

2 ASPIRATIONS

2.1 CONTEXT

Cities throughout the world are currently experiencing a period of considerable change in their roles and uncertainty about their future. This is affecting how they are conceptualised, planned and managed.

As the world population continues to expand dramatically, over 50% of people are now living in urban locations. The structure and identity of cities and towns therefore takes on an ever increasing significance in the delivery of long term sustainable development. In particular:

- In a global economic environment, competition is intense and the role of the nation state diminishing as trading blocks (such as the EU and NAFTA) become more significant.
- We are moving into an information age, where higher value economic activity is based around the knowledge economy, in particular the skills and embedded knowledge of citizens.
- As cities have lost some of their place-based industrial and service roles they are having to find new functions compatible with the knowledge age.
- The ever expanding development of technology (particularly in communications) is breaking down time and distance constraints in the business world. However, this is giving a new significance to the competitive role of place, as knowledge workers, tourists, etc. can choose to go anywhere.



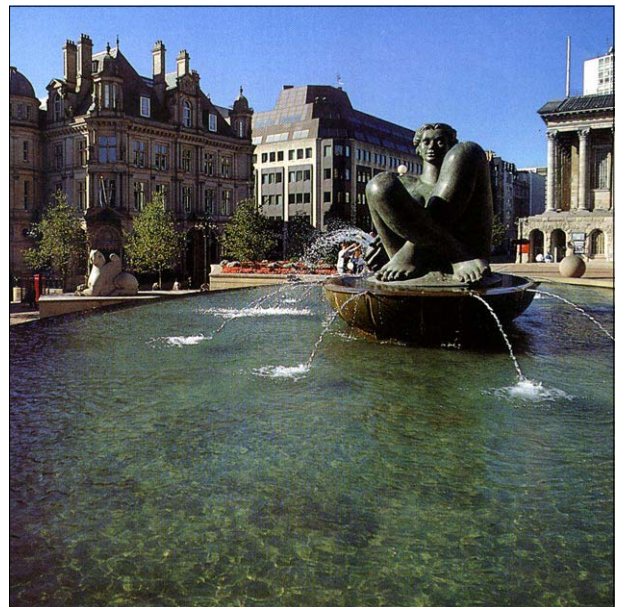
Marine inspired architecture providing a distinctive landmark on the waterfront
Zuiderterras Cafe, Antwerp

The success of cities, but particularly their centres, will therefore depend heavily in the future on their ability to respond and adapt to challenges of change that will face us over the next 20-30 years.

Current practice and theory describes what we know today about some of the challenges. The following set of themes identifies some of these challenges, including those referred to in the final report of the Urban Task Force (Towards an Urban Renaissance) and its key proposals for urban regeneration. Effectively they all describe a future where cities must address change by looking to the future in a positive way and adopting multiple roles. They are

- Creating places to work
- Creating places to live
- Getting there and moving around
- Creating culture and leisure
- Controlling technology
- Ensuring adaptable buildings and spaces

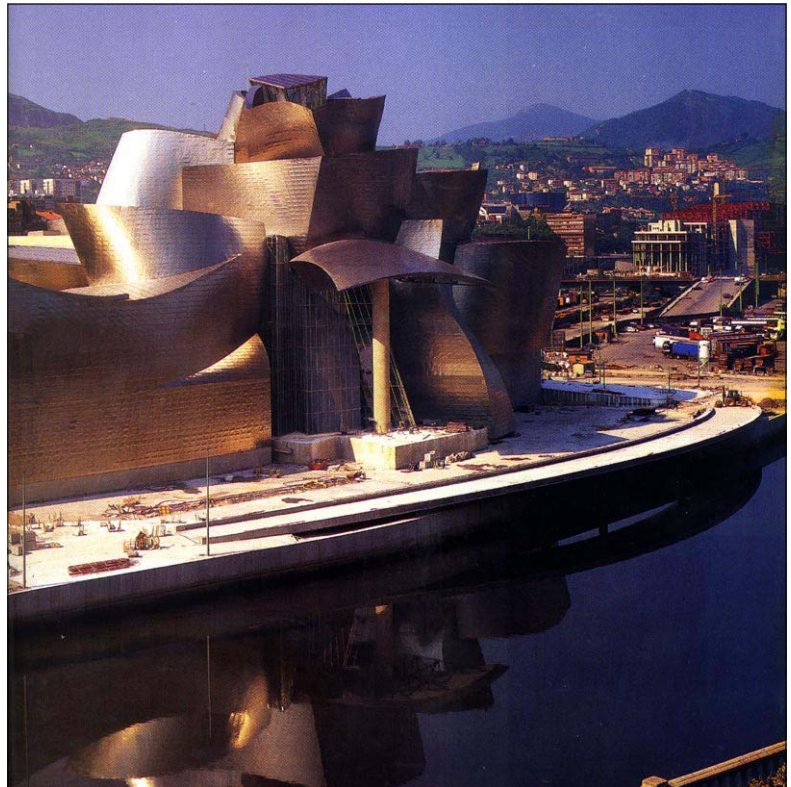
All of these are relevant in Southampton and influence the development of the City Centre Urban Design Strategy.



New public squares leading urban regeneration strategy
Victoria Civic Square, Birmingham



*Introducing new urban spaces into existing urban form
Exchange Square, Manchester City Centre*



*Iconographic architecture of international stature
Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao*



*Popular waterfront destination with a strong mix of leisure uses
Nyhavn, Copenhagen*

2.2 THE ROLE OF URBAN DESIGN

Reconfiguring the built form and social life of cities is not straightforward. Many previous attempts at re-designing whole city districts have failed because of inadequate understanding of the relationships between human activity, built form and the image of place. Much rational planning and modernist architecture around the middle part of the century tended to destroy the complex focus of life and activity in many centres. Physical and social links to the past were broken; there was planned dispersal from the cities to new towns and the spread of suburbia; segregated zoning of activity; the spread of 'left-over' or meaningless public space – 'prairie planning'.

This segregated and systematic approach has not brought us the towns centres or neighbourhoods we had hoped. The combination of the development and planning systems has not provided the joined up sense of place in many areas. Southampton has suffered from this as much as others.

Urban design is an important remedy for these place based challenges because it seeks to understand, guide and shape the form of the city from the strategic to the street level, yet it is not focused on architecture per se. It is an approach to integrating elements and disciplines to achieve city quality. It now influences the management, development and the promotion of many of our urban centres. This is because:

- At a national (even international) level it can be part of a re-branding of a city - re-establishing a sense of confidence and quality.
- At a regional level it can support a range of business, leisure, retail and tourism initiatives, enhancing economic competitiveness.
- At a local level it can stimulate new investment by retailers, hotels, restaurants, developers, house builders, etc.
- Over the long term, it acts as a basis for sustained investment and development, reinforcing spatial priorities and providing qualitative standards and guidance.
- Finally, but perhaps over-ridingly, it provides the basis for establishing a strong sense of place.

2.3 INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Given that urban design has become such a widely used tool in city re-branding and restructuring, it is only appropriate that Southampton seeks to emulate best practice. Reviews of various towns and cities, particularly across Europe, indicate that the leading edge cities have key a range of ingredients. There is no one-off quick fix solution to the complex challenge of city form. Rather it is to be achieved across a broad front.

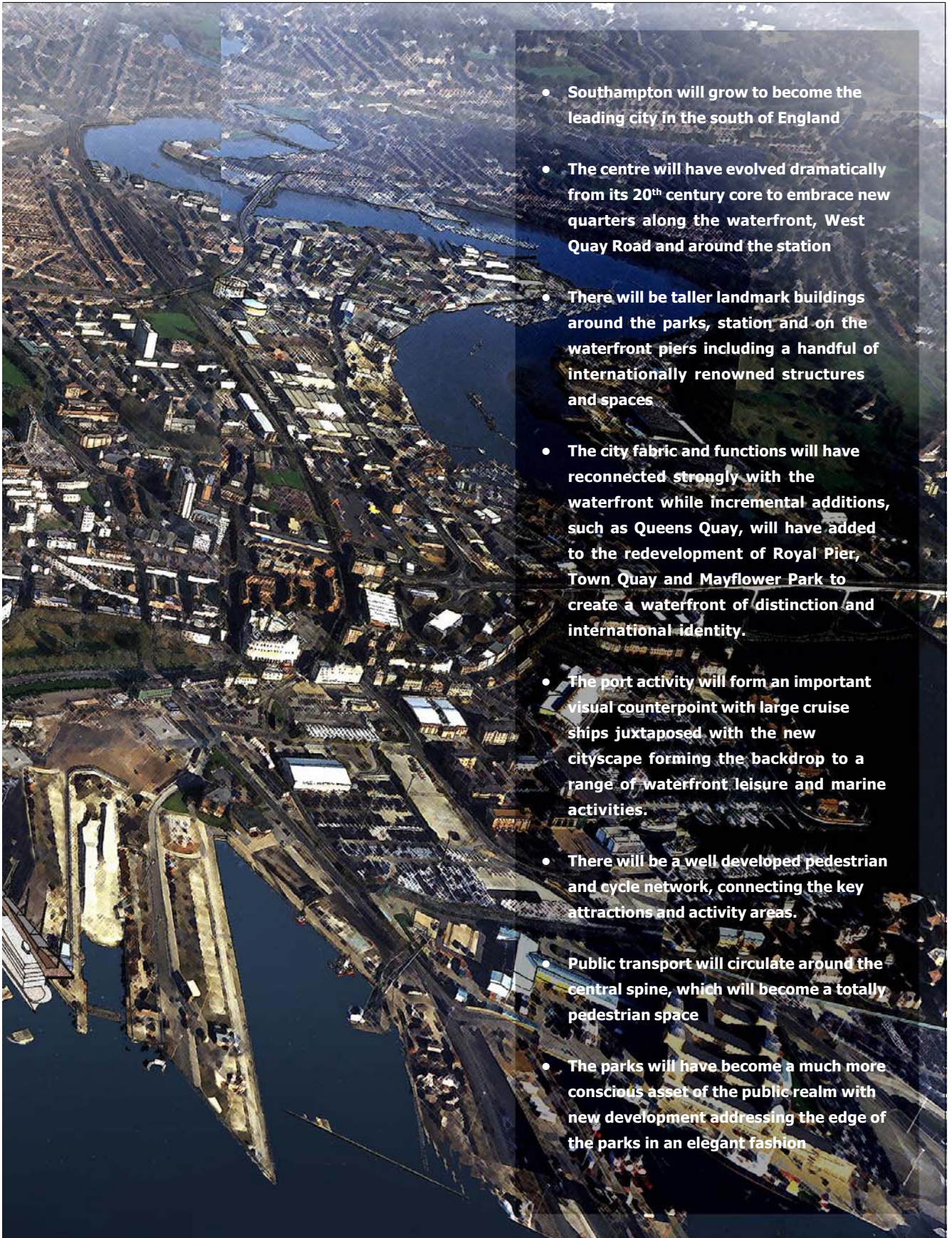
These best practice ingredients are:

- a belief in the importance of design and sense of place, from both the public authorities and the wider business and residential community
- mechanisms and policies for promoting good design, including strategies, competitions, exhibition centres, master plans and guidance documents
- leading edge projects, both in area based built form, iconographic buildings and high quality people spaces
- places which attract a broad cross section of people for different reasons, whether retrofitted ones such as Copenhagen's Nyhavn or Bilbao's new Guggenheim
- an area or neighbourhood based approach geared to building up the component parts of the city in an integrated manner
- the linking up of keynote projects and improvements across the city
- progressive thinking on the shifting relationship between vehicle transport and pedestrian realm
- debate and dialogue about design and city quality issues
- gradually rising aspirations of the community and client sectors
- visible and tangible change, accompanied by marketing and promotion of the place

These effectively become the criteria by which Southampton must gauge itself. If, through the projects and actions arising from this Urban Design Strategy, it can be demonstrated that progress is being made across most of these fronts, the city will justifiably be able to claim that it is of international quality in urban design. The broad aspirational vision for the city is set out below.

A LONG TERM VISION FOR SOUTHAMPTON

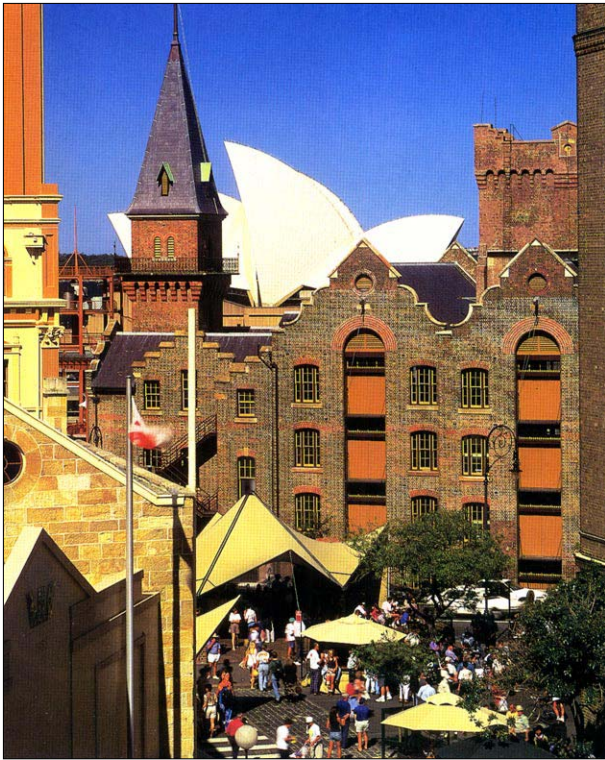




- Southampton will grow to become the leading city in the south of England
- The centre will have evolved dramatically from its 20th century core to embrace new quarters along the waterfront, West Quay Road and around the station
- There will be taller landmark buildings around the parks, station and on the waterfront piers including a handful of internationally renowned structures and spaces
- The city fabric and functions will have reconnected strongly with the waterfront while incremental additions, such as Queens Quay, will have added to the redevelopment of Royal Pier, Town Quay and Mayflower Park to create a waterfront of distinction and international identity.
- The port activity will form an important visual counterpoint with large cruise ships juxtaposed with the new cityscape forming the backdrop to a range of waterfront leisure and marine activities.
- There will be a well developed pedestrian and cycle network, connecting the key attractions and activity areas.
- Public transport will circulate around the central spine, which will become a totally pedestrian space
- The parks will have become a much more conscious asset of the public realm with new development addressing the edge of the parks in an elegant fashion

2.4 THE STRATEGIC VISION

Over the next 20-50 years Southampton will grow to become the leading city in the south of England - with a distinctly separate city centre profile from other competing centres in the south east and south coast. It will be very much an intelligent city - built on a strongly networked community which learns from and adopts good practice in contemporary urban living. It will be built upon a strong economic base which has embraced the innovative and growing sectors of the national and international economy. It will be continually renewing its economy to provide for a wide range of enterprises of all sizes, ensuring sustainable prosperity for a wide cross section of the community.



*Weekend street market brings additional activity to public spaces
The Rocks, Sydney*

Physically, the centre will have evolved dramatically in a series of steps to provide contemporary infrastructure and attract a range businesses and visitors because of its quality and identity. It will cater for a more diverse - yet sustainable - mix of economic uses and social activities. This will involve expanding its current roles to provide for a broader range of shopping, new modes of contemporary workspace, civic and community facilities, city centre living, tourism and leisure uses.

Fundamentally, the centre will transform itself physically to become a strong, visually stimulating, memorable place with distinctive new buildings, active streets and dynamic public spaces.

Components of the vision:

City centre of scale and distinction

Expansion - the city centre will have grown outwards from its 20th century core to embrace new quarters along the waterfront, Western Avenue and around the station

Scale & Tall buildings : the central area will be of a more urban scale with 4-6 storeys the norm across much of the area. In key locations in the centre, there will be taller landmark buildings (notably around the town parks, station and at the waterfront) which will give it a distinctive, easily recognisable skyline.



*Icon cultural buildings providing a destination for visitors
Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art*

Iconographic buildings and spaces : central Southampton will have a handful of internationally renowned structures and spaces. This will include a tall building with viewing tower on the waterfront and an innovatively designed Southampton Centre visitor attraction.

Maritime city

The city fabric and functions will have reconnected strongly with the waterfront as the nature and value of maritime activity adjusts. The city will still have an important marine and port functions.

Incrementally, additions such as Queens Quay will have added to the redevelopment of Royal Pier, Town Quay and Mayflower Park to create a waterfront of distinction and international identity.



Civic events and celebrations staged on prime waterfront locations River Tyne and Newcastle waterfront

The port activity will form an important visual counterpoint to the new architecture and public realm of the waterfront. Large cruise ships docking at a Cruise Liner Terminal will be juxtaposed with the new cityscape and from the backdrop to a range of waterfront leisure and marine activities.

Accessible city

The new city centre will have excellent access by all modes, particularly new modes of public transport. Interchange between private transport and public will be simple and comfortable.

Information on travel, connections, parking and city centre events will be available electronically at many sites across the centre and at home as a virtual centre on broadband receivers.

Cross city traffic will be by a limited number of strongly designed boulevards. There will be a series of mid town transit loops connecting the higher density neighbourhoods.

Walkable city

There will be a well developed pedestrian and cycle network, connecting the key attractions and activity areas. There will be a series of new, prestigious public squares at the Central Station, Guildhall, Bargate, Holyrood Church, West Quay Phase 3, Queens Park and the Waterfront making the city a truly walkable European city.

Public transport will circulate around the central spine, which will become a totally pedestrian space, along with a number of other adjoining streets, some of which will be 'home zones'. It will be possible to walk comfortably from the station and Civic Centre to the waterfront.

The parks will have become a much more conscious asset of the public realm with new development addressing the edge of the parks in an elegant fashion

The Esplanade Park link through to Mayflower Park will be a key new multi use public realm and include a key event/activity space.

Quality of Life Centre for all

The centre will be attractive to - and safely used - by all ages and social groups at all times of the day, evening and weekend. This will include the business sector, residents and visitors. Safety and vitality will be distinguishing characteristics.

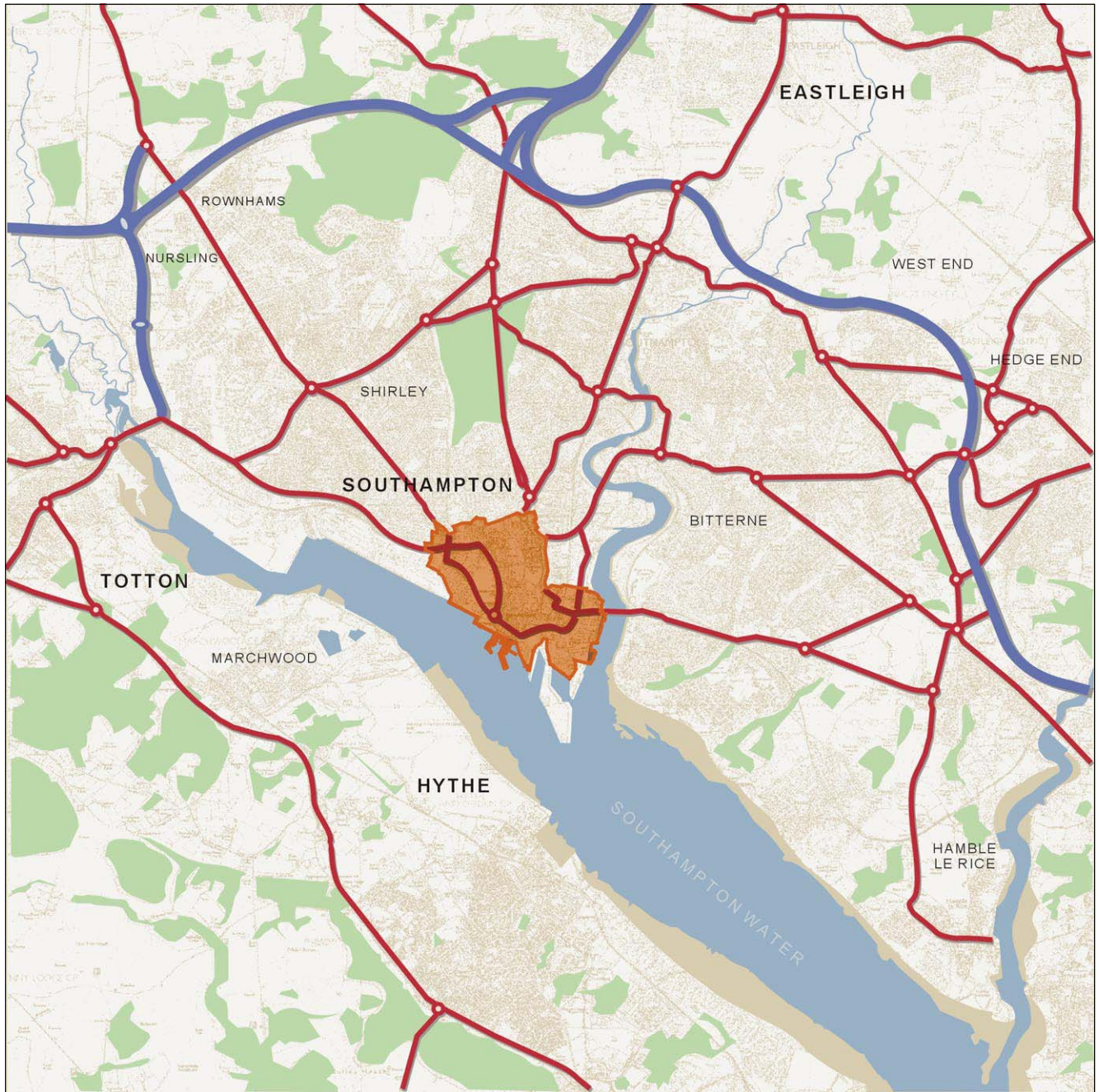
This vitality will be supported by optimising a progressively updated and highly integrated, user- friendly public transport system. This will be complemented by a well-managed private car access and parking regime and good practice models for pedestrian and cycle access.

There will be an increased density and intensity, particularly in areas given over to residential use. This will be supported by strong base of mixed use activities, evening and cultural economy. Prominent residential neighbourhoods will exist not only to the east and within Old Town, but along the waterfront and across the centre.

The centre will be cleaner, greener, with better air quality, a healthier population and an increased propensity to see the centre as a positive social and cultural - as well as economic - asset.

The external image of Southampton will be of a progressive, vibrant contemporary city - with a good balance between competitive business, new townscape investment supported by a strong community and well managed environmental assets. It will be held up as a model urban centre in European terms.

THE CONTEXT OF SOUTHAMPTON'S CITY CENTRE



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