

# Chapter 7

## Legibility.

### 7.1 Creating memorable streets

### 7.2 Public art

'We shape our buildings and  
thereafter they shape us'.

WINSTON CHURCHILL



*The dramatic presence of boldly detailed tall buildings can add greatly to the urban scene.*



*The green roof to the right is sufficiently strongly designed and memorable to support legibility although there is a poor contextual relationship between this and the buff and white building to the left.*



*Iconographic buildings help local legibility and the image of the place in both regional and national context.*



*The shading devices on this building add interest to the skyline.*

## 7.0 LEGIBILITY

### 7.1 Creating memorable streets

#### Objective

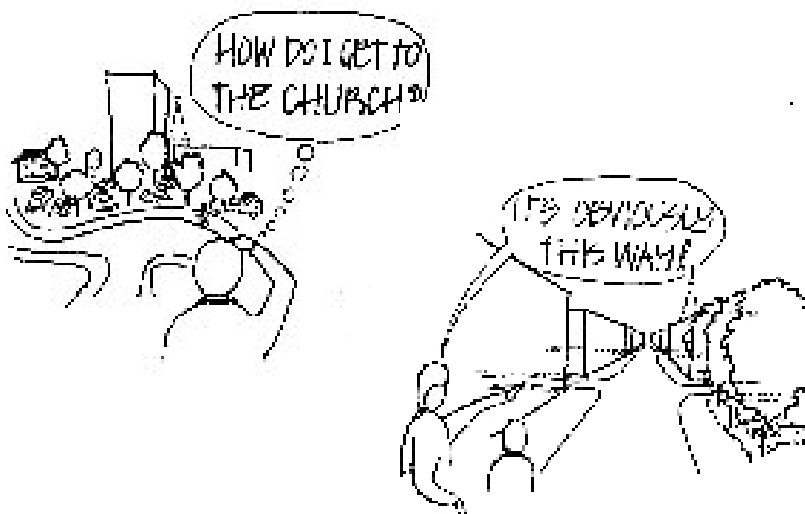
To ensure that new and existing streets are appealing and easy for people to find their way around.

This section supports Local Plan policies SDP 8iii, 9ii, 11i and 17, requiring useable, attractive and well lit public routes. Enhancing the arrival experience and movement through the City is a key theme of the CCUDS (pp. 40-41).

#### 7.1.1 Views and orientation

This section relates to views from the public realm and not views from private property. Development cannot be controlled to protect views from private properties.

Memorable views help people find their way around the city and help shape local distinctiveness. Any links between major development sites and notable features, such as landmark buildings or the waterfront, may be emphasised by the creation of view corridors within which a route or linear park could be created. Built form should be used to help define and frame the view.



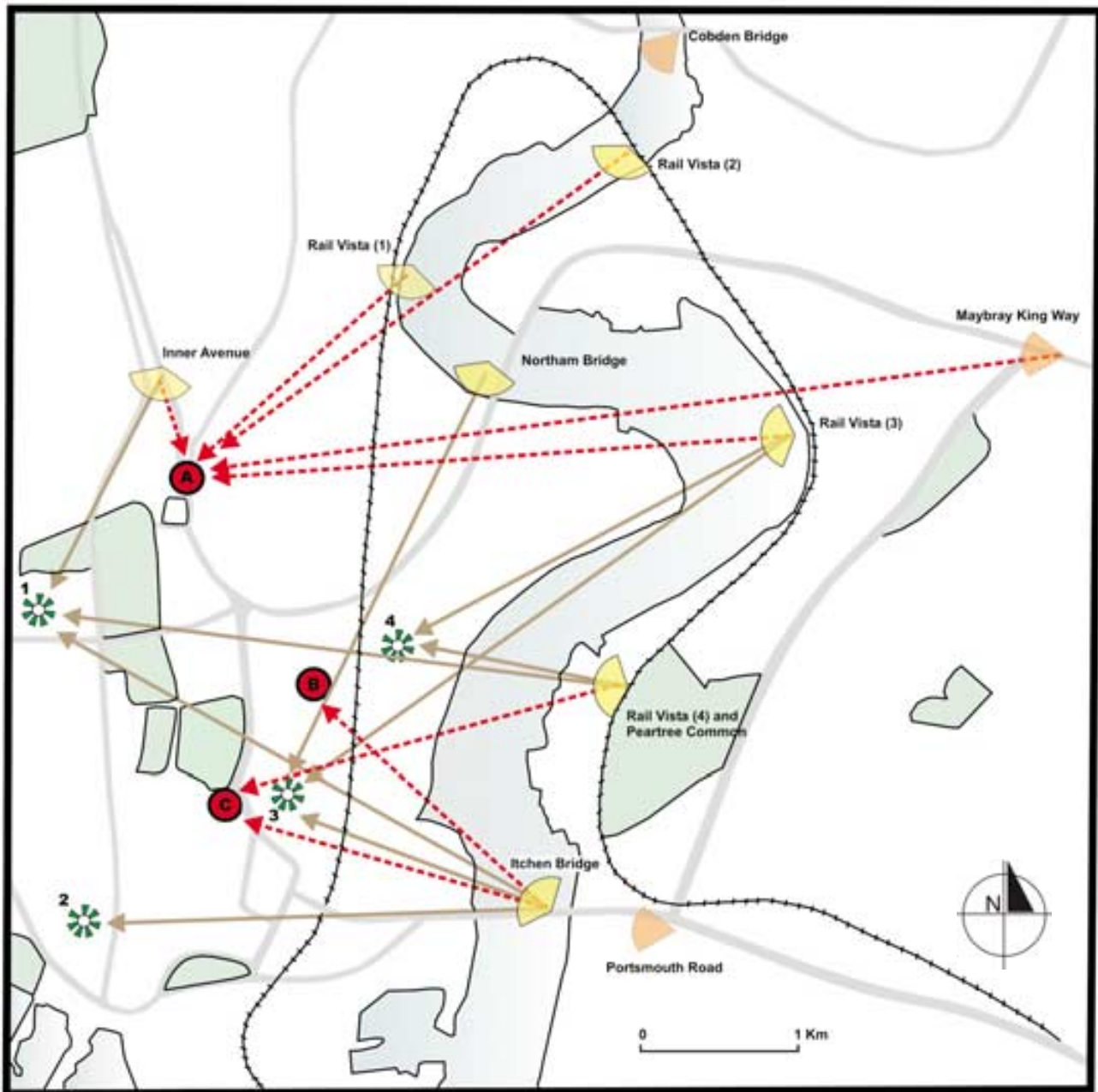
Plans 7.1 (a) to (c) identify the primary viewpoints of the City Centre. These are defined as those views of the City Centre that are seen by a large number of people. These are the most critical views in terms of the establishment of the Southampton 'brand' in visitors' minds, and for the general aesthetic enjoyment of users. The plans identify a series of visual links between the viewpoints and important landmarks which are to be conserved as far as possible.




The views of the City Centre vary in quality. Some of the poorest quality are located on the busiest routes. For example those from Mountbatten Way (over 60k vehicles per day), Western Esplanade (50k vehicles per day), Northam Bridge (50k vehicles per day) are particularly poor. The view from the upper decks of P&O liners docked at the terminal (used by 300k passengers per year) is also poor. Views from the rail vista points 1-3 are also poor.




Plans 7.1 (a) to (c) also identify buildings which have the worst impact on the City Centre skyline. There are various options for mitigating the impact of these buildings:

- Refurbishment of existing buildings including possible recladding
- Mitigation of impact on views from primary routes by directing new development to a position where it restricts the view of the eyesore, or by planting trees in locations which obscure it.

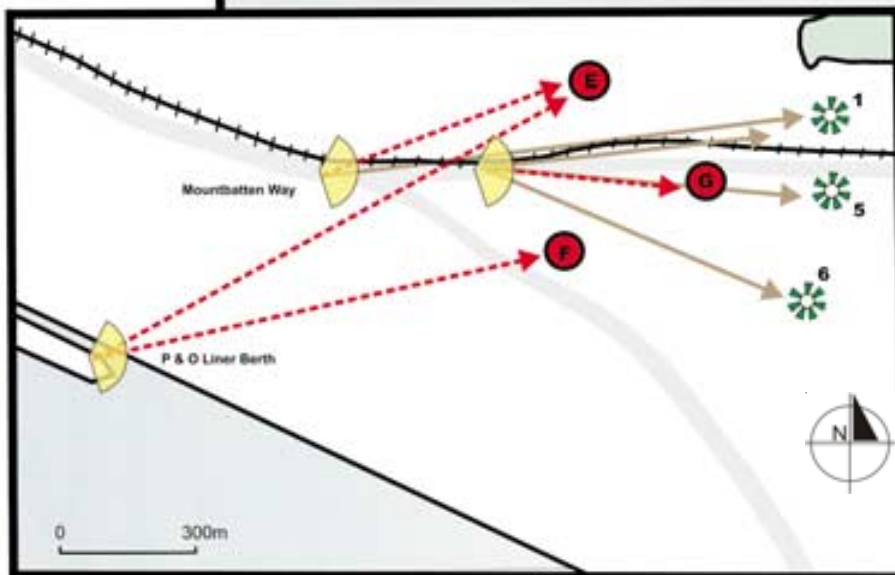
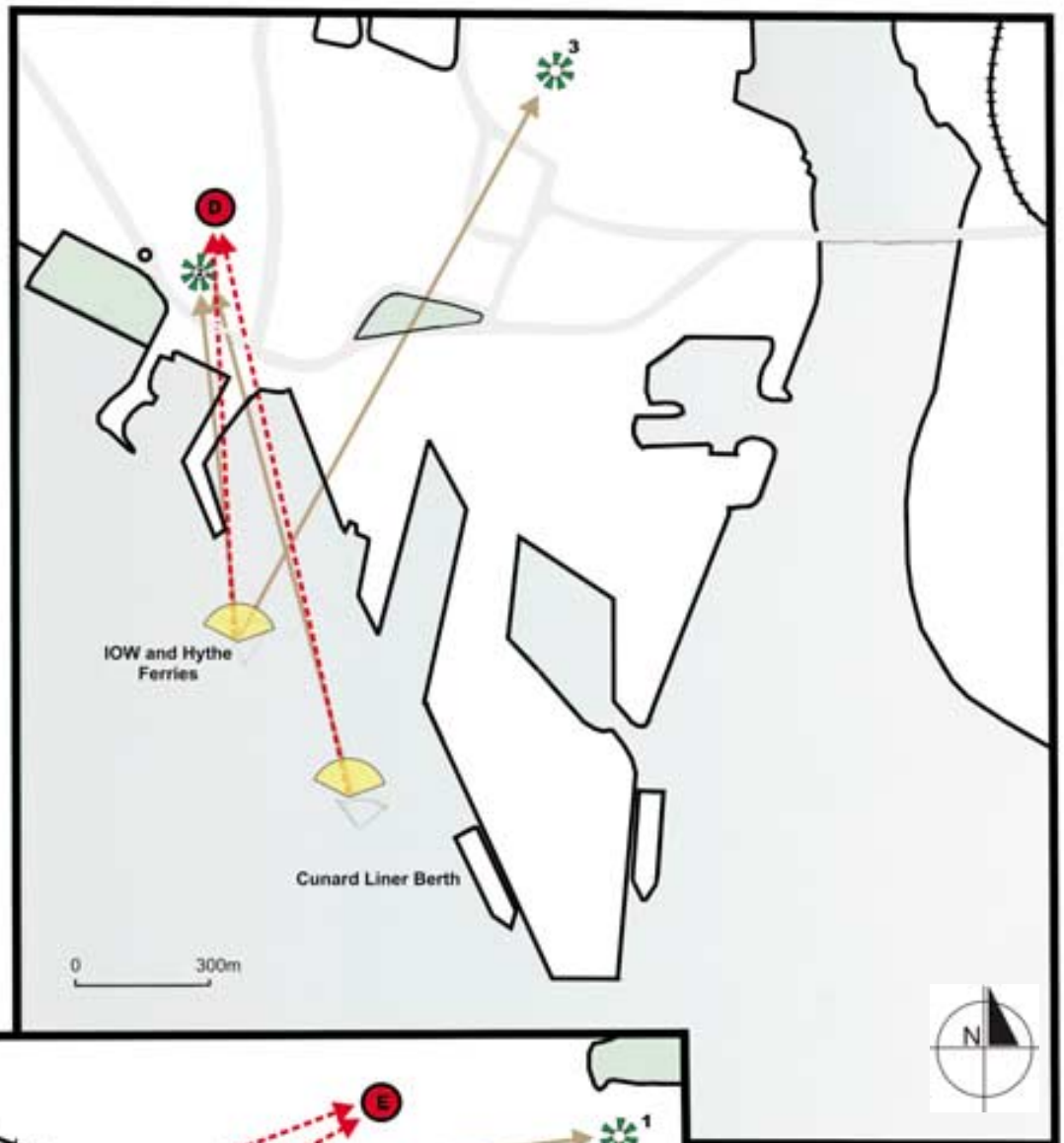
Plan 7.1(a) PRIMARY VIEWPOINTS OF THE CITY CENTRE FROM NORTH AND EAST



-  Primary viewpoints of the city centre ; those that are passed by large numbers of people
-  Secondary viewpoints
-  Existing key landmarks that have a positive impact on views from any of the primary viewpoints:
  1. Clock tower
  2. St Michael's spire
  3. St Mary's spire
  4. St May's Stadium
  5. Scandia Life
  6. West Quay

-  Buildings which have a negative impact on views of the city centre from one of the primary viewpoints:
  - A. Orion Point
  - B. Albion Towers
  - C. Capitol House
  - D. Castle House
  - E. Nelson Gate & Frobisher House
  - F. Novotel
  - G. Toys R Us
-  Visual links between viewpoints and landmarks that should be conserved as far as possible
-  Visual links between primary view points and buildings with a negative impact

**Plan 7.1(b)**  
PRIMARY  
VIEWPOINTS  
OF THE CITY  
CENTRE FROM  
THE SOUTH



**Plan 7.1 (c)** PRIMARY VIEWPOINTS OF THE CITY CENTRE FROM THE WEST

Plan 7.2 identifies the views and vistas **from** the City Centre. These include views within the City Centre and of landmarks outside it such as St Mary's Church spire, St Mary's Stadium and the waterfront area. The City has a close relationship with the sea and maritime activity. The major views of the waterfront and shipping activity safeguard the City's seaport character. Views of the port, the maritime environment and beyond are seen through buildings and the infrastructure of the City.

Photographs illustrating Views 1-8 identify vistas vulnerable to change. The view from Arundel Tower is from a closely defined point. For all other views it is the intention to protect views of all or part of the objects within the red box.

**Design Principle 7.i: Developments should respect and make the most of existing major views of the City Centre (Plans 7.1a to c) and within and from the City Centre (Plan 7.2). Sections of views from the City highlighted with a red box on the view photographs are to be protected. These and other views that help define the relationships between the City Centre, historic townscape and the active and dynamic port, are particularly important to the conservation of Southampton's character.**



**View 1.** Looking south-west along West Park Road to Western Docks, showing protected view envelope enclosed by the red line.



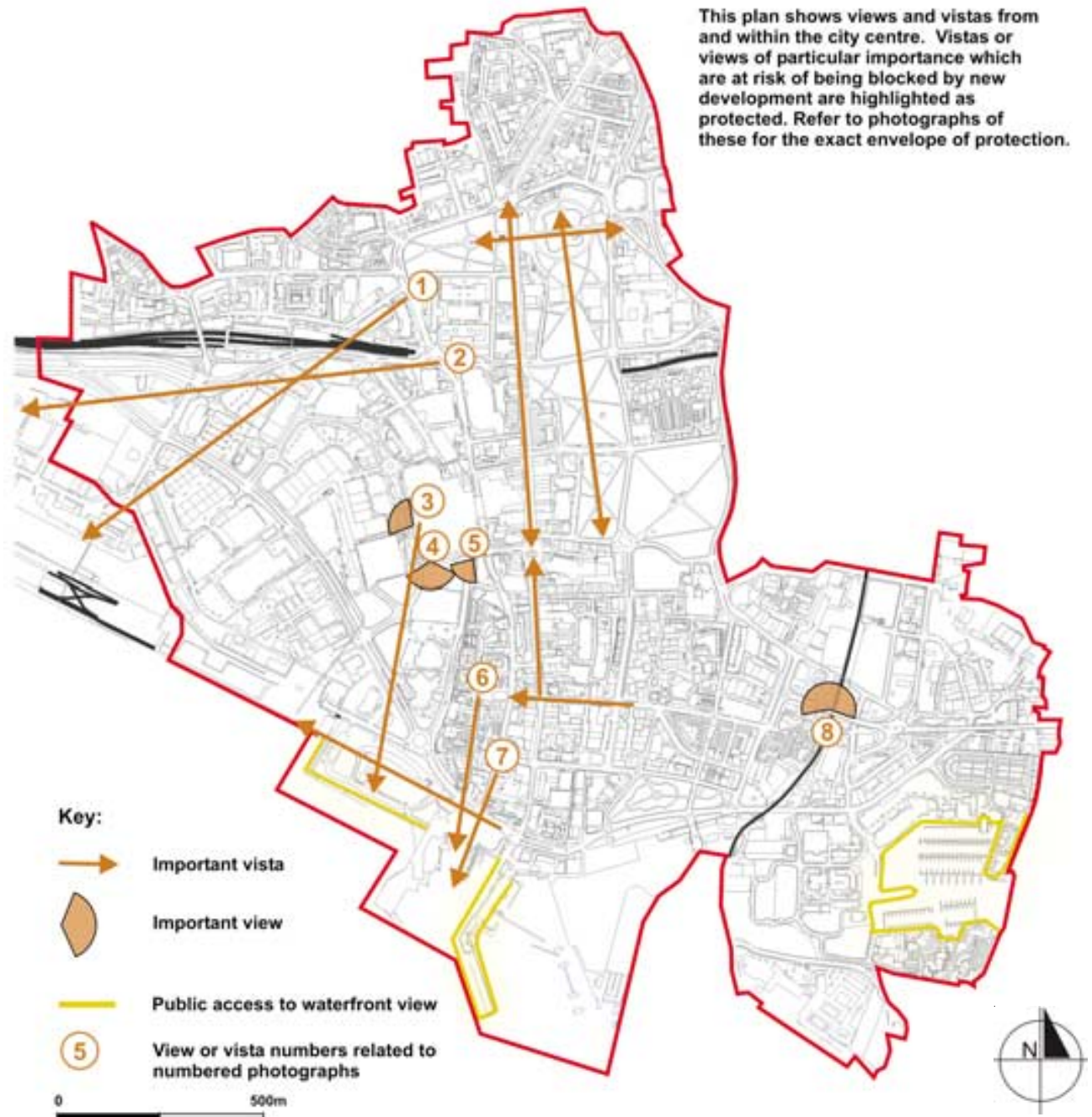
**View 2.** Looking west from Civic Centre environs to Western Docks, showing protected view envelope enclosed by the red line.



**View 3.** From West Quay food court terrace looking west, showing protected view envelope of waterfront and shipping activity enclosed by the red lines.

Plan 7.2 VIEWS AND VISTAS FROM THE CITY CENTRE.

This plan shows views and vistas from and within the city centre. Vistas or views of particular importance which are at risk of being blocked by new development are highlighted as protected. Refer to photographs of these for the exact envelope of protection.



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**View 4.** From West Quay external terrace outside M&S's café looking south, showing protected view corridor in the red box.



**View 5.** From the top of Arundel Tower; sufficient glimpses of maritime activity and horizon line should be maintained.



**View 6.** Bugle Street looking towards the waterfront, showing the protected vista envelope in the red box.



**View 7.** French Street looking towards the waterfront, with the protected vista envelope in the red box.



**View 8.** From Central Bridge showing protected view corridors to St Mary's Church and the stadium.





*The City Centre skyline from Peartree Green with the Hovermarine factory in the centre. The factory roof is highly intrusive and dominates the view.*



*This sketch illustrates how the impact of the factory on the skyline is mitigated using a slightly modified roof design and darker colour finish.*



*St Mary's Church, just beyond the eastern boundary of the City Centre, is dominant in most views of the City Centre from the east side.*

### 7.1.2 The sky's the limit

Buildings that will have an impact on the skyline should be designed to create a positive contribution to it. This is especially important in highly visible locations such as on or near the waterfront on the eastern side of the City Centre which is visible from the eastern bank of the Itchen and the west facing residential areas above.

Care should be taken to ensure that the colour, materials and form of development do not conflict with surrounding buildings. Roof gardens that provide glimpses of high level vegetation can add substantially to the quality of the skyscape.

A varied roofscape may enrich the skyline as viewed from street level. However, potentially unsightly plant, ventilation equipment and elevator shafts on roof tops should either be architecturally celebrated as part of an integral design or enclosed beneath the roof.



*St Michael's Church is located in the Old Town. Its spire is an important landmark in the southern part of the City Centre.*



*Marker feature on high density social housing - Birmingham.*



*A successful corner feature on Above Bar Street, Southampton.*



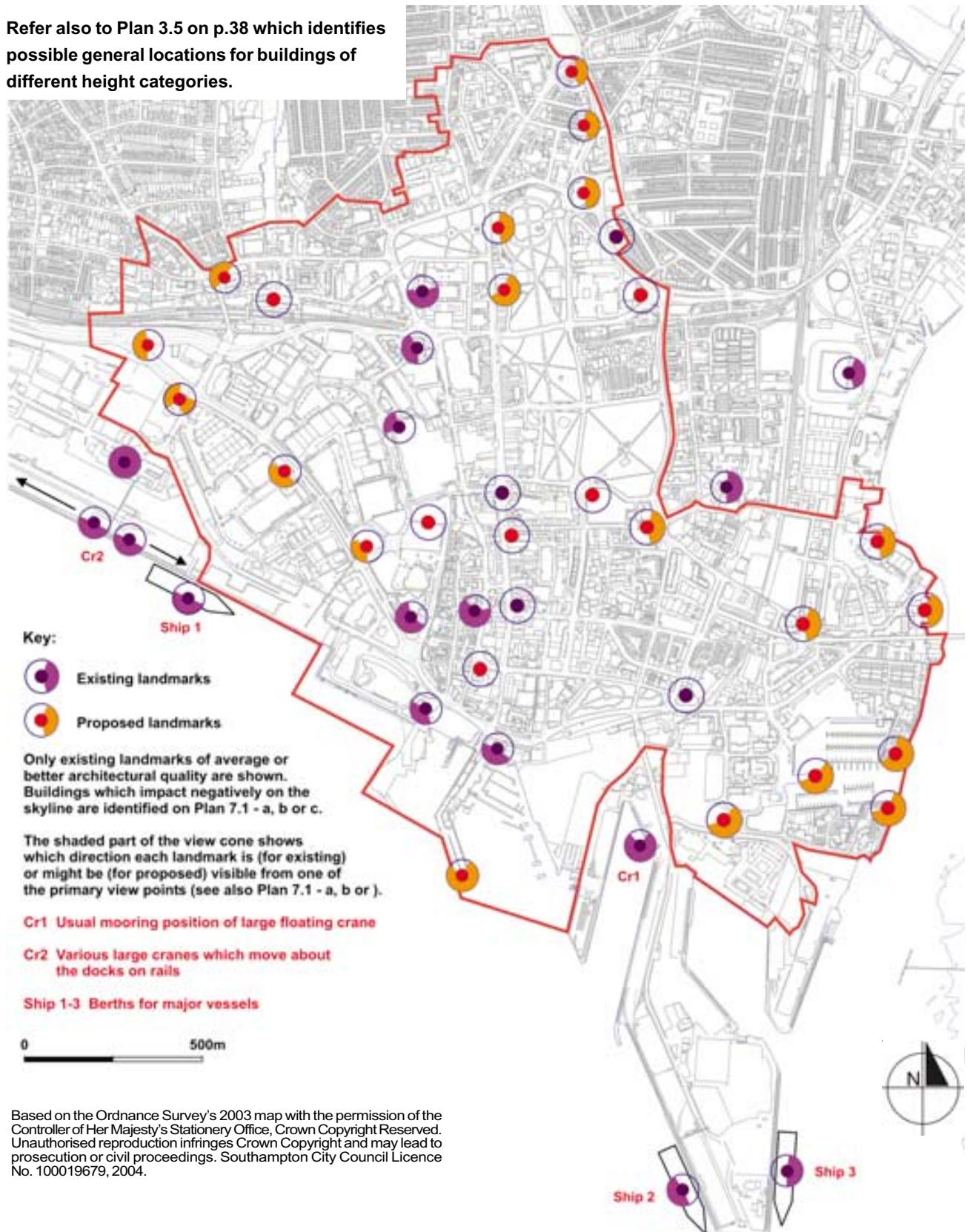
*Whilst not every landmark needs to be a tall building, Auckland's sky tower is a good example of how a building can provide a point of reference for a whole city centre.*



*The strong entrance feature to the BBC building in Southampton acts as a marker feature.*

Plan 7.3 LANDMARKS

Refer also to Plan 3.5 on p.38 which identifies possible general locations for buildings of different height categories.



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Corner detail - Kreuzberg, Berlin.



Corner feature - University of East London.  
© Edward Cullinan Associates



Due weight is given to the corner of this building overlooking a public space - Manchester.

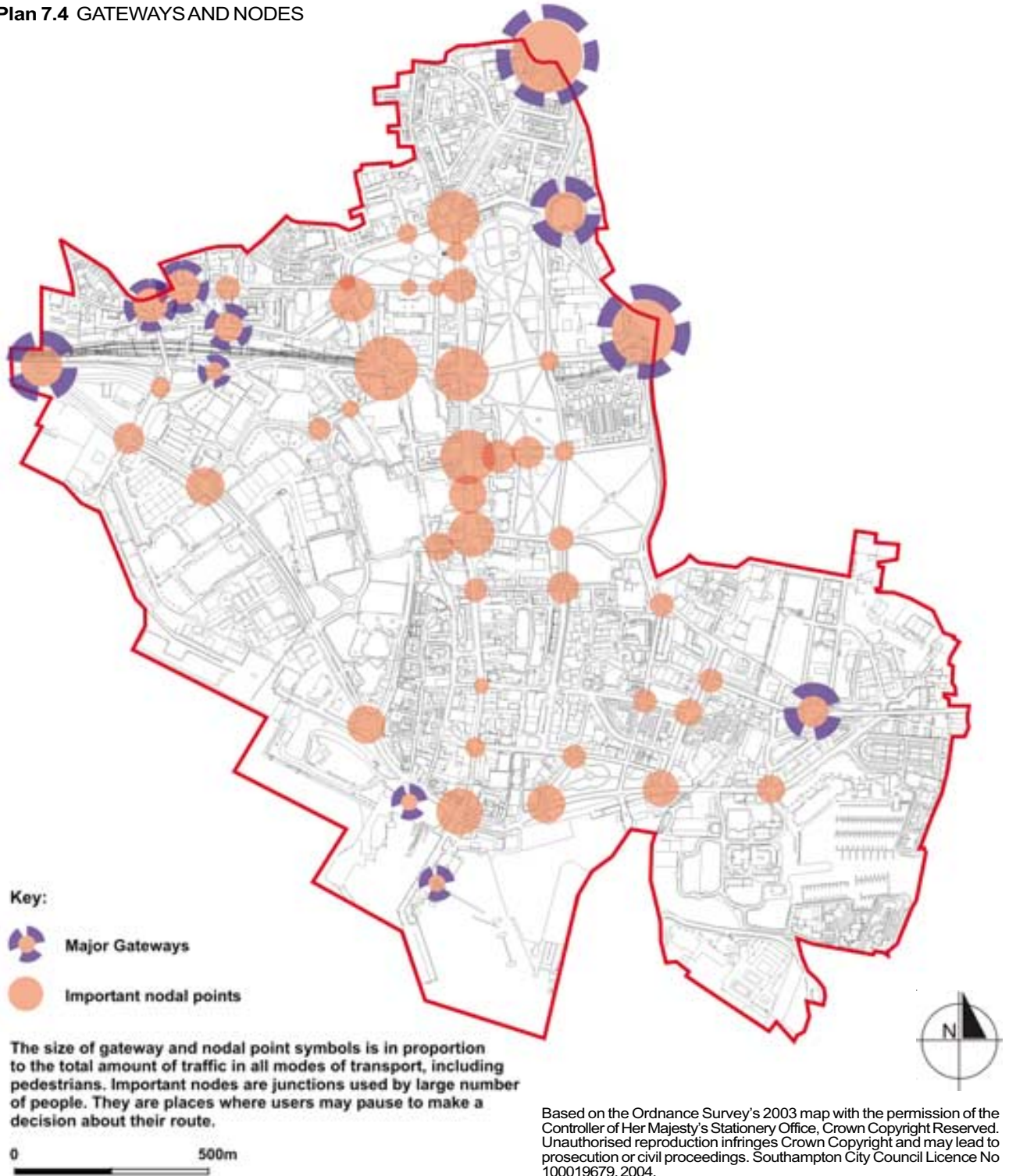
### 7.1.3 Gateways and corners

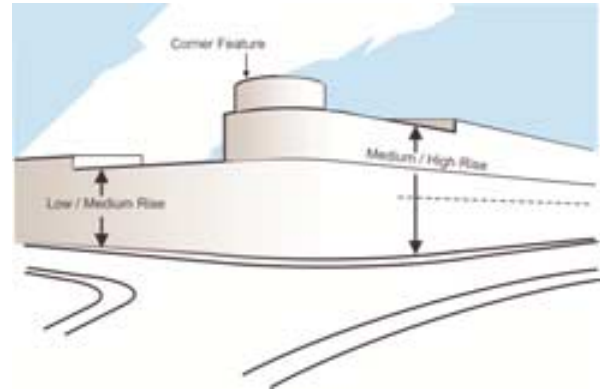
Gateway and corner sites have a visual prominence which warrants special buildings or features, and/or special uses. These are the key points of decision in the townscape where people pause before choosing a route. The most important corners are those located at major gateways. Plan 7.4 identifies the major gateways. Most of these are very poor quality townscapes. The two most important gateways, Mountbatten Way and Six Dials are arguably the least attractive. Enhancement of the quality of all gateways would have a major impact on the image of the city. Buildings at these sites should therefore be of landmark quality. Buildings on other corners should be designed with emphasis appropriate to their location in the street hierarchy (Plans: 4.3, 4.4 and 7.4 can be used to assess the relative importance of corner sites).

Corner buildings may be used to divide the scale of buildings between one street and another. If possible there should be a prominent entrance at the corner point. Buildings should face both streets and allow adequate sight lines for turning vehicles.

**Design Principle 7.ii: The importance of gateway and other corner sites in the hierarchy of City Centre streets should be reflected in the design and scale of any development proposals on these sites (see Plans 7.4, 4.3, and 4.4).**

**Plan 7.4 GATEWAYS AND NODES**





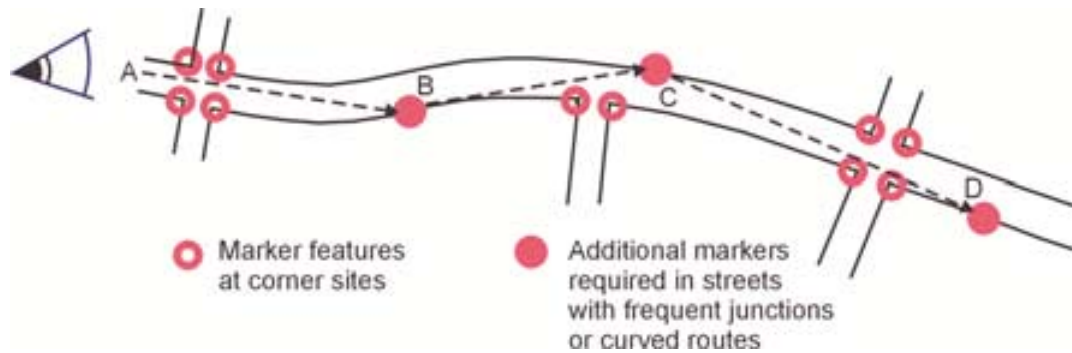
*Corners are an ideal place to change the scale of development.*

*The dished corner of this building acknowledges the corner site but the prematurely weathering galvanised steel columns finish weakly at the top balcony and the feature fails to deliver appropriate emphasis.*

© Edward Cullinan Architects



*Emphasising corners: proposal for Canon's Marsh, Bristol.*



*Streets are perceived as a series of visual segments. Put together, these segments form sequences. Designers of major developments should include a series of marker features to help make routes memorable. These are best included as building features on corners, or in mid block position.*

#### 7.1.4 Landmarks and townscape sequence

Creating landmarks is a key theme of the CCUDS (p46/7). Major landmarks, including tall buildings, will be considered in the following situations:

- Main points of arrival, orientation or activity such as nodes
- The waterfront, particularly at pier ends
- Sites with a park frontage (up to 10-15 storeys)
- Buildings which will provide or reinforce desirable local character and identity.

Plan 7.3 identifies existing landmarks and locations for new ones. Refer also to section 3.2.1 High Fliers in this document and the CCUDS, p.47 'Creating Landmarks'. The following paragraph exemplifies how tall buildings might assist the visual framework and identity of the City.

Tall buildings will be considered around Central station. This is a key rail and road gateway area. It is also in a hollow so tall buildings are less likely to detract visually from the established civic heart to the east. Tall buildings in the Charlotte Place area (MSA 3 in the Local Plan) will be highly visible from viewpoints to the north, east and south-east. They should also create a significant focal point to distract from the existing unattractive landmark of Orian and Meridian Point office blocks.

On roads where the junctions are widely spread or where roads are angled or curved, additional marker features may be needed at a roughly intermediate position between corners: see diagram above. Marker features are most important on the primary vehicular and pedestrian routes (see Plans 4.3 and 4.4). Features such as emphasised gables or projecting bays and balconies on buildings, trees or sculpture act as mini-landmarks which people use to orientate themselves. Subtle changes in route direction can be introduced in developments large enough to need new streets.

In exceptional circumstances and by agreement with the Council buildings aligned slightly in front of the building line may be used to emphasise a corner building or create a visual break in the route, whilst not destroying the sense of progression. Designers should ensure that such buildings do not unduly restrict pavement width.

**Design Principle 7iii: Major developments and, where applicable, individual buildings should utilise landmarks, marker features and other townscape measures to enhance the overall quality and legibility of the City's streets.**

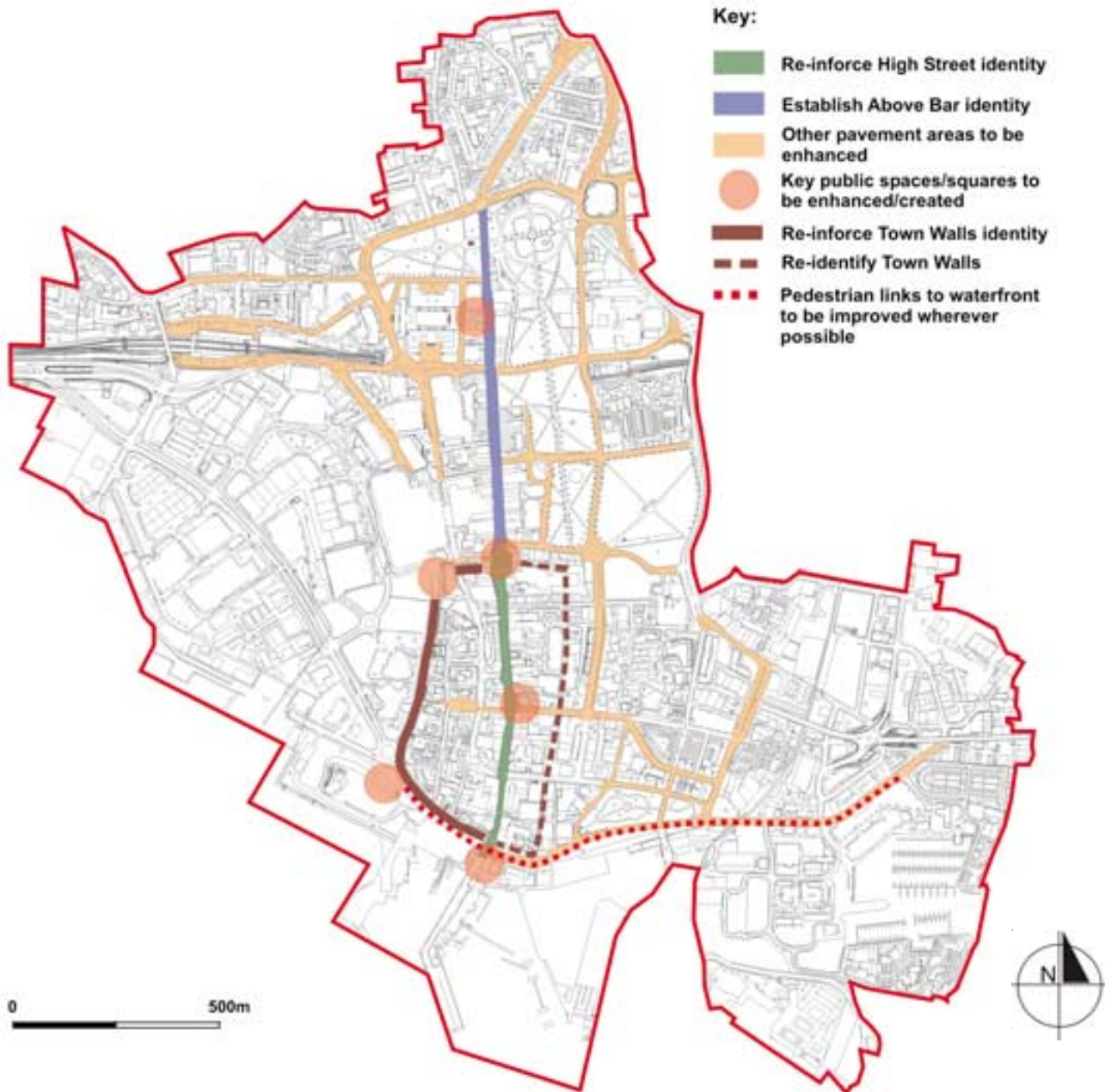
7.1.5 Public realm enhancement

The North/South Spine Strategy identifies a series of proposals for enhancement of the central route bisecting the City Centre. Fed by the Inner Avenue and London Road to the north, the spine runs from Cumberland Place, along Above Bar and the High Street towards Town Quay. The recent program of restoration of the Central Parks has underlined the

immense contribution they make to the character of the City Centre. Enriching the public realm is also a key theme of the CCUDS (pp. 44-45).

**Design Principle 7.iv: The unique character/setting of the North/South spine; City Plaza, the Central Parks, Queen’s, Vokes and Mayflower Parks should be respected and enhanced through any development proposals which front onto them.**

Plan 7.5 PROPOSALS FOR ENHANCEMENT OF HARD LANDSCAPE



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*Lighting enhancing the public realm in addition to reinforcing the corporate name of this building tenant, and creating a whole new way of seeing the building.*



© Chetwood Associates

*J. Sainsbury, Clapham, London.*

### 7.1.6 Lighting

Lighting provided by the City Council will provide the level of ambient light essential for comfortable vision along public pavements, roads and in parks. The Council may require developers to enhance or

upgrade street lighting as part of their works. This is likely to involve 'white' lighting sources that will improve the rendition of colour, help reduce the fear of crime and improve the efficiency of CCTV cameras. The following paragraphs provide advice for the lighting of buildings and spaces on privately owned land. Selective and sensitive lighting with subtleties of tone and contrast, light and shadow, can enliven and celebrate buildings.

### 7.1.7 Illuminating building frontages

The illumination of building frontages will greatly improve the night time ambience and legibility of the City Centre. Buildings which should be illuminated include those providing public services and those identified in this guide as being at landmark locations. Buildings on corner sites and buildings of architectural or historical significance should also be illuminated. The illumination of buildings not in the above categories should be determined on a site by site basis. The less important a building is in the hierarchy of urban buildings, the less it should be considered for illumination. The opportunity for introducing coloured and moving light as a special feature should be considered when designing the illumination of landmark buildings.

### 7.1.8 Light pollution

Lighting schemes should be produced by experienced lighting designers in a way which minimises unwanted light spillage. Light pollution can adversely affect residential developments as well as limiting views of the night sky. The Institute of Lighting Engineers has drafted a set of guidance notes for the reduction of light pollution, which should be followed.

**Design Principle 7.v: The lighting of a building should be appropriate to its relationship to the hierarchy of buildings in the townscape (as determined by the context appraisal).**



Architecture as art - Los Angeles.



Humour in public art - New Plymouth.



Quizical public art - Cheltenham.



De Barones Shopping Centre, Breda, The Netherlands.

© CZWG



Public art - Bristol.



Public art can be temporary.

## 7.2 Public art

### Objective

To enhance legibility, local character and identity and stimulate emotions.

### 7.2.1 Art in public places

The Council operates the 'Percent for Art Scheme' (see also Local Plan policy SDP8iv). This is a mechanism by which a proportion of the capital cost of public or private sector building development or refurbishment is allocated for the commissioning of contemporary works of art. The work of artists or craftspeople should be integral with that of Architects and Landscape Architects.

### 7.2.2 About public art

The defining quality of Public Art lies in the artist's or designer's intent and the integrity of ideas or concepts which inform the relationship between an artwork and the nature and context of a specific place or site.

### 7.2.3 About the artwork

The artwork may make reference to the social, cultural or historical context for which it is intended. It may make connections with local history, not in the sense of simply explaining heritage, but in a way that reveals, intrigues or provokes inquiry.

Most importantly an artist approaches a site specific commission in a way that is sensitive to the quality or character of a place and to its physical aspect, function, usage or local meaning and so responds in such a way as to enhance a sense of identity or local distinctiveness. The public artworks that arise from this process have relevance and a connection with their immediate surroundings. They become an intrinsic part of the townscape, forming a reference point for local people and visitors.



*Art that encourages touch - Bristol.*



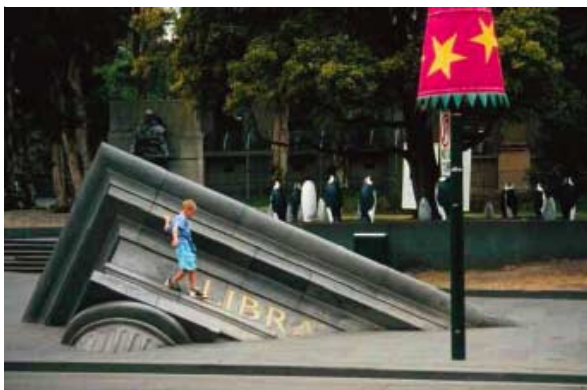
*'Big Saint' by Martin Donlin - St Mary's Stadium, Southampton.*

Public art encompasses many areas of work, from permanent sculpture for specific sites, to artists collaborating with professional design teams integrating their creative ideas and work into the fabric of the built or natural environment, to temporary or ephemeral projects or interventions.

**Design Principle 7.vi: Major developments will be expected to include the provision of works of art integrated into architecture or in public places and this will be encouraged through the Percent for Art Scheme.**



*Sculpture in West Park - Southampton.*



*Art as a plaything - Melbourne.*



*Public art - Bristol.*