

# Character Area Five: Gillygate



## Overview

Gillygate and the southern part of Bootham are of medieval origin but now local shopping and residential streets are of mixed 18th and 19th century character ❶. Unlike elsewhere in the city, houses built directly on the former city wall ditch and alongside St Mary's Abbey wall have escaped the extensive clearance that took place in the early 20th century.

Over the last 30 years the quality of shops and businesses here has risen generally. There are still exceptions, especially at the southern end of Bootham and Clarence Street, where shops are vacant, poorly maintained or garishly painted. The area remains an important gateway to the city centre but is blighted by heavy traffic. Until this is resolved, this issue will suppress further improvement.

### Boundaries

This area consists of Gillygate and several side streets, including Portland Street and Claremont Terrace. The south eastern and south western boundaries are defined by the old city and St Mary's Abbey walls. The northern edge is defined by the grounds of Bootham School and by the car park and modern university buildings on Clarence Street.

This character area only includes the southern end of Bootham. The northern end is considered in character area 2 (Bootham) because the character of the two parts differs- the southern end is predominantly commercial whereas the northern end is residential. The southern end also suffers from traffic problems associated with the Gillygate junction.

Bootham Bar is considered in character area 4 (Museum Gardens and Exhibition Square) because of its relationship with Exhibition Square.

### Historical development

In the mid-12th century Gillygate was developed on the south east side with building plots running up to the city walls. Beyond Gillygate

was an open space called the Horsefair extending up to the junction of Wigginton and Haxby Roads.

The church of St Giles, from which the street takes its name, was situated on the north western side opposite the present junction with Lord Mayor's Walk. By the 17th century, development was still limited to the wall side of the road and the church had been demolished. On the other side of the road were open fields.

The city's rapid growth in the first half of the 19th century necessitated further expansion outside the walls. The Ordnance Survey map of 1851 shows the other side of Gillygate built up and Bootham Row created along with two side streets off it. Portland Street and Claremont Terrace are not shown so must have been built after this date ❷.

In the 1970s, Gillygate escaped demolition plans to make way for a purpose-built inner ring road, following pressure from conservation groups. Despite this, it is still part of the inner ring road now.

Since the 1970s Gillygate has steadily improved its retail opportunities. Activity has been boosted by De Grey Court, a modern landmark at the end of Gillygate, and other recent extensions to York St John University on the corner of Clarence Street and Lord Mayor's Walk.

### Ambience and use

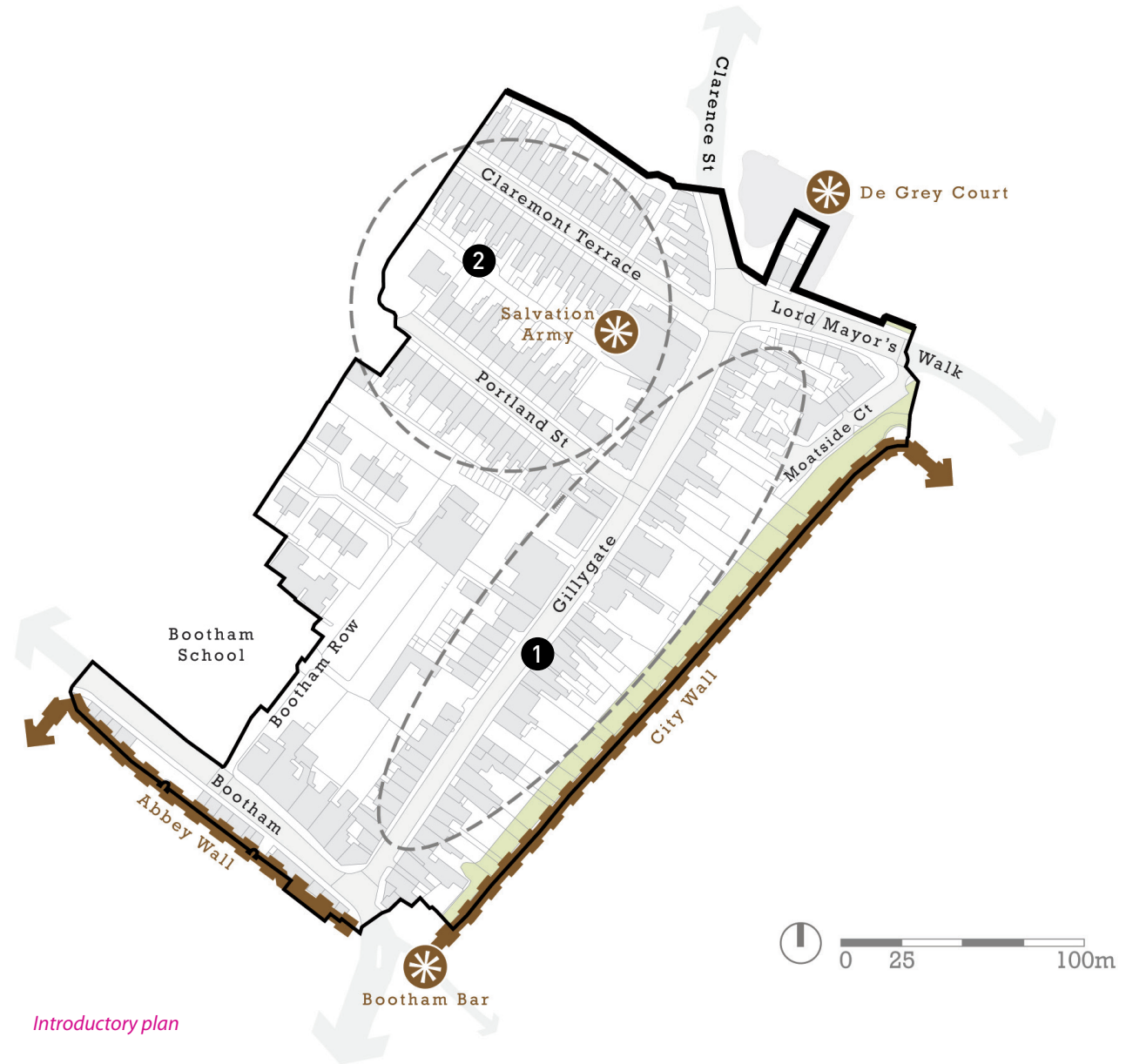
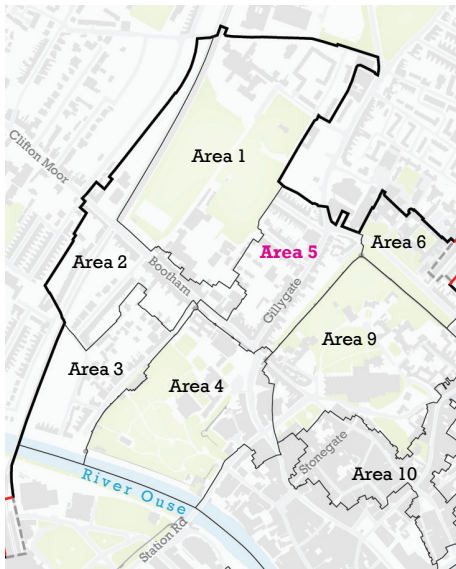
Gillygate has a good mix of independent retail and commercial uses. Its proximity to the city centre and York St John University means there are high numbers of pedestrians and a buzz of activity throughout the day and evening.

However, busy traffic junctions at either end of the street and the high number of buses and lorries make the street congested and polluted. The coach-drop off point and car park at Clarence Street means Gillygate is heavily used by pedestrians, who are relegated to narrow pavements and kept behind railings.

Part One: Understanding the City > Character Areas > Five: Gillygate

- 1 18th and 19th century buildings now containing small shops and offices
- 2 Late 19th century terraced houses
- ☼ Landmark
- ▬ City and Abbey walls
- ▬ Conservation Area boundary
- ▬ Character area boundary

Area 5 location plan



Introductory plan









## Designation

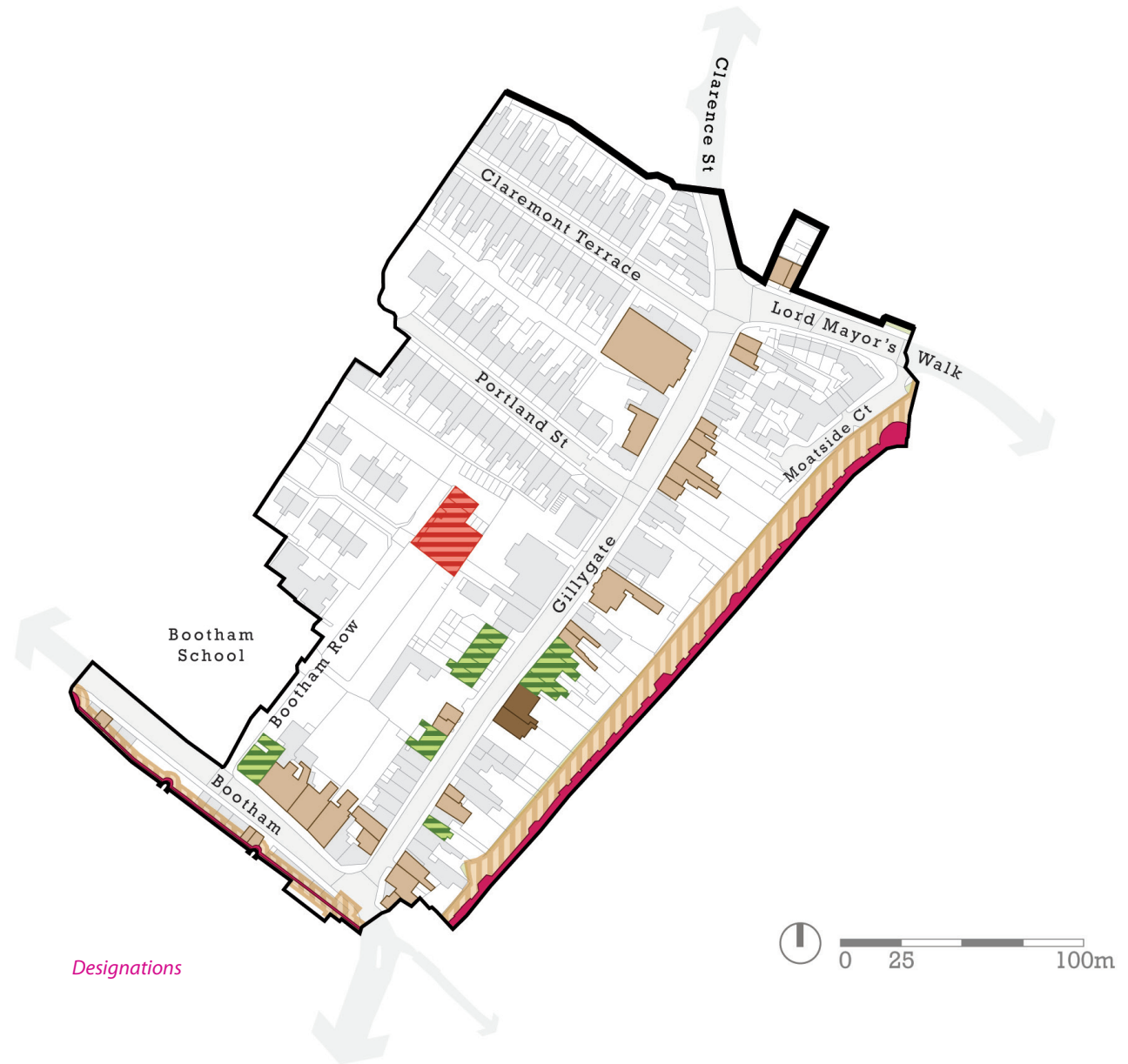
There are two Grade II\* listed buildings, Nos. 26 and 28 Gillygate, and a selection of Grade II listed buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries. The best unlisted examples have been designated as buildings of merit; some have attractive historic shop fronts.

There is only one detracting building, BBC Radio York at the end of Bootham Row. Fortunately, its hidden location means it makes little impact on the appearance of the area.



*No. 26 Gillygate is Grade II\* listed*

-  Schedulded Ancient Monument
-  Grade I Listed Building
-  Grade II\* Listed Building
-  Grade II Listed Building
-  Building of merit
-  Detractor
-  Conservation Area boundary
-  Character area boundary



## Streets & Spaces

### Gillygate and Bootham

The streets are tightly enclosed by buildings on either side. They have varied and attractive groups of 18th and 19th century buildings. Those on Gillygate are of a similar building line but a range of heights and styles creating an interesting street scene. The plots which run up to the city wall are longer than those on the northern side, the rears of which have been used for car parking. On Bootham there is a rare surviving row of buildings still attached to the Abbey wall. Due to the constrictions of the site, these are only one room deep.

The concrete slab pavements in Gillygate are very narrow, especially around the junctions with Bootham and Clarence Street. Bootham is fairly wide and provides excellent historic views of Bootham Bar and the Minster beyond. The views from Gillygate are not particularly inspiring – the city walls cannot be seen and to the north is the modern brick façade of the University's De Grey Court.

There is very little greenery in the area. The ramparts and ditch are incorporated into private gardens and therefore inaccessible; the wall walk can be accessed from Bootham Bar. There is a small green space on Bootham where some buildings were cleared from the Abbey wall. However, due to the volume of traffic it is not a space where people dwell.



*18th and 19th century buildings on Gillygate share the same building line but have a varied roof line*

### Side streets

There are two late 19th century side streets, Claremont Terrace and Portland Street. The latter is the more attractive, the terraced houses having front gardens bounded by iron railings, whereas Claremont Terrace has lost them. Both roads are wide enough to accommodate on-street parking in a manner that does not dominate the street.

### Car parks and yards

To the west of Gillygate is some public and private car parking, covering an area of demolished industrial buildings and yards. One of the last yards is Miller's Yard, belonging to a former bakery.



*Attractive railings of late 19th century houses on Portland Street*

## Buildings

### 18th century

A good number of substantial 18th century houses survive, mostly on the south east side of Gillygate and the northern side of Bootham. Almost all the ground floors of these buildings have been converted to a commercial use. Two of the finest examples are below:

Nos. 26 and 28 Gillygate were originally built in 1769 as two houses but were converted for use as doctor's surgery and shop in the 19th century.

Nos. 3 and 5 were built in Gillygate in 1797. The ground floor has been converted for a shop with a 19th century doorway added to each side. The original central doorways and upper windows remain unaltered. This pair of houses is now in a poor state of repair.



*Nos. 3-5 Gillygate, a pair of houses built in 1797 but converted to shops in the 19th century*

### 19th century

The 19th century buildings on Gillygate contribute to the attractive historic street scene and demonstrate a wider variety of styles than those of the 18th century. Some examples include Nos. 30-36 and those with attractive shop fronts such as the art nouveau No. 8.

Nos. 30-36 is a row of four identical buildings with shops on the ground floor and residential use above. There are round-headed windows on the first floor, an element of 'Romanesque' style. Dormer windows with attractive bargeboards protrude from the slate roof.

Of the side streets, Portland Street is the best quality, containing a selection of two and three storey houses with ground floor bay windows and deep set round-headed doorways. A few poor quality roof extensions and plastic windows have crept in on this street and neighbouring Claremont Terrace.

The only public building in the area is the large Salvation Army Citadel on Gillygate built 1882-3 to the design of E. J. Sherwood of London. The main material is red brick with decorative features picked out in white paint. A key feature is the battlement parapet.



*A row of attractive 19th century buildings on Gillygate*

## Traffic & Movement

### Gillygate

Gillygate is a busy stretch of the inner ring road where several A-roads meet. It is heavily used by all modes of transport – cars, buses, delivery vans and pedestrians- and one of the most polluted in York. Gillygate is the one of the main routes to two car parks just outside the character area which contribute to the high volumes of traffic - one off Marygate (cars) and the other off Clarence Street/ Union Terrace (cars and coaches).

Due to the street's narrow width, the large vans and buses are especially detrimental to its appearance and of the air quality for pedestrians.

Delivery vans service shops on Gillygate through the front as there is no access at the rear. The vans cause congestion and block pavements. Traffic lights at either end of Gillygate further slow traffic which is stationary for much of the time. The traffic problems undoubtedly compromise the attractiveness of the street to retailers and shoppers.



*Narrow pavements, delivery vans, and large numbers of buses create a hostile environment for pedestrians on Gillygate*

### **Gillygate/ Bootham junction**

Three key roads combine at the southern end of Gillygate creating an awkward pinch point. The junction creates congestion for traffic, as buses struggle to turn into Gillygate from Exhibition Square. Narrow pavements and railings make it an unpleasant environment for pedestrians to cross. Furthermore, the visual clutter of signs, traffic lights and railings detracts from the setting of Bootham Bar.

### **Gillygate/ Clarence Street/ Lord Mayor's Walk junction**

This is another busy intersection of three roads which was widened in 1958 following the demolition of houses on the corner of Lord Mayor's Walk and Gillygate. This left a small triangular piece of left over space on the corner of Lord Mayor's Walk.

The large Union Terrace car park just outside the area adds to the pressure on the junction. Pedestrians using the car park or visiting the University face problems such as narrow pavements and obstructive railings.

*Pedestrians hurry to cross the very busy Gillygate / Bootham junction during a rare break in the traffic*



*Large volumes of traffic leave Gillygate at the junction with Lord Mayor's Walk and Clarence Street*



## Issues & Opportunities

### Strengths

- Good selection of varied 18th and 19th century buildings which create an attractive street scene on Bootham and Gillygate. Many still possess original architectural features and there are some good shop fronts.
- From Bootham there is a strategic view to Bootham Bar and the Minster beyond



*Traffic congestion and signage clutter in the view along Bootham to the bar*

## Weakness and opportunities

### Short term

- Railings and other clutter at Gillygate/ Bootham junction hinder pedestrian movement and detracts from views to the Bar. Removal of unnecessary clutter should be a priority. Implementing diagonal crossings should also be considered.
- There are no alternatives to parking on the pavement for delivery vans visiting Gillygate. However, this impedes traffic and pedestrian flow. Restricting delivery van sizes and hours in a similar way to the footstreets would enable the problem to be managed more effectively.
- Traffic light re-phasing may reduce stationary traffic on Gillygate. Technical transport analysis would be needed to confirm this.
- Claremont Terrace and Portland Street have a few poor quality alterations. An article 4 Direction should be put in place to control permitted development in order to conserve their architectural character.
- The staggered group of Nos.77-81 at the corner of Gillygate and Clarence Street are prominent in the townscape but include a building at risk (No. 79, following a wall collapse). Its refurbishment would do much to improve the appearance of this 'gateway' into the historic core (see also the vacant site opposite, discussed below).






### Long term

- The traffic issues in the area need to be considered at a strategic level across the city. Pavements should be widened wherever achievable and it may be possible to have a diagonal pedestrian crossing at the Gillygate/Clarence Street junction to improve movement.
- There is an enhancement opportunity at Miller's Yard. As one of the last historic light industrial sites in the conservation area, it is a reminder of the industrial past of the historic core. Any proposals for the site should take into account this interest.
- There is a small space on the corner of Lord Mayor's Walk and Gillygate left over from the demolition of buildings which detracts from the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area. Development of this site - either with landscaping or building - should be of a high-quality because this is a gateway to the city centre, and should seek to assist in improving this busy junction for the pedestrian.



*Railings hinder pedestrian movement and street clutter ruins views at the junction of Bootham and Gillygate*





Existing

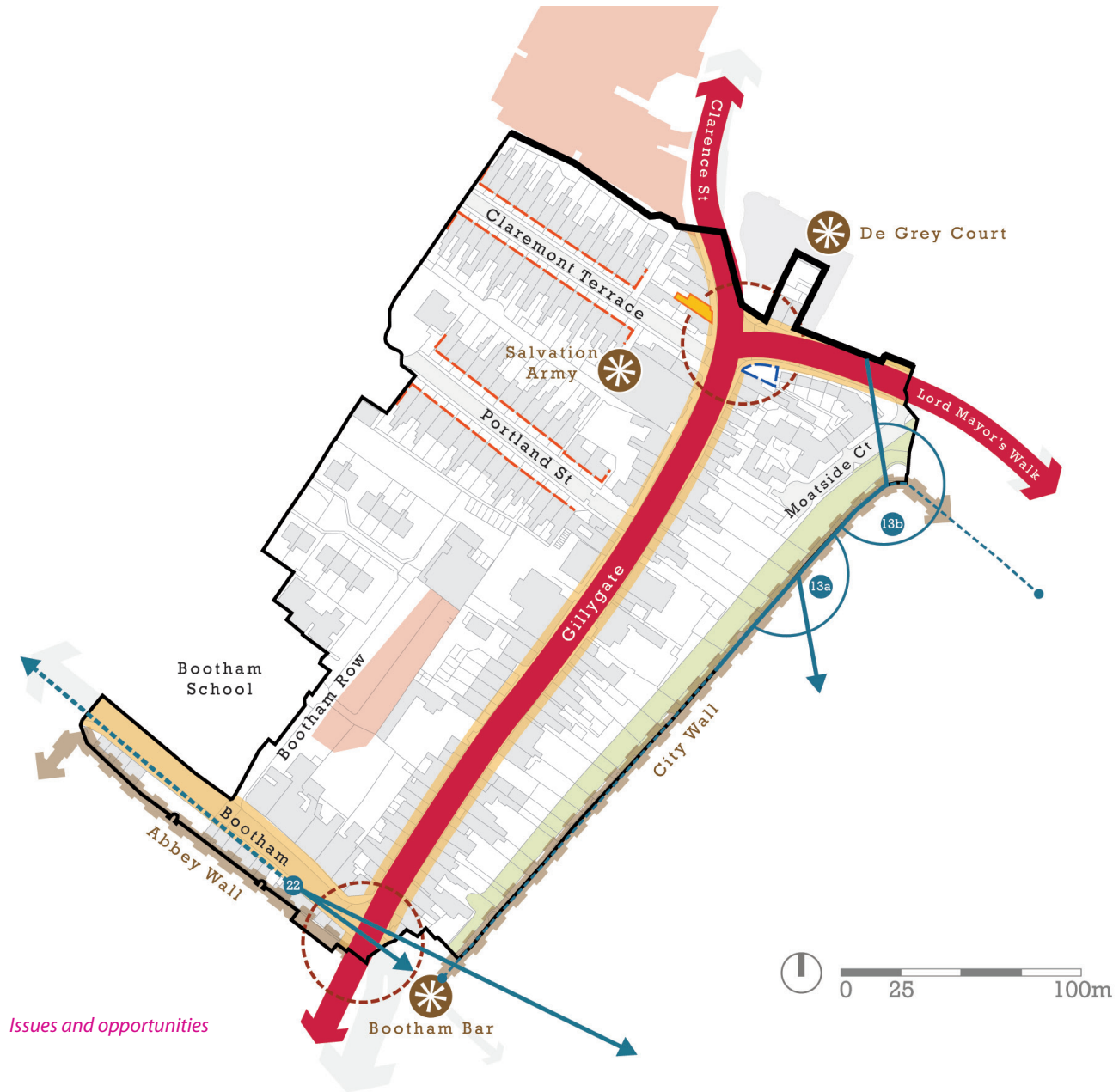
-  Character threatened by uncontrolled alteration
-  High volumes of traffic
-  Building at risk
-  Landmark
-  City Wall

Opportunities

-  Potential for public space improvement along busy roads
-  Junction improvements
-  Development opportunity at vacant site (currently green space)
-  Potential for long term redevelopment of car parks

Views

-  Strategic fixed with focal point
-  Strategic dynamic
-  Strategic dynamic panoramic
-  Strategic dynamic panoramic with focal point



Issues and opportunities