

33 West Quay**Context**

The area known as West Quay is on the western edge of the study area and borders the Town Walls in part and the commercial core (West Quay II) of the City to the east, the station and railway line to the north and the port area and waterfront (Mayflower Park) to the west and south. The operational port area stretches across the southern boundary (CA34) and impedes any direct physical connection to the waterfront at this point. The western boundary to the port area is loose and undefined in townscape terms with the Solent Mills some distance away forming an important part of views to the waterfront.

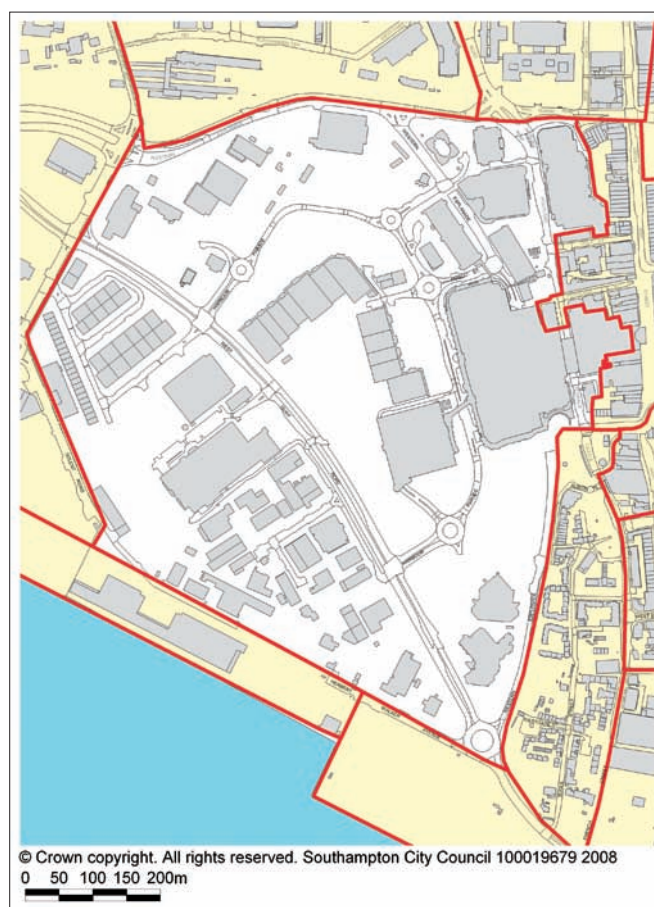
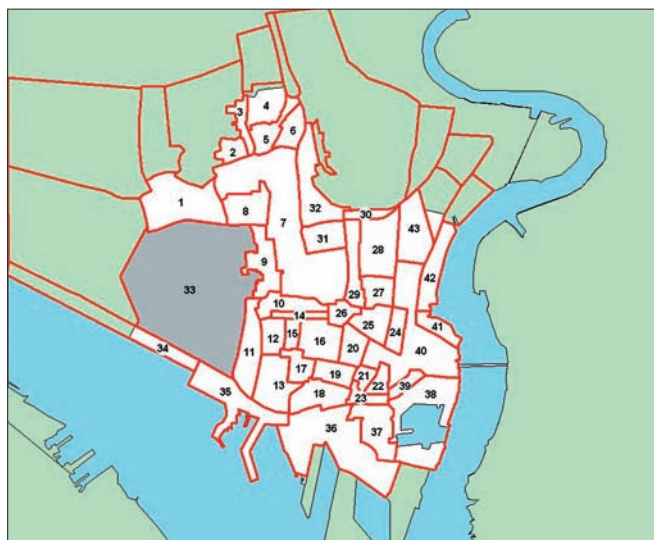
Prior to rising sea levels drowning the Solent River and its tributaries this area was dry land occupied by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers whose implements and settlement sites have been discovered in the submerged landscapes of the Solent. The area was largely reclaimed in the late 1920s and 1930s although the area closest to the historic shoreline was subject to gradual reclamation from the eighteenth century. The area at the foot of the town wall was historically a busy quayside. In the eighteenth century this area became the focal point of the spa phase of development of the town with the public baths and the Long Rooms built out from the quayside. In the early twentieth century a power station and the Pirelli factory were built on reclaimed land. The reclamation has resulted in the creation of a large flat area except where the land rises to the north on the line of the historic shoreline. The higher ground to the east and north provides views across the area and to key landmarks.

Grain

There is a coarse grain to the built form with wide modern roads with feeder roads to sequences and groups of large footprint buildings set in hard landscaped car parks. There is a low density of development and limited enclosure throughout with much of the area given over to infrastructure – roads or roundabouts or large surface car parks. Building lines are consistent in places but often provide dead frontages to main routes due to the nature and scale of the uses.

Scale

Built form varies in scale and massing with buildings to the edges, notably the hotel group to the western edge and car parks and West Quay II being eight to ten storeys or the equivalent height. The hotels sit comfortably within their context on the western fringes, however West Quay II is dominant in terms of its bulk and massing and robustly expressed ground floor plinth in views to the east. The remaining buildings, often referred to as 'The Sheds' comprise a series of large rectangular flat roofed structures, often linked and



sometimes staggered in plan. These are generally the equivalent of two to two and a half storey buildings with some exceptions such as the cinema complex (Leisure World) to south of West Quay Road on the southern boundary. Given the relatively low level of these structures views across the character area towards the campanile and St Michaels spire are uninterrupted and help place this area in its context.

Uses

There is a mix of uses across this large character area comprising retail warehouses and a public house (A1 and A3), leisure – cinemas and casino, sports facilities, hotels (C1) and storage (D1) and car sales showrooms (sui-generis) and light engineering. The National Express bus station is also located within this character area. However, these uses are not well-integrated and sit in very separate and sometimes isolated pockets of development with very limited connectivity.

Public Realm

The public realm for the pedestrian is very poor with limited soft landscaping to the large expanses of car park and areas set over for highways provision. This is relieved to a degree by the welcome presence of street trees to the south side of West Quay Road and trees also line the Western Esplanade approach to the City to the northern fringes of the character area which provides some relief from the dead frontages of the retail warehouses which line this important approach.

Connectivity

This area is separated from the waterfront except for its border with Mayflower Park to the south-east corner. This is due to the restricted operational area occupied by Associated British Ports which runs along the water's edge (CA34). Visually the waterfront is connected to this character area and is seen as an active and interesting edge to the south as cranes and ships can be seen and glimpsed from a number of points. The physical barriers to the port area and water are however a significant negative factor.

The road network is the most effective form of navigation through the character area though the roads are very busy and signing and junctions are focused on port and commercial (West Quay II) traffic. Junctions are highly engineered and signs, traffic lights, barriers and road markings make for a very visually cluttered public realm.

There is poor pedestrian linkage to Central Station which could be significantly improved through redevelopment and reorientation of built form to respond to the station building's southern entrance.

Views

There is a strategic view from the character area towards



- 01** The retail sheds of the area characterised by flat or shallow pitched roofs and a setting of large surface level car parking
- 02** Highway infrastructure and the public realm is poorly designed and favours the car or lorry.
- 03** Distance views to the cruise terminals characterised by cranes on the skyline

St Michael's spire which is clearly seen in its Old Town setting protruding above the walls and modern buildings in the foreground. A number of strategic views, focused on the landmarks of the waterfront (ships and cranes) pass across the character area from the high ground around the Civic Centre. A number of views and glimpses of the waterfront features can be had from within the character area and link the area to the waterfront.

Views to the west are dominated by the Solent Mills building (a locally listed building of potentially listable quality) just to the edge of the study area and the container stacks to the operational port area beyond. The Post House Hotel to the south-east corner of the character area is a poor landmark.

Building types

Buildings are highly functional within the character area and focus on their internal environment rather than that presented to the street. These buildings are generally large floorplate simple shed-like structures. One of the main characteristics of this built form is the signage which is invariably in proportion to the building and alien to the human scale. This is particularly apparent to the pedestrian on travelling through the character area.

The hotels and commercial buildings to the edges have more defining features which identify their use and provide more articulation and invitation to further enquiry. A good example of this is the De Vere Hotel to the south-east corner with its striking full height atrium. This building is a key landmark from the waterfront (particularly on arrival from the local ferries – Hythe and Isle of Wight) (CA35).

Architectural qualities

The majority of buildings in this character area were built in the late twentieth century. Most are functional architecture and visually uninspiring. West Quay II (John Lewis Store) makes some attempt to address this character area with some larger areas of glazing. The building is set on a concrete base with knapped flint inset panels presumably to reflect the solidity of the town walls it now obscures in distant views. The Ibis Hotel has successfully picked up on warehouse type motifs to produce two tall buildings which give the loose impression of being converted warehousing and this is quite successful. The De Vere Hotel is a striking waterfront building which although dated is of high quality materials and makes a very strong statement from the waterfront with its full height glazed sloping atrium.

Heritage Assets

Despite largely being reclaimed land there are nationally important historic environment considerations within the area. The principal area of importance is along the eastern edge of the area where the character area forms the setting of the scheduled medieval town walls. The

medieval West Quay and Castle Quay lay within the area and represent a significant archaeological consideration. The area is also considered to possess a high degree of evidential value given there is potential for maritime archaeological features such as the remains of vessels that were abandoned within the former 'bay' and submerged peat deposits which will contain important environmental evidence. The eastern and northern fringe of the area lies within a Local Area of Archaeological Importance to reflect this potential to yield significant evidence for past activity in the area.

As well as evidential significance, the area has a high degree of associative value due to its close relationship to historic events such as the departure of Henry V on his French campaign which was to lead to the battle of Agincourt, and the Pilgrim Fathers leaving for America in 1620.

The scale and context of the medieval walls is best appreciated from the character area and in this respect as well as other values recognised in this and other character area analysis the walls have aesthetic value given they are the most intact amount of medieval city walls seen nationally.

Materials

Building are mostly steel framed with various claddings and curtain walling to include profiled metal, glass, stone and pre-cast concrete panels, knapped flint panels, marble and brick. Roofs are largely flat and so obscured from view. There are some notable exceptions for example the local-authority-run swimming and diving complex known as The Quays to the rear of the De Vere Hotel with its highly sculptural and expressive roof in steel and profiled metal. Most of 'The Sheds' continue the wall cladding to the roof where these are pitched adding to their rather bland exteriors.

Condition

This character area is generally in good condition with a high degree of investment and maintenance to the building stock and well-maintained roads and infrastructure.

Ownership

The land has a number of buildings and spaces in multiple ownership and other areas such as the large electricity sub-station which are the responsibility of utilities companies.

Intervention

- Future development should have regard to improving the pedestrian experience within this character area.
- The station should form a defining axis for sustainable development and linkages to the station (across Western Esplanade) should be strongly promoted in future major development plans.

- Increasing active frontage to the Western Esplanade and West Quay Road.
- Removing unnecessary over-engineering to junctions to include barriers, signage, traffic lights and road markings.
- Define and reinforce important view corridors to historic assets; St Michael's spire, Town walls and the campanile, Civic Centre.
- Encourage redevelopment to the west side of Portland Terrace to mask the multi-storey car park and provide active frontages to the street.
- Consider (with partners) the repositioning of the electricity sub-station to the centre of the character area, it could prove to be a significant barrier to major investment in the holistic masterplanning of the area.

Key design principles

- Create active frontage to key routes through character area.
- Simplify infrastructure.
- High quality materials for public realm.
- Improve pedestrian experience.
- Improve linkage and legibility through character area.
- Have regard to views to waterfront from the character area and strategic views from surrounding character areas.
- Potential for reintroducing water adjacent to the town walls to recreate their historic context.
- Relocation of electricity sub-station to facilitate holistic redevelopment.





Heritage Assets



Townscape

