

Andover Town Centre

Hemingway Design and **NEW masterplanning** are working with **Test Valley Borough Council** to prepare a **Vision and Spatial Framework** for Andover town centre. Since July, meetings and workshops have been held with a range of businesses, residents' groups, students and other stakeholders. A public survey received nearly **3,000** responses and we held events at Andover Carnival and Fun Fridays.

This exhibition now presents our first findings on the key issues facing Andover town centre and outlines a possible new approach to revitalising the town centre. A questionnaire is available, and can also be completed on-line until 1st January 2020 (www.thinkandovertowncentre.co.uk). In the New Year we will take the feedback and prepare a more detailed strategy and action plan for the town centre. **We hope you will take this opportunity to study our suggestions, give us your views and influence the future of Andover.**

Issues facing Andover

Many of Britain's town centres continue to witness significant and well documented economic, social and physical upheaval, resulting from evolving consumer habits. Nationally, more than 10% of shop units are empty and footfall is falling. Small and medium sized towns are also dealing with an ageing population as more than a million young people are said to have moved out of small communities in the last 30 years.^(source)

We do not believe however that this decline is inevitable, but that we are in an evolutionary period for town centres. The good news is that some towns are bucking this trend and increasing their sales. These towns are creating different social and economic models, focusing on a distinct and **independent identity**, building a strong **social connection** with the local community, promoting a **green ethos** and an **enterprising town centre** with a range of businesses and activities.

Unique & Independent

There is growing interest in 'independent' towns, such as Ludlow, Frome, Halifax and Hebden Bridge. Towns that reject the 'identikit' high street model and focus on their individuality, distinctive experiences, heritage and unique physical characteristics to create a strong local identity. Towns that recognise the significant increases in sales across food and drink, health and well-being, leisure and the independent specialist retail sectors.

Green & Ethical

Ethical trading, food miles and reducing carbon footprint are increasingly important to consumers. The ethical consumer market has grown by more than £40bn since 2008.^(source) More people are choosing to buy second hand and there is an increasing distrust in brands that cannot prove their provenance and ethical sourcing. Research also shows that businesses and town centres tend to underestimate the importance of the 'pedestrian pound'. Promoting walking and cycling is good for business, not just for health, well-being and the environment.

Social & Inclusive

Successful town centres are places where the local community can come together and partake in shared social activities, festivals, events and activities. Food and drink, health, leisure and the cultural sector are increasingly important and 'social traffic' has a wider positive impact on town centre economies. When people get together commercial exchange and new business ideas will follow.

Creative & Enterprising

A vibrant town centre is important to the whole economy and helps businesses recruit younger people. Town centres need to provide an environment where businesses feel confident to test ideas with space for pop ups, street food and specialist markets, space for start-up and creative businesses as well as modern and flexible office space. The best town centres offer more than just a shopping experience. Offices, homes, leisure, education and community facilities all help create the 'footfall' on which retailers depend.



Opportunities for Andover

Andover has many positive features which can form the basis of a strong physical, social and economic vision. We also believe it is time for the town to be brave and consider radical interventions where the current urban infrastructure is no longer fit for purpose. The Council has already taken the bold decision to acquire the Chantry Centre and its wider land ownership in the town centre presents further opportunities to improve Andover.

Unique & Independent

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. The Lanes are also a strong feature but are easy to miss and often lead to unattractive service areas behind buildings. The town has also invested in the leisure centre as an important community facility and is looking to enhance the cultural and community offer in the Lights Theatre. Integrating these important destinations more effectively will create a stronger identity for the town centre.

The survey results highlighted a strong desire for more independent shops and businesses and redevelopment of the Chantry Centre could therefore provide an opportunity to encourage this. Flexible spaces, flexible buildings and flexible leases will all be critical in developing a stronger independent identity.

Green & Ethical

Andover has some strong green assets which could be enhanced. Improving access to the River Anton was a priority in the survey responses and the Vision needs to address this. It also needs to address the demand for more green spaces in the town centre and make Vigo Park and the cemetery more accessible.

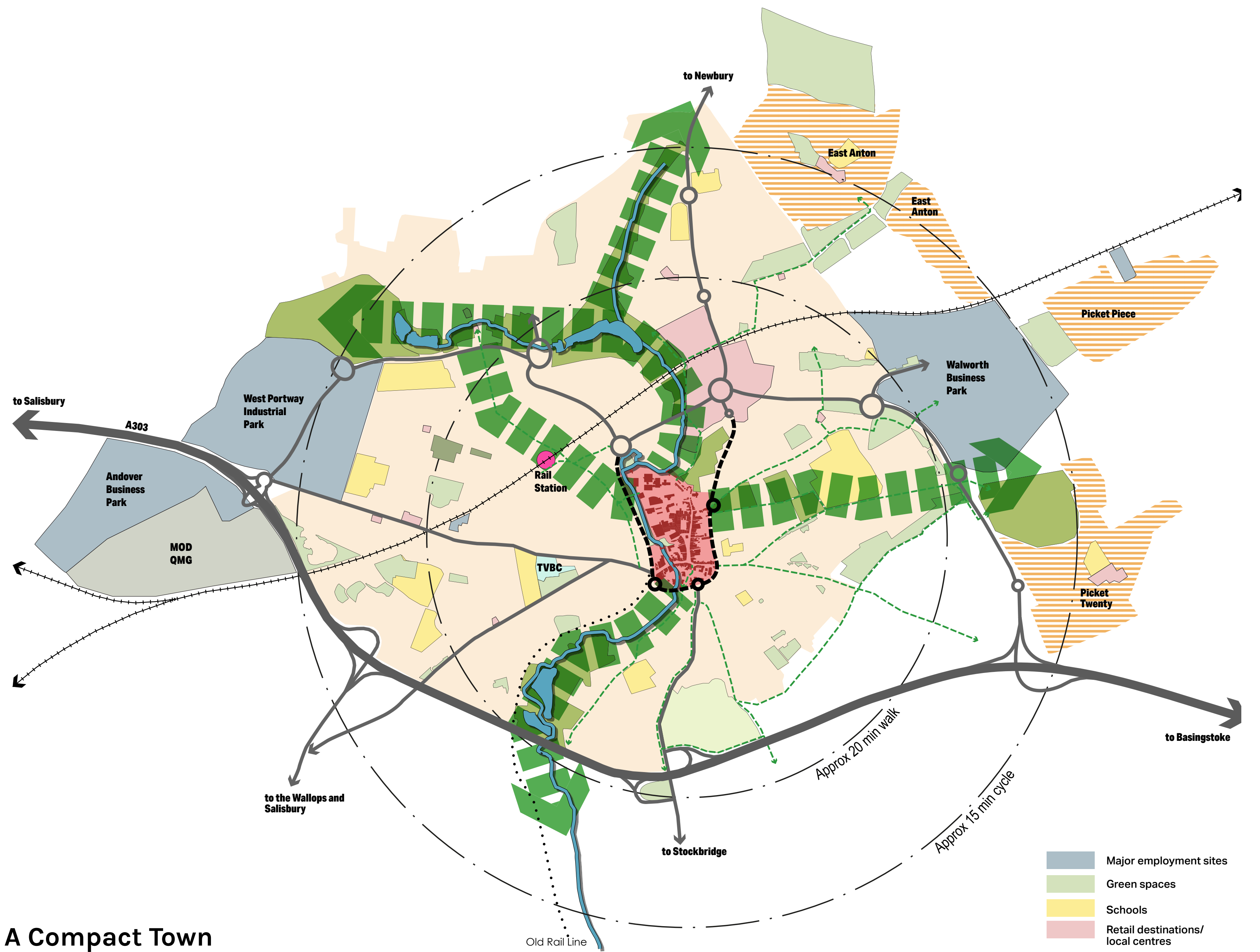
Andover has the potential to be an exemplar town for walking and cycling. Traffic flow data suggests that the scale of the Ring Road can be reduced, underpasses removed, links to the station improved and more open space created along the river.

Social & Inclusive

There is a strong community base in Andover and a good range of festivals and events but there are few public spaces in the town centre suitable for large events and markets. The Lights and Leisure Centre are excellent facilities but can feel isolated from the town centre's cafés and restaurants. Andover has a relatively limited evening economy and needs to feel more welcoming after dark. More people living and working in the town centre, improvements to the public realm and lighting would all help to achieve this.

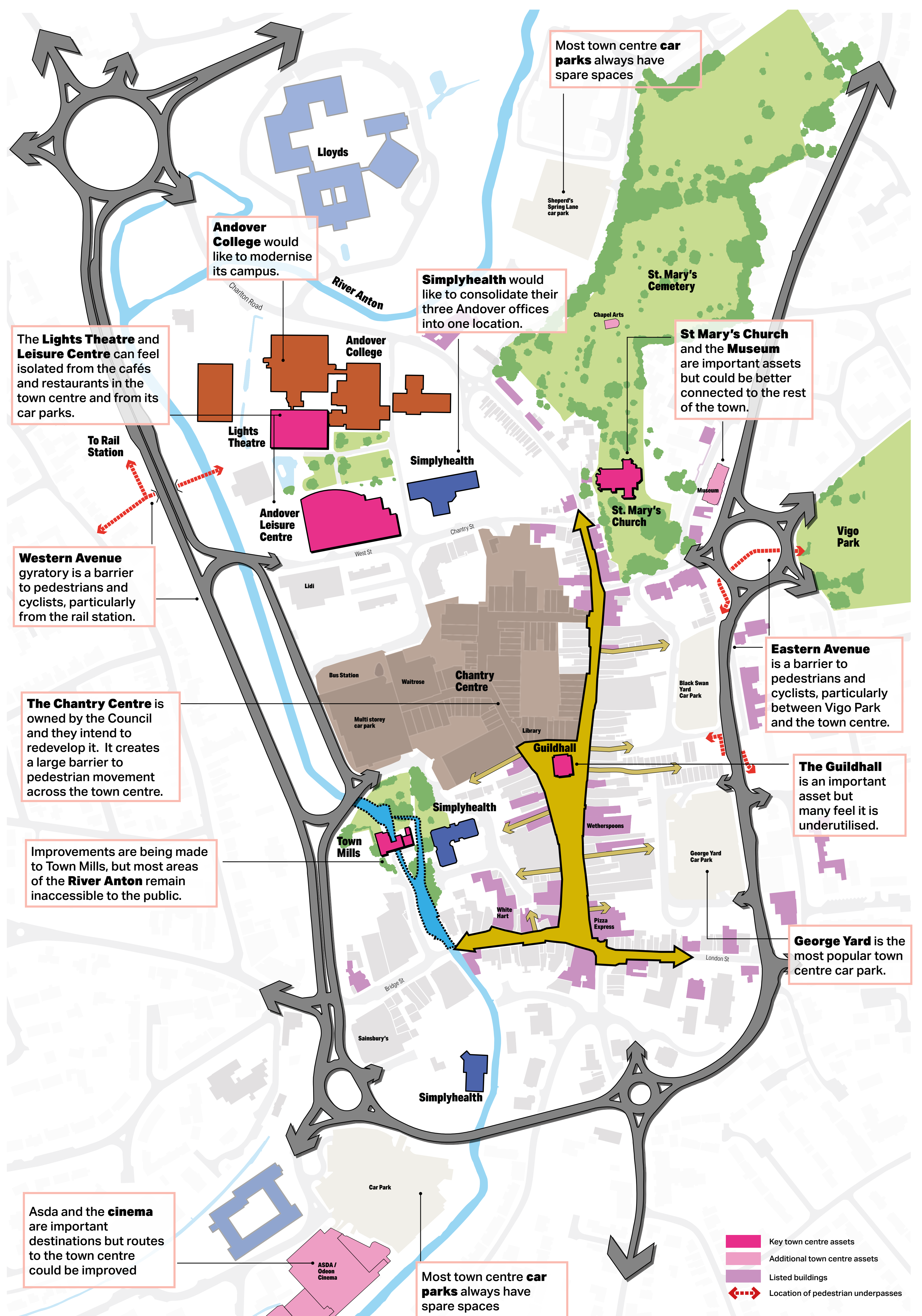
Creative & Enterprising

A key strength of Andover town centre is the variety of reasons why people visit it. Andover College is an important asset and wishes to enhance the quality of its buildings and spaces for students. Simplyhealth are an important employer who wish to improve the quality and sustainability of the working environment for their Andover employees. The vision needs to support both of these projects and ensure that they feel less isolated from the retail uses. Andover's business parks are a key strength, and should be more involved with, and better connected to, the town centre.



A Compact Town

Andover is a very compact town. It has large numbers of people living within a 20 minute walk of the centre, almost everyone lives or works within a 20 minute cycle of the town centre and the railway station is only a 10 minute walk. It has potentially strong green links connecting to the town centre but crossing the Ring Road is a major barrier for pedestrians and cyclists which needs to be addressed. Within the Ring Road it is 5 minutes walk from Eastern Avenue to Western Avenue, and 5 minutes walk from the College to the Guildhall but it feels much further because of the barrier created by the Chantry Centre.



Key issues & priorities

A Vision for Andover



Well-being Quarter

Improved facilities for Andover College and new 'green' offices for Simplyhealth alongside the Leisure Centre could form the basis of a 'Well-being Quarter' with a new town space for play, exercise and relaxation.

Shepherd's Spring Lane car park

St. Mary's Cemetery

St. Mary's Church

Improved connections, better public spaces and enhanced lighting will help reinforce St. Mary's Church civic and community role in Andover.

Vigo Park

Vigo Park

Removing the roundabout and underpass would create space to improve and expand Vigo Park.

Eastern Avenue

New homes, shops or community uses, a new public space, removal of the underpasses and tree planting on the street and George Yard car park create a high quality arrival for pedestrians and motorists.

Andover Lanes

Public realm improvements, community gardens, pop up shops, public art and lighting strategies can strengthen the role of the lanes.

Guildhall

A larger space could enhance the setting of the Guildhall and support a more important civic or community function for the building.

Borden Gates

A possible strategic site if Simplyhealth and Sainsbury's land is surplus. With restructuring of the Southern Ring Road it could provide housing, offices and community facilities with improved river frontage and links to Asda and the cinema.

Car parks

A coordinated strategy with improved pedestrian links to strategic parking areas north, south, east and west edges, and additional on-street parking for drop-off and disabled access in the town centre.

ASDA / Odeon Cinema

- Key town centre assets
- Proposed redevelopment blocks
- Active frontages
- Public spaces/ routes
- Lanes

Revitalising Andover's historic core

Andover High Street, Guildhall, Town Mills and St Mary's Church are important historic assets, as is Andover's network of Lanes. Plans are underway to enhance Town Mills and consideration also needs to be given to these other important features.

Guildhall

The public survey highlighted that the Guildhall is one of Andover's most loved most underutilised assets. It occupies a strategic civic position at the centre of the High Street, and whilst its function as a restaurant is valuable, it could do more to animate and activate this area of the town.

Public suggestions for its long-term use included arts and music events, fairs and markets, community and education as well as civic uses. The scale and aesthetic qualities of the Guildhall, alongside its public ownership, gives it the potential to be the 'crown jewel' of Andover town centre.

Redevelopment of the Chantry Centre should support this, and consideration has therefore been given to increasing the public space to the north to allow greater flexibility for events and spill-out activities.



The proposals for Andover town centre seek to strengthen the Guildhall's civic and community role at the heart of the town centre. Suggestions to improve the quality of the Lanes are also set out below.

- 1 An enlarged and enhanced space around the Guildhall
- 2 Improvements to the Lanes connecting the High Street to Town Mills
- 3 A new space at the end of Union Street

Case Studies

The following case studies are examples of where prominent, historic yet underutilised buildings in town centres have been re-purposed and re-imagined.



Altrincham Market Hall

Altrincham is one of the original market towns and its charter dates back to 1290. In 2010, the town had one of the worst shop vacancy rates in the country and the original Market House was at the heart of its re-invention as 'the' modern market town. The Market House is now a permanent foodie hub with an annual turnover of £5m. It is home to 6 food kitchens, a coffee shop, a chocolatier, a wine shop and a bar that serves up the best of British craft beers. At weekends it hosts outdoor themed markets covering regional food producers, vintage fashion and furniture, home house & garden and contemporary craft.



Hebden Bridge Town Hall

The Grade 2 listed building is one of a handful of community-owned Town Halls in the UK and is a symbol of what a community can do when it pulls together with a common ambition and vision. In 2008 the Hebden Bridge Community Association was formed and acquired the building on a 125 year lease. What was a barely used building falling into disrepair is now one of the largest conferencing and event venues in the Calder Valley, providing a range of services for local people, space for creative businesses. It is also fully licensed for weddings and civil partnerships placing it at the heart of community and civic life in the town.



The Lanes

The Lanes are a key part of Andover's historic character and home to some of the town's most loved independent shops, restaurants and cafés but the public survey also highlighted the need for improvements. The lanes are also important east-west pedestrian routes, linking the Guildhall to Town Mills and linking the High Street to Eastern Avenue.

Investing in the public realm along these key pedestrian routes, providing seating, planting, community gardens, public art, lighting installations or space for buskers will help these existing businesses thrive, attract a more diverse range of people to visit Andover and encourage them to explore the wider town. Low cost pop-up spaces within the lanes, and improved public spaces at the end of the lanes, can also help to attract new businesses to the town centre. These measures can be introduced relatively early and cheaply and can help to stimulate interest in the town from higher quality and innovative developers.



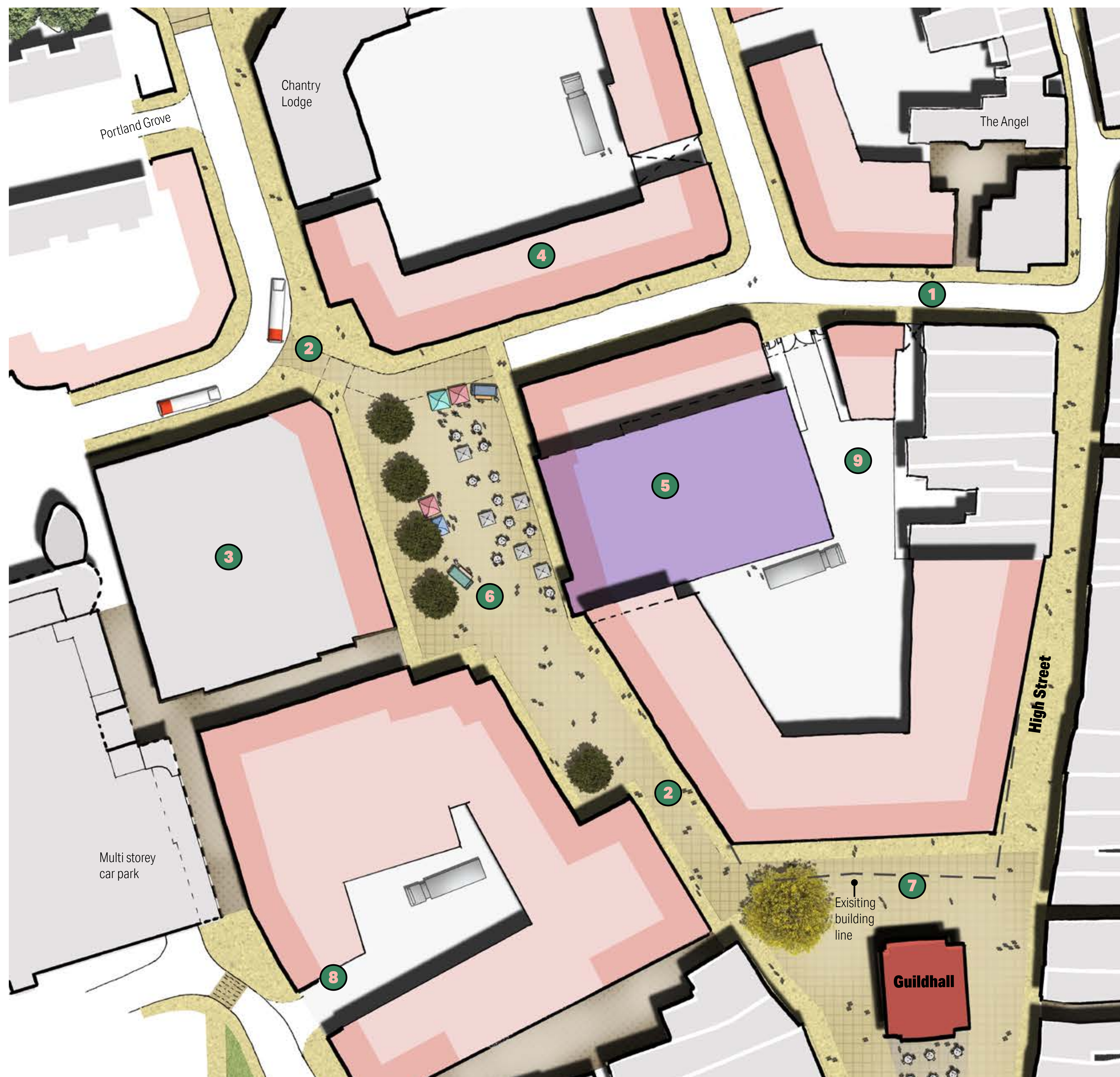
Revitalising the Chantry Centre

Test Valley Borough Council has acquired the Chantry Centre with the intention of redeveloping it. This provides an opportunity to address some key issues in the town centre.

The key objectives for the redevelopment of the Chantry Centre site are to create a more integrated street network, address the physical blockage at the heart of the town centre and provide a more diverse mix of uses, including workspace, homes, community and cultural activities. Specific proposals include:

- 1 Better east-west connections, especially to the High Street
- 2 Stronger north-south connections to the leisure centre and Andover College
- 3 Retaining important 'anchors' such as Waitrose
- 4 Flexible space for independent and 'pop-up' businesses
- 5 A possible new location for an improved Lights Theatre
- 6 A new public space for events, street food and markets
- 7 A larger space and improved setting for the Guildhall
- 8 Reducing the visual impact of service yards,
- 9 Maintaining servicing for High Street businesses
- 10 Office and residential uses at upper levels

Redevelopment of the Chantry Centre would be undertaken in phases, to allow for retention and relocation of existing businesses and minimise disruption to trading in the town.



Redevelopment of the Chantry Centre should create a more public network of streets and spaces, and a livelier mix of uses, particularly in the evening.



Public streets and spaces

'Anchor' tenants (such as supermarkets) are still essential in town centres and meeting the long-term needs of Waitrose is therefore a priority. Alongside this however, redevelopment of the Chantry Centre can provide temporary, flexible spaces that can accommodate different uses over time and help to add variety and diversity to the town centre.

The provision and design of high-quality public space is increasingly becoming the new anchor for successful retail centres. Successful streets have a mix of uses, are not closed in the evening, have office, community, cultural and residential uses alongside retail to bring activity at all times of the day and all days of the week.

There is currently relatively little on Andover's High Street and in the Chantry Centre that would encourage visitors to 'linger'. Redevelopment of the Chantry Centre therefore provides an additional public space with flexibility to accommodate markets and street food vendors, public events such as live performances, screenings and festivals as well as encourage sporadic activities such as small scale performances and busking.



1846-1899 Street network



Proposed street network

Redevelopment of the Chantry Centre provides an opportunity to reinstate elements of Andover's historic street pattern. In particular it creates better connections to High Street and St. Mary's Church and helps integrate Andover College, Simplyhealth, Lloyds and the new leisure centre with the historic core. All of this will encourage visitors to explore more areas of the town.

Revitalising the Chantry Centre

Many retail centres are now tapping into consumers' desire for experiences and looking beyond 'filling spaces'. The formulaic notion that creating a retail centre is about building then filling its spaces with the same stores as the one in the next town has proved unsuccessful. Redevelopment of the Chantry Centre provides an opportunity to create destinations where people are drawn to visit, spend time in and bring their friends.

Culture & Community

Key national retailers should be complemented by a mix of short leases, pop-up spaces, and market-style events, bringing in smaller businesses that cater for consumers who demand more authentic local experiences – whether in food, fashion or lifestyle. The proposals therefore mix 'flexible' units with more traditional retail units.

This approach can be tested in advance of redevelopment by considering 'meanwhile uses', (the short-term use of temporarily empty buildings or shops until they can be brought back into commercial use). Utilising Andover's empty retail units for meeting spaces, informal training and learning spaces, temporary rehearsal spaces, pop-up shops and exhibitions could help empower the community and offer a breeding ground for innovative ideas.

A new public space has also been provided to allow for specialist food traders, markets or other events and the flexibility of the existing event space on the High Street is proposed to be enhanced by expanding the space around the Guildhall. The operation of a market can significantly increase footfall by between 15-27% compared to locations without markets ([source](#)) but the offer needs to be curated to provide a relevant, distinctive, local product.

Facilities such as theatres and libraries, health hubs, childcare facilities, play spaces, public toilets and showers create vibrant, accessible and inclusive town centres. Space is proposed within the redevelopment for a new theatre/performance/community building which could spill out into the new public space.

Living & Working

The majority of younger people stated in the survey that they would like to see more residential accommodation in the town centre and the upper floors of the Chantry Centre re-development provide opportunity for this. It has long been accepted that residential development within town centres can contribute to its vitality, increasing footfall and supporting a night-time economy. Residential uses can also improve the commercial viability of any redevelopment, although there is relatively little residential inside the Ring Road and at the moment values are not particularly strong. There is however potentially the opportunity to create attractive views to the surrounding countryside from upper levels.

Providing office space and co-working space in the town centre benefits businesses and retailers. In a recent survey by Colliers International, around 70% said co-working space in a shopping centre would encourage them to visit shops and restaurants more often. Businesses get a prominent place to do their work, workers get easy access to shops and services and retailers receive an increase in footfall during weekday working hours when footfall can be lower. Provision has therefore been made in the Chantry Centre redevelopment for co-working space at ground floor level and for larger office space and residential uses at upper levels.



Case Studies

Apex Theatre, Bury St Edmunds

The Apex Theatre is part of the 'Arc' retail, leisure and residential development, comprising of some 36 shops, cafés and restaurants and residential accommodation.

The venue has a 500 seat auditorium, with capacity for 750 standing. It is designed primarily for live music, comedy and dance performances, but also hosts community and corporate events, and houses the Apex Gallery and Cafe. The Apex opened in 2010 and is now an award winning venue, owned and managed by West Suffolk Council.



Frome Independent Market

Founded and managed by local residents, The Frome Independent market is a free, non-profit making event which has evolved and grown over 10 years. It is now an award winning, destination street market, reclaiming Frome's high street once a month to "showcase the best independent craftspeople, designers, makers, food producers and vintage traders in the South West".

The market includes live music, DJs, street performance, workshops and children's activities on market days. It states that it attracts over 80,000 visits each year and helps generate an estimated £2.5 million in revenue for its traders and Frome's independent retailers. Between market days it has a social and community role, running 'Night School' workshops and supper clubs.



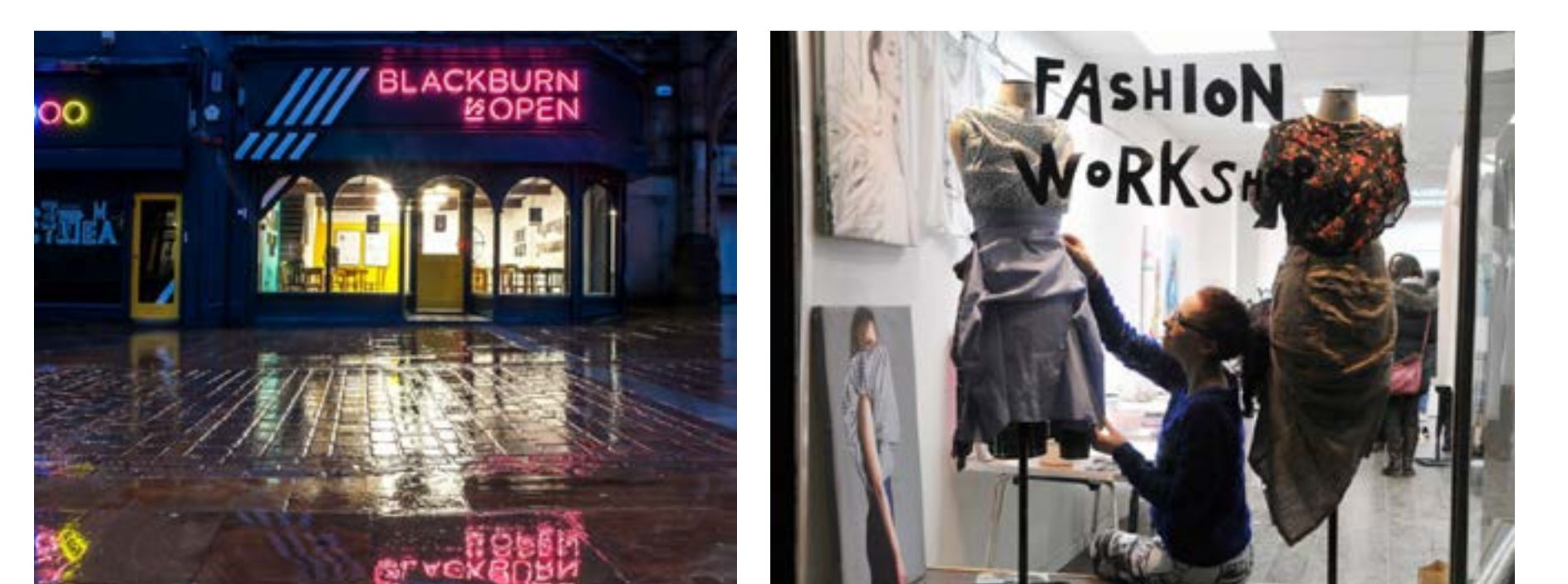
Creative Start-ups

South Leytonstone Pop-up was a pop-up shop programme, funded by the London Borough of Waltham Forest, via New Homes Bonus funding. The six month programme gave free pop-up space for up to four weeks for local start-up businesses to test and develop their business.

For most of the participants, the pop up shop was their first ever space and it gave them the confidence to take the next step for their business. Half of the new businesses moved on to further spaces within Waltham Forest.

Blackburn is Open transformed a set of Council owned empty shops into start-up retail spaces and visible studio space for makers so shoppers, residents and visitors could experience 'performance making' and appreciate the act of craft, design and small-scale manufacturing.

The First Thursday programme (opening after 5pm on the first Thursday of each month) provided another opportunity to test the market for music, exhibitions, fashion trends, performances and workshops and expand the evening economy.



A greener Andover - Well-being Quarter

A modern campus for Andover College and green offices for Simplyhealth alongside the Leisure Centre can create a 'Green Spine' from River Anton to Vigo Park, with St Mary's Church at the centre.



- ① Modern campus for Andover College
- ② Environmentally sustainable offices for Simplyhealth
- ③ 'Green Spine' with views between leisure centre and church
- ④ Removal of underpass and better links to rail station
- ⑤ Removal of roundabout and expansion of Vigo Park
- ⑥ New public spaces improve connections to St Mary's Church
- ⑦ Links to decked car park on Shepherd's Spring Lane



Anton to Vigo green spine

A modern campus for Andover College would help it retain and attract students. By increasing heights and densities it would potentially free up some land for additional offices and housing in the town centre. Around 150 car parking spaces would be available to the public in the evening and weekends to help serve the leisure centre. Preferred locations for a new theatre are being considered, but the Magistrate's Court could be an option, with café at ground floor fronting the River Anton welcoming visitors from the rail station.



New offices for Simplyhealth would mean around 1,000 people working close to the town centre shops and services and their green ambitions would support the Vision for Andover. Health related uses at ground floor such as physiotherapists and chiropodists alongside the leisure centre could create the basis of a 'Well-being' Quarter.



The proposed 'Green Spine' at the heart of the Well-being Quarter' would address the need for new green space in the town centre. It would be a social space where residents and visitors of all ages can play, exercise and relax. Improvements to the Ring Road would ensure this space is easily accessible from the rail station to the west and Vigo Park and playing fields to the east.

St Mary's Church

The Vision reinforces St. Mary's church as a civic and community focus. New streets and spaces enhance its setting, connect it to the rest of the town and provide opportunities for events and activities within its grounds.



The Vision will open up longer distance views to the church. Exterior lighting can highlight its presence, create a stronger sense of identity for Andover, improve wayfinding and encourage more evening activity in the area.

A greener Andover - The River Anton

Improving access to the River Anton and providing more green space is a public priority and fundamental to the Vision for Andover. Reducing the scale of the Western Avenue gyratory is essential to achieve this.

The River Anton can potentially be opened up to create a green pedestrian/cycle link from Town Mills to Andover College with ecology areas, recreational space, informal play and picnic areas. It will provide a 'shop window' along Western Avenue promoting Andover College, the Lights Theatre, new housing, cafés and restaurants alongside the green qualities of Andover.

- 1 Removing the eastern arm of the gyratory allows land in public ownership to become public open space
- 2 New green corridor between the town centre and Western Avenue
- 3 Removal of underpass to create more attractive arrival from rail station
- 4 Magistrate's Court site provides prominent location for variety of possible uses, including Andover College or Lights Theatre.
- 5 Lidl could potentially be relocated or incorporated into a mixed-use scheme
- 6 Opportunities for occasional high quality café, pub or restaurant
- 7 New apartments create an attractive frontage to the Chantry Centre car park
- 8 Existing proposals to enhance Town Mills which could be complemented by the potential redevelopment of the Waterloo Court Simplyhealth site
- 9 Redevelopment of Borden Gates could enhance quality of river frontage



A greener Andover - The Ring Road

There are significant opportunities to reduce the scale of the Ring Road around Andover, improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and creating more open space for residents without creating traffic congestion or impacting on other streets.

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.

There are three key areas where radical intervention is considered potentially beneficial for the town. The benefits and impacts of these improvements are being tested with the County Council.

Western Avenue gyratory

Two lanes could potentially be removed allowing the river Anton to be opened up. The underpass to the rail station could be removed and 'at-grade' crossings provided for pedestrians and cyclists. Following the approach adopted for the Town Mills improvements, new T-junctions could maintain access to West Street, the bus station and Chantry Centre car park.

Eastern Avenue/Vigo Park roundabout

This could be replaced with T-junctions and the underpass replaced with 'at-grade' crossings. This would allow Vigo Park to be extended closer to the town centre and improve the setting of the Church. Slowing traffic on Eastern Avenue would also allow the underpass at the end of Union Street to be removed and replaced with a standard pedestrian crossing.

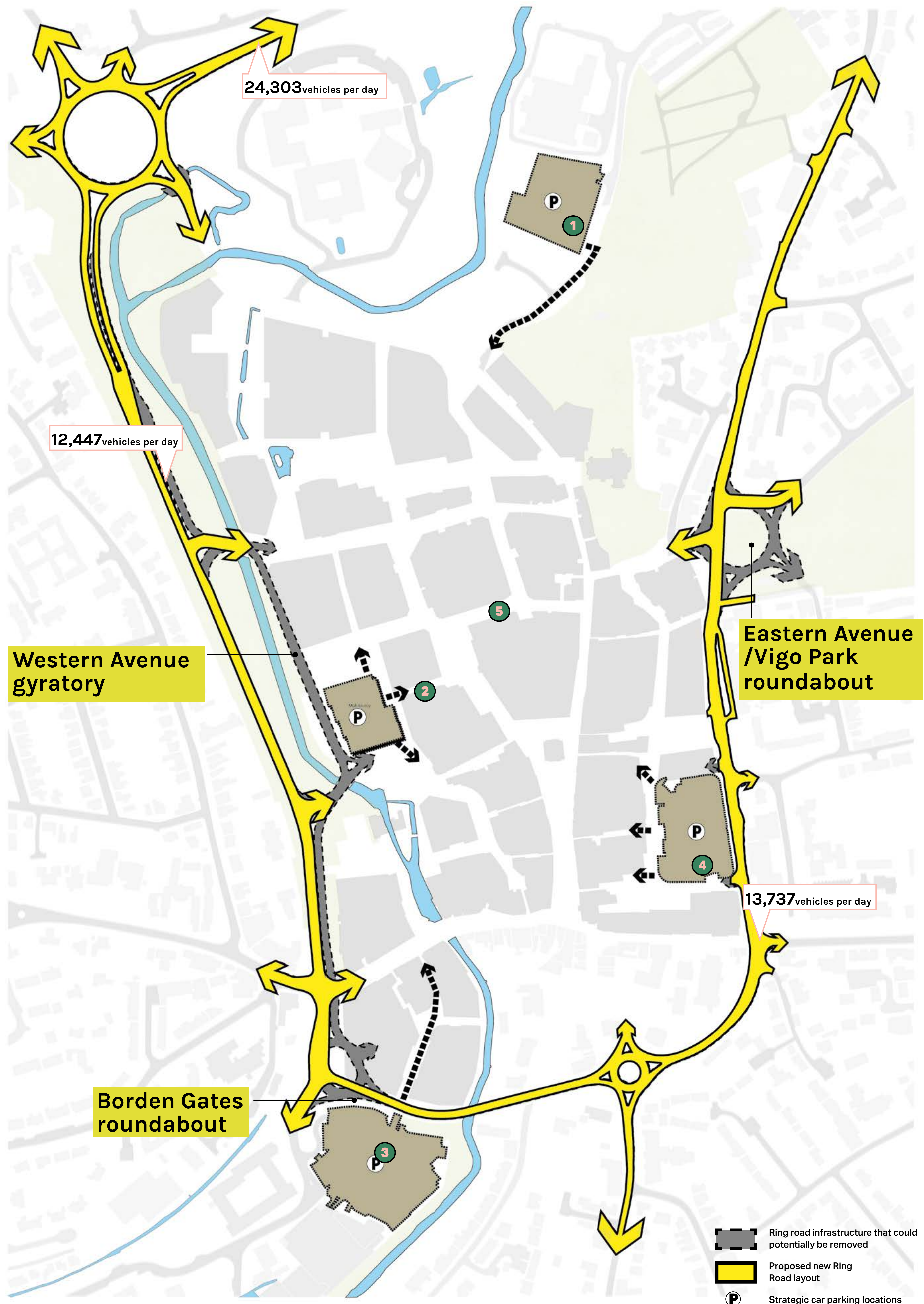
Borden Gates roundabout

This could be replaced with a T-junction, improving connections between the cinema, Asda, car park and the town centre.

Car Parking

Council surveys indicate that even at busy periods, and allowing for future growth, there is spare capacity in town centre car parks. Surveys also indicate that residents and businesses are generally happy with the amount of car parking in the town centre. There is however a need for additional parking to the north of the town centre, serving the leisure centre, and a need to improve pedestrian routes into the historic core from all car parks. The strategy therefore proposes:

- 1 Increasing car park capacity at Shepherd's Spring Lane and ensuring any new car park at Andover College is visible and accessible to the public at evenings and weekends.
- 2 Improving pedestrian exits and connections from the Chantry Centre car park to the leisure centre.
- 3 Improving pedestrian connections from Asda car park to the town centre via Borden Gates and River Anton
- 4 Improving the quality of George Yard car park and the lanes connecting to the High Street, allowing Black Swan Yard car park to be developed for a mix of shops, housing and community space.
- 5 Improving accessibility to the town centre with on-street parking, disabled parking and drop-off facilities close to key destinations.



Ring Road & parking strategy



Western Avenue, River Anton and underpass connection to Rail Station



Eastern Avenue Roundabout and pedestrian underpass



Borden Gates roundabout and connections to town centre