

12 High Street (north)

Context

This character area occupies a central position within the northern part of the medieval town covering the upper part of High Street. To the north is the junction with East Street (CA14: East Street) and the lower section of CA10 (Bargate, Hanover Buildings and Queen’s Buildings). To the east is CA15 (Canal Walk) and part CA17 (Lower Canal Walk) and to the south is CA13 (High Street (south)). To the west is CA11 (West Gate, Town Walls and Castle).

The existing length of High Street was, until the fourteenth century, divided into two by Holy Rood Church raising questions about the origins of the lower part of High Street. The northern section of High Street was possibly one of the earliest streets of the settlement that developed on the ridge overlooking the Test when settlement shifted away from Saxon Hamwic on the bank of the Itchen. It remained the most important street of the town throughout the medieval period during which time it was known as English Street. The west side of the street was badly damaged by bombing during WWII. The east side was also damaged but to a far lesser extent; this is reflected in the survival of so many important historic buildings (a number of which are statutory listed).

Grain

The street has maintained a fine grain despite relatively modern (post-war) intervention to the west side of High Street. This has maintained the traditional plot width admirably and ensured this section of High Street within this character area retained its sense of a substantial survival of pre-war Southampton.

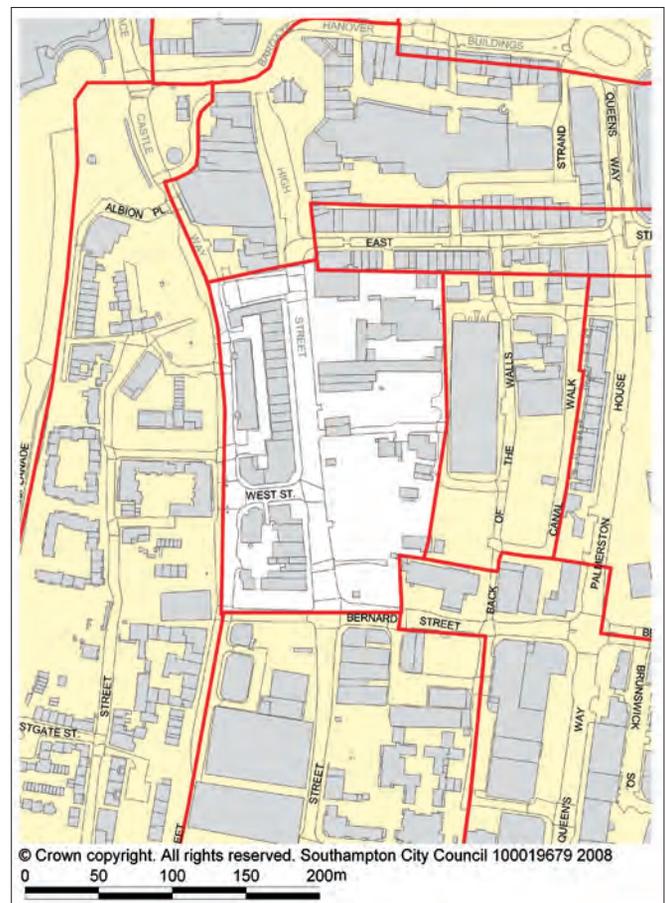
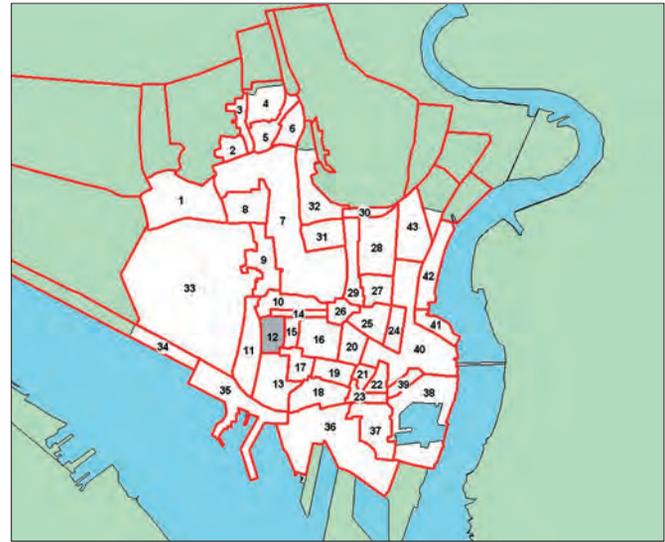
The buildings lines are consistent to the east and west sides of the street accentuating views along the street animated by the articulation of the facades – particularly the Dolphin Hotel and its double storey oriel windows.

Buildings are set to the back of pavement throughout.

Of note is the historical site of the Holy Rood which was further west than at present and was islanded in the High Street. What remains is only part of the medieval church, rebuilt in 1849-50 and subsequently heavily damaged in the Second World War (the bombing largely destroyed the Victorian work with the medieval parts remaining and seen today – Pevsner p.524).

Scale

The height of buildings varies between two and four storeys with the predominant height of three storeys but on a grand classical scale with generous floor to ceiling heights. Roofs are generally hidden behind parapets (some decorated) although the Dolphin Hotel has a



notable prominent mansard roof, however it maintains a strong eaves line through the use of a moulded stone cornice and central pediment which draw the eye. Buildings are well articulated to corners and return down side streets with repeated facade rhythms accentuating the grand scale of some buildings.

Uses

There is a mix of secondary service providers and pubs, bars, cafes and hotel. There is an enlivened character to this part of the High Street but with most activity focussed towards the evening economy. Upper floors have some office and ancillary accommodation related to their ground floor uses. There does not appear to be significant residential accommodation to this part of the High Street.

Public Realm

There is some survival of historic street finishes to include granite setts to the drainage channels and stone kerbs. Some of the paving is looking dated and worn. The carriageway is in poor condition with a considerable number of repair trenches and repair patches and ineffectual traffic islands.

Connectivity

The character area is very well connected with adjacent areas retaining in places lanes and alleys with medieval origins still used particularly to connect High Street with Castle Way. Visually it is very well connected with strategically important way-finding views north towards the Bargate and west to St Michael's spire which dominates the character area along St Michael's Street.

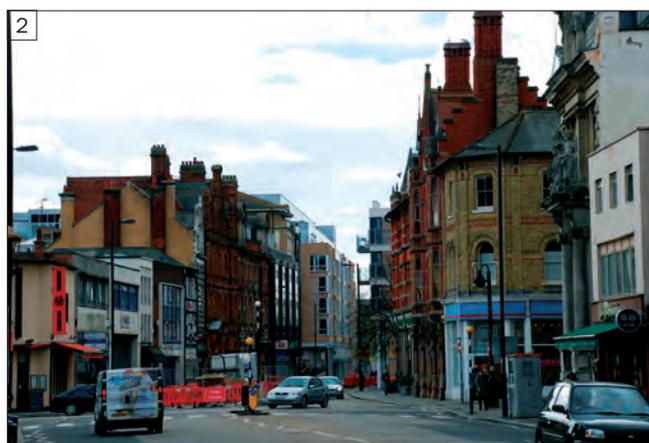
Views

The view along St Michael's Street is terminated dramatically by the spire of the church of the same name. To the north the Bargate closes the view along High Street, which is funnelled and accentuated by the enclosure created by the street. The area falls to the south and east across its length with a real sense that you are looking up to Bargate and down (eventually) to the waterfront, as a slight kink in High Street in the area of Holy Rood Church prevents a view along the whole length of the street and also accentuates the townscape experience within this character area by increasing the exposure of facades to long views up and down the street.

The view along Bernard Street and St Michael's Street on the boundary with Character Area 13 is a strategic view (originating from the Itchen Bridge but with a number of key view points along the street) of considerable importance.

Building types

The most notable buildings types within the character area are the purpose-built banks, office chambers and commercial buildings. The former banking halls in partic-



- 01 View looking north towards the Bargate
- 02 View looking south along High Street
- 03 St Michael's church, Holy Rood Church and No.129 High Street – an important group.

ular are fine examples of their periods – No.129, mid nineteenth century, Italianate style and No. 31-33 (now Walkabout) early twentieth century in a stripped neo-classical style, both stone ashlar. This character area, perhaps more than any other, provides a real insight into the wealth, status and investment in Southampton in these periods.

Architectural qualities

There is a rich mix of architectural styles and, above all, a real attention to detail not seen in most other character areas. An Italianate style runs through the banks, chambers and commercial buildings with some richly detailed carved stonework to doorcases, entablature hoods with scroll brackets and large sculptured coats of arms as well as modillion cornices, moulded string courses, and stone architraves to windows. The detailing goes down to some very fine Art Nouveau railings to No. 129 former Banking Hall by John Gibson (1867).

The mid and late Georgian periods are well represented in the character area by the Dolphin Hotel (which Pevsner notes as ‘the best C18 building in the city proper’) and the Star Hotel respectively with its stuccoed facade added to an earlier building.

The mix of highly individual buildings with great attention to detail with the austerity and simplicity of the post-war rebuilding is striking and tends to accentuate the former. The grouping of Holyrood, St Michaels Church and spire and number 129 High Street (to the corner of St Michael’s Street and High Street) viewed looking west from Barnard Street is one of the best groups in the city showing the architectural quality of the surviving historic buildings of Southampton.

Heritage Assets

Being at the heart of the medieval town, the area is considered to possess a high degree of evidential value due to the considerable potential for recovering archaeological deposits relating to the development of settlement in the late Saxon period and its subsequent growth, including the site of the church of St Lawrence on the east side of High Street. These are regarded as being of national importance. There is also evidence of Roman occupation. The area lies within a Local Area of Archaeological Interest to reflect this potential to yield significant evidence for past activity in the area.

There are six listed buildings within this character area, four of which are Grade II* (Star Hotel, Dolphin Hotel, Holyrood Church and No.129) plus a listed vault on the corner of High Street and West Street (also a Scheduled Monument). The listed hotels reflect the aesthetic values of the Georgian period and are highly significant survivals of post war Southampton. The ruins of Holy Rood are also a Scheduled Monument and are of both

spiritual and communal value as the ruins were restored in 1957 (by L Berger) as a memorial to merchant seaman. There are four locally listed buildings of very high quality reflecting aesthetic values of later, predominantly Victorian periods of architectural quality. The area lies within the Old Town North Conservation Area which helps encapsulate and define the complex inter-relationship of heritage values seen stemming from the archaeology of the street plan (and its effect on the townscape today) through to the high number of important historic buildings surviving in this part of the city.

Materials

Stone as a main material and as dressings for window architraves, doorcases, parapets and cornices is seen in a relatively high number of buildings. This is invariably Portland Stone with a creamy white colour and fine grain but with a buff Bath stone also seen on the Lloyds building by Horace Field (1927-8). Red and buff brick is seen in combination with other materials mainly stone. There is also some fine rubbed and moulded brick put to great effect on the corner building south side to St Michael’s Street and High Street (The Futon Co. No.126 High Street). The brick and stone buildings are interspersed by the use of stucco render, sometimes rusticated which also adds to the vibrant mix of textures and colour.

Roofs are almost entirely hidden from view, in some cases by elaborately decorated parapet details, with the large, traditional, handmade clay tile mansard roof of the Dolphin Hotel being a notable exception.

Condition

The character area is in a fair condition with some of the post-war buildings to the west side looking dated and in need of maintenance in places.

Ownership

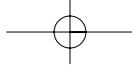
Multiple ownership throughout, much of which will be corporate and for investment purposes.

Intervention

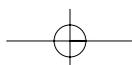
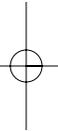
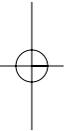
- Resurfacing of street and pavements (this is due to be undertaken as part of the North-South Spine project work).
- Review of signage for shops and businesses targeting illuminated signage in particular.
- Removal of traffic islands (this will also form part of the North-South Spine proposals).
- Encourage re-use of upper floors where possible (potentially for residential).

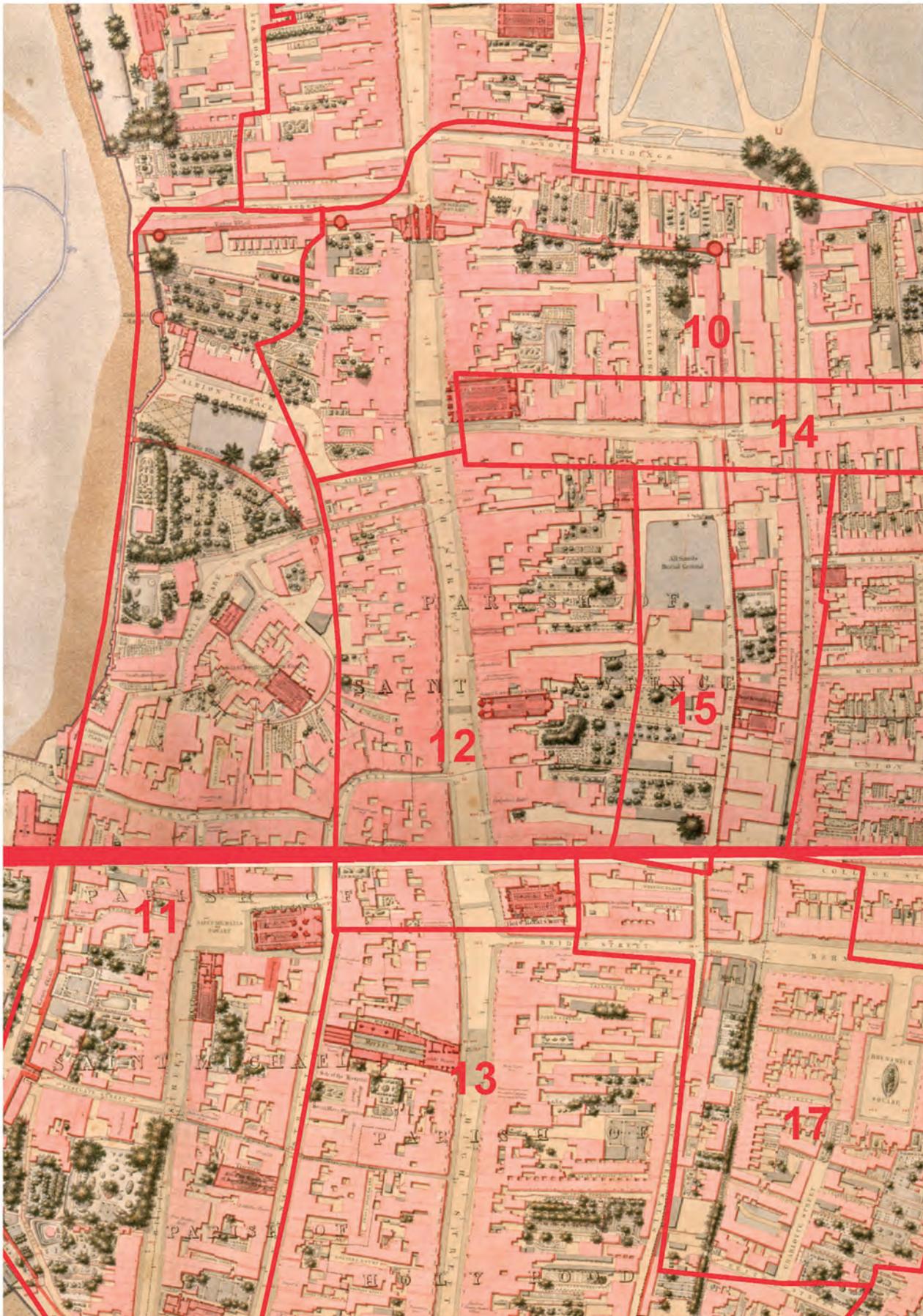
Key design principles

- The traditional grand scale of built form is a very important component of this part of the city. Any redevelopment should very carefully analyse the very cohesive scale of the traditional street and its building



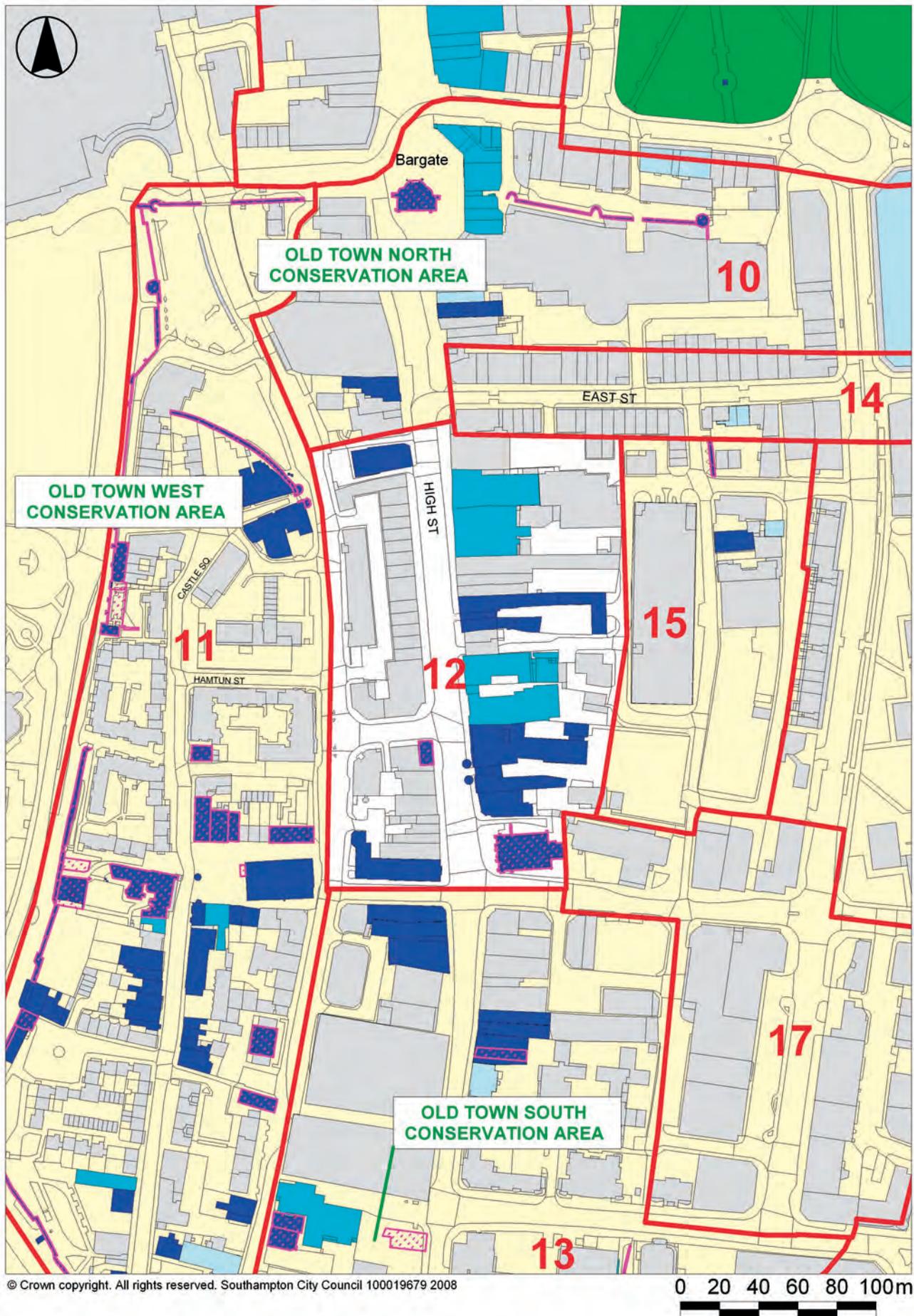
- lines (both in height and set back terms).
- The variation of materials is part of the richness of this character area. These materials are of a high quality and new development should reflect this high quality.
 - The views north towards the Bargate and west towards St Michael's Church are strategic city views and the most modest of impacts (such as new signage) should be very carefully considered so as to not impact adversely on these sensitive views.
 - New shopfronts should be of high quality materials and reflect the scale and articulation of the upper floors.
 - Active uses are to continue to be encouraged with the opportunity (as part of the North-South Spine project) to create outdoor café seating areas adding to the vibrancy of the area.
 - Retention and repair of all surviving historic fabric (windows in particular) in any proposals for refurbishment of listed or unlisted buildings.



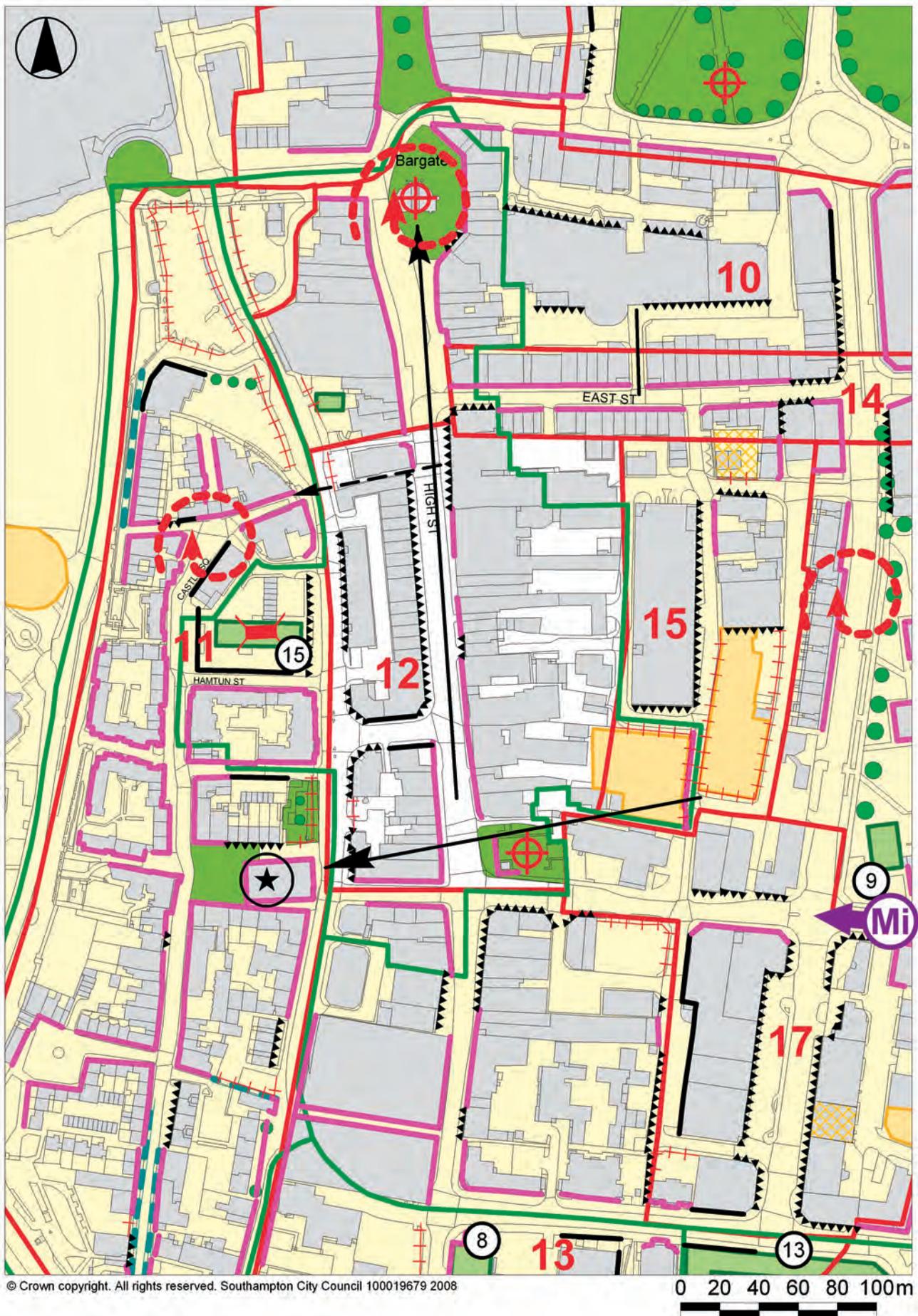


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Heritage Assets



Townscape

