

Cheshire West and Chester



Introduction

This document is intended to replace the original Commonhall Street Development Brief, published in 1989, following a review of the original brief to align more closely with current national and local planning policy and respond to the regeneration context, as set out in Chester's One City Plan 2012 - 2027. The revised brief has been informed by comments received through a consultation process with both internal and external stakeholders.

The revised development brief is intended to set out area specific objectives that are specifically tailored to address the issues presented within the Commonhall Street area and address the barriers to investment. It is anticipated that the development brief will be used by a variety of users and will provide planning certainty to developers and investors who are looking for regeneration opportunities within the historic core of Chester, whilst supporting the decision making process for development management within Chester.

It gives clear policy guidance to design consultants for design quality associated with private sector development. It also sets out a targeted investment strategy for public sector public realm improvements. The document may be used to support funding applications from external bodies in respect of public realm proposals. It will also inform politicians, developers and the general public of the intended vision for the Commonhall Street area for the next 15 years.

This document has been produced in 2017.

Desk Top Study

1. Commonhall Study Area
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Commonhall Street is situated within the south western quadrant of the historic central core of Chester, within the borough of Cheshire West. It is located within the Roman City Walls, and is included within the Chester City Conservation Area. Chester Race Course is situated to the south west of the study area and Chester Castle, the River Dee and associated walkways can be found a short walk away, to the south.



Wider Context Plan

Commonhall Street Study Area

Part One: Site Analysis

Commonhall Street is located on an east to west axis within the urban block defined by Watergate Street, Bridge Street, White Friars and Nicholas Street. It falls within an area that has a rich historical legacy and existing buildings within the south western quarter possess strong character that contribute significantly to the quality of the townscape. The site also falls within an area of archaeological importance.

Commonhall Street enjoys direct pedestrian linkages to the primary retail frontages of Watergate Street and Bridge Street, including the Rows on the upper levels. These two streets draw significant trade and contribute significantly to the local economy of Chester. Bridge Street possesses a 'parisian charm' with café's and specialist shops benefitting from the promotion of international tourism within the historic core. The evening economy is also developing in this area, owed in part to an increase in student numbers. Likewise, Watergate Street is similar in character to Bridge Street, but is more enclosed in scale.

White Friars is also very characterful, with commercial and residential uses interspersed within the existing historical form.

Nicholas Street functions as a primary vehicular access route through Chester, having been the subject of improved highways works during the 1970's.



Study Boundary Plan (nts)

Commonhall Street Study Area

This original roman street layout is believed to have had an impact on the topography in relation to the development of the Rows, where the present surface of the major streets was either cleared back or remained at Roman level, but in minor streets off Bridge Street and Watergate Street the ground level in some instances is in line with the Rows level -particularly from Bridge Street to Commonhall Street– i.e. there is a disparity in height. This is a consideration with regard to the impact on the height of new buildings in these areas perhaps.



 The Cross

Historical Development

Part One: Site Analysis

The South Western Quarter

The south western quarter of the city has been dominated by a castle for almost 1000 years, and the western part of the area enclosed by the city walls was quite loosely developed in medieval times – containing agricultural land as well as monastic buildings. The Dominicans or Black Friars arrived in 1236, occupying a site to the west of the city, between Black Friars Lane and Watergate Street. They were followed in 1237 by the Franciscans or Grey Friars, whose house stood north of Lower Watergate Street. Finally, the Carmelites or White Friars came sometime before 1277 and built their church alongside White Friars Lane in 1290. Although never rich, these friaries were successively enlarged and they became very significant features within the medieval townscape, occupying almost a quarter of the land within the walled city.

The south western quarter became densely infilled after Henry VIII sold monastic lands in the area and merchants built houses for themselves. During the Middle Ages Watergate Street led to the port and was the merchants' natural choice for their homes and shops. As the port gradually silted up Watergate Street lost its advantage, so Eastgate Street and Bridge Street were preferred for redevelopment by Georgian and Victorian shopkeepers. Chester's Rows are unique in their linkage during the middle ages to provide direct covered access for visitors to the second storey of most merchants' premises. It is unclear how this system developed, but no other like it is known to exist on this scale. Victorian or Georgian facades often disguise medieval cellars or interiors and many buildings have evolved as fashion and economics dictated without necessarily being redeveloped.

Historic mapping reveals that this area has been continually developed since at least 1789, with much of today's street structure already in place. Braun's 1581 map of Chester also shows this area fully occupied with buildings. The main feature of later development has been the amalgamation of plots to create larger holdings and the development of former gardens, infilling the city area much more densely.

Many of the backland areas to the west of Bridge Street, linked by narrow passageways connected at Row Level and street level, have been cleared over time, with occasional surviving mews buildings, stables and other service functions, as well as warehouses giving clues as to the former character of this area. Historical modes of transport would have seen the use of the horse and cart, and pedestrian movement, followed by cycling and the relatively recent invention of the motor vehicle.



1796 Map (John Stockdale)

Historical Development

The Commonhall Street Study Area

Commonhall Street takes its name from the city's first town hall – the Moot Hall or Common Hall which lay on the south side of the street. By 1510, the City Assembly had moved to the old St. Nicholas Chapel in Northgate Street and the Common Hall became the chapel for St. Ursula's Hospital. The Fraternity of Guild of St. Ursula was founded as a religious community for wealthy citizens to retire to. The community was probably dissolved in the reign of Edward VI but the benefaction survived as almshouses until the mid 19th century.

The Carmelites or White Friars also played a significant role in the history of the area from the 13th century. Their church was probably situated on the south side of White Friars, with the cloister to the north. A tile floor and part of an apse have been found near the eastern end of White Friars. "The Friars" at the eastern end of the street incorporates medieval sandstone walling. By the end of the last century, most of the area was developed, with narrow street frontages concealing courtyards behind and ginnels or alleyways giving access. Some of the historic urban grain and fabric has survived in these areas and is important evidence of the past.

A conservation movement within Chester moved apace during the 1970's and 1980's. Much of the historic fabric of Bridge Street and Watergate Street was restored, as can be seen today. However, backland buildings formed less of a priority. Some examples of historic buildings remain, but within Commonhall Street, there has been demolition and, in some instances, new development.



Commonhall Street circa 1930's

Historical Development

Part One: Site Analysis

The revised Commonhall Street Development Brief is intended to replace the existing Development Brief for the area. However, significant changes in planning policy have taken place since the first Development Brief was drafted. The following sections set out the historical policy context that has helped to inform current planning policy.

The seminal document that has underpinned much of the planning policy for Chester is the BDP, MVA and Donaldsons's Document entitled 'Chester: The Future of an Historic City'.

Chester: the Future of an Historic City (BDP, MVA Consultancy and Donaldsons), June 1994

Recent historical planning policy for Chester has been informed from a study undertaken in 1994 by BDP, MVA Consultancy and Donaldsons. The key aim of this study was to consider the role of Chester, options for its future, the needs of its residents, visitors and the historic fabric, and to consider how the future development of Chester may be directed while conserving the historic character and fabric, recognising that the City may have a finite environmental capacity. Much of the findings of the document are still relevant today.

In summary, the context of Chester is described as a walled city, adjacent to the River Dee, with strongly defined approaches. The fabric of the City is notable for the concentration of historic buildings and structures within the City Walls. Chester is described as being compact and walkable. The development of Chester over 2000 years has resulted in much historical layering within the built form. The riverside setting and historical fabric of Chester is identified as critical environmental capital for the City that forms the special character of the City.

In the BDP study, Chester was identified as fulfilling the following needs:-

- Shopping
- Business (predominantly B1 uses)
- Housing
- Tourism
- Administrative

Key issues are set out in the capacity framework. Relevant issues include the following:-

1. Development pressure on the edge of the City, resulting from out-of-town retailer requirements and residential developments
2. Development pressure on green areas, reducing available public space
3. Large development in central Chester, impacting upon the urban grain and public realm
4. Development of tall buildings
5. Adaptation of historic buildings to accommodate modern retail and business needs
6. Under-use of historic buildings, resulting in vacant premises
7. Impact of Tourism on the City core experience
8. Car Commuter Congestion
9. Quality of Car Parking in the city core
10. Pedestrian and vehicular conflict in Central Chester

Post 2008 Changes

Since this document was written, there have been notable changes to legislation, policy guidance, funding streams and the national economy as a whole. More emphasis has been placed on empowering private sector development, with private financing arrangements in place, rather than public sector funding. However, public sector funding is still possible for public realm proposals, through developer contributions, although competition is fierce.

The Disability Discrimination Act of 1996 places a requirement to provide disabled access within the public realm and for access to retail premises and businesses. The credit crunch of 2008 – 9 has changed bank lending patterns for development, with a reduction in joint venture schemes funded by public monies and resultant focus on private lenders developing in higher market value areas and increased rental yields. Chester has seen many changes to administrative roles, with the dissolution of the County Council, followed by public sector cuts at the local authority level, and the selling of land assets. The dissolution of the North West Regional Development Agency has also impacted upon available funds for aspirations within Chester. National Planning Policy Guidance was revised and simplified in 2012, resulting in the adoption of the NPPF. Changes to student financing have resulted in higher student fees, with a demand for higher quality accommodation near to University premises. The developments of Cheshire Oaks in Ellesmere Port and Liverpool One have also increased the options for shopping destinations at the local and regional level.

Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF’s key aim is to achieve sustainable development by adopting a three pronged approach to support the health of the local economy, local community and local environment. It sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, as long as proposals accord with an up-to-date Local Plan.

The NPPF also sets out 12 core planning issues, The 12 principles of planning should:

1. be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area. Plans should be kept up-to-date, and be based on joint working and co-operation to address larger than local issues. They should provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency;
2. not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
3. proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability, and set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities;
4. always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
5. take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
6. support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);
7. contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;
8. encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;
9. promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);
10. conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;
11. actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and
12. take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

It then sets out more detailed policy guidance in respect of each of these principles. Of particular relevance to Common Hall Street is the policy guidance included within section 1: Building a strong, competitive economy and section 2: Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres. Paragraph 21 of the NPPF recognises the need to recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment, including a poor environment or lack of infrastructure.....

Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment and Section 7: Requiring Good Design are also highly relevant within the historic context of Commonhall Street and should be referred to.

Planning Practice Guidance, which sits alongside the guidance within the NPPF, includes a section on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Specifically, the guidance states that local authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. Such a strategy should recognise that conservation is not a passive exercise. In developing their strategy, local planning authorities should identify specific opportunities within their area for conservation and enhancement of heritage assets. This could include, where appropriate, the delivery of development within their settings that will make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the heritage asset.

The NPPF aims to provide a framework for providing a balanced and sustainable outcome, addressing the needs of the local environment.

Part One: Site Analysis

Cheshire West and Cheshire Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies

The Local Plan (Part One) sets out 16 strategic objectives that aim to address the three prongs of sustainable development within the Cheshire West Context. For full details of these policies, this document should be referred to, but they are briefly summarised below.

In order to support the economic development of Chester, it is intended to develop Chester as a sub-regional city that supports a vibrant, diverse and competitive economy, in order to create a range of employment opportunities (SO1, SO2). Chester's One City Plan: The One City Plan is a 15 year strategy to guide the future economic regeneration of Chester, which will co-ordinate and drive a programme of public and private investment and development activity into Chester city centre. The plan defines the overarching vision and direction of travel for the city, under which all projects should sit. Importantly, it is driven by prioritisation, implementation and delivery. The plan will inform the emerging Cheshire West & Chester Local Development Framework, which will be the statutory planning document for the city. Social objectives include provision for the development of mixed, healthy communities that have access to a range of housing to suit their individual needs, whilst enjoying leisure, recreational and community facilities, including good linkages for walking and cycling (SO6 and SO8). Environmental policies support sustainable development and urban regeneration on or within suitable located previously developed land and buildings and by locating the majority of development within and on the edge of the main urban areas (SO9). Policy SO12 sets out a requirement for sustainable and high quality design that respects heritage assets, local distinctiveness and the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape. The Common Hall Street study area provides opportunities that are very much supported by the strategic policies within the Local Plan.

The spatial strategy for Chester is set out in STRAT 3: Chester, and states the following:-

Chester is the key economic driver for the borough and will deliver in the region of 5,200 new dwellings..... Development will enhance the city's role as a sub-regional shopping and leisure destination and support its role as an international tourism designation. Key retail and leisure proposals are:

- *The comprehensively planned development of the Northgate area for major leisure and retail uses*
- *A new theatre in the city centre to sustainably enhance the city's cultural offer*

The Chester Business Quarter is identified as a broad location for mixed use, employment led regeneration to the east of the City Centre. This will include in the region of 44,000 m2 of high quality office floor space adjacent to Chester Railway Station. In recognition of the national and international importance of Chester as a historic walled city, any development within or on the periphery of the city centre or within the urban area should be compatible with the conservation and enhancement of the City Centre and the setting of the City.

Chester is regarded as a significant international tourist and visitor destination, attracting 9 million visitors a year. Visitors are attracted to Chester's heritage assets including the Cathedral, roman amphitheatre and historic shopping rows. Major sporting events are hosted at Chester Race Course and Oulton Park, and Chester Zoo provides excellent facilities for a family day out. Economic policies aim to support and encourage expansion of existing tourism assets, to enhance the existing offer and benefit the local economy (ECON 3). Major leisure, tourism, cultural development proposals and visitor accommodation, which will attract a significant number of visitors, should be located within or accessible to Chester, making use of sustainable transport links. Regeneration benefits through the development of brownfield land will be supported. Cheshire West and Chester are currently drafting a Town Centre Strategy for Chester that will inform policies within the CWAC Local Plan Part Two.

The Common Hall Street study area falls within the Chester City Centre conservation area designation. Reference should be made to ENV 5: Historic Environment to gain an understanding of strategic conservation policies for the city centre. In the context of Chester, development should ensure the city's unique archaeological and historic character is protected. Proposals should safeguard or enhance both designated and non-designated heritage assets and the character and setting of areas of acknowledged significance.

In order to facilitate sympathetic development within the conservation area, high quality design and sustainable construction will be required. Policy ENV 6 sets out the principal design considerations as follows:-

- Respect local character and achieve a sense of place through appropriate layout and design
- Provide high quality public realm
- Be sympathetic to heritage, environmental and landscape assets
- Ensure ease of movement and legibility, with priority for pedestrians and cyclists
- Promote safe, secure environments and access routes
- Make the best use of high quality materials
- Provide for the sustainable management of waste
- Promote diversity and a mix of uses
- Incorporate energy efficiency measures and provide for renewable energy generation either on site or through carbon offsetting measures
- Mitigate and adapt to the predicted effects of climate change
- Meet applicable nationally described standards for design and construction

A key priority of the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy is valuing and promoting West Cheshire's unique and diverse natural and built environments, and supporting the development of rich cultural opportunities. The vision emphasises the importance of the historic environment of Cheshire West and Chester, stating 'everybody will be proud of our varied and unique local distinctiveness, culture and heritage, with a strong sense of civic pride'.

Planning Policy Context

Saved Policies from the Chester District Local Plan

Detailed policies have been saved from the Chester District Local Plan. Of most relevance to the Common Hall Street Study Area are the following policies:-

- ENV 8: Views, viewpoints and landmarks
- ENV 10: Parking
- ENV 37: New development in conservation areas
- ENV 39-43: City Centre conservation area
- EC14 Tourism
- HO4 Infill Housing Development
- HO9 Conversion of non-residential properties to residential use

Detailed policies are currently being reviewed as part of the drafting of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) Detailed Policies Draft. A final draft is anticipated to be available by Spring 2016.

Chester City Centre and Approaches Characterisation Study 2012 (Taylor Young)

This document identifies character areas within the City Core and provides a townscape analysis for each character area, which then informs future management objectives for each character area. The study identifies Commonhall Street as a key detractor to the character of the City, stating that ‘The vacant sites, derelict listed warehouse and the backs of numerous buildings create a poor environment in a potentially interesting area, within a few metres of one of Chester’s most vibrant retail streets.’ In terms of capacity to accommodate change, this document noted that Commonhall Street has the capacity to accommodate development of appropriate scale and form to reflect the surrounding historic fabric. Since this document was written, development has occurred on the Chronicle Building site and Roman Gate site, but some gap sites still exist.

Public Realm Design Guide (September 2010)

The public realm design guide sets out a public realm framework. Commonhall Street, Weaver Street and White Friars are envisaged as minor pedestrian streets. Four alleys and lanes are identified on Weaver Street, leading onto Watergate Street, Old Hall Street, Commonhall Street (leading onto Bridge Street) and Pierrepont Street. This document was produced prior to the proposals coming forward for Northgate, the new Theatre, the re-located transport interchange and the Chester Business District.

The Rows Draft Conservation Management Plan (BDP, 2009)

This document makes a recommendation to create destinations beyond the rows, including the backland areas of Commonhall Street, to help re-establish pedestrian circuits and routes of discovery. It also sets out detailed recommendations in respect of public realm treatments.

Chester Local Transport Plan

The top priorities for the Transport Plan focus on providing and developing reliable and efficient transport networks which support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area. Indivisible from this is the need to reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change; and manage a well maintained transport network.

Other objectives include ensuring safer and secure transport in West Cheshire and to promote types of transport which are beneficial to health; Access to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity is prioritised and there is an identified need to ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire. There are limited resourced in the current climate, so low cost measures for high impact schemes will be sought.

Additional Objectives include the following:-

1. Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area. - Develop transport schemes and measures that help support the economic viability of towns, villages and leisure attractions in West Cheshire.
2. Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change. Improve and encourage the use of sustainable (low carbon) transport; Ensure that new development takes place in accessible locations which minimise the need for travel.
3. Manage a well maintained transport network - Maintain the highway network in a safe and serviceable condition for the use of vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, equestrians and all other road users; and
4. Contribute to safer and secure transport in West Cheshire and to promote types of transport that are beneficial to health - Encourage healthier lifestyles by promoting more active forms of transport such as cycling and walking;
5. Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity - Improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility especially for disabled and older people.
6. Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire - Ensure that new transport

Part One: Site Analysis

Archaeological Management Objectives

The area that is subject to this Development Brief lies in the heart of the historic city and is known to be rich in well-preserved archaeological remains. Excavation works at the northern end of Weaver Street have revealed the remains of the Roman fortress's granaries whilst much of the southern part of the block was occupied by the precinct of the Carmelite friary. In addition to the extant Rows, archaeological deposits associated with their use are known to be present in their rear plots. The quality of the archaeological remains has most recently been demonstrated during the re-development of the Bollands Court area where limited intrusions to accommodate services have revealed deep, complex Roman and post-Roman deposits including surfaces and a probable corn drying oven. Structural remains are also known from this area, which are likely to be related to the friary.

The significance of the area is recognised by its inclusion in the Chester Area of Archaeological Importance, as defined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979). In addition, a recent comprehensive re-consideration of the archaeological evidence for Chester has resulted in the production of the Chester Archaeological Plan which forms part of the evidence base for the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan. The Archaeological Plan divides Chester into Primary and Secondary Archaeological Character Zones and provides detailed guidance on the appropriate treatment of the archaeological remains where they are affected by development proposals.

All of the land that is the subject of this Brief lies within Primary Archaeological Character Zones, where remains of National Archaeological Significance are likely to be present. The south-western quadrant lies in Zone 10: Commonhall Street whilst the rest of the area is included in Zone 8: The Chester Rows.

In Zones of this sensitivity, the Chester Archaeological Plan makes clear that developments which cause significant harm to the archaeological deposits will not be permitted. This means that basements, damaging foundations, and wholesale removal of archaeological strata will not be acceptable. Development is still entirely possible but there will need to be careful consideration of foundation design with particular emphasis on the positioning of piles, the depth of any intrusions to accommodate slabs and sub-bases, the location of lift shafts and the positioning of services. This approach is also in line with national planning guidance as set out in the Section 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).



The excavation of the Roman amphitheatre in 2006, followed by landscape interpretation to facilitate accessible public open space, has provided a significant asset within Chester that helps to promote tourism within the City and also allows for curricula activities associated with education. The Roman Deva experience, situated on Commonhall Street, provides opportunities to observe first hand Roman remains resulting from archaeological excavations.

Planning Policy Context

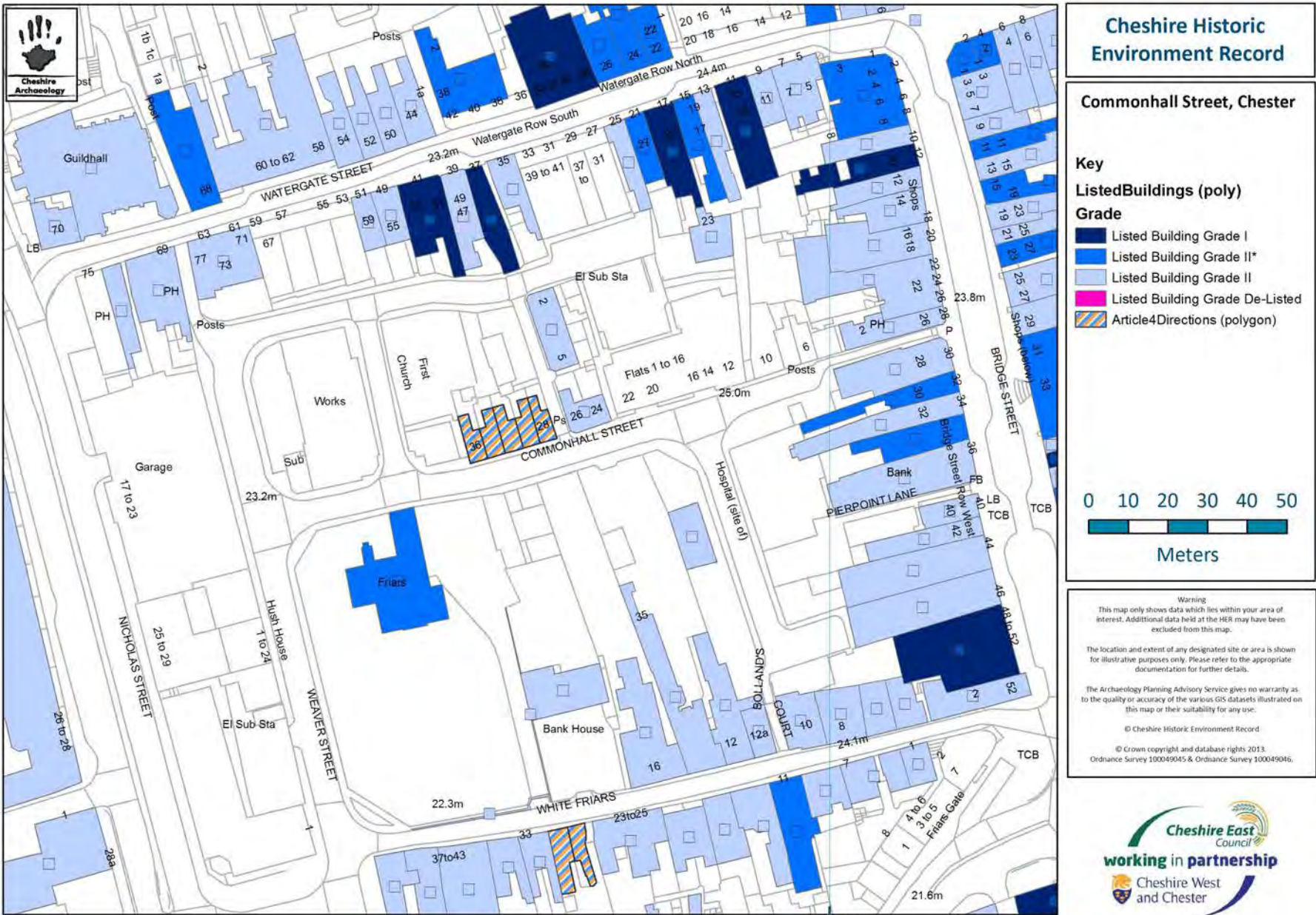
Conservation Management Objectives

A significant conservation effort in the 1970s and 1980s has resulted in the major enhancement of many historic buildings on Bridge Street and Watergate Street which were in distress, including high quality re-paving. The Commonhall Study area is situated within the Chester City Centre Conservation Area. There is a high concentration of listed buildings in Watergate Street, Bridge Street and Whitefriars. Detailed information in respect of the historic assets can be found on the 'Revealing Cheshire's Past' database, available on line. There are several buildings of medieval origins, but many have been altered during the Georgian and Victorian period. The backs of several of the properties to Bridge Street back onto Pierpoint, which has one or two 19th century 2 storey houses. There are two storey listed cottages built for Brown of Chester, in the vernacular revival style by TM Lockwood on Commonhall Street.

Within the backland area of Commonhall Street, listed buildings are comparatively few. The most notable building is The Friars, currently grade II*. This former detached house is located on the site of the Carmelite Friary, now offices. It enjoys a walled garden accommodating a mature landscape space. Grade II handed pairs of cottages are also situated on Old Hall Place. Several properties are warehouses in origin – such as the early 19th century listed warehouse northwest of Bollands Court, which has evidence of late medieval sandstone walling; and warehouses, now converted, exist to the eastern end of Whitefriars. They are typically three or more storeys, and window openings have generally been little altered. Many of the buildings are built of brick, in Flemish bind, with some instances of English garden wall bond.

Future conservation effort should be directed to the enhancement of backland areas in terms of appropriate infill, improved public realm and the rear elevations of buildings, which have suffered from poor control of visible services such as air conditioning equipment. Pedestrian routes through existing alleyways are crucial for the permeability of the city and should be an important consideration in any redevelopment.

Commonhall Street, has the capacity to accommodate development of appropriate scale and form to reflect the surrounding historic fabric. Where there are opportunities for redevelopment, given the extent of nationally recognised heritage assets and their settings, development must be of an exceptionally high design quality. Where there is a disparity in height at street level, regard should be had to the impact on the height of new buildings in these areas.



Regeneration and Investment Opportunities

Public Sector Investment

The major economic drivers of Chester are business, tourism and education. The critical environmental assets of the historic core and River Dee, combined with good access to employment opportunities make Chester a desirable place to live. This is reflected in property market values. Major regeneration projects envisaged at the planning policy level intend to build on the existing infrastructure to support these economic drivers and are now becoming more tangible in form. Significant progress has been made to date.

Cheshire West and Chester Council have recently re-located their head quarters to recently completed, state of the art premises situated at the junction of Nicholas Street and Grosvenor Road, to the north east of Chester Race Course. The building also incorporates hotel and conference facilities, providing a major business asset to the City.

Environmental improvements to the setting of the River Dee are progressing, in line with the Chester Waterways Strategy. Investment at The Groves has resulted in an upgrade to the elevated pathways adjacent to the edge of the River Dee, and this work is further complemented by restoration of the Grosvenor Park. It is intended that these offers will support the health and well being of local residents, whilst helping to promote overnight visits to Chester. Further work is being brought forward, in line with the Chester Waterways Strategy.

The proposals for the cultural hub at the former Odeon Cinema on Hunter Street have received planning approval and construction works are progressing well on site, with an anticipated opening date schedule for autumn 2016. This scheme will incorporate a theatre, library, cinema and rehearsing studios, intended to serve local residents and promote overnight stays to Chester, but will also provide a venue to support the expanding cultural activities of Chester University.

Similarly, plans for the Chester Business Quarter are progressing, with the One City Place Building recently completed. Situated adjacent to the well connected Chester railway station, this scheme is targeting businesses choosing to re-locate, whilst offering a vibrant and attractive city environment to support aspirational lifestyles. The primary objective for the Chester Business Quarter is to provide easily accessible, energy efficient buildings that will reduce on-costs for businesses, in order to support viable businesses and attract highly skilled employees.

Further major investment is planned within the Northgate area, situated in the north western quarter. A revised masterplan for the Northgate scheme was approved by council cabinet on the 2nd September 2015, and a hybrid planning submission is scheduled for submission by March 2016, with a decision anticipated by summer 2016. The Northgate scheme aims to provide high quality retail premises, of large floor plate, in order to attract premium retailers that would otherwise not be able to set up in Chester, owing to the limited floor spaces available within the historic core. An hotel, residential and commercial uses are also likely to be incorporated within proposals.

To facilitate the Northgate scheme new bus interchange facilities within the City Centre have received planning approval and are currently on site. This development provides an opportunity to develop a co-ordinated approach to linked trips by multi-modal forms of transport.

Other Public Sector Initiatives include the Rows Project, Dee House, Watersports Hub, and North Eastern Gateway.



HQ, Nicholas Street



The Groves and River Dee Frontage



Grosvenor Park

Regeneration and Investment Opportunities



Odeon Theatre and Cinema Complex

Private Sector Investment

Chester is becoming recognised as a place where people want to live and private initiatives are coming forward now. Tramways has now reached completion, near to the train station, providing student accommodation for a growing student population. Student accommodation within the former Chronicle Building has also reached completion on Weaver Street.

Waitrose have completed their store on the A51 approach into Chester, using very high quality materials. This building now forms a distinctive landmark on the approach into Chester.

Numerous planning applications for small scale infill development within Chester are also being brought forward.

Grass Roots Initiatives

In terms of community initiatives that have been brought forward in respect of regeneration, residents and local businesses have been consistently vocal about the possibilities the Commonhall Area presents. In January 2014, a Design Workshop took place where local residents and businesses had the opportunity to collectively formulate the issues the area raised, with suggestions for actions to secure improvements.

In the short term, it was identified that businesses and landowners must take a responsible attitude to the environment and ensure that waste is dealt with properly.

There is also scope for public art projects to be undertaken in association with the University of Chester's Faculty of Art/History, to include lighting installations.

By way of future actions, a wish was expressed for up to date local authority plans for the area, to effectively guide future development. Low rental costs for market and retail space could also be used advantageously, to fill vacant premises and promote more activity.

The design charrette also recognised the potential to open up views and access points by working with the Kwik Fit site. The existing links to the Rows also need to be strengthened and enhanced, with pop-up shops located to building rears, to provide active frontages where space permits. Improvements to the public realm were also suggested, to include provision for family activities. Heritage Interpretation and Wayfinding were also suggested, to highlight the historical significance of the area.

Following on from the Design Charrette, a detailed ownership plan has been prepared by the Local Authority, to unpick the complex ownership of the site.

The Local Authority is also preparing a revised Development Brief for the area. This revised Brief is intended to address the need for an up-to-date plan for the area, in order to guide planning decisions and set out high quality design principles that complement the historic core.

A Commonhall Street Working Group has been set up, in order to raise issues that need addressing with the local authority. Priority issues that are currently being raised include management of functions, including refuse, deliveries and parking. These issues give rise to problems of noise, waste and infestation, and need to be addressed as quickly as possible.



One, City Place



Northwood Masterplan by ACME, 2015

Part One: Site Analysis

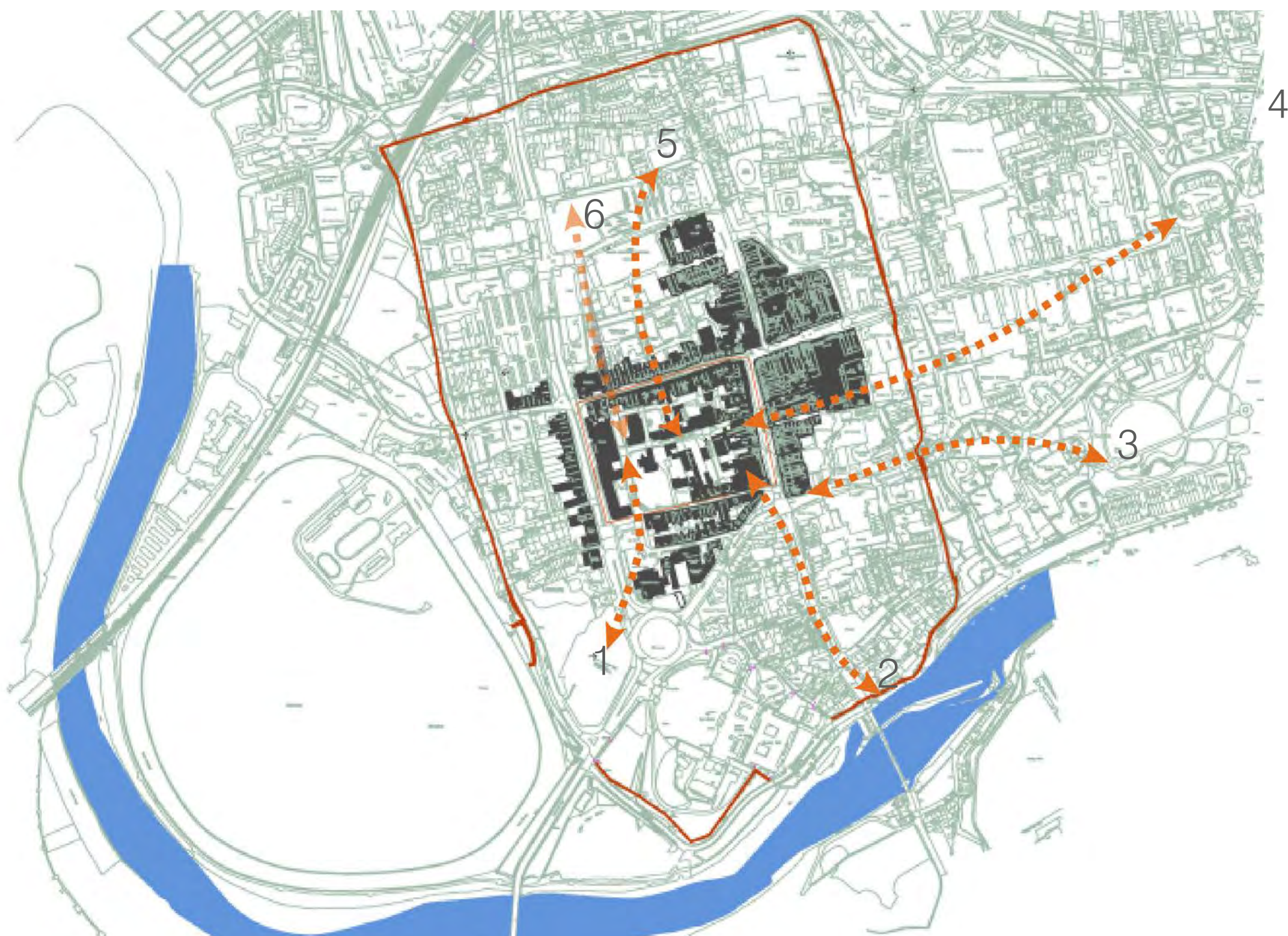
The Commonhall study area is centrally located within Chester and affords a wealth of opportunities for employment, with access to good commuting links to the wider area. A diverse retail offer is available on the door step, to satisfy a wide range of aspirational family needs. Opportunities to develop employment skills are readily available through Chester University, and market values suggest that Chester is a good place to invest, in terms of property.

The cultural offer is varied, and is set to increase with the completion of the Theatre, and excellent schools are situated within commutable distances. Opportunities abound for participation in social activities and leisure, to enable social cohesion and community participation. Pedestrian and cycle access to the River Dee and canal network enables recreational opportunities for families and sustainable transport links to nearby villages. The waterside recreational offer supports health and well being. In short, Chester is a good place to work, live and play.

The proximity of Commonhall Street to major regeneration schemes coming forward within the city is note worthy, and the characteristic network of lanes and alleys provide ready made linkages to these existing and potential assets within the City.

Investment by developers on Commonhall Street and Weaver Street has been brought forward following the 2008-9 recession, showing investor confidence within the area. Small infill sites are more likely to be supported financially by lenders, within a healthy property market, as they pose less risk. Given the amount of investment taking place within Chester at present, as envisaged through strategic regeneration policies, during the economic downturn, the Commonhall Street study area presents very real opportunities for investment.

It is hoped that the review of the Commonhall Street Development Brief will identify barriers to investment within this area, and set out a series of recommendations that will hopefully address these issues, enabling the south western quarter to reach its full potential.



Plan to show regeneration linkages from Commonhall Street to 1) HQ, 2) The Groves, 3) Grosvenor Park, 4) One, City Place, 5) Odeon Theatre and 6) Northgate

Regeneration and Investment Opportunities

Regeneration and Investment Opportunities



Former Chronicle Store, Old Hall Place (1)

Despite the array of facilities close by, there are still gap sites that need to be brought forward, to repair the built form and positively enhance the quality of the townscape on Commonhall Street and Weaver Street.

The car park on Weaver Street (1) has been granted planning permission for residential housing.

The Chronicle Paper Store (2), situated at the junction of Weaver Street and Old Hall Street is currently the subject of discussions to bring forward this site for re-development.

The site of the Deva Experience (3) currently supports the tourism economy within the City, but from a long term perspective, there is room for expansion or diversification on this plot, to enable a scale and massing to be achieved that is characteristic of the area. Discussions are taking place with the site owner to identify aspirations for the Deva Experience that will retain this valuable asset within the City, whilst realising the full development potential of this site.

The Deva Printworks (4) neighbouring The Friars on Commonhall Street has recently been granted consent for a restaurant.



Deva Experience, Commonhall Street (2)



Development Opportunities Plan



Deva Printworks, Commonhall Street (3)

The Kwik-fit garage (5) fronting Nicholas Street currently houses a franchise mechanical engineering business, and it is not envisaged that this site will come forward in the near future. However, the site could accommodate higher densities of use, and should the Commonhall Street area become a prime development location in the future, this site may come forward as a result. From a long term perspective, this site should not be discounted.

Bringing vacant buildings back into use also has the potential to bring activity to the area. In particular, Knights Courts, situated on the corner of Nicholas Street and Weaver Street presents a significant opportunity for regeneration of the area. It is understood that these premises are being pro-actively marketed for office re-use.

Site Analysis

1. Townscape Assessment
2. Movement and Circulation Assessment
3. Public Realm Assessment.....

The historical development of the Central Area of Chester is illustrated in Fig. 4.1.2 of the Chester Characterisation Study, Volume 1: Inner Areas. The 1908 plan shows the study area as being comprised of three urban blocks. The northern block was defined by Watergate Street, Weaver Street, Commonhall Street and Bridge Street. The southern block was defined by Bridge Street, White Friars, Weaver Street and Commonhall Street and the western block was defined by Watergate Street, Nicholas Street, White Friars and Weaver Street.

The present historical block form within Chester is shown below. Urban block sizes within The Walls show a mixture of large block sizes, due to amalgamation over time, and small block sizes, where the original block structure has remained intact. Urban block sizes to the west of Nicholas Street that came forward at a later date show larger block sizes than the original block size within the historic core of Chester.

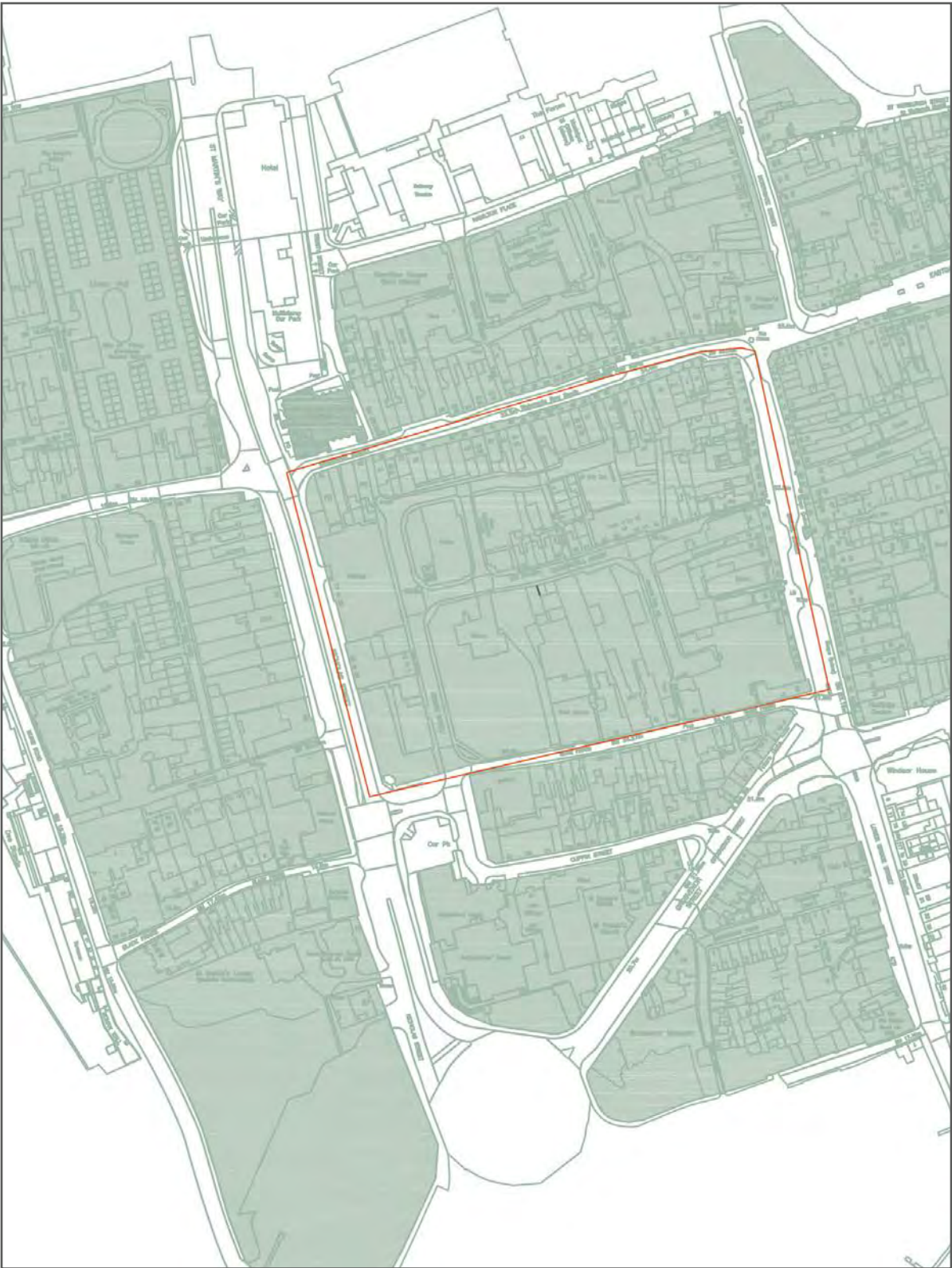
Notably, the block structure breaks down to the eastern side of Nicholas Street. Demolition of buildings in the 1970's took place to make way for an improved highways system. Some vacant plots that were left have subsequently been developed, but an uncomfortable arrangement has resulted, with rears exposed to public view on Weaver Street. The typical arrangement of the burgage plot would have presented a trade frontage onto Weaver Street. Other smaller sites have not come forward, and are subsequently fulfilling a role as car parking. The fragmentation of the urban form to the east of Nicholas Street has not successfully resolved itself to date.



Photograph showing building rears facing onto Weaver St.



1908 plan of Commonhall Study Area



Urban Block Structure within Chester City Core

Part One: Site Analysis

The amalgamation of block form has resulted in a very large urban block form bounded by Watergate Street, Bridge Street and White Friars, where the historic building form and retention of active frontages has remained in place on both sides of the street. Whilst the block form as a whole has become strengthened, the internal sub-block structure starts to break down in Commonhall Street, due to demolition of the built form to the southern side. The inactive frontage facing onto Weaver Street, with views of building rears also detract from the sub-block structure also. Whilst the block structure is very clear, the sub-block structure is incoherent. This reduces legibility and wayfinding in the area.

There is an opportunity to reconnect the rear of the properties to the frontages, particularly with regard to overall appearance, which generally is poor. Whilst the rears have a different function, there is quite a significant disparity in terms of character and appearance in relation to the active frontages. A sensitive pallet of hard and soft landscaping would help this, combined with a coordinated strategy to address bin waste.

The highways improvements in the 1970's have had a significant impact upon sub-block form and legibility within the area. A long term strategy would help to address the repair of the sub-block form in the longer term, as sites come forward.



Plan showing active frontages and sub-block structure

Townscape Assessment: Sub-block Form and Frontages

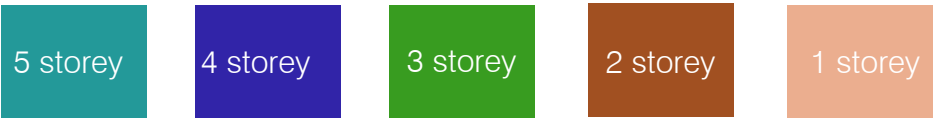
Buildings are consistently higher on Watergate Street and Bridge Street, and Buildings on White Friars are predominantly three storeys, with some development of two storey blocks.

Buildings heights range from single storey heights to four and five storey heights on Commonhall Street, showing much less consistency in the built form. More recent development shows a trend for increased height, to ensure maximum yields within a high density area. Building heights on Nicholas Street are also very inconsistent, ranging from single storey to five storey.

Where the historical street pattern and existing buildings have been preserved on site, building heights are consistent, and provide a frame to the streetscene. Where the historical street pattern and built form has been altered, building heights are much less consistent. The frame enclosing the street is less effective.



Plan to show indicative building heights



Part One: Site Analysis

Overall, land uses within the urban block are very mixed.

Smaller buildings on White Friars and Nicholas Street are occupied by single land uses, of predominantly office and residential uses. Watergate Street and Bridge Street are defined as primary retail areas within Chester, but on closer inspection building uses within upper storeys, to include office and residential land uses, suggesting a complex, layered approach. Within the upper level of the Rows blank windows suggest vacant units, but international retailers are occupying lower floors and extending to upper storeys on the Rows. This facilitates DDA access, via entrance positioned at street level, but results in a blank frontage at the upper level. This shift in the type of retailers occupying the Rows suggest higher rents within the premium retail area of Chester that smaller independent shops will struggle to afford, in the current economic climate.

A trend is also developing for conversion of town houses on White Friars Street from previous office use, back to residential uses. It is also possible that restricted inclusive access for clients and staff may also be having an impact on land uses within White Friars, given the level changes between premises and the street. Parking for staff within this area is also likely to be problematic, and commercial businesses may be choosing to re-locate to more easily accessible locations for customers and staff alike.

Commonhall Street shows a mix of uses, but is defined within the draft town centre strategy (2015) as a primary shopping area. There is a definite trend developing within the Commonhall Street area in respect of conversion of existing premises to residential.



Plan to show land uses

Retail

Business

Residence

Culture

Vacant

Townscape Assessment: Land Uses

Indicative site densities have been extrapolated from the studies undertaken in respect of building heights and land uses. Not surprisingly, the highest densities within the study area occur on Watergate Street and Bridge Street. This is to be expected in an area of very high commercial and retail value within the historic retail core.

Historical site densities on White Friars, Nicholas Street and Commonhall Street show medium densities, but more recent development on Commonhall Street and Weaver Street shows an increase in density within the plot, moving towards the development of apartments in place of individual houses, to increase site yields.



Plan to show indicative densities, as extrapolated from indicative building heights information and indiciative land use information

High Density

Medium Density

Part One: Site Analysis

Views and landmarks abound within Watergate Street and Bridge Street, with elevated views afforded across the street from The Rows. The culmination point for views on these street is found at The Cross. The elevated spire of the Guildhall is visible within Commonhall Street from Weaver Street and Old Hall Place.

Entrances into Commonhall Street from Watergate Street and Bridge Street, via Commonhall Street are framed by attractive historic architecture.

Internally, remaining historic buildings form significant landmarks on White Friars, Commonhall Street and Old Hall Place. The built enclosure and historic architecture on Old Hall Place helps to articulate the historic character of the area, with a view from Commonhall Street terminated by an old warehouse. The location of local landmarks internally would support the development of a pedestrian circuit to connect Watergate Street with Bridge Street, via Old Hall Place and Commonhall Street.

Open service yards within Bollands Court and Weaver Street (north), and demolition of the built form to the southern side of Commonhall Street detract from the overall visual quality of the area. Should re-development of these sites come forward, this will significantly address the negative impacts of these sites.



Plan to show local landmarks and views



Townscape Assessment: Key Views and Detractors



Part One: Site Analysis



Street hierarchy

The Public Realm Strategy recognises street typologies within the study area. Characteristic combinations of Street enclosure, building height, building line, active frontage and surface paving treatments have helped to identify relevant street typologies that enable a street hierarchy to emerge.

Principle Streets are recognisable for their tall buildings built to the back of pavement, with active frontage, facing onto a wide thoroughfare, typically between 1:1 and 1:1.5 building height to street width ratios. Footpaths and the carriageway are delineated. The pedestrian friendly streets of Watergate Street and Bridge Street have benefitted from recent investment within the public realm, incorporating very high quality stone paving. Nicholas Street is also a principle street, but possess a different character to Watergate Street and Bridge Street, owing to the function of serving as a fast transport route for vehicular traffic.

Minor Streets show buildings of medium height and boundary walls built to the back of the pavement, with active frontage. The building height to street width ratio is 1.5 to 1, possessing a more enclosed and intimate scale. There is a delineation between footpaths and carriageways. The built form and historical paving has remained intact in White Friars, but Commonhall Street has less authenticity due to partial demolition of built form to the south side, due to widening of service routes coupled with removal of the historic surface paving in recent years.

Lanes are located at the entrance to Commonhall Street, Pierpoint Lane, Bollands Court, Old Hall Place and the side lane from Watergate Street, leading to Weaver Street. These lanes often connect to other lanes situated in adjoining blocks, and assist greatly with pedestrian permeability within the historic core. They characteristically show buildings built to the back of pavement, sometimes with active frontage. Passageways are narrow in character, with a strong sense of enclosure. The historic paving has remained in situ in some instances of shared surfacing.

Alleys occur on the Rows, connecting to Old Hall Place. They are characteristically fully enclosed, narrow passageways, with traditional paving still in place. They do not possess active frontage and are intended for pedestrian use only.



Part One: Site Analysis

Townscape Assessment

Principle Street: Bridge Street

Tall buildings

Wide Streets

Active frontages

Delineated footpaths and
carriageways

Traditional public realm treatments



Minor Street: White Friars

Medium height buildings

Narrow streets

Active frontages

Delineated footpaths and
carriageways

Traditional public realm treatments
combined with more recent highways
upgrades.



Lane: leading from Watergate Street

Medium height buildings

Very narrow streets

Intermittent active frontages

Shared surface

Traditional public realm treatments

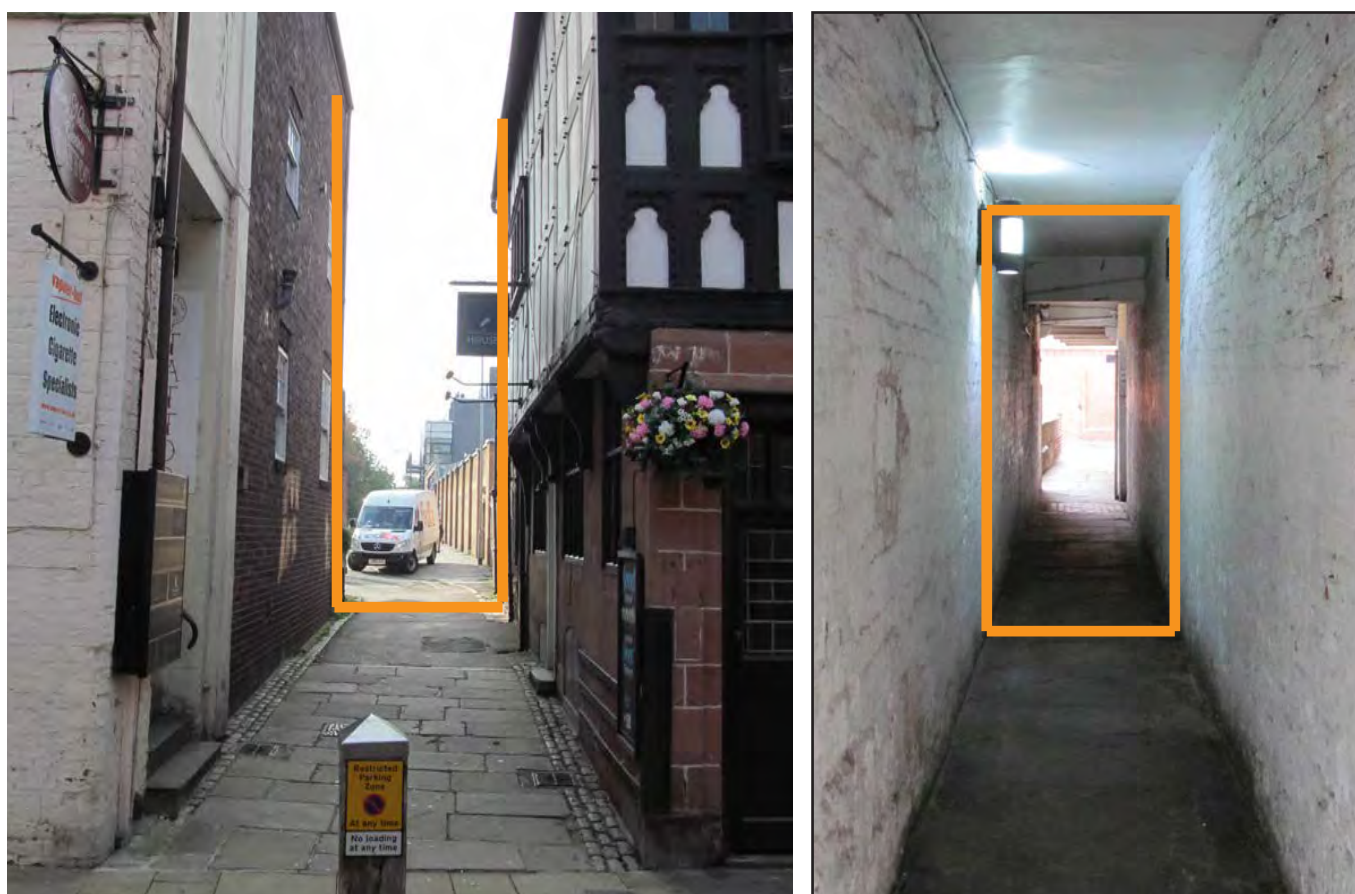
Alley: leading from The Rows

Enclosed passageways

Inactive frontage

Pedestrian route only

Traditional public realm treatments





Historical Street Enclosure

Historical photographs of Commonhall Street (circa 1930's), looking west, show street characteristics similar to lanes, extending some distance along Commonhall Street from Bridge Street.



Existing Street Enclosure

The built form of Commonhall Street has changed significantly in the last 80 years. Building lines have been re-aligned to allow for wider pavements to the north side of the street, whilst demolition of the historic built form to the southern side of the street has enabled servicing and car parking.

Whilst this has facilitated modern uses within the existing buildings, the historic character has been eroded.



Existing Street Enclosure

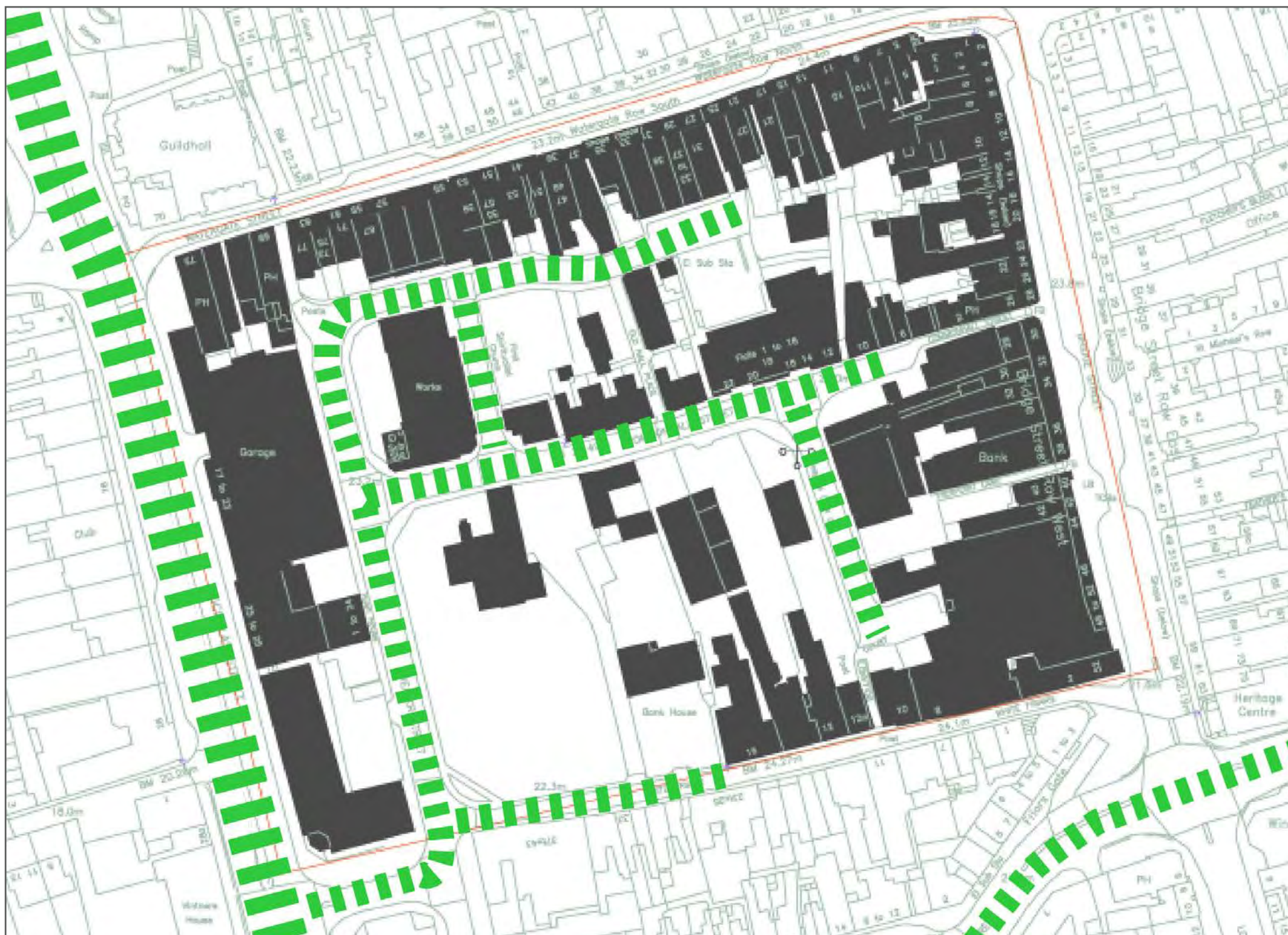
The historic buildings and associated building line have been retained to the western side of Commonhall Street. This section of the street shows a wider street character, suggesting a secondary street.

Part One: Site Analysis

Vehicular access is free flowing on Nicholas Street, with priority given to vehicular traffic.

The only point of access into the south western quarter for vehicular traffic is via the entrance from Nicholas Street, leading onto Weaver Street and White Friars. Vehicular routes on Weaver Street (north), and Commonhall Street are terminated by built development, with no through routes. Vehicular permeability is poor within the area, with many vehicles being forced to turn around at the Commonhall Street junction and service yard leading from Weaver Street (north).

The reduced permeability for vehicles results in a slower pace in this area. An analysis of carriageway to pavement layouts would suggest that priority is given to vehicles in the area but realistically, pedestrian and vehicular traffic is equally balanced in priorities. Vehicular speeds are reduced, due to the dead ends resulting from the density of built form fronting onto Watergate Street and Bridge Street.



Plan to show vehicular movement patterns



Vehicular Movement

Movement and Circulation: Vehicular Routes

The existing network of pedestrian linkages within the historic core afford good pedestrian connectivity across the site, linking to surrounding areas to the north, east and south.

Direct pedestrian access from The Cross, along Watergate Street to Nicholas Street affords links to the west of the historic core, and likewise, pedestrian access from The Cross to Pepper Street, via Bridge Street afford direct links to the south of the historic core. These pedestrian routes are well populated.

The purpose of White Friars Street has changed, with the intervention of Friars Gate. Linkages to the west and south of White Friars are now served by Friars Gate. White Friars tends to function as a local access route to land uses within White Friars.

Pedestrian access from Bridge Street to Nicholas Street via Commonhall Street is blocked by built development, with pedestrians forced to seek alternative routes via Weaver Street on to Watergate Street and Weaver Street.

Pedestrian connectivity to the west of Nicholas Street is hampered by the fast pace of vehicular transport on this route, but pedestrian crossings are available, that enable pedestrian connectivity, although interrupted.



Plan to show pedestrian movement patterns



Pedestrian Movement

Part One: Site Analysis

In terms of servicing, access and parking, there is an inter-relationship between the Commonhall Street area and the Rows that needs to be recognised.

Car parking covers a significant area within the south western quarter and forms an important land use. They are situated on street, within historic service yard areas and on former building sites. As potential building sites come forward for development, available space for parking is likely to reduce, and pressures for car parking will continue to increase. However, the emerging car parking strategy aims to manage these pressures through changes to conditions for residential permits. This document should be referred to for further detail. Private parking leases within building curtilages formerly used as rear service yards attract considerable commercial yields, highlighting the pressures for parking in this area. Disabled parking is positioned on Commonhall Street, but the disabled access ramp is positioned in Pierpont Street, some distance away, reducing access to the Rows for particular users. Servicing and delivery access is afforded via the existing street system. Weaver Street (north) and Commonhall Street, leading into Bollands Court are particularly important for servicing of retail premises on Watergate Street and Bridge Street (including retail premises to the east of Bridge Street). Proposals are ongoing to implement a bin storage area in Bollands Court to support these retail premises. However, these streets also benefit from restricted servicing provision on Bridge Street and Watergate Street which could be utilised further. The disabled access on Pierpont Street allows for the delivery of more bulky goods to the upper Row levels that can be wheeled in via this ramp. A potential servicing route providing level access to The Rows is via the alley leading from Old Hall Place. This route also has the potential to provide disabled access. Contractual arrangements for commercial waste collection are agreed privately and operated by national companies, using available service routes within the Commonhall Street area, so the ability to reduce waste service vehicles within the area is beyond the control of the council.



Plan to show vehicular movement patterns



Car Parking



Service Access



Disabled Car Parking



Disabled Access

Movement and Circulation: Parking, Access and Servicing

Commercial waste associated with retail premises has to be removed by a private contractor. Restricted times and obstructed access help to facilitate the collection of trade waste within the city centre, daily from 8.30am to 10.30am on Bridge Street and Watgate Street.

Large retailers are more likely to generate commercial waste than smaller retailers situated on The Rows. Outlets preparing and selling food and drink generate waste food and empty bottles. Increased tourism within Chester is exerting additional pressures on the use of retail space for commercial gain by landlords, resulting in extensions to premises benefiting from primary retail frontage. Rear extensions to buildings fronting on to Watgate Street and Bridge Street have resulted in the partial or complete loss of rear yards in this area, and this has caused problems in respect of bin storage and commercial waste. Particular problems of bin storage are evident on Weaver Street, the rear alley leading to Commonhall Street and Bollands Court. On street commercial bin storage looks unsightly and detracts from the townscape quality of the area. It also presents opportunities for arson, presenting a risk to the historic fabric of the Rows. A duty of care exists for commercial traders to store waste responsibly, but the opportunities for waste storage are being reduced through the reduction of service yards, in order to maximise commercial rent yields. The trend for national retailers extending into The Rows may accentuate waste issues further over time.

Opportunities for the discreet and safe storage of commercial waste need to be identified. Council owned land may present opportunities to help address this problem for traders, supported by appropriate legal agreements. A more long term solution would be to incorporate a waste policy within the Development Brief, to ensure that waste storage is appropriately addressed at the planning stage, within building curtilages.



Plan to show pedestrian movement patterns



On street Bin Storage

Part One: Site Analysis

Public Realm Assessment

Paving

Paving materials and the quality of surfacing within the south western quarter is very mixed. Watergate Street, Bridge Street, White Friars and the lane leading into Commonhall from Bridge Street have very high quality stone paving, laid to consistent levels. Materials include stone setts and flags with stone kerbs.

Elsewhere, the quality of the paving becomes inconsistent, both in the selection of materials and the quality of the surface. Historic paving in Old Hall Place is still in place, but settlement has created an uneven surface. Cobbles delineate historic service yards in Pierpont Lane, but again, levels have settled to such an extent that they are difficult to walk on or drive over.

Concrete, concrete flags and tarmac are found on pavements in Weaver Street and Commonhall Street. These pavements are poor in quality, showing uneven surfaces within a patchwork of materials in some instances. Vehicular access and ground settlement in isolated instances has resulted in pavement levels that are extremely challenging to walk on, forcing pedestrians onto the carriageway. There has been very little investment into the public realm quality for pedestrian pavements within Commonhall Street and Weaver Street (north).

Carriageway surfacings have been maintained to an acceptable level, to facilitate vehicular access, and are fit for purpose.

Where new access routes have been incorporated within the block, the ratio of carriageway width to pavement width is engineered in such a way as to give vehicles priority, with no pedestrian crossing points.

Services and utilities underneath paved surfaces are complex. In places, the original Roman sewer channel, 4m below ground level is still in use today for its intended purpose. Consultation with the local authority archaeologist is necessary to ensure that works within archaeological areas are undertaken with due regard to historic structures underground. A survey to assess the location of utilities would help to identify areas where collapse could occur, and also aid with developer certainty for development proposals. Welsh Water should be consulted in respect of regeneration proposals for the area. The area is crossed by a number of sewers and protection measures, either in the form of easement widths or a diversion of pipes, will be required where development would impact upon these assets.



Watergate Street



Bolland Court



Stone setts and flags laid to White Friars



Setts and clay paviours laid to Old Hall Place



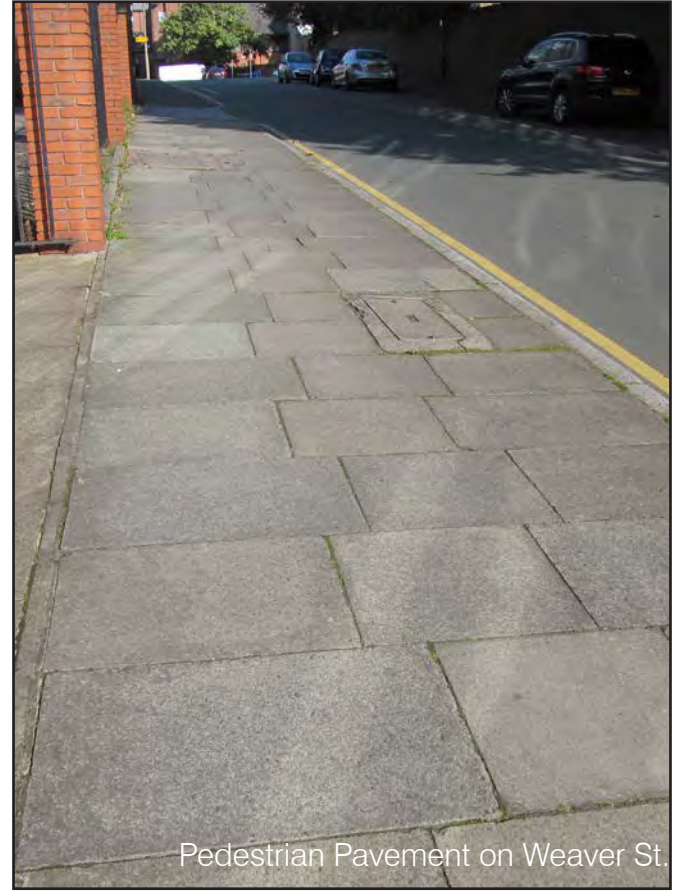
Stone setts and cobbles laid to Pierpont Lane, with uneven surfaces



Lane leading into Commonhall St. via Bridge St.



Lane leading from Watergate St. to Weaver St.



Pedestrian Pavement on Weaver St.



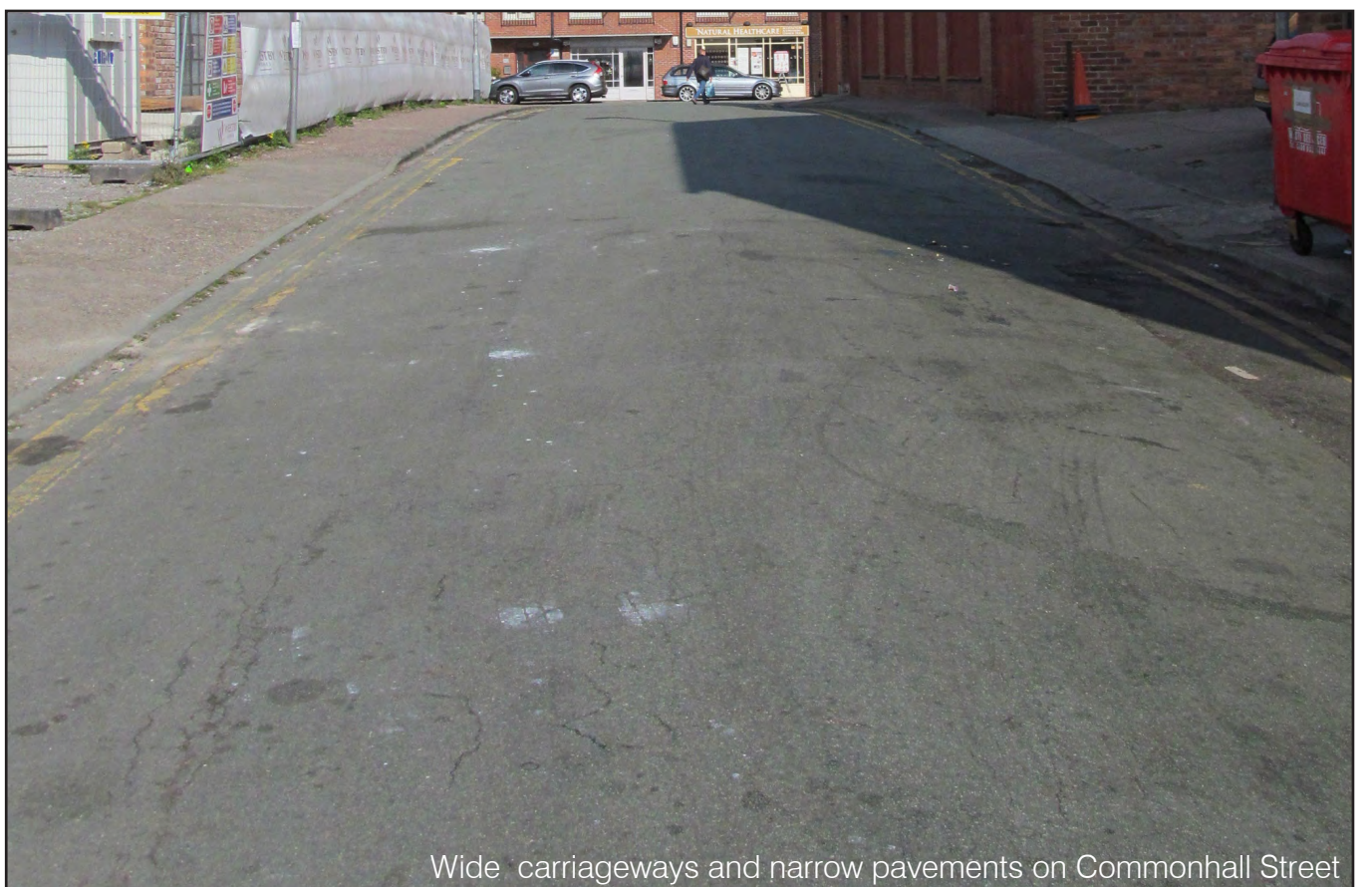
Exposed aggregate concrete surfacing to Commonhall St.



Poor re-instatement of surfacing/unlevel surfaces on Commonhall St.



Collapsing pedestrian pavement on Weaver St.



Wide carriageways and narrow pavements on Commonhall Street

Part One: Site Analysis

Public Realm Assessment

Greenspace and Biodiversity

Publicly accessible greenspace within the south western quarter is limited to a re-defined kerb line on the junction of Weaver Street and White Friars. Available space has been grassed over. A landscape design approach could make more of this space.

The majority of the greenspace is found within The Friars listed curtilage. Mature trees and lawns afford a pleasant aspect for this property, but it is not publicly accessible. However, mature tree canopies are visible within the area, particularly on Weaver Street and White Friars, and this helps to soften the otherwise hard edges of the built environment, whilst providing shade and shelter from the weather. Bat populations may also benefit from feeding opportunities afforded by the trees.

A garden to the rear of the bank house and an isolated Indian Bean Tree, situated within a rear yard on Weaver Street (north), function in a similar manner.

Commonhall Street has no tree planting and receives very little benefit in terms of micro-climate enhancements. Bio-diversity is very limited.



Tree canopies on White Friars



Publicly accessible green space on Weaver Street



Tree canopies on Weaver Street



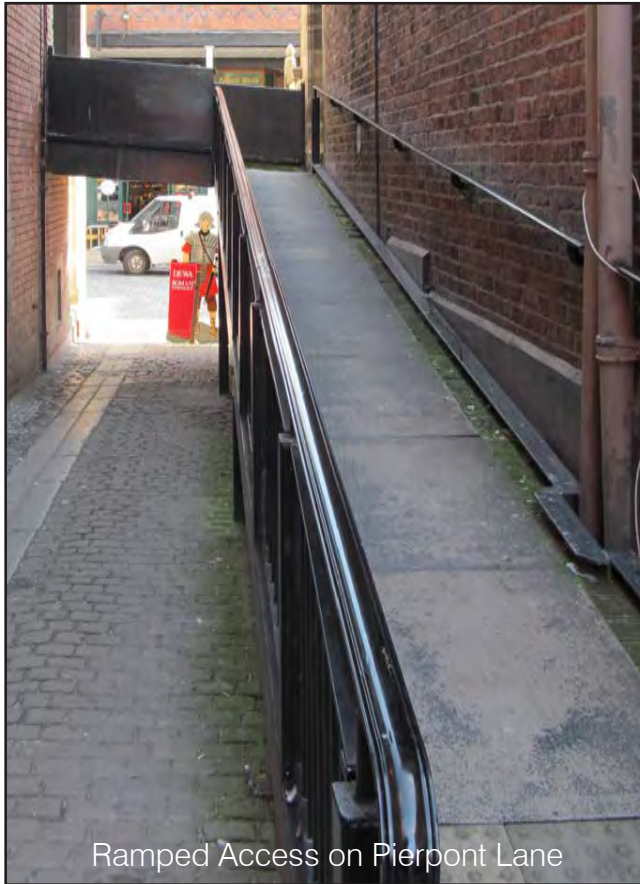
Private lawned garden within the curtilage of The Friars

Level Changes and DDA Compliant Access

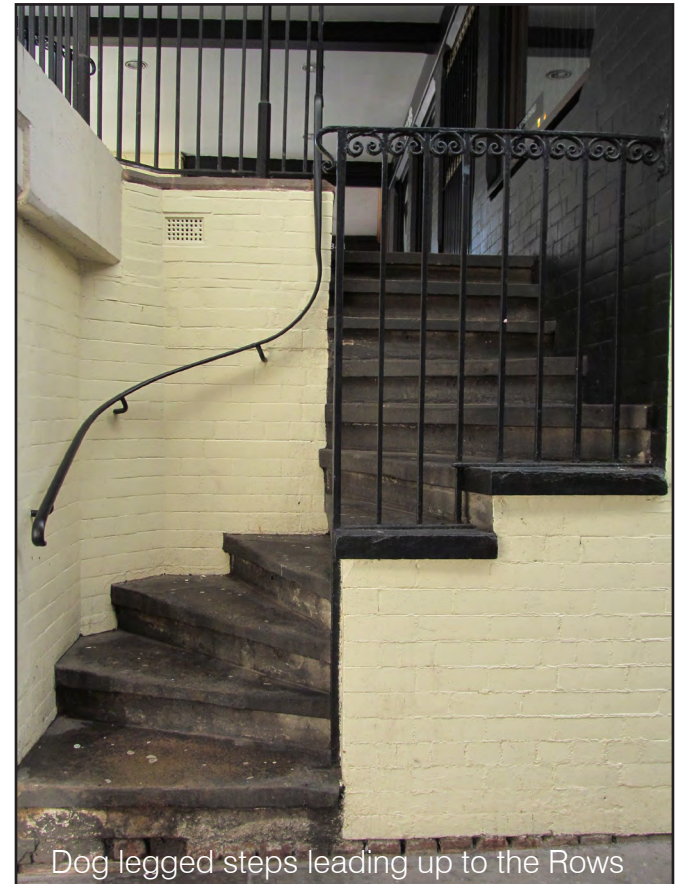
The Disability Discrimination Act came into force in 1996, and with it, the requirement to incorporate compliant access to new buildings providing services, after the date of enactment. Part M of the Building Regulations sets out the technical requirements to facilitate this. There is a dispensation within Part M in respect of historic buildings.

Within the historic built fabric of the south western quarter, access is complicated by the two storey retail provision, with access at Bridge Street level and also at the level of the Rows. DDA access provision is provided for access to the Rows on Pier point Lane, connecting to the Rows on Bridge Street. It is the only point of ramped access to the Rows, and the suitability of the ramp, together with the surfacing leading to it discourages use by wheelchair users. However, an alley leading from Old Hall Place to the Rows on Watergate Street allows for level access. Both accesses are not very clearly articulated within the street scene. Elsewhere to the Rows, level changes are provided via the use of steps, of which some are dog legged. Due to the historic importance of the Rows, inclusive access presents some challenges. Incremental level changes on the Rows are occurred through small ramps. Bridges across lanes enable a continuous route, once on the Rows. These bridges were built circa 1970's to link the Rows together.

On Commonhall Street, White Friars and Weaver Street, incremental level changes have been accommodated through the use of small ramps where space allows, but where space is constrained, stepped access into commercial buildings still exist.



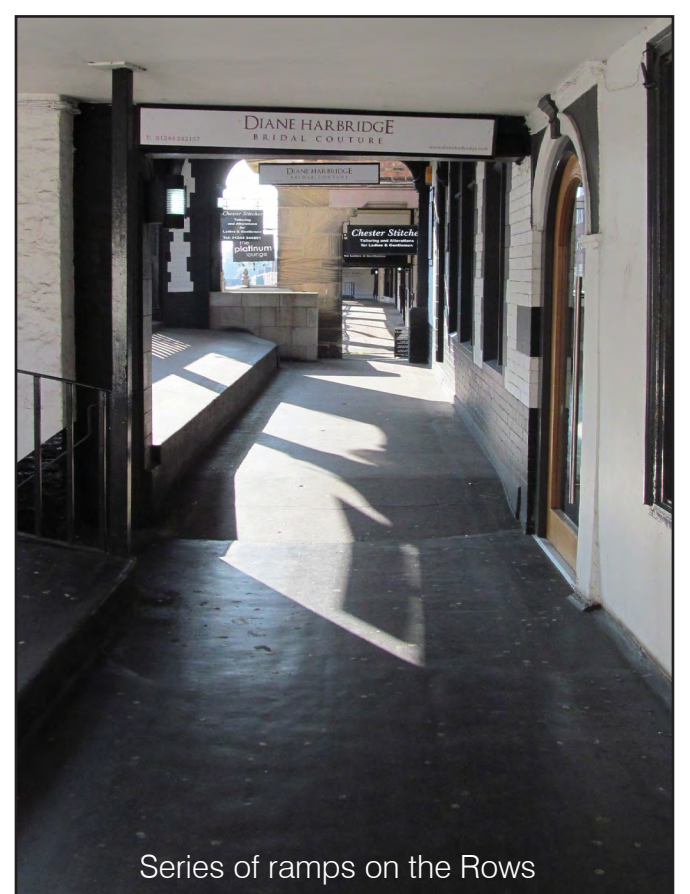
Ramped Access on Pierpont Lane



Dog legged steps leading up to the Rows



Ramped Access to the Deva Experience



Series of ramps on the Rows



Stepped access into historic buildings



Bridge crossing across Commonhall Lane



Stepped access from Weaver Lane

Part One: Site Analysis

Public Realm Assessment

Delineation of Private Boundaries

Pressures for extended commercial space and car parking have led to building extensions in rear yards and demolition of historic rear boundaries on Weaver Street and Commonhall Street.

Access to facilitate maximum numbers of parking spaces has resulted in poorly defined private boundaries that have eroded the street enclosure significantly. These boundary treatments detract from the quality of the public realm.

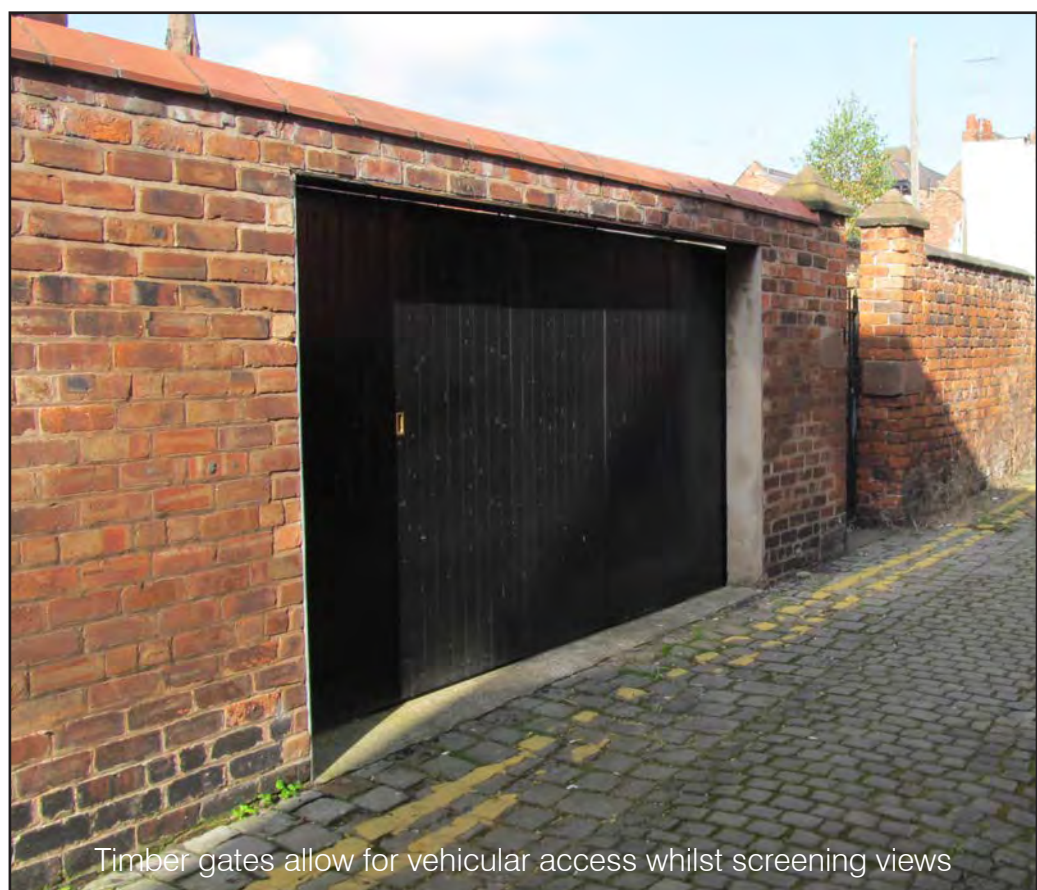
Historic boundary treatments evidence solutions to facilitate vehicular access, such as timber gates. These treatments clearly define private space and screen rear yards from view.



Garage incorporated within rear extension



Gated access defines private access



Timber gates allow for vehicular access whilst screening views



Access for parking has resulted in poorly defined boundary



Delineation of private space is unclear



Poor quality boundary treatments erode street enclosure and look unsightly

Public Realm Fixtures

The confined space available for public realm fixtures has resulted in very little public realm clutter within the south western quarter.

Where the original street structure has been preserved, historic street fixtures have remained in place, such as historic lighting columns and traditional bollard treatments. These fixtures contribute to the historic character.

Where the street structure has been modified, more utilitarian fixtures have been installed. Whilst lighting columns on Commonhall Street are functional, they detract from the overall quality of the area. There is no lighting on Weaver Street north, supporting the original purpose of Weaver street north as a service route, rather than a main thoroughfare.

There are no bins or benches provided in this area.

CCTV is building mounted, and the architectural character of the buildings allows for CCTV cameras to be visually discrete.

Public art is located on bollards at the entrance to Commonhall Street, embellishing a functional element to add interest at the detailed level, without creating further obstruction in a confined space.



Timber bollard to Commonhall Street



Traditional Cast Iron at Bolland Court



Public art detail to timber bollard



Public art detail to timber bollard



Historic lighting column on White Friars



Modern lighting column to Commonhall St.



Building mounted CCTV to Bollands Court

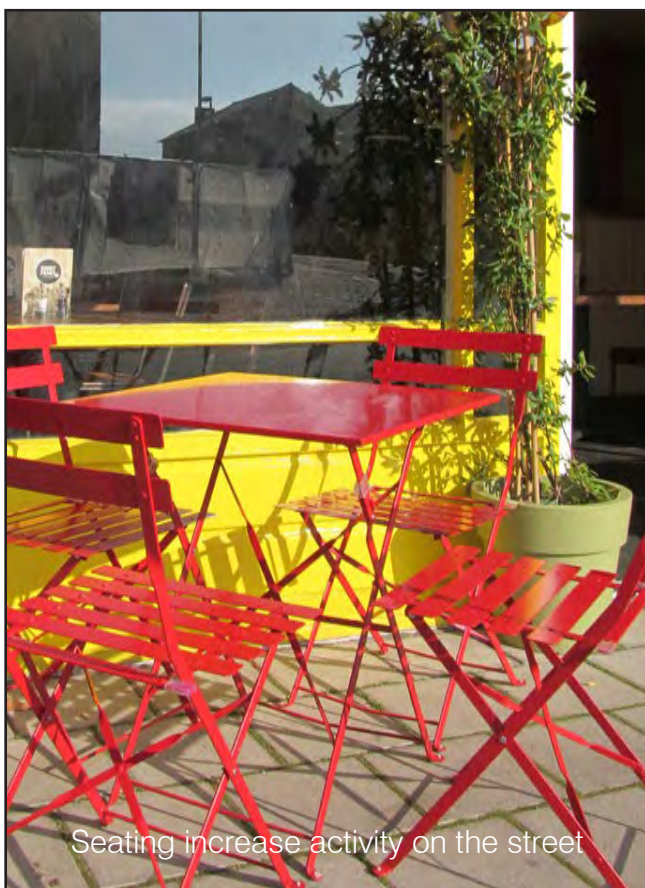
Part One: Site Analysis

Public Realm Assessment

Active frontages

In the wider thoroughfares of Watergate Street and Bridge Street, active frontage has the capacity to spill out onto wide pavements. Elsewhere within the south western quarter, dwell time is limited, due to the narrow nature of pedestrian pavements. The recent mixed use building on Commonhall Street has been set back from the original building line of Commonhall Street and this allows for limited spill out of tables and chairs.

Retail frontages elsewhere are limited to the shop window. Sensitively designed shop windows use heritage paint colours, planting and lighting to enliven and draw interest.

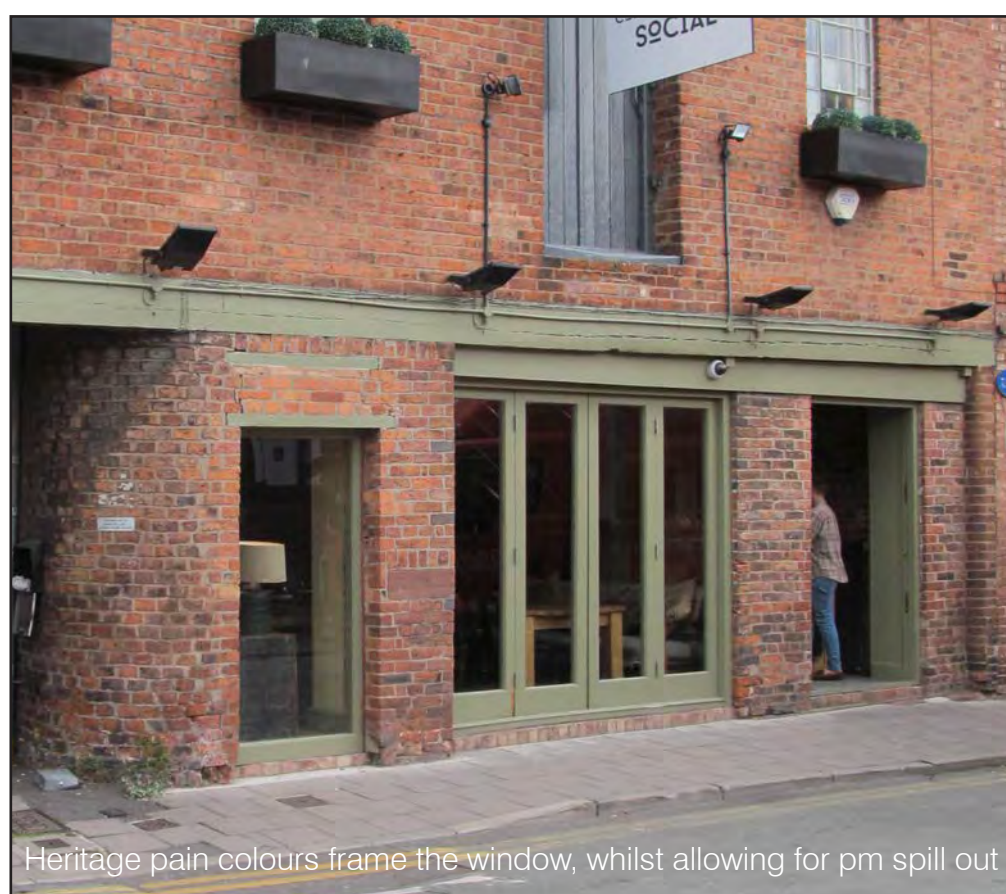


Seating increase activity on the street



Wall paint frames a shop window

Heritage paint colours frame the window, with lighting fixed internally



Heritage paint colours frame the window, whilst allowing for pm spill out



Wide thoroughfares and pedestrian friendly streets afford generous space for dwell time within the street

Signage and Wayfinding

Signage within the quarter is predominantly associated with retail premises, using traditional signage techniques, in line with conservation policy.

Informative signage is also present on new buildings to articulate building names.

Prohibitive signage can be found in use on private boundaries to prevent obstruction of access to parking within rear yards.

There is no provision for wayfinding to enable pedestrian linkages both within and outside of the study area.

Building Signage



Wall mounted retail signage



Suspended and wall mounted signage, and A-board on wider pavements



Suspended shop signage



Prohibitive signage to maintain private access



Retail signage in nostalgic style

Part One: Site Analysis

Key Findings and Recommendations Derived from the Analysis

1. *Urban Block Form*: the highways improvements of the 1970's have had a significant impact upon sub-block form and legibility within the area. A long term strategy would help to address the repair of the sub-block form in the longer term, that can be used to inform proposals as sites come forward. This should give consideration to the location of active frontages within the street hierarchy.
2. *Repairing the Historic Urban Form*: the remaining gap sites within the built form, as identified in the analysis, should be brought forward for sustainable development, in order to repair the historic urban form in this area and improve the quality of the townscape in this area. The Chester Growth Partnership will play a crucial role in facilitating this aspect of the works, including initiating discussions with land owners to understand their aspirations and needs, and guide them appropriately. Full use should be made of opportunities for pre-application discussions with the local planning authorities, who will have been consulted in the preparation of this revised Development Brief. Future proposals should be mindful of Archaeological and Conservation Management Objectives, as detailed within the analysis, and will need to comply with National and Local Planning Policies. Building heights should show consistency within the area and land uses should be complementary to current land uses in the area. Proposed schemes should be mindful of the impact that their buildings will have upon the existing street enclosure, and provide adequate bin storage to accommodate the needs of proposed uses.
3. *The Rows Interface*: a critical issue in the Commonhall Street area relates to the interface between the Rows and associated rear facades. Whilst the public face of the Rows fronts onto Watergate Street and Bridge Street, many of the functional aspects of retail premises on these streets occur to the rear. Commercial expansion has reduced available space to accommodate refuse storage, servicing provision, vehicular access and car parking. These areas are fully accessible, with no clear delineation between the principle pedestrian routes through the area and areas serving principally as service yard areas. The strategy for the Commonhall Street area should include specific policies to address these issues as follows:-
- Develop a clearly defined network of public realm areas that are distinct from service yard areas to inform a strategy for investment within the public realm.
 - Due consideration of available space for refuse storage should be given at the planning submission stage for change of use or extension of retail premises.
 - Provision of a commercial waste bin store to support commercial uses on the Rows by the local authority waste team.
 - Define a clear strategy for parking and access to commercial/retail premises on Watergate Street and Bridge Street, to include disabled parking and inclusive access routes. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to controlled access to service yards to private users only.
- This will require close liaison between The Chester Growth Partnership, the local planning authority, the Localities Team and the Waste Department, and existing stakeholders to be able to co-ordinate effectively.
4. *Transport Hierarchy and Public Realm*: an opportunity exists to re-balance the existing transport hierarchy by upgrading existing pedestrian pavements, in line with the Chester City Centre Public Realm Strategy, so that pedestrian surfaces are improved and existing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles are reduced. Public realm improvements have the potential to significantly enhance both the physical and visual experience within the Commonhall Street area. Chester Renaissance and the local highways authority will play a significant part in bringing these improvements forward, working in close liaison with each other to access available funding streams. Public realm improvements in the Commonhall Street area will help to articulate the intention of the local authority to regenerate this area, and encourage private sector investment that will ultimately benefit the economy of Chester as a whole. A balance will need to be achieved between materiality and functionality, with due consideration given to maintenance costs in the future.

Revised Strategy for Commonhall Street

1. Vision and Objectives
2. Supporting Planning Policies
3. Urban Form
4. Potential Development Opportunities
5. Street Hierarchy and Pedestrian Routes
6. Public Realm Investment
7. Commercial Waste
8. Parking, Access and Servicing

Part Two: Recommendations

The Vision

The vision is to promote an exciting offer of City Centre living and working that enables friends, family and colleagues to enjoy the assets found within the unique historic environment that Chester has to offer, in a safe and easily accessible environment. The Rows are identified as the most important surviving medieval townscape within western Europe, and the proposals encourage an everyday interaction within an internationally recognised historic core. Strategically, the regeneration intention is to extend the quality of experience found within the historic core into the study area. Sustainable development of the area underpins the proposals at all levels, from environmental considerations, to economic concerns and community issues.

The original vision for Commonhall Street advocated an artisan quarter, continuing the model of the burgage plot. Recent shifts in working patterns, coupled with IT developments enable working from home as an acceptable alternative to conventional methods of working. A contemporary interpretation of the burgage plot is perfectly feasible in this location, reinforcing the artisan concept originally put forward, but allowing for a wider reach within the population. Building upon the unique historic environment within the Commonhall Street area, adjacent to the historic core, will provide an attractive environment that will persuade potential residents and businesses to choose Commonhall Street as their preferred location to suit their living and working needs. Locally distinctive buildings have been strategically identified within the study area and future regeneration in the area will enhance these existing assets, enabling the development of a true sense of place. Recent trends show changes of land use from commercial to residential, utilising existing town houses on White Friars, and new build residential schemes on gap sites, and these trends are supported to enable delivery of the vision.

In order to encourage developer appetite within the area, opportunities for investment in the public realm of Commonhall Street will be proactively sought by the Chester Growth Partnership and City Council and land holdings managed in such a manner as to enhance the townscape quality of the area. Public realm improvements will help to increase investor confidence and support the re-development of gap sites, whilst encouraging the quicker wins to be gained from the re-use of vacant buildings.



Vision and Objectives

Objectives

The original design brief set out 7 principle aims for the Commonhall Street area. These aims have been slightly modified, but much of the original intent remains in place. Additional objectives in respect of public realm and commercial waste have also been added. These area specific objectives are intended to supplement the wider development management policies contained within the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Part one and emerging Part Two. Future development proposals should be informed by these objectives..

Townscape Quality

- 1. Improve the townscape quality in the heart of the city and increase pedestrian activity and vitality in the area. This will be achieved by encouraging refurbishment and re-use of vacant buildings and infill development, to encourage occupation of existing and new buildings, with associated management of the built form, and improving public realm quality.

Urban Form

- 2. Repair the urban block form to provide greater coherency and legibility within the Commonhall area, and provide additional linkages to the wider Chester area. An increase in active frontages would benefit natural surveillance within this area, and help to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists within the public realm.

Heritage Assets

- 3. Protect the significance of designated and undesignates heritage assets, including important historic buildings and fabric, townscape patterns and characteristics and archaeological remains, in line with section 12 of the NPPF and existing planning policies for conservation and archaeology.

New Infill Development

- 4. Encourage economic regeneration for mixed uses including housing, commercial and retail uses, through new development on gap sites and re-use of existing vacant buildings: reinforce city centre retailing by complementary developments, including specialist shops

High Quality Design

- 5. Encourage high quality design which reinforces the positive elements of the area and works contextually with the character of the historic core, whilst supporting modern methods of working and living.

Public Realm Improvements

- 6. Define the street hierarchy and resulting public areas clearly through public realm improvements, particularly in respect of pedestrian pavements and reduce the visibility of areas functioning as service yards to the Rows: create local environments and spaces which make the area a destination, and encourage people to use and enjoy the spaces as well as buildings, through enhanced wayfinding and investment. Reference should be made to the Chester Public Realm Design Guide (2010).

Commercial Waste Storage

- 7. Ensure that new development incorporates appropriate provision for discretely sited commercial waste provision that is not visible from the adjacent public realm.

Part Two: Recommendations

Supporting Planning Policies

An assessment of existing planning policies was undertaken within the analysis, and these policies are capable of guiding development to ensure that the objectives set out for Commonhall Street are met.

Additionally, there are area specific policies contained within the original Commonhall Development Brief that are worthy of retention and should be re-iterated within this revised brief, as follows:-

- 1. Ensure the scale and massing of new development respects the hierarchy of the city’s historic core
- 2. New development should enrich the existing roofscape of the area and complement the existing roofscape character within Chester, rather than detract from it.
- 3. The green setting to the grade II* listed ‘The Friars’ building needs to be retained, in order to comply with heritage legislation.
- 4. Localised views identified within the analysis should be preserved, to ensure that legibility and ease of wayfinding within the Commonhall Street area is maintained.

By way of additional policy, it is recommended that a policy be included within the Local Development Framework Part Two that specifically requires proposals within the historic core to illustrate how domestic and commercial waste will be incorporated within existing building curtilages, in a discreet and concealed manner.

The following information sets out additional recommendations not covered within existing planning policies that will help to achieve the objectives set out above.

Urban Form

In order to resolve the fragmentation of the urban form to the east of Nicholas Street, it is proposed that the existing urban block form within the Commonhall Street area be split into two smaller block sizes, that align more closely in size with the historical block form within the City Core. The division would occur along the line of Commonhall Street. The urban block to the north of Commonhall Street would be defined by Bridge Street, Watergate Street, Nicholas Street and Commonhall Street. The urban block to the south of Commonhall Street would be defined by Bridge Street, White Friars, Nicholas Street and Commonhall Street.

Future re-development of the Kwik-Fit garage would enable this to be achieved in the longer term, by achieving a break in the block to align with Commonhall Street, leading onto Nicholas Street. The character of this break could align with the dimensions of Commonhall Lane, leading from Bridge Street.



Existing Urban Block Structure within Chester City Core



Proposed Urban Block Structure within Chester City Core

Part Two: Recommendations

Urban Form cont.

Re-development of the built form within the Commonhall Street area, particularly in respect of potential development sites will help to repair the sub-block structure so that it becomes more coherent, aiding wayfinding and legibility.

The traditional burgage plot extending from White Friars to Commonhall Street is still very evident. Historically, the burgage plot incorporated both the housing accommodation and workshop accommodation of the resident family, with these two uses being separated by garden space to support the amenity needs of the family. The burgage plot could be interpreted to introduce more active frontage onto Commonhall Street, and side elevations facing onto Commonhall Street could also be modified to present opportunities for windows that will enhance natural surveillance.

Introducing a link between Commonhall Street and Nicholas Street, extending from Commonhall Street would also present opportunities to introduce active frontage. This will help to support the re-configuration of the urban block and encourage greater footfall within Commonhall Street, which in turn will support commercial uses at ground floor, allowing for the development of a mix of uses along the street's length.



Plan showing proposed sub-block structure and potential for active frontages

Urban Form

Potential Development Opportunities

Since drafting the analysis, a number of planning permissions have been granted within the Commonhall Street area.

The car park on Weaver Street (1) is currently being re-developed for residential land uses. The Chronicle Paper Store (2), situated at the junction of Weaver Street and Old Hall Street has potential for re-development, subject to the resolution of land ownership issues.

The Deva Printworks (4) neighbouring The Friars on Commonhall Street has been granted planning permission for conversion into a restaurant, through a sensitive approach that conserves the existing historic fabric of the building. This approach is very much supported in this instance, and will help to bring this building back into commercial use and enliven the streetscene.

The site of the Deva Experience (3) currently supports the tourism economy within the City, particularly in respect of school curricula activities, and this function is very much supported. It is understood that the current owners wish to continue existing functions within this building, and have no major plans for the future, but would very much support public realm improvements adjacent to their building, and would be willing to co-operate with the local authority to enable those works to take place. A previous permission has expired on this site and the site does offer scope for substantial re-development in the future.

Should the Kwik-Fit Garage come forward for re-development in the future, an opportunity exists to present a strong architectural focal point to the western end of Commonhall Street, of increased height and stature that will aid with legibility and reinforce the character of the street.

A number of vacant buildings currently existing within the study area. In particular, Knights Court, situated on the corner of Nicholas Street and Weaver Street has the potential to contribute significantly to existing commercial or residential capacity within the area, and proposals to bring this building back into use would be very much supported. Historic warehouse buildings that are currently vacant also have the capacity to contribute to the vitality of the area, should they be brought back into active use.

Potential Development Opportunity

Vacant Building



Part Two: Recommendations

Pedestrian Routes

Should service yards be re-instated, pedestrian access through the Commonhall Street area will become slightly more restricted to the rear of the Rows, but not to such a degree as to severely disrupt pedestrian permeability within the area. The alley leading from Commonhall Street through to the Rows, via the private car park would not be promoted as public realm.

Active frontages should be promoted on principle pedestrian routes.

Should the re-development of the Kwik-Fit Garage be brought forward in the longer term, enabling the development of a lane linking Commonhall Street to Nicholas Street, pedestrian permeability will be increased in this location.

Regeneration initiatives, such as the Northgate scheme, will encourage linkages between Commonhall Street and Northgate Street. The lanes and alleys linking Commonhall Street with Watergate Street will become important linkages.



Plan to show pedestrian movement patterns



Existing Pedestrian Movement



Proposed Pedestrian Movement (in event of re-development of Kwik-Fit site)

Street Hierarchy and Pedestrian Routes

Street hierarchy

The draft town centre strategy proposes to raise the status of Commonhall Street from a secondary retail street to a primary street. The scale and massing of the built form at the eastern end of Commonhall Street, combined with existing commercial uses located here would support a primary retail designation, combined with re-development of existing gap sites to the south of Commonhall Street in this area. Further west, the scale and massing of building, combined with residential and commercial land uses suggests that this section will continue to function as a minor street. Along the length of Commonhall Street, the delineation between footpaths and carriageways should continue. Improvements to pavements on Commonhall Street would encourage greater use by pedestrians, and increase the quality of the existing townscape. Where space permits, consideration should be given to widening pavements in the eastern section of the street, to accommodate spill out from retail premises.

The introduction of a lane is proposed, linking Commonhall Street to Nicholas Street, should the re-development of the Kwik-Fit garage come forward. This would enhance pedestrian connectivity between the main retail core and surrounding areas, and encourage greater footfall on Commonhall Street. In turn, this would support commercial uses at ground floor level on the street.

Pierpoint Lane would benefit from the re-instatement of the boundary wall to its edge, in order to align it more closely with the existing character of the lanes in this area. This would also help to screen unsightly views of building rears from view. However, servicing access will still need to be maintained, so it may not be possible to re-instate along the entirety of its length. A review of existing inclusive access provision on Pierpoint Lane is also recommended.

Lanes and alleys that strongly connect Watergate Street with Commonhall Street would benefit from public realm enhancements and lighting, to aid linkages to surrounding areas. This is particularly important, should the proposed Northgate scheme be brought forward.



Part Two: Recommendations

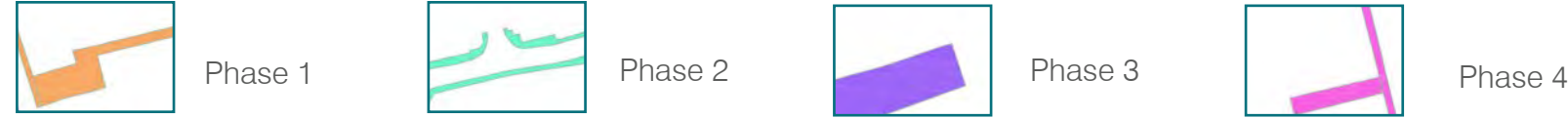
Public Realm Investment

Proposals for public realm improvements have been guided by proposed pedestrian permeability routes and future development schemes, in addition to identified need. Initial proposals include improvements at an early stage to Pierpoint Lane and Old Hall Lane. A conservation approach is recommended, whilst ensuring appropriate inclusive access. Old Hall Street is adopted, as is Weaver Street, so re-instatement of the historic paving on Old Hall Street is achievable. CWAC partially own the land leading from Old Hall Place through the alley onto the Rows. Negotiation with existing land owners would be required to complete this stretch in entirety. This area would also benefit from the provision of parking for loading/unloading from the Rows, if possible.

Pierpoint Lane falls within private ownership, but there is an ancient right to pass through this lane. Negotiations would be required with the existing land owner to improve the surfacing of the pathway, following a conservation approach. Re-instating the service yard boundary wall piers along Pierpoint Lane, allowing for apertures to accommodate timber gates, is recommended. Pierpoint Court could form a small courtyard, accommodating existing parking arrangement and providing entry to the Deva Experience, whilst encouraging re-use of vacant buildings in this area. CWAC own much of this site, but Pierpoint Lane crosses the site, in private ownership. Landowner discussions would be required for this project to be brought forward. The pavement leading from Pierpoint Lane to Commonhall Street mostly falls within CWAC ownership and would benefit from the re-instatement of levels and re-surfacing.



Plan to show location of public realm improvements



Public Realm Investment cont.....

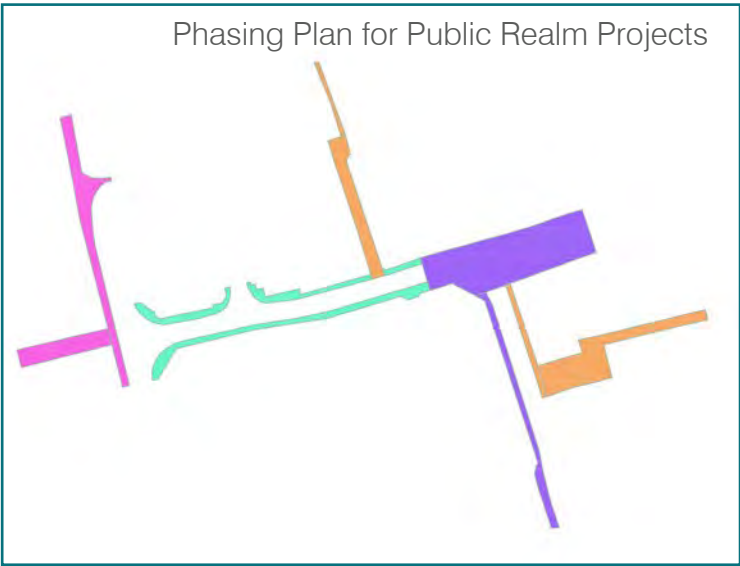
The pavements on Commonhall Street included within Phase 2 proposals appear to be adopted, or fall within CWAC ownership. These projects could be brought forward, subject to the availability of funding.

Phase 3 proposals include the creation of a small public space within the eastern section of Commonhall Street, and improvements to surfacing on the western pavement leading from Commonhall Street to Bollands Court. The land ownership within this area is more complex and will involve negotiations with existing land owners in this area. However, improvements to public realm in this location will make the area a more attractive location for visitors and potentially benefit adjacent commercial premises, increasing rental yields, so proposals for improvements to this area present potential opportunities for existing land owners in this area that would be attractive.

A review of lighting in this area would help to extend the retail and leisure offer within Commonhall Street into the evening hours by enhancing pedestrian safety. This would support the developing residential character within the area, and create an interesting vibe.

Phase 4 proposals are dependent upon the re-development of the Kwik-Fit Garage site, should this site come forward in the longer term. The costs for the proposed lane could be incorporated within the re-development costs of the site.

Generally, investment should encourage the potential for temporary events and explore opportunities to enhance the existing cycling infrastructure.



Phase 1



Phase 2



Phase 3



Phase 4



Improvements leading to Bollands Court would benefit pedestrians



Re-laying paving to Old Hall Place is easily achievable



Pierpont Court would benefit from paving/boundary improvements

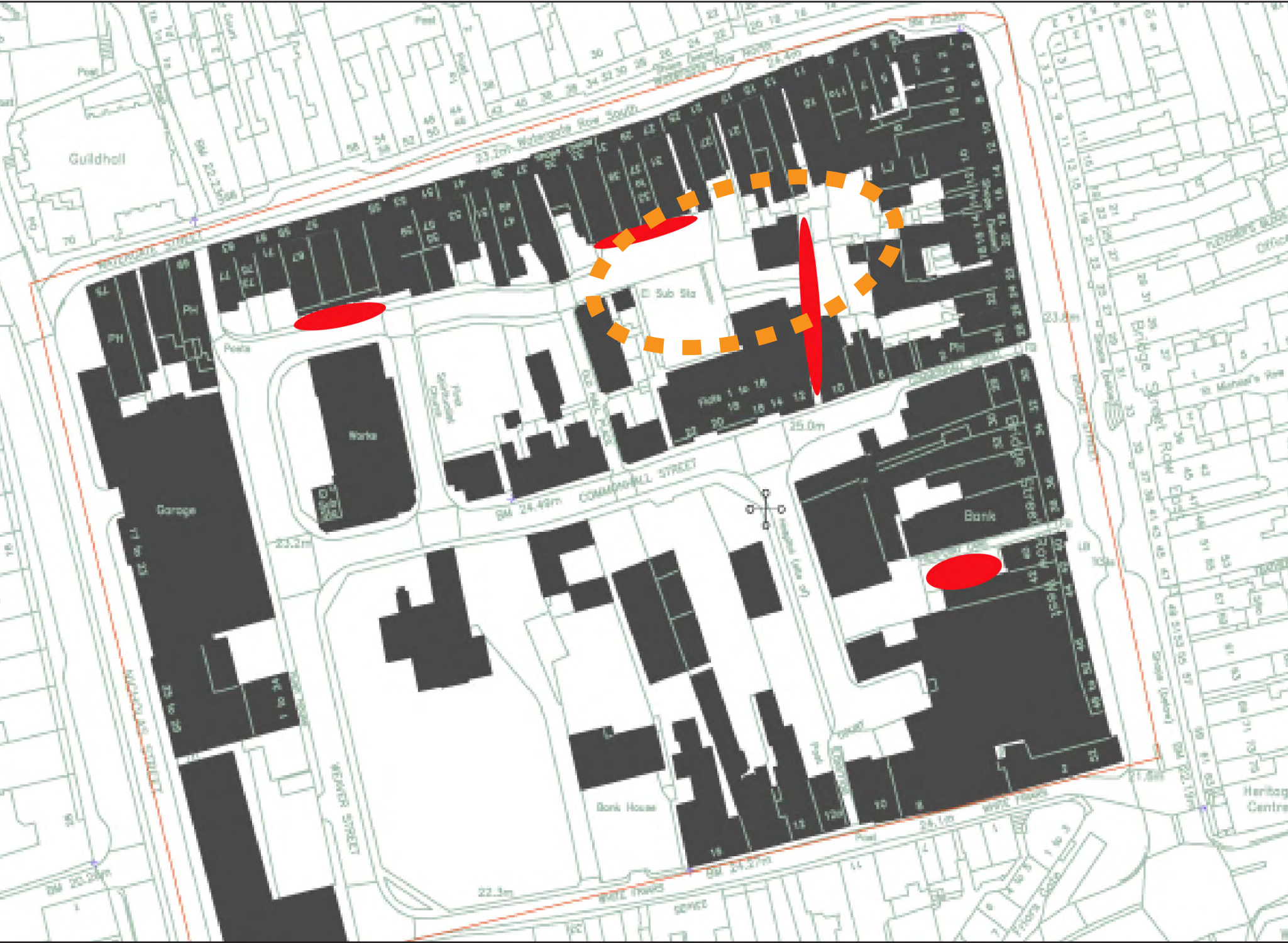
Part Two: Recommendations

Commercial Waste

A significant problem within the Commonhall Street area relates to the removal of historic private boundary walls, to enable development or parking. This has resulted in a poor delineation between public and private space, with the service functions of adjacent buildings on full view. Subject to the agreement of relevant land owners, this strategy recommends re-instatement of historical rear yard boundaries, by re-instating entrance piers and gates. This will help to articulate more clearly areas that are within the public realm and areas that are more private in nature.

A large service yard exists to the rear of Whitegate and Bridge Street, serving the needs of multiple occupants in this area. Remains of an entry gateway can be found to the side elevation of the listed property fronting onto Old Hall Street. Re-instatement of this gateway would help to partially screen views into this area, whilst suggesting a more domestic, private function of servicing buildings. This would also allow for a targeted approach to spend, in a very concentrated area, without trying to change too much of the functionality of this area. A small intervention such as this is likely to be successfully achieved, subject to buy in by interested stakeholders. Access for stakeholders would still have to remain, but the area would cease to be adopted by the local highways authority. Consultation with interested stakeholders will be required at an early stage.

An area wide review of existing waste management and collection arrangements is recommended, given the developing trend for increased residential uses in this area.



Location 1, showing proposed location of commercial waste storage area within Pierpoint Court



Bin Storage



Potential service yard areas

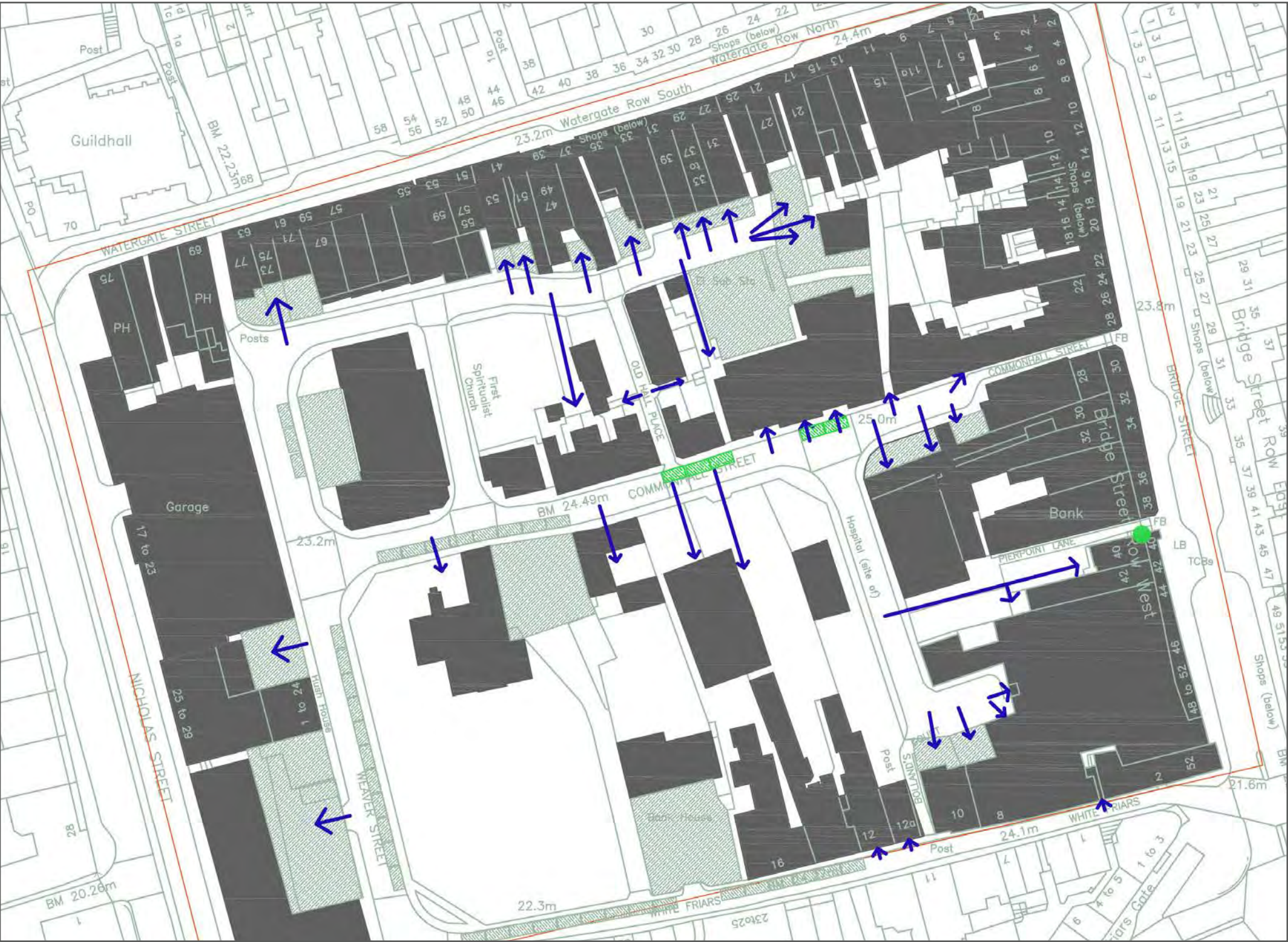
Commercial Waste

Parking, Access and Servicing

In terms of servicing, access and parking, it is proposed that minimal intervention would be the best approach in the Commonhall Street area, as the inter-relationships between occupants and land uses are very complex.

The Parking Review and Strategy: Chester currently sets out the local authority view on parking provision within the study area, but is currently under review. Any future development proposals should refer to this document for guidance on parking requirements. Parking provision within the Commonhall Street area is likely to reduce, given approved permissions for development on gap sites recently, including the car park behind the spiritualist church. Alternative transport modes should be encouraged through improvements to the public realm to encourage journeys on foot, and cycle parking provision.

Proposed schemes for re-development need to make every effort to reduce the need for vehicle usage within the area. Archaeological constraints prevent basement parking solutions, so reducing the need for vehicle ownership would be the best option. However, this is possible, given the city centre location. Consideration could also be given to car-share schemes. Servicing access should be reviewed as public realm investment progresses . The location of disabled parking and access to the Rows would also benefit from a review.



Plan to show vehicular movement patterns

 Car Parking

 Service Access

 Disabled Car Parking

 Disabled Access