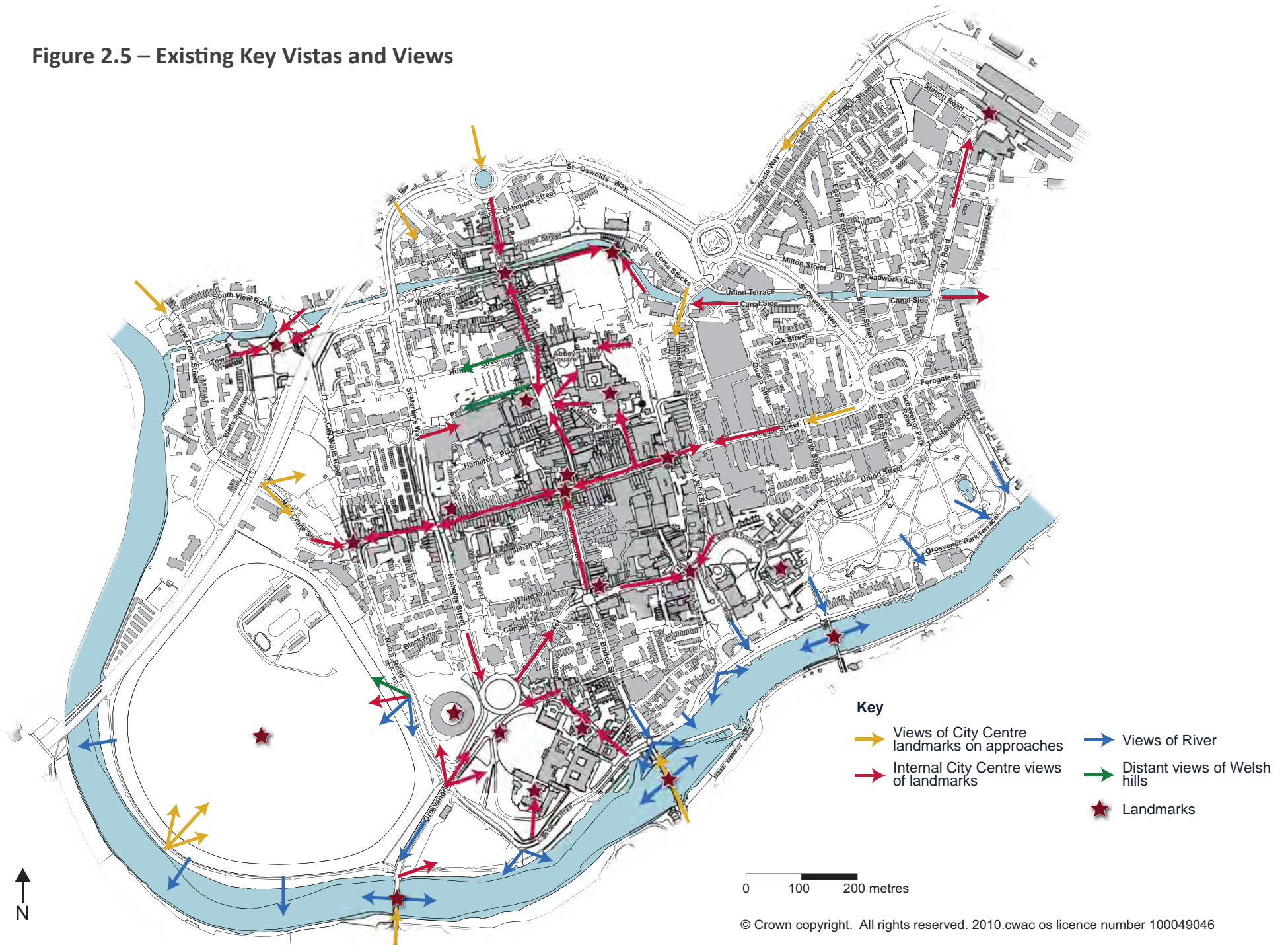


Figure 2.5 – Existing Key Vistas and Views



# Existing Public Realm Context

## 2.5 ~ Legibility

Legibility determines how easy it is to navigate and orientate within a place. Legibility is influenced by the following:

- Simplicity of the street layout
- Key orientation features
- Key landmark buildings that form skyline features or are particularly prominent
- Other landmark buildings
- Other landmark features
- Gateways
- Key views and vistas

### Simplicity of the Street Layout

Chester's historic street layout is based broadly around a grid that emanates from the Cross. The cross streets, with The Cross at the centre and the distinctive Rows, form a central reference point for visitors, marking the very centre of Chester. The legibility of this layout is compromised by parts of the inner ring road (outside the city walls) which do not conform to the grid pattern.

### Key Orientation Features

There are three key orientation features, which are integral to legibility in Chester. They are:

- The City Walls: broadly defines the extent of the city centre
- The River Dee: defines the southern and western boundary of the city
- The canal: In general this marks the northern boundary to the city

### Key Landmark Buildings and Other Landmark Buildings

There are a number of key landmark buildings in and around the core area of the 'cross streets' (see list in Figure 2.4). These tend to be buildings with spires or towers which appear in skyline views. In addition, there are a few other distinctive landmarks buildings outside this core area, which include the railway station building, St John's church, St Mary's Church and the castle and crown courts.

### Other Landmark Features

Other landmarks are formed by distinctive places or features, rather than buildings. These are listed in Figure 2.4. These include The Rows, the gateways on the city walls (Eastgate's iconic clock being the most prominent of these), The Cross, The Roman Amphitheatre and suspension bridge.

### Gateways

As described in Section 2.4 - Access and Movement, gateways into the city are poor. The Grosvenor Bridge and Old Dee Bridge representing the only two existing gateway landmark features found.

### Key Views and Vistas

The orientation features and landmarks identified in Figure 2.6 are integral to the key vistas and views experienced in Chester.

### Internal City Centre Views of Landmarks

Figure 2.6 illustrates the network of views which lead toward distinctive landmarks in the city centre, contributing to legible movements from place to place. Figure 2.6 shows that there is a general lack of local landmarks identifiable in views east of the city (beyond the city walls), which makes orientation between the railway station and city centre more difficult.

### Views of City Centre Landmarks on Approaches

Landmarks that form skyline features result in the creation of key vistas on the approaches to the city. The approach into Chester from Hoole Way (A56) benefits from a vista of the cathedral. The elevated section of St Martin's Way provides views of the city centre skyline, including the prominent Town Hall spire. From the southern approaches across the Grosvenor Bridge and Old Dee Bridge, the spires of St Mary's and St Michael's as well as the Castle and HQ create distinctive vistas. Views of the western city walls and city skyline are also possible from the A458 approach into the city from the west, as well as from the waterside circular route (around the western edge of the Roodee) for cyclists approaching the city.

### Views of the River

As a key orientation feature, views of the river and its bridges from higher ground in the city are important in orientation. This relies on an understanding that the river bends around the city centre, forming its southern and western boundary.

### Distant Views of Welsh Hills

A key part of Chester's heritage is its link to Wales and this is apparent in the views of the hills of North Wales from the elevated position on Northgate Street.

### Relevance to the PRDG

The following bullet points summarise the key points relating to existing legibility which are to be addressed in the PRDG.

- Although the city is compact and the historic streets laid out as a logical grid, the legibility of the city is compromised by the inner ring road, which does not conform to this pattern and creates a barrier to movement between the city centre, river and railway station. Legibility must be improved to address this.
- An understanding of Chester's key orientation features (City Walls, River Dee and canal) should be promoted through the wayfinding strategy.
- The lack of distinctive landmarks in the eastern part of the study area (between the city walls and railway station) should be addressed through the creation of new landmarks (at gateway locations).
- As highlighted in Section 2.4, generally gateways at the city centre's approaches are not distinctive. These should be strengthened to assist orientation.
- Existing views and vistas should be protected and enhanced, particularly the rare views of the Welsh Hills. The lack of distinctive views and vistas in the eastern part of the city centre should be addressed in tandem with the creation of distinctive gateways and landmarks.



Grosvenor Bridge