

CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF AN ENGLISH FRONTIER CITY - PROTECTING, UNDERSTANDING AND HELPING PEOPLE TO APPRECIATE CHESTER'S HERITAGE

Towards a Heritage Strategy for Chester

1.0 Justification

- 1.1 To safeguard Chester's heritage for the benefit of future generations, achieve its potential as an international, national, regional and local heritage destination and to create a clear sense of place and community and possibilities of engagement for residents, a strategy is needed that deals not just with disparate buildings and monuments or with below-ground archaeology, building conservation, museums and archives as separate disciplines but treats the city's past holistically.
- 1.2 Such a strategy will:
- Summarise the character of the city's heritage;
 - Summarise the significance (or 'values': see English Heritage's [Conservation Principles](#) 2008), integrity and authenticity of that heritage;
 - Set out a long-term vision;
 - Explain how the challenges of maintaining a living city will be managed;
 - Set out the issues, aims and objectives for its conservation and for improving understanding, interpretation and public engagement.

Models for such a strategy already exist, for example in the [Draft City of York Council Heritage Strategy](#) and the [City of Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan 2010–2016](#) and the [Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan 2011–2016](#). This sort of approach is appropriate given the quality and significance of Chester's heritage and the fact that the former City Council contemplated seeking World Heritage status for the city.

2.0 Geographical scope

Chester's historical areas are already characterised and delimited, through its Conservation Areas, Character Areas (see the [Chester and Approaches Characterisation Study](#), especially Introduction, p 28), Area of Archaeological Importance and Primary and Secondary Archaeological Character Zones (see the [Chester Archaeological Plan](#), especially p 15) and do not need to be defined again for the present purpose.

3.0 Description

3.1 *Cultural*¹ Assets

The starting point for this strategy is the reference in the [One City Plan](#), p 3, to the 'fascination of [the city's] multi-period remains'. Chester not only contains well preserved remains that reflect its long history as a 'central place', but crucially these survive in their original settings rather than isolated in a sea of modernity.

¹ 'Cultural' is used here in the archaeological sense to refer to the products of human activity as opposed to those of (quasi-) natural processes.

3.1.2 The city's visible built remains span the Roman (possibly Iron Age) period to the twentieth century. They include, in brief:

- A conjectured Iron Age hillfort on the Brewer's Hall peninsula;
- The City Walls (Roman in origin but extended by the twelfth century and converted into an elegant promenade in the eighteenth century, with clearly identifiable sections of Roman, medieval, and eighteenth-century work);
- The Roman amphitheatre;
- Fragments of Roman buildings in the basements of various shops;
- Possible Roman quay wall;
- Well preserved grid of Roman major (and some minor) streets, modified in the Saxon period and Middle Ages;
- The Cathedral (founded as a late Saxon minster, refounded as a Benedictine abbey under the patronage of the Norman earls, with a fine surviving group of monastic buildings and precinct);
- Norman Castle (much rebuilt and remaining in military use until 1954);
- St John's Church (founded in the Saxon period with a large precinct, perhaps significantly close to the amphitheatre and briefly a cathedral immediately after the Norman Conquest);
- Other medieval parish churches (many sited at the former gateways to the Roman fortress or on the site of the Roman headquarters building);
- Medieval undercrofts and Row buildings (many rebuilt) on individual burgage plots;
- Dee bridge and weir;
- Quarries (probably Roman and medieval);
- eighteenth-century town housing developments, especially on former ecclesiastical land (West of Nicholas Street and Linenhall Street; Abbey Green);
- Eighteenth–nineteenth century canal, port and associated buildings;
- Nineteenth-century river bridge and railway station;
- New nineteenth-century areas of industry and housing (Newtown, Hoole, Boughton, Saltney);
- Victorian and Edwardian black-and-white revival;
- Remains of recent military buildings, eg the former Western Command buildings and their bunkers in Queens Park.

3.1.3 Chester's built heritage is complemented by relevant contemporary artefacts, works of art and documents in the Grosvenor Museum, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies and the Cathedral Library, for example one of the largest collections of Roman tombstones, other inscriptions and architectural fragments in Britain, fine collections of Saxon coins and sculpture, work by local silversmiths, a remarkably comprehensive collection of topographical art, including the watercolours of Louise Rayner; medieval writings by the monk Lucian and Ranulf Higden, the revived medieval Mystery Plays and Midsummer and Midwinter Watch parades; documentary information on the port and a series of historical maps; also by publications and unpublished records of archaeological remains that have now been destroyed. Archaeology tells us much, for instance, about the history and plan of the Roman fortress, the Saxon *burh* (fortified town), and the now-vanished medieval religious houses, and reveals fascinating continuities and trends in urban form.

3.2 *Situation*

3.2.1 The situation of the city centre on a gentle slope inside a wide bend of the Dee at the western edge of the Cheshire Plain, where the river cuts through a continuation of the sandstone 'Eccleston Ridge' in a shallow gorge, gives rise to impressive views into the city, especially from the west, north-west, the east and the meadows to the south, and from it to the Welsh hills, Beeston Castle and the Mid-Cheshire Ridge and up the Dee valley, as well as within it (see O Bott, *Townscape within the Walls* (2001): <http://www.chestercivictrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Townscape-within-Walls1.pdf>; P Boughton, *Picturesque Chester* (1997), *passim*). In broader terms it lies at the head of the Dee estuary, which debouches into the Irish Sea, at the junction of the Midland Plain, Wales and north-west England.

4.0 **Significance**

4.1.1 *Statement of Significance*

4.1.1 The quality of the evidential or historical/associative values of Chester's major monuments is exceedingly high and, in the cases of the Row 'system' and perhaps the City Walls, possibly unique. The clear layering and juxtaposition of remains of different periods in highly specific ways attests the purposeful reuse of buildings, sites and the centre of the city as a whole over the centuries, while the varying character of these remains represents 'arguments in stone', reflecting the differing needs and aspirations of succeeding generations. Alongside this evidence for change is evidence for long-term continuity, especially in defences, gates, streets and open spaces, many of which perpetuate the original Roman layout (eg the origin of the Town Hall Square in a massive Roman courtyard building and the site of a market since the early twelfth century) and make many of its landmarks intervisible and so more easily comprehensible. This continuity over 2000 years, deliberate reuse of sites and comprehensibility is perhaps what is distinctive about Chester, enabling it to serve as a textbook example of the development of a pre-industrial English city. The visual coherence of the city's street plan, circuit of walls and major monuments also makes the centre of Chester as a whole memorable, if not unique, in aesthetic terms. Moreover, many of its buildings, individually and collectively, and views of them, are also outstanding (individual buildings: for example, the Castle, Grosvenor Bridge; views: to the Cross from the Eastgate and from the bottom of Bridge Street; down Lower Bridge Street); the views are again often the result of its straight Roman streets and situation on the edge of the Dee gorge. (For views, see again for example Bott, *op cit* and Boughton, *op cit*).

4.1.2 Chester was founded at the junction of four regions (The English Midlands, North-West England, Wales and the 'Irish Sea Province') and historically it has belonged to all and none of them (Indeed, the intervisibility of the Cheshire and Clwydian hillforts has suggested that, before the city's foundation, what are now west Cheshire and Flintshire may have formed a single political unit). As a result, the city has had a variety of far-reaching connections and impacts, has been subject to a variety of influences and the focus of strife, and has been ambiguous in its identity. Chester's historical remains attest this frontier geographical and political situation, while conversely its situation makes its remains and their purpose more easily understood. Indeed, much of the hinterland that was the *raison d'être* of many of its monuments can be seen, especially from the City Walls (see 3.2 above). Thus its strategic position can be perceived visually, not just understood intellectually.

4.1.3 In brief, over the centuries Chester has served as:

- One of the three permanent Roman legionary fortresses in Britain on the border of the tribes of the Cornovii, Deceangli and Setantii (of the west midlands, Flintshire and south Lancashire respectively), maintaining surveillance over North Wales and north-west England.
- A shadowy sub-Roman 'central place' on the borders of Mercia, Powys, Gwynedd and Northumbria, close to the site of the 'Battle of Chester' (probably fought at Heronbridge) in the early seventh century between the Northumbrians and Welsh (and ?Mercian) kingdoms;
- A late Saxon *burh* (fortified town), founded during the reconquest of the Danelaw by the English kingdom but with strong links to Norse-Irish communities around the Irish Sea, where Edgar received the submission of eight western ?British kings in AD 973, head of the most north-westerly English 'shire' at the time of Domesday, and site of an important mint;
- The head of a semi-independent county palatine and base for the English conquest and rule of North Wales, whose earl issued his own *Magna Carta*;
- A Royalist stronghold bolstered by Welsh and Irish troops during the Civil War, at odds with the south and east of England, which largely supported Parliament;
- A centre for the luxury trades in north-west England in the eighteenth century;
- An early and major railway junction in the nineteenth century;
- An outstanding example of nineteenth-century historicist Romanticism;
- A military centre until after World War II, supposedly the site of high-level wartime meetings (see ['University of Chester Business School has Churchill pedigree'](#) *Chester Chronicle* 5 October 2015).
- The head of a major port extending along both sides of the Dee estuary, operative from at least the Iron Age and only being eclipsed by Liverpool from the late seventeenth century onwards.
- As a garrison town, port and governmental and trading centre, the home to a variety of immigrants, eg Roman soldiers from *inter alia* southern France; and Norse, Welsh, Manx and Irish settlers in a variety of roles from the Saxon period onwards.

4.2 *Integrity and Authenticity*

The concepts of integrity and authenticity, used in connection with World Heritage Sites, need to be used with care. 'Integrity' can be meaningfully used in Chester of street plans, plots and to some extent individual buildings but not of the whole city and only with difficulty of major monuments, given that its essential characteristic is the 'layering' referred to above, resulting from constant piecemeal renewal and changes in fashion over two millennia. 'Authenticity' is also difficult in a city that saw numerous nineteenth-century reconstructions of its churches and a Victorian black and white revival that led to wholesale reconstructions, eg of 'God's Providence House' in Watergate Street, and a conscious revival of Chester's sixteenth- and seventeenth-century half-timbered buildings (most notably by John Douglas) that is now valued for its own merits.

4.2.1 Integrity

Some of Chester's Roman structures were demolished during the Saxon period and others probably decayed slowly, the substantially built bath houses probably surviving the best of all. The inherited defences may well have been retained and repaired until the end of the period, although it is possible that they were extended to the river in the north-west and south-east. The major Roman streets also clearly survived in use, as well as some minor ones such as Hamilton Place and the southern part of Crook Street, although others were built over. By and large Saxon occupation probably consisted of timber buildings, only recoverable by archaeological excavation; their extent is not yet well understood, but the lack of a clear new pattern of streets – regular or otherwise – suggests that the tenth-century revival of the city was relatively weak, although the southern part of Northgate Street was laid out across the substantial remains of the Roman headquarters building. The churches of St John, SS Peter and Paul (later St Werburgh/the Cathedral) and probably St Bridget and St Olave were founded during this period and Newgate Street was constructed, linking the churches of St Werburgh and St John.

After the Norman Conquest the city took on the form that seems to have survived with little change until the early nineteenth century and is easily appreciated today. The Roman defensive circuit were extended south and west to the river and the Castle was built in the south-west corner. The line of the former Roman south and west defences came to be defined by closely spaced pairs of roads; their stonework may well have been robbed at this time, leaving only the slight rise in ground level that can be seen today. The City Walls have continued to be modified and repaired up to the present day, and work of different periods (including Roman on the north and east sides) is clearly visible in the stonework. The church of St Werburgh was refounded as a Benedictine abbey, the remaining parish churches were constructed, and four religious houses established on the western side of the city. The Rows probably took shape in the thirteenth century and lined the four main streets. New streets such King Street, Princess Street and the northern part of Crook Street were also laid out during this period.

As a result of the Reformation, as elsewhere, Chester's religious houses (including St John's College) were abolished. St Werburgh's was soon refounded as the Cathedral with its outbuildings and precinct intact, and St John's survived in diminished form as a parish church, but the nunnery and some of friaries, together with the precinct of St John's, were converted to expansive gentry town houses; consequently no visible remains of them survive above ground.

Chester supported the royalist cause during the Civil War and was besieged; ultimately its citizens were starved into submission. The site of a breach in the south-eastern sector of the City Walls can still be seen. Outworks were constructed to defend the city but remains have only been tentatively identified. The city and its suburbs suffered widespread destruction, as attested by the widespread rebuilding after the war.

Between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries most of the Rows in Lower Bridge Street, in Watergate Street west of Crook Street, and at the east end of Eastgate Street, away from the commercial heart of the city around the Cross, were enclosed or completely lost through changes in fashion; elsewhere, in Abbey Square and around St John's the inherited buildings were replaced by fine new town houses

and vacant land on the former friary precincts was developed at Nicholas Street and Stanley Place. Between 1766 and 1810 the major medieval defensive gateways were replaced by the present structures, opening up the city centre to traffic while maintaining the walkway of the City Walls as an elegant promenade.

The Chester Canal was opened in 1779 but only became a financial success after the completion of the Wirral Line to Ellesmere Port on the Mersey. Most of the canal through Chester is intact although the Dee Basin is derelict. The ruinous outer ward of the Castle had been rebuilt by 1815, albeit as a Greek Revival masterpiece of international importance. Nevertheless, the rectilinear layout of the medieval city, based on that of the Roman fortress, survived largely intact until the construction of Grosvenor Street on the diagonal in the 1820s; this led to the demolition of St Bridget's Church but also involved the construction of the Grosvenor Bridge, a remarkable feat of engineering and once the largest single-span stone arch in the world. Minor elements of the City Walls were lost in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Following the arrival of the railway in 1840, new industrial suburbs grew up in Newtown and Hoole, as well as in Boughton, alongside the canal. Crowded insanitary courts of housing also developed within the City Walls, especially around Crook Street, while the middle classes increasingly moved to new suburbs in Queens Park and Curzon Park. In the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth there was considerable rebuilding along the major streets of the city in the black and white revival style; this led to the loss of earlier buildings but their replacements are now valued in their own right. The city's churches and Cathedral also underwent considerable refurbishment. The late seventeenth-century Exchange was destroyed by fire in 1862 and replaced by the present Town Hall, based on the Cloth Hall at Ypres.

Like many other cities, Chester suffered major losses to its historic environment in the 1960s, when the construction of the Grosvenor shopping centre removed most of the well preserved Roman fortress baths and obliterated much of Newgate Street. Likewise the Central Area Redevelopment Scheme – already in 2015 at the end of its life – destroyed the impressive remains of the unique Roman 'Elliptical Building' and another Roman bath house, the Victorian Market Hall, truncated Crook Street and swept away other, nineteenth-century, streets², while the construction of the Inner Ring Road required the wholesale demolition of Georgian terraces along Pepper Street, Nicholas Street, Linenhall Street and of Egerton House on Upper Northgate Street, severed the upper and lower parts of Bridge Street and Watergate Street and required a new gateway in the City Walls (St Martin's Gate). It also swept away the historic triangular area of Gorse Stacks containing the cattle market; the resultant 'shatter zone' around the north-eastern quadrant of the road has still not healed. Further out, nineteenth-century housing was demolished in Newtown and replaced by high-rise flats. Much of the western end of Chester station went out of use and parts of the overall roof were removed, leaving the brick arcades that supported it without function; consequently despite recent improvements, parts of the station still have a ruinous feel.

² admittedly courts of slum housing, largely demolished in the 1930s.

From the 1970s onwards industrial buildings along the canal have been lost, most notably the leadworks, and in the 1990s the Western Command building in Queen's Park – the latest manifestation of Chester's long-term military role – was modified unsympathetically as a bank. Thus most of the visible remains of Chester's industrial and recent past have been lost, perhaps inevitably in some cases but without proper recognition of their significance. Older, more central parts of the city have fared better thanks to determined conservation work but remain vulnerable to large-scale development that threatens to disrupt their fine grain. The [Chester and Approaches Characterisation Study](#) lists numerous prominent post-war developments that it classes as 'negative environment' or 'key detractors' and recent developments outside the Northgate can be argued to add to the list.

4.2.2 Authenticity

- 5.1 Chester's evolution and history, in terms of the development of individual plots and buildings, its overall plan and its place in the wider history of the region and country, are well documented, for example in the [Victoria County History](#) volumes on the city, the [Chester Archaeological Excavation and Survey Reports](#) series, the English Heritage volume [The Rows of Chester](#) by A Brown (1999), the [Mapping Medieval Chester](#) project, and in 150 years' worth of articles in the [Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society](#), plus a series of historical maps, numerous archival documents (including texts of the Mystery Plays) and the as-yet unpublished results of intensive archaeological investigation.

For almost a century the city has seen few high-quality new buildings that enhance the inherited stock. Nevertheless, although not 'authentic', the reconstructed eighteenth-century buildings on the western side of Lower Bridge approximate to the original designs and are at least in character. Looking forward, concerns remain about the detailing of the consented scheme for student accommodation at Linenhall. Sensitive redevelopment of the Northgate area will be vital if a sympathetic character is to be restored to this part of the city: historical streets need to be preserved, others restored wherever possible, and new buildings need to respect inherited ones in scale and detailing.

5.0 Management

5.1 Ownership

[Brief survey of ownership and tenure of property in Chester, especially the city centre, and its implications for conserving and enhancing the historic environment].

5.2 Planning and Policy Framework

As well as being subject to the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), especially sections 7 'Requiring good design' and 12 'conserving and enhancing the historic environment', Chester's historic environment is covered by the CWaC [Adopted Local Plan \(Part One\): Strategic Policies](#), especially policies ENV 5, ENV 6 and the retained policies of the [Chester District Plan](#), especially Sections C and G, the [Chester Archaeological Plan](#), the Area of Archaeological importance and the [Chester and Approaches Characterisation Study](#). The [One City Plan](#) also makes numerous mentions Chester's heritage and historic environment.

6.0 Vision and Aims

6.1 Long-Term Vision

- Chester will practise and promote sustainable management, understanding the city's historical character and its national and European significance. It will be a centre of excellence for urban heritage management and conservation, founded on partnerships of local, national and international communities and organisations.
- Chester will conserve and safeguard the heritage assets of the city for this and future generations.
- Chester will be accessible and enjoyable to all; a place that understands and celebrates its outstanding character, significance and atmosphere.
- Chester will continue to be a thriving, living city which uses its heritage to support and further the vitality of the local community.

6.2 Aims of the Strategy

The aims of the strategy are to:

- Promote sustainable management of the city;
- Ensure that its character and significance are understood, protected and sustained;
- Maintain and promote Chester as a living and working city that benefits from its heritage;
- Improve physical access and interpretation, encouraging all people to enjoy and understand the city;
- Improve public awareness of, and involvement in, Chester's heritage, achieving a shared local, national and international interest in the city's management.

7.0 Issues and Objectives

7.1 Managing Change

7.1.1 Issues

Issue 1: There is a need to establish clearer leadership on heritage matters, political and professional.

Issue 2: There is a need to secure adequate provision of appropriately qualified and knowledgeable staff to manage Chester's historic environment.

Issue 3: There is a need to develop and maintain opportunities to transfer learning between Chester and other historic cities.

Issue 4: There is a need to access alternative funding sources, and re-invest funds generated from heritage into management and conservation, so that responsibility for funding does not fall disproportionately upon the Local Authority.

Issue 5: There is a need to clarify the relationship between cultural heritage and the economy, and better to measure, understand and appreciate financial and other benefits.

Issue 6: There is a risk that policies, strategies and other plans, both at a national and at local level, may not take account of the historical character and significance of the city.

Issue 7: There is a need to undertake periodic risk identification, assessment and monitoring, and ensure mechanisms for prevention and/or mitigation for all risks are in place.

Issue 8: There is a need to monitor the city's general condition regularly, and assess the implementation of the Heritage Strategy.

Issue 9: There is a need to raise the local community's awareness of the character and significance of the city, particularly beyond the historic core, and to promote the opportunities and responsibilities that these bring, and to enable property owners to make informed decisions.

Issue 10: There is an opportunity for greater engagement of the local business community in the management of the city.

Issue 11: There is a need to minimise the threat of inappropriate development, and to ensure that decisions fully consider the impacts of development proposals, and are based on a thorough understanding of the city's historic character.

Issue 12: There is a need to minimise the potential damage caused to the fabric, authenticity and character of the city by incremental change.

Issue 13: There is a need to address the challenges of integrating contemporary design within the city, and to encourage high-quality development schemes.

Issue 14: There is a need to address sustainability issues, including climate change, and to manage the permanent, inherent tensions between the needs for adaptation, development and conservation.

Issue 15: There is a need for further research into the relationships between sustainability and conservation, and to disseminate learning through education, training and public information.

7.1.2 Objectives

[To be defined but to include:

- *Need for high-ranking officer with deep understanding of heritage to provide professional leadership and coordination and report directly to elected members;*
- *Need for planning officers to understand the character and significance of the city's built form*
- *Need to address continuing poor/mediocre development schemes]*

7.2 Conservation

7.2.1 Issues

Issue 16: There is a need to promote co-ordination and responsibility across complex ownership patterns.

Issue 17: There is a need for co-ordinated management of all elements of the city's historic environment, to protect their authenticity and integrity, based on a thorough understanding of their character and significance.

Issue 18: There is a need to manage disused or damaged buildings, structures and sites, which deteriorate faster than those in use, and quickly bring them back into productive, economic use.

Issue 19: There is a need to address the long-term availability of materials and skilled craftsmen to maintain the fabric of the city.

Issue 20: There is a need to safeguard the city's historic buildings and archaeological structures, ensure they remain in general good condition, and protect them from inappropriate and/or inadequate maintenance.

Issue 21: There is a need to ensure that the city's landscape setting is recognised, interpreted, protected and managed to prevent incremental damage.

Issue 22: There is a need to ensure that Chester's open spaces are seen to be integral to the city's landscape setting and managed appropriately.

Issue 23: There is a need to identify and safeguard important views, both within and beyond the city and manage them appropriately.

Issue 24: There is a need to secure the necessary capital investment to realise opportunities to improve the quality and maintenance of the city's public realm.

7.2.2 Objectives

[To be defined but to include:

- *Ensure that owners and users of historic properties/sites within, or impacting upon, the city and its setting, are aware of the requirements for care and maintenance, and have access to appropriate guidance, advice and craft skills.*
- *Ensure effective joint working between archaeological and conservation officers.*
- *Encourage the use of, and where appropriate prepare, programmes for planned maintenance, management and/or conservation.*
- *Ensure that damaged and disused structures within the city are monitored, repaired, maintained and, where appropriate, reused.*
- *Ensure that landscape and natural elements of the city and its setting, including heritage sites and their associated remains, are protected, acknowledged, understood and managed alongside the city.*
- *Ensure that awareness and understanding of the archaeological remains are increased, and improve the range and accessibility of information.*
- *Ensure that the public realm is seen as, and understood to be, a significant, historic and cultural element of the city, is inviting to explore, and that alterations are of a high standard to take this into account].*

7.2.3 Actions

[To be defined but to include:

- *Resurface and tidy up minor lanes and areas, eg Music Hall Passage and in the Cathedral Quarter, eg the Quarry, the Kaleyards car park.*
- *Tidy up the western end of railway station and consider the future of the disused arcades that used to support the overall roof.*
- *'Green' backlands through tree planting, eg around Volunteer Street and Commonhall Street. Such areas would have been largely open in the Middle Ages and to some extent remained so until the nineteenth century. Such 'greening' would also provide impromptu areas of relaxation for visitors away from the main streets.*
- *Tidy up the Inner Bailey of the Castle, repair buildings and bring them back into public use.*

- *Existing scattered information and recommendations on views and skylines need to be brought together and supported by photographs (especially from the west, eg Parkgate Road, Saughall Road and Sealand Road).*
- *Mark and interpret the north-western and south-western corners of the Roman fortress and the south and west gates;*
- *If possible open up the roof of the Agricola Tower to the public. The Castle is one of the most significant monuments of the city but is sadly neglected.*
- *Bring St Olave's Church back into use. Its name is one of the few reminders of the Scandinavian period in the city's history.*
- *Consider how the historical character of the port areas can be enhanced, both along New Crane Street and at Stone Bridge on Saughall Road, the site of the medieval Port Pool].*

7.3 *Interpretation, Education and Research*

7.3.1 *Issues*

Issue 25: There is a need to make the message and branding of the city consistent.

Issue 26: There is a need to enrich the 'story' of the city, improve communications, in particular web presence, and to increase public awareness of that 'story'.

Issue 27: There is a need to ensure that historic buildings are understood in the context of their surroundings and the history and significance of the city as a whole.

Issue 28: There is a need to explore the need for and feasibility of a new museum that tells a comprehensive story of the city and serves as a base for its discovery and that of the region.

Issue 29: There is a need to enhance use of the city as a learning resource.

Issue 30: There is an opportunity to realise the potential benefits of wider involvement, and the opportunities that the city's heritage brings for regeneration, education, culture, and civic pride.

Issue 31: There is a need for continued archaeological and historical research, so that the city's character and significance are better understood and to improve its maintenance and management.

7.3.2 *Objectives*

[To be defined but to include:

- *Provide consistent, high-quality and accessible interpretation facilities and materials that present a comprehensive view of the city's character and significance.*
- *Bring Chester's industrial-era and recent past and its communities into the mainstream of the city's history.*
- *Begin planning a new city museum.*
- *Encourage focused historical and archaeological research and coordinate where appropriate, involving the Historical Environment Team, Archaeological Planning Advisory Service, Cheshire Archives and Local studies, Museums Services, Chester University, local societies and individuals.]*

7.3.3 Actions

[To be defined but to include:

- *Create unified, authoritative, map-based website on the city's heritage, drawing on the Historic Environment Record, but also conveniently downloadable to mobile devices by people visiting the city.*
- *Plan a new historical museum, telling the story of Chester through the ages and putting it in appropriate geographical contexts, from international to local. 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 the historic buildings and monuments of the city, eg the City Walls, Amphitheatre, Roman Gardens, St John's Church, Cathedral, Castle and Rows, port and canal, and historic re-enactments and festivals, eg Civil War siege, Mystery Plays, but should also refer to sites and monuments further afield relevant to Chester, eg the hillforts of the Mid-Cheshire Ridge and the Cwydian hills, the Viking-era sculpture of Wirral, local motte and bailey castles, the outports on both sides of the Dee estuary and the Ellesmere Port Boat Museum. Thus, the museum would be the focal point for discovering and understanding the history of the city and region and could become a 'must see' objective in a trip to Chester. This museum should also be relevant to the lives of present-day residents; it should bring the history of the city up to date and incorporate 'stories' currently only told at Chester History and Heritage.*
- *Prioritise the publication of major unpublished archaeological excavations and ensure the synthesis of the results of excavations carried out by a variety of organisations.*
- *Appoint a lead heritage officer to take charge of CWaC's existing archaeological teams and museum service, and possibly conservation officers and archives, secure funds, initiate and manage projects and co-ordinate with outside bodies.]*

7.4 Physical Access

7.4.1 Issues

[To be summarised from the [Chester Transport Strategy](#) but to include:

- *As a result of the construction of the Inner Ring Road, the elegant western and especially the southern sides of the city tend to be isolated from more central areas; indeed, Lower Watergate Street carries so much traffic that it suffers from poor air quality.*
- *Frodsham Street and Kaleyards present a poor gateway to the city centre for people arriving at the new bus exchange.]*

7.4.2 Objectives

[To be defined based on the [Chester Transport Strategy](#) but to include:

- *Reduce the visual impact of the Inner Ring Road at the points where it separates Bridge Street and Lower Bridge Street and Watergate Street and Lower Watergate Street. (Long term, reduce the heavy traffic flow on Lower Watergate Street through construction of the Western Relief Road).*
- *Upgrade public realm along Frodsham Street and Kaleyards.]*

7.4.3 Actions

[To be defined based but to include:

- *Extend setts across Inner Ring Road down Lower Bridge Street and Lower Watergate Street?].*

7.5 Visitor Management

7.5.1 Issues

Issue 32: There is an opportunity to enhance the quality of the environment at entrance points to the city centre.

Issue 33: There is an opportunity to disperse visitors around the city beyond the current concentrations in the central area.

Issue 34: use Chester's historical links as an element in encouraging visitors to use the city as a base for discovering the locality and region.

7.5.2 Objectives

[To be defined but to include:

- *Upgrade the built environment around Hoole Road bridge.*
- *Upgrade the public realm along Frodsham Street and Kaleyards for people arriving at the new bus exchange; see 7.4.2 above.*
- *Continue to upgrade Chester Railway station; see 4.2.1 above.*
- *Break down the barrier effect of the Inner Ring Road to encourage more visitors to explore the southern and western parts of the city centre; see 7.4.1 and 2 above.*
- *Promote Chester's historical links with, for example, Neston and West Kirby (Norse-Irish sculpture), Meols and Parkgate (outports), Pont Cysyllte aqueduct and Ellesmere Port Boat Museum (both on the Shropshire Union canal), castles of west Cheshire and North Wales and hillforts of the Mid-Cheshire Ridge and Clwydian hills as destinations for visitors based in Chester.]*