

# 2. Baseline Assessment

## Key contents:

The town centre's 'assets'

Living and working in Andover

The Chantry Centre

Town centre character

Impact of the Ring Road

# Andover growth

Andover occupies a strategic location in central southern England. It lies on the A303 trunk road which links London with the West Country and is close to the A34 trunk road which connects the south coast ports of Southampton and Portsmouth with the Midlands, via the M40. It is within a 30 minutes' drive of more than 50,000 business sites and 520,000 people including 380,000 of working age.

Andover has a resident workforce of about 27,000. This reflects the Borough's high economic activity rate participation in the labour market of 82%. Much of the employment is concentrated on the business parks, close to the strategic road network. Major employers include the MoD, Stannah Stairlifts, Le Creuset, Abel & Cole and Ocado. Andover also has numerous smaller businesses which thrive in these areas, and many new businesses are growing in Andover's Enterprise Centres at Basepoint (East Portway) and Walworth.

Andover's town council area population is forecast to grow from just over 50,000 today to 55,000 by 2026. Much of the growth occurring on the eastern edge of the town.

Andover has the ability to gain from some of the possible societal shifts that the Covid-19 crisis is triggering. There is increasing evidence of medium sized towns gaining at the expense of large cities by offering more access to outside / green space and cleaner air.

As the town grows, it is important that businesses and residents look to Andover as their town centre. Andover is a relatively compact town, and potentially well placed to promote 'active travel' (access to the town centre by walking or cycling). Most existing residents are within a 20min walk of the town centre and the growth is located within a 15min cycle. Andover needs to ensure that the pedestrian and cycle infrastructure is in place to encourage this active travel. It also needs to promote strong social and economic links between the business parks and the town centre.



## A compact town

- Andover Town Centre
- Retail park / neighbourhood centre
- School sites
- Employment sites
- Residential expansion areas
- Green / open spaces

# Town centre living and working

## Working

Whilst there are a large number of employers in and around Andover many are on out of centre business (e.g. Basepoint) or distribution parks rather than in town prime Grade A office schemes. Commentators consider office space in the larger centres could change or decline as a result of the Covid-19 working patterns, however Andover could be in a position to benefit from increased demand for smaller “local” offices and managed workspace within a reasonable distance from London.

Test Valley Borough Council is an important employer, located at Beech Hurst House, approximately 800m (10 minute walk) west of the town centre.

Lloyds and Bewiser are important employers in the town centre. Bewiser is located in a variety of office buildings, south of Bridge Street. Improving the pedestrian links along the river is important to encourage integration with the High Street. Lloyds has two large office buildings but is concentrating activity north of the town centre. It is close to Andover College, but can feel slightly isolated. It is important therefore to make the pedestrian routes to the core retail area as safe, convenient and attractive as possible.

## Simplyhealth

Simplyhealth currently operate from three sites in Andover and would like to consolidate on to one site with the potential to operate their business from 1-2 buildings. They would employ around 1,000 people and have an estimated floorspace requirement of approx. 75,000 sq ft. As all companies adjust to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, this floorspace requirement is currently being reviewed.

As part of the redevelopment they would implement a green travel plan and only require 150 parking spaces. They have explored options to deck Spring Lane Car Park and share the car park jointly with Council. This could provide 600 spaces.

Simplyhealth are exploring a number of options within the town centre that could deliver a high quality, sustainable, modern office environment. There is currently limited office demand from other major occupiers so retaining Simplyhealth within the town centre is a priority.

## Andover College

Andover College could consolidate their site from 2.8 ha and create a more urban approach to their facilities. They currently have approximately 120,000 sq. ft. floorspace and to accommodate future growth they would need to expand and grow to provide 160,000-180,000 sq. ft. Redevelopment would need to ensure a physical relationship is maintained with the new skills centre as it was funded by the LEP.

The college needs to retain 150 car parking spaces but these could be shared evenings and weekends by the public. Positioning of this parking could be beneficial for the Theatre, Leisure Centre or other town centre uses.

## Living

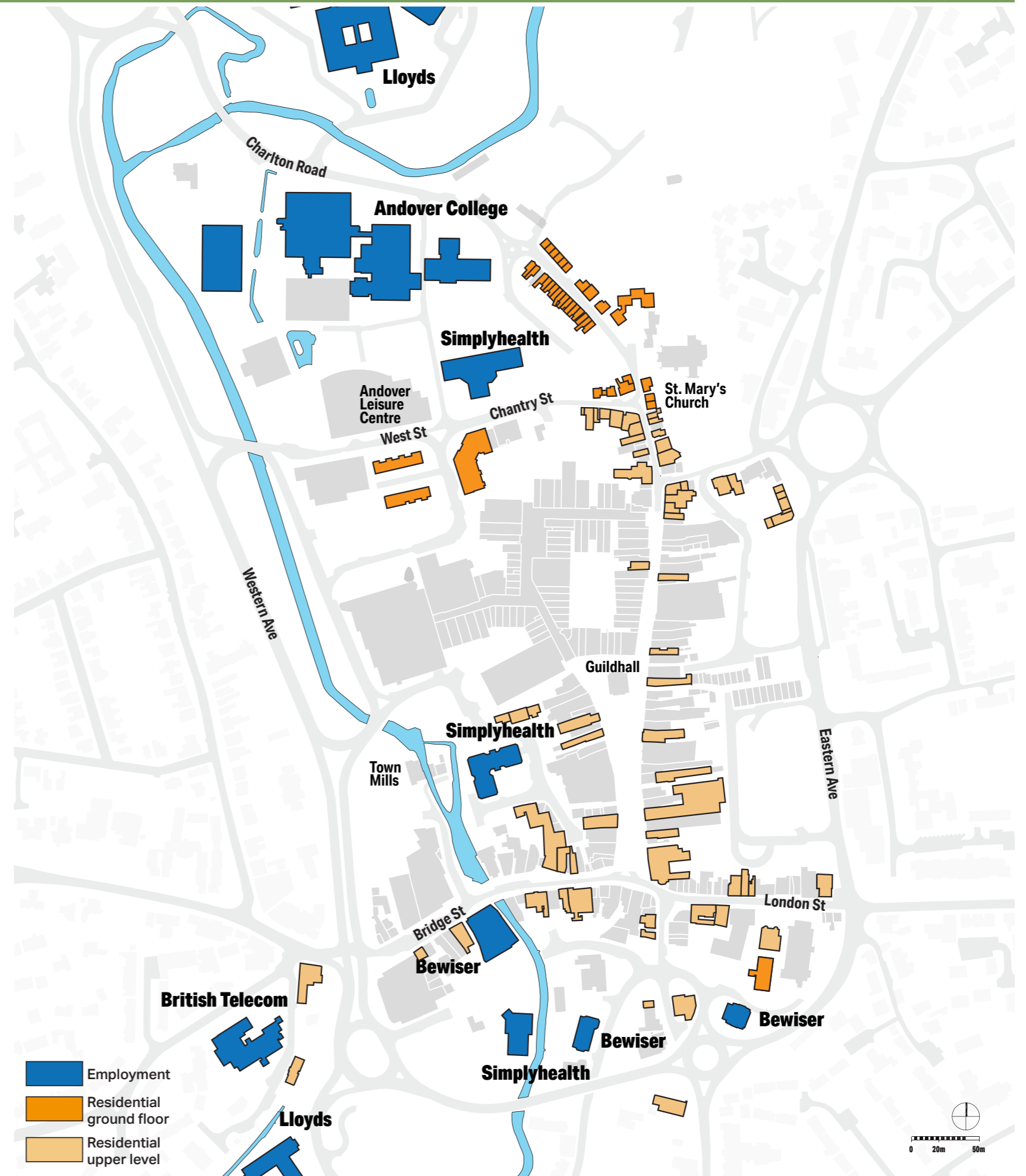
Although there is a large population within easy walking distance of the town centre, within the ring road, there is currently a limited residential market. Alongside retirement living, there has been a growth in vacant offices being converted to residential under the permitted development rules. This has apparently created problems with access and refuse collection.

There is a desire for more town centre living, particularly from younger people who responded to the survey. The key opportunities within the town centre are considered to be:

- Creating an attractive river frontage
- Exploiting views to the surrounding countryside
- Providing housing for younger people, potentially with limited on-site parking
- Integrating with the existing residential communities to the east of the town centre.

### Key messages:

- A large number of people live and work within potentially easy walking distance of the town centre. This is an opportunity for Andover.
- Limited number of people living within the town centre, particularly in the Chantry Centre, contributes to Andover feeling 'closed' and uninviting in the evenings.



# Key community 'assets'

## Lights Theatre

The Lights theatre's main auditorium has capacity for 249 seats. Ticket sales highlight that this could be increased to accommodate more people. A new venue could not only provide for a greater capacity but also address other current issues such as a lack of accessible seating and technical issues which prevent them from diversifying their performance offer.

Facilities such as the meeting rooms, dance studios and cafe are well used throughout the day with the latter providing a good meeting space for many community organisations and a good revenue stream for the Theatre. They would like to maintain a community function in the future. The retention/expansion of flexible spaces to accommodate varying community group's needs would be useful.

Without visible road frontage and good connections to the town centre the theatre lacks a physical prominence in their current location and feels isolated. The theatre is keen to have a stronger relationship with local bars and restaurants to help support and strengthen the evening economy but this is constrained by their separation and the perceived distance from the town centre.

The feasibility report drafted by RPT consulting identifies the potential for Andover to support a larger theatre and supports the relocation of the theatre to a more central location. There is opportunity for the Lights to act as much more than a theatre and become a cultural venue for Andover.

## Andover Leisure Centre

The new Leisure Centre has been completed during the course of this study and has proved very popular. It attracts a large number of visitors into the town centre during the day and early evening. Consideration needs to be given to how more of these visitors can be encouraged to visit the town centre by improving the links between the Leisure Centre and the High Street/Chantry Centre.

The reopening of the Magistrate's Court car park has reduced pressure for parking spaces close to the Leisure Centre. Improving links to the Chantry Centre car park or Shepherds Spring Lane would also help. The new public space has also provided an opportunity to consider opportunities for outdoor exercise and events.

## St. Mary's Church

St. Mary's Church, Chapel Arts Centre and the Andover Museum provide a cluster of important cultural community facilities in this part of the town centre. St. Mary's have been working with architects to reorder the internal layout of the church.

As part of these proposals they are keen to review all of their site ownership to understand how they can both create better links with the wider community and utilise their space for events and functions that bring together the residents of Andover.

## The Guildhall

The Guildhall was identified as one of the town's more important assets, but there was a clear difference of opinion across age groups. The student workshop highlighted that younger people felt no particular connection with the building or that area of the town. They would like to see it used more 'inclusively' for a wider variety of events. This was a view shared by most respondents, who considered the Guildhall to be underutilised.

## Key messages:

- **Local residents value the town's heritage and its community facilities.**
- **The survey of residents showed a very strong desire (across all ages) to create a 'social and inclusive' town centre.**

pedestrianised high street

**waitrose**

CHAPEL ARTS

historic architecture

riverside bowl

LA DI DA

St Mary's Church

**GUILDHALL**

Wetherspoons' roof terrace

TAMA CHULO

**MOOCH**

leisure centre

**LIGHTS THEATRE**

**MUSEUM**

blue onion

chalkies

captains

LIBRARY

cinema

**RIVER**

waterstones

**TOWN MILLS**

**pizza express**

coffee #1

THE ROCKHOUSE

**VIGO PARK**

andover tap

**MARKETS**

ZINTINO

TWENTY5

CHARITY SHOPS

**ANTON**

# Green Space & River Anton

The survey results and analysis highlighted the importance of the River Anton to the identity of the town, and the underutilised nature of this important asset.

Town Mills was highlighted as one of the key attractions in the town centre. It is one of the few places where access is possible to the river edge and a strategy is in place to enhance this area of the town.

South of Town Mills, between Bridge Street and the cinema, the river is visible but the route is often unattractive. Many buildings turn their backs to the river, or have unattractive service yards and car parks on show.

Elsewhere, the analysis highlighted the lack of access to the river, and lack of visibility of the river, as it runs through the town centre. Many were unaware of its presence hidden by the western gyratory as illustrated in the photographs.

This stretch of the river, between Town Mills and Andover College, was identified as the priority for improvement, building on the support for the Town Mills improvements.

The survey also highlighted the lack of accessible green space in the town centre. Vigo Park is the most popular area but residents felt it was isolated from the town centre. Increasing the amount of green space in the town centre was seen as a priority in the survey responses.



The large roundabout separating Vigo Park from the town centre



The River Anton is hidden by the Western Avenue Gyratory



Town Mills is one of the few areas where the river is visible and accessible

## Key messages:

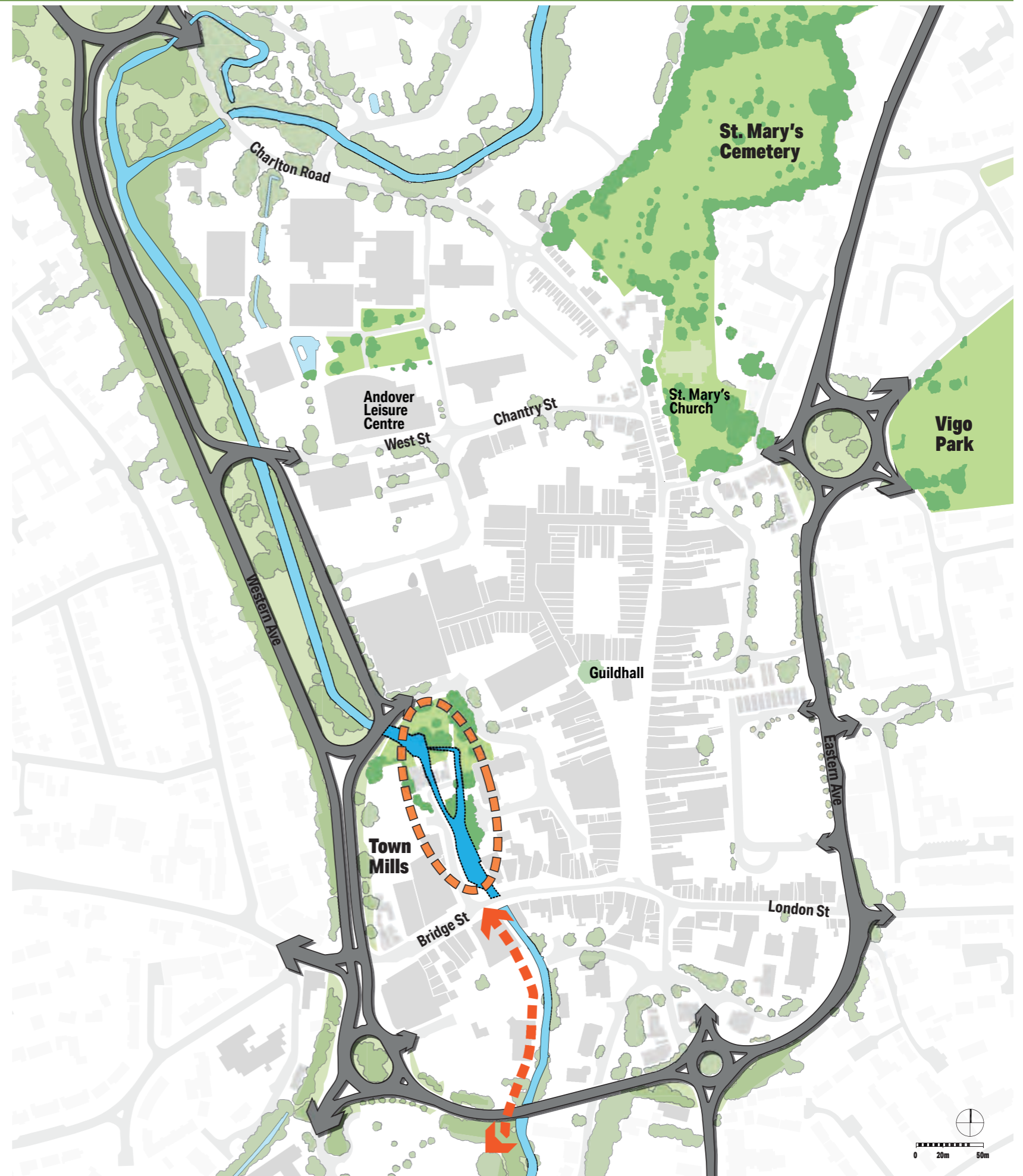
- The town centre lacks usable green space.
- Vigo Park and St. Mary's Cemetery key green spaces for residents but they do not feel connected to the town centre.
- The River Anton is an underutilised asset.

## Survey Responses

**"Improve the river to give the town centre a more natural feel, improved access and more places to sit and relax."**

**"Make the river the core of any redevelopment so that it informs subsequent town centre redevelopment."**

**"It would be nice to have a dedicated area that you can paddle in the river with children and have a nice picnic area nearby."**





# Retail & Leisure

Andover town centre has a good mix of uses, however recently the town has lost some key retailers including M&S. It is losing trade to Basingstoke, Winchester and Salisbury as well as to retail parks and the internet. The survey responses show that people visit the town centre regularly and for a variety of reasons. This is a key strength.

The most successful parts of the town centre are concentrated at the southern end of the High Street, Bridge Street and London Road. There is a good mix of independent retailers and smaller unit sizes alongside national retailers.

Within the Chantry Centre the mix of uses is reduced. There is a much greater proportion of A1 retail uses and fewer leisure and service uses. There is also a greater concentration of vacant units, particularly on the northern edge of the Chantry Centre, and this appears to have been the case since at least 2017.

Redevelopment of the Chantry Centre should therefore seek to address this weakness and accommodate a wider variety of ground floor uses.

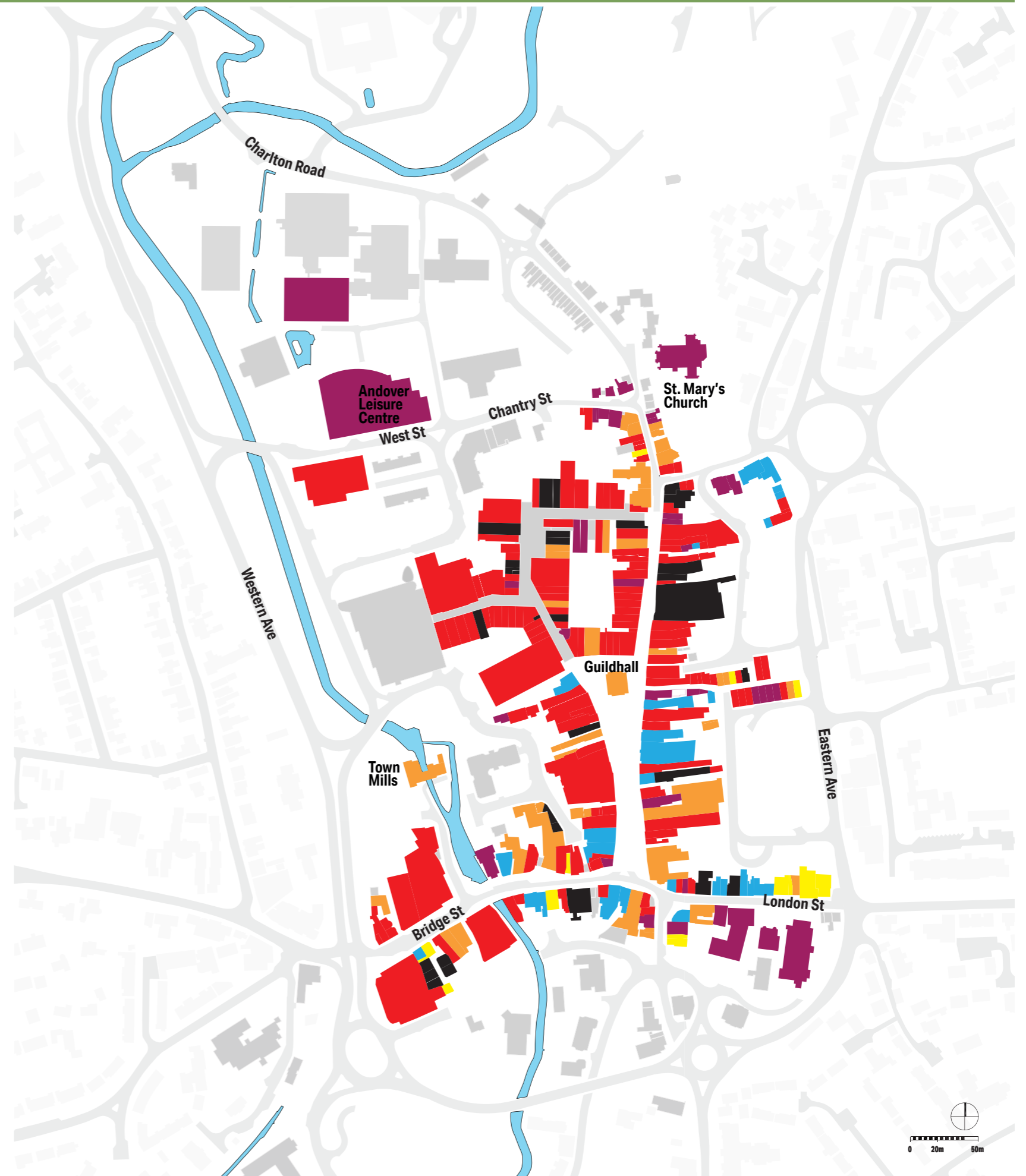


## Key messages:

- Variety and mix of uses located at lower end of High Street and Bridge Street is a strength.
- The Lights Theatre is isolated from other evening uses.
- Chantry Centre is dominated by a 'singular' type of use, this is a weakness and should be addressed.
- Vacancies are concentrated in the northern part of the town centre



Land uses based on survey in January 2020

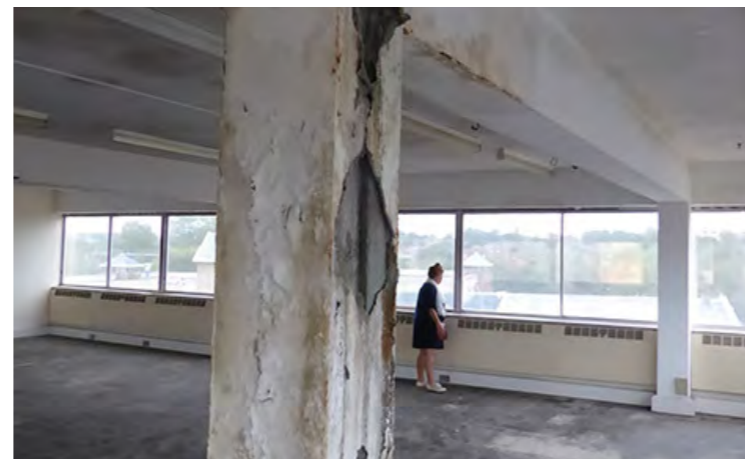
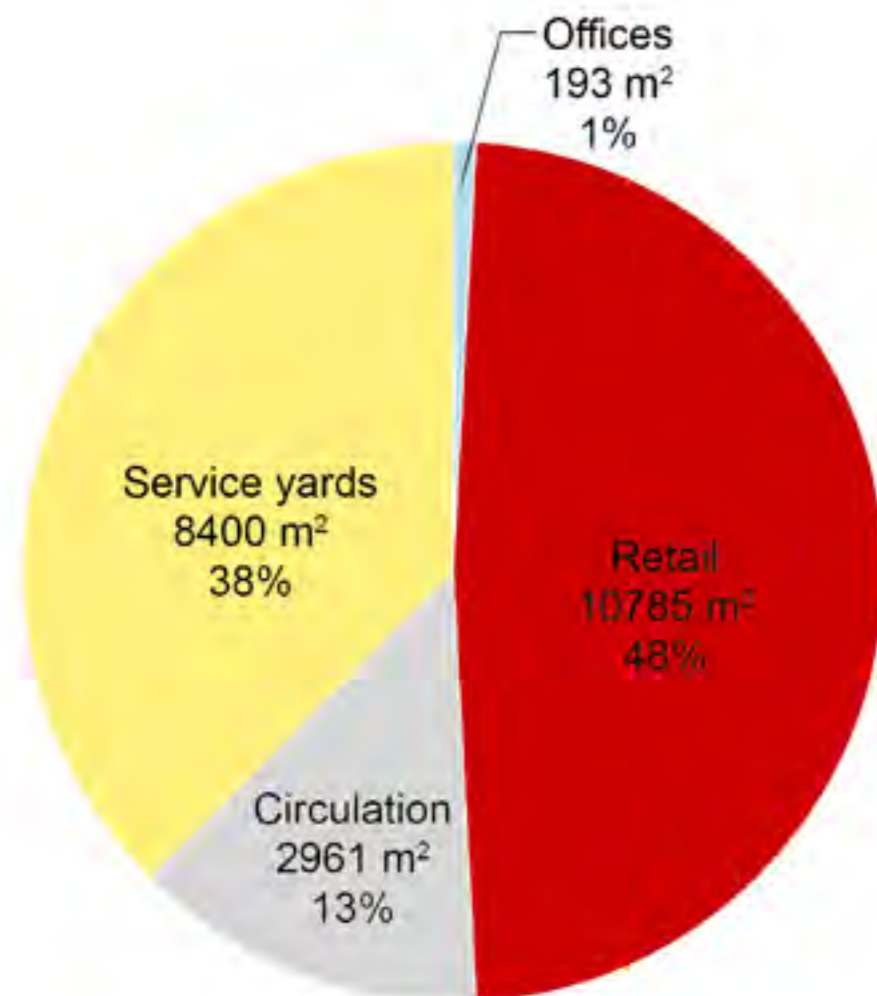


# The Chantry Centre

The Chantry Centre has a number of important tenants, including Waitrose. It is located next to the refurbished bus station and has a large multi-storey car park. It is however a dated shopping centre, and its internal shopping environment is in need of improvement. Although there is office space above the shopping centre it is empty and unsuitable for modern occupiers. The form and structure of the centre creates a barrier to pedestrian movement between key destinations.

The Chantry Centre is particularly inefficient in its layout. Around 50% of the area is taken up by service yards and circulation. The service yards are also very visually prominent for visitors arriving in the town centre on foot or by car.

Redevelopment of the centre should therefore address this and reduce the dominance of the large service yards. It should also increase the variety of uses at upper floors, to bring more life and activity to the town centre during the day, at weekends and in the evening.



Poor quality office space above the centre



The main entrance to the market square and Guildhall

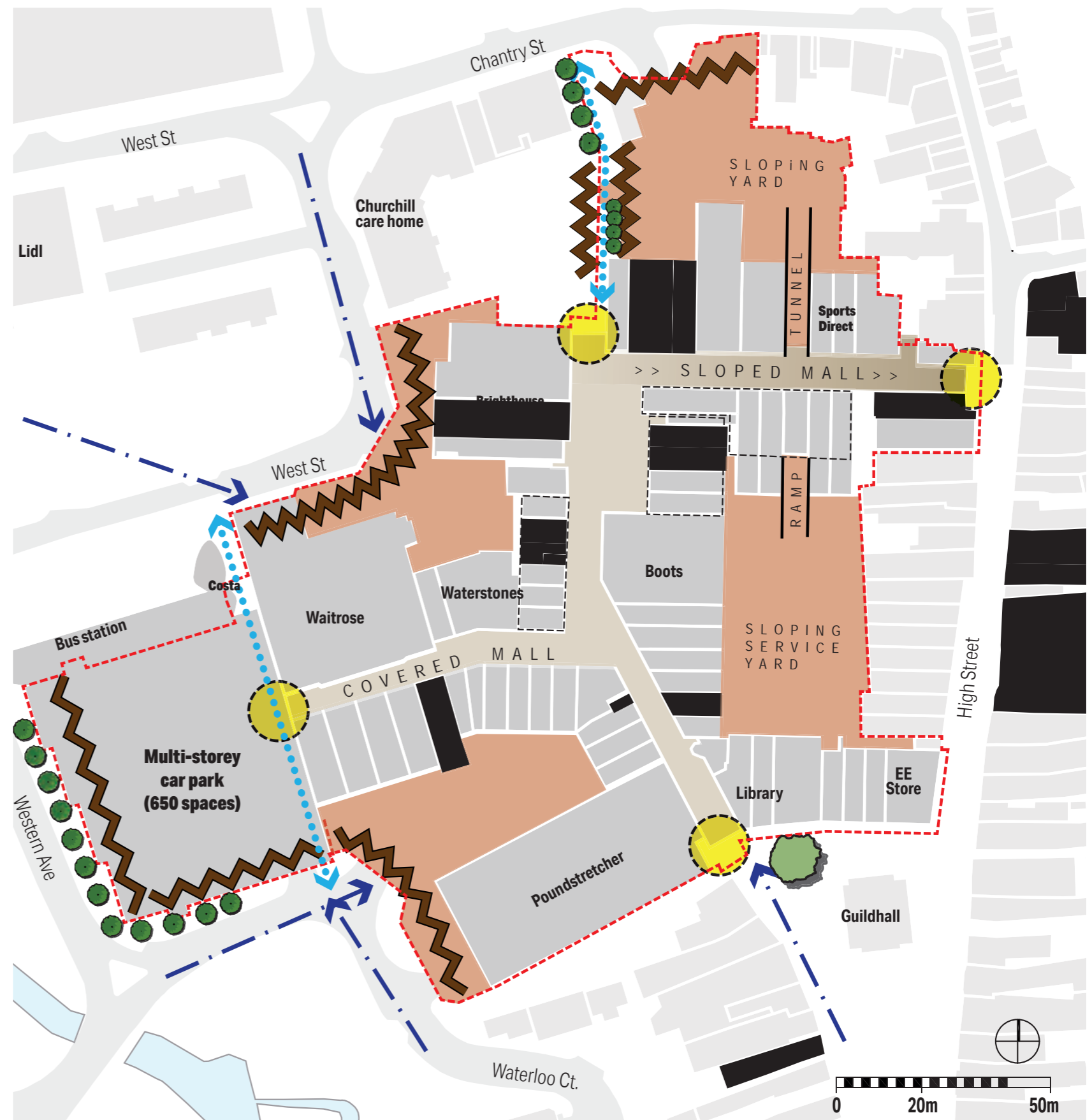


Service yards dominate key approaches to the centre



Covered roof is very low to mall floor, heavy and outdated in appearance

- Boundary of Chantry Centre ownership (main shopping area excluding multi-storey car park 22,339m<sup>2</sup>)
- Retail (+ office access) including vacant units 10,785 m<sup>2</sup> (193m<sup>2</sup>)(49%)
- Vacant shops
- Service yards 8,400 m<sup>2</sup> (38%)
- Circulation 2,961m<sup>2</sup> (13%)
- Position of upper level empty offices
- ➔ Primary views to centre from public realm
- Poor quality edges and backs
- Shopping centre access points
- ⤵ Pedestrian routes



Chantry Centre existing issues plan

# Town Centre Character

Listed buildings are focused on the High Street but there are important buildings on Bridge Street, London Street, and East Street as well. The pedestrianised High Street and lanes are a key characteristic of Andover and a much-loved asset.

At the northern end of the High Street there is an important cluster of buildings around the Church and Newbury Street. At the southern end of the High Street, there is an important cluster with Bridge Street and London Street, with the Guildhall a prominent feature. The church is also prominent in certain views from this area.

Larger more modern interventions are positioned west of the High Street and are characterised primarily as standalone buildings, larger in scale and height. They have created large impenetrable blocks.

Redevelopment provides an opportunity to reinstate some of the principles of Andover's historic street pattern.

Some of the properties within the Chantry Centre are identified within the Conservation Area (and described as follows):

*"The small group of properties forming the southern part of Chantry Way are unexceptional in themselves but provide an important backcloth to the Guildhall. Visually they are associated with the High Street and by including them in the conservation area, the Council hopes to ensure that any changes to their appearance are sympathetic to their surroundings." [Source](#)*

Any redevelopment will therefore need to be sensitive to this and should positively enhance the setting of the Guildhall.

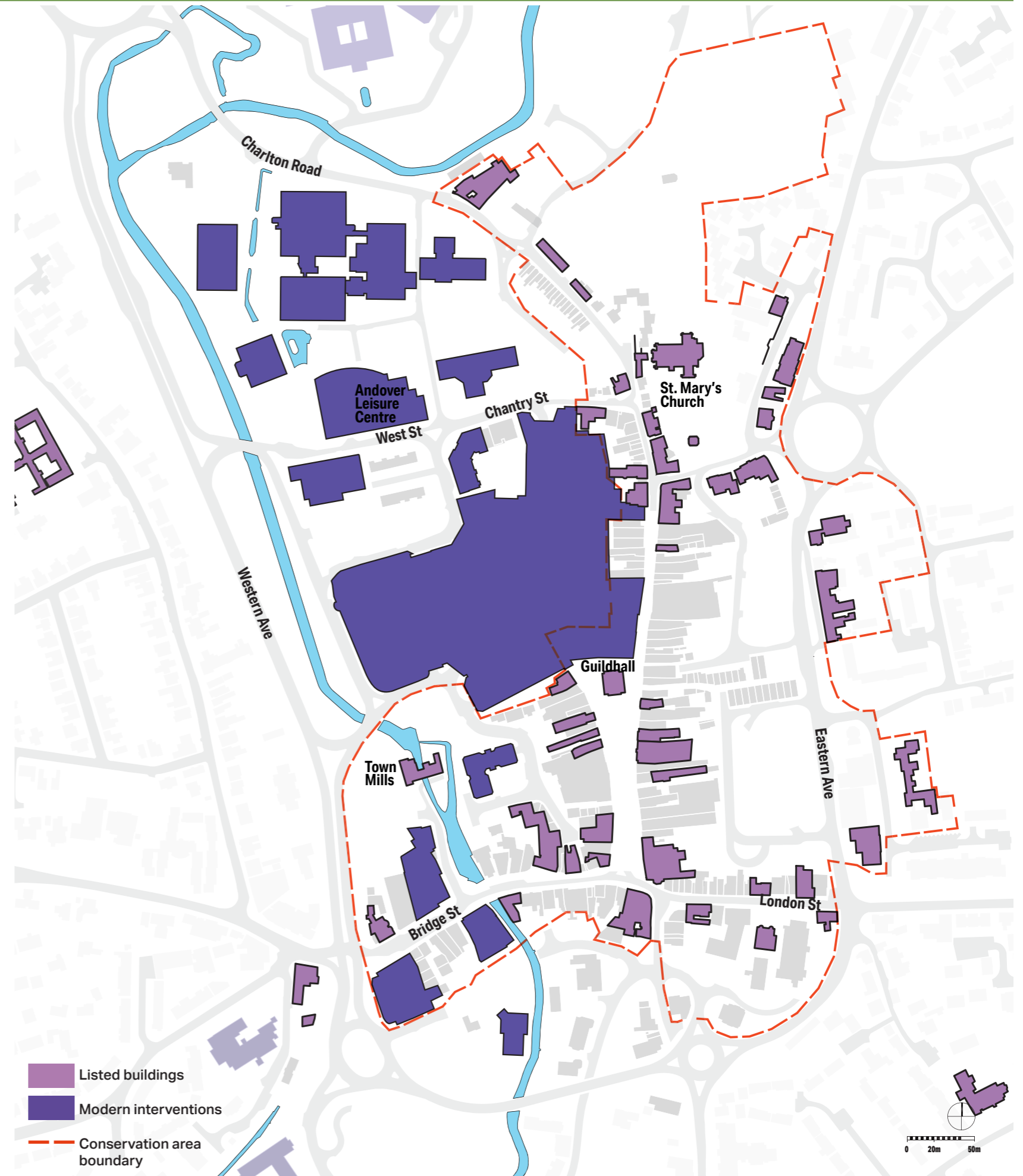


## Key messages:

- Modern interventions are concentrated west of the High Street, and have undermined the historic connections and qualities of the town centre.
- Redevelopment provides an opportunity to enhance the settings of key buildings and the connections between them.



1846-1899 street network



Town centre character

# Scale

The difference in character across the town is reflected in a difference in scale of building.

The scale of building in the central core of the town reflects the qualities of the historic High Street. Our analysis indicates there is an area (in yellow) where any new development will need to be sensitive in scale, reflecting the predominantly 2-3 storey nature of buildings in this part of the town centre.

Particular focal points are identified around St Mary's Church, Guildhall and Town Mills. Views to these feature buildings, and the sensitivity of their immediate setting, need to be protected and enhanced.

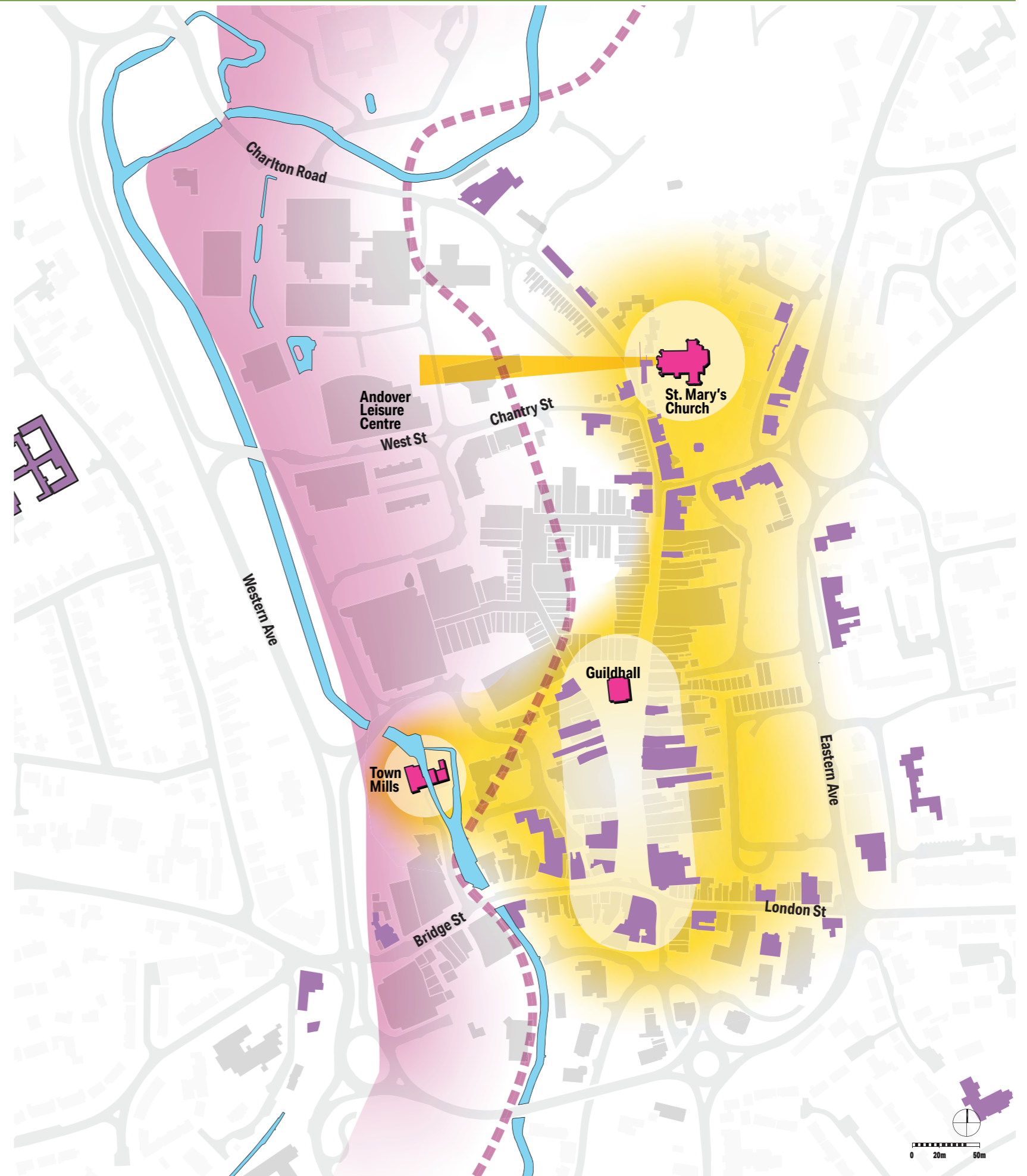
Any development east of the High Street will therefore need to be more residential in scale. West of the High Street there is more opportunity for an increased scale and density of development. Developments of 4-5 storeys are likely to be appropriate, with occasional opportunities for taller buildings subject to consideration of key view corridors.

The increased height will allow new office and residential buildings to take advantage of attractive views to the surrounding Hampshire countryside. It is essential however, that development provides a variety of heights even within blocks to replicate the variety of heights found within the Conservation Area to create an interesting roofline and avoid replicating the 'monolithic' forms of development which create barriers to movement across the town centre.



## Key messages:

- Difference in character east and west of High Street.
- Opportunity for tall buildings taking advantage of views to Ladies Walk / green hills on western edge.
- Responses east of High Street need to be more sympathetic of historic character, lower in scale and finer in grain.
- Need to consider setting of the Guildhall, Town Mills and views to the Church.



Town centre scale



# Connections

The analysis has shown the relative isolation of key facilities such as the Leisure Centre and Lights Theatre and key employers such as Lloyds, Andover College and Simplyhealth from the town centre.

There are four key 'civic' focal points which are within easy walking distance of each other:

- St Mary's Church & Museum
- Guildhall/High Street
- Town Mills
- Leisure Centre/College/Lights Theatre.

These have the potential to create a strong town centre 'pedestrian circuit'. The biggest barrier to creating these connections is the scale and impermeability of the Chantry Centre and the quality of the routes which do exist.

This has the effect of increasing the perceived distance between these locations, reduces the likelihood of people walking to the town centre from the College or Leisure Centre, and reduces the likelihood of town centre visitors exploring as far as the Lights Theatre, the Church and the Museum.

## Survey Response

**"I would want to link the church more effectively into the town centre."**

**"Redevelop the footpaths / back alley routes that approach the town from all areas (on just focusing on the car routes)."**

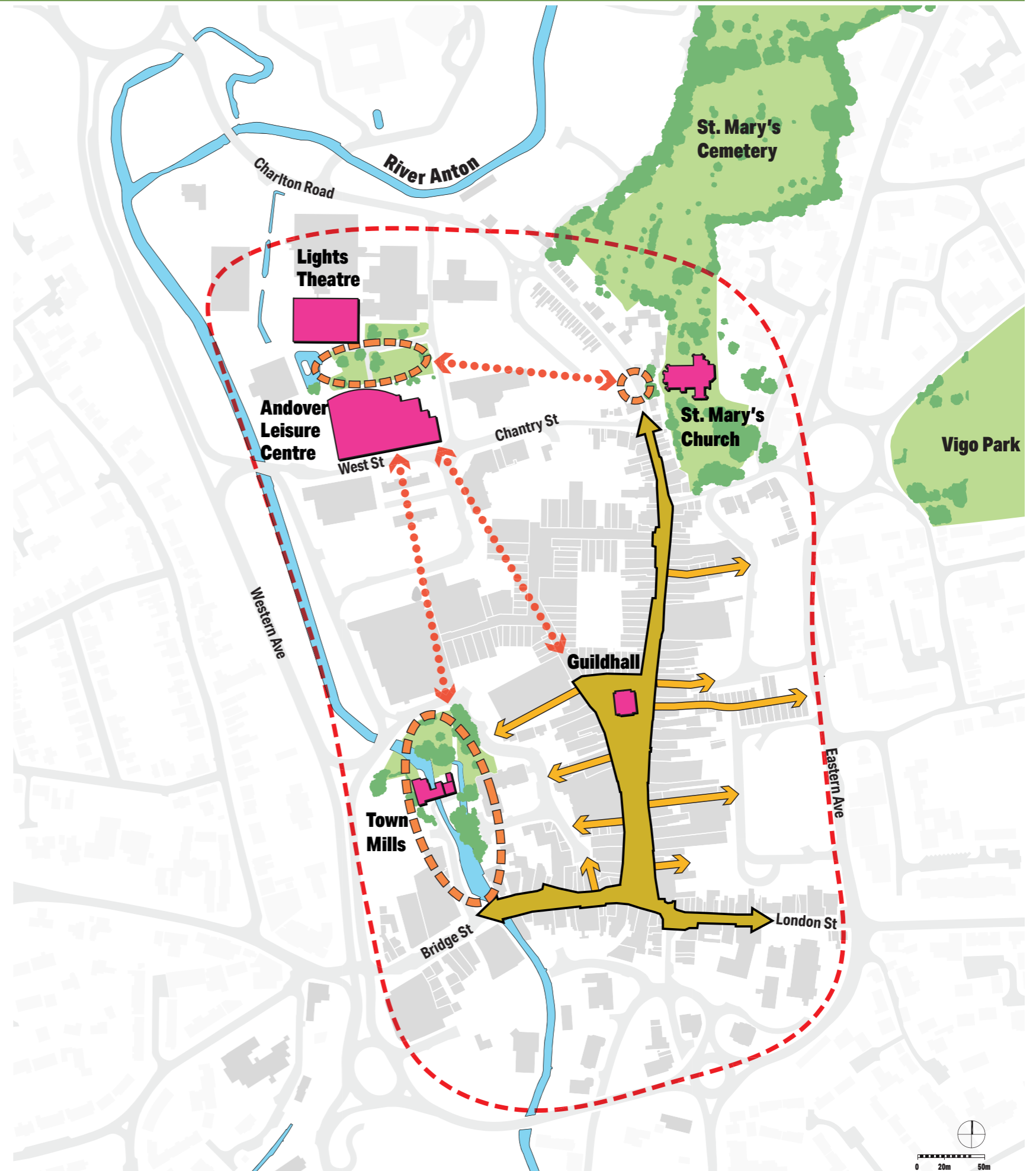
**"Improving the experience of getting into town would help, i.e. there are large roads that surround the centre and make walking a less desirable choice."**

**"At the moment, it feels very disjointed, take away the 'us and them' feeling between the two main shopping areas."**



## Key messages:

- Key assets lack connection making uses feel more distant and disconnected despite compact nature of Andover town centre need to recreate historic 'loop'.
- Modern Chantry Centre prevents creation of meaningful connections to civic uses located on the northern fringe of the town centre and can make uses feel much more isolated and disconnected.
- Lanes are often easy to miss and often don't feel like they connect to additional uses or spaces. Need to create stronger East - West connections.



Town centre connections

# Ring Road

Surveys show that traffic flows on Eastern and Western Avenues are relatively low (around 12,000 vehicles per day) but the number of lanes, width of the carriageway and size of the roundabouts encourages high speeds and makes crossing difficult for pedestrians and cyclists.

It has been agreed in principle with the County Council that there is potential to reduce the scale of the Ring Road without adversely affecting traffic capacity. This would provide the opportunity to improve facilities and crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. It would also free up land for development or for public open space.

There are three key areas where the scale of the Ring Road could be reduced:

## **Western Avenue gyratory**

Reducing the scale of the gyratory could transform the River Anton, creating the opportunity for a riverside walk and cycle route. It would improve arrival into the town centre from the rail station and enable the underpass to be removed. It would create opportunities for new shops, cafés, hotel, offices or homes fronting the river.

## **Eastern Avenue/Vigo Park roundabout**

The scale of the roundabout is a significant barrier to pedestrians and cyclists accessing the town centre or the park. Reconfiguring the junction creates the potential for more open space at Vigo Park bringing it closer to the town centre and improving the setting of the Church.

## **Borden Gates roundabout**

Reducing the scale of this roundabout would improve connections between the cinema, Asda, car park and the town centre.



**Western Avenue Underpass / Station arrival**



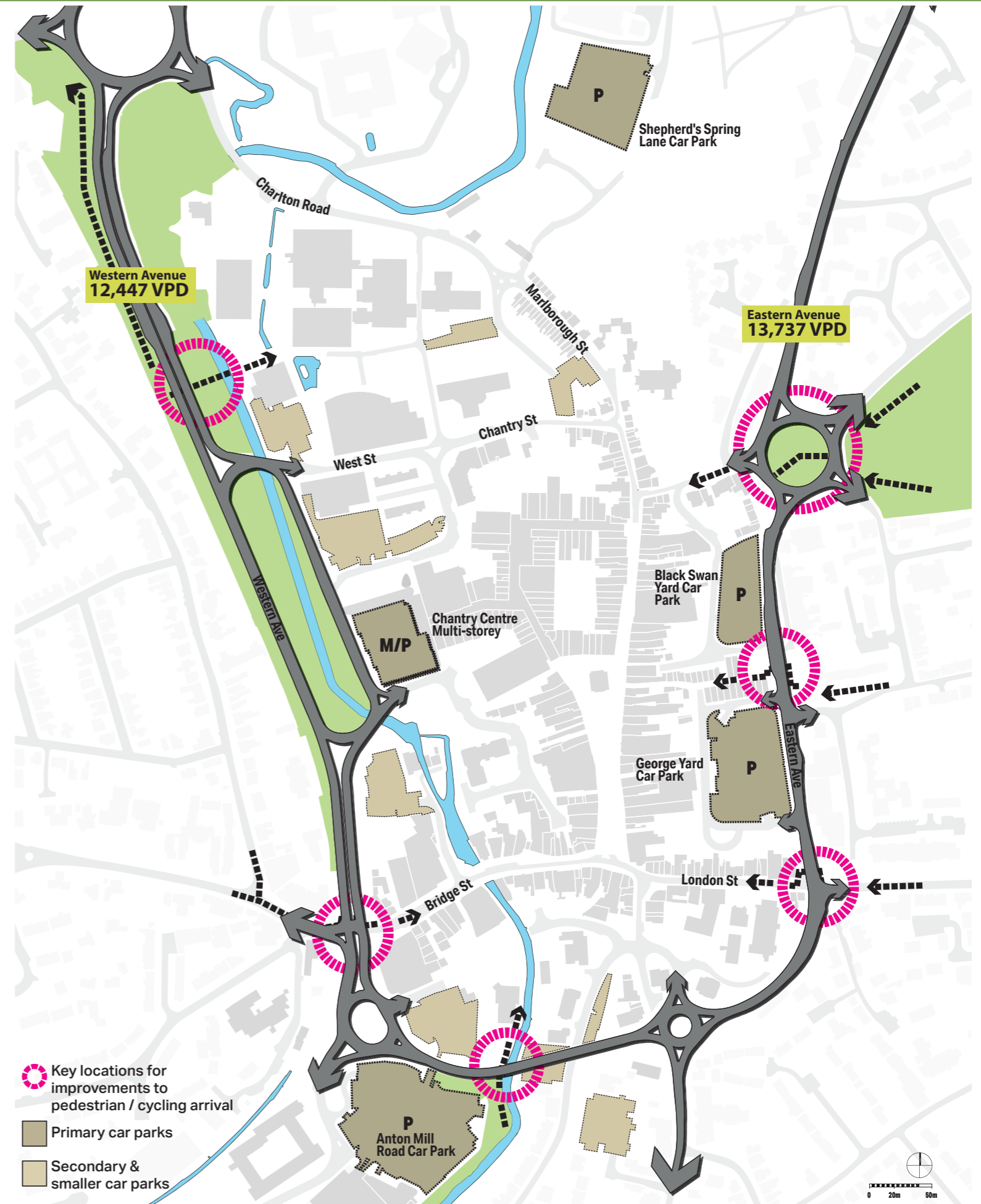
**Scale of Ring Road infrastructure**



**Crossing the roundabout at Vigo Park**

## Key messages:

- Large number of comments in the survey highlighted the scale and impact of the ring road on accessing the town centre creating poor arrival experiences for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Key opportunities to improve pedestrian and cycle crossing of the Ring Road.
- Key opportunities to 'humanise' Ring Road and change perceptions of Andover.



Ring Road as a barrier showing traffic flow data 2017 (VPD - Vehicles per day)

# Car parking

A parking study was undertaken on behalf of TVBC in 2018. The study identified more than 2,000 off-street public car parking spaces in the town centre. It stated that the quality and location of the car parks was considered to be 'very good'.

The study highlighted that the data available indicated that generally, parking demand in the town centre did not exceed 60% of available spaces. During peak times, demand did not exceed around 70% of available spaces. During the 2-year period analysed, there was an increase of over 5,000 new homes in the wider catchment area, but parking demand remained broadly constant. In other words, even during peak times, there were generally around 600 empty parking spaces available in the town centre.

This situation was also reflected in the survey results with relatively few respondents highlighting car parking capacity as an issue.

Popularity of car parks does vary, with George Yard car park consistently one of the most popular. It was noted that the Chantry Centre car park was less popular and measures have been put in place by TVBC to address this during the last year.

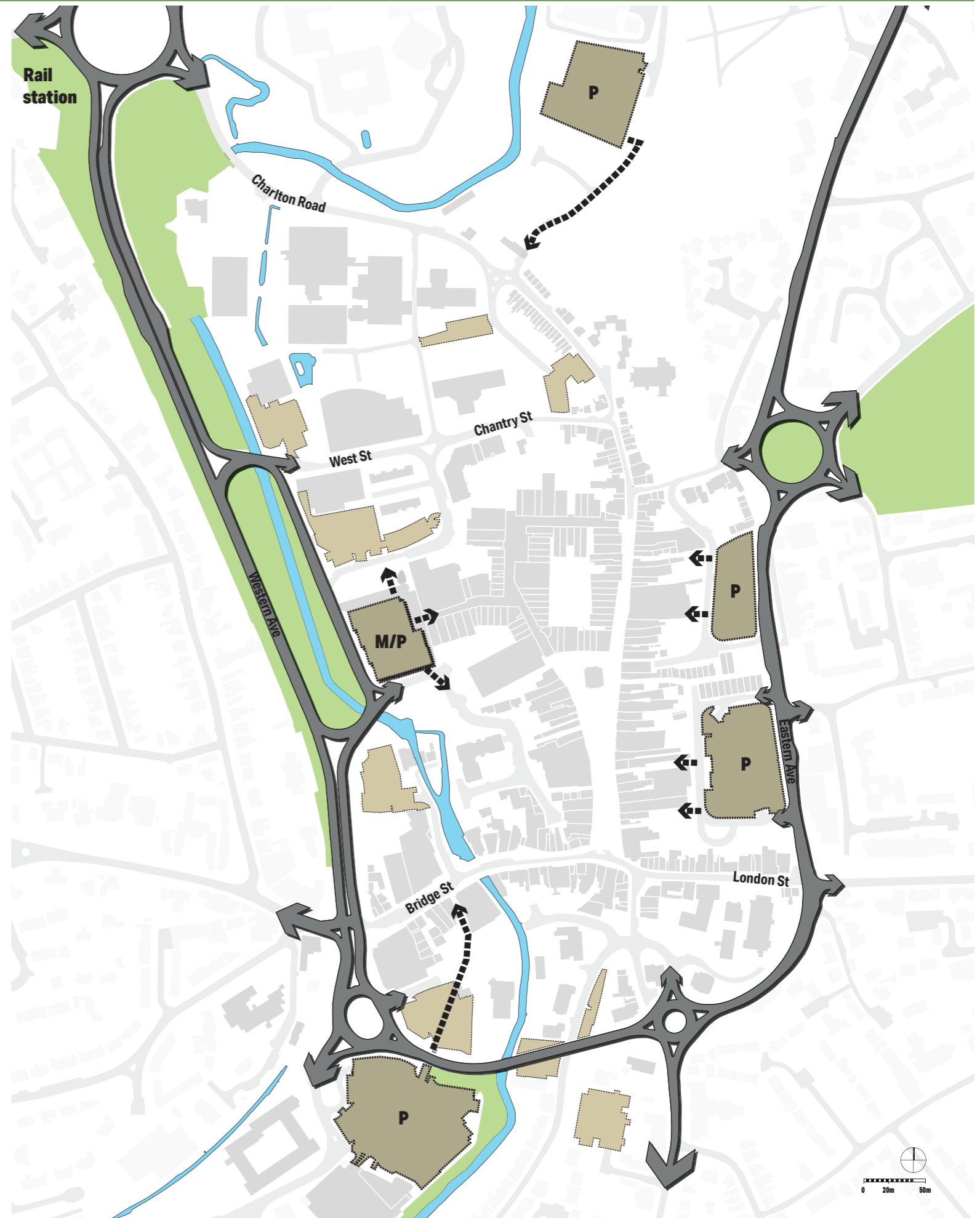
The study stated that forecasts of future demand showed that there would still be spare capacity in the town centre.

Car parking spaces for disabled drivers should be close to the town centre shops and essential facilities. The strategy for redevelopment of the Chantry Centre should seek to improve vehicular access to the town centre core, with accessible on-street car parking spaces. This would potentially allow the existing spaces to be relocated from the High Street, enhancing the historic qualities and improving its flexibility for markets and events.



## Key messages:

- The town centre has good quality and well located car parks
- Analysis of the baseline data shows that all categories of car park duration of stay have spare capacity on both a Friday and Saturday during the peak periods and will continue to do so in the future. (source TVBC 2018 study)



Town centre car parking

# Baseline Summary: issues and priorities for Andover

Nearly 2,700 people responded to the first on-line survey on the key issues facing Andover. 97% support change in the town centre. Only 11 people stated that the town was fine as it is.

The analysis has highlighted key assets in Andover town centre that provide the basis for an attractive and successful town centre. There are key town centre employers who wish to expand in the town centre, local retailers and businesses who are active and passionate about the town, and a local community that uses its town centre on a regular basis and for a variety of reasons.

Respondents value their town and its historic qualities, but they believe it is feeling 'unloved'. The analysis has identified fundamental structural problems that constrain Andover's long term potential.

These structural issues undermine the environmental and built quality of the town centre and its 'walkability'. They relate particularly to the Chantry Centre, the Ring Road and the River Anton. These issues need to be addressed for Andover to become the town centre that local residents and businesses want it to be, and believe it can be.

## Do you think Andover town centre could be better?

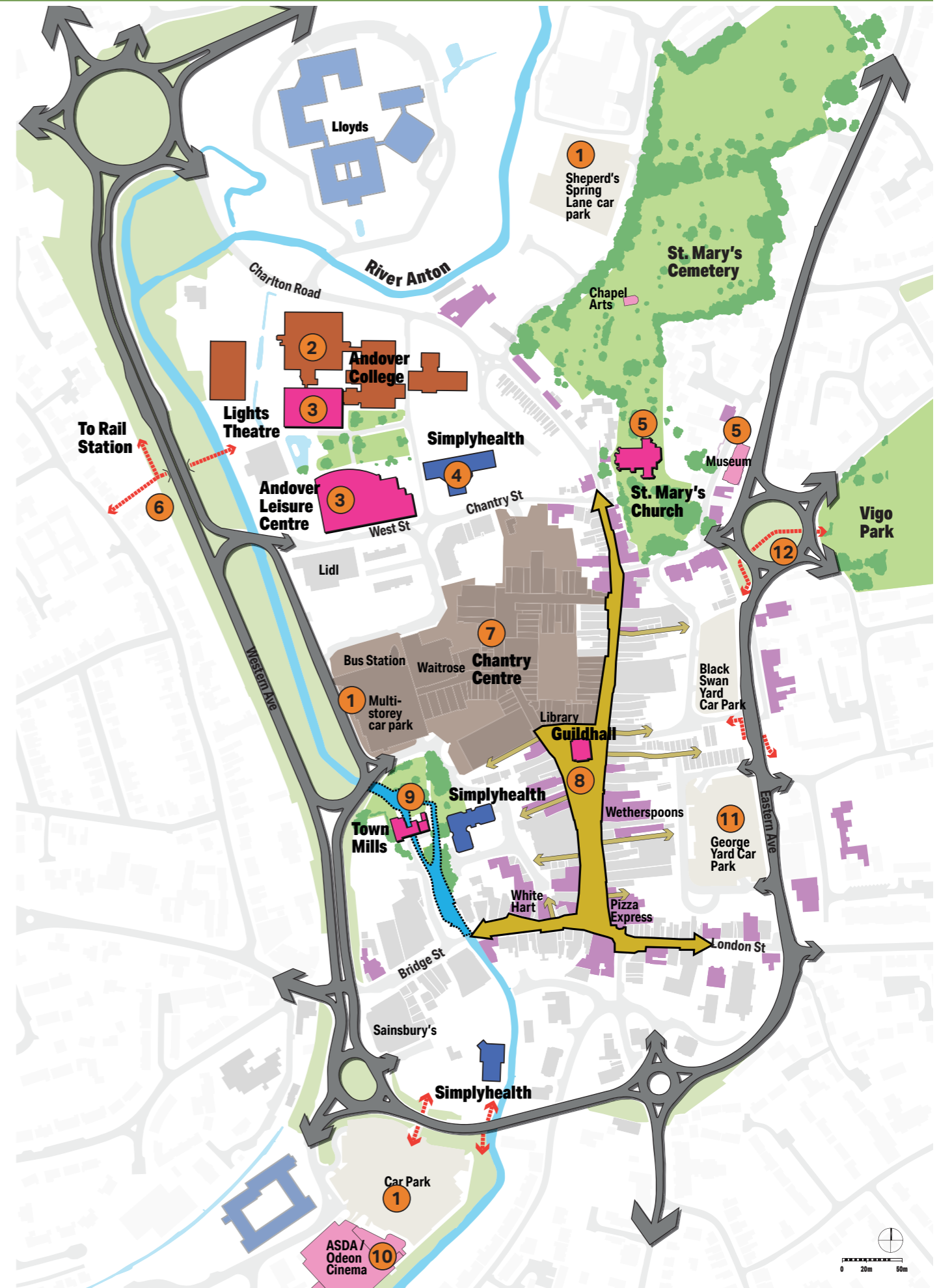


## What do you think Andover town centre needs to make it a better place for everyone to enjoy in the future?



- 1 Most town centre car parks always have spare spaces
- 2 Andover College would like to modernise its campus.
- 3 The Lights Theatre and Leisure Centre can feel isolated from the cafés and restaurants in the town centre and from its car parks.
- 4 Simplyhealth would like to consolidate their three Andover offices into one location.
- 5 St Mary's Church and the Museum are important assets but could be better connected to the rest of the town.
- 6 Western Avenue gyratory is a barrier to pedestrians and cyclists, particularly from the rail station.
- 7 The Chantry Centre is owned by the Council and they intend to redevelop it in phases. It creates a large barrier to pedestrian movement across the town centre.
- 8 The Guildhall is an important asset but many feel it is underutilised.
- 9 Improvements are being made to Town Mills, but most areas of the River Anton remain inaccessible to the public.
- 10 Asda and the cinema are important destinations but routes to the town centre could be improved
- 11 George Yard is the most popular town centre car park.
- 12 Eastern Avenue is a barrier to pedestrians and cyclists, particularly between Vigo Park and the town centre.

- Key town centre assets
- Additional town centre assets
- Listed buildings
- Location of pedestrian underpasses



Key issues & priorities