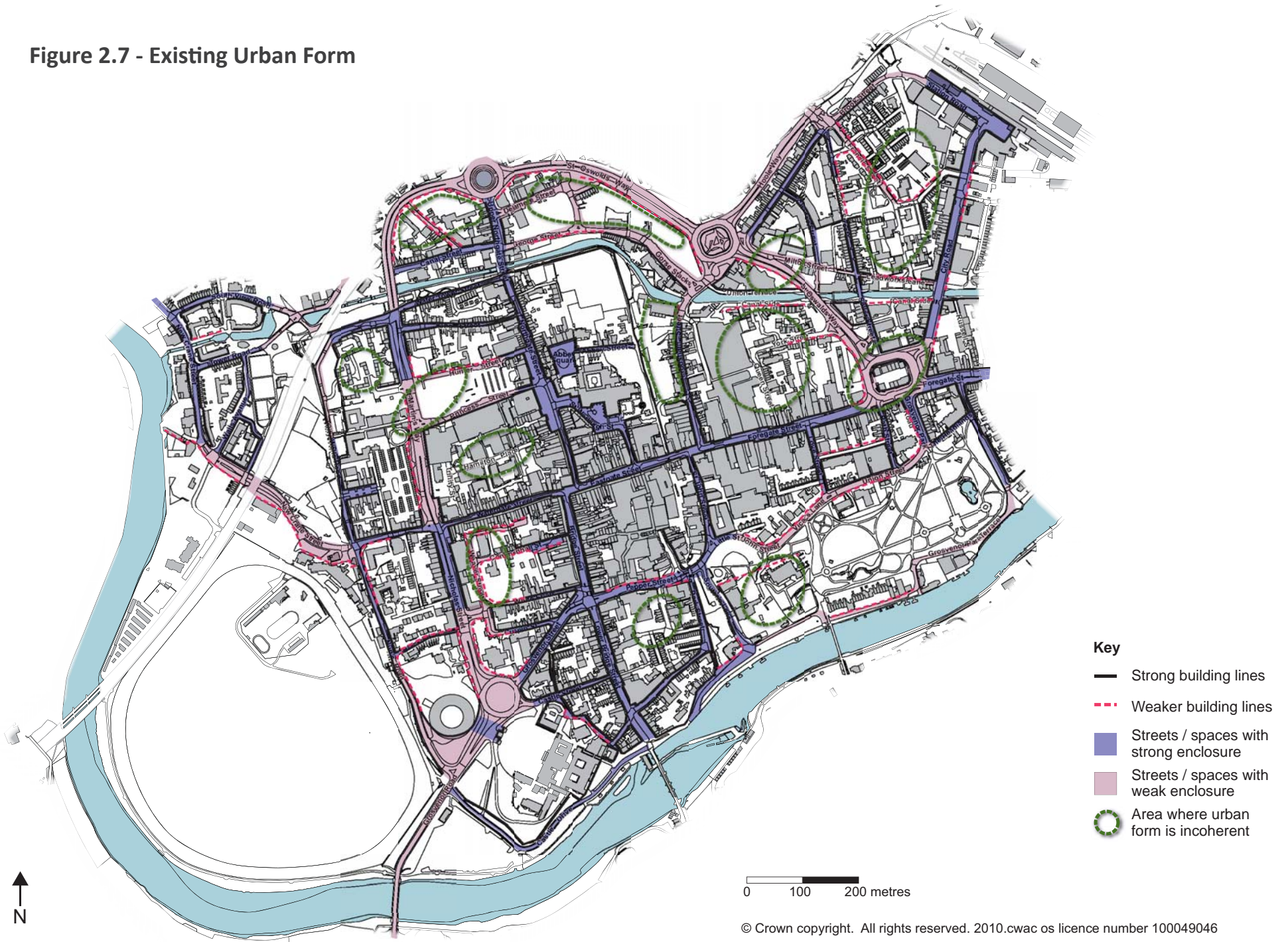


Figure 2.7 - Existing Urban Form



Existing Public Realm Context

2.6 ~ Urban Form and Land Use

Existing Urban Form

Chester's strong grid layout and historic built form means that in general the city has strong building lines and well-defined and well-enclosed streets and spaces. The exception to this is the ring road, particular the purpose built sections which cut across the historic urban grain. This creates some streets and spaces with poorer enclosure at some of the key entry points to the city. In addition, many of the internal side streets within perimeter blocks tend to have weaker building lines, resulting in pockets of incoherent urban form.



Strong urban form to cross streets



Modern development has created incoherent urban form in past



Backland area with weak urban form



Traditional terraces streets within city centre with strong building lines



Strong building lines on cross streets

Figure 2.8 - Existing Land Use



Existing Land Use

Figure 2.8 Shows the primary retail area is concentrated around The Rows and extends along the 'cross streets' to the city walls to the north and south. The Rows themselves provide a unique first floor galleried walkway edged by shops and businesses, many of which are independent. This is quite different from the national retailers more commonly found at street level in the core of the city. Linked to the Rows is the Grosvenor Shopping Centre which in-fills a large urban block in the heart of the city.

To the west, retail along Watergate Street is cut short by the ring road. To the east, the prime retail function extends beyond the city walls along Foregate Street towards the Bars roundabout. Anchor stores are in evidence along Foregate Street beyond the City Walls and these destinations influence pedestrian flows across the city. Upper Bridge Street is a busy retail street, but this function becomes more secondary in nature closer to the river along Lower Bridge Street.

There are a series of well developed retail circuits around the city, but these could be strengthened to improve the shopping environment. The proposed redevelopment of the indoor market and the Forum Shopping Centre as a new mixed use development, including more national retailing, would add to the mix and quality of the offer.

Within and around the City Walls there is a rich mix of other uses including offices and professional services, residential developments including city apartments and more traditional housing, cultural and civic uses and leisure uses (most notably places to eat and drink and hotel accommodation). Special uses, such

as Chester racecourse, add another dimension to the city centre and the racecourse transforms the ambience of Chester on race days. There is scope to extend the leisure and culture offer in the city and there are proposals for a new performing arts centre/ theatre, for example. Developing these types of facilities would help to extend visits and improve the night-time economy.

Relevance to the PRDG

The following bullet points summarise the key points relating to existing urban form and land use which are to be addressed in the PRDG.

- Address the issue of poor enclosure at key entry points in the city through the design of the public realm to strengthen streets and enhance gateways.
- Address the poor enclosure and incoherent urban form in backland areas by improving the appearance of internal side streets. This could also encourage further retail/business opportunities in these areas and strengthen shopping circuits.
- There is a need to enhance and promote The Rows as a unique shopping experience.
- Raise the quality of the public realm, east of the City Walls to reflect the importance of Foregate Street as prime retail extending beyond the City Walls.
- Strengthen the links between Bridge Street and Lower Bridge Street as important streets extending to the river.
- Strengthen minor (see previous comment regarding backland areas) and major retail circuits through the design of the public realm.
- Develop a public realm which will support future leisure/culture development opportunities and Chester's evening and night-time economy.