CWAC CHESTER MOVEMENT STRATEGY

CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY TRANSPORT STATEMENTS – DIGEST

1.0 CWAC LTP4 *case for Change* document (for comparison)

Aims

1 Schools, shops and other vital services should be located close to where people live, reducing the need to travel. We will align our approach to transport planning and spatial planning as set out in the borough's Local Plan.

2 Our approach to the future of transport will prioritise investment in quality walking, wheeling and cycling networks, for personal transport and deliveries. This includes reallocation of road space where necessary and appropriate to create a coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive network for local trips.

3 We will seek to support the post-pandemic recovery of bus and rail patronage, and work with partners to develop public transport where this meets our priorities, including improving integration with other modes.

4 Decarbonisation of the vehicles which transport people and goods.

5 A significant reduction in car miles driven, particularly where there is only one person in the vehicle, will be essential to achieving our priorities. We will need to provide better alternatives, as set out earlier, but we also need to avoid factors which make short, solo car trips the easiest option where other travel options are readily available.

6 We want transport to enhance our local neighbourhoods, helping to create beautiful, healthy, safe places where people want to live and work, and where children feel safe to move around and play. This applies as much to the existing fabric of our towns and city as it does to new development sites enabled through the planning system. This means transforming our streets to create people-centred places and prioritise community, giving people a real choice to walk, cycle and use public transport in the places they live. This also includes integrating biodiversity enhancements into new transport infrastructure.

7 Targeting an end to deaths and serious injuries on our road network.

8 Delivering well-maintained and resilient networks. Ensuring financial sustainability and value for money.

2.0 Overall CAS Aims

2.1 *Our general aims in transport matters are to:*

- Protect the built historic environment and buried archaeology from damage or destruction by transport infrastructure;
- 'Restitch' historic town centres torn apart by roads and reduce motor traffic and surface car parks to permit a better appreciation of built heritage and recreate urban grain on a human scale;
- Put an end to the waste of land caused by the construction of car-dependent out-of-town retail parks, to the detriment of the viability of town centres potentially easily accessible by public transport or active travel;
- Emphasise the need to integrate roads and transport into the planning of new developments, which should include everyday public facilities, green spaces, street trees and cycleways;

2.2 *Chester: Overall Threats. Potential and Aims*

Chester's small-scale, tightly knit urban form of medieval origin, which is a major factor in its heritage value, is at risk from inappropriate development aimed at accommodating motor vehicles. Measures to tackle climate change, by promoting the use of public transport and making future developments more 'walkable', would have the welcome side-effect of strengthening the city's historic character.

Specifically:
Personal motor vehicle use in and through the city needs to be reduced. It leads to ever-increasing demands for road-widening and extra parking capacity, which destroy the urban grain as well as causing congestion, air pollution, noise and danger to other road users. Electric vehicles are not a panacea; ultimately the number of vehicles on the road needs to be reduced.

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3.0 Specific Recommendations

3.1 *Operational*

a) An experimental approach should be taken to the frequencies, routes and stops of bus services, in consultation with the communities that they serve.

b) Multimodal travel should be facilitated, eg in Chester by routing some Saughall and Blacon buses via Bache, to serve the railway station, and as many suburban services as possible should take in Chester station; this approach is very common on the continent.

c) New bus services should also be trialled, and existing services promoted, to serve edge-of-town or out-of-town retail parks, industrial parks and other facilities: eg from Saughall and Blacon to Bache to serve the Countess of Chester hospital and Morrison's supermarket; to the Sealand Road retail and employment parks; from Chester to Airbus and the Deeside industrial estate.

d) Recognise that many rural journeys will have to continue to be made by car, so focus on encouraging the uptake of EVs in those areas. However, bus services from villages need to be improved in frequency and reliability.

e) Frequency and reliability are especially important for multimodal journeys. It should be easy to plan and book through journeys using a single timetable, as in Switzerland (https://www.sbb.ch/en/ buying/pages/fahrplan/fahrplan.xhtml); this would also show where journeys by public transport remain impractical because of inadequate services. A standard mobile phone app with real-time information on public transport services may also be useful. However, the information needs of those – especially older people – who do not use the internet should also be remembered.

3.2 *Transport Infrastructure*

a) We share the general aversion to building new roads. However, a Chester Western Relief Road, perhaps from the A483/A55 junction to Sealand Road at Blacon Point, should be investigated to take traffic off the increasingly built-up Wrexham Road between the Business Park and the city centre and from the western sector of the Inner Ring Road and Lower Watergate Street; a route should be clearly identified and key sites safeguarded. Chester's historical situation as the lowest easy bridging point of the Dee still plays a role in channelling an excessive amount of traffic through the city centre; more bridges are needed (contrast Newcastle upon Tyne *par excellence*).

b) The logic of the movement hierarchy shown on page 17 [of the LTP4 Core Strategy] is that within settlements the question is not where cycleways or dual use (pedestrian-cum-cyclist) routes should be permitted, but where should motor vehicles be permitted: whose vehicles, what sort, and during what hours?

c) We strongly support the creation of more cycleways as a healthy and space-efficient way for people to get to and around towns as a normal part of their daily lives; these need to form a network allowing everybody who wishes to cycle 'from anywhere to everywhere' and to be direct, safe, comfortable and attractive. A lot of attention has been paid to the potential of reusing old railway routes and canal towpaths as cycleways. However, this potential is overstated, and the use of canal towpaths is dangerous, especially for large numbers of users. In settlements, cyclists will need to occupy road space (because that is where journeys begin and end), resulting in less space for motor vehicles; only in between is it sensible for cycleways to go off road. Cycle lanes in general should include physical separation from pedestrians (especially given the popularity of heavy and fast e-bikes) and from motor vehicles, as, for example, on a stretch of the A56 between Helsby and Frodsham.

d) **Within the Inner Ring Road/City Walls:** motor vehicle movements should be simplified and reduced. We have long argued that the dual carriageway sections of the Inner Ring Road, plus its feeders (Boughton, Hoole Way, New Crane Street, Grosvenor Street) should be 'put on a diet', ie be reduced from four lanes to two and segregated cycle lanes built. The streets of Chester within the City Walls/Inner Ring Road except for the Inner Ring Road should be shared space (ie pedestrians, cyclists, specific categories of motor vehicle). Grosvenor Park Road should be one-way only, westbound, as should Lower Watergate Street, releasing space for cycle lanes and to improve pedestrian movement. Remove the unsightly chicane between St John Street and Frodsham Street and reverse the direction of traffic on St John Street. Access to Frodsham Street from the Cow Lane Bridge roundabout should be restored and traffic flow along Northgate Street and Hunter Street reversed to take traffic off Delamere Street, George Street and Gorse Stacks.

e) **Chester Gateway Area (ie Railway Station)** The pedestrian circulation area in front of the station should be increased. More bus stops should be created nearby at the east and west ends of the station. Two-way traffic for private vehicles and cycles for access should be retained on City Road and in front of the station to avoid the need for long detours. We support the idea of an 'active travel' bridge across the railway, but it should be designed to work well with the existing road bridge, as well as a new one that may never be built. Improved, attractive crossings of Hoole Way and Hoole Road for pedestrians and cyclists will need to be built at each end of the bridge. We support the principle of a Mobility Hub at the western end of the station. Parking for disabled people should remain as close to the platforms as possible.

Any development at Flookersbrook should include a connection to the Millennium Greenway and an improved crossing of Hoole Road. There also needs to be a link from the Greenway onto Victoria Road for access to the city centre.

The route from the city centre to the station needs to be made more attractive and legible by the removal of traffic infrastructure and redesign for pedestrians at both ends of Brook Street, where it is cut by the Inner Ring Road and by the Hoole Way–Black Diamond Street– Station Road junction. The first location is a

key part of a pedestrian route from the city centre to the station, while a logical route for cyclists approaching the station from Blacon along the Millennium Greenway would be via Victoria Road, St Anne Street and Black Diamond Street. Both junctions need remodelling to make them more legible and attractive to pedestrians and cyclists

A more legible and attractive route from Brook Street across Hoole Way would encourage access to St Anne's Field from an area otherwise devoid of public green space. But see our comments on the need for parking in this area. Air quality poses a problem here, and there is also a comment that Northgate Links are isolated from the city by the Inner Ring Road. Reducing the ring road, and Hoole Way, from four lanes to two would help reduce vehicle dominance.

Car parking occupies a lot of land that is currently waste and could more profitably be used in other ways. However, consolidating it into a single MSCP to service the station is problematical. There needs to be parking for the hotels on City Road; long-stay station parking; station drop-off (and pick-up) parking; taxi parking; parking for Brook Street shops; and residents parking both in the St Anne Street and Queens Road areas, and these are likely to need to be on separate sites.

f) **Maintenance:** The maintenance of all roads (carriageways, cycleways and pavements, signage needs to be improved.

g) **Design:** Transport infrastructure, whether horizontal (road surfaces, pavements, squares) or vertical (bridges, railway- and bus stations, signage and other street furniture) does not just determine how we move between and within places; it is itself part of the built environment and the standpoint from which we see the rest of that environment. It thus needs to be appropriate to its function and location and beautiful in materials and design, both in its solid forms and in the spaces that it creates. We list below what we consider good and bad examples.

Good

- The façade of Chester railway station, although the west end of the station is ruinous and might be improved by a low MSCP as part of the rationalisation of parking in the area (another case where master-planning is needed);
- Chester Bus Interchange, reminiscent in its open style of 19th -century station train sheds but with a roof that merges with the green spaces around the Newtown flats, and situated immediately adjacent to the Inner Ring Road;
- The car park of the Tesco Frodsham Street supermarket, placed out of sight above the store, permitting an active frontage, and again adjacent to the Inner Ring Road;

Bad

- Northgate MSCP, out of scale with the historical townscape and attracts traffic, on a sector of the Inner Ring Road that is itself problematical, built over the remains of significant green space in the city that had probably existed since Saxon times and could have provided a recreational area for the housing envisaged for Northgate Phase II;
- The southern and western sectors of the Chester Inner Ring Road, which sever pedestrian connections within the medieval walled city both physically and psychologically;

- Lower Watergate Street, heavily used in two directions as part of a through route between the Inner Ring Road and Sealand Road, to the detriment of businesses and the few passers-by, who rarely pause even to look at historic buildings such as Stanley Palace or Watergate House;
- Frodsham Street, aesthetically bizarre with its yellow surfacing and functionally unsatisfactory given the amount of traffic that it carries, with an ambiguous zone between the still-narrow pavements and the bollard-delimited carriageway; a more conventional remodelling with wider pavements and a clearly defined, narrower carriageway would have been preferable.
- The Forum and Grosvenor Precinct car parks and loading bays, which in the 1960s totally destroyed extremely well-preserved, indeed unique, Roman archaeology for the sake of developments now already obsolete or past their best and, in the case of the Grosvenor Precinct, blocked the Saxon Newgate Street, damaging the permeability of the city and blocking fine views towards the Cathedral.

Dr P Carrington FSA

Chair, Chester Archaeological Society

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