

3.6 Future proposals for tall buildings - a methodology for assessment

Applicants seeking planning permission for tall buildings within the city centre should ensure that the following information is provided. This will enable a thorough assessment of the visual impact, design quality and overall appropriateness of the proposals to be made.

Planning applications

Outline planning applications will be discouraged to enable design issues and impact on the setting of key heritage assets to be considered early and properly. Outline applications will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances; where the applicant is seeking to establish the principle of a tall building as an important element of a robust and credible masterplan for an area to be developed over a long period of time. Even then, the City Council and Historic England must be satisfied that the parameters for a tall building will result in excellent urban design, architecture and placemaking.

Content and presentation of proposals

As a minimum the City Council will expect the following appraisal of the setting of key heritage assets in relation to the proposed development site.

- The proposed site plotted onto the composite view plan
- Agree with the City Council the strategic view(s) which may potentially be affected
- Agree with the City Council whether the site is better revealed or has potentially more impact on the strategic view from another view point within the HAVA (Heritage Asset Viewing Area)
- Agree a number of views in which it will need to be demonstrated that the building will not appear within the 'highly sensitive' view zone
- Agree mitigation* with the City Council if the development appears within the 'sensitive' view zone.

*Mitigation can include a number of factors; these will predominantly include:

- The siting of the building within its plot and whether some form of distribution of development within the plot will reduce the impact on the setting of the key heritage asset(s)
- The orientation of the building within the plot and whether turning the development will reduce its impact
- The proposed materials and whether alternative materials will help better integrate or in some cases distinguish the proposed development in the setting of the key heritage asset(s).

The preferred view point is that which is defined in each of the strategic views, however, the applicant should have regard to all of the Heritage Asset Viewing Area (HAVA) and provide a commentary as to how the impact/perception of the proposed development will change in views from the HAVA.

In some cases the height of the proposed development and the location and inter-visibility of the site will be key factors in determining whether the chosen view point is the best position to assess the development from. However, in all cases the chosen view point should be the starting place for assessment.

The City Council will expect the applicant to follow guidance set out in the Landscape Institutes Guidelines etc... (third edition) – as referenced in GPA3 (latest version) in establishing the viewing position, focal length and height of photographs taken. The City Council can provide a set of verified photographs taken from the view points (at the time of the study) for the purposes of computer generated images of the proposed development within the identified strategic views.

For each of the views selected the applicant will be expected to provide an annotated photographic view and a heritage 'wash' layer with the proposed development clearly plotted in the view.

- **Accurate drawings and plans** - site plans, elevations, sections, photomontages, streetscenes, 3D modelling and possibly physical models showing the heights of proposed buildings (in metres and storey heights) and the surrounding context to determine the proportional relationships within the city centre

- **Tall building statement** - evaluates the justification and benefits for a tall building based on the identified strategic views and checklist identified in this study to assess proposals (section 3.0 and 3.5 in particular)
- **Environmental Impact Assessment** - is likely to be required for tall building proposals
- **Design advice** - at the pre-application stage promoters of proposals for tall buildings will be invited to present their proposals to the City's Design Advisory Panel, and in the event of a regionally significant proposal, promoters may be advised to seek review through the Design Council Design Review Panel

The greater the scale, impact and complexity of the tall building proposal, the more detailed and comprehensive the information should be.

Airport safeguarding

Proposals for tall buildings must adhere to the height thresholds set out by BAA in order to safeguard the airspace of Southampton Airport. In the city centre, development proposals exceeding these thresholds (currently either 45 or 90 metres depending on proximity to the flight path – the equivalent to 16/32 storeys), require consultation with BAA, the airport safeguarding authority.

4. Recommendations

The City of Southampton has experienced significant interventions to its evolution and development. It has a number of national and in some cases internationally important heritage assets within it which retain varying degrees of integrity despite changes which have taken place over time.

The city is at a key point in its evolution. It needs to decide how best to protect, interpret and in some cases better reveal the key heritage assets (defined within this study) which make such an important contribution to the understanding of the development and ongoing significance of the city.


The fundamental aim of the study is to provide clear advice about protecting the key heritage assets from the impact of tall buildings. It identifies the key heritage assets and strategic views of them within the city centre. Within these views, areas regarded as highly sensitive and sensitive are identified. Within these areas a tall building proposal is likely to be visually intrusive and cause harm to the historic setting.

The following recommendations 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:

- **Baseline evidence:** that the study be used as baseline evidence for the development of specific policies relating to views to and from key heritage assets
- **Key heritage assets:** within the study are recognised and defined within emerging policy as the basis for city defining heritage policy in relation to development of tall buildings in the city. The City Council should develop a specific tall buildings policy relating to key heritage assets which secures the protection of areas defined within the study as being highly sensitive to change
- **Strategic views:** that the viewing points and view cones form part of the detailed assessment by the City Council of the potential impact of proposed development on the setting of the key heritage assets and other heritage assets as deemed appropriate. Those strategic views not covered by this study (Fig 82) as a result of project resources and time limits should be considered and where appropriate, included at a later date
- **Lighting strategy:** the City Council consider developing a lighting strategy which can encompass the lighting of all the key heritage assets as an art form, contributing to the sense of identity and place
- **Assessment methodology:** is adopted as the minimum requirement for the assessment of the setting of key heritage assets which may be impacted upon by tall buildings. It will be incumbent on the applicant to demonstrate that the key view(s) identified will be unaffected by proposed development
- That the assessment methodology should be used for any future agreed viewpoints, but in particular those that fall within the defined Heritage Asset Viewing Area (HAVA). That these alternative views be agreed with the City Council at pre-application stage in order for the applicant to demonstrate that no harm is caused by the proposed development
- **Tall building statement:** that applicants of proposals for a tall building submit with their planning application a Tall Building Statement that addresses the issues presented in section 3.5
- **City centre urban model:** the City Council consider developing a 3D digital representation of the city centre. Proposals for tall buildings can then be viewed with accurate levels, block and photo realistic details
- **Monitoring and review:** that the study is updated and supplemented as new development takes place and heritage assets are better revealed as a result of protection or reinstatement of a view



Figure.82
City strategic views
not assessed in
study

 Strategic view (recommended)
 not assessed in study

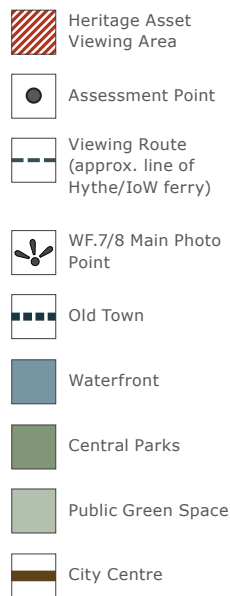
- A. Above Bar to Bargate
- B. St Mary's Street to St Mary's Church
- C. Itchen Bridge to St Mary's Church
- D. Hanover Buildings to St Mary's Church
- E. Central Station pedestrian bridge to Civic Centre Campanile

0 100 500
 metres

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Figure 83.
HAVAs within the
city centre

- **Heritage Asset Viewing Areas:** as part of the viewer’s ability to recognise, appreciate and enjoy the overall viewing experience of key heritage asset(s) within the city centre, it will be important that these locations are accessible, comfortable, improved where necessary and well maintained. Fig 83 shows all of the HAVAs identified within this study
- **Beyond the city centre:** that the City Council extend the methodology to full city views and panoramas taking in the wider setting of the key heritage assets within the urban landscape of Southampton
- **Waterfront appreciation and understanding:** that the City Council undertake further work on the significance and extent of views from the water of Southampton and promote the importance of the city skyline



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Appreciation

How well the Key Heritage Asset(s) can be seen and understood in the Strategic View. In particular their relationship with other heritage assets and their response to their context.

Assessment Point

An Assessment Point is considered to be the optimum viewing point within a Heritage Asset Viewing Area and is the reference point for the assessment of a strategic view. An Assessment Point is formally identified by Ordnance Survey northing and easting grid references in the study report.

Association

Degree to which the view to the Key Heritage Asset(s) is associated with historic events, people or artistic depiction. Including examples of key events including dates and details where highly significant.

Background/Backdrop

Is the immediate area behind and extending away from a Key Heritage Asset(s) or focus of the Strategic View. It is the area beyond the identified Foreground or Middle Ground of the Strategic View.

Canyon Effect

The effect that can occur when tall buildings are constructed in the area either side of a Highly Sensitive or Sensitive View.

Condition

Degree to which the Key Heritage Asset(s) within the Strategic View are impacted upon by either modern development which has encroached upon the key values of the setting, or the loss of key elements of the setting which has resulted in a degree of loss of meaning and connection with the past or with other heritage assets previously associated with each other.

Conservation Area

Conservation Areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest'.

Cluster

Group of tall buildings located close to each other.

Context

The setting of a site or area, including factors such as traffic, activities and land uses as well as landscape and built form and character.

Dominant

Having a commanding or imposing effect in the Strategic View.

Familiarity

Importance of the view to the local community and how significant the view is in terms of the familiar and cherished local scene as defined and valued by local users.

Focal building

A landmark building of local rather than strategic importance.

Foreground and Middle Ground

These are the Foreground of Strategic Views identified in this study and they are the area between the Assessment Point and the specified Key Heritage Asset.

Heritage Asset Viewing Area (HAVA)

The public space from which a particular Strategic View to a Key Heritage Asset(s) may be best appreciated and understood. There are likely to be more than one Assessment Point in each Viewing Area, reflected in the values given to Kineticism, such as with the defined Waterfront Prospects.

Highly Sensitive View

Area of the Strategic View to the Key Heritage Asset(s) where tall building proposals will cause substantial harm.

Historic Parks and Gardens

The register of parks and gardens of special interest and that the grading of the park is dependent upon the historic interest. Grade I parks are of exceptional historic interest. Grade II* are of great historic interest and Grade II are of special historic interest. Central Parks are Grade II*.

Key Heritage Asset

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a high degree of significance for the city centre. In this study they include designated heritage assets, local listings and the waterfront.

Kineticism

Degree to which the Strategic View can be appreciated or changes through the movement of the viewer within Heritage Asset Viewing Place. This is separate to defining different views but relates to how sensitive a view is to possibly even subtle or small changes to the Assessment Point. Relates to the significance of the viewpoint (linked to Appreciation).

Landmark

A building or structure that is prominent in the view / stands out from its background by virtue of height, size or some other aspect of design. Landmark buildings, in cityscape terms effectively act as pointers to help guide people around the city. They make a significant contribution to local distinctiveness.

Listed Building

A building which is acknowledged by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to be of 'special architectural or historic interest'.

Legibility

The degree to which a place can be easily understood.

Massing

The combined effect of the height, size and outline of a building or group of buildings.

Mixed Use

A mix of different uses within a building, site or area. This can be horizontal – where the uses are side-by-side or vertical – where the uses are on different floors within the same building.

Prominent

Important, projecting or particularly noticeable in the Strategic View.

Section 106 Agreement

Of the Town and Country Planning Act, which allows a local planning authority to enter into a legally binding agreement or planning obligation, with a land developer over a related issue.

Sensitive View

Area of the Strategic View to the Key Heritage Asset(s) where tall building proposals may cause substantial harm. Tall buildings may be allowed subject to visual impact and design quality.

Strategic View

An important sight or prospect from a particular position to a Key Heritage Asset(s).

Skyline

The outline of buildings, trees and other features, such as cranes seen against the sky.

Strategic View

The line of sight from a particular point to an important key heritage asset, landmark or skyline.

Tall Building

Defined in this study as generally a building over six storeys. A tall building will also include a building which is substantially taller than their neighbours and/or which significantly changes the skyline.

Time Depth

Extent of time which can be viewed in the surviving Key Heritage Asset(s) and whether this has changed over time to its present state. Generally provided by a period of time (for example 800 years) and/or accompanied by key dates where relevant.

Urban Grain

The pattern of the arrangement and siting of buildings and their plots in a built up area; and the degree to which an area's pattern of streets, blocks and junctions are respectively small and frequent, or large, coarse and infrequent.

Visual Amenity

The value of a particular area or view in terms of what is seen.



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