

11 West Gate, Town Walls and the Castle

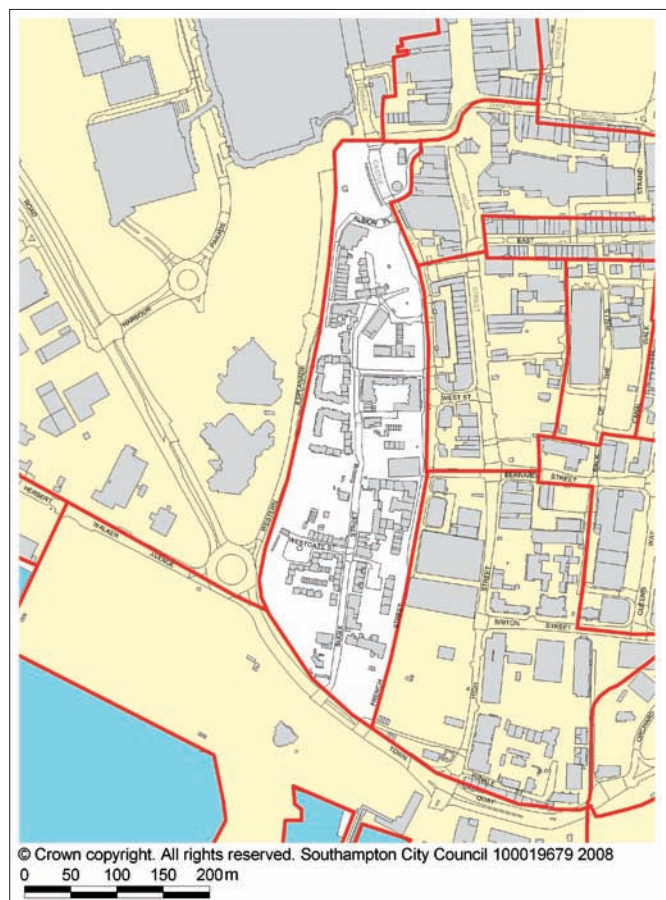
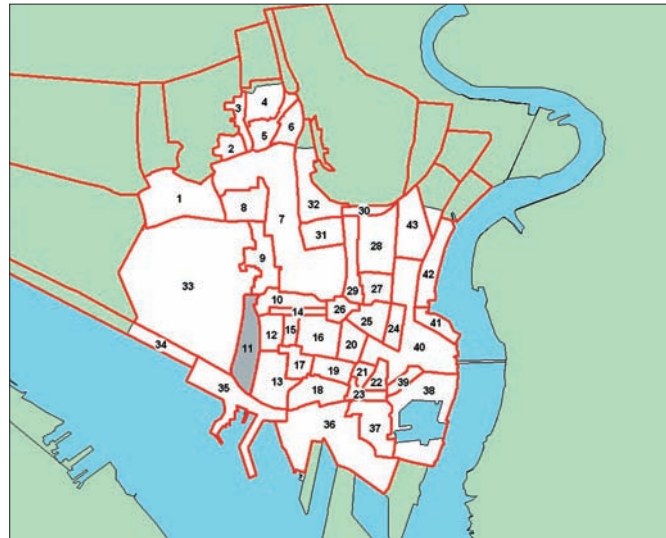
Context

This area encompasses the western half of the walled town and a large proportion of the surviving walls, plots and historic buildings. Nevertheless it was extensively redeveloped following wartime damage. Unlike CA13 to the east, there are few larger scale development sites available and thus there are few recent developments at present. CA12 on its north-eastern side contains the middle portion of the High Street and CA9 to its north, contains Bargate and the part of the remnants of the northern town walls. CA35, Mayflower Park and Town Quay on the south side covers the waterfront area. CA33 to the west represents the greatest contrast, characterised by wholly recent development on an open grain morphology.

The spine of CA11 is an elevated spur of land along the axis of Bugle Street, descending to the Town Quay. The difference of level can be appreciated when looking west from the town walls. This area of higher ground became the focus for settlement in the late Saxon period after occupation shifted from Hamwic lying on the lower ground to the east alongside the Itchen. This area formed part of one of the Hampshire boroughs listed in Domesday Book and it is possible that the then recent settlement of 65 Frenchmen in the borough led to at least the naming of the one of the main north-south streets as French Street as opposed to the High Street which was historically known as English Street. The area, adjacent to the main West Quay, had a grid of streets and lanes filled with the houses of merchants, some of whom built stone houses, many of which had vaults beneath where the main commodities traded through the port, wine and wool, were stored. The Normans built a timber castle within this area in the eleventh century which was replaced by stone structures in the following centuries. The development of a town wall to the waterfront in the fourteenth century fossilised the walls of some of the earlier quayside houses.

Grain

Generally fine grain, with narrow frontages and relatively short plots. The development of the 1970s and 1980s has generally respected this pattern whilst adopting the perimeter Block layouts in the centre and west of the area. The major disruption in this pattern is the slab block and associated blank and open frontages between Castle Way and lower Bugle Street. The park and gardens on the south-west corner also represents an open contrast to the fine grain. The grain has been totally disrupted with the construction of car parks and service yards, north of the castle walls and south of the north-west corner of the Town Walls. Most buildings conform to the back edge of the pavement pattern, except some 1950s – 1960s redevelopment.



Scale

Generally appropriate to an historic city; between three and four storeys of modest storey heights; some later infill is of two storeys. Pitched roofs generally parallel to the street; parapets in many cases. Street sections reflect the predominantly enclosed character of the area (approx 1 : 1.8 : 1). St Michaels Square and the triangular Castle Square are pleasant exceptions to this pattern, providing contrasting spaces of human scale.

The twelve storey slab block (Castle House) breaks the vertical and horizontal scale, and, whilst it is of some note historically, it has a negative landmark effect in the streetscene. The major positive landmark is the spire of St Michaels Church, which is glimpsed from a number of vantage points in the city.

Uses

Predominantly residential with some sheltered housing. There is very little retail; some small scale businesses and offices of charities. Some cultural uses such as the Maritime Museum and Tudor House Museum. The two churches and their associated properties also influence the uses of the area.

Public Realm

This area contains more remnant traditional paving than the whole of the city centre, especially in Bugle Street, St Michaels Square and the pathways just west of Bugle Street. The paving is generally of Purbeck Stone, the nearest source, and has probably been recovered and re-laid in the post-war period. The areas of soft landscaping are on the south-western end of the Town Walls (including a magnificent specimen evergreen tree) and the less successfully designed open space on the eastern side of the Maritime Museum.

Connectivity

This is particularly good, due to the dense network of medieval streets and lanes, some of which puncture the walls, which have survived the wartime destruction and post-war reconstruction. The reinstatement of the former Brewhouse Lane east of the Medieval Merchant's House (within CA13) is essential to maintain east – west connectivity, following the closure of the extension to Briton Street.

Views

There is a strategic view from the south-west corner of the walls looking towards the waterfront. This is the only place where the visitor can gain any sense of what it was like to look from the historic walls of the city out to the water. The foreground is now taken up with Mayflower Park and the intersection of West Quay Road and Town Quay.

Further views from the wall can be had along its length up to the north-west corner of the town. However, views



- 01** Important view south along Bugle Street to the waterfront
- 02** The Town Walls seen from the Western Esplanade
- 03** New development sympathetic to the scale of the old town

westwards may be radically altered by the imminent arrival of West Quay III which will transform the area adjacent to the walls but largely obscure long views to the waterfront.

There is an important view looking south along Bugle Street which picks up on the waterfront activity and further views of the waterfront from the mound adjacent to the Maritime Museum.

Building types

Mainly smaller scale high density residential buildings with street access. Some individual houses survive but these are limited. Multi-storey flats (Castle House). Limited small scale commercial properties, some pubs, two churches.

Architectural qualities

There is an important survival of medieval timber-framed buildings, some much restored, and the former fourteenth century Wool House, now the Maritime Museum. St Michaels Church with its magnificent landmark spire has been much restored internally, but has greater significance within the townscape. Some good eighteenth century town houses, usually individually, mainly along Bugle Street, although also a somewhat altered terrace on the western walls.

St Joseph's Catholic Church on Bugle Street, and inventive facade to a Church Hall further south. A good late Victorian Warehouse is found on French Street, with robust detailing and an attractive faintly Art Nouveau pub on the east side of Bugle Street. The eclectic cluster forming Castle Square is a positive asset, including the early twentieth century commercial block on the south east and the 'Tudorbethan' pub on the west. The neo-classic court building is a finely proportioned and massed composition on a tight site. Some early 1970s infill at the southern end of Bugle Street is sympathetic and understated, with references to the historic built form. However, the 1980s residential development which respects the grain has less architectural merit.

Heritage Assets

The area is considered to possess a high degree of evidential value due to its national importance in respect of the archaeological remains of the late Saxon and medieval town. The area also includes evidence for Bronze and Iron Age occupation. The area lies within a Local Area of Archaeological Importance to reflect this potential to yield highly significant evidence for past activity in the area.

The area is rich in buildings, structures and sites that are Scheduled or listed as being of national importance and whose settings should influence all development decisions in the area and adjacent areas. The historic value of the walls is both illustrative in terms of their



04 View to the Spire of St Michaels from Western Esplanade

survival and quality and associative in as much as so much of Southampton's historic association lies in the role of the medieval defences which historically to the west and south overlooked its quay and the associated port trading wealth this created through time. They have not only defined the way the city has developed but have immense importance in terms of linking Southampton to its past. In this character area they are at their most visible and intact and their setting, especially on the west and north of the area is neutral at best, and poor in places. The same is true of the castle walls, north side, which are of equal historical value.

The medieval timber-framed buildings are a tiny survival of pre-war Southampton and their importance in the story of Southampton and their early date justify their Grade I and II* status. These houses have illustrative value in terms of their rarity and what they can tell us about the status of medieval Southampton and aesthetic value in terms of their materials, techniques and plan. In addition to the medieval survivals, the architecture represented up to 1940, whether listed or not, should be considered as having considerable historical and aesthetic value. These buildings reflect a series of different architectural periods but conform to the medieval street plan. The designation of the Old Town Conservation Area, which covers virtually the whole of CA11 supports the heritage significance and cultural importance of this area despite some modern indifferent development, in and adjacent to the conservation area which has had an overbearing affect on the character of the Old Town.

There are a significant number of medieval vaults surviving in this character area. The excavated and exposed vaults are scheduled monuments and some are publicly accessible though they are locked behind poorly designed railings and gates. The cultural, illustrative and aesthetic values of these vaults are compromised by the

current management and presentation of these heritage assets. Their significance as survivals of medieval Southampton is under-appreciated and they are often unrecognized.

Materials

Stone (mainly medieval) but some for dressings. Timber frame with plaster infill, red brick (mainly) some buff brick and painted brick, some render. Mostly clay tile on traditional roofs. Modern materials varied.

Condition

This area is generally in good condition.

Ownership

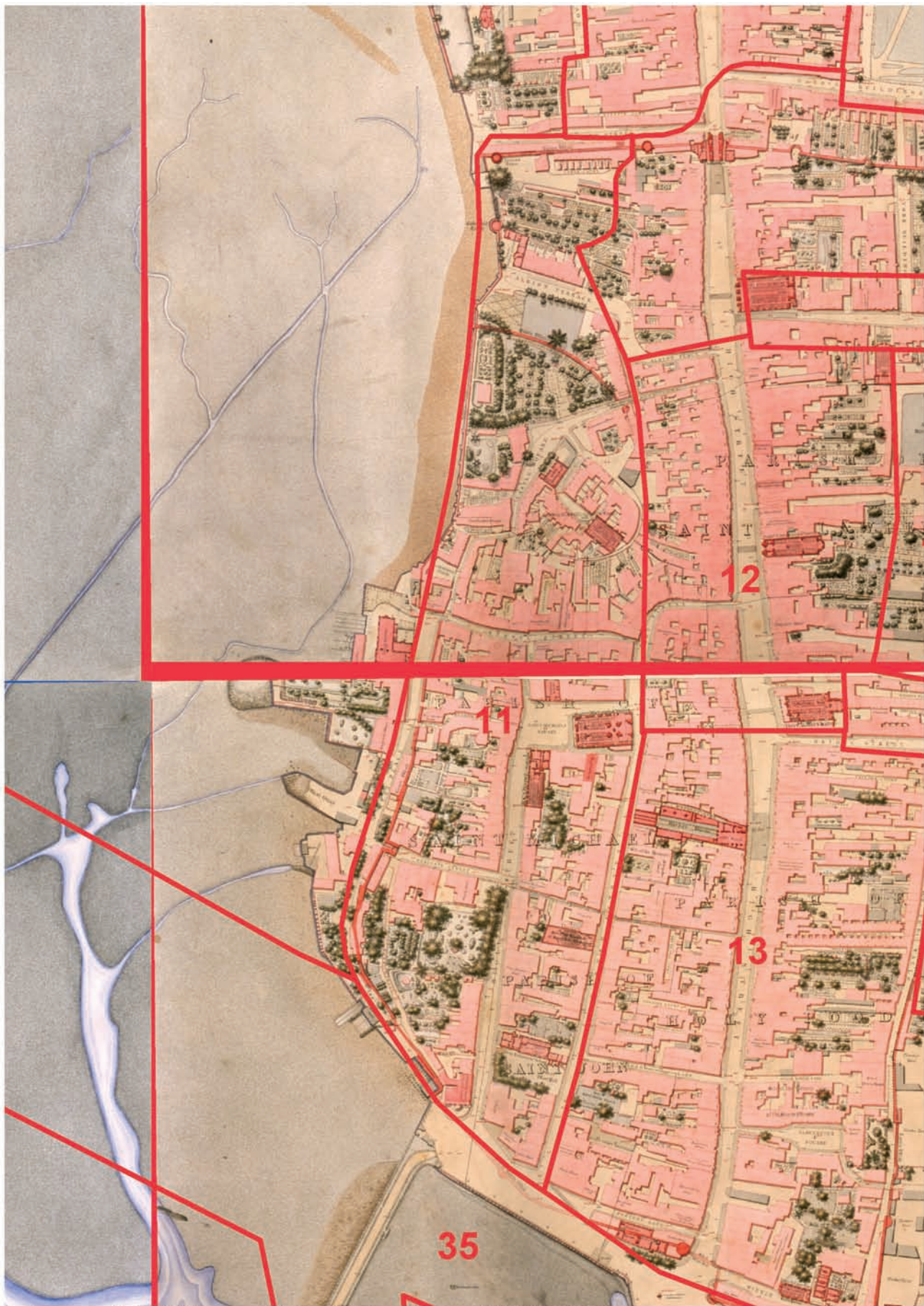
Housing Associations and Local Authority with some individual freehold and leasehold ownership.

Interventions

- The area between Castle Walls and the north-western Walls urgently requires consideration regarding the re-creation of street frontages, sensitive and intimate placemaking near the walls and enclosed parking areas where necessary.
- Where redevelopment of some 1950s blocks becomes necessary, the reinstatement of frontage built form is required.
- Castle Square could become a shared surface space.
- It is recommended that more buildings are added to those already on the Local List.
- Every effort should be made to retain and protect from damage the remnant traditional paving found in a number of streets and lanes in this character area.

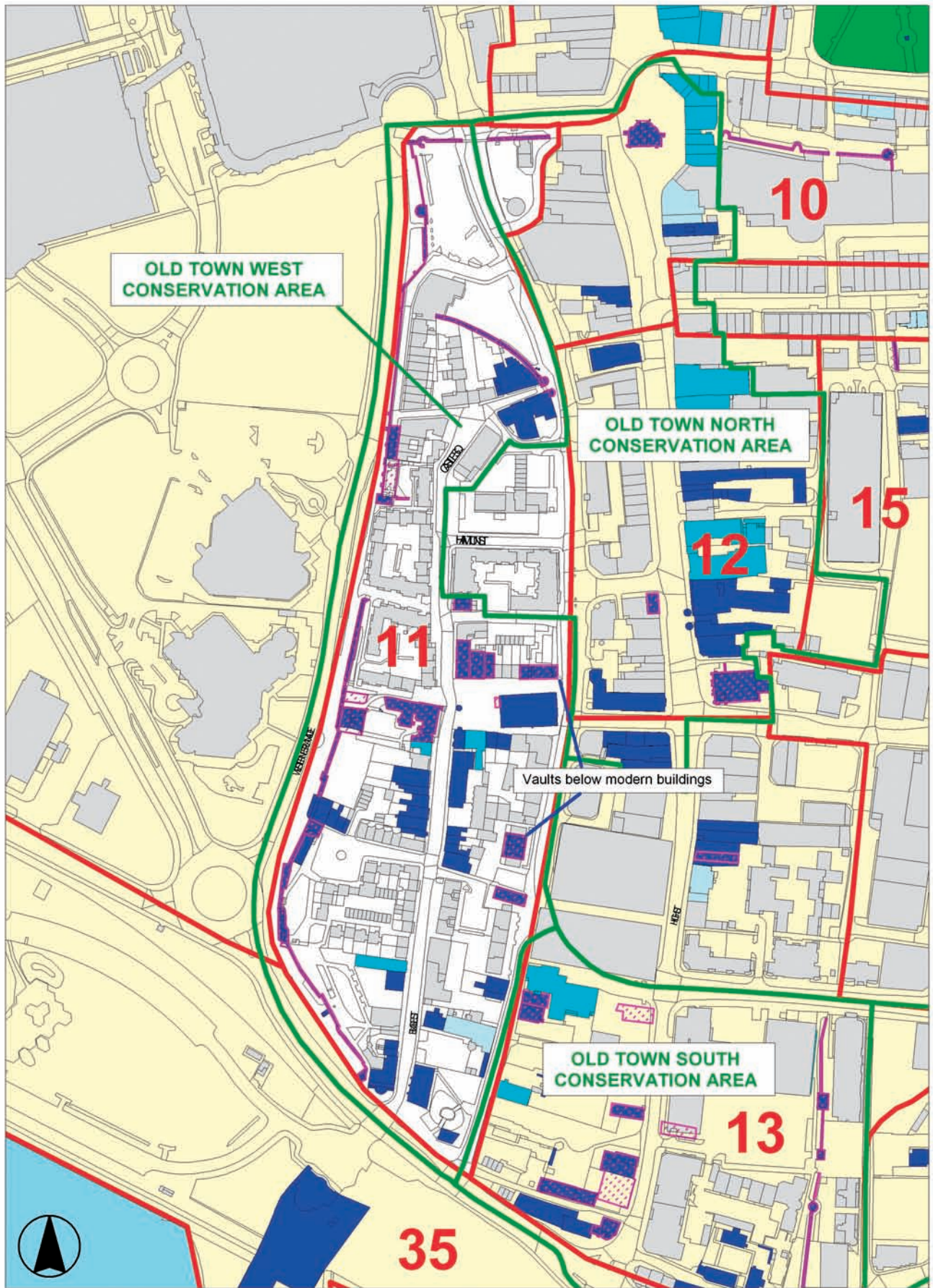
Design Principles

- To be developed in detail – with reference to the Old Town Development Strategy [2004], where appropriate.

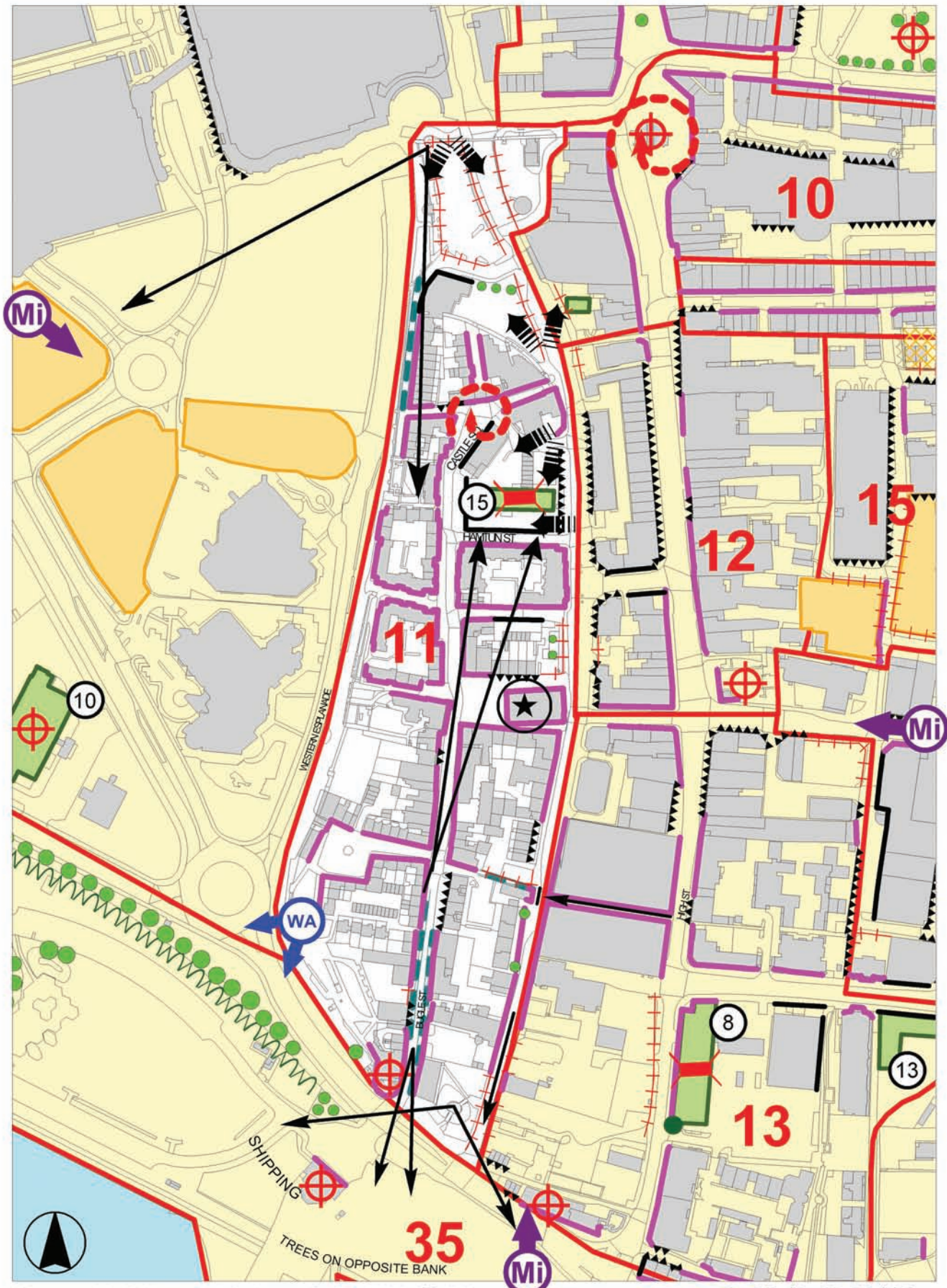


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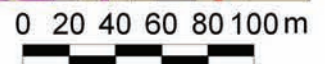




Heritage Assets



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Townscape

