



character appraisal

This chapter of the report describes the process of defining character areas for St Helier using a multi-stage urban design analysis of the town. Five general categories of assessment were used, each with a number of sub-categories. These were as follows:

- **context** – topography, boundaries/edges, landmarks, sea-views
- **grain, scale and texture** – figure field, frontage width, frontage setback, building height
- **use and activity** – land use, street activity, waterfront, population density
- **spatial issues** – places, green space, public realm
- **built heritage** – historic value, listed buildings, architectural character

In addition to these, an appraisal was carried out of the town's main approaches and entrance points.

CONTEXT

Topography: St Helier has a highly distinctive setting occupying low ground around the base of a granite outcrop on which sits Fort Regent. The town is generally contained by the steep escarpment slopes of Jersey's East and Central Plateau to the north east and west. The sea context is varied and interesting with the broad sandy open St Aubin's Bay to the west contrasting with the more rugged seascape visible from Havre des Pas, particularly at low tide. The escarpment slopes, sea fringes and granite outcrop of Fort Regent combine to create strong containment.

Boundaries and Edges: The town is defined and shaped by some very strong edges and boundaries. The predominant edge is represented by the coastline with an especially hard edge along the built quayside. This is reinforced by a sequence of progressively softer edges represented by the beach, rocks and waterline.

The rising slopes to the west, north and east of the town provides another distinctive edge, defining a dish-shaped hollow in which the town sits. Although the town's buildings now flow up and over the top of the slopes, it still provides a strong defining edge - a solid backdrop that 'contains' and embraces the town.

The land mass on which Fort Regent is perched also acts as a partial edge. The rocky outcrop forms a wedge that intrudes into the town centre and creates a physical separation between the town centre and harbour areas and the eastern suburbs.

Other important edges are formed by the primary road network. The most significant examples of this are Victoria Avenue/Esplanade

and the Ring Road where the physical scale of the roads and the level of traffic create dominant corridors that act as powerful boundaries or barriers that cut through the urban matrix.

Landmarks: The town has a range of landmark buildings and features which take on different roles, as follows:

Iconic landmarks – these are the most conspicuous and best known landmarks of the town that often become icons or emblems for the place. Images of these landmarks appear frequently in postcards or marketing material so that they are often recognisable even to people who have not been to Jersey. They have a strong influence on the character of the town as a whole and include:

- Elizabeth Castle
- Fort Regent
- Victoria College
- St Thomas' Church
- Almorah and Victoria Crescent
- La Collette power station chimney

Major local landmarks – these are landmarks that are well known to Jersey residents, which are easily recognised and useful for orientation or wayfinding. They include distinctive buildings or structures that are often in prominent locations and have a strong influence on the identity of distinct parts of the town. They include:

- Le Havre de Pas pool
- New flats on La Route de la Port Elizabeth/La Route de la Liberation
- Abattoir and Tourism Office
- Parish Church and States Buildings
- Central Market
- Wesley Grove Church
- St Mark's Church
- Town Park gasometer
- General Hospital

Minor local landmarks – these are distinctive buildings or features that, because of their modest scale or discreet location, have a more localised influence than major landmarks. They are still useful for wayfinding but only affect the character of a localised area. There are potentially quite a number of these, but notable examples include:

- La Fregate
- Opera House
- Odeon Cinema
- Stopford Road Masonic Hall
- Brewery, Ann Street
- Wesley Street chapel

Sea Views

Views to the sea reinforce the 'island' or 'seaside town' identity of St Helier but interestingly, although the sea is visible from a wide area round the margins of town, almost the entire town centre itself is denied views to the sea. Rather, from within the town centre, views to the rising ground of the escarpment or Fort Regent are much more significant.

The reclaiming of land at the new Waterfront has meant that parts of the town that were previously closely connected to the water no longer have a visual connection with the sea. In those areas (most notably the Esplanade and abattoir area) the original configuration and strong sense of being a frontage for the town no longer applies and a new rationalisation will only emerge once anticipated new development takes place in adjoining areas.

GRAIN, SCALE AND TEXTURE

Figure Field:

The figure field analysis distinct variations in line with the major stages of historical development of the town. This ranges from extremely small scale and dense in the old centre of the town to more open on the west, north and east slopes of the town as well as in the Havre des Pas and Georgetown areas.

Frontage Width:

An analysis of frontage width revealed a highly complex situation with clear patterns emerging although these appear to be generally unrelated to age, use or other obvious factors

Frontage Setback:

This analysis, based on no frontage setback compared to normal garden or other setback revealed a clear picture of the dense character of the centre of the town and the extent to which this spreads north – almost to the ring road in some cases.

Building Height:

Despite the great variety of building styles and forms in the town,

there is a relatively high level of consistency in building height. The vast majority of buildings in St Helier are in the range of 2 ½ to 3 ½ storeys (equivalent) regardless of their use or location within the town

Exceptions to this include areas in the southern parts of the town where commercial pressures have pushed building heights up to 5 or 6 storeys. Taller buildings in this range are also found scattered along the lower reaches of the slopes that curve around the town, where they are seen against the solid backdrop of rising ground.

The town is also peppered with a scattering of very tall buildings - high rises over 7 storeys tall and up to 14 or so, which are most commonly residential high rise flats, usually designed to optimise views to the sea. Some of these are visible from well beyond the town itself, but the often bland mid 20thC architecture means they lack distinctiveness and therefore do not act as true landmarks for St Helier.

USE AND ACTIVITY

Land Use: The analysis of land use was generalised to create broad sweeps of different activity rather than the detailed small scale patchwork that would have evolved from a detailed survey. Uses were categorised under eight headings – residential, mixed urban (general mixed use), public buildings, retail core, mixed industrial, business/office, leisure and vacant. On the basis that land use is a strong determinant of character, these created twelve separate character areas.

Street Activity: Daytime activity is concentrated in the commercial heart of the town where people come to do business, shop and access services and local amenities.

There is comparatively little residential use in this zone, so it is often relatively unpopulated at night.

Night-time activity is concentrated a in a few specific locations where there are clusters of eating and drinking establishments and entertainment, at:

- the Waterfront
- Lewis Street/Kensington Place
- the south end of the Parade and York Street
- the Esplanade
- the Conway Street area
- the Weighbridge

- Colomberie

There are many shops and cafes that serve specific immigrant ethnic communities and these often have a strong influence on the character of the immediate area. These small nodes are gathering points for certain communities but are comparatively small scale and scattered throughout the town; there are no identifiable "ethnic neighbourhoods" as such in St Helier.

There are one or two locations in town where young people gather to socialise. Observation indicates that Snow Hill is a popular meeting point for groups of young people who linger to chat close to where there are food outlets and public toilets. The skateboard and trampoline parks at Les Jardins de la Mer are also popular, where it is possible to take advantage of the additional facilities at Le Fregate and the Waterfront leisure development.

Waterfront:

St Helier's waterfront has been a central influence on the development of the town and its culture; the waterfront location is fundamental to its identity as the capital of an island state, a seaside town and an historic harbour town.

The water's edge has been modified repeatedly over time through reclamation, land shaping and the construction of basins, ramps, quays, retaining structures and sea defences. It serves many different functions, being used for a mix of transportation, industry, manufacturing, commercial and leisure uses.

As a linear space it is complex, diverse and intriguing, with many examples to be seen of features from all stages of the sequential evolution of the waterfront from its earliest beginnings to the present day.

The actual edge varies in character depending on adjacent uses, the scale and character of architecture and the treatment of the quayside environment. It divides up into five main character zones:

Havre de Pas - an historic seaside resort that has a great range of architectural styles but that, taken as a whole, represents a charming, harmonious townscape with an attractive human scale. The richness of detail and ornamentation on key buildings plus the promenade treatment along the sea edge give it a distinctive Victorian seaside character.

Havre de Pas is focused on the curved expanse of St Clement's Bay with the central feature of the iconic 1930's swimming pool and pier.

La Collette - a purely functional industrial and storage area. A place of work that is not accessible to the public but that has a significant visual impact, not least because of the dramatic scale and robust style of the power station chimney.

Historic Harbour - this includes the Old French and English Harbours where there is a strong sense of the maritime functions of historic St Helier.

This area is typified by large scale robust treatments. Massive blocks of granite are used for retaining walls, quayside paving and mooring posts, with cast iron used for railings, bollards and dockside paraphernalia.

The area accommodates both commercial and leisure maritime activities which create an evocative colourful and vibrant atmosphere. The character of the area is enhanced by the huge diversity of boats both on the quayside and in the water, the assorted chandlery scattered about and the collection of sculptural navigation equipment at key vantage points on the pierheads.

Reclaimed/The Waterfront - recently reclaimed land that is partially complete but with gap sites awaiting development. This area does not itself have clear defining characteristics at present but is identifiable largely because it is different from the adjoining stronger and more historic areas.

The reclaimed area accommodates a large new marina, port-related buildings, new residential blocks, a leisure centre and a new promenade and park. The character of the area is being shaped in large part by the distinctive late 20thC style of the various buildings and the public realm, but the ultimate overarching character of the place will only transpire on completion of the wider scheme.

West Esplanade - a broad sweeping esplanade running west from the Les Jardins de la Mer. It comprises a linear promenade space with wide open views southwards to the beach, sea and sky of St Aubin's Bay. It is characterised by a simple, robust treatment with a distinctive string of lights adding a somewhat jaunty seaside theme.

This is a place primarily for walking, running or cycling and is used as a continuous vantage point from which to take in scenic views to the sea and Elizabeth Castle or landmark features inland and across the bay.

Population Density:

Population density information provided a further insight into levels

of use and activity. Although information was somewhat patchy, the highest densities of residential population lay within the ring road to the north of the town centre.

SPATIAL ISSUES

Places:

The places (and areas) identified in this part of the analysis were compiled from a range of observations on what are significant parts of the town. These may be meeting places, evening economy locations, general areas that have been referred to in conversation or places with cultural significance. This part of the analysis will continue into the next stage of the study and should not be regarded as complete.

Green Space:

Although St Helier itself is densely built up, it is surrounded by extensive open space, with the broad expanses of St Aubin's Bay and St Clement's Bay to the south and open agricultural countryside to the north. The sea and countryside are fundamental determinants of character for the whole island as well as St Helier itself.

The steeply rising ground that defines the town to the west, north and east is colonised by significant groups of trees and provides an important green backdrop to the built up area. Likewise, the vegetated slopes of Fort Regent provide an important ecological resource and contribute softness and greenery to many otherwise hard urban views.

Some groups of trees in the town have a significant influence on the character of particular areas. Notable examples of distinctive groups of trees with this quality include the mature trees at the Rouge Bouillon roundabout, trees on Great Union Road and others at the north end of Val Plaisant.

In some locations there are striking examples of individual trees affecting the character of streets; these include large specimens at the junction of Great Union Road/Aquila Road and on St Saviour's Road opposite the Apollo Hotel.

Formal green space within the town comes in different forms and includes the following:

The Parade - a formal green space mostly laid out to lawns but including a popular play area and distinctive, colourful seasonal bedding displays. As the site of several significant monuments, it has a civic as well as amenity function. The geometric layout, the

style of certain adjacent buildings (eg at the Union Street/Parade junction) and strong avenue planting around the edges give it a distinctly continental air. The Parade has become the name of the area rather than just the space, which reflects its impact on the character of the wider area.

Les Jardins de la Mer – a contemporary space, recently completed, that incorporates a dynamic water feature, maze, decorative planting and seating, alongside trampoline and skateboarding facilities. The activities provided mean that this is an important destination at the western edge of the town. The eye-catching Le Fregate building also contributes to the role of this space as a place to gather and linger, especially during the warmer months.

The contemporary styling of the space complements that of the wider Waterfront development which has established a distinctly different character area from those in the adjacent historic parts of the town.

Green Street Cemetery - an historic cemetery that is no longer used for burials but has instead become a treasured urban wild area. The amenity of the space is compromised by the poor environment of the adjacent multi-storey car park but the space itself is interesting for the tombstones that give historical insights as well as the abundant wildlife and colonising plant species.

Howard Davis Park - a traditional park located in St Saviour's just on the boundary of St Helier. This space provides a formal and decorative park with large lawn areas and well-maintained ornamental planting. It has a small bandstand that is used for concerts and outdoor film events.

The park is surrounded by busy roads and enclosed within high walls and so is generally inward-looking. Consequently, the park's influence on the character of the surrounding area is relatively limited and is only significant at the western entrance where ornamental gates act as a focal point at an important junction.

Springfield Stadium - a football ground with a range of indoor and outdoor sports facilities. It is also a venue for conferences and other exhibitions or shows that require large level open spaces.

The stadium building itself is large and conspicuous and so exerts a direct influence over the Springfield Road/Janvrin Road area. On match or event days the high levels of activity focused on the park means that its influence is more widely felt throughout the area.

Public Realm:

The selection of materials for the carriageway and footways, how the street is lit and the presence of seating, signage and planting all contribute to the character of St Helier streets. As might be expected, generally, the more peripheral the street, the more 'ordinary' or utilitarian it becomes. Streets in the heart of the town centre are therefore most likely to have been pedestrianised, repaved and embellished, reflecting their greater status in the street hierarchy.

There are a number of especially distinctive design features that distinguish St Helier streetscapes from those found on the mainland, some of which perhaps reflect a more continental approach:

- small scale, discretely-placed road signage
- the use of moveable benches in public spaces
- high quality stonework in walls, floors and benches (often using local granite)
- 'stabilisé' surface in public spaces
- attention to detail in surface laying (eg the ubiquitous struck joints)

There are distinct zones of streetscape character that arise from the colour, style and arrangement of the street environment that is, in turn, influenced by the period in which the scheme was implemented. The key character zones can be described as follows:

Basic utilitarian - treated in a simple and functional way with concrete or asphalt (black or red) footways and asphalt on the carriageway. Kerbs are usually granite.

High quality utilitarian - treated simply with asphalt on the carriageways and stone kerbs but enhanced with granite on the footways.

Historic harbour-side - areas around the historic English and French harbours and along the Victoria Avenue esplanade where very robust, large scale stonework is used. The rich brown and ochre-toned local granite is the predominant material and is used in a variety of ways including orthogonally shaped, random sized blocks in the harbour walls, massive single blocks for quay stones and stanchions and patterns of small scale units for paved surfaces.

1980s pedestrianisation - short lengths of pedestrianised streets treated in a style fashionable in the 1980s using coloured paviers and seating grouped around trees in planters. These areas are showing signs of deterioration and beginning to look rather 'tired' in places.

1990s pedestrianisation - the pedestrianised heart of St Helier, which has been paved in dark red/brown granite cubes and slabs with white marble trim patterns. This scheme is visually distinctive and has provided a functional, long lasting and attractive floor surface that complements the scale and character of the main shopping streets. This scheme adds to the legibility of the town centre by 'flagging' the main shopping spine.

Contemporary waterfront - a simple palette based mainly on manmade materials but with stone used in places as a higher quality finish. Small scale paviers and concrete slabs are used for pedestrian surfaces, with stone used for trim and as a facing applied to walls. Contemporary light fittings set into surfaces, in bollards and lamp standards distinguish these spaces from those in other parts of the town.

Public Spaces:

There is a network of open spaces in the town that includes soft and hard spaces, parks and squares. Some spaces are notable for their cultural significance (eg Royal Square and Liberation Square), whilst other are more functional or decorative in nature (eg Jardin de Mer and Wests' Centre).

Many spaces have a significant impact on the character of the surrounding area and in some cases even become the defining element of a wider neighbourhood, as in the case of The Parade.

There is a noticeable difference between the way the historic spaces of the town function within the network as compared with more recently created public open space. The historic spaces have arisen as a natural product of the evolution of the surrounding townscape and are therefore inextricable components of the matrix of buildings and spaces. The historic spaces and streets therefore tend to be well-connected and it is possible to flow readily from one to the other through a seamless sequence of spaces and places.

Contemporary spaces however, have often arisen in quite a different manner, as a conscious carving out of space or the exploitation of gap site opportunities. As a consequence they are frequently rather isolated by comparison with historic spaces, and not well-connected to the pedestrian network or the wider space network.

BUILT HERITAGE

Historic Value:

Our analysis used two categories of historic value:

- high quality architecture (with medium to high percentage of original fabric intact)
- good quality architecture (with medium percentage of original fabric extant)

These were supplemented by groupings of early 18th century buildings, old streets and second generation streets, and by major post war redevelopment sites. This analysis produced distinct groupings of high, medium and low value areas.

Registered Buildings:

We are aware that the analysis information on Listed Buildings presented to the Steering Group at its meeting in May was based on inaccurate information. We have not corrected this but it is unlikely that the character assessment would change.

Predominant Architectural Character

The building styles of St Helier are sufficiently varied and intermixed that architectural eclecticism virtually becomes a defining characteristic of the town. It is therefore difficult to identify distinct neighbourhoods of singular architectural style or quality.

It is possible nevertheless to identify certain patterns and consistencies which can be used to loosely define areas within which a predominant architectural character can be identified.

This process results in a mosaic of 8 key character areas, as follows:

- Victorian/Edwardian commercial
- Regency/Victorian middle class residential
- High Victorian middle class residential
- Victorian working class residential with
- Victorian middle class residential
- Mixed 19thc commercial/warehouse
- Regency/Victorian resort
- Early 19thc maritime/industrial

GROUPING AND ANALYSIS

Summary analysis drawings were produced for each of the five categories of context, grain, scale and texture, use and activity,

spatial issues, and built heritage showing the development of character areas based on the criteria selected. These were then re-analysed to produce a provisional plan of Ten Character Areas for St Helier. The layers of analysis for each category, the grouped analysis and the final combined analysis are shown on the following pages.

These character areas themselves are described in detail in the subsequent chapter.



Character Appraisal: context
topography

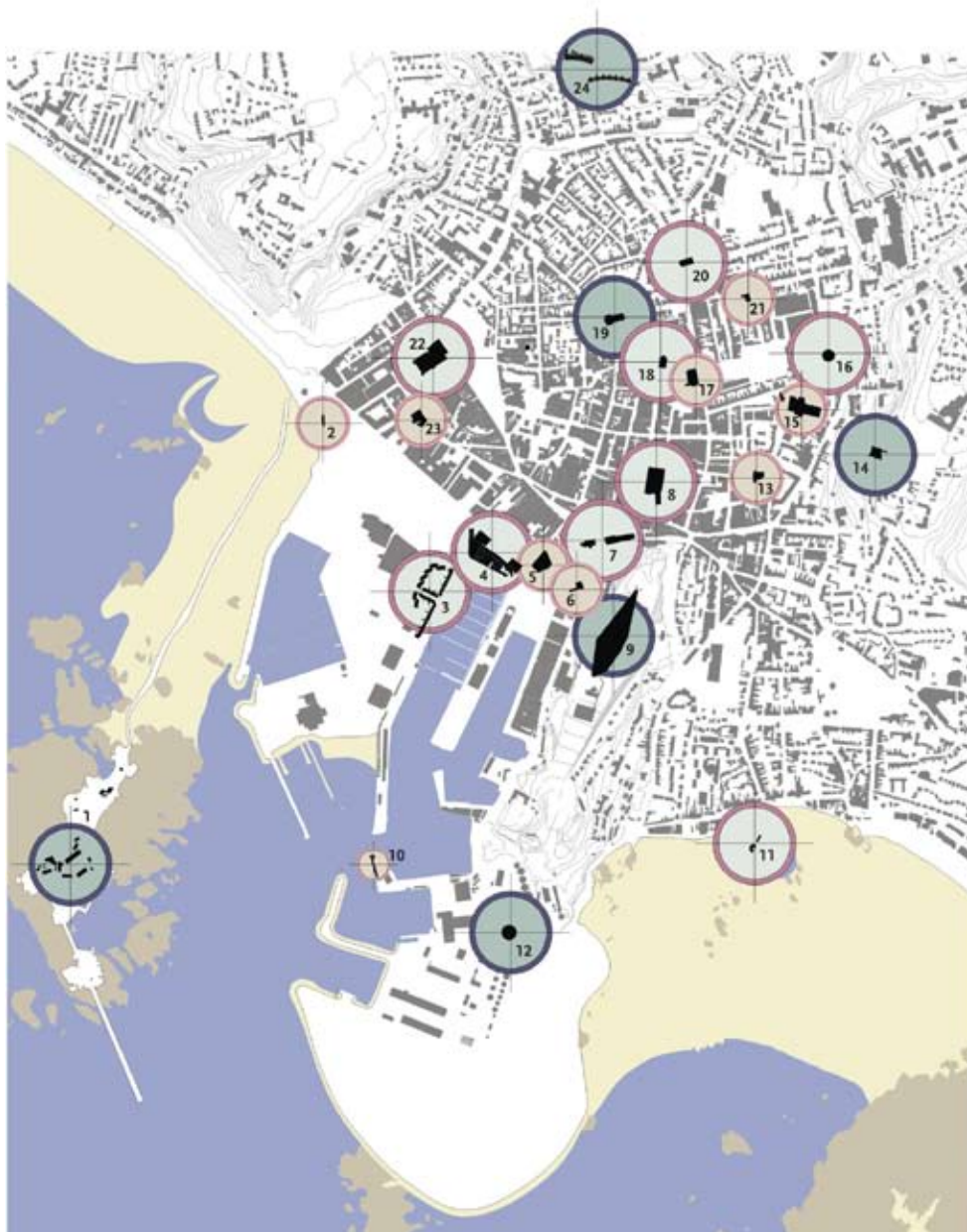
- LOWLAND 'VALE'
- STEEP 'SCARP' SLOPES
- UNDULATING PLATEAU



Character Appraisal: context boundaries and edges

-  BUILDING EDGES
-  MAIN E-W ROAD
-  SEA EDGE
-  RING ROAD
-  STEEP SLOPES

Character Appraisal: context landmarks

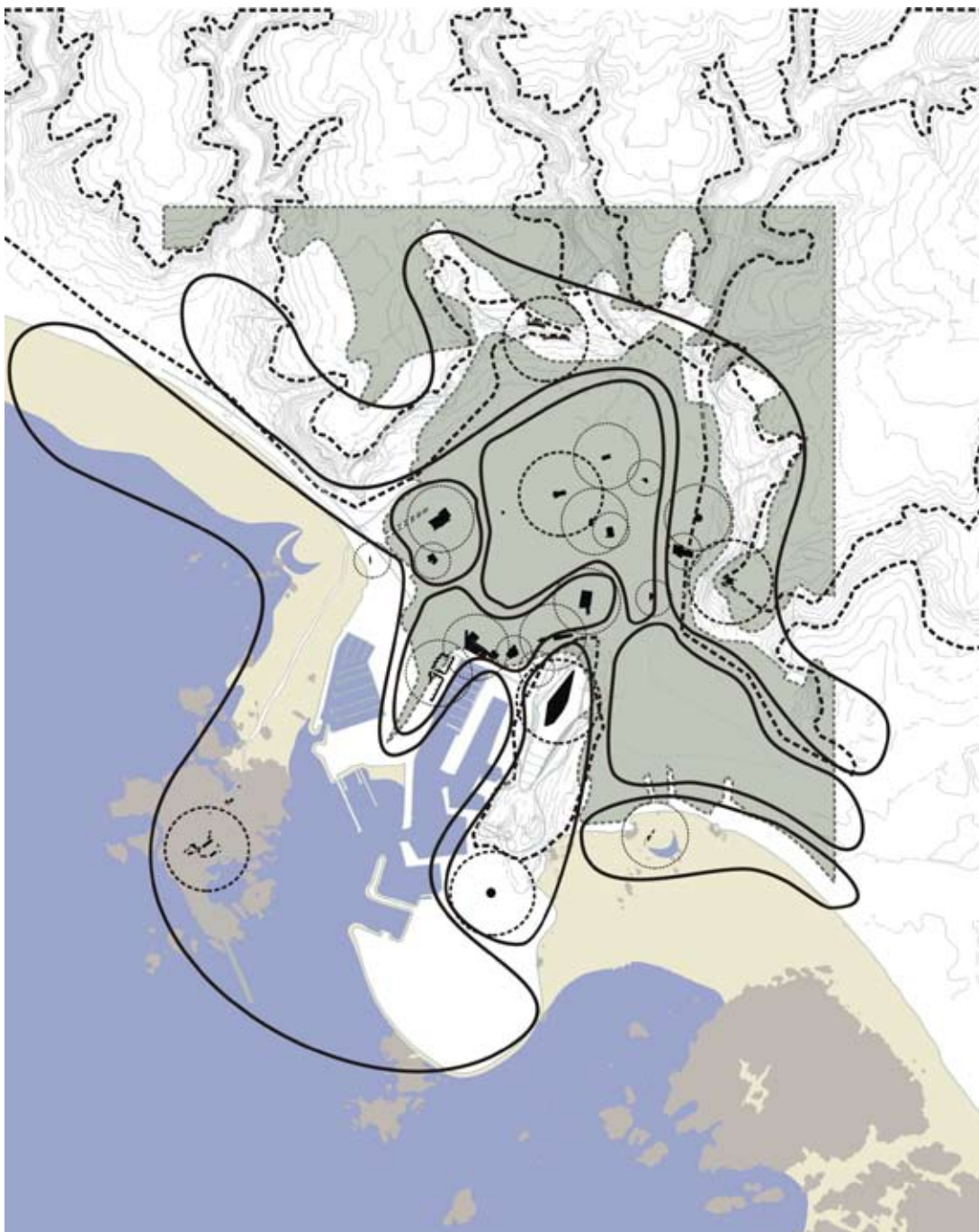


- 1 ELIZABETH CASTLE
- 2 LE FREGATE
- 3 RECENT WATERFRONT RESIDENTIAL
- 4 FORMER ABATTOIR
- 5 HOTEL
- 6 JERSEY MUSEUM
- 7 TOWN CHURCH AND STATES BUILDING
- 8 CENTRAL MARKET
- 9 FORT REGENT
- 10 HARBOUR TOWER
- 11 HAVRE DES PAS SWIMMING POOL
- 12 POWER STATION CHIMNEY
- 13 WESLEY STREET FORMER METHODIST CHAPEL
- 14 VICTORIA COLLEGE
- 15 BREWERY
- 16 GASOMETER
- 17 ODEON CINEMA
- 18 WESLEY GROVE METHODIST CHAPEL
- 19 ST THOMAS CHURCH
- 20 ST MARKS CHURCH
- 21 MASONIC TEMPLE
- 22 GENERAL HOSPITAL
- 23 OPERA HOUSE
- 24 ALMORAH TERRACE / VICTORIA CRESCENT

-  ICONIC LANDMARKS - town-wide influence
-  MAJOR LOCAL LANDMARKS - widespread local influence
-  MINOR LOCAL LANDMARKS - restricted local influence

Character Appraisal: context
seaviews



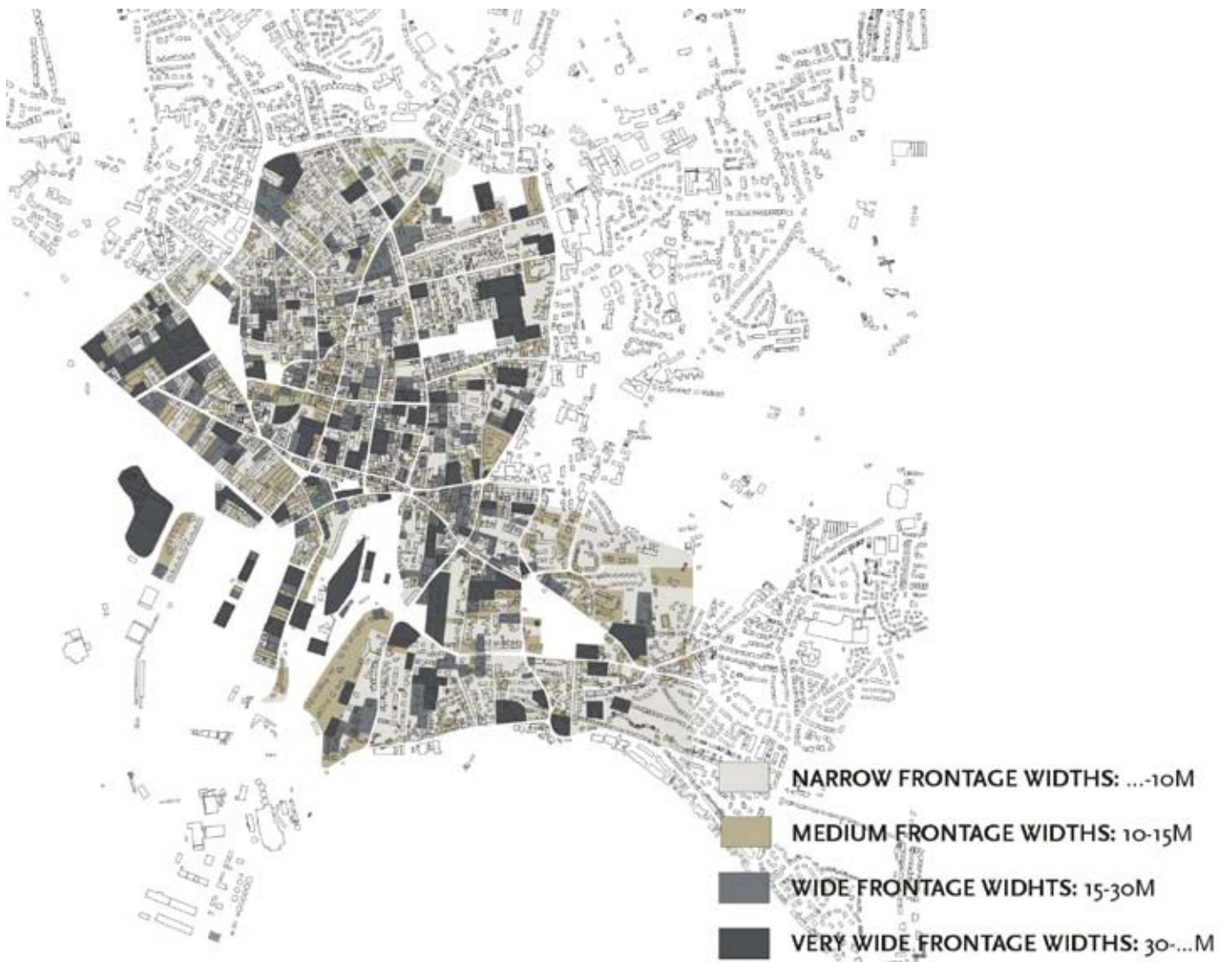


Character Appraisal: context
summary



Character Appraisal:
grain, scale and texture
figure field

**Character Appraisal:
grain, scale and texture
frontage width**



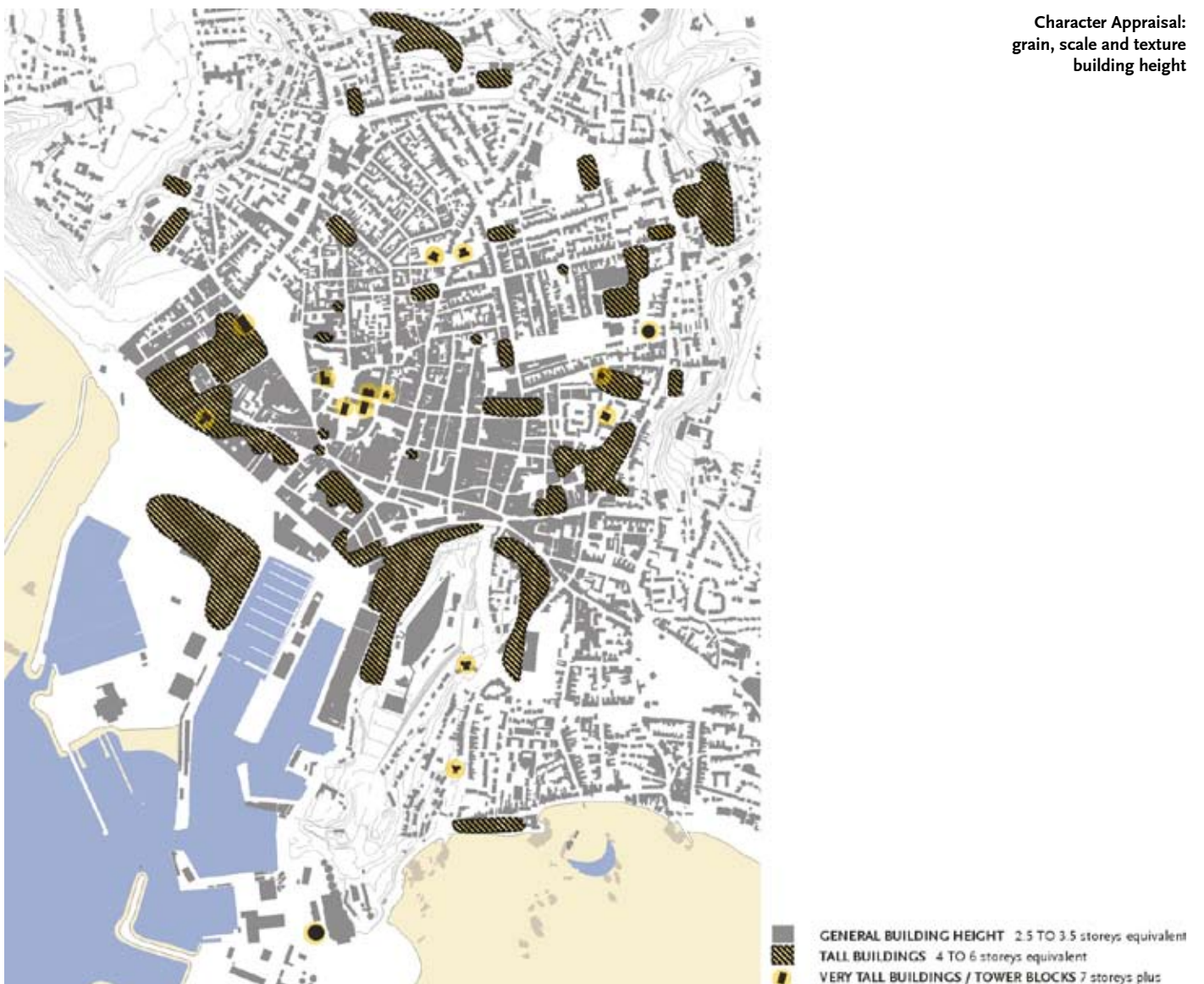
Character Appraisal:
grain, scale and texture
frontage setback

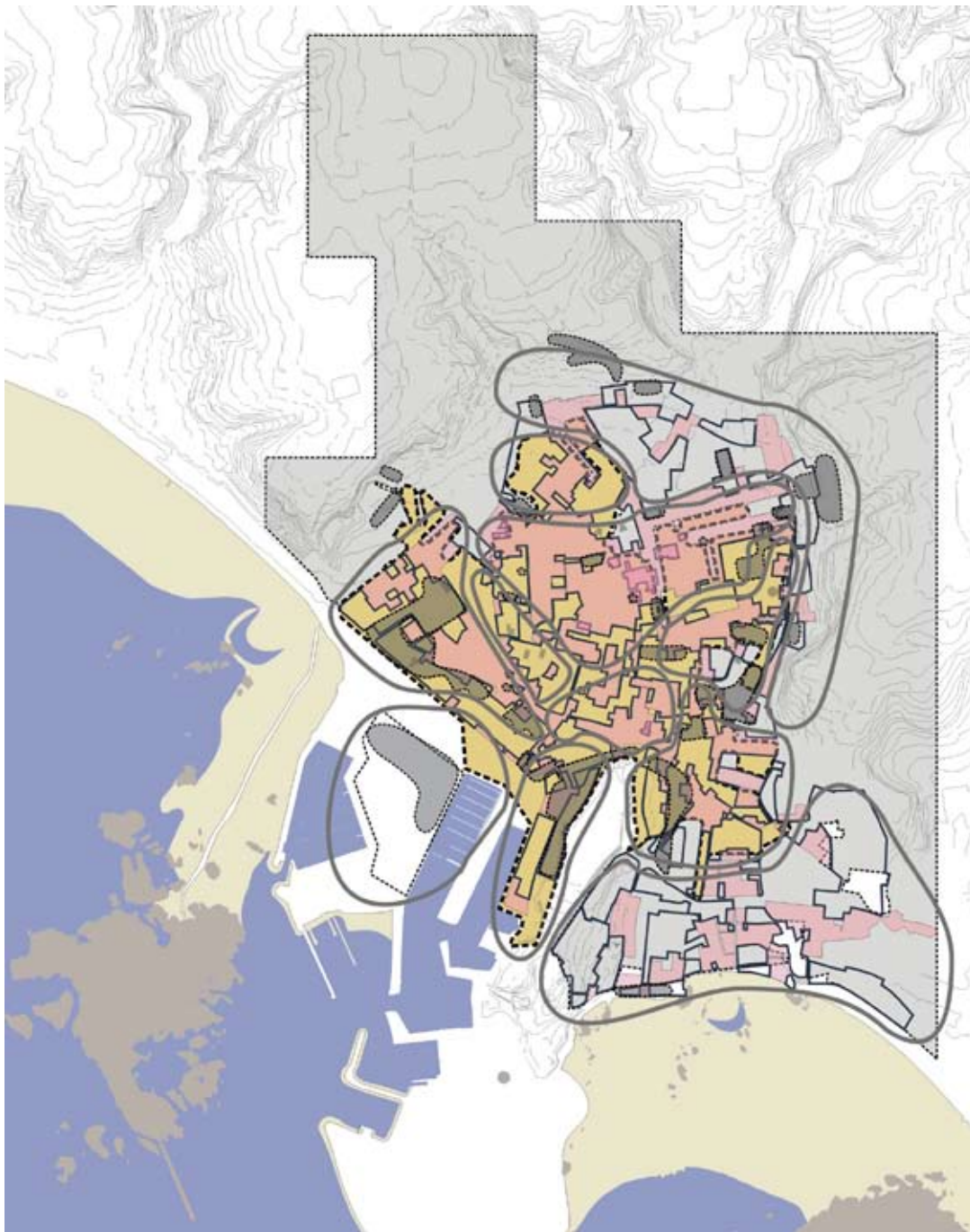


FRONTAGE FLUSH WITH PAVEMENT: NO SETBACKS
maximum enclosure

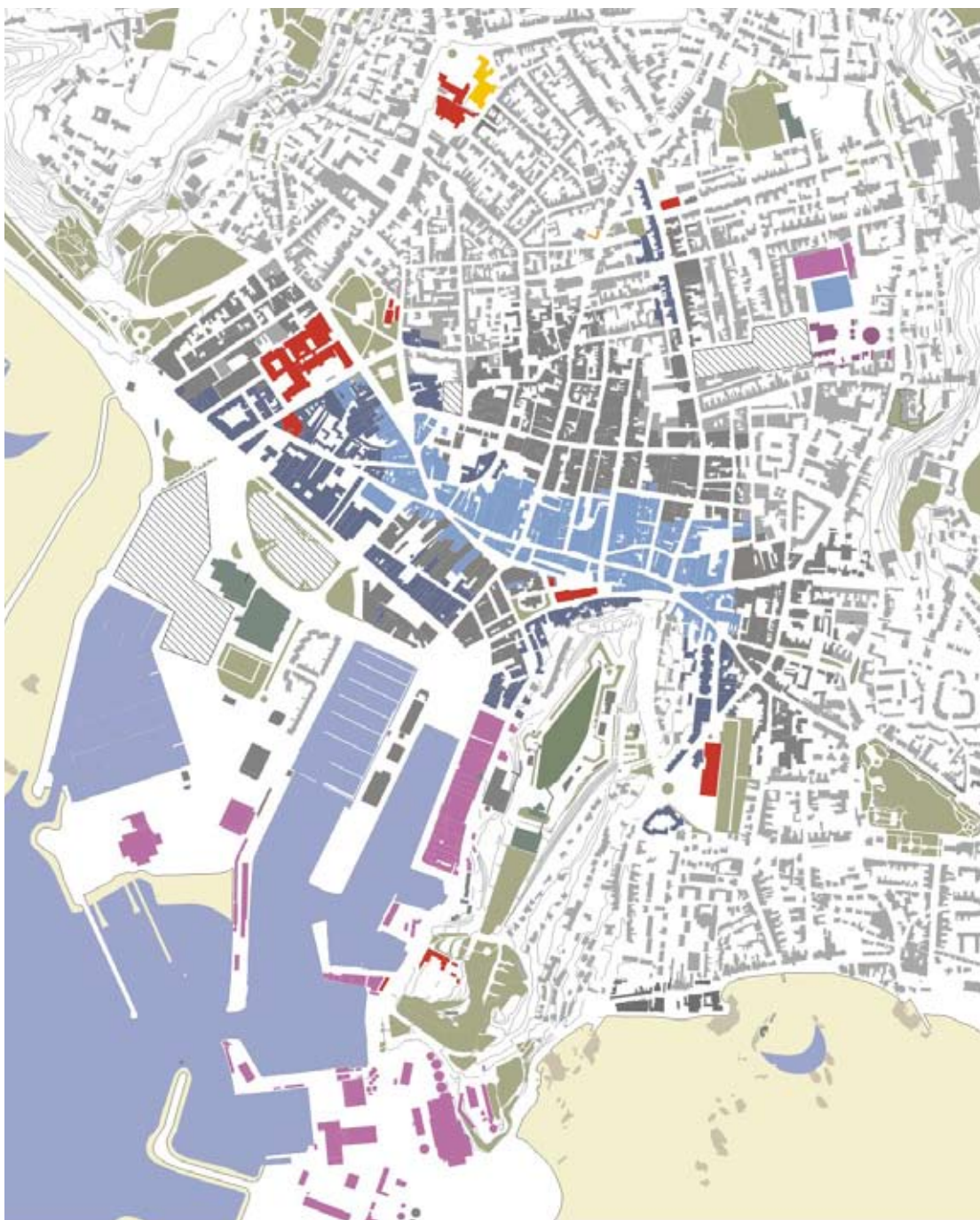
FRONTAGE SET BACK FROM PAVEMENT
more open character

Character Appraisal:
grain, scale and texture
building height





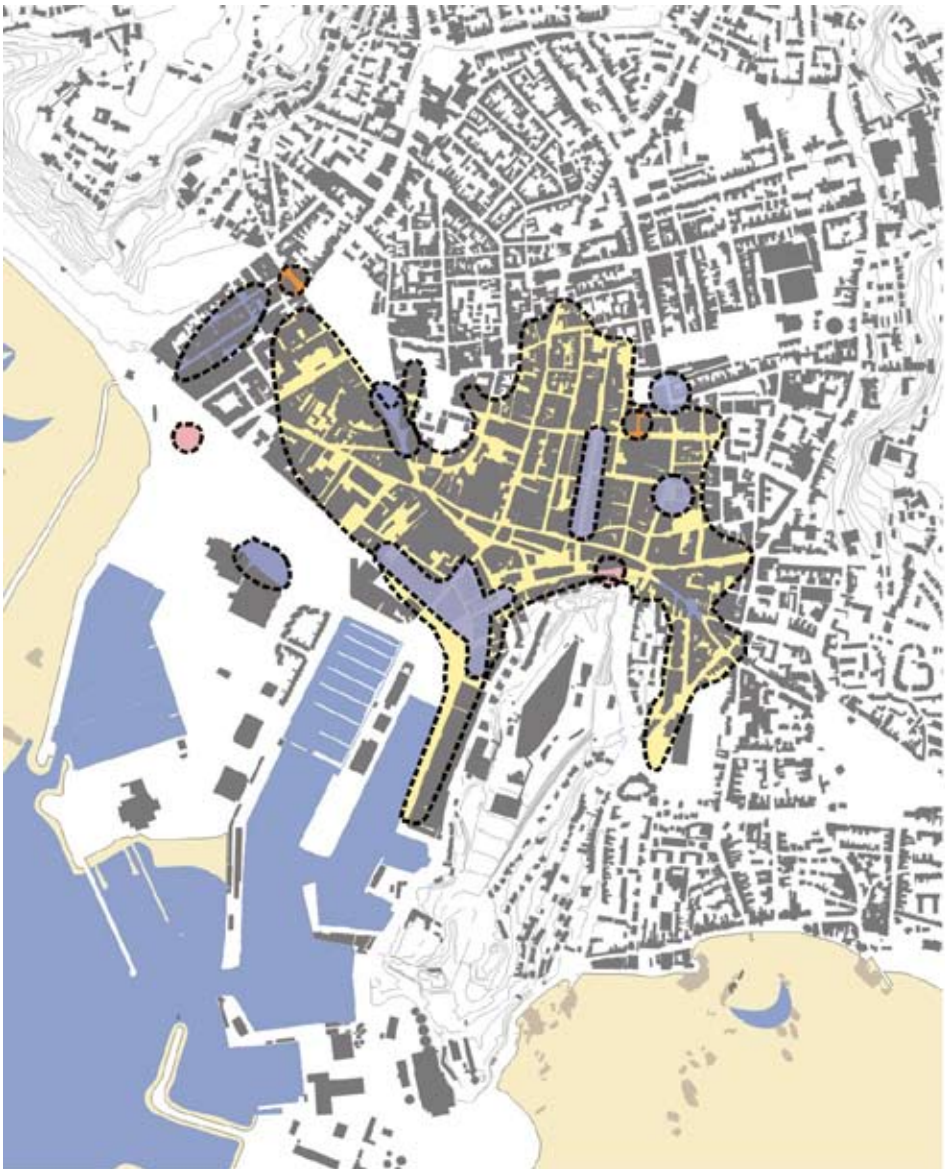
Character Appraisal:
grain, scale and texture
summary



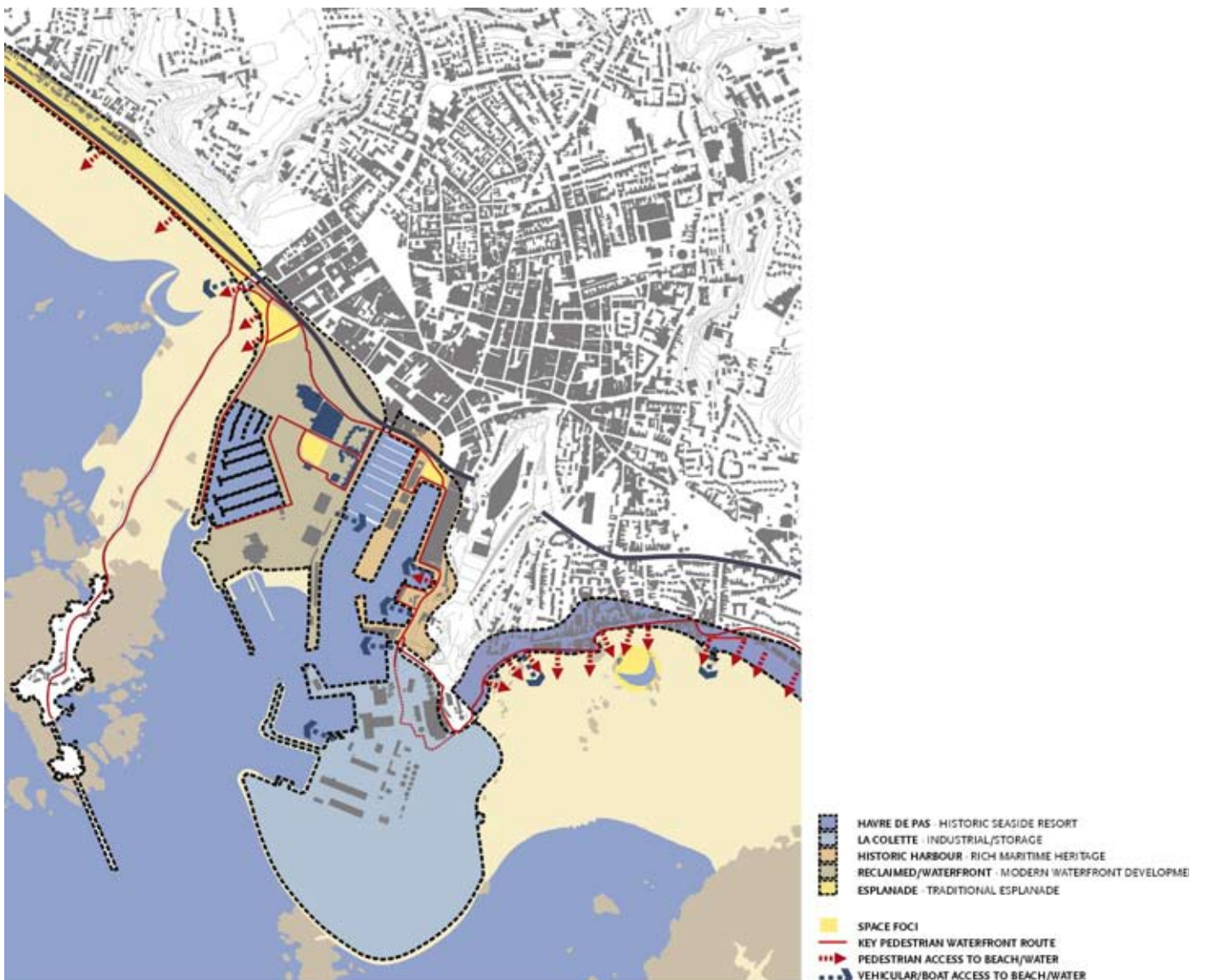
Character Appraisal:
use and activity
land use

-  GENERALLY RESIDENTIAL
-  MIXED URBAN
-  PUBLIC BUILDINGS
-  RETAIL CORE
-  MIXED INDUSTRIAL
-  BUSINESS/OFFICE
-  LEISURE
-  VACANT
-  EDUCATION

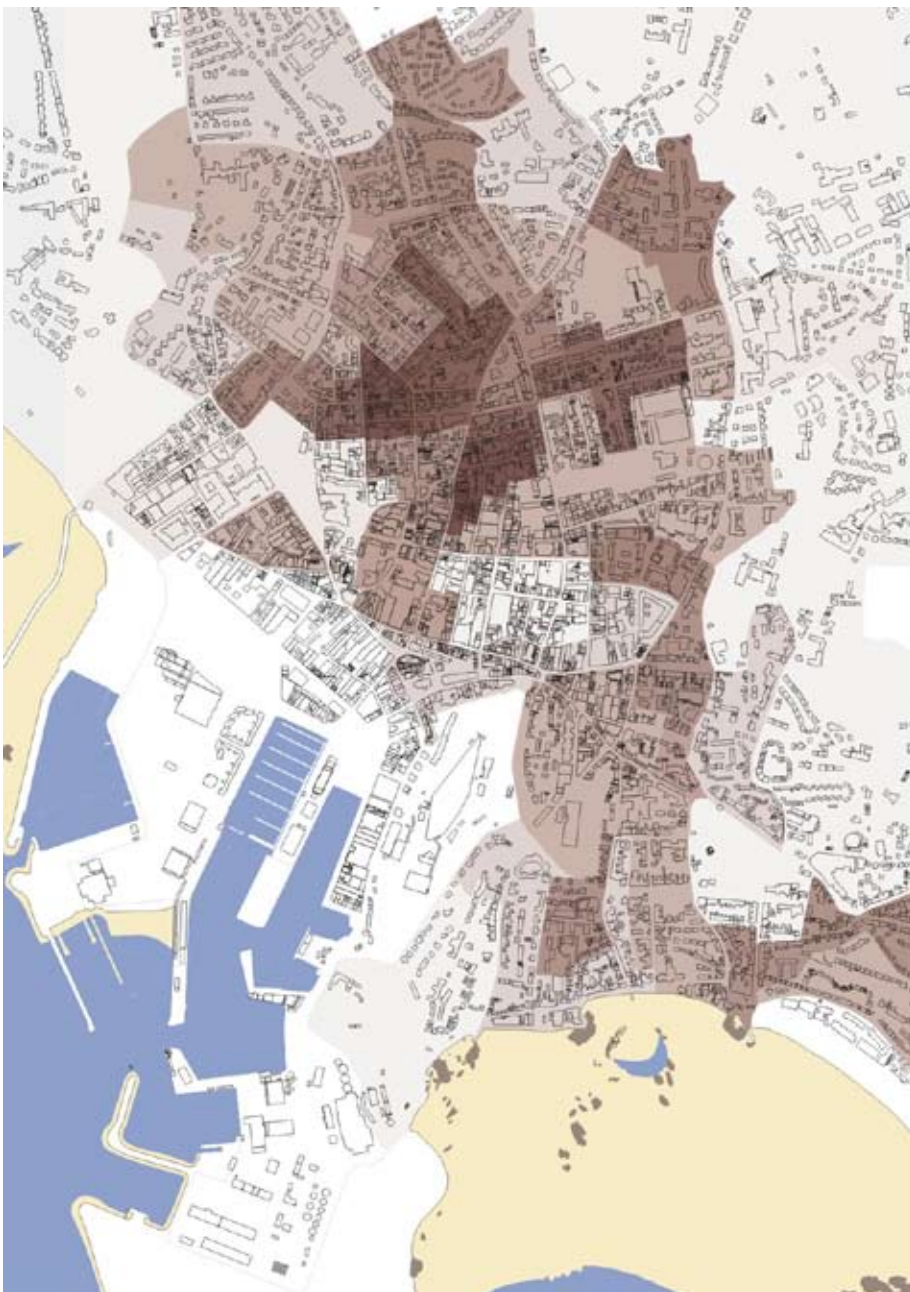
Character Appraisal:
use and activity
street activity



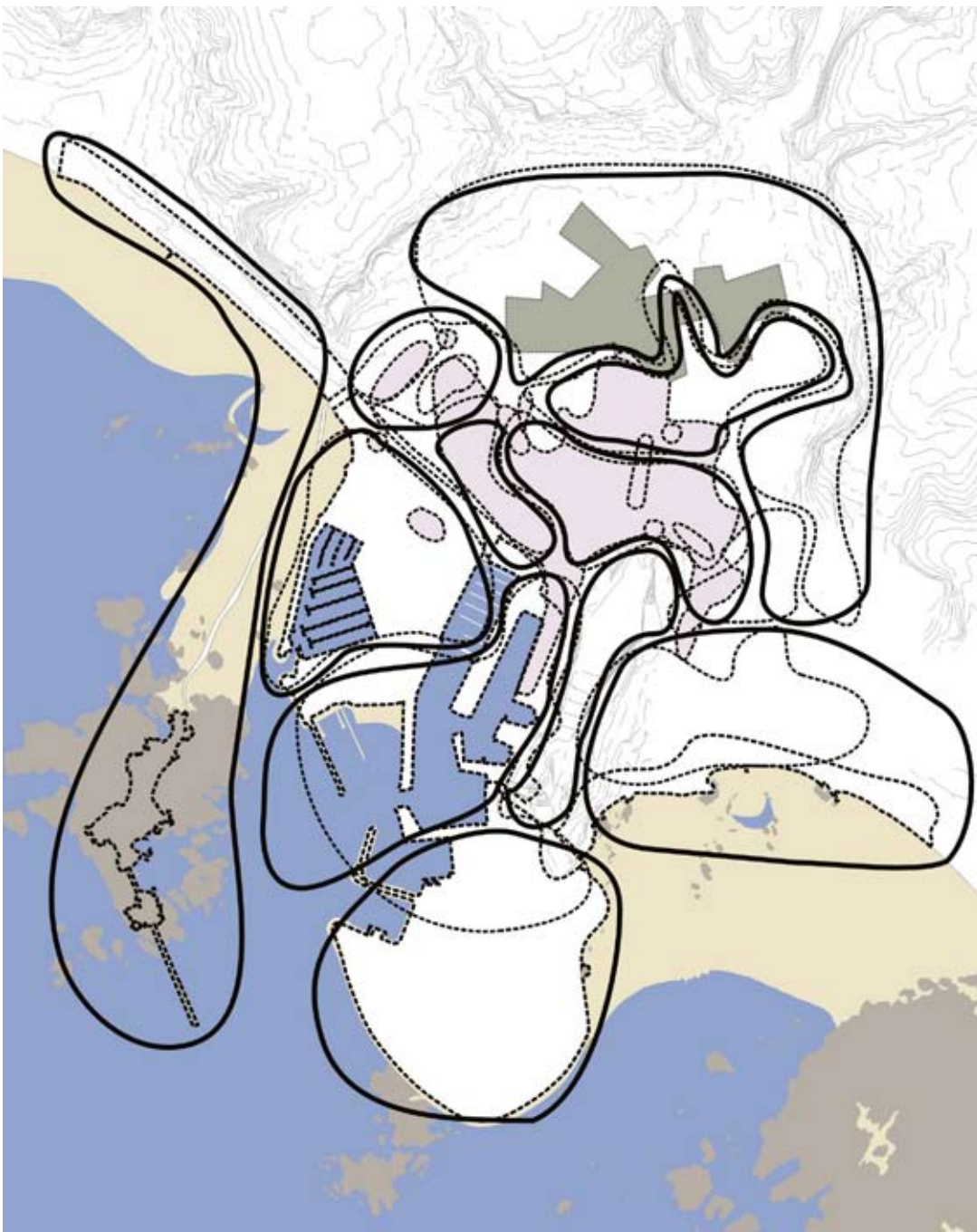
Character Appraisal:
use and activity
waterfront analysis



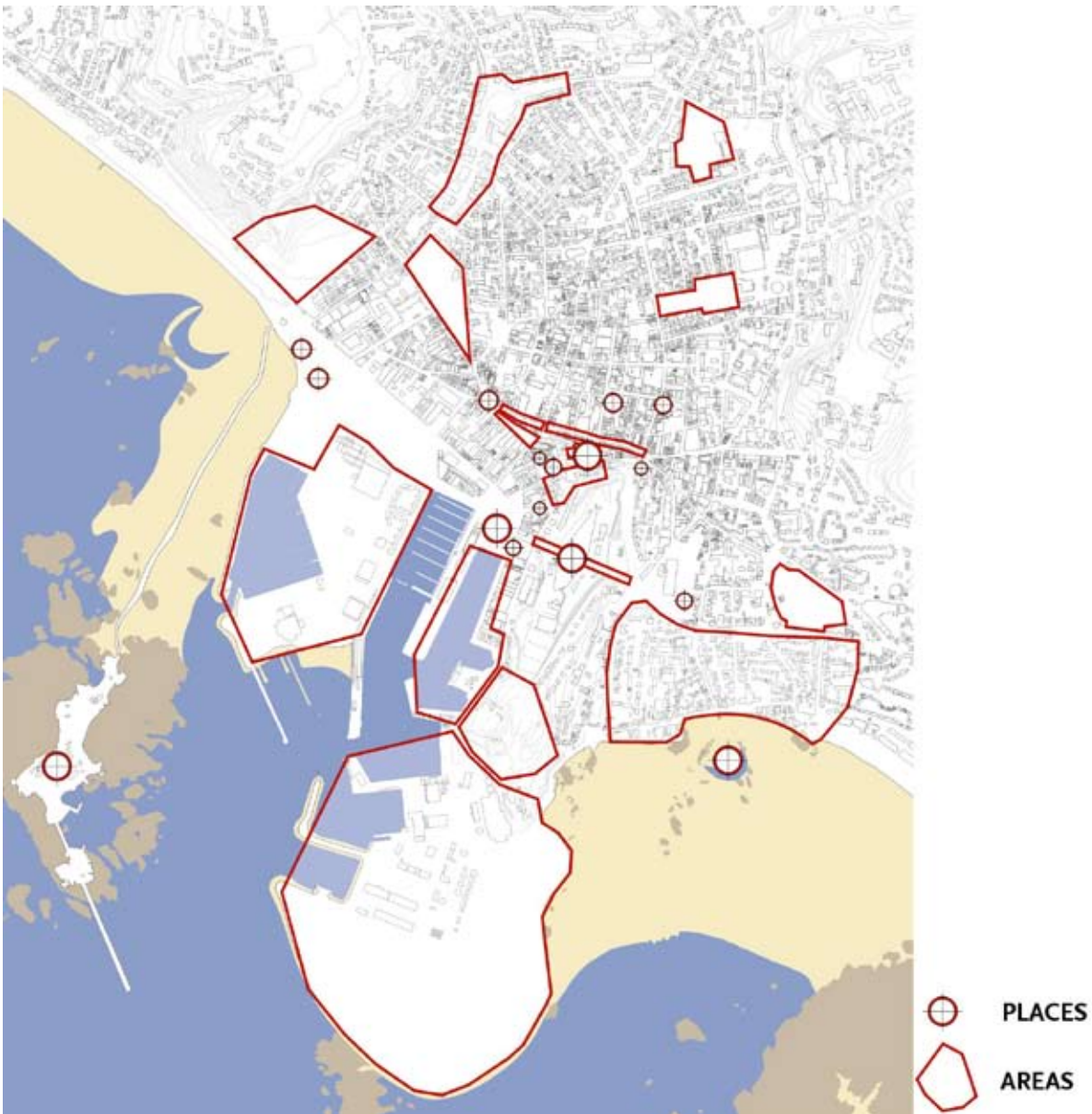
Character Appraisal:
use and activity
population density



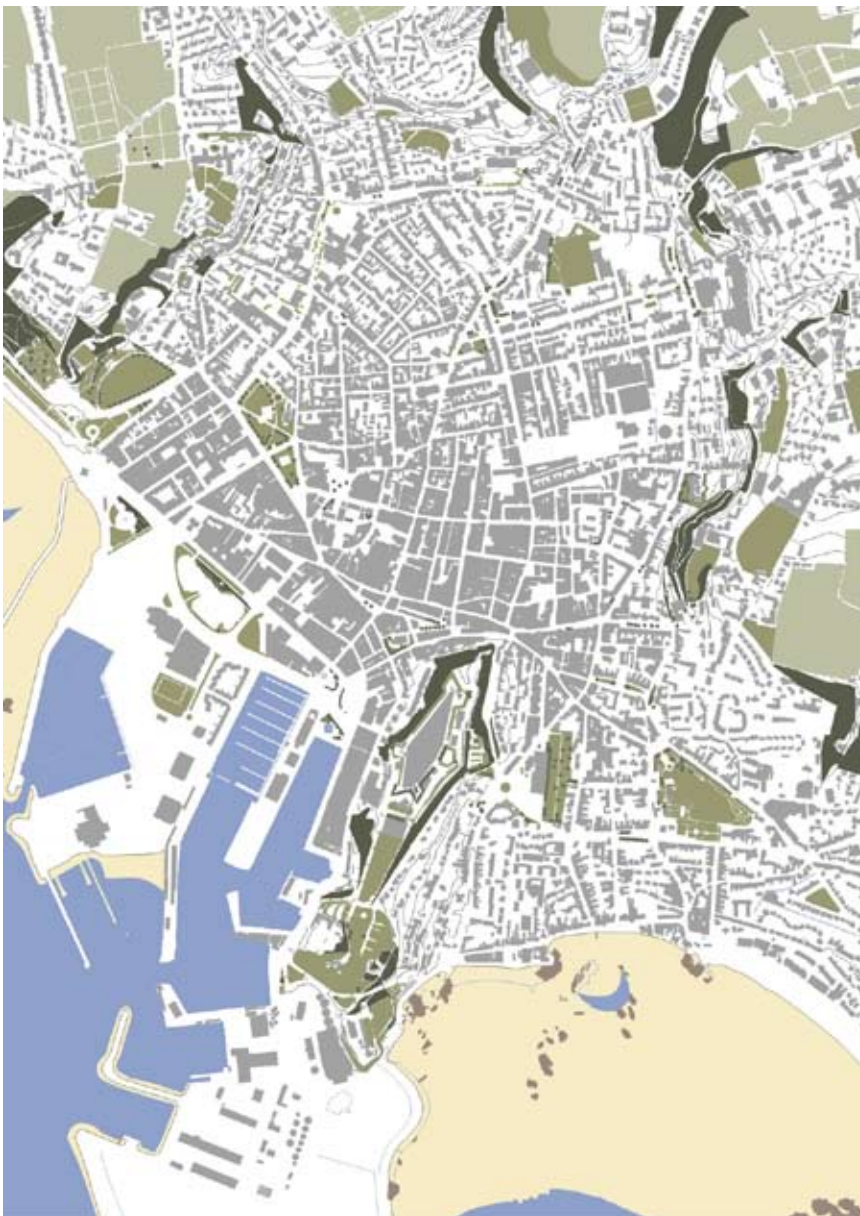
Character Appraisal:
use and activity
summary



Character Appraisal:
spatial issues
places



Character Appraisal:
spatial issues
green space



- SPECIMEN TREES
- PROTECTED TREES: TPO'S
- PUBLIC GREEN SPACE
- WOODED/PLANTED AREAS
- SURROUNDING OPEN SPACE

Character Appraisal:
spatial issues
public realm



BASIC UTILITARIAN
concrete footways, asphalt carriageway, stone kerbs



HIGH QUALITY UTILITARIAN
stone pedestrian surfaces, asphalt carriageways, stone kerbs



HISTORIC HARBOURSIDE
large scale stonework, industrial/marine paraphernalia



1980s PEDESTRIANISATION
concrete blocks

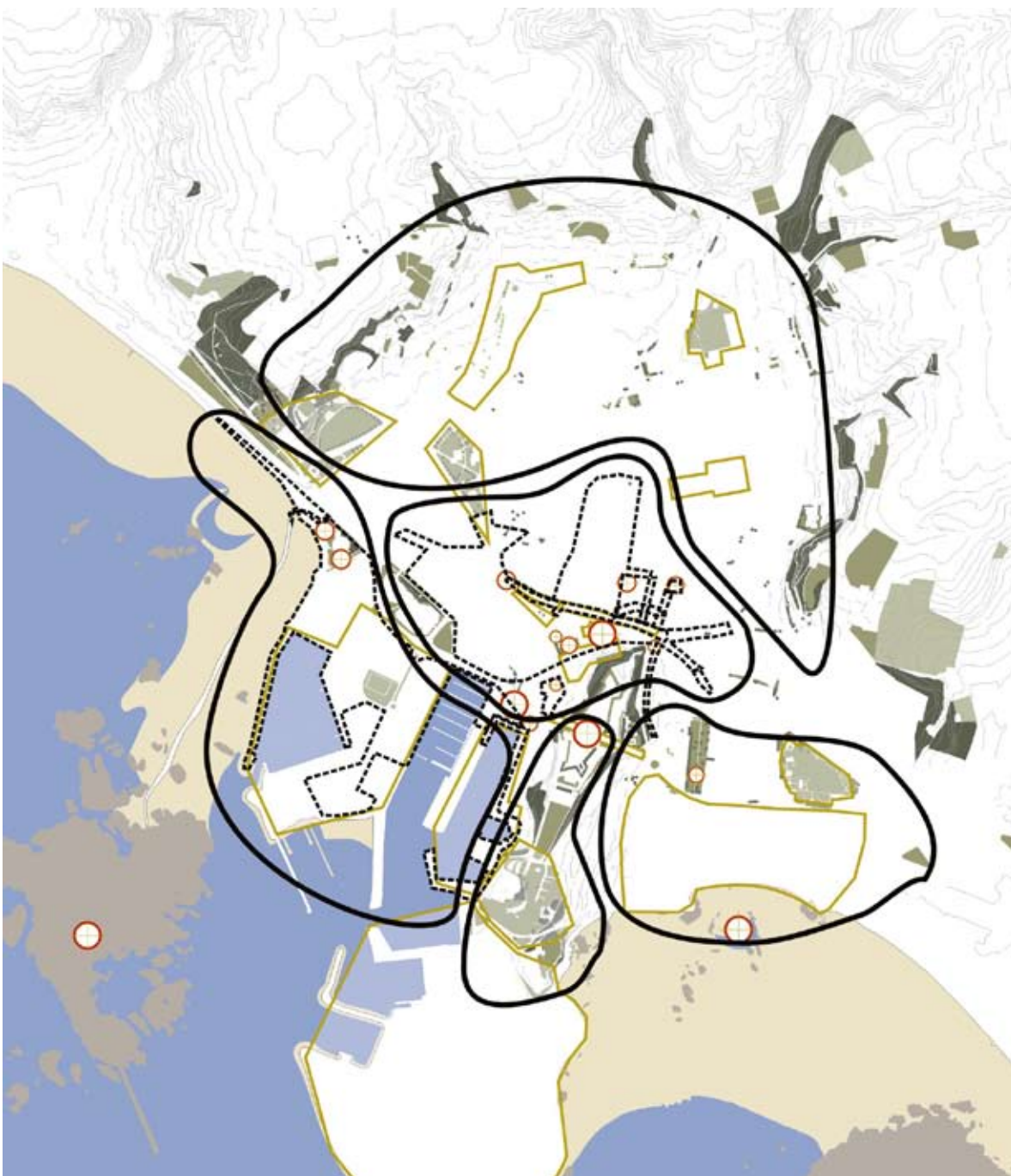


1990s PEDESTRIANISATION
decorative stone paving



CONTEMPORARY WATERFRONT
manmade materials

Character Appraisal:
spatial issues
summary



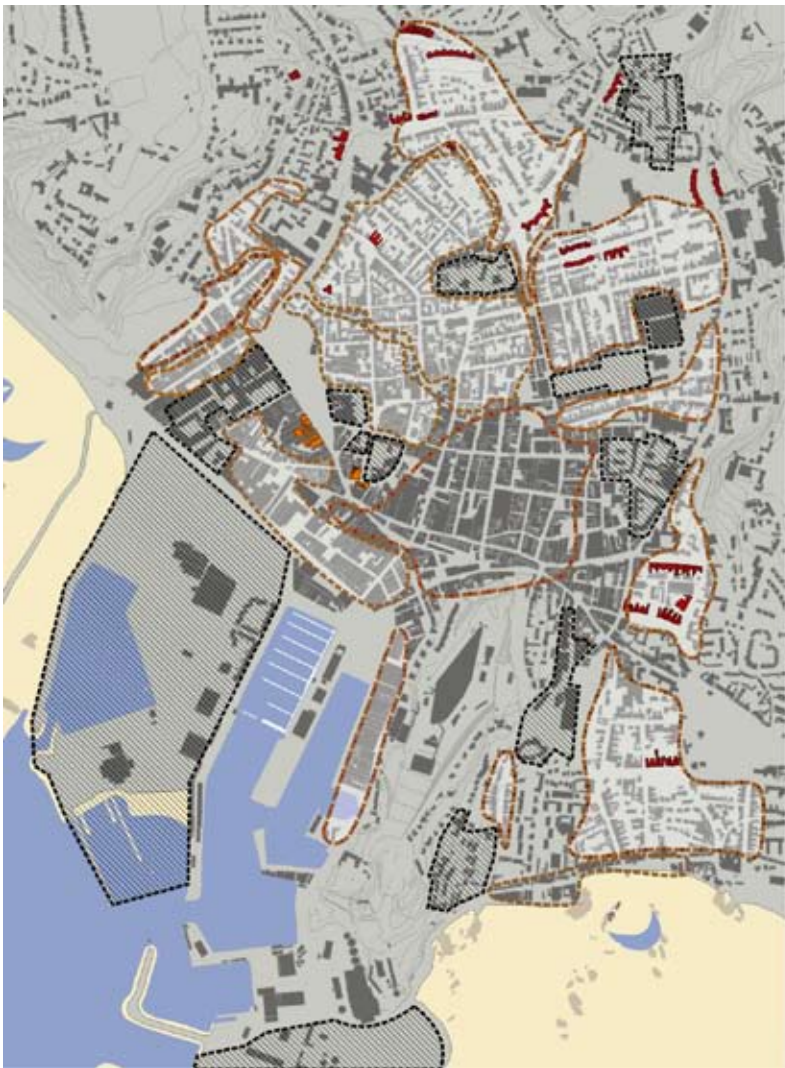
Character Appraisal:
built heritage
historic value





Character Appraisal:
built heritage
listed buildings

Character Appraisal:
built heritage
architectural character

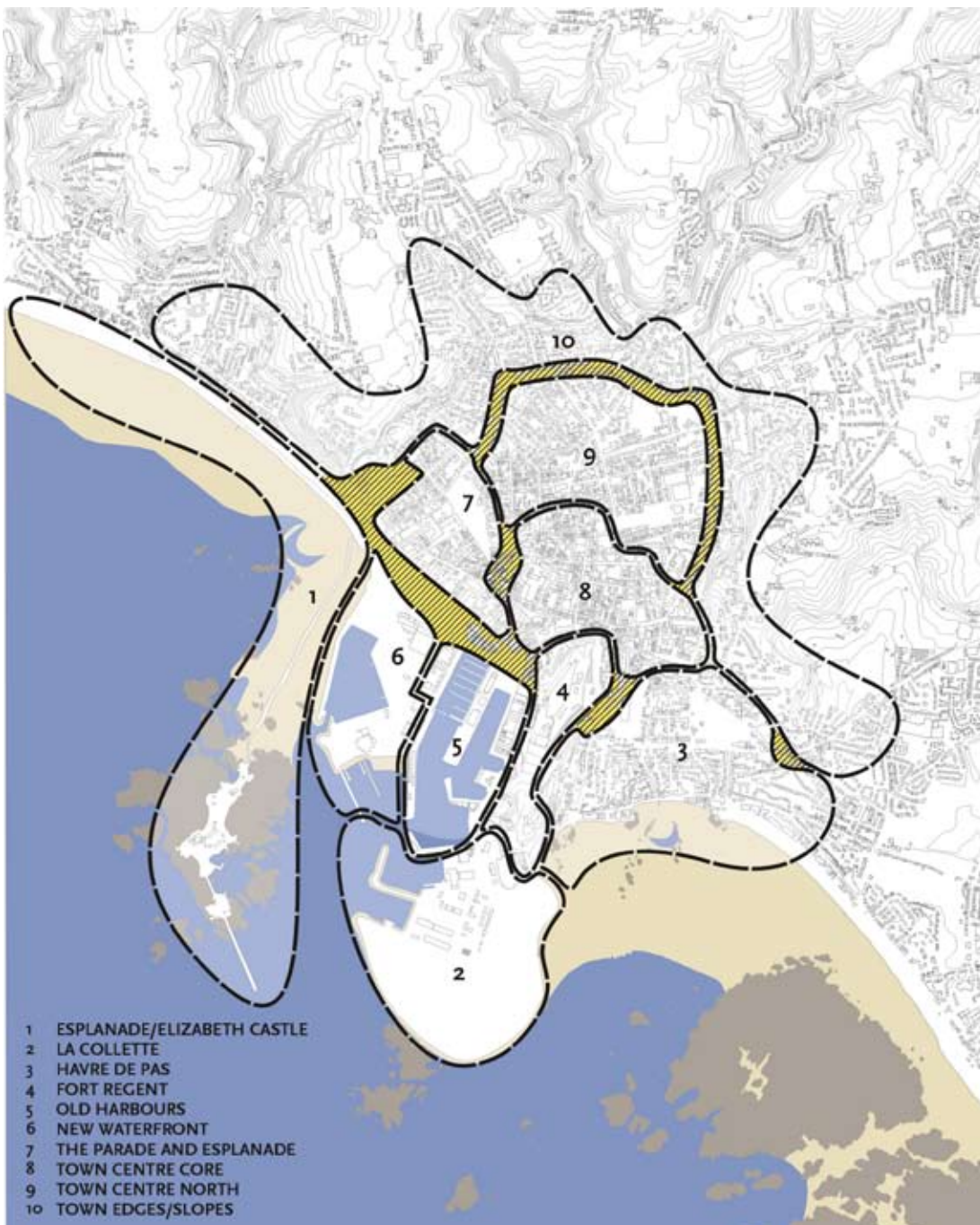


-  VICTORIAN/EDWARDIAN COMMERCIAL INTERSPERSED WITH 20C
-  REGENCY/VICTORIAN MIDDLE CLASS RESIDENTIAL
-  HIGH VICTORIAN MIDDLE CLASS RESIDENTIAL
-  VICTORIAN WORKING CLASS RESIDENTIAL
-  VICTORIAN WORKING CLASS RESIDENTIAL WITH SCATTERED WORKSHOPS
-  VICTORIAN MIDDLE CLASS RESIDENTIAL
-  MIXED 19C COMMERCIAL/WAREHOUSE
-  REGENCY/VICTORIAN RESORT
-  EARLY 19C MARITIME/INDUSTRIAL
-  MAJOR POST WAR REDEVELOPMENT SITES
-  18TH CENTURY BUILDINGS
-  SET-PIECE TERRACES - FORMAL TERRACES WITH 'PLEASURE GARDENS'



Character Appraisal:
built heritage
summary

Character Appraisal:
provisional character areas



Character Appraisal:
character areas without
interstices

