Figure 1:
Study Area

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Southampton City Council 100019679 2008

City Centre Action Plan Boundary
Southampton City Council
Adminstrative Boundary

A Characterisation Appraisal to inform the City Centre Action Plan for the City of Southampton

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Forum Heritage Services and Context[4]D have been commissioned by the Planning and Sustainability Division of Southampton City Council to carry out a comprehensive characterisation study of the City Centre as defined by the City Centre Action Plan (CCAP) boundary (Figure 1). This document is intended to assist the City Council through the process of delivering a sustainable Local Development Framework for the City of Southampton.

1.2 Purpose of the document

This study will:

- be a key background resource to the production of the CCAP and will be integrated into and influence the Council's design guides for new city centre development areas and future master planning within the City.
- enable value judgements to be made leading to robust spatial analysis. It develops analysis set out in *By Design (Urban Design in the Planning System; towards better practice* (DETR/CABE 2000) and *Better places to live: By Design* (DTLR/CABE, 2001) which is directly linked to Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) and to the work of English Heritage on the characterization of urban settlements.
- prescribe values to areas and will enable assessment of the capacity of the City Centre to accommodate development to meet with the range and phasing needs of the South East Plan while reinforcing character and avoiding harm to the significant characteristics of those areas, with particular emphasis on the heritage values and assets of the City.
- provide the necessary base-line information to enable the identification of areas where change could be accommodated or may be desirable and set out broad principles for development.
- clearly define those areas where the heritage of the city is of significant value and vulnerable to change and highlight actions needed to manage those assets.

1.3 Key objectives

This study will:

- help provide the basis for judging the capacity of the City to accommodate change, ensuring that development is 'locally distinctive' and informing the emerging CCAP (LDF) document and related policies, respond to the requirements of PPS1 in the City Centre by ensuring that the Council are able to prepare policies on design, based on a clear understanding and evaluation of the city's present defining characteristics.
- aid Southampton City Council assess whether design fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area including providing a background for development control decisions.
- provide the baseline character analysis that will enable the progressive enhancement of the existing city centre and its conservation areas.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Introduction to urban characterisation

2.1.1 The purpose of undertaking characterisation is to provide a sensible overview of the resource. This is often a case (as it is in Southampton) of bringing together a number of different strands of work and knowledge to provide a cohesive, robust and useable definition of an area's character.

2.1.2 This approach is embedded into the present spatial planning system which promotes the concept of the area action plan, and undertaking the necessary work to establish the baseline for informed decisions to be taken. Planning Policy Statement 1 states:

'Planning authorities should prepare robust policies on design and access. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its present defining characteristics'. (PPS1 Para. 36)

2.1.3 The document has adopted a broad definition of heritage and has used maps and text to assess the historic importance of the area and its qualitative and aesthetic qualities which are broadly termed townscape.

2.1.4 This document is intended to create a framework for analysing context which will include:

■ the identification and qualifying of key characteristics within defined areas.
■ identifying structures that contribute to and result from an area's distinctive character and quality.
■ establish patterns of change through time.
■ utilise GIS-based spatial data systems to display these themes in a clear and simple format.

2.1.5 With specific regard to the heritage values and assets of the city, the concept of '*Informed Conservation'* (Clark, 2001) is especially relevant to the future development of the city.

2.1.6 Given the historic background to Southampton it is especially important to consider the importance of the heritage assets in defining the character of areas. English Heritage guidance *Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment* (April 2008) provides a series of conservation principles which extend to the assessment of the importance of place generally:

■ the historic environment (and general built environment) is a shared resource.
■ everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the environment historic or otherwise.
■ understanding the significance of a place is vital to planning change in that place.
■ significant places need to be managed to sustain their values.
■ decisions about change must be informed, reasonable, transparent and consistent.
■ learning from previous decisions and recording the process is an essential part of developing an understanding of a place.

2.1.7 One of the principal roles of characterisation relates to the process of gaining a better understanding of the wider past and present context of a place, building, or space which can be used to help define value. English Heritage identify four groups of values;

■ **evidential value** – the potential for past evidence of human activity (archaeology buried and standing).
■ **historical value** – the way in which the present is connected to past people, events and aspect of life.
■ **aesthetic value** – the way in which people assimilate a place largely through sensory and quality judgements.
■ **communal value** – the sense of community derived

from the sense of the past in the present and connections through tradition and collective memory.

2.1.8 These values, along with good practice identified in *By Design (Urban Design in the Planning System; towards better practice* (DETR/CABE 2000) and *Better places to live: By Design* (DTLR/CABE 2001) and the *Urban Design Compendium* (English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation 2000) have formed the basis for analysis and driven the assessment on an area by area basis. Significance is identified in each character area as part of the assessment of the heritage assets of an area.

2.2 Criteria for character areas

2.2.1 The Southampton City Centre Action Plan area is large and diverse in character. To make sensible conclusions about the character of any given part of the action plan area it is essential to break this area down into 'sub areas' and define and provide a clear understanding of the elements which make up the character of that given area.

2.2.2 It should be noted that whilst forty-three sub-areas have been identified (Figure 2), the transition between areas is also important and that in decision-making regard must be had to the cohesion of the whole area. In all cases the marked boundary on the map is not intended as a solid barrier but as an indication of where a transition is taking place. In almost all cases connectivity between areas will be encouraged and should be pursued through development opportunities. The character of an area will be inextricably linked to its neighbours, in all cases visually and often as part of a continuation of a routeway – a road or footpath.

2.2.3 This document has developed the work undertaken in the *City Centre Urban Design Strategy* (Southampton City Council 2001) but has fine-tuned this analysis to provide a deeper understanding of the capacity for change, particularly in relation to the sensitivity of the historic assets within the City Centre Action Plan area. For this reason, and given the number of indicators required in the brief and through adopting a best practice approach, it has been necessary to increase the number of character areas from eight to forty-three. This should be seen as a response to the specific requirements of the brief rather than any shortcomings in the *Urban Design Strategy* which had a different set of drivers, aims and objectives. It should also be noted that the CCAP area is larger than that of the *Urban Design Strategy* with the inclusion of St Mary Street environs, the stadium and the Itchen riverside to the eastern side of the city.

2.2.4 The character areas have been defined so that sensible and understandable conclusions and guidance

Figure 2:
Revised Character Areas
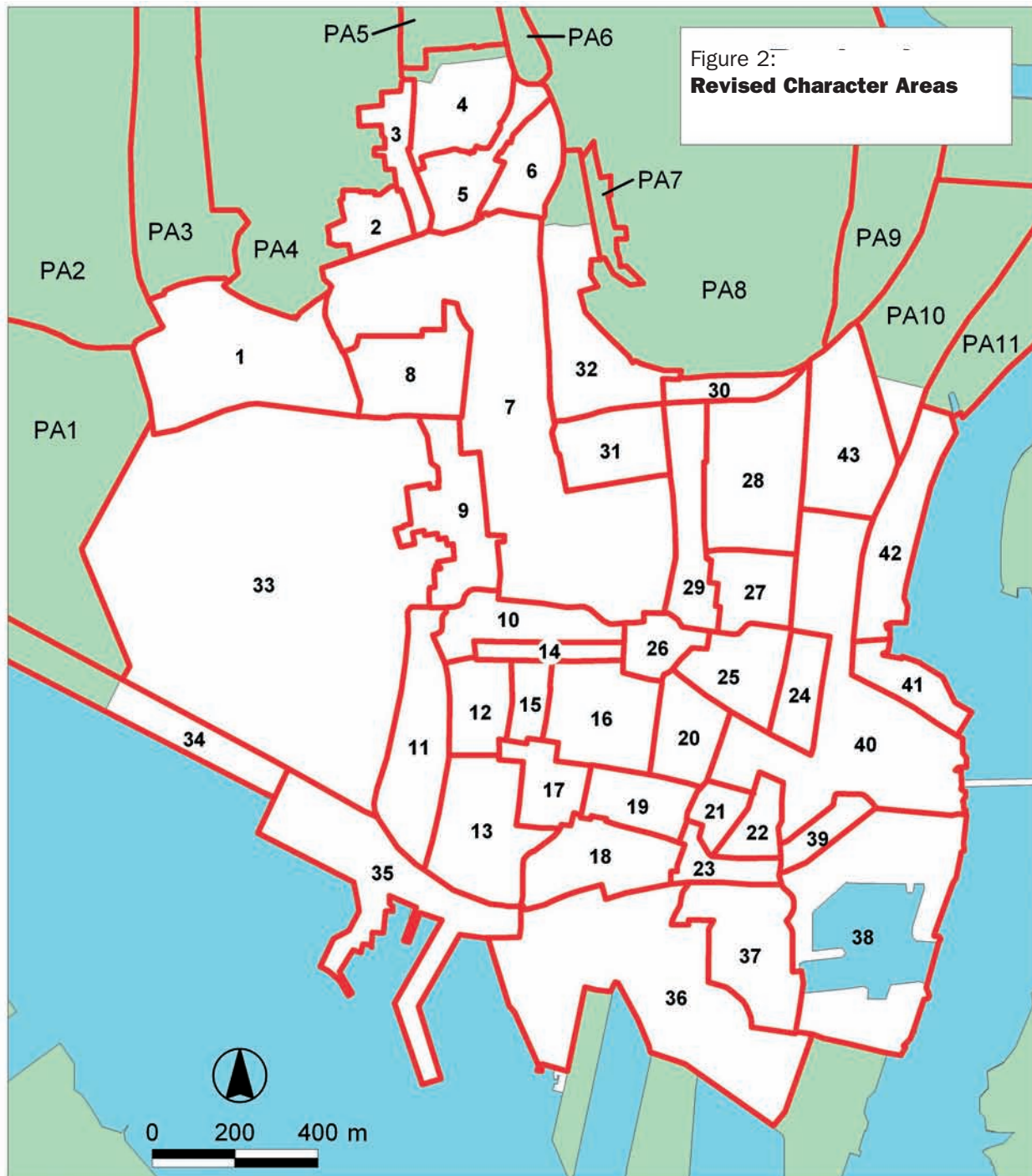
© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Southampton City Council 100019679 2008

CHARACTER AREAS
1. Station Heights
2. Grosvenor Sq
3. Bedford Place
4. Carlton Crescent & Carlton Place
5. London Road
6. Bellevue
7. Central Parks
8. Civic Campus
9. Above Bar
10. Bargate Environs & Hanover Buildings
11. West Gate, Town Walls & the Castle
12. High Street (North)
13. High Street (South)
14. East Street
15. Back of the Walls & Canal Walk
16. Holyrood Estate
17. Queensway, Bernard St. & Brunswick Sq.
18. Queens Park
19. Oxford Street

20. Duke St, Richmond St & College Street
21. Captains Place
22. Royal Crescent Road and Environs
23. Canute Road
24. Chapel Rd
25. Maryfield & Marsh Lane
26. Evans Street & Threefield Lane Environs
27. City College Campus &
        St Mary's Church
28. Golden Grove Estate
29. St Mary St
30. Old Northam Rd
31. Kingsland Estate
32. Solent University, Charlotte Pl. & Environs
33. West Quay
34. Western Docks
35. Mayflower Park, Royal Pier & Town Quay
36. Eastern Docks
37. Ocean Village - commercial
38. Ocean Village - residential

39. Canute Rd & Albert Rd
40. Crosshouse, Central Bridge &
        Melbourne St
41. Itchen Shore - working wharfs (historic)
42. Itchen Shore - working wharfs (modern)
43. St Mary's Stadium

PERIPHERAL AREAS
PA1   Western Docks & Freemantle Ind Area
PA2   Shirley & Freemantle
PA3   Hill Lane
PA4   Polygon
PA5   Fitzhugh
PA6   The Avenue
PA7   St Mary's Rd (commercial core)
PA8   Newtown & Nicholstown
PA9   Northam
PA10 Nertham - Belvidere
PA11 Millbank

can be provided under the following headings:

- Context
- Grain
- Scale
- Uses
- Public realm
- Connectivity
- Views
- Building types
- Architectural qualities
- Heritage values and assets
- Materials
- Condition
- Ownership
- Intervention
- Key design principles

2.2.5 Character areas need to be robust enough to withstand close scrutiny but at the same time be workable and sensible. In some cases the character areas may not exactly fit the aspirations of particular departments within the City Council but this should in no way be a hindrance to the management of change and in all cases it is hoped that this better understanding of the area will lead to better development control decisions and the consolidation and re-focusing of corporate priorities.

2.3 Contents and structure of the character area analysis

2.3.1 The following provides an indication of the structure of each character area analysis within the City Centre Action Plan Area.

Context
The text provides details of the landform, orientation and topography, edges, relationship to other character areas, relationship to water where important and key historic influences.

A location map is provided which puts the character area in the context of the City Centre Action Plan area.

Grain
The text provides an overview of the morphology/street pattern (historic, modern, narrow/broad), blocks, plots, plot grain (fine/medium/coarse), building lines, density, enclosure.

A figure ground is provided to gain a sense of plot size, distribution and relationship to open space and road, lane and footpath widths.

Scale
The text provides details of the size, bulk and massing of built form. The height of buildings is generally referred to by the number of storeys. This is then quantified in

more detailed terms with regard to the roof form; its scale and orientation of the ridge is also defined. The street section where it is felt to be a key consideration is quoted as a ratio of built form to width of the street, thus 1:2:1 would mean the width of the street is (approximately) twice the height of the enclosing buildings.

Tall buildings (defined as eight storeys or more) are noted on the townscape map (the number of storeys is provided).

Uses
The type and range of uses and how the mix affects the vitality/vibrancy and also the sense of neighbourhood/community identity/culture is identified.

A separate map (Figure 3) provides an overview of the predominant uses across the City Centre Action Plan area. This is to provide some sense of the focus of particular activities across the Action Plan area.

Public realm
This section highlights the quality of the public spaces between buildings and provides a commentary on existing street furniture, signage, surface treatments, boundary treatments and hard or soft landscaping. Historic paving is recorded on the townscape map. The question of how legible an area is (how easy is it to navigate into, through and beyond the area) is also addressed in this section.

Connectivity
A series of questions are addressed in this section. These are intended to provide a clear sense of how well connected the area is in relation to the rest of the CCAP area and beyond. The following forms the basis of study in this section:

- is the character area well connected or isolated?
- what is the nature of the key linkages?
- are they safe or transitional?
- are they busy?

Key pedestrian routes are identified on the townscape maps.

Views
Important views can be divided into two categories; strategic views and local views, both of which are identified in the text and on the townscape maps:

- Strategic views are generally long views across parts of the city focussed on one of three prominent landmarks or the waterfront as shown in Figure 4. Strategic views are intended to highlight the sensitivities of an area to development and how it could potentially impact on the heritage values and assets of the city. This could be in the form of tall buildings or in
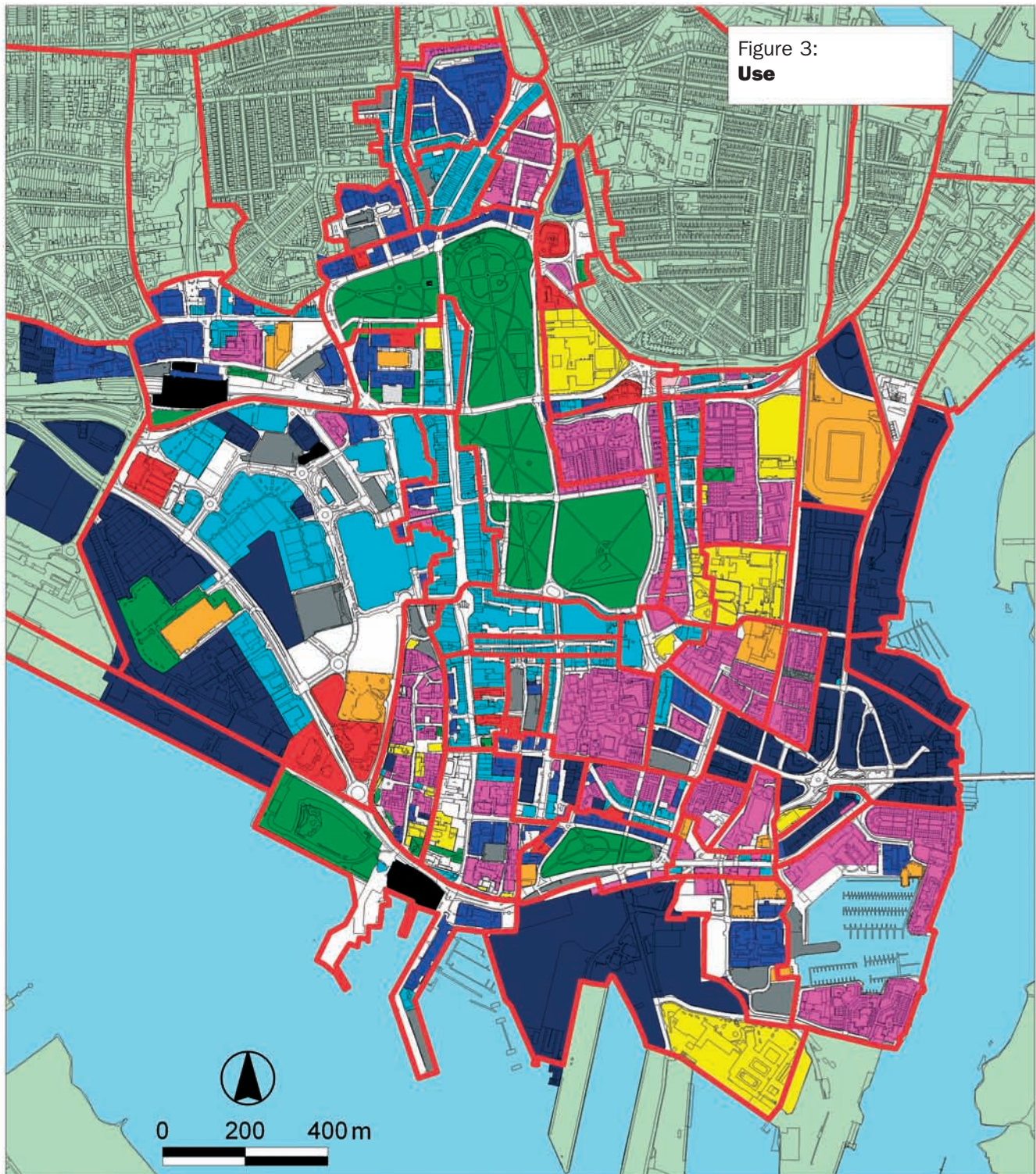
Figure 3:
Use

0   200   400 m

	A1/2/3 Shops, banks, food and drink		Public car park
	B1 (a) and (b) Offices		Transport interchange
	B1 (c), B2 , B8 Industrial and power infrastructure		Public park
	C1/2 Hotels, hospitals		Vacant site
	C3 Residential		
	D1 Places of worship, educational uses, museums, libraries and art galleries		
	D2 Leisure uses		

some cases even modest development may have a negative impact on a heritage asset. The strategic views are divided into four categories and colour coded:

- ■ **Red** views focussed on the campanile of the Civic Centre.
- ■ **Green** views focussed on the spire of St Mary's Church.
- ■ **Purple** views focussed on the spire of St Michael's Church.
- ■ **Blue** views to the waterfront (usually but not completely defined by the cranes to the water's edge).

- ■ Key local views are identified in the text. Their character is defined as follows:

- ■ are they a fixed view to a static object from one location?
- ■ are they deflected views, terminated views or open vistas?
- ■ do they take in a sequence of buildings and spaces?
- ■ does the view contrast with the enclosure of an adjacent space creating incident and dynamic townscape?

In each case the reason for the view is given, usually the subject; for example, views south down Above Bar Street are terminated by the Bargate. Landmarks are identified and defined as positive or negative.

Building types
The text identifies the broad building types to be found in the area. Housing – townhouses, flats above shops, flat blocks, retirement flats; Industrial – purpose-built or converted small/medium/large units; Commercial – purpose-built commercial – small/medium/large floor-plate shops, retro-fitted shops to earlier buildings, conversions.

Architectural qualities
The text highlights prevalent building periods. It also provides comment on the dominant articulation, rhythm, treatment of frontages (bays, set backs, windows, doors, entrances, colonnades, balconies), formality or informality and other features (such as the lighting of a building or structure).

This section also highlights individual buildings where these are considered exemplars or their detailing or composition merit additional explanation, for example in Carlton Crescent where the high degree of rhythm and repetition to the façades helps them to be read as one composition and which forms an important part of the architectural character of the buildings.

Buildings which are identified for their positive contribution are identified on the townscape maps. In some instances this will be for their architectural quality. Where

this is the case they are usually mentioned in the text.

First floor bow windows, a notable architectural characteristic of some of the early nineteenth century buildings (and later) have been specifically identified on the townscape maps.

Positive frontages are identified on the townscape maps and these will often reflect in part their architectural quality. By default, poor frontages identified on the townscape maps can refer to their poor architectural design in combination with the materials used.

Heritage values and assets
The text highlights the type (scheduled, statutory listed, or locally listed), quality, condition and where appropriate or relevant the accessibility of the heritage asset.

This section identifies whether the area is within a Local Plan (review March 2006) defined Local Area of Archaeological Importance (LAAI). It provides some indication, where possible, of the nature of the likely archaeological deposits as well as identifying key sites and provides some indication of their relative importance, for example Character Area 11: West Gate, Town Walls and Castle – the area is generally regarded as being of national importance in respect of its archaeological remains.

An assessment of the heritage values of the character area is also provided using the headings promoted in the English Heritage publication; *Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment* (April 2008). These are evidential, aesthetic, historical and communal.

Heritage assets are also defined on the heritage assets map. This includes scheduled monuments, statutory listed buildings, locally listed buildings and buildings which make a positive contribution – these will often be traditional (with some twentieth century) buildings of local architectural or historic interest.

An overview of heritage assets is provided in Figure 5. This in particular gives an idea of the relationship of the designated conservation areas of the city compared with the character areas (compare with Figure 2). It also includes statutory listed buildings, locally listed buildings and scheduled monuments.

Materials
The text identifies the predominant types of material and distinguishes where necessary between traditional and modern. The colour, textures, patterning, building techniques, locally distinctive building methods and/or materials are specifically mentioned where they are felt to contribute to the character of the area (though they may not be dominant).
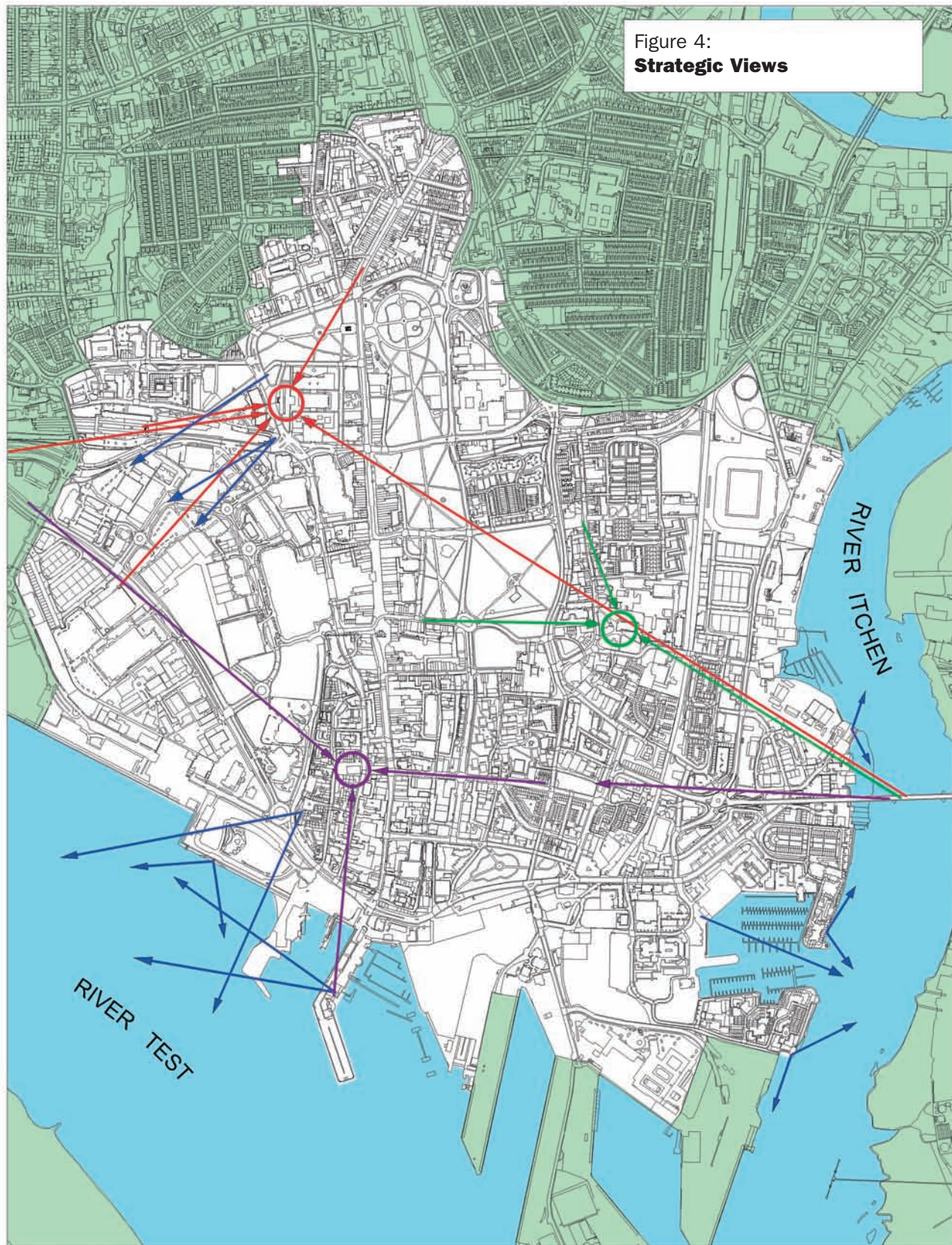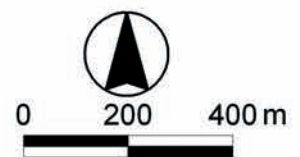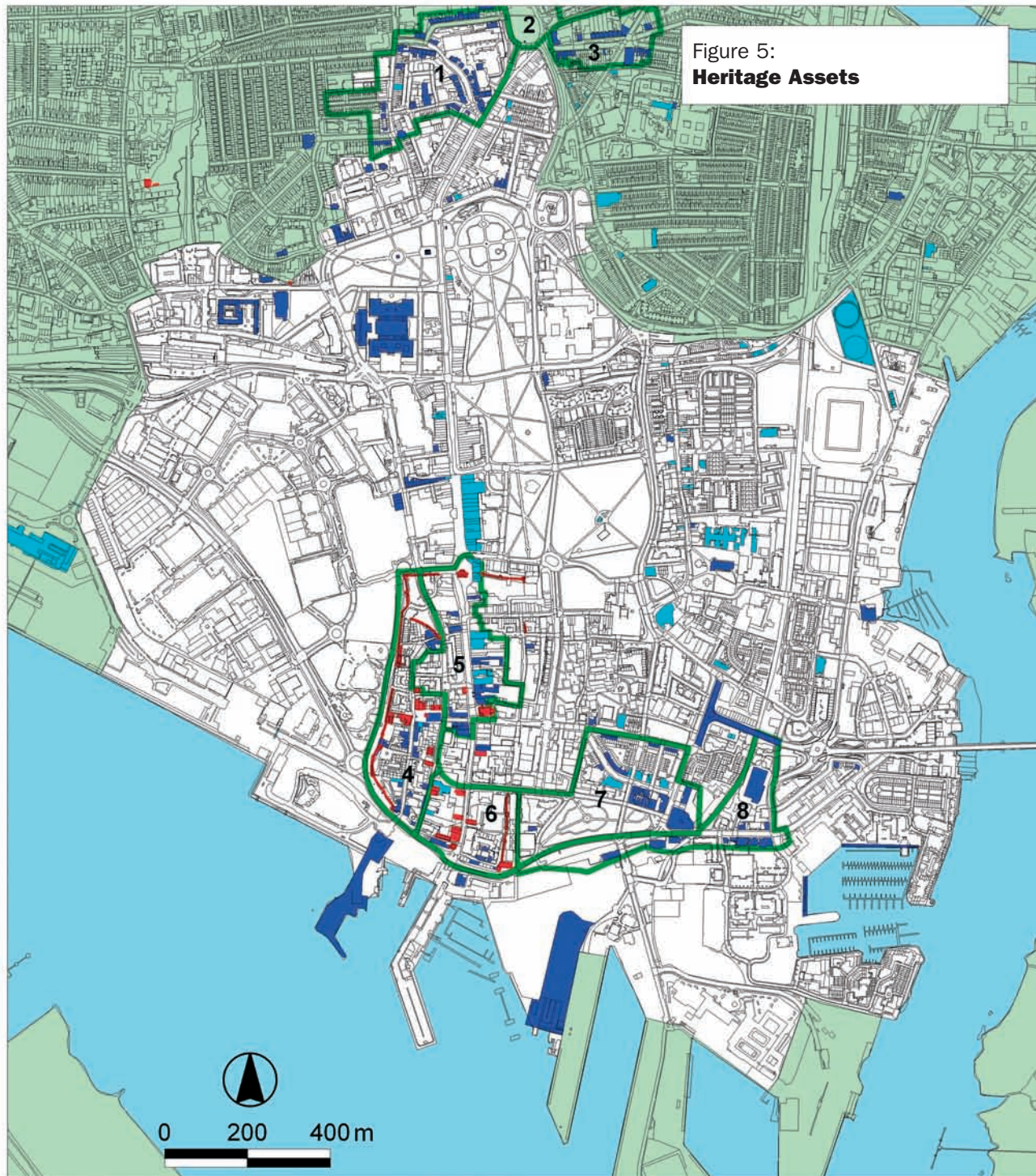
Figure 4:
Strategic Views

RIVER ITCHEN

RIVER TEST

Views to Campanile, Civic Centre
Views to Water
Views to St Michael's
Views to St Mary's

0   200   400 m

Figure 5:
Heritage Assets

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Southampton City Council 100019679 2008

Scheduled Monument

Listed Building

Locally Listed Building

Conservation Area

1 Carlton Crescent
2 The Avenue
3 Cranbury Place
4 Old Town West
5 Old Town North
6 Old Town South
7 Oxford Street
8 Canute Road

Note:
Some Scheduled Monuments are also Listed Buildings.

Unscheduled but nationally important archaeological areas or sites area discussed within the individual character areas.

The townscape map identifies poor frontages and these may in part be a result of poor use of materials. This should be read in conjunction with architectural qualities and condition.

Condition
The quality and condition of both the historic and/or townscape assets are assessed on a street level survey basis.

The townscape map identifies poor frontages and this could include those in poor repair. Similarly an area could be considered to be in a poor condition if it has a high degree of missing or dead frontages (also identified on the townscape maps).

Ownership
The ownership or likely ownership pattern is identified. This is not definitive but indicative, for example, is ownership likely to be large corporate or small scale independent companies, private or local authority?

Intervention
Suggested areas for improvement are bullet pointed. These are intentionally broad but provide some indication of the corporate aims identified in other City Council documents and also provide possible solutions to problems/issues highlighted in the previous sections.

Key design principles
Strategic issues relating to the sensitivity of the area in relation to potential development. These may in some cases be relatively minor issues but have the potential to be highly significant to the medium/long term future of the values, assets and attributes of the character area in question.

3.0 Overview of the City Centre Action Plan (CCAP) area and capacity for change

3.1 The capacity for change within the City Centre Action Plan area is summarized in Table 1. This provides an overview of the area in terms of its sensitivity to change in relation to the headings within the character area analysis. They are measured by degree of sensitivity: extremely sensitive, highly sensitive, moderately sensitive, low sensitivity and no sensitivity to change.

3.2 By way of a worked example Character Area No. 1 Station Heights is extremely sensitive to changes in connectivity. This is to say that within the Station Heights character area there is an established level of connectivity which is sensitive to even small changes in use patterns. Much of the area depends on the station and its connection with the town. This is not to say that there is not room for improvement (this is identified within the individual character area) but that connectivity is always going to be extremely sensitive to change and should be very carefully considered in any new development. This could be contrasted with Character Area No. 33 West Quay. This area is identified as being of low sensitivity to change. The reason for this is the poor connectivity presently experienced by pedestrian and car traffic alike within the character area and that improvements would be welcomed. Given the nature of the built form in CA33, there are also significant opportunities for improved connectivity which could involve fairly radical redevelopment. Therefore the overall sensitivity in relation to connectivity is low. It is generally the case that the lower the sensitivity the greater the opportunity for change. In these cases change will be able to take a more radical form, ie. re-development rather than something less interventionist such as refurbishment (where the sensitivity might be significantly higher).

3.3 Where a character area scores low sensitivity across the summary table this would suggest a more radical intervention can take place. However, the table should be used as a guide with more detailed assessment made by reference to the character area analysis. A good example of this is Character Area No. 20 Duke Street, Richmond Street and College Street which scores relatively low sensitivity except for the views section which is extremely sensitive to change. In this case, redevelopment may be welcome but tall buildings may be an issue because of the strategic location of this character area and the strategic views which pass over and close its boundaries.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 Southampton is a city possessing many significant assets, in terms of heritage, environment, culture and activities, which contribute to its character and distinctiveness. However, these assets are not always obvious,