

Andover Town Centre Masterplan

Final Report

September 2020



This document sets out a range of transformative projects for Andover town centre, including opening up the River Anton.



Contents

1. Executive Summary

Outlines the inclusive design and engagement process, the issues and opportunities that have informed the study and Vision for the future.

2. Baseline Assessment

Describes how Andover operates as a town centre and our analysis of its historic, social, economic, environmental and built context, as well as its movement patterns.

3. Spatial Framework

Presents the overarching spatial strategy that underpins the proposals, including movement strategy, approach to the Ring Road and parking, and public realm strategy.

4. Area Masterplans

Presents the illustrative masterplans for the four priority areas highlighted in the Spatial Framework, the Chantry Centre, the Wellbeing Quarter, Western Avenue/River Corridor and Eastern Avenue/Vigo Park.

5. Action Plan

Outlines the key steps needed to progress delivery of the Area Masterplans and the measures needed to be undertaken in the meantime to enhance the town centre.

This study has been commissioned by
Test Valley Borough Council



The study has been led jointly by
HemingwayDesign and NEW masterplanning.

HEMINGWAYDESIGN **NEW** masterplanning

Specialist input has been provided by:

Transport and Movement: **Andrew Cameron Associates**

Cost consultancy: **Currie & Brown**

Commercial and delivery: **Tulley Bunting and Newsteer**

A new era for Andover

This masterplan marks the beginning of what is set to be one of the most exciting moments in Andover's history – certainly in living memory.

It was a bold move to purchase the Chantry Centre in 2019 to facilitate the transformation of the town centre as we know it. And although back then I had some big ideas to redevelop the Chantry Centre, create fantastic public realm and green the town centre, this masterplan has surpassed those expectations and seeing it reflected in the pages of this document is a defining moment.

The world has changed dramatically over the past few months. But town centres were changing long before Covid-19 spread its shadow across the globe. In fact, the Panorama programme pre-lockdown summed up the changing nature of town centres in one simple statistic, that high streets up and down the country have lost 25 per cent of their retail units over the last decade. Thanks to the growth of out of town shopping and the continued sophistication of the internet.

Andover, the town I have spent my life calling home, has felt the full force of that change in people's shopping habits. It is a town filled with amazing people and fantastic local businesses but I have always thought it had so much more to give. So much more potential. And I'm thrilled that our colleagues at HemingwayDesign and NEW masterplanning share that view.

Our goal, therefore, is to embrace the changing nature of town centres. Create a place for people to visit, work, live and spend time with their family, friends and colleagues, as well as indulge in some good old-fashioned retail therapy. That is what has guided the development of this masterplan.

This document signifies a new era for Andover. One of ambition, hope and prosperity. We have before us a once in a generation opportunity to revitalise our town and we will grab it with both hands.

My fellow councillors and I are determined to create a town that people can be proud of. A town that draws people in to live, relax and shop here, and a town for businesses to thrive and grow.

This year has been one of the most difficult many of us have faced. But I believe regeneration is key to recovery and so as we begin to move forward, the transformation of the town centre will be our primary focus. From here we plan to identify a developer partner to build our vision and over the coming years we will create an Andover for the future.

Thank you so much to everyone who has helped to shape this new vision, from the teams at HemingwayDesign and NEW masterplanning, to all those who took the time to respond to the consultations.

I am incredibly proud to present you with a glimpse of a new era for Andover.

**Foreword by
Cllr Phil North**

Executive Summary

From our first visit to Andover we knew we wanted to be the team to start the ball rolling and create a vision and masterplan which will enable the town to embrace the future positively. We knew we wanted to be the winning team because of one thing, potential. Potential is an asset that is invaluable, and to us Andover town centre's potential was clear and apparent.

Town centres have not always been 'temples to shopping'. This will be seen as a late 20th century 'blip', a phenomenon that temporarily took us away from their real purpose of people getting together and enjoying themselves, working and living sustainably. The future of our town centres lies with independent retail, leisure, food & beverage; with arts, public services, education and community facilities; with homes and workspace; with green spaces and event spaces. Andover has the potential to deliver on all of these.

Its compact layout, historic streets, well-proportioned spaces and relatively small shops are perfectly suited to the local shops, events and 'curated' markets that society is rediscovering. It has a wonderful, but hidden, natural environment in the River Anton. It has distinctive, but underutilised, heritage in St Mary's Church, High Street, Guildhall and Town Mills. It has high quality employers committed to Andover. And it has a proactive Council already investing in community facilities, cultural facilities and the public realm.

And on that first site visit we were also excited at the opportunities for change. And although the impact of the Covid-19 crisis has made the need for change more urgent we believe it has accelerated the pace of societal and economic change rather than fundamentally altered the direction of travel for Andover.

Fortunately there is strong support for change across the town. Over 3,000 people have given us their views on the draft proposals, with overwhelming support for the vision. Test Valley Borough Council has demonstrated its commitment through the purchase of the under performing Chantry Centre with the intention of delivering transformational change. Hampshire County Council is supportive of measures to make the Ring Road more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists and to open up the River Anton. And initial work with specialist developers suggests that there will be interest in working with the Council to deliver that vision.

There is a lot more work to be done. The vision includes major infrastructure and development projects that will take time and resources to deliver. In the meantime, Andover cannot afford to stand still and wait. It must continue to support the expansion of businesses in the town centre, and other organisations such as Andover College, Lights Theatre and St Mary's Church. It must continue to support the improvement of its community facilities and green spaces. It must create pop up shops for vacant units and support its local retailers with events and markets that "belong" to Andover. And it must continue to involve its local residents in that process.

So if you have attended the events, viewed the proposals and given us your comments we are grateful for your contribution and we hope that this document reflects your input. We hope you agree that the vision presented here will help Andover begin its journey towards a sustainable, prosperous and deliverable future. And we hope you will continue to engage in the process to help deliver that future.

Need for change

Many of Britain's town centres continue to witness significant economic, social and physical upheaval, resulting from evolving consumer habits.

Over the past few years, in most English towns the number of empty shops has increased and around 60% of existing empty shops have remained vacant during this time. This situation has been made more urgent by the social and economic impact of Covid 19.

Many towns in the UK, including Andover, also have an ageing population. On top of this, one million young people are said to have moved out of smaller towns and communities over the past 30 years. Like many market towns, Andover needs to attract a younger dynamic demographic, and provide them with reasons to live, work and socialise in the town.

Some towns are bucking this trend and remain places where people are seeking to fashion alternative futures and test different social and economic models. There is growing interest in 'independent' towns, that reject the identikit High Street and are setting a new trend for buying locally, affordably and sustainably. Towns such as Ludlow, Frome and Hebden Bridge that recognise the importance of a strong, lasting community spirit and attract creative pioneers looking for more space and time to think.

The changes in people's living, working, shopping and socialising preferences are being accelerated by Covid 19. Town centres such as Andover need to identify the opportunities that this could bring for housing, workspace and community facilities to help replace the long term decline in retail floorspace.



From the survey results and workshop findings, it is clear that respondents feel that Andover town centre, with its rich history and proximity to the River Anton is feeling unloved. It is very positive that the overwhelming majority of residents support change in the town centre. Out of the 2,587 respondents, only 11 people wanted the town to stay as it is.

Andover town centre loses significant amounts of expenditure from its local catchment to larger centres such as Basingstoke and to historic centres such as Winchester and Salisbury. In common with most town centres, Andover loses a significant amount of expenditure to the internet. Andover town centre does however lose significantly more expenditure than most centres to retail parks within the town.

There is a clear need for Andover to find its own way to 'compete' with these centres. The town centre has some interesting independent shops and attractive streets, but has been over reliant on large traders. Demand from national retailers is unlikely to return and Andover needs to focus on supporting and growing its local, independent businesses.

Andover has a relatively limited evening economy and needs to feel more welcoming after dark. More people living and working in the town centre would help to address this. The Chantry Centre does little to bring life to the town after shops close, and its scale and form also makes it a barrier to movement across the town centre, particularly in the evening. The Lights and Leisure Centre are excellent facilities but can feel isolated from the town centre's cafés and restaurants.



Think about Andover town centre.

What do you associate with the town centre?

Tell us the first three things that spring to mind.

Desire for change

Between July 2019 and June 2020, a series of events, workshops, walkabouts, meetings and surveys were held which have helped shape the proposals for Andover town centre.

Visioning Events

Over the summer, the team attended Andover's Carnival and Fun Fridays. Residents and visitors of all ages suggested what they thought would make the town a better place to live, work and visit.

In September, the team hosted a visioning event at the Lights Theatre. Local businesses, creatives, community groups and councillors were invited to help generate ideas for the town centre.

On-line surveys

Nearly 3,000 people responded to our on-line survey giving an invaluable insight into how people use the town centre, what they value and what they think needs to change.

Working with stakeholders

A series of meetings, workshops and a 'town walkabout' were held with officers and members from Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council.

Workshops were held with key organisations including Andover College, Simplyhealth, Lights Theatre, Waitrose and St Mary's Church. Breakfast meetings were held with the Business Improvement District (BID) and local businesses. A workshop with Andover College students gave a very different perspective from younger people.

Pop-up Shop

Draft proposals were presented to the public at a 5-day pop-up shop on Bridge Street running from 11th -15th of December 2019. Almost 600 people attended with the majority of feedback both positive and supportive

Exhibition

On 11th December the team presented the draft proposals to approximately 100 invited stakeholders at St. Mary's Church. The proposals were also available to view online, and we received more than 500 detailed responses which helped shape the final report.

Market testing

Following the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, emerging proposals were tested informally with a range of town centre developers and investors in a "soft market testing" exercise. This process provided confidence that there was still market interest and support for the town centre redevelopment.

Engagement reports

Separate reports are available detailing the results of the survey exercises and how these have specifically informed the development of the town centre masterplan. A separate confidential report has been provided to TVBC on the findings of the 'soft market testing' exercise with developers and investors.

Fun Friday Event: The on-line survey received nearly 3,000 responses



Want to understand what you
to make your town centre
place. Please do take this
opportunity to share your honest
views with us.

Do you think Andover Town Centre could be better?



Stakeholder event at St Mary's Church to consider draft



Visioning event with stakeholder groups

Pop-up shop received over 600 visitors



Opportunity for change

Andover has many positive features which can form the basis of a strong physical, social and economic vision.

Heritage

Andover has a strong historic core of the High Street, St Mary's Church, Guildhall, Town Mills and other listed buildings along Bridge Street and East Street in particular. Town Mills is being improved and the Guildhall is also in need of a more 'civic' role and setting. The Lanes are also a strong feature but need more activity and to be connected to higher quality spaces.

Jobs

Andover has high quality employers on the edge of the town and in the heart of the town centre, reflecting its accessibility by road and rail. Simplyhealth has made a strong commitment to Andover. It wishes to create new, environmentally friendly offices in the town centre which would significantly enhance the vibrancy and the image of Andover.

Education

Andover College is a key asset in the town centre. It wishes to expand and improve its facilities for students which would bring more vitality to the town and create space for additional housing and workspace.

Housing

Andover is a popular housing location and will see continued growth. It has the opportunity to make living in the town centre more attractive, particularly for younger people seeking access to facilities and to public transport.

Community

There is a strong community base in Andover. The town has invested in the new Leisure Centre as an important community facility and is looking to enhance the cultural and community offer in the Lights Theatre. St Mary's Church, Andover Museum and Chapel Arts are all important facilities that would like to expand their role in the cultural and community life of the town.

Environment

Andover town centre is relatively lacking in green space, but has strong green assets which are hidden or underutilised. The River Anton, St Mary's Cemetery and Vigo Park should all be much stronger and more accessible spaces in the heart of the town centre, promoting opportunities to improve physical and mental health.

Walking & Cycling

Andover is a compact town, with the potential to be an exemplar town for walking and cycling. Traffic flow data suggests that the scale of the Ring Road can be reduced, underpasses removed, links to the station improved and more open space created along the river.

Parking

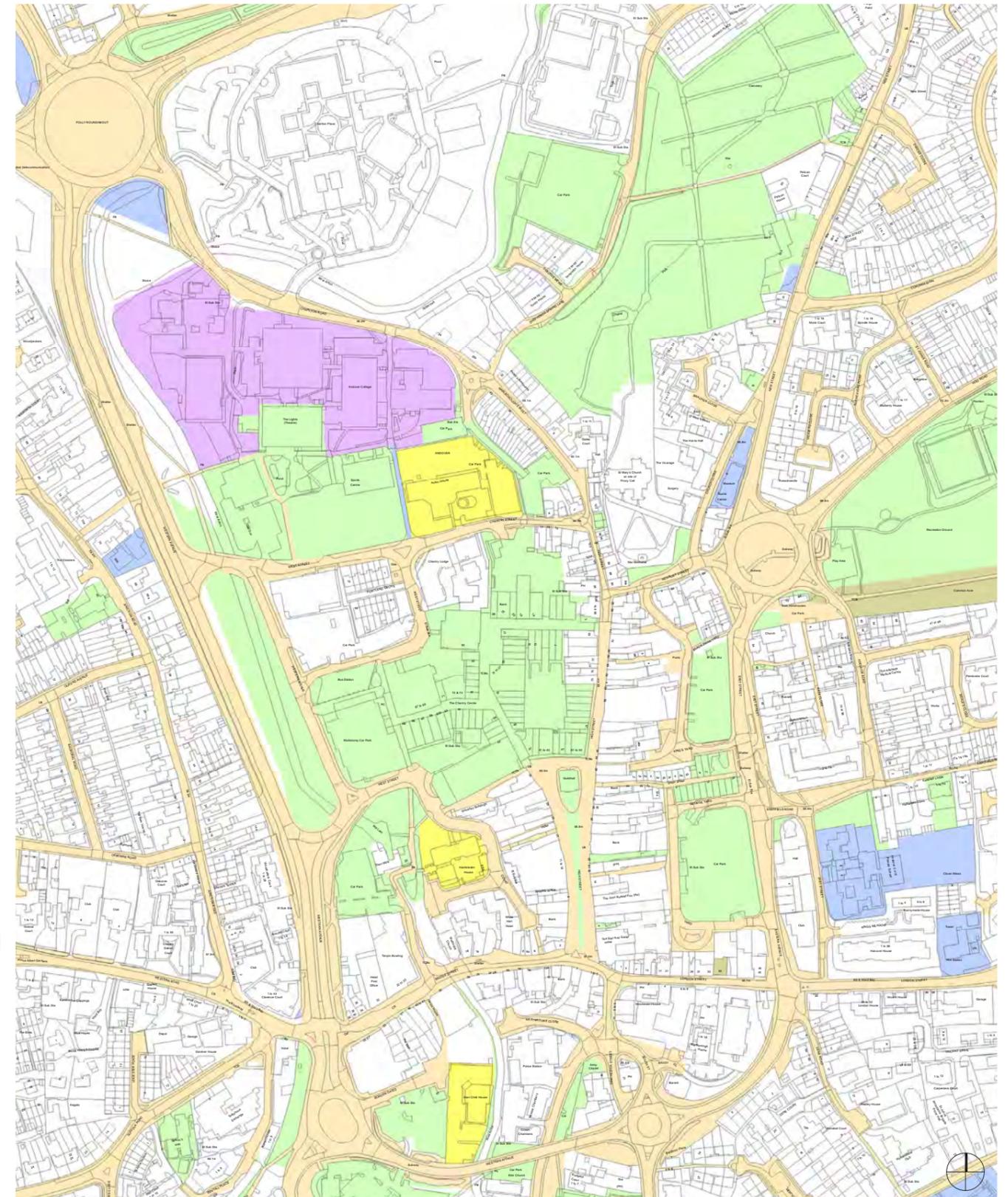
Surveys show that Andover town centre has sufficient parking within the town centre to cater for new development without the need for additional car parking. Strategic improvements to parking can help bring more life to the town centre, particularly in the evening.

It is time for the town to be brave and consider radical interventions where the current urban infrastructure (roads, water, power, drainage) is no longer fit for purpose.

The scale of public sector landownership in the town centre means that there is a tremendous opportunity to address the challenges facing Andover. Substantial areas of land are owned by Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council which allow for a comprehensive approach to be taken to its regeneration, and the opportunity to address the climate emergency.

TVBC has already taken the bold decision to acquire the Chantry Centre. Through its management of the Centre, and its future redevelopment, it has the opportunity to 'curate' the town centre offer. This will enable it to encourage specialist, independent businesses and community uses and to encourage activities that bring wider social and economic benefits to the town.

In addition to the public sector landownership, key areas of land are owned by two other key stakeholders in the town centre, Andover College and Simplyhealth. Both have stated publicly their wish to enhance their facilities in Andover, and have engaged positively with TVBC on the comprehensive regeneration of the town centre.



Land ownership

Vision for change

Andover town centre will be:

Social & Inclusive

A town centre that is relevant to its local community. That is accessible to all, by foot, wheelchair, cycle, bus, rail or car. With a range of health services and community facilities to meet the needs of all its residents. With an affordable and diverse housing mix suitable for the elderly, young people and families.

Green & Ethical

A town centre that addresses the climate emergency, helping to increase its biodiversity and eliminate its carbon footprint. That recognises the importance of ethical and local trading. That prioritises walking and cycling and encourages electric vehicles.

Creative & Enterprising

Improved facilities and a modern campus for Andover College. A new and improved Lights Theatre in the centre of town, promoting local arts and creative organisations and supporting the evening economy. Sustainable workspace for small businesses and new office space for Simplyhealth.

Unique & Independent

A town centre that values its heritage assets, placing the Guildhall and St Mary's Church at the centre of civic and community life. That provides affordable space and support for start up businesses. That 'curates' local markets and events and designs bespoke stalls, seating and public art.



Illustrative Masterplan

- 1 Improved pedestrian and cycle arrival from rail station with removal of underpass and new hotel or residential/ mixed use
- 2 New urban campus for Andover College and an improved public space opening up views to St Mary's Church.
- 3 New offices and homes fronting new public spaces.
- 4 New public space to enhance civic role of St Mary's Church
- 5 Improved Vigo Park, with removal of roundabout and subway.
- 6 Removal of Western Avenue Gyratory allowing for river walk opening up the River Anton
- 7 New space with public access to the river
- 8 New streets to replace the Chantry Centre with shops, services, workspace and apartments
- 9 Retained Waitrose store.
- 10 Theatre and cultural uses fronting new public square with opportunity for events and markets.
- 11 High quality offices and apartments in the centre of town
- 12 Small shops, homes and public space enhancing Union Street and Eastern Avenue with removal of underpass
- 13 Improved civic setting and role for Guildhall
- 14 Improved space at Town Mills
- 15 Decking and landscaping of George Yard car park.



Preparing for change

Ring Road & River Anton

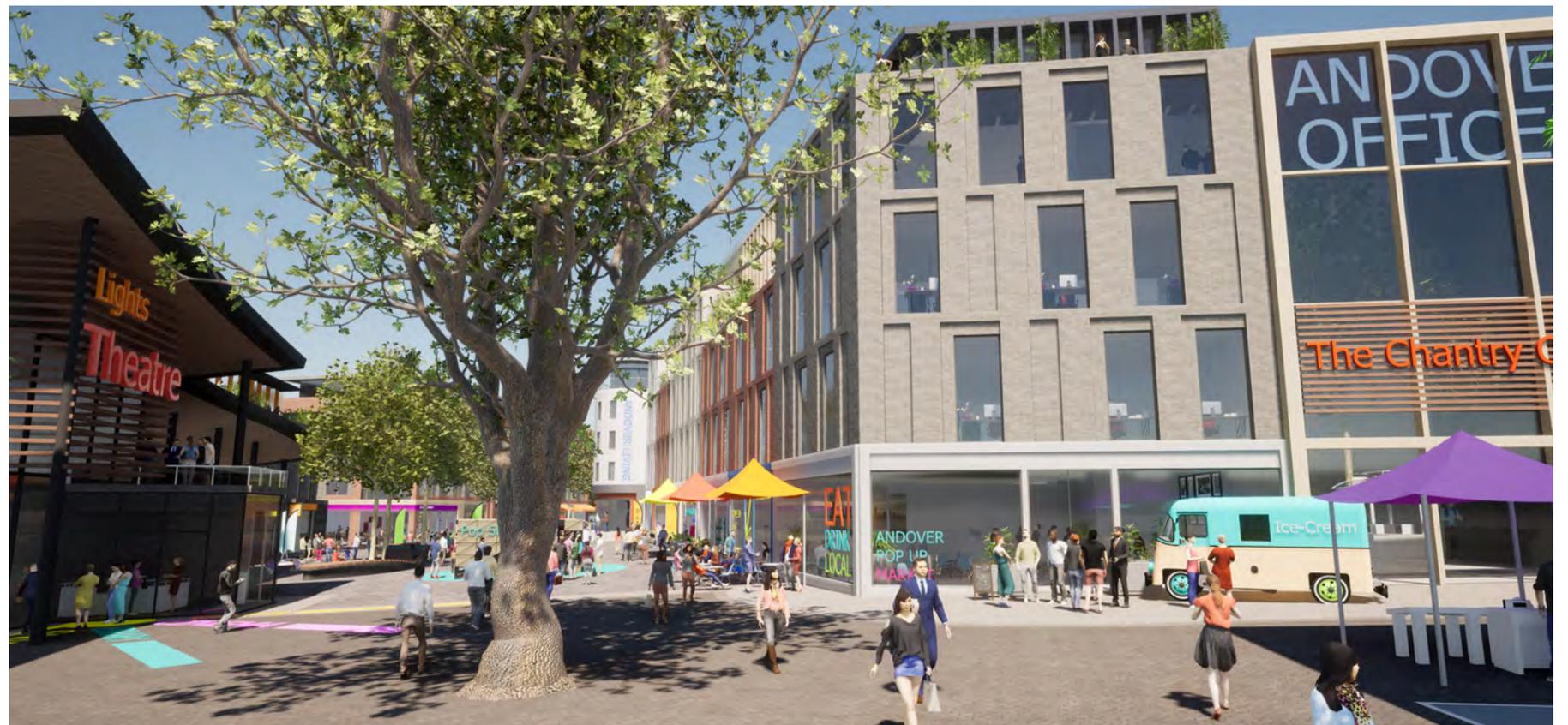
TVBC is continuing to work with Hampshire County Council to help deliver a transformation of Eastern Avenue and Western Avenue. Reducing the scale of these roads is a prerequisite for improving connections to the railway station, opening up the river corridor and for creating the Anton- to- Vigo link. It is key to improving walking and cycling connections into the town centre, improving health, air quality and addressing the climate change emergency.



Opening up the River Anton as a natural corridor with footpaths and cycleways.

Chantry Centre

TVBC will continue the process of engaging with suitable development partners to assist with the redevelopment of the Chantry Centre. The Council will also be seeking external funding to help deliver this ambitious scheme.



A new street and a new public space, replacing the existing Chantry Centre.

Well-Being Quarter

TVBC will continue to support Andover College, Lights Theatre and Simplyhealth to deliver their plans for improved education, employment, leisure and community facilities in the town centre. This will include working with Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership to maximise external funding opportunities.



The Anton-Vigo green link, a space for study, exercise and relaxation.

Meanwhile uses

In the short term, TVBC will prioritise measures to support existing businesses in the town centre and to attract new local traders. This will include events and pop-up activities to animate streets, spaces and vacant shop units. The Council will also work with businesses in the Chantry Centre to minimise any disruption from its redevelopment.



New and existing public spaces need to be 'animated' with opportunities for eating, drinking, pop-up shops, events and festivals.