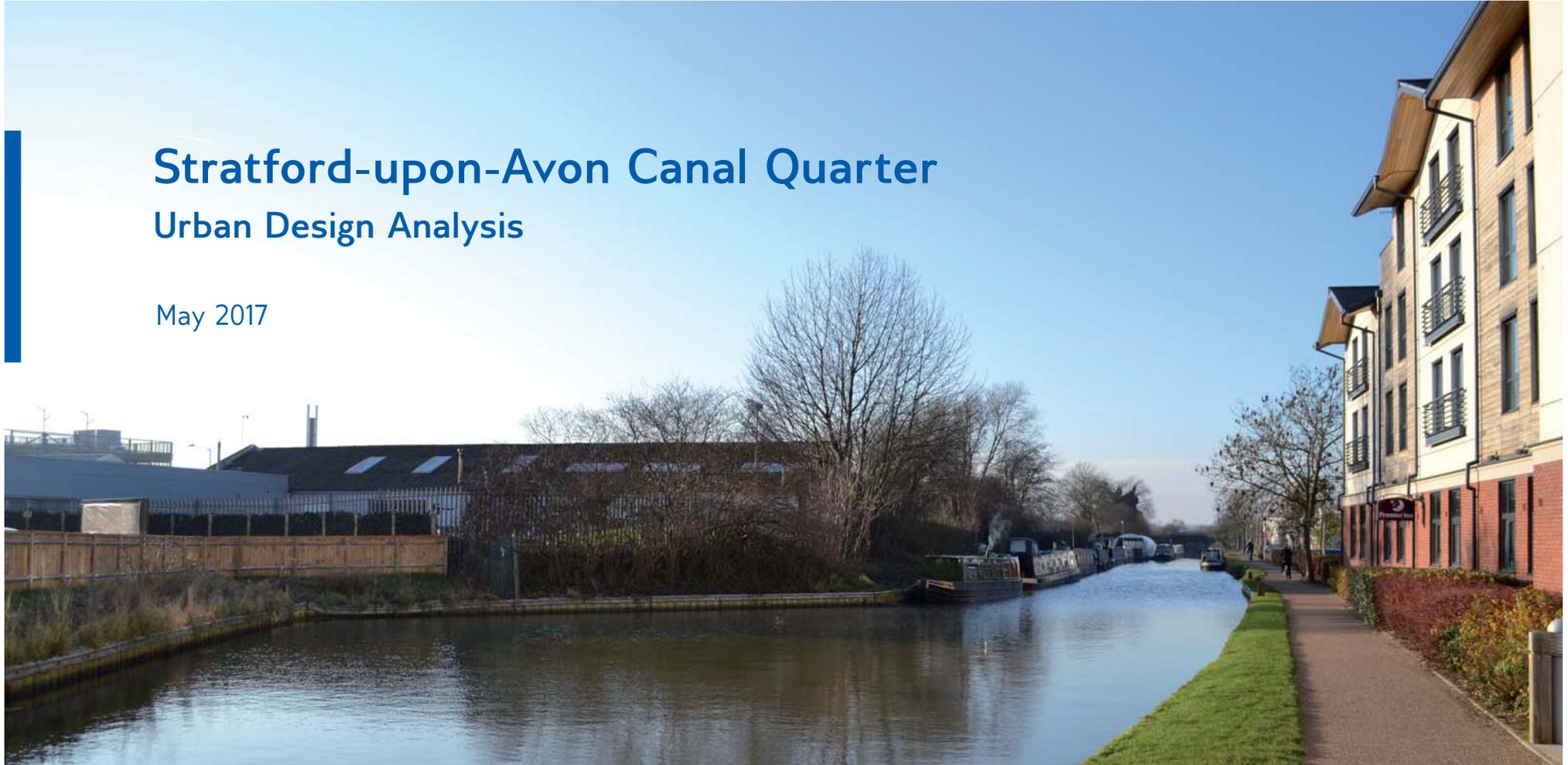


Stratford-upon-Avon Canal Quarter

Urban Design Analysis

May 2017



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Revision D

Prepared for Stratford-on-Avon District Council by Built Form Resource Ltd

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal Quarter Urban Design Analysis study. The study was commissioned by Stratford-on-Avon District Council in November 2016 and undertaken by Built Form Resource Limited.
- 1.2 The Urban Design Analysis forms part of a wider effort to achieve the long standing aim of regenerating the Canal area north-west of the historic core of the town. The policy context for the regeneration is the adopted Core Strategy, in particular Proposal SUA.1, which sets out the objectives for the Canal Quarter regeneration.
- 1.3 The principal content of the Policy for the Canal Quarter is as follows.

Policy CS.16 Housing Development

Strategic allocations

650 homes within the plan period from a total of approximately 1,010 homes on the Canal Quarter Regeneration Zone, Stratford-upon-Avon (SUA.1)

Proposal SUA.1

What is to be delivered

- *Housing – approx. 650 dwellings by 2031 of which up to 25% will be provided as a mix of affordable homes*
- *9,000sqm of Class B1 distributed throughout the Canal Quarter*
- *Linear park alongside canal*
- *Multi-purpose community facility (if required)*

Specific requirements

Production of a Framework Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to guide developers and the local planning authority in respect of environmental, social, design and economic objectives as they seek to create a new community in the Canal Quarter. The SPD will set out broad principles to show how the policy

requirements, together with other policy requirements in this Core Strategy, should be delivered on the site. The SPD will also incorporate a Delivery Strategy in conjunction with Proposal SUA.2 and Proposal SUA.4.

The development will:

- *secure environmental, ecological and recreational enhancement of the canal corridor*
- *provide pedestrian and cycle links through the area and with adjacent parts of the town and a vehicular crossing over the canal linking development off Masons Road and Timothy's Bridge Road*
- *deliver traffic management measures*
- *improve links to Stratford railway station*
- *ensure implementation of the Steam Railway Centre is not prejudiced*
- *secure appropriate treatment of any contamination*
- *de-culvert watercourses.*

- 1.4 As indicated in the policy, development in the area will be guided by a Framework Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD will set out more specific social, economic and environmental objectives for the area as a basis for creating a new community. The role of the Urban Design Analysis is to provide a foundation for the SPD by bringing together the policy aims, information about the area, its features and attributes and principles of good urban design. The result of combining these should be to:
- Establish the broad principles for the Canal Quarter to ensure co-ordinated delivery
 - Focus on and maximise the public realm and other public benefits of the regeneration
 - Provide technical evidence that will underpin the SPD proposals for the Canal Quarter.

1.5 A key consideration in undertaking the Analysis and formulating the SPD is the complex land ownership of the area, which establishes a distinct context in which to bring forward the regeneration. In this context the principles identified need to establish the potential role that individual parcels might play in giving form to the area as a greater whole.

1.6 The methodology for the study is based on best practice guidance and research including the principles and methods set out in the following sources:

Urban Design Compendium 1 and 2

CABE Creating Successful Masterplans

Stephen Marshall's *Streets and Patterns*

Gordon Cullen's *Townscape*

Kevin Lynch's *Image of the city*

Historic England's Urban characterisation

Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice

Urban morphology handbook

1.7 The focus of the analysis is as much on the adjacent and surrounding areas as the site itself. There are three main objectives in the analysis:

- Identify the specific relationships between the site and the context in which it sits
- Identify the potential relationship between the features within the site to be retained and land to be redeveloped
- Identify the key relationships that will ensure development is integrated into the town as a whole and makes the most of the features within the site - most obviously the canal.

1.8 Topics for analysis include the following.

- Topography, natural features and vegetation
- Unique assets, persistent and historic features
- Route structure and accessibility (layout and permeability)
- Land parcel patterns
- Character areas and built form parameters
- Land use, neighbourhood structure and centres/attractors
- Solar orientation/shadow patterns
- Public realm, open space network
- Townscape, city image and views.

1.9 The steps in the process of analysis have been to:

- Compile information
- Map features and attributes
- Assess the implications of the disposition and relationships of features and attributes for the redevelopment of the site and application of urban design principles
- Consult with stakeholders to determine common objectives and preferred principles
- Apply the common objectives and preferred principles of good urban design to the area in response to the specific features and attributes it presents.

2 Analysis

Location and topography

- 2.1 The Canal Quarter area (Figure 1) is made up of two distinct parts situated north-west of the historic core either side of the railway. For convenience, the two parts can be referred to as the eastern and western areas. Both areas extend along the line of the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal running in a westerly direction from the town centre.
- 2.2 Topographically, the town of Stratford-upon-Avon lies on a valley site on the River Avon between the Welcombe Hills to the north east and the ridge running from Wilmcote to Bordon Hill to the west (see Figure 2). The canal and railway both run between the higher ground, placing the Canal Quarter in a relatively low point but above the river terrace on which the historic centre lies.
- 2.3 More locally, two brooks run through the low point south to the River Avon: Shottery Brook to the east and another to the west. The two parts of the Canal Quarter sit either side of the brook to the west. Of the two areas, the western is flatter, lying just north of a local rise occupied by the Hospital. The eastern area rises up from a low point on Masons Road by the former football ground to a high point on Timothys Bridge Road. The high point gives some sense of expansive views while most of the rest of both the eastern and western areas feel relatively contained.

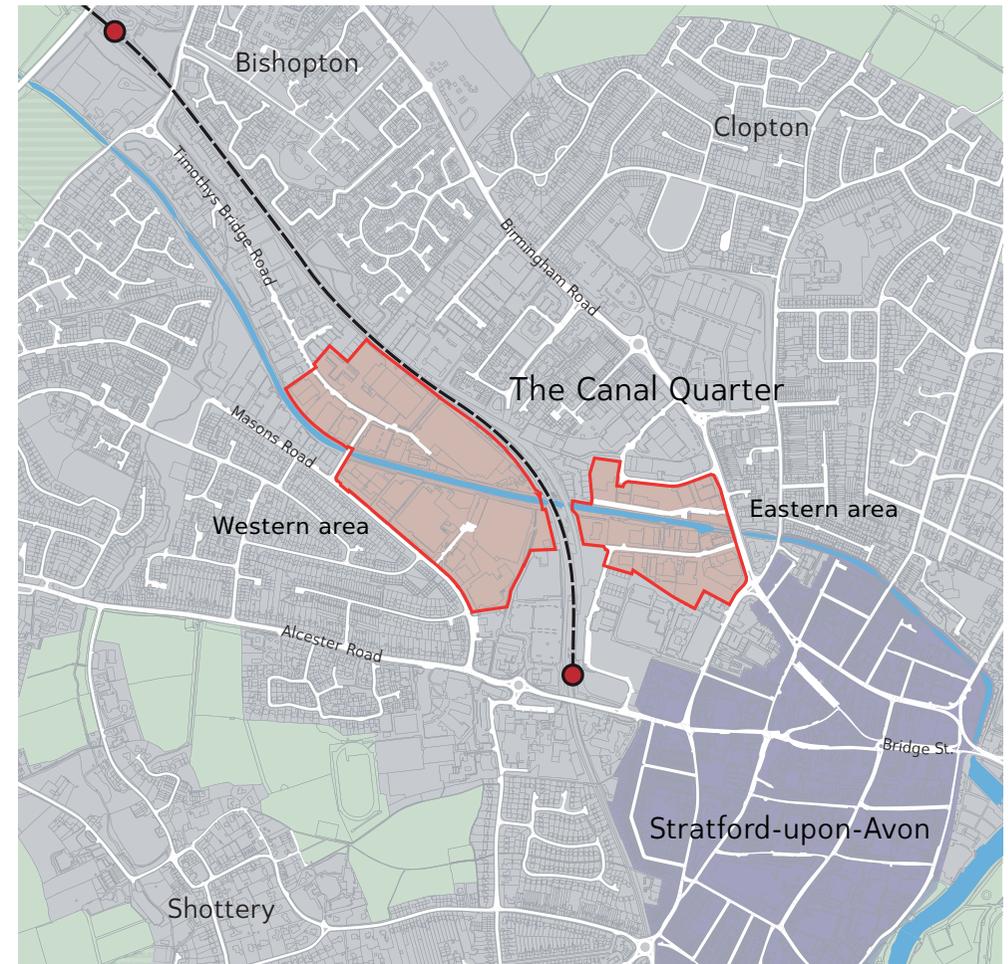


Figure 1 The Canal Quarter area

Site location and topography

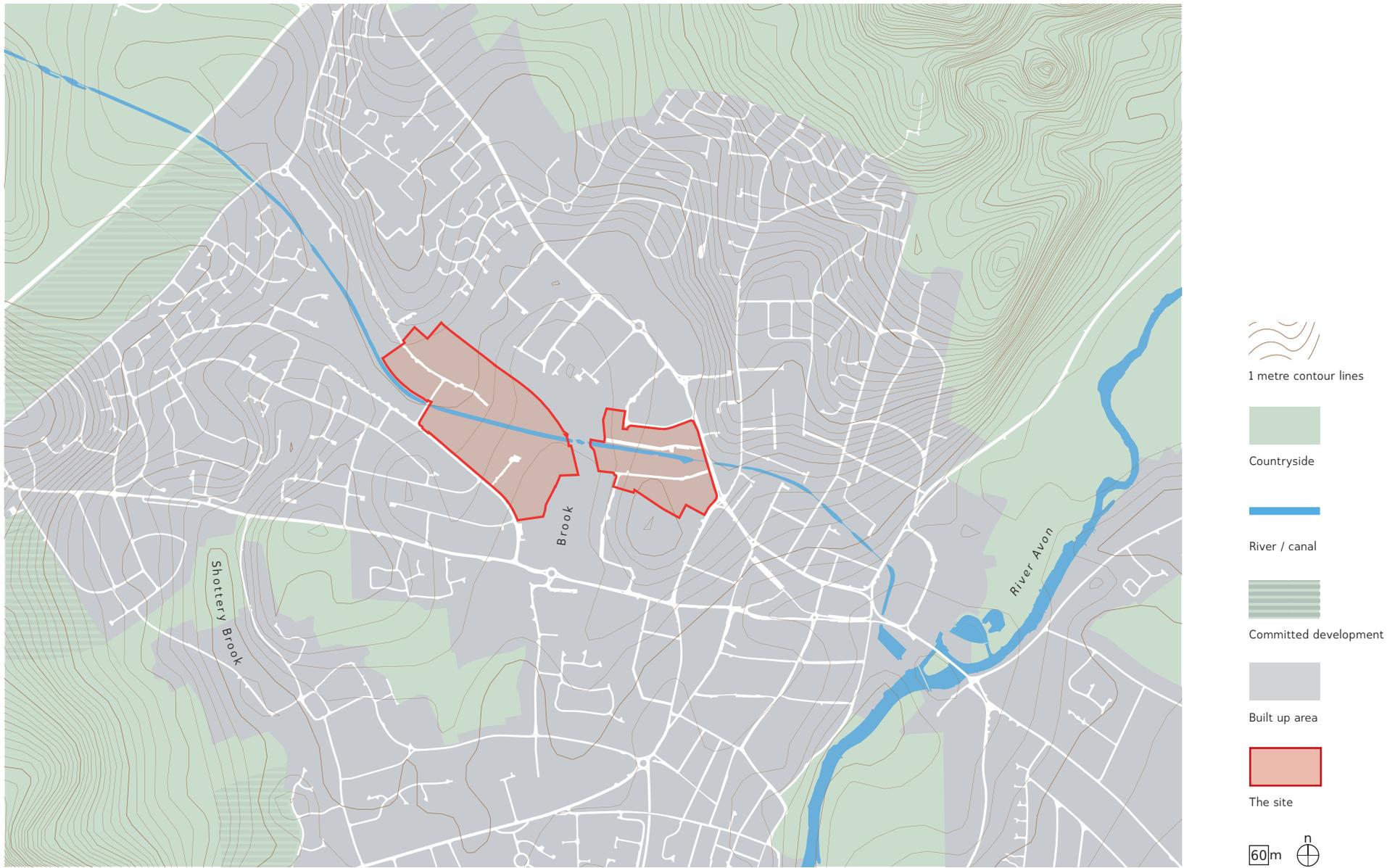


Figure 2 Site location and topography

Site situation



Figure 3 Site situation

Situation

- 2.4 As shown in Figure 3, the line of the canal provides the key orienting feature for the areas. With its publicly accessible tow path connecting Bancroft Gardens and the Riverside in the east to the open countryside in the west, the physical orientation is reinforced by the active use of the canal as a line of movement. In terms of its position within the town as indicated in the Figure on page 4, the areas occupy a surprisingly central location, more or less equidistant from Bishopton and Old Town. Importantly, the areas are in close proximity to both the town and parkway rails stations.

Route structure and connectivity

- 2.5 Generally the town of Stratford-upon-Avon is characterised by a route structure (Figure 4) of main radial routes converging on a centre of thoroughfares, notably the grid of the Medieval New Town. The peripheral areas are characterised by a combination of thoroughfare 'connector' routes, loops and cul-de-sac trees typical of 20th century housing development.
- 2.6 Within that overall pattern the potential benefits of the Canal Quarter's central physical location as the crow flies are frustrated by the relative lack of street connections. The low level of connectivity is a consequence of the historical development of the town, in particular the building of the canal and railway in the nineteenth century. Since their construction they have acted as barriers to cross movement and attracted industrial development.
- 2.7 Of the two areas, the eastern is much more well connected with access from the Birmingham Road, a primary strategic arterial and Western Road/Brunel Way, a secondary arterial. The western area is only accessible from two points, one off Masons Road and the other from Timothys Bridge Road. Both of the access points are several junctions or turnings away from the primary arterials of the Alcester Road to the south (for Masons Road) and the Birmingham Road via Bishopton Lane to the north (for Timothys Bridge Road). The access is therefore more indirect. The differing levels of connectivity reinforce a broad gradient of centre-to-periphery from east to west. As a general rule central areas at the convergence of main radial routes experience more traffic and are therefore more commercially attractive. They therefore tend to be more active while peripheral areas tend to be quieter with lower levels of traffic and commercial activity. The Canal Quarter sits between the centre and edge with the eastern area closer to the centre and so more active, the western area more peripheral and tranquil.

Route structure

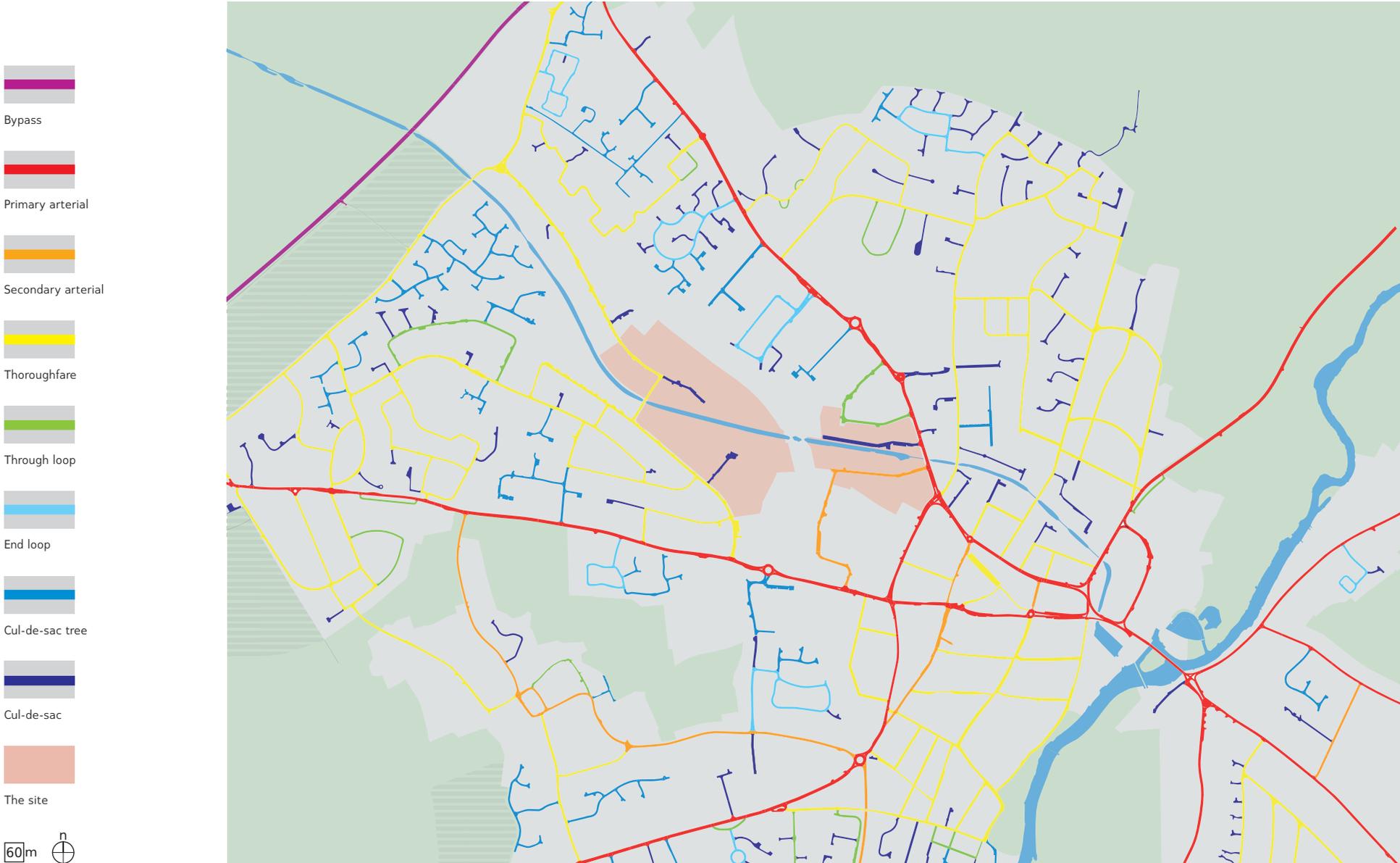


Figure 4 Route structure

Townscape

- 2.8 The centre-to-periphery gradient that applies to the areas in terms of position and access is also very evident in the townscape. As shown in Figure 5, there is a significant cluster of elements along the eastern edge of the eastern area including the crossing points or 'nodes' of the canal and the Birmingham Road and the Arden Street / Birmingham Road junction. Both of these are reinforced by landmark features such as the canal lock and Premier Inn and attractors such as McDonald's. The principal landmark to the west is the multi storey building at No. 20 Timothys Bridge Road.
- 2.9 Other key features include:
- The Hospital and health centre
 - The Stratford Hotel
 - The railway station
 - The canal and tow path
 - Landmark trees along the canal
 - The canal / railway crossing
 - Masons Road.
- 2.10 The diagrammatic townscape structure that begins to emerge from these elements is two clusters on either end of the line of the canal. In between is the gateway feature of the railway bridge over the canal punctuated by landmark trees. The clusters mark the principal entrance 'gateways' to the Canal Quarter, supplemented by the access points from the south off Alcester Road.

Character areas and land use

- 2.11 In terms of physical characteristics (Figure 6), the Canal Quarter and its surroundings are made up of four broad areas of different types of urban tissue (see Glossary). There is the 'fine grained' historic core (with relatively small plots and buildings) that extends up to the line of the historic Borough boundary along Arden Street; the similarly fine grained mainly residential area of Clopton to the north-east; the slightly less fine grained residential area of Masons Road / Alcester Road to the south and the diverse, coarse grained area along the canal and railway corridor. Within that area, to the north of the railway, there is a greater mix of patterns, both fine and coarse grained. The Railway and Canal are in themselves distinct character areas, the former includes the site of the approved steam locomotive centre.
- 2.12 The pattern of land uses (Figure 7) corresponds to both the distinct urban tissues and the centre-to-periphery structure. The historic core includes a broad mix of uses, the Clopton and Masons Road / Alcester Road areas are predominantly residential and the canal / railway corridor mixed, with a finer grained, more diverse mix near the centre becoming coarser moving west.

The design response to context

- 2.13 As described above, the centre-to-periphery structure, the different character areas and mix of uses in their different locations present a context to which development in the Canal Quarter sites should respond. It goes without saying that the most important features to which the design principles should respond are the key persistent elements of the Quarter:
- The canal
 - The railway
 - Existing topography
 - Vegetation.

Townscape

-  Skyline landmark
-  Landmark building
-  Landmark tree
-  Key view
-  Key frontage
-  Green edge
-  Node
-  Gateway
-  The site
-  25m 

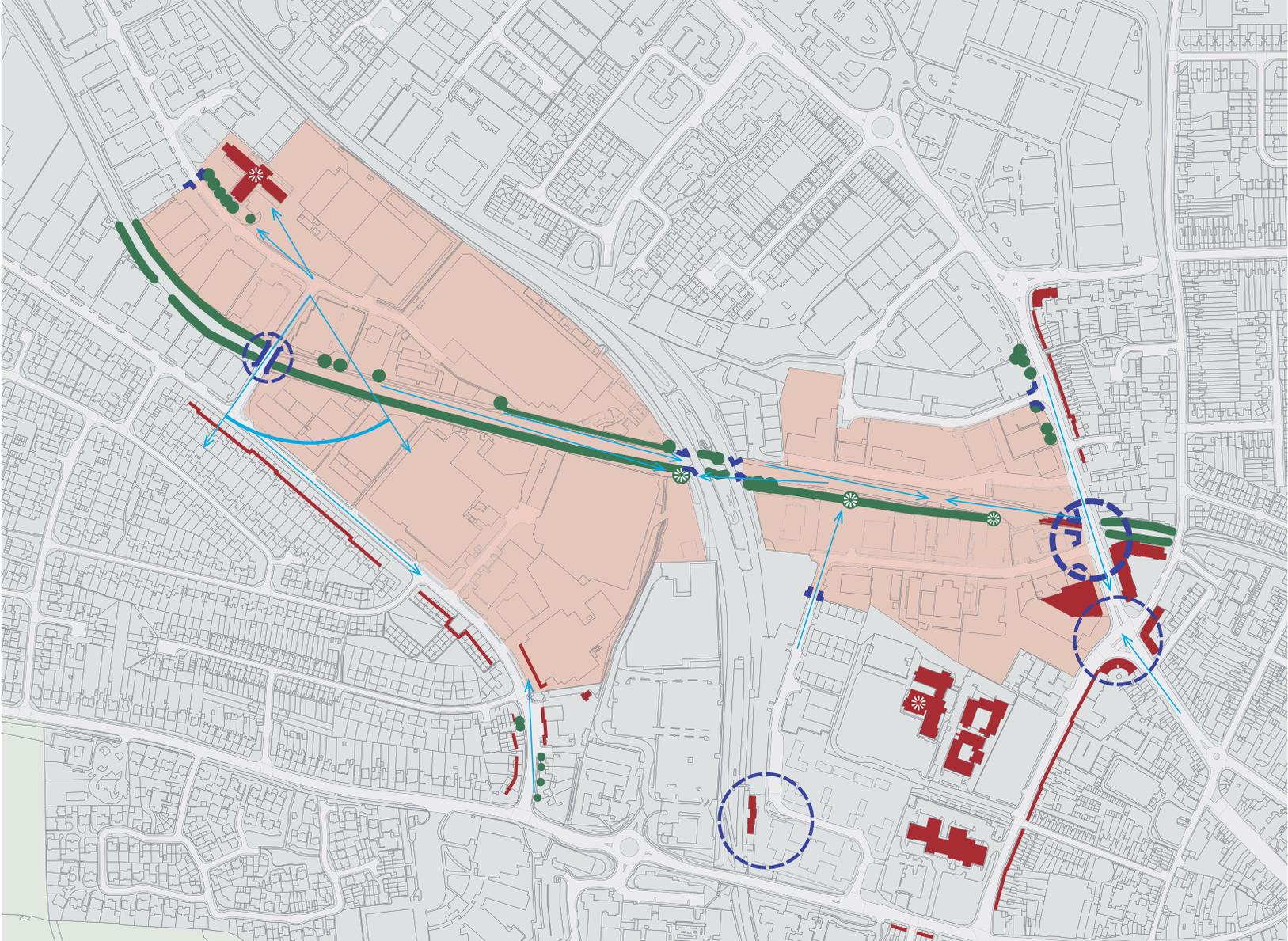


Figure 5 Townscape

Character areas and designations

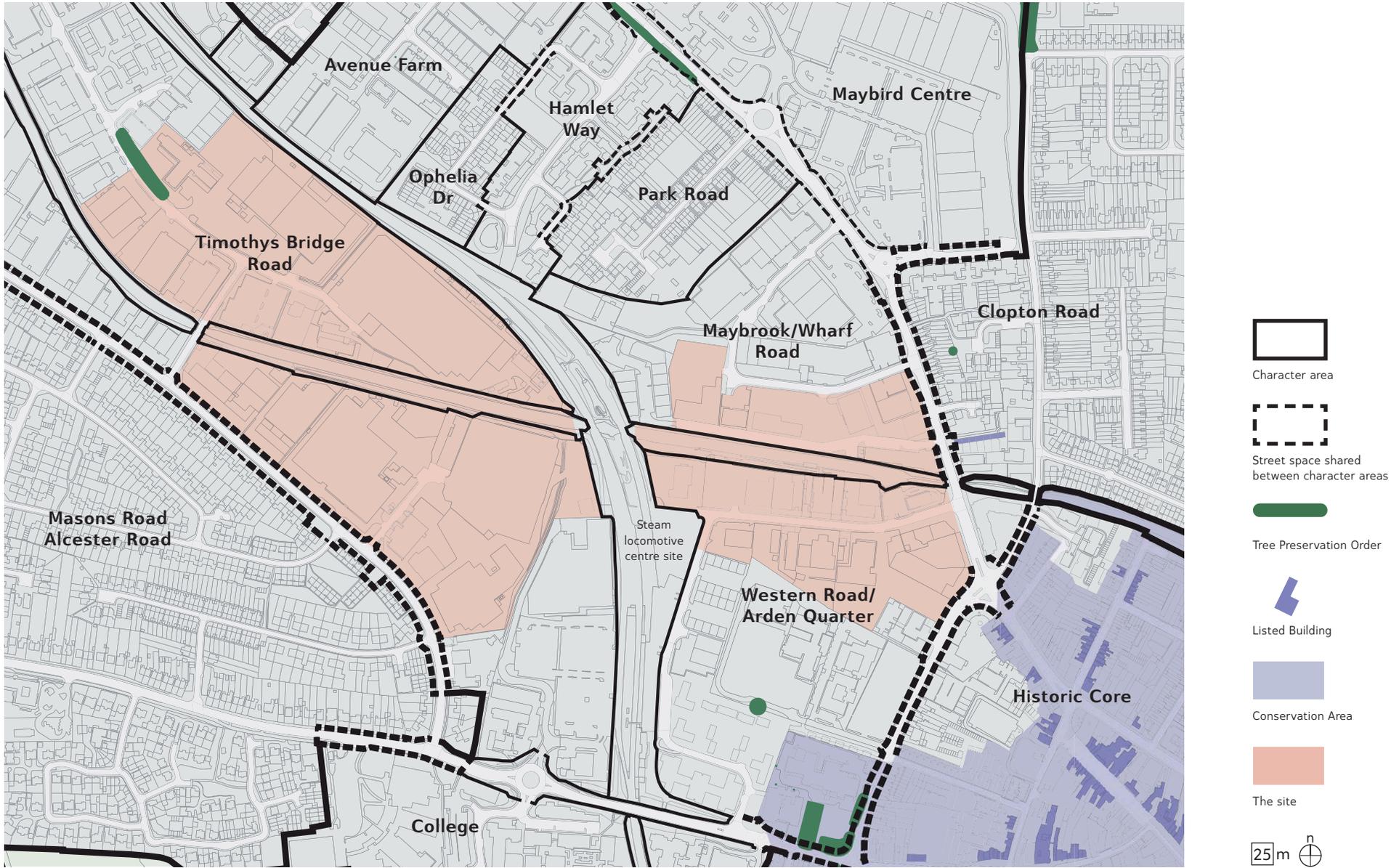


Figure 6 Character areas

Broad land uses

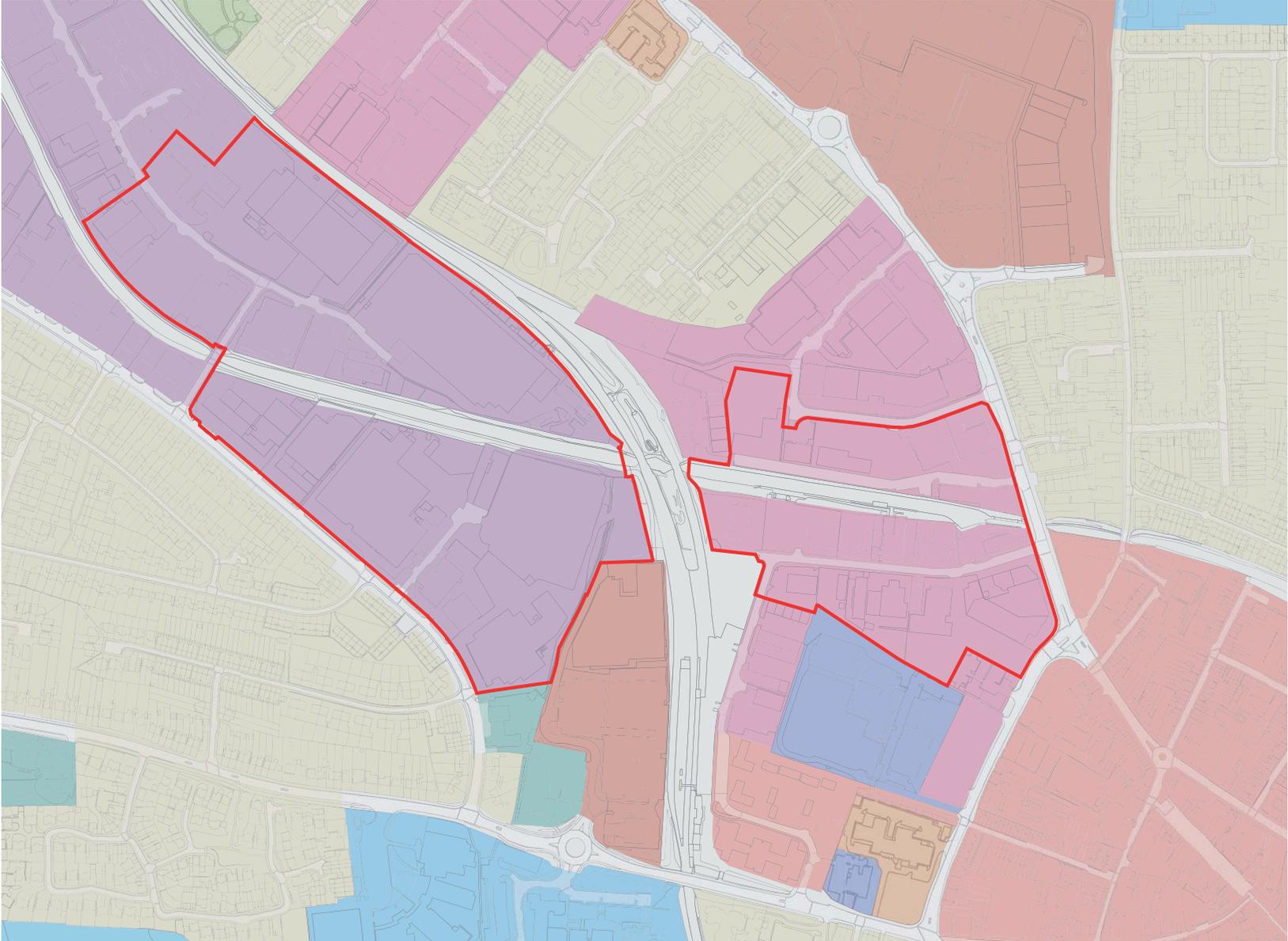
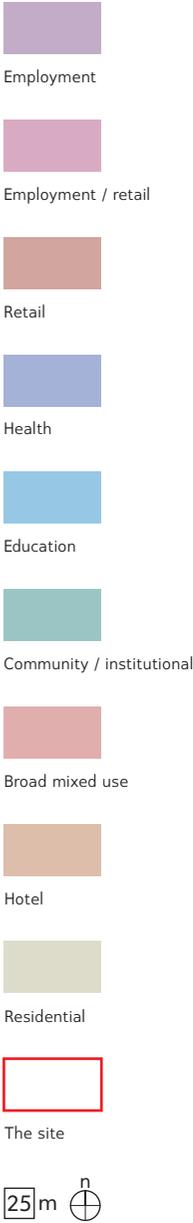


Figure 7 Land use

Heights

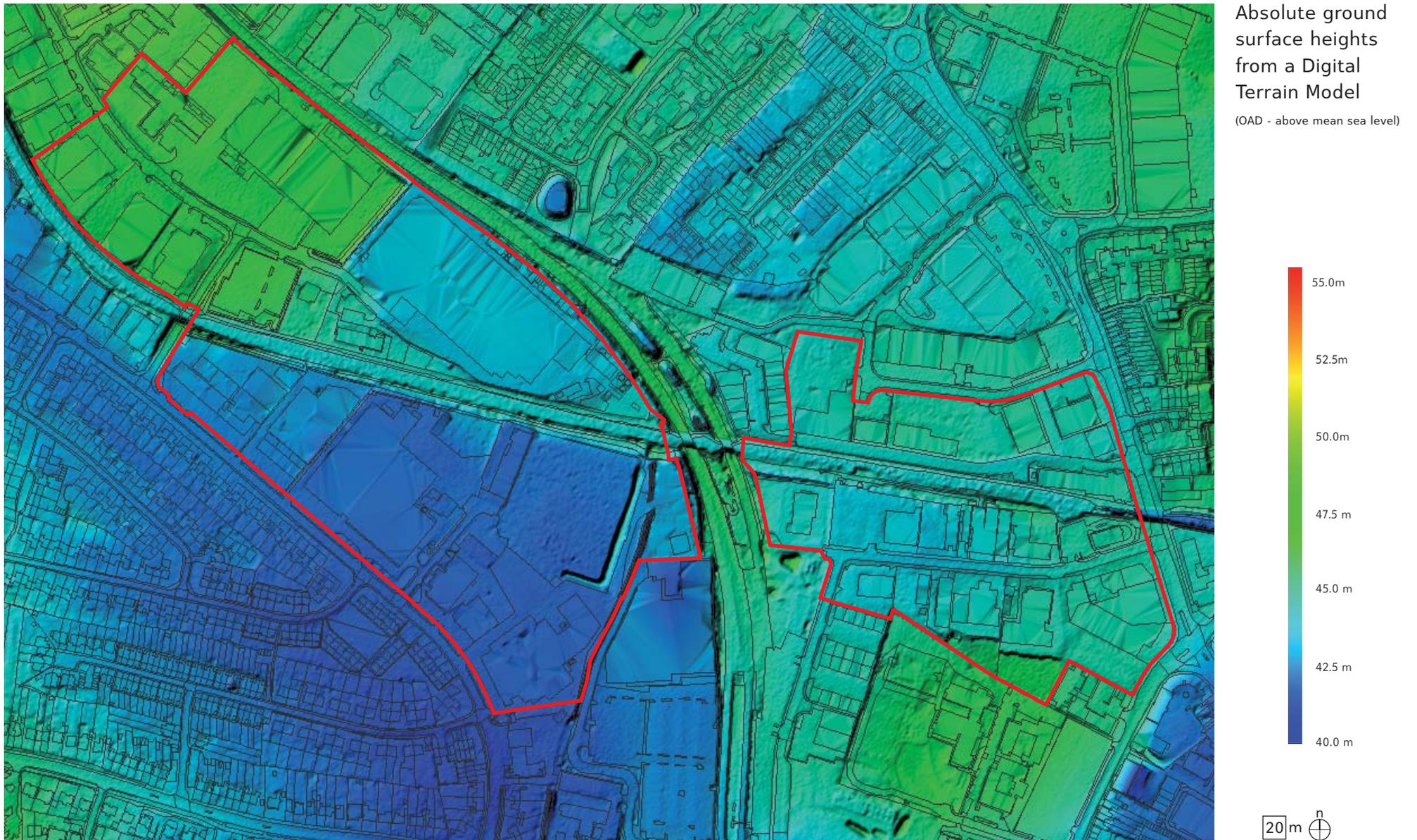


Figure 8 Surface heights

Heights

Absolute ground and building heights from a Digital Surface Model

(OAD - above mean sea level)

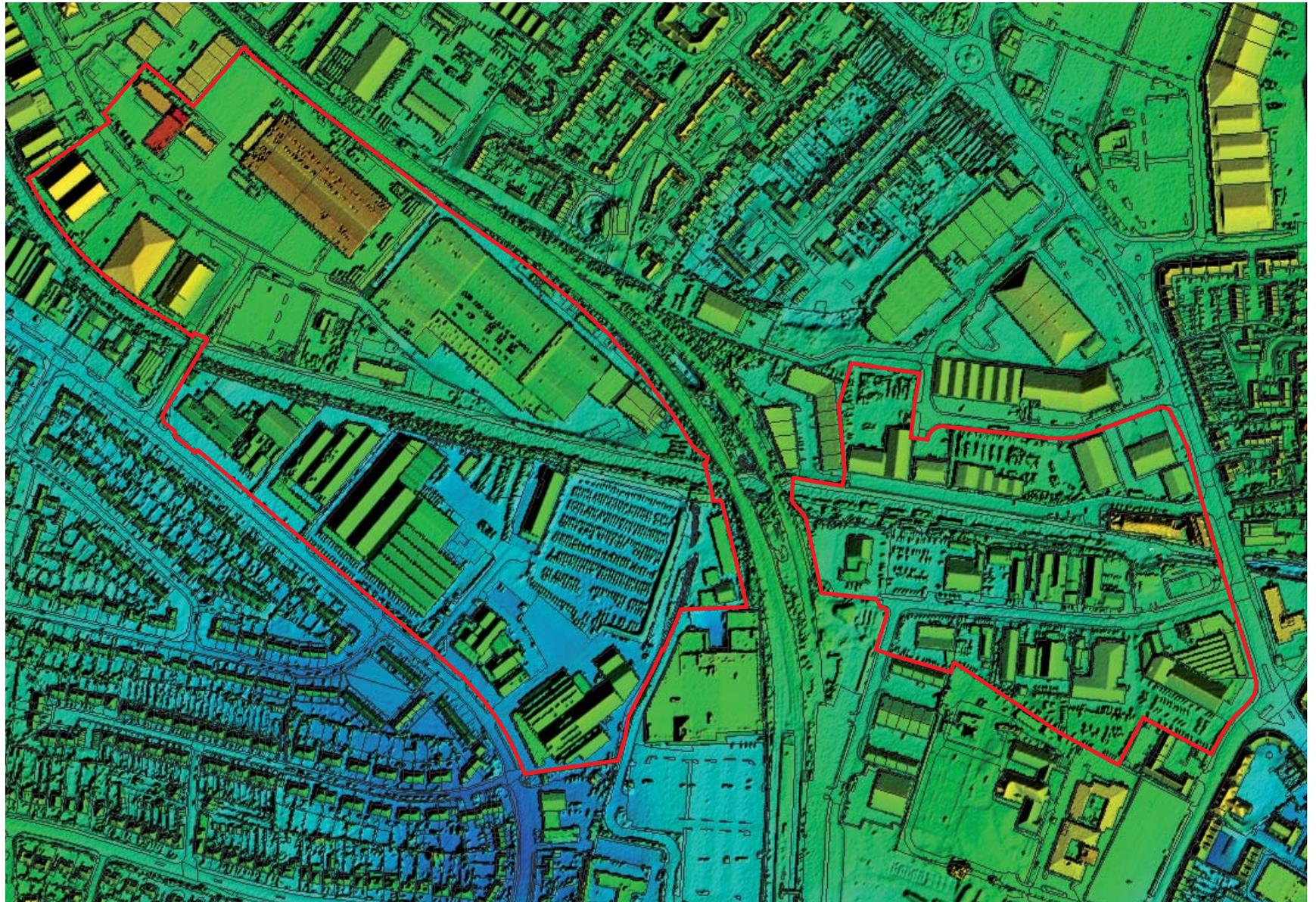
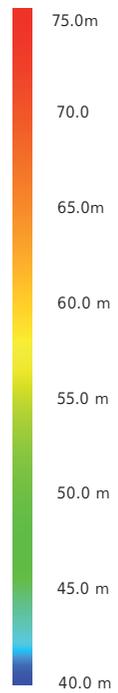


Figure 9 Building heights

-
- 2.14 The aim of responding to these features should be to ensure that the Quarter participates in and reinforces the identity of the surrounding areas as well as creating an identity for the Quarter itself. This suggests the Quarter should not be uniform but varied or ‘inflected’ to acknowledge and accommodate the differences within the area and in the context. The design could be inflected, for example, by adjusting the orientation of buildings that face the boundaries of the site to suit the local conditions or in relation to features within the area such as the canal. Inflections can also be made by varying the plot size, building size or building height depending on the surrounding circumstances.
- 2.15 The drawings on the following pages provide additional, more detailed information that will help in formulating the specific design principles in response to particular features. The information includes the location of principal vegetation, the nature of the external edges or boundaries of the area, the street frontages and boundaries within the area as well as the pattern of land holdings.
- 2.16 The existing vegetation is central to the character and quality of the area and should be retained and reinforced as far as possible. The most important vegetation to retain is that along the canal, which has value as a visual amenity and as habitat. Other key areas of vegetation include the trees along Masons Road, Timothys Bridge Road and the Birmingham Road at the Wharf Road junction.
- 2.17 The external boundaries present both opportunities and constraints. The obvious examples are, on the one hand, the Masons Road frontage that faces the existing housing across the road and, on the other, the boundary with hospital site. The former is a public front, which should be faced with a new public front to maintain a positive and active public realm. The latter is a back boundary, the response to which should be a back boundary. The boundary with the railway is another back boundary but one that should be mitigated to address issues of noise and relatively negative views toward the railway but also to improve views from the railway on entering the town by train.
- 2.18 Another key consideration that relates to both townscape and frontage types is the visibility of features from various points in and around the area. The consideration should also include views from the railway and canal. Of particular importance with respect to views is the subtle bend in the line of the canal, with an outside bend on the south side at the railway crossing. This results in views along the canal that terminate in the cluster of trees around the railway crossing over the canal. By the same token, the bridge structures over the canal (Timothys Bridge and the rail bridge) are significant visual stops and should be treated and/or enhanced to ensure they play a positive role in the visual experience of the Quarter.
- 2.19 The pattern of land holdings is most critical for the development process. The aim and challenge is to establish an overall set of design principles that can be delivered in a sequence of practical steps starting with the existing pattern.
- ### **A basis for assessment and evaluation**
- 2.20 The material presented thus far represents the first step in establishing the design principles to inform development within the Canal Quarter. The next step is to begin to assess and evaluate the information and make judgements about how to respond. In order to ensure the response taken has broad support, the process has included workshops with key stakeholders to elaborate and refine the analysis, to evaluate features within and around the area and begin to identify potential principles for development. The results of the workshops are set out in Section 3.

Vegetation: Wharf Road / Western Road

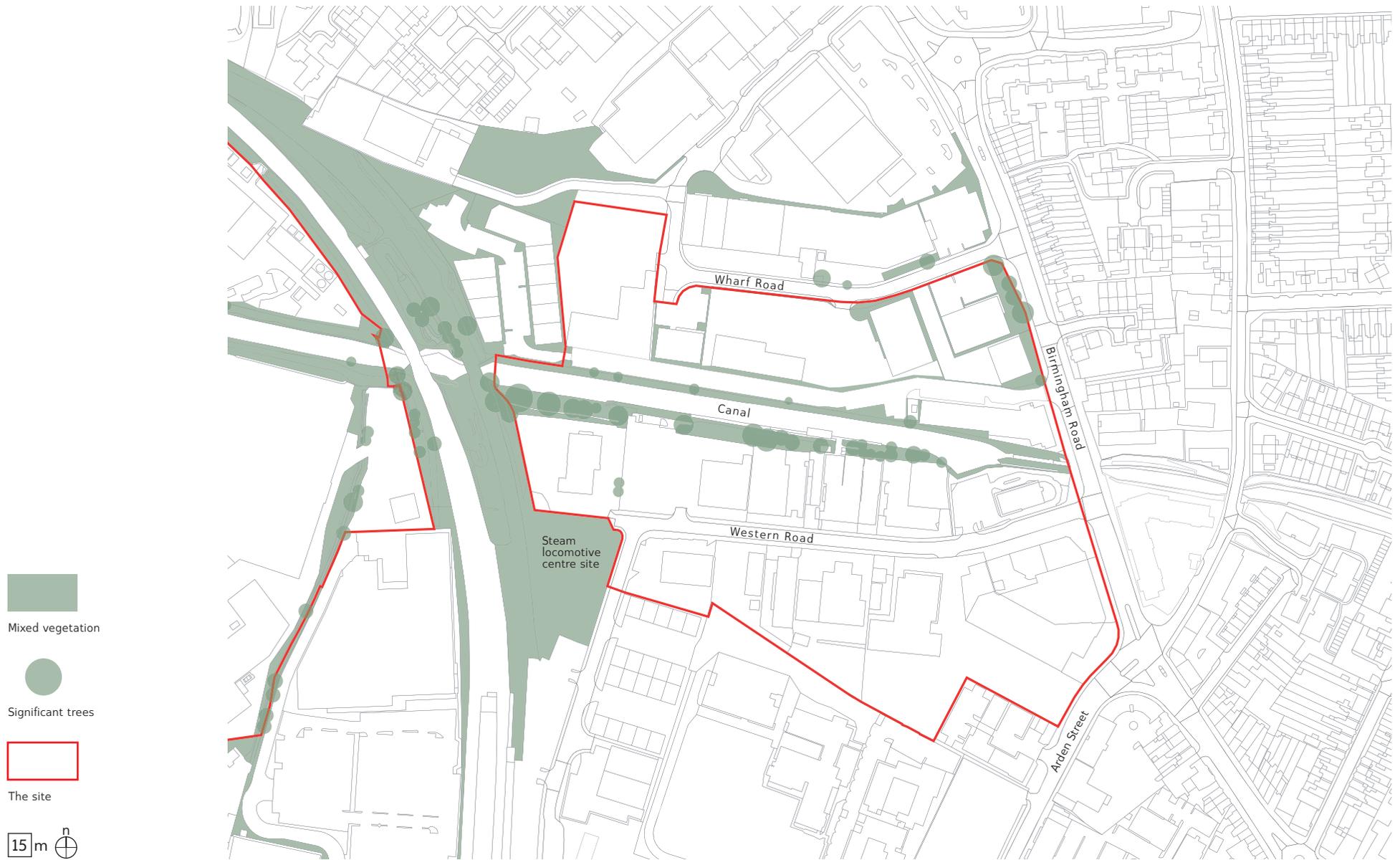


Figure 10 Vegetation: Wharf Road / Western Road

Vegetation: Masons Rod



Figure 11 Vegetation Timothys Bridge Road

Vegetation: Timothys Bridge Road

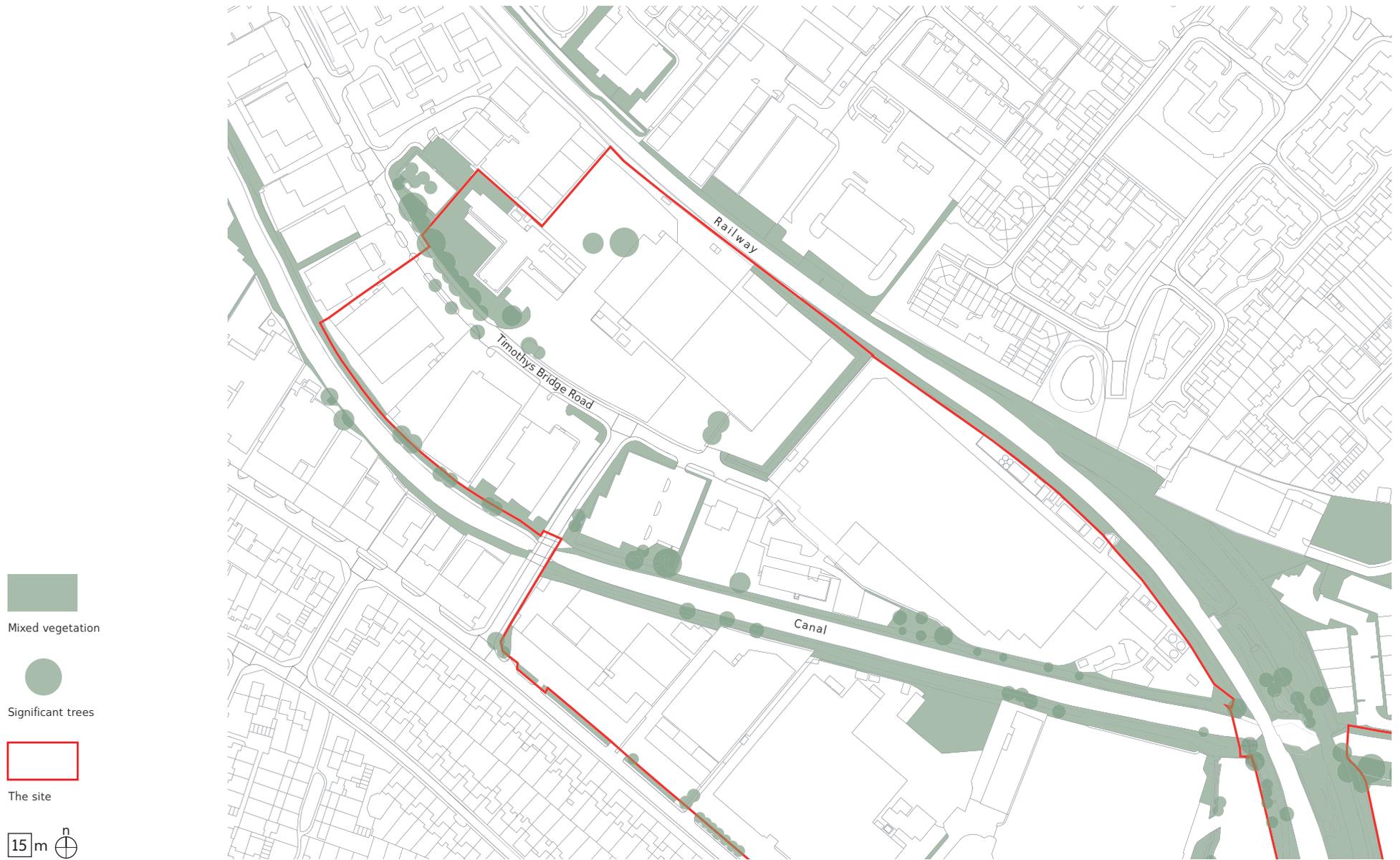


Figure 12 Vegetation Masons Road

Frontage types: Wharf Road / Western Road

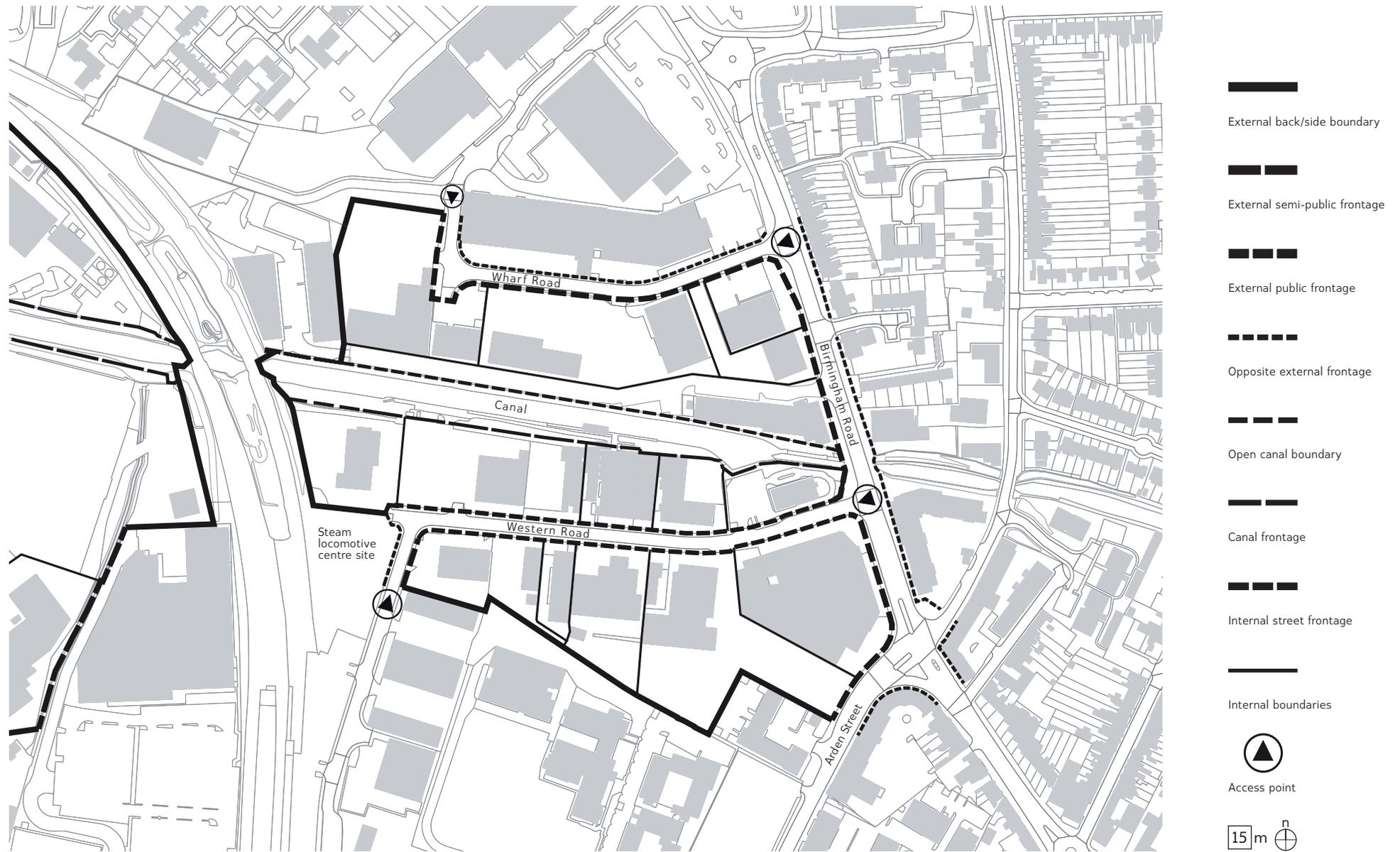


Figure 13 External and internal frontage types Wharf Road / Western Avenue

Frontage types: Masons Road

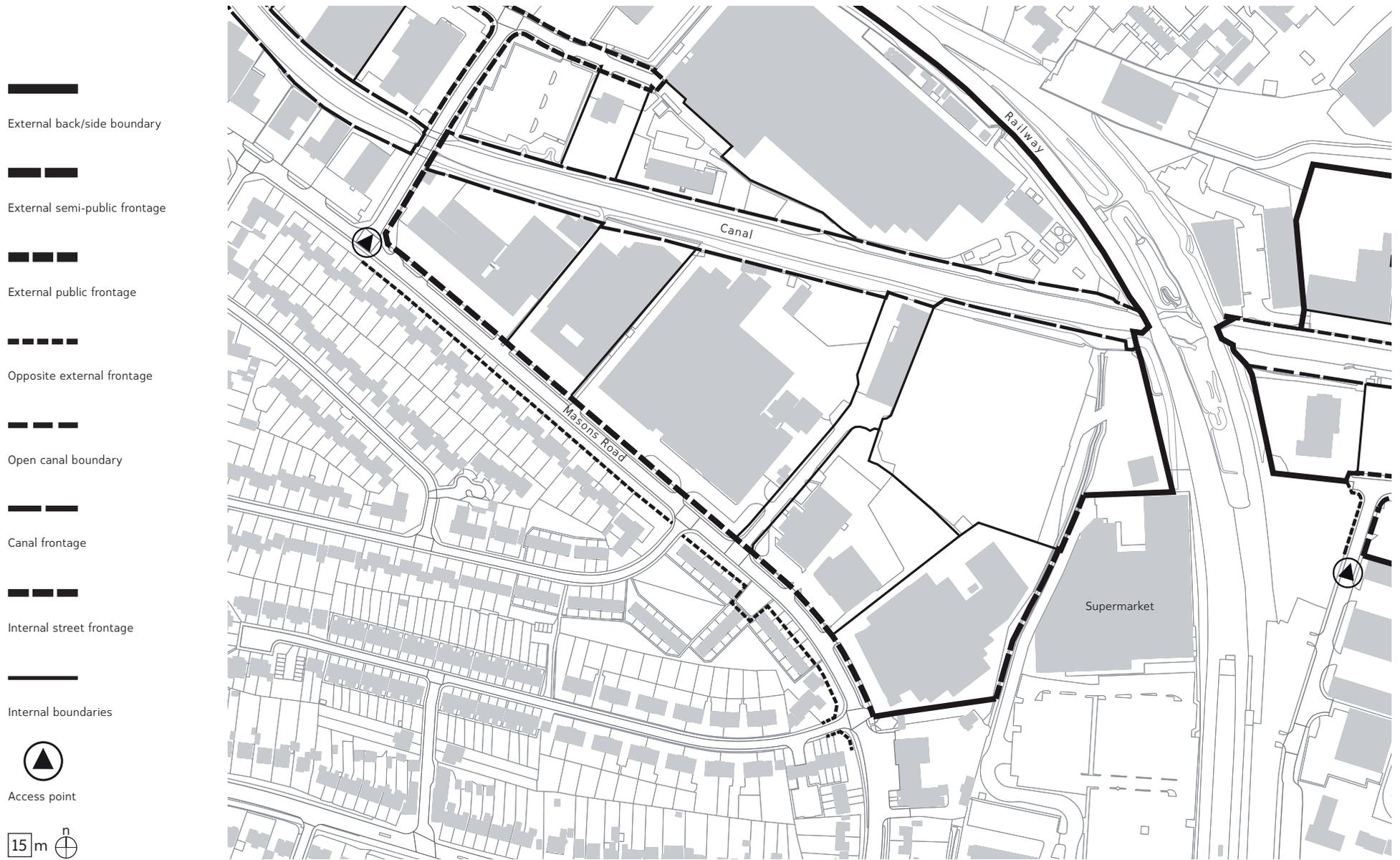


Figure 14 External and internal frontage type: Masons Road

Frontage types: Timothys Bridge Road

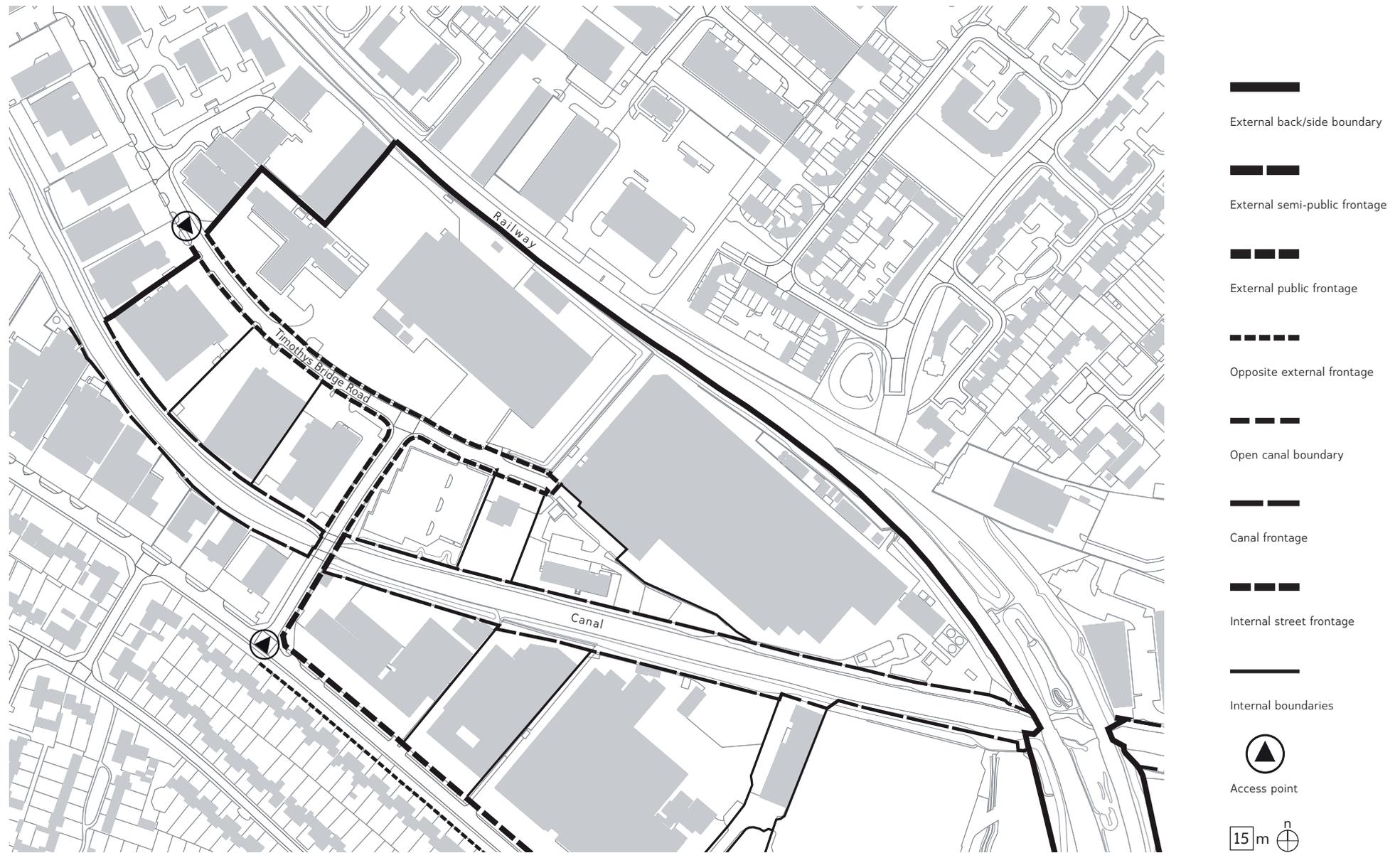


Figure 15 External and internal frontage types Timothys Birdge Road

Land ownership pattern: Wharf Road / Western Road

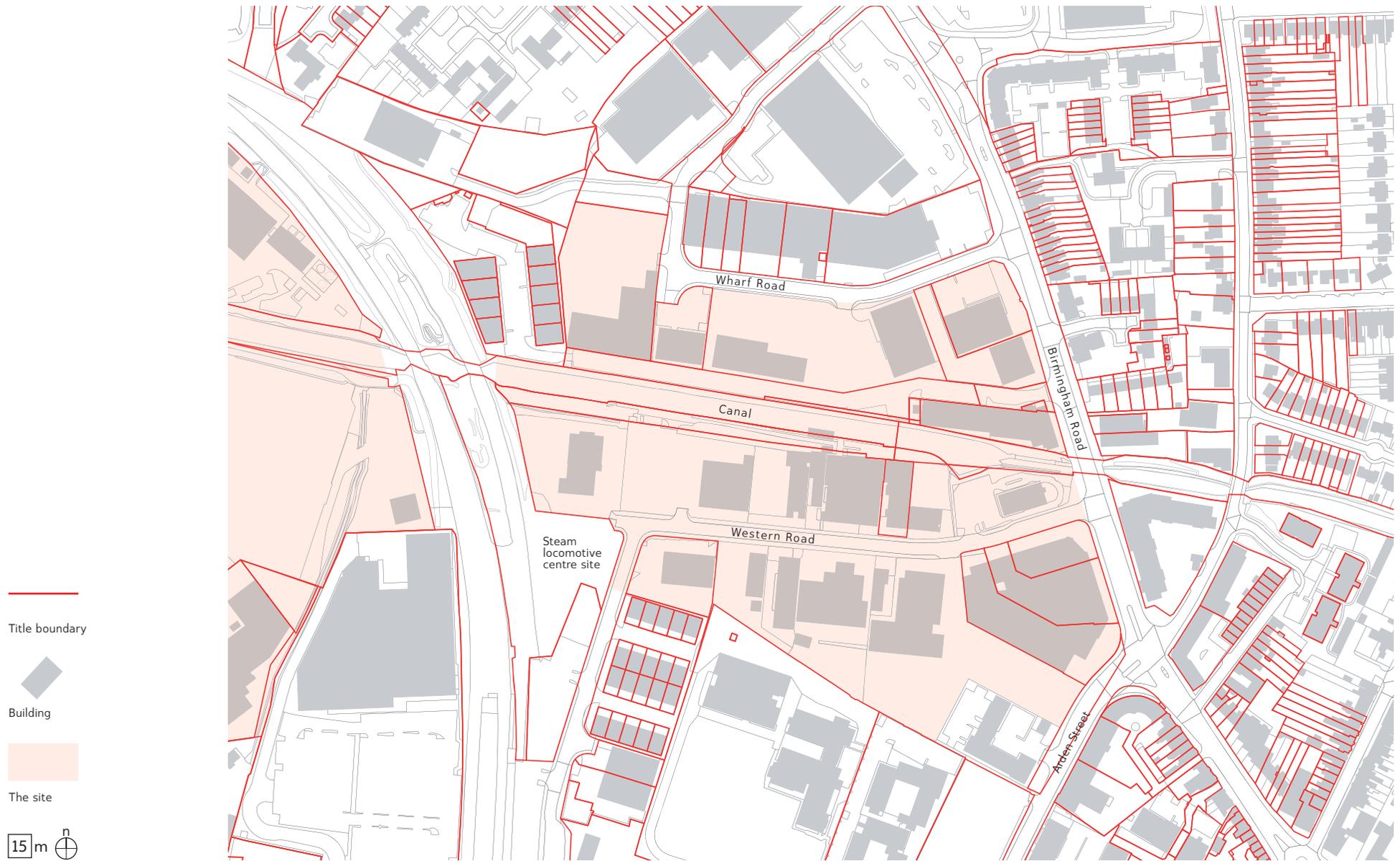
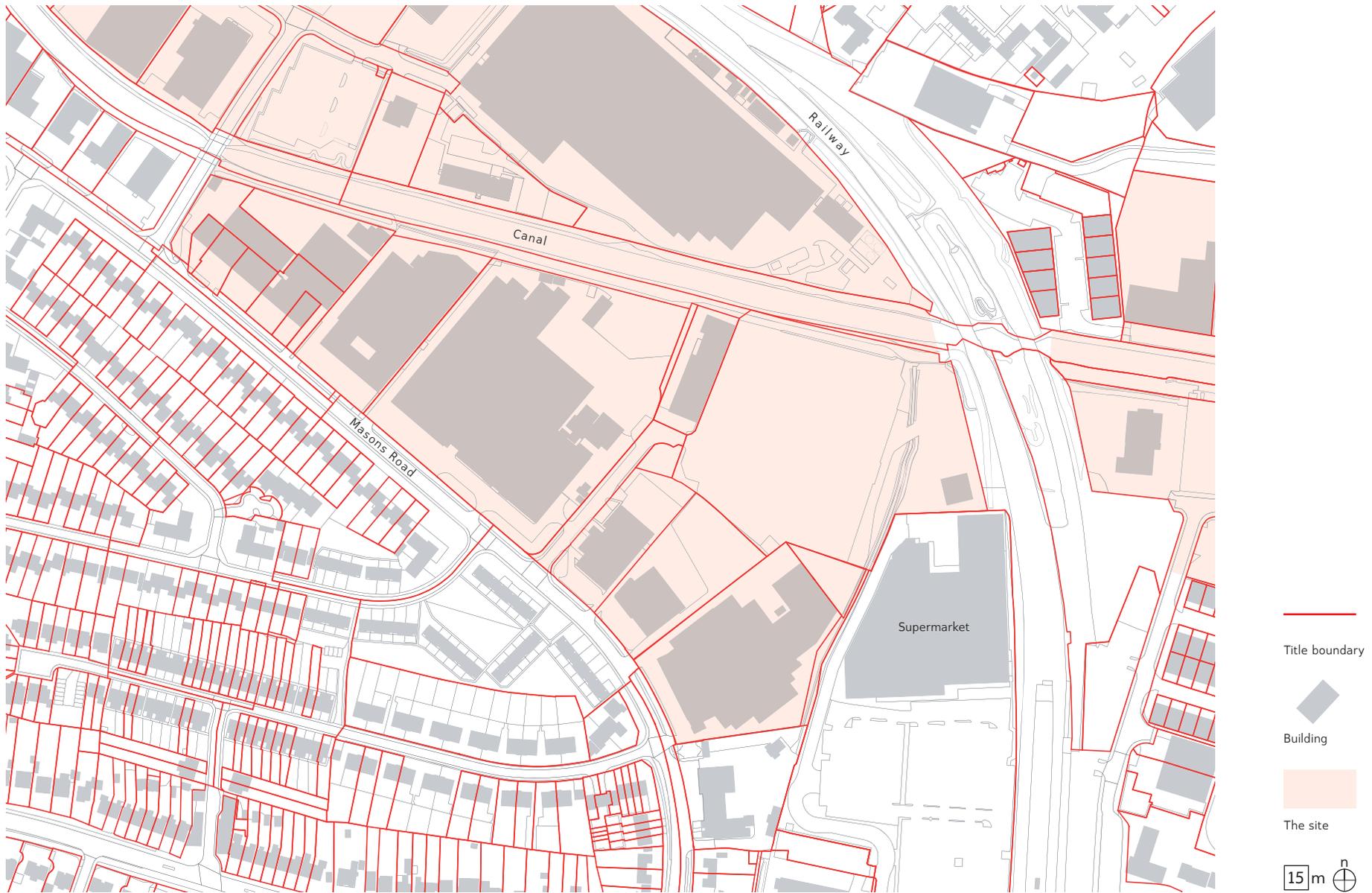


Figure 16 Land ownership pattern A

Land ownership pattern: Masons Rod



Land ownership pattern: Timothys Bridge Road

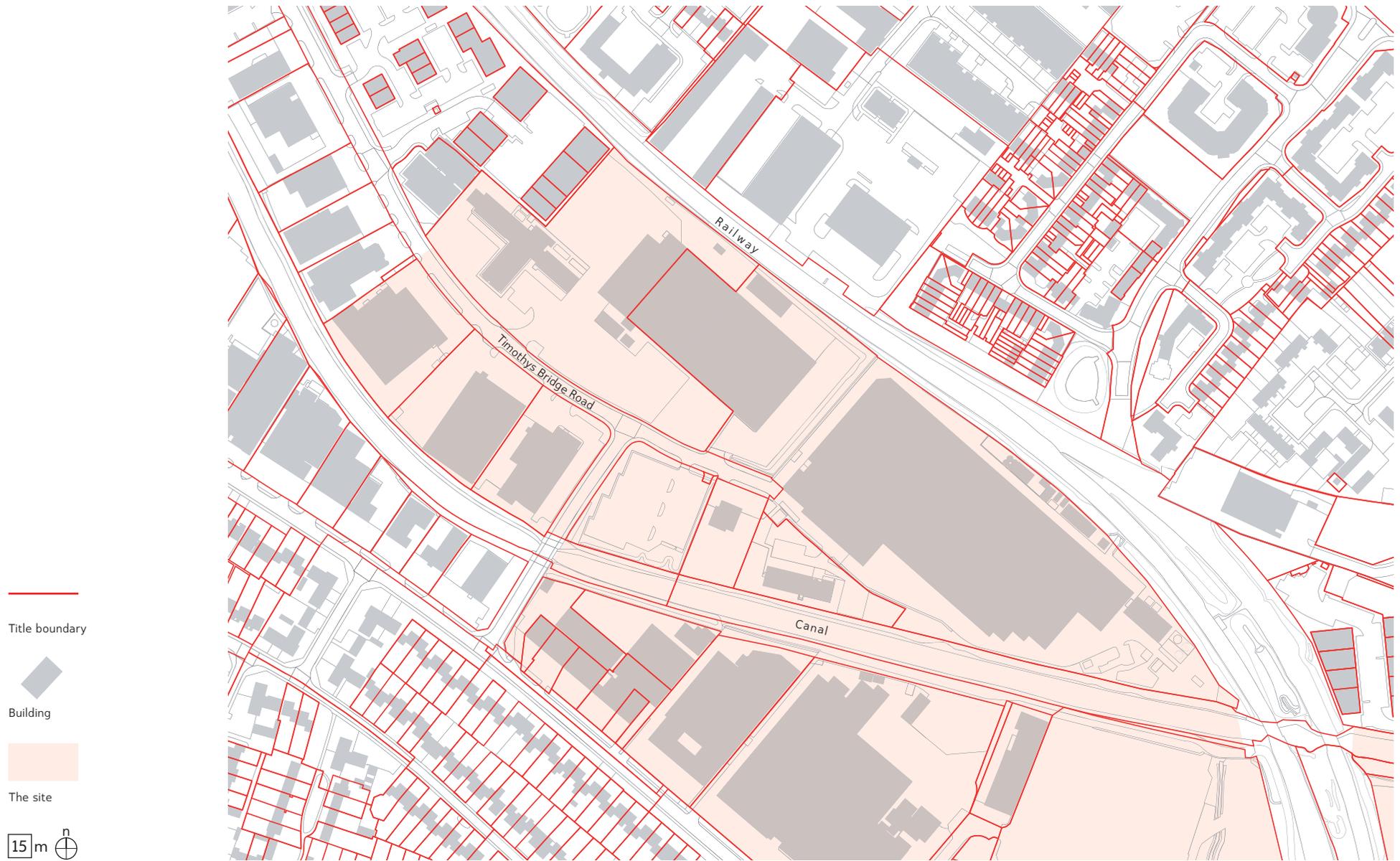


Figure 18 Land ownership pattern Timothys Bridge Road