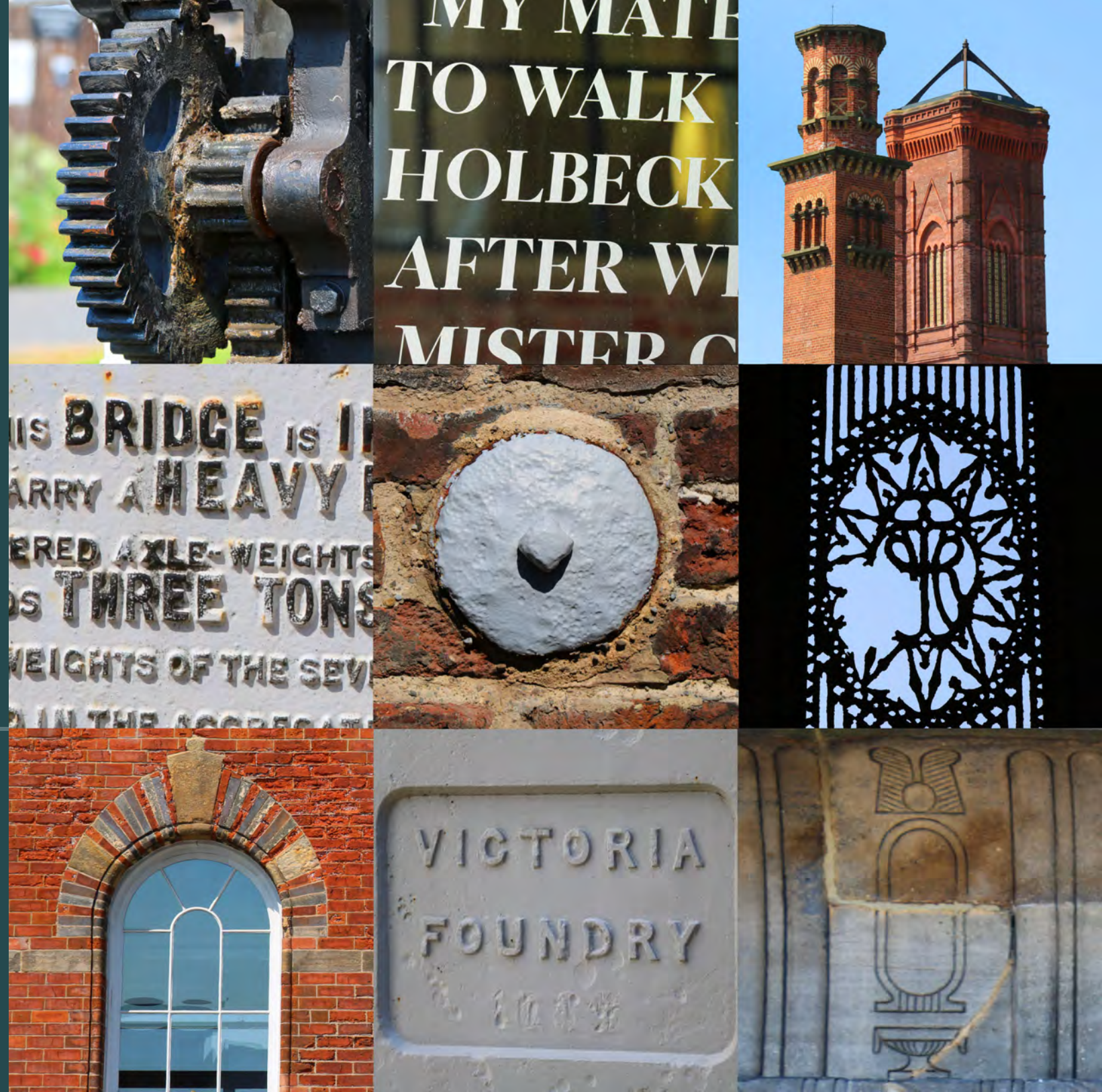


# HOLBECK:

## *Walking Tour*



Historic England

# HOLBECK:

This short 1km tour explores the inherited character of part of Holbeck, a former industrial area of Leeds undergoing heritage-led regeneration. A rich industrial heritage is interspersed with large gap sites, many of which have secured investment to create an urban village immediately south of the city centre. Poor quality developments in the late 20th century led to adoption of the Holbeck Urban Village Planning Framework (2006). Principles within it are guiding future development, helping to “preserve the area’s unique character, combining the architectural legacy with new high-quality and contemporary design”.

Moving around the area we’ll be exploring some techniques of characterisation, a method used to understand and describe how a place is distinctive. We’ll explore some policies in the Urban Village Planning Framework, and considering how more recent developments have contributed to the area’s character. Relevant principles within the ‘Urban Design & Public Realm’ and ‘Conservation & Listed Buildings’ chapters of the Holbeck Urban Village Planning Framework are introduced along the way, demonstrating the important roles that strategic planning and development management have in heritage-led regeneration.

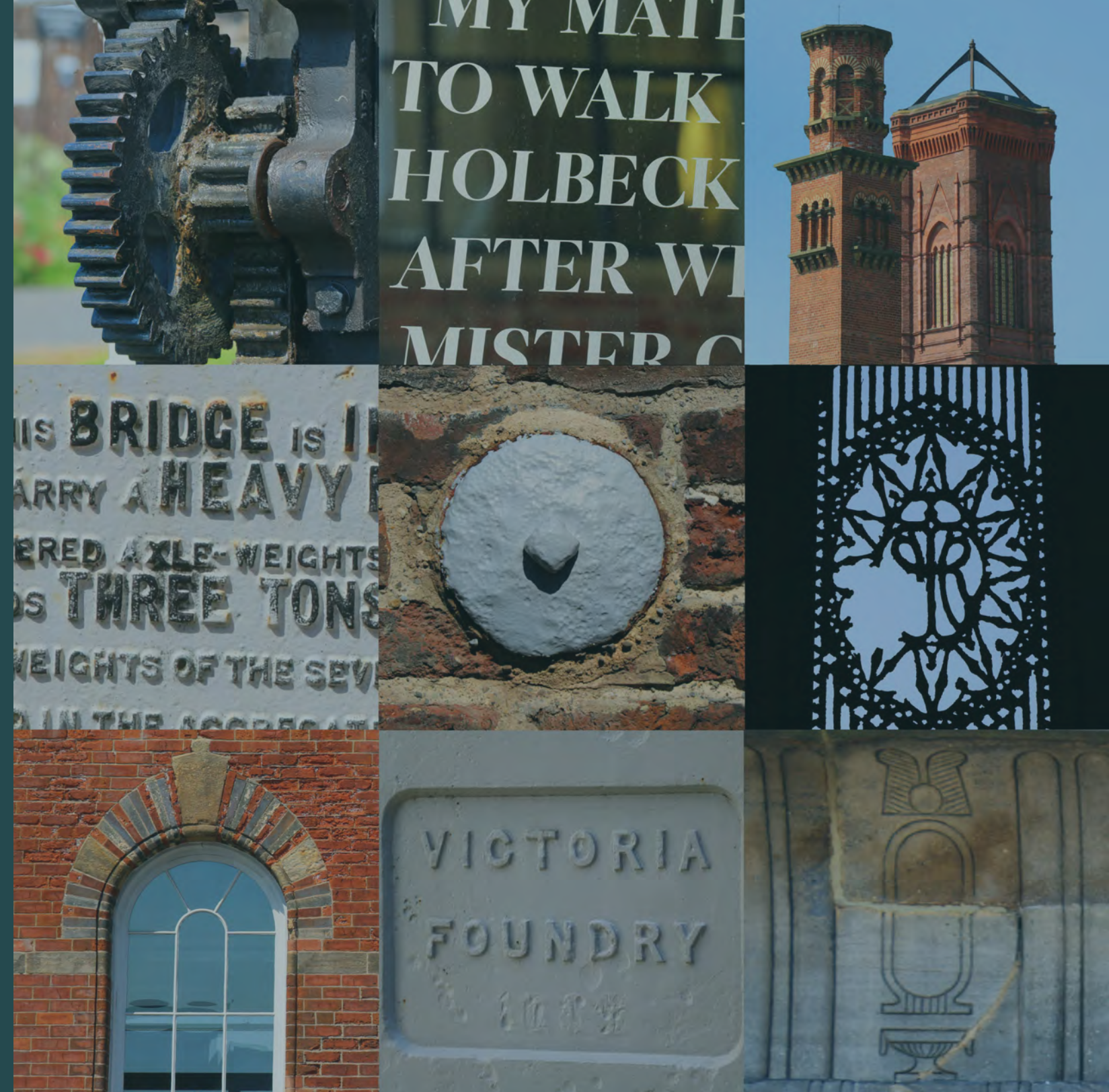
You can navigate the tour by following the map and the key points along it. Short descriptions with images are provided for each point.

N.B. Some principles of the Holbeck Urban Village Framework are slightly abridged in places. The full version can be found at <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Holbeck%20Urban%20Village.pdf>.

## A NOTE ABOUT SAFETY!



*The tour follows a number of busy streets in Holbeck, and special care should be taken when crossing them. Many view points along the tour are taken from the carriageways themselves and each point does not necessarily present a safe place to stop. As such, find a safe place to pause before continuing with the tour. Following the tour as a pair or small group of people will be more fun and safer.*

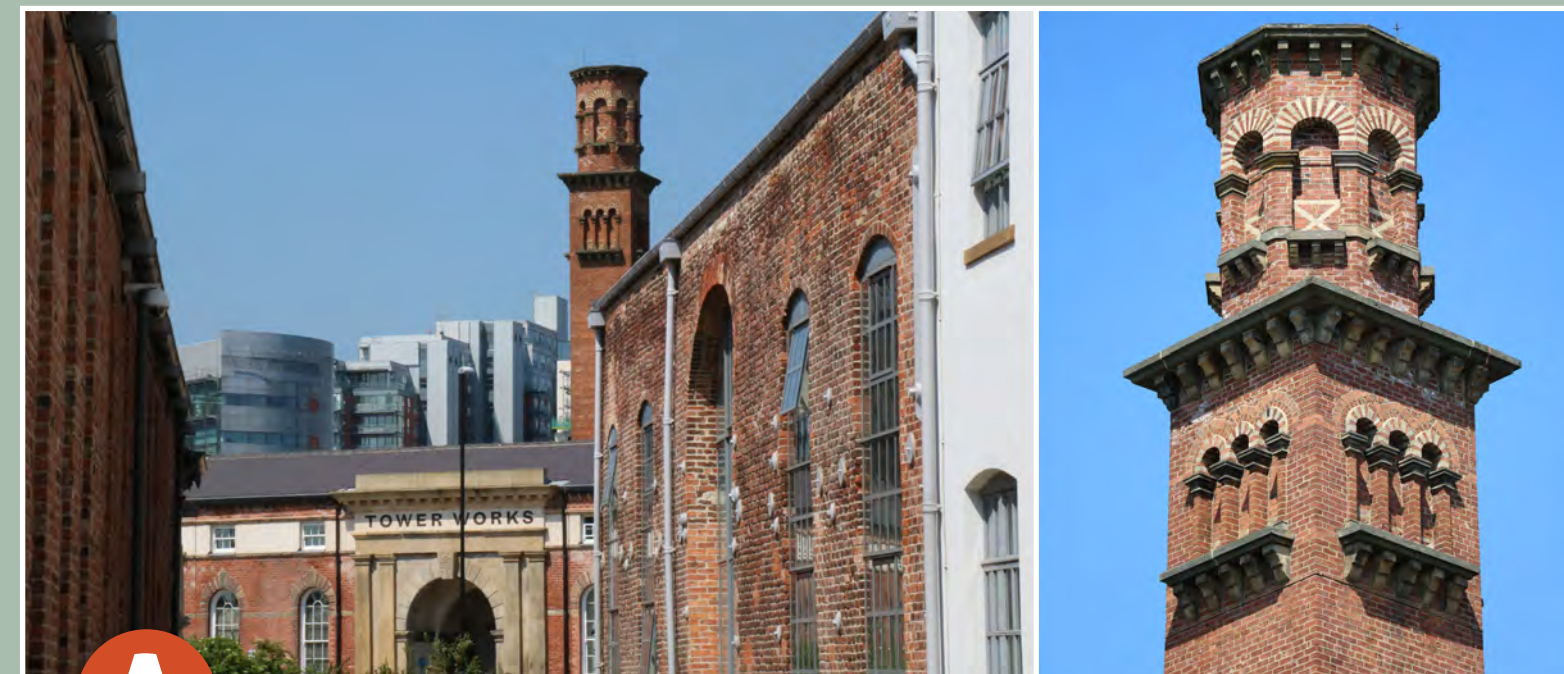
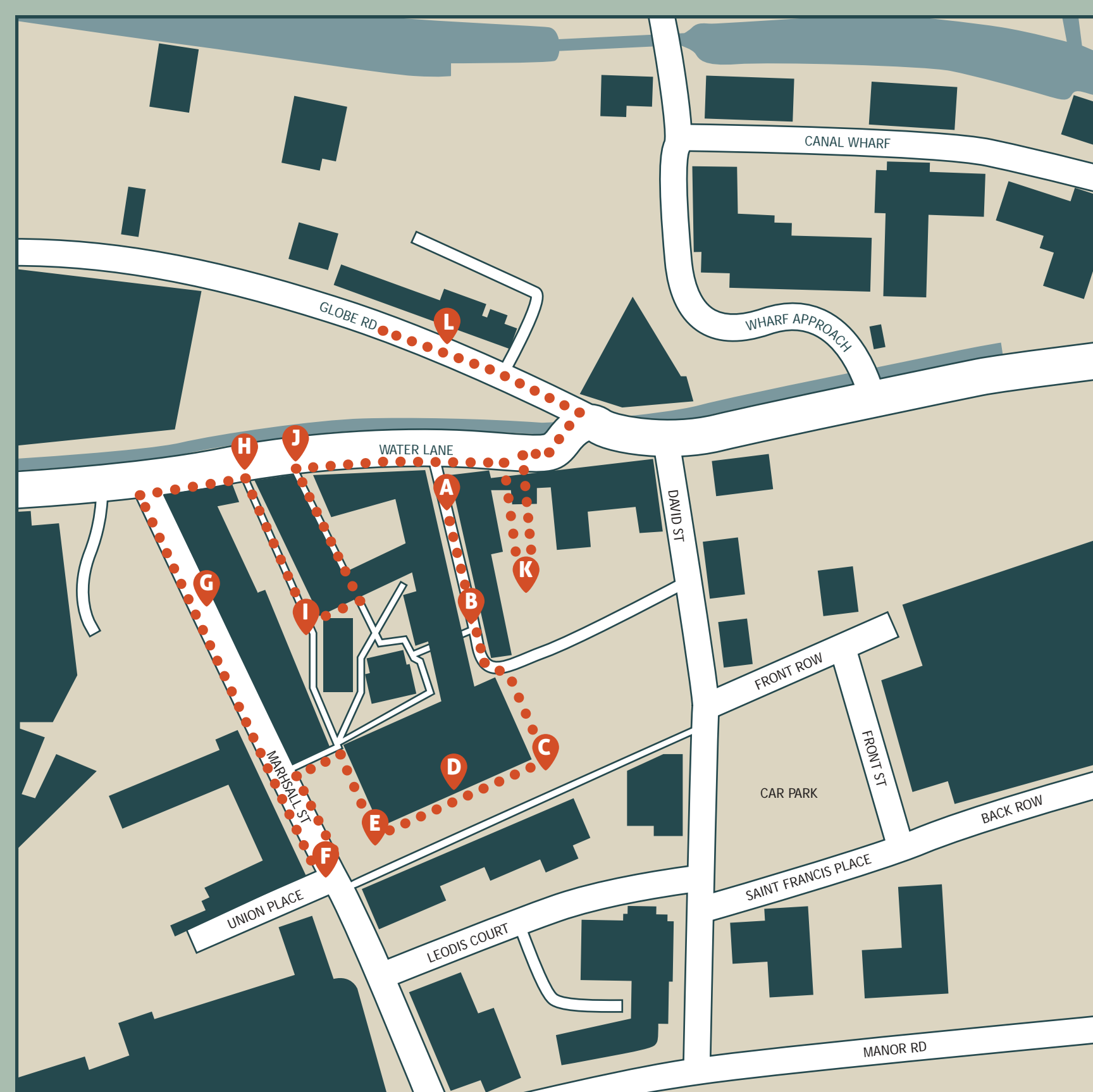


# HOLBECK:

## INTRODUCTION

Holbeck was a cradle of the Industrial Revolution, a place which promoted Leeds as a centre of business and entrepreneurship. It hosts an array of industrial buildings including the Round Foundry, one of the earliest surviving engineering works in the world. Lying on the south banks of the River Aire the area has medieval origins, and was comprehensively developed for textile manufacturing and heavy engineering during the 18th and 19th centuries, leaving only traces of its earlier past. Today, the city has developed right against its fringes and the area is targeted for regeneration as an 'urban village'. Much of Holbeck lies within a Conservation Area and several of its buildings, including its tall towers, are Listed Buildings. We start our tour at the junction of Foundry Street and Water Lane, in front of the area's iconic towers. (Nearest Postcode LS11 5WD).





## CHANGE ON THE HORIZON:

Looking north towards Leeds city centre, the foreground is dominated by the broad footprint of Tower Works, its stone gateway a landmark terminating feature to northerly views along Foundry Street. The skyline is punctuated by the tall towers that both serve as chimneys and give the works their name. Looking beyond, the city centre backdrop provides a strong contrast to buildings in the area. It's a useful point to begin understanding how Holbeck sets itself apart as a place with a special character. Compare modern buildings on the skyline with those in the foreground, picking out some basic ways in which they differ from one another. These might include:

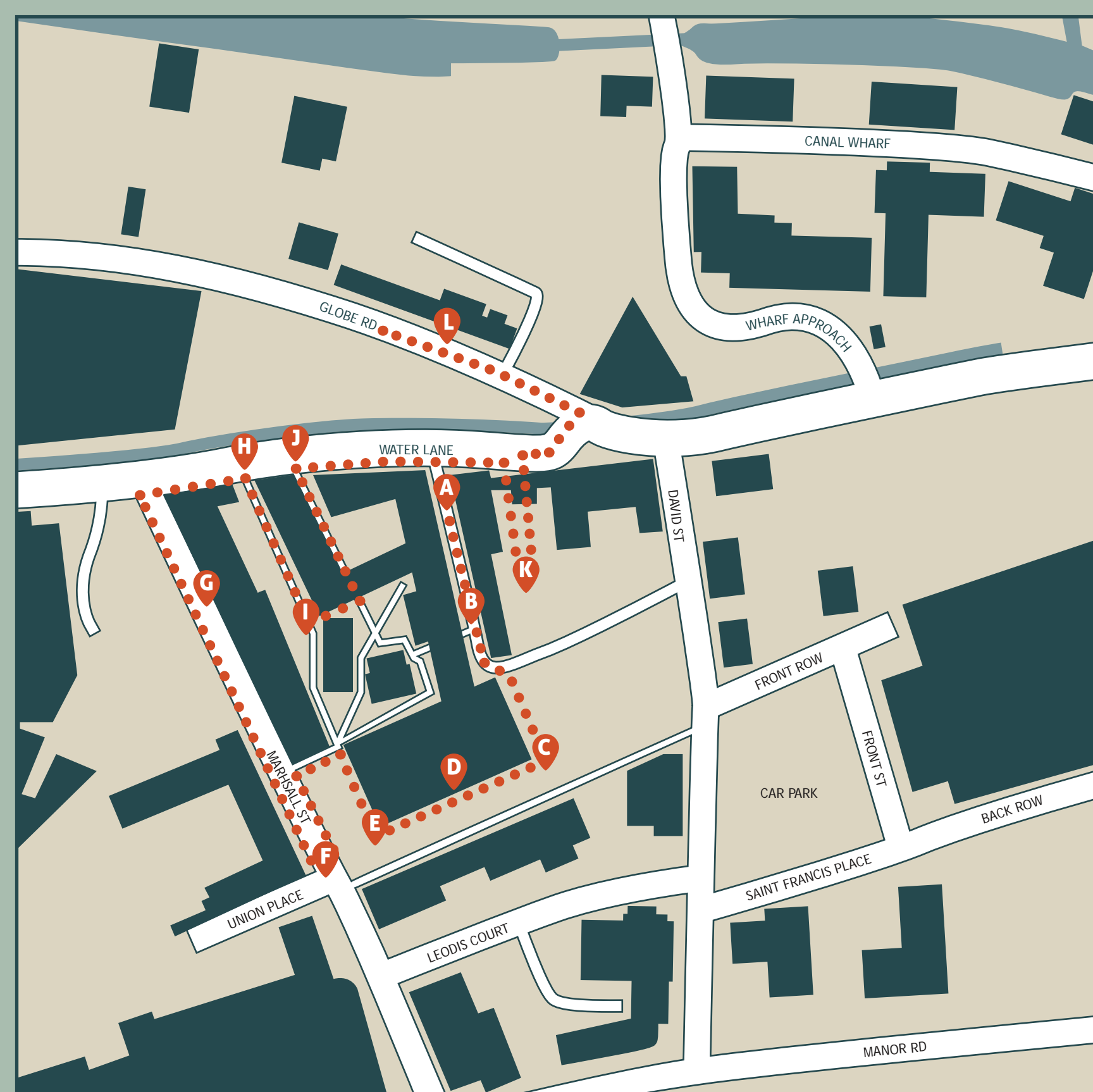
- Modern buildings are much larger in scale, rising clean above those in the area, including the tall towers.
- The material construction of buildings is highly dissimilar, with local brick and stone contrasting with modern grey panelling.

- Flat roofs on modern buildings are stepped and more irregular in form than the shallow gabled roofs with long consistent roofline.

- The façades of buildings differ in a similar way, with more constant building lines in the area contrasting with the diverse indented frontages of modern developments.

- Windows are of different orientations too; those on modern buildings are horizontal in emphasis whereas within the area they are tall vertical openings.

Comparing the character of areas in this way helps to articulate how places vary from one to another and what they have in common. Although a simple approach, it underpins many place-shaping processes, including how we regenerate areas through quality contextual design. We'll have the chance to put the technique into practice later on in the tour.



## FOUNDRY STREET:

Foundry Street area has some of the oldest surviving industrial workshops in the world. As part of a wider regeneration scheme, buildings were restored using salvaged and other quality materials, ensuring the street retains its utilitarian character.

A functional character is created by two parallel and opposing building lines set at the back of the footway, defining the edges of the street. This is common in industrial areas where internal manufacturing space is at a premium. Buildings are built of a local reddish-brown brick with regular and tall vertical windows that maximise light into internal areas. Their utilitarian character is reinforced by constant rooflines, a limited palette of construction materials and plain undecorated walls. The latter emphasises the array of industrial fixtures and fittings. Public realm has an important role too, with a carriageway of robust stone setts indicative of the wear and tear associated with heavy engineering.

The street's regeneration has clearly responded to its functional character. The material palette remains restricted, even within the colour scheme with windows, fixtures and fittings picked out in the same light grey. Parking bays are allocated using steel markers and building façades have been rebuilt using local brick, or are rendered. The result is a street scene that retains its industrial character and serves as high-quality office and commercial premises with car parking provision.

The Holbeck Urban Village Planning Framework recognises this: 'a limited palette of largely natural paving materials will be used throughout. Existing natural paving materials in the area including granite sets will be re-used.'

At the end of Foundry Street we turn left then right heading toward the open car park in front of the Round Foundry Building.



86 m

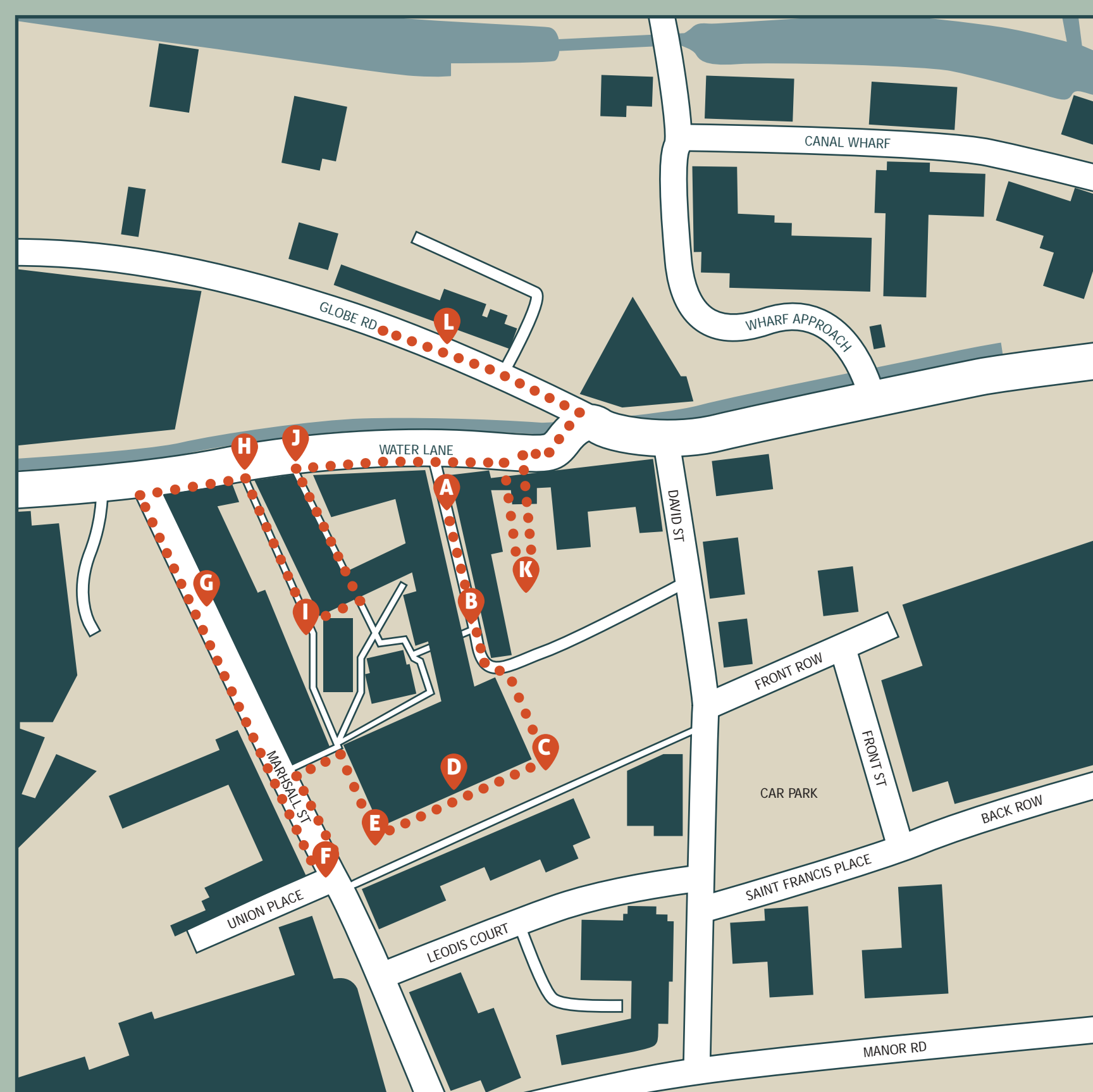
## ROUND FOUNDRY BUILDING:

Turning the corner there is a palpable change in the sense of enclosure. Enclosed streets and courtyards (such as adjacent Foundry Square) are a feature of Holbeck and development earmarked for the expansive car park in front of the Round Foundry could recreate this characteristic, enhancing the setting of buildings in the vicinity.

Redevelopment of the Round Foundry has again responded to the character of the building, with broad shallow gable ends facing the car park replicated in glass and timber. The materials sit at ease with existing buildings and are unified through the use of light grey within the window structure. A key success in the design approach is that each of the three gable ends have individual characters but retain a limited material palette and simple built form. This emphasises the historic brick built structure whilst enabling the

creation of new modern units that continue to reinforce the area's distinctive industrial character.





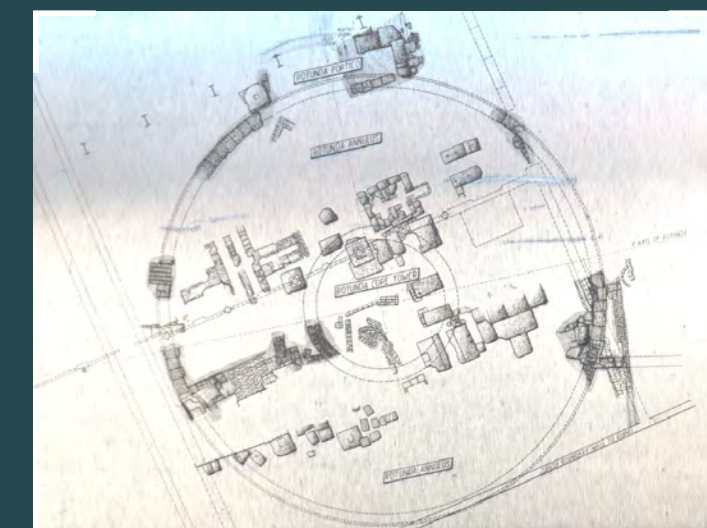
110 m

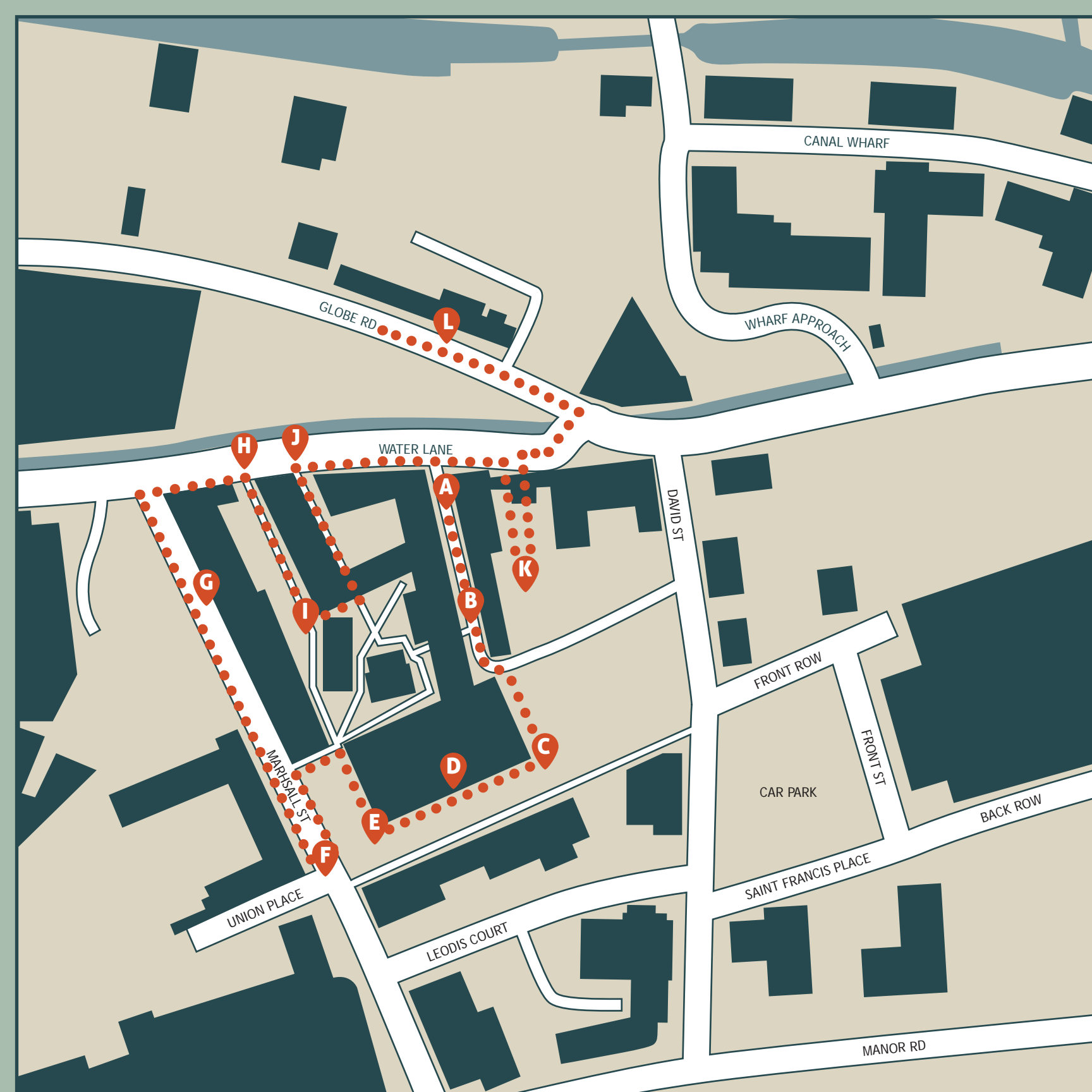
## THE ROTUNDA REVEALED:

We now move to the side of the Round Foundry building, within an area of car parking. The original round building, known as The Rotunda, was a fitting-up shop for components produced in the foundry. At four storeys high it was a conspicuous structure, giving the Round Foundry its name. The current building was constructed as an assembly workshop on the site of the Rotunda after it was destroyed by fire in 1875.

However, the historic significance of the Rotunda has not been entirely lost. Instead, the path of its foundations, discovered during archaeological excavations of the site, are traceable within a casting in the new Media Centre car park. The potential contribution that archaeology can make to developments is difficult to harness at times, and is often lost

completely. But here the vast scale and shape of the Rotunda is simply captured, adding a sense of intrigue and excitement to an otherwise ordinary area of parking.





210 m

## MARSHALLS MILL:

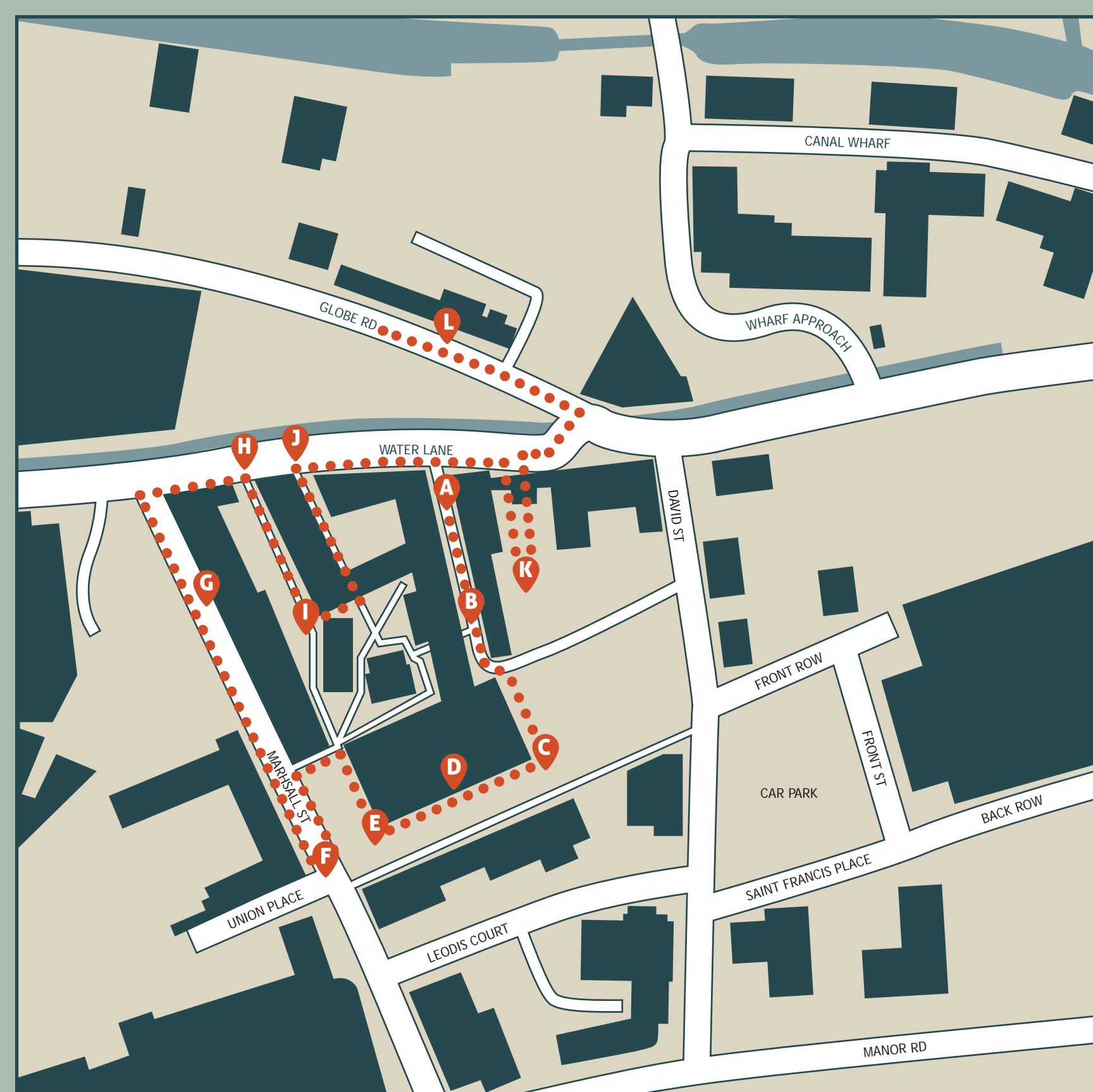
Heading down towards Marshall Street the true scale and mass of Marshall's Mill becomes apparent. Built in three phases between 1817 and 1830, it was the most prosperous flax mill in Leeds. The building conveys in large-scale some of the prevailing characteristics shared by industrial buildings in Holbeck. Six storeys of regularly punched vertical windows create a strong pattern and create a low solid-to-void ratio. This architectural term expresses the proportion of a building's façade that is open (i.e. doors and windows) in relation to those that are solid (e.g. brick). Like many others of its age the building is set at the back of the footway and, despite its grandeur, is plain decoratively, with simple gabled wings at each end and three neo-classical doorways facing the street.

These defining characteristics are recognised in the Urban Design & Public Realm principles of the

Holbeck Urban Village Planning Framework. For example, one principle stresses that

*'new developments should generally be sited at the back of the footpath to enclose the street, as is traditional in this area. This is particularly important in the case of street corners.'*





The *Egyptian Revival* style came about through increased public awareness and intrigue in the ancient civilisation, owing to Napoleon's conquest of Egypt and the Battle of the Nile, where Admiral Nelson defeated the French fleet in 1798.



255 m

## TEMPLE WORKS: Architecture from Afar

Next to Marshall's Mill is another flax mill, Temple Works, a Grade I Listed Building modelled on the Egyptian Temple of Horus at Edfu. Built between 1836-40 it makes a striking contribution to the street scene, dramatically distinguishing itself from the functional form of other buildings in Holbeck. The building originally had a green roof to maintain the correct levels of humidity in the workshops below. Famously the turf was grazed by sheep to keep it in under control.

Where they exist, decorative buildings in Holbeck are extravagant expressions of revival architecture, demonstrating the wealth and global influence of industry. As such, future buildings may want to account for and reinforce the divide between highly functional and highly decorative buildings.

But it's not just decoration that sets Temple Mill apart.

*QUESTION: What other characteristics help highlight the building in the street scene?*

*ANSWER: Temple Mill is set back from the footway with a small forecourt, drawing attention to it within the building line. Its smaller scale also serves to highlight the works, as does its stone construction, a material used sparingly within Holbeck. The solid-to-void ratio has increased too, with smaller windows set back within a porch.*



F

255 m

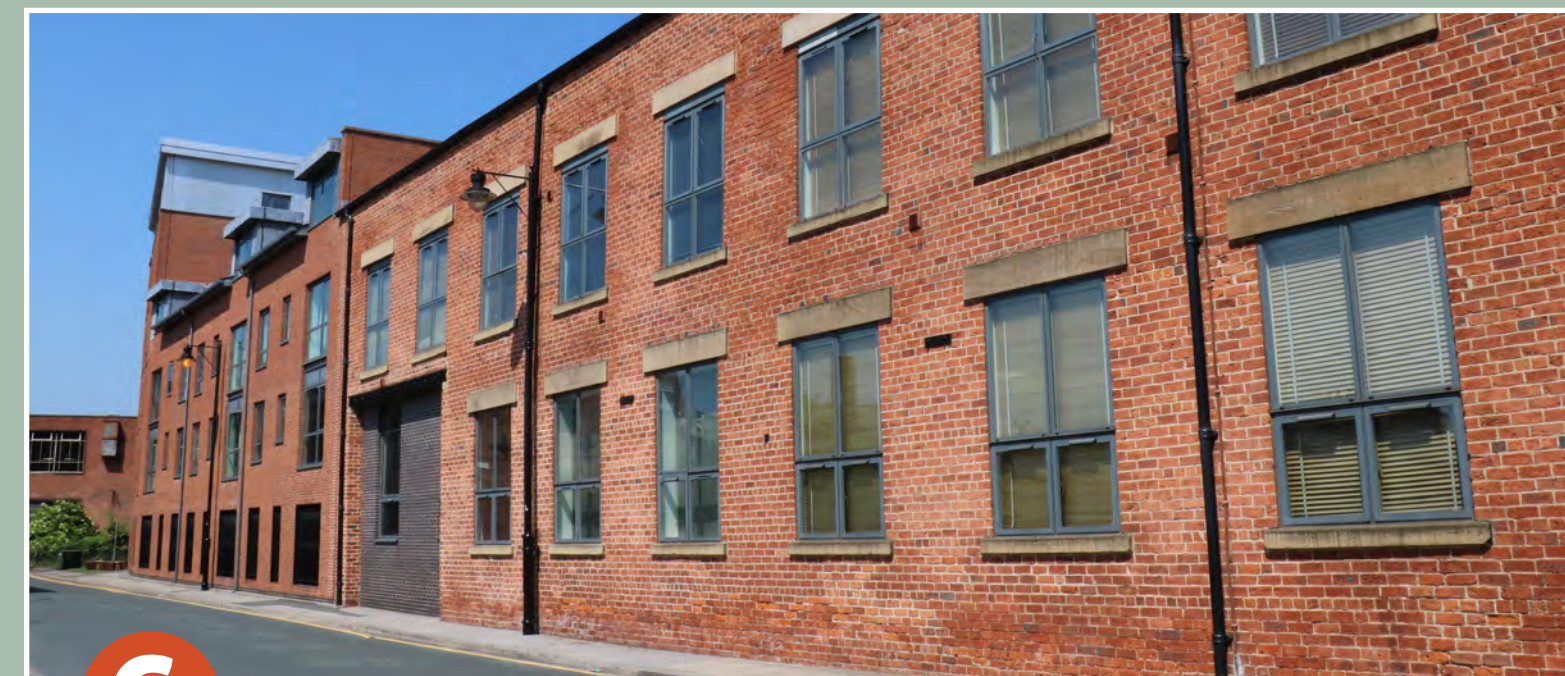
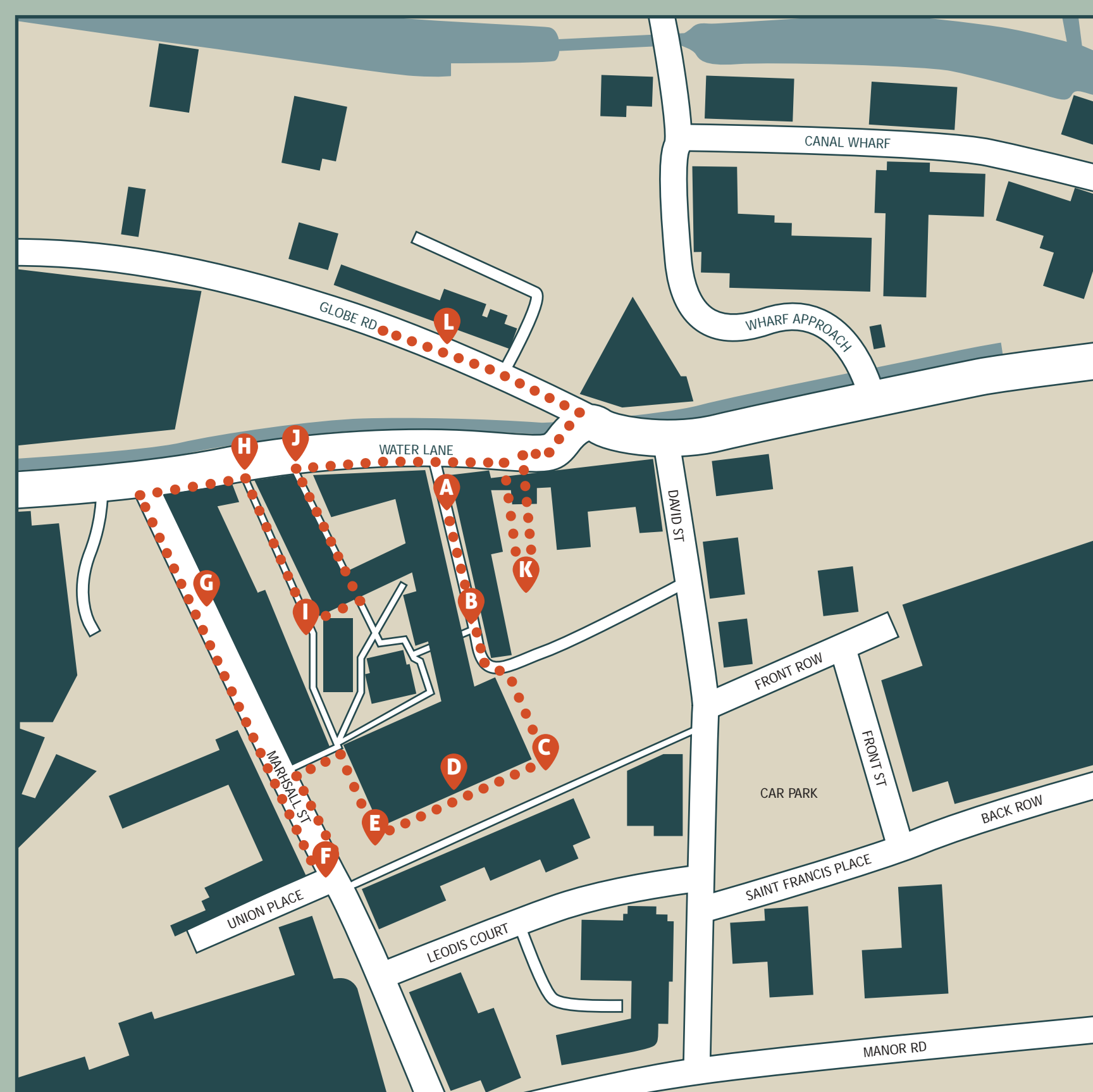
## TEMPLE WORKS: A Foreign Influence

As part of the regeneration plans for the area, luxury fashion house Burberry have acquired the site, and will redevelop it as one of their manufacturing locations. Land allocations and funding from the City Council will enable the creation of new buildings and a public space.

Late 20<sup>th</sup> century development opposite the works is of an entirely different character. It's a useful chance to consider how development within the setting of heritage assets can enhance or harm their historic significance. In this instance the light industrial unit has introduced a different palette of building materials to the surrounding area, including a buff coloured brick similar in hue to the dressed stone of the mill. The unit is dismissive of Marshall Street and Temple Mill, facing the side road and offering a blank wall with very few openings facing the street, leading to a sense of

inactivity. Moreover, the low scale of the building reduces the prominence of Temple Works within the street scene, whereas a taller building might serve to highlight it.

Looking at historic maps, such as the 1888 Ordnance Survey map pictured, can help maximise the benefit that a historic asset can bring to regeneration schemes. The map clearly shows the Temple Works within an enclosed street scene surrounded by buildings set at the back of the footway. Encouraging development of larger scale and massing positioned in this way could better frame the building. However, new public space might also take the opportunity to reveal new views of the works' distinctive aesthetic. Either way there's opportunity to use heritage to advantage here.



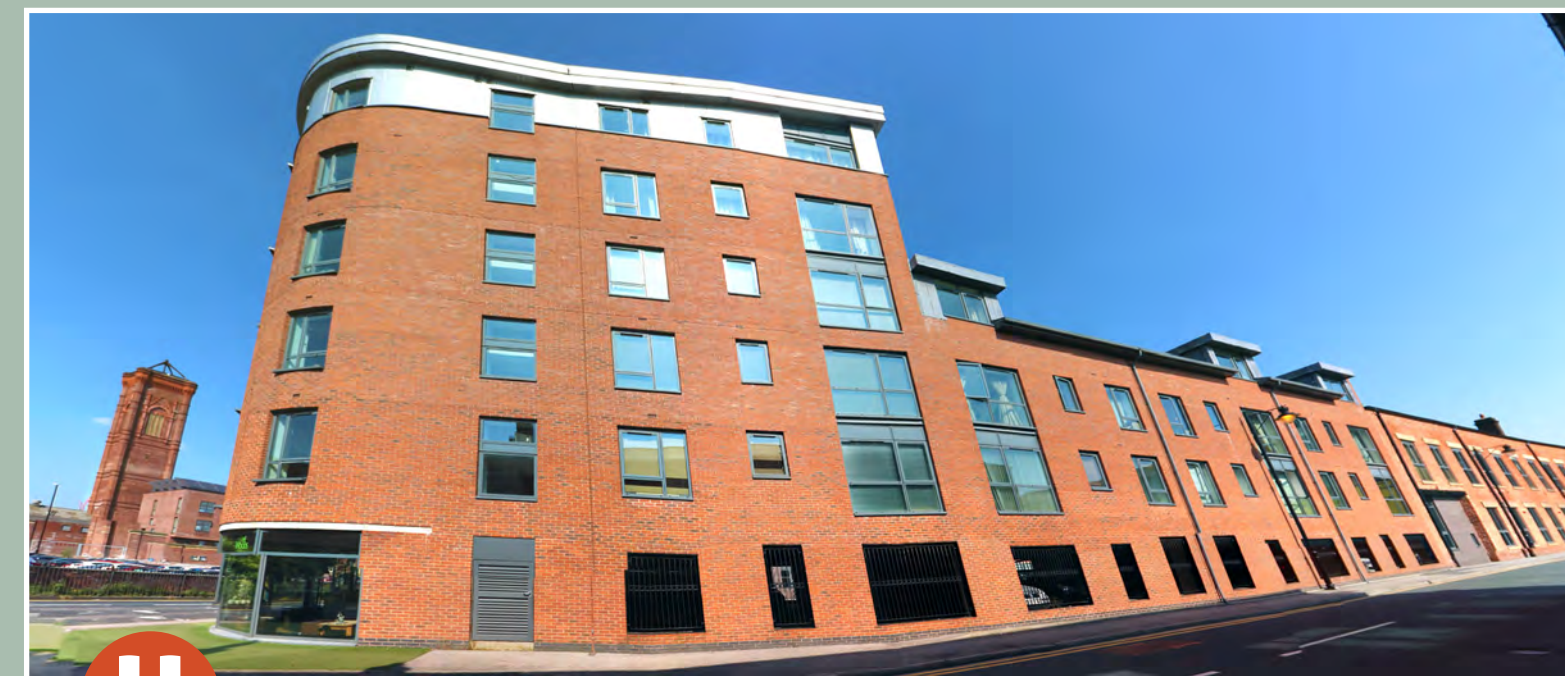
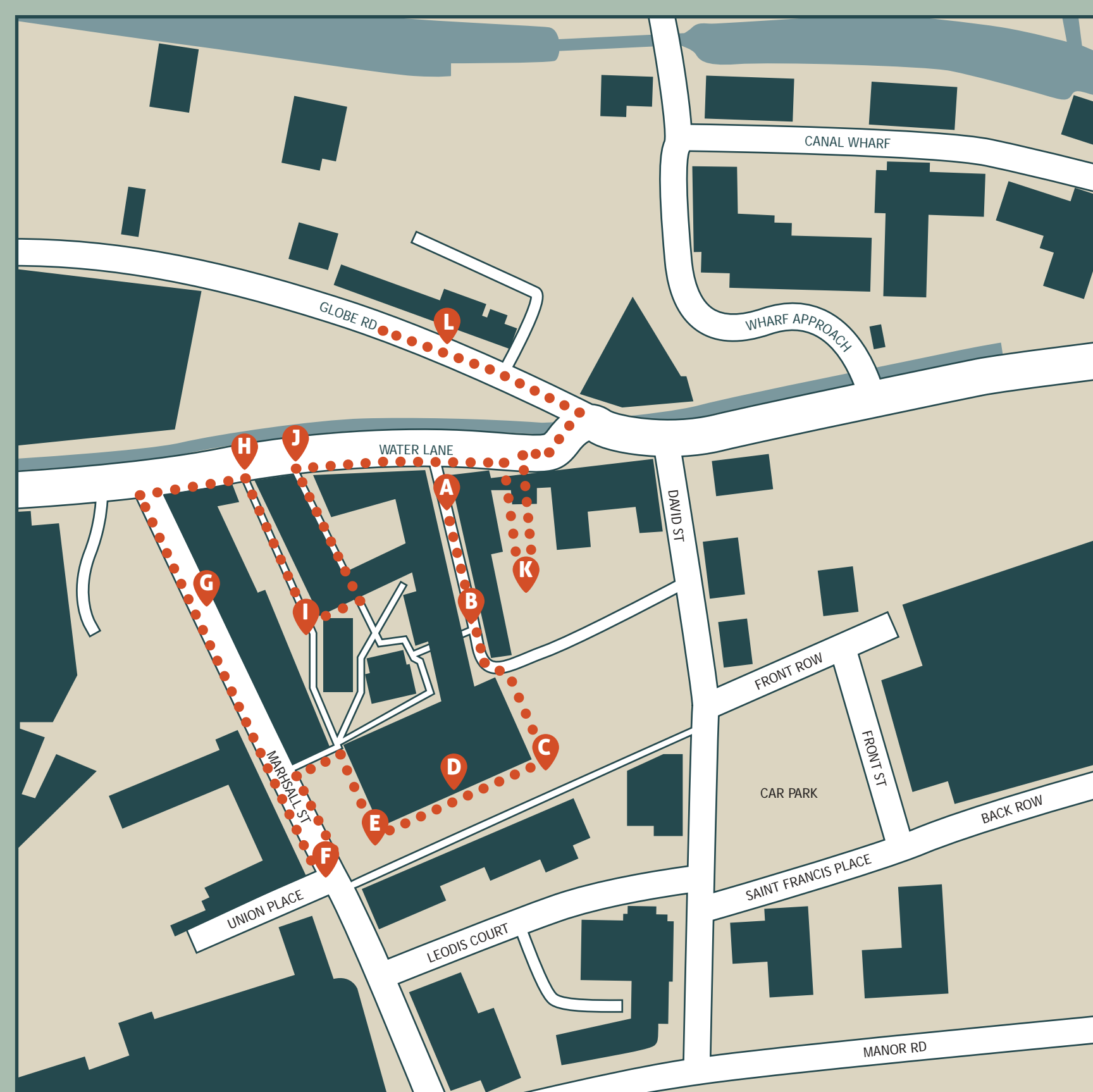
443 m

## MARSHALL STREET & BUTCHER STREET:

We now start to head back towards Water Lane. Having moved around the area we've a better grasp of what the prevailing architectural characteristics are: Long constant ridgelines; shallow symmetrical gabled roofs; regular patterns of vertical windows; brick construction with stone used for ostentatious decoration or as basic structural features; constant building lines set at the back of the footway; clear single-storey steps in scale between one building to the next; and active façades with low solid-to-void ratios.

We now work our way along Marshall Street onto Water Lane and, turning right, head down Butcher Street. Along the way there's a chance to consider how the modern apartment development that spans the block has responded to the historic character of Holbeck.





495 m

## A RECENT ADDITION:

*QUESTION: What aspects of the development reinforce the inherited character of the area, and how does it choose to differ? Do you feel the outcomes are successful?*

DISCUSSION: Brief evaluation shows how the design of the development has responded to many characteristics. New buildings are sited at the back of the footway and are of similar scale to adjoining industrial buildings, maintaining the overall roofline overlooking Marshall Street. The development is plain in character and built of brick. Refurbished windows in the earlier buildings are mainly vertical in orientation and of a similar material construction and colour to those on the new development, adding a sense of coherence to the street scene.

Yet, there are a number of areas where the development diverges from the prevailing character. The regular pattern of fenestration has been replaced with over 7 different types of window, the uppermost of which are horizontal in orientation. Car parking introduced at ground floor level has led to inactive frontages at street level. Although some elements of the development have gabled roofs, taller sections towards Water Lane take the form of an inverted asymmetrical gable. Dormers, an architectural feature not seen elsewhere, punch through and break the roofline. The building is a large single development unit, stepping up in height towards Water Lane, whereas elsewhere in the area changes in scale typically denote different individual buildings. The recent development has also introduced a new material to the upper storey and this, coupled with the change of roof form, is more consistent with recent developments on the skyline outside of the area.



495 m

You may feel that some outcomes are more, or less successful than others, and it's important to remember that other factors have an influence on design and the viability of a development. The exercise of understanding how new buildings and spaces respond to, or diverge from, the inherited character of an area is useful in the processes of evaluating development proposals and in setting out future plans for regeneration.

Due to the erosion of the special character and quality of the area by earlier developments, the Holbeck Urban Village Planning Framework sets out a series of design principles to help. Some key policies include:

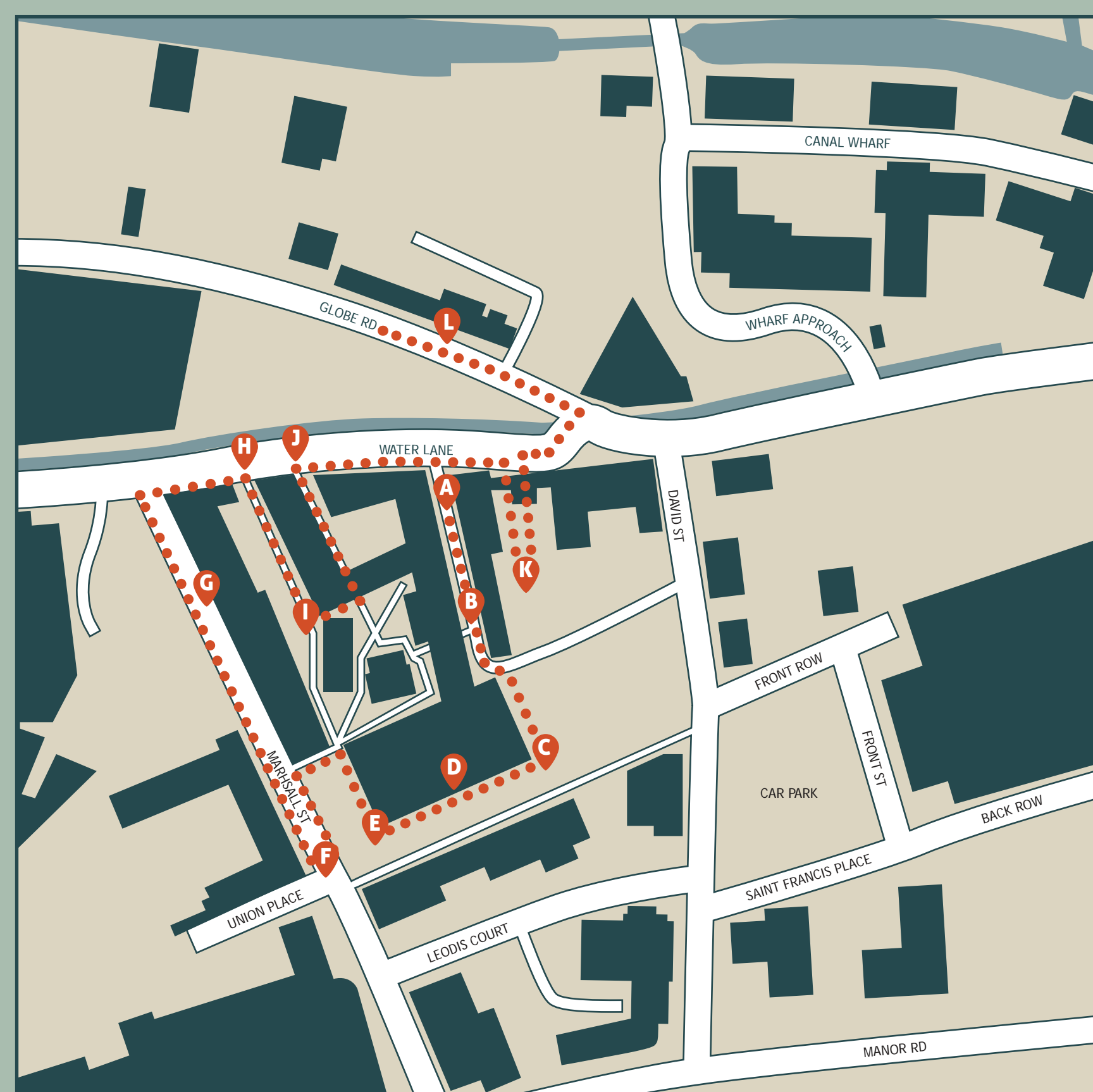
*'Developments should be at a scale, height, massing and alignment complementary to the part of the village they are in. Within the*

*conservation area, heights of new buildings should be within a storey height difference of adjacent buildings.'*

*'Retain and reinforce the varied roofline of the area.'*

*'Materials should be of a high quality and chosen to complement the prevailing materials within the area which are red brick, sandstone and blue slate (provided that this does not inhibit the development of innovative buildings using new technologies to achieve sustainability). Quality modern materials such as steel and glass would be allowed in conjunction with the use of traditional materials.'*

We now head between the buildings on the east side of Butcher Street, leading to Keys Court.



550 m

## KEYS COURT & SAWMILL YARD:

Defined courtyards accessed by narrow passageways are a distinctive characteristic of the area. Today many have been repurposed as public spaces. The Urban Village Planning Framework makes special provision for this form of movement and type of open space:

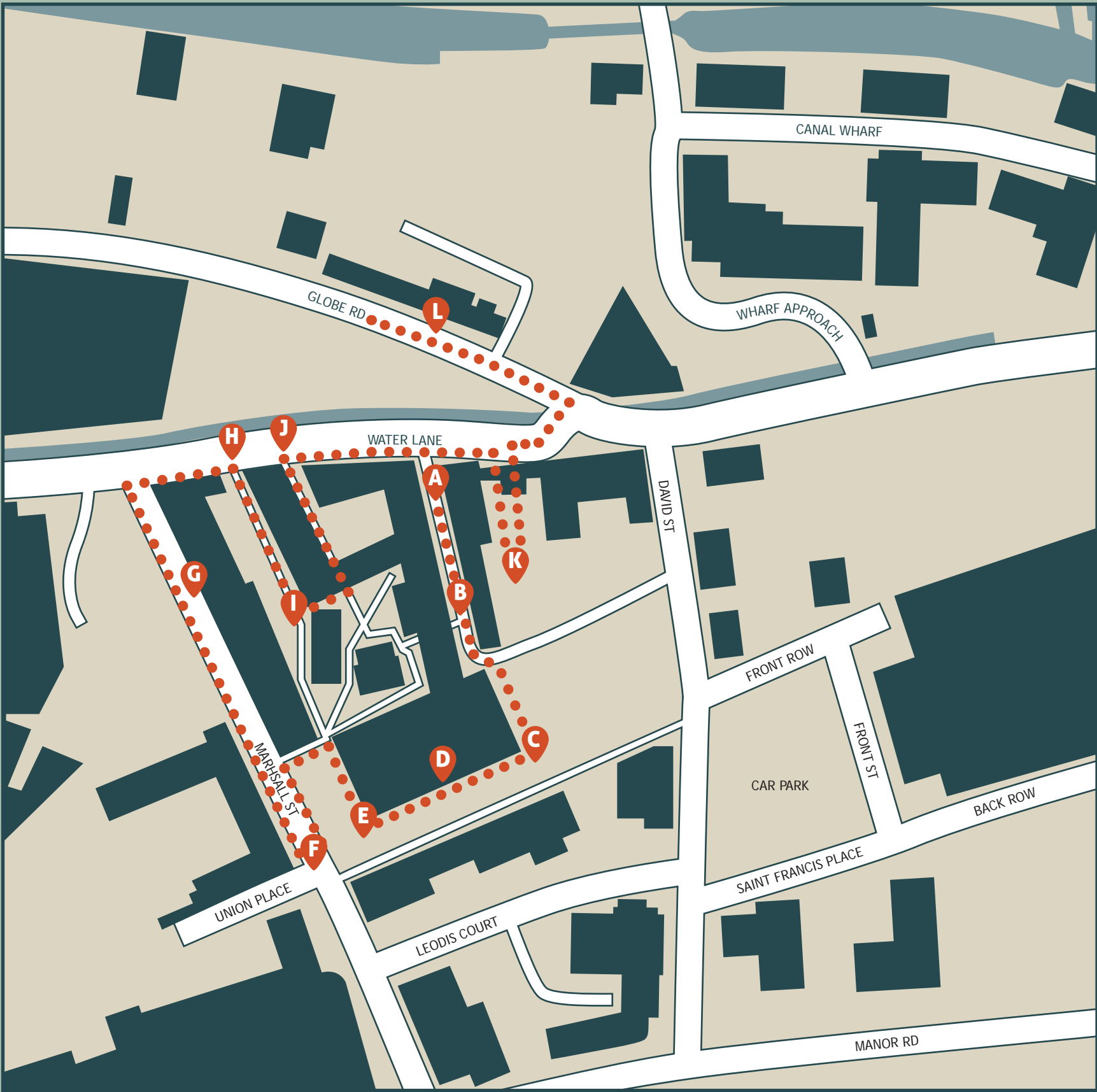
*'The village should be made permeable to pedestrians. A fine grain should be retained by the avoidance of long, unbroken building frontages.'*

*'20% of the urban village will be devoted to publicly accessible open spaces. There will be a series of spaces of different size and character. The spaces should be enclosed by buildings and animated by active uses on the ground floors of the enclosing buildings.'*

Buildings within Keys Court have been redeveloped, their wide arcaded entranceways

offering a high sense of activity at street level. Upper levels retain the strong pattern of vertical fenestration, again giving a sense of activity and regularity. Two different modern developments have occurred here and, using the skills applied previously, it's a chance to evaluate the contribution of one of them to the square. Is it more or less successful than the approach we saw previously?

Going through the passageway, Saw Mill Yard has a different character. The square is part public space and part car park, with the ground floor of the recent development allocated to covered parking. Parking provision is an important amenity, but its integration into Holbeck poses a particular set of challenges. The result here is a very inactive ground floor, with little animation afforded to the public space.



## WATER LANE:

We now re-join Water Lane. The road is one of the earliest surviving features within the area, following the path of the Hol Beck stream, from which the area takes its name. The course of the stream was canalised as part of the area's industrialisation during the 18th and 19th centuries.

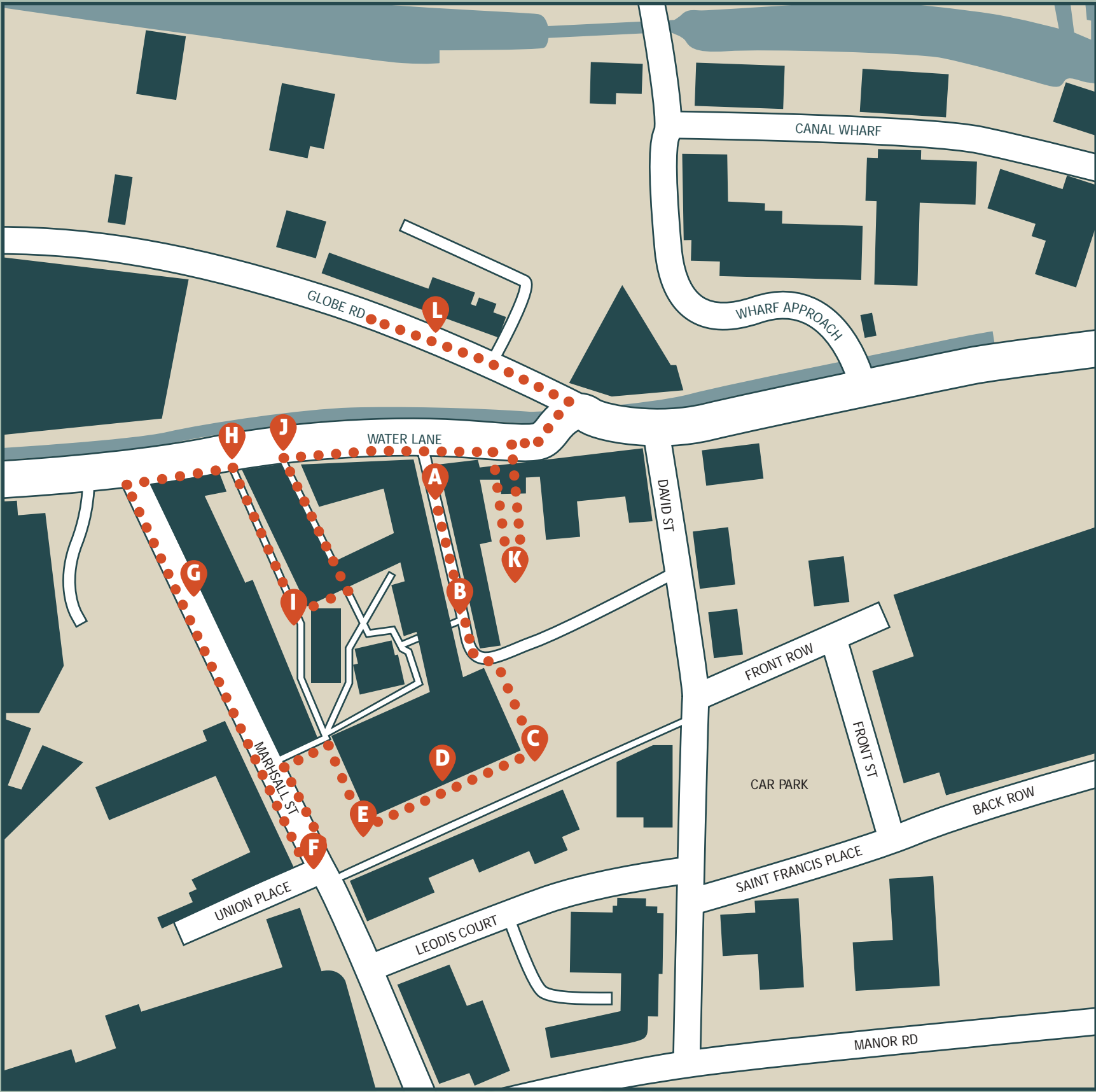


Despite its subdued presence in the townscape it provides the orientation for many of the surrounding streets and buildings along them.

As we saw with the Rotunda, emphasising old or understated orientations and features within places can help add variety to an area and re-establish its provenance. Plans within the Holbeck Urban Village Framework include proposals to '*enhance the appearance of the Hol Beck and creating a new footpath along the north side whilst also re-opening closed footbridges*' taking advantage of its potential in natural and historic environment terms.

The existing layout of Holbeck is also recognised as important to the character of the area and is promoted as the foundation for future development:

*"New developments should reflect the traditional street pattern to create a level of permeability conducive to good urban design."*

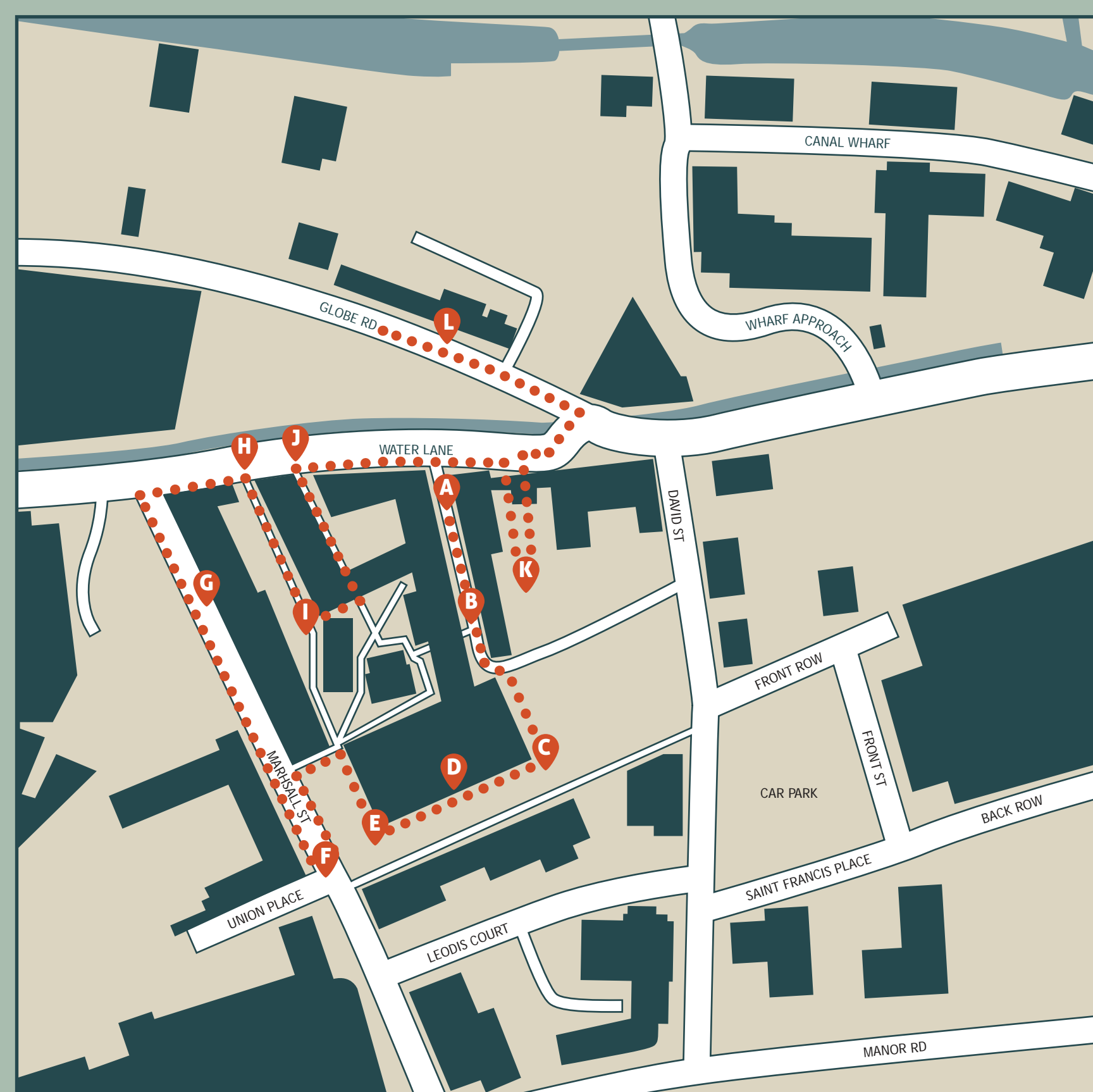


712 m

### FOUNDRY SQUARE:

Heading along Water Lane with the stream on our left we turn briefly into Foundry Square. The Square was one of the earlier phases of redevelopment. Once again stone is used judiciously, featuring within certain structural elements such as lintels and cills, but also within the neo-classical Doric columns that form the entranceway to the Welcome to Yorkshire Building.





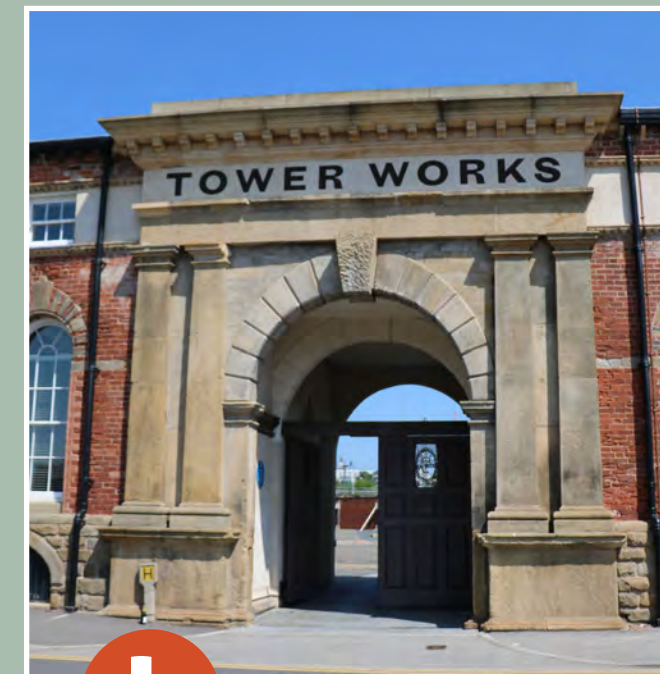
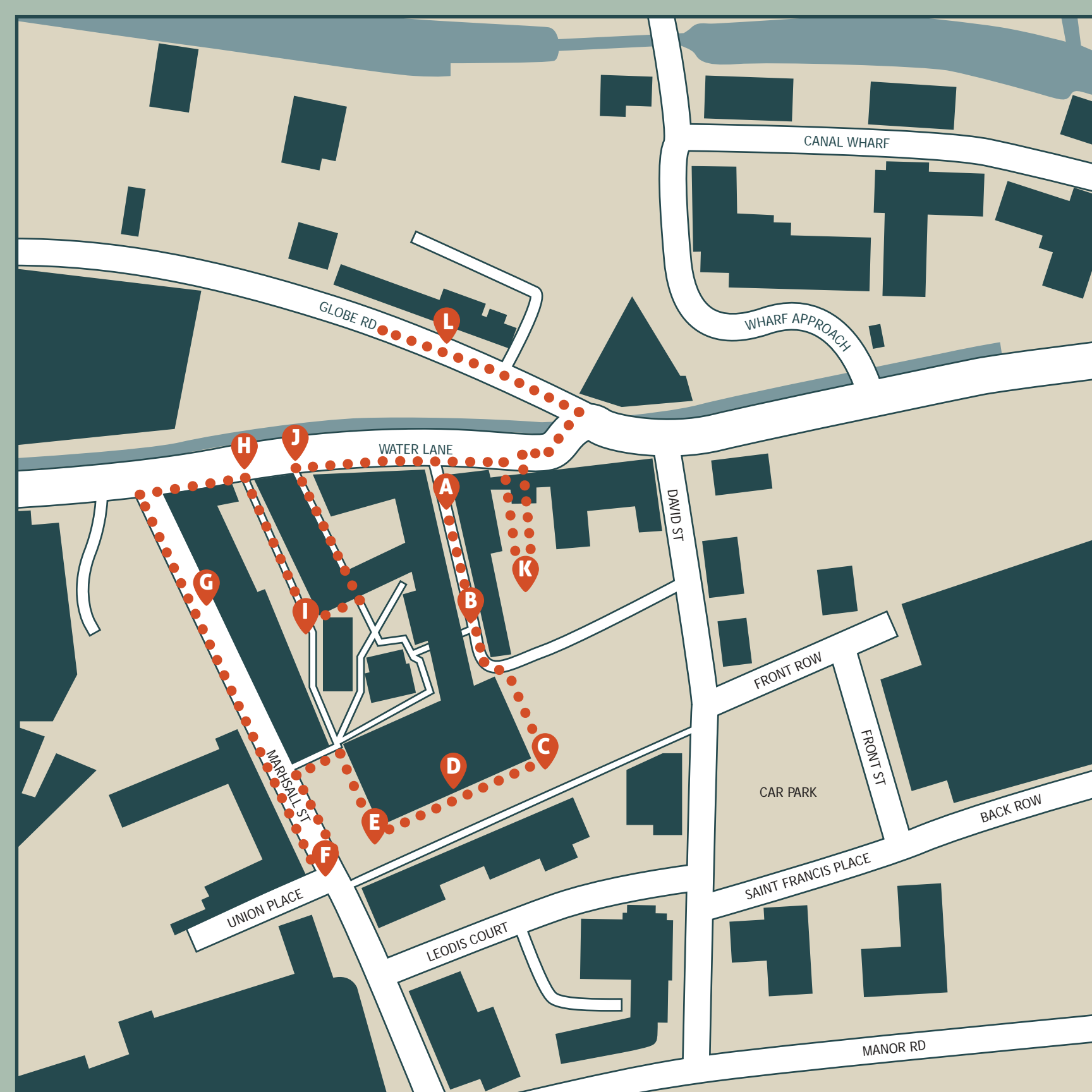
K

712 m

## FOUNDRY SQUARE:

The Square provides another opportunity to consider how new development can integrate with the existing character of the area. In this instance a glazed stairwell atrium with lift shaft has been added to the front of the former Fenton Murray machine and fitting shops and wood engineers. Some points of note include its scale, which extends to the ridge line, its limited palette of materials and simple patterning which blend well with the re-fenestrated façade of works, and its low solid-to-void ratio which affords a high sense of activity onto the public space. The new windows on this Grade II\* Listed Building are double glazed, securing occupancy of the internal space as premium office accommodation. It's a clear example of Constructive Conservation and heritage-led regeneration that ensures the building continues to play a valuable and sustainable role for many years to come.





852 m

## TOWER WORKS & CURTAIN WALL:

Our final leg of the tour takes us to Tower Works. Along the way we pass the tall perimeter wall of the site, a clear message inscribed on its façade heralding the area's metamorphosis into an urban village.

At the main entrance to the works we are confronted by an ornate neo-classical stone entranceway flanked by arched windows with polychromatic brickwork and stone gothic arches beneath. It's a story we've seen before on our tour. As with the Egyptian Temple Works, Tower Works is stating its dominance within the townscape through the use of decoration, stone and low scale. The decorative brick and stone towers within the complex follow suit, with the Italianate 'Verona Tower' emulating the Lamberti Tower in the Italian city, and the 'Big Tower' to its left based on the campanile (bell tower) of the cathedral in Florence (see overleaf).

The eclectic mix of architectural styles in the area emphasises the need for constructive conservation alongside a quality approach to new design, one that accounts for the power and dominance of buildings. Elsewhere we have found a plainer more functional form, serving to emphasise the special landmark status of decorative buildings within the wider townscape. The interrelationship between these two prevailing characteristics anticipates future quality developments, both decorative and utilitarian in design.

The Holbeck Urban Village Framework sets out these objectives from the outset, recognising the *'major opportunity to put new uses into old buildings and for new buildings and spaces.'*

*'The challenge is to do this in a way that is as truly innovative today as when the area first developed two centuries ago.'*



TOWER WORKS



TOWER WORKS

CANAL SIDE LEEDS

# Acknowledgements:



These documents were authored by Locus Consulting Ltd and designed by Pighill for Historic England.

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## References:

Holbeck Conservation Area Appraisal (Leeds City Council, 2005)  
<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Holbeck%20CA%20appraisal%20%20Final.pdf>

Holbeck Urban Village Revised Planning Framework (Leeds City Council, 2006) N.B. Currently under review.

