

20 Duke Street, Richmond Street and College Street

Context

A flat area bounded by Terminus Terrace to the east, Bernard Street to the south, Marsh Lane to the north and Threefield Lane to the west. CA 40: Crosshouse, Central Bridge and Melbourne Street lies on its eastern edge; CA16, the Holyrood Estate to the west; CA19, the more historic Oxford Street area to the south and CA25: Maryfield and Marsh Lane environs to the north.

Marsh Lane is a road of at least late medieval origin and there is some archaeological evidence of medieval activity in the area but most of the area was agricultural land until the nineteenth century. By 1846 this area lay on the fringes of the expanding urban area of Southampton with the western frontage predominantly experiencing housing development. To the rear there were outbuildings but most of the central part of the block was undeveloped. At the southern end of the block there was a house set in well-wooded grounds. By 1877 the area was crossed by a number of new streets and was fully developed with terraced housing. These late nineteenth century streets (Charles Street, Duke Street, Richmond Street and College Street) survive but the built form is almost wholly late twentieth century.

Grain

Generally coarse grain. Large floorplate buildings sometimes conforming to street alignments and in other cases not. Large areas of poorly defined or contained spaces, mainly taken up by car parking. High density area due to high rise buildings.

Scale

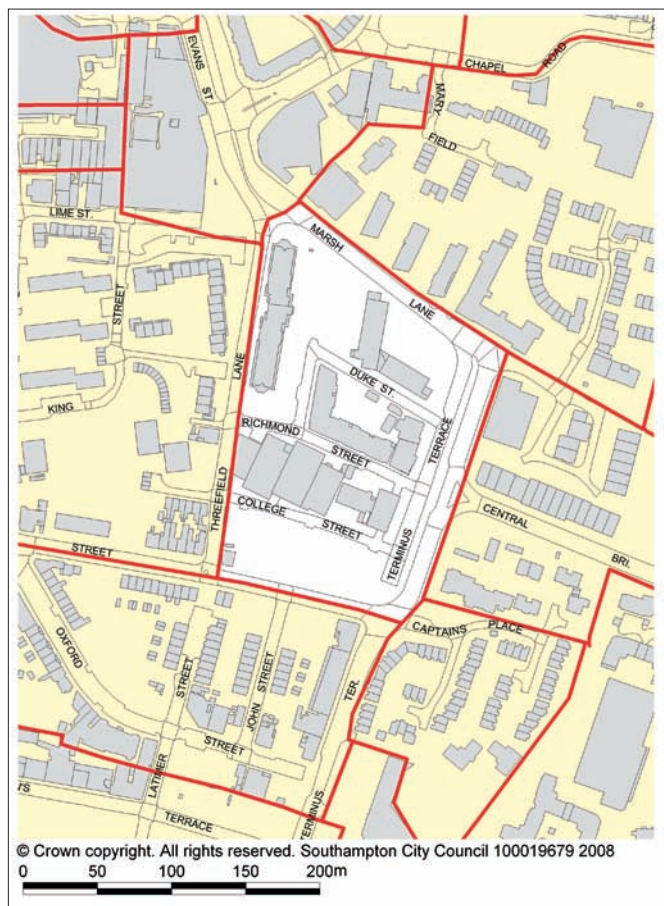
Most buildings medium to high rise, mainly ten to twelve storeys with a seventeen storey landmark block (Mercury Point) which can be seen from a number of important view points, most notably Itchen Bridge and Central Bridge Road. This block is fairly well massed with a central tower and subservient wings. Otherwise the built form is in the nature of slab blocks.

Uses

Predominantly commercial office space and residential; minimal retail at street level. There is a low level of vitality, although there is car park activity at morning and evening. There appear to be a number of small scale enterprises under the arches of Terminus Terrace.

Public Realm

The public realm in this area does not encourage pedestrian movement. There is a general lack of good hard and soft landscaping. Terminus Terrace provides the only coherent public realm, with wide pavements and a pedestrian space at the southern end. The line of lime trees gives some softness and formality (a single poorly



installed bench is inadequate street furniture). Spaces outside the tower blocks are semi-private with sparse token planting. Otherwise most space is in the ownership of the commercial blocks. There are dead frontages along most of the streets within the character area with the wall of the car park on the south and south-east edge of the area exacerbating the feeling of a lack of permeability or conscious aim to improve the public realm in this character area.

Connectivity

There is only effective connectivity on the north, east and south edges. Otherwise through routes and ownership are unclear.

Views

Mercury Point is a notable landmark and forms an important part of the Southampton skyline when viewed from Itchen Bridge and St Mary Street. This building is one of a small cluster of tall buildings emerging in this part of the city and is the most architecturally successful in extended views.

The fifteen storey slab block Dukes Keep dominates views from the east and is considered a negative landmark on the Southampton skyline.

The strategic view to St Michael’s spire from the Itchen Bridge passes over the car park to the south of the fourteen storey Richmond House.

Building types

Large floorplate offices and private apartments.

Architectural qualities

Largely indifferent commercial architecture of the 1970s to present. Mercury Point has a more inventive use of colour, fenestration and balconies. Strong horizontal bands of alternating black glass and white spandrels on lower blocks is very assertive. Piloti to the ground floor of the twelve storey block is wasted as a car parking. Terminus Terrace is good example of railway civil engineering creating positive townscape.

Heritage Assets

The area is considered to possess a moderate degree of evidential value due to the potential to recover archaeological evidence of medieval activity along Marsh Lane (referred to in documents in the fifteenth century). Accordingly the area lies within a Local Area of Archaeological Importance to reflect this potential to yield significant evidence for past activity in the area.

The raised road and bridge structure known as Central Bridge is a Grade II listed building. There are no other listed or locally listed buildings and no buildings that are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the area. The remnant street alignment is the



01 View east along Richmond Street (Mercury Point in the left and Richmond House on the right)
02 The architecturally distinctive Mercury Point
03 The public realm of College Street

only element of the historic character of the area that has been retained. This is of historic value.

The southern edge of the area borders the Oxford Street Conservation Area and development would need to have regard to the setting of the conservation area.

Materials

Modern: precast concrete, render, brick, mirror glass, lightweight curtain walling materials. Victorian: dark engineering brick.

Condition

The Corporate areas associated with the high-rise blocks are in good condition. Public realm is neglected.

Ownership

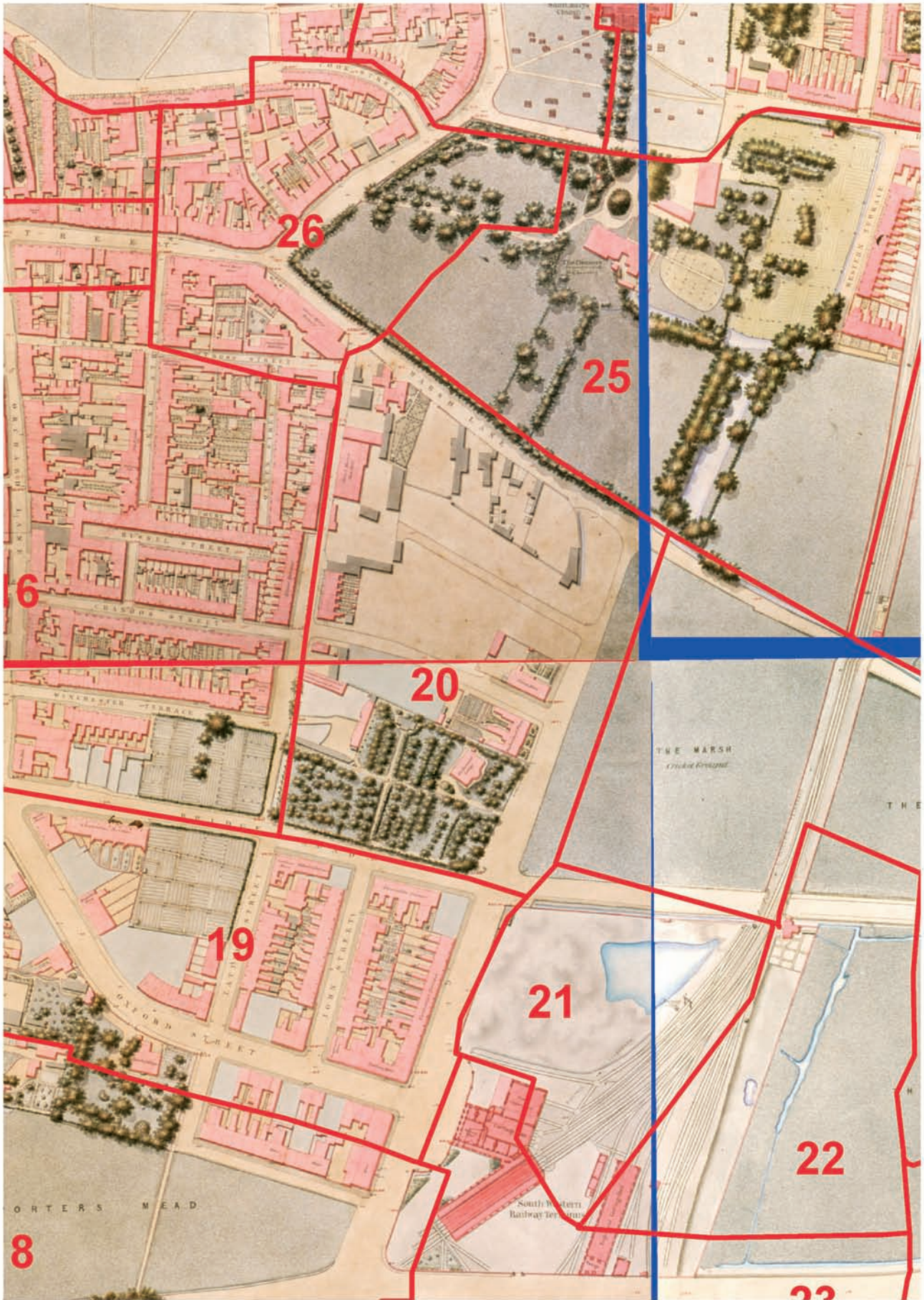
Predominantly privately owned with some council ownership.

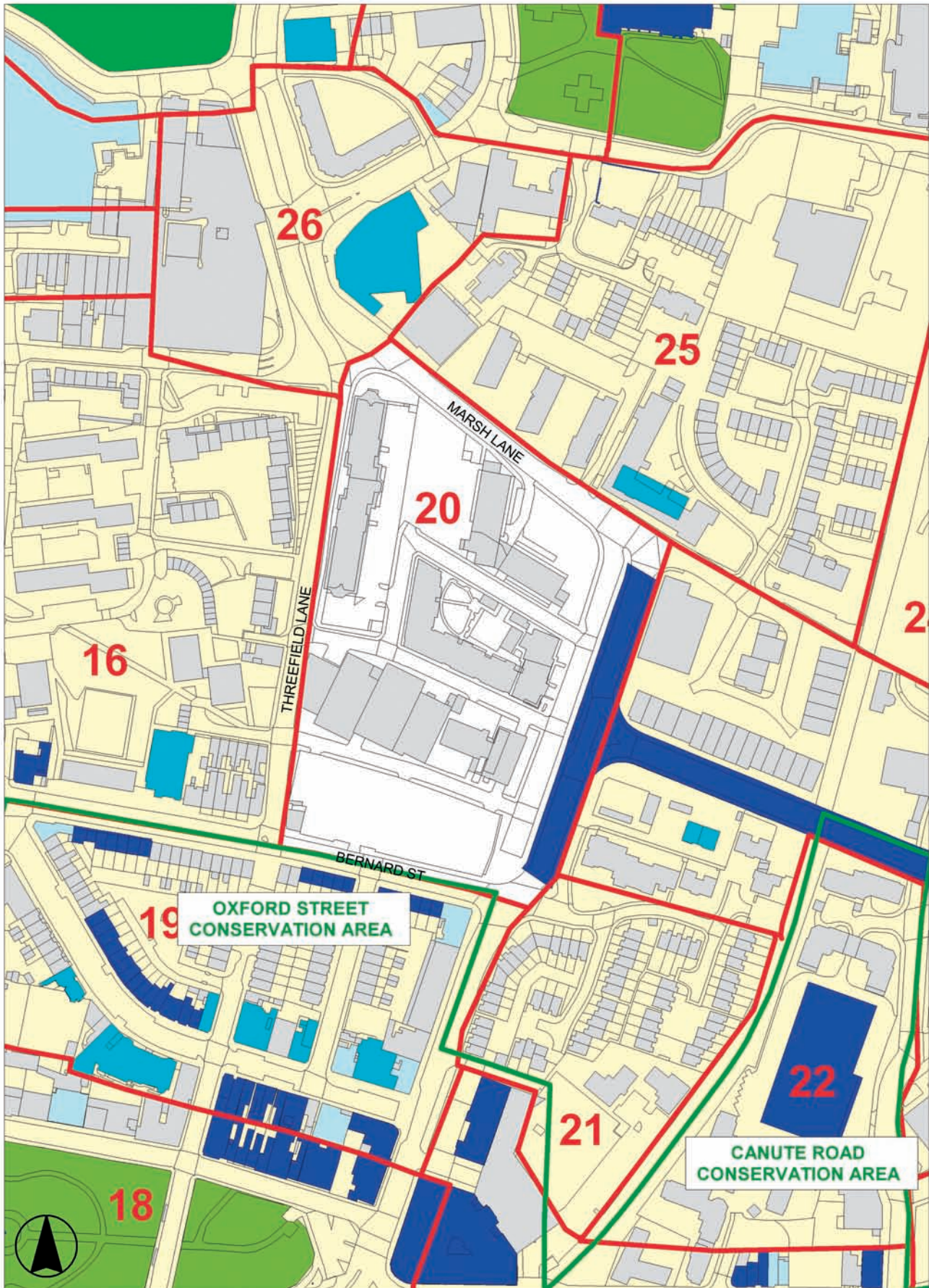
Intervention

- Public realm improvements – hard and soft landscaping.
- Create development with active frontage along Bernard Street and Terminus Terrace on the south-east corner.

General design principles

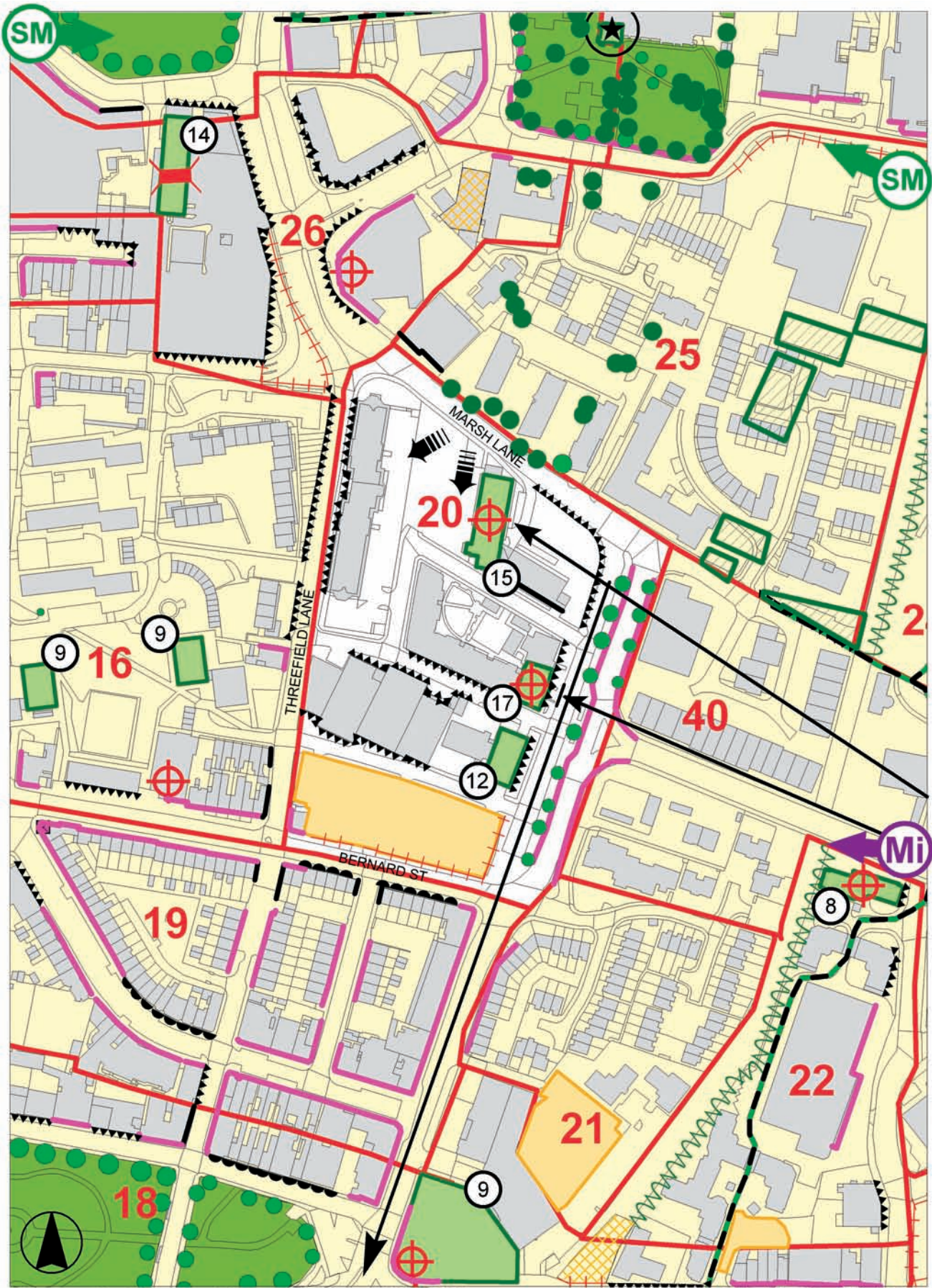
- Seek to improve linkage with western sections of CA40 which has the potential for large scale redevelopment.
- Seek to protect strategic views of city landmarks such as St Michael's Church and spire.
- Retain the existing network of streets and seek to open better north-south linkage through the character area and beyond (particularly northwards).





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Heritage Assets



Townscape

