Report

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Chester One City Plan

Appendix 1: The City of Now

March 2011

Cheshire West and Chester

Chester Renaissance

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Appendices

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For and on behalf of GVA Grimley Ltd

Executive Summary

A multidisciplinary team led by GVA, in partnership with RHWL, AECOM, Donald Insall Associates, and PPS was appointed by Cheshire West and Chester Council ('the Council') and Chester Renaissance (CR) in October 2010 to produce a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for Chester – the 'One City Plan'. The One City Plan considers and follows the analysis undertaken by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) within Chester in November 2010 and has reflected upon the ULI recommendations report subsequently published in March 2011.

The Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) economy is forecast to return to growth and, under the strategic economic leadership of the newly-formed Cheshire-Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Chester has the potential to be well placed to respond to this. The City contains many enviable assets including its Cathedral, Roman Walls and Amphitheatre, and medieval Castle all within its historic centre. There are highly successful visitor attractions including Chester Racecourse and Chester Zoo, the higher and further education (HE/FE) institutions of the University of Chester and West Cheshire College, and the waterfronts of the River Dee and Shropshire Union Canal. The City could be seen as a 'mosaic' of opportunity – each with positive effect in isolation, but when considered comprehensively as a whole, with the potential to become a locally distinctive, unique and cohesive success on a much greater scale.

This report sets out the findings of Stage 1 of the One City Plan commission by firstly considering Chester's 'baseline' position related to a range of key thematic indicators to assess and identify the future drivers to which the One City Plan must respond and further develop.

The following thematic sub-sections summarise the current issues affecting the City to which the One City Plan objectives and solutions must respond.

People & Culture

- **An Ageing Population** - The age structure of Cheshire West and Chester is projected to alter dramatically over the next 15 years. A significant growth in older residents is likely to have multiple impacts on both the housing requirements and economy of the City of Chester. Most pertinently, the fall in the absolute number and proportion of working-age residents has the potential to act as a labour-force supply-side restraint on economic recovery and growth across the area. In addition, the growth in an older population will require additional social, healthcare and housing, support services to be planned for and provided, as well as a range of housing that meets the needs of an ageing population.

- **Household Growth Ambitions** - The Council's ambition for sustained economic and housing growth is set out in Cheshire & Warrington's 'Unleashing the Potential' ambitious sub-regional growth strategy as well as being reflected in its Growth Point status. This will increase pressure on existing housing stock and the supply of development land in Chester. The scale of growth will be tested within the planning framework through the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy process.

- **Celebrating Chester's Culture & Heritage**: Chester has a long and interesting past that has shaped its current cultural offer. Much of its physical history remains intact and is a big draw for tourists and residents alike. However, the quality of cultural provision – particularly its evening offer – and the maximisation of the City's assets, is questionable – with investment required to fully celebrate the City and continue to drive investment into the economy as a preferential place to live.

Education & Learning

- **Supporting Life-long Learning**: Chester exhibits concentrations of communities with low skills levels, limited qualifications and high incidence of child poverty in the suburban Blacon and Lache neighbourhoods. This sits at odds with the strengths Chester holds in its Higher, and Further education offer – suggesting a local disconnect. The University of Chester has aspirations to place itself at the heart of a 'University City', and is proceeding to take active steps towards this – building relationships with local businesses and communities, encouraging entrepreneurialism and drawing the University into the City centre to strengthen its physical ties and presence. It will be important for a greater targeting of skills, learning and social support towards these neighbourhoods to enable them to benefit from, the educational and economic potential of the City.

Community Safety & Perceptions

- **Negativity of Night Time Economy**: Chester City centre has an elevated crime rate, compared to the borough average, which is influenced at least in part by the City's night time economy. The City has become synonymous with a drinking culture at night with heightened levels of alcohol-induced criminal activity including violence and anti-social behaviour compared to the rest of the CWaC. However, Police intelligence, supported by the latest crime statistics, indicate that Chester's reputation for criminal activity associated with the evening economy is much worse than the reality. As a result, changing this perception will play a key part encouraging a wider demographic and footfall into the City centre during twilight and evening hours.

- **An 'Unsafe' City after Dark**: The Police have implemented an effective Night Time Strategy to combat crime and improve presence, which has had a significant impact in reducing crime rates. However, the City centre offers limited cultural amenity and activity in the early evening. When coupled with the presence of groups of drinkers results in local perceptions of a lack of safety, rowdiness and anti-social behaviour, which discourages many from entering the City during the evening.

- **Maintain & Enhance Safety**: Potential exists to relocate the Police Station from the Town Hall basement in 2012 to enable a full refurbishment of the Town Hall for civic benefit and to provide revenue generating services. It will, however, be vital that the Police are retained in a location within the City centre to facilitate more effective joint-working with partner agencies, minimize response times and maximize their presence for the benefit of community safety and to improve resident and visitor perceptions of the City.

Community Health & Care

- Chester demonstrates health inequalities for several key health indicators, including a high mortality rate from cancers, and at the neighbourhood scale there are a number of health challenges, notably around mental health and lifestyle issues.

- The Western Cheshire PCT Strategy, Transforming Health and Health Care: Getting it Right (2010), has established a targeted action-led approach to tackling health inequalities. The PCT are adopting a more integrated approach to the provision of primary and community care, working with other public service agencies.

- Examples are: Two new priority facilities are planned in Chester – working under the model of Integrated Resource Centres. These will operate within a 'one-stop shop' framework, on a multi-agency basis, providing a range of different services in one locality including primary, secondary, voluntary sector and social care.

- Working closely with Cheshire West and Chester Council, a preferred site has been identified by the PCT within the Chester Northgate area. The Delamere Street site is proposed, as part of a wider facility, to accommodate the relocation of four inner City GP Practices, together with the delivery of the emerging Transforming Community Services agenda. In addition, there are plans in Blacon to consider within a structured partnership agreement with Cheshire West and Chester Council and Chester and District Housing to deliver an integrated development that includes affordable housing, health and social care.

Business & Investment

- **Growth Ambitions**: Cheshire West and Chester Council is committed to the aspiration set out within Cheshire and Warrington's 'Unleashing the Potential' sub-regional economic strategy, which by 2030 targets the delivery of 22,000 additional jobs, an increase GVA by at least £10 billion to some £30 billion, together with increasing population by at least 100,000, across the Cheshire Warrington sub-region. Chester is expected to play a significant role in this growth as the principal economic centre for Cheshire West & Chester, providing employment across a range of professional, financial, cultural, tourism, and retail sectors. 'Unleashing the potential' promotes high levels of growth and development based around Chester and the Deeside Hub up to 2030, developing a major transformational tourism project in Chester, and building on Chester's high quality office and retail offer. Forecasting forwards, the 'Unleashing the potential' aspirations will be a challenge to deliver – with total employment expected to increase by only 0.5% (c. 850 jobs) between 2009 and 2027(although this does not take account of Chester's potential CBD and Northgate schemes). However, Chester is well placed to benefit from this growth, with strongest additional employment and GVA growth forecast within Pharmaceuticals, Banking and Finance and Other Business Services sectors, all of which have clusters in Chester.

- **Distinctive Sectors** - Considering the existing economy; the majority of employees in Cheshire West and Chester are employed in distribution, hotels and restaurants; followed by the public sector and banking, finance & insurance. Trend analysis since 1998 reveals that the largest growth in employment has been in the public sector which has risen 40.79%, followed by the other services sector (28.58%) and banking, finance and insurance at 17.75% - predominantly driven by strong growth within Chester at the Business Park.

- **Inclusive Economy** - Income levels demonstrate significant variance across the Chester urban area, with clustering of high income households in the Overleigh ward alongside low income households within the Lache neighbourhood, City ward and Blacon ward. There are several wards, covering both the Blacon neighbourhood and Chester City centre, which have consistently held elevated claimant rates above the Cheshire West and Chester authority average since 2007. Additional support may be required for the residents of these wards to gain employment, or to re-skill and re-train – focusing on key growth sectors, if Chester is to generate an inclusive economy.

- **Inward Investment**: Considering the City's commercial offer and desirability as an investor destination, it is perceived that Chester has allowed its economic position

at the regional scale to slip behind its competitors, with limited inward investment into the City, as result of the lack of high quality retail and office accommodation in the City centre, as well as the limited availability of car parking. Chester is currently marketed to businesses as it is to tourist; with heritage, lifestyle and its proximity to the rural areas played as its strengths. This is seen as understating Chester's potential business strengths, which lie in its role as a legal, financial services, judiciary, health and public services hub. This is coupled with the ageing of the accommodation at Chester Business Park and other out-of-town locations, which are limited in their appeal to a wide breath of potential occupiers. It will be important for Chester to actively lever inward investment into the City to deliver projects and programmes with strong employment creation outputs to realise growth closer to that targeted within 'Unleashing the potential'. It is anticipated that there is existing latent demand for high quality office and retail space, with the Northgate Retail scheme and Chester Central Business District projects seen as vital to capitalise on this potential. Concurrently, this is also likely to result in pressures for housing delivery to meet demand.

Neighbourhoods, Planning & Housing

- **A Location of Choice**: Chester has 'bucked the trend' of the recession, with average prices remaining stable since 2007. In fact, prices have increased within Chester City centre (within the Walls), which is likely to reflect the constrained housing supply within the area, as well as the continued desirability of the location for City living. This is supported by evidence of a strong housing rental market in Chester, with high average rents compared to the wider authority. This does, however, suggest limited affordability for households wishing to reside in Chester City centre. – particularly for low income households and first-time buyers.

- **Supply Pressures**: The Core Strategy will become the key spatial planning document - forming the basis of planning and investment decisions for the next 15 years within the 'Open Source Planning' framework. The Council will engage local communities to consult on the Core Strategy Preferred Options document in autumn 2011. This will test the vision and options for growth (housing and economic), with the authority split into its 5 local sub-areas for focus – of which Chester is one. The options identify increasing amounts of housing development to support, and attracting, potentially rising levels of household and economic growth. Considering forward supply, the CWaC Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) suggests that there is capacity for growth in Chester, although the majority of larger sites do have considerable constraints, such as greenbelt location, which limit their deliverability in the current market and under current policy. Hence, for the household growth level of housing

required through RSS (medium) and 'Unleashing the Potential' (high) sites outside settlement policy boundaries would be required on land that is currently designated as open countryside and Green Belt.

- **Neighborhood Planning**: Given the high demand for housing in Chester, and the Council and LEP's aspirations, there is potential for the current and forward constraints on housing supply under current policy to stymie the economic potential of the City and its environs. The Core Strategy process will therefore test the options for growth and evaluate their potential impacts during 2011. This will subsequently enable a clearer framework to guide and advise local communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans in Chester.

Living City

- **Under-utilised Green & Recreation Spaces**: There are existing green spaces notably the Grosvenor Park and Roman gardens. Oddly these spaces aren't readily accessible and the visitors will not find them easily. Discussion with local residents suggests that Grosvenor Park is a vital green space for local recreational use. However, the quality of the Park, particularly play facilities, was seen as requiring investment to meet the needs of local families. It is recognised that there is a live Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid to upgrade the park's facilities to realise the Master plan for this area. The current under-utilisation of the River Dee, its frontage, and poor way finding to this natural resource represent particular issues at present and require consideration through the One City Plan.

- **Disconnected Streets & Spaces**: The current hierarchy of streets within Chester and many of the primary routes, which are recent additions, have marginalised some of the secondary or historic routes. The inner ring road has destroyed much of the historic grain and cut side streets or lanes off. Some streets are lost and some are devoid of activity due to the disconnection of places. The opportunity to meander between and through spaces has been lost. The human desire to wander is not satisfied in many parts of Chester.

- **Creating a Legible[1] Experience**: It will be important for all future proposals to reinforce legibility and balance the gravity of character and interest that is currently missing. By re-establishing a legible layout, using key features and landmarks, supported by a network of accessible movement corridors and linked open spaces the experience of life on the street will be enhanced. This will allow

[1] Legibility in this instance refers to the ability for a person to understand where they are in relation to other places in the vicinity.

Chester's unique built heritage and the new architecture in waiting to be experienced fully.

- **Discontinuous Frontages & Enclosures**: The built form and grain[2] within Chester has two very distinctive characteristics. Many areas predominantly inside the City Walls are continuous. The opposite to this to the East is largely fragmented and broken, with unresolved and incomplete building lines resulting in urban blocks being open ended, unfinished or at odds with the street pattern and contextual grain. This discontinuous building line, caused by empty sites or ill conceived development, prevents their being a harmonious street space and so results in a negative perception of the City.

Creating a Competitive City Centre – Retail

- **Slipping Retail Ranking**: Chester provides a significant City centre retail offer consisting of large multi-national and national scale 'high street brands' as well as a number of specialist and independent traders. However, in recent years Chester has struggled to compete with the substantial levels of investment in flagship shopping facilities such as the Trafford Centre, Liverpool One, Cheshire Oaks, , which have become premier shopping destinations and have provided strong competition for visitor spend. In addition, Wrexham Town Centre has begun to divert local resident shoppers away from Chester.

- **The Rows**: Retail units within the unique historic Rows are arguably Chester's most significant 'unique selling point' (USP). However, it is proving difficult to let, with occupiers often unwilling to compromise given the lack of flexibility in the space and limited access arrangements. Moreover, the Rows are increasingly experiencing lower footfall that leads to reducing rents and increasing vacancy. The Rows area, however, is the subject of an application for World Heritage Status. By spring 2011, the Council will know if the Rows are progressing from the UK national list to next (international) stage. This, in itself, with bring significant kudos to the Rows if successful – placing them on the global 'must see' list of visitor destinations.

- **Partnership Approach**: A successful City Centre Management partnership with retail traders, business leaders, and public authorities is active. Their main objective is to drive greater footfall into the City centre. The mechanisms to do so at present include organising and contribution towards events, marketing campaigns and the publicity of the City centre.

[2] In this instance 'built form and grain' refer to the pattern and arrangement of streets and parcels of buildings and land.

- **Major Retail Development Plans**: Chester City Centre is subject to proposals for a substantial new retail development; the 'Northgate' scheme, providing a mixed use retail-led scheme. The Council and ING, along with their advisors, are currently working to produce a revised commercial concept that is viable in the current economic climate with a revised hybrid planning application (supported by schematic master plan) aimed for submission in early 2012+. Any scheme that creates a new Northgate retail quarter must seamlessly integrate with the rest of the City Centre, drawing visitors into the wider City, and complementing the overall retail offer.

- **Re-providing City Centre Facilities**: The Northgate scheme will result in a number of impacts on key City centre facilities. To enable the delivery of the Northgate retail scheme, the Chester Market will require relocating from its current indoor site behind the Town Hall in Princess Street. Options for a new market are currently being tested and explored with the market traders and wider public. The delivery of the Northgate scheme will also require the demolition of the existing City bus interchange located to the rear of the Town Hall. However, this will contravene saved Chester District Local Plan Policy TR9. It is therefore critical that plans for either a new bus exchange / interchange, or a series of smaller 'bus hubs', are developed within the City, along with funding and phasing confirmation, in order to allow planning permission to be granted for the Northgate scheme. Ongoing analysis is being undertaken by the Council and advisors to identify the appropriate method of bus interchange and potential locations. The One City Plan must influence the method and location of facilities to enhance and maximise the benefit for the City and its users.

Leisure & the Visitor Economy

- **Leisure Investment**: The Cheshire West and Chester Council Leisure Stock Review was published in August 2010, identifying the strategic leisure needs in Cheshire West and Chester. Among drivers of this were the need to address health and wellbeing inequalities, the need to provide clear pathways to excellence for athletes, and the need to manage ease of access to facilities. The two main recommendations of the review involve the respective reconstruction or replacement of two existing major leisure facilities in Chester: Chester Baths and Northgate Arena. Among other recommendations are that the Council works with the Education department to ensure new school developments are designed to maximise community use, and to enhance working arrangements with the University of Chester to develop indoor facilities and playing pitches.

- **Maximising Potential**: As explored within the culture section, a large element of Chester's appeal is its rich history and heritage – however the present offer is not

fully meeting the expectations of Chester's visitors or maximising the potential of the City to benefit from the visitor economy. Chester is diversifying its offer through an increasing number of events. Chester Races is a big draw with substantial local economic benefits provided on each race day. Expansion plans of the Zoo are projected to further boost visitor numbers, and marketing of the City to link more closely with the zoo should further emphasise that Chester has more to offer the visitor than its heritage alone.

Movement & Accessibility

- **The Barrs Area Gyratory** – The area including the Barrs gyratory and the other effective gyratory incorporating Grosvenor Park Road, Union Street, Love Street and Foregate Street is acting as a major severance for pedestrians and cyclists and a barrier between the rail station and the historic core. The area also represents an inefficient use of land with significant land take and only moderate levels of flow throughout most of the day.

- **Gateway Car Parking** – It is considered of great importance to remove as much traffic as possible from the City centre without reducing the accessibility of its main amenities. The parking strategy for the One City Plan should therefore be one of interception and connection, whereby vehicles are collected at key gateways into the City centre outside of the inner ring road, and high quality connections are created onwards into the City centre for the use of alternative modes.

- **Inner Ring Road Carriageway and Junctions** – With more Chester-bound traffic being intercepted before arrival at the Inner Ring Road system, the road itself could be downgraded to improve accessibility and crossing opportunity and to remove severance. In addition, the three large roundabout junctions (excluding the Barrs gyratory) around the perimeter could be reviewed and reduced in scale to lessen excessive land-take and to maximise connectivity and development land.

- **The Station Approach** – The route between the rail station and historic core (Brook Street and City Road) is of varying quality, is badly signed, does not support legibility and orientation, and does not encourage walking or cycling trips, or further exploration. City Road could be greatly improved to offer a broad boulevard access way which, in combination with improvements to the Barrs gyratory will greatly enhance access between the rail gateway and the retail centre. This does, however, recognise the high quality of the Public Realm achieved outside the station as a result of recent investment.

- **The Bus Network** – The existing bus network involves convoluted routeing around the City Centre, has limited interchange potential between modes or buses, and is fractured to form two distinct hubs which do not connect well. It is considered that a focus for bus activity is required, with opportunities for better integration with the rail station and the central amenities explored, which discourages buses generating additional unnecessary journey miles around the City Centre. Locating this facility effectively will be extremely important, particularly considering how the bus offer can 'take a step up' from its current mix of standard bus and park and ride to attract an even higher modal split and encourage more sustainable movement into the City.

- **Cycle Accessibility** – The cross-City connectivity of the City Centre by bicycle is extremely poor with little potential for linkage and poor crossing facilities at large junctions. The One City Plan should look to address this and create dedicated space for cyclists, and cycle storage, across the retail core.

- **Pedestrian Areas** – The pedestrian zone within the City Centre is currently difficult to access, has limited connectivity, and is shared with disabled motorists (blue badge holders), vehicular traffic associated with patronage of the Grosvenor Hotel and servicing vehicles. Consequently, an extension of pedestrian activity around the centre paying special attention to the creation of corridors, and improving access between outlying areas such as the rail station, University Quarter and waterside areas is a desirable objective. Pedestrian connectivity into and out of the City Centre should be improved using high quality conventional at-grade crossings (as apposed to the current underpass system) where appropriate and parallel work to redesign and remodel large barrier junctions on the Inner Ring Road could help to support this.

- **Penetrable Backlands** – Large areas of the City Centre are currently either highly inaccessible or are isolated from the pedestrian circuit to such an extent that they are under-populated and often under-utilised, unknown and unknowable as a result. It is therefore suggested that these areas could be redeveloped to be much more outward facing with signage, frontage and gateways which invite rather than stifle exploration. This could be combined with the pedestrian and cycle strategies to create better circuits which take in some of this currently underutilised space.

- **Frodsham and Foregate Streets** – The area around these important links is currently heavily utilised by buses, pedestrians and traffic at the Northern end of Frodsham Street for access to Tesco and Iceland car parks. The existing Public Realm on Frodsham Street is considered to undersell the link as one of the key gateways to the City Centre, given the imbalance awarded in favour of vehicular traffic. This

has a market impact on the mix of retail units currently available. A solution is required which balances pedestrian flow with the needs of bus users. A key question should be whether to retain the existing bus hub at this location, or to downgrade the facility in favour of another facility.

Conclusion

As a City Chester continues to grow and prosper – with a rich heritage, growing education institutions, passionate residents and unique historic centre.

Yet, despite being an economic leader within the Cheshire-Warrington sub-region and having a strong relationship with North Wales, there are challenges to overcome. Some of its neighbourhoods have become detached from the City's affluence, with social issues of poor health, vulnerability and low qualifications common against a backdrop of rising unemployment and benefit claiming. The City centre has attracted shoppers and tourists to visit its unique galleried Rows and take in its well preserved Roman heritage – including the largest known Amphitheatre and the most complete City Walls in Britain. Yet, today Chester is struggling to compete for business investment, visitors and shoppers – arguably the 'jewel in the crown' of the North West no longer sparkles as brightly.

1. Introduction

1.1 A multidisciplinary team led by GVA, in partnership with RHWL, AECOM, Donald Insall Associates, and PPS was appointed by Cheshire West and Chester Council ('the Council') and Chester Renaissance (CR) in October 2010 to produce a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for Chester – the 'One City Plan'.

1.2 The Council has established a set of objectives for the One City Plan, to:

- Act to further reinforce the Council's vision for the City through their emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy.
- Set an overall vision and development guidance for Chester, 'the place, the product and the ambition'.
- Identify the key deliverable action areas and project priorities within the City centre.
- Articulate the core themes which will connect spatial areas and projects.
- Establish a high level programme and project priorities for delivery.
- Producing a programme and strategy with the delivery mechanisms and required interventions to ensure schemes are delivered.

1.3 The One City Plan will therefore respond to the 'untapped potential' of the City of Chester and will set a cohesive regeneration programme that will bring together strands of policy, programmes and mainstream expenditure.

1.4 The timing of the development of the One City Plan is critical to:

- Ensure the recent momentum established through recent project priorities, including the Commercial Quarter, Performing Arts Venue and Northgate, is maintained through the sustained attraction of investment and programme delivery.
- Ensure that Chester plays a full role in the growth of the Cheshire Warrington sub-region.
- Ensure that the residents of Chester and its diverse communities fully participate in and benefit from economic growth and investment.

- Ensure that mainstream public funding and private investment is attracted to the area in a financial climate where resources and funding opportunities are tight. It needs to provide a compelling forward looking case for investment and funding.

1.5 This report will focus on the City of Chester (it is only this area that will be subject to specific physical changes and proposals in the One City Plan), having wider regard the Cheshire West and Chester local authority geography where appropriate (the 'urban fringe'). For the purposes of data analysis, the One City Plan study area is presented in the following figure, with the Cheshire West and Chester local authority, following. The One City Plan study area is coterminous with the spatial designation of the Chester functional urban area and its 5 urban unitary wards (Figure 1.2). Data, where necessary is provided at the scale of the 2003 CAS wards (Figure 1.3).

1.6 The observations contained in this report are also informed by a series of consultations with individuals and a collective stakeholder and community event held on 1st December 2010, attended by over 60 representatives, A number of workshop activities that were held at this stage 1 engagement event have provided useful messages and views about people's experiences and perceptions of the City Centre (including identifying well liked and disliked parts of the City, suggesting priority areas for action, and analysing some key challenges/questions).

1.7 The ward boundaries within the City of Chester will be amended in May 2011. Statistical analysis has been undertaken for the pre-May 2011 ward boundaries as analytical data is not yet available for these new spatial boundaries. Future monitoring for the One City Plan will consideration analysis of statistical data for the post-May 2011 ward boundaries as and when data comes available.

Report Purpose & Structure

1.8 This report sets out the findings of Stage 1 of the One City Plan commission within a series of sections, which consider Chester's 'baseline' position related to a range of key thematic indicators – examining the demographic, economic and social - to assess and identify the future drivers to which the One City Plan must respond. This includes a place-based analysis focusing on the functional movement systems of the City.

1.9 The report has been informed by one-to-one meetings and formal engagement with the relevant Council departments, as well as key external stakeholder agencies to add depth, as well as to validate analysis and conclusions.

Figure 1.1: Cheshire West and Chester

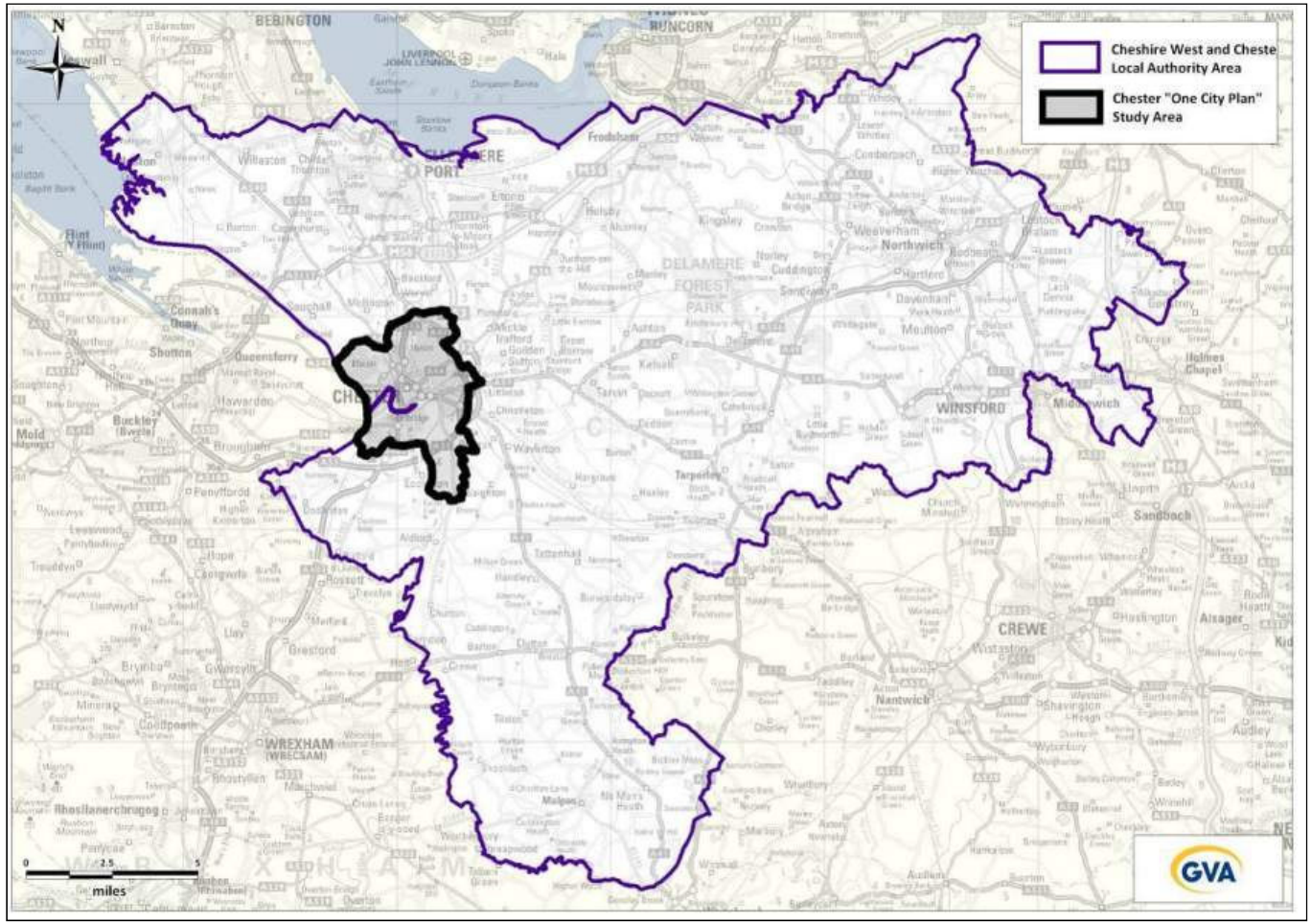


Figure 1.2: 'Chester One City Plan' Study Area – Unitary Wards

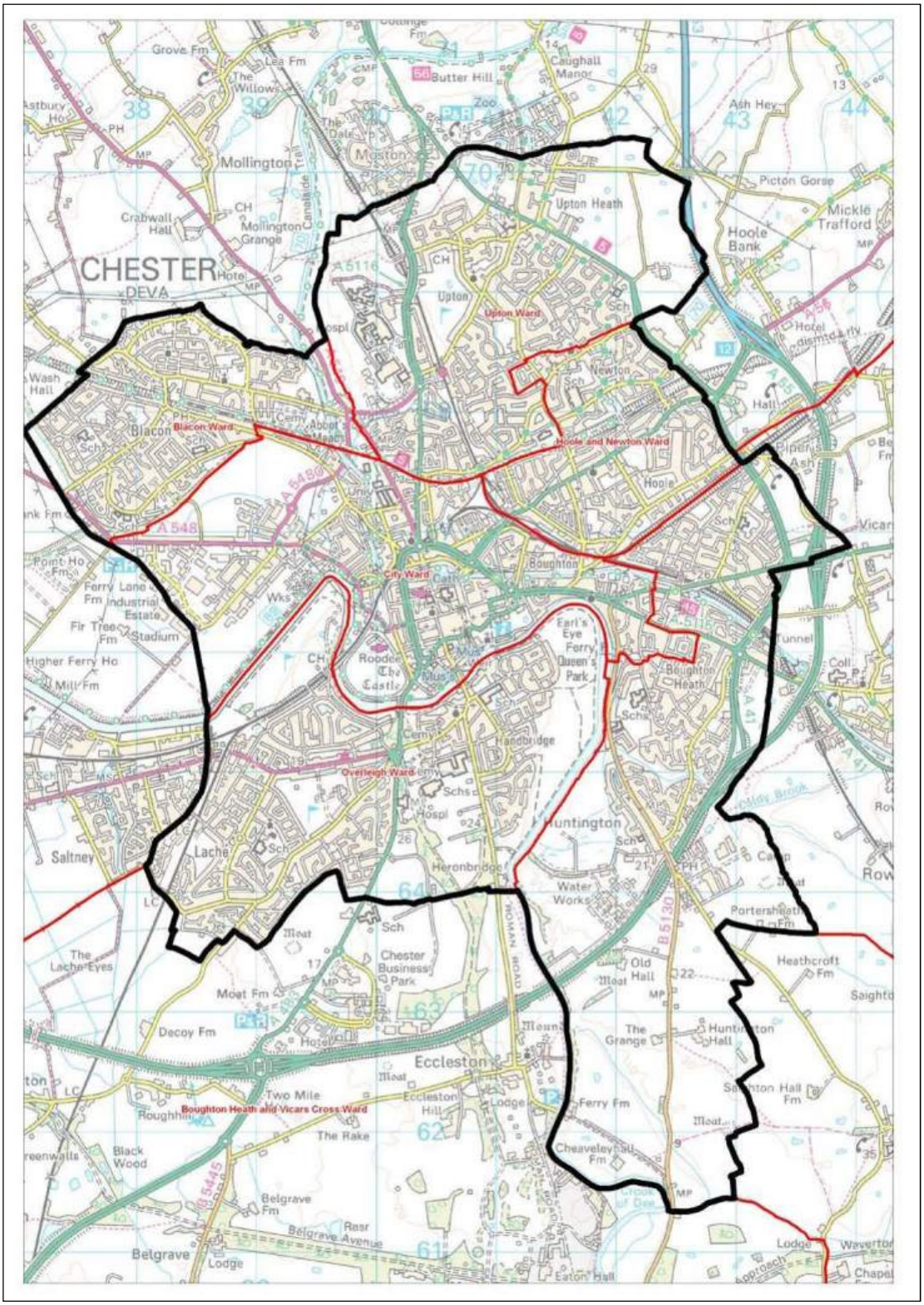
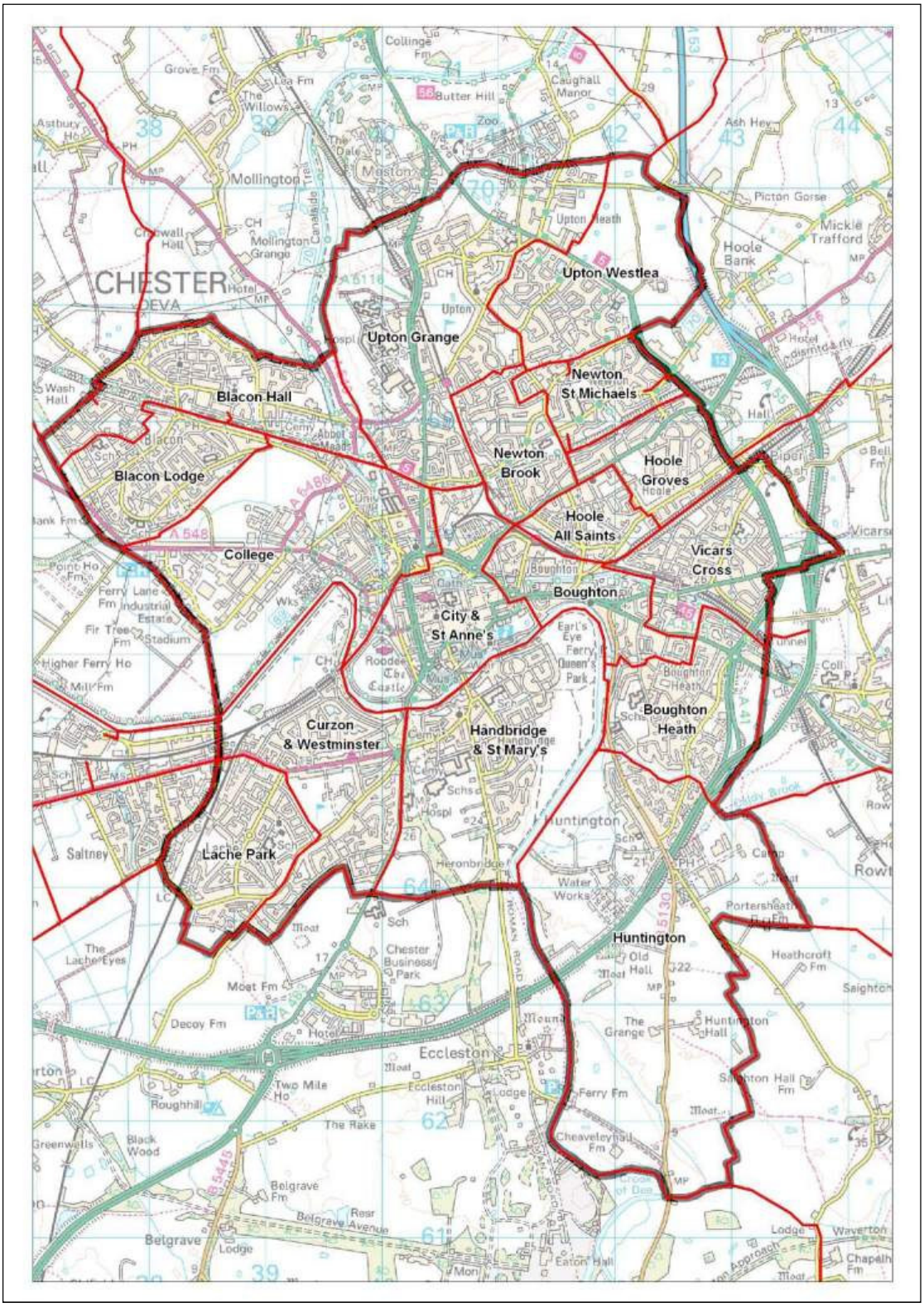


Figure 1.3: 'Chester One City Plan' Study Area – 2003 CAS Wards



2. The Strategic Context

2.1 It is acknowledged that Chester has been the subject of many plans, strategies and reviews during the last ten years. Whilst this is not unusual for places and a sign of much thinking and analysis of a City – the extent of this undertaking in Chester has been extensive and has resulted in over sixty masterplans, strategies, and guides, with mixed results of implementation and delivery.

2.2 The starting point for the preparation of the One City Plan was to assemble all of those documents in so far as the team were able and to assess these in light of the City's current direction. The following is a short documentary of those that have been influential, those that are current working documents and an explanation of how they have informed the One City Plan. This is not a complete summary of all sixty plus documents, the majority of which are project specific, but is an explanation of how the more relevant documents and One City Plan relate to each other.

Timeline/Background

2.3 The activities that have been undertaken to develop and improve the City in the last five years have been founded upon a chain of key documents. The Culture Park Programme, April 2006, is where this commentary begins. The Chester Culture Park was an integrated programme of culture and visitor development and management in Chester developed by Chester City Council. The central aim of the programme was 'to make Chester a 'must see' European City by 2015' by combining the overall product of the City for the visitor. The component parts being; City centre management, visitor management, zone development, routes and gateways, new product development, interpretation, events, the City at Night, place marketing, delivery, and maintenance. This Culture Park approach ran in parallel with the City's development programme at that time. It was a new way of approaching the City as a visitor destination and attraction, but it did not include very much of the community needs of the City or the business potential beyond the tourism strengths.

2.4 The Culture Park document included a thorough action plan identifying immediate, medium and longer term priorities. By no means have all of these been seen through, but immediately the work led to a series of masterplans for key 'zones' to be addressed/developed. This included the Rows Management Plan, Castle Quarter and Cathedral Masterplans. It also led to the commissioning of the Interpretation Masterplan to identify Chester's stories and how it should tell these as part of the Public Realm, discussed below.

2.5 The Place Marketing Strategy, July 2006, sat within the context of the Culture Park. It was prepared by Yellow Railroad International Destination Consultancy to make recommendations for Chester's future success as a place. It stated that 'Chester must rely on its physical and architectural environment and cultural history to define its sense of place.' Further, it recommended that; Chester should aspire to be one of Britain's great historic boutique cities; should focus on its role as an "energy centre" and service hub for the sub-region (Chester provides the shopping, cultural and entertainment needs for residents across the wider sub region); be a beacon of quality retail quality, range and distinctiveness; and be a leader in applying world class solutions to the development of small historic cities.

2.6 The themes in the Place Marketing and Culture Park Strategies are relevant for the One City Plan, and some of the projects have already been delivered. The key distinction is that the One City Plan hangs all of these actions and interventions together and challenges what is delivered based upon a detailed analysis of the 'City of Now', identifying 'forgotten' areas or issues, and making clear delivery recommendations.

2.7 The Interpretation Masterplan prepared by Imagemakers is being used to inform the interpretation of some key sites within the City e.g. Amphitheatre and Edgar's Field. It is adopted by the Council as its reference and guide to take forward the implementation of effective interpretation, and provides an audience focussed and evidence based framework for 'telling Chester's stories' in the Public Realm. It is recognised in the One City Plan.

2.8 It is a key component of the investment in Chester that the Public Realm is improved and enhanced for public use and maximum enjoyment; this includes redressing the balance between vehicles and pedestrians; providing a coherent approach to improving connections and reinforcing Chester's distinctiveness and quality through its Public Realm. This is the basis of the Public Realm Design Guide (PRDG), completed in September 2010 by Taylor Young. In its completed form, the document is now being applied in the delivery of actual schemes e.g. the Groves, St John's Church, CWaC HQ. The PRDG as well as setting out the overall parameters and guidance, also provided detailed designs for a number of streets in the City Centre, CWaC and Chester Renaissance have already started implementing some of these e.g. Bridge Street. Wayfinding and Architectural Lighting form stand alone strategies within the Public Realm and parts of these are also being implemented e.g. architectural lighting of the Amphitheatre and Newgate Bridge.

2.9 Chester Renaissance developed from the Culture Park ideas; it was set up in 2008 as the delivery vehicle for development and change in the City. Its role is to support the efforts of public and private sector partners and provide added value to complete and accelerate the economic growth of Chester. It has developed effective partnerships which have delivered Amphitheatre improvements, City Walls restoration, new areas of green space and Public Realm, a masterplan for a Central Business Quarter, events and festivals in the

City Centre, and a major public art event in 2010 ('Rhinomania'). Key aims identified for Chester Renaissance in the Business Plan (2009-11) are; to stand out as a City of excellence in the region (recognised as a dynamic and vibrant City of culture, heritage, quality retail and leisure); promote the City as one which influences businesses and attracts new business – continually encouraging and enabling growth; to make Chester a great place to live, work and visit; to improve linkages between the private and public sectors; be a 'must see' European destination.

2.10 It is relevant in describing the key documents and strategy background that we refer to a short report prepared by Locum consulting in September 2009. 'Ideas for Place Shaping in Chester' was part of the North West Visitor Economy Pilots project – adding a commercial approach to the thinking about how a distinctive sense of place can be nurtured. The report has provided a very useful quick snapshot of Locum's ideas for the City. Summarising the strategic principles from the study, the key message is 'aim higher' because Chester has the potential to be a genuine world class heritage City.

Sub-regional Context

2.11 The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is the new sub-regional economic body. A Partnership Board is established, who will set the policy and oversee the strategic delivery of the following private-sector led functions;

- Facilitating growth
- Assisting investment
- Providing skills and local intelligence
- Promoting Cheshire and Warrington
- Support the transition to a low carbon economy

2.12 The LEP must ensure close working between the public and other sectors in forging the economic strategy and priorities for the area. The broad mission of the LEP Board is to ensure that every opportunity is taken to improve the prosperity of the region.

2.13 The current economic strategy for Cheshire and Warrington is 'unleashing the potential', which represents an ambitious target for growth by 2030.

2.14 Chester Renaissance is one of the "place teams" responsible for delivery of projects and the local agenda within the LEP structure. The LEP structure and role is developing in parallel to ideas emerging around the delivery architecture in the One City Plan – it is very important that the OCP is aware of its functions and impacts on the recommendations for delivery in Chester.

Cheshire West and Chester Context

West Cheshire 'Together we can aim high', Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2010-26:

2.15 West Cheshire Together, formed in April 2009, is the Local Strategic Partnership for the area and it will guide the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The commitments of the SCS are broadly;

- Our communities will live well together
- Our communities will benefit from the right services that are delivered in the right place at the right time
- West Cheshire will be recognised as a world class place to visit and invest

2.16 A number of specific objectives sit beneath these headlines including; working with communities to address local issues particularly around crime and disorder; improving access to good quality and affordable homes; recognising and releasing the potential of young people to play a full and active part in the future of West Cheshire; and adapting built and natural environments to be resilient to climate change.

2.17 The SCS commitments are linked to five thematic groups, which make up West Cheshire Together. These are; Safer and Stronger Communities; Health and wellbeing; Children and Young People; Environmental Sustainability; and Business, Enterprise and Culture.

2.18 These broad objectives and themes can be very easily related to the main themes that the One City Plan is using to describe the City of Now and the City of the Future.

2.19 The Area Partnership Boards for Ellesmere Port, Rural West, Chester, Winsford and Rural East and Northwich and Rural North are the local based part of the LSP structure. Each has an action plan which supports delivery of the SCS. A number of Community Forums then sit within each of these areas.

2.20 The Localism Bill will have a major impact on the future structure of the Area Partnership Board and Community Forums.

2.21 The One City Plan has used the current forums and Chester Area Partnership Board as a way of engaging with community stakeholders and service deliverers.

Cheshire West and Chester Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy

2.22 The goals and objectives of the One City Plan will be delivered through the emerging Cheshire West and Chester Local Development Framework (LDF). This is the statutory

document, produced by the Council, which will guide all future growth across the Borough, including Chester.

2.23 The One City Plan has been developed at a time when the development options for growth in the Core Strategy, the main document that will help drive the future goals of the borough, are being consulted on. This is based on the consultation of the Issues and Options in 2009 and the evidence gathered during this time. Communities are being asked to give their views about the future of their area, how much growth is required and where this should be concentrated.

Cheshire West and Chester Local Transport Plan 'Integrated Transport Strategy 2011-26'

2.24 The new LTP sets out Cheshire West and Chester Council's plans and proposals for improving local transport over the next fifteen years. It consists of a long term strategy and a shorter term implementation plan (2011 – 2015). The document recognises that transport is not an end in itself but is a key factor in helping to improve quality of life, develop the economy, increase accessibility, enhance the environment and tackle poverty – all of which are key subjects in the One City Plan.

2.25 The top priorities informed by the extensive consultation of the LTP and stated in the final document are;

- To provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks which support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area;
- To reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change; and
- To manage a well maintained transport network

2.26 The One City Plan has considered many of the objectives that are set in the LTP for delivering these goals. In particular; schemes and measures that support the economic viability of the area; improving connectivity with surrounding areas; improving and encouraging the use of sustainable (low carbon) transport; and focusing on easy accessibility to developments.

Vision 2050 'A Sustainable Future for Cheshire West and Chester'

2.27 This report was prepared by the Chester Climate Change and Sustainability Ginger Group for the Local Authority in March 2009. Its intention is to guide the Council in making decisions about the future of the borough and is based upon the need to set the future direction of travel today in order to achieve sustainable communities by the year 2050.

2.28 In order to be truly sustainable communities, the Vision identifies a number of characteristics which are important for Cheshire West and Chester. A number of these are recognised within the One City Plan. For example; the supporting of improved walking and cycling access into and through the City Centre will greatly assist to promote improved health and well being; mixed use developments such as the Artisan's Quarter in the Commonhall Street area are recommended in the One City Plan; and more journeys by public transport, which is supported by movement and accessibility principles in the One City Plan.

Local Economic Assessment, Story of Place

2.29 Cheshire West and Chester's 'Story of Place' was produced in February 2011 – an economic profile which will inform future work to be carried out by the Council. The Assessment highlights that CWaC is no single economic geography, and its analysis at a Chester (District) level has been helpful in drawing comparisons with the One City Plan 'City of Now' report.

2.30 The evidence and conclusions from the detailed economic analysis undertaken by Mickeldore for the Story of Place have informed the research stages of the One City Plan and support the key economic findings. Strong messages relating to affordability issues, out-commuting, sector strengths and weaknesses, and issues of severe deprivation in parts of Chester's suburbs are supported by the Economic Assessment.

Development Briefs

2.31 The following Development Briefs exist for Chester City Centre and are relevant to the geography of the One City Plan;

- Railway Lands (2002)
- Boughton Canal Corridor (2001)
- Gorse Stacks (2003)
- Riverside (2004)

2.32 The first three Briefs listed form a suite of documents covering the North East Urban Action Area.

2.33 The Railway Lands Brief has had particular influence over the development of the Railway Station as a sustainable transport hub, and informing the recent Development Framework for Chester Central Business Quarter.

2.34 Other key Chester specific documents that should be noted as part of this background section are;

- Chester Prosperity Study 'Economic Growth and its impact on the Demand for Housing in Chester', February 2011 (Nevin Leather Associates)
- Chester City Centre and Approaches Characterisation Study, Draft March 2011 (Taylor Young)
- River Dee park Masterplan and Sites Assessments, March 2009 (TEP)

3. People & Culture

Population & Households

3.1 Cheshire West and Chester has benefited over recent years from the successful attraction of new business and elevated employment opportunities and economic activity which has served to increase this pressure on its housing stock with people seeking to move into the area to access jobs. In addition to locally derived employment growth the authority, as a result of functional linkages with the regional economic hubs of Manchester and to a lesser extent Liverpool, has also seen households migrate in to access housing and commute to these employment centres.

3.2 Growth in the number of households within the authority, also driven by an increasing population and falling household sizes, will present an increasing pressure on demand for housing of all tenures.

Population

3.3 Growth in population is illustrated through the following chart which uses the ONS released 2008 mid-year estimates to show the increasing numbers of people residing within the former Chester district scale, which demonstrates a 'best fit' alignment with the One City Plan spatial geography.

Figure 3.1: Projected Population – Chester (2008– 2033) (000's)

Population		Chester (former District) - 2008 Based Population Estimates & Projections (2008-2033)						
		2008	2011	2013	2023	2026	2028	2033
School age (0-19)	Number	26.6	26.3	25.8	25.4	25.6	25.4	25.3
	%	*22.5%*	*22.2%*	*21.8%*	*21.6%*	*21.7%*	*21.5%*	*21.3%*
Working age (20-64)	Number	69.9	69.6	68.6	65.2	64.5	63.9	62.8
	%	*59.1%*	*58.8%*	*58.0%*	*55.4%*	*54.6%*	*54.0%*	*52.9%*
Pensioners (65 and over)	Number	21.8	22.8	24.0	27.0	28.0	28.9	30.8
	%	*18.4%*	*19.3%*	*20.3%*	*22.9%*	*23.7%*	*24.4%*	*25.9%*
Total		118.2	118.4	118.2	117.7	118.1	118.4	118.8

Source: ONS 2008 mid-year estimates, 2010

3.4 The former Chester District is estimated to have a population of approximately 118,400 in 2011. As to be expected the population is currently weighted towards working–age residents – representing approximately 59% of the total. School age residents represent approximately 22%, and residents of retirement age represent the remaining 19% of the total.

3.5 Projecting forwards across the Cheshire West and Chester Core Strategy period to 2026, the overall population is projected to remain relatively stable, although decreasing slightly to an estimated 118,100. However, the age structure is projected to alter dramatically over this period:

- The proportion, and absolute number, of school-age residents is anticipated to decline slightly by -0.5% to represent 21.7% (25,600 persons) of the total population.
- The proportion, and absolute number, of working-age residents is also anticipated to decline, but more significantly, by -4.2% to represent 54.6% (64,500 persons) of the total population.
- Conversely, the proportion, and absolute number, of older residents over retirement age is projected to increase substantially by 4.5% to represent 23.7% (28,000 persons) of the total population.

3.6 The shift in age-structure towards older residents is likely to have multiple impacts on both the housing requirements and economy of the former Chester District area – and therefore on the City of Chester. Most pertinently, the fall in the absolute number and proportion of working-age residents has the potential to act as a labour-force supply-side restraint on economic recovery and growth across the area. In addition, the growth in an older population will require additional social, healthcare and housing, support services to be planned for and provided, as well as a range of housing that meets the needs of an ageing population.

Households

3.7 Growth in households is illustrated through the following chart which uses the ONS released 2008 mid-year estimates to show the increasing numbers of household within the Cheshire West and Chester authority, as well as the former Chester district scale, which demonstrates greater alignment with the One City Plan.

Figure 3.2: Projected Number of Households – Cheshire West and Chester (2008– 2033)

	Chester - 2008 Based Household Estimates & Projections (2008 - 2033)								
	2008	2013	2018	2023	2026	2028	2033	Change	% Change
Chester (former District)	51,000	51,000	52,000	53,000	54,000	54,000	55,000	4,000	8%
Cheshire West & Chester	**137,000**	**141,000**	**146,000**	**150,000**	**152,000**	**153,000**	**156,000**	**28,000**	**14%**

Source: ONS 2008 mid-year estimates, 2010

3.8 The number of households are projected to increase by 4,000 between 2008 and 2033, an 8% increase over the period within the former Chester district, which is comparably low when considering the wider authority growth level of 14% - and is likely to be related to constrained new housing supply. The ONS projections remain a policy-off approach to projecting forward growth in households. The commitment to sustained economic and household growth across Cheshire West and Chester is set out in the Cheshire & Warrington 'Unleashing the Potential' sub-regional strategy document, which outlines a maximum level scenario for housing growth across the authority. The scale of growth within 'Unleashing the Potential', which will be targeted in order to, and as a result of, encouraging further households to reside in Cheshire West and Chester to support economic growth, is to be tested within the planning framework through the LDF Core Strategy process. The Core Strategy process is considering a range of growth options.

3.9 In addition to this natural growth, the West Cheshire Growth Point Programme of development (October 2008) set out growth targets to deliver an additional 2,700 homes between 2007/08 and 2016/17 (on top of the requirement for 11,853 homes set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy (2008), an increase of 23%); Ensure that 30-40% of these homes are delivered as affordable housing. This concentrated growth in areas which have the greatest regeneration needs, including within Chester with particular sites at Saighton Camp, City Centre and North East Urban Action Area, and West Chester Regeneration sites.

3.10 This has implications for housing delivery in the context of increasing pressure on existing housing stock and the extent to which the ability to meet housing demand will affect economic aspirations of Cheshire West and Chester. These implications are assessed in further detail within Section 4 (The Local Economy) and Section 9 (Housing & Planning).

Culture

Chester's Cultural Influences – Heritage & History

3.11 Chester's rich culture has been influenced throughout its significant historical evolution since the City's inception as 'Deva' – a military fortress in the Roman period. Chester today is the product of nearly two thousand years of continuous activity. The following section provides a brief overview of the major periods in history of Chester's cultural development drawing on the Shaping the Future of Chester ULI Briefing Document (2010)[3].

The Roman Period

3.12 Founded in AD 70s as a Roman Fortress and called Deva, Chester was chosen due to its strategic location at the lowest crossing of the River Dee which allowed control of North Wales and the Western Pennines. Reflecting its importance, is the fact that it was just one of three fortresses built in Britain by the Romans. In AD 80-100 the first Amphitheatre was built in Deva and in AD 200 it was substantially remodelled with a 12m high outer wall, decorative façade, and internal staircases. Amidst the collapse of Roman rule in Britain, Deva was abandoned in AD 400.

The Saxon Period

3.13 In the 7th century, Chester fell under Mercian control and in 689 the St. John's Church was founded. In 907, Aethelflaed (daughter of Alfred the Great) established Chester as a Burh, and a part of the network of fortified towns built during the reconquest of Mercia from the Danes. The Roman Walls were repaired and extended West and South to the River Dee at this time.

The Norman Period

3.14 After the Norman invasion of England, Chester was established as a stronghold from which Norman authority was exerted over the mutinous North West of England, making the City a key regional administrative and military capital once again. Key events in this period include William the Conqueror founding Chester Castle in 1070, St. John's Church being rebuilt and proclaimed a Cathedral in 1075-95, and the refounding of St. Werburgh's Church as a Benedictine Abbey by Hugh Lupus in 1092. During the 12th century the City Walls were extended along the river —taking on the present enclosure— and the castle was rebuilt in stone.

[3] Shaping the Future of Chester (2010) ULI Briefing Document, p54-55

The Medieval Period

3.15 In this period, Chester grew economically and socially and remained a key military and ecclesiastical centre for the region. In 1277, Edward I used Chester as the base for his conquest of Wales which brought much wealth into Chester as it became a supply centre. It is believed to have helped lead to the development of one of Chester's most well known symbols: the Rows. In 1227 the existing Dee Bridge collapsed, and in 1387 the present Old Dee Bridge was built. 1375 saw the first known performance of the mystery plays.

Tudor and Stuart

3.16 The 16th and 17th centuries were some of the most fraught in Chester's history. The Parliamentary besiegement of 1544-46 left a heavy mark on Chester, with much of the medieval City suffering great destruction. Other developments during this time were the first horse races on the Roodee in 1539 and the St. Werburgh's Abbey becoming the Chester Cathedral.

Georgian and Regency

3.17 The late Stuart and Georgian periods were a time of great wealth, change and growth in Chester. During this time many of the key features that make up Chester today were built. In 1704, The City Walls were partially rebuilt and converted to promenades; the Groves Promenade was laid out in 1726; and the Recorders Steps were built to connect the Groves and the City Walls in the same decade. In the 1730s, the River Dee was canalised to help access the port. In the 1750s, Abbey Square was built with its elegant Georgian Houses. In 1775, the Chester Canal opened. 1782 and 1788, saw the present Bridgegate and Watergate built, respectively. Finally, from 1788 to 1822, Thomas Harrison extensively remodelled the Chester Castle.

Victorian

3.18 This period was one of great civic pride and growth, and can be said to be the birth of modern Chester. Great public buildings and parklands were created, largely thanks to the Grosvenor family. Grosvenor Park (1867), Grosvenor Museum (1886), and Edgar's Field (1892) were all gifts from the Grosvenor family. The period also saw the great 'Black and White' revival that led to many of the City centre façades that Chester is now famous for. The railway arrived to Chester in 1840, facilitating population growth and urban expansion into a modern City. In 1869, the Town Hall opened, following the destruction of the Exchange by fire.

20th Century

3.19 During this period, the City began to discover, preserve, and exploit one of its most valuable assets, its unique built heritage, and in the 1930s began to discover the importance of tourism to the City. In 1929, the Roman Amphitheatre was discovered and in 1969, a City centre conservation area was created. From the period 1975-2000, over 600 historic buildings were saved and restored. In 1975, the Chester Cross was returned from the Roman Gardens by Chester Civic Trust to its central location in front of St Peter's, and the Cathedral Bell Tower (Addleshaw) was built and became known as Chester's Space Rocket. Towards the end of the century, the historic Mid Summer Watch and Mystery Plays were reinstated.

Cultural Events & Facilities

Events

3.20 The introduction of the *Chester Culture Park Strategy,* highlighted a requirement for an increased number and better quality of events as part of its aim, stating that Chester needs "to raise its game as an International and local events destination."[4]

3.21 Chester now has a substantial events calendar that benefits both local residents and tourists alike:

- **Chestival** takes place in early summer. Now in its 2nd year it is a showcase of the best festivals and events in Chester. It is 33 days of events, and consists of BMX riders, music, racing, Roman characters, and show jumpers.
- The **Chester** Races combine the thrill of horseracing with high glamour of fashion, attracting both racing fans and fashionistas to the races.
- In April, the **Chester Food, Drink and Lifestyle Festival** takes place. It is an opportunity for visitors to sample and buy food from over 120 top quality food and drink producers. This event includes appearances by celebrity chefs, opportunities for kids to cook in one of the cookery workshops, and a nightly BeerFest[5].
- In 2010, Chester celebrated the introduction of their first annual **Christmas Market**. It included attractions such as a Big Wheel, market stalls and an outdoor ice rink. The Market was successful and is expected to return in 2011.

[4] Chester Culture Park Strategy (2005) Chester Council, p35

[5] Events (2011) – Visit Chester, available at: http://www.visitchester.com/site/events#ProductList-/site/events

- Other events include the Chester Summer Music Festival, Cholmondeley Pageant of Power 2011, Shell Chester Literature Festival, the British Masters Show jumping, the Mystery Plays, and the Chester Fashion Festival.

3.22 However, there is currently a limited supply of venues to hold events and festival activities within the City centre, which limits the opportunities to host large scale, regular events. Cheshire West and Chester Council are currently progressing an Events Strategy Review, which will prioritise events, locations and establish funding mechanisms to deliver key events.

Chester's Archaeological Heritage

3.23 The archaeology of Chester is a cultural resource of European significance and a major component of what makes the City special. Visible features include the Roman street plan, Amphitheatre, castle and circuit of medieval City Walls as well as the unique two-tiered shops of the 'Rows'. However, below the ground in many places les up to 2m of rich archaeological deposits from all periods of Chester's history. Preserved within its rich stratigraphy are the remains of many buildings, along with their associated plots, streets, refuse deposits, and a wide range of artefacts and finds.

3.24 Built development must carefully consider the impact on the archaeology, with active stewardship and management undertaken primarily through the planning process, to ensure its survival to the benefit of current and future generations. This goes beyond preservation and is also about making a positive impact to the contemporary City and its landscape.

3.25 The archaeology and heritage of the City is therefore a key aspect of Chester's character and environment. People living and working here should be able to engage with their heritage through access and active involvement. Similarly, it has the potential as a destination for people from further afield to enjoy and learn about the historic environment and its management at popular and professional levels.

3.26 It will be important to continue to invest to preserve, and enhance, the current economic contribution of heritage assets. This will require:

- Conservation and maintenance
- Improvements to cleanliness
- Improved lighting
- Increased marketing and more events
- Improved signage

- Enhanced interpretation
- Curbing of heritage crime and anti-social behaviour

Cultural Facilities

3.27 At present the provision of cultural facilities is limited within Chester and the offer is not of the quality or breadth expected of a European class City. The principal cultural ambitions of Cheshire West and Chester Council are therefore twofold:

- To protect the existing cultural assets and make them fit for purpose
- To improve Chester's existing assets and develop new assets to expand the breadth and improve the quality of the City's cultural offer

3.28 There are a number of opportunities within Chester for these ambitions to be realised. They are as follows:

- A new Theatre / Performing Arts Centre – Delivering a theatre is a high priority for the City, with substantial latent demand existing for such a cultural facility – and a business case prepared. There are two final options for the location of the theatre within the City – either for a new purpose built facility on the Little Roodee, or through a refurbishment of the listed former Odeon Cinema building. Detailed feasibility is currently being undertaken by the Council to establish the preferred location with a final decision from the Council anticipated in summer 2011. Funding for the facility is to be provided by the Council, the Arts Council and through various donor Trusts and Foundations.
- Chester currently has two museum and exhibition spaces that are open to visitors and provide information on the City's history and heritage; the Grosvenor Museum and the smaller St Michael's Church Exhibition Centre. Feasibility studies have been prepared for the redevelopment and refurbishment of both facilities, with a formal decision yet to be announced by the Council on what elements of either proposal will proceed. The proposals for the Grosvenor Museum include expanding the usable museum floorspace by 60%, introducing a new café as well as providing 'white box' and 'black box' gallery space that could be utilised for art exhibits.
- Chester currently lacks a Convention or Events Centre, which the Council and Visit Chester and Cheshire indicate is losing the City valuable inward investment with recent enquiries coming from the Royal Geographical Association, BSA and others, which have had to be turned down. Such a venue could also host pop concerts and exhibitions, therefore attracting more visitors and further spend in the local economy. The Council is currently undertaking feasibility testing to establish site opportunities within the City – with co-locating on the Little Roodee with the new theatre one option

being considered. During 2011 the Council will undertake detailed market testing and seek a commercial partner to fund and manage the facility, with a view to delivery by 2014.

- In the absence of a major performing arts venue at present, the St Mary's Centre has been proposed for use as a full time small-scale performing arts venue by 'Chester Performs'. The facility is owned by the Council, and the Chester Performs performing arts organisation has put forward proposals for the management of the facility. Funding has been made available for the renovations required and the Council is in the process of reaching an agreement with Chester Performs.

- A Library Services Review is currently being undertaken by the Council to establish the priorities for future library provision across the authority. Chester Library is now too small to meet requirements, and it is anticipated that plans will be made in the future to extend the facility. The Review is scheduled for completion in July and will provide recommendations.

- Chester Castle, and the wider Castle Quarter and its buildings, are owned by the Crown Estates, the Council and Cheshire East Council. The castle is managed by English Heritage, but the organisation has no current plans to open this important heritage and cultural asset to the public. There is potential for a private hotel to occupy part of the site through conversion of Napier House, which would open access to the castle and increase footfall. If this were to occur, there would be a stronger business case for opening the castle as a visitor attraction.

- Dee House is a listed building located beside Chester's Amphitheatre, and is in significant disrepair. The property is in the ownership of the Council, and has a stage 1 funding application in place with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for £5.5million to redevelop the building for use as a world site of excellence for archaeology, and visitor centre, working with the University of Chester. However, even if successful, this will require match funding from the Council to support the redevelopment. The match funding has not yet been confirmed and provision of a public heritage attraction has the potential to form direct competition with the Grosvenor Museum, nevertheless, this idea was supported by the Urban Land Institute in their recommendations for Chester (see Tourism sub-section for further information).

Public Art

3.29 Chester has not invested in public art strategies to the extent that many other competitor cities have, marking it an area upon which it can improve. Still, some investment in public art has occurred over the past several years, including: Rhinomania – which was extremely successful during summer 2010, the Narrows Community Park project, the Canal Corridor,

Millennium Trail, Forum phase 1, Walls signage, Garden for the Blind in Grosvenor Park, Museum Gates, and Town Hall gates, among other works[6].

Bringing the Evidence Together

History, heritage & Culture

3.30 Chester has a long and interesting past that has shaped its current cultural offer. From the Roman Amphitheatre and Walls, to the medieval emergence of the Rows, to the Georgian Groves, Steps, and promenades, much of Chester's history remains intact and is a big draw for tourists and residents alike.

3.31 The emergence of an increasing number of events in Chester are diversifying its offer and providing more cultural options than the traditional historical based ones.

3.32 Further investment in, and encouragement of, public art is needed if Chester is to keep up with its competitor cities in the UK, and the rest of Europe. Rhinomania proved extremely successful in 2010 and Chester should not lose the momentum that this art initiative developed.

3.33 There exists several potential projects, not least a new theatre, which if delivered could significantly lift Chester's cultural offer to both visitors and local residents.

[6] Chester City Council Public Art Strategy (2001)- Chester City Council

4. Education & Learning

4.1 Ensuring a high level of both educational and skills attainment alongside the aspirations of residents represents a key driver to elevating the overall life opportunities and quality of life of residents. This section will consider:

- Examination results amongst children and young people, including analysis of Key Stage 2 and 3 results, GCSEs and A-Levels for Chester in comparison to Cheshire West and Chester, and England. The lowest and highest achieving areas in Chester will be identified.
- Child poverty – The Lower Super Output Areas with the highest levels of child poverty will be identified, as well as considering the contributing factors to child poverty.
- Qualification and Skills, including analysis of the percentage of people educated to degree level, and those with no qualifications at all in the Chester area in comparison to Cheshire West and Chester, and England. Areas will be identified within Chester with the highest and lowest proportion of people with degree-level educations and those with no qualifications at all.
- Higher and further education in Chester. The numbers of students at Chester University, the courses offered, and the location of origin of national and international students will be analysed.

Children & Young People

4.2 The Chester Area Partnership Board area profile reports that, as of January 2009, there were:

- 21 primary schools, 5 secondary schools and 2 special schools.
- Approximately 4,500 children of primary school age, 6,100 pupils of secondary school age, and 1,600 nursery-school age children (in Chester APB in 2007).
- The percentage of children in Chester APB in their Reception year at school (the year when they reach 5 years of age) who achieved expected outcomes was 61%. Rural West APB had the highest proportion (67%).

4.3 The percentages of pupils achieving the expected level in Key Stage 2 and 3 examinations in 2006-7 are shown in the figure below. Note that Key Stage 3 examinations were discontinued after 2007-8.

Figure 3.1: Key Stage 2 & 3 Results in Key Subjects (%)

Key Stage 2	English	Mathematics	Science	Key Stage 3	English	Mathematics	Science
Chester APB	80	75	85	Chester APB	73	73	72
CW & C	82	79	88	CW & C	77	78	76
England	80	77	88	England	74	76	73

Source: Chester APB Profile (2009)

4.4 A higher percentage of pupils in Cheshire West and Chester achieved the expected level of key Stage 2 and 3 examinations than in England. However, the percentage of pupils in Chester APB to achieve the expected level was lower than in England, and slightly lower than the percentage in Cheshire West and Chester.

4.5 At key Stage 2 level, the lowest percentages were seen in:

- SouthBlacon – English (65%) and Science (79%)
- Lache Park – Science (79%)
- North Blacon – lowest for Mathematics (60%)

4.6 The highest percentages were seen in:

- Huntington & Boughton Heath for Mathematics (90%). This MSOA was also highest in Cheshire West and Chester for English (94%).
- Boughton Hall & Hoole Park was highest for Science (93%).

4.7 At Key Stage 3, the lowest percentages were seen in:

- SouthBlacon for English (52%), Mathematics (56%) and Science (53%)
- Ellesmere Port APB's Westminster and Central for English (50%) and Mathematics (54%),
- Wolverham and Stanlow for Science (51%) in Cheshire West and Chester.

4.8 The highest percentages were seen in:

- Upton, Grange & Newton for English (91%), Mathematics (87%) and Science (90%).

- Northwich & Rural North's Hartford & Kingsmead for English (97%) and Science (97%), and
- Cuddington, Oakmere & Whitegate (95%) for Mathematics in Cheshire West and Chester.

4.9 The figure below shows a comparison of results at GCSE and A-level, or equivalents, in 2006-7.

Figure 4.2: GCSE & A-Level Qualifications (2006-07)

	GCSE 5+ Grades A - C	A Level Average Points
Chester APB	55%	691
CW & C	62%	748
England	60%	712

Source: Chester APB Profile (2009)

4.10 Points obtained depended on the type of qualification and the grade achieved. For example, an A at A-Level contributed 120 points, and an A-Level with additional AS at grade A contributed 180 points.

- The lowest percentage of students achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C in Chester APB was seen in North Blacon (35%)
- Huntington and Boughton Heath had the highest proportion (76%) in Chester.
- The highest in Cheshire West and Chester was seen in Willaston & Burton, Rural West (89%)
- The lowest in Cheshire West and Chester was seen in Rivacre Brook, Ellesmere Port APB (34%)

4.11 A-level points per pupil for Chester APB:

- Highest average - Huntington & Boughton (731)
- Lowest average - SouthBlacon (559).

4.12 A-level points per pupil for Cheshire West and Chester:

- Highest average – Winsford's Mara, Tarporley and Oulton (895)
- Lowest average – Wolverham and Stanlow, Ellesmere Port APB (541)

Child Wellbeing & Poverty

4.13 According to the Child Wellbeing Index 2009, in Chester APB, 13 LSOAs were in the lowest 20% of LSOAs nationally for the Children In Need indicator, having high proportions of children supported by social services. Ellesmere Port APB had 16 LSOAs in the bottom 20%.

4.14 Child poverty is defined as:

"… growing up in a low income household. The official government measure of child poverty is defined as children living in a family with an income of less than 60% of the national median after taking into account household size and composition. Children are defined as individuals under the age of 16, plus 16/17 year olds in full-time education."

4.15 Cheshire West & Chester Council has set up a Child Poverty Steering Group to oversee local implementation of the new statutory duties placed on the LA and its partners as a result of the Child poverty Act 2010. The Group will collect information on the key actions and programmes to prevent, reduce and mitigate against child poverty that CWaC agencies are taking in order to undertake child poverty mapping.

4.16 An initial dataset of child poverty statistics have helped to reach the following conclusions about child poverty in Cheshire West and Chester:

- Child poverty is below 20% overall, but there are pockets of child poverty where 50% of children in some Lower Super Output Areas are living below the Government's poverty line (60% of median income). The location of thee pockets is predominantly:
    - Urban Centres
    - Social housing areas of Winsford, Chester and Ellesmere Port
    - Northwich (although to a lesser extent)
    - Some isolated cases in rural areas (not as statistically significant compared to urban areas).
- Child poverty is typically a result of: household unemployment; low incomes; welfare dependence; poor educational attainment and poor access to key services that can facilitate entry to work (such as transport and childcare).
- Many of the 16-18year olds in the area, who are not in education, employment or training, are not available to the labour market as they are teenage mothers.

- Regeneration in Cheshire West and Chester need to be beyond retail, and focus on replacing some of the 50% of manufacturing job losses in the last 10 years.
- The ageing population in Cheshire, and the expensive housing in Cheshire West and Chester can act as a barrier to young people living in Cheshire West.
- Improvements are needed in the educational attainment levels for children living in families with below average income, especially for children in care and on free school meals.

4.17 The Coalition Government's Strategy for Welfare Reform is intended to get the long term unemployed back to work, which should therefore contribute positively to the child poverty agenda. However, elements of the reform, such as increases in rent arrears and evictions; household debt and doorstep lending, and use of temporary accommodation in the poorest and most vulnerable families, have the potential to impact very negatively on child poverty and individual families.

4.18 The Government sees teenage pregnancy, early years development and children's centres as key parts of the child poverty strategy, as well as housing, health, transport, work and welfare reform.

4.19 There are a number of Lower Super Output Areas in the Chester urban area that have a high percentage of children in poverty. These are highlighted in the following figures.

Figure 4.3: Percentage of children in poverty in Chester (LSOAs)

LSOA	% of children in poverty under 16	% of children in poverty All children
SouthBlacon L4	54.6	53.1
Lache Park L1	56.5	53.1
Lache Park L4	42.6	43.1
North Blacon L3	42.6	41.8
SouthBlacon L2	42.4	40.0
North Blacon L2	40.5	39.4
North Blacon L4	40.5	39.3
Upton & Westlea L1	37.9	37.2
Upton & Westlea L3	38.8	35.7
Hoole Groves & Vicars Cross North L3	36.8	35.5
Chester Station L2	35.7	35.2
SouthBlacon L5	35.4	34.8

Source: CWaC Council

4.20 This demonstrates:

- SouthBlacon L4 and Lache Park L1 are the LSOA's in Chester with over half of all children in poverty, the highest percentage, at 53.1%.
- Lache Park L1 has the highest proportion of under 16 year olds in poverty at 56.5%, followed by SouthBlacon L4 at 54.6%

Qualifications & Skills

4.21 Using data available at the Chester Area Partnership Board (APB) scale, from the 2001 Census, in Chester APB:

- 27% of 16-74 year olds were qualified to degree level or above, compared with 22% in Cheshire West and Chester and 20% in England & Wales.
- 25% had no qualifications at all (27% in Cheshire West and Chester and 29% in England & Wales).
- South of Dee MSOA had the highest proportion of people aged 16-74 with degree level qualifications or above (40%) in Chester APB and the Unitary Authority.

- North Blacon MSOA had the highest proportion of people aged 16-74 with no qualifications (40%) in Chester APB, but Wolverham and Stanlow in Ellesmere Port APB had the highest proportion in Cheshire West and Chester (44%)7.

4.22 The qualifications in Chester are higher than Cheshire West and Chester, and significantly better than the average for England and Wales.

4.23 In comparison to the Cheshire West and Chester authority average, Chester has a much higher percentage of people qualified to degree level (5% more), and a lower percentage of people with no qualifications at all (2% less). In comparison to the average percentage for England and Wales, Chester has 7% more people qualified to degree level, and 4% fewer people with no qualifications at all. The highest proportion of people with degree level qualifications are located in South of Dee (40%), with North Blacon containing the highest proportion of people with no qualifications (40%).

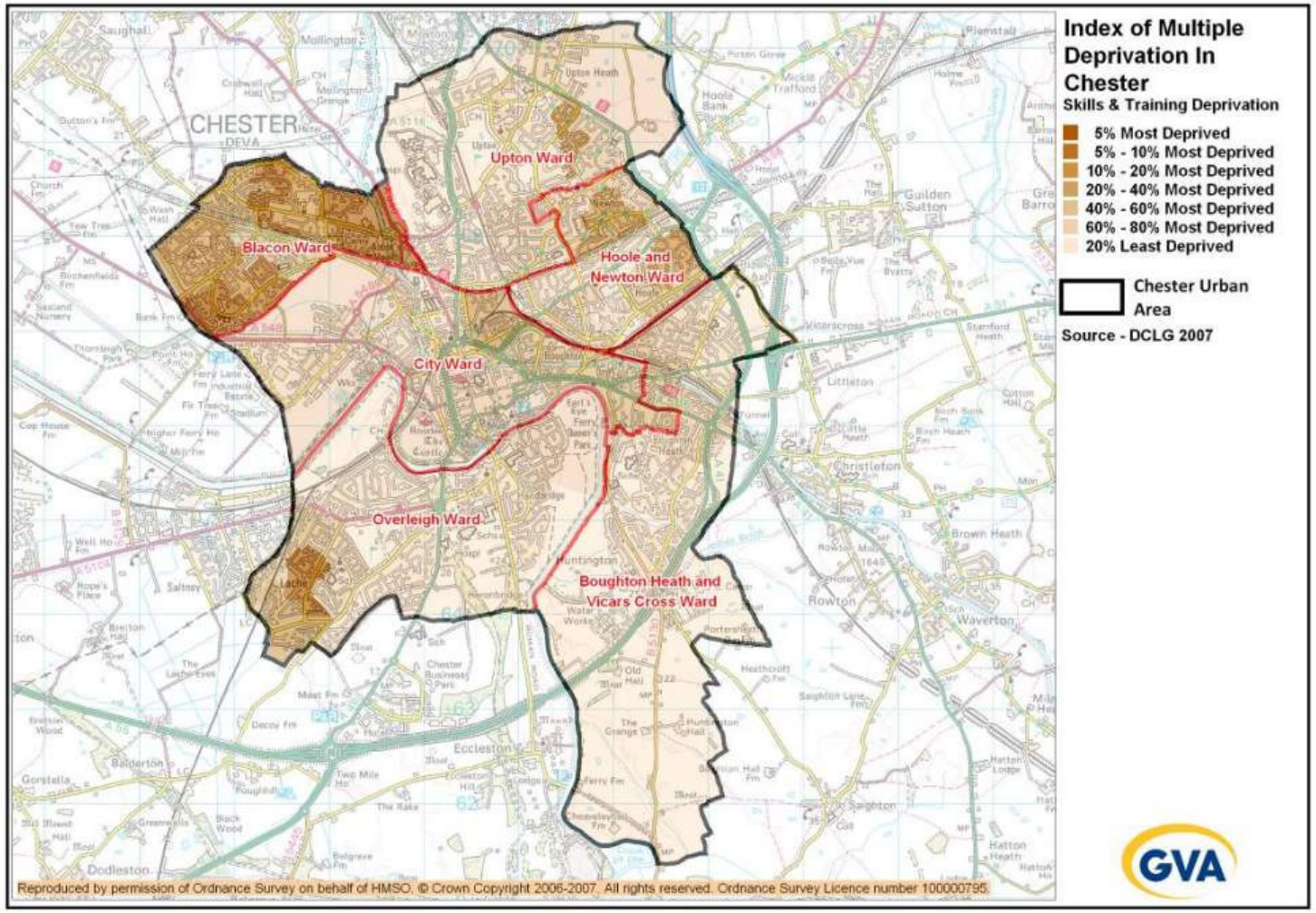
4.24 This is supported by analysis of the 2007 IMD for the Chester Urban Area, demonstrated in the following figure. Analysis of the IMD domain highlights the concentration of skills and training related deprivation within the Blacon unitary ward, and the Lache neighbourhood of the Overleigh ward.

4.25 Cheshire West and Chester Council, the Cheshire Warrington Economic Alliance, Warrington Borough Council and Cheshire East Council are currently collaborating to produce a Work and Skills Plan (2011-2014). This will demonstrate and outline how worklessness and skills issues will be addressed as a major, cross-functional priority for all of the key partners of the new Cheshire &Warrington Learning and Skills Commission and will explain in detail how a fully integrated approach to solving employment and skills challenges will be taken across the sub-region The overall purpose of the plan is to improve employment and skills levels within Cheshire and Warrington - particularly addressing target neighbourhoods with the highest concentrations of worklessness[8].

[7] Chester APB Profile (2009) – Cheshire West & Chester Council

[8] Cheshire &Warrington Interim Work & Skills Plan (2010) Cheshire & Warrington partners

Figure 4.4: IMD 2007 – Skills & Training Deprivation in Chester



Source: CLG, 2007

Higher & Further Education

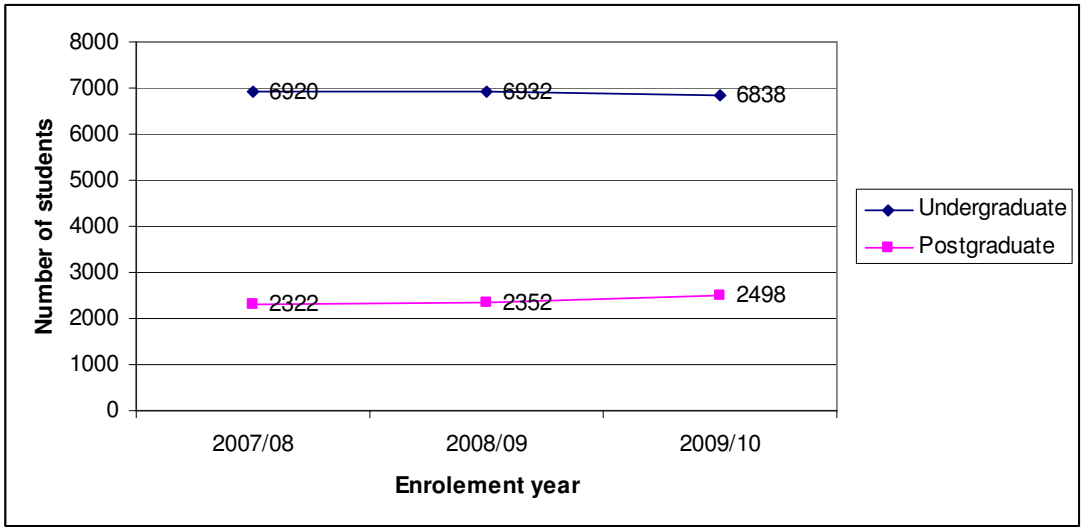
4.26 Chester is home to both the University of Chester and West Cheshire College offering higher and further education opportunities.

University of Chester

4.27 The University of Chester is one of the oldest English higher education establishments, pre-dating all but Oxford, Cambridge, London and Durham. Founded in 1839 by pioneers such as William Gladstone, the Earl of Derby and a former Archbishop of Canterbury, its original buildings in Chester were the first in the country to be purpose-built for the professional training of teachers. Degrees in education are now just a small part of the 130 course combinations on offer.

4.28 The University now has some 12,000 students from the UK and overseas, who study at three campuses in Chester and one in Warrington. Although the majority of students are undergraduates, The University of Chester also offers postgraduate degrees, foundation degrees, and research degrees, with MPhil and PhD qualifications as a growing area of activity.

Figure 4.5: Number of undergraduates and postgraduates enrolling at the University of Chester from 2007-2009



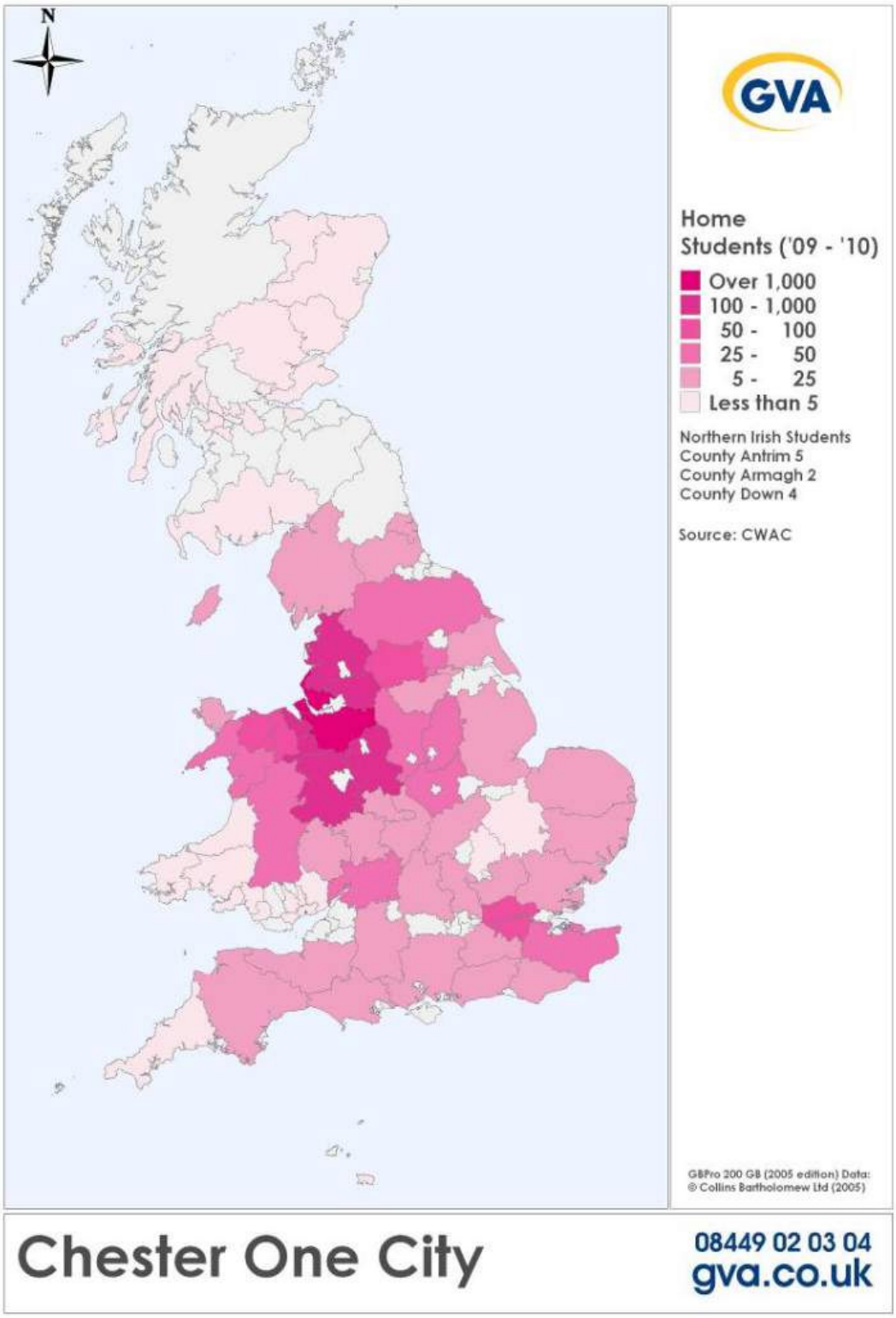
Source: UoC, 2010

4.29 Analysis of enrolment figures indicates that the number of undergraduates has remained fairly consistent from 2007 at 6920 to 1838 in 2009. Importantly, the number of postgraduates has increased steadily from 2322 in 2007/08 to 2498 in 2009/10.

4.30 The University's development of well-respected courses has further extended the University's work and connections with industry, commerce and the professions. These courses include: Health and Social Care; Business and Management; Arts and Media; Social Science; Applied Sciences; Education and Children's Services. Millions of pounds are being invested in the accommodation and resources to support this work, with a strong emphasis on making students feel at home.

4.31 The University of Chester is internationally recognised, and draws students from across the world. The following figure highlights the areas in the UK where the students at Chester University originate from for the academic year 2009/2010. Analysis demonstrates that the University acts as a draw to students from all over the UK, but the highest proportion of students are from the North West region.

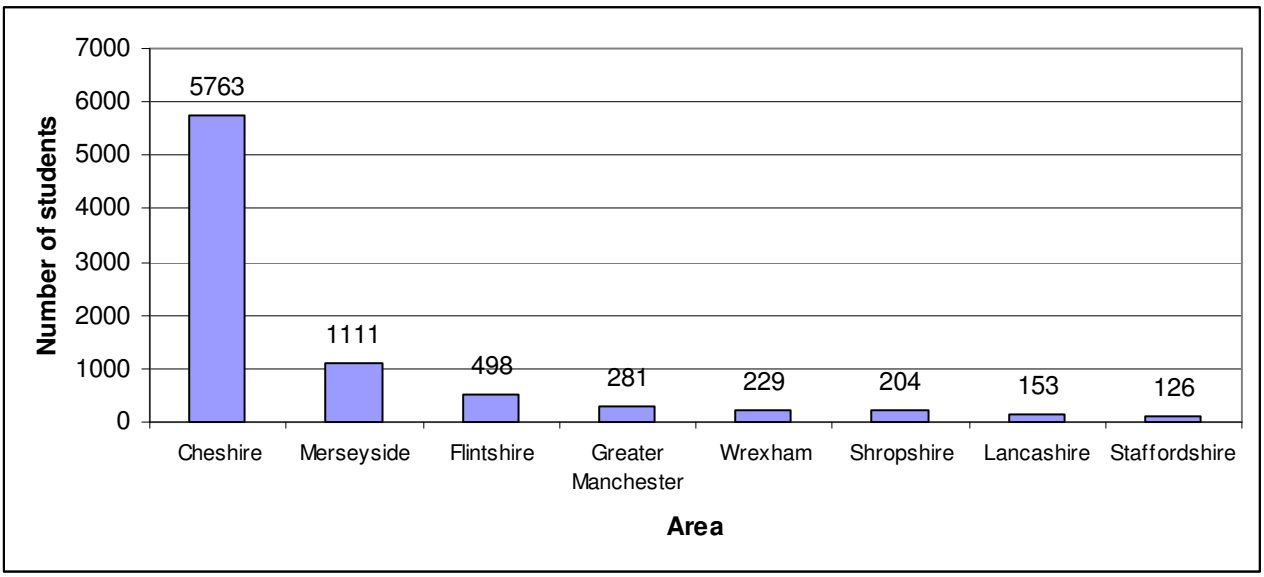
Figure 4.6: National Students Location of Origin (2009/10)



Source: UoC, 2010

4.32 Figure 4.7 displays the locations across the UK from which the highest numbers of students originate from.

Figure 4.7: National Students location of origin - 2009/2010 – top 8 areas



Source: UoC, 2010

4.33 Analysis demonstrates that:

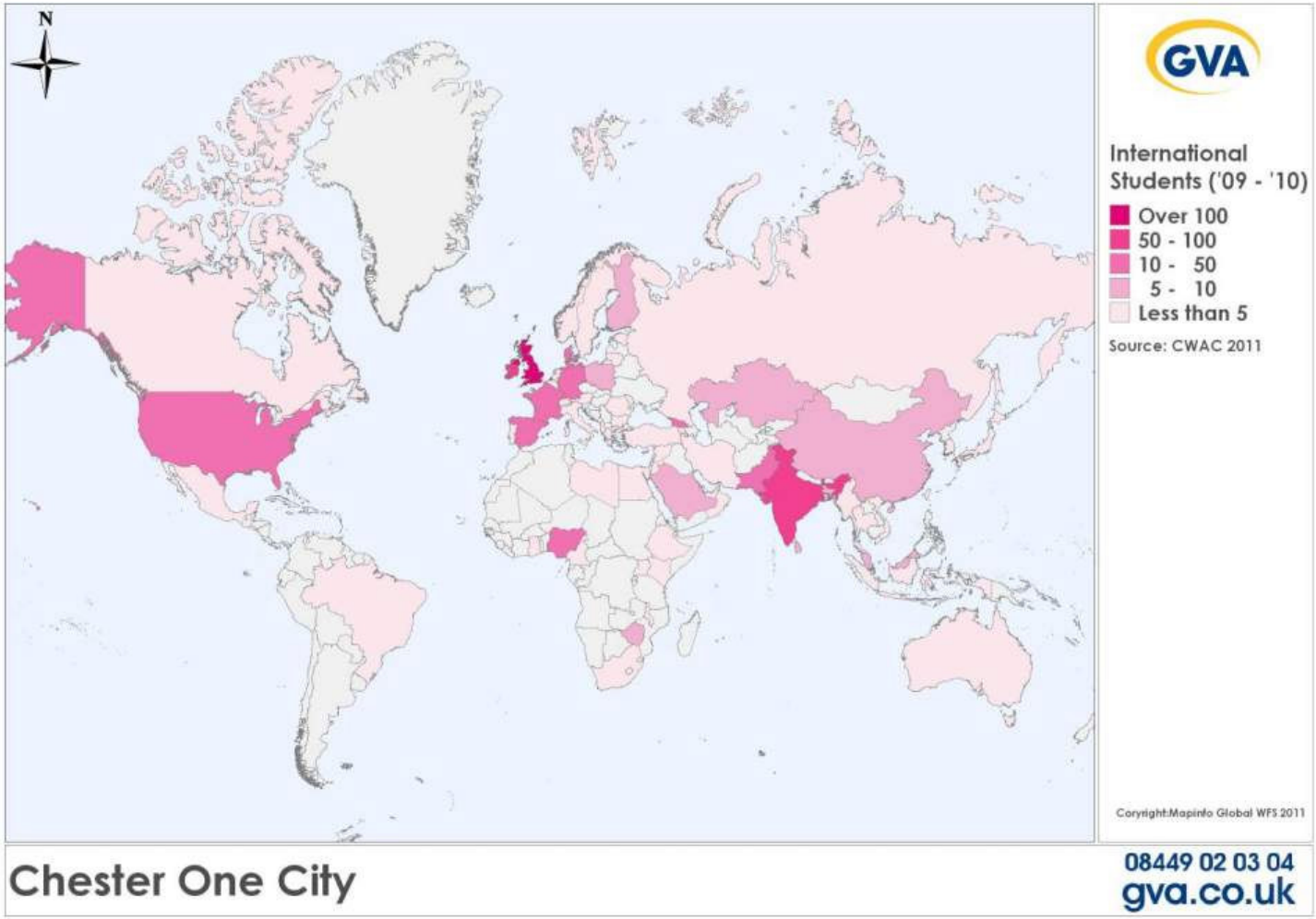
- Chester University attracts local students from Cheshire far more than any other location, with over half of the total students at the University coming from Cheshire.
- 1111 students come from Merseyside. This is over a fifth less than the number of students originating from Cheshire, but is the second largest representative area.
- A significant number of students come from North Wales and Manchester.

4.34 Analysis demonstrates that there are a high proportion of international students originating from:

- North America
- Europe – mainly France, Spain, Germany and Denmark
- India

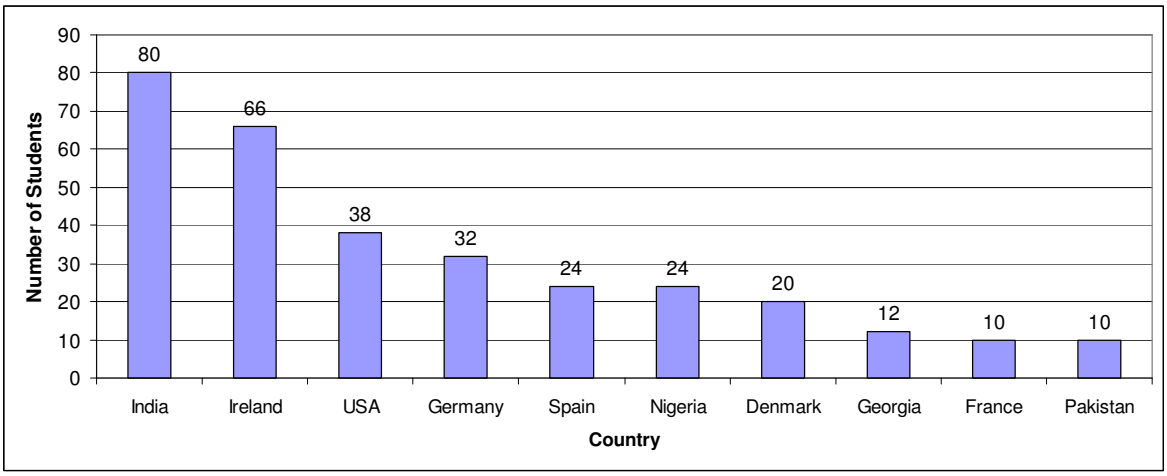
4.35 This is demonstrated in the following figure.

Figure 4.8: International Students Location of Origin (2009/10)



Source: UoC, 2010

Figure 4.9: International Students Location of Origin 2009/2010 – most significant areas



Source: UoC, 2010

4.36 To summarise:

- The highest proportion of international students originated from India (80).
- The European countries that were home to the highest amount of international students at The University of Chester were Ireland (66), Germany (32), Spain (24), Denmark (20) and France (10).
- A high proportion of student originated from USA (38).

4.37 Despite its strong draw, a number of challenges remain for the University. The recommendations of the Browne review of Higher Education, which concluded in October 2010, included the lifting of tuition fees payable by students commencing higher education from September 2011. This was subsequently endorsed by the Coalition Government within its Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). As a result, there is potential for a decline in students applying to study given the reduction in affordability.

Local Business Relationships & Career Development

4.38 The University of Chester has built close relationships with local private and public sector businesses within Chester, at Chester Business Park, and across the wider region. As a result the University has been running two placement programmes to provide students with valuable experience with local, and smaller, businesses to support their professional and career development.

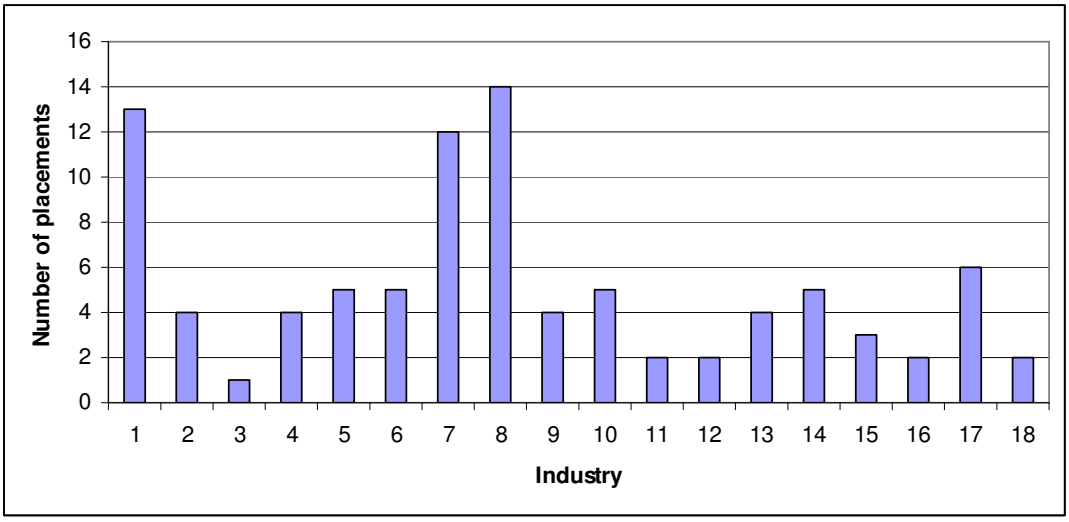
4.39 There is a HEFCE-funded Graduate Placements project that offers graduates paid placements; this sits in Work-Based Learning department within the University. Funding for this has run from January 2010 to May 2011. The sectoral breakdown of the latest cohort of

placements, as at September 2010, is as follows (all of these are classed as small businesses):

- Digital industry - 19
- Life sciences and pharmaceuticals - 9
- Professional and financial services - 15
- Ageing society - 4
- Other sectors - 4

4.40 The Careers and Employability department within the University also offer unpaid placements as part of the Graduate Head Start programme and the companies with whom graduates have been placed are as follows:

Figure 4.10: Graduate Placements by Industry



1 = Digital and Creative Industries
2 = Manufacturing
3 = Accountancy practices
4 = Distribution
5 = Health and Care Industry
6 = Visual Arts
7 = Education Sector
8 = Charity/Community
10 = Public Sector
11 = Financial Sector
12 = Food and Drink
13 = Document Management
14 = Online Retailers
15 = ICT
16 = Telecommunications
17 = Scientific
18 = Training Organisations

Source: UoC, 2010

4.41 This indicates that the University is particularly successful in generating opportunities for graduates to gain experience in:

- Charity/Community
- Digital and Creative Industries
- Education Sector

4.42 However, the retention of graduates from the University within the City of Chester remains a challenge, with those graduates who choose to remain in the City often becoming 'under-employed' in lower-skilled roles.

4.43 In order to support local graduate employment and improve student satisfaction rates, the University is actively working to encourage entrepreneurialism by providing graduates with support in starting their own businesses. Key to this is the University opening the Chester Innovation Economy Centre in the City centre within the Annex of County Hall in early 2011. This facility enables the University of Chester, in partnership with the Council and other business support agencies, to support the performance of start-up and small businesses. The Centre aims to encourage businesses to move away from the existing perception of universities as providers of full-time undergraduate education, and towards the reality of an environment where universities provide lifelong support to businesses.

4.44 Business support activity within Centre includes partnership space and facilities for:

- sector skills agencies;
- Business Link North West;
- Chambers of Commerce;
- Ethnic Minority Business Forum North West;
- Cheshire West and Chester;
- National Skills Academy; and
- private training providers.

4.45 Fully-equipped business meeting space, continuous professional development and work-based learning advice is available, as well as business start-up assistance. There are state-of-the-art facilities, including video conferencing, break-out rooms and a 150-capaCity flexible use conference hall. The sector focus for the Centre will be:

- biomedical;

- digital;
- business and professional;
- food technology; and
- health.

4.46 The University has also traditionally had a limited level of formal engagement with Cheshire West & Chester Council and other institutions and businesses within the City. However, it is the aspiration of the University to increase its integration and formal relationships to facilitate the reputation of Chester as a 'University City'. The University has therefore developed a number of relationships with key agencies in the City in recent years including Chester Race Course, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Daresbury Park and Glyndwr University in North Wales to consider opportunities to pool resources and support local business through strategic planning and joint-working arrangements. In particular, discussions are being held with the Council to consider opportunities to co-ordinate on replacing leisure facilities.

4.47 Moreover, significant visitor numbers are generated by University open days and other events. The University of Chester and the Council are therefore considering methods of encouraging student's families to visit the City, stay and generate additional spend in the visitor economy.

West Cheshire College

4.48 West Cheshire College has three main campuses located in Chester, Ellesmere Port and Capenhurst, and is the largest provider of vocational education and training in Cheshire and Warrington. The college strives to offer the highest standards of tuition and work-based skills development with a flexible and responsive approach. The college specifically focuses on training for the creative, service and technological industries, aiming to help learners to achieve proficiency through skills acquisition and practice making them employable and work ready.

4.49 Ofsted reports for 2010 stated that "The College's focus on developing work skills and work readiness is extremely effective." West Cheshire College offers:

- full time courses for students aged 14-16
- Full and part time courses for ages 16-19
- Full and part time courses for students aged 19+, including Higher Education and Professional qualifications and apprenticeships.

4.50 The college offers a wide range of courses, from record producing, engineering and beauty therapy to bricklaying and acting.

4.51 The Chester campus, located in Handbridge, was the first campus to open, in 1963. The Chester campus will soon benefit from a new 6,000 sq meter Technologies Campus, due to open early 2011. This new build will provide excellent facilities for a range of vocational areas, including engineering, manufacturing, logistics, wood trades, plumbing, painting and decorating and brickwork, computing, IT and pharmacy. Learners and the wider community will have access to services and facilities here, which include: restaurants; cafes; a theatre; a fitness suite; shops and a spa.

Bringing the Evidence Together

4.52 Although the qualifications in Chester are better than the wider Cheshire West and Chester authority average, and significantly better than the average for England and Wales, three LSOAs have been identified as having particularly low records of achievement in examinations, high levels of child poverty and a high percentage of people with no qualifications at all. These areas are South Blacon, Lache Park and North Blacon. North Blacon is also the LSOA with the highest proportion of people with no qualifications at all in Cheshire West and Chester, at 40%.

4.53 Child poverty is below 20% overall in Cheshire West and Chester, but the areas with higher than average child poverty have been identified as:

- North Blacon: L4 (53.1%); L2 (40%); L5 (34.8%)
- Lache Park: L1 (53.1%); L4 (43.1%)
- South Blacon: L3 (41.8%); L2 (39.4%); L4 (39.3%)

4.54 Chester has a significant strength in its Higher, and Further education offer. The University now has some 12,000 students from the UK and overseas, who study at three campuses in Chester and one in Warrington. West Cheshire College offers both full and part-time vocational courses for students aged 14 upwards. The college specifically focuses on training for the creative, service and technological industries, aiming to help learners to achieve proficiency through skills acquisition and practice making them employable and work ready.

4.55 The University of Chester has aspirations to place itself at the heart of a 'University City', and is proceeding to take active steps towards this. The Chester Innovation Economy Centre within the Annex of County Hall in the City centre will open in early 2011, and forms a key element of this process; drawing the University into the City centre and strengthening its physical ties and presence.

5. Community Safety & Perceptions

Introduction

5.1 This section will consider crime rates (incidences per 1000 people) for the Unitary Authority of Cheshire West and Chester. Comparisons will be made between the crime rates of Cheshire West and Chester, and the North West region as a whole. The total crime rates will be analysed, as well as the crime rates for various types of crime.

5.2 Consideration turns to the Chester Urban Area scale, specifically analysing the crime rates within the 6 wards in Chester, which include: City ward; Blacon; Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross; Overleigh; Upton and Hoole and Newton.

5.3 Incidences of crime will be subsequently compared to local people's perceptions of crime and safety, using information from the 2008 Place Survey.

5.4 Definitions of robbery and burglary are explained below, to ensure clarity as to what is classed within each crime indicator

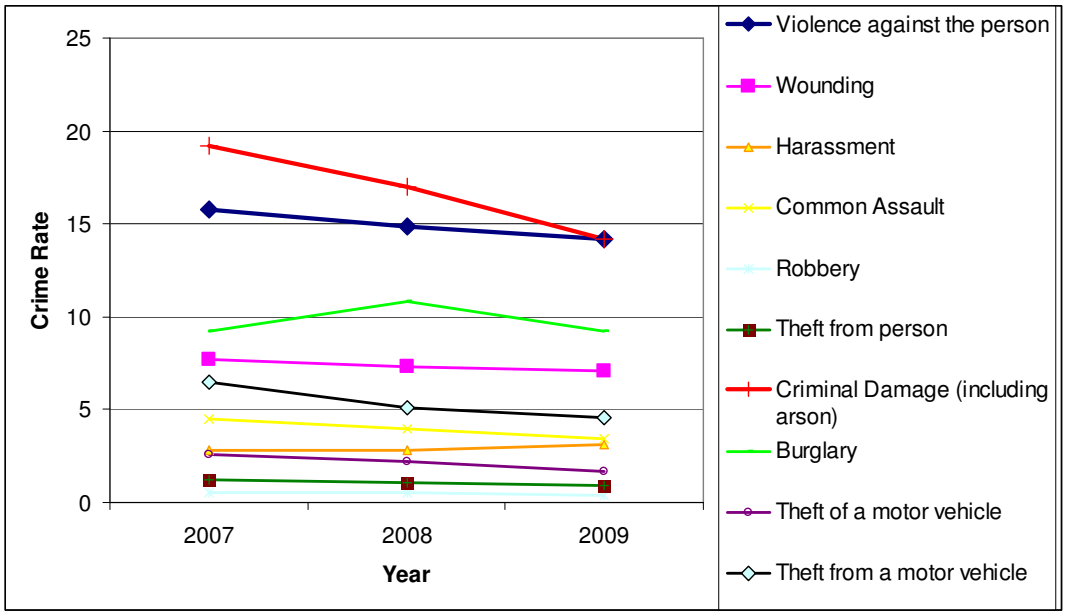
Robbery: "A person is guilty of robbery if he/she: steals and - immediately before or at the time of doing so, and in order to do so - uses force on any person, or puts or seeks to put any person in fear of being then and there subjected to force" (Section 8 (1) of the theft Act, 1968).

Burglary: "A person is guilty of burglary if they: enter any building or part of a building as a trespasser with the intention to steal, inflict grievous bodily harm, rape or cause unlawful damage, or having entered any building or part of a building as a trespasser they steal, inflict or attempt to inflict grievous bodily harm" (Section 9 of the Theft Act, 1968).

Cheshire West and Chester

5.5 The following figure demonstrates the trends in the crime rate across Cheshire West and Chester between 2007 and 2009.

Figure 5.1: Crime Rate in Cheshire West and Chester



Note: Crime Rate = incidences per 1000 people

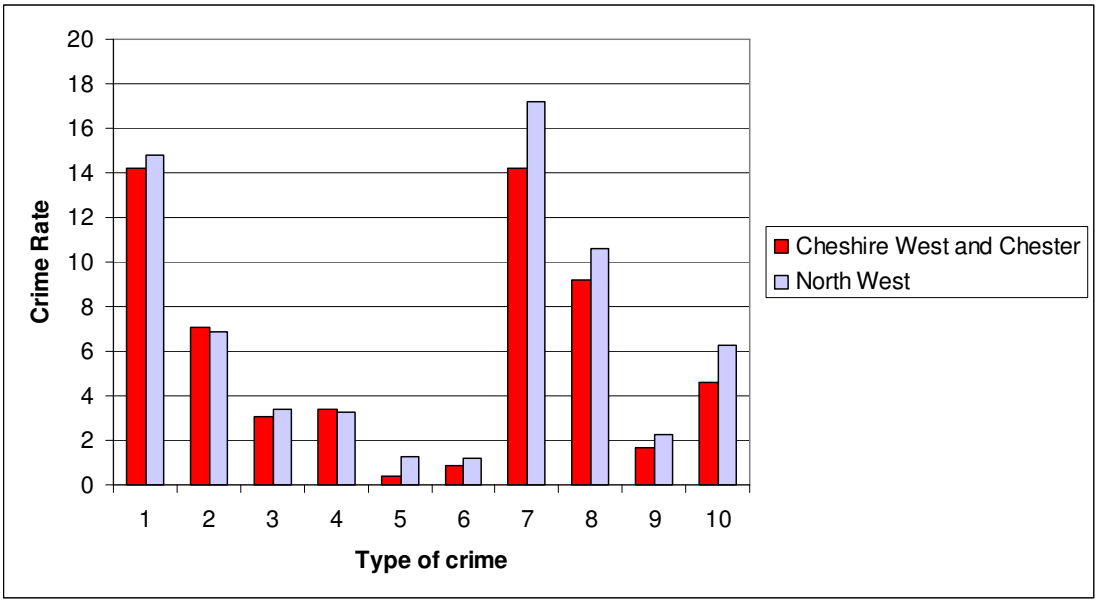
Source: Neighbourhood statistics

5.6 Analysis indicates:

- Criminal damage, including arson, is the type of crime with the highest rate for all three years, at 19.2 incidences per 1000 people in 2007 to 14.2 in 2009. This is also the type of crime to have reduced the most.
- Violence against the person is also high, with a rate of 15.8 in 2007, to 14.2 in 2009, this has also been reduced. Of these violent acts, a far lower number of them resulted in physical wounding, which has a rate of 7.1 in 2009 (reduced from 7.7 in 2007).
- Burglary is the only crime whose rate has not been reduced, with an increase from 9.2 to 10.8 incidences per 1000 people from 2007 to 2009.
- Whilst the crime rates for theft of a motor vehicle are low, and have been reduced, the rates for theft from a motor vehicle remain much higher (although these have been reduced from 6.5 to 4.6 incidences per 1000 people).
- Robbery and theft from a person are the lowest crime rates, with less than 1 incidence per 1000 people in 2009.

5.7 Whilst these statistics display the rates of various crimes in Cheshire West and Chester, it is important to consider how this compares to North West regional levels.

Figure 5.2: Comparison between crime rates in Cheshire West and Chester, and the North West Region, 2009



Key:

1 = Violence against the person

2 = Wounding

3 = Harassment

4 = Common Assault

5 = Robbery

6 = Theft from the person
7 = Criminal Damage (including arson)
8 = Burglary

9 = Theft of a motor vehicle
10 = Theft from a motor vehicle

Source: Neighbourhood statistics

5.8 Analysis demonstrates:

- The majority of the crime rates are lower than, but close to the average crime rates for the North West region.
- The only types of crime with a higher rate than the North West average are wounding, and common assault. These are only marginally higher than the North West average, with wounding and common assault in Cheshire West and Chester at 7.1 and 3.4 respectively and 6.9 and 3.3 in the North West.

- Criminal Damage is significantly lower in Cheshire West and Chester than in the North West region as a whole, with a crime rate difference of 3.

Chester Urban Area

5.9 Analysis of the crime rates within each of the 6 wards in Chester (City Ward, Blacon, Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross, Overleigh, Upton, Newton and Hoole), in comparison with the average crime rates for different crimes in Cheshire West and Chester enables clear identification of the areas with highest crime rate, and what specific type of crime is most prevalent.

5.10 The following graphs show the crime rates of the various wards in Chester over the last 12 months, clearly displaying the fluctuations of total crime rates month to month, and allowing for comparison between the wards (note that the crime rate scale is different for each graph).

Figure 5.3: City Ward (December 2009 – November 2010)

Figure 5.4: Blacon Ward (December 2009 – November 2010)

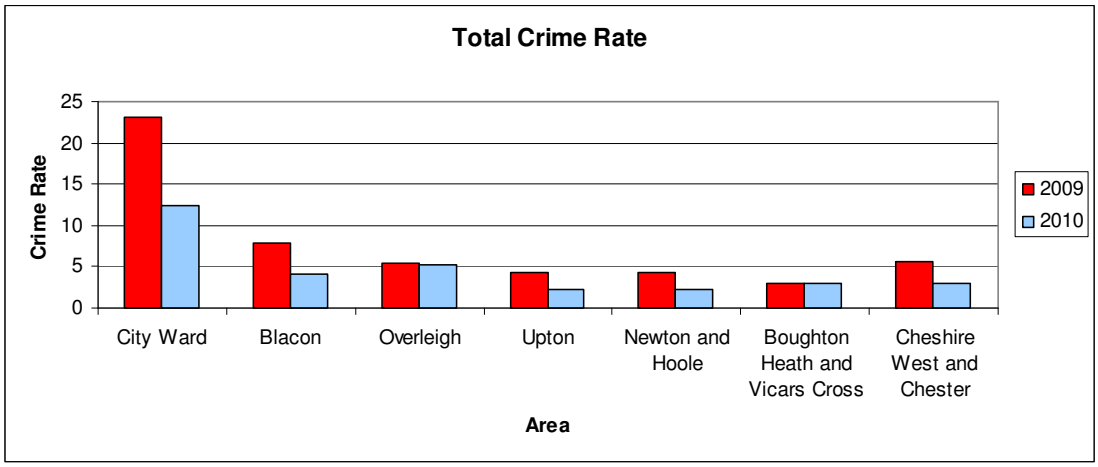
Figure 5.5: Overleigh Ward (December 2009 – November 2010)

Figure 5.6: Upton, Newton and Hoole Wards (December 2009 – November 2010)

Figure 5.7: Boughton Heath & Vicars Cross Ward (December 2009 – November 2010)

Source: www.maps.police.uk

Figure 5.8: Total crime rate for each ward in Chester, and Cheshire West and Chester UA (Sep – Nov 2009, Sep – Nov 2010)



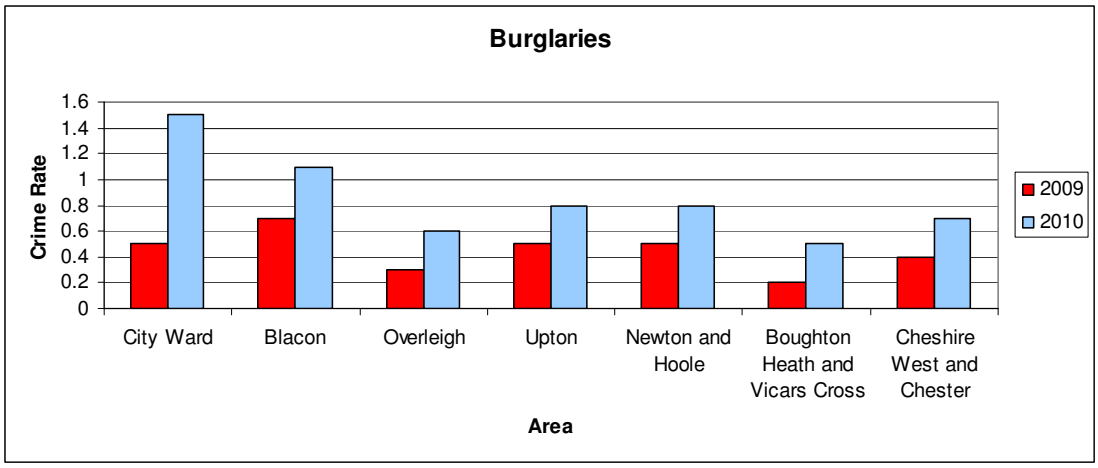
Source: www.maps.police.uk

5.11 This indicates:

- The City ward has a significantly higher crime rate (at 23.1 in 2009, and 12.4 in 2010) than any other ward. Even though there has been a significant decrease in total crime rate in the City ward, it is still 4 times higher in this area than the average crime rate for Cheshire West and Chester UA.
- Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross ward has maintained a low total crime rate from 2009 to 2010, equal to the Cheshire West and Chester crime rate for 2010.

- The percentage decrease in total crime rate for each ward between 2009 and 2009 is as follows:
    - City Ward – 46.2%
    - Blacon – 46.8%
    - Overleigh – 5.8%
    - Upton – 49.4%
    - Newton and Hoole – 49.4%
    - Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross – 1%
- In comparison, the percentage decrease for Cheshire West and Chester was 45.1%

Figure 5.9: Crime Rate for Burglaries (Sep – Nov 2009, Sep – Nov 2010)

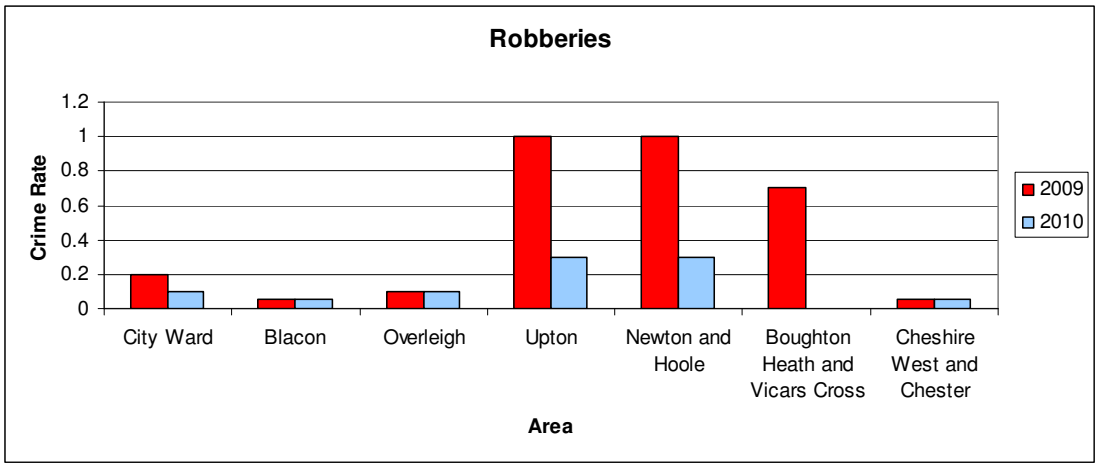


Source: www.maps.police.uk

5.12 This demonstrates:

- The crime rate of burglaries has marginally increased in each ward from 2009 – 2010.
- City Ward has the highest rate of burglaries in 2010, and the largest increase in burglaries from 2009 – 2010 (from a crime rate of 0.5 to 1.5). Burglary rate is also much higher in the City ward than in Cheshire West and Chester overall.
- Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross ward has the lowest rate of burglaries in 2009 and 2010.

Figure 5.10: Crime Rate for Robbery (Sep – Nov 2009, Sep – Nov 2010)

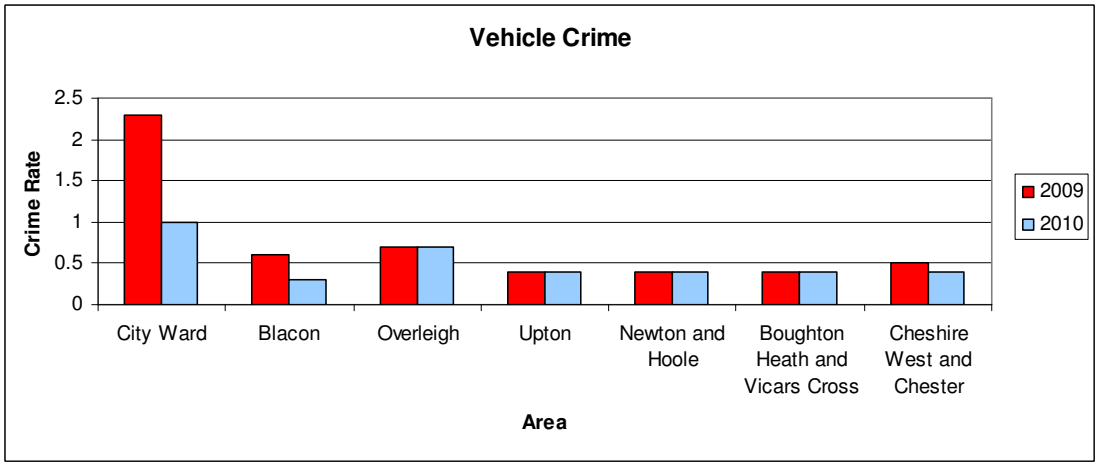


Source: www.maps.police.uk

5.13 This demonstrates:

- Although City Ward has the highest total crime rate, it has one of the lowest robbery rates.
- Upton and Newton and Hoole have the highest rate of robberies, and the largest reduction in rate of robbery from 2009-2010 (from 1 to 0.3), far higher than in Cheshire West and Chester as a whole.
- Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross reduced the rate of robberies from 0.7 in 2009 to 0 in 2010.

Figure 5.11: Rate of Vehicle Crime (Sep – Nov 2009, Sep – Nov 2010)

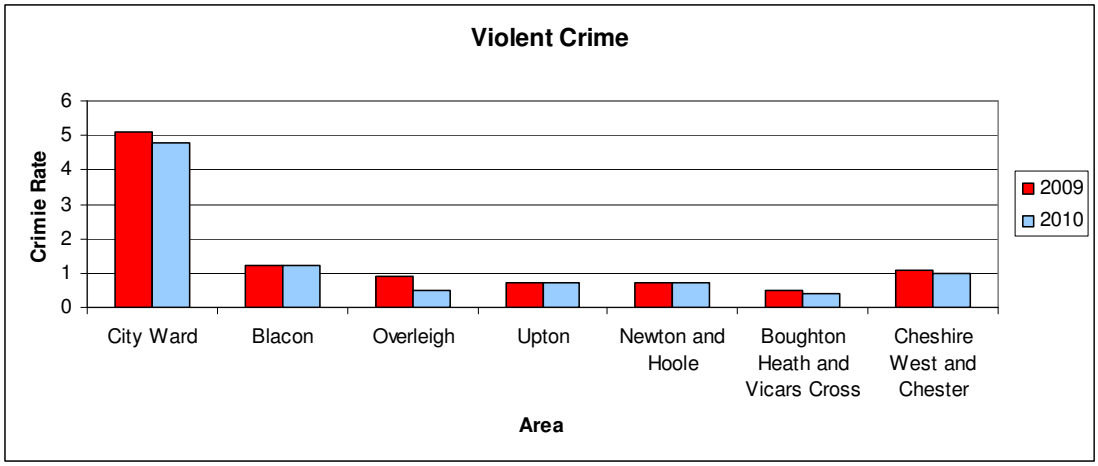


Source: www.maps.police.uk

5.14 This demonstrates:

- City Ward has the highest rate of vehicle crime, but has managed to have the largest reduction, from a rate of 2.3 in 2009, to 1 in 2010.
- By 2010, Blacon has the lowest rate of vehicle crime, reduced from 0.6 incidences per 1000 people in 2009, to 0.3 in 2010, which is just lower than the average vehicle crime rate for the whole of Cheshire West and Chester.

Figure 5.12: Rate of Violent Crime (Sep – Nov 2009, Sep – Nov 2010)

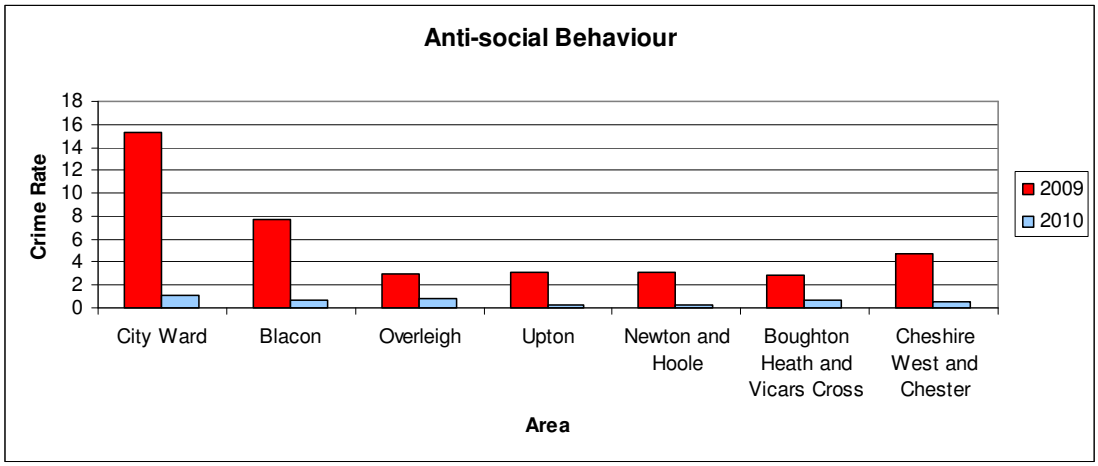


Source: www.maps.police.uk

5.15 This demonstrates:

- City ward has the highest violent crime rates for both 2009 and 2010, with only a very small reduction from 5.1 incidences per 1000 people in 2009, to 4.8 in 2010. This also significantly exceeds the authority average in both years. Violent crime in the City Ward remains the most significant crime issue across the Chester urban area in 2010.
- Overleigh, Upton, Newton and Hoole and Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross all have violent crime rates lower than the average for Cheshire West and Chester.

Figure 5.13: Rate of Anti-social Behaviour (Sep – Nov 2009, Sep – Nov 2010)



Source: www.maps.police.uk

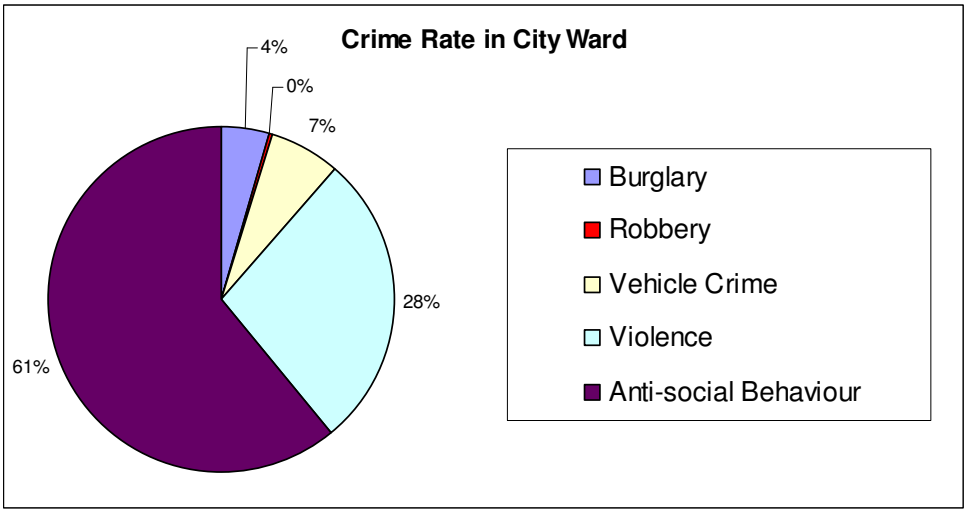
5.16 This demonstrates:

- The rates of anti-social behaviour have significantly decreased in every area when comparing rates from September to November in 2009 to the same months in 2010. From September to November 2010, anti-social behaviour represented only a very small proportion of crimes.
- City ward had very high levels of anti-social behaviour compared to the other wards and Cheshire West and Cheshire overall in 2009, but this has decreased, from 15.3 in 2009 to 1.1 in 2010.

Considering Chester City Centre

5.17 The analysis indicates that the City Ward has the highest crime rate in Chester. Figure 4.14 shows what type of crime has the most incidences each month.

Figure 5.14: Average number of incidences of each crime per month in City Ward, 2010



Source: Neighbourhood Statistics

5.18 To summarise:

- Although analysis from previous results have shown that anti-social behaviour levels were low from September – November 2010, these results show that the number of incidents of this type of crime in 2010 were the highest of all crimes.
- Violent crime is the second most common type of crime in this area, with an average of 73 incidences each month.
- The number of robberies each month in City Ward is very low, with an average of 1 a month.

5.19 Figure 5.15 demonstrates that the crime rate for anti-social behaviour was consistently high throughout 2010, until falling dramatically in September, and remained reduced towards the end of the year.

Figure 5.15: Anti-social Behaviour Rates in City Ward, 2010

Source: www.maps.police.uk

5.20 Discussions with Cheshire Police highlights that Chester City Centre is comparatively safe, with limited incidences of crime, when contrasted against the neighbouring cities of Liverpool and Manchester. However, the Police highlighted that there were several crime and safety issues pertinent to the City Centre. These included the night-time economy and the prevalence of vulnerable and vagrant persons congregating.

The Night- time Economy

5.21 The Police indicated that Chester's evening/night-time economy is limited, at present, to a focus on bars and clubs, which encourages a 'drinking culture' and increasingly presents Chester with this reputation externally. Moreover, this has been reinforced in recent years by the increased availability of low-cost hotel accommodation in the City centre (Holiday Inn Express, 2 Premier Inns, Travelodge), which has lifted the status of Chester as a 'stag' and 'hen' weekend destination. This offer encourages alcohol related crimes including violence and anti-social behaviour, as well as resulting in an intimidating atmosphere of a late evening, with Chester very quiet except for groups of drinkers.

5.22 The pressure on the Police to tackle such behaviour is substantially increased on Race Days, with an estimated additional 30,000 people entering the City centre from 6pm onwards. However, as demonstrated by the statistical analysis, Cheshire Police have adopted and effective Night Time Strategy for the City Centre.

5.23 The crime rate has been reduced throughout all wards from 2009 to 2010. The Police have effectively reduced crime in City Ward at night by:

- Improving the visibility between 12am – 4am, reducing the number of serious assaults.
- Maintaining a good relationship with club owners and door staff. Police can threaten clubs with a review of their license if there is regularly trouble, and so the larger clubs won't allow large groups of boys, or stag and hen parties to enter.
- Increasing CCTV cameras throughout the City.
- Introducing Section 27 penalties, which enable offenders to be physically ejected from the City by police.

City Centre Management

5.24 Robbery and theft from the person is low in the City centre. Local police confirmed that they found that mugging was not really a problem in Chester, with very few reported incidences. They found pick-pocketing to be a sporadic problem, but in general incidences were not high.

5.25 Discussions with Cheshire Police highlighted that several locations across the City centre required improvement to reduce criminal activity, anti-social behaviour and improve feelings of safety and well-being:

- St Johns Street would benefit from improved lighting to support the new CCTV facility installed in December 2010.
- An increase in public toilets would discourage urination in the street in the evening, which also has a negative impact on retailers.
- The subways are reported as feeling unsafe and unclean for users, also forming a begging hotspot, which can be intimidating for individuals – particularly females.
- There is a concentration of vagrant, and homeless persons within the City centre, who often drink during the day and generate an intimidating atmosphere, as well as begging in the City. The Police are actively engaging with partner agencies to aid these people to find the support they require.
- Hotspots for crime due to a lack of natural surveillance include The City Walls and King Charles Tower and Grosvenor Park; especially in the summer months.

Considering Perceptions of Crime and Safety

5.26 The perceptions of local people are captured within the 2008 Place Survey. Perceptions of crime and safety in Chester are summarised below:

Figure 5.16: Local Perceptions of Crime & Safety in Chester

Description of National Indicator	Chester	Cheshire West and Chester
% with a high level of perceived anti-social behaviour.	21.1	19.6
% agreeing that the police and other local public services are successfully dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues in your local area.	26.5	26.5
% stating a very big or fairly big problem with people being drunk or rowdy in public places.	34.0	29.4
% stating a very big or fairly big problem with people using or dealing drugs.	34.4	32.3
% feel safe outside in daylight	89	89
% feel safe after dark	50	50

Source: www.communities.gov.uk

5.27 This demonstrates:

- 89% of people in Chester stated that they feel safe outside in daylight, the same number as for Cheshire West and Chester as a whole. However, only 50% of people stated that they feel safe after dark. Local police explained how the evening culture is very limited in Chester, with the gap between shops closing and the 'drinking culture' starting, making the area very quiet and therefore feel unsafe.

- 34% of people in Chester (and 29.4% of people in Cheshire West and Chester UA) stated that they thought that there was a big or fairly big problem with people being drunk or rowdy in public places. This is likely to be attributed to the night life and binge drinking culture in the centre. However, it could also reflect the presence of vagrants and homeless persons congregating in the City centre, drinking during the day.

- Only 26.5% of people in Chester agree that the Police and other local public services are successfully dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues. However only 21.1% of people in Chester (and 19.6% in Cheshire West and Chester) perceive a high level of anti-social behaviour.

Crime in Student Areas

5.28 With the assumption that most students own a laptop and iPod, and with each student house accommodating between 2 to 9 students, they are a prime target for thieves who actively look for ways to break in to student houses, not just opportunist crime. At the end of 2009/2010 academic year, several cases had been reported around areas like Bouverie Street, Chichester Street and Cheyney Road, which all surround the main campus [9].

5.29 The University of Chester's Student's Union have set up a campaign called CSI (Common Sense Innit), to help improve student's safety by working closely with local organisations, such as the Police and the Council. CSI give facts and advice on crime to students, and are currently trying to set up a safety scheme for students to make sure that they get home safely, even if they have no money on them at the time, by coming to an arrangement with local taxi companies.

Relocation Opportunity

5.30 Chester's Police Station is currently located in the basement of Chester Town Hall in the City centre. The Police highlight that this offers them an excellent location in the heart of the City centre, with the ability to mobilise quickly if incidents are reported, provide a visible presence and enable civilians to report incidents or issues.

[9] http://www.chestersu.com/index.php?id=734

5.31 The Council is, however, considering the opportunity to introduce a commercial offer into the Town Hall, which currently acts as a considerable resource cost due to its ongoing maintenance requirements. Feasibility assessment is underway to test the business case for establishing the Town Hall as a revenue generating facility through the introduction of a community-based functions offer (such as banqueting / wedding services) and the use of the auditorium for cultural purposes such as concerts, alongside continuing its current civic functions.

5.32 The current Police presence in the basement of the Town Hall acts as a constraint on introducing revenue generating services as this space would be required for providing support services and equipment storage. The lease expires for the Police accommodation in 2012, and if the Police could be effectively relocated to another location within the City centre – ideally working alongside the Council's Community Safety Team, this has the potential to remove the constraint on the Town Hall redevelopment.

Bringing the Evidence Together

5.33 The City Ward has the highest crime rate within the Chester urban area, which is also 4 times higher than the crime rate in Cheshire West and Chester as a whole. City Ward incorporates the City centre, including all shops, pubs and clubs. The drinking culture at night in the City centre encourages alcohol-induced criminal activity, as local Police explain that most problems occur at night after the clubs close, as large numbers of people start to make their way home after having consumed a large amount of alcohol.

5.34 Although the rate of violent crime is high, it is slightly lower than the North West rate. The ward contributing most to the violent crime rate in Chester is the City Ward, where violent crime rate is significantly higher than that of Cheshire West and Chester. Anti-social behaviour is the most prevalent type of crime in City Ward, although incidences decreased dramatically by the end of 2010. Rates here are far higher than any other ward, possibly as a result of the night-time economy in the centre.

5.35 The Police have however adopted an effective Night Time Strategy to combat crime and improve presence, and thus instil a greater feeling of safety during the evening within the City centre. A further strategy that police would like to employ to reduce night-time crime is to spread out taxi locations and take-aways throughout the perimeter of the City centre in order to disperse the direction that people head to after a night out.

5.36 The University of Chester is located in City Ward. Students can be a target for thieves. However, local Police stated that property theft in student areas is not overly high, with only 7 incidences in the month of November 2010, which was higher than the average.

5.37 Although City ward has the highest total crime rate, it is not the area with the highest robbery rate. The Upton ward and Hoole and Newton have a higher rate of robbery than City ward, although it was dramatically reduced from 2009 to 2010.

5.38 Local perceptions from the 2008 Place Survey for Chester revealed:

- People felt less safe during the evenings in Chester.
- A higher proportion of local people in Chester felt rowdiness and anti-social behaviour to be a problem than across the wider Cheshire West and Chester Authority.
- Only just over 25% of people felt that the Police and partner agencies were effectively dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime.

5.39 Should the Police Station be relocated out of the Town Hall basement when the lease expires in 2012, the opportunity may exist to refurbish the Town Hall to provide revenue generating services. This would have the potential to support investment in its maintenance and provide additional cultural and community amenities.

6. Community Health & Care

Introduction

6.1 Ensuring Chester has a healthy population is fundamental to its economic and social success – good health outcomes enable people to live longer, have productive lives, and provide responsible role models for subsequent generations.

6.2 NHS Western Cheshire PCT leads the local National Health Service (NHS) and serves the population of Western Cheshire. There are generally three accepted localities within the Primary Care Trust: Ellesmere Port & Neston, Chester City and the Rural (see Figure 8.8). NHS Western Cheshire is responsible for using resources effectively to improve the health and quality of life for all residents, however for the purposes of the One City Plan, this report focuses on Chester City where possible.

6.3 This analysis has been developed through consideration of available data, review of the PCT's existing evidence base, and through engagement with:

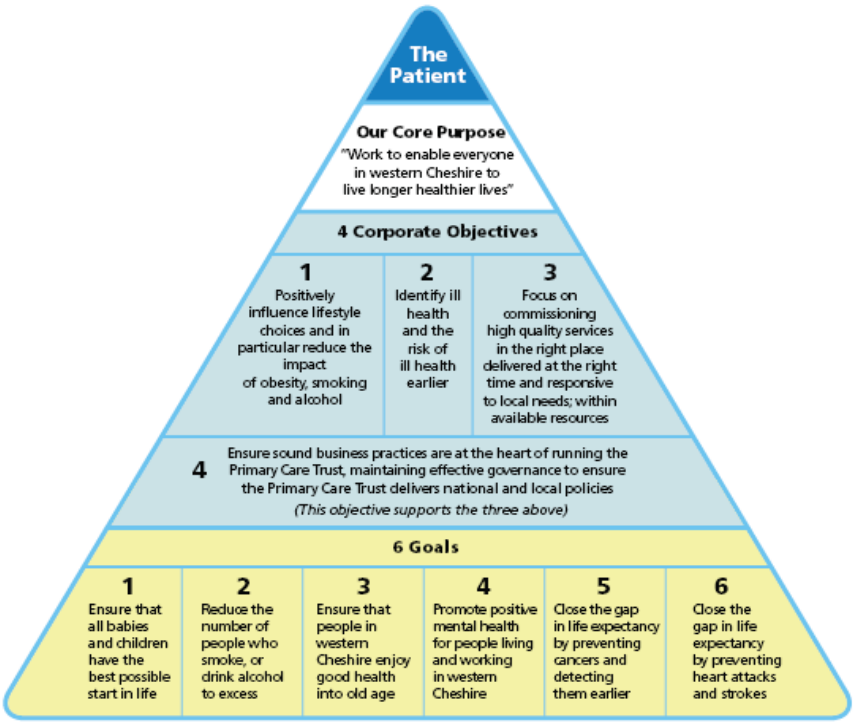
- Liz Noakes – Associate Director of Public Health, Western Cheshire PCT
- David Parry – Head of Estate Strategy & Investment Programme, Western Cheshire PCT

6.4 The overarching aim of NHS Western Cheshire is to commission high quality services that treat today's ill health alongside services to enable people to live healthier lives in the future. This is supported by the mission statement 'NHS Western Cheshire exists to enable everyone in Western Cheshire to live longer healthier lives'.

6.5 Tackling health inequalities across Cheshire West and Chester is key to achieving this aim and forms one of the key priorities for action within the West Cheshire Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) West Cheshire Together we can aim high 2010-2026, produced by West Cheshire Together – the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). As such, it is seen as essential that the Primary Care Trust continues to work with local people as well as partners in the public sectors (Local Acute and Mental Health Trusts, GP`s, Dentists, Pharmacists, Optometrists; Local Authorities; voluntary and not for profit organisations, to ensure that a full range of services are provided to meet local needs close to where people live.

6.6 The Western Cheshire Primary Care Trust strategy Transforming Health and Health Care: Getting it Right 2009/10- 2013/14, sets out the PCT ambition to improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Western Cheshire. The following figure is an extract from the strategy, and summarises the core purpose, corporate objectives and goals.

Figure 6.1: Western Cheshire PCT – Health Care Approach & Ambitions



Source: Western Cheshire PCT, 2010

Health & Well-being Challenges

6.7 The Western Cheshire PCT Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) provides the evidence base from which the PCT identify the current and future health and wellbeing challenges prevalent within Western Cheshire, and therefore the priorities for strategy to target.

Life Expectancy, Death Rates & Causes

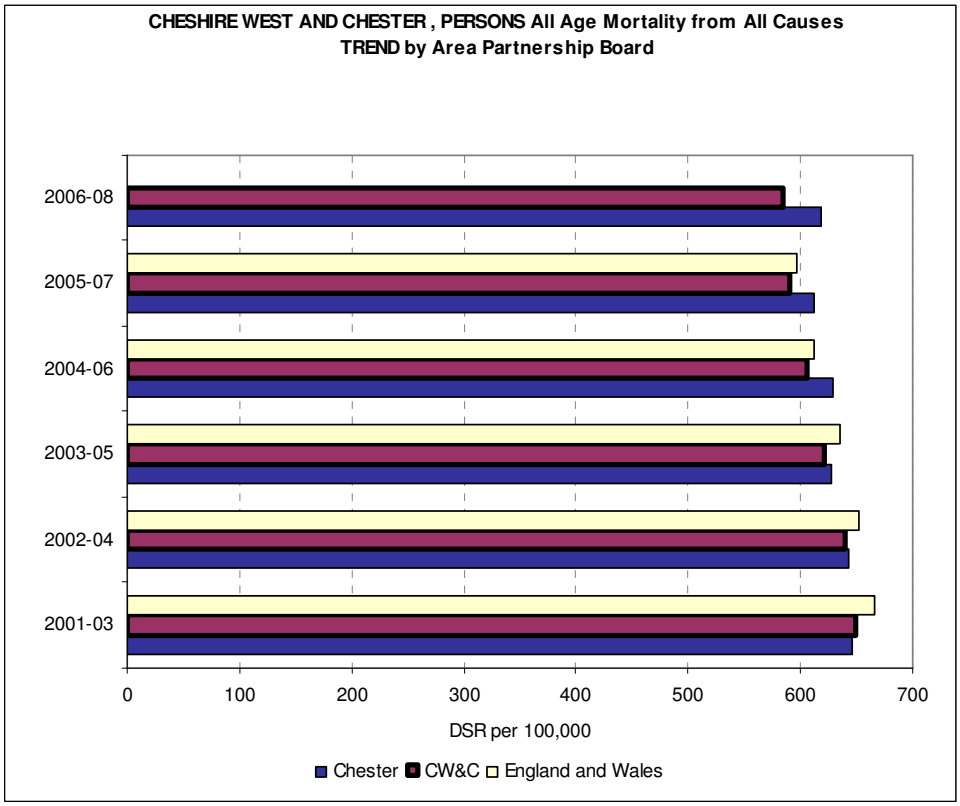
6.8 The JSNA indicates that between 2001-03 and 2006-08 overall life expectancy increased by 1 year in women and 1.3 years in men in Western Cheshire. Death rates in men are lower than the national average. Death rates in women however are similar to the national average but have fallen slightly less than nationally.

6.9 In women, death rates have fallen in cardiovascular disease but have risen in respiratory infections, digestive diseases and non-transport accidents such as falls. In addition, trends in death rates from different types of cancer show a mixed picture. These adverse trends are largely affecting older women across a range of deprivation quintiles.

6.10 In men, death rates have fallen substantially in cardiovascular disease, cancers and respiratory diseases, however, small increases are evident in digestive diseases and non-transport accidents.

6.11 The following figures provide overview analysis of key mortality indicators for all persons and age-groups at the Chester Area Partnership Board (APB) scale, contrasted against the wider Cheshire West and Chester scale, and national average where available.

Figure 6.2: All Cause Mortality (2001-2008 trend) – Chester APB



Source: ONS Annual District Death Extract, and LSOA population estimates, Compendium of Clinical and Health Indicators (National Centre for Health Outcomes Development)

6.12 Trend analysis suggests that the Chester ABP area has experienced an increasing mortality rate since 2001-03, when it was lower than both the Cheshire West and Chester and national averages. Since 2004-06, the Chester APB area has experienced a mortality rate exceeding both the wider spatial scales.

Figure 6.3: All Age Mortality from All Circulatory Diseases (2001-2008 trend) – Chester APB

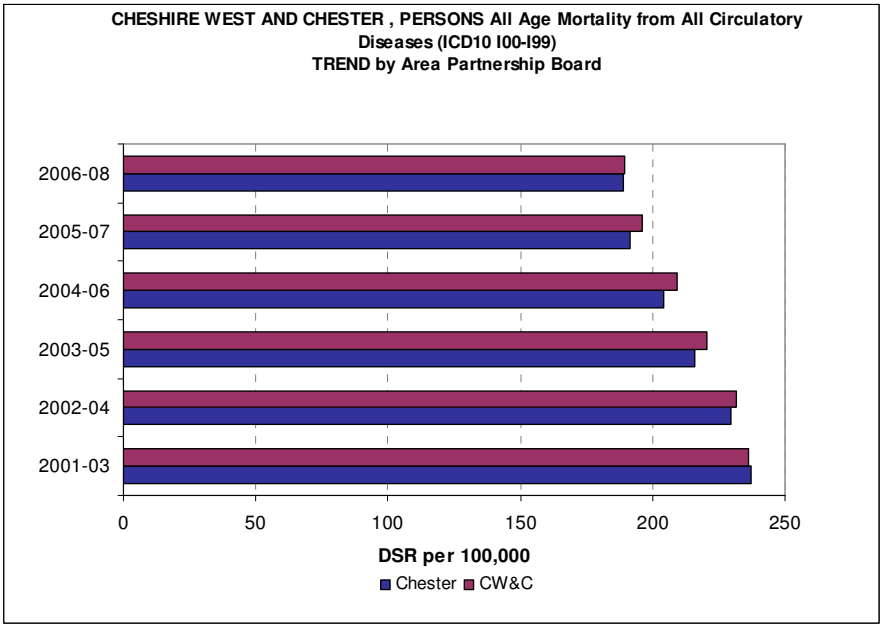
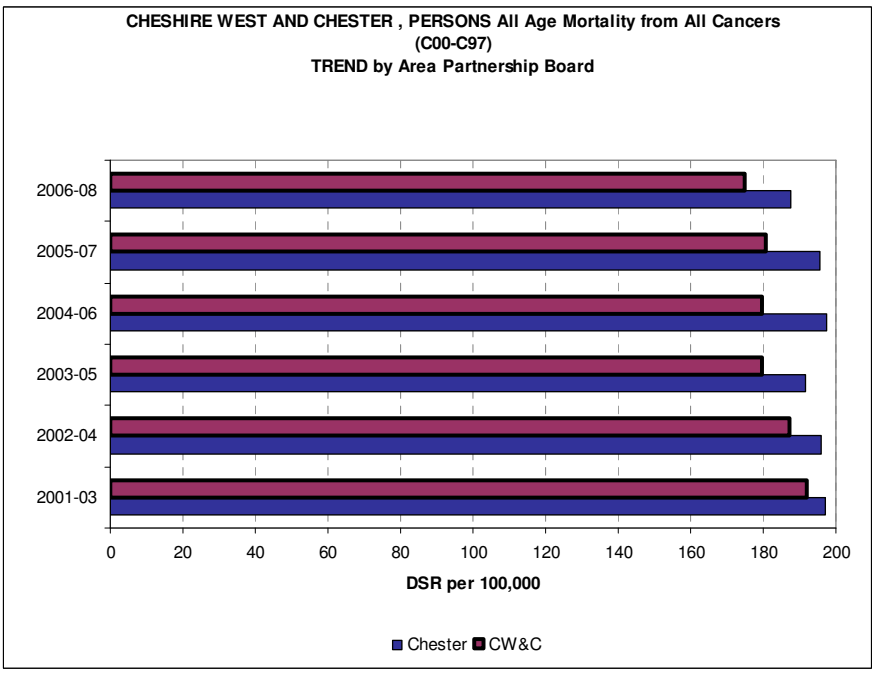


Figure 6.4: All Age Mortality from All Cancers (2001-2008 trend) – Chester APB



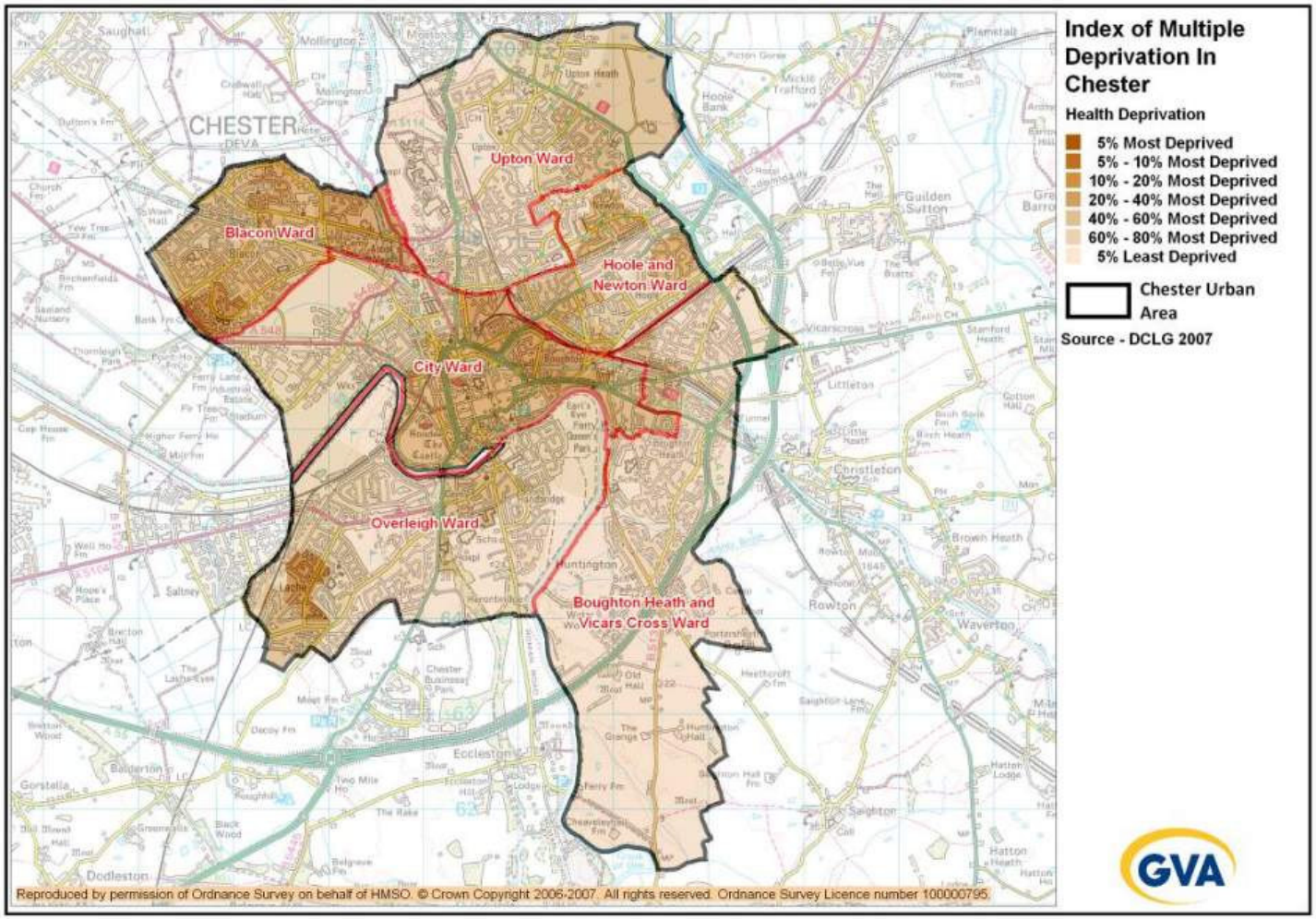
Source: ONS Annual District Death Extract, and LSOA population estimates, Compendium of Clinical and Health Indicators (National Centre for Health Outcomes Development)

6.13 The analysis suggests that:

- The Chester APB area has consistently recorded a lower mortality rate from all circulatory diseases than the Cheshire West and Chester area over the 2001 to 2008 period.
- In contrast, the Chester APB area shows a consistently higher mortality rate from all cancers than the Cheshire West and Chester area over the 2001 to 2008 period.
- The overall mortality rate for both all circulatory diseases and all cancers has, however, demonstrated a trend of decline between 2001 and 2008, although this is more distinct when considering circulatory disease related mortality.

6.14 The following plan illustrates the IMD 2007 Heath Domain for the Chester urban area.

Figure 6.5: Index of Multiple Deprivation – Health Domain (2007)



Source: IMD

6.15 Engagement with the PCT has highlighted further concentrations of health issues, which support the spatial indicators prevalent in the IMD (2007) plan:

- The Blacon and Lache neighbourhoods within Chester City demonstrate high incidences of heart disease, lung cancers, mental health and alcohol-related illnesses. However, these locations have also recorded the strongest improvements in outcomes in recent years.
- Health inequality amongst the older population of Chester City has 'stood still' in recent years, with issues related to heart disease and respiratory problems in this age group elevated within the Newton and Hoole neighbourhoods.

Mental Health

6.16 Mental ill health is a condition that can severely impact the quality of life of those suffering from it and those immediately around them. It may also lead to other forms of deprivation, such as, unemployment or homelessness; potentially, individuals may find themselves in a downward spiral that may be difficult to break out of. In Western Cheshire over four thousand people are currently receiving Incapacity Benefit due to mental health disorders/ problems. Furthermore, mental health illness represents a major burden on NHS resources as around 12% of hospital occupied bed days are due to mental health disorders.

6.17 Review of the Western Cheshire PCT Mental Health in Western Cheshire report reveals that 33 SOAs in Western Cheshire have levels of mental health deprivation between one and two-times higher than the national average – drawing on the IMD 2004 mental health domain. A number of these are located within Chester City, including the highest concentrations at Blacon Lodge, Lache Park, City & St. Anne's wards.

6.18 Consideration of hospital admission rates, related to mental health, reveals that the highest levels of admissions were associated with residents of the Blacon Lodge and City & St. Anne's wards in Chester City.

Emerging Dynamics

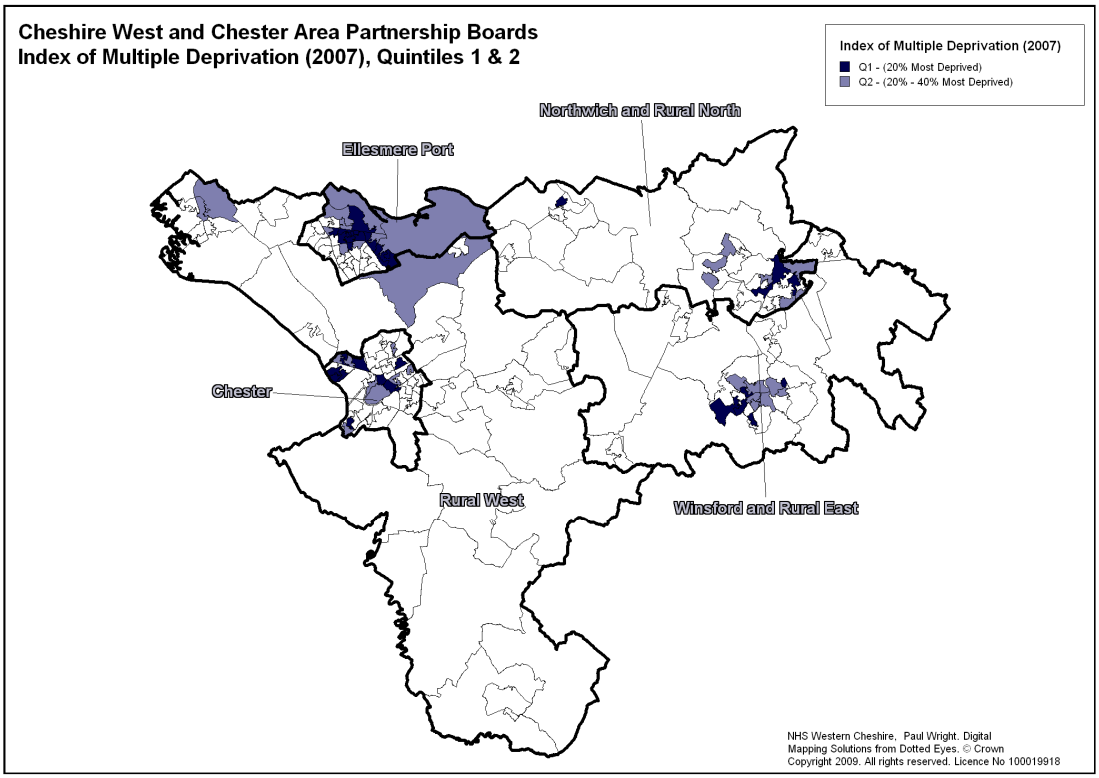
6.19 Health inequalities are widening locally across Western Cheshire - particularly amongst men.

6.20 Populations in both the most deprived (20%) and second most deprived (20%-40%) national quintiles have significantly higher death rates compared to the national average. Within the Chester PBA there are 17 LSOAs that are situated within the most deprived and second most deprived national quintiles:

- Blacon Ward - 7 Lower Super Output Areas
- City Ward – 4 Lower Super Output Areas
- Overleigh Ward – 2 Lower Super Output Areas
- Hoole and Newton Ward – 3 Lower Super Output Areas
- Upton Ward – 1 Lower Super Output Area

6.21 These are presented spatially on the following plan, within the wider context of Cheshire West and Chester.

Figure 6.6: Chester APB IMD (2007), Quintiles 1 & 2



Source: Western Cheshire PCT, 2010

6.22 In 2006-08, the gap in life expectancy in Western Cheshire between the most deprived two quintiles and the rest of the population was 6.3 years in men and 4.3 years in women. Around 61,760 (26%) people live in the most deprived two national quintiles.

6.23 Coronary Heart Disease accounts for the largest share of the gap in death rates in men (21%) and this gap is widening. Death rates from lung cancer and digestive diseases are

also continuing to rise in men in these two quintiles. In women the gap is dominated by Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (17%).

6.24 Moreover, the JSNA highlights that Cheshire West and Chester has an older age profile when compared nationally. The population has a higher proportion of people aged 40+, particularly 55-59 years. Around 17% of the population are over 65 years compared to 16% nationally.

6.25 Over the next 10 years, the population is expected to increase by 17,300 people. Large sustained increases in the number of older people in the area are forecast. By 2016, the number of people aged 85 or over will increase by 40%, an additional 2,800 people in a potentially vulnerable group.

6.26 The number of young people aged 5 to 15 years will decline by nearly 3%, however the birth rate is increasing and the number of children under five is set to increase by nearly 7%, an additional 1,100 children. These trends will have consequences for health and social service planning and delivery as well as for housing and adaptations provision.

6.27 There has been a recent increase in 'lifestyle' issues, which are negatively impacting on health and well-being within Cheshire West and Chester. These include high levels of lung cancer – related to smoking, and also a rise in 'binge drinking' and diabetes.

6.28 The One City Plan can play a role in improving health outcomes through the spatial solutions it promotes by encouraging walking, cycling and recreation, to reduce inequalities.

Tackling Health Inequalities

Healthcare Strategy

6.29 The Western Cheshire PCT Strategy, Transforming Health and Health Care: Getting it Right (2010), and the supporting Health Inequalities Action Plan (2010), acknowledge the importance of all key public sector agencies working together in a partnership approach to support people, influencing their health and quality of life.

6.30 Getting it Right (2010) identifies three thematic areas requiring targeted focus in order to tackle the significant health inequalities experienced by the residents of Cheshire West and Chester:

- to tackle the underlying causes of ill health, through improving educational attainment, housing, getting local people into jobs and creating a safe and healthy environment;

- to bring about lifestyle changes with a focus on smoking prevention and cessation, improving diet/nutrition and increasing exercise; and
- the identification of people at high risk of developing disease and managing them optimally.

Current Healthcare Provision

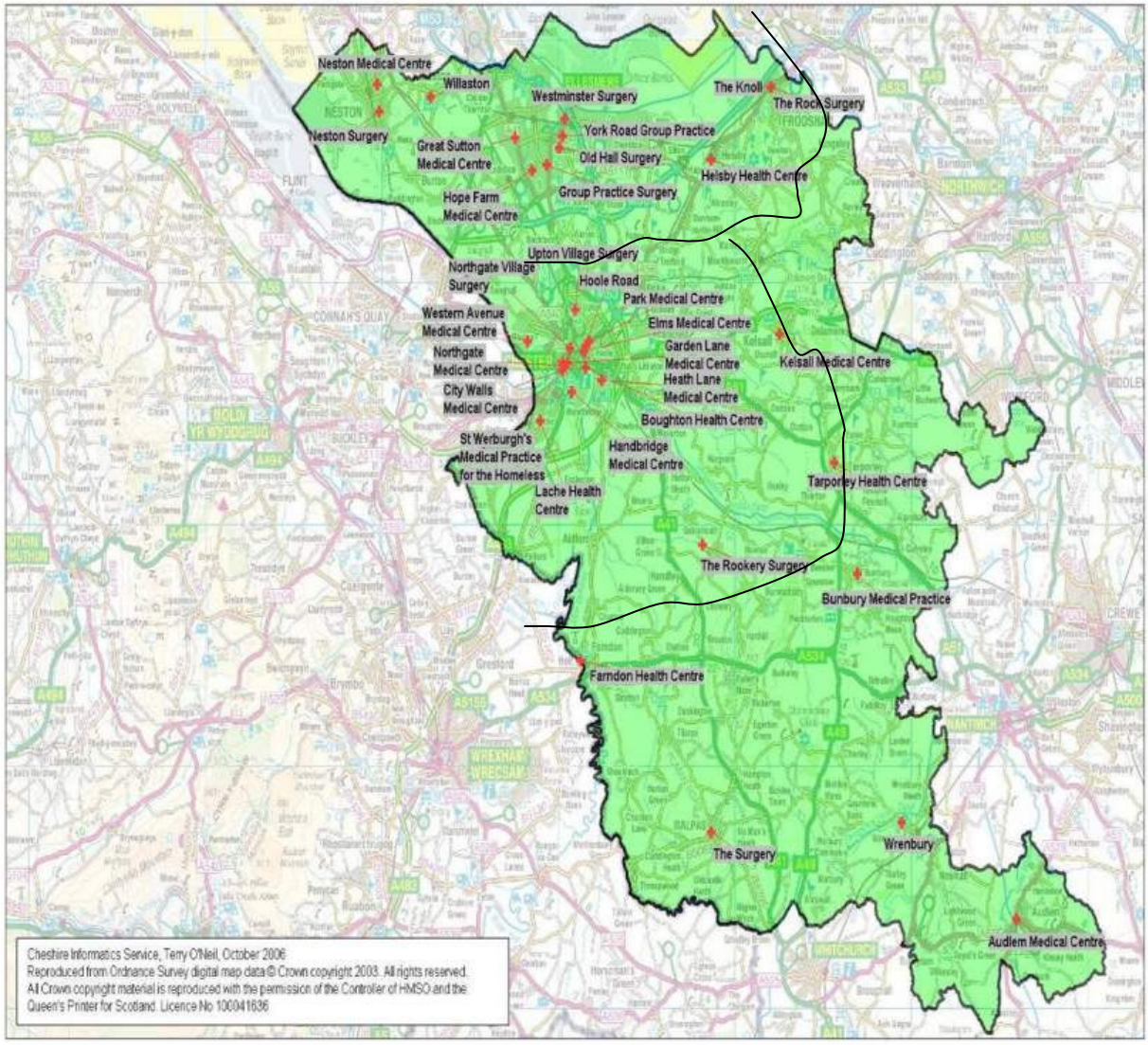
6.31 In order to support residents' healthcare needs, the Western Cheshire PCT split their spatial remit into three broad localities – Chester City, Ellesmere Port and the Rural Areas. Focusing within Chester City, there are 18 GP healthcare practices and clinics, which are clustered spatially into 4 areas – North West, Eastern, South and City. Provision is presented by cluster in the following table, and spatially within the plan below.

Figure 5.7: Chester City - Practices/clinics Grouped into Clusters and Localities

Chester City - Practices/clinics Grouped into Clusters and Localities		
GP Practices and Clinics (Tier 1)	**Tier 2 (A) Cluster**	**Tier 2 (B) Locality**
Western Avenue Medical Practice	North West City (population 33,257)	Chester City Locality (total population: 103,347)
Blacon Clinic		
City Walls Medical Centre		
Garden Lane Medical Centre		
St Martin's clinic		
St Werburgh's Practice for the Homeless		
Upton Village surgery	Eastern City (population 33,399)	
Upton Clinic		
Park Medical Centre		
Boughton Medical Centre		
Heath Lane Medical Centre		
Handbridge Medical Centre	South City (population 12,375)	
Lache Health Centre		
Lache Clinic		
Northgate Medical Centre	City (population 24,319)	
Northgate Village Surgery		
Hoole Surgery		
The Elms Medical Centre		

Source: Western Cheshire PCT, 2010

Figure 6.8: Western Cheshire PCT – Location of GP Practices & Clinics



Source: Western Cheshire PCT, 2010

6.32 In addition, the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is also located within Chester City.

6.33 The Western Cheshire NHS is now acting to realign their approach to healthcare service provision with the key current, and emerging, action areas requiring attention to reduce health inequalities and improve health outcomes and wellbeing across the population. The ambition is to provide *a personalised health care service where local people have access to the best care possible; the right care of the right quality at the right time in the right place from the right clinical staff with the right outcome.*

6.34 This is considered in the following sub-section.

Future Healthcare Provision - Investment & Asset Management

6.35 The Western Cheshire NHS *Commissioning Investment and Asset Management Strategy* (CIAMS) (2009-2017) document presents the approach to future investment and development of the Primary and Community Services infrastructure across Cheshire West and Chester.

Implementing Efficiencies

6.36 There is recognition that the PCT is required to take action now before the full effects of the changing economic climate, and spending reductions, impact and strive to continually become more efficient in service delivery. Each year from 2010 there is a requirement to reduce recurrent expenditure by £15 million to maintain financial balance.

6.37 Over the next 5 years, Western Cheshire PCT can expect zero or very limited growth in the funding allocation and all investment will need to be more than matched by corresponding reduction in costs or disinvestment. By 2014/15 resources will in real terms have declined by £79.8 million and the PCT will need to ensure all our resources are directed to achieve maximum benefit for the local population and ensuring services are delivered in the most efficient way. This will involve a shift in emphasis and investment to achieve the following:

- Promotion of health and well-being and early action to prevent illness
- Early identification of illness and the risk factors which could lead to illness
- Support for diagnosis and treatment at home or close to home in the community
- Creation of the infrastructure to support our vision by building clinics and premises that are fit for purpose and developing a skilled and flexible workforce

A Partnership Approach

6.38 The successful delivery of the CIAMS is dependant on developing a multi agency collaborative asset management approach. There are a number of significant priority developments identified within the CIAMS involving successful joint working initiatives between the Primary Care Trust and Cheshire West and Chester Council. The CIAMS will be therefore be delivered with full participation with the emerging Cheshire West and Chester Local Development Framework-The Core Strategy (2011-2026),The Sustainable Community Strategy and The Local Transport Plan(2011-2026).

6.39 To date there are four priority major developments planned, as well as a series of smaller developments across Western Cheshire. These will all see a more integrated approach to the provision of primary and community care and will underpin significant changes to the Pathways of Care that will drive improvements in the management of the unplanned care journey for patients and support people living with chronic conditions.

6.40 Two of the priority developments are located within Chester; one is to be located within the Northgate area of Chester because of current primary care constraints within this area of the City, as the opportunity has arisen to consider a development opportunity within an optimum location within Chester City. This is referred to by Western Cheshire PCT as the Northgate Area Development, however to avoid confusion with the proposed Northgate Retail Development, the PCT scheme is referred to as 'The Delamere Street Development'. The status of the development is as follows:

- Working closely with Cheshire West and Chester Council, a preferred site has been identified by the PCT within the Chester Northgate area. The Delamere Street site, a former Chester City central bus station, is currently being redeveloped for a mixed use development that includes residential, retail and potentially health and social care; all within a formal development between the Council and a nominated developer. The site has the benefit of a central accessible location within Chester City and includes a large multi-storey car park within the overall development proposal.

- The Primary Care Trust is working closely with the Council nominated developer in a detailed viability appraisal to deliver the requirements of a prepared Stage 1 Service Delivery Plan and Feasibility Report that requires the development of a 7000m2 building to accommodate the relocation of four inner City GP Practices, together with the delivery of the emerging Transforming Community Services agenda. The appraisal undertaken by the developer also includes a detailed assessment of relocating healthcare services from secondary care to a community setting; enabling the delivery of Primary Care Trust Transforming Health Care: Getting it Right 2009/10-2013/14 strategy.

- The developer led appraisal process will include a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process all within a pre-agreed Project Initiation Plan process.

- The current Primary Care Trust draft investment programme assumes delivery of the Delamere Street development in late 2012/13, conditional on an approved viability appraisal. Business Case approval was achieved in early 2010.

6.41 The Blacon area of Chester also has constraints within current primary care and community care infrastructures and there is a significant development opportunity to consider within a structured partnership agreement with Cheshire West and Chester

Council and Chester and District Housing Trust relating to a Neighbourhood regeneration initiative. The status of the development is as follows:

- Working with a structured partnership arrangement with Cheshire West and Chester Council and Chester and District Housing Trust, the Primary Care Trust is developing a Neighbourhood regeneration initiative for the Blacon community, relating to a number of strategic sites and in particular the central Parade zone. The structured partnership arrangement is also supported and endorsed by the Homes and Communities Agency (formerly English Partnerships).

- The partnership agreement objectives ensure the delivery of an integrated development that includes affordable housing, health and social care; all developed with full engagement with community groups.

- The Primary Care Trust will ensure the delivery of the Stage I Service Plan and Feasibility Report (Link), which includes a 3000m2 accommodation requirement for the re-provision of the local GP Practice and Clinic, in addition to enabling the delivery of the emerging Transforming Community Services and the Transforming Health Care; Getting it Right 2009/10-2013/14 strategy. The overall development proposal will include a network of services in accessible locations within the Blacon community that will include development of the Cheshire West and Chester Children's Centre and the redevelopment of a community resource, Plas Dinas for a Healthy Living Centre facility.

- The current Primary Care Trust draft investment programme assumes delivery of the Blacon development in early 2013/14, conditional on the viability of the Joint Partnership Agreement, anticipated for early 2010.

6.42 It is anticipated that these developments are likely to follow a model of Integrated Resource Centres. These will operate within a 'one-stop shop' framework, on a multi-agency basis, providing a range of different services in one locality. Patients would experience a more 'seamless' service where the traditional boundaries of primary, secondary, voluntary sector and social care become integrated, offering patients a wider range of services at a single point of contact. The types of services provided within an Integrated Resource Centre would vary according to location and the availability of existing services, but could include diagnostic tests, pre- or post-operative assessments, specialist chronic disease management clinics, specialist sexual health clinics etc.

6.43 A range of facilities, provided by development partners or other stakeholders, will be included in one of two ways;

- In an integrated pattern with the primary and social care premises, sharing a main entrance and opening of the public space. This would allow individual developments

to be expanded to include a number of additional functions, which are integrated into the building, as follows:

- Pharmacy facilities (community or retail pharmacy)
- Health promotion advice and displays
- Facilities for the informed patient
- One stop shop for social services
- Housing advice and benefits office
- Voluntary sector base
- Community police base
- Crisis self referral point
- Social initiatives
- Banking services
- Crèche and/or nursery
- Catering facilities (vending, coffee shop, café, restaurant or community kitchen)
- Retail facilities

- In a symbiotic pattern being provided alongside the primary and social care premises, in a mixed-use development of the site including:
  - Health club (private or public sector)
  - Library
  - Specialist training facilities for IM&T or life skills
  - Residential (key worker, social or private)
  - Crèche and/or nursery

- Catering facilities (vending, coffee shop, café, restaurant or community kitchen)
- Retail facilities
- Pharmacy facilities

6.44 The services provided will support the aim of avoiding unnecessary admissions to, or attendance at, hospital or facilitate earlier discharge from hospital. The Integrated Resource Centre hubs may have specific service themes, such as enhanced diagnostic capacity which may be provided to a wider footprint of the population e.g. to the whole Primary Care Trust.

6.45 The Western Cheshire PCT has also identified Lache and Handbridge, within Chester, as areas that are likely to need more significant development and will probably need early consideration as the capacity for primary care to expand particularly in Handbridge is extremely limited. However, no specific development plans have been produced to date.

6.46 To summarise, it is proposed by Western Cheshire PCT that the model of care outlined above will facilitate the following outcomes, to improve health within the local community:

- increased and improved quality of services, especially in deprived neighbourhoods;
- a single person-centred assessment process, rather than a service-centred one;
- improved community access to local services, especially for more socially-excluded groups such as people with learning disabilities;
- a focus on delivering appropriate secondary care functions (e.g. a range of ambulatory care and management of long term conditions) in community settings;
- provision of diagnostics to develop integrated one stop clinical pathways
- integrated signposting, referral and triage facility;
- a focus on a mix of skills across staff groups and developing extended skills; and
- improved staff morale through greater clinical integration and reduced clinical isolation.

Bringing the Evidence Together

6.47 The overarching aim of NHS Western Cheshire is to commission high quality services that treat today's ill health alongside services to enable people to live healthier lives in the future.

6.48 Tackling health inequalities across Cheshire West and Chester is key to achieving this aim and forms one of the key priorities for action within the West Cheshire SCS 2010-2026, produced by West Cheshire Together – the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The Chester APB area demonstrates health inequalities for several key health indicators including a high mortality rate from cancers, and at the neighbourhood scale there are a number of health challenges, notably around mental health and lifestyle issues – particularly in the Blacon and Lache areas.

6.49 The Western Cheshire PCT Strategy, Transforming Health and Health Care: Getting it Right (2010), establishes thematic a targeted action-led approach to tackling health inequalities. This is supported by the Western Cheshire NHS CIAMS (2009-2017), which presents the approach to future investment and development of the Primary and Community Services infrastructure across Cheshire West and Chester.

6.50 It is clear there are significant financial pressures within the Western Cheshire PCT to introduce efficiencies and prioritise resources. However, by developing a multi agency collaborative asset management approach the PCT are adopting a more integrated approach to the provision of primary and community care, working with other public service agencies.

6.51 Two new priority facilities are planned in Chester – working under the model of Integrated Resource Centres. These will operate within a 'one-stop shop' framework, on a multi-agency basis, providing a range of different services in one locality including primary, secondary, voluntary sector and social care.

6.52 Working closely with Cheshire West and Chester Council, a preferred site has been identified by the PCT within the Chester Northgate area. The Delamere Street site will, as part of a wider facility, accommodate the relocation of four inner City GP Practices, together with the delivery of the emerging Transforming Community Services agenda. In addition, there are plans in Blacon to consider within a structured partnership agreement with Cheshire West and Chester Council and Chester and District Housing to deliver of an integrated development that includes affordable housing, health and social care.

7. Business & Investment

The Economic Context

7.1 The City of Chester is the principal economic centre for Cheshire West & Chester, providing employment across a range of professional, financial, cultural, tourism and retail sectors.

7.2 Cheshire West and Chester Council's aspirations are set out in the Cheshire and Warrington 'unleashing the potential' document which includes the target to deliver 22,000 additional jobs across the Cheshire Warrington sub-region – Chester is expected to play a significant role in this. Whilst the latest forecasts[10] suggest this remains an ambitious goal (these are presented within this section) this will clearly place additional pressure on the overall number of houses and land for employment purposes required across the authority in the future. This is an issue recognised within the latest version of the Core Strategy.

7.3 The types of job created and already in existence also represent an important context with different levels of earnings associated with high and low value sectors of employment.

7.4 This is underpinned by Cheshire West and Chester Council's refreshed Corporate Plan 2009-2011 (April 2010) 'Making it Happen'.

Unleashing the Potential July 2010

7.5 The Unleashing the Potential report[11] establishes the aim of the Chester and Warrington sub region, to realise its economic growth potential and to increase annual GVA by at least £10 billion to some £30 billion by 2030. This growth will be based on increasing levels of productivity, together with increasing population by at least 100,000 by 2030 and employment opportunities. The strategy to reach the report's overall economic growth aims includes improving connectivity and accessibility; providing appropriate housing provision; inspiring and supporting enterprise and business; and committing to skills, people and jobs. The Unleashing the Potential (2010) sets out a high level ambition for growth involving providing appropriate housing throughout the sub-region. In particular this aim is underpinned by the Housing Growth Point status in West Cheshire and Warrington.

[10] Draft Chester Prosperity Study, Cheshire West and Chester, September 2010 – Sourced from CWEM

[11] Unleashing the Potential of Cheshire & Warrington Sub-Regional Strategy, July 2010

7.6 In Chester the report promotes high levels of growth and development based around Chester and the Deeside Hub up to 2030, developing a major transformational tourism project in Chester, and building on Chester's high quality office and retail offer.

Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

7.7 Following the announced abolition of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) by the Coalition Government, the sub-region of Cheshire and Warrington has recently completed its prospectus[12] and business plan for a Cheshire & Warrington LEP to support economic growth and investment into the sub-region and underpin its commitment to 'unleashing the potential'.

7.8 The vision of the LEP for Cheshire and Warrington is:

7.9 To make Cheshire and Warrington quite simply the best place to do business in the UK. We will provide the ideal environment for businesses to grow: access to the right skills, supportive and efficient public services; effective infrastructure and utilities; and a beautiful part of the country for people to enjoy.'

7.10 The LEP is targeting its establishment in shadow form from February 2011, with operation commencing in March 2011 to enable transitional arrangements to be made from the NWDA.

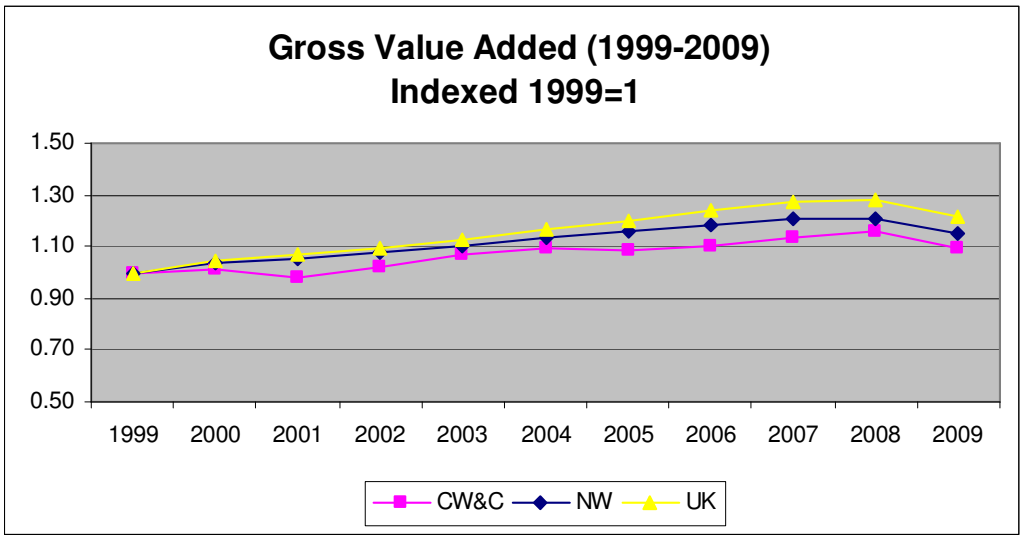
Employment and Productivity

Long-term Trends

7.11 GVA growth in Cheshire West & Chester has historically been below national and regional averages; average GVA growth during the period 1999-2009 has been 0.84% pa compared to 1.40% pa for the region. Whilst behind the North West in terms of economic performance over the past decade, it is important to note that the regional average is enhanced by the economic importance of Liverpool and Manchester. The deterioration of GVA growth at all levels between 2008 and 2009 is attributable to the recession.

[12] Cheshire & Warrington Means Business – A prospectus for a Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, September 2010, Cheshire & Warrington Enterprise Commission (CWEC)

Figure 7.1: GVA Trends (1999-2009)

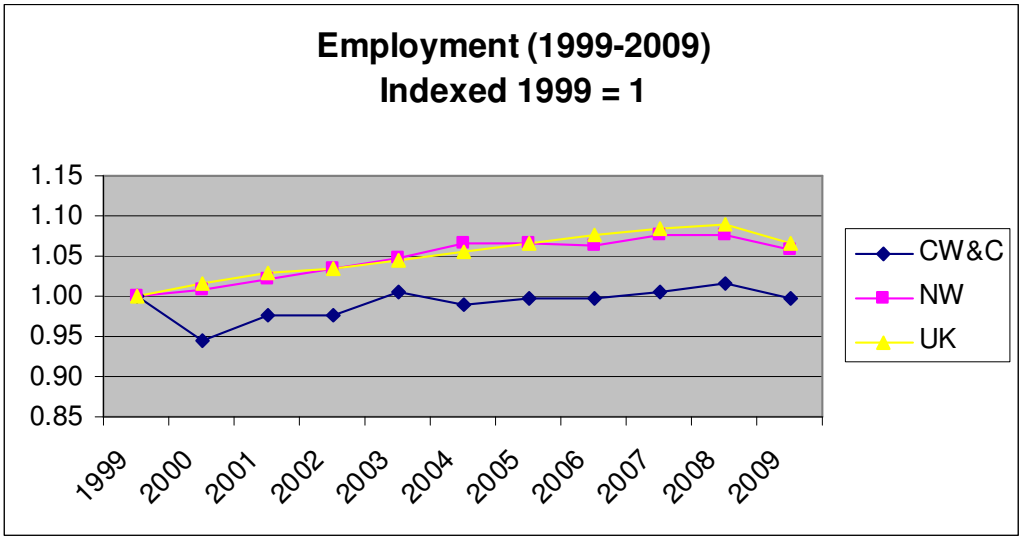


Source: CWEM

7.12 Figure 7.2 below shows the overall employment trends since 1999 across the Cheshire West & Chester area compared with national and regional averages. Cheshire West & Chester has experienced employment growth below the regional average employment growth for the whole period and is perhaps attributable to the absence of high levels of active investment and development.

7.13 Notably, Cheshire West & Chester does not appear to have experienced a net growth in employment between 1999 and 2009; this trend is in contrast with employment trends for the North West. The data suggests changes occurred at the turn of the millennium (2000) which seriously affected the rate of future employment growth for Cheshire West & Chester whilst the region, in comparison, consolidated its position.

Figure 7.2: Employment Trends (1999-2009)



Source: CWEM

Local Labour Market

7.14 Analysis has been drawn from the draft Cheshire West & Chester Local Economic Assessment (January 2011)[13], which presents labour market employee analysis with data sourced from the Annual Business Inquiry published by NOMIS and ONS.

7.15 The draft Local Economic Assessment indicates:

- The majority of employees in Cheshire West and Chester are employed in distribution, hotels and restaurants; followed by the public sector and banking, finance & insurance.
- Since 1998, the number of employees working in energy and water has declined by over 53% and manufacturing has also declined by almost 40%. The largest growth has been in the public sector which has risen 40.79%, followed by the other services sector (28.58%) and banking, finance and insurance at 17.75% - predominantly driven by strong growth within Chester at the Business Park.

[13] Draft CWaC Local Economic Assessment (January 2011) – Mickledore Ltd

Figure 7.3: Employee analysis by industry group (% split & change) Cheshire West & Chester, 1998-2008

Employee analysis by broad industry group, % split and change, CWaC, 1998-2008				
Industry sector	1998	2008	2008 % split	% Change
Agriculture and Fishing	2,054	2,094	1.4	1.95
Energy and water	1,164	539	0.4	-53.69
Manufacturing	24,533	14,901	9.9	-39.26
Construction	7,908	7,460	5	-5.67
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants	35,147	39,443	26.2	12.22
Transport and Communications	5,976	5,986	4	0.17
Banking, Finance and Insurance	30,819	36,290	24.1	17.75
Public Administration, Education & Health	25,855	36,401	24.2	40.79
Other Services	5,864	7,540	5	28.58
Grand Total	**139,321**	**150,654**		8.13

Source: ABI / Taken from draft Cheshire West & Chester Local Economic Assessment (January 2011)

Figure 7.4: Employee analysis by industry group (% Change) Former Chester District, 1998-2008

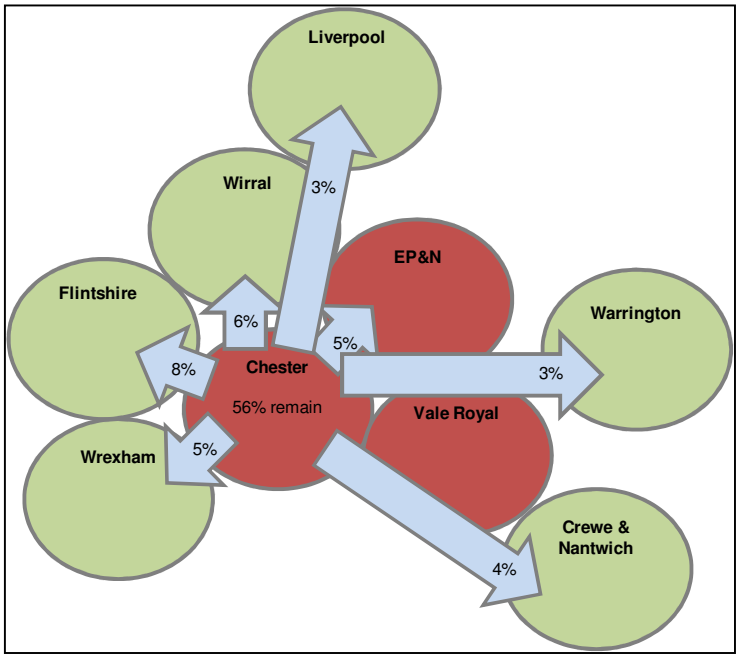
	Employee analysis by industry group (% Change) Former Chester District, 1998-2008								
	Agri & fishing	Energy and water	Mnfr	Const	Distrib, hotels & restaurant	Trans. and comms	Banking, finance and insurance	Public admin, education & health	Other service
Chester	-23.7	-83.2	-32.9	10.9	-3	19.5	15.5	33.2	32.7
Cheshire West & Chester	1.9	-53.7	-39.3	-5.7	12.2	0.2	17.8	40.8	28.6
North West	8.6	-38.4	-34.2	24.3	0.9	9.5	36.4	23.6	25
England	-5.3	-22.9	-33.3	16.1	5.1	9.1	28.5	24.6	24.6

Source: ABI / Taken from draft Cheshire West & Chester Local Economic Assessment (January 2011)

Commuting Trends

7.16 Analysis has been drawn from the draft Cheshire West & Chester Local Economic Assessment (January 2011)[14], which presents the 2008 commuting trends into, and out of, the former Chester District in a spatial format. These trends are presented in a more detailed account in Section 10: Transport.

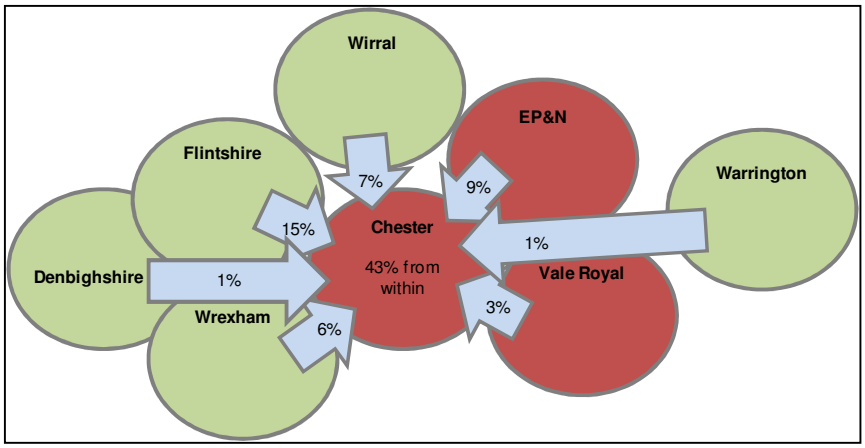
Figure 7.5: Workplace of Chester residents, 2008



Source: APS / Taken from draft Cheshire West & Chester Local Economic Assessment (January 2011)

[14] Draft CWaC Local Economic Assessment (January 2011) – Mickledore Ltd

Figure 7.6: Residence of Chester workers, 2008



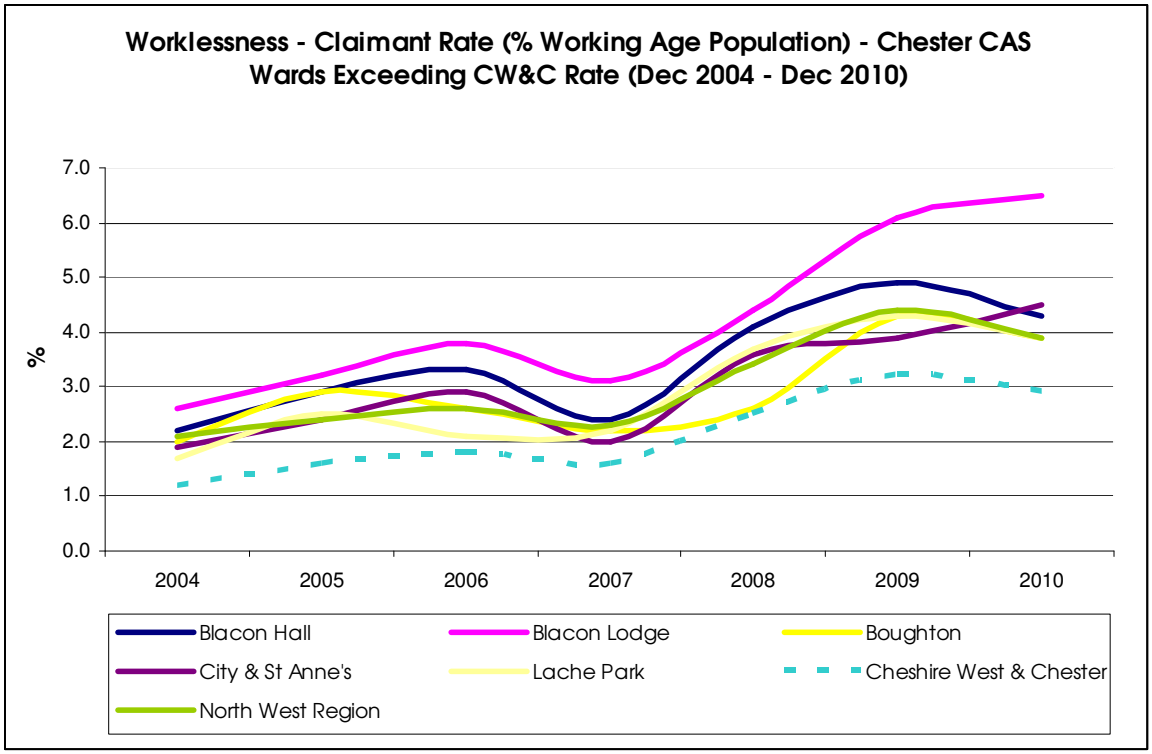
Source: APS / Taken from draft Cheshire West & Chester Local Economic Assessment (January 2011)

Worklessness

7.17 Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and National Insurance Credit allowance benefit claimant data for the working-age population (16-64) provides the most accurate proxy for the volume and rate of unemployment at a level below the Cheshire West and Chester authority scale.

7.18 The following figure presents the 2003 CAS wards within the Chester urban area that demonstrate a claimant rate above the Cheshire West and Chester scale in December 2010. The analysis charts the trend in claimant levels from 2004, therefore considering the impact of the recession.

Figure 6.7: Claimant Rate (% Working-age population) – Chester CAS Wards Exceeding CWaC Rate (Dec 2004 – Dec 2010)



Source: Nomis, 2011

7.19 Analysis demonstrates the following key trends:

- Claimant rates in Cheshire West and Chester rose from a base of 1.2% in 2004 to a peak of 3.2% in 2009, having since reduced slightly to 2.9% as the recession passed. This has mirrored the trend at the regional North West scale, although the claimant rate for the North West has tracked at a higher level demonstrating that Cheshire West and Chester performs comparably well in economic activity terms.

- Within the Chester urban area, there are several wards that have consistently held claimant rates above the Cheshire West and Chester authority average across the period. The trend in these wards has followed a similar pattern to that at the authority scale. Those wards in December 2010 demonstrating a particularly high claimant rate are:

    - Blacon Lodge: 6.5%

    - City & St Annes: 4.5%

- Blacon Hall: 4.3%
- Boughton: 3.9%
- Lache Park: 3.9%

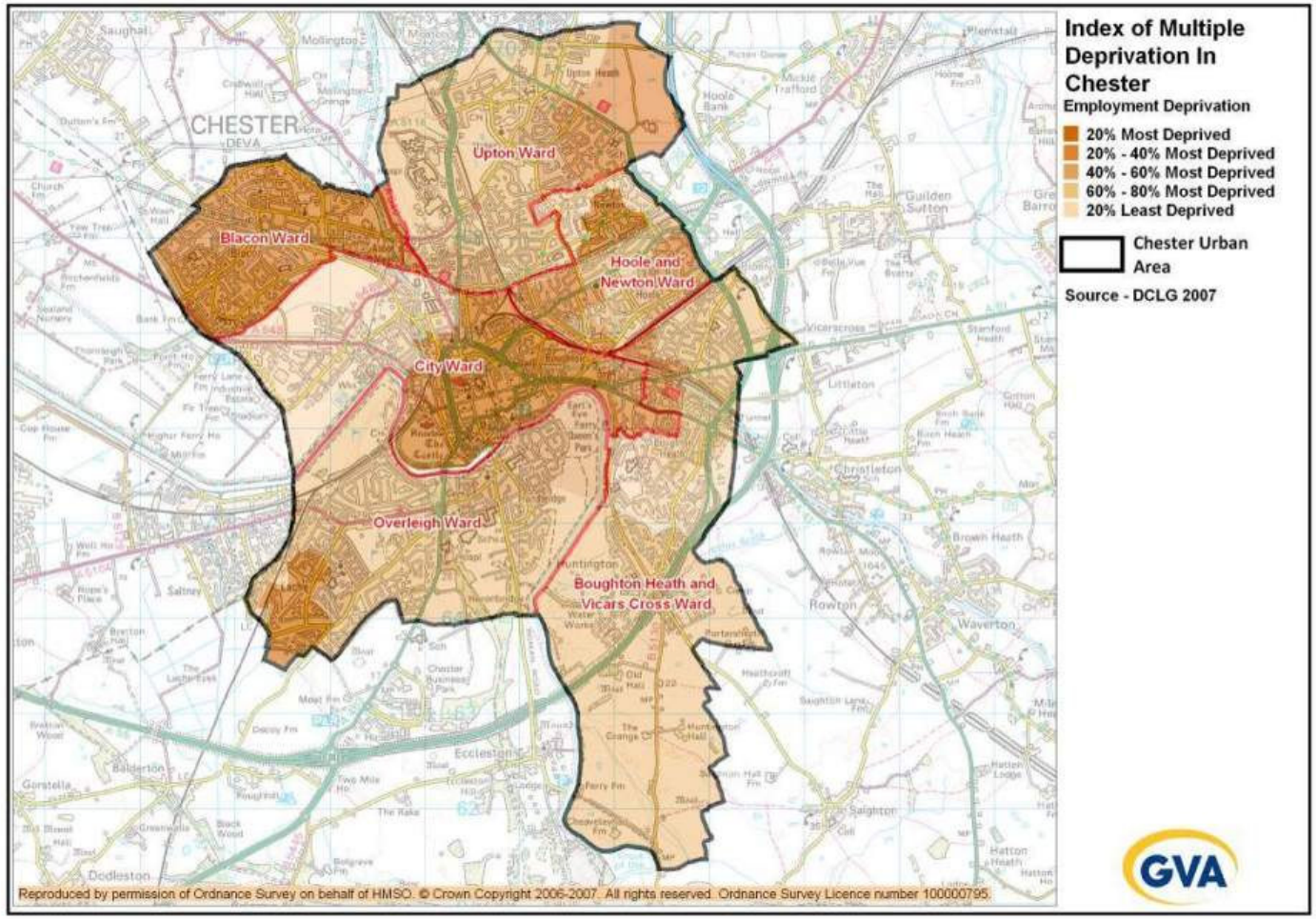
7.20 Several wards covering both the Blacon neighbourhood and Chester City centre have fared particularly badly since 2007, demonstrating a particularly adverse impact from the recession. These wards have experienced a high growth in claimant rate between December 2007 and December 2010. This suggests additional support may be required for the residents of these wards to gain employment, or to re-skill and re-train:

- Blacon Lodge: +3.4%
- City & St Annes: +2.5%

7.21 The following figure displays the Employment deprivation domain for the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2007) within the Chester urban area.

7.22 Supporting the analysis above, this demonstrates the concentration of unemployed residents, and those claiming benefits, within the Blacon ward and the Lache neighbourhood of the Overleigh ward, as well as with the City ward and the Newton neighbourhood of the Hoole and Newton ward. These areas registered as being within the 20% to 40% most deprived locations (LSOAs) nationally.

Figure 7.8: IMD (2007) – Employment Deprivation in Chester



Source: IMD

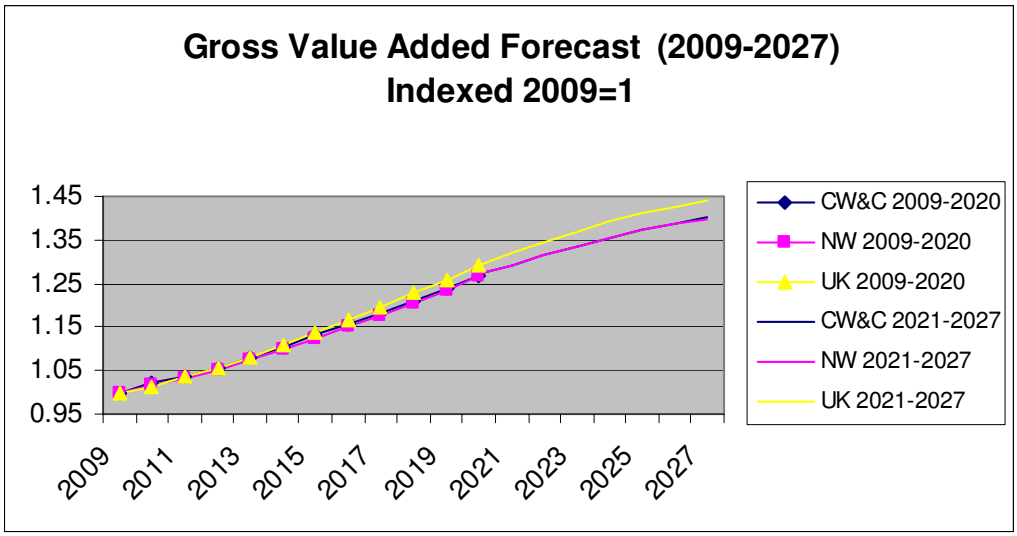
Forecast Trends

7.23 Economic forecasts from the 2010 update of the Cheshire & Warrington Econometric Model (CWEM) are utilised for the purpose of this analysis. The CWEM results are consistent with the Model supplier's, Cambridge Econometrics, latest (February 2010) regional forecasts publication.

7.24 The forecasts do not take account of local economic intelligence or future development projects, policies or initiatives, and as are result are to be considered 'policy off'. The forecast utilises 2007 as the baseline year.

7.25 The established trends pre-2009 are anticipated to persist over the next 10 years or so (to 2020). To ensure consistency with the Council's LDF plan period, Figures 6.9 and 6.10 below forecast to 2027 based on average annual growth during the period 2009-2020.

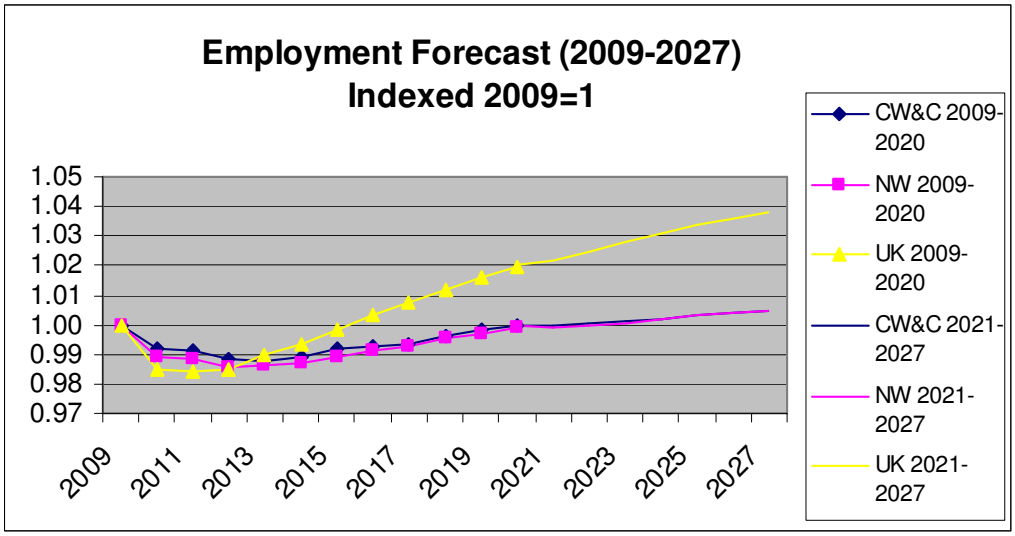
Figure 7.9: Forecast GVA 2009-2027



Source: CWEM

7.26 Figure 7.9 above shows that forecast GVA growth in Cheshire West & Chester is broadly in line with that of the region between 2009 and 2027. This is interesting and suggests that the area's industry mix is capable of 'keeping pace' with growth in the region, despite below average GVA trends pre-2009 (as shown in Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.10: Forecast Employment 2009-2027



Source: CWEM

7.27 Figure 7.10 above indicates that employment growth in Cheshire West & Chester is also forecast to 'catch up' with the region. Surprisingly perhaps, given the 'gap' identified considering past trends, the forecasting model suggests that the area will out-perform the North West in terms of employment growth between 2009 and 2015/16 (i.e. post-recession). To summarise, total employment in the Cheshire West & Chester area will be expected to increase by only 0.5% (c. 850 jobs) between 2009 and 2027. Similarly, for the region, employment is also anticipated to increase by 0.5% (c. 17,000 jobs) over the same period.

7.28 It is also possible to consider sectoral GVA and employment projections for Cheshire West and Chester for 2009-2020 utilising the CWEM and interpolating forward to 2027. Forecast GVA for those sectors growing at or above the regional average are presented in the following figure.

Figure 7.11: GVA Forecast - High Growth Sectors 2009-2027

High Growth GVA Forecast: 2009-2027	CWaC	NW
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	24%	16%
Other Mining	35%	24%
Food, Drink & Tobacco	27%	19%
Manufacture of Fuels	36%	34%
Pharmaceuticals	176%	167%
Rubber & Plastics	17%	12%
Basic Metals	59%	36%
Metal Goods	32%	24%
Electrical Engineering & Instruments	26%	9%
Gas Supply	24%	-9%
Distribution	50%	46%
Retailing	53%	49%
Hotels & Catering	29%	26%
Banking & Finance	85%	70%
Insurance	50%	39%
Other Business Services	60%	58%
Public Admin. & Defence	31%	31%
Health & Social Work	43%	39%
Miscellaneous Services	32%	29%

Source: CWEM

7.29 The strongest growth is forecast within Pharmaceuticals, Banking and Finance and Other Business Services, as well as a range of manufacturing sectors, within Cheshire West & Chester.

7.30 Whilst high growth prospects are spread across services and manufacturing, the service sector is forecast to be much more dominant in the future. Importantly here is the 'high value' component of the services (i.e. banking & finance, insurance) predicted to provide the highest percentage increase in employment within Cheshire West & Chester, and specifically within Chester by nature of the location of these businesses.

7.31 Reflecting the aforementioned high GVA growth sectors, the following table presents analysis of those sectors projected to result in employment growth in Cheshire West & Chester that outperform the regional average growth.

Figure 7.12: Employment Forecast - High Growth Sectors 2009-2027

High Employment Growth: 2009-2027	CWaC	NW
Manufacture of Fuels	8%	6%
Pharmaceuticals	27%	22%
Distribution	0%	-3%
Hotels & Catering	25%	22%
Banking & Finance	26%	15%
Insurance	21%	12%
Health & Social Work	10%	7%

Source: CWEM

7.32 Analysis demonstrates that, as with forecast sectoral GVA growth, the Pharmaceuticals, Banking & Finance, and Insurance sectors provide a high level of growth in employment for Cheshire West & Chester when considered in the context of projected regional growth. Importantly for the One City Plan, a substantial proportion of growth in the Banking & Finance and Insurance sectors will be located within Chester – either within the City Centre or at Chester Business Park - given the clustering of these sectors in these locations.

7.33 In summary, the economic structure of the Cheshire West & Chester economy is one where the forecast high employment growth sectors are particularly service oriented and with a significant competitive advantage across these sectors, then further growth prospects look particularly bright. Of particular note is the expected employment growth in Banking & Finance (26%) and Insurance (21%), both of which will create high value growth – this will have a functional relationship with the housing market. Primarily, this will enable residents within the area to generate the levels of income necessary to stimulate housing demand.

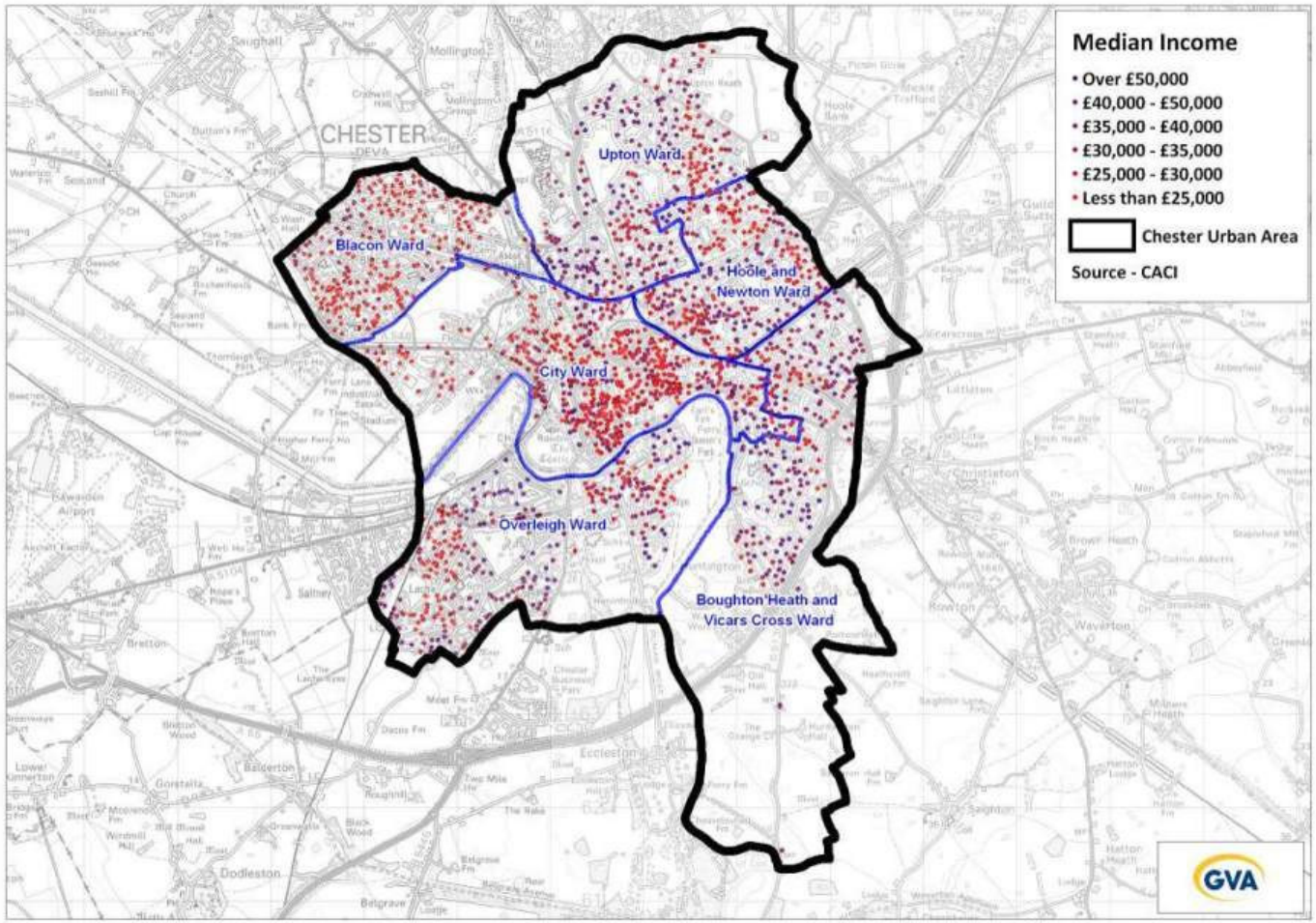
7.34 The high employment growth sectors are not limited to services however, with manufacturing sub-sectors such as Pharmaceuticals (27%) and Manufacture of Fuels (8%) also forecast to perform well and, indeed, 'above region'. It is evident therefore that demand pressures will occur in both Chester and Ellesmere Port.

Incomes

7.35 In 2008 the average household income in Chester was £34,300, which fell 4% below the Cheshire West and Chester authority average, but on a par with the national average. The lowest average income levels were recorded in North Blacon ward (£25,900) and the highest incomes recorded in the Huntington and Boughton Heath ward (£41,500).

7.36 The following plan utilises CACI data, dated at 2010, to provide a spatial analysis of household incomes across the Chester urban area at the 6-digit postcode scale.

Figure 7.13: Median Household Income – Chester Urban Area (2010)



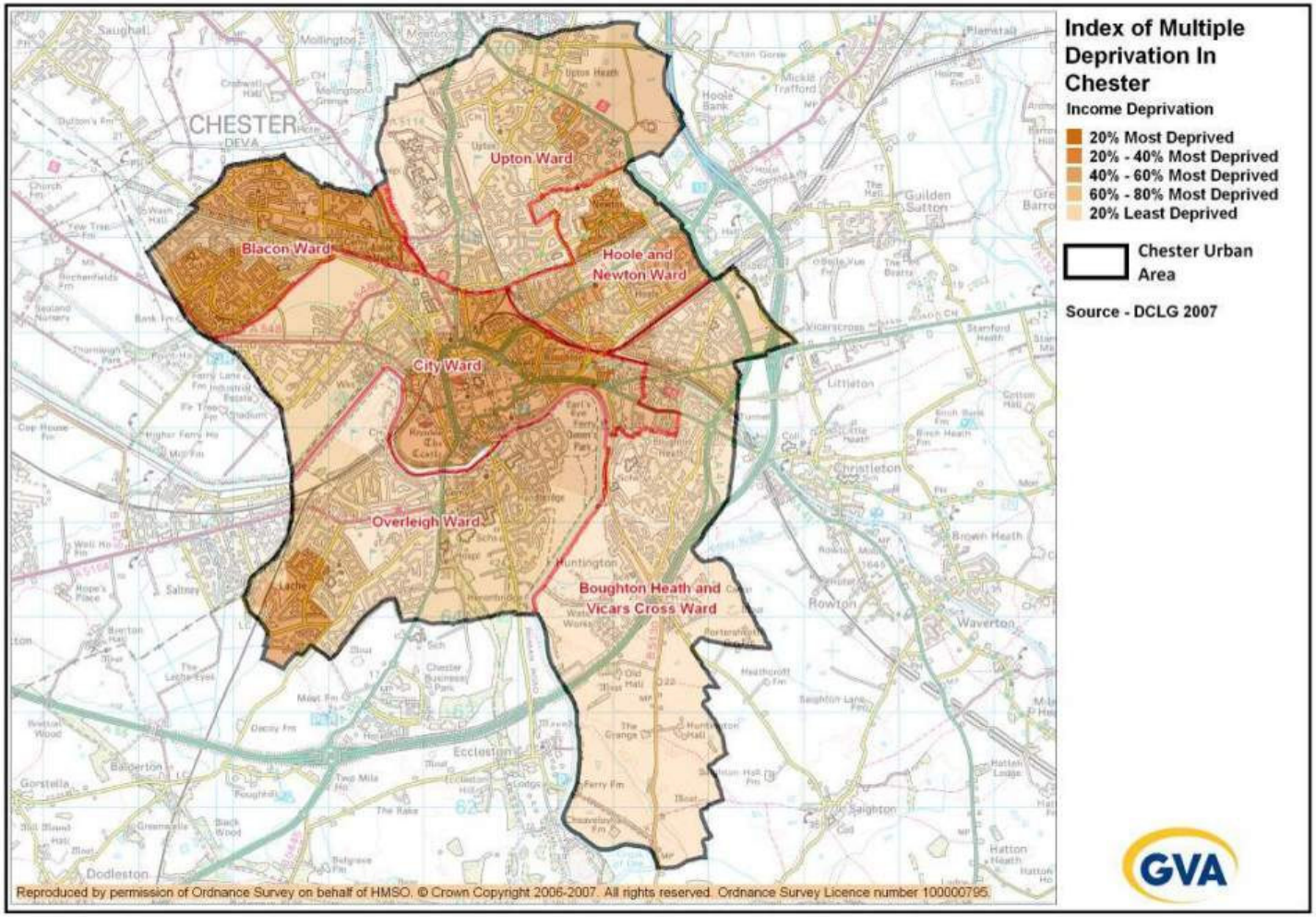
Source: CACI, 2010

7.37 The analysis demonstrates clustering of high income households in the Overleigh ward alongside low income households within the Lache neighbourhood. The City ward also demonstrates clustering of low incomes below £25,000, as does the Blacon ward.

7.38 Higher income households are represented in the Boughton and Vicars Cross ward and the Upton ward.

7.39 Analysis of the Income Deprivation indicator of the IMD 2007 within the Chester urban area – as displayed in the following plan – reinforces this analysis. Areas of the Blacon ward, the Lache neighbourhood and the City ward are within the 20% - 40% most income deprived neighbourhoods (LSOA's) nationally. This shows a strong correlation with those locations experiencing high unemployment deprivation and worklessness.

Figure 7.14: IMD (2007) – Income Deprivation in Chester

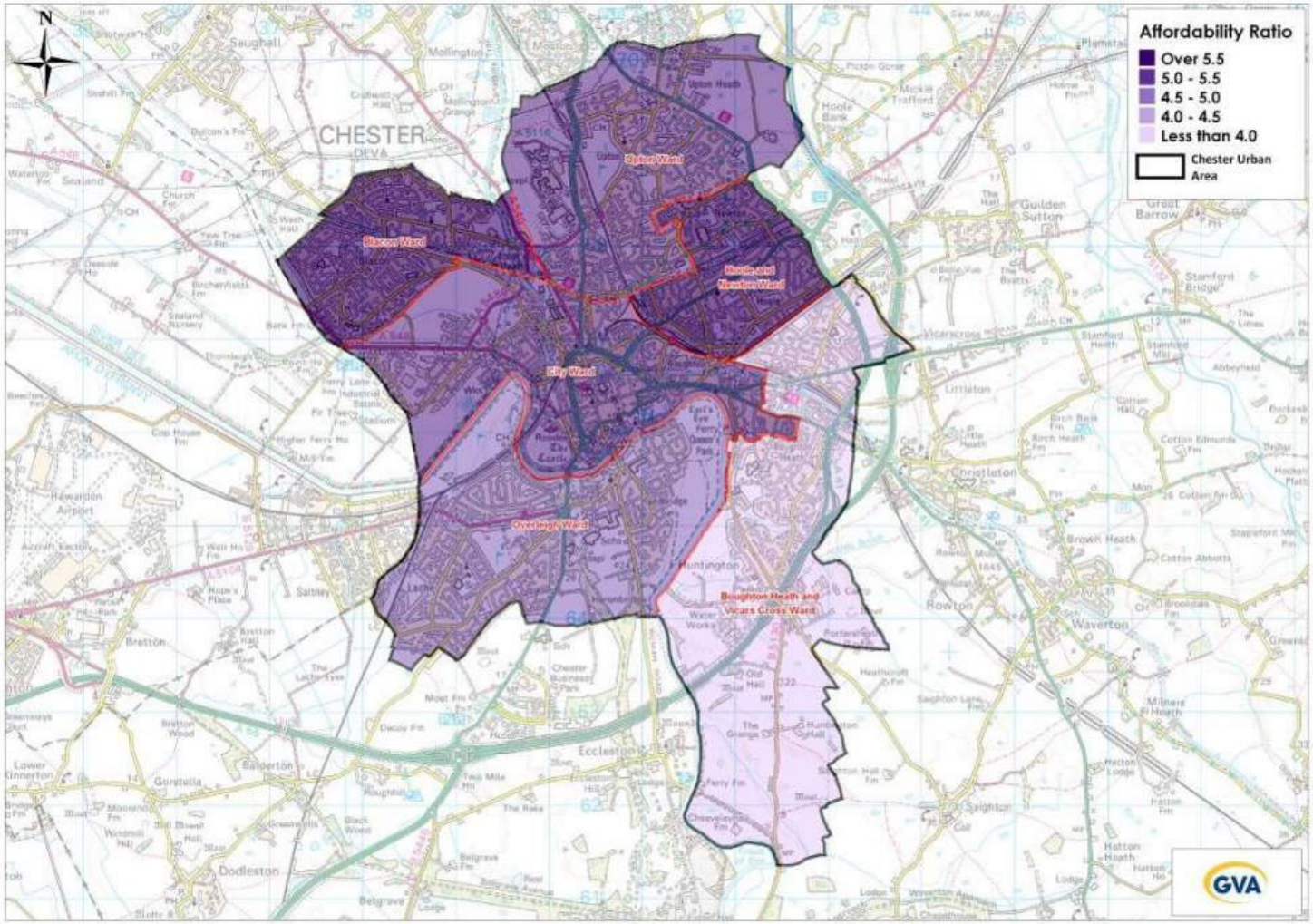


Source: IMD

7.40 The CACI Median Quartile dataset has been analysed against average house prices (presented in Section x) to arrive at locally based affordability ratios (house price / income). Affordability ratios present a basic tool for assessing the relative accessibility of owner-occupier housing to households.

7.41 This is displayed in the following plan, which illustrates that affordability is most challenging for households residing within the Blacon ward and Hoole and Newton ward, where house prices on average exceed 5x median household income. This is an issue discussed further in Section 7 – Neighbourhoods, Planning and Communities.

Figure 7.15: Affordability Ratios – Chester Urban Area (2010)



Source: CACI, 2010, Hometrack, 2010, GVA, 2010

Commercial Market

Cheshire West & Chester

7.42 The main economic centre for Cheshire West and Chester is Chester itself, with the urban locations of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford also key locations of commercial activity.

7.43 Chester itself is considered a desirable investment location, although this has been somewhat hampered by a number of stalled development projects. Ellesmere Port is a key growth area for the borough, and although it is currently considered to be predominately a location of industrial activity, in recent years this has begun to diversify into a broader spectrum of office and retail development. The rural area is inevitably linked to these key commercial areas through travel-to-work patterns and spin-off businesses. However it also retains a significant degree of independence and differentiation, in commercial terms, to the urban areas.

Chester City – Market Overview

7.44 The following sub-sections present an overview of the commercial market in Chester, drawing on the most recent information contained within the Shaping the Future of Chester - Briefing Document (November 2010) and engagement with Cheshire West and Chester Council's Economic Development officers.

7.45 In overall terms, it is perceived that Chester has allowed its economic position at the regional scale to slip behind its competitors, with limited inward investment into the City, as result of the lack of high quality retail and office accommodation in the City centre, as well as the limited availability of car parking.

7.46 There is also concern that Chester is currently marketed to businesses as it is to tourist; with heritage, lifestyle and its proximity to the rural areas played as its strengths. This is seen as understating Chester's potential business strengths, which lie in its role as a legal, financial services, judiciary, health and public services hub.

7.47 This is coupled with the ageing of the accommodation at Chester Business Park and other out-of-town locations, which are limited in their appeal to a wide breath of potential occupiers. It is therefore anticipated that there is existing latent demand for high quality office and retail space, with the Northgate Retail scheme and Chester Central Business District projects seen as vital to capitalise on this potential.

Retail

7.48 There are signs of strength within the City Centre in certain sectors with retailers taking advantage of any vacant premises which become available on the High Street. Examples include Currys on Eastgate Street and Cotswold on Foregate Street. There has also been an increase in café operators such as Café Rouge, Carluccios and Pret a Manger locating in prime locations. Prime pitch appears to be generally buoyant but with slightly lower zone A rents and longer rent free periods. Within the Councils portfolio, secondary retail also appears buoyant with a number of enquiries for properties as they become vacant. It appears that there is a lack of supply of good sized, regular retail units, which may be limiting retailer demand. The retail sector within the City centre is discussed further in Section 9 (Creating a Competitive City - Retail).

Offices

7.49 There appears to be a two tier supply of offices in the City Centre and Business Park. There is a lack of grade A stock currently available, a position confirmed by local agents who generally report a significant over supply of lower quality office space in the City centre. As an example, 25,000 square foot of new office space remains vacant at Delamere Street to the rear of the new Travelodge Hotel. Further, parking is a real concern and resulting in many tenants relocating to out of town space. Smaller units are proving easier to let.

7.50 Cheshire Oaks Business Park is also increasing being actively marketed as a commercial business cluster, which is attractive to occupiers given the quality of the building stock, parking availability and its excellent linkages to the motorway network. Ellesmere Port is therefore currently absorbing demand, which would otherwise see investment targeted towards Chester.

7.51 However, overall the market is providing an opportunity for tenants to trade off between landlords with the benefit of a strong negotiating position. Asking rents for available vacant office space have reduced over the last couple of years to any where between £8 -£15 dependent on individual premises. This is due to the need to let the premises to avoid Empty Rates payments and lease lengths have also reduced.

Industrial

7.52 Demand is steady for good quality industrial units at rents approx. £5 -£5.50 per square foot with longer rent free periods of approx. 3-12 months depending on individual circumstances and length of lease taken. Older units appear to be being refurbished/redeveloped and then re let.

Employment Sites & Land

7.53 Chester contains a number of the sub-region's key existing employment locations – notably:

- Chester City Centre
- Chester Business Park
- Chester Zoo
- The Countess of Chester Hospital & Western Cheshire PCT
- West Cheshire Employment Park (Sealand Road)

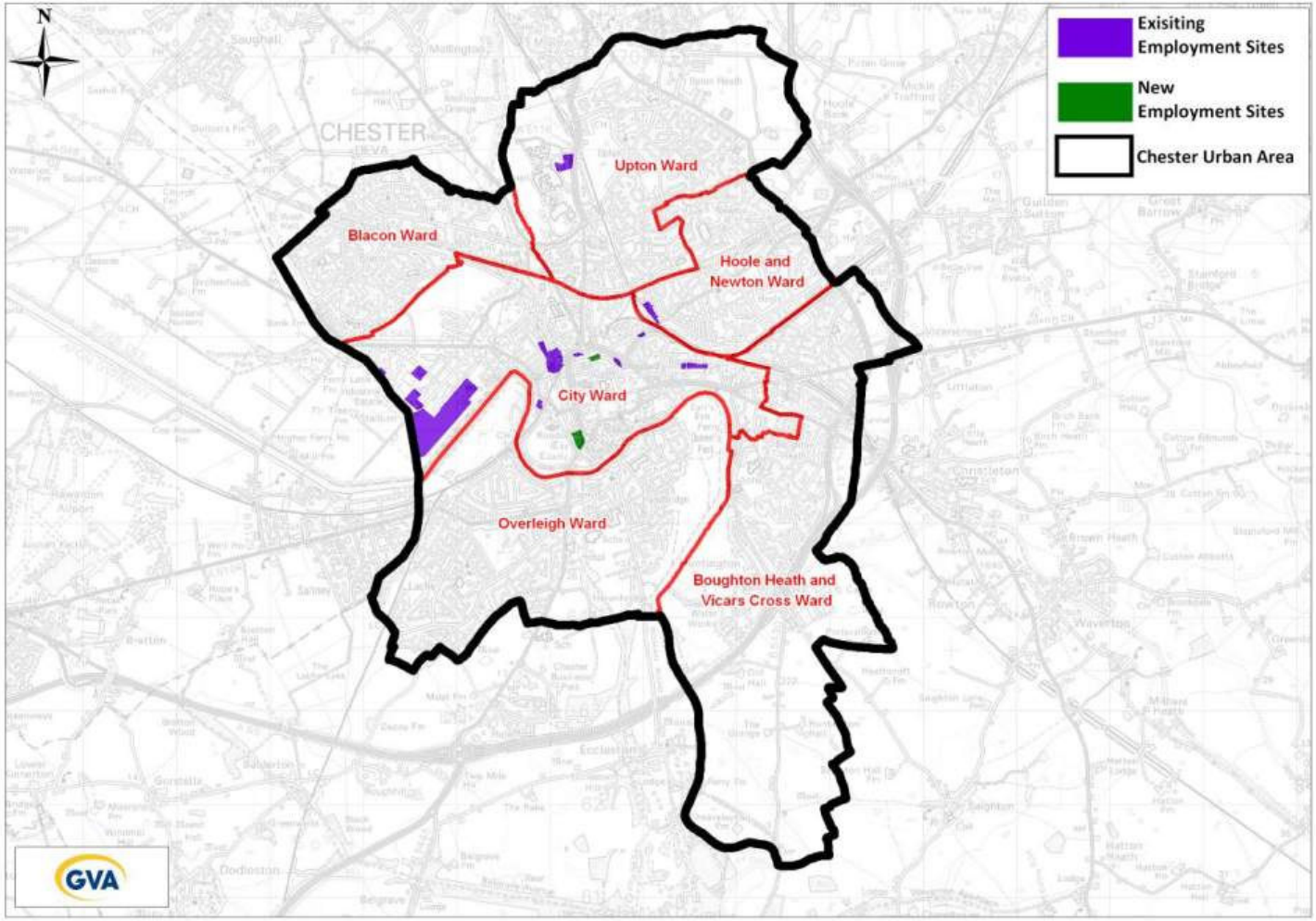
7.54 The City is, however, tightly constrained in terms of new land supply, both within the urban area (having already been developed) and outside of the urban area (being constrained by Green Belt). The 2009 Cheshire West & Chester Employment Land Review highlighted that Cheshire West & Chester has an undersupply of employment land and suggests Chester has potential sites for attracting significant levels of new business development.

7.55 The 2009 Cheshire & Warrington Sub-regional Employment Land & Sites Study identified only one priority employment site for development across the sub-region within Chester. This site is at the Countess of Chester Hospital, where it is proposed that the land could be utilised for the development of biomedical facilities related to the Hospital or University of Chester.

7.56 The 2009 Study also identified a number of additional sites with future employment potential within the Chester Urban Area. The North West's list of strategically significant sites, produced by the NWDA, also includes the land to the South and East of Chester Railway Station known as 'Chester Central'. This location forms the preferred location for Chester's new commercial Business Quarter.

7.57 These, along with the site at the Countess of Chester Hospital, are displayed on the following plan.

Figure 7.16: Employment Sites within Chester Urban Area

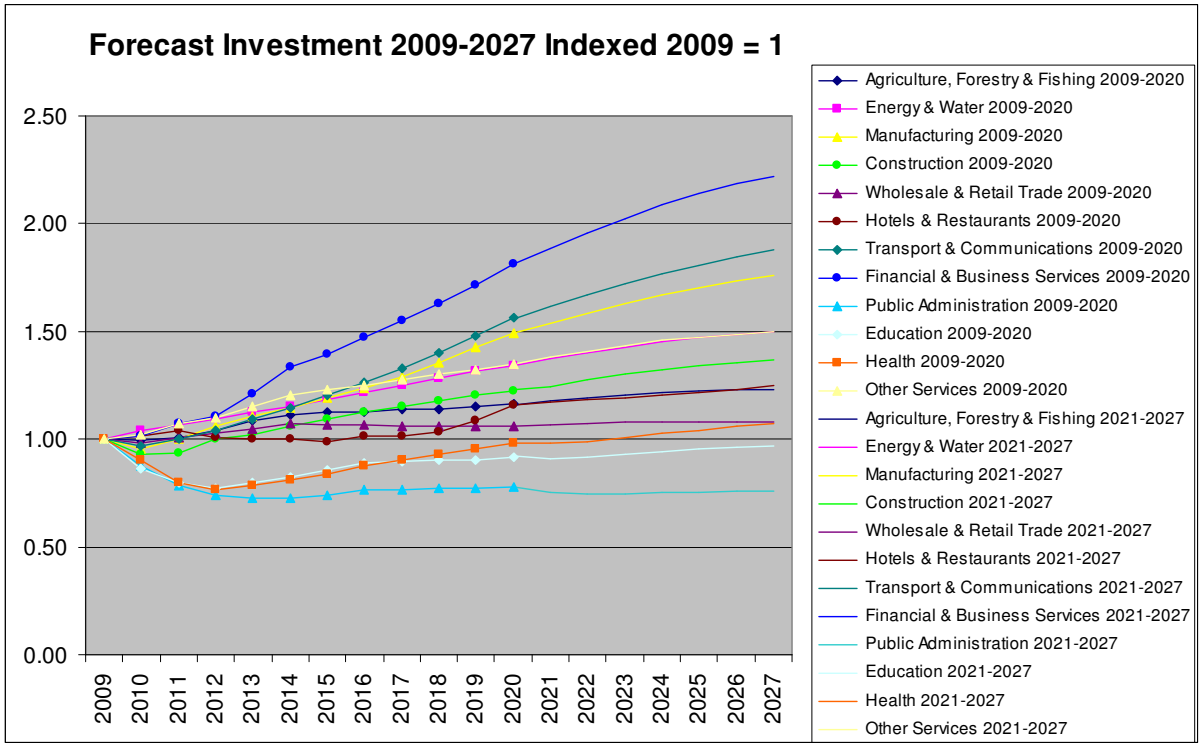


Source: CWaC Council, 2010

Forecast Investment

7.58 Utilising the CWEM it is also possible to observe the investment trends projected by sub-sector across Cheshire West & Chester. The results are shown in Figure 7.17 below.

Figure 7.17: Forecast Investment 2009-2027



Source: CWEM

7.59 The majority of sectors are expected to post increasing investment growth; Financial & Business services, Transport & Communications and Manufacturing are forecast to perform particularly well. Whilst investment is spread throughout a broad range of sub-sectors, critically, those forecast to post declining investment include public services such as public administration, education and (up until the early 2020s) health.

Bringing the Evidence Together

Growth Ambitions

7.60 Cheshire West and Chester Council is committed to its aspiration for 'unleashing the potential', which by 2030 targets the delivery of 22,000 additional jobs, an increase GVA by at least £10 billion to some £30 billion, together with increasing population by at least 100,000, across the Cheshire Warrington sub-region. Following the abolition of RDA's a

Cheshire & Warrington LEP has been approved by Government to support economic growth and investment into the sub-region, and underpin its commitment to 'unleashing the potential', with operation commencing in March 2011.

7.61 Chester is expected to play a significant role in this growth as the principal economic centre for Cheshire West & Chester, providing employment across a range of professional, financial, cultural, tourism, and retail sectors. 'Unleashing the potential' promotes high levels of growth and development based around Chester and the Deeside Hub up to 2030, developing a major transformational tourism project in Chester, and building on Chester's high quality office and retail offer.

Current Economic Context

7.62 Considering the existing economy; the majority of employees in Cheshire West and Chester are employed in distribution, hotels and restaurants; followed by the public sector and banking, finance & insurance. Trend analysis since 1998 reveals that the largest growth in employment has been in the public sector which has risen 40.79%, followed by the other services sector (28.58%) and banking, finance and insurance at 17.75% - predominantly driven by strong growth within Chester at the Business Park.

7.63 Income levels demonstrate significant variance across the Chester urban area, with clustering of high income households in the Overleigh ward alongside low income households within the Lache neighbourhood. The City ward also demonstrates clustering of low incomes below £25,000, as does the Blacon ward.

7.64 Analysis of the labour force reveals that the authority has had a lower rate of claimants than the North West region over the past 5 years. However, within the Chester urban area, there are several wards that have consistently held claimant rates above the Cheshire West and Chester authority average across the period. The trend in these wards has followed a similar pattern to that at the authority scale. Those wards in December 2010 demonstrating a particularly high claimant rate are:

- Blacon Lodge: 6.5%
- City & St Anne's: 4.5%
- Blacon Hall: 4.3%
- Boughton: 3.9%
- Lache Park: 3.9%

7.65 Several wards covering both the Blacon neighbourhood and Chester City centre have fared particularly badly since 2007, demonstrating a particularly adverse impact from the recession. These wards have experienced a high growth in claimant rate between December 2007 and December 2010:

- Blacon Lodge: +3.4%
- City & St Anne's: +2.5%

7.66 This suggests additional support may be required for the residents of these wards to gain employment, or to re-skill and re-train.

Bringing the Evidence Together

7.67 Considering the City's commercial offer and desirability as an investor destination, it is perceived that Chester has allowed its economic position at the regional scale to slip behind its competitors, with limited inward investment into the City, as result of the lack of high quality retail and office accommodation in the City centre, as well as the limited availability of car parking.

7.68 The LEA does highlight the economic strengths and potential for growth in Chester – with clustering of businesses in financial and professional services. However, it also points to the growth of public sector employment in recent years, a trend not expected to continue given the Government's public sector spending cuts.

7.69 There is also concern that Chester is currently marketed to businesses as it is to tourist; with heritage, lifestyle and its proximity to the rural areas played as its strengths. This is seen as understating Chester's potential business strengths, which lie in its role as a legal, financial services, judiciary, health and public services hub.

7.70 This is coupled with the ageing of the accommodation at Chester Business Park and other out-of-town locations, which are limited in their appeal to a wide breath of potential occupiers.

7.71 Forecasting forwards, the CWEM (2010) 'policy off' trajectory for Cheshire West and Chester indicates that the 'Unleashing the potential' aspirations will be a challenge to deliver – with total employment expected to increase by only 0.5% (c. 850 jobs) between 2009 and 2027. However, Chester is well placed to benefit from this growth, with strongest additional employment and GVA growth forecast within Pharmaceuticals, Banking and Finance and Other Business Services sectors, all of which have clusters in Chester, as well as a range of manufacturing sectors, within Cheshire West & Chester.

7.72 It will be important for Chester's 'policy on' position to actively lever inward investment into the City to deliver projects and programmes with strong employment creation outputs to realise growth closer to that targeted within 'Unleashing the potential'. It is anticipated that there is existing latent demand for high quality office and retail space, with the Northgate Retail scheme and Chester Central Business District projects seen as vital to capitalise on this potential. Concurrently, this is also likely to result in pressures for housing delivery to meet demand.

8. Neighbourhoods, Planning & Housing

8.1 This analysis has been developed through consideration of available data, review of the Council's existing evidence base, and through engagement with officers:

Planning Policy & Strategy Context

National

8.2 The national planning policies for housing are set out in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (June 2010) (PPS3). This document establishes the framework for regional and local policy and is one of a number of Planning Policy Statements produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

8.3 PPS3 places emphasis on good design, efficient use of land and helping to deliver sustainable communities. Nationally there has been increasing emphasis placed on the need to have a detailed understanding of housing markets in order for local authorities to plan effectively and this is reflected in PPS3. It requires Local Planning Authorities to implement a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to housing.

8.4 However, the Coalition Government is introducing reforms that will significantly alter the planning system. This will be an important consideration for the One City Plan. The Localism Bill was published on 13th December 2010. The key aim of the bill is to remove top-down central and regional controls over planning decisions, and provide for a planning system that empowers local communities and gives them an ability to share in local development-led growth. Further details of the impact of the Localism Bill are included under the 'Local' sub-section.

Regional Planning

8.5 The Localism Bill seeks to give a legal foundation to the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). The Bill seeks to impose a duty on local planning authorities to co-operate and provide constructive, active and ongoing engagement in decisions relating to sustainable development or strategic infrastructure.

8.6 It was proposed that regional planning would be abolished entirely, although the High Court Challenge to this (10th November 2010) makes the future approach to this uncertain

[15] At present, therefore, RSS remains a key document for the Council in developing its Core Strategy.

IPC and Infrastructure Planning

8.7 The Localism Bill abolishes the Infrastructure Planning Commission and transfers its functions to the Secretary of State. Parliament will approve National Policy Statements.

Neighbourhood Plans and Incentivised Planning

8.8 The Green Paper 'Open Source Planning' (February 2010) outlined transitional arrangements with regard to housing figures in Local Development Frameworks once Regional Spatial Strategies have been revoked. It set out some of the principles that are now being pursued by the Coalition Government.

8.9 Following this, the Coalition Government published the White Paper Growth 'Local Growth: realising every place's potential' (October 2010). The paper sets out further details on reform of the planning system, including new Right-to-Build powers (enabling small scale development without the need for a planning application) and streamlined national policy and guidance. A New Homes Bonus to incentivise Local Authorities to encourage housing development (from 2011-12) is anticipated to match-fund additional council tax for each new home and property bought back into use, for each of the six years after a home is built.

8.10 The 'Open Source Planning' concept refers to a planning system where there is a national framework of planning priorities and policies, within which local communities can produce their own distinctive local policies within Neighbourhood Plans.

8.11 The local planning system is therefore radically changing, with neighbourhood planning providing communities with ownership of local development decisions. Parishes or designated forums will be empowered to deem consent for certain categories of development within a defined area under a neighbourhood development order. In addition, neighbourhood development plans will set out policies in relation to development and use of land in a particular neighbourhood specified in the plan. The

[15] On November 10th 2010 The High Court ruled that communities secretary Eric Pickles acted unlawfully in unilaterally revoking the system of regional strategies in England. CALA Homes challenged the revocation, and the resulting judgment supports the challenge and sets out that the secretary of state acted outside his statutory powers in circumventing the need for parliamentary scrutiny of such a fundamental change to the planning regime. In addition, the environmental effects of removing regional strategies have to be considered, in line with European law.

Localism Bill seeks to ensure that communities can vote to have a neighbourhood development plan, and give consent via referenda.

8.12 The proposed incentives towards development, that were anticipated to be introduced by the Bill, include the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the New Homes Bonus and broader incentives for communities to approve development are omitted from the Bill.

8.13 The Local Authority will assist in neighbourhoods developing their own plans. In addition to this, housing targets will not longer be top-down from central or regional government, but be derived locally in accordance with best practice guidance. The paper also supports the concept of Local Housing Trusts, where local communities decide what housing is needed within their area and promote, develop and retain homes for the local community. In addition, the paper sets out that planning policy will also adopt a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

8.14 The Bill does seek to bring forward changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) so as to ensure that funds are allocated for infrastructure to support the development of the area to which the development relates.

8.15 If the Bill proceeds through Parliament, Royal Assent is expected towards the second half of 2011.

8.16 The DCLG Business Plan (2011-2015), published in November 2010, sets out the role that the Department will play in the new agenda for decentralisation and localism. It sets out the structural reform priorities as follows:

- Decentralise power as far as possible-decentralise power and give greater freedom and flexibility to local government so that they can lead their communities.
- Reinvigorate accountability, democracy and participation-Devolving power closer to neighbourhoods, increasing citizen participation and promoting community ownership.
- Increase transparency by letting people see how their money is spent-publishing finance and performance data.
- Meet people's housing aspirations-providing Local Authorities with strong and transparent incentives to facilitate housing growth, as well as making the provision of social housing more flexible.
- Put communities in charge of planning-give local people and communities far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which they live by radically reforming the planning system.

Local

The Local Development Framework

8.17 Cheshire West and Chester's Core Strategy is the key spatial planning document within the Local Development Framework and will form the basis of planning and investment decisions for the next 15 years.

8.18 In light of recent political announcements, Cheshire West and Chester Council is now responding to the Government White Paper on local growth in developing its planning framework. Although the role of the Core Strategy is now being revised to reflect the shift towards localism in planning policy development, its role is to set out the spatial vision for the area over the whole plan period (up to 2026), together with objectives and policies designed to achieve the vision. It will be made up of a number of key parts, including the vision and objectives for the area, together with a spatial strategy, policies and a framework to monitor the effectiveness of the plan. The Core Strategy will provide the framework for the production of other, more detailed, Local Development Framework documents that will cover specific areas and topics.

8.19 The first Local Development Framework document to be produced was the Cheshire West and Chester Local Development Scheme (LDS) which was adopted on 2 March 2009. The LDS is a public statement setting out Cheshire West and Chester's programme for the production of its Local Development Documents, which include the Statement of Community Involvement, Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

8.20 The Core Strategy Issues and Options paper, following consultation, was published in November 2009, with the Preferred Options Consultation Draft due for publication in spring 2011.

8.21 The Council's priority is to consult on the Core Strategy Preferred Options document in autumn 2011. This will test the vision and options for growth, with the authority split into its 5 local sub-areas for focus–of which Chester is one. This will engage local communities in the process to ensure that the process is not driven in a 'top down' approach, and will subsequently enable a clearer framework to be put in place for the development of Neighbourhood Plans, which are in line with the Core Strategy when adopted.

8.22 The options for housing development follow high, medium and low growth projections, which reflect respectively:

- The 2008 CLG household growth projections (low)
- Current RSS Requirements (medium)

- The aspirations set out in 'Unleashing the Potential' (high)

8.23 The 'low' option in line with household growth projections has been shown through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to be achievable on sites within existing settlements.

8.24 However, for the household growth level of housing required through RSS (medium) and 'Unleashing the Potential' (high) sites outside settlement policy boundaries would be required on land that is currently designated as open countryside and Green Belt.

Neighbourhood Planning

8.25 The Council propose to undertake a 'Vanguard' Neighbourhood Plan within the authority, in Tattenhall, over the next 12-18 months. A submission has been prepared to Government recommending its inclusion in the national vanguard programme. The Neighbourhood Plan will act as a test-bed for rolling the process out across the authority with a specialist cross-departmental team assembled within the Council to support the local Parish Council and wider community in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan for formal inspection at an Examination in Public (EIP). If successfully adopted the Neighbourhood Plan will set the level and location of site allocation for housing development at the local level, yet cannot specify a lower level of housing development than set out within the Core Strategy upon adoption.

Emerging Research

8.26 Emerging research will continue to inform the understanding of the Cheshire West and Chester area, as well as inform approaches to future housing delivery and development:

- Considering the enabling future housing provision, the draft Arc 4 RSL Partnering Report (July 2010) report defines the affordable and intermediate housing products required and the priority target groups requiring accommodation, as well as identifying current partner RSLs and alternative options to strengthen current partnerships. The report also sets out the next steps delivery plan for the Authority in securing capacity and capability from Registered Providers, recommending that the Authority appoints a Lead Registered Provider in each of the four geographical priority areas of Chester, Weaver Valley, Ellesmere Port and Rural areas. It also recommends appointing other Registered Providers to ensure that capacity, expertise and commitment is in place to deliver the Authority's housing and regeneration agenda within each geographical priority area.

- The Arc4 Report, Alternative Models for Increasing the Delivery of Affordable Housing, identifies new funding sources and delivery models to respond to the current economy. Three main approaches are identified to facilitate the addition of extra money in to the system and to reduce costs. These approaches include approaches

making use of land assets in joint ventures and asset-backed vehicles, approaches that make use of new or particular products, investments and other funding and revenue supported products to assist purchase.

8.27 Going forward, the Council has recently commissioned the following studies:

- A Private Rented Sector Study to identify the current role performed by it, and its relationship to the social rented sector in meeting housing need in the local housing market. This document will assist the formulation of housing policy.
- A Movers Survey to gain a better understanding of the current housing market and to plan for future housing needs. This project forms part of a comprehensive research programme, which will provide the Council with a robust housing evidence base to inform future strategy and policy. The survey is to cover both the private and social housing sectors (including affordable and 'Extra Care' housing) and should investigate accessibility/ affordability, suitability, awareness and future needs.

Current Housing Offer – Housing Stock

Housing Profile - Tenure

8.28 The 2001 Census represents the most up-to-date, definitive, data source for analysing the detailed tenure and type make-up of housing stock at a unitary ward level across the One City Plan study area. For consideration at the Cheshire West and Chester authority scale, the SHMA (2009) is utilised.

Figure 8.1: Breakdown of stock by dwelling tenure – unitary ward

Location	All Households	Owner occupied : owns outright	Owner occupied: mortgage or loan	Owner occupied: Shared ownership	Rented from: Council	Rented from: HA / RSL	Rented from: Private landlord or letting agency	Rented from: Other
Chester Urban Area	33,568	30.3%	38.4%	0.5%	7.7%	10.2%	9.7%	3.2%
Blacon	5,573	19.6%	33.5%	0.6%	18.4%	21.2%	3.2%	3.6%
Boughton & Vicars Cross	4,924	39.4%	46.5%	0.4%	2.2%	4.6%	5.2%	1.8%
City	5,818	22.2%	29.5%	0.6%	6.5%	13.0%	23.8%	4.5%
Hoole & Newton	6,569	31.9%	41.4%	0.4%	6.2%	8.0%	9.5%	2.7%
Overleigh	6,445	33.9%	40.0%	0.5%	7.3%	7.7%	7.5%	3.2%
Upton	4,239	37.2%	40.8%	0.4%	4.7%	6.0%	7.9%	2.9%
Cheshire West & Chester	100%	78.6%			14.3%		7.1%	

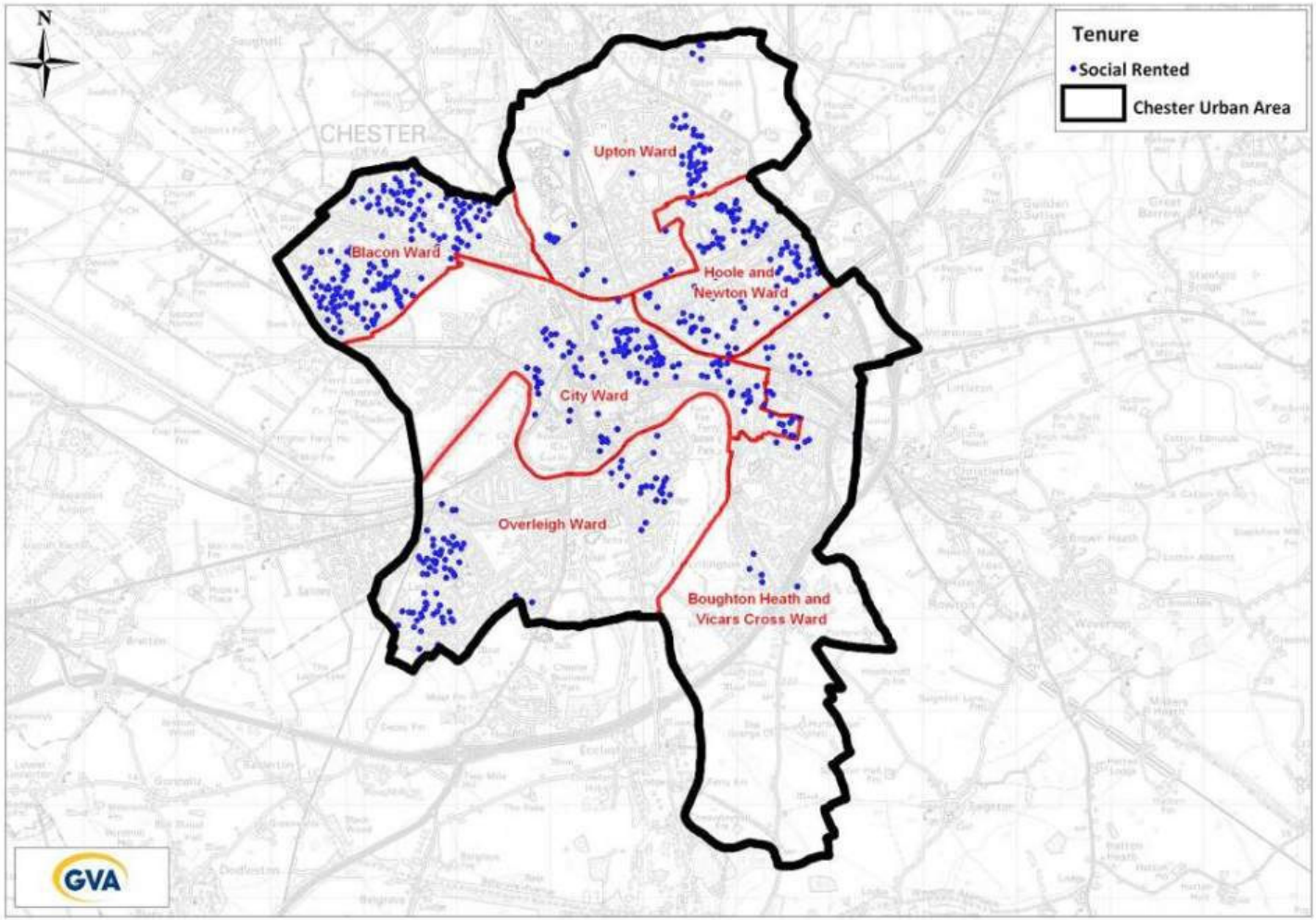
Source: ONS, 2001 Census; CWaC SHMA, 2009

8.29 The data demonstrates:

- Chester urban area has a lower proportion of owner-occupation than across the authority as a whole, although this gap may have narrowed since 2001.
- The Blacon ward contains a very high incidence of households within the social sector representing 39.6% of all households. The City ward is also substantially in excess of the authority wide average for social tenure households.
- Owner occupation is most concentrated within the Boughton & Vicar's Cross ward and Upton ward, suggesting a more settled, long-term community in these locations.
- Private renting is most prolific in the City ward, with renting (overall) representing almost 30% of all households. Moreover, this is likely to have increased since 2001 with the significant supply of apartment dwellings delivered up to 2008.

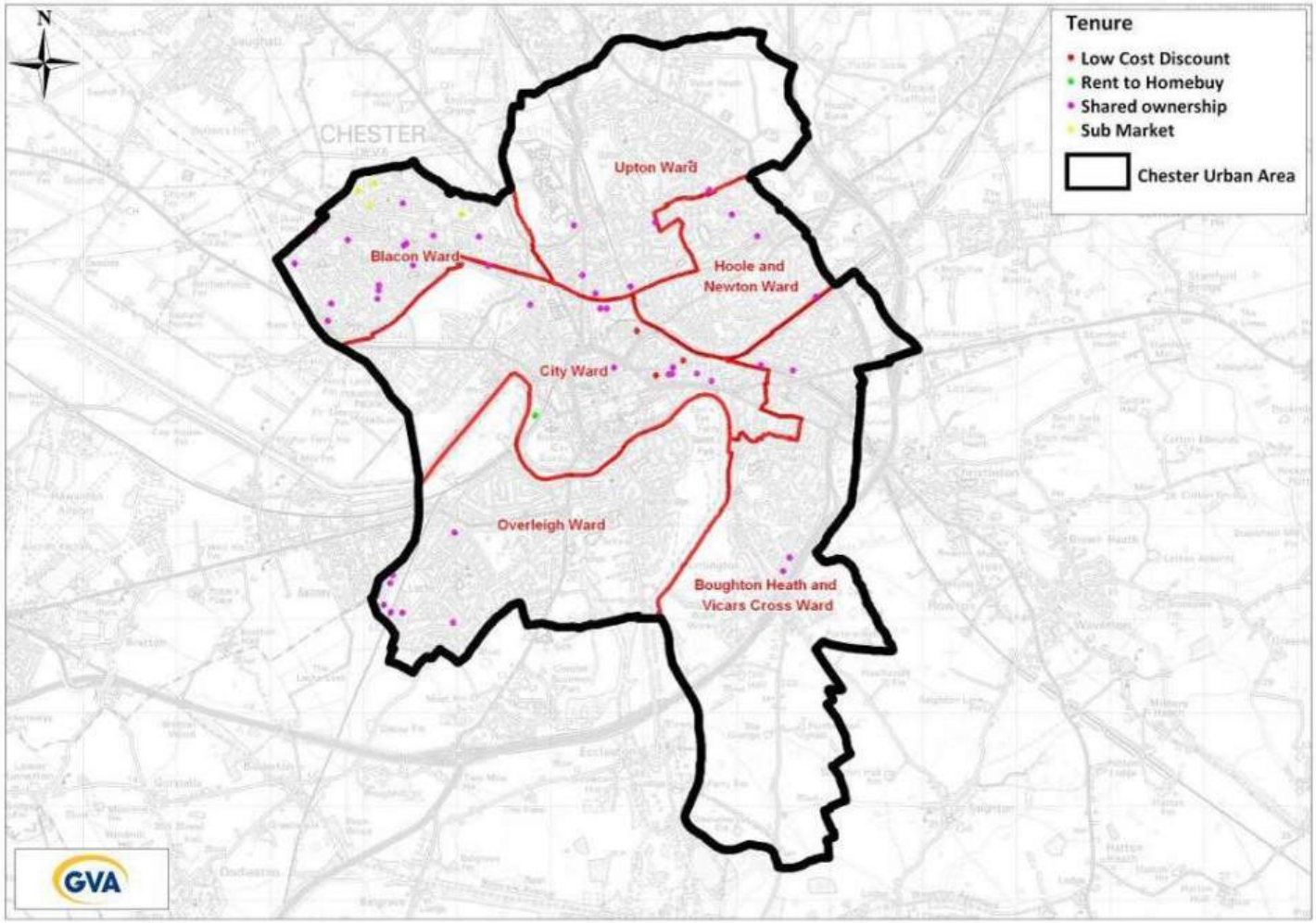
8.30 Data has also been provided by the Council that allows the spatial point mapping of social rented and intermediate housing in 2010, although this does not allow for an updated analysis of private rented or owner-occupied dwelling stock.

Figure 8.2: Spatial Distribution of Social Rented Housing



Source: CWaC Council, 2010

Figure 8.3: Spatial Distribution of Intermediate Tenure Housing



Source: CWaC Council, 2010

Housing Profile - Type

8.31 The following figure presents analysis of the dwelling type make-up of housing stock at a unitary ward level across the One City Plan study area. This is compared to the breakdown at the Cheshire West and Chester authority scale established through the Cheshire West and Chester Housing Land Monitor Report (2009) and Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2009).

Figure 8.4: Breakdown of stock by dwelling type – unitary ward

Location	All Household Spaces (Total - temporary)	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Flat, Maisonette or Apartment
Chester Urban Area	35,234	18.6%	35.3%	28.4%	17.7%
Blacon	5,772	10.3%	33.4%	38.7%	17.6%
Boughton & Vicars Cross	5,080	29.4%	49.3%	12.3%	8.9%
City	6,358	6.0%	15.0%	44.7%	34.3%
Hoole & Newton	6,839	12.0%	42.5%	28.6%	16.8%
Overleigh	6,790	30.5%	34.1%	23.6%	11.9%
Upton	4,395	27.1%	41.5%	17.3%	14.1%

Location	All Household Spaces (Total - temporary)	House			Bungalow	Flat, Maisonette or Apartment
		Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced		
Cheshire West & Chester	141,078	40,279	47,156	26,554	12,559	14530
	as %	28.6%	33.4%	18.8%	8.9%	10.3%

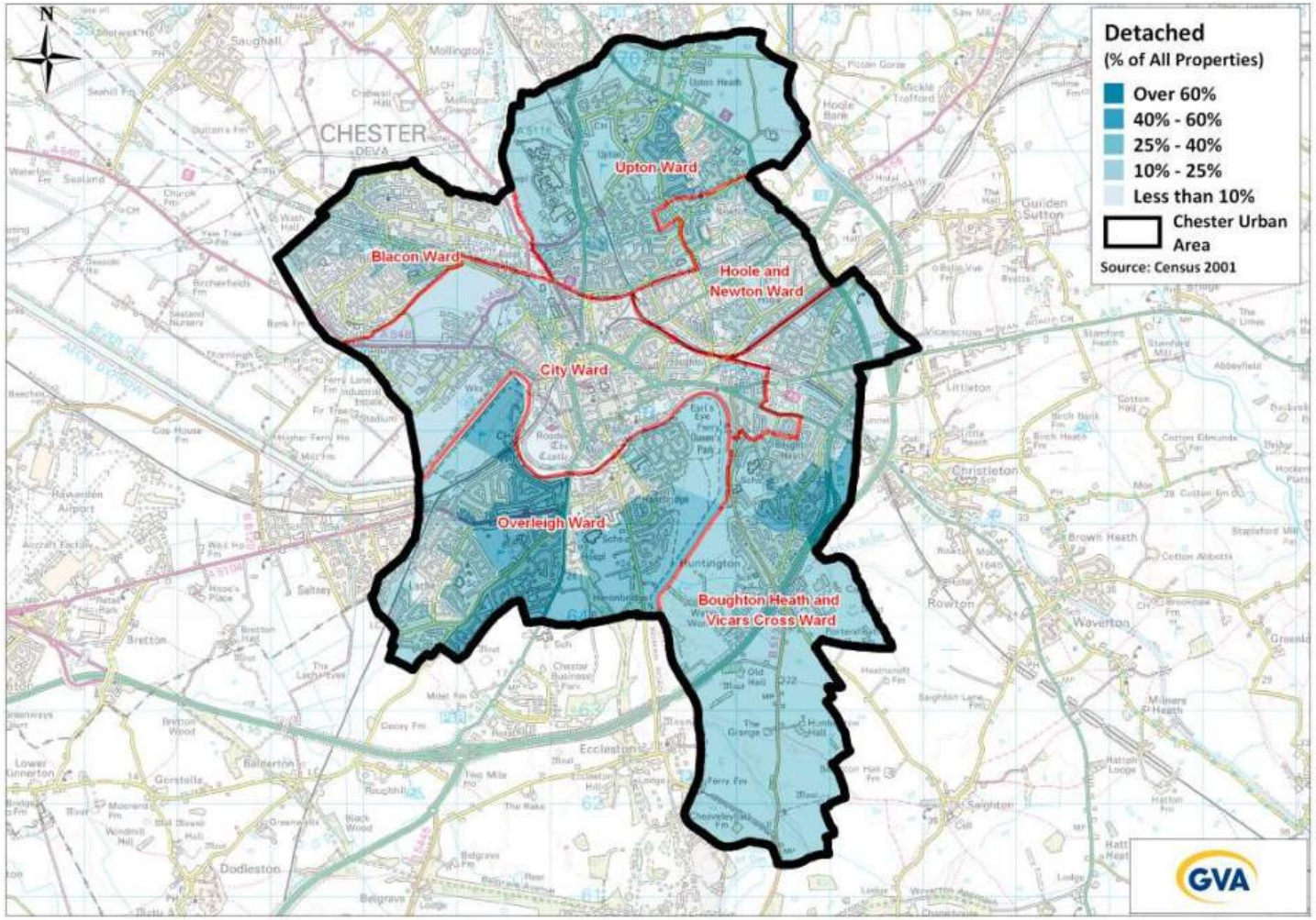
Source: ONS, 2001 Census; Housing Land Monitor Report, 2009; SHMA, 2009

8.32 The analysis demonstrates:

- Chester urban area's housing offer contains a high prevalence of semi-detached, terraced and flatted stock, which is to be expected given the urban nature of Chester. The most heavily skewed stock typology is located in the City ward, which includes almost 45% terraced housing, and 34% flatted accommodation, with a very limited supply of detached and semi-detached dwellings.

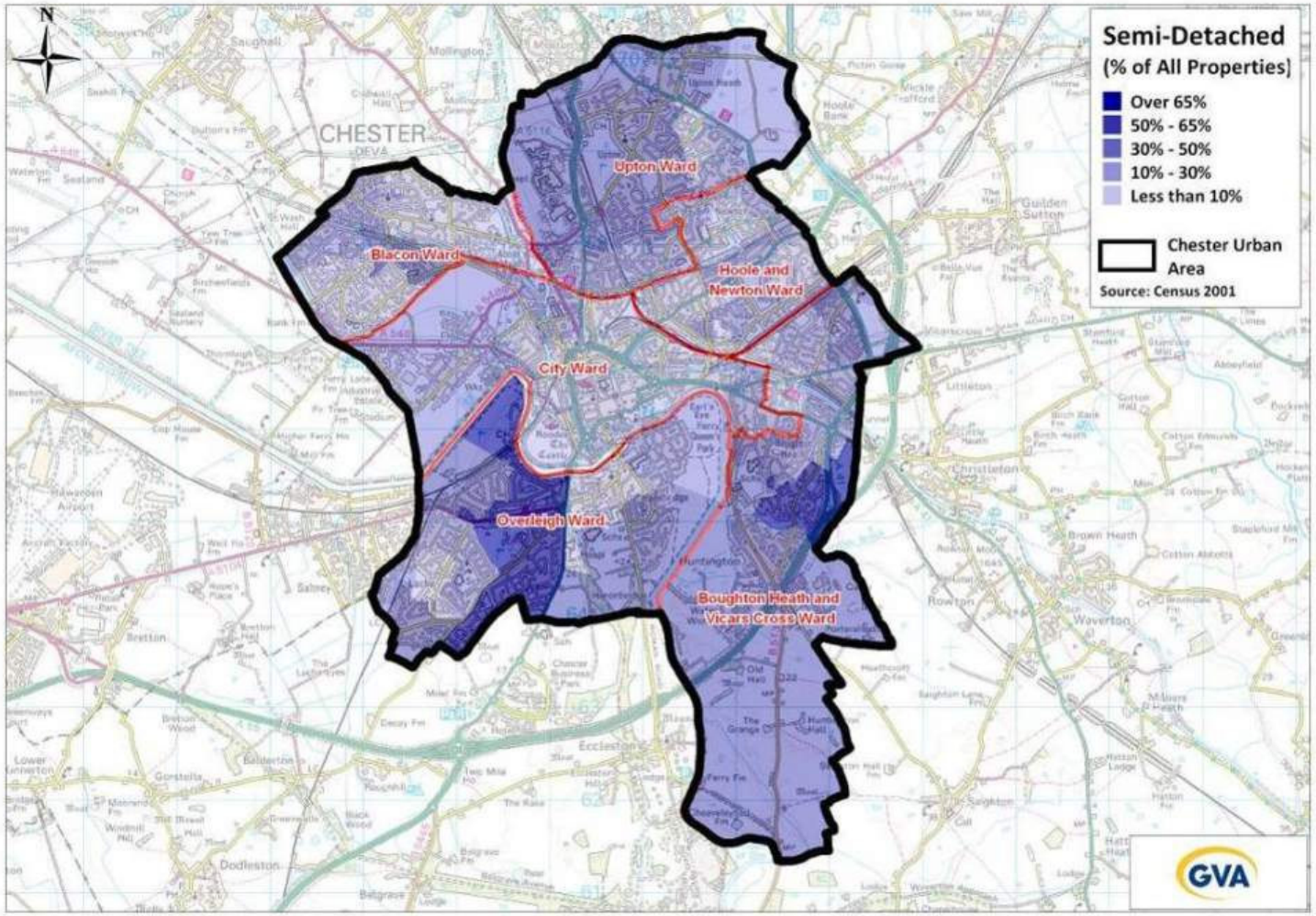
- In contrast the Overleigh ward, including the Lache and Handbridge neighbourhoods, contains the highest proportions of larger detached housing (30.5%), as well as a significant element of semi detached stock (34.1%).

Figure 8.5: Spatial Distribution of Detached Housing



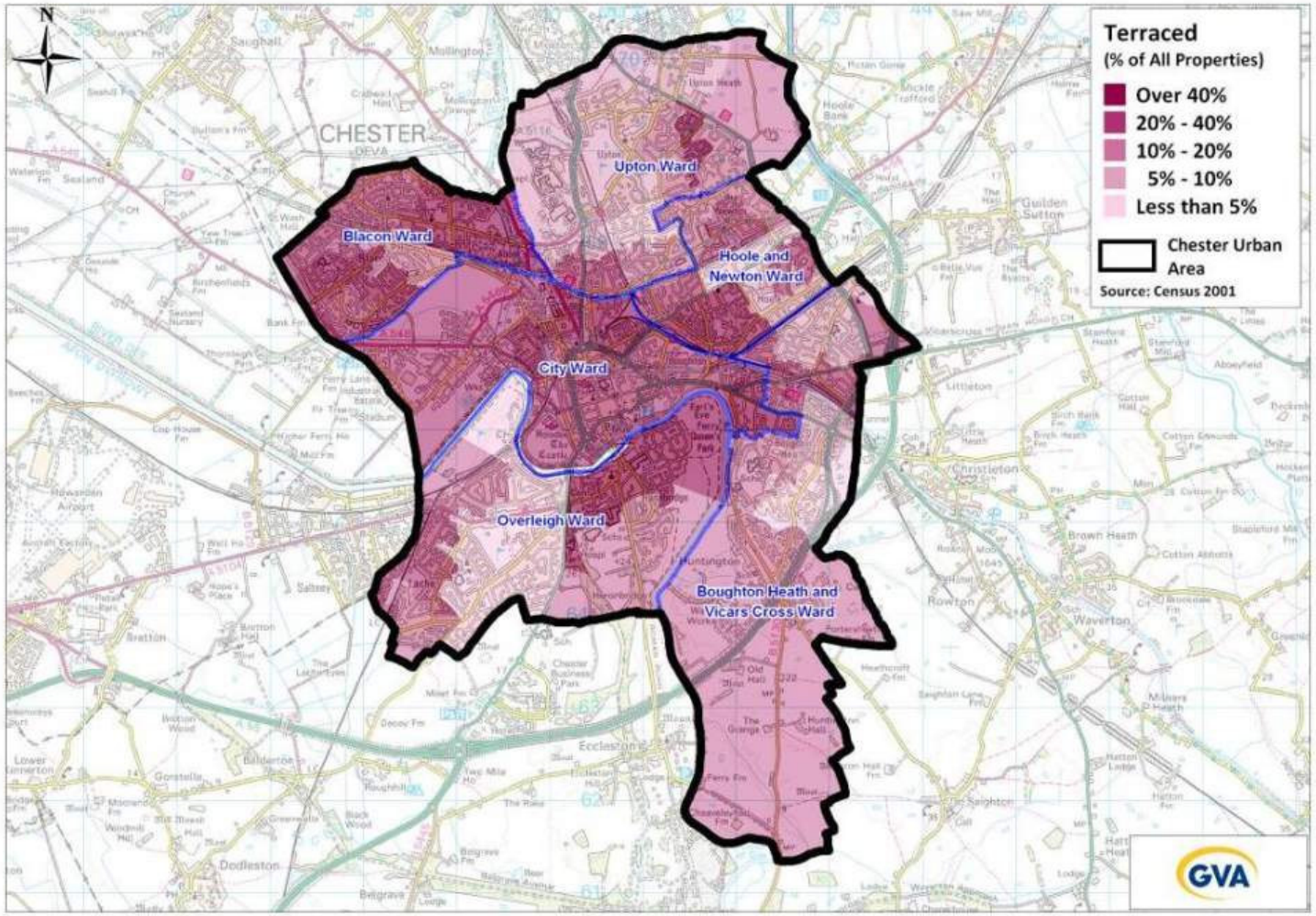
Source: ONS, 2001 Census

Figure 8.6: Spatial Distribution of Semi-detached Housing



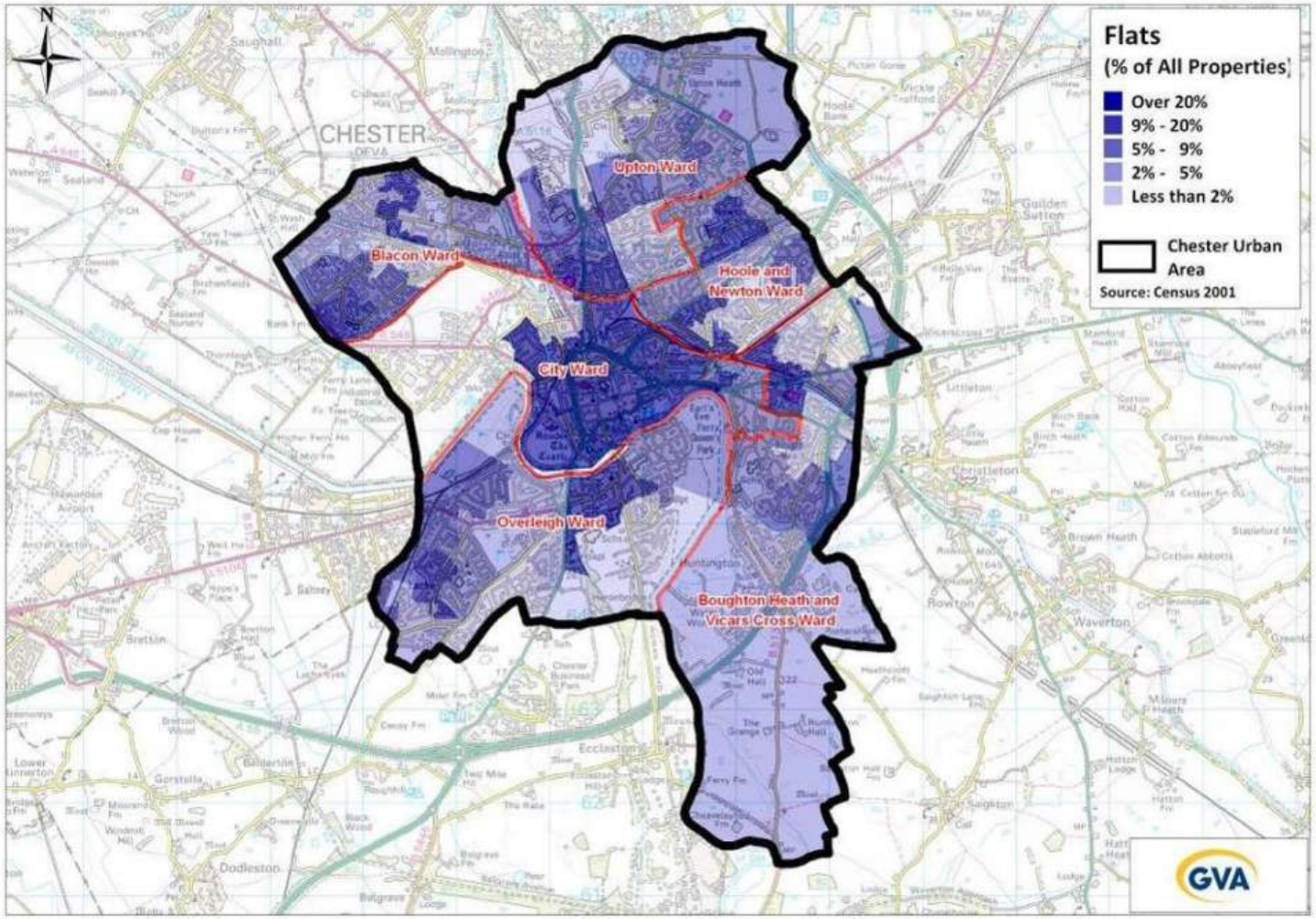
Source: ONS, 2001 Census

Figure 8.7: Spatial Distribution of Terraced Housing



Source: ONS, 2001 Census

Figure 8.8: Spatial Distribution of Flats & Apartments



Source: ONS, 2001 Census

Stock Decency

8.33 The Council recently completed a private sector stock condition survey (PSSCS) in 2010[16]. The PSSCS provides an indication of the quality of the housing stock and in particular the prevalence of unfit stock as well as the reasons for this classification and represents a major review of private sector housing conditions within the Cheshire West and Chester unitary authority area.

8.34 Data for the study has been drawn from a new house condition survey programme in the former Chester City Council area and from previous private sector house condition surveys conducted in Ellesmere Port, Neston and Vale Royal.

8.35 In summary, with the exception of disrepair, private housing conditions locally are better than the national average. However 21.3% of homes within Cheshire West and Chester do fail the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard and are considered non-Decent. The following tables presents the compliance levels of private sector stock within Chester City's urban wards.

Figure 8.9: Decent Homes Compliance – Wards

Chester Urban Area - Decent Homes Compliance		
Unitary Wards	**Compliant**	**Non-Compliant**
Blacon	77.5%	22.5%
Boughton Heath & Vicar's Cross	75.8%	24.2%
City	78.0%	22.0%
Hoole & Newton	85.6%	14.4%
Overleigh	83.0%	17.0%
Cheshire West & Chester Average	78.7%	21.3%

Source: PSSCS, 2010

[16] Cheshire West & Chester Private Sector Stock Condition Survey (2010) Cheshire West & Chester Council

Figure 8.10: Vulnerable Households in Non-Decent Homes – Wards

Chester Urban Area - Vulnerable Households in Decent Homes		
Unitary Wards	**Compliant**	**Non-Compliant**
Blacon	74.8%	25.2%
Boughton Heath & Vicar's Cross	84.3%	15.7%
City	77.1%	22.9%
Hoole & Newton	86.9%	13.1%
Overleigh	83.3%	16.7%
Cheshire West & Chester Average	76.5%	23.5%

Source: PSSCS, 2010

8.36 When considering the wards within the Chester Urban Area, the PSSCS demonstrates:

- Blacon, Boughton Heath and Vicar's Cross and City wards all have levels of non-compliance with Decent Homes above the authority average level. In contrast, the Hoole & Newton and Overleigh wards perform well – demonstrating strong levels of Decent Homes compliance.
- Blacon ward contain a high proportion of non-compliant homes containing vulnerable households. The other wards perform well against this measure, will the levels of compliance with Decent Homes exceeding the authority average.

8.37 The improvement of non-Decent homes, to meet Decent Homes standards, is anticipated to incur minimum costs of £166.867 million across Cheshire West and Chester. The survey has identified a number of key local issues within the investment framework which can guide the development of private housing strategies. These include:

- An uneven distribution of physical housing problems across the housing stock with the greatest impact on the private-rented sector and older (pre-1919) terraced housing stock.
- Energy efficiency levels are above the national average but energy problems are still impacting on fuel poverty and on dwelling performance within the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Excess Cold). The pre-1919 and private-rented housing sectors again experience the greatest impact.
- There has been significant progress in achieving Decent Homes for vulnerable households. 21% of vulnerable households still however remain in non-Decent housing with the key sectors affected being again the private rented sector and pre-1919 housing.

8.38 The overall proportion, as well as concentration, of non-compliant housing raises issues about the quality of stock, as well as the extent to which the full potential of the housing stock is being realised across Cheshire West and Chester.

8.39 This is an issue that has been more widely recognised in Cheshire West and Chester's Affordable Warmth Strategy, 2010-2013. The report recognises that economically vulnerable households are more at risk, and sets out a series of priorities to improve levels of affordable warmth.

The Active Housing Market

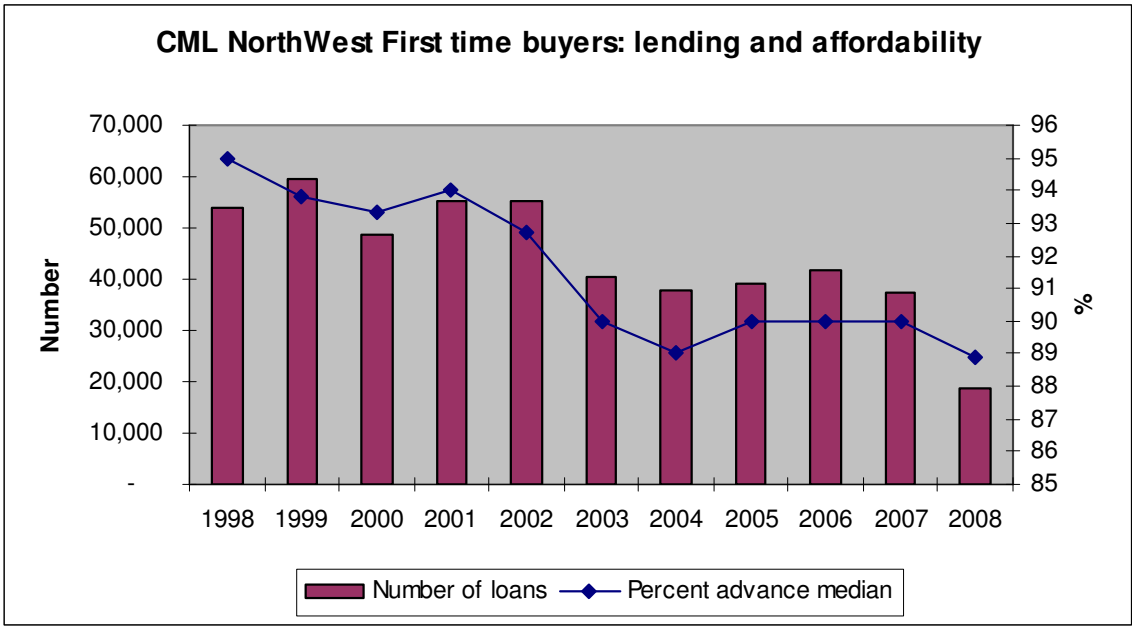
8.40 The last three years have witnessed a significant period of change and uncertainty within the housing market. Whilst prior to 2007 the UK had seen a sustained period of significant growth in house prices and transactions running back to 2000 the Credit Crunch in 2007 and the subsequent recession was linked to a turbulent period of significant house price falls and a proceeding inactive market climate.

8.41 It is yet uncertain how long this period of market stagnation will continue for. A number of recent forecasts suggest that in the North West house prices are unlikely to recover to their 2007 peak until as late as 2014[17]. One of the underlying drivers behind the lack of activity remains the banks reluctance to raise mortgage finance with ever increasing levels of deposit required by purchasers.

8.42 This is reflected in the following two figures. The first of which show the number of mortgages provided across the North West region to first time buyers and the percentage advance (remaining mortgage minus deposit). It is clear that both the number of mortgages being provided, as well as the percentage advance, have declined significantly since 2007 to a 10-year low. This has made it less affordable, and therefore discouraged or excluded, an increasing number of first time buyers from entering the housing market with a knock-on effect on sales chains across the rest of the market.

[17] House Price Forecast (August 2010) - Savills

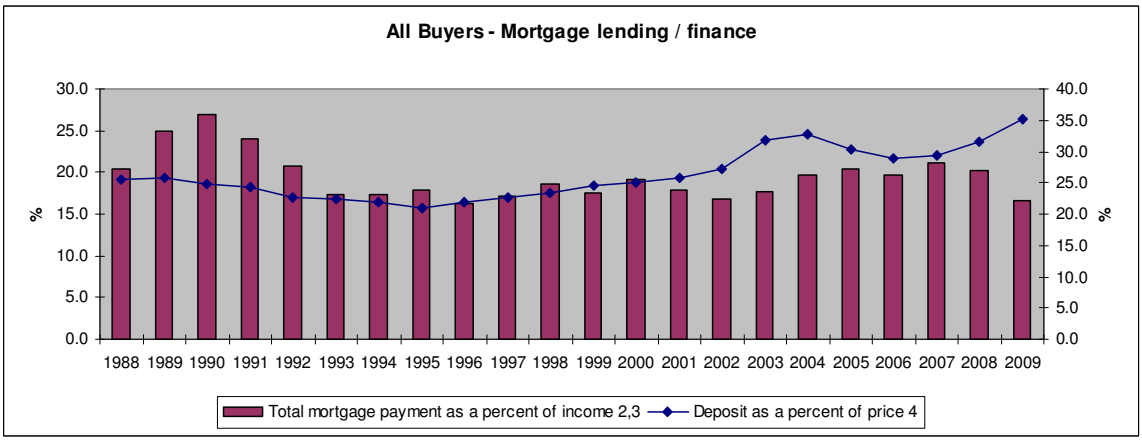
Figure 8.11: North West First Time Buyers – Lending and affordability



Source*: *Council of Mortgage Lenders, 2010

8.43 The following figure shows the widening gap between the level of deposit required and the monthly payments for all households across the UK.

Figure 8.12: All Buyers UK – Mortgage lending / finance



Source: Council of Mortgage Lenders, 2010

8.44 This demonstrates that, when considering a long-term trend, the proportion of household income to be spent on mortgage payments is the lowest it has been over the last 40 years, which has positive impacts on affordability as is places a lower level of pressure on household income to cover housing costs. This is, however, counteracted by a rise in the

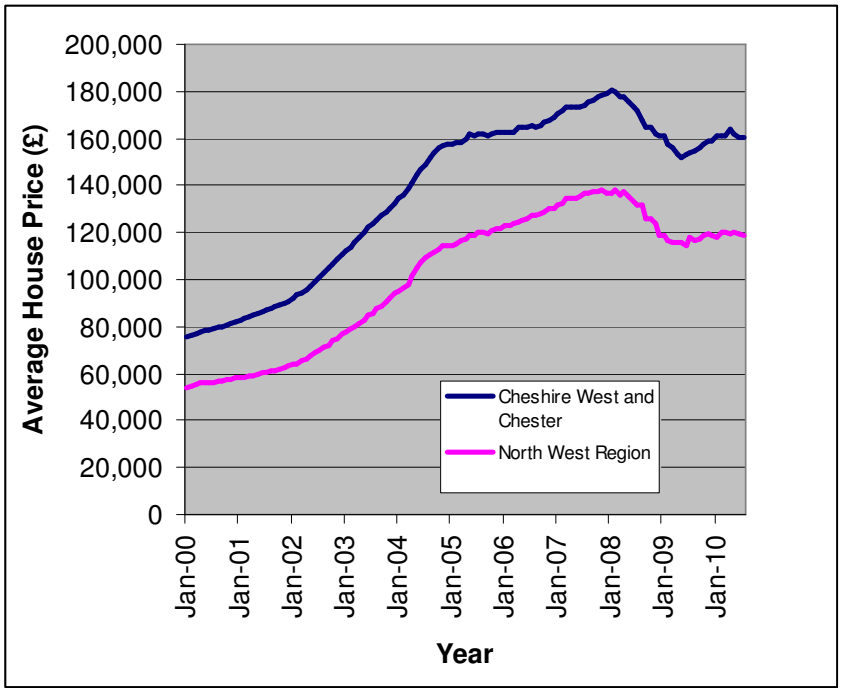
level of deposits required as a proportion of the house price paid to an average exceeding 35% in 2009.

8.45 The trends shown in these charts appear likely to be entrenched for at least the short-term, impacting significantly on the ability of households to purchase housing. This is particularly true of those areas where house prices are higher with incomes on the whole continuing to show only modest growth as a result of the recent emergence from a wider economic recessionary climate.

House Price Analysis

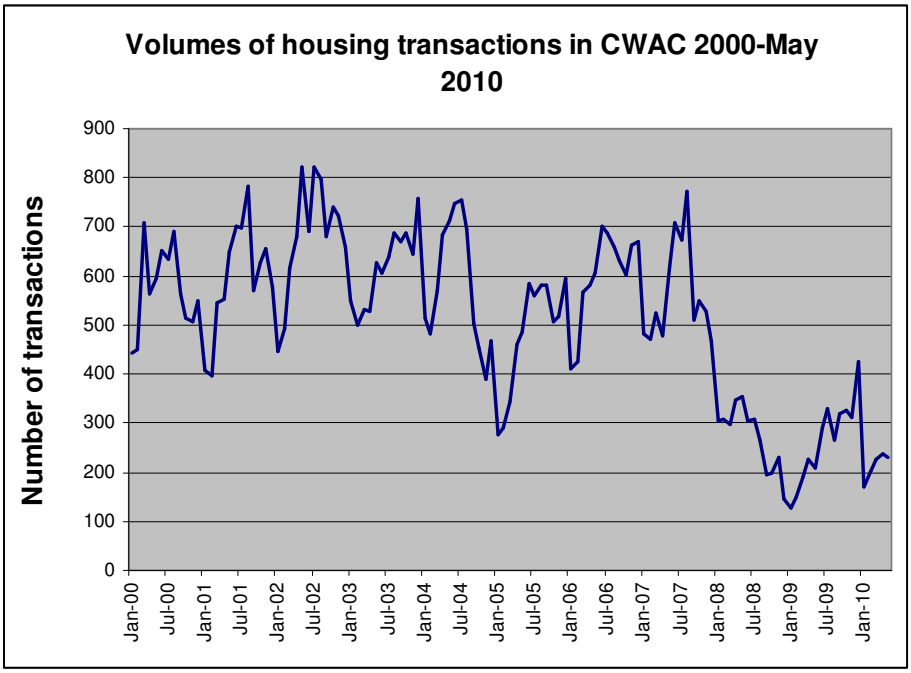
8.46 The following figure indicates that house prices in Cheshire West and Chester have remained consistently above the North West regional average over the last 10 years – falling sharply from a peak in early 2008, but recovering and stabilising at a lower level around £160,000 in January 2010. Despite the recent decline in prices, the elevation above the rest of the region poses issues for affordability, particularly for lower and middle income households and first time buyers.

Figure 8.13: North West & CWaC House Price Change 2000-2010



Source: Land Registry, 2010

Figure 8.14: Volume of Housing Sales in CWaC, Jan 2000 – May 2010

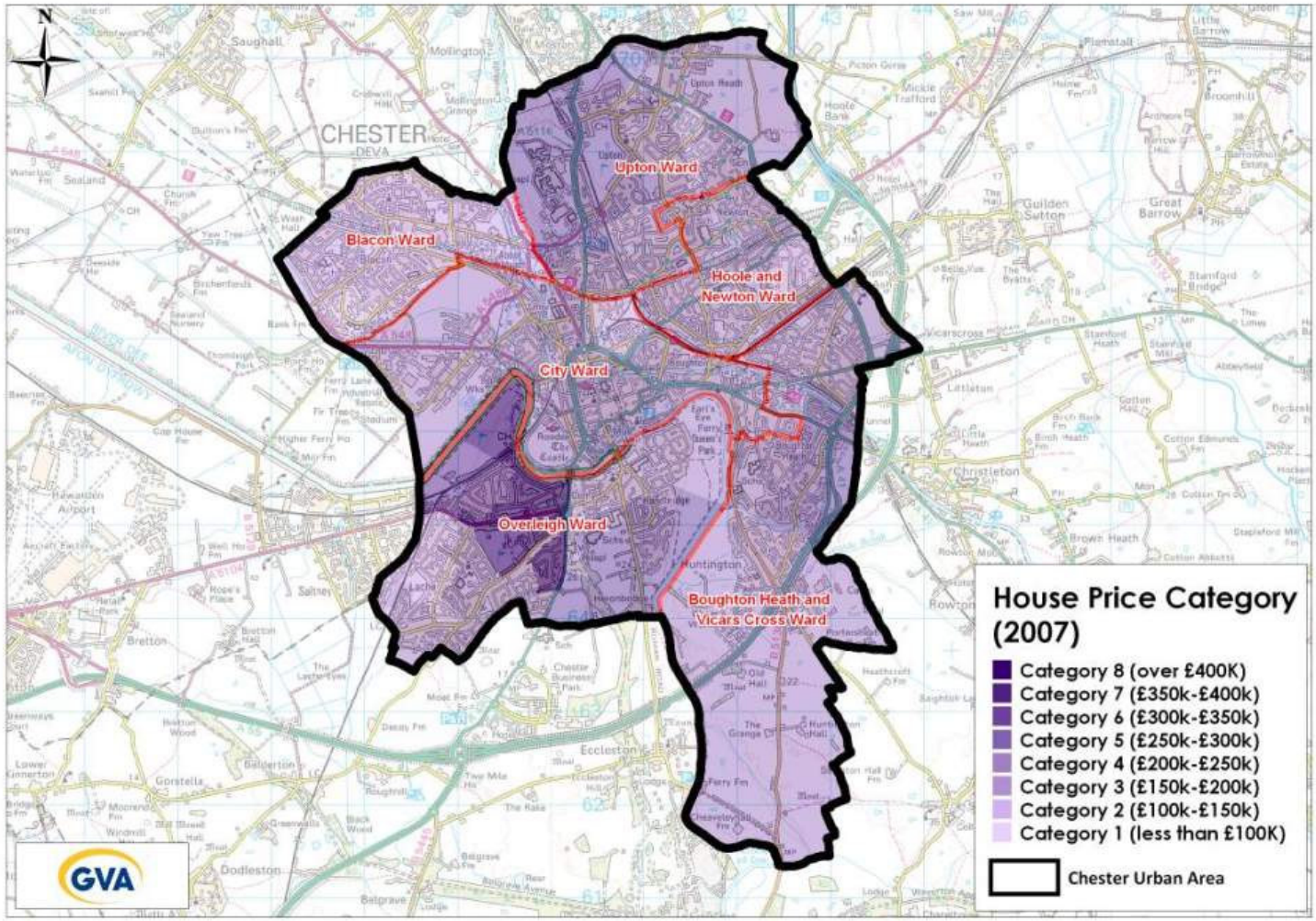


Source: Land Registry, 2010

8.47 Over the last decade, transactions in Cheshire West and Chester peaked at 823 for the month May 2002, followed by a surge in transactions in autumn 2007. From then, the impact of the 'credit crunch' is apparent, with the volume of transactions falling into rapid decline, bottoming out at 129. Transaction levels recovered moderately throughout 2009, but have since dropped – remaining stable at a low level since January 2010.

8.48 Consideration of house price change since 2007 provides indication of where demand has remained most robust against the impact of the recession across Chester urban area, at the ward scale. Average house prices are broken down by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) for 2007 and 2010, and the levels of change between 2007 and 2010 are subsequently presented.

Figure 8.15: Average House Prices in Chester (by LSOA), 2007



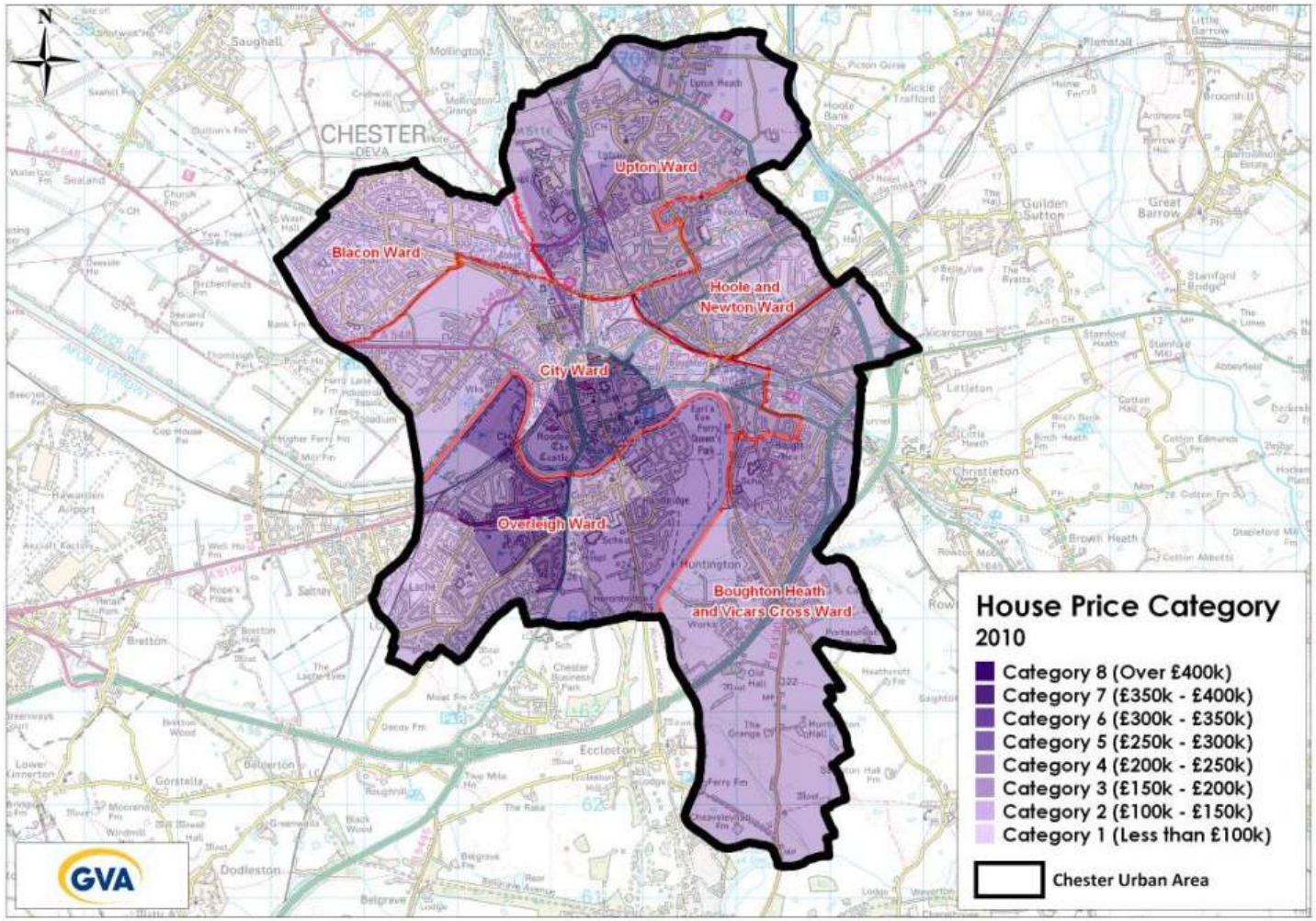
Source: CWaC, 2010

8.49 The Land Registry records the average house price in Cheshire West and Chester in August 2007 as £175,583. The analysis of the Chester urban area demonstrates:

- House prices in the Curzon Park and Westminster area, within the Overleigh ward significantly exceeded the authority average – recording prices between £250,000 and £300,000 on average. Parts of the Handbridge neighbourhood also recorded high prices – costing between £200,000 and £250,000 on average.
- The City ward, Hoole and Newton ward and Boughton Heath and Vicars Cross ward demonstrated average prices similar to the local authority.
- Prices stood out as being lowest than average within the Blacon ward, with properties costing less than £100,000 on average.

8.50 The following plan considers the average house prices in 2010. The Land Registry records the average house price in Cheshire West and Chester in July 2010 as having fallen to £160,285, which equates to a decline of 8.7%.

Figure 8.16: Average House Prices in Chester (by LSOA), 2010



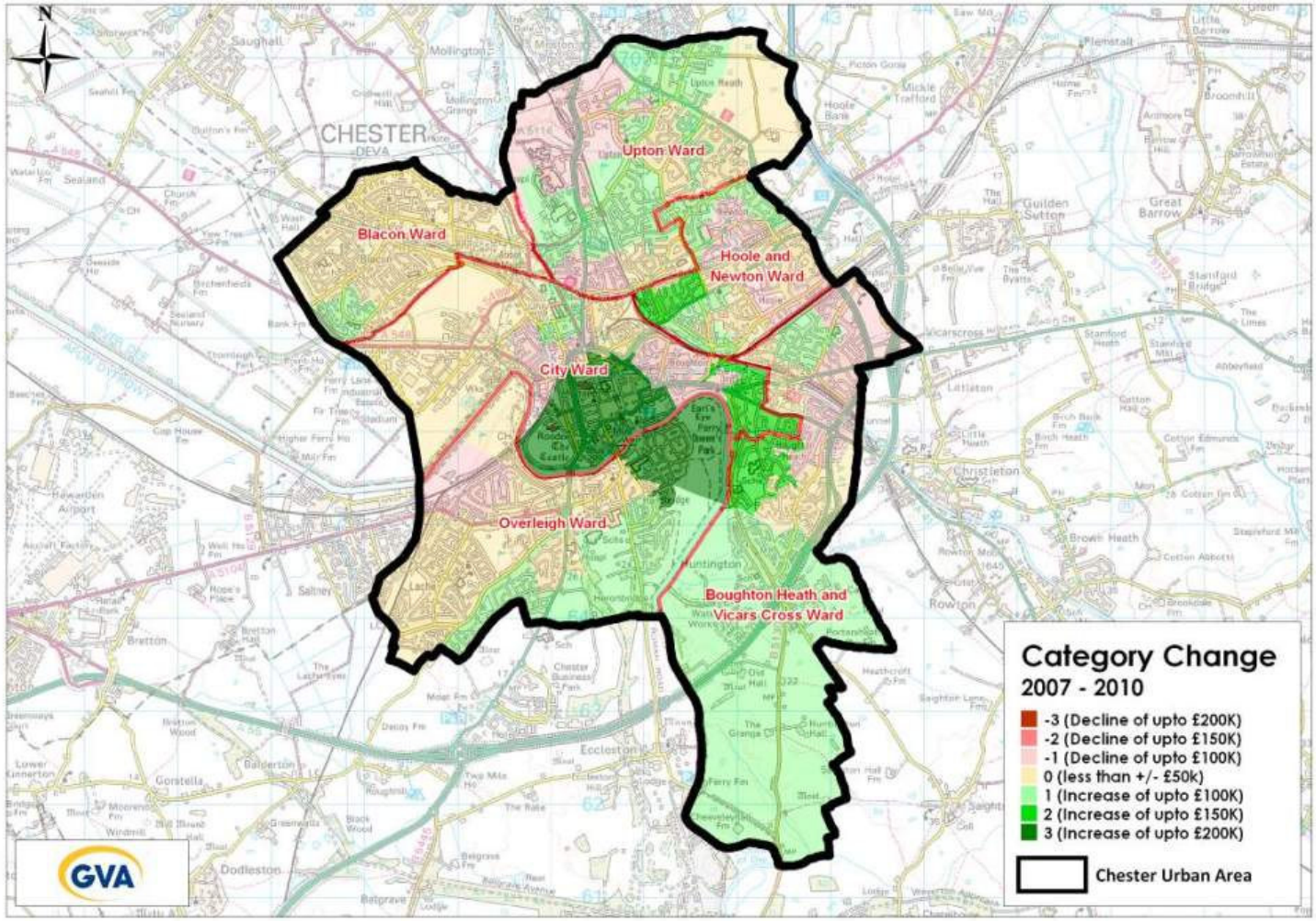
Source: CWaC, 2010

8.51 The analysis of the Chester urban area demonstrates:

- The Chester urban area appears to have 'bucked the trend' of declining prices across the authority, with average prices remaining stable and elevated in similar locations to 2007. In fact, it appears that prices have increased within Chester City centre (within the Walls) to an average of £200,000 to £250,000.
- Prices have also risen in the Handbridge neighbourhood and parts of the Upton ward in the vicinity of the Countess of Chester Hospital.

8.52 The following plan considers house price change between 2007 and 2010 spatially, and in more detail.

Figure 8.17: Average House Price Change in Chester (by LSOA), 2007-2010



Source: CWaC, 2010

8.53 The plan demonstrates that:

- Average prices have indeed increased substantially within the historic City centre of Chester – with price growth on average of up to £150,000. This is likely to reflect the constrained housing supply within the area, as well as the continued desirability of the location for City living.
- Areas of Hoole in proximity to Chester Railway Station have also experienced strong price rises. This is likely to be an outcome of the area's proximity to the City Centre and leafy, suburban character.
- Negative price growth is evident in the Boughton neighbourhood within the City Ward – this is likely to be a result of declining values within the apartment market that characterises this area and experienced a strong increase in supply up to 2007. The Hoole and Newton neighbourhoods also saw modest declines in average prices between 2007 and 2010.
- Prices remained relatively static in Blacon – although this is likely to be due to the limited growth in house prices within this area up to 2007. Prices also stayed relatively static in the Curzon and Westminster area suggesting demand remained steady for the type of properties in these neighbourhoods despite the recession.

The Rental Market

8.54 Local Housing Market Reports produced by the Council provide a summary of average weekly private rental prices by property size (bedrooms) and unitary ward, up to March 2010.

Figure 8.18: Private Rental Prices by Unitary Ward (March 2010)

Private Rental Prices by Unitary Ward (March 2010)			
	Number of Bedrooms		
Location	**1-bed**	**2-bed**	**3-bed**
Blacon	nda	£137	nda
Broughton Heath and Vicar's Cross	£102	£155	£150
City	£114	£150	£207
Hoole & Newton	£104	£137	£150
Upton	£108	£133	£155
Cheshire West &Chester	***£109***	***£137***	***£150***
North West	***£103***	***£124***	***£137***
England	***£169***	***£219***	***£300***

Source: CWaC Council, 2010

8.55 This data indicates that rental prices for both 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom properties are close to or above the Cheshire West and Chester average, and significantly above the regional average, across all of the unitary wards within Chester's urban area. Rents are particularly high within the City ward, which is due to limited supply, but also suggests limited affordability for households wishing to reside in Chester City centre.

Estate Agents Views on Market Dynamics

8.56 A number of local agents and a locally active developer have been consulted with regard to their views and experiences of the local housing market, and their assessment of the local demand / supply of housing across the Chester urban area. These consultees were:

- Beresford Adams
- Humphreys of Chester
- Knight Frank
- Lovells
- Reeds Rains
- Savills

Attracting Families

8.57 In an overall picture of lowering seasonal demand, Agents reported that in terms of demand, the areas around the outskirts of central Chester are increasingly in popularity, particularly from families looking for larger, detached and semi-detached properties. Families tend to prefer to live in suburban areas closer to school, shops, transport and amenities and housing supply in the typically more aspirational rural areas is becoming increasingly constrained. Hoole and Boughton are cited as areas popular with families.

The City Centre Apartment Market

8.58 There are a significant amount of new build apartment developments in the City centre which aim to attract first time buyers e.g. Saddlery Way next to Chester Racecourse offers 50% shared ownership, and some other developments offering 30% mortgage/70% rent arrangements. Since July 2009, 10 apartments have been sold at Saddlery Way, ranging from £57,000 (shared ownership) to £155,995. However, City centre apartments are not deemed to be popular or to appeal to a broad spectrum of the local population. They are attractive to investors with student lets, and businessmen who work in Chester during the week.

First Time Buyers and Affordable Housing

8.59 A significant amount of development activity within Chester has targeted young people and first time buyers. However, there are considered to be very few young people in the market overall. Those that are tend to be restricted to buying in the less desirable parts of Chester (e.g Chester Point in Blacon) where there is some affordable housing supply. Affordable housing outside of the City centre is generally concentrated in less desirable areas, and there is a lack of supply, which dictates that those in need of affordable housing are limited to a few urban locations. Estate agents did note, however, that terraced properties within a 3-mile radius of the City centre are increasingly attractive to first time buyers; popular areas include Hoole, Vicars Cross and Bache.

An Elderly Urban Population

8.60 Interestingly agents highlighted that elderly people, over retirement age, are demonstrating growing interest in moving back into urban areas, as cuts in services (post office, transport, shops) mean that rural areas are less appealing to more vulnerable and less mobile people with less of a disposable income. There is significant over-50's housing within the Walls of Chester to cater for this demand. The compact nature of the City centre and number of apartments appeals to these type of people. However, some schemes are reportedly not selling well in the present market climate.

Assessment of Housing Demand & Need – SHMA and Needs Survey

8.61 The Council published a SHMA in 2009 which was prepared by Arc4. This included a detailed household survey, with over 4,000 returns used to construct analysis of housing need and preferences. An update of this assessment has been conducted in 2010 focusing on the secondary data elements to ensure that the evidence base remains up-to-date in the current housing market context.

8.62 This section presents a number of the key analysis and recommendations from the 2009 SHMA and the subsequent update:

- House prices in Cheshire West and Chester remain high and the income to lower quartile house price ratio for the former districts that make up Cheshire West and Chester is 7.7 in Chester, 7.3 in Ellesmere Port and Neston and 6.9 in Vale Royal. House prices range from the more expensive areas in and around the City of Chester and across the rural areas, to lower value areas around the more industrial towns.

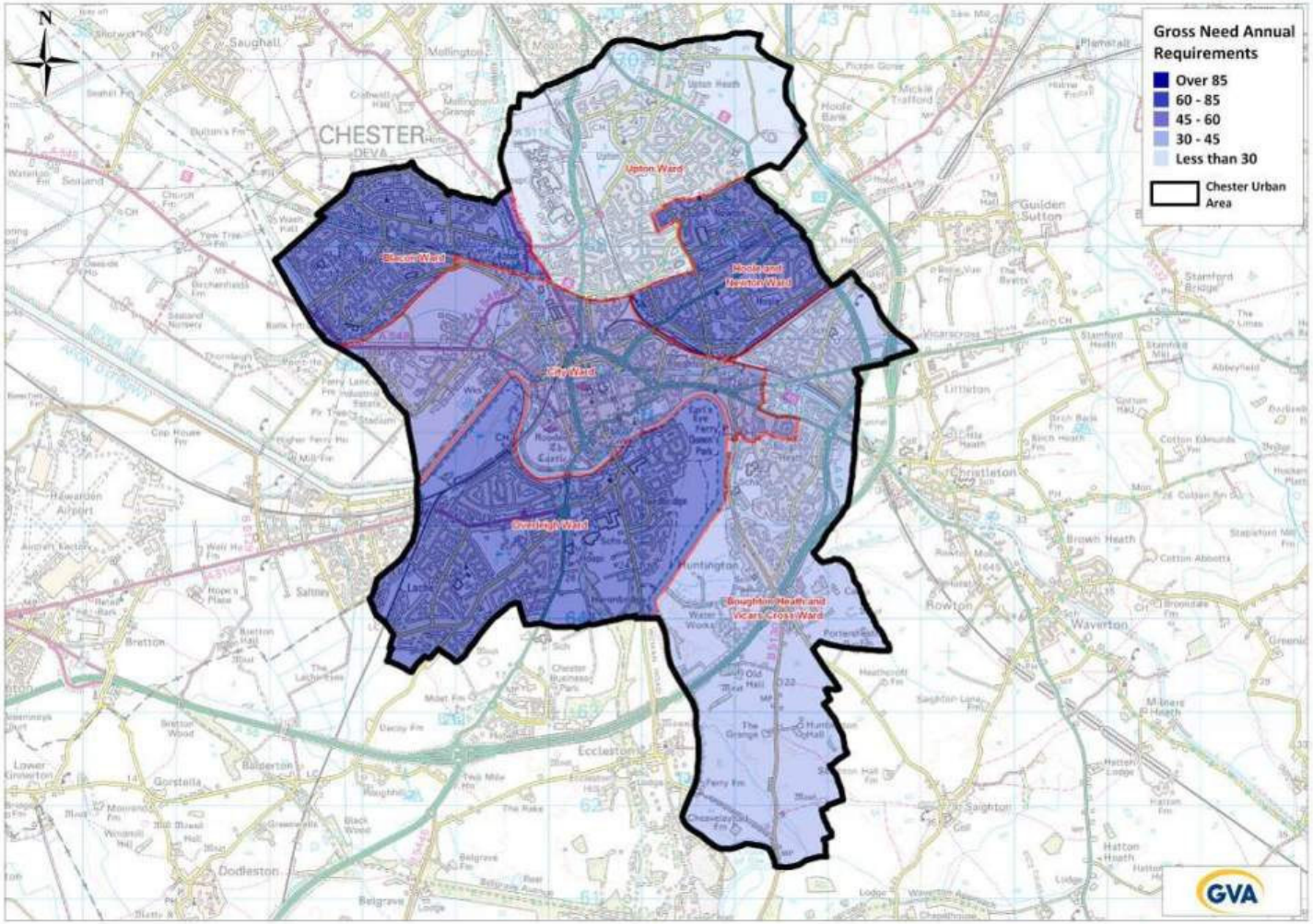
- The vast majority of housing within Cheshire West & Chester is owner occupied (78.1%). Typically in the more rural areas the preponderance of this tenure rises significantly suggesting potential difficulties in accessing any other forms of housing.

- Cheshire West and Chester is a largely self contained housing market with 70% of all moves in the last five years within the boundaries of the sub area.
- There is a gross annual shortfall of 1204 affordable dwellings in Cheshire West and Chester. In addressing this shortfall the SHMA supports existing planning policies which requires between 25% and 40% of affordable housing provision on all sites over 15 dwellings in the urban areas and suggests a tenure split of 64% social rented and 36% intermediate tenure across Cheshire West and Chester
- The proportion of older people is expected to increase from 24.5% of the population in 2009 to 32% by 2031. A high proportion of older people (80.8%) want to continue to live in their current home with support when needed.
- Cheshire West and Chester is identified as a high demand area with demand exceeding supply for all property types across most areas, with a particular shortfall of bungalows. In terms of market sector housing aspirations the strongest demand is for houses (particularly detached and semi detached) and bungalows with some demand for flats (most likely to be from newly-forming households). Within the Chester urban area demand is particularly high in the City ward.

8.63 The 2010 SHMA calculated the number of households across the borough classified as in affordable housing need and arrived at an annual delivery figure of 1,193 affordable dwellings in order to meet demand. This is specifically relevant in the short-term i.e. the next five years.

8.64 The 2009 research also provided a breakdown of annual affordable housing need at a unitary ward level. The following plan displays this distribution of need spatially within the Chester urban area.

Figure 8.19: Local Housing Need 2009 SHMA – Spatial distinctions



Source: adapted by GVA Grimley from data within the Arc4 SHMA, 2009

8.65 The 2009 SHMA analysis demonstrates the greatest annual levels of affordable housing need are situated within the Blacon ward and Hoole and Newton ward.

The Future Housing Market

Supply

8.66 The Council published its Final Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in November 2010 for public consultation. This document seeks to demonstrate a sufficient supply of potential sites suitable, available and achievable for residential development. Sites excluded from the Final Draft SHLAA include:

- sites with a high level of flood risk (i.e. Zones 3a and 3b) excluding town centres locations in Winsford and Northwich;
- sites comprising playing fields and designated open space; and
- sites below 0.4 hectares without planning permission.

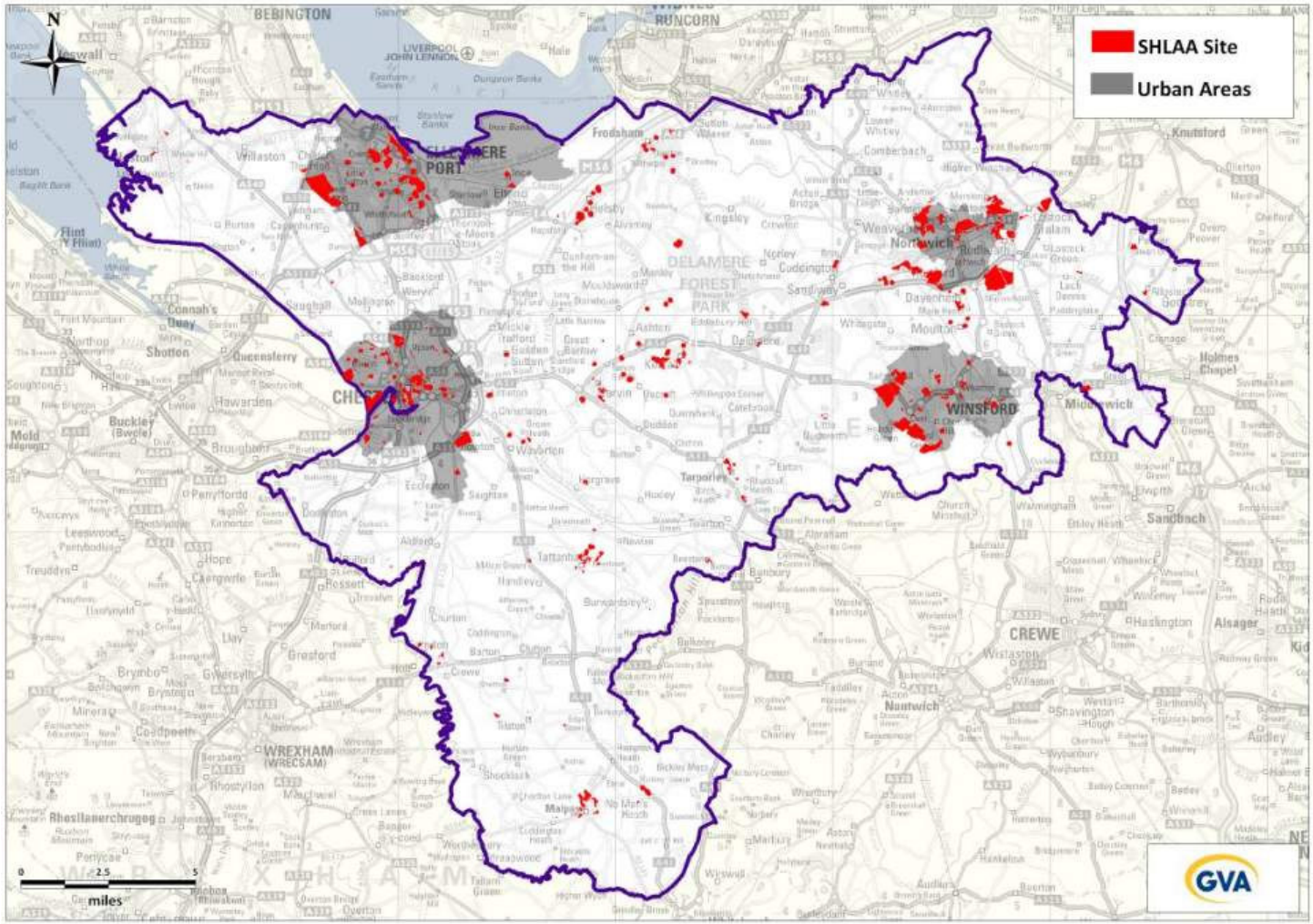
8.67 With regards to establishing the net developable area of sites included in the Final Draft SHLAA, the following assumptions are applied:

- up to 0.4 hectares – 100% developable
- between 0.4 and 2 hectares – 80% developable
- 2 hectares or above – 60% developable

8.68 The total number of SHLAA sites taken forward across Cheshire West & Chester as a whole equates to 35,991 dwellings. The following plan illustrates the location and scale of SHLAA sites across Cheshire West and Chester.

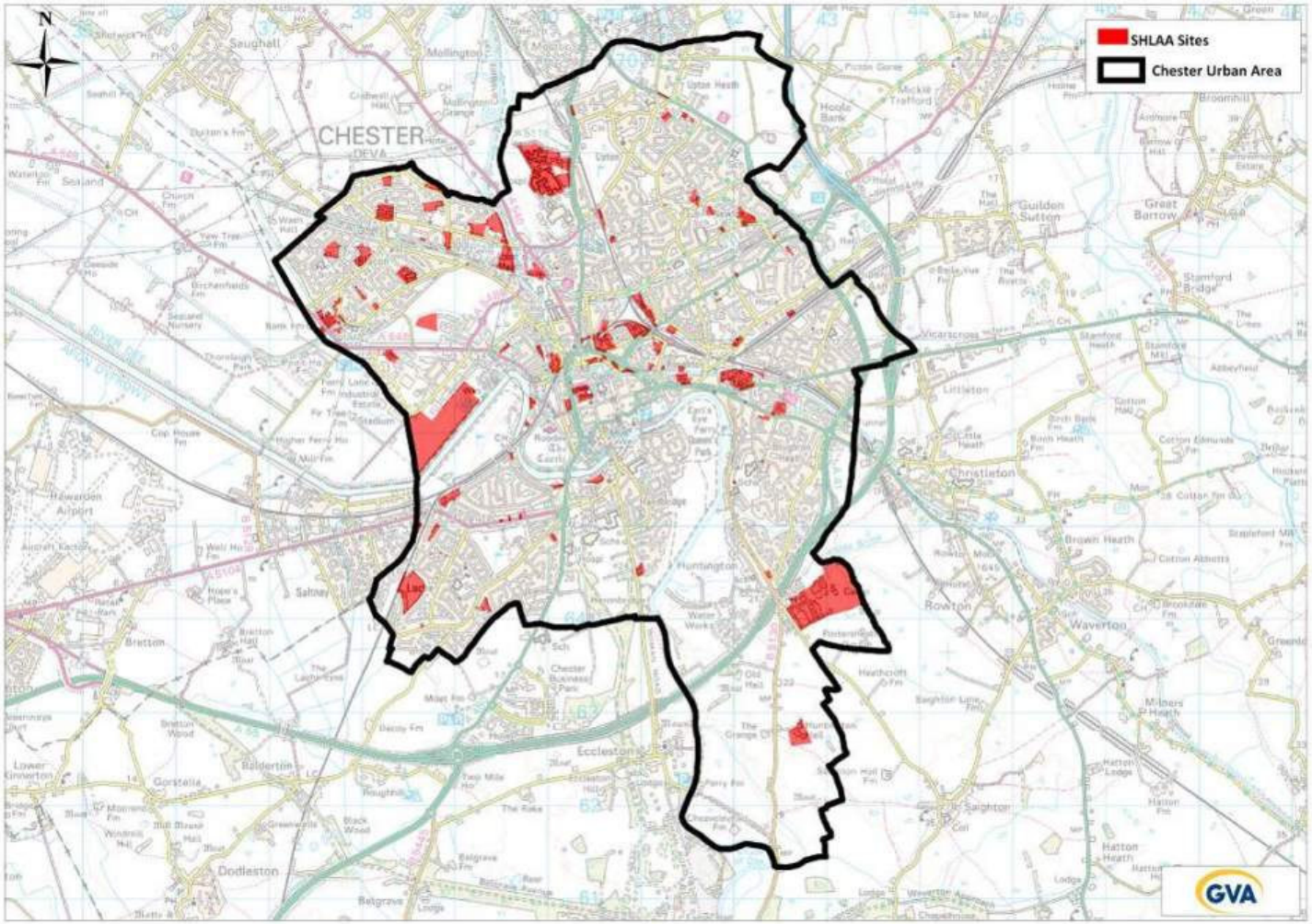
8.69 Potential supply capacity within Chester's urban area accounts for around 16% (5,858 dwellings) of this potential housing supply. There are 133 SHLAA sites identified within the Chester urban area. The latter plan illustrates the location and scale of SHLAA sites within the Chester urban area.

Figure 8.20: SHLAA Sites across Cheshire West & Chester



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council

Figure 8.21: SHLAA Sites within Chester



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council

8.70 The following figure shows that nearly three-quarters of SHLAA sites within Chester (97) are less than one hectare; this skew towards smaller sites is to be expected given the predominantly 'infill' nature of residential development within urban areas. A further 17 sites are between 1 and 2 hectares, whilst 12 sites are between 2 and 5 hectares.

Figure 8.22: Number of sites (by site area) within Chester

	0-1 ha	> 1-2 ha	> 2-5 ha	> 5-10 ha	> 10 ha
Number of sites (by site area)	97	17	12	3	4

Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2010

8.71 There are four sites over 10 hectares identified within Chester's urban area. These are situated on the edge of the urban area, as follows:

- Saighton Camp, Sandy Lane, Saighton (34 hectares) – This site is located to the South East of Chester, beyond the A55, and has outline planning permission for 833 dwellings. This site will provide family housing at a density of 35 dph. 60 dwellings are expected to come forward within 5 years (with 200 in 6 to 10 years, 200 in 11 to 15 years, and 373 thereafter).
- Rear of Bumpers Lane tip (31.89 hectares) – This employment site on the Eastern edge of Chester is identified with an estimated capacity for 781 dwellings.
- Land at Countess of Chester (10.13 hectares) – This Green Belt site to the North of Chester is identified with an estimated capacity for 266 dwellings.
- Upton Dene, Liverpool Road, Upton (12.01 hectares) – This previously developed site to the North of Chester is identified with an estimated capacity for 154 dwellings. This site is currently under construction; all 154 dwellings are expected to come forward within 5 years.

8.72 The following figure shows the potential number of dwellings by site density (i.e. dwellings per hectare) within the Chester's urban area. Only sites above 0.4 hectares are considered given that sites below 0.4 hectares achieve 'unreasonably high' densities by virtue of their size; such sites account for 828 dwellings in total (all of which have planning permission).

8.73 The Final Draft SHLAA identifies a potential housing supply for 3,792 dwellings at 35 dph (i.e. family housing) and – perhaps reflective of current market conditions – only 970 dwellings at 50 dph (i.e. high density flats). Only 268 dwellings are expected to come forward at less than 35 dph; such housing is generally associated with larger, high value dwellings in suburban locations.

Figure 8.23: Potential housing supply (by site density) within Chester

	< 35 dph	35 dph	50 dph
Potential number of dwellings (by site density)	268	3,792	970

Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2010

8.74 The following figure shows Chester's potential housing supply over a period of 15 years (and beyond). Of the overall potential housing supply (5,858 dwellings), almost a quarter (1,324 dwellings) is to be delivered within 1-5 years. A considerable proportion of this potential housing supply is expected to come forward in 11-15 years (1,448 dwellings), or in 16 years or more (980 dwellings); the deliverability of these sites is open to question given the timescales.

Figure 8.24: Potential housing supply (by phase) within Chester

	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	> 16 yrs	Total
Potential number of dwellings	1,324	2,106	1,448	980	5,858

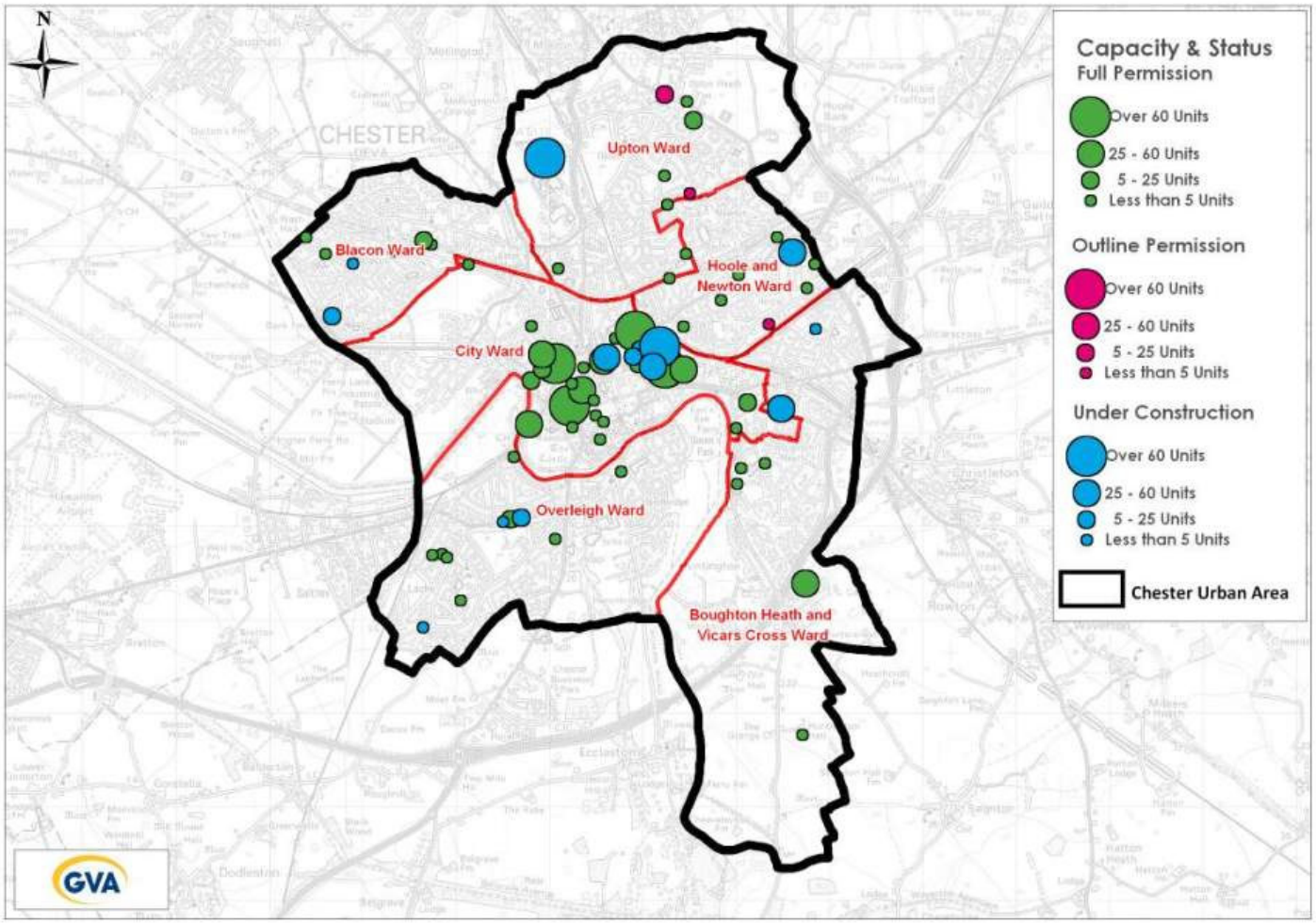
Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2010

8.75 A total of 215 sites were omitted within Chester (equating to 485 hectares). A considerable proportion of these omitted sites were below the minimum site size of 0.4 hectare.

Pipeline Development Activity

8.76 The Council collates, as part of its planning function, the quantum of housing sites with extant planning permissions and those under construction. The following plan shows the location and scale of pipeline housing development within the Chester urban area as at November 2010.

Figure 8.25: Pipeline Housing Supply (Sites with Permission) in Chester Urban Area (November 2010)



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2010

Bringing the Evidence Together

The Planning Framework

8.77 The Coalition Government is introducing reforms that will significantly alter the planning system; removing top-down central and regional controls over planning decisions, and providing for a planning system that empowers local communities and gives them an ability to share in local development-led growth.

8.78 The Localism Bill seeks to give a legal foundation to the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), which although uncertain at present, empowers Local Authorities to consider appropriate planning for housing growth at the local neighbourhood and authority scales with the 'Open Source Planning' framework. Within Cheshire West and Chester the Core Strategy will become the key spatial planning document within the Local Development Framework and will form the basis of planning and investment decisions for the next 15 years.

8.79 The Council's priority is to consult on the Core Strategy Preferred Options document in autumn 2011. This will test the vision and options for growth, with the authority split into its 5 local sub-areas for focus–of which Chester is one. This will engage local communities in the process to ensure that the process is not driven in a 'top down' approach, and will subsequently enable a clearer framework to be put in place for the development of Neighbourhood Plans, which are in line with the Core Strategy when adopted. The options for housing development follow high, medium and low growth projections. However, for the household growth level of housing required through RSS (medium) and 'Unleashing the Potential' (high) sites outside settlement policy boundaries would be required on land that is currently designated as open countryside and Green Belt.

Localism & Neighbourhood Planning

8.80 The Council proposes to undertake a 'Vanguard' Neighbourhood Plan to act as a test-bed for rolling the process out across the authority in line with Government ambitions, and a specialist cross-departmental team is being assembled within the Council to support the local Parish Council and wider community in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan for formal inspection at an Examination in Public (EIP). If successfully adopted the Neighbourhood Plan will set the level and location of site allocation for housing development at the local level, yet cannot specify a lower level of housing development than set out within the Core Strategy upon adoption.

The Current Housing Market

8.81 Chester's urban area has a high proportion of social-renting households, with particular concentrations in Blacon and the City wards. There is also a high level of private renting in the City ward – as to be expected given the flatted apartment market and prevalence of student households. However, this suggests lower levels of owner-occupation within the City – particularly the City centre, which is important for establishing a stable, long-term community with a real stake in the City's future.

8.82 The City's urban housing offer contains a high prevalence of semi-detached, terraced and flatted stock, which is to be expected given the urban nature of Chester and the RSS density requirements in place until recently. The most heavily skewed stock typology is located in the City ward, which includes almost 45% terraced housing, and 34% flatted accommodation, with a very limited supply of detached and semi-detached dwellings. This limitation on the supply of mid-range and larger property acts to discourage families from settling in the City Centre and the broader demographic, and income ranges, that this can bring to support City Centre activities.

8.83 Analysis of house prices indicates Chester has 'bucked the trend' of the recession, demonstrable across the wider authority, declining prices across the authority, with average prices remaining stable and elevated in similar locations to 2007. In fact, it appears that prices have increased within Chester City centre (within the Walls) to an average of £200,000 to £250,000. This is likely to reflect the constrained housing supply within the area, as well as the continued desirability of the location for City living. This is leading to problems of affordability, especially as wage increases are not keeping pace with property values.

8.84 However, negative price growth is evident in the Boughton neighbourhood within the City Ward – this is likely to be a result of declining values within the apartment market that characterises this area and experienced a strong increase in supply up to 2007. The Hoole and Newton neighbourhoods also saw modest declines in average prices between 2007 and 2010.

8.85 This is supported by evidence of a strong rental market in Chester, with high average rents compared to the wider authority. This does, however, suggest limited affordability for households wishing to reside in Chester City centre–particularly for low income households (some middle-income households) and first-time buyers.

8.86 Considering forward supply, the SHLAA suggests that there is capacity for growth in Chester, although the majority of larger sites do have considerable constraints, such as greenbelt location, which limit their deliverability in the current market and under current policy. As noted earlier, to adopt a 'medium' or 'high' level of household growth in line with 'unleashing the potential' would require the release of sites outside settlement policy

boundaries would be required on land that is currently designated as open countryside and Green Belt.

8.87 Given the high demand for housing in Chester, and the Council and LEP's aspirations, there is potential for the current and forward constraints on housing supply under current policy to stymie the economic potential of the City and its environs. The Core Strategy process will therefore test the options for growth and evaluate their potential impacts during 2011.

9. Living City

Initial Place Analysis

9.1 RHWL and AECOM have been analysing the City at four specific scales, namely regional scale, former district scale, Chester urban area scale, and City centre scale. This study builds on the knowledge gained during the Central Business Quarter design work and the larger appreciation of the City as a whole with respect to the emerging One City Plan.

9.2 At this moment it is a high level review of selected study area's seeking to identify key opportunities and challenges with respect to the existing urban structure to gain an understanding of the City centre's physical conditions, including urban character, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

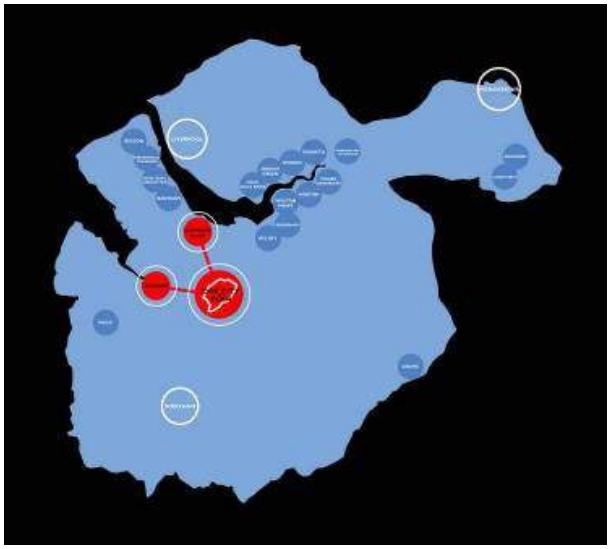
9.3 The analysis includes an examination of functional systems, including movement as well as open space, the role and function of identifiable local centres, special places and unique character areas. Issues relating to heritage and environmental resources are awaiting further investigation to create a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities to be addressed through the One City Plan.

9.4 As well as attending client meetings, workshops have taken place between RHWL, AECOM and GVA. Other stakeholder meetings and events have gleaned valuable information. A City walk has taken place attended by the client and design team.

9.5 Peripheral meetings and presentations have taken place too, for example to the Chester City Management Partnership and the Character Assessment Steering Group. The Northgate retail scheme design team is being shadowed by RHWL and the One City Plan team is liaising with the Theatre project design team sharing with them the emerging thoughts from the One City Plan to aid them in their final recommendations for the location of this important development.

Spatial Context

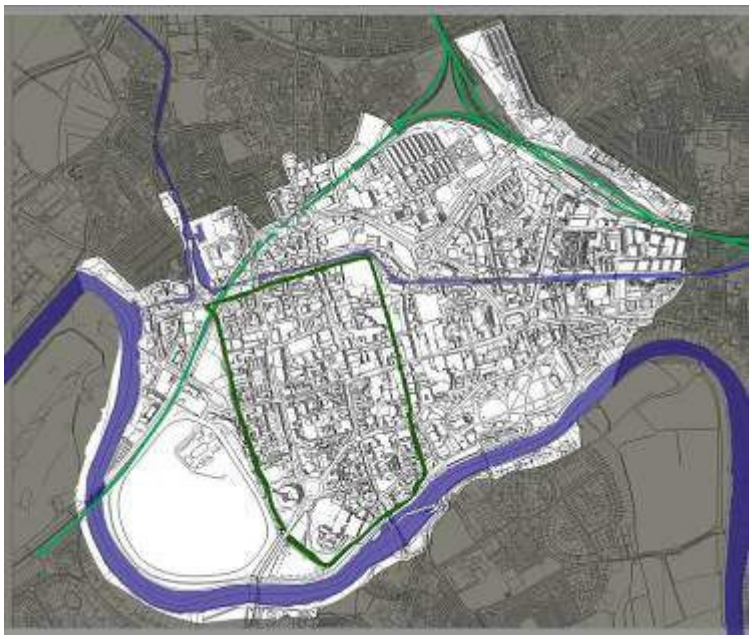
9.6 Placing the City in its sub-regional context is important and an initial diagram places Chester in the centre of a triangle of neighboring cities made up of Liverpool, Manchester and the towns of Wrexham and Ellesmere Port. Important locations with a functional relationship to Chester are also highlighted.



9.7 The importance of this diagram will become relevant as the wider transport links and economic significance is developed.

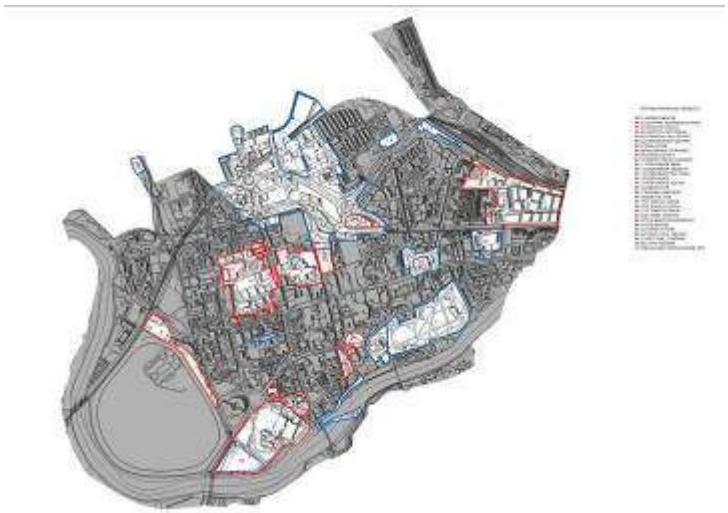
Establishing the City Centre

9.8 Actually identifying the extent of the City centre and the study area is essential. Physical barriers such as the river Dee and the railway offer obvious borders but further analysis suggests the study area must cross these barriers in certain locations to incorporate surrounding communities and key employment locations. A three dimensional sketch up model has been constructed and the background model is ready.



Locating Key Development Projects & Sites

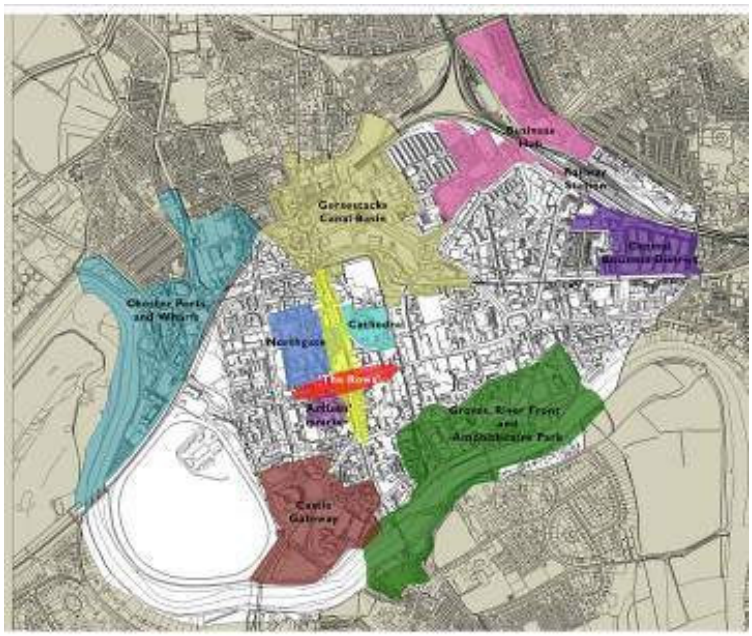
9.9 Much work as been carried out to understand and place into context the existing and *emerging* development sites in Chester – further information is provided in Part 2 of this report.

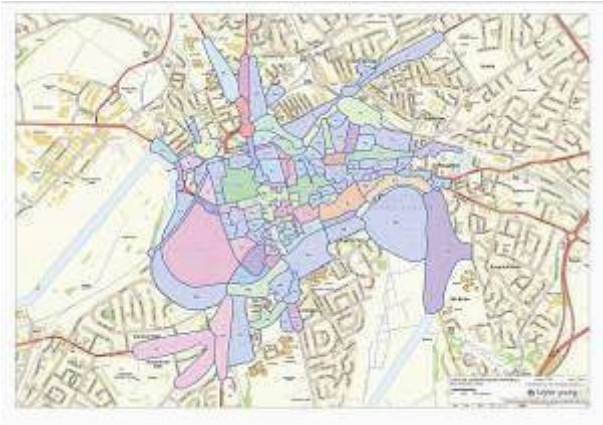


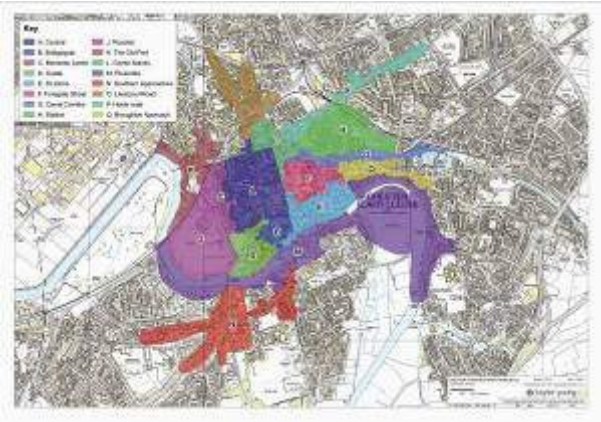
9.10 As GVA, in partnership with Cheshire West & Chester Council, have proceeded to prioritise these projects mapping and locating of them on to the base model is underway.

9.11 Having edited down and begun the specific analyse of the emerging priority development projects and locations a series of regions or City neighbourhoods are becoming identifiable.

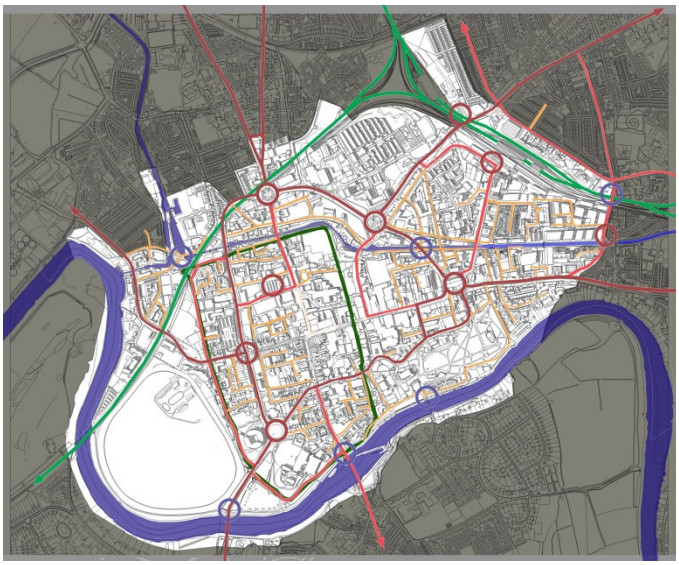
9.12 We are now able to compare these regions with the emerging character assessments that Taylor Young are producing (see diagrams below) through their commission by Cheshire West & Chester Council to undertake a Historical Characterisation and Assessment of the City approaches. Breaking sub these down further in to character areas will take place as the detailed work at local level progresses.







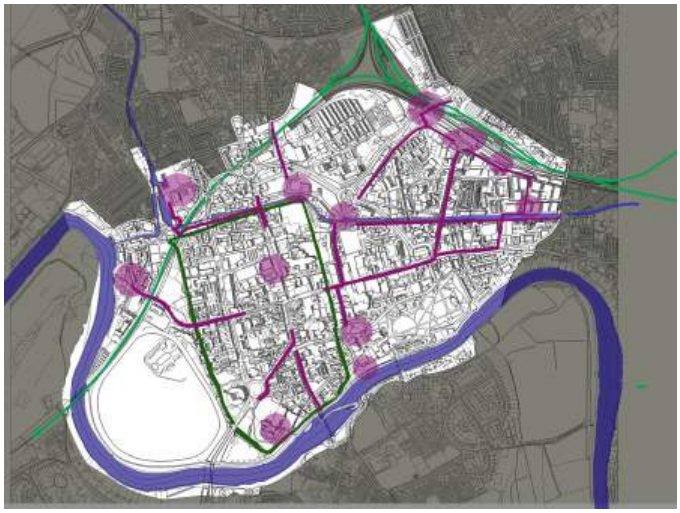
Movement Analysis



9.13 Having established the extent of the City centre (based on the River Dee, railway, racecourse and University as broad perimeters) the **One City Plan** starts with a critical appraisal of the existing movement systems within this area. A series of diagrams show the network of primary and secondary routes through the City as well as arrival points.

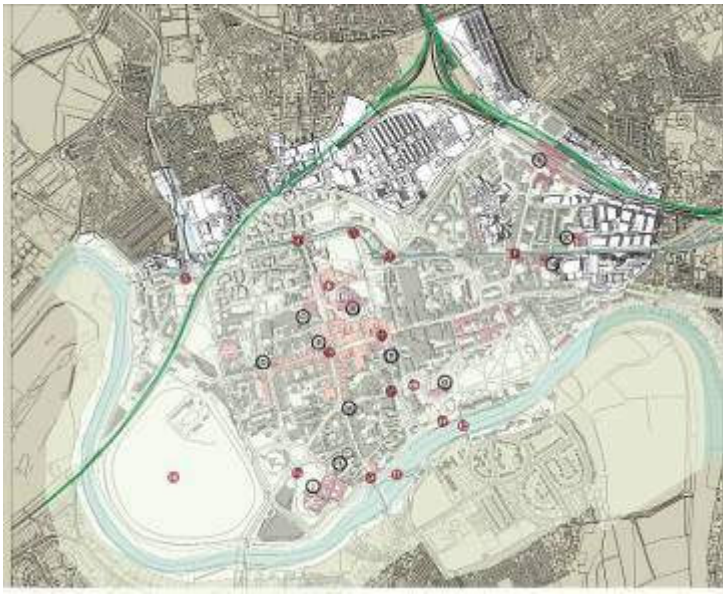
9.14 The current hierarchy of streets within Chester and many of the primary routes, which are recent additions, have marginalised some of the secondary or historic routes. The inner ring road has destroyed much of the historic grain and cut side streets or lanes off. The opportunity to meander has been lost. The human desire to wander is not satisfied in many parts of Chester.

9.15 A major theme in the **One City Plan** is to rebalance the movement systems prevalent in the City with a bias towards more sustainable modes of transport and the improvement of the experience of the City by foot and bicycle (see Movement & Accessibility Section). Further diagrams identify urban blocks whilst ignoring specific character traits to these blocks. The corridors in between become channels of specific study and natural primary movement structures.



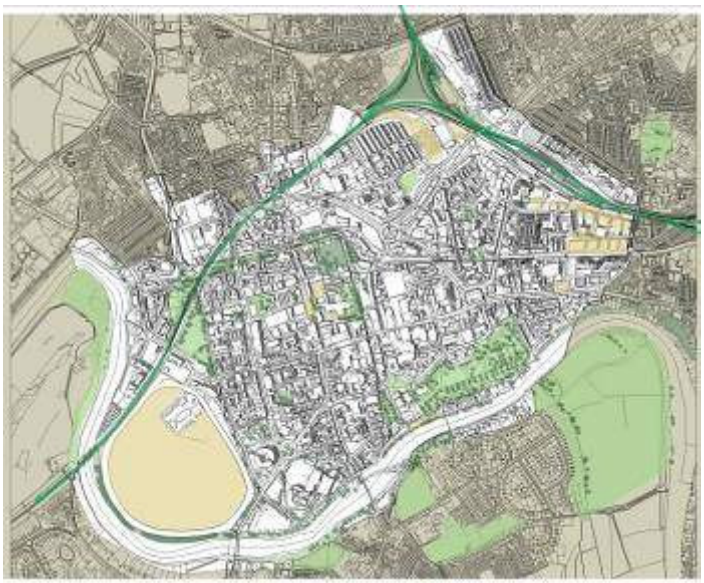
9.16 Some streets are lost and some are devoid of activity due to the disconnection of places. These diagrams begin to identify primary pedestrian routes. **The One City Plan** presents Chester with an opportunity to establish and improve connections through the City.

Legibility



9.17 Legibility influences and resolves navigation and orientation within a place. There are many factors which affect legibility:

- Simplicity of street layout
- Key orientation features
- Key landmark buildings
- Gateways
- Citizens and visitors



9.18 Whilst the historic core has a very obvious and clear legibility, the area around the Railway Station, Gorse Stacks and the Business Quarter, lacks a similar clarity.

9.19 The weight of Chester's grain and landmark buildings sits to the South and West, in and around this historic core. The Conservation Area blanket stops on the edge of the Business Quarter site and the grain of Chester starts to break down.

9.20 It will be important for all future proposals to reinforce legibility and

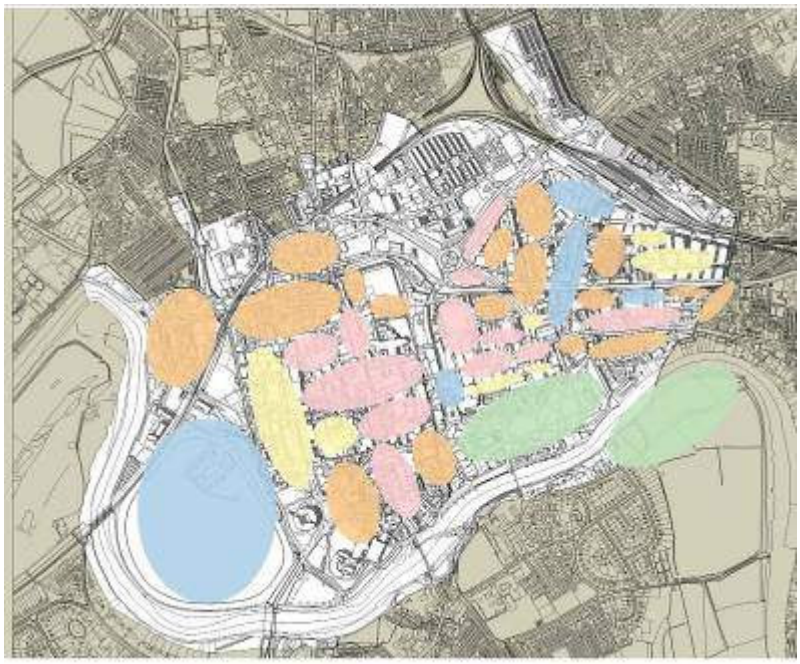
balance the gravity of character and interest that is currently missing. By re-establishing a legible layout, using key features and landmarks, supported by a network of accessible movement corridors and linked open spaces the experience of life on the street will be enhanced. This will allow Chester's unique built heritage and the new architect in waiting to be experienced fully.

Green spaces

9.21 Chester is relatively compact City. There are existing green spaces notably the Grosvenor Park and Roman Gardens. Oddly these spaces aren't readily accessible and the visitor will not find them easily.

9.22 The **One City Plan** should use these existing resources as attractors in a wider movement strategy for both leisure and commuter routes to maximise their recreational value and potential for both residents and visitors.

9.23 The current under-utilisation of the River Dee, its frontage, and poor way finding to this natural resource represent particular issues at present and require consideration through the One City Plan. The River Dee is a valuable natural asset, and contains a wealth of biodiversity both within the watercourse and on its banks. Moreover, it is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Despite Public Realm interventions into the pathway notably around the castle quarter, movement along the river is poorly lit and does not fulfil its full potential at present.



9.24 The One City Plan will reinforce the considerable work emerging from the Public Realm Design Guide and establish a unified and coordinated approach to the City's public green spaces. This study encompasses strategies towards Public Arts, Lighting, Wayfinding and Signage.

9.25 Particular attention will be

paid to vistas and links that need to be protected, enhanced, strengthened and developed. These will be developed over time as the City centre moves towards pedestrian priority.

Existing land Uses

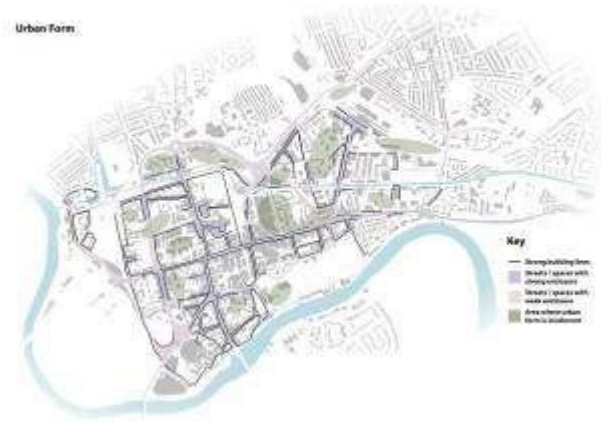
9.26 Like any bustling City, Chester has, at its historic heart, a mix of uses. These are predominantly retail based in and around the 'cross streets' within the historic core. Small retail units extend along Boughton as far as Hoole Lane.

9.27 Within the City Walls, there is a mix of small scale offices and residential, to the North and West. There is a greater density of residential as you travel towards the Railway Station and along the Shropshire Union Canal. There is also a significant amount of leisure use within this area, with the Boughton Centre providing retail warehouses.

9.28 The site for the new Business Quarter is currently an under utilised part of Chester when compared with the rest of the City. The imbalance between the historic core and the Canal Zone needs addressing.

9.29 The new Business Quarter will deliver a range of commercial office accommodation so far not on offer in Chester. There is currently a lack of 21st Century (Grade A) office space available in Chester, which embraces modern working methods as well as environmental standards. The Business Quarter will deliver BREEAM excellent buildings in a socially and environmentally sustainable way. BREEAM (B.R.E Assessment method) is the most widely used environmental assessment method for buildings. It sets the standard for best practice in sustainable design and has become the recognised measure used to describe a building's environmental performance.

9.30 The wider masterplan will also deliver a greater mix of use than just commercial and will balance the land uses in this area, with that of the City centre, ensuring the sustained success of the initiative being undertaken. This mix will be based on achieving a balance of uses that complements the City and does not upset it. All these uses will need links strengthened to connect the new Business Quarter to the historic core and ensure the transition between uses is smooth and lasting.



Frontages and Enclosures

9.31 The built form and grain within Chester has two very distinctive characteristics. Many areas predominantly inside the City Walls are continuous. The opposite to this to the East is largely fragmented and broken, with unresolved and incomplete building lines resulting in urban blocks being open ended, unfinished or at odds with the street pattern and contextual grain.

9.32 This discontinuous building line, caused by empty sites or ill conceived development, prevents their being a harmonious street space and so results in a negative perception of the City.

Local Level Analysis

9.33 The Strategy for the spatial analysis at the development scale in the first phase of the One City Plan is for the design team to focus on to key development opportunities, namely the new Business Quarter and the Northgate scheme including the Cathedral Quarter, the Town Hall Square and the potential to locate the Performing Arts Theatre on the Odeon site or on the Little Roodee. This is also influencing the strategic thinking around Gorse Stacks.

Chester Central Business Quarter (CBD) within the One City Plan

9.34 A substantial body of work exists from the development of the CBD Vision and Development Framework and RHWL down loaded all this information to AECOM. From this an appraisal of the movement and transport strategies implicit in the development brief was critiqued by AECOM. AECOM subsequently have produced a detailed diagnosis report from this piece of work. The key recommendations are summarised as follows:

- The single most important aspect of the Transport Strategy is integration with the One City Plan, the central overriding strategy for the entirety of the City Centre.
    - Create a transport interchange and hub adjacent to the Rail Station, on the doorstep of the CBD, by significantly improving bus service levels and interchange facilities at this key entry point for the City Centre.
    - The station and CBD are to connect with the City Centre via a dedicated branded link running at high frequency.
- A key emerging strategy plans to intercept vehicles at key arrival points on the outskirts of the City Centre and provide high quality walking, cycling and public transport routes for the rest of the journey.

- The CBD's location on the outer edge of the City Centre makes it an ideal location to capture traffic on the radial routes of A51 Boughton Road and Hoole Lane (and perhaps also A56 Hoole Way).
- Parking provision within the CBD will form part of the overarching parking strategy for the One City Plan.
- The CBD development explicitly calls for a large parking facility at Queen's Road and it is considered essential that this should also serve as an interceptor facility for the City Centre.
- Flexibility of parking use, rather than individualised to separate corporate users is critical and best use of space.

- Walking and cycling provision between the CBD and the City Centre will be high quality with the canal towpaths forming a major well used connection.
  - Perception of security essential along this link and as such lighting and CCTV provision will be key.
  - Integration between the CBD proposals and the One City Plan relate to the rollout and expansion of Park and Ride services.
- The creation of a major employment zone outside of the historic City centre creates the potential for commuter based Park and Ride with halts created on the Boughton Road, Hoole Lane and potentially Hoole Way corridors.
- Chester CBD has to be seen as a core park and ride stop in the City centre.

9.35 It must be considered essential to see the development of the CBD development as a key part of the wider One City plan and not in isolation. Chester CBD will draw the City Eastwards – the City's transport infrastructure needs to gravitate and change with it, with, in particular, the role of transport changing to bring this area into the City.

9.36 Only by engaging in an overarching approach can the transport, access and movement issues currently prevalent within Chester be tackled fully for the benefit of the City as a whole.

Northgate Retail Quarter (Scheme) within the One City Plan

9.37 The development of the Northgate retail quarter is vital to re-establishing Chester as a regionally-competitive shopping centre and destination, as well as providing a catalyst for the regeneration of the City Centre. The timing of the One City Plan and new

consideration of the Northgate retail quarter are fortuitous and enable one process to inform the other, thereby achieving the best possible result for Chester and the region.

9.38 The challenge for Northgate is to ensure that there is a seamless integration with the remainder of the retail area in a functional and economic sense and that the development is part of, and not apart from, the rest of the City Centre.

9.39 Within Chester's Historic Core the site for the Northgate retail quarter represents a major and unique opportunity. A long term scheme will only be achieved if it adds to the overall vitality of the City Centre, provides new and improved Public Realm, achieves good pedestrian linkages and is part of a comprehensive movement strategy. The Northgate retail quarter must encourage, support and help deliver the aspiration of the Council to be a walking and cycling City.

9.40 The Northgate retail quarter must look beyond its immediate boundaries and embrace the One City Plan objectives for co-ordinated thinking across civic and cultural infrastructure and assets and across the Public Realm, which links movement and activity across the wider City centre environment. In particular, it will be critical for the Northgate retail quarter to forge a positive relationship with Town Hall Square and the Cathedral.

10. Creating A Competitive City - Retail

10.1 Chester provides a significant City centre retail offer consisting of large multi-national and national scale 'high street brands' as well as a number of specialist and independent traders. However, in recent years Chester has struggled to compete with the substantial levels of investment in flagship shopping facilities such as the Trafford Centre, Liverpool One, Cheshire Oaks, and Wrexham Town Centre, which have become premier shopping destinations and provided strong competition for visitor spend.

Increasing Competition

10.2 Alongside increasing competition, limited retail investment in Chester has resulted in the City falling 30 places on Experian rankings to a position of 35 by 2008, ranking below Croydon and Hull. Moveover, retail rents in Chester, were once among the highest outside of London's West End, yet for the last ten years they have remained static and have recently fallen, reflecting the recent recessionary climate, while centres such as Liverpool One and the Trafford Centre now enjoy prime retail rents some 50% above the level in Chester.

10.3 When considering vacancy levels, Chester has a relatively low level of retail sector vacancy within the City centre – however, those vacant units are predominantly clustered in 'pockets' within the secondary retail streets. Retail units within the historic Rows are also providing difficult to let, with occupiers often unwilling to compromise given the lack of flexibility in the space and limited access arrangements. Moreover, the Rows have recently experienced lower footfall and high levels of vacancy compared to the City centre as a whole – hotspots include Eastgate Row North and Watergate Street in particular.

10.4 The Rows are unique and valuable as a retail asset and visitor attraction. Hence, they are, the subject of an application for World Heritage Status. By spring 2011, the Council will know if the Rows are progressing from the UK national list to next (international) stage. This, in itself, with bring significant kudos to the Rows if successful – placing them on the global 'must see' list of visitor destinations.

10.5 Despite the current commercial issues experienced, the Rows have been the subject of a number of City management initiatives in recent years and significant investment is required to maintain and enhance their physical fabric. Chester Renaissance, NWDA and English Heritage jointly commissioned BDP Architects to produce a Conservation Management Plan for the Rows. The Plan resulted in multiple improvement projects to lift the physical standard and management practices of the Rows including:

- The 'Rows Caretaker'; and
- Preservation and enhancement to Eastgate Row North (lighting, access, signage) with £100,000 budget to be used by April 2011

City Management

10.6 Moreover, there is a desire from the Council, and City centre partners – including landlords, occupiers and local residents to reverse Chester's retail decline and drive increased footfall and spend into the City. The Council has established a successful Chester City Management (CCM) Partnership with retail traders to organise events, resolve issues and make voluntary contribution towards events, marketing campaigns and publicity of the City centre. The CCM has been running for two years and recognises the following issues require resolution:

- Being a clean and safe City is not enough – Chester needs greater leisure / cultural activity draw and further emphasis on heritage tourism to encourage overnight visitors who are important to maximize spend in the City.
- Transport, car parking, pedestrian / cycle movement are very important to encouraging people to use the City. At present the parts of the City centre are not pedestrian friendly and there are problems of way-finding and limited signage. In particular, it is important to improve links to Chester Station. The quality, location, and convenience of the current car parking offer is seen as a major deterrent to attracting shoppers and visitors to the City centre.
- The City Centre uses are very compact resulting in 'dead areas' – there is a need to grow the City.
- The evening economy requires expansion / diversification as there is a limited offer at night in both scope and quality. As a result there is a need to provide a greater offer to retain visitors in evening. If this occurred it would be desirable to extend shopping hours to capture the potential offered by additional footfall.

Northgate Retail Scheme

The Scheme Proposals

10.7 Chester City centre is also subject to proposals for a substantial new retail development titled the 'Northgate' scheme. The scheme has been 15 years in the planning, and seeks to resolve the following issues at the core of its business case:

- The existing Forum Shopping Centre has inadequate units in size / flexibility and poor environmental standard.
- The is high latent mainstream retail demand in Chester with John Lewis and House of Fraser keen for inward movement and upsizing.
- There is increasing competition in sub-region / region as previously mentioned and a step-change in quality and quantity is required for Chester to compete.

10.8 The original scheme, which was subject to a planning application became unviable due to the recession.

10.9 The Council and ING, along with their advisors, are currently working to produce a new scheme that is viable in the current economic climate with a revised hybrid planning application (supported by schematic masterplan) aimed for submission in Q4 2011/Q1 2012.

10.10 Any scheme which creates a Northgate retail quarter must do so in such a way that it has seamless links to the remainder of the City Centre and complements the overall retail offer. A combination of the marketing strategy and mitigation measures will need to ensure there is a limited impact on the remainder of the City Centre.

Resultant Impacts

10.11 As outlined in the previous sub-section, the revisions to the scope of the original Northgate scheme result in a number of impacts on key City centre facilities.

Chester Market Relocation

10.12 To enable the delivery of the Northgate retail scheme, the Chester Market will require relocating from its current indoor site behind the Town Hall in Princess Street.

10.13 Moreover, the current market building is in a poor condition and trades at 62% of its potential occupancy. To continue to operate in this building is estimated to cost the

Council between £2m and £3m over the next five years, with the Council heavily subsidising the loss-making facility.

10.14 The Council has completed initial feasibility testing and concept preparation for the delivery of a new purpose-built facility elsewhere in the City. The objective is to achieve a new modern market with space for temporary outdoor stalls.

Bus Interchange

10.15 The delivery of the Northgate scheme will require the demolition of the existing City bus interchange located to the rear of the Town Hall. Saved Chester District Local Plan Policy TR9 states that:

'Development resulting in the loss of all or part of the existing bus exchange (behind the Town Hall) will only be permitted if appropriate alternative public transport interchange provision is made within the development or on another site within the inner ring road. Also, in order to facilitate better bus interchange, future pedestrianisation and improve links to the Railway Station, a network of small scale interchanges will be developed at key points around the planned bus priority network'.

10.16 It is therefore critical that plans for either a new bus exchange / interchange, or a series of smaller 'bus hubs', are developed within the City, along with funding and phasing confirmation.

10.17 Ongoing analysis is being undertaken by the Council and advisors to identify the appropriate method of bus interchange and potential locations. The One City Plan must influence the method and location of facilities to maximise the benefit for the City and its users.

11. Leisure & the Visitor Economy

Leisure

11.1 Providing diverse leisure opportunities is an important part of ensuring communities have a good quality of life. Leisure opportunities can have a positive effect on a communities health and economic performance.

11.2 The Cheshire West and Chester Council Leisure Stock Review was published in August 2010. The vision that the stock review sets out is: "To have a network of high quality sports facilities operated to a high standard which contribute to the Council's wider strategic priorities which are:

- To improve health and well-being
- Longer, safer, and healthier lives
- Communities are safe and secure
- Best use of resources
- Value for money"

11.3 The aim of the stock review was to: "Identify the strategic needs for leisure facilities in Cheshire West and Chester in order to identify what replacement, refurbished and new facilities are required to meet changing demands over the next 25 years." [18]

11.4 The stock review considered the following venues and programmes:

- Indoor leisure facilities
- Community centres
- Civic halls
- Primary and Secondary schools (including special schools)
- Principal outdoor recreation sites/networks
- PCT health centres

[18] Cheshire West and Chester Council Leisure Stock Review (2010)- Cheshire West and Chester Council, p5

- University of Chester
- West Cheshire College
- Outdoor educational and residential centres
- Other Cheshire West and Chester Council property/assets which could contribute
- Private and voluntary sector provision

11.5 The Council has identified a range of drivers for undertaking a review of leisure facilities across Cheshire West and Chester. These include:

- The need for a people-centred approach to the provision of services
- The need to address health and wellbeing inequalities
- The need to provide clear pathways to excellence for athletes
- The need to delivery of services within communities
- The ease of access to facilities and services
- The future demographic changes taking place in the Borough
- The need to Integrate provision across services and partners
- Maximise opportunities for co-location of facilities and services
- Ensure facilities and services are as environmentally sustainable as possible
- The need to manage out the maintenance 'time bomb' of escalating revenue costs[19]

11.6 There are a number of recommendations of the Review pertinent to the enhanced provision of leisure facilities within Chester:

- A new wet and dry sports facility in Chester which incorporates a bespoke *swimming development centre* operated in partnership with Chester Swimming Association (i.e. to replace Chester City Baths).
- A new wet and dry sports facility with extensive fitness provision in Chester which replaces Northgate Arena.

[19] Cheshire West and Chester Council Leisure Stock Review (2010)- Cheshire West and Chester Council, p6

- Maximise the funding opportunities that may be presented as a result of the sale of the Northgate Arena site to contribute to the investment strategy.
- Redevelop Chester City Baths in line with the retention of the heritage aspect of the site.
- Develop a strategic relationship with University of Chester which has aspirations to deliver a range of academies across the Borough plus ambitions which may contribute to the development of major indoor (and playing pitch) facilities in Chester City centre.
- Use the leisure study alongside other work being concluded to inform, and make decisions about the Council's planned response to, surpluses and deficiencies in the provision of playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities. It is important that work is done to dovetail the studies.
- Work with partners in Education (i.e. new government funding/academies/free schools) to ensure that new school developments are designed in such a way that they maximise community use, rather than designing out the opportunity[20].

Tourism

Introduction

11.7 Tourism is an important part of Chester's economy. It generates significant revenues, provides thousands of jobs, supports communities, and helps maintain and improve local assets. The combined Cheshire and Warrington visitor economy is valued at over £1.78 billion and supports 27,041 jobs or 15% of all local employment [21]. Understanding the current context of tourism in Chester will help inform future policy direction to create more viable and sustainable tourism growth in Chester.

[20] Cheshire West and Chester Council Leisure Stock Review (2010)- Cheshire West and Chester Council, p8

[21] Shaping the Future of Chester (2010)- ULI Briefing Document p98

Branding & Place Marketing

11.8 Creating the right image to attract visitors to the City is important in ensuring Chester remains competitive with similar places. A major component of this process involves developing an appropriate branding or place marketing strategy that emphasises the strengths of the location while also providing a framework for future improvements in the tourist experience. Much work has been done on this in the recent past.

Chester Place-Marketing Strategy

11.9 In 2007, the former Chester City Council published a document outlining their vision for Chester in 2015 titled, Chester Place-Marketing Strategy.

11.10 This followed the Chester Culture Park Strategy developed by Chester City Council, which sought to help 'brand' Chester in order to attract more tourists to the area. The aim of the strategy was 'to make Chester a "must see" European City' by 2015'. A major component of this strategy was the concentration of development in distinct zones. These zones were:

- Amphitheatre Park Zone
- The Groves & Riverfront Zone
- Castle Gateway Zone
- Chester Ports & Wharfs Zone
- Gorsestacks Canal-Front Zone
- Cathedral Precincts Zone

11.11 Other specific development aims were the development of a New Chester Museum, Rows Streets Development (Rows Bazaar) and a Waterfront Scenic Route.

11.12 The Chester Place-marketing Strategy supported the aim of the Culture Park Strategy, with the vision: to turn Chester into a "must-see" European destination, an "energy centre" for the economic sub-region, a beacon of a range of quality retail, and a leader in developing world-class solutions to the development of small historic cities. The Chester Place-marketing Strategy sets out 68 actions to be pursued in order to achieve this vision such as urban realm investment; working to achieve transformational change such as riverside development; attracting "signature" restaurants and "boutique" hotels; and a

"night-time strategy" to encourage a range of bars and clubs in order to diversify the entertainment offer[22].

11.13 The Chester Place-Marketing Strategy stressed concern that there was an over-reliance on day visitors and a lack of overnight stays and suggested shifting marketing and development to a different target market of younger overnight visitors. Figures showed that when compared to other historic cities Chester attracts an older range of visitors and measures should be put in place to expand its customer base. Appropriate product development was emphasised as being an important aspect of shifting to a new target market, as they demand higher standards of accommodation, cuisine and entertainment.

11.14 Cheshire West and Chester Council are in the process of establishing a 'Brand Vista' programme to refresh the branding for the City. The One City Plan will inform this process.

Visit Chester and Cheshire

11.15 The organisation currently in charge of marketing Chester is Visit Chester and Cheshire. It is funded by three local authorities and over 400 private sector tourism stakeholders in Cheshire [23]. Their stated mission is:

> *"We will build our tourism industry to generate economic return for all, through our vision, passion, positive action and effective partnership working."*

11.16 They work closely with the Tourism sector – especially hoteliers, transport providers and attractions. One of their key objectives is to make Chester a 2-3 day visitor destination by packaging offers to different attractions to maximise the potential value generated by visits. They conduct marketing campaigns such as Eventful Escapes, which promoted summertime events in Cheshire over the summer of 2010; regularly maintain and update online guides for visitors; and promote tourism investment and other tourism-related activities in Cheshire and Chester.

Shaping the Future of Chester

11.17 In November 2010, the internationally-recognised Urban Land Institute (ULI) was invited to provide advice to Chester on successful ways it can plan for the future. Following the ULI visit the organisation published an initial diagnosis and recommendations presentation, Shaping the Future of Chester as a precursor to a full report scheduled for publishing in February 2011. The ULI established issues for Chester, including that modern visitors want to 'experience' not just listen or read when visiting places, some attractions disappoint

[22] Chester Place Marketing Strategy (June 2006)- Yellow Railroad

[23] Shaping the Future of Chester (Nov 2010) – ULI Briefing Document

(Amphitheatre, 'Castle'), some attractions could be presented better (City Walls, Rows), and the small number of attractions means Chester can be 'seen' in just a few hours[24]. It outlined both short term, low investment solutions and long term, high investment solutions.

11.18 Key tourism-related short term solutions suggested are:

- Integrating university curriculum with key City tourism services such as heritage management, hospitality, museology, preservation and zoo management courses working with their respective industry, thus creating a synergy of training for students and jobs for graduates
- Improving the connection between Zoo and the City Centre (for instance: creating a weekend package "one day City, one day zoo")
- Strengthening pedestrianisation and increasing bicycle usage
- Upgrading the arrival experience into the City at key gateways (e.g. from Chester Station)
- Managing the Rows as a high quality, specialist open-air shopping centre

11.19 The ULI's higher-investment, long-term solutions include:

- Further improving the Public Realm throughout the City centre
- Developing further around the River Dee and creating a focus of activity at the Southern end of the City
- Reintroducing a theatre to the City centre
- Creating a mutli-purpose conference/performing art/exhibition facility
- Supporting the extension to Chester Zoo through its Biodome proposals
- Developing a history experience centre in the City to create a higher quality visitor experience drawing on the City's rich heritage and culture
- Developing Chester Port to make the most of this area of the City and its canal frontage
- Attracting a high quality hotel to the Rows to maximise the utilisation of the upper floors, which are predominantly used for storage by current retail occupiers. The

[24] Shaping the Future of Chester (2010) – ULI Briefing Document

provision of an additional high quality hotel would bolster the City's offer, which is currently limited.

Visitors to Chester

11.20 Visitor figures in 2010 showed increases over those recorded for 2009, which is a positive trend for a City that relies on tourism as a major industry. In 2010 there was an increase in passengers using Virgin Trains between London and Chester of 150,000, due to the introduction of the franchise between Chester and the capital, which is estimated to have boosted the Cheshire economy by £17.9 million[25]. Hotel occupancy figures up to October 2010 show that Chester hotel room occupancy was up 3% points over 2009 numbers, at 70%.

11.21 The following figure shows forward hotel bookings for key events throughout the year and shows the variance between 2009 and 2010. Eleven of the thirteen events experienced an increase on 2009, a positive trend, with the Easter Holidays, showing the largest increase at 24%.

[25] Shaping the Future of Chester-Briefing Document (2010)- ULI Briefing Document, p98

Figure 11.1: Forward Hotel Bookings in Chester – Key Events (2008-10)

Key Events in Chester 2010	2008 Forward Bookings	2009 Forward Bookings	2010 Forward Bookings	2009 – 2010 Variance (% points)	Actual 2009 Occupancy (** indicates 2010 occupancy)	Pickup (Actual)
School Holidays, 12th – 21st Feb	26%	34%	48%	14% UP	**80%	**32%
Easter Holidays, 26th Mar – 12th Apr	33%	24%	48%	24% UP	**67%	**19%
May Day Bank Holiday, 30th Apr – 3rd May	59%	60%	61%	1% UP	**68%	**7%
Chester Races, 5th – 7th May	80%	91%	88%	3% DOWN	**92%	**4%
Chester Races, 22nd May	59%	66%	79%	13% UP	**96%	**17%
School Holidays 28th May – 6th June	34%	35%	43%	8% UP	**74%	**31%
Chester Races, 25th – 26th June	72%	65%	77%	12% UP	**94%	**17%
Chester Races, 9th – 10th July	83%	82%	91%	9% UP	**93%	**2%
Chester Races, 31st July	65%	62%	69%	7% UP	**97%	**28%
Chester Races, 21st August	49%	75%	77%	2% UP	**98%	**21%
Chester Races, 10th – 11th September	54%	74%	77%	3% UP	**88%	10%
Chester Races, 25th September	57%	68%	78%	10% UP	**98%	20%
Summer Holidays, 20th July – 1st September	53%	77%	75%	2% DOWN	**75%	0%

Source: Visit Chester & Cheshire, October 2010

11.22 Cheshire continues to remain popular with visitors ranking number 9 on a recently published list of UK's most popular towns and cities for a leisure break (excluding London). However it is notable that it is outranked by comparable historic towns such as York and Bath, and other nearby cities Liverpool and Manchester [26].

11.23 A survey of day, overnight UK, and overseas visitors to Chester conducted in 2008-09 revealed the characteristics of Chester that most impressed them. High on the list were: character of the historic town, architecture/buildings, short walking distances, and City Walls. Low on the list were: river/riverside, the whole City, and green spaces/gardens. This demonstrates the current weaknesses to the City as perceived by visitors, and suggests that improvements to the River Dee waterside and green spaces would heighten the visitor experience.

[26] Ideas for Place Shaping in Chester (Sept 2009)- Locum Consulting

Chester's Assets

Historic and Heritage Assets

11.24 **The Amphitheatre** contains the remains of the largest stone built Roman military Amphitheatre outside Italy, and dates to the 1st century. It is a Grade 1 listed building and a scheduled monument. It attracts thousands of visitors each year – with educational demonstrations given on a daily basis to school children.

11.25 **The City Walls** are the most complete circuit of Roman, Saxon, and medieval City Walls in Great Britain and run for 2 miles. They were built for defensive purposes to protect the strategically important City of Chester. Most of the Walls are medieval and Victorian although the earliest surviving sections date back to at least 120AD. A recent study concluded that the Walls make a significant economic contribution to the City – acting as a draw for visitors and resultantly creating an annual economic contribution exceeding £24million and directly/indirectly supporting over 370 full-time equivalent jobs[27].

11.26 **The Cathedral** has been a centre of worship for the City since 1541 and represents all major styles of medieval architecture from Norman to Perpendicular. The Cathedral Quarter includes buildings in the North-Eastern quarter of the City within the Walls, is bounded by Northgate Street and St. Werburgh's Street, and cuts into the centre of Chester, between the Rows shopping area and the soon to be regenerated Northgate Project and the emerging Gorse Stacks area[28].

11.27 Unfortunately, many of the buildings and sites in the Cathedral Quarter are unused and vacant. The Cathedral Quarter offers much more potential than is currently being utilised. To realise this potential a partnership has been formed consisting of Cheshire West and Chester Council, English Heritage, and Chester Renaissance, and are currently preparing a vision for the Quarter. The first phase includes the Public Realm area to the South of the Cathedral and links to the Walls, Northgate Street and Eastgate Street, the Cathedral at Heights. It will address entrance and exit issues, lighting, concert staging, and development of a café. Economic impact assessment undertaken by Cheshire West and Chester Council estimates that the first phase of investment in the Cathedral has the potential to lead to an increase of 130,000 visitors a year to the Cathedral and spending by £1.04 million.

11.28 A planning application for the first phase of works is currently being considered by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

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[27] Chester's City walls and Towers Competitiveness Study (October 2009) Jura Consultants

[28] Shaping the Future of Chester- (2010)- ULI Briefing Document

11.29 **The Rows:** the City's central shopping area include its unique Rows (two levels of shops) which date from medieval times. The Rows, found in each of the four main streets are unique as nothing precisely comparable exists anywhere else in the world. Chester Rows are a major tourist attraction in the City because of their unique nature, their attractive appearance, and the covered shopping experience they provide.

11.30 **The Castle** built in 1070 by Hugh Lupus the first Earl of Chester with a range of neoclassical buildings. It stands on an eminence overlooking the River Dee and part of the building is used as a military museum. Both the museum and medieval remains are tourist attractions.

Chester Zoo

11.31 The Chester Zoo has been a leading conservation organisation for over 75 years. It hosts 150,000 school visits per year and facilities 500,000 direct public contacts via education presentations, thus providing Chester with a large amount of educational tourism[29]. In addition to attracting schoolchildren and educational providers, it provides an international training centre for veterinary surgeons, conservationists, biologists and environmental scientists, marketers, social scientists and others, attracting a range of wealthy tourists, whose presence helps further benefit the tourism industry.

11.32 Aside from education and professional tourism, Chester Zoo is a major UK tourist attractions. Attendance to the Zoo is high and it is already the 2nd largest paid visitor attraction in the UK (ALVA) and the most visited wildlife attraction in the UK. The Zoo has developed a comprehensive masterplan, for which planning permission was received from Cheshire West and Chester City Council in September 2010. The Zoo's comprehensive masterplan to deliver expansion and a 'Biodome' facility is projected to further increase visitor numbers to the attraction, with the potential for Chester to capitalise on this opportunity by developing greater linkages and synergies with the Zoo. It expects visitor numbers to increase from 1.4m to 1.8m at the end of Phase 1 (2015) and 2.1m when the full masterplan (2024) is complete.

Chester Races

11.33 Chester Racecourse is the oldest racecourse in the UK and one of the oldest in the world, with the first recorded race held on February 9th, 1539. With this long history, Chester Races are a natural draw for horseracing enthusiasts around the world. Recent investment of over £10m over recent years has seen a major upgrading of facilities particularly with the development of the Pavilion facility, Restaurant 1539 and Paddock redevelopment [30].

[29] Shaping the Future of Chester- (2010)- ULI Briefing Document

[30] Shaping the Future of Chester- (2010)- ULI Briefing Document

11.34 Attendance is strong and for 2010 averaged 23,000 for 13 days, with the highest attendance 43,000 on the Sunday Funday event in August 31. Saturday race meetings bring an additional £1.2 million in tourism revenue for Chester in terms of hotel room bookings and spend in bars, restaurants and retail outlets. The racecourse employs approximately 85 full time staff and over 1,000 part time on a race day providing important local employment opportunities.

11.35 To maximise visitor accessibility and numbers, as well as minimise disruption for local residents it will be important to consider effective travel management strategies for race days and other events in the City.

Recreation

11.36 Following the securing of funding from 'Sustrans' as part of the national Connect 2 Initiative in 2008, Cheshire West and Chester City Council are currently running Chester as a Cycle Demonstration Town. Through this, the City has adopted the 'Cycle Chester' brand an ambitious initiative of improvements to the City that will encourage cycling in Chester. The programme includes development of cycling infrastructure, training, and participative events. The aim is to make cycling the most obvious transport choice for journeys around Chester. Encouraging cycling is a key objective of the Culture Park Strategy to boost Chester's appeal, and offer, to tourists by adding cycling to their to-do lists when visiting Chester. Promotion of cycling events may also draw more people to Chester to participate in the events.

11.37 The Groves is a river side walk on the bank of the River Dee which starts at the end of Lower Bridge Street and finishes near Grosvenor Park. It is an attractive waterfront location for both tourists and local residents, which offers boat rides, rowing boats for hire, a band stand, and the opportunity to sit and have a light refreshment. The Groves has seen recent, and ongoing investment, in the paving sets, lighting and seating to provide an upgraded Public Realm and amenity along the River Dee frontage.

11.38 The River Dee itself is a popular place for recreation. It is particularly popular amongst local rowing teams, with local schools and clubs utilising the watercourse. It also offers opportunities for boating, cruising, strolling, alfresco art, and riverside cafes and bars.

11.39 The current issue with the River Dee is its dislocation from the City centre, with Wayfinding to the Groves area challenging given limited directional signage at present. This makes it an under-utilised asset for the City. Easier access will make the area more attractive to tourists.

[31] Shaping the Future of Chester- (2010)- ULI Briefing Document

11.40 Next to the River Dee is Grosvenor Park. Chester as a City is limited in its available greenspace for recreation and leisure. Grosvenor Park forms the principal recreational greenspace within the City. The park consists of 20 acres of land overlooking the River Dee. It is regarded as one of the finest examples of Victorian parks in the North West. It possesses ornamental flower beds, arches, grassed areas, trees, footpaths and a reputedly magical well.

11.41 Cheshire West and Chester Council has produced a Masterplan for the upgrade of the park to significantly raise the standard and breadth of its offer. The masterplan to improve the park includes aims such as enhancing linkages between Grosvenor Park, the City Centre, and the River Dee; providing new recreational opportunities for both children and adults; and improving viewpoints and the general Public Realm.

11.42 HLF funding has been applied for to implement the Masterplan, which is currently progressing. As the park further improves and builds on its strong reputation, its role as an destination for relaxation and recreation for both local residents and tourists will increase.

11.43 The Roman Gardens offer another opportunity for relaxation and learning about Chester's rich history, especially well suited for visitors following a stroll along The Walls. The Roman Gardens were built in 1949 exposing original Roman architecture and artefacts and now represent the best outdoor collection of Roman architectural pieces in the UK.

11.44 Following a collapse in The Walls elsewhere in the City all vegetation was removed against the Walls including parts of the Roman Garden. The Gardens therefore need to be regenerated and a scheme is being prepared. At the same time the Civic Trust are developing proposals for a new mosaic to be provided in the Gardens.

Bringing the Evidence Together

Leisure

11.45 The Cheshire West and Chester Council Leisure Stock Review was published in August 2010, identifying the strategic leisure needs in Cheshire West and Chester. Among drivers of this were the need to address health and wellbeing inequalities, the need to provide clear pathways to excellence for athletes, and the need to manage ease of access to facilities. The two main recommendations of the review involved the respective reconstruction or replacement of two existing major leisure facilities in Chester: Chester Baths and Northgate Arena. Among other recommendations are that the Council works with the Education department to ensure new school developments are designed to maximise community use, and to enhance working arrangements with the University of Chester to develop indoor facilities and playing pitches.

Tourism

11.46 As explored within the culture section, a large element of Chester's appeal is its rich history and heritage. Chester is also diversifying its offer though an increasing number of events. Chester Races is a big draw with substantial local economic benefits provided on each race day. Expansion plans of the Zoo are projected to further boost visitor numbers, and marketing of the City to link more closely with the zoo should further emphasise that Chester has more to offer the visitor than its heritage alone.

12. Movement & Accessibility

Introduction

12.1 This section provides a summary by mode of the baseline transport conditions prevalent within Chester (and in particular it's City Centre) and presents the evidence visually where appropriate. The objective is to identify a set of key issues for the City which the One City Plan should seek to adjust in order to ensure a Chester accessible for all with few or no barriers to movement and no transport related social exclusion, and developments which make accessibility a primary function.

12.2 The following sub-sections review the baseline situation with regard to traffic and parking, public transport, and walking and cycling. This is felt to be an appropriate 'key-mode by mode' basis for review. The main findings are summarised in a concluding sub-section that brings the evidence together.

12.3 The analysis is based on findings from datasets primarily supplied by the Council, key related strategy and review documents, and a qualitative assessment of the City centre and its environs – based on movement 'tours'.

Traffic Flows and Parking

12 hour Traffic Flows

12.4 In order to better understand traffic flow levels into Chester City Centre over the course of a typical working day and a typical Sunday, 12 hour (07:00 – 19:00) traffic flow data was obtained for each of the major radial routes of A540 Parkgate Road, A5116 Liverpool Road, A56 Hoole Road, A51 Boughton Road, A548 Sealand Road and A483 Wrexham Road. The data used has been collected in October 2010 and comprises a mixture of Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) data from permanent sites, and manual classified turning counts at key junctions around the City. This data is clearly indicative in nature as any historic 'snapshot' of information inevitably is.

12.5 Figure 12.1 shows the 12 hour traffic flows counted on key links around the City for an average weekday. It is colour coded with 'colder' colours representing lower daily flows and 'warmer' colours representing higher. As expected the inner ring road of Nicholas Street, St Martin's Way and St Oswald's Way have the highest recorded flows within the OCP defined central area, with the Western section of Boughton Road recording significant two-way flows due to

it being at the confluence of three radial routes. The fourth arm of the ring road (Pepper Street et al) appears to have substantially lower daily flows although more significant in the Eastbound direction than the Southbound.

12.6 Of the radial routes into the City Centre, the A483 Wrexham / Grosvenor Road has the most significant flows accounting for nearly a quarter (24%) of the total. Other significant inbound routes are the A5116 Liverpool Road (15%), A56 Hoole Road (14%), A548 Sealand Road (14%), and A551 Christleton Road (12%).

12.7 Figure 12.2 shows the same information for the 12 hour period on a typical Sunday. Flows are, in general, 25% lower than for the equivalent average weekday period – this reduction factor was applied in cases where flow data was not available for Sunday. Reflecting upon the data available, the A483 Wrexham / Grosvenor Road is still the most significant contributor to City centre traffic.

Figure 12.1: 12 Hour Traffic Flows – Average Weekday

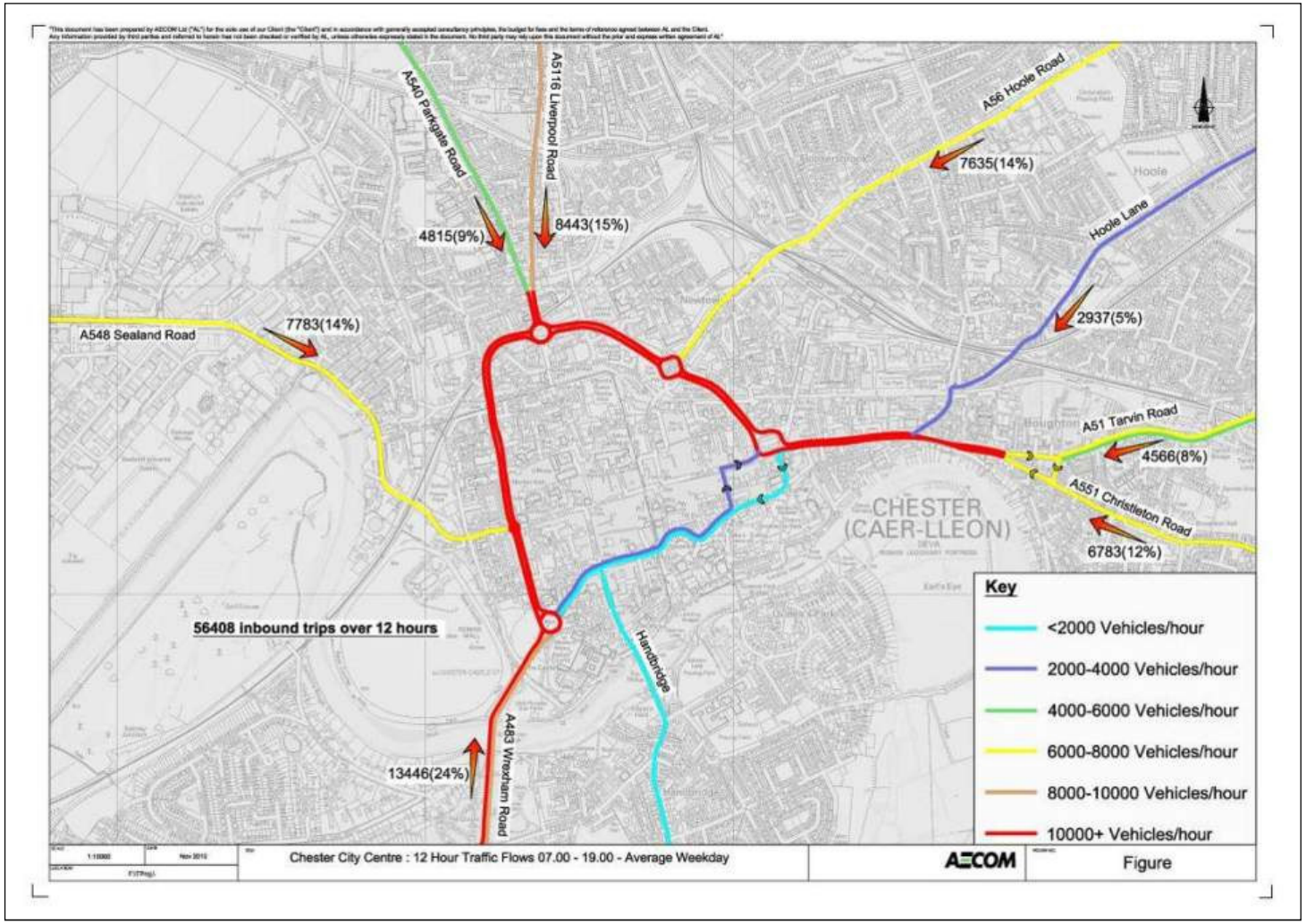
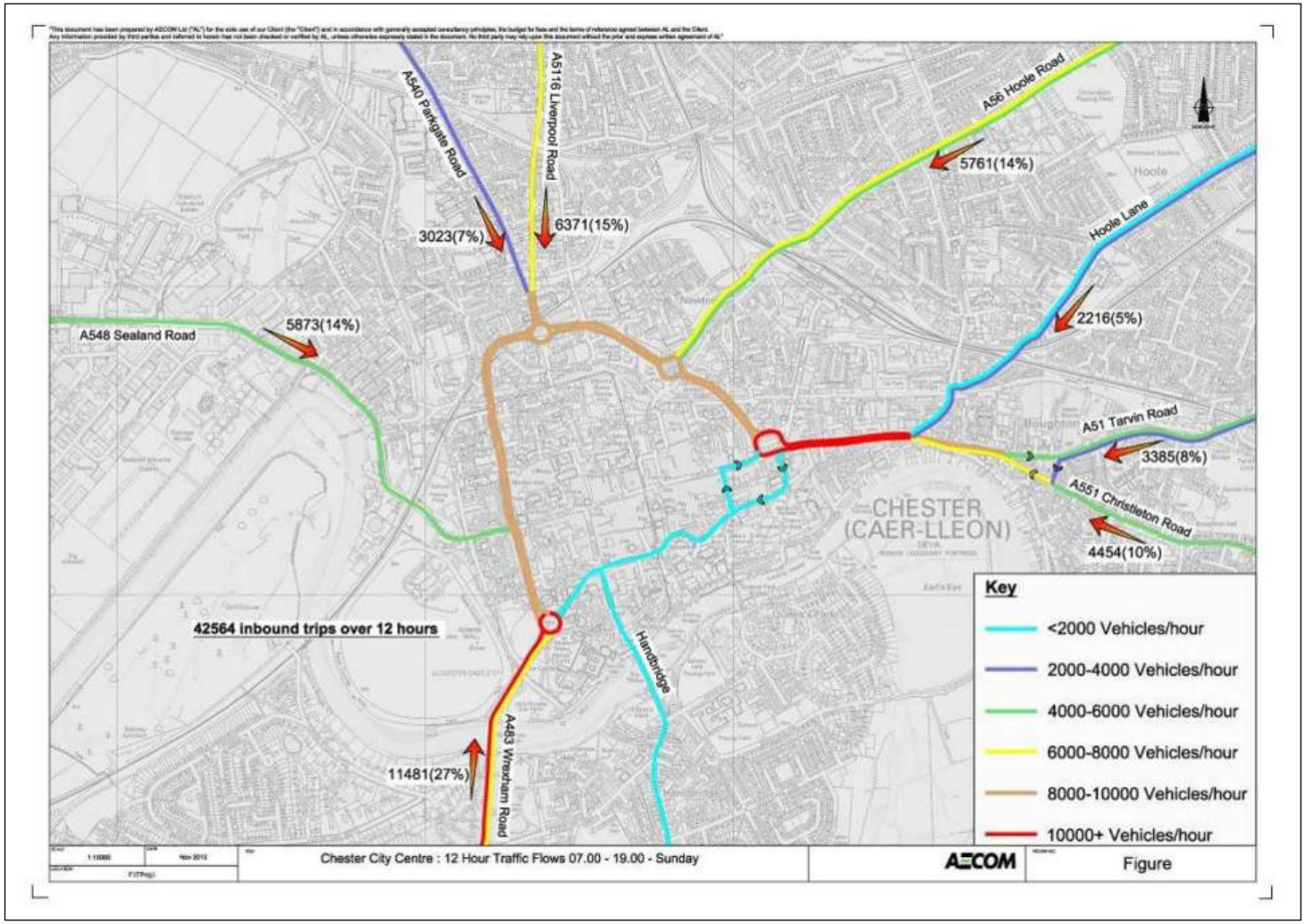


Figure 12.2: 12 Hour Traffic Flows – Sunday



12.8 Flows on all links are in this case below 10,000 vehicles per hour apart from on the Grosvenor Road inbound link and at the confluence of the routes on Boughton Road. There are two key perceived reasons why flows are not significantly lower on a Sunday than a weekday – these being the strong retail and tourism draw of Chester and potentially that capacity of approaches over key physical barriers of River and Railway already start to 'cap' weekday volumes.

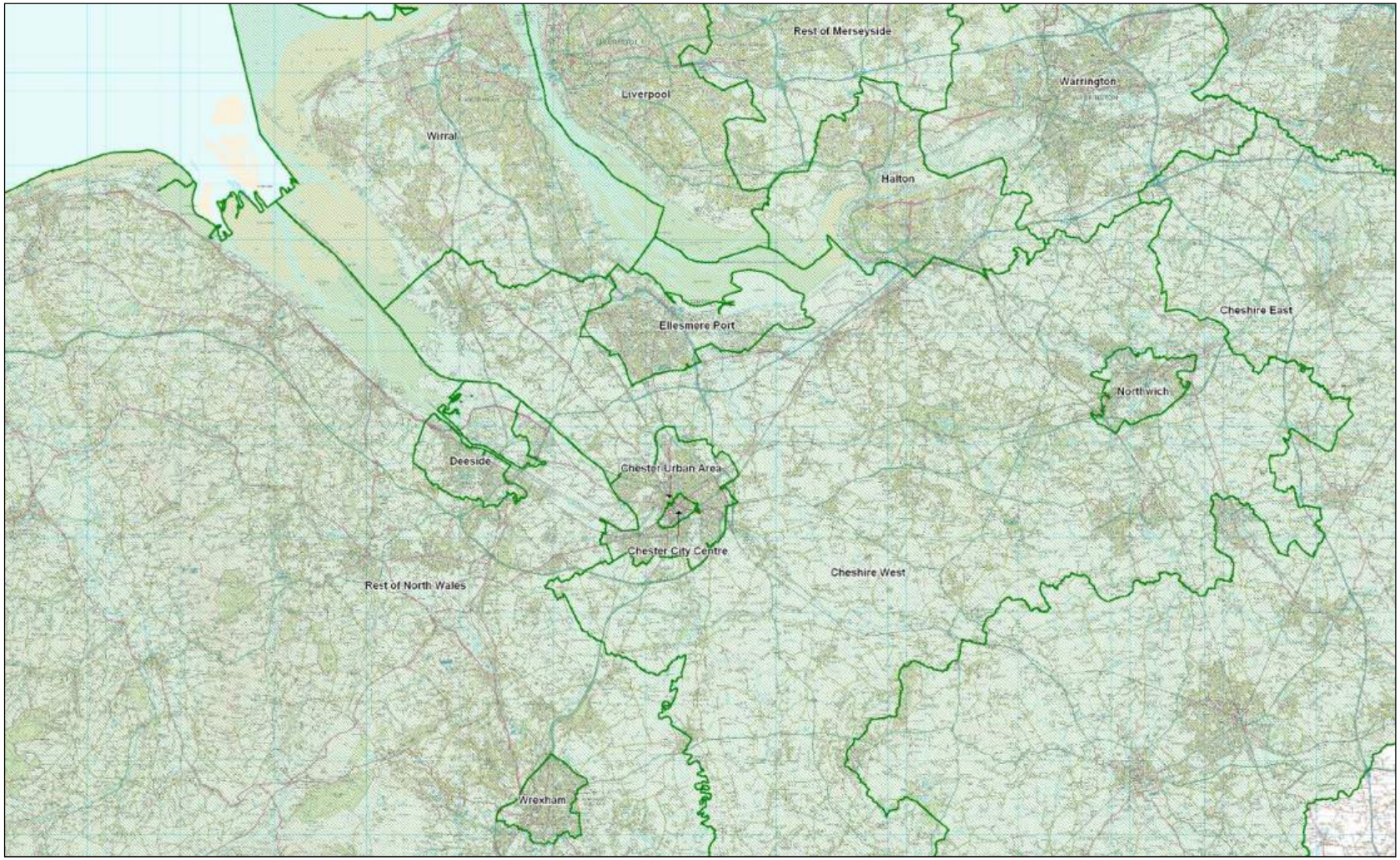
Journey to Work Data

12.9 Chester's inbound and outbound commuter trips were investigated using a Journey to Work analysis and data from the 2001 census. Although now somewhat dated, this is the most recent data available for analysis at this scale, and is useful in illustrating the relative splits between destinations.

12.10 Four separate datasets were investigated to provide a balanced consideration. Trips into and out of Chester Urban Area as a whole (including the City Centre) and trips into and out of the City Centre only. A zoning system was developed which identified the key neighbouring localities of Ellesmere Port, Deeside, Wrexham, Cheshire East and the rest of the Cheshire West and Chester authority area. Additional zones from further afield were also included and these were Wirral, Liverpool and the rest of Merseyside, the rest of North Wales, Greater Manchester, Warrington and Halton.

12.11 The zones are presented in Figure 10.3 reproduced overleaf. The Urban Area is defined as the area encompassing the urban grain of Chester's development whereas the City Centre is defined as per the One City Plan (as set out in Section 1). This data is supplied here as 'all modes' although further in-depth analysis is possible on a 'by mode' basis–for example there is a very high percentage of rail usage from the Wirral (17%) compared to from other areas, this felt to be a result of the good service frequencies. From the 'rest of the country' 7% travel to Chester by rail, felt to be a reasonable proportion but one upon which increases are potentially possible.

Figure 12.3: Zoning Plan for Chester and Environs


Rest of Merseyside
Warrington
Liverpool
Wirral
Halton
Cheshire East
Ellesmere Port
Northwich
Deeside
Chester Urban Area
Chester City Centre
Cheshire West
Rest of North Wales
Wrexham

Work Trips to Chester Urban Area

12.12 Of the 47,397 work trips terminating within Chester Urban Area each day, 44% also originate within the urban area. This implies that 56% of the jobs within Chester are held by people who reside outside of the urban area and therefore must travel significant distances each day. The largest source of travel to employment in Chester is from the North Wales zone (excluding Wrexham and Deeside), which supplies 17% of the employees and who are anticipated to arrive primarily via the A55, A494 and North Wales rail corridors. Also of significance is the rest of the Cheshire West and Chester authority area comprising Helsby, Frodsham, Northwich and the rural areas which supply 14% of employees. Ellesmere Port, Wirral and Deeside are also important but the travel-to-work functional relationship with Wrexham is, surprisingly, quite unimportant and is of no more significance than Liverpool, Manchester or Warrington which are significantly further afield.

12.13 This information is shown in **Figure 1 of Appendix 1.**

Work Trips from Chester Urban Area

12.14 Of the 37,782 commuter trips that originate within Chester Urban Area each day, 55% of these travel to work also within the Urban Area. The remaining 45% travel to areas outside of the Chester area. Of these 11% travel to other destinations within Cheshire West and Chester authority area, 10% travel to destinations in North Wales excluding Wrexham and Deeside, with 4% travelling to Ellesmere Port and 6% travelling to Merseyside including Wirral and Liverpool. 3% also travel to work in Greater Manchester. Wrexham again demonstrated a limited functional relationship, as did Deeside, with only around 1% of trips from the Urban Area travelling to these destinations.

12.15 This information is shown in **Figure 2 of Appendix 1.**

Work Trips to Chester City Centre

12.16 The next stage of analysis involves the further disaggregation of Chester to reveal the City Centre as defined by the One City Plan, so as to understand the proportion of journeys into and out of the Central Business District. Of the 23,229 work trips into Chester City Centre each day, only 4% of these originate within the City Centre itself. This reflects the relatively low level of housing, and thus population, within the central zone itself and highlights the existing requirement to travel into the City Centre for employment purposes. The area supplying the largest proportion of employees is again North Wales (excluding Wrexham and Deeside) which provides 19% of the

workforce. Cheshire West and Chester authority area is the next largest with 15% and Ellesmere Port, Wirral and Deeside supply 8%, 5% and 3% respectively.

12.17 Importantly, 64% of workers arrive either as car driver or passenger primarily using the five key radial routes. Bearing in mind the retail and office nature of Chester City Centre these are likely to arrive during a 2 hour peak period. Around 13,300 vehicles arrive in the City Centre primarily during the peak. The five key radials each have a two way 'theoretical' capacity of 13000 vehicles per day, therefore equating to a one way 'in' capacity of around 32500 vehicles.

12.18 With over 33% of inbound trips arriving in the congested AM peak hours, it is clear that in order to accommodate more visitors, peak hour arrivals must be distributed more evenly throughout the morning via 'peak spreading' and consideration must be given to non-car modes for both commuters and visitors. Indeed buses already equate to a strong 18% of employment access.

12.19 The analysis reveals that the cap on 'inward' capacity is the five key radials not the Inner Ring Road. There are primarily two ways of increasing capacity–build more roadway and expand the existing radial provision, or promote and encourage other modes of access. The former is unlikely to be viable, since there is limited room on or around the radial corridors to add extra lanes throughout. Indeed this analysis also helps explain why observationally the ring road operates in a manner of stopping at key junctions but relatively fast sections in between rather than as 'a slow crawl' throughout.

12.20 This information is shown in **Figure 3 of Appendix 1.**

Work Trips from Chester City Centre

12.21 Considering work trips originating within Chester City Centre, these were substantially fewer than the number of employees travelling inward. Only 1,864 trips started in the City Centre, again representing the relatively small housing stock in this zone. Of those that did, 45% travelled to work elsewhere in the City Centre, while 11% travelled elsewhere in the Cheshire West and Chester authority area and 8% travelled outwards to North Wales excluding Wrexham and Deeside.

12.22 3% of employees travelled to Wirral, Liverpool and the Rest of Merseyside, Ellesmere Port and Greater Manchester respectively. Relatively few trips were made to Deeside or Wrexham once again showing the relatively low importance of this destination in providing work for Chester residents.

12.23 This information is shown in Figure 4 of Appendix 1.

Parking Stock

12.24 As noted in the previous sub-section, Chester City Centre provides around 23,000 employment opportunities with only around 4% of these arriving from within the City Centre (and therefore presumably able to walk). As such, there is currently a high demand for inbound transport and, in particular, on the highway network and parking stock.

12.25 Chester currently has 20 main car parking areas and a total parking capacity of 5162 spaces not including on-street or private non-residential (PNR) spaces. Ownership of these varies from the council itself to large retailers such as Tesco to event specific facilities such as the Race Course car park. Bearing in mind 13,000 people drive into the City Centre for employment purposes this level of supply shows the impact of PNR supply on attracting people into the City Centre. Indeed many public car parks are observed by AECOM as not being at capacity during a typical weekday and therefore although public supply is available the proportion of PNR appears extremely high at around double or more the public spaces. Many of these are likely to be small car parks at or around individual properties and therefore difficult to manage in a co-ordinated manner.

12.26 In addition to these there is also a temporary parking facility located at Linenhall and accessed off St Martins Way.

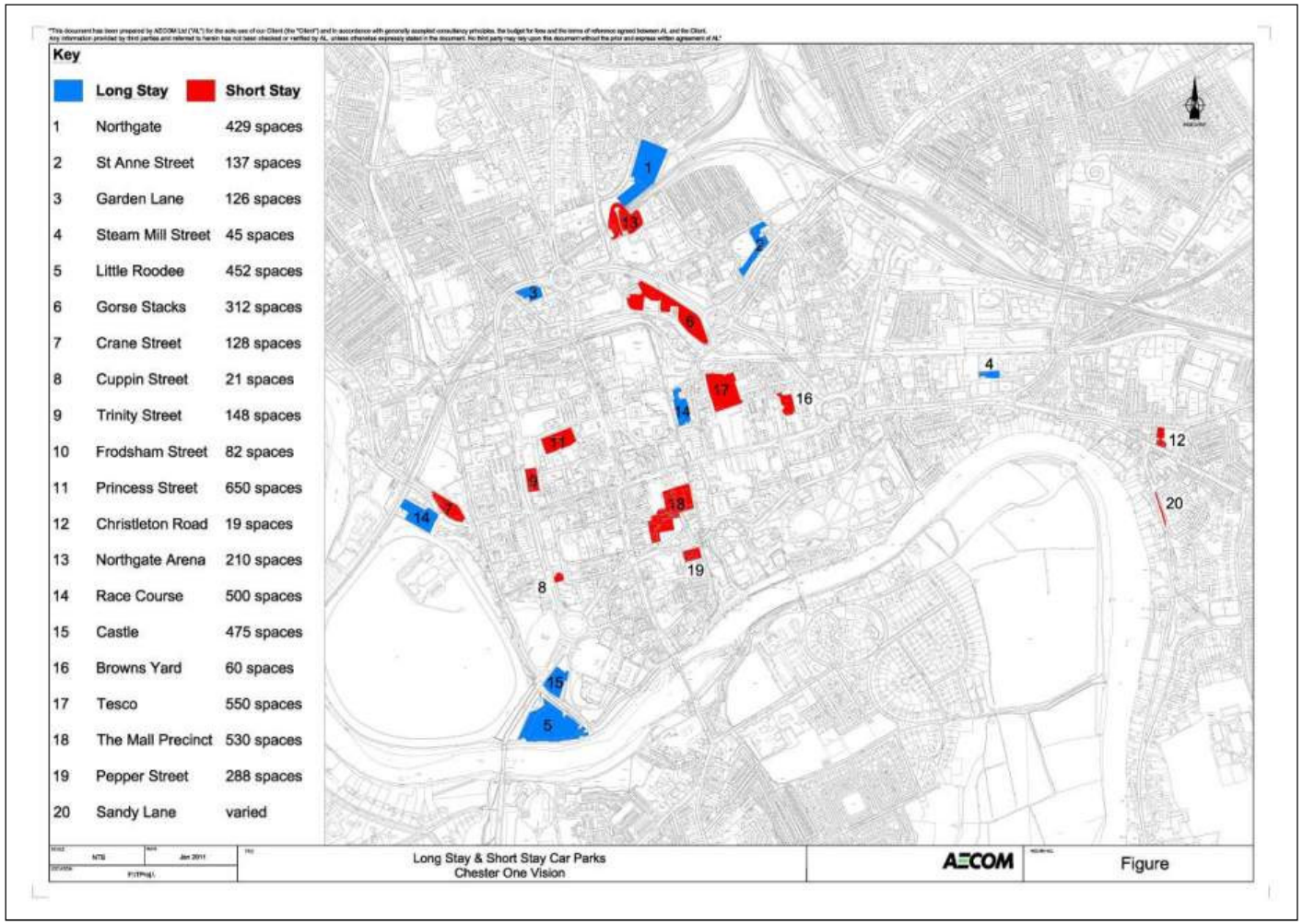
12.27 The following figure summarises Chester's parking stock and provides details of the 20 main car parking facilities. Car parking caters for both short and long stay parking with several facilities open 24 hours a day. Despite this, anecdotal evidence from the One City Plan Stage 1 stakeholder engagement event (held 1st December 2010) suggests a deficiency in parking availability and ease of access with many additional vehicle miles added to the network due to the need to circulate and look for parking space.

Figure 12.4: Chester City Centre Parking Stock

Car Park	Long / Short Stay	Number of Spaces	Hours of Opening	Ownership
Northgate	Long	429	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
St Anne Street	Long	137	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
Garden Lane	Long	126	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
Steam Mill Street	Long	45	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
Little Roodee	Long	452	07:30 - 22:30	Cheshire West and Chester
Frodsham Street	Long	82	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
Race Course	Long	500	Racedays only	Private
Castle	Long	475	Weekdays after 18:00 All day Sat and Sun	Cheshire West and Chester
Gorse Stacks	Short	312	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
Crane Street	Short	128	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
Cuppin Street	Short	21	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
Trinity Street	Short	148	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
Princess Street	Short	650	06:30 - 23:30	Cheshire West and Chester
Christleton Road	Short	19	24 hours	Cheshire West and Chester
Northgate Arena	Short	210	Arena opening hours	Private
Browns Yard	Short	60	07:30 - 18:30	Private
Tesco	Short	550	Tesco opening hours	Private
The Mall Precinct	Short	530	Precinct opening hours	Private
Pepper Street	Short	288	07:30 - 22:30	Private
Sandy Lane	Short	Varies Seasonally	24 hours	Private
	Minimum Total	**5162**		

12.28 The location of each of the car parks is shown on the following extracted plan produced by the Council which also highlights ownership and availability of disabled parking space.

Figure 12.5: Chester City Centre Car Park Locations



12.29 The geographical spread of the car parking facilities is quite wide, but there are relatively few directly accessible from the Inner Ring Road system, with journeys into the central core required to access many spaces. This can add to congestion within the centre and greatly increase journey time, especially if there is no space at the first choice location requiring further searching for a suitable space.

12.30 Electronic variable message (VMS) parking signage has reduced this issue by a certain amount, however the relatively limited number of these and the lack of infrastructure further away from the City centre continues to pose a problem. In addition, it is noted that future proposals point to a net loss of parking spaces within local authority control, which may result in a reduction of spaces within the City centre that are available for all and accessible throughout the day. This issue will only serve to exacerbate the issue and compound the problem of locating an available and appropriate space.

12.31 There is also an existing covenant to provide public parking space within the identified Central Business District area of the City to the North East of the Bars. This facility is almost completely unsigned however and consequently is very lightly used by the public. It will be a requirement of the One City Plan to provide significant car parking space in this location to serve not only the CBD during working hours, but also the wider City centre throughout the week. The Boughton Road corridor is one of the most significant in terms of traffic flow and there would be great advantage to using this area to capture traffic prior to its arrival at the Bars gyratory and the Inner Relief Road system.

12.32 Parking spaces for people with limited mobility are spread around the City Centre with some available in most of the car parks listed above. It will be an important part of the future parking strategy to ensure that this is maintained and remains fully accessible at each of the key parking locations, including, where appropriate, within the City centre retail core. A method by which this could be achieved is via better on-street parking controls to provide high quality disabled on-street parking at locations near to key City Centre attractors.

12.33 In addition to its public City Centre car parks, Chester operates a comprehensive and popular Park and Ride system from four sites located around the outer edge of the urban area and totalling 3170 parking spaces. Each of these facilities offers free parking and fast, frequent bus transport into the City centre, partially via routes with bus priority measures such as bus lanes and selective vehicle priority at traffic lights. Park and Ride has been successful enough in Chester to expand to its current four site extent with a fifth site planned to serve the North East of the City, and consequently it has helped to reduce the number of car trips into and out of the City centre. Despite this and similar to other comparator cities, Park and Ride is still primarily used by tourists and visitors rather than by the local population or the City's workforce. It will be a key

part of the One City Plan to expand this system further to accommodate these trips, providing an efficient peak time alternative to the private car and also to better serve outbound local residents via integrated schemes such as cycle and car hire etc. In this way the facilities can be made outward looking as well as serving the traditional inbound tourism catchment.

Accidents

12.34 Of the 336 injury accidents occurring within the City Centre, 293 (87%) resulted in slight injuries, whilst 43 (13%) were more serious although there were no fatalities. In total 75 accidents resulted in injury to at least one pedestrian representing 22% of the total, and of these 60 (80%) were slight whilst 15 (20%) were more serious.

12.35 Injury accidents are clustered along the main radial routes into the City Centre (particularly along the A56 Hoole Road) and around the Inner Ring Road system which is logical since these are the links with some of the highest traffic flows. There are, however significant numbers of collisions within the City core including along Foregate Street, Werburgh Street and Northgate.

12.36 The large roundabouts on the inner ring road including the Bars gyratory are focal points for accidents. In addition the junctions of A5268 Pepper Street / Bridge Street, A483 Grosvenor Road / A5104 Hough Green and A548 New Crane Street / A5268 St Martins Way have clusters of accidents adjacent and nearby (although a trial road safety scheme is currently being implemented at the latter to assist right turners and link with the Cycle England scheme). Of more concern is the number of serious injury accidents occurring at two smaller junctions around the ring road – at the junction of A5268 St Oswalds Way / St Anne Street, and St Martins Way / Princess Street (the bus station egress onto the ring road), each of these involving serious collisions with pedestrians. This is clear evidence of the severance to movement created by the inner ring road system and the barrier it presents to pedestrians, the lack of crossing points in convenient locations encouraging more dangerous uncontrolled movements which can result in accidents.

12.37 The accident analysis would appear to highlight the associated safety cost of allowing such heavy traffic flows into the City Centre and historic City core (within the Walls), in particular within the area constrained by the Inner Ring Road system. The ring road itself is acting as a significant barrier to pedestrian access and within its circumference conflicts are occurring between heavy traffic flows and other road users including a high pedestrian and cycle demand. Some of the key routes (including in particular Pepper Street) have the potential for treatment to reduce the dominance of vehicular traffic and make them more suitable for pedestrians and cyclists etc and this is to be encouraged wherever possible.

12.38 **Figure 5 of Appendix 1** shows spatially the location of personal injury accidents in the City Centre within the last three years. Each point is either a green circle (representing a slight injury accident) or a blue square (representing a serious injury accident). In addition, accidents involving at least one pedestrian are denoted with a red border around the point.

Public Transport

Bus Routes

12.39 In total, Chester City Centre is served by 52 distinct bus route groups which generally radiate outwards from a small number of locations in Chester City Centre to a wide variety of destinations both locally and further afield within North West England and North Wales. The vast majority of routes serve one or both of the two primary bus hubs in Chester – the Bus Exchange and Frodsham/Foregate Street.

12.40 Figure 6 in Appendix 1 summarises the bus provision in Chester City Centre and the daytime frequencies of each service during a working weekday and a Sunday. Figures 7 to 10 in Appendix 1 also show the routeing of each of these services in the wider Chester region and within the City Centre. The geographical spread of services is excellent, however, the frequencies on some of the routes are low and unsuitable for 'turn up and go' style public transport use.

City Centre Bus Services

12.41 Within the City Centre, buses generally follow a prescribed routeing and gyrate around the bus hubs in a single direction. Figures 11.6 and 11.7 show the roads which are used as bus routes in the City Centre and highlight the relative frequencies of services along each link during a weekday daytime and during a Sunday daytime using a 'cold to hot' colouring system with cold representing low frequency of services. The two primary bus hubs are shown clearly on these diagrams as two loops of high bus service accessibility.

12.42 The main conclusions are:

- Bus routes are concentrated to the North of the City Centre with the busiest sections comprising the two bus hub gyratories and the section of the Inner Ring Road connecting them;
- The Bus Exchange and Frodsham Street / Foregate Street are both served by more than 50 services per hour during weekdays. The exact numbers are 55 per

hour through the Bus Exchange and 62 per hour through Frodsham and Foregate Streets;

- Bus service levels are significantly lower on Sundays with no area on the network served by more than 20 buses per hour. The rail station is also poorly served on a Sunday with no City Rail Link services and fewer scheduled services than during the working week.

12.43 There is no bus penetration into the majority of the historic core and poor integration between the two bus hubs requiring long walks on foot to interchange. Similarly to the daily traffic flow figures, the A483 Grosvenor Road is the most important entry corridor with 21 buses per hour arriving from this direction during the week, closely followed by the A5116 Liverpool Road with 19. Other corridors supply substantially fewer services although it should be noted that the A51 Boughton Road provides a combined total from three corridors of 9 services per hour during the working week.

12.44 While bus patronage for employment trips is relatively good at 18% modal share it is clear that Chester has potential to think beyond traditional bus based transport systems, and something that cities of comparable size in Europe have done. It is clear that the combination of upgrading buses and stop infrastructure with high quality cross City routes and priority can change the image of public transport in the City and bring about substantial mode shift. Links to the rail station and to existing Park and Ride networks will be a key part of the One City Plan, as will the creation of a strategy for rural public transport linked with Park and Ride.

12.45 Coach services provision within the City centre must also be improved as part of the One City Plan. At present, coaches drop passengers at a stop adjacent to the Roman Amphitheatre however links from this location to the main City core are poorly signed and impermeable and there is no accommodation for coaches to layover. Given that a substantial number of Chester visitors arrive by coach, consideration should be given to finding a suitable site for a bespoke coach facility providing coach parking, travel information and waiting accommodation. There is the potential to upgrade facilities at the Little Roodee site to provide this, however if this is not to be the location of such a facility in future, another appropriate site should be identified at the earliest opportunity.

Figure 12.6: Bus Routes into Chester City Centre – Monday to Friday

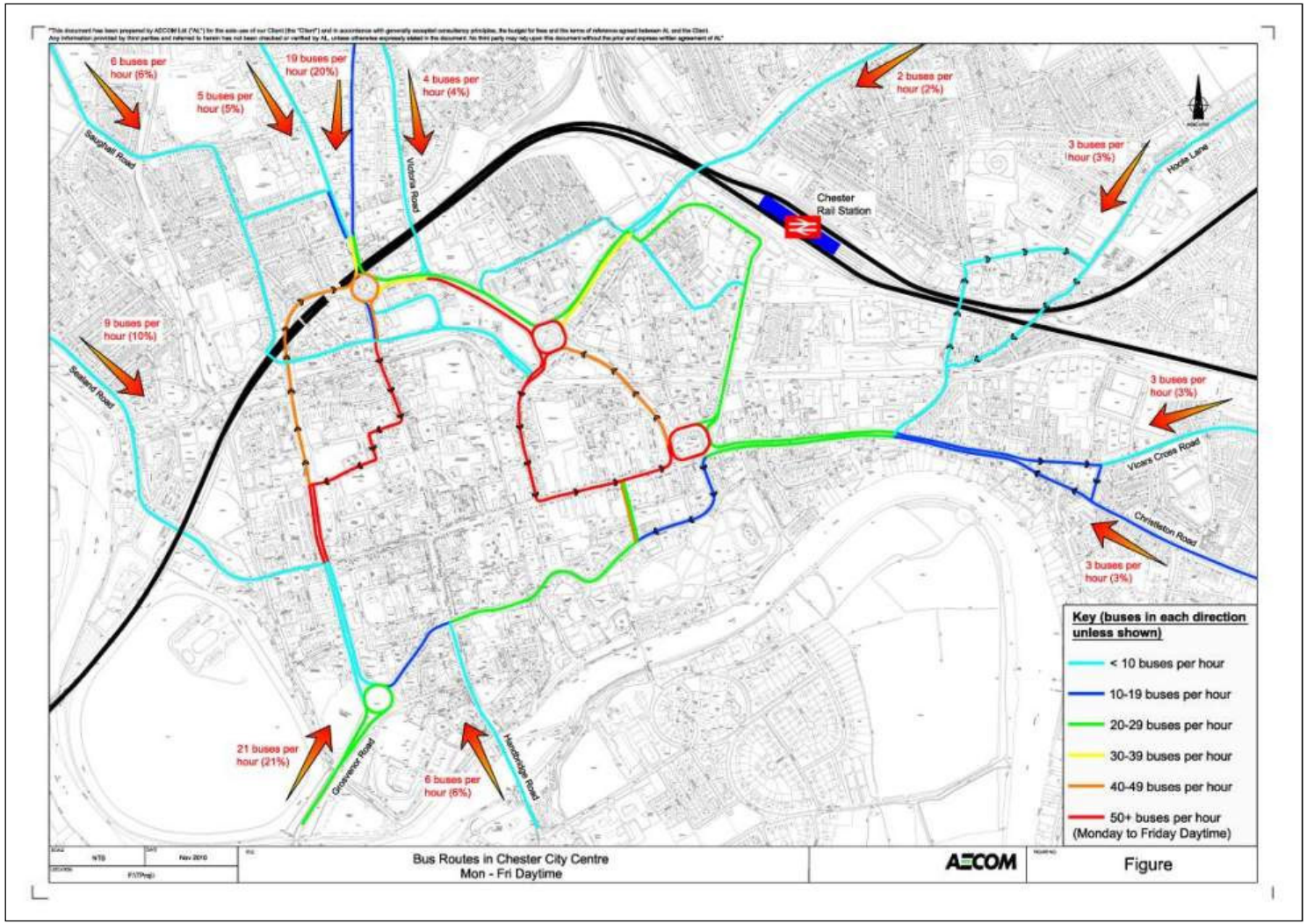
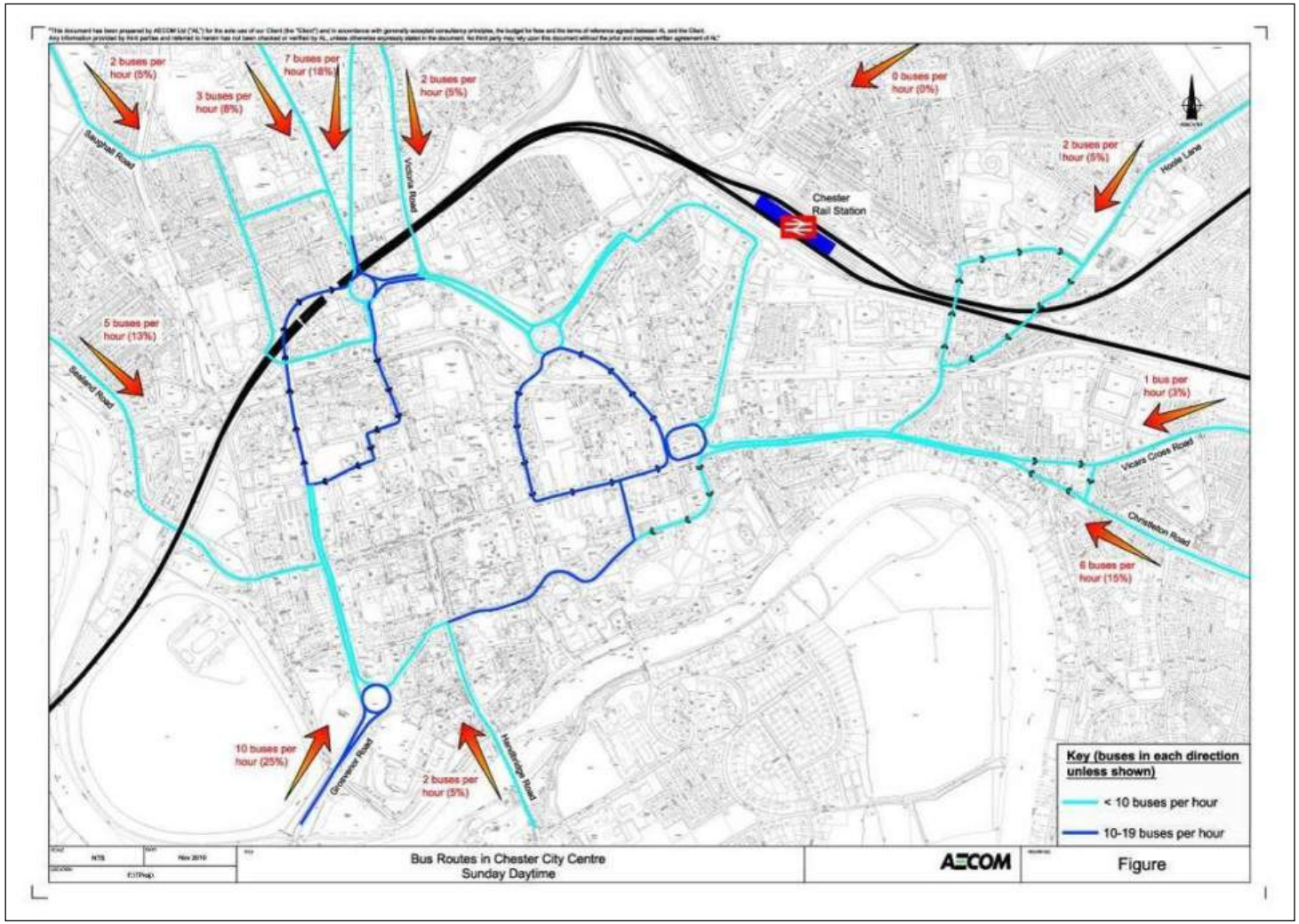

6 buses per hour (6%)
5 buses per hour (5%)
19 buses per hour (20%)
4 buses per hour (4%)
2 buses per hour (2%)
3 buses per hour (3%)
Hoole Lane
Chester Rail Station
Saughall Road
Victoria Road
9 buses per hour (10%)
Sealand Road
3 buses per hour (3%)
Vicars Cross Road
Christleton Road
3 buses per hour (3%)
21 buses per hour (21%)
Grosvenor Road
6 buses per hour (6%)
Handbridge Road
Key (buses in each direction unless shown)
< 10 buses per hour
10-19 buses per hour
20-29 buses per hour
30-39 buses per hour
40-49 buses per hour
50+ buses per hour (Monday to Friday Daytime)
Bus Routes in Chester City Centre
Mon - Fri Daytime
AECOM
Figure

Figure: 12.7: Bus Routes into Chester City Centre – Sunday



Rail Services into Chester Station

12.46 Chester Rail Station is an important node on the rail network due to its location at the Welsh border and on the North Wales rail line. The station is at the confluence of six rail lines:

- To the South West, the rail line splits into two with one branch serving the North Wales Coast and terminating at Holyhead, and the other travelling South to Wrexham and Shrewsbury;
- To the East the line continues to Crewe where it joins the West Coast Mainline for services to Birmingham and London;
- To the North East, the line splits into two, both serving Manchester, with one travelling via Warrington and Newton-le-Willows, and the other via the Mid-Cheshire line through Northwich, Knutsford and Altrincham to arrive at Manchester from the South;
- To the North West the Merseyrail Wirral line continues to Liverpool via Hooton, Bebington and Birkenhead. This is an electrified sub-urban rail line and provides frequent services throughout the day.

12.47 Due its excellent links with London, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, Chester is well connected to the national rail network with onward transfers possible to the rest of the UK. It is also an important node on the North Wales line served by intercity trains from London and Manchester and more local stopping services. The main routes serving Chester, their frequencies and operators are shown on the following figure.

Figure 12.8: Rail Services into Chester Station

Route	Mon-Fri Daytime Freq (Trains per hour)	Sunday Frequency (Trains per hour)	Operator/s
Holyhead / Llandudno - Chester - London	1	6 journeys	Virgin
Birmingham - Shrewsbury - Chester - Holyhead	1	1 per 2 hrs	Arriva Trains Wales
Cardiff - Shrewsbury - Chester - Holyhead	1 per 2 hrs	0	Arriva Trains Wales
Llandudno - Chester - Warrington - Manchester	1	1	Arriva Trains Wales
Chester - Crewe	1	1	Arriva Trains Wales
Chester - Northwich - Altrincham - Manchester	1	1 per 2 hrs	Northern
Chester - Birkenhead - Liverpool	4	2	Merseyrail
Totals	**9.5**	**5.5**	

Footfall at Chester Station

12.48 Footfall figures for stations in Cheshire West and Chester authority area have been obtained for the financial years 2005 / 2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2008 – 2009 and 2009 – 2010. These figures highlight that, for all years, Chester was the busiest station in the Cheshire West and Chester authority area by some margin.

12.49 Chester station's footfall growth is around the national average (although slightly lower than the average for the Cheshire West and Chester authority area) at around 8% making it the 127th busiest station on the national network and highlighting the importance of the station as a transport hub and interchange location. In 2008 – 2009, 603,514 interchanges were made at the station.

12.50 The ranking of 127th has to be considered in context that many of the stations above will be far larger cities and/or commuter locations in South East England and London. The footfall data for both years are shown in the following table provided courtesy of the Council.

Figure 12.9: Annual Station Footfall Figures – Cheshire West & Chester

Cheshire WEST	2005 - 06 [2,506 Stations]			2006 - 07 [2,519 Stations]			2007 - 08 [2,518 Stations]			2008 - 09 [2,518 Stations]			Annual growth
	Footfall	Rank	Interchange	Footfall	Rank	Interchange	Footfall	Rank	Interchange	Footfall	Rank	Interchange	
Acton Bridge	4,162	2,306		8,913	2,235		11,373	2,215		14,480	2,190	-	27.46%
Bache	60,430	1,614		53,016	1,739		88,074	1,566		104,334	1,543	-	40.28%
Capenhurst	53,069	1,669		44,215	1,800		59,933	1,721		75,050	1,683	-	30.28%
Chester	2,336,893	112	394,933	2,440,874	141	646,195	2,607,840	137	529,609	2,829,358	127	603,514	7.66%
Cuddington	46,583	1,726		48,809	1,767		51,775	1,780		53,040	1,815	-	4.24%
Delamere	16,736	2,074		20,996	2,043		28,220	1,983		29,828	2,009	-	19.19%
Ellesmere Port	215,005	999	821	157,893	1,229		191,239	1,167		221,508	1,179	-	18.44%
Frodsham	77,028	1,512		78,118	1,569		88,668	1,564		92,704	1,598	-	8.94%
Greenbank	73,086	1,536		80,667	1,557		90,598	1,555		93,076	1,592	-	7.42%
Hartford	89,523	1,450		106,269	1,428		127,616	1,367		153,908	1,365	-	20.34%
Helsby	52,067	1,676	877	57,412	1,703	3,527	68,386	1,665	899	71,314	1,704	2,054	11.45%
Hooton	357,690	720	16,522	342,245	828		359,837	838		540,926	702	25,499	25.72%
Ince and Elton	1,055	2,420		845	2,447		867	2,456		544	2,479	-	-19.76%
Little Sutton	49,925	1,698		30,721	1,936		36,185	1,916		44,910	1,878	-	20.91%
Lostock Gralam	16,145	2,088		14,633	2,145		14,348	2,170		16,910	2,161	-	7.50%
Mouldsworth	13,663	2,124		13,674	2,165		17,407	2,130		20,720	2,108	-	23.10%
Neston	35,216	1,833		32,716	1,919		35,922	1,917		36,960	1,947	-	6.29%
Northwich	135,542	1,238		140,882	1,292		154,907	1,273		157,482	1,345	-	5.73%
Overpool	50,627	1,686		26,995	1,965		33,929	1,930		39,562	1,925	-	21.06%
Stanlow & Thornton	130	2,492		326	2,487		278	2,490		480	2,485	-	21.34%
Winsford	67,986	1,571		78,521	1,566		86,772	1,569		105,208	1,536	-	15.75%
TOTAL	**3,752,561**			**3,778,740**			**4,154,174**			**4,702,302**			**11.55%**
Cheshire West [21] :													
							⇔	Static		↑	Incr.	↓	Decr.

Walking and Cycling

City Centre Walking and Cycling Infrastructure

12.51 Despite some recent welcome improvements to walking and cycling routes as part of its Cycle Demonstration City status, within Chester City Centre, infrastructure specifically for pedestrians and cyclists is often conspicuously absent from many of the streets and links. Cycle links in particular are often highly peripheral and are limited to some on-street cycleways on some of the main routes into the centre and the off-street cycle routes along the Shropshire Union Canal, along the North Wales railway line and on the banks of the River Dee.

12.52 Considering walking routes, aside from the pedestrian zone alongside The Rows within the City Centre (along which traffic still has access to the Grosvenor Hotel) there are

few pedestrian only links within the centre. The Walls form an orbital pedestrian link around the historic core and are well used, however they do little to penetrate into the City's heart.

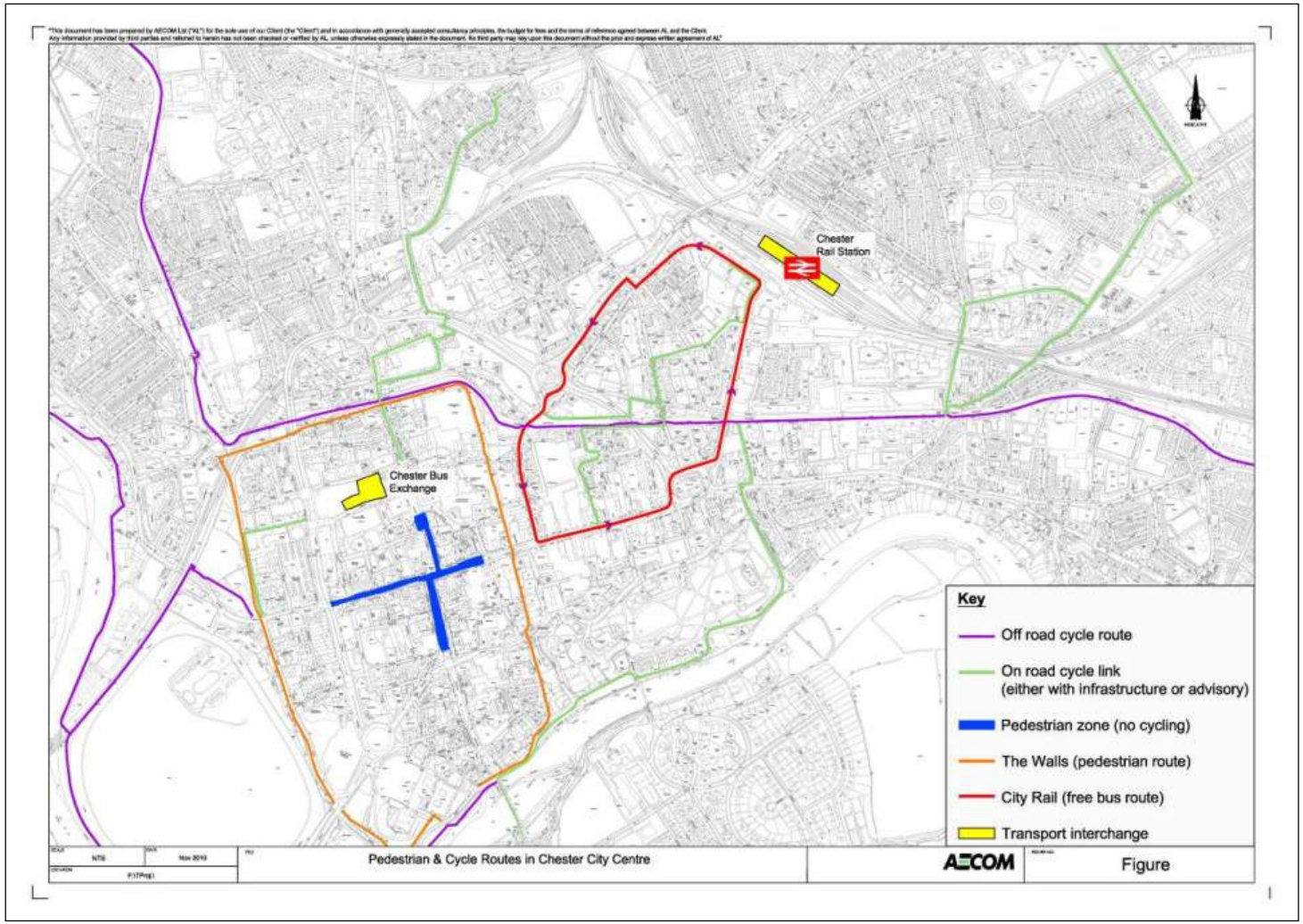
12.53 The network of underpasses that exist in Chester as a means of improving pedestrian permeability across the Inner Ring Road, particularly at the Bars gyratory and at the junction of Hoole Way and St Martin's Way, are unattractive, poorly lit and (according to anecdotal evidence from consultation events) underutilised as a result. Given their positioning at two key gateways into the City Centre and on both main pedestrian routes between the Rail Station and the retail core, their unattractiveness causes pedestrians to seek alternative means of crossing these large junctions and this can cause safety issues as a result. In addition, conversations from local residents point to the fact that the underpasses are perceived as dangerous in terms of criminal activity and are consequently seen as 'no-go' areas after dark.

12.54 A key aspect of the One City Plan should therefore focus on improving pedestrian connectivity into and out of the City Centre using high quality conventional at-grade crossings where appropriate and parallel work to redesign and remodel large barrier junctions on the Inner Ring Road could help to support this. In addition to this is the general lack of available and accessible cycle parking. There are 50 cycle stands at Town Hall Square and 20 at the junction of Bridge Street and Pepper Street, and there are also cycle lockers adjacent to the Market, however facilities adjacent to the station are extremely sparse and cycle parking elsewhere in the City is notably absent. As such, the City does not always present itself as a cycle friendly place despite its status as a Cycle Demonstration City.

12.55 The conclusion to draw from this is that cross City connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists is extremely poor within Chester with large swathes of the City either inaccessible or off the main pedestrian corridors and consequently undiscovered and unexplored by the vast majority. In addition, cycling is not currently permitted within the pedestrian zone and few crossings are to Toucan specifications making cross City cycling challenging.

12.56 Figure 12.10 overleaf shows the pedestrian and cycle infrastructure within the City Centre and highlights this lack of cross City connectivity.

Figure 12.10: Pedestrian & Cycle Routes in Chester City Centre



Local Cycle Routes

12.57 Chester's status as a Cycle Demonstration City has led to the devising and signing of a number of ten cycle routes colour coded and shown in Figure 11.11. These routes lead from the outskirts of the City Centre locations within the outer urban area. Each route is several miles long and connect most of the localities within the Chester Urban Area with the City Centre.

12.58 These routes take advantage of existing alignments such as the Shropshire Union Canal, and the disused rail line to Sealand, to create a network, however little new infrastructure within the City Centre itself has been created and there is no improvement to levels of connectivity across the central core as a result. The routes do link outlying areas within the Urban Area to the City Centre, however without parallel investment in infrastructure, they are not likely to induce many new people to cycle, with their greatest use being the weekend leisure market. Figure 10.11 shows the local cycle network around the Chester Urban Area.

Figure 12.11: Local Cycle Route Network

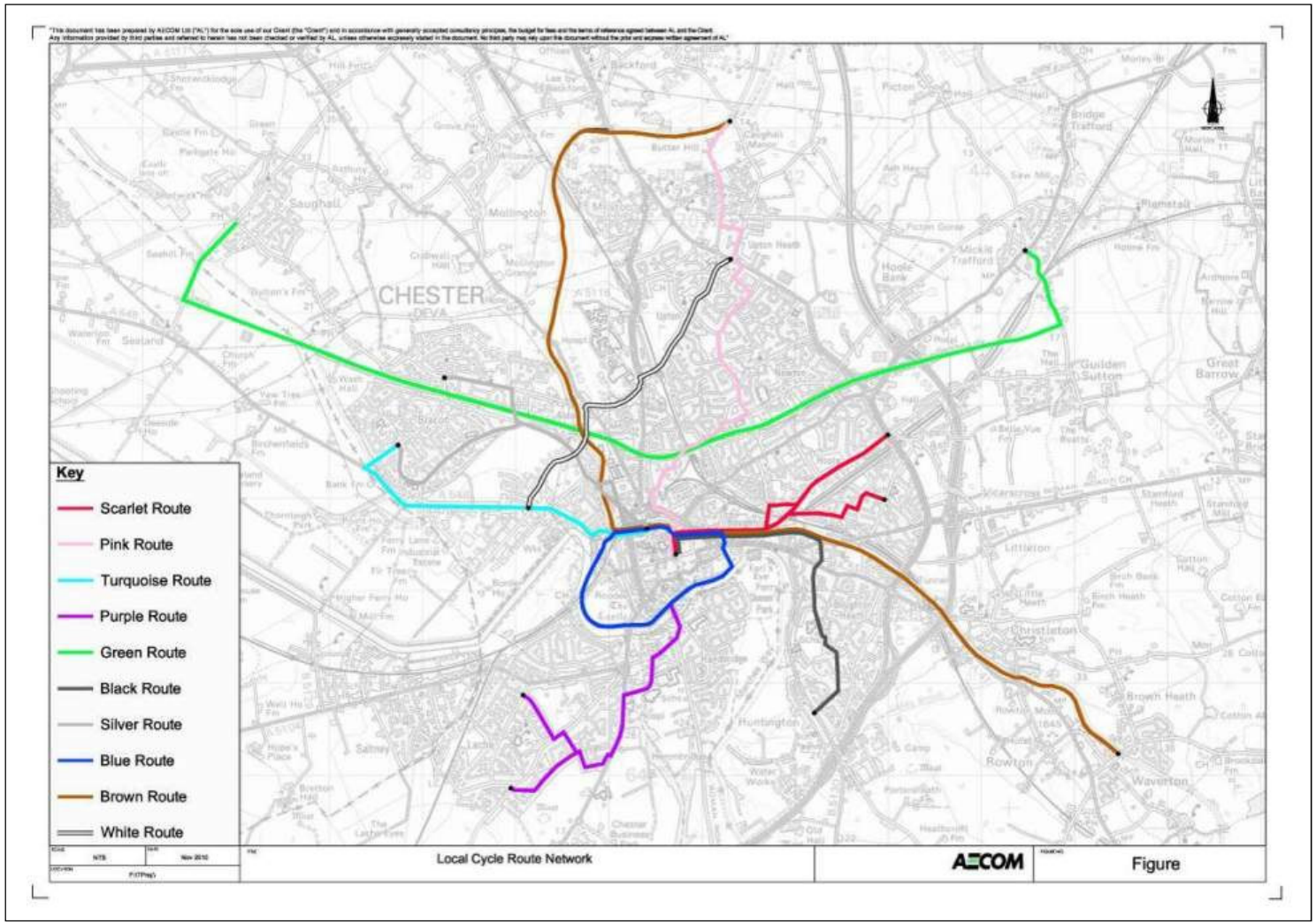
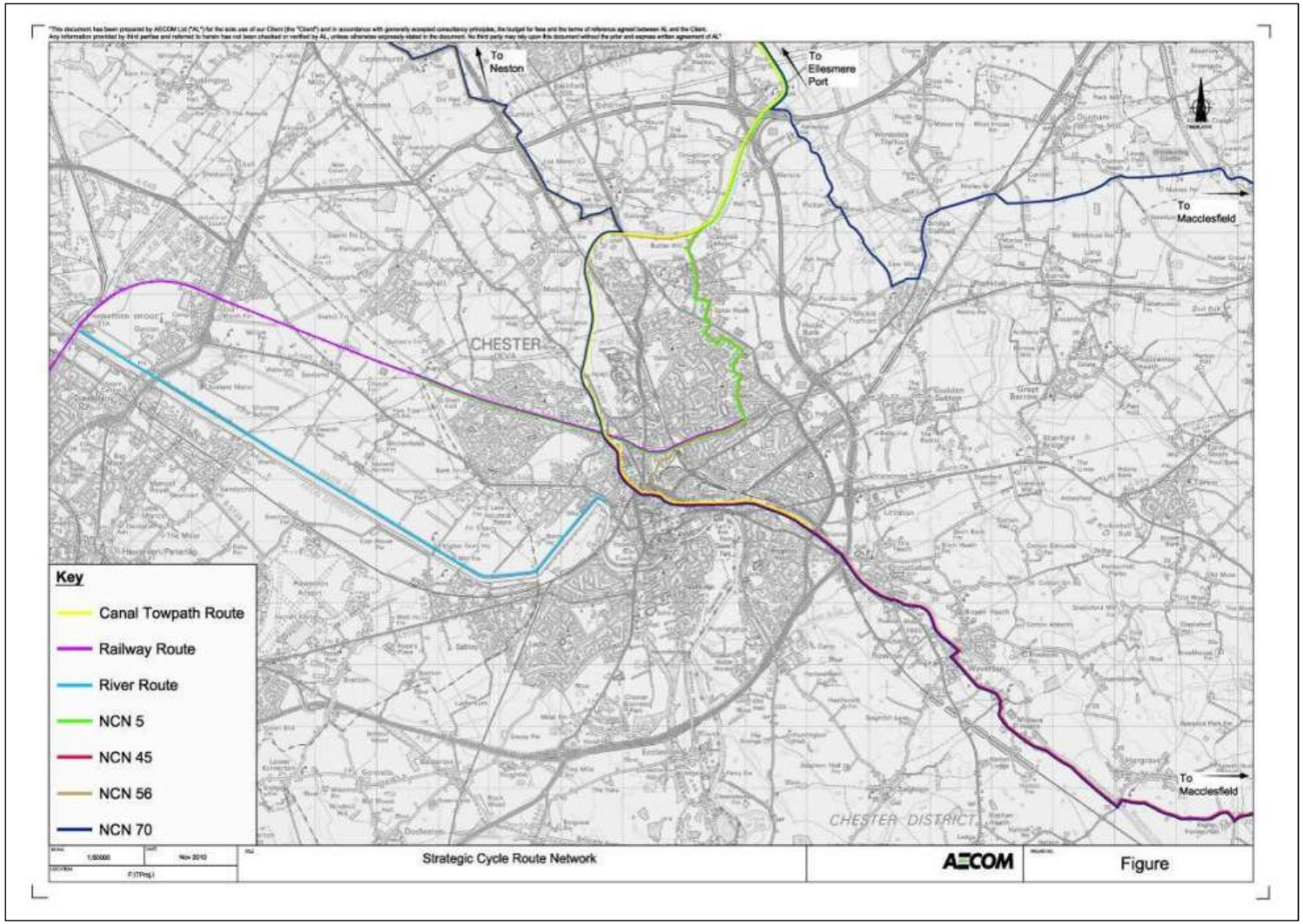


Figure 12.12: Strategic Cycle Route Network



Strategic Cycle Network

12.59 The third tier of cycling infrastructure with a relationship to Chester is the strategic national cycle network maintained by the charitable organisation Sustrans. These routes include three links which make use of the existing alignments of the River Dee, the Shropshire Union Canal, and the disused rail line to Deeside and connect Chester with Ellesmere Port, Queensferry, Hawarden and other important destinations. The other four routes are respectively National Cycle Network route 5 from Chester to Ellesmere Port, route 45 from Chester to Macclesfield, route 56 from Chester to Liverpool via Wirral, and route 70 from Ellesmere Port to Macclesfield via Chester.

12.60 These links place Chester on the strategic network of cycle routes and connect it with important regional destinations, however the distances involved and time required to travel by bicycle between these destinations make these links unlikely to be used by anyone other than the most experienced of cyclists or leisure cyclists completing all or part of each route at weekends.

12.61 Connections across the City Centre via the Strategic route network are again poor with the canal link functioning as the only off-street facility for cyclists within the historic core.

12.62 Figure 12.12 presented on the previous page highlights the strategic cycle network around Chester Urban Area.

Servicing Requirements of Businesses

12.63 Chester, similar to any other modern settlement, must be able to service its shops and businesses as required. The historic and constrained nature of the streets can cause issues in relation to this and servicing is often done in conflict with other pedestrianisation or accessibility related schemes particularly on Eastgate Street. Potential relocation of the Market to Frodsham Street could also lead to servicing conflicts. It will be a key objective of the One City Plan to determine a strategy which allows servicing access without impacting on the quality or accessibility of the Public Realm, or the streetscape. This is possible through careful and quality design and the creation of a strategy that considers the various needs of users at different times of the day. Communication with local businesses to understand their needs and requirements will also be key.

Bringing the Evidence Together

12.64 Perhaps the most important issue to recognise is that of 'finite capacity'. Historic cities across Europe have finite capacity, not just within the historic areas themselves but due to wider constraints such as rivers and railways. Recognising this and working creatively with such constraints, allows for schemes to be developed which preserve the environment but allow greatest flexibility for all users.

12.65 Going forward, the One City plan will need to decide what type of City Chester will be. From an access and movement perspective, it is the aspiration to create a fully accessible and sustainable City with excellent pedestrian, cycle and public transport links across the centre and with a parking strategy that removes unnecessary journeys from the City's inner core. These factors will combine to form a more permeable City for sustainable modes without reducing overall accessibility for anyone including those with limited mobility. In order to achieve this, the following key issues will need to be addressed:

- The Bars Area Gyratory – The area including the Bars gyratory and the other effective gyratory incorporating Grosvenor Park Road, Union Street, Love Street and Foregate Street is acting as a major severance for pedestrians and cyclists and a barrier between the rail station and the historic core. The area also represents an inefficient use of land with significant land take and only moderate levels of flow throughout most of the day.

- Gateway Car Parking – It is considered of great importance to remove as much traffic as possible from the central core of the City without reducing the accessibility of its main amenities. The parking strategy for the One City Plan should therefore be one of interception and connection, whereby vehicles are collected at key gateways into the City centre outside of the Inner Ring Road, and high quality connections are created onwards into the City centre for the use of alternative modes. The parking strategy should also make full use of the potential of Park and Ride and incorporate this into the demand management structure.

- Inner Ring Road Carriageway and Junctions – With more Chester-bound traffic being intercepted before arrival at the Inner Ring Road system, the road itself could be downgraded to improve accessibility and crossing opportunity and to remove severance. In addition, the three large roundabout junctions (excluding the Bars gyratory) around the perimeter could be reviewed and reduced in scale to lessen excessive land-take and to maximise connectivity and development land.

- The Station Approach – One of the routes between the rail station and historic core - Brook Street - is of relatively poor quality, is badly signed and does not encourage walking or cycling trips, or further exploration. The other - City Road - could be further improved to offer a broad boulevard access way which, in combination with improvements to the Bars gyratory will greatly enhance access between the rail gateway and the retail centre.

- The Bus Network – The existing bus network involves convoluted routeing around the City Centre, has limited interchange potential between modes or buses, and is fractured to form two distinct hubs which do not connect well. It is considered that a focus for bus activity is required which is better integrated with the rail station and the central amenities, and which does not create additional unnecessary journey miles around the City Centre. Locating this facility effectively will be extremely important, particularly considering how the bus offer can 'take a step up' from its current mix of standard bus and park and ride to attract an even higher modal split and encourage more sustainable movement into the City. A 'road map' approach is required for this to plot the course to delivery of a desired solution.

- Cycle Accessibility – The cross-City connectivity of the City Centre by bicycle is extremely poor with little potential for linkage and poor crossing facilities at large junctions. The One City Plan should look to address this and create dedicated space for cyclists, and cycle storage, across the retail core.

- Pedestrian Areas – The pedestrian zone within the City Centre is currently difficult to access, has limited connectivity, and is shared with disabled motorists (blue badge holders), vehicular traffic associated with patronage of the Grosvenor Hotel and servicing vehicles. Consequently, an extension of pedestrian activity around the centre paying special attention to the creation of corridors, and improving access between outlying areas such as the rail station, University Quarter and waterside areas is a desirable objective. Pedestrian connectivity into and out of the City Centre should be improved using high quality conventional at-grade crossings (as apposed to the current underpass system) where appropriate and parallel work to redesign and remodel large barrier junctions on the Inner Ring Road could help to support this.

- Penetrable Backlands – Large areas of the City Centre are currently either highly inaccessible or are isolated from the pedestrian circuit to such an extent that they are under-populated and often under-utilised, unknown and unknowable as a result. It is therefore suggested that these areas could be redeveloped to be much more outward facing with signage, frontage and gateways which invite rather than stifle exploration. This could be combined with the pedestrian and

cycle strategies to create better circuits which take in some of this currently underutilised space.

- Frodsham and Foregate Streets – The area around these important links is currently heavily utilised by buses, pedestrians and traffic at the Northern end of Frodsham Street for access to Tesco and Iceland car parks. The existing Public Realm on Frodsham Street is considered to undersell the link as one of the key gateways to the City Centre, given the imbalance awarded in favour of vehicular traffic. This has a market impact on the mix of retail units currently available. A solution is required which balances pedestrian flow with the needs of bus users. A key question should be whether to retain the existing bus hub at this location, or to downgrade the facility in favour of another facility.