

## CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER DESIGN CODE – VISION ENGAGEMENT

### CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY COMMENTS

#### Part 1 - Vision Questions

*Question one - Looking at the five emerging themes below for a Vision for Cheshire West and Chester in 2030, which is the most important for you? Please select one option.*

1. A borough which promotes and protects the prosperity, health and liveability of our city, towns, villages and countryside to the benefit of present and future communities.
2. A borough where it is easier and more attractive for residents to travel sustainably and affordably (across all modes), with cleaner, greener and safer streets.
3. A borough where new homes are part of diverse neighbourhoods that are well-integrated with our existing communities to support equality, community cohesion and sustainable lifestyles.
4. An environmentally sustainable and climate resilient borough, where water, trees and greenery are woven into existing and new streets and public spaces to complement the built environment.
5. A borough with beautiful, functional and popular new homes with locally distinctive buildings and streets that reflect the best of local architecture and materials.

*Your answer* **All these qualities are important.**

*Question two - What is your vision for Cheshire West and Chester? Are there any aspects in the emerging vision (from the statements above) that you really like or dislike?*

*Your answer* **The borough should maximise the potential of its built and biocultural ('natural') heritage, eg conservation areas, to (re-) create beautiful, distinctive easily walkable/'cyclable' and sustainable communities. We have made this point numerous times; see most recently our response to the CWaC Local Plan Evidence Base consultation and our response to the initial consultation on the preparation of a design code.**

#### Part 2a - Visual preference survey - Buildings

Thinking about the images of buildings below, how appropriate do you think these examples would be for a new development in Cheshire West and Chester? This section of the survey will take between 5 and 10 minutes. If you are short on time, please answer question 1 only for each image.

**This section focuses almost entirely on houses and apartments. According to NPPF (December 2023), para 97, CWaC and developers should be creating integrated communities with local facilities. We therefore need to see examples of shops/supermarkets, schools, colleges, leisure centres, clinics, hotels, student accommodation, offices – the whole repertoire of the built environment. As alternatives for shops/supermarkets one could offer, for example, Morrisons West Kirby and a supermarket on the Chester Greyhound Park; Marks and Spencer and the former BHS, both Chester; and the Parade and Western Avenue shops, both Blacon.**

Even with the buildings that we suggest are generally appropriate for future development in CWaC, we would expect further notice to be taken of local character; see the *National Design Guide*, 10–17 under ‘Context’ and ‘Identity’ and the *Chester Characterisation Study*.

Comments made in respect of particular buildings that are generally applicable are shown in *italics*.

How applicable will guidelines in respect of new development be to modifications to existing buildings?

### Building 1



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate Yes

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* The illustrated building is reminiscent of local 19<sup>th</sup>-century mills and might be appropriate as infill in former industrial areas. The massing of the highest sections of the building is broken up. There is generous, well-proportioned and regularly arranged fenestration and good use of coloured brickwork

19<sup>th</sup>-century mills are now often reused for apartments or workspaces. Such apartments or workspaces would not be built *ab initio* in this form nowadays. However, the general scale, massing and appearance could still provide useful inspiration; it would have been far preferable to the monolithic form of the recently permitted hotel at Brookdale Place, Chester.

If you selected **appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location (**Former industrial area**)

Suburban location

Rural location

### Building 2



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate  
Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **The interior may well function satisfactorily but the exterior, while not objectionable in scale and massing, is generic and lacks detailing, articulation and any local character; it is instantly forgettable. The landscaping is bleak, without trees.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location
- Rural location

### **Building 3**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate  
Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **Conjoined characterless boxes.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location
- Rural location

### **Building 4**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate  
Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer Reminiscent of the Tower Wharf student accommodation in Chester; canal warehouse style. Not fatally objectionable, and possibly acceptable in principle in a canal context, but the ground-floor frontages are 'dead' and faced in depressing grey brick; the fenestration is unimaginative and the white facades out of keeping with warehouse character.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location
- Rural location

### **Building 5**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

- Appropriate
- Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer There is a dominance of grey, especially on the first-floor window surrounds. The fenestration is unimaginative, especially the three-storey run (by side of staircase?) – nice idea but needs refining. The meter boxes on the front wall are unnecessarily prominent.**

**These are in Weaver Street, Chester. Why were they thought appropriate next to the Arts and Crafts-style cottages on Old Hall Place?**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location
- Rural location

### **Building 6**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes**

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **Seemingly a successful attempt at Georgian style. Should perhaps be confined to infill in areas with buildings already in this style (eg west of Nicholas Street, Chester). With care, might be possible in villages.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location **Probably not if detached.**

Urban location **Yes**

Suburban location **A bit too grand?**

Rural location **Yes**

### **Building 7**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes with caveats**

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **Relatively successful modern attempt at traditional town-house terrace, eg Nicholas Street, Chester. Well-proportioned openings, with white surrounds contrasting with brickwork and adding colour, but perhaps too much uniformity. The greenery at the front is essential. There is apparently a broad pavement in front, so why are there no street trees?**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location **Yes**

Suburban location **Yes; could aid 'densification' in centres of suburbs.**

Rural location

## Building 8



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Neutral**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer** The openings are generally well proportioned, but the windows are poorly subdivided and the dormer windows are too prominent (and how energy-efficient are they?). Too much grey, and why is there no greenery in front? Why no street trees?

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location

Rural location

## Building 9



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes**

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer** Well-designed replica of traditional terrace suiting local character. Well-proportioned openings, colour, gardens, trees in front, but are there steps up (unnecessarily) from the pavement?

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location **Yes (probably 19<sup>th</sup>-century suburb).**

Rural location **Yes**

## Building 10



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes, with caveats**

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer Does not obviously reflect a traditional local style, except for the diaper work, but quite pleasing in isolation and would be happy in a new neighbourhood. The light-coloured brickwork is inappropriate for this part of the country; a darker brick would require white window frames for contrast. The diaper work shown is crude. Good to have small gardens and trees in front.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location **Yes**

Rural location **Yes (village)**

## Building 11



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes**

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer Pleasing proportions of windows and dormer. The white render makes the grey window frames and door acceptable, and with the red brickwork of the bay and red tiled roof creates a colourful effect. Not an obvious local style but should fit in well.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location **Yes**

Rural location **Yes (village)**

### **Building 12**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes, with caveats**

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer Scale, proportions and fenestration are fine. The plain yellow brickwork seems reminiscent of London; if used in CWaC, it should be built in a darker brick, with sills, lintels and cornice picked out. Use for infill in areas with Georgian and Victorian buildings.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location **Yes**

Suburban location

Rural location

### **Building 13**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes with caveats**

Inappropriate



*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer Bright red Ruabon-style brick is overwhelming in quantity and should be used with care. The arched window- and door openings make a change, but are the moulded bricks still available? If this style is to be reproduced, it should be done properly, not half-heartedly. Note how on this photo the doors and bay windows do not match.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location **Yes**

Rural location

### **Building 14**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes**

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer Given the lack of detailing, the interest of this design lies in the steeply pitched roof and proportions of ‘cut-outs’ in the brickwork for windows and doors, although the top windows are perhaps too small. If done slightly differently, this design could easily be bad (see no 16). Light brickwork provides contrast with grey window frames. Not a traditional local style and would fit more easily in a new development than in an infill site.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location **Yes**

Rural location **Yes**

### Building 15



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Yes (unless much modified)**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer In scale and proportions of fenestration, this is acceptable, and the arched tops of the windows are a nice touch. However, overall, it lacks character, with ‘standard’ red brick and white door, window frames and fascia; if these were modified, it would be quite acceptable.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location

Rural location

### Building 16



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer The combination of darkish brick, grey roof and grey window frames and door is depressing. The undivided flush triangular windows in the gable do not work; contrast no 14.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location

Rural location

### Building 17



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Neutral**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **This is a modern version of a generic inter-war style (not inherently bad but lacking local character), but it is dominated by the double garage.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location **Only as infill in an area already dominated by this style.**

Rural location

### Building 18



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **A detached house with a pitched roof; poorly subdivided windows; no attempt at articulation or detailing (eg sills, lintels, fascia, fascia boards).**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location
- Rural location

### Building 19



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **This looks like an old house with multiple extensions added so that it is now totally illegible. This is a danger with the current fashion for extensions.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location
- Rural location

### Building 20



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **Bungalows are necessary for elderly people and those with mobility problems. However, this example lacks character as a result of its small windows, and the cream-rendered gables emphasise the lack of detailing; contrast no 21. Note also the totally sterile surrounding green areas. As an aside, might failed ground-floor retail units be usable as bungalows?**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location
- Rural location

### Building 21



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

- Appropriate **Yes**
- Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above? Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer** This has plain brickwork like no 20, but the darker red adds warmth, as does the red door. The large, well-proportioned windows in white frames with arched tops that contrast with the brick look welcoming. This looks like sheltered housing – so all the more reason to ask why there isn't a communal grassed area at the front with seating rather than what appears to be parking.

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location **Yes**
- Rural location **Yes**

### Building 22



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

- Appropriate **Yes**
- Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above? Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* A large traditional-style detached house with well-designed bay and dormer windows. Good detailing, eg sills. Greenery at front. The design could easily be adapted to be semi-detached - better than trying to replicate no 13.

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think development like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location **Yes**

Rural location

### **Part 2b - Visual preference survey - Streets**

Thinking about the images of streets below, how appropriate do you think these examples would be for a new development in Cheshire West and Chester? **We'd like to know what you think of these examples as places to live, not just to move through.** This section of the survey will take up to 5 minutes. If you are short on time, please answer question 1 only for each image.

**As is recognised in the CWaC *Local Transport Plan*, the borough has a major problem with the domination of town centres by motor traffic, and some have been ripped apart by dual carriageways (eg Chester Inner Ring Road; Whitby Road, Ellesmere Port; A54, Winsford; Chester Way, Northwich); there is also a lack of joined-up urban cycleways. In this questionnaire, only Streets 2 and 4 relate to urban locations. To gauge views on the matter, one could offer as alternatives, for example, Watergate Street and Lower Watergate Street in Chester. Examples of town centres that have been 'restitched', with street trees and cycleways, should be offered.**

**Parking falls between buildings and streets. Government guidance is set out in the *National Model Design Code*, 17. Parked cars should not dominate residential streets or frontages. Good solutions are relatively easy to devise in new developments but less so in old terraced suburbs (there is a similar problem with wheelie bins). These problems cannot be unique to Chester or the UK. Have solutions been found elsewhere? All new residential parking (and where possible public parking) should include charging points for electric vehicles.**

#### **Street 1**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* Despite the (few) trees, this is a street for motor traffic, not people. It would be improved by build-outs from the pavement with trees, breaking up the parking.

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think a street like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location **This looks like a street in a 19th-century inner suburb.**

Rural location

### Street 2



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Neutral**

Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.

Your answer **Depends on whether the street is open to motor traffic. Ideally, pedestrian and vehicle areas should be clearly demarcated.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think a street like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location

Rural location

### Street 3



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Yes**

Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.

Your answer **The build-outs to slow traffic are desirable, but as designed are confusing and lead drivers around to the left, whereas it seems possible to drive straight on; visual clarity is important. The build-outs should include vegetation to soften the scene.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think a street like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location
- Rural location

#### Street 4



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

- Appropriate
- Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*

**Your answer The ground floors are dead and the frontages on both sides are depressing and monotonous in their lack of colour and variety; a wind tunnel. Compare Hunter Street in Chester, flanked by the Northgate I development and Storyhouse, Waitrose in Boughton, and Barons Quay in Northwich.**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think a street like this would work well:

- Town centre location
- Urban location
- Suburban location
- Rural location

#### Street 5



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

- Appropriate **Yes**
- Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?  
Please leave a comment.*



*Your answer* Creates a semi-private courtyard. However, would the communal gardens be looked after? Has the impact of fully grown trees on light been considered? The flanking buildings have no local character and are inappropriate; they seem to be more typical of the east of England.

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think a street like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location **Yes**

Suburban location **Yes**

Rural location

### **Street 6**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* This street seems to have build-outs with trees breaking up the parking, but cars still dominate. The overall effect remains bleak, perhaps because of the lack of interest in the flanking buildings, and in particular the small windows.

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think a street like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location

Rural location

### **Street 7**



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes**

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **This street is flanked by a variety of buildings and front gardens, some quite close to the street. This creates the impression that the street serves the buildings rather than *vice versa*. Where is the parking for residents? *Access for emergency vehicles needs to be maintained.***

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think a street like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location

Rural location **Yes (village)**

### Street 8



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate **Yes, with caveats**

Inappropriate

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **The build-outs with trees breaking up the parking and the green space to the right are fine (although trees have the potential to block light from houses and damage pavements), but to encourage people (especially children) to cross from the houses to the green space there needs to be some traffic calming, eg raised platform or setts. Is there a chicane or similar in the distance? Driving needs to be calmed, not made complicated!**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think a street like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location **Yes**

Rural location

### Street 9



*How appropriate is this example for new development in Cheshire West and Chester?*

Appropriate

Inappropriate **Yes**

*Why exactly? What do you think is appropriate or inappropriate about the image above?*

*Please leave a comment.*

*Your answer* **This street is bleak and designed for cars. Street trees are needed. Why is there a swept curve on the junction in what is clearly a residential area?**

**If you selected appropriate**, is there a particular location you think a street like this would work well:

Town centre location

Urban location

Suburban location

Rural location

P Carrington

*For Chester Archaeological Society*

27 November 2024