

05 London Road

Context

The character area comprises London Road which links the Avenue (outside the study area) with the Central Parks. The area takes its shape from the medieval road which provided one of the main routes to and from Southampton travelling to and from the north. To the north-west is Carlton Crescent (CA4) and to the south-east Bellevue (CA6). London Road is a straight road running north-east – south-west. Its gently slopes down towards the parks. The campanile of the Civic Centre closes the view south-west along this wide street providing a strong sense of the role of this road as a key entry point to the City.

Development in the area commenced in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century with the construction of large houses with substantial grounds. By 1802 the area to the south-east of the road lay within the grounds of a large house called Bellevue. The north-west side of the road was developed along with the adjacent Carlton Crescent/Carlton Place and Bedford Place developments of the 1830s onwards. The area suffered extensive bomb damage during World War II.

Grain

The built form is of a fine to medium grain with a consistent building line to both sides of the street though this breaks down on the north-west side with the modern law courts set in grounds and facing away from London Road onto the Avenue. There is good enclosure with buildings commensurate in scale to the wide boulevard character of the street.

Scale

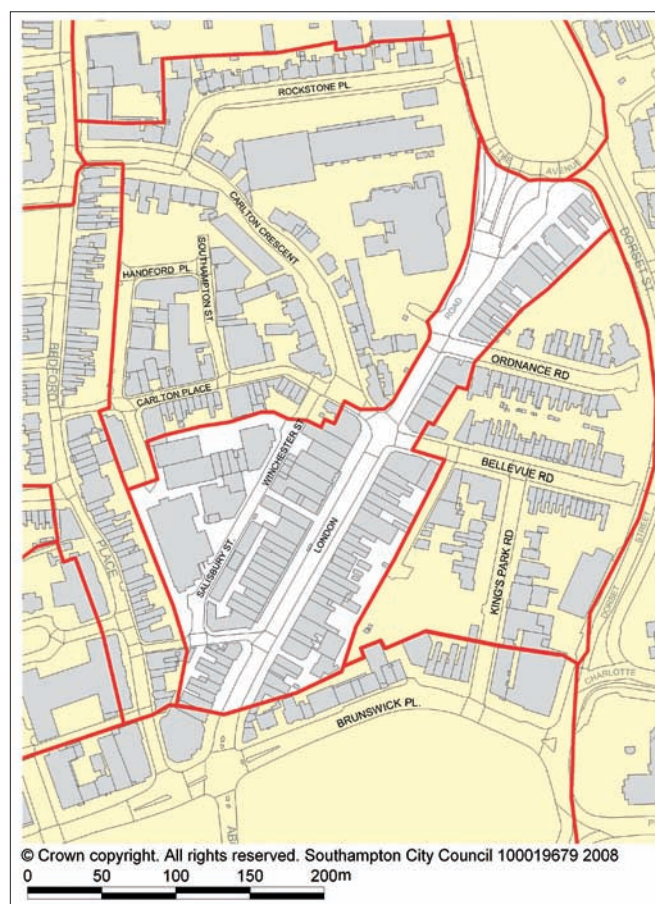
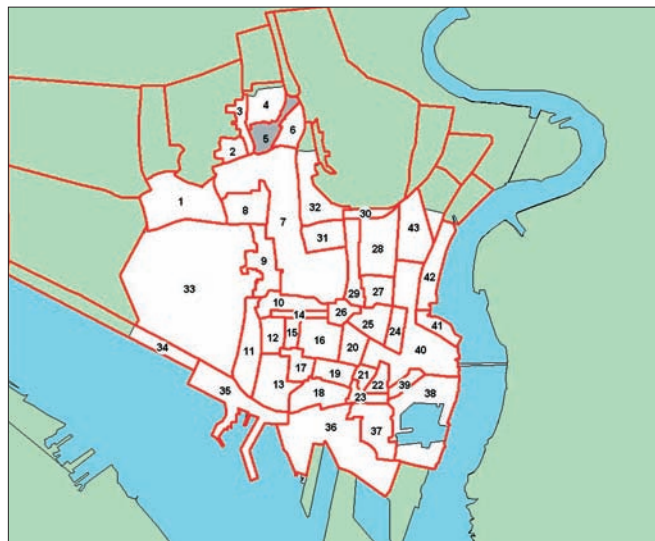
The buildings lining the street range from two to three storeys and are consistent in groups. Similarly there is a consistency to roof profiles in groups with sequences of gables and decorative dormers (to the north end), low pitched roofs to the street, and flat roof sections. There is a very strong horizontal emphasis to the latter and this is carried on by older groups of buildings which have been extended but still maintain a strong parapet eaves line and from street level this is often the defining characteristic.

Due to the uninterrupted views up and down the street, the scale is important as it appears consistent throughout the character area despite some variations to rooflines and eaves and ridge heights.

The height of buildings is sensitive in terms of the potential impact of taller buildings on the excellent views south-west to the Civic Centre campanile.

Uses

There is a good mix of shops, A1 and café, take-away,



restaurants and pubs, A3 uses and, similar to Bedford Place, the area has a variable vitality dependent on time of day. The emphasis is on the lunch-time and evening economy. There are also a number of services such as banks, building societies and estate agents which give this shopping street a secondary shopping character.

Despite an emphasis on evening usage the area remains vibrant and busy throughout the daytime helped by the provision of on-street parking adjacent to shops.

Public Realm

The quality of the public realm is high throughout as the street has recently undergone complete refurbishment and remodelling to provide a very pedestrian-friendly permeable environment with the emphasis on slowing the traffic and creating a managed tension between vehicle users to the benefit of the pedestrian.

Street furniture, signage, street surfaces have been replaced and rationalised throughout, with the most successful improvement being the eradication of all roadside barriers from the entire length of the street.

There are a number of street trees which contribute to the quality and boulevard feel of the townscape.

Connectivity

The character area is well connected to adjacent character areas and strongly linked visually to the parks and Civic Centre to the south. It is a permeable, pedestrian-friendly part of the City and given its wide pavements and comfortable enclosure from built form it feels safe and welcoming.

Views

There is a strategic view running the length of London Road from the Avenue focussed on the campanile of the Civic Centre. This planned vista is an important part of the intention of the architect to put this civic building at the perceived heart of the city so that civic pride formed a key part of a visit to Southampton. On travelling one of the principal routes into the city the tower would be an unmissable and impressive landmark.

Building types

The area largely comprises medium sized blocks of purpose-built shops with offices above. There are older buildings to the southern and northern sections of London Road on the south-east side. These are likely to have been built as large terraced town houses (to the southern end) and late Victorian semi-detached villas (to the north end) Those to the south have been converted at ground floor to shops, with ancillary or office or residential uses above. At the northern end these large houses have been converted for office use. These are mostly solicitors' and barristers' chambers.



- 01 New public realm, London Road
- 02 View south along London Road towards Campanile of Civic Centre
- 03 Important pedestrian links between London Road and Bedford Place

There are also a small number of well-designed banks and former banks with their distinctive stone facades to the ground floor only.

Architectural qualities

There are no listed buildings within the character area but groups of buildings, particularly the two blocks of shops and offices in a restrained Festival of Britain style common to much of Southampton rebuilding immediately postwar, make up most of the north-west side of the street and are well proportioned and articulated with good subtle emphasis of the corners.

The older stock of buildings has varied characteristics. Some of the townhouses to the southern section of the street have flat gauged brick arches to the windows and some have had mansard roof extensions with varying success. Adjacent to this, late nineteenth century houses have Dutch gables, slightly projecting bays with large sash windows and moulded and plain string courses. Houses (now offices) to the north have a vaguely early Arts and Crafts Domestic Revival movement feel to them with very well detailed dormers and strong gables with deep eaves to the road frontage.

Heritage Assets

The area is considered to possess a high degree of evidential value due to archaeological evidence for Roman, late Saxon and some medieval occupation within the area. The area largely served as agricultural land until the first half of the nineteenth century. Archaeological potential relates to prehistoric and Roman, late Saxon and medieval occupation and use of the area. Accordingly the area lies within a Local Area of Archaeological Importance to reflect this potential to yield evidence for past activity in the area.

The character area includes a very small section of the Carlton Crescent Conservation Area which relates primarily to the setting of Carlton Crescent and the adjacent former Ordnance Survey offices (Grade II listed). The value of historic associations (based on the importance of these buildings in military history) between London Road and the Ordnance Survey Offices should be considered more fully. There are no listed buildings within the character area.

Materials

Materials are traditional. The predominant walling mate-

rial is red/orange brick, contrasted with deeper reds for the arches in the older buildings. There is a good survival of contemporary 1950s materials such as slate panels, pre-stressed concrete architraves and metal framed windows. There is some stonework – seen particularly on the bank buildings to emphasise their ground floors. This appears to be Portland stone. There is also some clay tile hanging and painted render.

Roofs, where seen, are a mix of natural slate, Cornish Delabole slate (Old Bank House) and clay tiles.

It is disappointing to see poor quality design, materials and finishes to the shopfronts of London Road particularly the materials and scale of the fascias and signage generally.

Condition

This character area is in a reasonable to good condition. The public realm has been recently refurbished and remodelled and it is expected that this will encourage investment in the shops. The shops are generally well maintained and in good repair.

Ownership

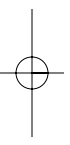
Multiple ownership.

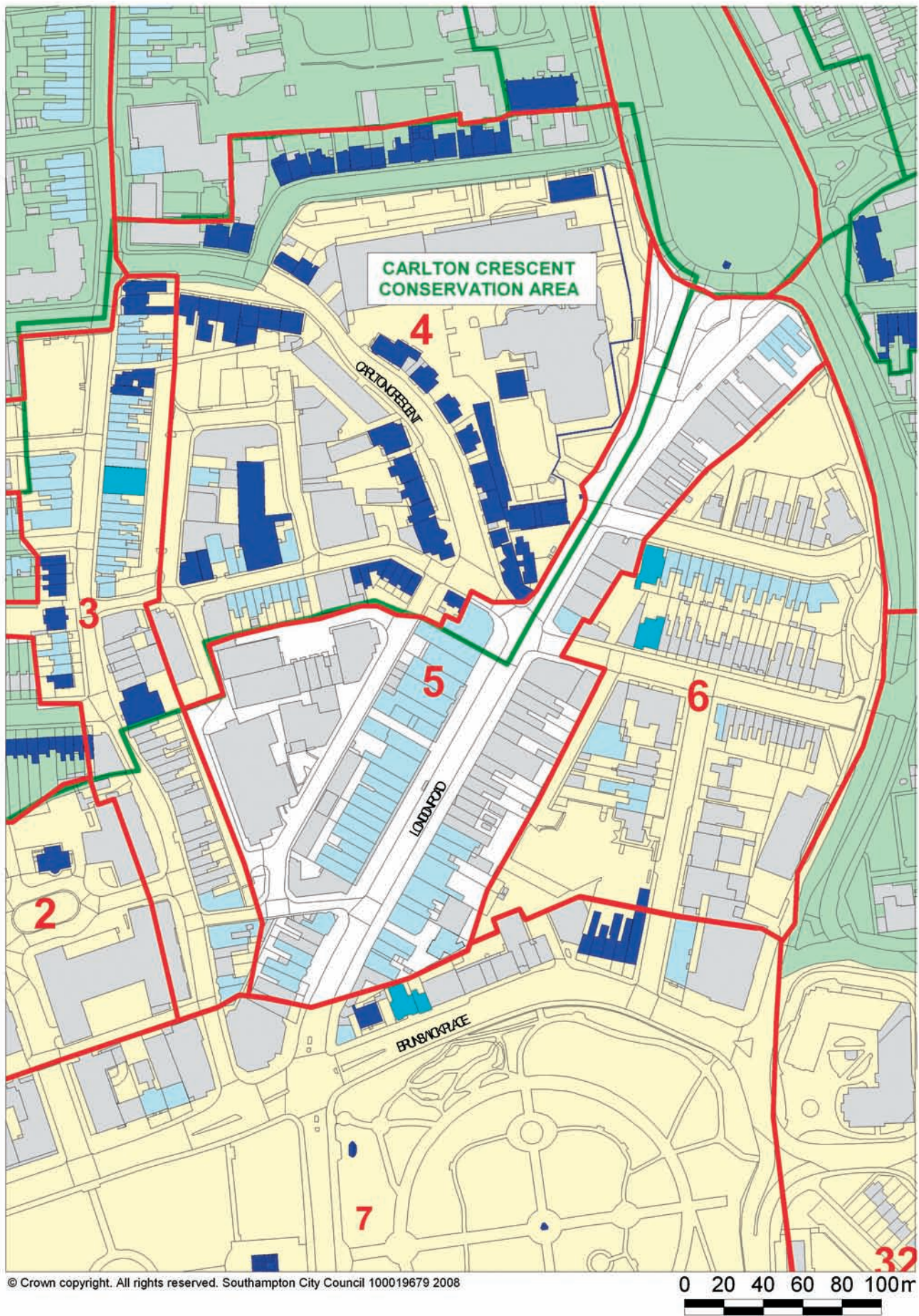
Intervention

- It is regrettable that the new lighting columns have such a significant impact on the important views to the campanile of the Civic Centre.
- Increase the number of street trees to the northern part of the street.
- Continue surface treatments to Vernon Walk and rationalise street signage and replace bollards.
- Continue to encourage and enhance pedestrian connectivity between London Road and Bedford Place.

Key design principles

- Ensure corners continue the subtle emphasis seen throughout London Road.
- Height of new buildings not to exceed three storeys so as to retain consistency to built form and the dominance of the Civic Centre campanile in extended views.
- Encourage by development, signage and street finishes connectivity between London Road and Bedford Place.





Heritage Assets

