



Southampton Tall Buildings Study

Assessing the sensitivity to change of heritage assets to buildings of six storeys and above

Preamble

Southampton's city centre is a historical composite, the cumulative result of a long and everchanging process of development. Our views of the best parts play a critical role in shaping our appreciation and understanding of what makes the city special. The historic environment is a finite and non-renewable resource requiring careful management.

At the same time the city needs to grow and continually adapt its places and spaces to shifting contemporary socio-economic requirements. The need for growth needs to be carefully weighed against the often fragile survival of key heritage assets of national and sometimes international significance. The City Council along with partners Historic England has recognised this need and are seeking to place a system of safeguarding and review which will ensure the significance of the setting of these heritage assets is carefully and robustly considered for all to enjoy in the future.

As a maritime city, visual links with the water help to define the relationship between the city, its rivers and the sea and safeguard the city's seaport character. Views to and from the waterfront are especially significant because the openness of water spaces allows for relatively long-distance views. There are a number of adverse effects that tall buildings can have, which include overshadowing, wind turbulence and visual canyon.

The city does not possess the preserved or strongly defined vistas enjoyed by other planned cities such as Plymouth or parts of London. Neither does it have the literary or artistic back catalogue of Oxford or Salisbury. There are some exceptionally important water colours, sketches and prints of Southampton from the water. It does have some fine landmark buildings and structures which deserve a setting within which to enjoy their architectural and historic significance.

What is clear is that the transformation of the city centre needs to be carefully co-ordinated over time. This will ensure that new development respects the historic environment, is properly integrated with existing areas and that improvements are delivered with the widest range of benefits possible.

“Skylines are urban signatures...Cities of all descriptions and periods raise aloft distinctive landmarks, to celebrate faith and power and special achievement.”

Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped*, London 2001





Executive Summary

1. Introduction

1.1 Background	1
1.2 Role and status of the study	1
1.3 Study area	1
1.4 Who has been involved in the development of the study?	1
1.5 Study structure	1
1.6 Policy context	3

2. The Southampton city centre context

2.1 Topography	4
2.2 Heritage assets	5
2.3 Existing tall buildings and proposals for tall buildings	7

3. Sensitivity of key heritage assets to tall buildings

3.1 The key heritage assets - defining significance	9
3.2 Defining a tall building in Southampton	30
3.3 Approach specific to Southampton	30
3.4 The strategic views - fixed and kinetic	34
3.5 General factors for achieving high quality design and appropriate scale of tall buildings	146
3.6 Future proposals for tall buildings - a methodology for assessment	148

4. Recommendations

150

Glossary

153

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This study has been prepared in the context of pressure for growth in the city of Southampton. The city features tightly constrained boundaries which contain amongst other things internationally important heritage assets which defined and continue to define the shape and evolution of the city centre. Southampton City Council and Historic England are keen to understand and further protect these highly significant heritage assets whilst accepting that a sustainable city has to embrace positive change.

As a maritime city, visual links with the water help to define the relationship between Southampton and its waterfront. Part of its very reason for existence is the important relationship the city has had and continues to have with its waterways and how this historic character still defines elements of the city to this day. Unlike a number of other cities which have been the subject of similar studies, notably London and Oxford, Southampton does not have strongly defined planned vistas although some success was achieved in the early C20 through the siting of the Civic Centre and its distinctive landmark Campanile. In addition to the Grade II* Listed Civic Centre, Southampton has some fine, often overlooked nationally important Scheduled and Grade I Listed heritage assets, such as the Bargate, St Michael's Church, and the surviving medieval defences of the Old Town. All of these heritage assets have complex, diverse and extensive settings. This study seeks to define the evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal significance of those settings and how they could potentially be affected by new development.

The study seeks to provide a baseline of evidence-based analysis in order to inform the policy framework in relation to the impact of tall buildings on the key heritage assets defined within the city centre. It builds on and develops the existing policies set out within the adopted Core Strategy (Policies AP17 and AP7) and will be used to inform the emerging new Local Plan.

The study is based on heritage asset analysis and provides view-based guidance on the sensitivity to change of key heritage assets to proposed development, specifically tall buildings (6+ storeys). Existing building heights are relatively low across the city centre compared to many other cities in the UK. At present, Moresby Tower at Ocean Village represents the city's tallest building at 26 storeys.

The study has had regard to guidance from Historic England on heritage assets, their settings, significance and appreciation. Based on this analysis six key heritage assets have been identified and scored within the city centre:

- Bargate (BG)
- Central Parks (CP)
 - Watts and East
 - Palmerston
 - Houndwell
 - Hoglands
- Civic Centre Campanile (CCC)
- Town Walls (TW)
- St Michael's Church (STMIC)
- Waterfront (WF)

A total of 21 strategic views to these heritage assets have been identified. A summary of the significance of the heritage values has informed the importance of each of the heritage assets and placed them in the wider city context. Views to these heritage assets have been chosen where the significance has the potential to be harmed. In some cases, inappropriate development within the context of these heritage assets could result in substantial harm to their significance and would be contrary to both primary legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework. In each case the views have been described in the context of the heritage asset and its significance and recommendations made as to how these views and subsequently the significance can be sustained for future generations.

The combined sensitivities of all the strategic views (section 3.4) provides an indication of how easily tall buildings can have a detrimental impact on the setting of one or multiple key heritage assets within the city centre. Some care is needed in the interpretation of this data. However this study is intended as a position from which to ensure that all aspects of the historic environment are considered in all development of tall buildings within the city centre and in some cases beyond this notional boundary.

The study puts forward a recommended checklist for assessing the design qualities of tall building proposals in the city centre and a general methodology that will enable a thorough assessment of the visual impact, design quality and overall appropriateness of any proposal to be made.

The study concludes with a series of recommendations that are intended to provide a framework within which the City Council can approach the future preservation and enhancement of key heritage assets within the city centre. These include developing a city centre urban model (3D digital representation) where proposals for tall buildings can be explored in relation to accurate levels, block and photo realistic details, a lighting strategy to showcase key heritage assets, and monitoring and review as new development takes place.

It is clear from the study that the issues of view management in relation to the city's key heritage assets are complex in a growing and changing environment. Tall buildings in the wrong location will cause significant harm to the historic environment and the local character of an area within the city centre. The ongoing transformation of the city centre requires sensitive joined-up thinking from those involved directly and indirectly in creating and managing place. New development needs to ensure that it takes place in a way that understands and responds positively to the significance of the city's key heritage assets for all to enjoy in the future.



'The Walls of Southampton' an engraving by WH Bartlett 1809-1854. The work was produced to illustrate a book; 'The Ports, Harbours, Watering Places and Coast Scenery of Great Britain'. 1842, by William Finden, Edward Francis Finden & William Henry Bartlett.

1.1 Background

The study is based on heritage asset analysis and provides view-based guidance on the sensitivity to change of key heritage assets to tall buildings (6+ storeys) within the city centre. It has been prepared in the context of pressure for growth in Southampton within tightly constrained boundaries and the potential impact of new development on the rich historic environment to be found within the city centre.

This study provides an evidence base to inform the preparation of planning policies in the new Local Plan. It does not create policy. It provides a framework to help shape decisions on planning applications and investment decisions across the city centre, recognising the growth of Southampton to meet housing needs and realising opportunities for business investment.

1.2 Role and status of the study

The overall aim of this study is to provide policy advice within which decisions can be made about the impact of tall buildings on key heritage assets in Southampton.

It builds on and develops the existing policies set out within the adopted Core Strategy (Policies AP17 and AP7), supported by evidence, which identifies locations in and around the city centre that are unable or less able to absorb the impacts of tall buildings. It provides a checklist of design factors for achieving a high quality of design and appropriate scale for tall buildings and what applicants must address in their planning submissions. It advises discussions with the City Council at an early stage.

1.2 Study area

The study area is the boundary of the city centre, as shown in Fig 1.

The Old Town area is not included as part of this study. This is because the Old Town is already afforded a high degree of protection from the impact of tall buildings through the City Centre Action Plan and Old Town Development Strategy (adopted SPD). The SPD restricts tall buildings in order to respect the historic low rise development and its skyline.

1.4 Who has been involved in the development of the study?

A group of City Council and Historic England advisors representing heritage, planning policy and urban design have steered this study.

1.5 Study structure

This study is set out in a number of sections that cover the following:

- The Southampton city centre context
- Sensitivity of key heritage assets to tall buildings
- Recommendations
- Glossary and References



Figure.1
Study area

- City Centre
- Old Town
- Existing Building
- Central Parks
- Public Green Space
- Waterfront

0 100 500
metres

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1.6 Policy context

This Tall Buildings Study provides an evidence base to inform the emerging new Local Plan. A number of key documents, including best practice in the area of tall buildings have provided valuable information sources and these are listed below.

- City Centre Action Plan (2015)
- Seeing the History in the View (2011)
- Tall Buildings: Historic England Advice Note 4 (2015)
- The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 (2015)
- Settings and Views of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 (Consultation draft 2016)
- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)
- Assessment of the Oxford View Cones (2015)
- London View Management Framework (2012)

2. The Southampton city centre context

2.1 Topography

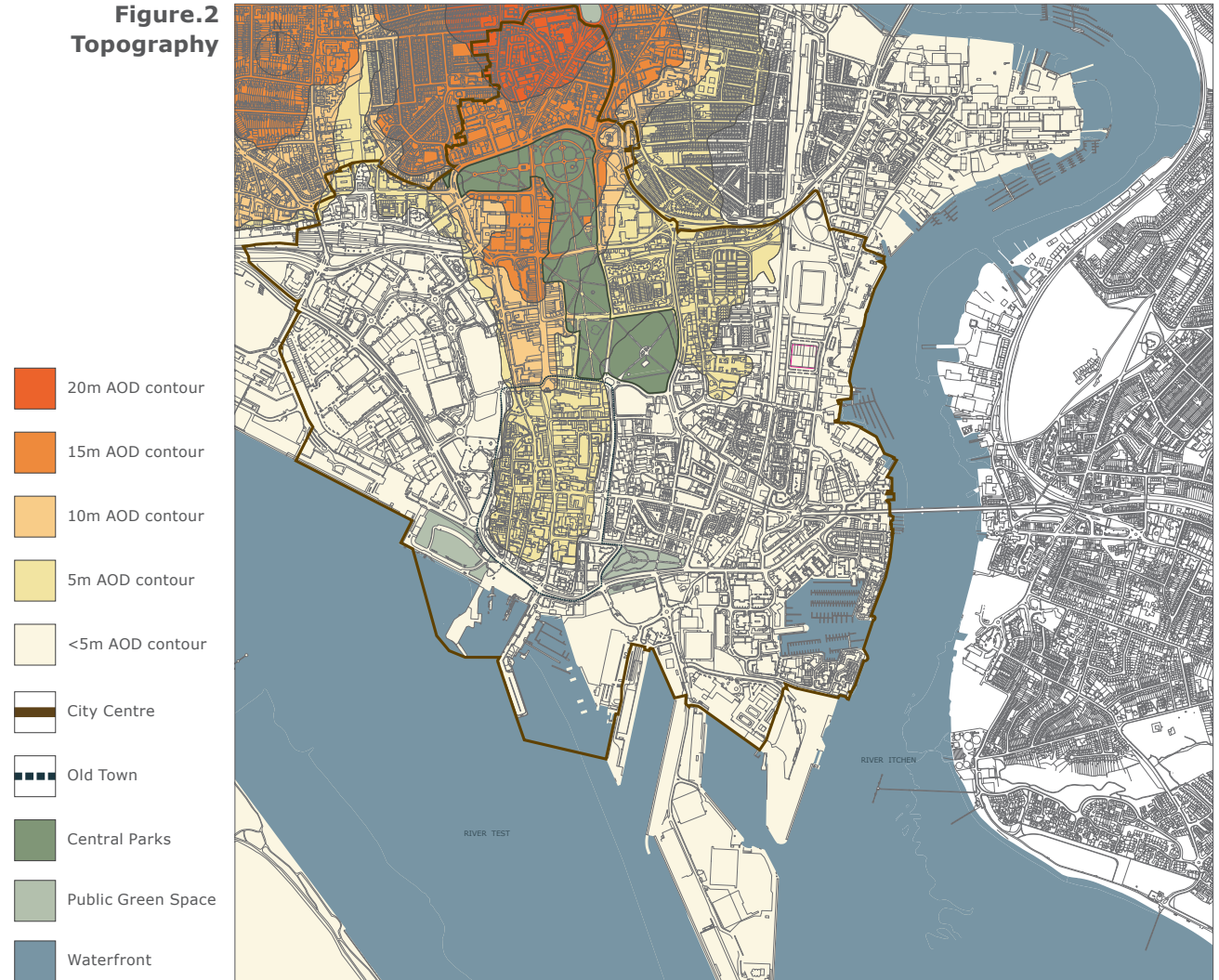
Set at the meeting of the River Test and River Itchen, the city's underlying topography is in the form of a broad peninsular that leads southwards through the city centre to the waterfront. The most significant level changes occur within the city centre on the western side of this landform, next to the Civic Centre, towards the northern end of the Central Parks. This area provides both views westwards across the docks along with the steepest route for pedestrians walking from Central Station up and into the city centre.

Southampton is not a city which is looked down onto from hillsides although there are some fine city wide panoramas from the east side of the Itchen River which look across the city centre (which do not form part of this study). Towards the waterfront there is a general sense of consistent level with limited variation although on closer review, particularly when focused on views down say Bugle (WF.4) or French Street (WF.3) to the Old Town there is a very real steady fall to the water. Similarly, the view from Mayflower Park to the heritage asset of St Michael's Church (STMIC.3) is made more prominent due to looking 'up' at the church located on the higher ground within the Old Town from the lower level park at the water's edge.

Figure 2 opposite shows the broad topography of the city centre (based on Ordnance Survey mapping).

More details on the nature of views and the impact of topography on the sensitivity of key heritage assets to tall buildings can be found in section 3.

**Figure.2
Topography**



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2.2 Heritage assets

Figure 3 shows all of the designated heritage assets within and around the city centre. This includes scheduled monuments (above and below ground), statutory listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens of special interest and conservation areas. Locally listed buildings and the boundary of the Old Town are also shown as these are an integral part of the story of the historic environment within the city centre, though they are not designated.

The highest concentration of heritage assets are located within the Old Town. This area represents the historic core of the city and is defined on three sides (north, west and east) by 1.5km of medieval town walls. It links the commercially and historically important waterfront with the impressive Central Parks and the main shopping core of the city. It contains a wealth of shops, pubs, clubs, hotels, cultural attractions, homes and a school.

The Old Town now survives in a fragmented manner with areas in the west more intact, retaining much of the tight medieval grain, traditional materials, low built form and historic character than areas in the east.

Four out of the six conservation areas within the city centre fall within the Old Town character area (Old Town North, Old Town West, Old Town South and Oxford Street). Canute Road conservation area lies to the east. The northern most part of the city centre is covered by the remaining Carlton Crescent conservation area.

Developed on former common land and laid out between the late 1850s and early 1860s, Central Parks provide an impressive and popular chain of public open space through the centre of the city.

Beyond the Old Town, Central Parks and conservation areas a number of Grade II* and II listed buildings are spread throughout the study area. These include the Civic Centre (II*), Wyndham Court to the west (II), St Mary's Church to the east (II) and both Royal Pier (II) and Trafalgar Dry Dock (II) to the south at the water's edge.



Figure.3
Heritage assets

- Grade I Listed Buildings and/or Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Grade II and II* Listed Buildings
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Locally Listed Building
- Conservation Area
- City Centre Boundary
- Old Town
- Existing Building
- Waterfront

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metres

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2.3 Existing tall buildings and proposals for tall buildings

The city centre is characterised by a mix of finely grained historic street patterns within the Old Town and a wider urban form that becomes more diverse, fragmented and sometimes disjointed in places. This includes some of the development that defines the western edges of Central Parks that turns its back on the key green spaces (sections of Park Walk and Sussex Road).

Building heights are relatively low across the city centre of Southampton compared to many other cities.

With the exception of a few single developments, tall buildings loosely cluster in six groups:

1. Charlotte Place
2. Terminus Terrace / Marsh Lane
3. Ocean Village
4. Briton Street / Queensway
5. West Quay / Harbbour Parade
6. Central Station

All of these clusters occur informally. They do not produce a distinctive or 'signature' skyline and are of mixed architectural quality. They result in a skyline which has been created on an ad hoc basis.

There are other tall structures located in or seen from the city centre which may not be thought as 'tall buildings', but which are significantly higher than the surrounding context. These include the grain silos at Eastern Docks, aerial/mast on Town Quay and working cranes and cargo containers stacked at the docks.

A limited number of tall structures also determine part of the skyline of the city centre. Among these are the spire of St Michael's Church, spire of St Mary's Church and the Campanile of the Civic Centre. All of these are listed and form important landmarks of local and historical importance. Owing to their slender, tapered and vertical profiles, they contribute to an attractive skyline without harming their surroundings.

The tallest building currently within the city centre is Moresby Tower at Ocean Village at 26 storeys.

Figure 4 shows existing tall buildings and structures within the city centre above five storeys, clusters and proposals for tall buildings which have either been given planning permission, or are resolved to grant planning permission subject to S106 approval and areas identified for individual landmark buildings identified in Policy AP17 of the City Centre Action Plan (CCAP).

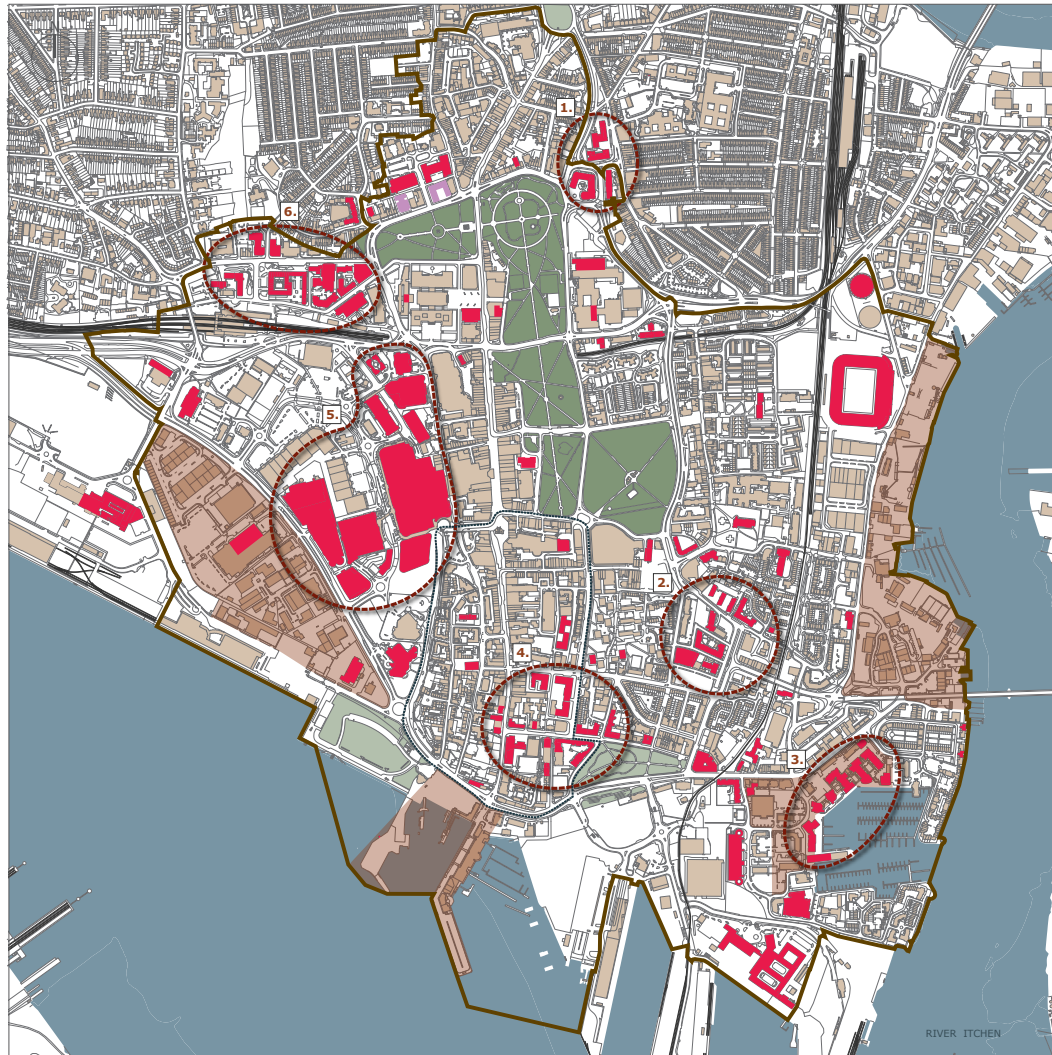










Figure.4
Existing tall buildings
and proposals for tall
buildings

-  Existing Building/Structure/
Building Under Construction
over 5 Storeys
-  Proposal for a Building over
5 Storeys - approved but not
built/resolved subject to S106
-  Existing cluster of tall buildings
in the city centre
-  Areas Already Identified for
Individual Landmark Buildings
(AP17, CCAP)
-  City Centre Boundary
-  Old Town
-  Existing Building
-  Waterfront

0 100 500
metres

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