

Chichester City Walls

7th January 2021

craft:pegg



Chichester's Historic Walls have been the defining feature of the city for 2000 years. Their presence has provided protection and marked boundaries and now place the city amongst a handful of settlements nationally that can claim an unbroken built fabric dating to the Roman period. The walls are respected as a piece of mixed heritage but are set apart from significant active use and their place in the city's identity is not in the foreground. Whilst the walls remain preserved no use has been found for them, their presence seems to be diminishing and their utility as a piece of brand identity.

Reinvigorating the walls as a part of the city identity through physical and programmatic interventions can provide a unique opportunity to reinforce the city's environmental and visual quality for both residents and visitors alike. The armature the walls provide a dual faced canvas for the provision of amenity and the projection of the city's identity.

This document identifies locations where the potential for positive intervention is greatest and goes on to identify specific initiatives that individually, and combined, can be brought forward to reinforce various qualities of the city. The inner face of the wall provides a special pedestrian experience whilst the outer wall and its immediate setting provide a clear statement of Chichester's historic identity and sets the tone for visitors as they pass-by or enter. Each initiative stands alone and each will have costs and benefits that may fit into forthcoming programmes and strategies. These ideas are not presented as designs rather a manifest of sites and obvious opportunities. They are not all potential sites nor are they all the potential opportunities that may be available for the walls and the immediate environment.

It is perfectly possible to continue with a neutral policy toward the walls however they represent such a key part of the City's authentic and specific identity that drawing them once again into the foreground of that identity will be an act of civic pride and possible catalyst for other initiatives to grow from.



Many sections of wall are physically or visually inaccessible. There are though ten key sections of wall that present themselves as viable points of engagement where intervention have the potential to heighten the walls identity and utility as a component of the cityscape. These are;

- 1 North Gate
- 2 Jubilee Gardens
- 3 Priory Road Bridge
- 4 East Gate
- 5 St Johns Road Carpark
- 6 Cawley Priory Car Parks
- 7 South Gate
- 8 South Gate Car Perk
- 8 Deanery Walls
- 9 West gate
- 10 Orchard Street Car Park

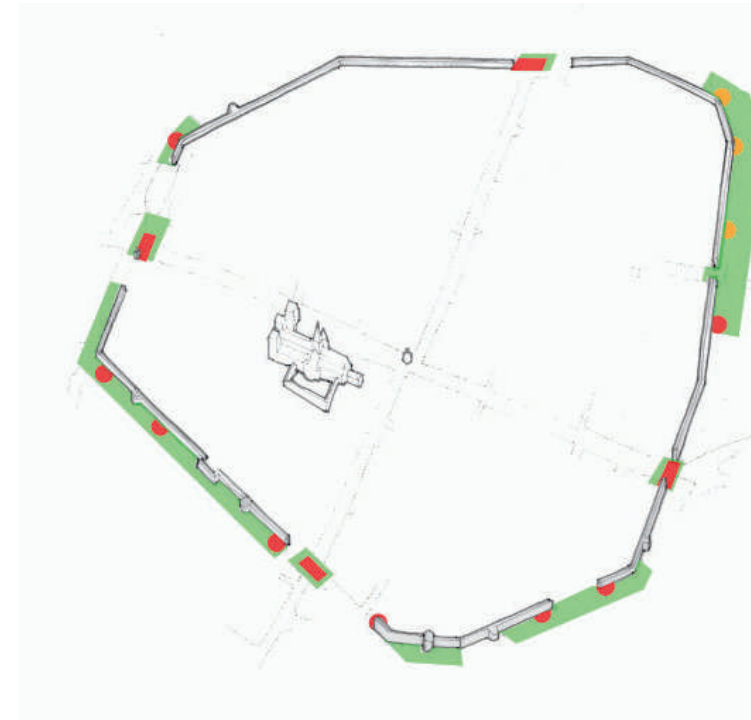


The wall circuit is based on a Roman foundation but there have been many phases of demolition and reconstruction. The walls project provides an opportunity to hunt down previously forgotten features and use them along with known features to articulate the walls history and learn about the city's past.

The sketch identifies known lost features (red) and the potential locations (orange) for, as yet unrecorded lost features.

Combining an active hunt for the walls archaeological remnants with creating a new identity and access pints for the walls will give the project a depth of content beyond a superficial brush up.

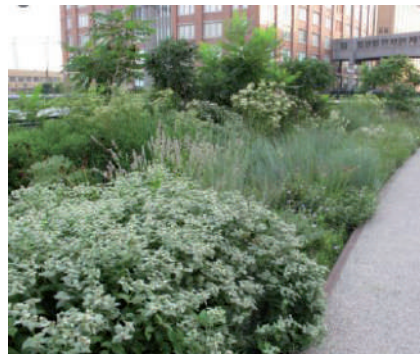
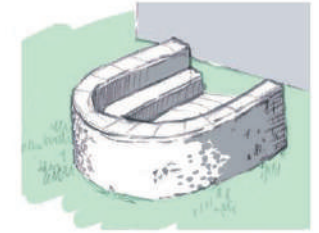
At this stage the lost features are only mapped in location where they align with spaces where the wall is visible from the exterior of the circuit. There will be others that may come forward through the process of consultation that will add to the tapestry of features that can be developed as part of the circuit narrative.



The tactics this report identifies are;



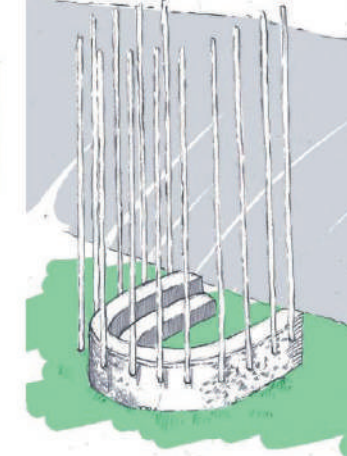
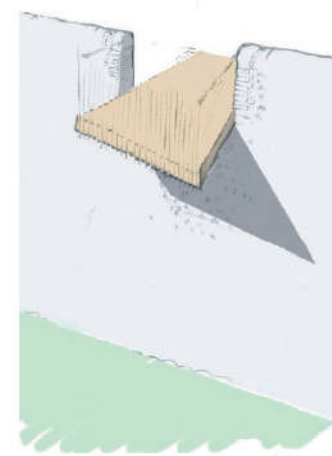
A, The creation of sculptural structures to articulate lost features and components of the Walls. The recent work of Italian artist Eduardo Tresoldi provides an excellent precedent for any largescale sculptural interventions intended to articulate the Walls former structures. The sense of lightness and grounding that is achieved through these works is something to emulate. Direct transposition would be impossible due to the robustness required of any structure inserted permanently into the public domain. However it would be quite possible to create features of tis nature in a viable material palette. Obvious sites for this type of work would be the historic gate locations and the sites of the lost towers along the walls.



B, The creation of new park and garden space. The outside face of the wall is scattered with a number of small inefficient cark parking facilities. These sites could be utilised to create new active park space that would also serve to create a green setting for the walls and communicate the City's commitment to environmental quality and high quality amenity for both it's residents and visitors.



C, The insertion of balconies and viewpoints through the parapet to create destinations. The parapet of the Walls is of varied age, some a modern development. The creation of secure railing panel and balconies will give strong punctuation and destination points along the wall. As well as creating variety along the wall walk balconies, particularly dramatic balconies if seen from out side the wall will act as an attractor drawing visitors to explore the walls to find particular Instagram worthy points.



D, The creation of a new bridge to link the wall work at a significant break.



E, The deployment of sculptural pieces to animate and articulate the walls history. Figurative sculptures can be a very useful device in permanently interpreting historic features, creating animation and act as the anchor to both historic and art trails. As a mode of animation statuary collections can be developed or relocated over months or years providing change to draw repeat visits and create curatorial opportunities. Individual sculptures could act to articulate both the physical environment but also multiple periods and aspects of Chichester's history

1 North Gate

The site of the North Gate remains a significant access point into the city core. This function has resulted in the complete removal of the features although the wall alignment survives in the adjacent property boundaries. Whilst any future realignment of the road would make creating a structural response less challenging there is sufficient space and surface area to mark the gateway and wall alignment in in both horizontal and vertical features.

Marking the imagined location and footings of the wall and gatehouse could be undertaken in granite setts. The use of fin walls and poles would allow high level sculptural structures to inter-mate the gateways presence and scale.

In addition the North Gate would prove a good location to populate with figurative statues as indicators of a key starting on the wall circuit walk.



2 Jubilee Gardens

Jubilee Gardens represents an excellent foreground to the walls and the inward face on Priory Park sets up an interesting relationship between the two spaces. The proximity to the high traffic New Park Road makes this the most viewed section of wall in the city.

The site is also the most exciting archaeologically with no known tower features but a strong likelihood that footings to lost towers lie below ground. Finding and articulating these features will significantly strengthen the impact of the walls in this area. The insertion of viewing panels and balconies within the reconstructed parapet will act as destinations from within but also intriguing signals from outside that there is an inner area worth exploring.

Sculptural representations of the lost towers might also provide a practical opportunity for new pedestrian access routes between Priory Park and Jubilee Gardens, reinforcing the weak pedestrian links between the city and two of its key institutions, the Hospital and University.



3 Priory Road Bridge

The principal of completing a section of the circuit walk with the introduction of a pedestrian bridge has been on the table for a long time. The benefits are obvious in re-pairing a gap in the wall and facilitating ease of access and mobility for wall walk users. The bridge also provides the opportunity to create a visual highlight on the wall walks and a destination in its own right. A simple singular bridge could be used for a more ambitious feature developed with seating and interpretation.



4 East Gate

The East Gate site is a complex space of competing road and pedestrian infrastructure in which the wall and gate house play a very minor part. However the site is one at which there is a significant amount of space, both vertical and horizontal to create a strong identity for the walls.

The view of the space from the east has a key role in determining the city's character in this formally prominent entry making this site a strong candidate for a large sculptural interpretation of the gateway image.

This prominence also suggests the site might also be populated with figurative sculptures to augment the sites public art figure of Keats.

From the south, the flank wall above the London Camera Exchange presents a great opportunity for an interpretive mural of the East Gate.

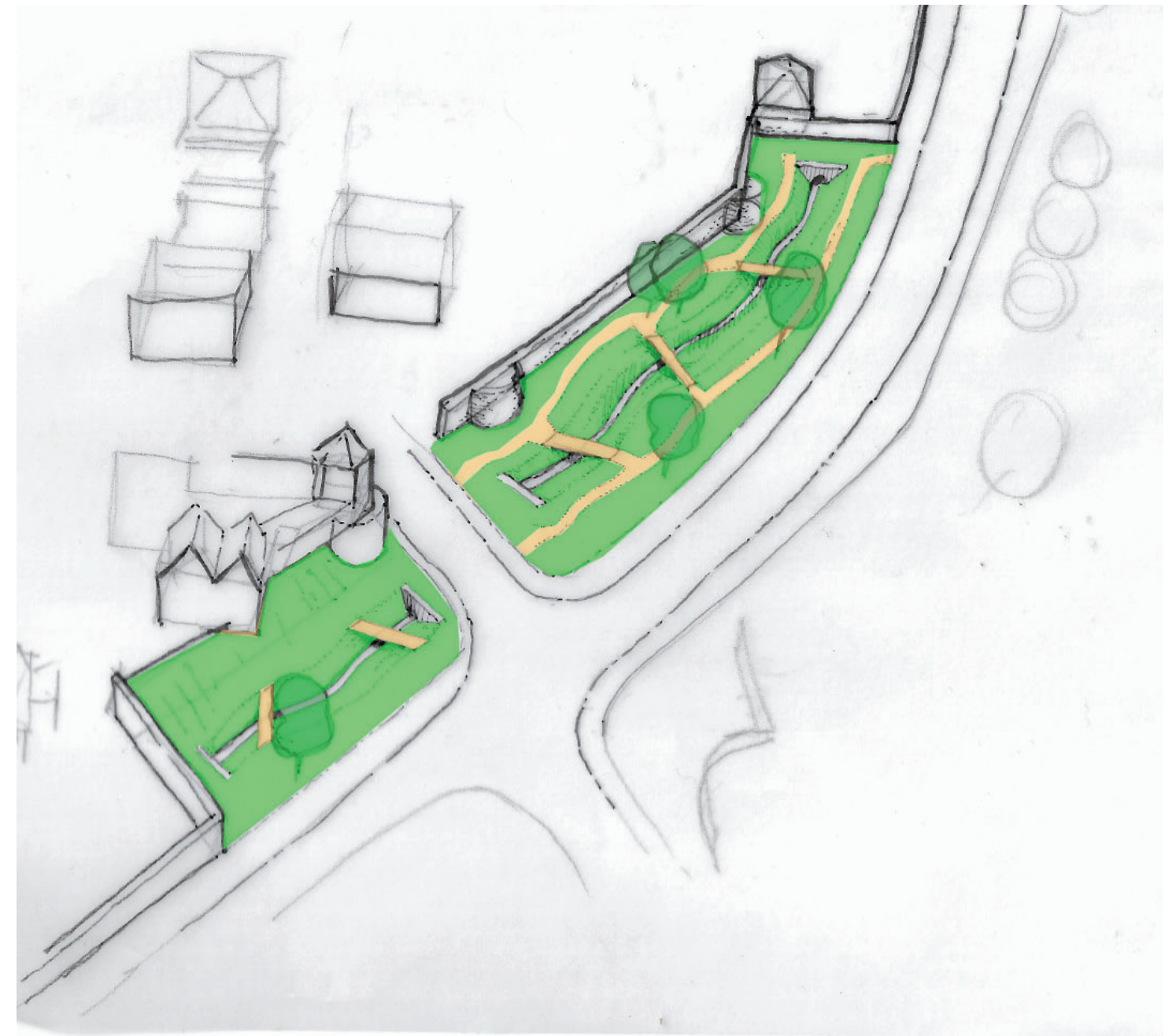


5 St Johns Road Car Park

Car Parks as the setting for the wall feature heavily in the southern section of the circuit. There is a fundamental decision to make about the character of the City, with regard to the relative value of parking utility and visual identity.

The St John Street Car Parks occupy a space that has hidden features both known towers locations and a culverted section of the River Lavant. In addition the location identity of the actual hard to discern due to the removal along a large section along the boundary with the Stride and Son building.

Closure or reduction of the par parks would create the opportunity to revive the wall as a feature intis location and make a strong statement regarding Chichester's identity by removing the car parks in favour of a new park creating setting, amenity and improved ecology by day lighting the culverted Lavant as a counterpoint to the harsh character of Market Avenue and the tracts of parking opposite in the Cattle Market Car Park.



6 Cawley Priory Car Parks

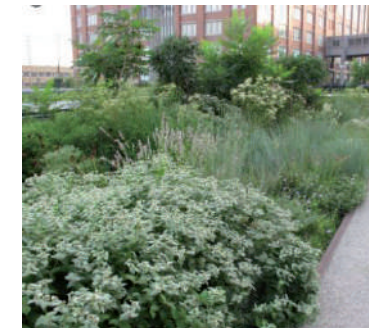
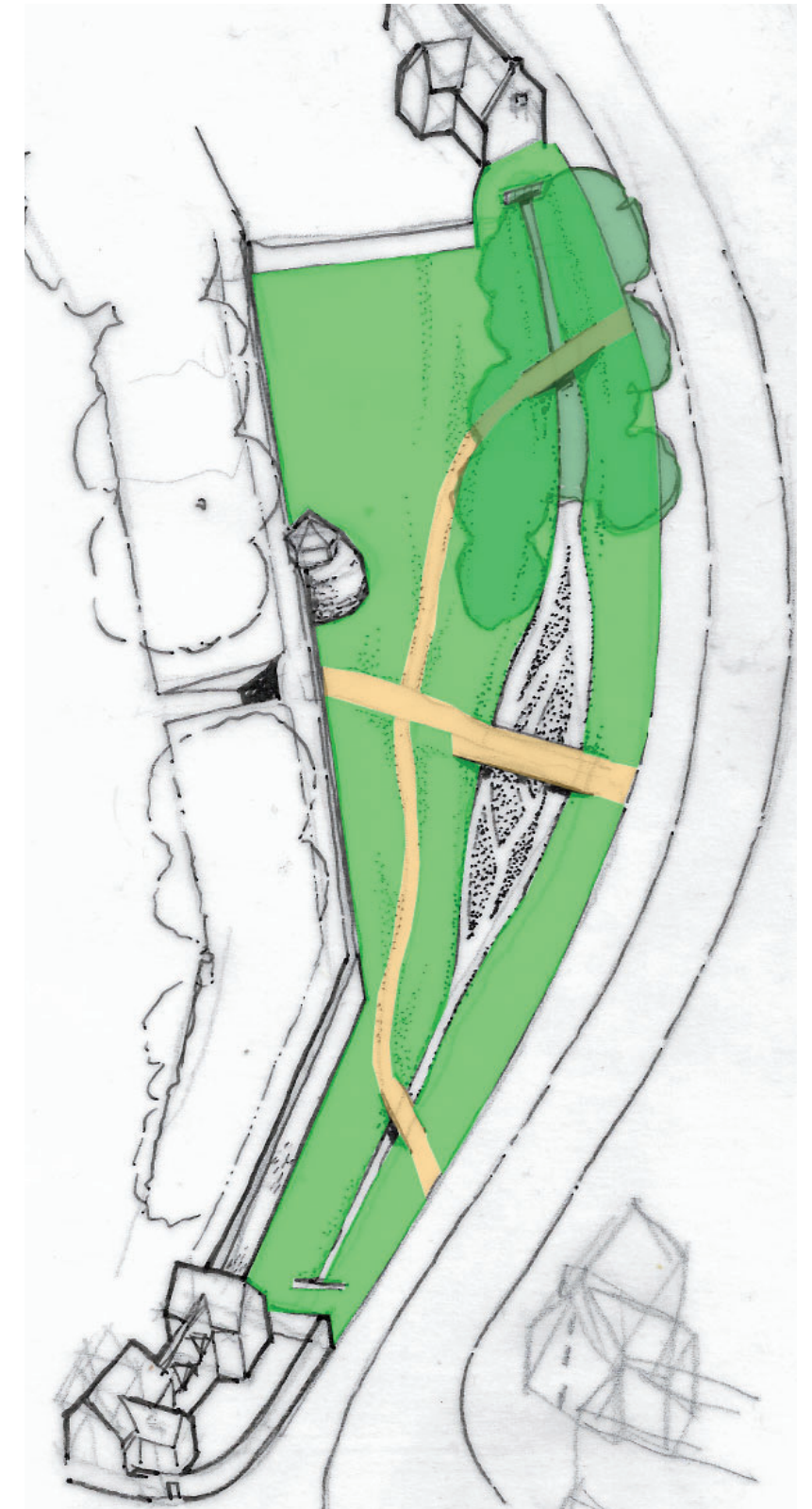
The Cawley Priory Car Parks represent the southern most extent of the wall circuit and a very interesting site.

In common with the St John Street Car park the relatively small car park south of the walls is constructed over the Lavant culvert. The car parks are linked by a small pedestrian path through the walls which give the area a unique quality. Within the walls the inner face embankment is a enclosed small park. The large internal carpark includes a significant number of mature trees, the densest tree block within the city.

The internal park could be significantly opened up and the character improved significantly with the removal of the enclosing railed fence. This form of enclosure can result in real and perceived risks to users whose exit routes are limited. The area is currently an under used asset within the City.

The external car park could easily augment the strategy suggested for the St Johns Street Car Parks with the daylighted Lavant the primary feature of a new park and garden.

There are few lost structures in this area however the extant structure could be revived and new balcony viewpoints established to further animate the walls from outside and create destinations from the inner side.



7 South Gate

The site of the South Gate remains a significant access point into the city core. This function has resulted in the complete removal of the features although the wall alignment survives in the adjacent property boundaries. Whilst a tight site sufficient space and surface area exist to mark the gateway and wall alignment in in both horizontal and vertical features.

Marking the imagined location and footings of the wall and gatehouse could be undertaken in granite setts. The use of fin walls and poles would allow high level sculptural structures to intermate the gateways presence and scale. This expression could be extended through the Cathedral Courtyard south of the Fountain pub along with figurative statues



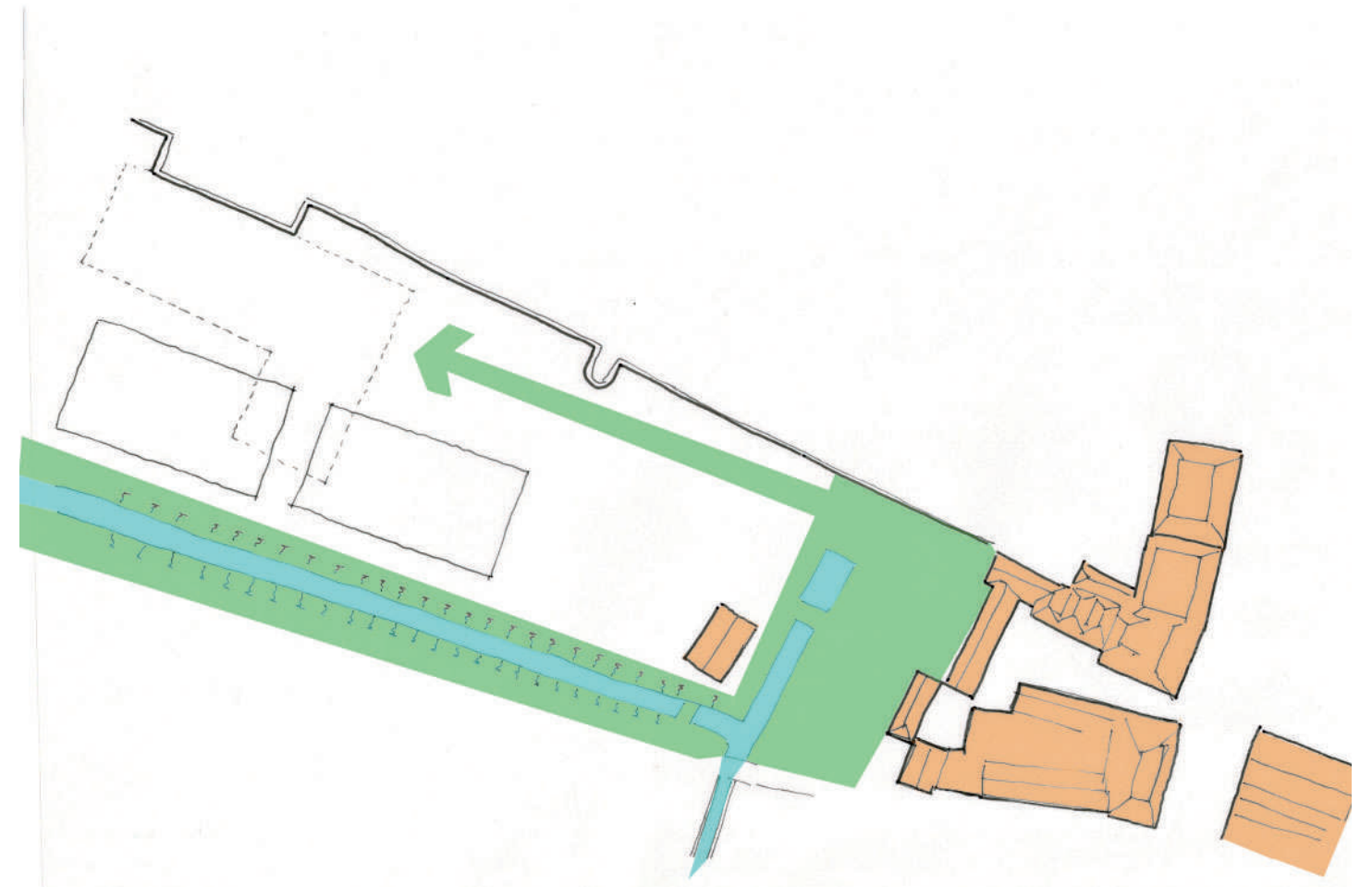
8 South Gate Car Park

The South Gate Car Park holds a remarkably significant position in the city. The site is built over and alongside the River Lavant, adjacent an important section of the surviving city walls, having one of the best views of the long section of walls and at the confluence of five pedestrian route ways. The site is the spring point for the Avenue de Chartres Bridge, the footpath to the railway station, two routes to South Street and the start point for the walk along the southern city walls.

This major node is apparently neither recognized nor celebrated, it's main features are hidden in what appears to be little more than a utilitarian yard.

Parking removal at this point would allow the space to become a pivotal and fully accessible public space. Both the City wall and river course would be focal points, additional traffic would be generated to businesses in Cathedral Courtyard and Deanery Farm Lane further small scale development opportunities might be available on the site of the car park itself.

A lowered threshold to the river and opening up of westward views along the wall will bring this forgotten gem of a space into a significant position in the City's open space network.



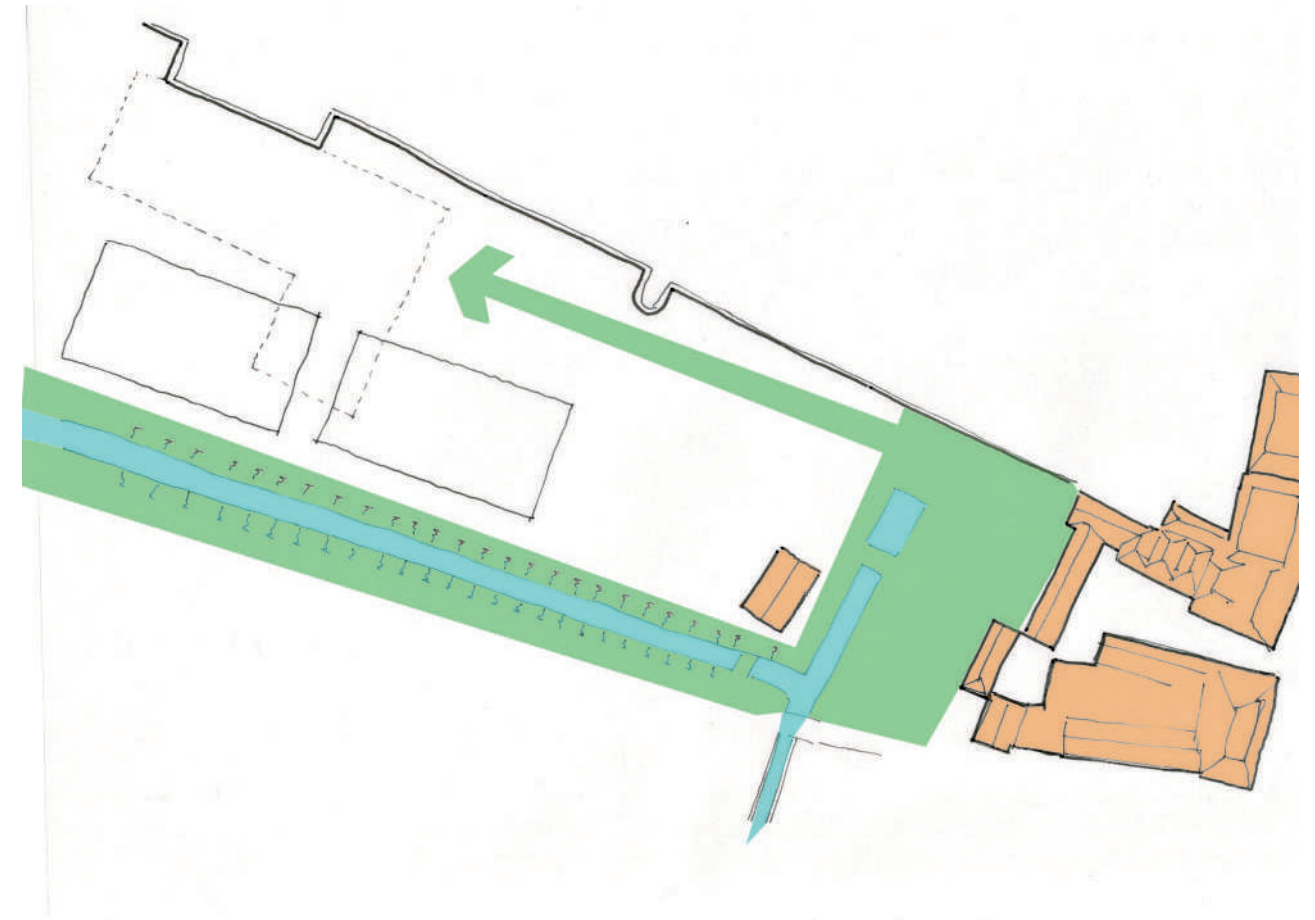
9 Deanery Walls

The Deanery Walls represents the longest section of walls intact and partially visible. It is unfortunate that vegetation management prevents the full wall section from the Cathedral Yard to Avenue de Chartres being visible. The impact of this long and varied section of wall being visible to visitors passing along the road would be significant.

This section of wall also has a number of known lost tower features the articulation of these in sculptural form would have a dramatic impact to the identity of the wall and aid in its interpretation.

The open ground south of the wall is cluttered with features, an opening up and regrading of the Lavant channel here could have significant ecological and character benefits. This could be further enhanced with the tight management of vegetation and the scattering of other structures in the vicinity of the walls allowing this fine section of wall to be more fully appreciated and significant to the city.

There seems little opportunity to improve the brick section of wall adjacent to Avenue de Chartres, however efforts should be made to improve the tight pedestrian access to the Bishops Palace Gardens adjacent to the "Old Cottage" car park.



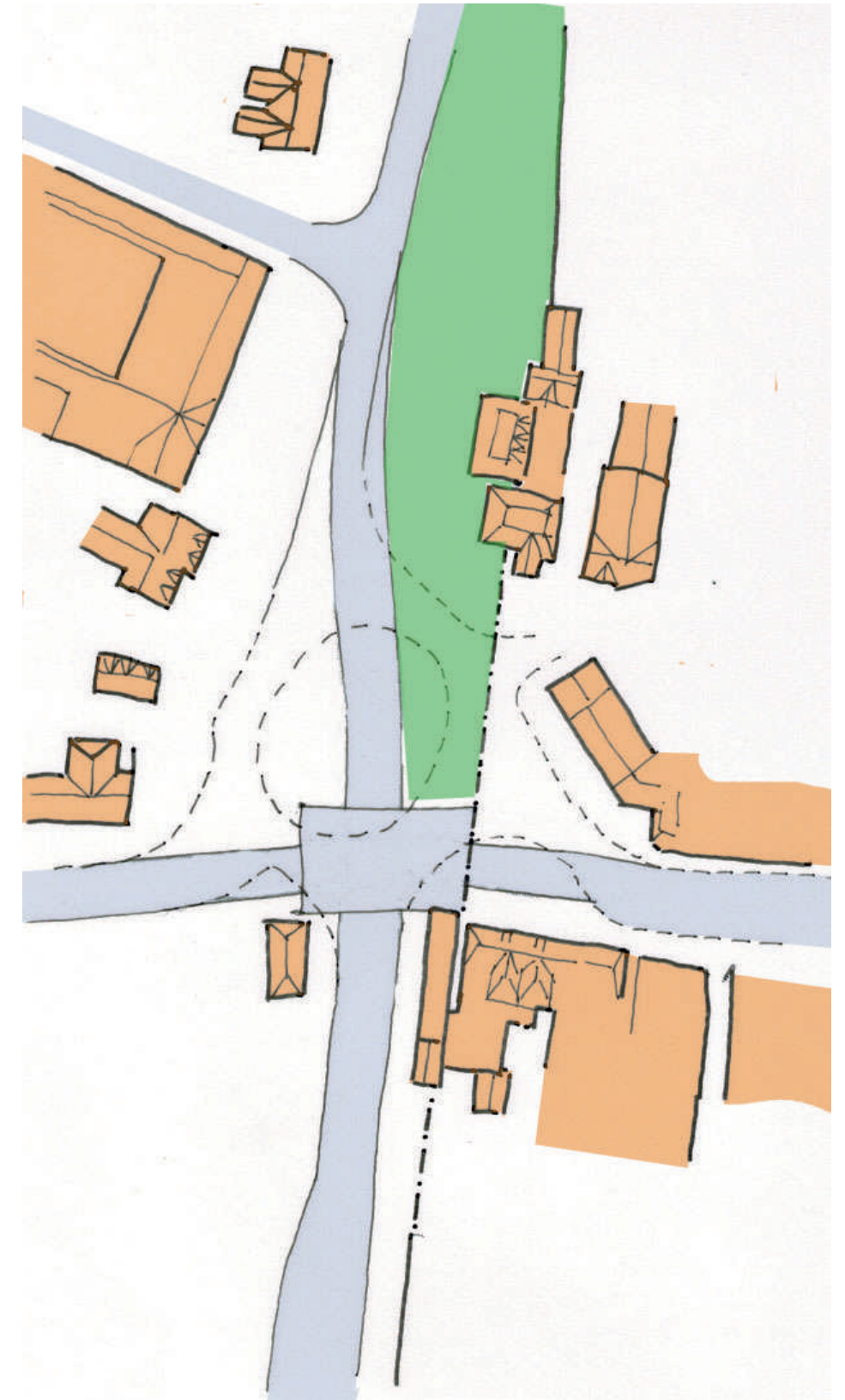
10 West Gate

The site of West Gate is obscured due to demolition and the Old Cottage building appended to the remaining wall although a short section of Gateway is visible in the roadside wall.

The area is characterised by a very large roundabout which may in time be reduced in scale. At this point there may be an opportunity to create a strong reinterpretation of the Gate Way in its original position.

With the current configuration of the site the roundabout island may prove a suitable point at which to create a strong and evocative sculptural piece setting the scene for the now absent walls.

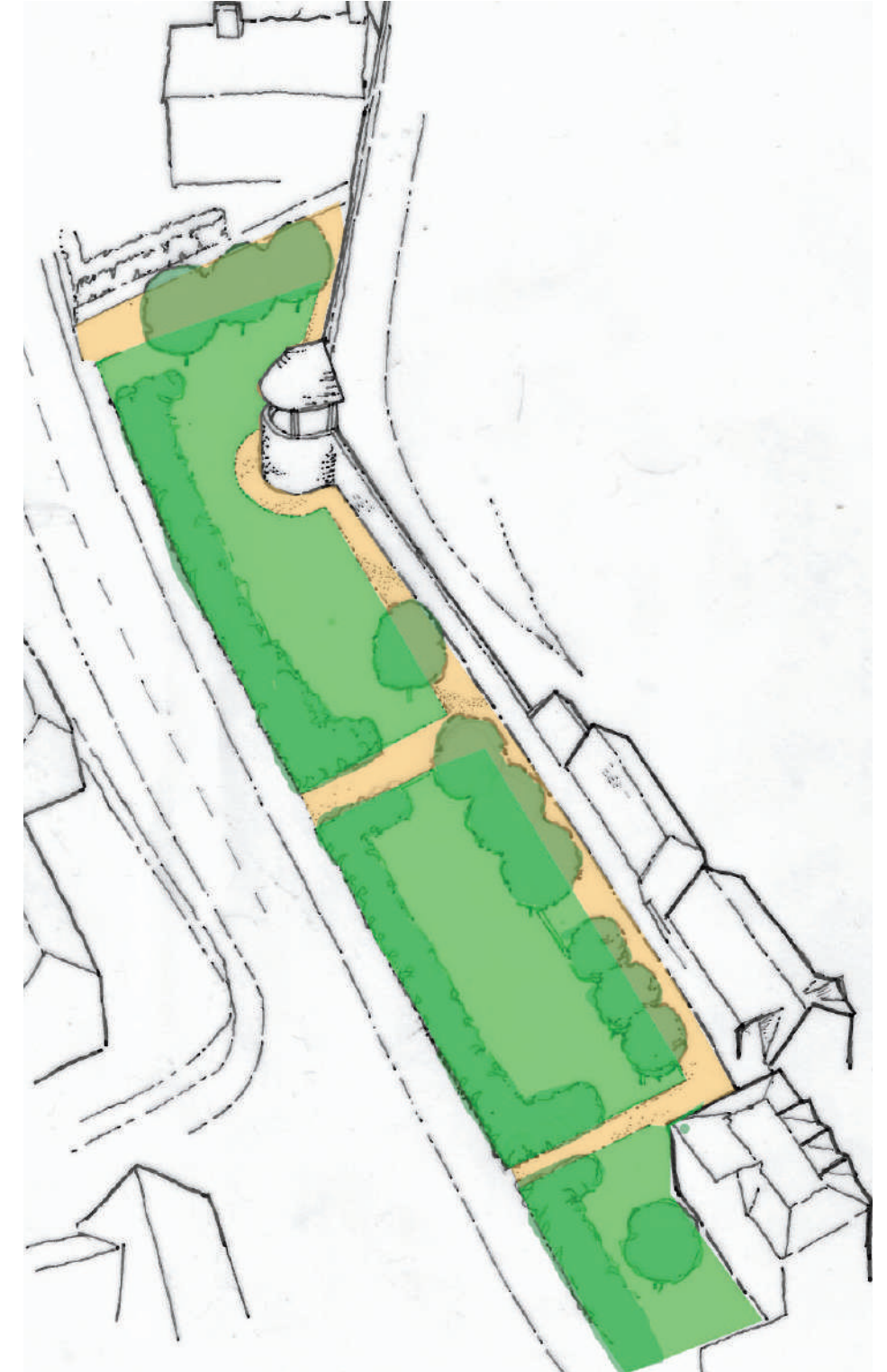
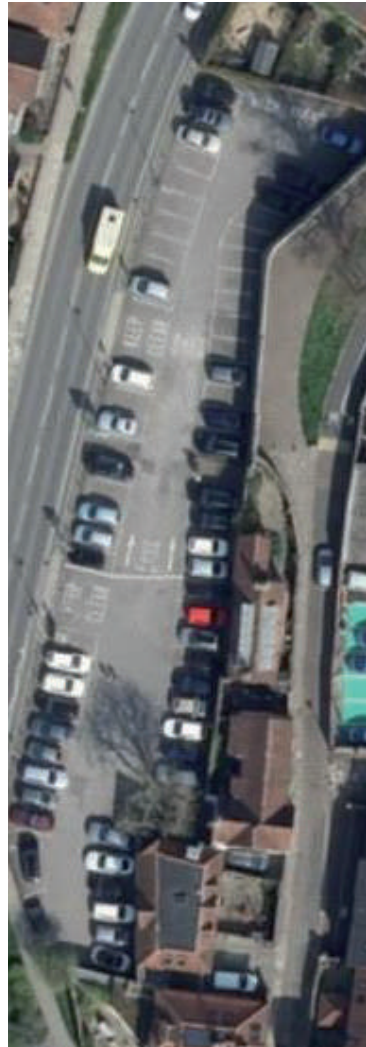
The literal footprint of the walls could be marked in granite setts and fine paving and the entrance further articulated by figurative sculptures.



11 Orchard Street Car Park

The Orchard Street Car park is the only point at which the walls can be identified in the North West Quadrant by passers by. When they do, it is one of the most exciting sections to view with various buildings and features embedded in the wall itself. The Wall Walk spring from north of the buildings and the distinct corner marks the site of a former tower.

Converting the car park into a small park with the addition of a tower interpretation will significantly reinforce the impact of the walls in this area. This will bring new green space amenity to a section of the circuit and city which is least well provided for in this respect.



Conclusion.

The City Walls have been one of the key components of Chichester's identity from the settlements very inception. In their current state they are secure, protected and a minor attraction for the city. There are numerous opportunities notes to utilise the wall as an enhanced destination and armature for development.

However, significant investment in the walls is likely to struggle to make a huge impact on visitor numbers to Chichester or local visits to the walls. Furthermore ramping up the visitor attraction status of the walls might serve to draw visitor focus away from the central area of the city where footfall and visitor dwell time is of the greatest benefit. The study suggests that the walls greatest value to Chichester is it's role of creating a setting and forming a connected open space armature around the city.

Strategically the adaptive re-use of the minor wall side car parks in tandem with the daylighting of the Lavant culvert would seem the most impactful use of the wall to create and express city identity, create community use and address the aspiration to lift the biodiversity of the city.