Bristol Legible City is a unique concept to improve people's understanding and experience of the city through the implementation of identity, information and transportation projects.

An initiative of Bristol City Council and its partners

Bristol Legible City

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The future of Bristol Legible City is a well-connected environment. But it's more than that. It's about creating a unique and coherent identity for Bristol, one that can expand beyond signage to encompass bus shelters, telephone kiosks, information booths and street furniture, and can express itself as lightworks, landscapeor sculptures, or in the design of bus timetables. Above all it is about creating an identity that will become a nationally and internationally recognisable symbol of all that's best about Bristol.

Bristol Legible City

A presentation of the concept
and work in progress on
Bristol Legible City

An initiative of Bristol City Council
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Bristol Legible City is a unique concept to improve people's understanding and experience of the city through the implementation of identity, information and transportation projects.

The following pages explain Bristol Legible City, why the initiative is needed, how it has been devised and the way it will work.
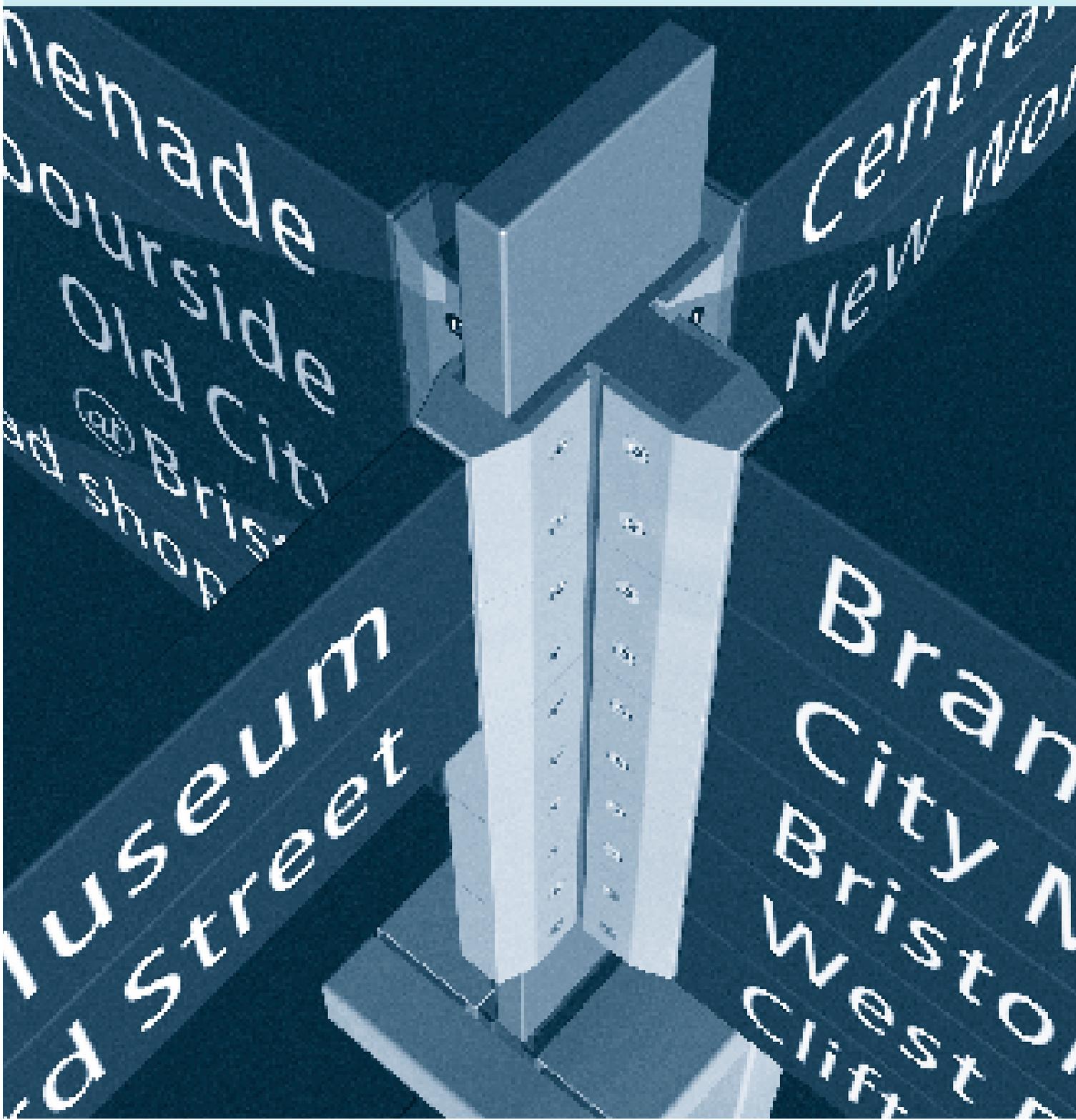
Like all the best ideas, Bristol Legible City is simple – an integrated programme of transportation, information and identity projects designed to improve people's understanding and enjoyment of the city. It's a unique concept that takes into account the needs of the user at every step – whether it's a tourist trying to find a hotel, someone with a business appointment to keep, a film-goer on their way to the cinema, a cyclist going to the shops, an occasional ferry user or a parent whose kids need a toilet in a hurry.

Bristol Legible City includes directional signs, visitor welcome panels, city and area maps, interpretation points providing details about a locality and its attractions, an integrated network of transport information, an arts programme, telephone kiosks, information booths, and markers at transport interchanges and neighbourhood gateways. Forward-looking and user-friendly, Bristol Legible City is devised specifically to meet your needs in the new millennium.

Concept for a showcase city
As a creative and innovative city, Bristol is changing. Ground-breaking regeneration and development schemes – such as those at Harbourside, Broadmead and Temple Quay – make Bristol more than ever a great place to be and to do business, encouraging both inward investment and a thriving visitor and leisure industry. These exciting projects provide the catalyst for Bristol to take its place as a modern pioneer, leading the way in the region –

Clear, easily understood information helps make cities tick. With major regeneration schemes now transforming the centre of Bristol, a new sign and information system is needed to enable visitors and residents to make the most of the city and all it has to offer.

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and making a unique contribution in Britain and Europe. Bristol Legible City is part of that vision, a key component of the City Centre Strategy to capitalise on Bristol's potential for the benefit of business, transport, culture, tourism and, most importantly, its people. It's about making Bristol a better place to live, work and travel in, to visit and enjoy; a showcase city.

A city's image and the quality of its built environment are vital to its local economy. Bristol, though unique in the variety, vitality and choice offered by its diverse neighbourhoods, currently lacks a strong visual identity to bind its disparate parts together and distinguish it from competing destinations. In recent times, road development has broken up its traditional neighbourhoods, and areas such as Temple, Harbourside, Old City, West End and Broadmead have become fragmented. Low levels of information – with attractions and routes erratically signposted – mean that visitors find the central area difficult to navigate whether on foot, by public transport or by car, offering them little in the way of welcome when they arrive at the bus or train station or at one of the city's car parks. Worse, the current signing system fails to give people comfort or guide them to the wealth of attractions the city has to offer – to the detriment of local retailers, leisure facilities, restaurants and arts venues.

From confusion to clarity

The city centre does not need to confuse and confound us, however. Bristol Legible City is a carefully thought-out transport and information concept which, together with an integrated art programme, will make the centre of Bristol more welcoming and more readable for its visitors, more successful for its businesses and more enjoyable for all its users. It doesn't mean more signs – in fact it means less muddle, and the removal of much of the clutter that confuses visitors and residents today.

Bristol Legible City has been developed by Bristol City Council in partnership with City ID/Urban Initiatives (project co-ordination and planning), MetaDesign (information and communication design), pArts (public art consultants), PSD associates (product design and development) and Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (business planning and marketing). Its aims are to link together the diverse parts of the city with a flow of consistently designed information; to make attractions better known and easier to find; to provide the city with a clear identity and reinforce the character of its individual neighbourhoods; and to encourage a shift towards public transport in line with Bristol's Local Transport Plan and the government's Integrated Transport Strategy.

The first phase, a pedestrian signing and information system for the city centre, is in development, funded jointly

Without a well-designed system of information, a city environment can easily confuse or annoy people. Currently, inconsistent signs and low levels of information in Bristol give little welcome to visitors, and fail to guide people to the city's attractions and facilities.

Before any design work was undertaken, the first and most important stage of Bristol Legible City was to think through all the issues, taking the user's point of view into account at every step.

by Bristol City Council, Capital Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget with the support of South West Regional Development Agency, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Initiative, theBroadmead Board, Bristol Harbourside and Public Art South West. Comprising wall-mounted and fingerpost directional signs and freestanding units with maps and local information, this initial phase will be appearing on the streets of Bristol early next year. Arranged along key pedestrian routes through the city, the new signs will clearly identify all nearby attractions and facilities, from museums, leisure venues and hotels to libraries, shops, markets and squares.

A distinctive identity: the first phase
Bristol Legible City has been designed to provide a simple yet distinctive 'voice' for Bristol – a visual language of easily understood symbols and legible text. The typeface – 'Bristol Transit' – is clear and easily read, designed to look modern and confident. It uses upper and lower case letterforms because these are the easiest, most natural to read, while the light-on-dark contrast has been chosen for maximum clarity, helping all, including those who are visually impaired. The number of words and icons on each sign is kept to a minimum to avoid information overload and visual clutter. Area information is provided by specially developed maps which use three-dimensional images to put people directly in touch with their environment.

A unique system of durable sign structures has been designed specifically for Bristol's needs. Using a 'menu' of components, it allows signs to be configured in a way that delivers information while keeping visual clutter to a minimum.

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All components are physically and visually robust, taking their cue from Bristol's architecture and industry. Designed as a visible expression of the city's character – strong, creative, contemporary but not faddish – they are made of stainless steel, powder-coated mild steel and vitreous enamel panels to blend with the cityscape and give long-lasting, low-maintenance quality.

A cleaner, greener environment
Tackling problems of vehicular movement is another key step, with new signs to be put in place around the city centre to discourage through-traffic and improve access to Bristol's attractions. Like every other major city, Bristol is beset by problems of car traffic and pollution, which are cited by local residents and businesses as two of the worst aspects of life in the city. Working in collaboration with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Bristol Legible City will respond to this problem not only by encouraging use of public transport but also by creating a step-by-step path of information about attractions from the motorway through to the destination.

After phase one of Bristol Legible City, the next step will be to extend the pedestrian signing system into other areas of the city and provide a wider range of items, including bus stops, information booths, telephone kiosks, and markers at transport interchanges such as ferry landing stages. A central focus at this stage will be to

BristolLegible City uses only icons that are widely recognised and immediately understood. Providing instant visual messages, they are key elements of a sign system that will grow into a network of information linking different modes of transport in the city.
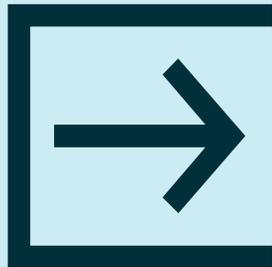
improve accessibility to buses, trains and ferries – making it easier for people to find out about, and use, an integrated system of public transport – while at the same time continuing to make the city centre a more appealing place in which to walk and cycle.

Public arts programme
The solution to the problem of providing information and identity isn't always a sign or a map. After all, people often navigate their way around a city by landmarks, pubs, roundabouts and petrol stations as well as official sites, or sometimes just by the 'feel' of a neighbourhood. As it progresses, Bristol Legible City will integrate regional, national and international artists' and designers' work through a long-term programme. This will make the city easier to understand and more familiar, and will also emphasise the identities of the individual neighbourhoods.

To be funded through public and private sector partnership, including related low-key advertising elements, the art programme will reflect a variety of media and approaches, from sculpture, street furniture and landscape works to lightworks on buildings, bridges or in water. Working in collaboration with the city's businesses and industries, artists and designers will also seek to reveal the often hidden wealth of Bristol's architecture, transforming key buildings for both daytime and night-time use in ways that are sensitive to the location and mindful of the need to avoid light pollution. Meanwhile temporary art-works will excite interest in the city and encourage exploration by local people as well as visitors.

The integration of public art in this way provides a unique blueprint for the creation of a vibrant and exciting environment and a strong, positive image for the city.

Symbol of a successful city
Part of the continuing transformation of the city, Bristol Legible City is about creating an easy, enjoyable, well-connected environment. It's about building an identity for Bristol that can grow beyond signs to encompass everything from bus shelters and kiosks to street furniture and sculpture, becoming a symbol of a confident and successful European city. The first phase, the pedestrian signing, is ready for manufacture. The next phase, vehicular signing to help encourage new ways to integrate transport in cities – is being developed now. So far, Bristol Legible City has met with a positive response from those consulted. This is your chance to have your say.

Different types of maps provide varying levels of information. Together with directional signs, they will be positioned along main pedestrian routes to assist with decisions at junctions and act as continuity markers.

The new sign structures have been designed as an expression of Bristol's character – creative, pioneering, robust. Their consistent aesthetic will link together Bristol's diverse neighbourhoods while complementing the city's richness and variety.
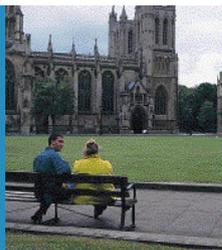
'People do not walk enough; some would like to drive right into the shop!'

'There are lots of nice green spaces in the city centre, but you have to negotiate five-lane highways to get to them.'

The ten best things about living in Bristol

% respondents

60
50
40
30
20
10
0

location & size
leisure & facilities
parks & open spaces
shops
heritage
people
transport
health services
education
jobs
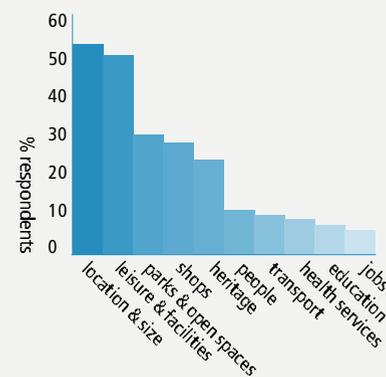
As a creative and innovative city, Bristol is changing. Bristol Legible City is a key component of the City Centre Strategy to capitalise on Bristol's potential for the benefit of business, transport, culture, tourism and – most importantly – its people.

'You have to think fast when you're driving around Bristol, but sometimes the signs are more confusing than helpful.'

'Cycling is like playing Russian Roulette at present.'

'Sometimes the bus seems to spend more time letting people on and off than actually travelling anywhere.'

'There's loads to do and see in Bristol, but sometimes it's a nightmare getting anywhere!'

How do people move around Bristol...
Bristol has more than 400,000 residents and one million people living within its immediate environs.

38% of those working in Bristol live outside the city.

Typically 415,000 vehicles go in and out of central Bristol every week day between 7am and 7pm. 79% are cars/taxis. 2% are buses/coaches. 1.9% are pedal cycles.

Traffic in Bristol has grown by 40% since 1985. Road traffic forecasts predict a growth in traffic of between 36% and 57% over the next 20 years.

Cycling currently accounts for less than 4% of all journeys in the city.

Walking accounts for only 10% of all journeys in the city.

Bus patronage has increased by some 25% since 1986, but usage is still amongst the lowest for any city in the United Kingdom.

The proportion of people using buses has increased by 23% since 1985.

The ten worst things about living in Bristol

% respondents

60
50
40
30
20
10
0

education
begging
housing
parking
planning
crime & policing
poor facilities
pollution
high cost
public transport
traffic
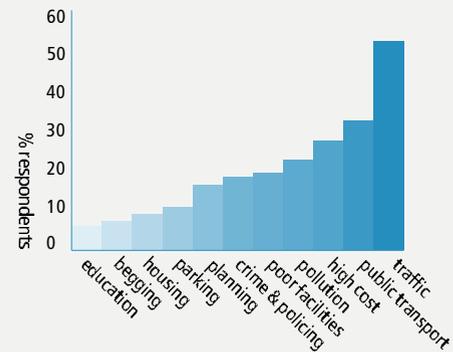
Total number of respondents: 895

Multiple answers were given.

Source: Bristol Citizens' Panel, 1999

At the heart of the project is an easy-to-understand system designed to provide a consistent flow of information through the city centre, linking diverse neighbour-hoods, helping people to make the most of Bristol's many attractions, welcoming tourists and encouraging a shift towards public transport.

'I walk from Broadmead to the Central Library regularly, it's not far but I'm slowed down by the amount of pedestrian lights.'

'In my opinion my city has been taken away from me by the explosion in the number of cars.'

A quarter mile is the maximum distance that the average person will walk to get somewhere on a routine basis. Beyond this, some people will either seek transport, or simply, not bother.

EDGES

User-centred design
By looking at scenarios involving different people, their varying journeys and motivations, we are able to imagine who the city's users are, how they navigate a city, what systems they already understand, and what design constraints exist.
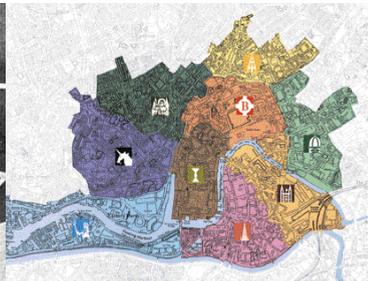
The designers and planners collaborating on Bristol Legible City used this technique to keep solutions rooted in reality, and to understand how the project would connect with other areas, services, facilities and initiatives.

regional

— Journeys

Kathryn has an appointment
She is 33, and drives everywhere. She's originally from High Wycombe.

She lives in Notting Hill in London with her seven year old daughter, Jill. She works in marketing for IBM in London.

This is her first time in Bristol. Her appointment is at 11am. She has an itinerary. She wants to get in and out as quickly as possible.

Sandra goes shopping
Sandra is going to a friend's wedding and is looking for strappy heels.

She has been in Bristol for three years. She is 26 years old and works at Bristol Royal Infirmary. It's a stressful job – crisis management. She uses her mountain bike and knows the city pretty well.

She cycles to keep herself healthy and she lives in a flat in Stoke Bishop. She is originally from Stratford upon Avon.

The Johnsons are visiting
The Johnsons are on a daytrip to Bristol and are staying in Bath. They are visiting from the US.

They have a teenage daughter, Jodie, and a ten year old son, Chris. They arrive on the train.

Their grandparents emigrated from the US. Charles is an historian, recently retired. Kate is an optician.

The city exists for many different audiences. For each audience the city will mean different things: In the World, Europe, UK, the South West and in itself.
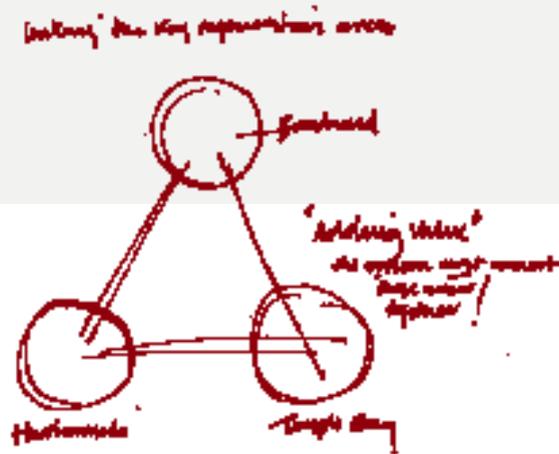
The first phase of Bristol Legible City is underway now, and early next year the new signage will be appearing on Bristol's streets.

The system has been designed by a team of specialists who have taken the needs of the city's users, whether they're pedestrians, cyclists, bus passengers, day trippers, shoppers or business visitors, into account at every stage.

"my house

TRANSPORT
MOVEMENT + FLOW

	orient	navigate	discovery
exists			

exists

orient

navigate

discover

SPACES + PLACES

stops "names"

Sticky notes (left page):
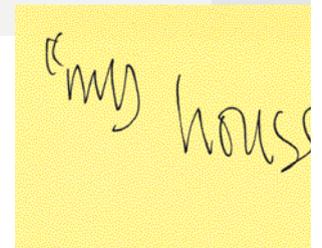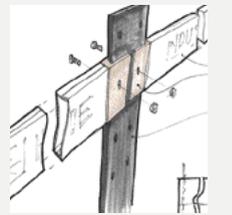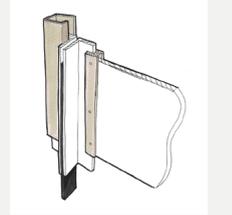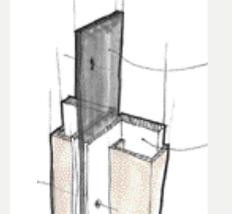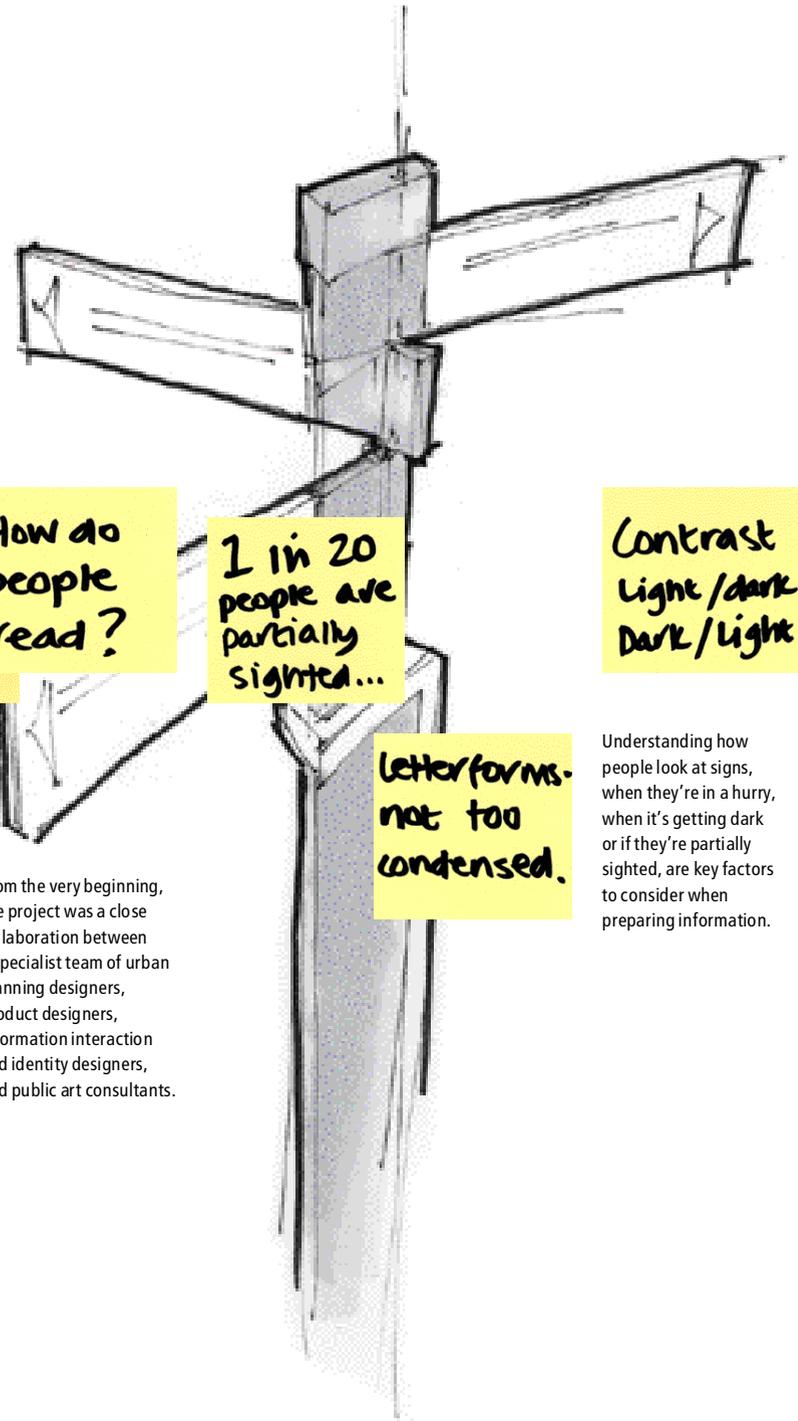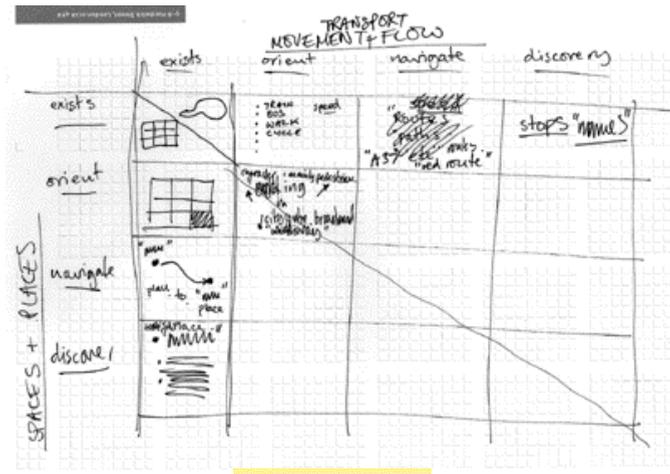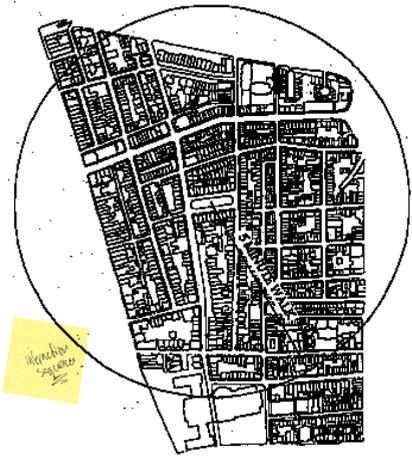
NEIGHBOURHOODS

- RANGE
- QUALITY
- VALUE

- POST BOX

Fine - 2 Trains
PLACE
REFERENCE
COMPONENTS

— here comes everybody
ROLES
+ movement systems

— the naming of parts.

— familiarity
- experience -

— intersections

"dinner & a movie"
THE

How do
people
read?

"attractions"
"services"
"places of interest"

COARSE

Type of
thing.

why would
you...

simple
types
of...

STABILITY
of place.

— attractions —
ATTRACTORS —

what are
the sub regional
forces
within
district
map

— PROXIMITY

1 in 20
people are
partially
sighted...

Letterforms.
not too
condensed.

Contrast
Light/dark
Dark/Light

From the very beginning, the project was a close collaboration between a specialist team of urban planning designers, product designers, information interaction and identity designers, and public art consultants.

Understanding how people look at signs, when they're in a hurry, when it's getting dark or if they're partially sighted, are key factors to consider when preparing information.

A sign is of no use if the place it points to has changed. That's why, right from the start of the project, future flexibility and the ease with which structures could be replaced were among the factors being considered, as these initial concept details reveal.

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'The thing most people notice when they first visit Bristol is how much water there is.'

Discover, create
The initiative was always conceived as an expression of the essence of Bristol – its history of maritime achievement, exploration and trade, its aviation, engineering and hi-tech industries, its landscape, architecture, culture, media and fun.

'I can see all sorts of blues when the sun hits the glass and steel of the Harbourside development.'

water

sky

steel

tiles

light

balloons

river

cobbled streets

reflections

flowers

flowers
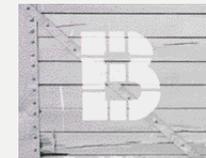
clear glass

The dominant colour throughout is blue, chosen for its clarity and its reflection of the city's character and heritage – its waterfront and maritime history, its fountains, bridges, blue glass and steel.

23

24

City identity

Building an identity for Bristol is a way of drawing together the many diverse strands of life in the city, allowing different voices to speak the same language.

The concept is to create a simple linking factor, one that everyone can identify with and that's flexible enough to stand the test of time.

Main pedestrian route
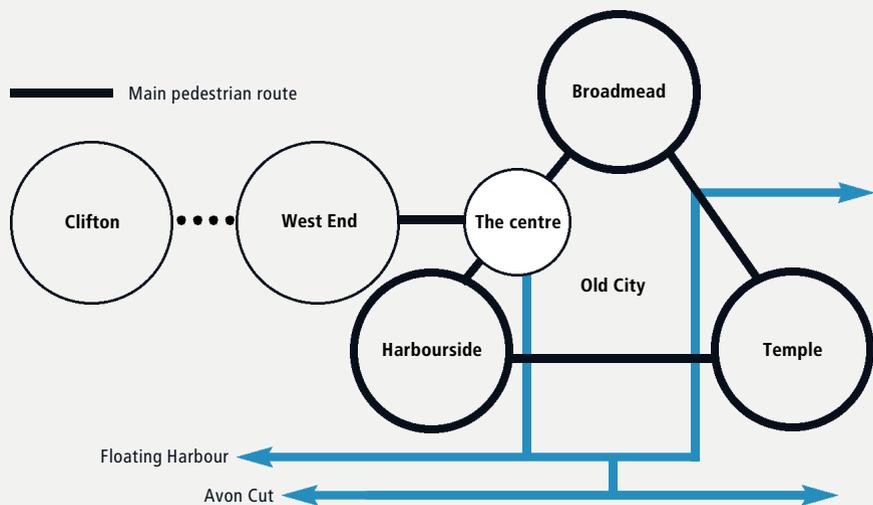
Above: the conceptual relationship between the key areas, linked together by the 'main pedestrian route'.
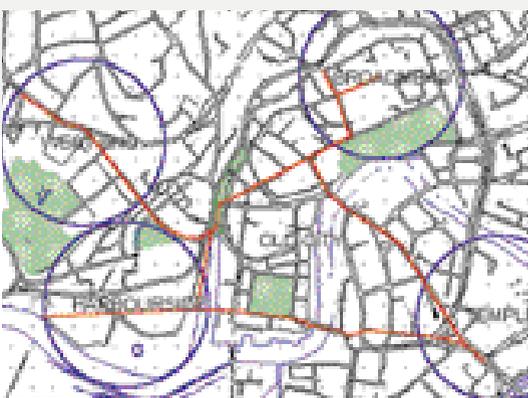
Pedestrian route

Phase one of the initiative focuses on the 'main pedestrian route'. Ninety per cent of Bristol's major destinations and points of arrival are within 100m of this route, and all are within 250m. Creating a fully accessible network, the route will provide the basis for further mobility improvements in future.

The sign structures combine highly durable stainless steel, vitreous enamel and polyester powdercoat finishes. They are designed to provide a robust and distinctive feel, as lasting as the materials used for construction.
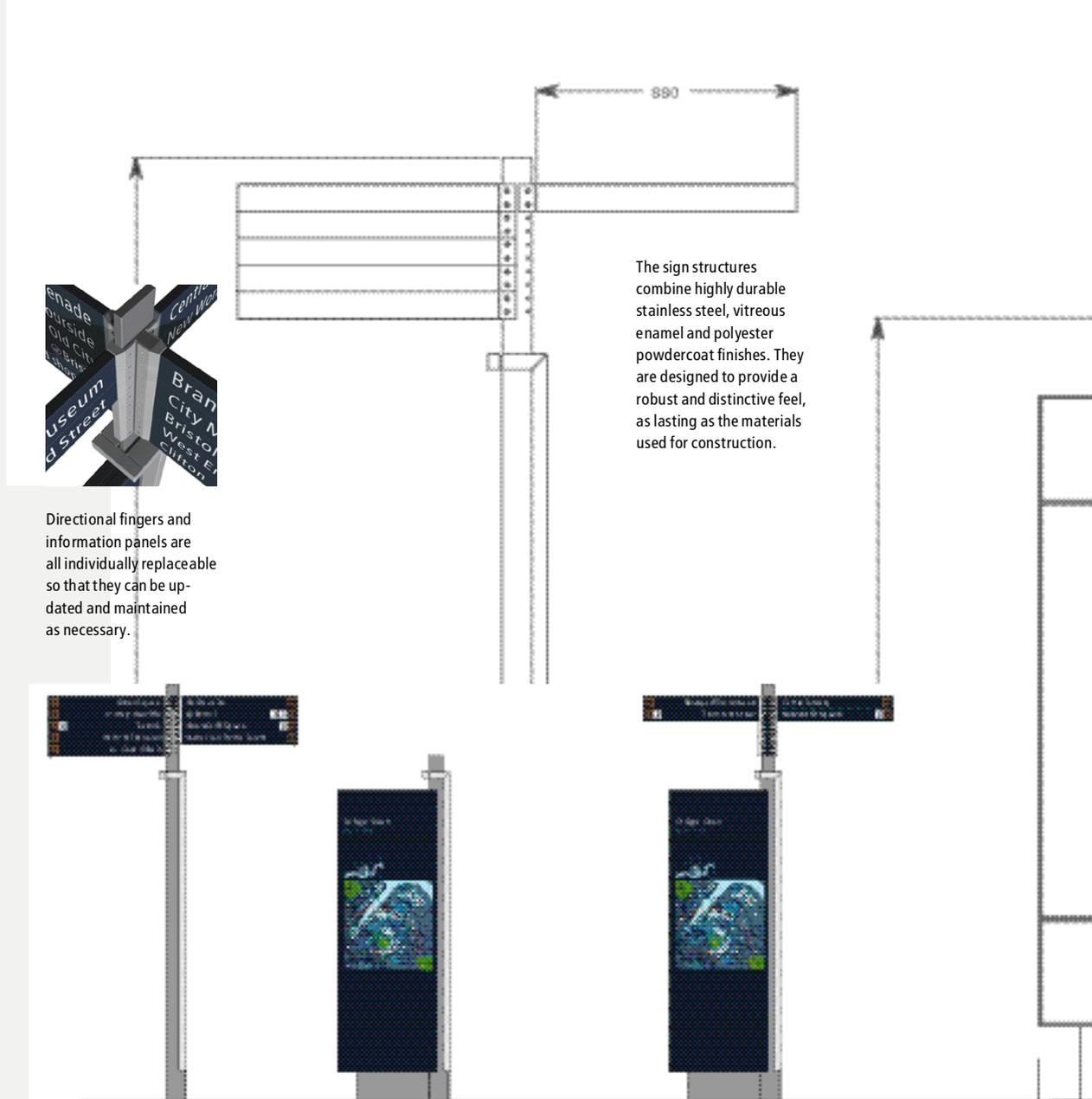
Directional fingers and information panels are all individually replaceable so that they can be up-dated and maintained as necessary.

The visual language of the street furniture is clear, clean and contemporary. The signage structures are strong and robust, and are designed to be sensitive to their environment yet always clearly visible.

'It used to be time consuming walking home from the station, but the new road layout means soon it'll be much quicker.'

'At the moment all the useful signs seem to be really scruffy looking, covered in graffiti so that you can't read them properly.'

Information planning

Careful planning, detailed analysis of pedestrian flow patterns, and observation from different user's points of view have been carried out to ensure that signs deliver the information people need, when and where they need it.

Night vision
Low-energy, low-maintenance LED technology is used to illuminate signs with a blue strip so that they become 'beacons' for navigation at night.

The base detail provides a clean floor finish, prevents water become trapped in corners, and accommodates slopes.
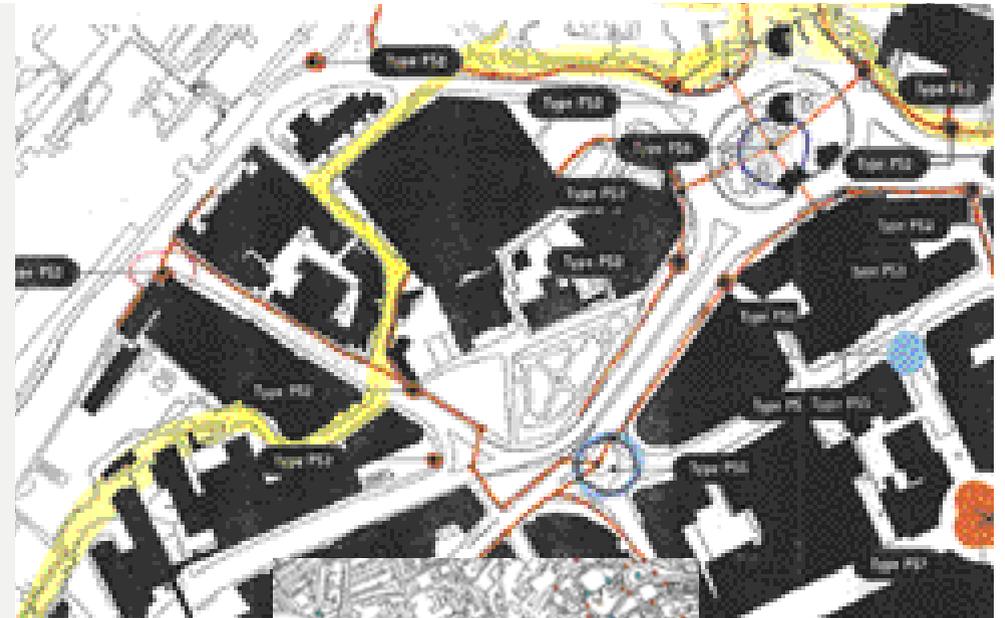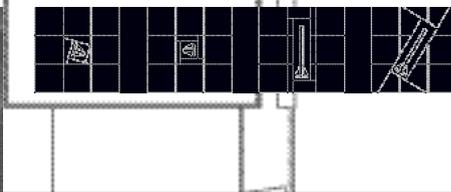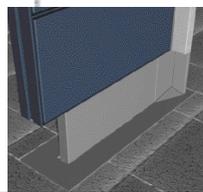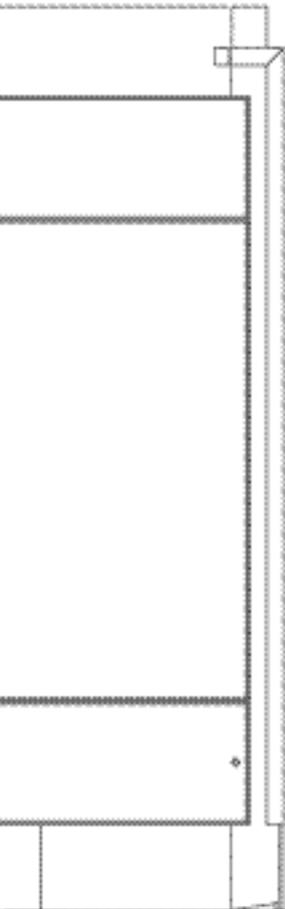
Information implementation
Computer planning software has been used to devise a network of signs providing varying levels of information. As a result, the total number of street signs in Bristol will be significantly reduced.
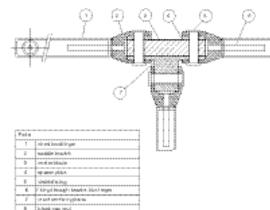
'Because I was fed up of waiting for buses I started to walk to work. Now I always try to walk somewhere if I can.'

'My grandad can't see the signs very well, so sometimes I read them out for him.'

'When you have kids who need the toilet, you don't want to have to figure out what the symbol is!'

Information design
To reassure people, make them feel safe and guide them in the most effective way, information provision must consider their needs at every point.

Studies suggest that we recall information that is relevant to us, not when it is in long lists or cross-referenced.

Icons
To communicate clearly with all users, the system utilises only commonly used and internationally recognised icons to combine with messages.

Bristol Transit icons

An example of sign information reproduced at actual size

Typeface
The 'Transit' typeface was chosen for its modern and confident character. It is a highly flexible family of type, therefore can be used in many applications, from road and pedestrian signs to timetables, maps or brochures.

Legibility and useability
With simple and clean character forms Transit is highly legible, not too condensed to be difficult to read, but capable of carrying a large number of characters per line.
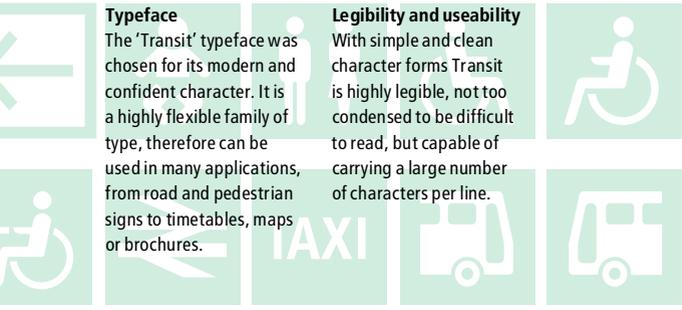
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Bristol Transit normal

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Bristol Transit bold

Typographic tests
Contrast is more important for legibility, hence light on dark letters are better. And since the human eye reads primarily by word shape, words in capital letters – which appear as rectangles – are not as legible as lower case – which at a glance are more distinguishable.

Harbourside

Harbourside

British Indus

BRITISH IND
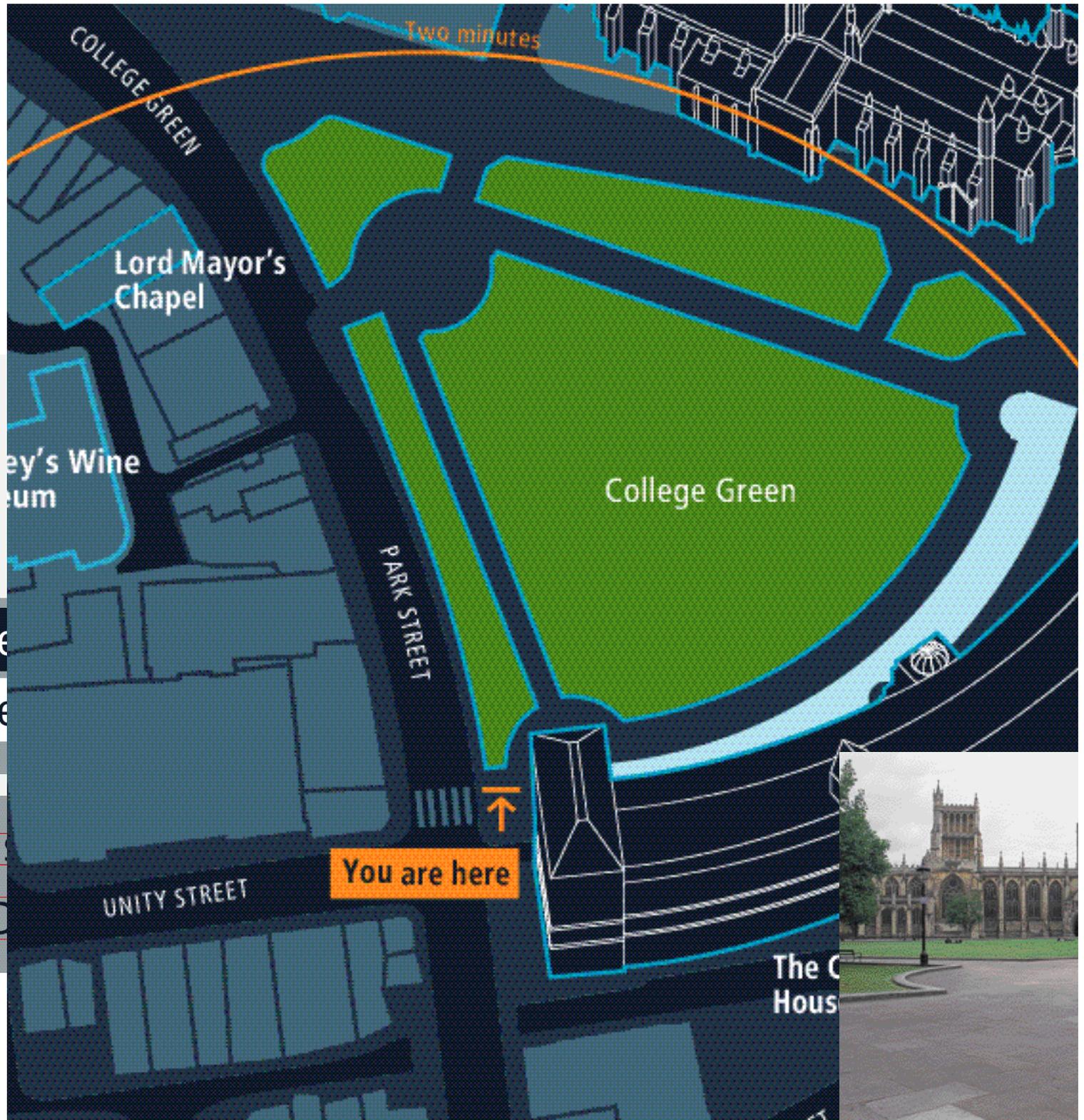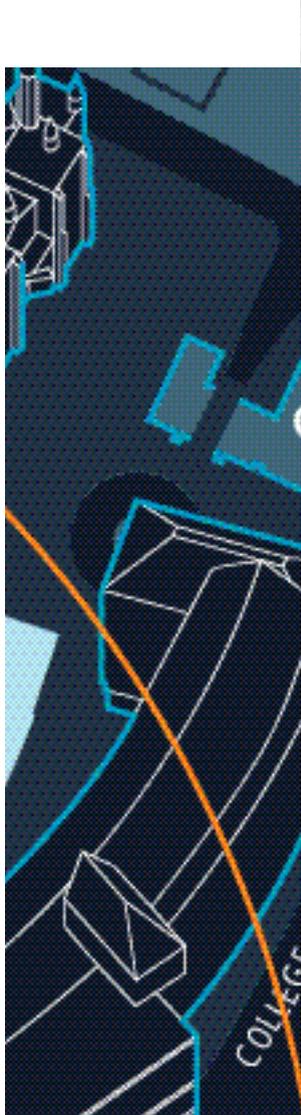
‘I'm hopeless with maps but I really like this one because it shows the city the way I see it.’

‘I think bendy buses are a good idea, as are low-polluting gas buses.’

‘I think ferries are a pleasant and stress-free way to travel… I'll certainly use them.’

‘It's nice to know where the pedestrian crossings are. If you've got kids you don't want to risk dodging the traffic.’

‘I always have to turn my map upside down to work out which way to go!’

Concept map
Giving information about the whole city centre area, and helping users to orient themselves and move between neighbourhoods.

Area map
This type of map (section shown here actual size) provides detailed information about a locality, its landmarks, green spaces and services, and indicates walking distances.

Map design
To relate directly to the pedestrian's view of the city, area maps use three-dimensional images and a 'heads-up' perspective. Letterforms throughout are clear, contemporary and easy to read.

'With the use of landmarks to establish two relative positions, the direction should be easily ascertained by the wayfinder. This direction is then confirmed through a landmark that is visible from the map's location.'
Gary L. Allen
'Wayfinding Behaviour: Cognitive Mapping and Other Spatial Processes'

Transport shelters with potential use at stops for all modes of public transport. Opportunities for inclusion of live information panels and intelligent ticketing have been considered as part of the scheme.

A key aim will be to integrate timetables and other information for use at bus stops, ferry stages, taxi stands and more.

Sign structures are designed to be durable, robust and clearly visible, while at the same time being sensitive to their surroundings.

Bristol shopping directory
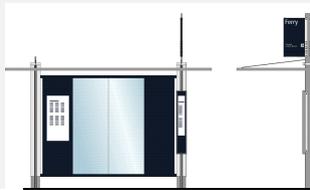
'People in Bristol really do want to cycle, and any improvements for cyclists will be very welcome.'

'I would like the bus system easier to understand and use, like having 'real time' information, so I know how long I have to wait until the next one.'

'I hear that all taxis in Bristol will be required to have wheelchair access... that will really help my aunt when she comes to stay.'
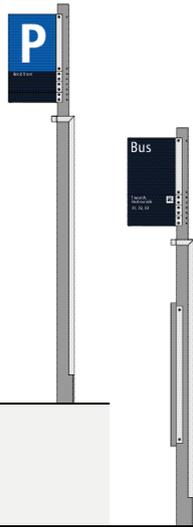
Telephone and touch-screen information kiosks designed to utilise common components from the rest of the range with the opportunity to combine with shelters to reduce clutter.
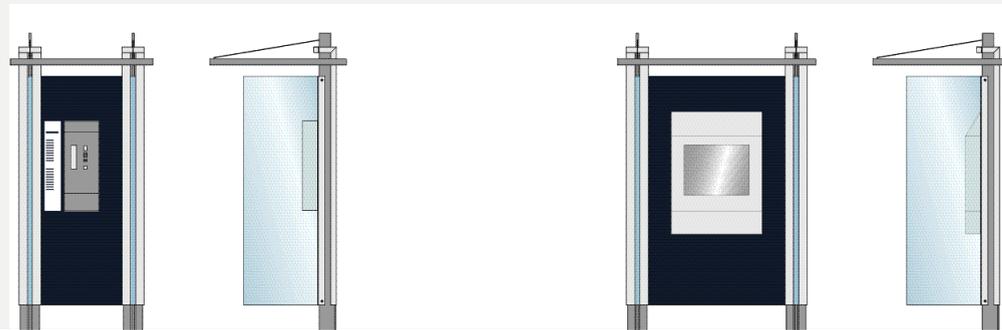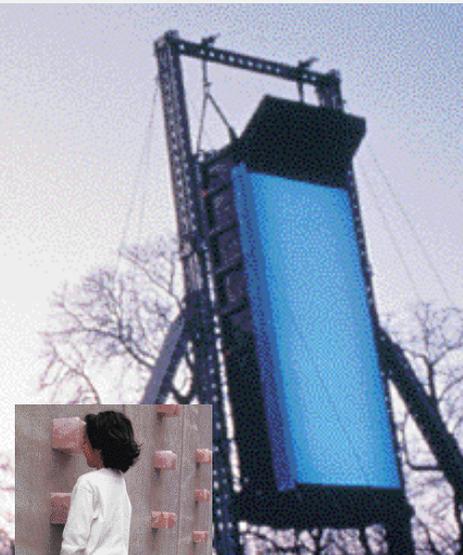
The future of Bristol Legible City is a well-connected environment. But it's more than that. It's about creating a unique and coherent identity for Bristol, one that can be expanded to encompass bus shelters, telephone kiosks, information booths and street furniture, and can express itself as lightworks, landscape or sculptures, or in the design of bus timetables. Above all it is about creating an identity that will become a nationally and internationally recognisable symbol of all that's best about Bristol.

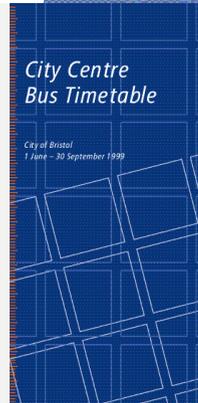People who know the city best of all rely more on specific landmarks or features to describe routes or directions. Public art therefore plays an important role in not only enriching the environment but in also giving aids to wayfinding.

These examples of art in public spaces, give an indication of the potential for future projects of this sort in Bristol.
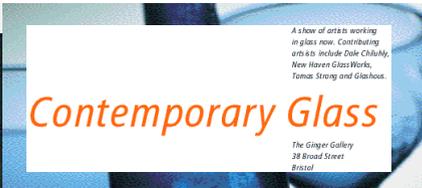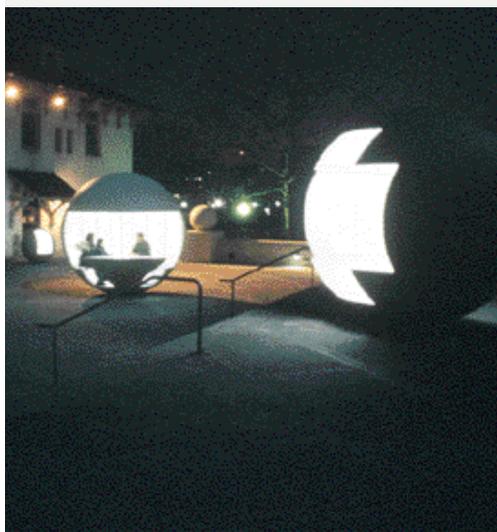
'I'm looking forward to seeing interesting things on my way into town; hopefully it will make the children curious about art.'

Telephone
Coins & Cards

City of Bristol Transportation
This ticket is valid for two hours from time of purchase or transfer to any service within the Bristol transport network.

A show of artists working in glass now. Contributing artists include Dale Chihuly, New Haven GlassWorks, Tomas Strong and Glashous.

Contemporary Glass

*The Ginger Gallery
38 Broad Street
Bristol*

Join the Bristol flower show
June 23 – June 29
Brandon Hill

All the family welcome

City Centre Bus Timetable

*City of Bristol
1 June – 30 September 1999*

City Centre walking map

*City of Bristol
Includes Temple, Harbourside, Broadmead, West End and Old City*

These imaginary examples of the way in which the identity for Bristol can develop for different needs, gives an example of how, over time, communications can be made simple and coherent for the real benefit of the visitor and resident alike.

Bristol Legible City is a blueprint for making the city a better place to live, work and visit, a means of giving the city the strong identity that is vital for its long-term prosperity.
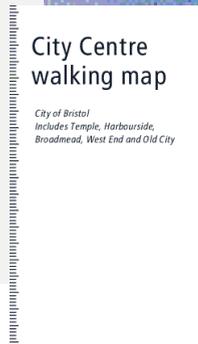
Bristol Legible City is about building an identity for Bristol that can encompass everything from bus shelters and kiosks to street furniture and sculpture, becoming a symbol of a confident and successful European city.

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Methodology
The development team
has researched into how
Bristol is perceived and
understood, using a
combination of skills and
best practice drawn from
a range of disciplines
including urban design,
social geography,
environmental psychology,
information design,
movement planning,
human factors design
and place marketing.

Desktop research has been
supplemented by extensive
site testing and interviews
with people on the streets
of Bristol to make sure the
concepts work in practice.

Copies of this text are available
in large print, Braille and on tape,
and in other languages

Please call City ID on 0117 927 7510
for more information