

Temple Way Underpass

Part 1: Research & Analysis

March 2023





Executive Summary

Redcliffe & Temple BID commissioned Streets Reimagined to undertake a research and analysis study focussed on the Temple Way Subway in central Bristol. The findings from this are set out in this report.

In a later report (part 2), the findings of this analysis were used to inform a set of design objectives for the subway and its environs to guide the development of a detailed action plan and proposals for the subway.

As part of the study, the team undertook a mixed method approach which included desktop research, mapping of existing proposals, stakeholder interviews, an interactive workshop, online engagement via an interactive whiteboard and a focus group with disabled people.

Drawing on the feedback from the research and engagement, the team also undertook its own research and spatial analysis.

The key issues identified included;

- Confusing / disorientating layout with poor signage
- Drainage issues
- Too narrow
- Poor accessibility
- Poor lighting quality
- Susceptible to vandalism and tagging which creates high maintenance needs which are difficult to meet

Key opportunities included;

- Improving lighting
- Improving signage and wayfinding
- Incorporating artwork
- Incorporating sustainable urban drainage
- Better connected and continuous walking and cycling routes
- Re-configuring entrances and better utilisation of space

Contents

| | | |
|------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Introduction + Purpose | 5 | |
| Scope + Assumptions | 6 | Sets out the purpose and scope of |
| Method | 7 | study, introduces the site and the |
| Orientation | 8 | method followed. |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----|---------------------------------|
| Research + Engagement | | |
| Desktop Review | 10 | Reports on the findings arising |
| Mapping Existing Proposals | 13 | from the research and community |
| Stakeholder Research Interviews | 14 | engagement process. |
| Workshop | 15 | |
| Inclusive Access Focus Group | 18 | |

| | | |
|------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Issues + Opportunities | | |
| Drainage | 19 | Drawing on the findings from the |
| Sharing Space | 21 | research and engagement process |
| Entry Spaces | 23 | to explore some of the key issues |
| Wayfinding + Signage | 25 | and opportunities. |
| Lighting | 26 | |
| Maintenance | 27 | |

| | | |
|---------|----|--|
| Summary | 28 | |
|---------|----|--|

Introduction + Purpose

Streets Reimagined were commissioned by Redcliffe & Temple BID to undertake a research and analysis study to inform a design brief for the Temple Way Subway.

The Temple Way Subway provides a useful and continuous walking and cycling route below six traffic lanes, connecting the Old Market and Redcliffe districts. It also forms part of one of the most direct walking / cycling routes between Bristol Temple Meads Station and the city-centre. However, it has been frequently highlighted in local planning policies and other community / business consultations as offering a poor user experience.

The overarching purpose for this study is to confirm and articulate the key priorities for change and to help unlock Community Infrastructure Levy funding to deliver enhancements to the subway both in the short-term and longer-term.

Objectives

The key objectives of this study were as follows;

- Review and map nearby proposals within the local area
- Undertake and summarise findings from stakeholder / user engagement via research interviews and an interactive workshop
- High level analysis of key opportunities and issues
- Setting out design objectives to form the basis of a design brief for the subway

Scope + Assumptions

Whilst the following could form part of future work stages, they were outside the scope of this commission;

- Developed Design Proposals
- Cost Estimates
- Technical Design and specification

Also, it should be noted that after initial investigation it was concluded that options to physically widen the subway and /or to provide alternative provision (e.g. via a footbridge) were financially prohibitive, at least in the medium term.

This was following advice from Bristol Highways and based on conclusions drawn from previous studies.

After consideration, the option to fill in the subway was also discounted on the basis that the current link provides a useful and continuous link at a crossing desire line. Also, there are few alternative crossing points nearby with the exception of the Old Market roundabout.

However, if new crossings were provided in the future, for example at the end of Avon Street to the south, there could be scope to review this assumption.

Method

Aware that previous studies have been undertaken in close vicinity of the subway, the team initially undertook a desktop review of this work. Where required, this also included follow up research and interviews with stakeholders and officers at Bristol city council to establish the most up to date information.

The various proposals were then mapped out for the area around the subway.

Building on this work, a targeted and mixed method approach was developed which explored the diversity of user experience of the subway. This included undertaking a stakeholder and user mapping exercise and following this a series of 1-2-1 research interviews both over phone / video call and on site. Targeted engagement was also undertaken with the Access Inclusion Team (part of the West of England Centre for Inclusive Living).

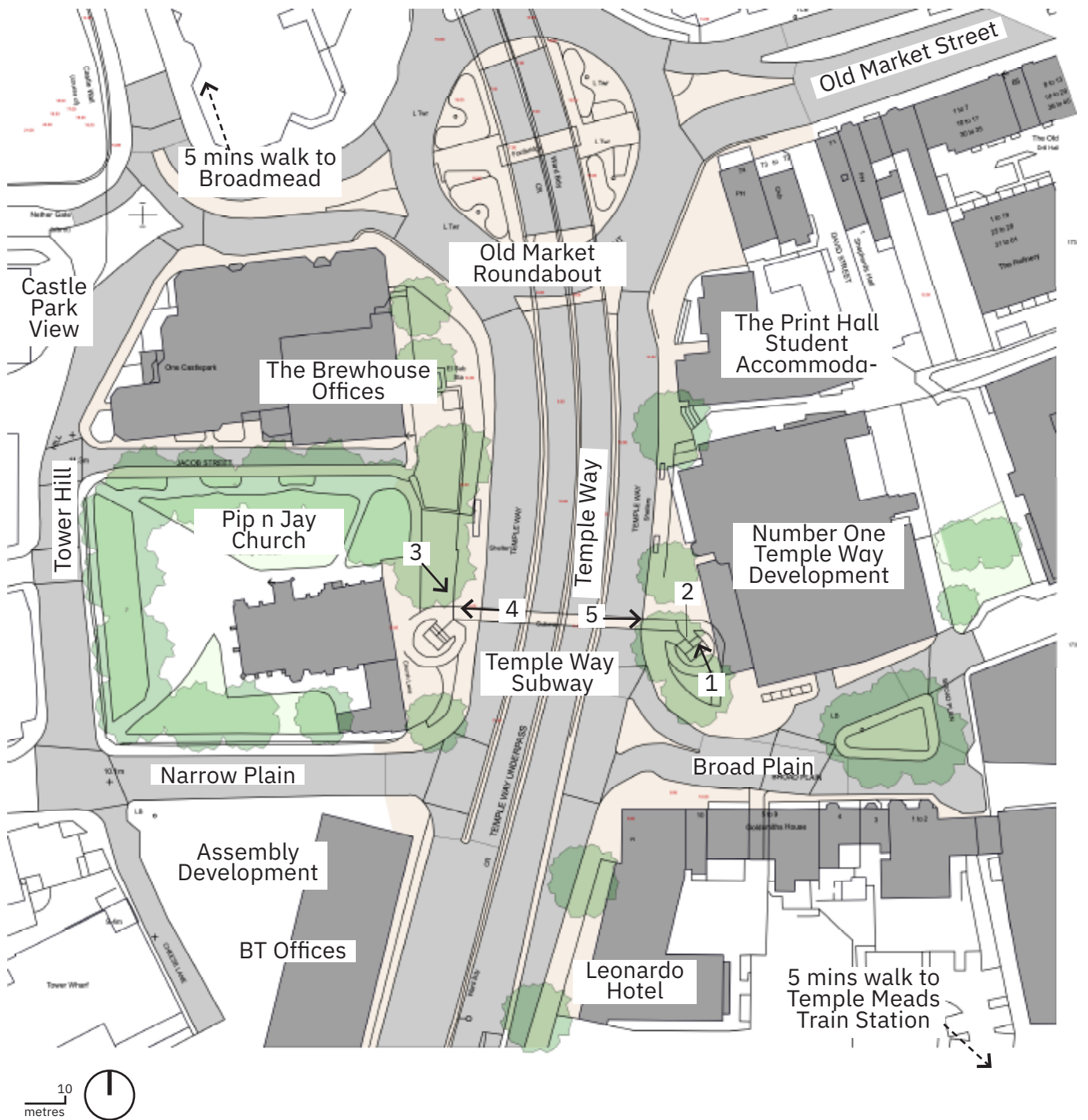
Additionally, an interactive street audit workshop was undertaken with more than 15 participants which explored some of the issues and opportunities in more depth on site as part of a group evaluation exercise.

The team also undertook their own analysis to explore in more detail some of the issues and opportunities raised.

In summary the key research activities included;

- Desktop Review of previous studies
- mapping of Existing initiatives
- 7 X Stakeholder Interviews
- focus Group with Disabled People
- interactive Street Audit Workshop
- online Interactive Whiteboard
- spatial and Movement Analysis

Orientation



Orientation

1. View of eastern approach



2. View of eastern entrance



3. View of western approach



4. Looking westwards in the subway towards Pip n Jay church



5. Looking eastwards to in the subway towards Number One Temple Way



Desktop Review

The Old Market Neighbourhood Plan

The Old Market Neighbourhood plan produced in 2013 highlights the ‘Eastern Gateway to Castle Park’ area (Project PR6) as forming a ‘strategic link’ between Old Market and the City Centre.



‘Old Market has limited public open space and it is therefore important that streets are not just for cars, but spaces for people to meet and socialise, where they feel safe to walk and rest’

Old Market Neighbourhood Development Plan
2013

Desktop Review

Broad Plain Public Realm Strategy

In 2020, The City Design Group at Bristol City Council completed a public realm strategy focussed on Broad Plain which included a number of different circulation and movement options. As part of this, it also highlighted the subway area as requiring ‘radical works’ and highlighted the need for better lighting and cleanliness but did not provide specific design proposals.

As part of this study there were stakeholder meetings, a drop-in session and on-street interviews. There were 30 attendees at the drop in, 17 people were interviewed on the street and ten more submitted feedback by email.

Amongst the key findings arising from this were a desire to see better lighting, improving the walking and cycling environment, including improved crossings, segregated cycle lanes and a renovation of the subway.

This study produced two options for Broad Plain and the preferred options was for Unity Street to become one-way eastbound for vehicles with a two way cycleway.

‘Improving the subway is essential to improving the experience of walking or cycling to Broad Plain. It is too dark, too dirty and too narrow for the large numbers of people that currently use it, even though many positively avoid doing so because they do not feel safe there. Better lighting and cleanliness would help, but more radical works are needed’

Broad Plain Public Realm Strategy 2020

Desktop Review

The ‘Old Market Gap’

The Old Market Gap is a long-standing Bristol City Council initiative that seeks to improve walking and cycling connections across Temple Way, between Redcliffe and Old Market. It has progressed periodically as new funding sources have become available including from CIL and government grant funding.

Recognising the physical constraints of the subway, a key part of this initiative has been to relieve pressure on Temple Way Subway and Jacob Street (the main western approach to the subway via a shared use path). Whilst there is no intention of closing the subway for cycle use (it will remain part of the National Cycle network NCN), in practical terms, this has meant providing an alternative east-west cycle route.

This has taken the form of a new route across Old Market roundabout and to the north of Old Market Street via Redcross Street and Braggs Lane (which will also be a NCN route).

On the western, city-centre side of the subway, there are imminent proposals to provide a two-way cycleway on Tower Hill and Castle Street which will connect to a new cycleway (to be completed later) along Narrow Plain, thus providing an alternative route to Jacob Street.

One Temple Way Section 278 Public Realm

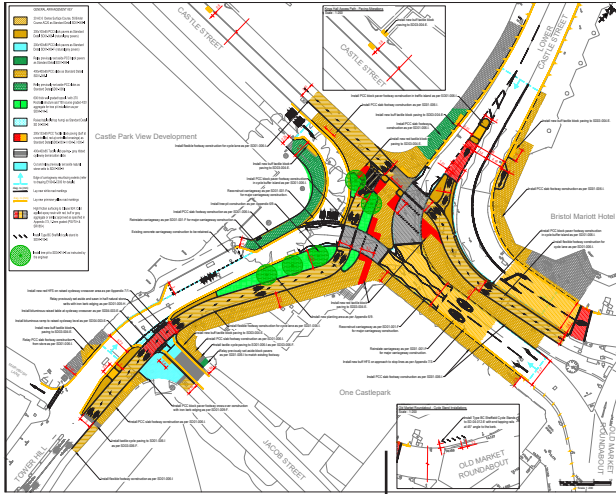
As part of the Section 278 agreement for the consented scheme there are proposals to ‘open up’ the area and remove the concrete spiral staircase around the eastern entrance to the Temple Way Subway. Meetings with the developer have revealed there is an opportunity to influence the detailed design of this scheme.

Key Findings

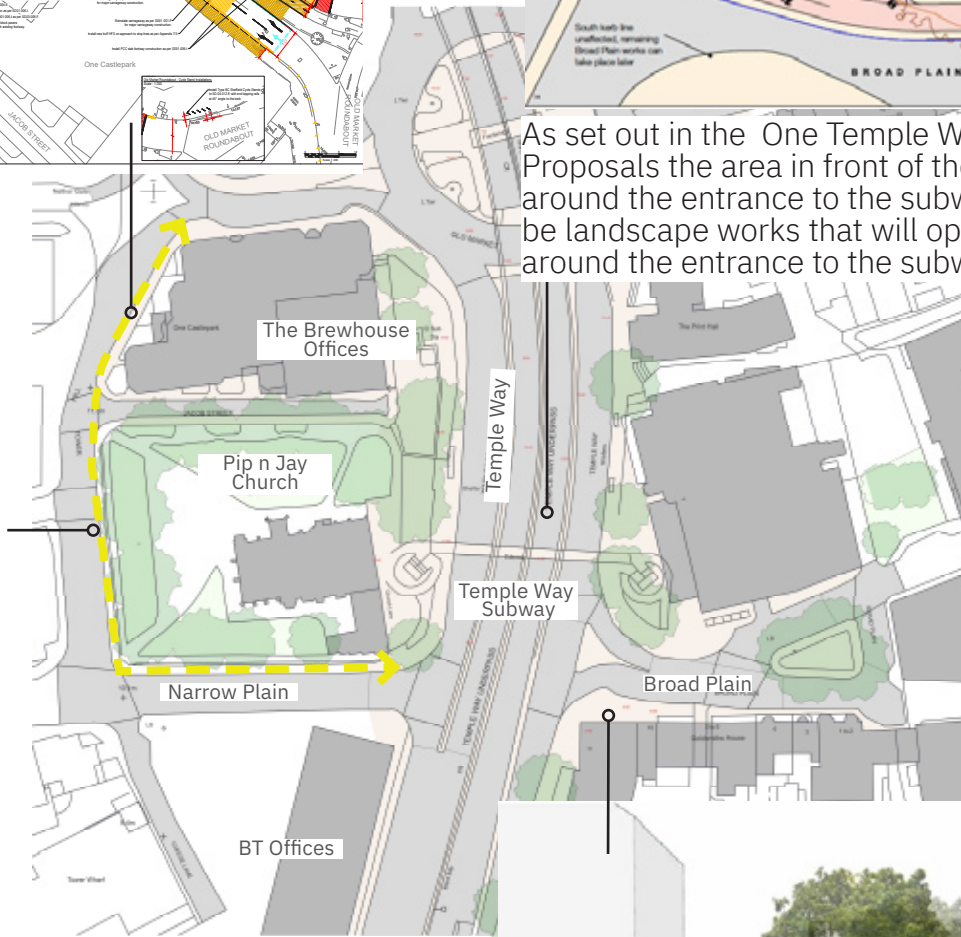
There are some gaps in the ‘mosaic’ of proposals, including the subway itself and the western approach in particular.

Mapping Existing Proposals

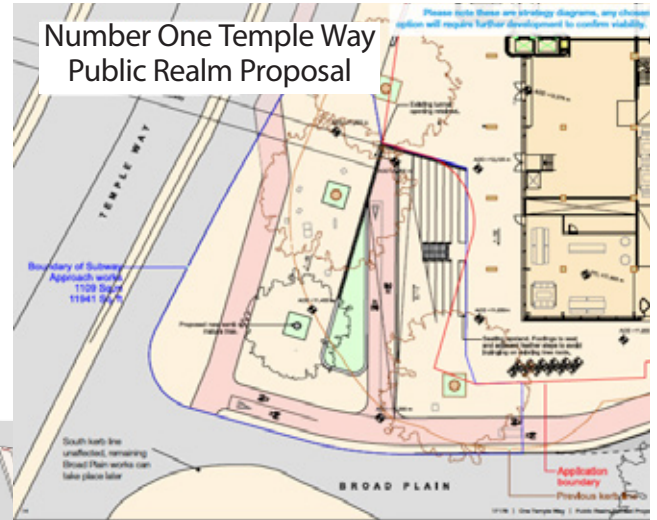
As part of the Old Market Gap project upgraded two-way cycleway on Tower Hill



Proposed two-way cycleway along southern section of Tower Hill and Narrow Plain to be funded via section 278 from the Assembly development.



It is understood that there are early discussions around providing a new pedestrian crossing from Avon Street across Temple Way as part of the Assembly Development. However, it has not been possible to confirm the status of this with the highways team at the council.



As set out in the One Temple Way Public Realm Proposals the area in front of the building and around the entrance to the subway there will be landscape works that will open up the area around the entrance to the subway



As set out in the Broad Plain Public Realm Strategy, there is an aspiration to implement public realm improvements in Broad Plain and make Unity Street one-way westbound with a two-way cycleway.

Stakeholder Interviews

Following a stakeholder mapping exercise the team identified an extensive list of stakeholders and user groups. Of these, the team organised and undertook interviews with representatives from the following;

- Project Manager – Paths for Everyone | West of England & Wiltshire, Sustrans
- Project Assurance Officer, Transport Delivery Team Bristol City Council Growth and Regeneration
- Chair, Old Market Community Association
- Managing Director, Gardiner Haskins
- Associate Leader, Central, St Philip and St Jacob Church.
- Representative, Bell Hammer (Property Development Company behind the Assembly Development on Temple Way)
- Representatives from Soapworks Development (planned for part of the Gardiner Haskins site)
- General Manager, Leonardo Hotel

Most interviewees felt the subway provided an important and continuous linking route for walking and cycling.

However, it was clear that there was universally strong support for improvements to be made and agreement that the current layout and condition of the subway could and should be better.

Amongst the issues raised included;

- Flooding at times of heavy rainfall
- Poor signage
- Disorientating ‘brutal’ architecture
- Poor lighting quality
- Insufficient level of maintenance and upkeep
- Insufficient width for level / type of usage

The interviewees all wanted to see these issues addressed and there were also questions about whether more transformational changes such as widening or a bridge were possible.

Workshop

Building on the findings from the research interviews an interactive workshop was held with the aim of analysing the subway and environs in terms of it's useability and place quality. We also wanted to agree and confirm key issues, opportunities and priorities for change.

The workshop was structured as follows;

Activity 1: Walkabout street audit activity

Activity 2: Facilitated plenary session to discuss and reflect on the findings from the walkabout and to confirm key issues, opportunities and priorities for change.

There were 16 attendees at the workshop session which included representatives from;

- The Soapworks Development
- Number One Temple Way development
- Bristol Walking Alliance
- BT Estates
- Gardiner Haskins
- Local residents
- Leonardo Hotel
- Royal London

After the session, participants were invited to add ideas and thoughts to an online whiteboard.



Workshop

Key Findings

Below we set out the key findings arising from the workshop session;

Positives /Likes

- Continuous flow for pedestrians and cyclists - not traffic delays
- A car free option for crossing Temple Way, considered the safest option especially for cycling
- Trees and shade

- ‘Best/least worst’ cycle and pedestrian route in that area - well used
- ‘Book ends’ of historical architecture

Challenges / Negatives

- Too narrow
- Confusing / disorientating
- (lack of) accessibility
- Flooding - “Funnel”
- Lighting quality
- Lack of surveillance + active frontage



Workshop

- Lines of visibility are poor
- Anti-social behaviour
- Routes to it are not resolved or clear
- Lack of signage or legibility

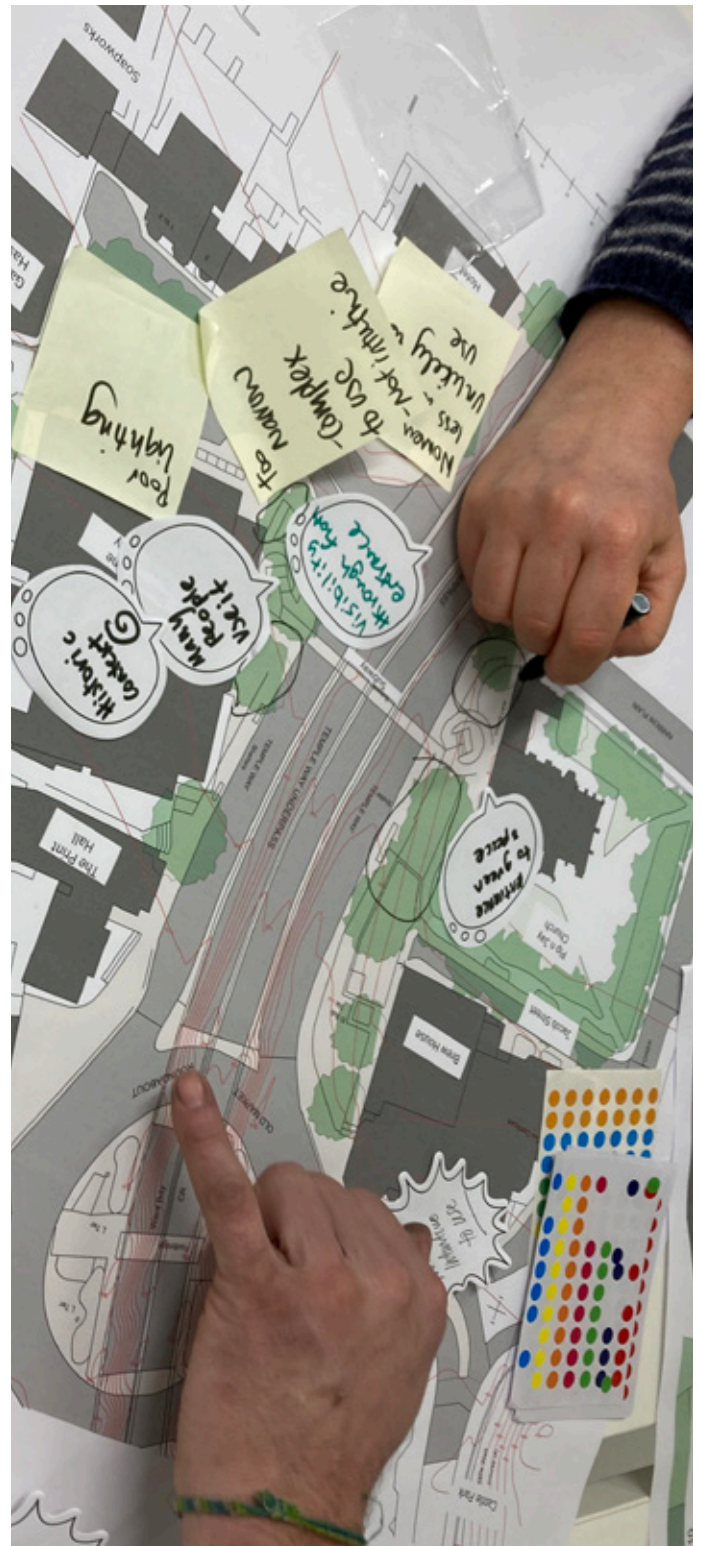
What would you change?

- Improve lighting
- Highlight segregated walking and cycling paths
- Painting / Animation
- More greenery / more wayfinding signage

Prioritisation Exercise

Easier to Deliver / High Impact;

- Improve Lighting
- Painting - incorporate street art, sculptures?
- Highlight segregated walking / cycle routes - through signage, colour and light
- Introduce pedestrian wayfinding / signage
- Historic interpretation signage



Inclusive Access Focus Group

The team also undertook some targeted engagement with the Access Inclusion Team - West of England Centre for Inclusive Living (WECIL). WECIL is a disabled peoples-led charity that provides support to the disabled community. The Access Inclusion team reviewed and analysed the useability of the subway.

The group reported that the subway was not somewhere they would be happy to use and most people would prefer to cross at street level.

In terms of specific feedback they highlighted the following;

Positives

- Clear indication for a probing cane

Negatives

- poor signage
- lack of colour contrast in the subway
- poor lighting quality
- whilst there was some delineation between walking and cycling it was not clear which was which

- The metal barriers were badly positioned and would be cold to touch in winter and hot to touch in summer
- The turns are very steep for wheelchair users
- For manual wheelchair users, it was felt the steepness of the ramps might be an issue
- For electric wheelchair users there could be issues with the battery
- No resting spaces so ramps would be a challenge

Proposed Changes

- Update Lighting
- Better Signage
- Tactile Indicators
- Make it wider
- Brightening up the corridor with street art
- Make handrails continuous and add a plastic cover of some kind

Whilst not mentioned, the current metal barriers could also preclude use by people using adaptive bicycles or cargo bikes.

Issues + Opportunities: Drainage

Drainage

Landform generally falls southwards and surface water flows to the lowest point which is the subway. Along both sides of the subway are open drainage channels which direct the water to drains both at the entrance to the subway and at the lowest points in the subway on both sides. We understand there is a pump that then pumps the water away.

As noted throughout the engagement process rain water is known to pool and back up here, sometimes making it impossible to pass through the subway. However, when the team visited after a long period of rain on the 12.01.23 (when there was extensive surface flooding elsewhere) there was no pooling in the subway and rainwater could be seen to be flowing into the channels as intended. However, it was noted that the drains were becoming blocked by litter and leaves which might indicate there is potential for them to become fully blocked at certain times of year and without regular maintenance.

Nonetheless, to address this issue and reduce pressure on the subway there are opportunities to explore sustainable urban drainage approaches, including for example rain gardens and permeable surfaces in the wider area to reduce surface run off at times of heavy rainfall.



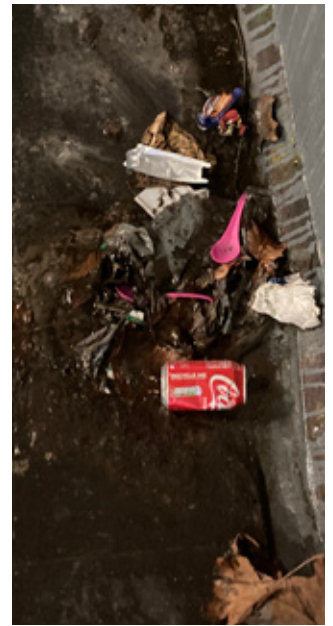
Landform falls southwards towards the lowest point which is the subway

Issues + Opportunities: : Drainage



Impermeable ground surface means rain water run-off (and leaves in Autumn) are 'funnelled' into subway.

Rainwater run-off flows into subway and towards a drainage channel



Drains are partially blocked by litter and leaves

Issues + Opportunities

Sharing Space

Sharing Space

The total width of the subway is approximately 3.15m. Once the width of the drainage channels and the raised central delineator is taken into account this only leaves 1.42m for a two-way cycleway and 1.25m for two way pedestrian movement. The current standard is 3m for a two way cycleway (LTN 1/20) whilst the footway standard is 2m (Manual for Streets).

Therefore, it can't fully function as a user segregated route, at least not to current standards. However, it is trying to operate as a segregated route through the use of a raised ground delineator strip and allocating different user types to different sides as indicated by the signage at each entrance.

In theory, pedestrians should keep left as they enter from the western approach but to the right when they approach from the east (the opposite for people riding bikes or scooters). However, there seems to be some confusion in practice,

with many pedestrians instinctively keeping left whichever direction they are travelling in - which is perhaps not surprising as the signage is small and could easily be missed.

Whilst visual and raised segregation (as has already been introduced) might help to reassure users, it is important to recognise a certain amount of sharing of the space between users is inevitable given the limited amount of space available, particularly at busy times.

Therefore, there might be value in considering updating signage and guidance for users which could take reference from recent signage / guidance installed on the Bristol to Bath railway shared path.

Efforts to provide alternative routes will also be beneficial in terms of easing pressure, however concerns / disappointment was expressed at the cancellation of the pontoon under Temple Way (Assembly to Trinity Quay) and the lack of a crossing at Avon Street .

Issues + Opportunities

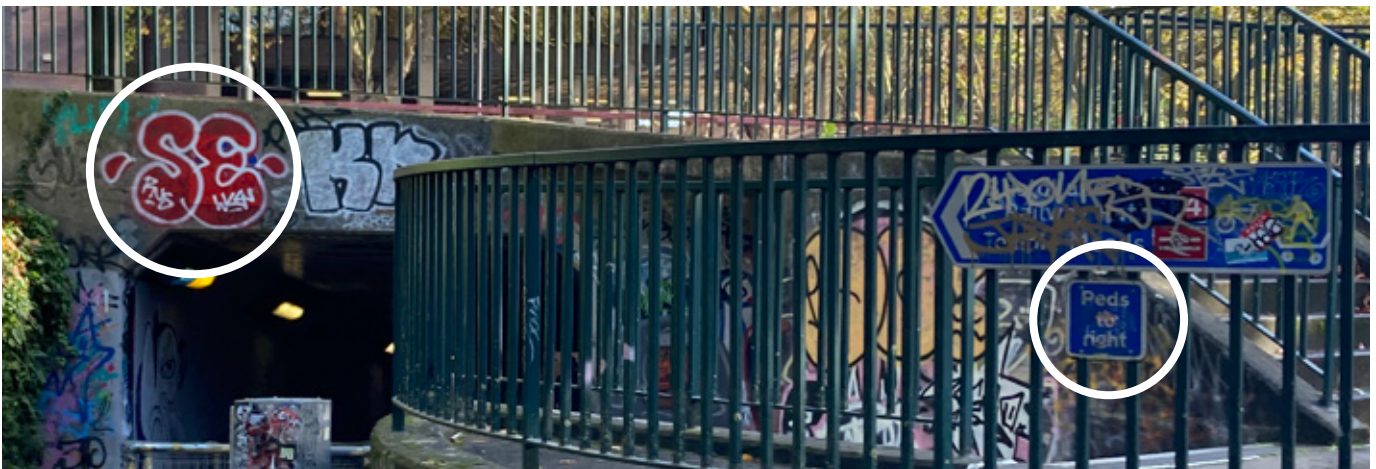
Sharing Space



LEFT: Modest signage from the western approach to inform pedestrians to stay left which could easily be missed



BELOW MIDDLE: Obscured signage from the eastern approach to inform pedestrians to stay right could easily be missed



LEFT : Many pedestrians (understandably) instinctively stay left (when according to signs they should be on the right)

Issues + Opportunities

Entry Spaces

The current spiral concrete ramps at both sides were thought to be steep for wheelchair users according to our focus group.

They also take up a significant amount of land area which could be put to more effective use.

Therefore, there is an opportunity to explore removing them and reconfiguring them to make them work better and/or make alternative provisions.



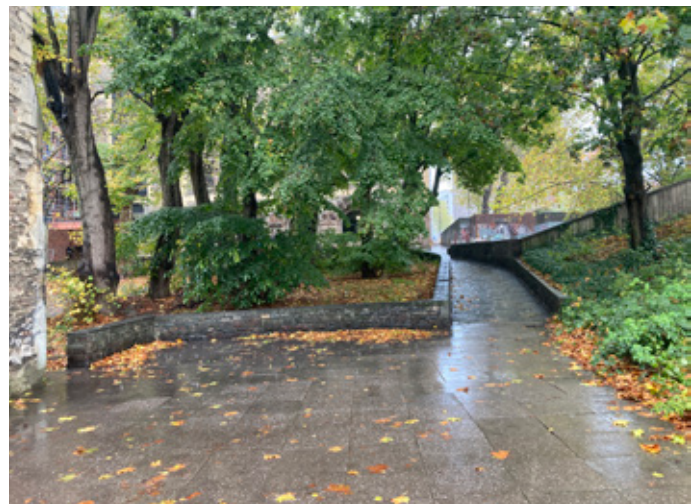
Issues + Opportunities

Entry Spaces

The area around the western approach in particular has a lot of underutilised space. Taking into account the church's long-term ambitions to 'open up' to the street from this side and also the plans to create a cycle connection to Narrow Plain there is an opportunity and a need to consider a new layout for the space between Pip n Jay Church and Temple Way.



Additionally the current desire line (for those walking or cycling) via Jacob Street lacks legibility and therefore there is also an opportunity to re-configure this space to bring more clarity and a better quality of place. The BID's plan to install 'tree lights' (like those on Victoria street and in Temple Gardens) will improve this but further re-engineering work should be considered.



Issues + Opportunities

Wayfinding and Signage

As noted, the Temple Way subway forms a key linking space, including between Temple Meads Station and the city-centre. However, whilst there is some wayfinding signage nearby, including in Broad Plain and also Castle Street there is very little wayfinding signage at the entrances / exits of the subway. And, what there is, is obscured by graffiti. Therefore, it could be quite disorientating for people who are new to the city.

At the workshop the participants identified that one of the positive elements of the subway was that it was 'book ended' by two historical buildings. Therefore, there could be value in creating some interpretative signage which explained some of the rich history. However, this will depend very much on the ability to maintain this signage which could be difficult given the level of vandalism and required maintenance levels.



View across Temple Way to Pip N Jay Church



Arrival at Pip n Jay Church from subway



Very little signage at entrance to subway

Issues + Opportunities

Lighting

The poor quality of the lighting was raised numerous times during the engagement process.

Whilst there is lighting provision in the subway, on closer inspection it was clear that a number of the light fixings / coverings are obscured by graffiti which doesn't allow for efficient light transmission. Also on the approach to the subway there is limited lighting and where there is lighting this is obscured by trees.

Therefore, there is scope to explore different light fixings and also the maintenance routine to ensure the best quality lighting in the subway.



Lighting obscured by tree on the western approach



Lighting obscured by graffiti



Issues + Opportunities

Maintenance

Overall there was a general theme in the feedback from stakeholders that the subway could be better maintained and this in turn would make it feel like a safer, more pleasant and functional place to use. The fact that the subway is sunken and out of sight makes it a place that is susceptible to misuse and anti-social behaviour.

In particular, litter and graffiti tagging was seen as being of particular concern. More regular maintenance might be one approach to addressing this. However, it seems to be a cyclical issue so there is also scope to explore a different approach such as commissioning artwork to fill the subway to counteract the visual impact of tagging.

An important consideration is that any intervention or investment needs to be robust and require minimal ongoing maintenance.



Summary

This report has outlined a multi-method approach to analysing and researching the current usage and place quality of the subway and surrounding environs. This included desktop research into previous studies and targeted engagement with stakeholders and diverse user groups. It has also included spatial and movement analysis.

It has concluded there is significant scope for improving the user experience of the subway.

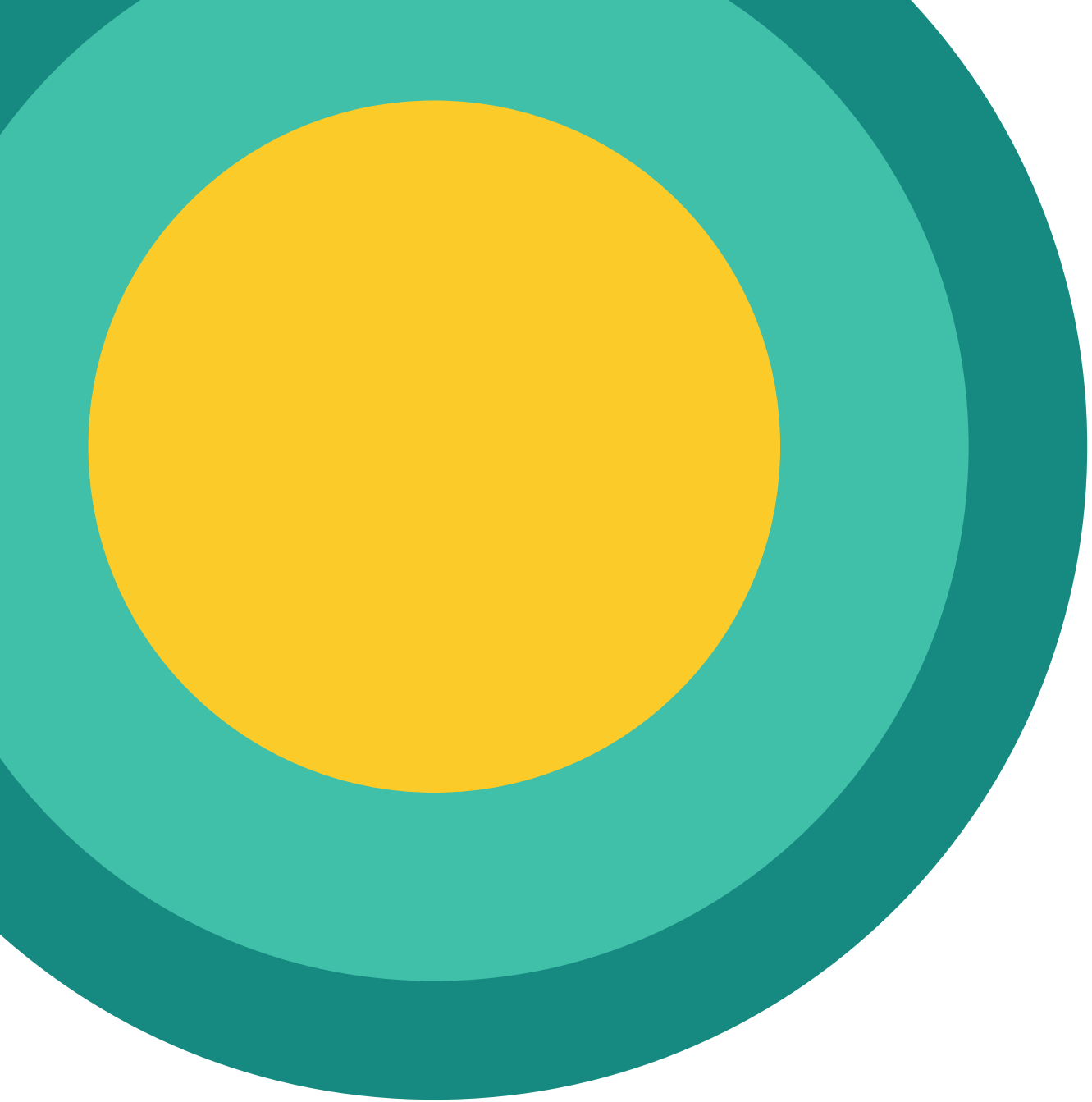
In part 2, a number of design objectives are set out and explored to inform funding applications.

To summarise the key issues identified included;

- Confusing / disorientating layout with poor signage
- Drainage issues
- Too narrow
- Poor accessibility
- Poor lighting quality
- Susceptible to vandalism and tagging which creates high maintenance needs which are difficult to meet

Key opportunities included;

- Improving lighting
- Improving signage and wayfinding
- Incorporating artwork
- Incorporating sustainable urban drainage
- Better connected and continuous walking and cycling routes
- Re-configuring entrances and better utilisation of space
- Re-configuring entrances and better utilisation of space



www.streets-reimagined.com