

CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

'Chester: Exploring the Evolution of an English Frontier City': A New Vision in Response to [CWaC Archaeology Service Users Consultation](#)

The Chester Archaeological Society welcomes this opportunity to reaffirm its considered belief in the wide-ranging value and potential of the borough's historic environment, of the Council staff charged with protecting, investigating and helping people to appreciate it, and of the need for investment.

Summary

- *National and local policies lay great emphasis on the preservation, enhancement and exploration of the historic environment for the benefit of the present and future generations. In its One City Plan CWaC sees its internationally important historic environment as a 'key driver' of Chester's future success. Research on the continent and in the UK clearly demonstrates the significant economic, social and personal benefits to be gained through well conceived proactive management of heritage assets. (Section 1.0)*
- *However, CWaC's plans fail to spell out how these benefits will be won, and in view of recent and imminent losses of staff and facilities it is now difficult to see how the potential of the borough's historic environment can be realised. Indeed, in comparison with some other authorities CWaC is now 'punching well below its weight' in this field, especially given the wealth and international importance of its heritage assets. (Sections 2.0 and 3.0)*
- *We advocate a fresh vision for Chester's past which attempts to encapsulate the significance and character of the city and could create a sense of identity for the whole borough and a 'unique selling point' for tourists. This overarching narrative should become the foundation of new museum displays as well as of on-site interpretation; it should guide research and activities that bring the historic environment to life, refresh our understanding of it, and involve the voluntary sector. (Section 4.0)*
- *We 'flesh out' this vision with suggestions of specific objectives. These are most likely to be achieved under the leadership of staff with expert local knowledge, most appropriately employed by CWaC. The archaeological services currently within CWaC (HET) and Cheshire Shared Services (APAS) provide complementary skills dealing with the preservation and enhancement of Cheshire and Chester's historic environment and are vital to the authority's strategic aims; they should be unified under a specialist manager. Existing staff and their expertise need to be nurtured and services future-proofed through investment in the recruitment of new junior staff and properly co-ordinated succession planning. CWaC's archaeologists should continue to be based in Chester, co-located with the County Record Office. (Section 5.0)*
- *It is time for CWaC to be ambitious. Its archaeological service should be staffed at a level that recognises the economic and cultural importance of the borough's historic environment and should be housed in new purpose-designed buildings together with a new Chester museum and county record office, in order to maximise synergies and public benefits. (Section 6.0)*

Detailed Comments

1.0 Review of National and Local Policies and Aspirations

1.1 National Planning Policy Framework

1.1.1 The importance of the historic environment in the widest sense is recognised in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), eg:

- Our historic environment – buildings, landscapes, towns and villages – can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives, rather than withers. (Page ii)
- ... planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment. (Para 61)
- ... where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, ...(Para 77)
- Green Belt serves five purposes:
 - (*inter alia*) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. (Para 80)
- Local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for the area in the Local Plan. This should include strategic policies to deliver: climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape. (Para 156)
- Crucially, Local Plans should ... contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment. (Para 157)
- Local planning authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment. ... Local planning authorities should either maintain or have access to a historic environment record. (Para 169)
- Where appropriate, landscape character assessments should also be prepared, integrated with assessment of historic landscape character, and for areas where there are major expansion options, assessments of landscape sensitivity. (Para 170).

1.1.2 In the glossary to [NPPF](#) we find (*our italics*):

- **Historic environment record:** Information services that seek to provide access to *comprehensive and dynamic* resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for *public benefit and use*.
- **Significance (for heritage policy):** The value of a heritage asset to this and *future generations* because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

1.1.3 The way that the historic environment should be treated in planning terms is set out in detail in Section 12 of [NPPF](#).

1.2 *Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance: Heritage Values and Benefits*

1.2.1 English Heritage's [Conservation Principles](#) recognise four types of 'heritage value' that sites and monuments may have:

- Evidential (the potential to yield evidence for past human activity)
- Historical (the potential to illustrate past events or their association with particular people)
- Aesthetic (a source of sensory or intellectual stimulation)
- Communal (the meanings of places in people's collective memory)

1.2.2 The benefits of well managed heritage assets (including direct and indirect economic benefits, physical distinctiveness ('sense of place') in an increasingly homogenised world, individual well-being and social cohesion and identity) are very usefully explored in [Archaeology-Minded Spatial \(Site\) Development](#) (Portico 2014), [Competitiveness Study: Second Part Final Report](#) (Jura 2014) and [Heritage Counts 2014 1: The Value and Impact of Heritage](#) (English Heritage).

1.3 *The Chester Area of Archaeological Importance*

1.3.1 The importance of Chester's historic environment in particular was recognised through its designation as one of only five [Areas of Archaeological Importance](#) in England under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979 (the others being Canterbury, Exeter, Hereford and York).

1.4 *CWaC Draft Local Plan Part 1*

1.4.1 Policy ENV 5 of the draft CWaC [Local Plan](#), part 1 recognises the historic environment of the borough as a whole and of Chester in particular: that it is irreplaceable, needs to be protected, adds value to regeneration, creates local distinctiveness and a sense of place for residents and enjoyment for visitors, and can be the source of rich cultural opportunities and a source of pride. Policy Strat 3 recognises the 'national and international importance of Chester as a historic walled city'.

1.5 *CWaC Chester One City Plan*

1.5.1 The historic environment and heritage of Chester is seen as a key element in its future in the [One City Plan](#). In all the word 'heritage' appears 27 times, and 'historic' 71 times.* For example:

- These historic environments and assets underpin the city's character, individuality and unique identity and must play a driving role in Chester's future success and growth. (page 38)

* Use of the words 'heritage' and 'history' often seems a little imprecise. Here we use 'heritage assets' to denote the physical survivals of the past (archaeological sites, monuments/buildings, landscapes) which collectively make up the 'historic environment'. 'History' we use to refer merely to the past so far as it is known, 'heritage' to refer not only to the physical survivals but to all survivals of the past, including the intangible (eg attitudes, ways of life).

- We are a city faced with a key challenge - how to make the best from the abundance and wealth of our very special assets that create our historical and unique place. (Page 3)
- The need to care for the historic environment. (Pages 4 and 38)
- The historic environment is what makes Chester distinctive. (Page 4)
- The historic environment creates a sense of place. (Pages 19, 36, 38)
- The historic environment should be enhanced by new developments. (Pages 20, 28, 37, 54)
- The fascination of its multi-period remains. (Page 3)
- Preservation alone risks ignoring the potential for creating truly world class experiences within the city's historic areas. (Page 19)
- A full calendar of events and festivals across the city has developed into 'Chestival' with a growing offer including ... historic re-enactments and well established Parades including the Romans and Giants. (Page 21)
- Celebrating its long and varied history and heritage – protecting, promoting and utilising its assets, to enhance their settings and maximise their full potential. (Page 27)
- Heritage Alive: We bring our history to life and develop assets that will stand the test of time. (Page 27)
- It [CWaC] will lever in public and private finance to create a well maintained and well utilised network (or 'trail') of historic places and spaces of international recognition. This network will provide a sustainable and exciting 'historic experience' ... for the enjoyment and education of Chester's residents and visitors now and a legacy for generations to come. (Page 38)
- Investment in Grosvenor Museum in the short-medium term will secure its position as the flagship museum for telling the story of Chester's history.(Page 64)

1.6 *Chester Archaeological Database*

1.6.1 The *Chester Archaeological Database* was completed at the end of 2013 and consists of four elements:

- The database itself, embedded in the [Cheshire Historic Environment Record](#), which serves as a summary of archaeological discoveries in Chester to date.
- The [Archaeological Character Zones](#), complementary to the [Chester and Approaches Characterisation Study](#), which considers the city's built historic environment and underpins the *Chester Archaeological Plan*.
- The [Chester Archaeological Plan](#), which has been adopted as an Evidence Base document for the CWaC Local Plan Part 2 and provides recommendations for developers and applicants on the potential archaeological implications of development in Chester, including: guidance on archaeological significance, the role of archaeology in planning, and development-led archaeological investigation.
- The [Archaeological Research Framework for Chester](#), which sets archaeological thinking about Chester in a wider context.

1.7 CWaC Cultural Strategy

1.7.1 The Black Radley document *Cheshire West and Chester Cultural Strategy: A Possible Approach* (September 2014) gives a possible framework for thinking about how the historic environment might be exploited for public benefit:

- It recognises archives, archaeology and museums as part of ‘culture’.
- It classifies culture as offer, identity, participation and innovation.
- It concludes that Chester is in decline in terms of culture.
- It offers a choice between a maintenance and renewal approach.
- It offers a choice between a ‘city as stage’ and ‘posh + fringe’ model.

2.0 Analysis of Local Policies and Aspirations

2.1 The CWaC [Local Plan](#) ‘does its job’ in that, in conformity with [NPPF](#) it recognises that the historic environment needs to be preserved and enhanced and creates a sense of local identity, pride and place; the last three may be said to equate with the communal and aesthetic values enunciated in English Heritage’s [Conservation Principles](#). It also recognises Chester’s particular importance. However, in mentioning ‘rich cultural opportunities’ it starts to go further, and this theme is taken up in the Chester [One City Plan](#).

2.2 Having repeated the points about preserving and enhancing the historic environment, the [One City Plan](#) states that the latter will ‘play a driving role in Chester’s future success and growth’ and says that ‘Preservation alone risks ignoring the potential for creating truly world class experiences within the city’s historic areas’. It proposes a ‘network of historic places that will provide a sustainable and exciting ‘historic experience’ ... for the enjoyment and education of Chester’s residents and visitors now and a legacy for generations to come’.

2.3 We recognise that, in accordance with the [One City Plan](#), since its formation CWaC has maintained the fabric of Chester’s most high-profile historic monuments (notably the City Walls) and invested in their interpretation (the City Walls again, the Amphitheatre and the Roman Gardens). It has also led the renovation of the [Lion Salt Works](#) near Northwich. However, a glance at the relevant section of the English Heritage [Heritage at Risk Register 2014 North-West](#) shows that across the borough as a whole there is no room for complacency as numerous structures, especially those in private ownership, are decaying, and CWaC needs to work with English Heritage and the owners to reverse this trend.

2.4 We support the aim of ‘mak[ing] the best from the abundance and wealth of our very special assets that create our historical and unique place’, but we do not find in the [One City Plan](#) a clear understanding of the nature and significance of Chester’s surviving historic environment, nor does it present compelling examples of the ‘historic experience’ that will be created ‘for the enjoyment and education of Chester’s residents and visitors now and a legacy for generations to come’. For example, it makes no mention of the Rows as a unique variant of medieval urban architecture, merely as an unusual shopping environment. The statement ‘Preserved, at its (Chester’s) heart, are examples of some of the best Roman architecture across the country and throughout Europe, which draw in visitors on an international scale’ is,

unfortunately, now simply untrue: what is left of Chester's Roman buildings can be matched or bettered at several other sites across the country; the most impressive remains were comprehensively destroyed in the 1960s. When it comes to spelling out exactly *how* the historic environment can provide 'world class experiences', we are offered only re-enactments, heritage trails (neither exactly new!) and a nebulous 'flagship' Grosvenor Museum. As we recently pointed out ([Response to CWaC 'New Ways of Working' consultation](#), section 2), the one thing that the Grosvenor Museum does *not* do at the moment is 'tell the story of Chester's history'.

3.0 Historic Environment Team (HET) and Archaeological Planning Advisory Service (APAS): Past Achievements, Present Retrenchment and Future Threats

3.1 *Historic Environment Team*

3.1.1 As Chester Archaeology, the present Historic Environment Team (HET) was noteworthy for the wide expertise of its staff and was remarkably effective for its size in the range, quality and quantity of its products and services: monitoring planning applications in the City and District, carrying out excavations and other fieldwork (including the Amphitheatre project in cooperation with English Heritage), a respected series of detailed excavation reports, the *Batsford Book of Chester* (long out of print but still much sought after), newsletters, contributing to third-party tourist leaflets, conferences, partnership projects (eg with this Society in the [Heronbridge](#) project), teaching at Chester University, open days and children's activities. In the late 1990s it was regarded as a model for community engagement. Since the formation of CWaC, through early retirement and voluntary redundancy HET has been deprived of skills at random and has recently lost its specialist manager: its effective staffing now stands at 50% of its strength ten years ago. We understand that the team is also likely to lose its store and workroom at Albion Street – a loss that will obviously lead to operational inefficiency and make archaeological finds less accessible to the public.

3.1.2 Despite the best efforts of remaining staff, the range of activities has inevitably been scaled back. Nevertheless, since 2009 HET has made a major contribution to some important interpretation projects such as the Chester Amphitheatre, Roman Gardens and City Walls, and has produced a major, highly praised [publication on the civilian settlement of Roman Chester](#), which brings together the results of numerous excavations, new and old. However, to a very significant degree these contributions have relied on the expertise of senior, and in some cases former, members of staff, gained over many decades; the age profile of the surviving team in general is unfavourable, and there is no succession planning. Moreover, recent departures have left its skills extremely skewed with a strong bias away from field archaeology. In addition there are few individuals working for external organisations who have an overview of the city's archaeology and who could fill the gaps (in some cases they learnt their skills working for Chester Archaeology). In other words, local expertise is wearing thin and the achievements of the past are no longer easily repeatable. The capacity to initiate the wider synthesis, interpretation and presentation of new archaeological discoveries in Chester for public benefit is disappearing, as is that to deal with the major unpublished excavations from the 1960s onwards that could still contribute so much to our understanding of the city's evolution and are potentially of international importance.

- 3.1.3 An example of the problems that may well be faced in the future is provided by the current excavations on the Commerce House site. These are likely to produce fragmentary remains of various periods which ought to be analysed and interpreted in the light of earlier excavations in the area, carried out between the 1950s and 1980s. However, none of the latter have yet been the subject of definitive publication; summaries are certainly available in the *Chester Urban Archaeological Database*, but they are provisional in nature, and using them to interpret new discoveries would be akin to the proverbial 'building on sand'. Without reliable synthesis-building, excavation becomes merely an exercise in 'stamp-collecting'.
- 3.1.4 As a result of the 2013/14 budget, HET was required to become entirely self-financing by 2017 (on which see our detailed response [Proposal to Remove Core Funding from CWaC Historic Environment Team](#)). The examples of other local authorities show that much progress can be made in this direction, and we understand that the HET and APAS team leaders put together proposals to secure external grants that would still enable projects of local relevance to be carried out. Has CWaC implemented these proposals? If the priority now for HET is instead merely to 'earn its living' by taking on any contracts that offer themselves, then it will cease to be able to focus on local work. This expedient was tried in the 1990s: it failed to raise significant amounts of money and, as just stated, resulted in a loss of local focus.
- 3.2 *Archaeological Planning Advisory Service*
- 3.2.1 The Archaeological Planning Advisory Service (APAS, formerly the Cheshire County Archaeology Service and now a shared service with Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington) has summarised knowledge of the history and archaeology of other parts of the borough through its [Historic Towns Survey](#) and its [Historic Landscape Characterisation](#). It has created an excellent, publicly accessible, online [Historic Environment Record](#) for the whole of Cheshire and has recently (with crucial input from current and former HET staff) extended that record to cover Chester city centre through the *Urban Archaeological Database*, funded by English Heritage. It initiated and is responsible for overseeing the publication of the results of the [Habitats and Hillforts](#) project on the mid-Cheshire Ridge, and it has initiated the synthesis of the scattered advances in knowledge achieved through developer-funded excavations and turned them into advances in understanding of interest to the wider community (eg with respect to Roman Middlewich). It has also initiated and continues to run the highly successful annual *Cheshire Archaeology Day*. In short, it has been a model of good practice.
- 3.2.2 Members of both HET and APAS contribute to development control work. Their knowledge and vigilance have resulted, for example, in concept designs for the Northgate Development and theatre in Chester that potentially minimise further damage to the surviving archaeology, and in thorough recording of the important remains of Roman Middlewich and medieval Nantwich prior to development. In particular we should note that the former manager of HET spent much time on development control work for Chester city centre. The historic environment of the city (both buried archaeology and standing buildings) is complicated, and even though the new *Urban Archaeological Database* replaces the previous reliance on personal memory of the archaeological resource, understanding, judgement and experience are still essential in using it to formulate constructive advice that balances the

interests of the historic environment with the need for renewal and gets the maximum possible information out of small excavations.

- 3.2.3 APAS is now also threatened with loss of its specialist manager, and since the early retirement of the head of HET, development control capacity has been cut from over 2 to 1.5 staff (probably in the region of 30%) to cover the whole of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. This is a matter of deep concern. We understand that staff now only react to consultations from planning officers regarding the impact of developments on the historic environment rather than proactively monitor planning applications for threats. The likelihood is that, at the very best, sites and monuments of ‘only’ local significance, but nevertheless of importance to community identity, will be lost. The Council must expect further embarrassments and conflicts with residents such as occurred at [Cuckoo Lane, Neston](#), with insensitive resurfacing of an ancient lane of community value. At worst, because of the lack of staff time to respond properly to major development proposals, or through their advice simply being ignored (as we understand was the case at Cuckoo Lane), there is a risk of going back to the bad old days of the 1960s, when the unique Roman ‘Elliptical Building’ under the Forum and the well preserved Roman baths in Bridge Street were destroyed – or even the 1920s and 1930s, when the then Chester Corporation was determined to build a new road across the middle of the amphitheatre (subject of an international campaign by this Society and ultimately stopped by the then Ministry of Transport).
- 3.2.4 We strongly support the continuation of the present geographical scope of APAS (although ideally with the addition of Wirral). If the [Cheshire Historic Environment Record](#) were to be fragmented along the lines of the present, somewhat artificial, councils, at best it would start to lose its research value; at worst, in the present financial climate we doubt whether specialist archaeological officers would be taken on to maintain it, and it would simply become obsolete. Likewise, if archaeological development control functions were to be divided among the several Cheshire councils, would they each take on their own specialist officers? We think not; rather, archaeological advice would be diluted, with permanent damage to the historic environment. The other activities undertaken by APAS that add public value to their planning role would also probably cease.
- 3.2.5 Given the cuts that English Heritage has suffered in recent years we are sceptical as to whether ‘closer partnership’ offers CWaC a panacea for its own difficulties: see further our [Additional Comments](#) on the CWaC 2014/15 budget proposals. Indeed, Aim 4 of Historic England’s [Draft Corporate Plan](#) is to ‘Support owners and local authorities to have the expertise to look after England’s heritage’. Or does CWaC hope to benefit from Historic England’s commitment (Aim 3, para 4) to ‘Target dedicated resources to support Heritage Action Zones in those places where growth offers the greatest opportunities and challenges for heritage’?
- 3.2.6 As its core function is quasi-regulatory, there is an argument that APAS should remain an in-house council service.
- 3.3 *Conclusion*
- 3.3.1 We fear that CWaC does not understand the essential connection between its archaeological services and the protection, investigation/understanding and public appreciation of the historic environment on which its own – and national – policies

place such emphasis. The ‘business’ is not just one a ‘mechanical’ one of implementing planning constraints or repairing the stonework of Chester’s City Walls, but of creating and renewing understanding. This crucial process, so well suited to ‘municipal’ archaeologists who can provide long-term familiarity with sites ([Archaeology-Minded Spatial \(Site\) Development](#) page 23), has already been badly damaged by redundancies/early retirements and will be further damaged by future ones, as will, we fear, CWaC’s ability to secure external grants. If CWaC does choose to cut its archaeological services further as a result of the present review, then of course it will be in good company in following bad practice – with Merseyside (where Liverpool has been in danger of losing its World Heritage status) and West Midlands, to name but two authorities. However, in doing so it will not be able to implement its own avowed policies or realise its aspirations. Nobody should imagine that this is a mere theoretical concern: there can be no doubt that understanding and presentation of the city’s (and borough’s) past will simply atrophy, and the historic environment may well suffer irremediable physical damage, further damaging West Cheshire and Chester’s heritage resources and potential and thus, *inter alia*, its ability to compete on a European and world stage as a tourist destination (see also our comments on the [CWaC Budget Proposals for 2014/15](#)).

- 3.3.2 Other local authorities (eg Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Surrey) do far better and maintain in-house archaeological teams that resolve the conflict of interest of curator and contractor, continue to offer a wide range of locally relevant services and are financed by a mixture of core council funding, grants and commercial work. Given the number, importance and economic potential of its heritage assets, comparison with these shire counties suggests that CWaC is now ‘punching well below its weight’ in the range of its historic environment services

4.0 A New Vision for Chester’s Historic Environment

- 4.1 We are convinced that Chester has the potential to be a centre for archaeology and history, from international academic conferences, through stimulating new insights for tourists, to local community activities and awareness – as York has done so successfully. This would achieve CWaC’s aspirations in the [One City Plan](#) set out in para 1.5.1 above.
- 4.2 However, recent and imminent cuts in staff and facilities make the realisation of this potential increasingly difficult. Unfortunately, we fear that the consequences of these cuts are being masked by the very richness and variety of the city’s historic environment, the wealth of new information that has been generated about it over the past generation, and the memory of the interpretative activities that were associated with it only a few years ago – also by the lack of appreciation among policy-makers of the unique character and potential of the city’s and borough’s historic environment.
- 4.3 Taking as our cue the reference in the [One City Plan](#) to ‘the fascination of its multi-period remains’, we offer a new vision that attempts to capture Chester’s historical character and significance and embraces the broad themes set out in the [Chester Research Framework](#), page 5:

Chester: exploring the evolution of an English frontier city.

- 4.4 Our characterisation attempts to encapsulate the fact that at and around Chester people can see remains of all historical periods, from Roman to Industrial, and of all sorts of activities (agricultural, industrial, ecclesiastical, administrative, military) juxtaposed in a small compass and, with a little imagination, can see themselves at a nodal point in the country – at a strategic port on the boundaries of England and Wales, the Midlands and the North (Mercia and Northumbria, in Saxon terms), Britain and Ireland. Such a vision could easily be elaborated to include the other towns and villages of the borough in a way that was both historically authentic and created a sense of shared identity. It would also embed the city and borough in a European as well as a national and regional context.
- 4.5 We reject the ‘city as stage’ model (for Chester or anywhere else), in the sense that the historic environment exists merely to be used as a theatrical ‘prop’ for unrelated events; rather the historic environment itself should be the subject of activities that have the potential to provide ‘offer, identity, participation and innovation’. Our vision could underpin and guide future research and public-facing activities and aid the positive shaping of the Council’s inherited archaeological services.
- 4.6 A new historical museum in Chester should be a key point for giving expression to this vision, telling the story of the city through the ages, from prehistory to the present day, as a Roman fortress, Saxon *burh*, head of a medieval county palatine and county town, putting it in appropriate geographical contexts, from international to regional. The main element in creating this ‘timeline’ would be archaeological, but other materials (eg paintings, prints, historical documents) would be drawn on as necessary. The displays should be carefully designed to link in with historic buildings and monuments, eg the City Walls, Amphitheatre, Roman Gardens, St John’s Church, Cathedral, Castle and Rows, all of which reflect the development and varying fortunes of Chester and its region: they are literally ‘arguments in stone’. Thus, the museum would be the focal point for discovering and understanding the history of the city and would hopefully become the main objective of a day trip to Chester. (See our response to the [CWac Growth & Prosperity ‘New Ways of Working’ Consultation \(with special reference to the Grosvenor Museum and Conservation & Design\)](#) for more details).
- 4.7 However, these ‘fixed’ items, such as the historic environment itself and major museum displays, need to be supported by high-quality, freshly renewed, high-profile information (eg syntheses of new discoveries), plus activities such as archaeological archive tours and opportunities for the public to take part in worthwhile but non-destructive archaeological activities. No matter how well conserved its monuments, without this activity and the constant renewal provided by new ideas, Chester (and indeed any other historical centre) will find itself ‘dressed up with nowhere to go’. (On the importance of the refreshment of public information through continuing research, see the [Competitiveness Study: Second Part Final Report](#) pages 11 and 26).

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Objectives

In our view the priorities for historic environment activity in the borough for the foreseeable future should be:

- Continued monitoring of planning applications, the provision of advice and the imposition of conditions to mitigate the effects of development on the historic environment and ensure its enhancement, at least as well as at present.
- Maintenance and enhancement of the [Cheshire Historic Environment Record](#) including the *Chester Urban Archaeological Database*, not just as a planning tool but as the starting point for research and a source of public information (cf [Chester Research Framework](#), page 8, Theme 1 and [NPPF](#), glossary).
- Full publication of the most significant backlog excavations, at Chester and elsewhere, to aid understanding and to provide a solid foundation for the interpretation of future investigations.
- Publication of syntheses and accessible summaries of the significant results of recent developer-funded excavations, especially evaluations (cf [Archaeology-Minded Spatial \(Site\) Development](#) page 23; [Chester Research Framework](#), page 4, para 3.1).
- Completion of a heritage asset management plan and identification of monuments for enhancement and interpretation (cf Norwich City Council's draft [Heritage Investment Strategy](#)).
- Promotion of research in line with the [Chester Research Framework](#), which reiterates (page 4): 'The need to provide a holistic approach to research that can be answered by professional archaeologists and specialists as well as community and academic groups'.
- Production of an authoritative but 'accessible' online account of Chester's history and archaeology (an updated version of the *Batsford Book of Chester?*), aimed at visitors.
- Contributing expert knowledge to other activities and interpretation as appropriate.

These priorities would ensure the implementation of the historic environment policies of the [Local Plan](#) and would go a long way to achieving the aspirations expressed in the [One City Plan](#).

5.2 Organisation

- 5.2.1 Our view is that these priorities are most likely to be achieved if leadership, and key elements of the input, come from a local authority or other local public sector agency, although a significant amount of the funding may come from external grants and some expertise may be bought in (as, indeed, has always been the case). We have noted above that other authorities maintain well staffed in-house teams providing a wide range of services. At the very least it needs to be recognised that to provide the sort of outcomes and activities that we advocate will require staff with specialised local knowledge, and that to acquire and retain such knowledge requires continuity of work.
- 5.2.2 Such a lead body would need to establish close and regular links with other heritage organisations and specialists, professional and voluntary, within the Council, the geographical area of the borough, Cheshire and the region, including north-east Wales (eg Cheshire Museums, Record Office, Chester University, English Heritage, Cadw, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, local societies) to benefit from synergies

and to ensure that Chester's and west Cheshire's historic environment can be studied and presented in its wider context. However, while some external organisations may be appropriate partners in realising complex projects or offering public involvement, they cannot replace CWaC in taking a lead role: they all have their own objectives and limitations. On the limitations of the voluntary sector in particular, see further our [Additional Comments](#) on the CWaC 2014/15 budget proposals, sections 4.0 and 5.0.

- 5.2.3 Given that the archaeological services currently within CWaC (HET) and Cheshire Shared Services (APAS) are small and provide complementary skills, we consider it appropriate for them to come under the same manager. We advocate the appointment of a specialised (rather than generic) senior manager – a Borough Archaeologist, a post whose title is immediately understandable – with the knowledge, vision, skills, experience and authority to purposefully shape and manage the services to realise a new vision and ensure that the policies and aspirations of the [Local Plan](#) and the [One City Plan](#) can be realised. Existing staff and their expertise need to be nurtured and services future-proofed through investment in the recruitment of new junior staff and properly co-ordinated succession planning.
- 5.2.4 At the moment HET comes under the Record Office. There is a disciplinary logic to this, and in some other authorities the historic environment record is also located in the county record office. As APAS and its library will shortly have to move out of the Forum offices, it may be worth considering this arrangement *cf* the [Hive](#) at Worcester. We have long urged more 'joined-up working' between CWaC's historical services (eg in our [Response](#) to an early draft of the *One City Plan*).

5.3 *Location*

- 5.3.1 We consider that CWaC's archaeological services, like the Cheshire Record Office, should continue to be based in Chester, as one of the major historical centres of north-west England and therefore the focus of research and public interest (*cf* our response to the [Proposals to relocate the Cheshire Record Office](#), section 1): it is intuitively and functionally the right place to locate them.

6.0 **Expenditure: The Economic Importance of the Historic Environment and the Need for Investment**

- 6.1 In the light of the cuts currently being enforced by central government on local authority expenditure, it is not surprising that heritage services are suffering. However, in view of the admitted importance of the historic environment to Chester's economy (see 1.0 above), and potentially to that of other towns in the borough, we consider that spending on it should be regarded as an investment of strategic significance – both spending on the physical infrastructure of monuments and buildings and on the refreshment of knowledge that maintains their fascination. Again, to quote from [Competitiveness Study: Second Part Final Report](#), page 10:

Although making expenditure cuts is necessary and inevitable within the current economic climate, the evidence suggests that heritage investment should be safeguarded and indeed promoted. Either as a way of differentiating a destination based on its unique heritage for international visits or by raising the profile of local destinations for domestic tourists holidaying in their own country, investing in heritage with a view to increasing tourism could be particularly astute in the current economic climate.

- 6.2 Some examples of the actual and potential impact and economic contribution of Chester's historic environment are:
- An estimated 2,700,000 or more people visited Chester's City Walls in 2007/8, not including approximately 620,00 residents, making a net contribution to the city's economy of over £24,500,000 ([Chester City Walls and Towers Competitiveness Study](#) (Jura 2010)).
 - Over 170,000 people visited the Chester amphitheatre excavations in 2004 and 2005 (English Heritage [Research News 4, Summer 2006](#), page 31).
 - Approximately 3 million people watched the first screening of the BBC *Timewatch* programme on the excavation of the amphitheatre.
- 6.3 We also consider that enhancing the city's and borough's heritage assets and associated activities will make it a more attractive location for businesses employing highly skilled staff (cf [Heritage Counts 2014 1: The Value and Impact of Heritage](#) , page 13).
- 6.4 Turning to indirect economic benefits, [Heritage Counts 2014 1: The Value and Impact of Heritage](#) page 7 states: 'The impact of heritage visits on life satisfaction was found to be slightly higher than the impacts of participating in sport and the arts'. On page 3 it states: 'Visiting heritage is worth £1,646 p.p. per year. Sport is worth £993 p.p. per year in terms of impact of wellbeing'.
- 6.5 CWaC is proposing to spend £37m in capital expenditure and £900,000 pa in revenue on the new Chester theatre, which is expected to attract about 625,000 people pa (<http://www.chesterchronicle.co.uk/news/chester-cheshire-news/37m-chester-theatre-project-praised-7974492>; <http://www.chesterchronicle.co.uk/news/chester-cheshire-news/chester-theatre-expected-attract-625000-6910571>). Given the number of people who visit Chester for the sake of its historic environment, surely the teams that protect, investigate and interpret that heritage are also worthy of investment and should be funded accordingly?
- 6.6 We concede the money that CWaC already spends on the heritage infrastructure (para 2.3 above), but in terms of the Black Radley document *Cheshire West and Chester Cultural Strategy: A Possible Approach*, this is largely a 'maintenance' approach (para 1.6.1 above). The renovation of the [Lion Salt Works](#) is an example of (archaeological) cultural renewal elsewhere in the borough that has been led by CWaC but where most of the funding has been external. We have referred above (para 4.6) to the need for a new historical museum in Chester. The organisational arguments just set out now lead us to propose a more ambitious scheme – new, purpose-designed buildings to accommodate not just a new museum but an archaeological service (combined HET and APAS) and record office, where staff could work together effectively and efficiently and where collections and information sources could be used in innovative and accessible ways for public benefit. That would indeed be a 'flagship museum' that would 'stand the test of time', 'be a source of pride' and put Chester back on the European stage.

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