

An aerial architectural rendering of a city block. The scene features modern, multi-story buildings with flat roofs and large windows. A central green space with trees and a small pond is visible. A river flows along the bottom edge of the block. The overall color palette is muted, with greys, greens, and blues. The text "2.00 CONTEXT APPRAISAL MASTERPLAN EVOLUTION" is overlaid in the upper left quadrant.

2.00 CONTEXT APPRAISAL MASTERPLAN EVOLUTION

2.02 FIREPOOL PROPOSALS EVOLUTION

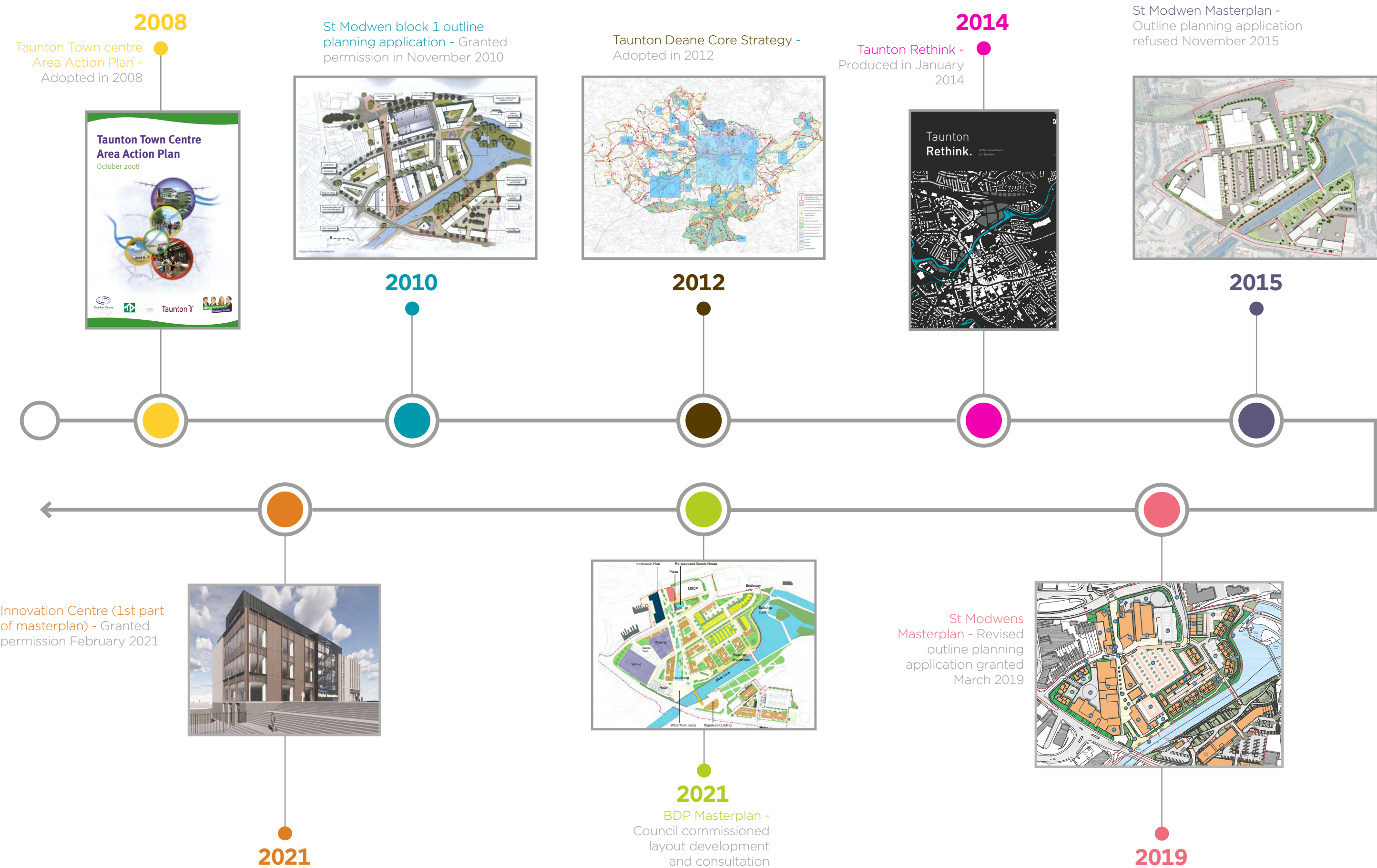


Fig.19: Firepool Planning Timeline

TAUNTON TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN (AAP) AND DESIGN CODE (2008)

The Taunton Town Area Action Plan (2008) identifies the site under policy FP1 - Riverside. The allocation proposes the redevelopment of the site to include:

- At least 47,000 sq.m (net) office space
- Approximately 8,000 sq.m. gross additional retail and leisure floorspace, of which 4,000 sq.m should be convenience retailing
- Approximately 400 dwellings including 25% affordable housing
- A 500 space multi storey car park
- Hotel with at least 100 bedrooms
- Primary healthcare facilities
- Relocation of produce market
- Boulevard link to station
- Active street level uses
- Riverside promenades
- Public art contribution

Further infrastructure requirements are set out within Policy FP2 of the AAP.

A Design Code was developed in parallel with the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TTCAAP) and adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), in accordance with Policy ED1 of the TTCAAP, which states that:

New development should be designed to be appropriate and sensitive to its context, with decisions informed by relevant policies and text in the Action Plan and the Town Centre Design Code Supplementary Planning Document.

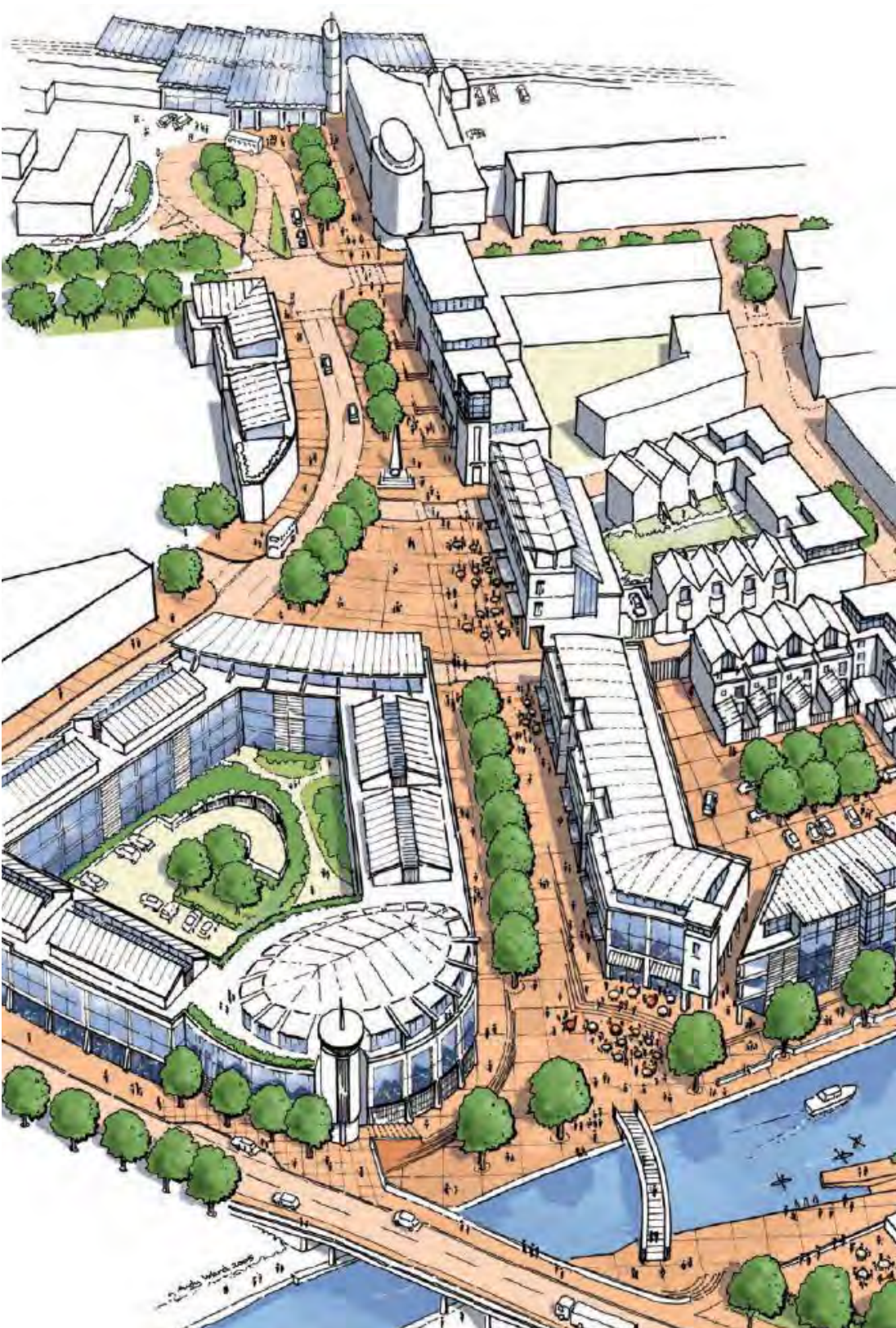


Fig.20: Vision for Firepool - AAP. Terence O'Rourke image from Urban Development Framework and Design Code 2004

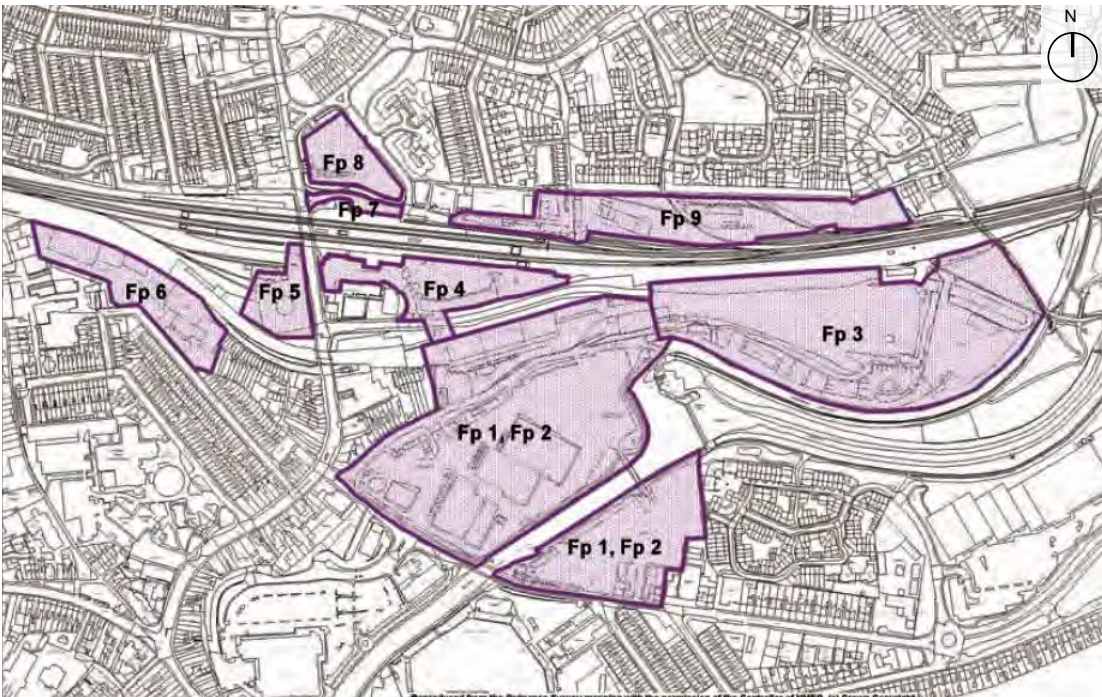


Fig.21: AAP Firepool Allocation Plan



Fig.22: Design Code Firepool Plan

ST MODWEN BLOCK 1 OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION (2010)

In 2010 an outline application was prepared by St Modwen for new office and residential floorspace on the Priory Bridge car park, this area is known as Firepool Block 1. This was the first phase of the wider regeneration proposals for the Firepool Site.



Fig.24: St Modwen Block 1 Outline Planning Proposals

TAUNTON DEANE CORE STRATEGY (2012)

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012) Site Allocations & Development Plan provides the overarching context for the site through Policy SP2 “Realising the vision for Taunton” with cross reference back to the AAP. The Council adopted in December 2016 a Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP) sets out more detailed site allocations to meet land requirements up to 2028. It also includes specific, detailed development management policies. It fits within the framework of the adopted Core Strategy.

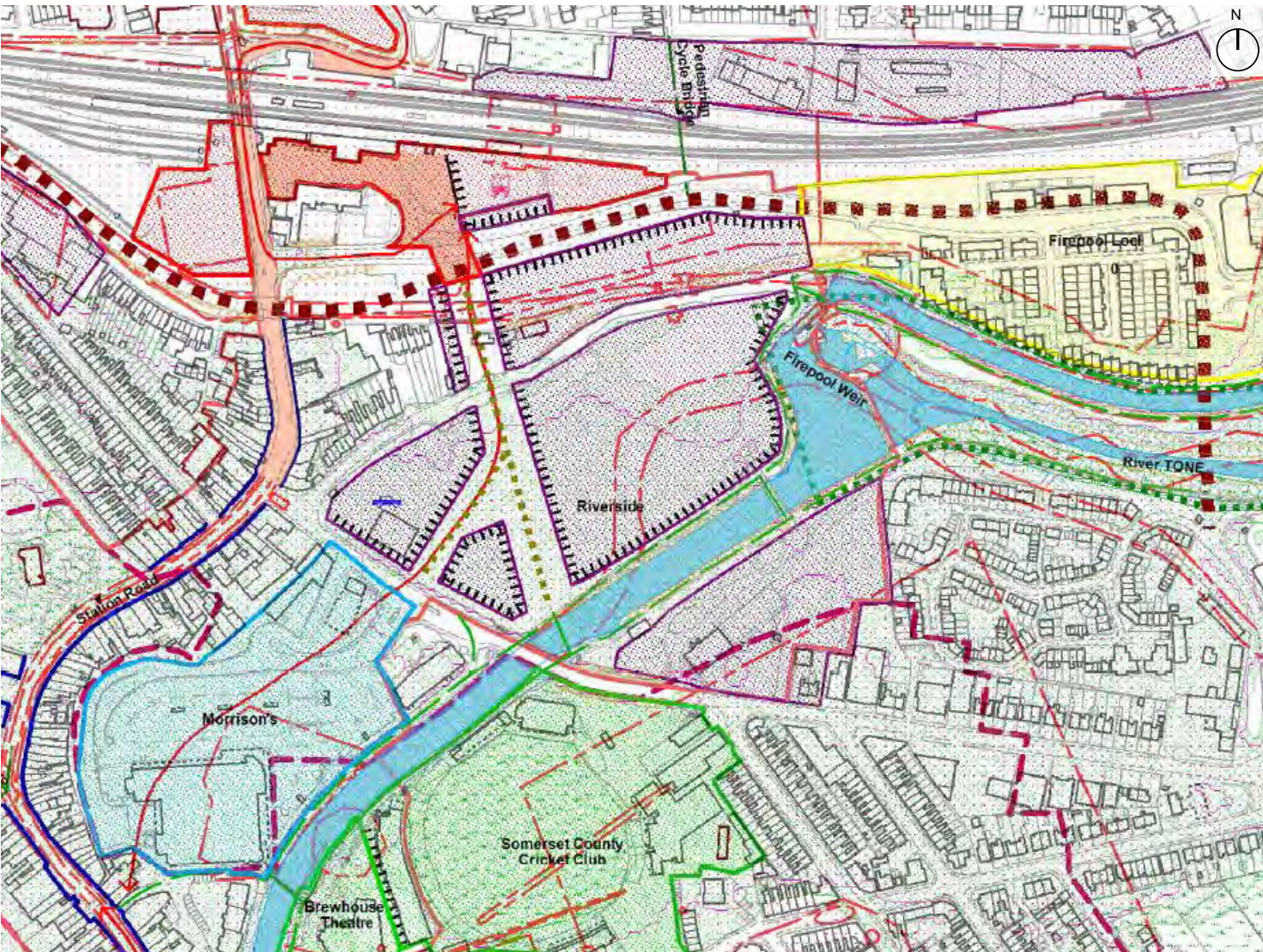


Fig.23: SADMP Firepool Plan

TAUNTON RETHINK (2014)

The Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008) identifies the site under policy FP1 – Riverside which includes the Priory Bridge land to the south of river (most of which is outside of this application). The allocation proposes the redevelopment of the site to include a range of mixed uses across the site but predominantly an office led scheme.

Since the AAP proposals for the site, it has become clear that the commercial office elements are unlikely to be delivered in the quantum previously envisaged on the site. In light of the market changes and time-lapse since the AAP, a ‘Rethink’ exercise was commissioned for the Town Centre regeneration sites including Firepool. The Rethink document (2014) was approved by Members as a strategy that could be endorsed for the site and wider sites. The Rethink document provided further clarity on the potential mix of development that could be provided on the site. The Rethink acknowledges that the provision of office space on the Priory Bridge site (south of the River) will provide a significant proportion of the originally envisaged office accommodation and identifies Firepool North as having the potential for retail and leisure uses including cinema, food and drink as well as residential, hotel, office, parking and infrastructure. The Rethink Document acknowledged that:

“Firepool represents the primary development opportunity in the town centre. The majority of the site is vacant and within Taunton Deane Borough Council control and, subject to planning and other issues identified in the Delivery Strategy, could be developed within 3-5 years”.

Key Objectives identified were:

- Mixed use redevelopment including up to 8,000m2 retail space and leisure uses (such as a cinema and restaurants);
- A high quality pedestrian connection between Taunton Station and Coal Orchard;
- An attractive waterfront on the River Tone; and
- A new town centre car park accessed off of the NIDR.

The underpinning strategy for the Rethink is to strengthen and focus development along the River Tone using Firepool, Coal Orchard and the Market Place as key nodes along the river corridor.



Fig.25: Rethink Taunton - Firepool Vision Masterplan



Fig.26: Rethink Taunton - Firepool Artist's Impression

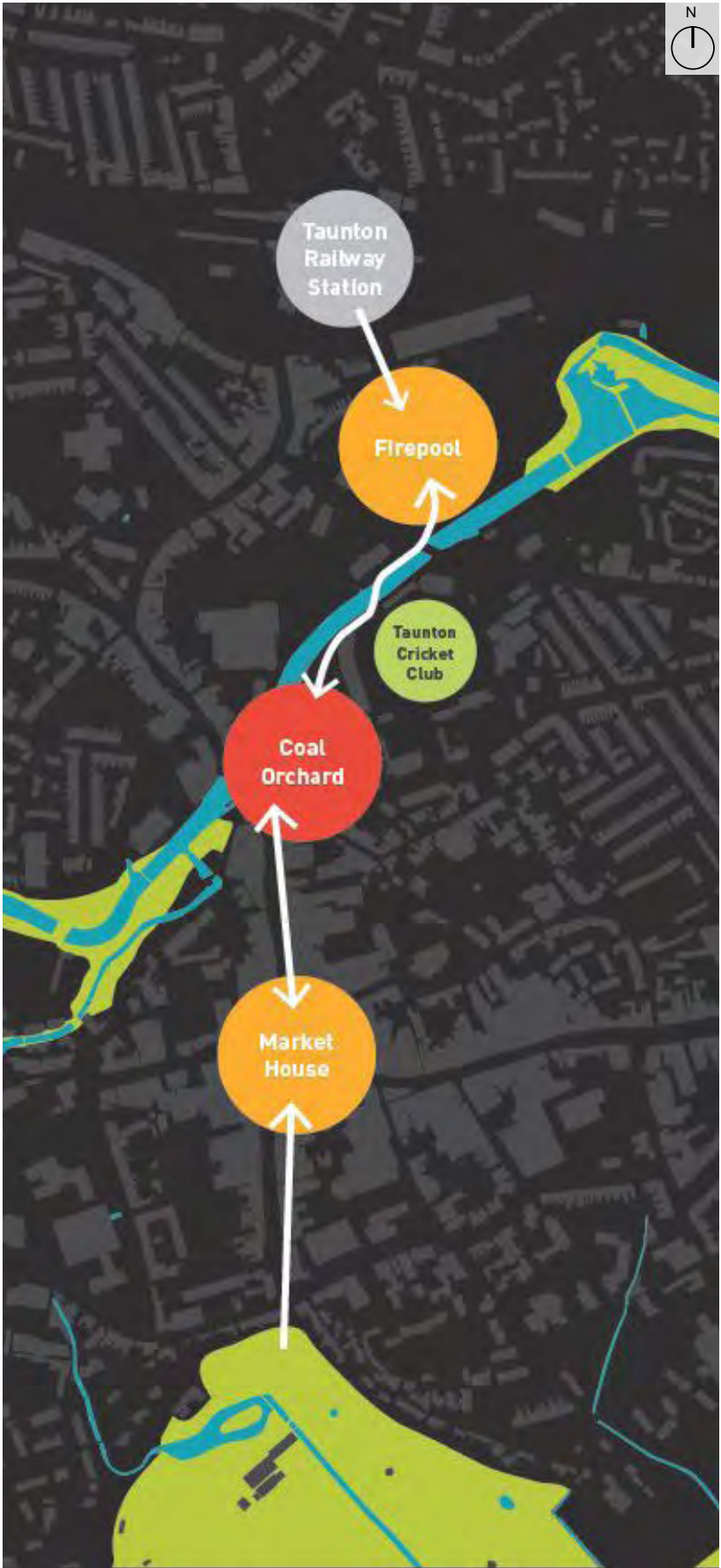


Fig.27: Rethink Taunton - Design Concept

ST MODWEN MASTERPLAN (2015) - REFUSED

The 2015 iteration of the St Modwens masterplan was refused at planning.

The mix was determined by the end user demand with the total quantum of development falling within the maximum permitted floorspace parameters which were:

Firepool North

- Food Retail (A1) 3,500m2
- Non Food Retail (A1) 6,000m2
- Food & Beverage (A3/A4) 2,500m2
- Cinema (D2) 2,400m2
- Hotel (C1) or Offices (B1) 4,000m2
- Residential (C3) 150 units

The scheme also provided circa 425 parking spaces via surface level car park.



Fig.28: St Modwen Illustrative Masterplan 2015

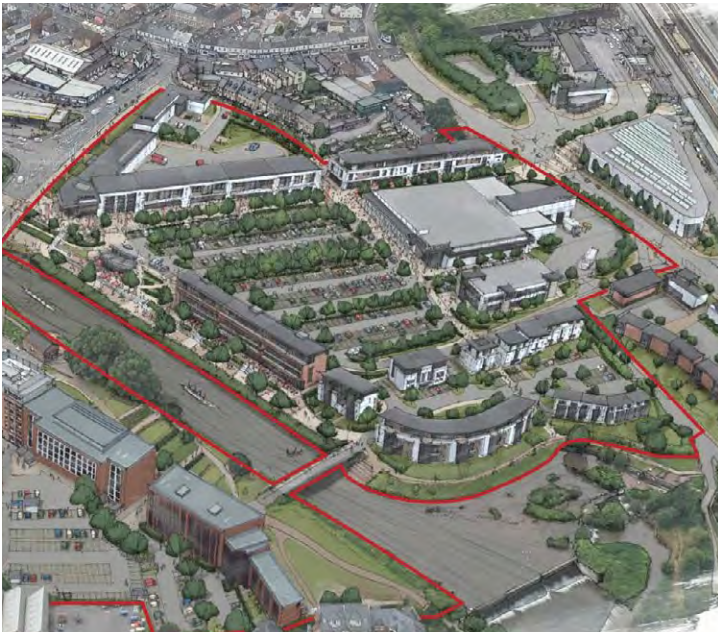


Fig.29: St Modwen Proposals Artist Impressions



Fig.30: St Modwen Proposals Artist Impressions

ST MODWEN REVISED MASTERPLAN (2019) - GRANTED (EXPIRED)

The existing outline consented planning application,with some matters reserved, for the former cattle market site makes provisions for up to 3500sqm of convenience retail development (Class A1), up to 6000sqm of non-food development (A1), up to 4000sqm of office (B1) or hotel (C1), up to 3900sqm of assembly/leisure (D2) and non-residential institutions (D1) (of which no more than 1500sqm shall be D1) , up to 2600sqm of food and drink establishments (A3/A4/A5), and up to 200 residential units (C3).

Redevelopment of the former Priory Bridge Road car park and former 84-94 Priory Bridge Road were to provide up to 2964sqm of office (B1) and 5525sqm of office (B1) or hotel (C1) uses and a further 1300sqm of A3/A4/B1 (office) D2 uses with car parking, landscaping, public realm, access, (in detail for the NIDR connection) highways, infrastructure works and relevant demolition at Firepool, Priory Bridge Road, Taunton.

Firepool North

- Food Store Floorspace: 3,500 sqm (Zone A,C);
- Non Food Retail: 6,000 sqm (Zone A, C, E);
- Food & Beverage: 2,600 sqm (Zone A,B,E);
- Assembly/Leisure (Zone A,E) & Non Residential;
- Institutions (Zone E only): 3,900 sqm Hotel (C1) or Offices: 4,000 sqm (Zone A,B); and
- Up to a Maximum Total Floorspace of: 20,000 sqm.

Firepool South

- Offices: 2,964 sqm;
- Hotel or Offices: 5,525 sqm;
- Ancillary (F&B and Leisure): 1,300 sqm;
- Up to a Maximum Total Floorspace of: 9,789 sqm;
- Total Floorspace (GIA): 29,789 sqm, Total Residential: 200 units; and
- Car Parking (excl. Residential): 425 spaces.

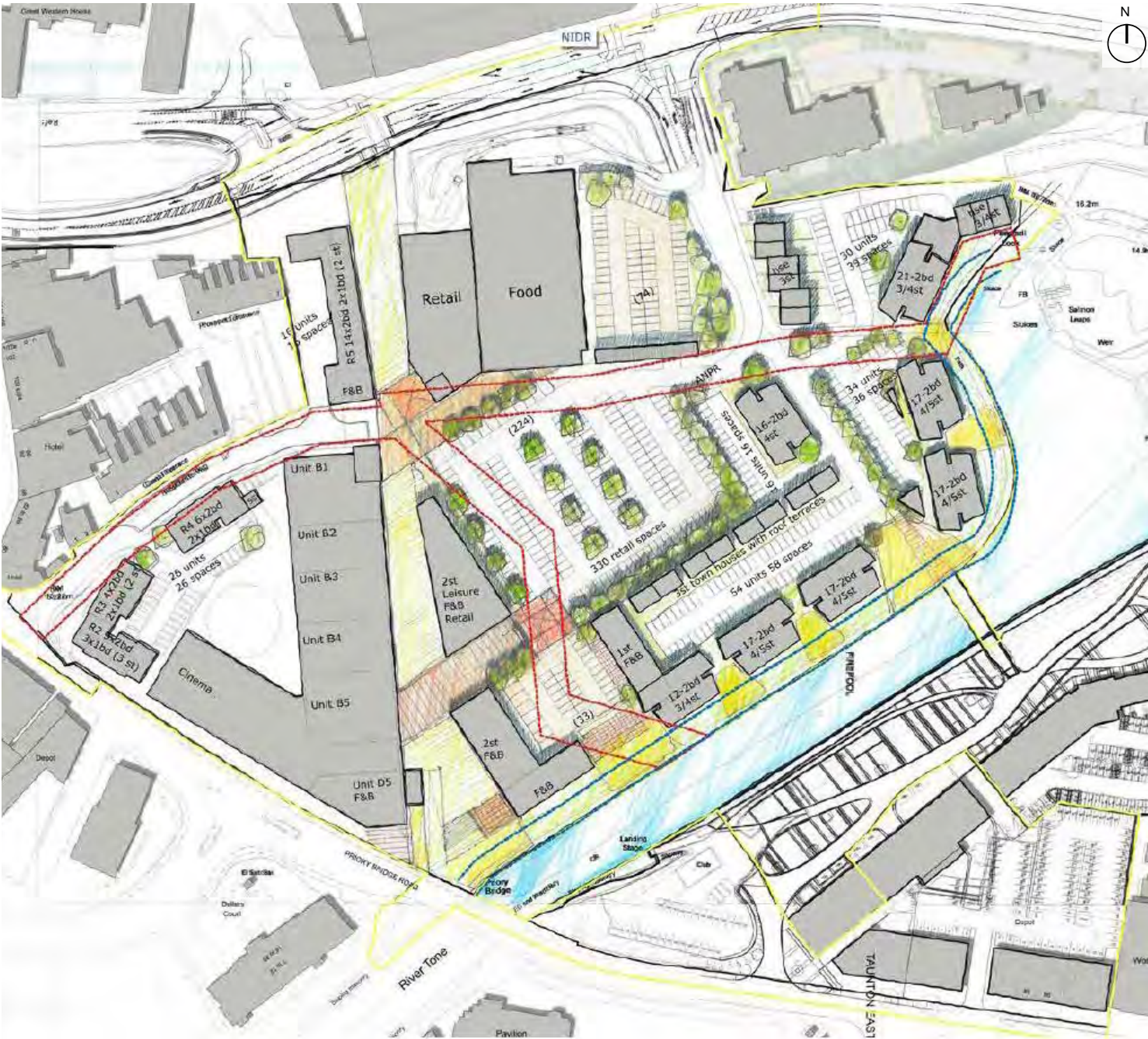


Fig.31: St Modwen Illustrative Masterplan 2018



Fig.32: St Modwen Proposals Artist Impressions



Fig.33: St Modwen Proposals Artist Impressions

2020 DRAFT MASTERPLAN

Developed masterplan produced in 2020 for SWT. This plan was subject to public consultation and pre-application discussions.

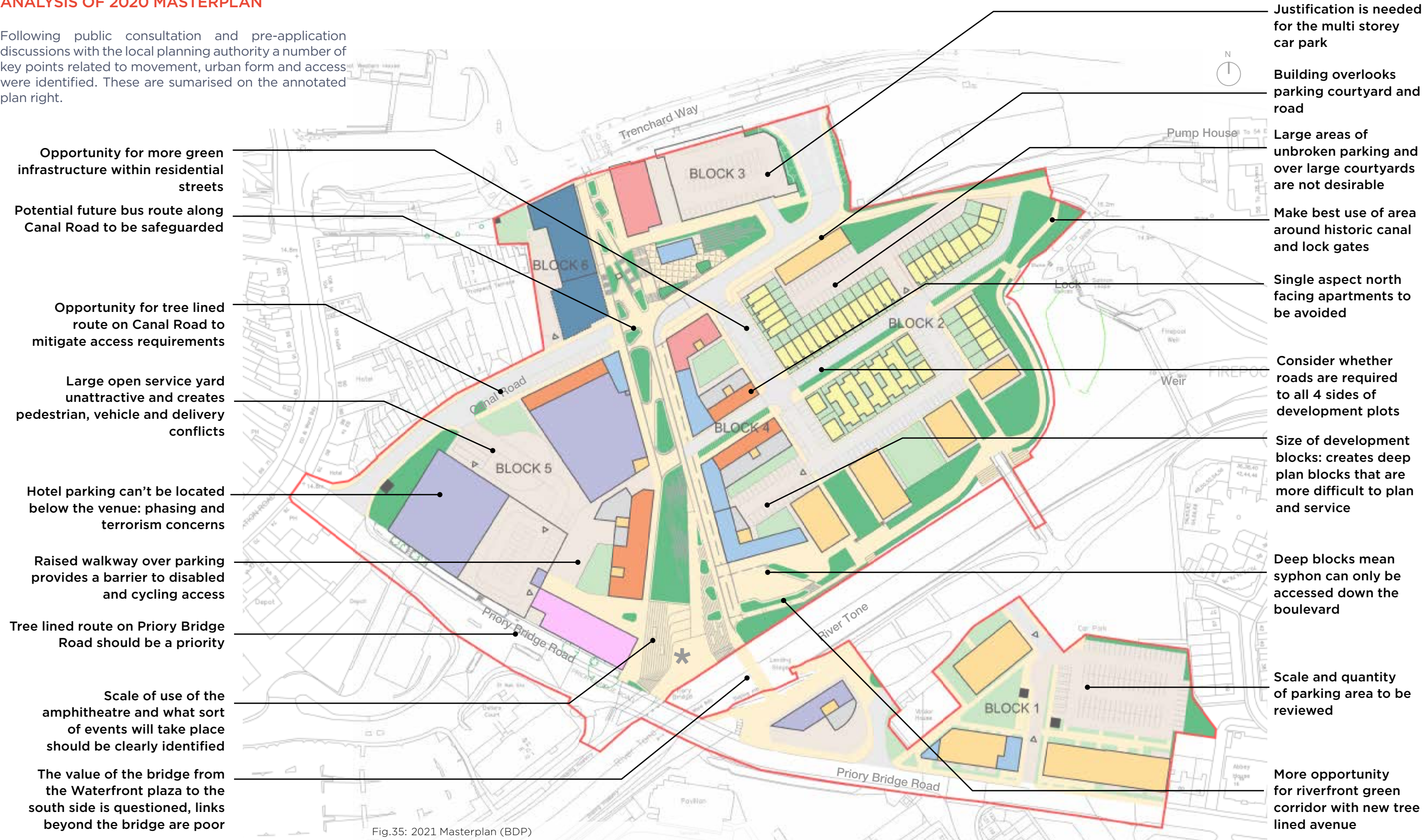
See following page for detailed analysis of this masterplan.



Fig.34: 2020 Draft Masterplan

ANALYSIS OF 2020 MASTERPLAN

Following public consultation and pre-application discussions with the local planning authority a number of key points related to movement, urban form and access were identified. These are summarised on the annotated plan right.



INNOVATION CENTRE

Full planning application for the erection of a three storey building of 2,613 sqm floor space (Use Class E) including office, reception, meeting rooms and flexible collaboration workspaces with 159 sqm ancillary cafe use and external car parking area on land adjacent to Trenchard Way, Taunton.

The plans opposite show the approved Innovation Centre that will sit in the Northwest of the masterplan site.

Along with the Block 3 office building and Northern Boulevard this development provides the primary facade and gateway into the Firepool development from Taunton Train Station.



Fig.36: AWW - Innovation Centre Visual

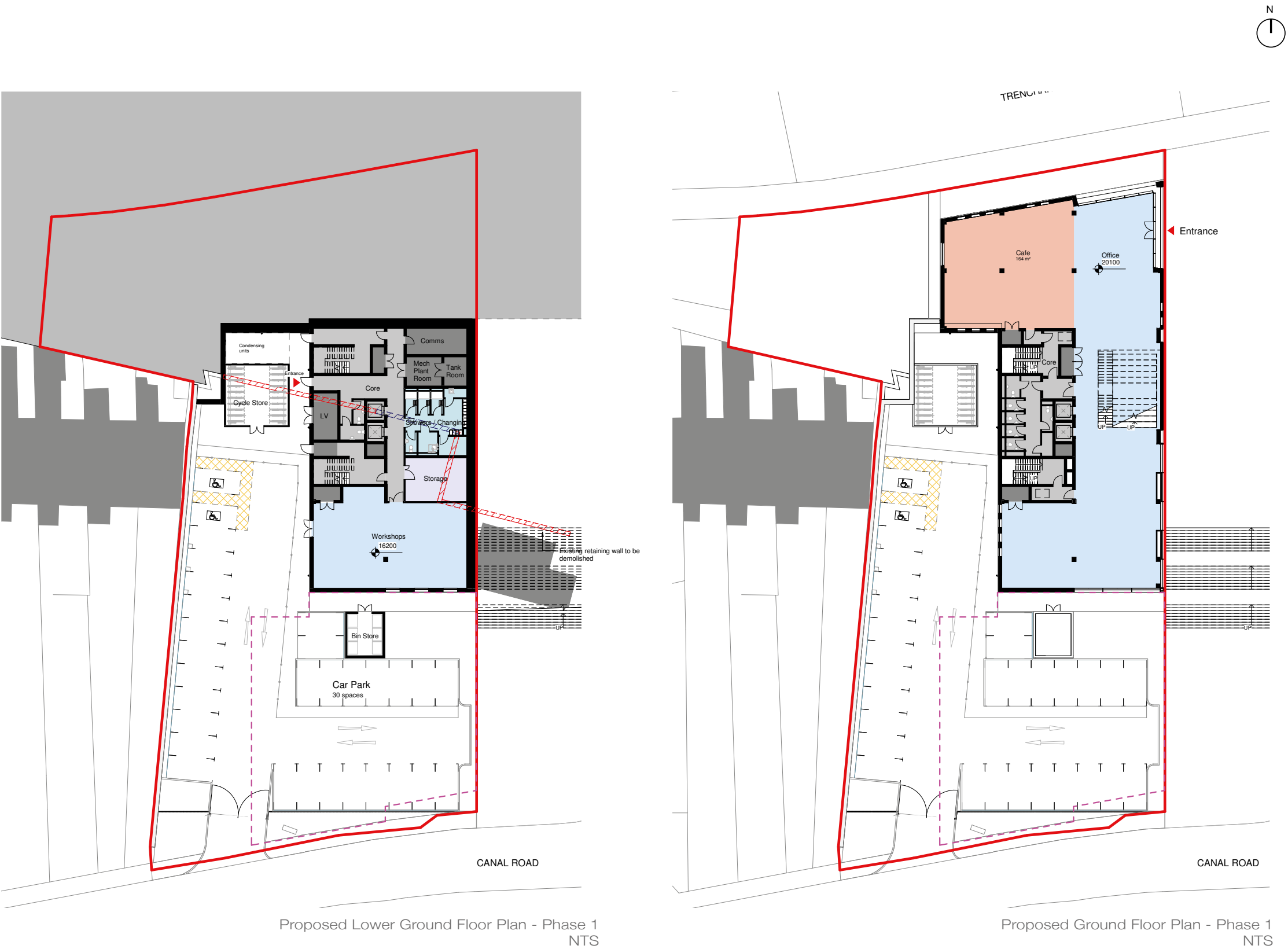


Fig.37: AWW - Innovation Centre Floor Plans

BLOCK 3

This application brought forward the development of a new mixed use office building, the refurbishment and extension of the existing GWR building and the northern section of the proposed boulevard that runs through the site from north to south.

This application (planning ref. no. 38/21/0436) was approved on 28th March 2022.

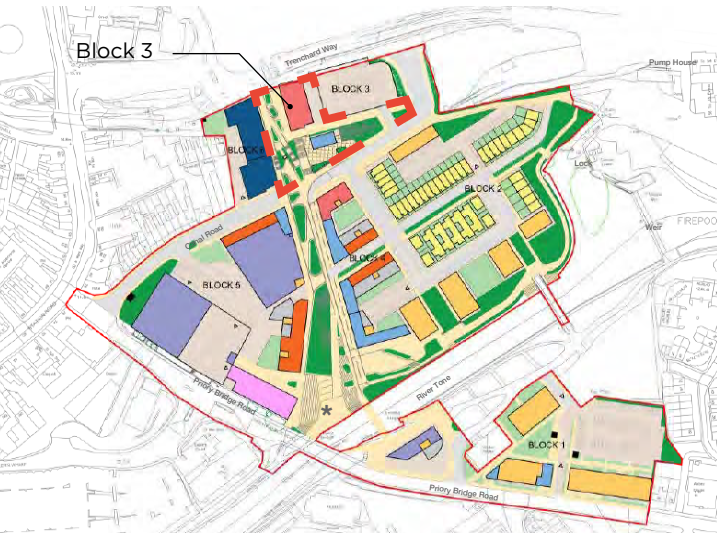


Fig.38: Block 3 Proposed Site Plan



Fig.39: Block 3 Visuals

ACCESS

A full planning application has been submitted and approved (application ref. no. 38/21/0464) for the formation of a vehicular access with associated works and alterations to the highway at the Firepool Regeneration Site, Trenchard Way (and land to the south), Taunton.

The 2019 extant outline permission with approved masterplan mix on the Firepool site included approval for full details of a new two-lane access.

Traffic forecasts were revisited and predicted a far lower generation than previously expected. As a result, the development proposals were changed for this application to comprise a single rather than two lane approach.

The proposals also enhance pedestrian and cycle access across and to and from the southern arm. This included the introduction of a cycle route on the Eastern side of the junction, provision of a direct single stage signal control cycle crossing and provision of an, in parallel, single stage pedestrian crossing immediately south of the cycle crossing.

This application was granted Planning Consent on 24th February 2022.

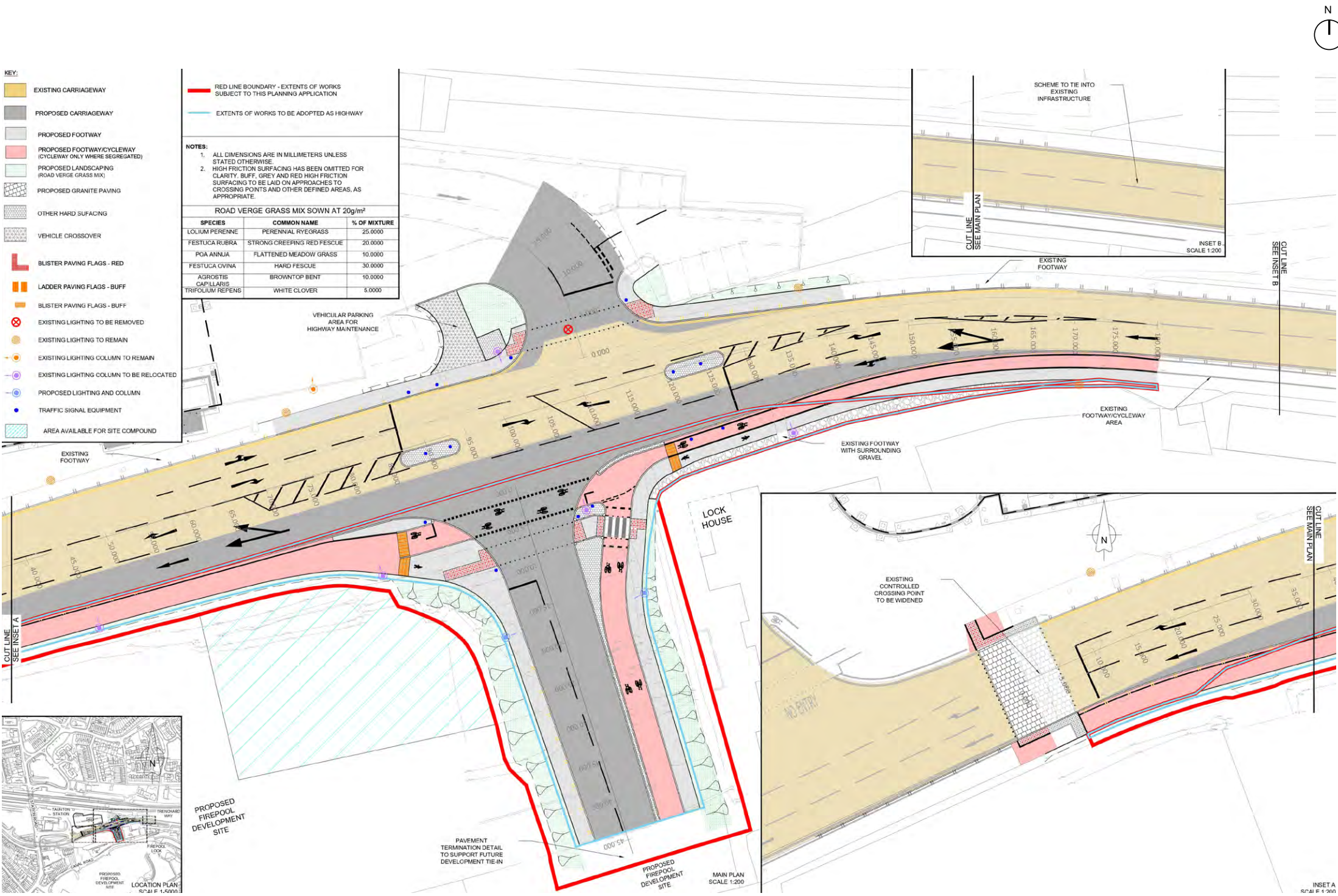


Fig.40: Proposed Junction General Arrangement

INFRASTRUCTURE

A full planning application (application ref. no. 38/21/0440) was submitted to Somerset West and Taunton Council and approved 13th May 2022, for enabling infrastructure works to the Site.

The works include; demolition of the existing Auction House and site clearance; temporary diversion of the existing cycle and pedestrian route through the Site (which will be reinstated as part of this application); ground raising to create platform formation levels for the Site; ground remediation; flood mitigation; primary foul and surface water drainage networks for the Site and connections for future sites / developments surrounding the Site.

The proposed works aim to clear obstructions from the site and provide a platform that does not direct or influence the scale, use or design of the future site masterplan and enables the works to come forward.



Fig.41: JUBB Proposed Isopachyte site strip

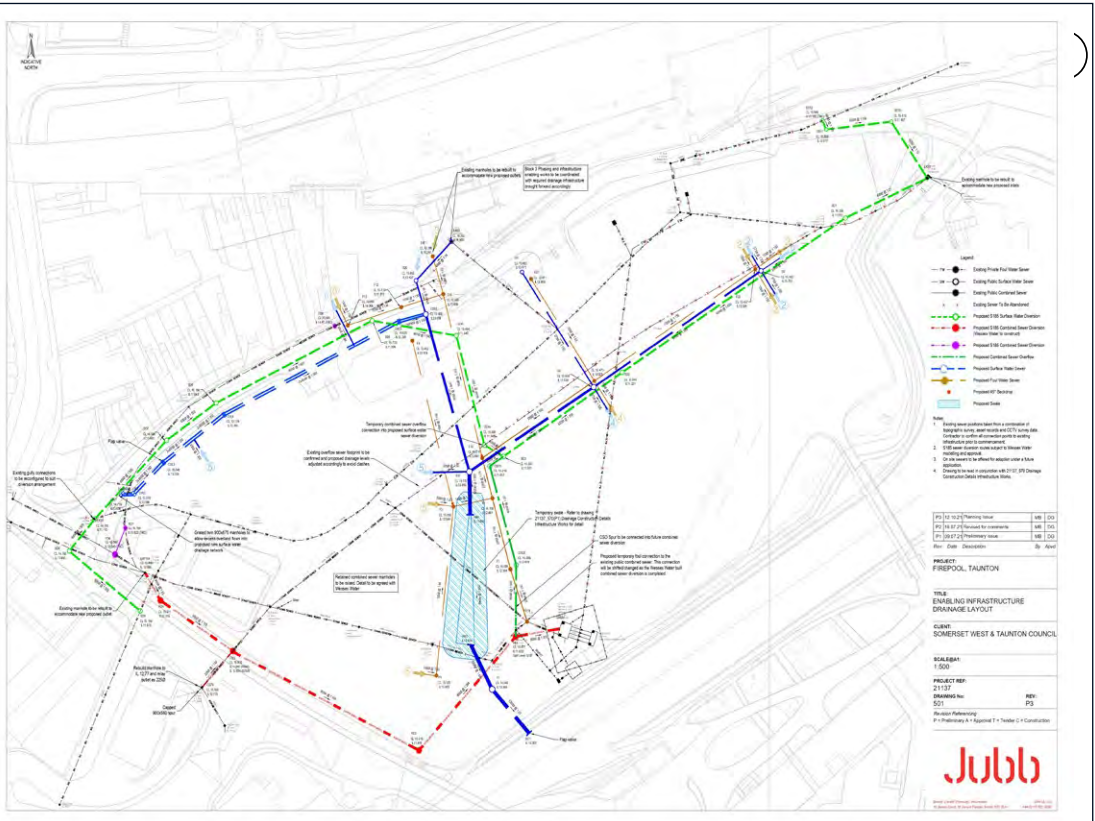


Fig.42: JUBB Enabling Infrastructure Drainage Layout

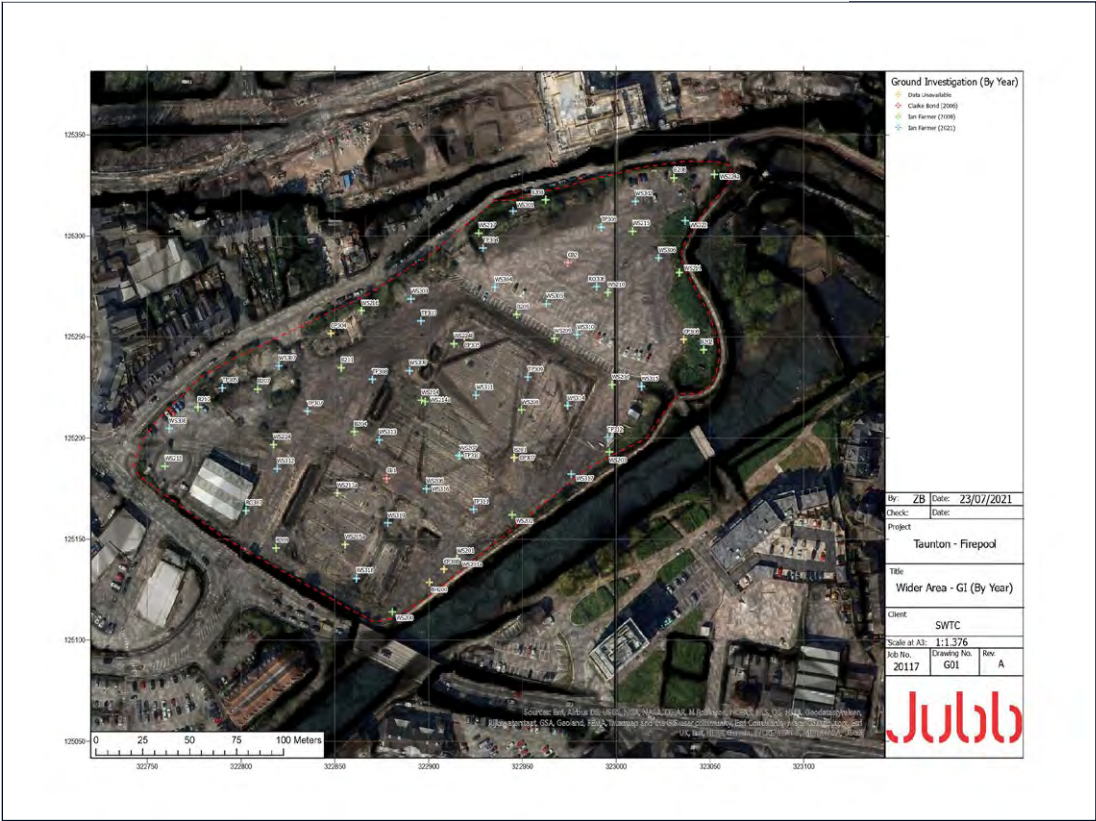


Fig.43: JUBB GI Plan



Fig.44: JUBB Proposed plateau levels

An aerial architectural rendering of a city block. The scene features several modern, multi-story buildings with flat roofs and large windows. A central green space with trees and a winding path is visible. A river or canal runs along the bottom edge of the block. The overall color palette is muted, with greys, greens, and blues. The text '2.00 CONTEXT APPRAISAL SURROUNDING BUILDINGS' is overlaid in the upper left quadrant.

2.00 CONTEXT APPRAISAL SURROUNDING BUILDINGS

2.03 HERITAGE

CONTEXT

There are two churches in the surrounding area which have significance to the Site. Key vistas to these church towers should be considered within the design.

St James’s Church is a Grade II* Listed Building, located approximately 240m to the south of the Site.

The Grade I Church of St Mary Magdalene is 470m to the south of the Site provides important focal points within the Conservation Area.

Visibility of these churches from within the wider surrounding area would have been an important aspect of their design and function, with the prominent towers providing a dominant and easily recognisable marker within the historic townscape.

Although views towards these churches have been considered within the masterplan, it is worth noting that one of the key conclusions from the Heritage Assessment is that the settings of the churches and influence of their settings to their significances are generally limited to their immediate surroundings.

KEY

Conservation Areas

- 1. Staplegrove Road Conservation Boundary
- 2. St Mary and St James Conservation Boundary
- 3. Castle Green/Bath Place Conservation Boundary

Listed Buildings

- 1. Grade II* Listed St James’s Church
- 2. Grade I Church of St Mary Magdalene



Fig.45: Church Heritage Context Diagram



Fig.46: View to church spires from within site



Fig.47: View of Church of St Mary Magdalene



Fig.48: View of Church of St James

2.03 HERITAGE - OFFSITE

CONTEXT

There are no designated heritage assets within the Site.

Within the study area there are a few Listed Buildings, identified on the diagram to the right. Those within closest proximity to the Site include:

- the Grade II Listed Firepool Pumping Station (C), located c. 60m to the east of the Site;
- the Grade II Listed former shirt and collar factory premises of Barnicotts (H), c. 40m to the south of the Site;
- the Grade II Listed Priory Lodge (I), c. 70m to the south;
- the Grade II* Listed Priory Barn (B), c. 85m to the south; and
- the Grade II Listed Gurd's (G), c. 25m to the west;

The St Mary and St James Conservation Area lies partially within the study area, approximately 170m to the south of the Site at its nearest extent (Figure 3). The Conservation Area contains a number of Listed Buildings, three of which, including the Grade II* Listed Church of St James (Figure 3, A), are also within the study area.

The Staplegrove Road Conservation Area lies at the western edge of the study area. There are no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields within the Site or the study area.

KEY

Conservation Areas

1. Staplegrove Road Conservation Boundary

2. St Mary and St James Conservation Boundary

Listed Buildings

1. Firepool Pumping Station - Grade II

2. Taunton Station - Grade II

3. Former Great Western Hotel - Grade II

4. The wheel Tapper Public House - Grade II

5. GURDS - Grade II

6. Former Shirt and Collar Factory Premises of Barnicotts Limited Printers - Grade II

7. Priory Barn - Grade II*

8. Priory Lodge - Grade II

9. Old Brewery House - Grade II

10. Black Horse and Myrtle Tree Inns - Grade II

11. 41 and 43 Bridge Street - Grade II

12. 45 - 55 Bridge Street - Grade II

13. Northtown House | Yarde House - Grade II

14. 52-53 Wood Street - Grade II

15. 29-47 Stapegrove Road - Grade II

16. Elms Parade - Grade II

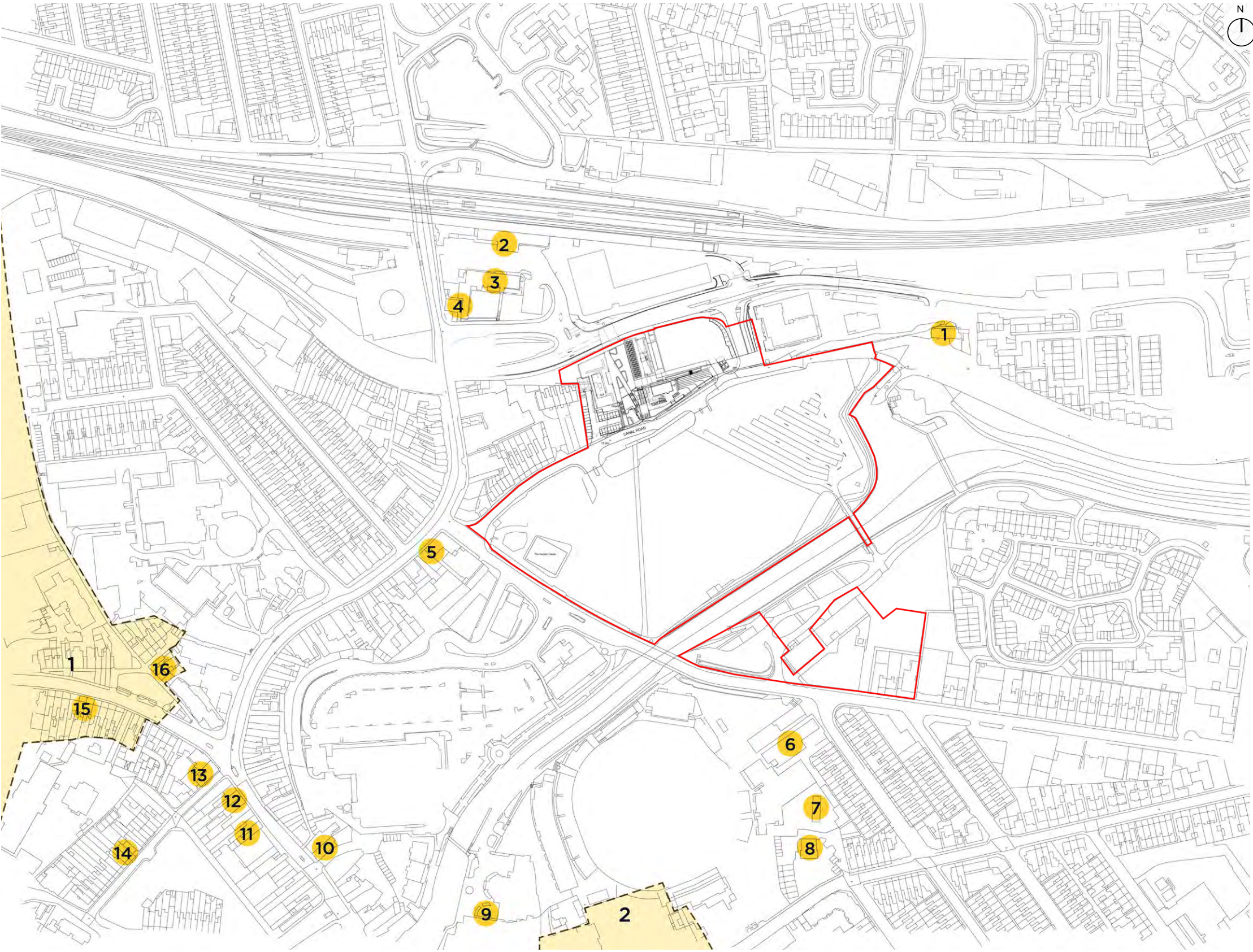


Fig.49: Heritage Context Diagram

2.03 HERITAGE - ONSITE & ADJACENT

KEY BUILDINGS - PUMPING STATION

The Grade II Listed Firepool Pumping Station is located approximately 60m to the east of the site. The structure comprises a hot air engine house which was constructed in 1866 over two earlier limekilns situated on a wharf along the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. The limekilns forming the base of the structure are built of limestone rubble with keyed brick arches.

The remainder of the building is predominantly of English bond red brick, featuring blue brick string and impost courses. The roofs to the main structure are hipped and slate covered, while a segmental corrugated iron roof overlies the wrought-iron water tank. Two sets of Pearn three throw engines reportedly survive within the building interior. The pumping station became redundant in the 1960s following the withdrawal of steam locomotives, and is currently disused and in a deteriorating condition.

The pumping station is situated alongside a footpath running adjacent to an existing section of the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. As a vital aspect of its functionality, the canal would have been a key influence in the original siting of the pumping house, and earlier limekilns, and so contributes towards its historical value.

The railway to the north of the pumping house, and station to the north-west, represent further surviving elements associated with the pumping house, and thus also contribute to significance, although subsequent redevelopment in these areas has somewhat reduced the intelligibility of these contextual relationships. The immediate surroundings of the asset have also experienced recent modern development, with the construction of the Firepool Lock apartment buildings to its immediate north, east and west

The proposed development would alter the present character of the Site, and introduce a new built element within the wider surroundings of the Grade II Listed pumping station. However, as discussed above, the Site does not bear any discernible functional or historical relationships with the asset, and does not inform its architectural and historical interest.

KEY BUILDINGS - COLLAR FACTORY

Grade II listed former Victorian factory has been completely renovated into a state-of-the-art workspace offering private offices and coworking memberships for those looking for a different way of working. The form and materials of the building have influenced the design of the Block 1 apartment buildings.

KEY BUILDINGS - GWR Building

The GWR building sits within the red line boundary of the Masterplan.

In the current planning consent for Block 3 the existing GWR building is renovated and extended to create a statement restaurant and associated landscape.

Historically, the site surrounding GWR has always been sat on a variety of levels. Historic maps show a bank running alongside and around the rear of the GWR building, with the goods shed being built at a higher level than the GWR building. This is reflected in the current site conditions where the GWR building currently has a large retaining structure to the rear of it.

The GWR Goods Depot was constructed in the early 1930's as part of improvements to the station goods facilities following the expansion of the railway. It is considered that the depot is of sufficient heritage interest to comprise a heritage asset, because it has 'a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest'.

KEY BUILDINGS - Auction House

Set within the former cattle market site this red brick, industrial Auction House was used for livestock sales.

Under the Infrastructure application this building is to be demolished. (ref. 38/21/0440)



Fig.52: Pump station and Lock



Fig.50: Pump Station



Fig.51: Lock



Fig.53: GWR Building



Fig.54: Auction House

2.04 RECENT DEVELOPMENT

KEY

1. Firepool Lock

2. Viridor

3. NIDR
4. GWR Taunton Car Park

5. Coal Orchard Regeneration



Fig.55: Recent Development Plan



Recent Waters Edge development overlooking River Tone



Viridor viewed from Priory Bridge Road

3. NIDR - Construction of Northern Inner Distributor Road linking Staplegrove Road to Priory Avenue, including a new bridge at Chip Lane for pedestrians and cycles. new road bridge at Station Road and a road bridge across the River Tone at Priory Park, Taunton. Construction completed.



View looking down towards the proposed Northern Inner Distributor Road

4. GWR car park - Multi-storey car park on Trenchard Way, completed.



View of newly constructed GWR car park from Trenchard Way

5. Coal Orchard Regeneration - Demolition of swimming pool and erection of mixed use development comprising of retail, commercial, restaurant, residential, car park and associated public realm at Coal Orchard, Taunton. This development is currently under construction.



Riverside view of Coal Orchard

2.05 LOCAL CHARACTER (TCAAP)

Firepool (including Firepool North, Firepool Lock and Canal Road)

This broadly corresponds with the Firepool area identified in the Taunton Town Centre Design Code (2008) and encompasses an area of land to the north of the town centre focused on the railway line, canal and River Tone. This has been identified as a key town centre regeneration area and much of the area has already been redeveloped for residential use.

The former Cattle Market site is of brownfield nature and has been cleared ready for redevelopment and the existing concrete and asphalt surfacing remains over much of the area. A tree survey has been carried out for the site and has found that the existing trees are of low to moderate quality and value.

The landform is reasonably flat over the majority of the site (at around 14m AOD), however there is a significant embankment and level change (4-5m approx.) north of Canal Road, where the landform rises towards the Trenchard Way and Taunton Railway Station. The approved Drainage and Levels application (application ref. no. 38/21/0440) will raise the site out of the flood plain and form a development plateau for future works.

The former Auction House is a remnant of the previous cattle market and is of brick construction. The Auction House is earmarked for demolition as part of the Drainage and Levels works.

Immediately to the north-west of the site new contemporary housing at the Firepool Lock comprises 3-4 storey houses and apartments which address Trenchard Way and the canal. These developments, to the north of the site, define the urban fabric within the area, providing a resident population and overlooked public areas.

The eastern end of Canal Road has a mix of modern and Victorian housing, service yards of local garages and employment units. The southern side of Canal Road is dominated by the vacant site, which is used for public amenity space and parking. The northern site is currently enclosed by a mix of galvanised steel & cast iron railings and Heras Fencing, in a range of condition and attractiveness. Also to the north of Canal Road is the Innovation Centre site which is currently under construction. The townscape is degraded due to the close proximity to the vacant Firepool site and a number of poorly maintained properties and low quality commercial uses.

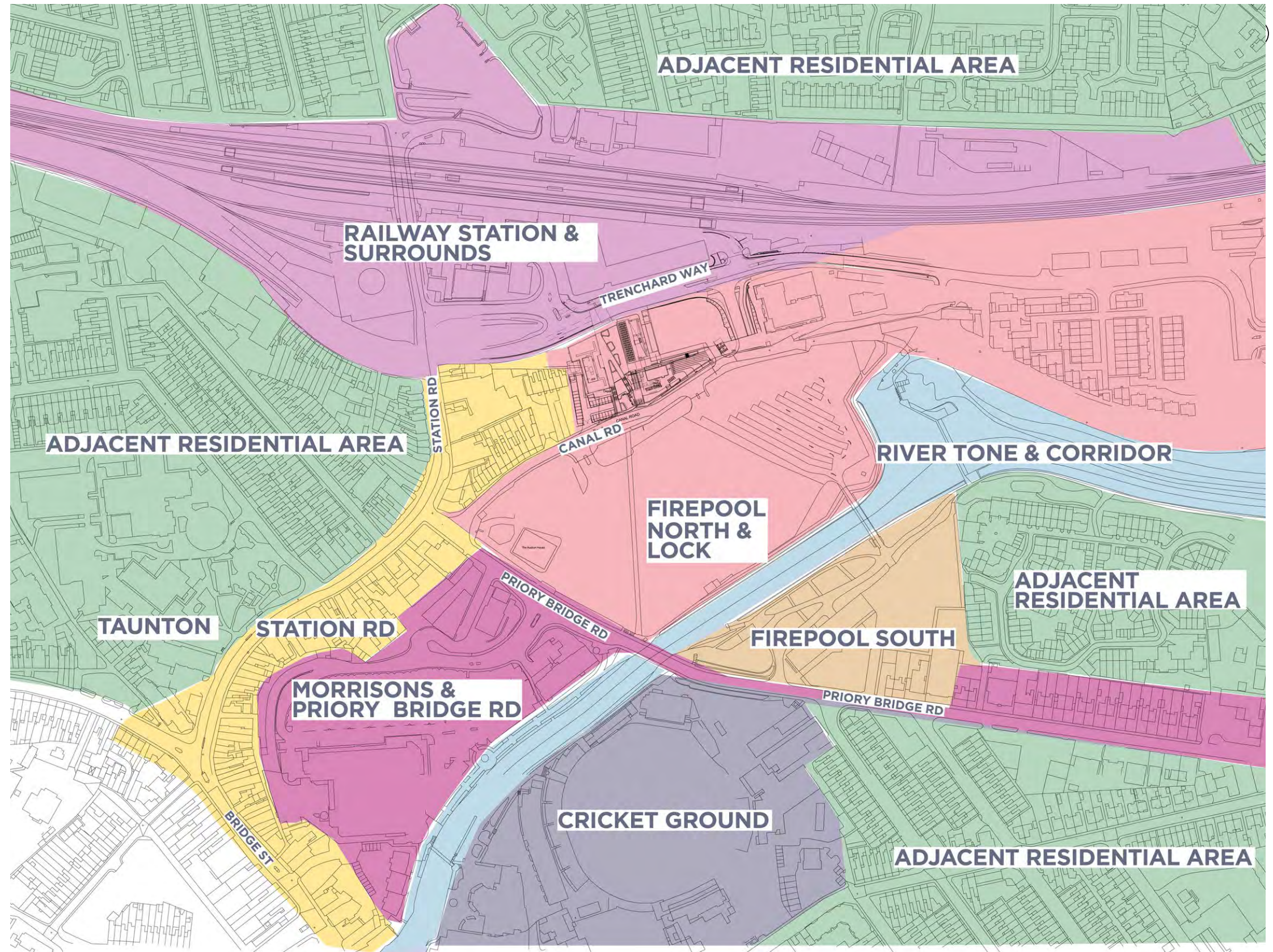


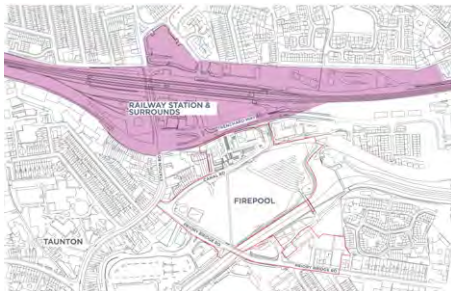
Fig.56: Character Areas Map from TCAAP

2.05 LOCAL CHARACTER (TCAAP)



Character Area - Railway Station & Surrounds

Victorian red brick train station and associated buildings, with a small amount of white render. The roofscape is a mix of pitched roofs with brick parapets, pitched gables and hipped roofs.



Character Area - Firepool North & Lock

Mix of contemporary residential buildings with a material palette of render and timber cladding and historic industrial red brick buildings. Generally the roofscape is a mix of flat roofs (mainly to apartment buildings) and front gabled pitched roofs.



2.05 LOCAL CHARACTER (TCAAP)



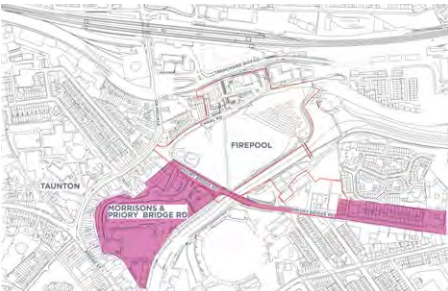
Character Area - Firepool South

The majority of buildings in this area are contemporary red brick residential or office buildings with flat roofs. The residential apartment blocks overlooking the river have balconies and a large amount of glazing.



Character Area - Morrisons & Priory Bridge Road

This area is characterised by large retail buildings, with a small amount of residential apartments. The majority of the roofscape is flat roofs with Morrisons itself having pitched roofs to the frontage with a large flat roof behind.

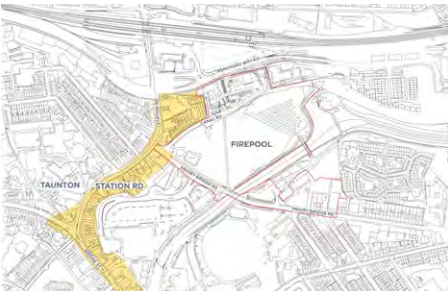


2.05 LOCAL CHARACTER (TCAAP)



Character Area - Station Road

Station Road is predominantly shop frontages with a mixture of red brick and render. The roofscape is generally pitched roofs.



Character Area - Cricket Ground

The cricket ground stands takes up the majority of this area with a contemporary style, with a palette of timber cladding, red and buff coloured masonry and grey coloured aluminium windows.

