



Chester Growth Partnership Business Plan 2016

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1. Introduction

Mission Statement and Vision

The Chester Growth Partnership ('CGP') will promote investment in and development of Chester to deliver sustainable growth in line with the aims and ambitions set out in the One City Plan. As such, CGP will act as a bridge between the public and the private sector and drive forward the economic development and regeneration of Chester.

CGP's mission statement is:

To help transform the economy of Chester, delivering sustainable growth and prosperity to the city region by raising Chester's profile, attracting investment and development, helping businesses grow, encourage tourism, and providing individuals with new skills, employment opportunities and great places to live and play.

CGP's vision is to be:

- a significant driving force in the transformation of Chester's economy by promoting investment in and development of the city;
- the key contributor to the regeneration agenda for Chester as set out in the One City Plan;
- recognised as an important voice in the debate about the future and economic strategy for the City of Chester;
- seen as the natural first port of call for those organisations who consider investment in Chester;
- the leading voice in the debate about Chester's future housing policy;
- the promoter of strategic dwell initiatives within the City of Chester;
- an active participant in the national infrastructure debate affecting Chester and the wider region; and
- seen as a body of integrity with significant sector expertise acting in the best interest of Chester, and as being available as a resource to CWaC.

CGP Objectives

The main objectives of CGP are as follows:

- enhance the brand of Chester as a place to do business, invest, live, study and visit;
- improve Chester's economy by promoting inward investment opportunities;
- support business growth through understanding employers and working with investors and educational establishments to meet employers needs;
- influence and guide the debate about Part II of the Local Plan dealing with Housing;
- promote housing, employment and other measures aimed at retaining students in Chester following their graduation;
- increase the stay and spend of tourists and shoppers in Chester by facilitating new events and attractions, and cross working between existing stakeholders;
- articulate a coherent message about Chester's place in the Northern Powerhouse Debate;
- champion Chester at regional, national and international level;
- campaign for direct trains from Chester to Manchester and Liverpool and reduction of journey times;
- promote the concept of 'Parkway' style stations in order to improve rail connectivity with Manchester and Liverpool;
- campaign for the electrification of the train lines; and
- promote existing car parks and identify potential new car parking sites especially near Chester station.

Measuring Success

CGP's operating model is based on five key pillars - Investment, Housing, Dwell, Engage and Infrastructure. Success for CGP is measured against these pillars and in 2016 this will mean achieving the following:

Investment

- A database of owners and investors with a substantial interest in Chester property;
- A comprehensive database of property investment opportunities; and
- An open source presentation demonstrating the investment potential of Chester.

Housing

- A One City Housing Plan to support housing and related objectives within the City;
- A Local Plan that supports the delivery of the Housing Plan, taking into account key planning and other considerations;
- Delivery of a number of key sites within Chester to support the One City Housing Plan; and
- An agreed strategy for the provision of Student accommodation within the City alongside a student retention strategy.

Dwell

- Understanding different dwell patterns and trends;
- Increasing education related dwell in the city centre;
- Support key tourism stakeholders to strengthen presence in the city; and
- Empower existing groups and communicate more effectively.

Engage

- A coherent message about Chester's place in the Northern Powerhouse Debate has been articulated in relevant form;
- CGP has hosted regional, national and international events promoting the brand of Chester; and
- A digital presence supporting the work of CGP by showcasing Chester and its opportunities.

Infrastructure

- There is a clear commitment to run express trains to Manchester and Liverpool am & pm;
- CWaC agreeing to create temporary display car parking on the site of the former Chester Enterprise Centre; and
- Directional signage is in place showing car park locations.

2. Context for 2016

Macroeconomic and policy drivers

The work of the CGP will have to take account of the following macroeconomic and policy drivers:

- The Northern Powerhouse debate and Chester's precarious position within this debate;
- The impact of the New Economy on Chester's retail offering, and specifically the change in demand for more leisure offerings over retail;
- The improving Housing market and the renaissance of city living, linked to the drive to retain the large student population in the city;
- Changes in the labour market and the skills base in Chester; and
- The continued squeeze on public spending.

Financial and commercial drivers

The following financial and commercial drivers provide the relevant context for the work of the CGP in 2016:

- Investment sales totaling £62.7 million were recorded in Chester in 2014 with strong returns such as the sale of the Primark site at a yield of 4.8%. *The Exchange* leisure and retail development, including Travelodge hotel, was acquired by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group in 2014 for £8.9 million. Deals were concluded in Chester in 2014 for over 13,454 square metres of space.
- Since the downturn no private sector new housing starts have commenced in the city, although housing associations and student accommodation providers have delivered a range of tenures, with success. The supply of new and second hand apartments has dried, and the market is poised for a rebirth of city centre living.
- Footfall has fluctuated over recent years with an estimated 9 million visitors to Chester although this years trend is upwards. Hotel occupancy and foreign visitor numbers are also increasing.
- Infrastructure drivers –
 - urgent requirement to reduce the number of cars and accidents on the M56;
 - reduce journey times into Chester;
 - make Chester a viable commuter city into Manchester and Liverpool and vice versa, to attract skilled labour into Chester by facilitating journey to work; and
 - to reduce congestion in Chester City centre and need to improve Chester City centre parking facilities.

3. Strategic Priorities

CGP's strategic priorities for the first six months of 2016 are as follows:

Deliver economic growth initiatives

Working in partnership with CWAC and other relevant stakeholders and agencies, CGP will design, advocate and implement local and national initiatives designed to stimulate sustainable growth in Chester.

Continue work on implementation of the One City Plan

The Chester 'One City Plan' remains the key Chester regeneration strategy and has influenced the delivery of the Business Quarter, Cultural Centre/Theatre and the forthcoming new bus station and the Northgate development. The CGP will work to consolidate existing and plan new activities aimed at the implementation of the One City Plan. CWaC will also review the document.

Create a Stakeholder Relationships and Communications Strategy

CGP will develop a new and unified approach to public and private stakeholder engagement in its endeavours to promote investment in and development of Chester. A significant aspect of this work will be to ensure that the CGP's role and objectives are fully understood by CWaC and other stakeholders. As part of this approach the CGP will develop a new communications strategy which seeks to raise the profile of CGP not only within Chester but also nationally and, where appropriate, internationally.

Complete the rebranding of CGP

CGP will complete the rebranding work and, as part of this, deliver a new website which will serve as the platform for the new communications strategy referred to above.

Improve Board Effectiveness

CGP will improve the Board Effectiveness and thus raise the profile and reach of CGP by making strategic appointments of high calibre candidates with the right skills set to drive forward the strategic agenda of CGP.

Secure funding to maintain and develop work of CGP

The CGP will work with and lobby the Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), national government and key funding bodies such as The Heritage Lottery Fund to champion Chester and its key priority projects. CGP will also develop opportunities with private sector benefactors to support city priorities.

Adopt focus on five key areas

Whilst not diminishing CGP's role as the guardian of the One City Plan, CGP will strengthen existing activity around five priority sectors: Investment, Housing, Dwell, Engage and Infrastructure. Consequently, CGP will align all relevant activities flowing from its role as the guardian of the One City Plan in order to ensure a fully coordinated approach, with clearly identified working group leads and clear objectives in terms of activity and outcomes.

Build new partnerships and coordinate work with other bodies

Following the realignment of its priorities, CGP will seek every opportunity to create new partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, BID, Chester Business Club and other business organisations in order to advance its strategic and operational priorities. A crucial aspect of this new approach will be an effort to achieve greater coordination between CGP and the other business organisations operating in Chester in order to avoid duplication of effort and confusion.

Implement reporting systems and performance reviews

CGP will support the above by implementing new and enhanced systems and processes including improved reporting systems and quarterly performance reviews of its five work streams.

4. Operational Priorities

CGP's strategic priorities for the year are supported by more detailed operational priorities and proposed actions which are set out below, organised by reference to the five work streams.

Indicative actions and timescales are identified and these will be confirmed in the actual stream plans which will form the basis for performance management and reporting throughout 2016.

Investment - Operational Priorities and Key Actions

- **Develop a database of who owns and invests in Chester property to provide a single source of current and future opportunities for development.**

Key Actions

- Map or list of owners and key properties.
- List of active developers and sites (and owners) with and without planning.
- Knowledge of who is changing their position and why.

- **Produce an investment proposition presentation for Chester, outlining current employers, investors, skills and infrastructure information together with forward looking information including an investment map.**

Key Actions

- Gather examples of best practice.
- Gather base data for presentation.
- Write and share presentation.

- **Maintain a watching brief on the progress of the Northgate development through from planning, funding and delivery.**

Key Actions

- Engage and offer to assist in key workstreams of the project (mainly funding).
- Actively share knowledge both ways.
- Work to become a useful stakeholder in the development process.

- **In conjunction with local employers and educational establishments identify key skills that are both available and in shortage for employers in Chester.**

Key Actions

- Understand the skills strengths and weaknesses of the city.
- Work with the stakeholders to effect change.
- Share the improvements changed via the network.

- **Prepare and publish a visual investment map to communicate the opportunity.**

Housing - Operational Priorities and Key Actions

- **To develop a specific Housing plan for Chester, taking regard to the existing strategies and studies undertaken by CWaC at wider Local Authority level.**

Key Actions

- Assimilation of existing strategies and studies.
- Consultation with key stakeholders (businesses, residents, university, planners, councillors) input into Part 2 Local Plan.
- Agreement of the Vision with Board and CWaC.

- **Develop a strategy for the provision of student accommodation within the city.**

Key Action

- Work with the university and other key stakeholders to develop how many, what, where and link to student retention objective.

- **Work with planners and conservation officers to agree areas of contention and blockages to housing delivery in the City.**

Key Action

- Establish task and finish group with relevant LA officers and other stakeholders and use outcomes to feed into Local Plan 2.

- **Deliver some key strategic projects to demonstrate what success would look like.**

Key Action

- Identify 2 or 3 key demonstration sites and work with local authority officers, councillors and landowners to develop within objectives of the City Housing Plan.

Dwell - Operational Priorities and Key Actions

- **Understand current dwell patterns and trends.**

Key Actions

- Collate and analyse current visitor dwell-time data.
- Identify gaps within the data.
- Create a base-line data set for 2015 to measure future figures against.

- **Identify, broaden and promote the night-time economy of the city-centre.**

Key Actions

- Understand and promote the current post 5pm offering.
- Support & encourage new post 5pm activities – both regular and one-off events.

- **Increase education-related dwell time in the city-centre.**

Key Actions

- Identify opportunities to encourage student families to stay in the city (this would include both the university and local primary / secondary schools).
- Support a university-led annual festival within the city
- Encourage academic visitors / conferences to stay longer in the city.

- **Support key tourism stakeholders (Zoo, Blue Planet, Racecourse etc) to strengthen their presence within the city centre.**

Key Actions

- Opportunities for a ZooTwo attraction in the city centre.
- Explore utilising empty buildings for 'pop up' Zoo, Blue Planet, etc.

- **Act as a support mechanism for other stakeholders to encourage 'dwell'.**

- Create a simplified process for creating events & utilising historic attractions in the city centre.
- Encourage resident dwell through a 'residents week' or 'Chester Foundation Day'.
- Identify under-utilised attractions that can increase dwell with some additional support.

Engage - Operational Priorities and Key Actions

- **Act as a champion for Chester regionally, nationally and internationally.**

Key Actions

- Organise a Chester event reporting on progress with the One City Plan and explain rationale for rebranding.
- Co-ordinate work of investment and infrastructure streams at regional level including the North Wales Ambition Board.
- Host a London event explaining Chester's position in the Northern Powerhouse project.
- Promote Chester as an investment location at MIPIM.

- **Articulate a coherent message about Chester's place in the Northern Powerhouse Debate.**

Key Actions

- Gather information from CWaC and other Cheshire local authorities about their position and their ambitions in this debate.
- Gather information about devolution framework and roadmap options for Chester.
- Prepare a position paper for discussion.

- **Co-ordinate the work of CGP with other public and private sector bodies in order to ensure maximum exposure locally and thus avoid duplication of effort.**

Key Actions

- Compile a list of all public and private sector bodies and their key representatives which operate.
- Meet with all relevant bodies and agree framework for co-operation.

- **Promote the work of CGP by creating a new responsive website and establish Chester Growth on LinkedIn.**

Key Actions

- Contribute core messages for website text.
- Recruit followers for LinkedIn presence.

- **Create a model for recruiting Chester 'ambassadors'.**

Key Actions

- Establish a database of potential candidates.
- Engage with potential candidates with a view of recruiting a dozen 'ambassadors' by June 2016.

Infrastructure- Operational Priorities and Key Actions

- **Campaign for direct trains to Manchester and Liverpool at 7am and 8am in under 45 minutes with capacity and return trains in evening.**

Key Actions

- Meet with Network Rail, Arriva, potential new provider - Deutsche Bahn.
- Lobby for increased carriages at peak times so no longer standing room only.

- **Improve parking at Chester Station, to include, lobbying Council to pay and display enterprise car park.**

Key Actions

- Meeting with the planners/car parking strategy at the council.
- Identify the steps to be taken to open up that carpark for public use.

- **Lobby to promote new car park at Delamere Street/Northgate Street by improved directional signage.**

Key Actions

- Lobby council for increased signage.
- Advertise free car parking after 3pm.

- **Chester Parkway station to Manchester / Liverpool Parkway Station to Liverpool.**

Key Actions

- Open Mickle Trafford Station - Manchester Deansgate/Victoria.
- Capenhurst Parkway for Liverpool.
- Meet with Mott MacDonald and ask them to carry out a cost analysis.
- Meet with Network rail - Martin Frobisher (Regional Director) & Tom Carbury - local Network Rail.
- Meet with new Provider/existing providers.

- **Become part of Manchester cross-ticketing.**

Key Action

- Meet with Manchester City Council and Transport for Greater Manchester to discuss how Chester becomes part of this initiative.

- **Conversations with Network Rail, Merseyrail travel, Arriva, new provider for line electrification and increased rolling stock.**

Key Actions

- Define and scope proposal, to include, electrification of the following lines:
 - Crewe - Chester - North Wales with links to HS2 and Manchester Airport
 - Chester - Manchester via Warrington
 - Mid - Cheshire line
 - Chester to Liverpool [with opening of Halton Curve providing rail access to Liverpool Airport]
 - Bidston - Wrexham line [stopping in Chester e.g. Saltney]
 - Meet with Mott MacDonald to obtain cost analysis for electrification of key lines.
 - Meet with North Wales Ambition Board to see how we can work together / fund investment.
- **Identify and lobby for additional car parking in the City.**

Key Actions

- Meet with car parking strategy at the council to identify potential car parking sites.
- Meet with Q park/NCP to discuss potential investment in the city car parks.

5. Performance Targets, Reporting and Evaluation

Performance Targets

CGP's performance targets, which are summarised in this business plan, have been developed against a simple performance management framework which allows CGP to assess its performance.

The framework links key performance indicators (KPIs) which are aligned to CGP's objectives; it is proposed that these can be independently evaluated by an external body, such as Chester University or KPMG.

Reporting

CGP's performance against business plan objectives and KPI targets is reported quarterly to its Board. Mid-year and end of year reports will be provided to CWaC and published on the CGP website.

Evaluation

CGP is committed to the external evaluation of its work. Thus it will seek to have its work and outcomes evaluated on an annual basis by an external body, to be confirmed.