

Handbridge

Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines

Final Report
December 2023

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Quality information

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A scenic view of a river with a stone bridge, a small boat, and a brick building under a blue sky with clouds.

Introduction

01

1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to help empower the local community to influence the design and character of the neighbourhood area and to deliver attractive, sustainable development that meets the needs of local people.

1.1 Background

The Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum has requested support through Locality to establish design guidelines to influence the character and design of any new development within Handbridge.

Handbridge is a mixed-use district of the City of Chester within the borough of Cheshire West and Chester in the North West of England.

The neighbourhood area is located to the south of the River Dee opposite Chester's historic city centre. It is enclosed by the River Dee to the north and east, Chester's Green Belt to the south and the residential districts of Curzon Park and Westminster Park to the west.

As a result of these boundaries, along with limited development space, the scale of any future development is likely to be relatively restricted. Nevertheless, this document will set out guidelines which meet the aspirations of all local stakeholders and support the delivery of high-quality sustainable development.

This document is focused on ensuring that development provides local distinctiveness, connections to green infrastructure, improvements to walking and cycling links and contributions to sustainability.

1.2 Neighbourhood plan vision

In 2030, Handbridge will be a place where residents of all ages enjoy an excellent quality of life with robust planning policies contributing to that experience by:

- ***Protecting local green spaces, riverside landscapes and heritage;***
- ***Encouraging businesses to thrive with an offer that serves local residents, neighbouring areas and attracting visitors from Chester's city centre; and***
- ***Ensuring that new developments are sustainable and designed to conserve and enhance the local character of Handbridge.***

1.3 Aims and objectives

The overarching aim of the Neighbourhood Plan is to enable the Handbridge community to set out design standards and policies for development in the neighbourhood area, within the context of national and local plans.

This document forms part of the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan on design-related issues. This document is locally specific and sets clear requirements that relate to Handbridge and its character areas.

Handbridge is an established community with considerable green space and heritage. The overarching aim of this document is to protect and enhance Handbridge's urban, rural and retail character via the following objectives:

- To positively influence the character and design of new development within the neighbourhood area.
- To enhance the sense of place and quality of the existing built and natural environments.
- To preserve the special character of the numerous Conservation Areas within the neighbourhood area.
- To ensure that development is made future proof to address climate change.
- To present a detailed appraisal of the area's urban and landscape character context.
- To protect and enhance green spaces and biodiversity within the area.



Figure 01: Handbridge's main commercial core, looking north.

1.4 Using this document

This document is a valuable tool in securing context-driven, high quality development. It will be used differently by different people in the planning and development process (see Table 01 below).

This document will be effective when used as part of a co-design process, actively involving key stakeholders, to establish local preferences and expectations of design quality. Through active participation and conversation, key stakeholders can use the guide to shape the key issues and ways to adequately respond to them in future development.

This document alone will not automatically secure quality design outcomes, but it will help to prevent poor outcomes by creating a rigorous process that establishes expectations. This document raises the standards and expectations for design quality.



Figure 02: The Grade II* Listed Church of St Mary's.

Potential users	How they will use the design guidelines
Applicants, developers, and landowners	As a guide to community and Local Planning Authority expectations on design which creates a degree of certainty. They will be expected to follow this document as planning consent is sought.
Local Planning Authority	As a reference point, embedded in policy, against which to assess planning applications. This document should be discussed with applicants during any pre-application discussions.
Parish council or neighbourhood plan group	As a tool to help structure comments on planning applications, ensuring that this document is complied with.
Community groups and local residents	As a tool to promote community-backed development and to inform comments on planning applications.
Statutory consultees	As a reference point when commenting on planning applications.

Table 01: User groups and how they will use the guidance.

1.5 Planning policy and guidance

This section outlines the national and local planning policy and guidance documents that have informed this document.

1.5.1 National planning policy and guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (Revised September 2023)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the UK Government's overarching economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. It is a high-level document that attempts to make good design pivotal and to put communities at the heart of planning. The policies within the NPPF apply to the preparation of local and neighbourhood plan areas, and act as a framework against which decisions are made on planning applications.

The NPPF states that a key objective of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

The parts of the NPPF which are of relevance to this document are:

- **Part 2:** Achieving sustainable development;
- **Part 5:** Delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
- **Part 8:** Promoting healthy and safe communities;
- **Part 12:** Achieving well-designed places;
- **Part 15:** Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; and
- **Part 16:** Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Part 12 (Achieving Well-designed Places) emphasises the need to create high-quality buildings and places as fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

It sets out several principles that planning policies and decisions will consider ensuring that new developments are well-designed and focus on quality.

The NPPF notes that "development that is not well-designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes".

This is supported by the National Design Guide, which sets out the 10 characteristics of a well-designed place.

National Design Guide (2019)

The National Design Guide (NDG) sets the 10 characteristics of a well-designed place and demonstrates what good design is in practice. The characteristics are: Context; Identity; Built Form; Movement; Nature; Public Spaces; Uses; Homes & Buildings; Resources; and, Lifespan.

This document should be used as an overarching reference for new development where topics are not covered in local guidance. The NDG characteristics were used in the initial analysis to understand local demands and challenges.

The NDG notes that a well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings.

National Model Design Code (2021)

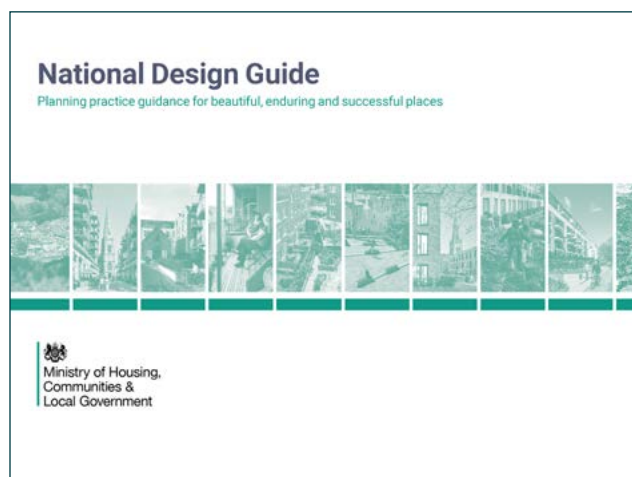
The National Model Design Code (NMDC) sets a baseline for quality and practice. It provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes and the outlining of character areas.

The NPPF is the foundation stone to good design and the NDG sets out the 10 characteristics of well-designed places. This is developed further by the NMDC, which creates the baseline for analysing and visioning places. Design codes help development achieve the requirements of good design and for community benefit.

Building for a Healthy Life (2020)

Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) is the new name for Building for Life, the Government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. The new name reflects the key role that the built environment has in promoting wellbeing.

The BHL toolkit sets out principles to help guide discussions on planning applications and to help local planning authorities to assess the quality of proposed schemes, as well as useful prompts and questions for planning applicants to consider during the different stages of the design process.



1.5.2 Local planning policy and guidance

The Neighbourhood Plan is required to be in general conformity with the Local Plan and as such the key related documents and policies from the Local Plan are set out below. These are key references for developers to address alongside this document.

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

The Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan was formally adopted on 29 January 2015. The Local Plan provides the overall vision, strategic objectives, spatial strategy and strategic planning policies for the borough to 2030.

Part One of the Local Plan includes policies that reflect locally determined priorities for new homes, jobs, the environment and infrastructure development.

Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies

Part Two of the Local Plan provides further detailed policies which support the strategic objectives and policies set out in Part One.

Chester Characterisation Study

The Chester Characterisation Study is relevant to the northern parts of Handbridge that fall within the Conservation Areas. It is intended to guide development in Chester and is to be used as a material consideration in the development planning process. Recommendations are made within the report as to how conservation policy can be improved, how the character of each of the study areas can be enhanced and the form of new development that would be most appropriate.

Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan

The Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared concurrently with this document and is the neighbourhood area's community-led development plan used alongside the Local Plan in determining planning applications. The Neighbourhood Plan contains the views of the local community and reflects the topics identified as being of particular importance.

Supplementary Planning Documents

There are several other Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) providing additional guidance covering both thematic and site-specific issues including:

- Revised Parking Standards SPD;
- Houses in Multiple Occupation and Student Accommodation SPD; and
- House Extensions and Domestic Outbuildings SPD.



1.6 Site visits and engagement

An inception meeting between AECOM and representatives of the neighbourhood group took place at The Ship Inn on 23 March 2023. The aim of this meeting was to introduce the teams, to explore and understand the neighbourhood group's aims and objectives relating to the design of new development.

A site visit was then conducted on 31 March 2023 led by members of the neighbourhood group. The visit covered a number of different areas within Handbridge, including the historic core, the surrounding suburbs, main open spaces, the key routes through the town and the riverside and crossings to the city centre of Chester.

A follow-up site visit was conducted on 17 May 2023 by members of the AECOM team. These site visits allowed AECOM to gather an extensive photographic survey and undertake a comprehensive place analysis which have formed the basis of this document.

The neighbourhood group highlighted several key priorities including appropriate small scale infill development, responding positively to local character, shop front design, design in conservation areas and future-proofing development (including electric vehicle charging and digital infrastructure).

The neighbourhood group reviewed and inputted into the draft document during its production, so that the document remained focused on the priorities and aspirations of the local community.



Figure 03: The Ship Inn: the location of the inception meeting on 23 March 2023.



Figure 04: The AECOM team undertook a site visit on 17 May 2023.



Figure 05: The site visit included Handbridge's open spaces and green routes.



Figure 06: View from River Lane towards the Church of St Mary's.



Table 02: Design guidelines production process.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a residential street. In the foreground, there is a low, rustic stone wall made of irregular red and brown stones. Behind the wall, there are green bushes and a red brick house with a white-framed window. In the background, other houses with red roofs and chimneys are visible under a blue sky with some clouds.

Neighbourhood area analysis

02

2. Neighbourhood area analysis

This section presents an analysis of Handbridge as a whole, including the movement networks, history and landscape character across the neighbourhood area.

2.1 Context and identity

Handbridge is a neighbourhood in the City of Chester. It is contained within a large bend in the River Dee opposite Chester's vibrant city centre. Handbridge is a key part of Chester's urban fabric but with an identity that feels spacious and peaceful.

The Old Dee Bridge is the key northern entry point that leads to the primary routes of Handbridge and Overleigh Road. These form Handbridge's main commercial centre with shops, pubs and small businesses that act as a minor extension to the city centre.

The neighbourhood area contains two educational clusters. The University of Chester (Queen's Park Campus), Chester International School and Queen's Park High School surround Queen's Park Road to the north. Cheshire College South & West, Overleigh St Mary Primary and Nursery Schools and The Catholic High School sit between Overleigh Road and Eaton Road to the west. These institutions give the neighbourhood area a dynamic character

The rest of the neighbourhood area is largely residential and includes a combination of terraced, semi-detached and large detached houses. This diversity of housing makes Handbridge a very desirable part of Chester, particularly for families.

The neighbourhood area has strong connections with its large open spaces and the River Dee. Chester Meadows, Edgar's Field Park and Overleigh Cemetery are important green spaces for the wider area. Development has historically responded well to this green context and residents are keen for this to continue.



Figure 07: The Church of St Mary's alongside housing and green space.



Figure 08: Commercial uses along the main thoroughfare of Handbridge.



Figure 09: Much of the neighbourhood area is residential.

2.2 Movement networks

2.2.1 Vehicular movement

The neighbourhood area is bounded to the west by the A483 which is the principal southern arterial route connecting the A55 and the Welsh Borders to Chester's city centre via the Grosvenor Bridge. Together, Overleigh Road, Handbridge and Old Dee Bridge create an important thoroughfare between the A483 to the west and Chester's city centre to the north. This thoroughfare can be very heavy with traffic, particularly at rush hour. Queen's Park Road connects the east of the neighbourhood area and Eaton Road connects the south, further leading out of the neighbourhood area towards the village of Eccleston.

2.2.2 Pedestrian movement

Pavement widths are generous in the residential areas but can be narrow in Handbridge's centre due to the historic layout. There are good links to the surrounding green spaces, particularly along the River Dee following the perimeter of Chester Meadows. Queen's Park Suspension Bridge is a public footbridge connecting Queen's Park Road with the city centre.

2.2.3 Cyclist movement

There is very little cycling provision in the urban areas. This is problematic on Overleigh Road and Handbridge where cyclists have to share with heavy vehicular traffic, apart from a small stretch of segregated cycle lane on Handbridge leading to the junction of Old Dee Bridge. There are also cycle routes by the Catholic High School, along Duke's Drive and north of Overleigh Old Cemetery.

2.2.4 Public transport

There are bus routes on, Handbridge, Overleigh Road, Eaton Road and Queen's Park Road which lead to Chester's city centre and beyond. It is a relatively short walk from the neighbourhood area to the city centre's main bus interchange and railway station which both provide transport connections across the UK.



Figure 10: Heavy vehicular traffic on Overleigh Road at rush hour.



Figure 11: A cyclist sharing the road with cars on Handbridge.

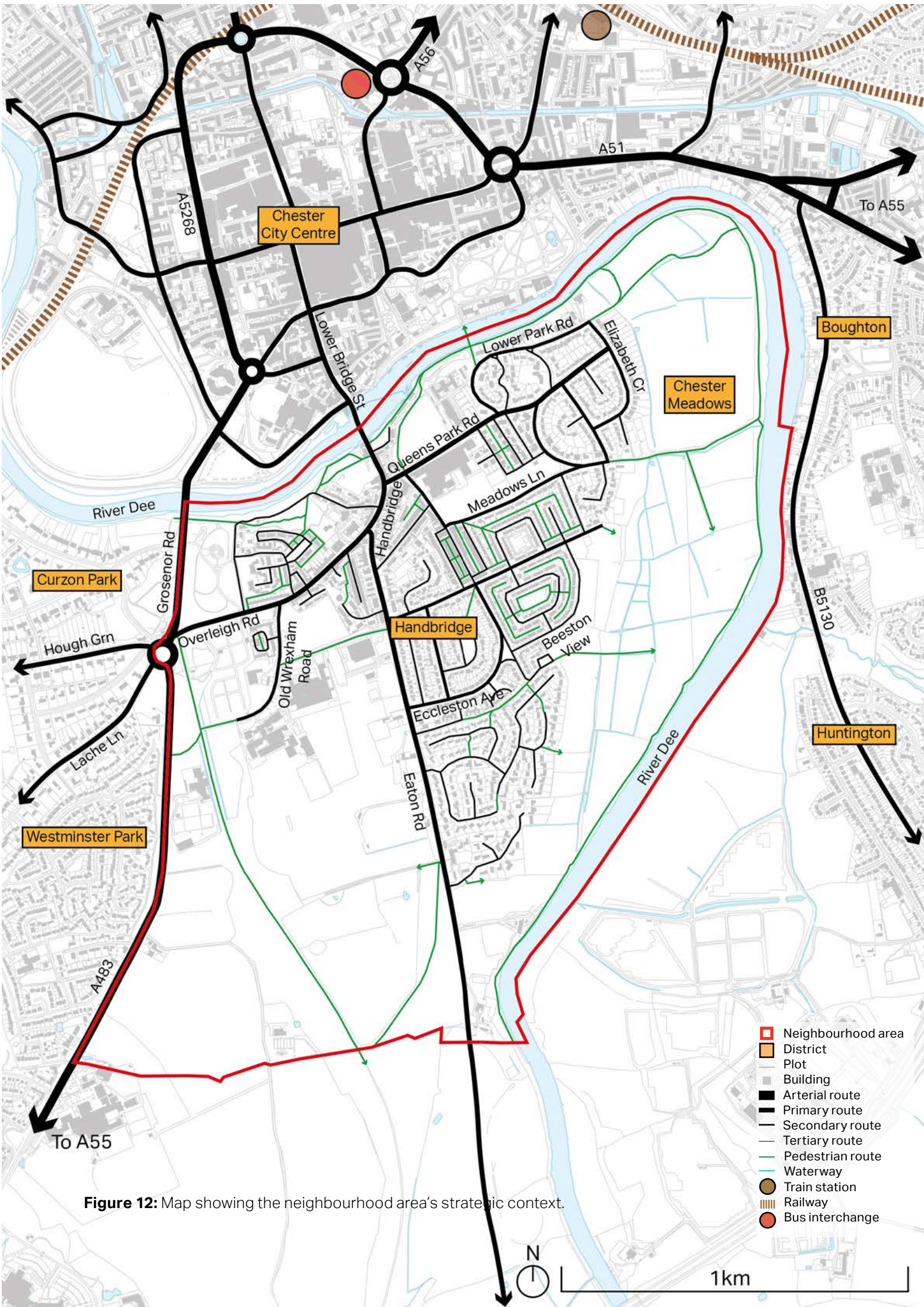


Figure 12: Map showing the neighbourhood area's strategic context.

2.3 History

2.3.1 Settlement origins and growth

A settlement has existed in Handbridge since the Iron Age but the area's first major period of development took place during Roman times, with the Grade I Listed Shrine of Minerva remaining to this day. One of the area's earliest uses was as a quarry for the local red sandstone. Patches of exposed sandstone remain in Edgar's Field Park. There has long been a crossing over the River Dee between Handbridge and Chester's city centre with the current Grade I Listed Old Dee Bridge dating from the 14th Century. Much of Handbridge's current aesthetic comes from its Victorian expansion with landmarks such as the Grade II* Listed Church of St Mary's and the Grade II Listed houses on Overleigh Road and Pyecroft Street dating from the 19th Century.

2.3.2 Conservation Areas

There are five Conservation Areas that impact on the neighbourhood area: the Handbridge Conservation Area, the Queen's Park Conservation Area, the Curzon Park Conservation Area, the City Centre Conservation Area and the Boughton and the Meadows Conservation Area.



Figure 13: Exposed red sandstone - Handbridge's history as a quarry.

2.3.3 Designated heritage assets

There are 58 listed assets within (or connected to) the neighbourhood area. Four of these are Grade I Listed including the Old Dee Bridge, the Grosvenor Bridge and the Chester Weir and Salmon Leap which connect to the city centre across the River Dee. Two assets are Grade II* Listed including the Church of St Mary and the Coplestone Memorial in Overleigh Cemetery. The Grade II Listed assets include houses, manors, pubs, milestones, monuments and a telephone kiosk. Please refer to Table 03 for the complete list of listed assets. In addition, there are two Registered Parks and Gardens: Overleigh Old Cemetery and Eaton Hall.

2.3.4 Non-designated assets

In addition to the designated heritage assets, there are numerous non-designated assets of special merit. These are buildings that either demonstrate Handbridge's unique design features, such as diaper, herringbone, corbelled and English garden bond brickwork, or that are particularly good examples from their era of construction. The intention is that the Neighbourhood Plan will list these buildings and recommend that they are locally listed. These buildings make a very important contribution to the neighbourhood area's character and should be taken into consideration in any planning application.



Figure 14: The Grade I Listed Old Dee Bridge dating from the 14th Century.

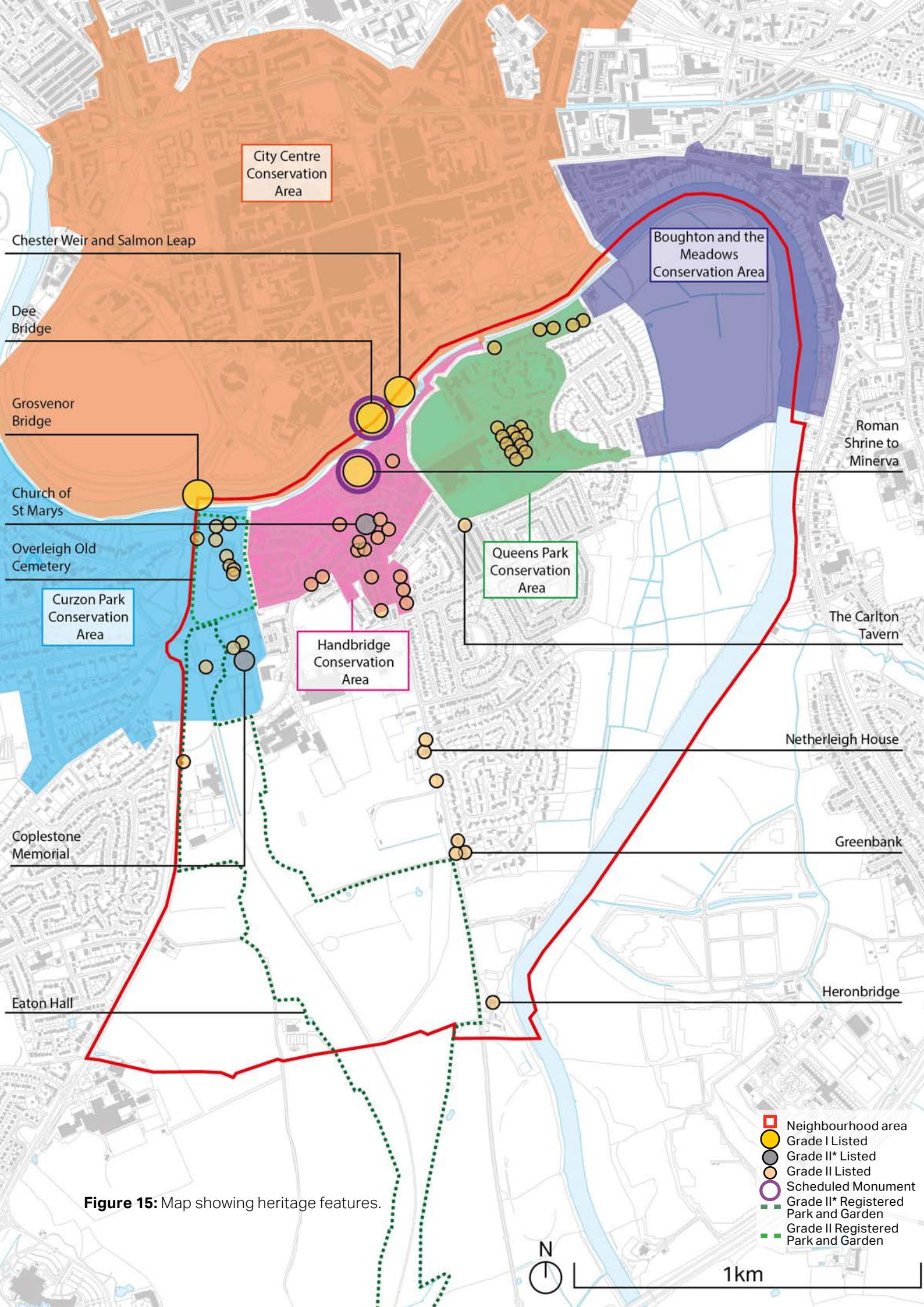


Figure 15: Map showing heritage features.

GRADE	HERITAGE ASSET
Grade I Listed	Chester Weir and Salmon Leap Grosvenor Bridge Old Dee Bridge Roman Shrine to Minerva
Grade II* Listed	Church of St Mary's Overleigh Cemetery (South): Coplestone Memorial
Grade II Listed	Boys Club Carlton Tavern Church of St Mary's: rectory, hall and buildings Church of St Mary's: wall, railings and gates Church of St Mary's: Sextons Cottage Eaton Road: 15 and 17 Eaton Road: 19 and 21 Eaton Road: 23, 25 and 25A Ebury House and St Mary's Cottage Fernrock Greenbank Greenbank: Lodge Greenbank: walls and piers Handbridge: 1-19 Heronbridge Lower Park Road: 13, 15 and 17 Manor House Milepost – to Chester Cross Milepost - south of Overleigh Roundabout Netherleigh House: yard walls and former coach house Netherleigh House: garden wall and gates Overleigh Cemetery (North): Bridge over drive Overleigh Cemetery (North): Gates and gate piers Overleigh Cemetery (North): Monument to Bishop John Graham Overleigh Cemetery (North): Monument to Samuel Venables Overleigh Cemetery (North): Monument to U Larsing Overleigh Cemetery (North): Monument to W Brown Overleigh Cemetery (North): Tomb and monument to Henry Raikes Overleigh Cemetery (North): WM Thackeray cenotaph and Thackeray and Jones tombs Overleigh Cemetery (South): War Memorial Overleigh Cemetery (South): West Chapel Overleigh Lodge and gates and screens Overleigh Road: 26, 28 and 30 Overleigh Road: 32-40 Pyecroft Street: 1 Pyecroft Street: 2 Pyecroft Street: 1A and 3-37 Pyecroft Street: 55 Redcliff with walls, piers and garden structures St Johns Road: 4 and 6 St Johns Road: 8 and 10 Tavenor Tower Telephone kiosk: by the Church of St Mary's Trafford House Victoria Pathway: 2 and 4 Victoria Pathway: 3 and 5 Victoria Pathway: 6, 8 and 10 Victoria Pathway: 7 and 9 Victoria Pathway: 11 and 13 Victoria Pathway: 12 and 14 Victoria Pathway: 15 and 17 Victoria Pathway: 16 and 18

Table 03: Listed assets in the neighbourhood area.



Figure 16: Pyecroft Street which contains many Grade II Listed houses.

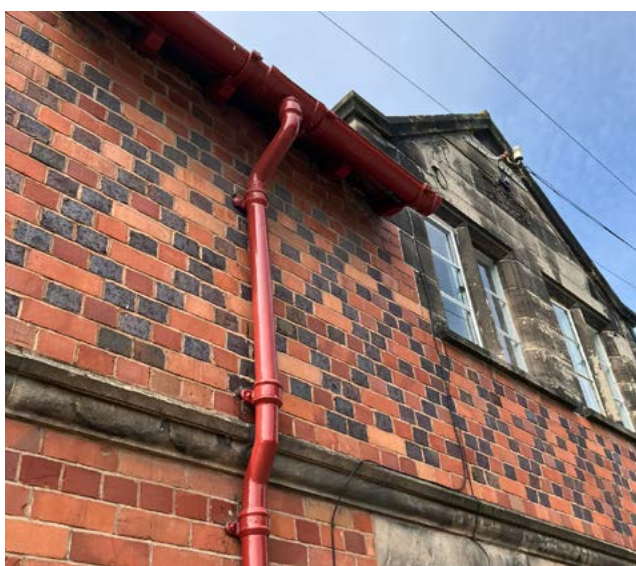


Figure 17: Diaper brick detailing on the Grade II Listed cottages of Overleigh Road.



Figure 18: The Grade II Listed rectory of the Church of St Mary's with an ornate Dutch gable.

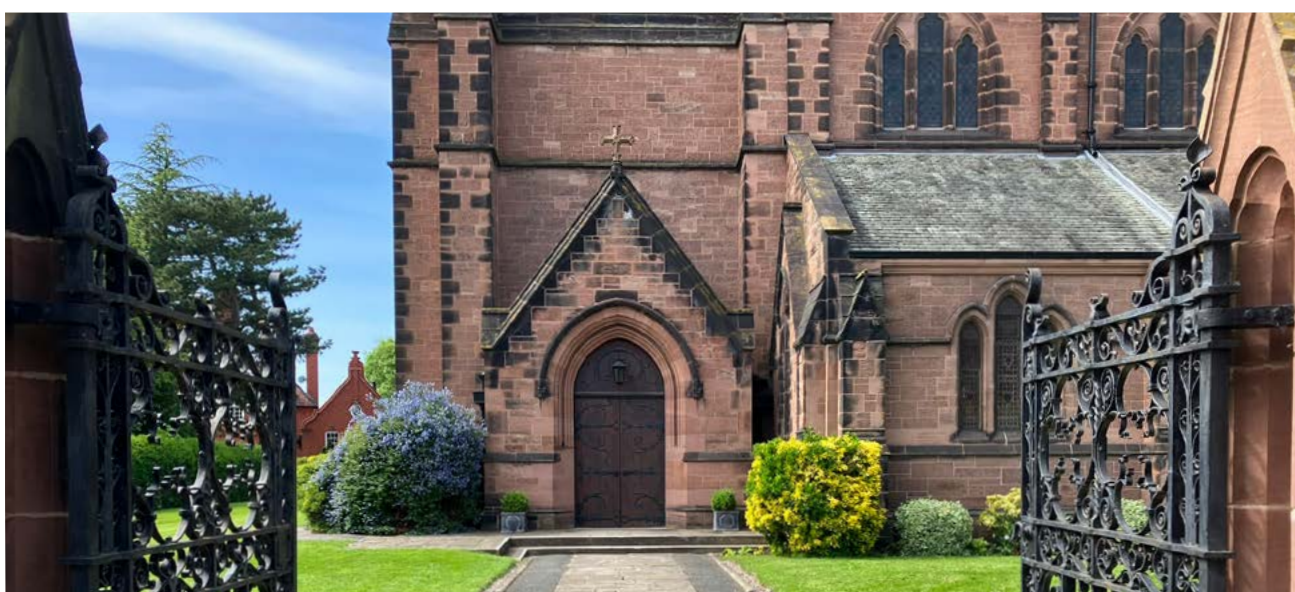


Figure 19: The Grade II* Listed Church of St Mary's.

2.4 Landscape

2.4.1 Landscape character areas

Outside of the urban area, the remaining landscape can be split into the following landscape character areas.

The Meadows North

This area includes the north side of Chester Meadows which is the area most frequented by visitors due to its proximity to Chester's city centre. A footpath surrounds the northern and eastern perimeter alongside the River Dee. Other footpaths cross the landscape and link Lower Park Road, Queen's Drive and St George's Crescent. The landscape mainly consists of open grassland and wetlands containing wildflowers and mature hedgerows. There are gentle topographical undulations with a steeper incline alongside the river. The land is occasionally used for grazing cattle.

The Meadows South

This area includes the south side of Chester Meadows which is wilder than Meadows North due to its mature grasses, wildflowers and hedges. There are a limited number of footpaths that cross the private land including the main perimeter route alongside the River Dee. The area's topography provides good views across the River Dee towards the district of Great Boughton and Huntington.

Duke's Drive

This area includes Overleigh Cemetery to the north and open grassland, fields and mature forested areas to the south. These spaces are connected from north to south by Duke's Drive. Overleigh Old Cemetery is located to the north of Overleigh Road and contains mature tree cover and informal arrangements of gravestones located on a series of small hills. Overleigh New Cemetery is located to the south of Overleigh Road and has more formal arrangements of manicured lawns and rows of gravestones.



Figure 20: The Meadows North Landscape Character Area.



Figure 21: The Meadows South Landscape Character Area.



Figure 22: Overleigh Old Cemetery in the Duke's Drive Landscape Character Area.



Figure 23: Overleigh New Cemetery in the Duke's Drive Landscape Character Area.

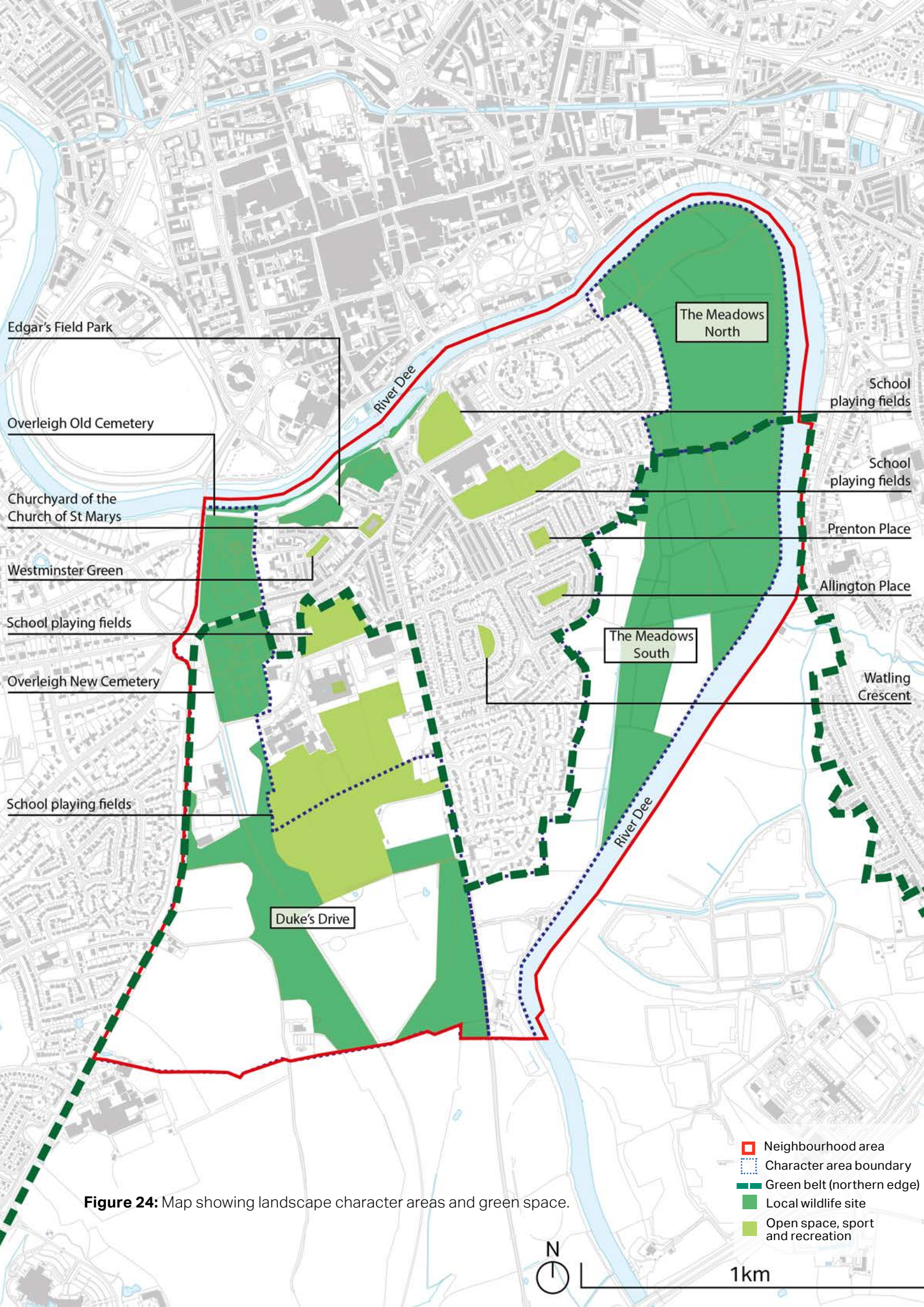


Figure 24: Map showing landscape character areas and green space.

2.4.2 Topography

The highest part of the neighbourhood area is at the south with some areas situated over 30m above sea level. There are gradual inclines leading north and east towards the River Dee, and west towards the A483. At certain points, this incline is relatively steep, such as along Overleigh Road and Greenway Street to the west and north of the neighbourhood area. On these streets the houses respond to the changes in elevation and there are views over the rooftops to the surrounding area. There are gentle undulations across the landscape character areas, generally more dramatic across Duke's Drive and with some steep inclines to the River Dee in the Meadows North and Meadows South character areas.

2.4.3 Flood risk

Much of the land surrounding the River Dee falls within Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3. The Meadows North and Meadows South character areas are particularly vulnerable which explains why there was no historic development in these areas. However, the steep inclines between the river and the northern part of the neighbourhood area, and between the residential areas to the east and Chester Meadows, means that most of the neighbourhood area's houses are located on elevated positions and don't fall within the flood zones.



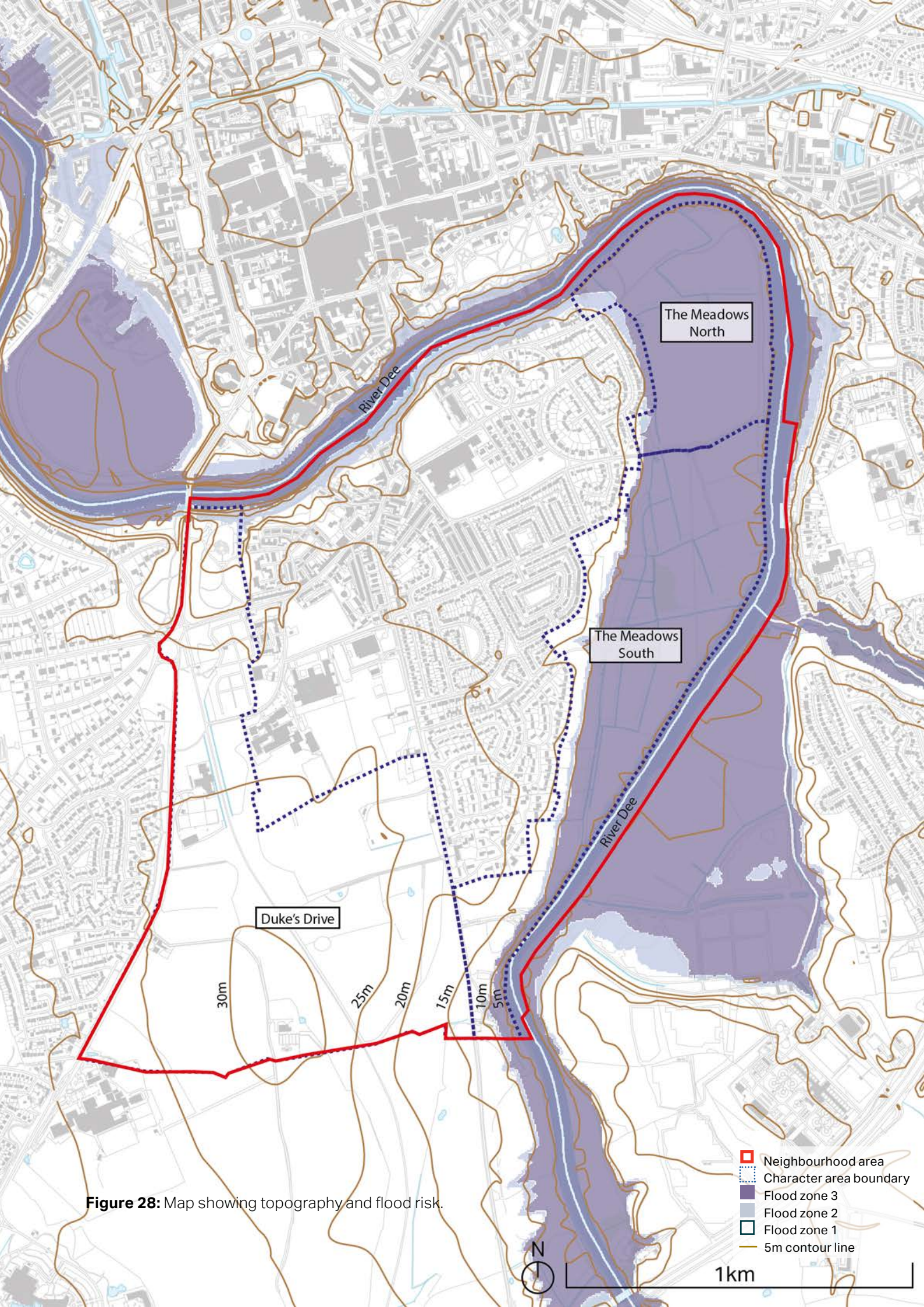
Figure 25: The River Dee from the neighbourhood area looking north.



Figure 26: Sloping topography on Greenway Street.



Figure 27: The gently undulating landscape.





Character area analysis

03

3. Character area analysis

This section contains an analysis of the neighbourhood area according to a series of character areas. A detailed study of sub-areas within each character area highlights examples of what makes that character area distinctive. These attributes can inform infill development and can serve as lessons (good and bad) and inspiration for future developments. Key takeaways and design considerations are set out for each character area and sub-area.

3.1 Character analysis

A primary purpose of this document is to help generate sensitive and characterful design responses to existing settlements and their landscape settings.

Across the neighbourhood area, this includes a range of contexts including the River Dee, Chester Meadows and Chester's nearby city centre.

This character analysis helps understand both the landscape setting and the detailed pattern of settlement growth that underpins the variety of character features across the neighbourhood area.

This analysis has been cross-checked on site as part of this study with walking tours and photographic studies guided by local residents.

Each character area may require subtly different design detail responses regarding infill sites, regeneration or nearby growth that will be in keeping with each specific local context within the neighbourhood area.

Alternatively, the neighbourhood area may continue to acquire new layers with design approaches and concepts that are innovative and look to meet the future challenges of sustainability and biodiversity net gain. However, these responses must still seek to tie in with the landscape and townscape appeal that helps to give Handbridge its distinctive character.

3.2 Character areas

The adjacent map illustrates Handbridge's overarching character areas as defined in this study based on an analysis of distinctions in the urban form, based on land use, layout, built form, and materials. Each of the four character areas has been split into sub-areas based on more specific issues or differences in character.

1 Historic Core

This is Handbridge's commercial and historical heart, defined by its position on the River Dee, its proximity to Chester's city centre and its cluster of historic buildings and streets. This character area has been divided into the sub-areas of (1a) Handbridge, (1b) Overleigh Road and (1c) Urban Fringe. Together, these sub-areas are 'urban' in nature as a result of the gentle density of their terraced (or otherwise adjoined) buildings, strong enclosure of the streets and larger pedestrian footfall.

2 Queen's Park

This area includes a mix of grand residential streets and educational buildings. Detached homes line the River Dee and Chester Meadows in an area abundant with mature trees, grass verges and neat hedgerows. This character area has been divided into the sub-areas of (2a) Institutional, (2b) The Pathways, (2c) The Crescents and (2d) Handbridge East. There is a varied building character between these sub-areas but the connected green streets and surrounding open space make them cohesive.

3 Appleyards Lane

The east-west Appleyards Lane ties this character area together. A series of tree-lined residential streets orbit community greens containing mature trees and playgrounds. This character area has been divided into the sub-areas of (3a) Prenton Place, (3b) Allington Place and (3c) Watling Crescent. Most of the houses in each sub-area were built in the 1920s/1930s but there are some differences in style between the sub-areas ranging between medium to large semi-detached homes and smaller terraces.

4 Eaton Road

The north-south Eaton Road ties this character area together. Suburban in nature, the areas residential and educational buildings are surrounded by generous gardens and playing fields. This character area has been further divided into the sub-areas of (4a) Eaton Road East, (4b) Eaton Road South and (4c) Eaton Road West. The Eaton Road corridor varies in character along its length, more rural in the south and urban in the north, but it is a green corridor for much of its length.

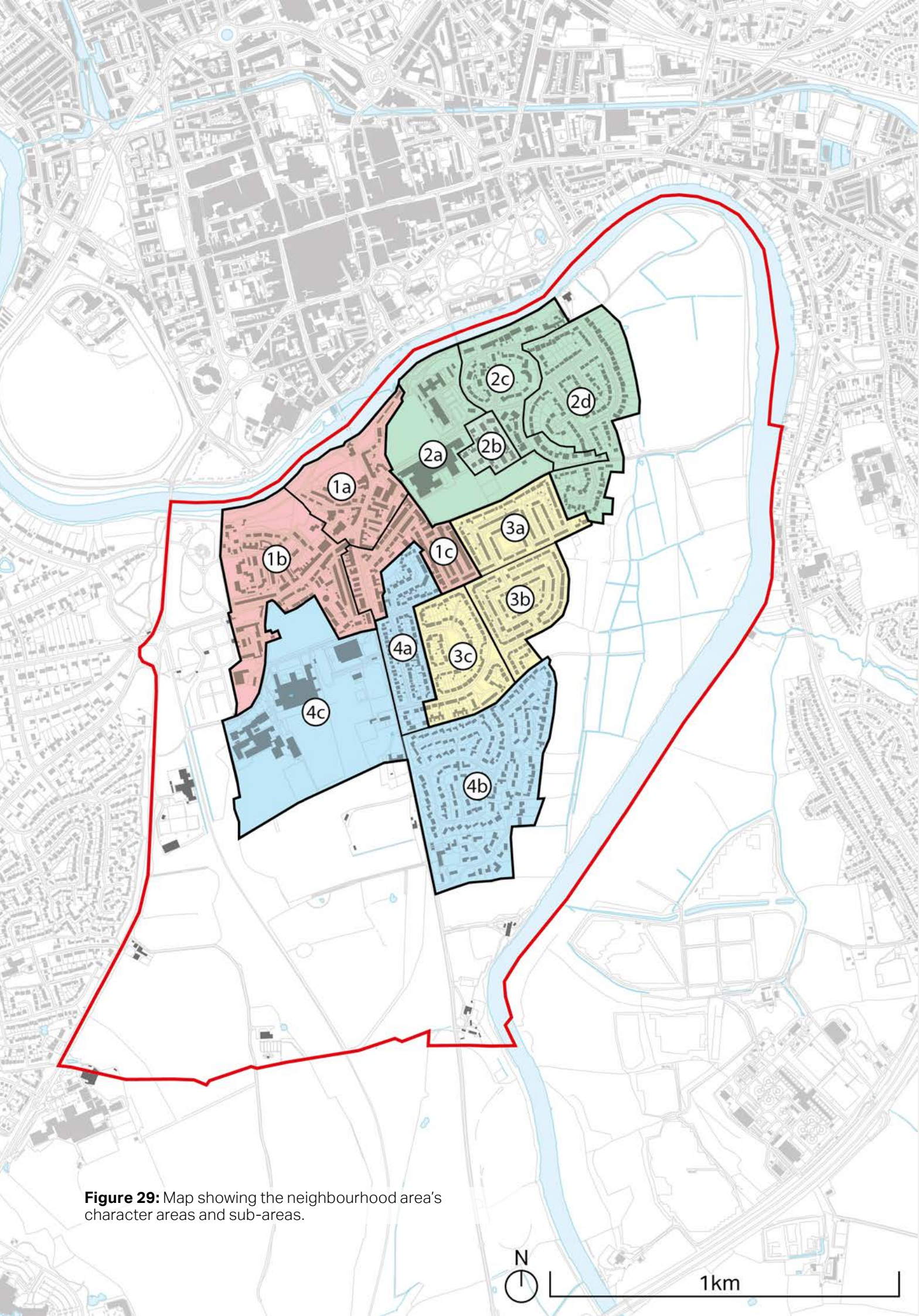


Figure 29: Map showing the neighbourhood area's character areas and sub-areas.

1

Character Area 1: Historic Core

This area has a wealth of heritage assets and a blend of urban form and riverside charm. It includes the Handbridge Conservation Area.

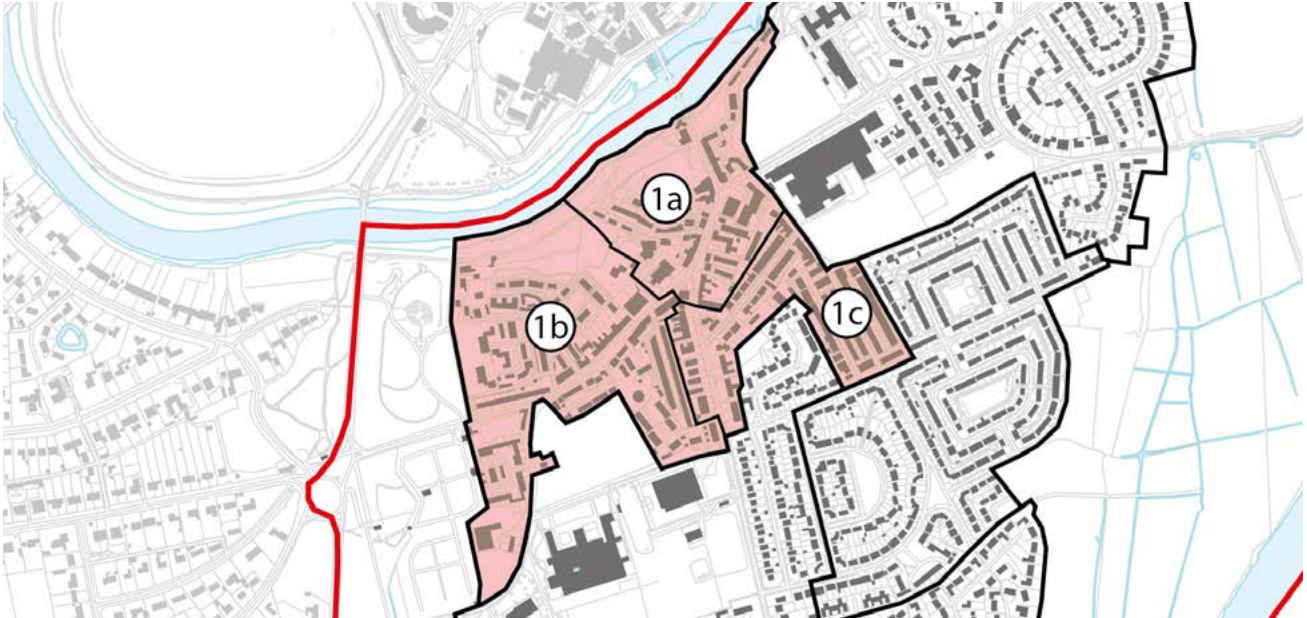


Figure 30: Map showing the Historic Core character area divided into sub-areas.

3.3 Historic Core

This area is surrounded by the River Dee to the north, the University of Chester (Queen's Park Campus) to the east, residential character areas to the south and Overleigh's large cemeteries to the west.

The Old Dee Bridge is a key vehicular and pedestrian access point connecting the area to Chester's city centre. The street named Handbridge is an extension to the city's commercial centre with its row of pubs and small independent businesses. The area then becomes more residential as it extends down Overleigh Road and Eaton Road.

Edgar's Field Park is a key section of the green network running along the neighbourhood area. The park contains the Grade I Listed Roman Shrine to Minerva. Another key landmark is the Grade II* Listed Church of St Mary's built from the distinctive local red sandstone and with an imposing spire that can be seen across the neighbourhood area.

Although there are differences between the sub-areas, there are many consistent elements including historic buildings built from red brick and sandstone. There are several examples of diaper, herringbone, corbelled and English garden bond brickwork and mock-tudor timber frames.

There is a gentle density of Victorian terraced buildings directly fronting the street across much of the area. There are also semi-detached Victorian villas along Eaton Road which contain front gardens enclosed by red-brick and sandstone walls and trimmed hedgerows. Notable exceptions include the 1960s modernist apartment buildings at Salmon Leap, Quarry Close and Powell's Orchard.

Doors are often colourful and, along with the windows, framed with ornate stonework. Many of the streets are partially cobbled. The area's sloping topography creates rows of stepped roofs leading to the River Dee and the Overleigh cemeteries.



Figure 31: Diaper and corbelled brickwork and stepped roofs.



Figure 32: Mock Tudor frames and colourful doors.



Figure 33: Semi-detached Victorian villas.

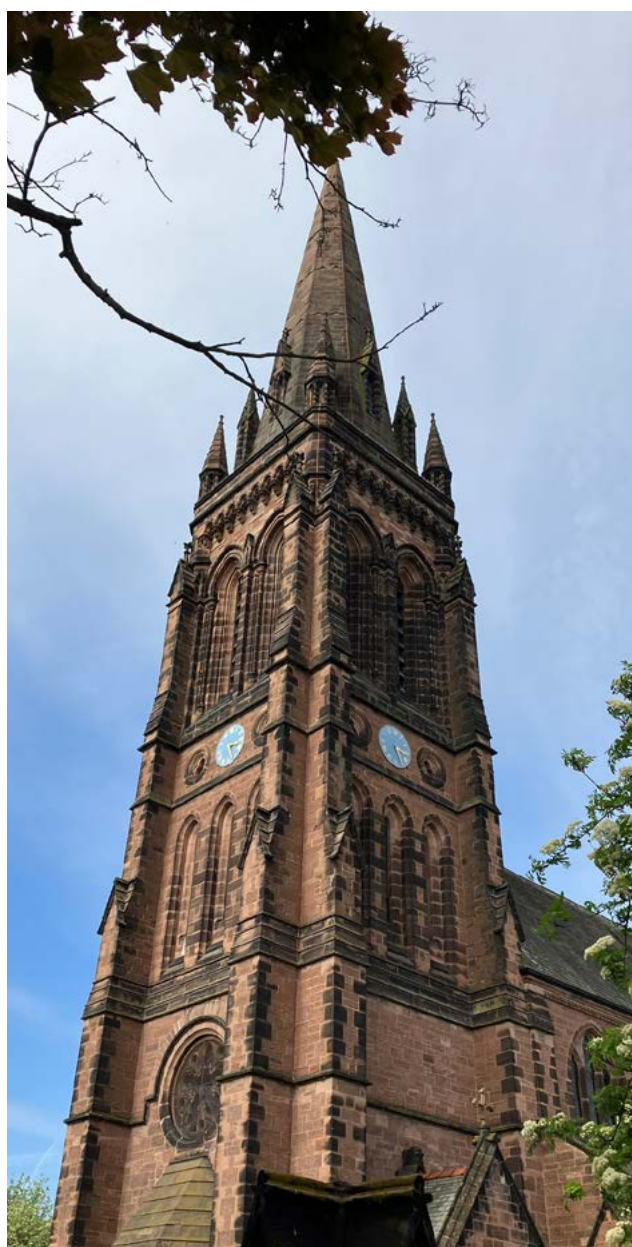


Figure 34: Grade II* Listed Church of St Mary's.

Figure Ground

A figure ground analysis shows an irregular urban arrangement that is a result of the proximity to the River Dee, the sloping topography and the large green spaces in Edgar's Field Park and along River Lane. Dense clusters of buildings line Overleigh Road, Handbridge and Eaton Road. Some linear terraces and cul-de-sacs extend from these roads but the arrangements are largely informal which reflects the area's range of architectural styles.



Figure 35: Historic Core figure ground.

Appearance

Red and brown brick are the most characteristic building materials but there are many examples of red sandstone, in particular on walls and on door/window surrounds. There is also a wide use of Tudor-style timber cladding along the road named Handbridge. Some buildings have ornate brick patterns, often on the upper storeys and surrounding windows. There is a wider use of grey slate roof tiles compared to other character areas. Windows and doors are mainly traditional including sash, bay and other Victorian and Edwardian styles.



Figure 36: Characteristic architectural features.

Uncharacteristic Development

Salmon Leap is a residential development built in 1976. The scale and massing of its 2-4 storey modernist blocks is overbearing compared to its surroundings and its ground floor blank wall interacts poorly with the River Dee.

Although, well-used by local residents, the petrol station at the junction of Handbridge and Queen's Park Road interacts poorly with its surroundings. It increases traffic in close proximity to several schools and misses an opportunity to create a landmark at the top of Handbridge that could encourage visitors towards Overleigh Road and beyond.



Figure 37: The Salmon Leap buildings (above) and the petrol station (below).

Legibility Plan

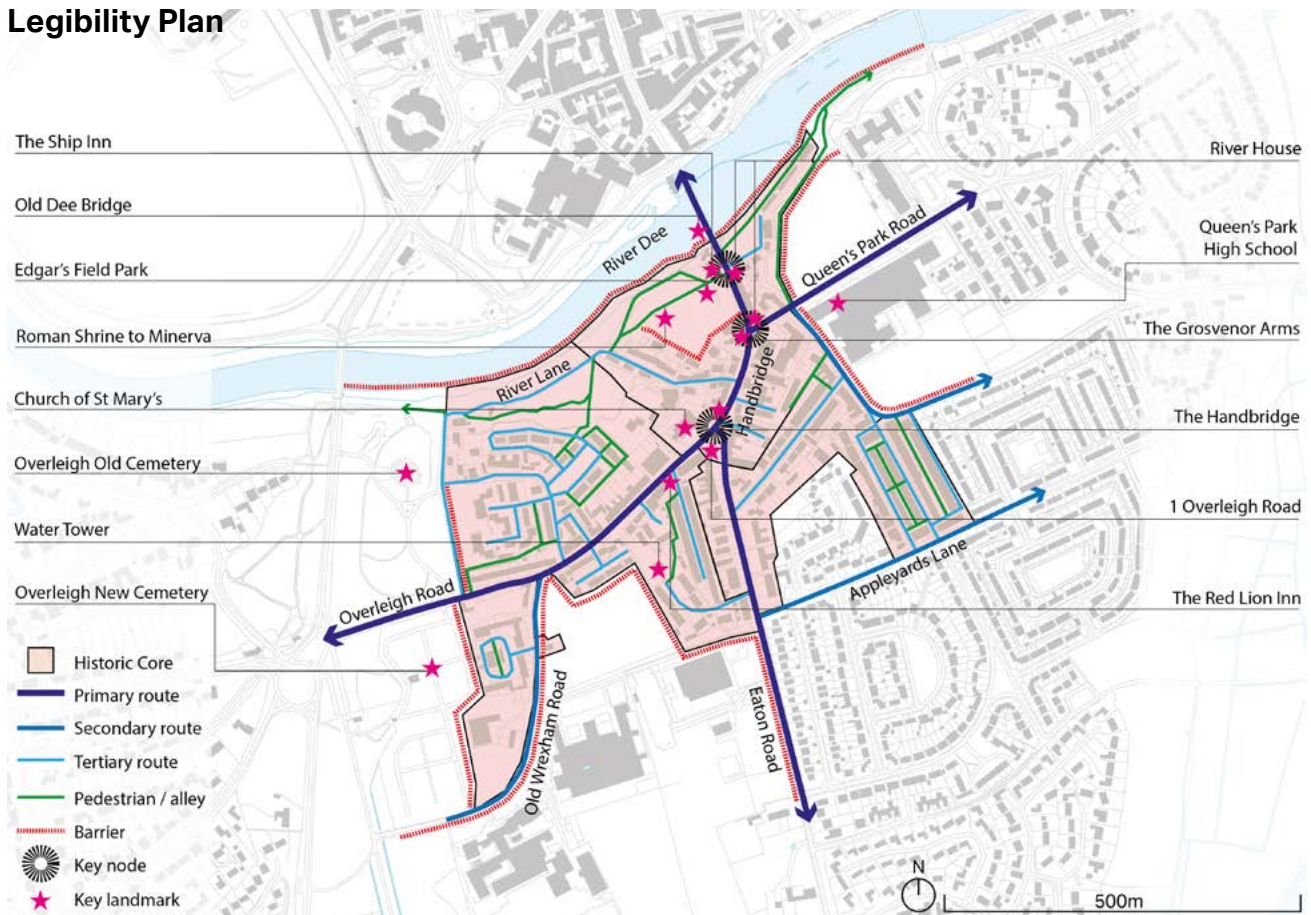


Figure 38: Map showing the legibility of the Historic Core character area.

Key takeaways and design considerations for CA 1: Historic Core

1. This area is the 'face' of Handbridge and requires traditional, high quality and characterful design approaches to boundaries and frontages in order to upkeep and enhance the strong sense of place and heritage value.
2. The commonly used materials of red sandstone, red brick and grey slate should be the default options for new materials for infill development.
3. Public art, historic interpretation and decorative features should be incorporated into development rather than being seen as additional costs. Arts and cultural activities can promote the identity of Handbridge and positively engage local communities and visitors.
4. Empty or underused buildings should be explored for community use or housing and refurbishment to avoid degradation of the built form. Boarded up windows and doors undermine the street scene.
5. This area is the main gateway to Handbridge from Chester's city centre and should therefore be the focal point for commercial activity and public realm enhancements.
6. The River Dee and the adjoining green space create a key natural corridor for Chester as a whole and all development should take into account the key views and routes to and from this space which form a key part of this area's character.
7. This area has a high concentration of key nodes and landmarks which aids legibility and contributes to Handbridge's rich townscape.



Sub-Area 1a: Handbridge

The main commercial centre of the settlement runs perpendicular to the River from the Old Dee Bridge. It includes the east of Handbridge Conservation Area.

3.3.1 Handbridge

Land Use: Mixed-use commercial ground floors alongside terraced and semi-detached houses and several religious buildings. Businesses include pubs, cafés, small shops, hairdressers and a pharmacy.

Built Form: Mainly red-brick and sandstone 2-3 storey Victorian and Edwardian buildings with decorative features including mock-tudor timber frames and patterned brickwork such as diaper, herringbone, corbelled and English garden bond. Some partially cobbled streets, particularly on Greenway Street.

Streets and Movement: Handbridge and Overleigh Road are the main vehicular and pedestrian routes running diagonally between the A483 and the River Dee. Eaton Road is a primary residential route. Secondary and tertiary residential streets extend from these.

Boundaries: Many buildings front the street with some accessible by small staircases due to changes in topography. Some homes have front gardens enclosed by brick and sandstone walls and hedgerows.

Public Realm and Landscape: There are seating and playgrounds in Edgar's Field Park and other open space alongside the River Dee. Few trees on the main roads and terraced streets but the residential streets surrounding Eaton Road contains hedgerows and mature trees.

Views and Landmarks: The mock-Tudor row of shops on Handbridge, the Grade I Listed Roman Shrine to Minerva, the Grade II* Listed Church of St Mary's and the Ship Inn, Grosvenor Arms and Handbridge public houses.

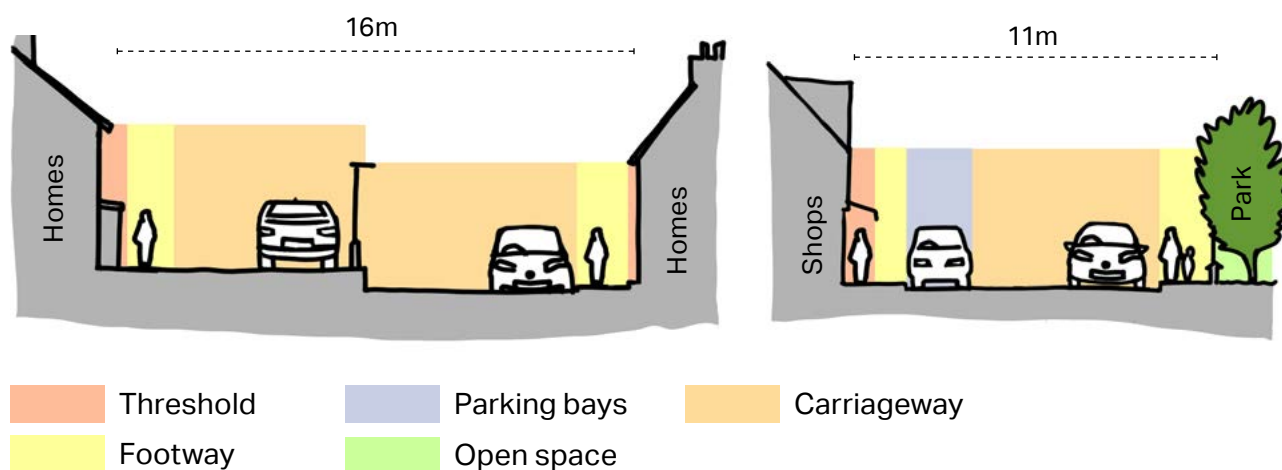


Figure 39: Cross section of Greenway Street (left) and Handbridge (right).



Figure 40: Commercial units in mock-tudor rows along Handbridge.



Figure 41: A former church in distinctive red-brick.



Figure 42: A house adjoining The Handbridge pub.



Figure 43: The junction of Handbridge and Queen's Park Road with a cluster of commercial units.

Land Use



Active shop frontage



Traditional shopfront



Active public house frontage



Derelict and inactive site



Petrol station in area of high footfall

Built Form



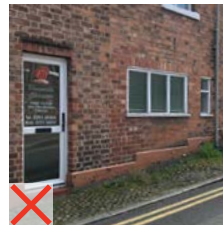
Good response to topography



Diaper brick detailing adding richness



Well-proportioned background design



Non-traditional layout and fenestration



Non-traditional form, scale and massing

Streets and Movement



Some wider pavements



Good street enclosure



Narrow pavements with high footfall



Car dominated streets

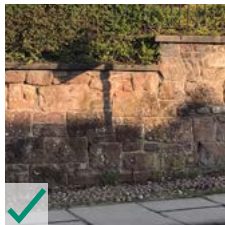


Limited cycle infrastructure

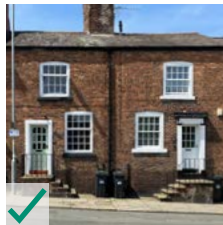
Boundaries



Intimate set-back



Local sandstone wall



Stone steps to entrances

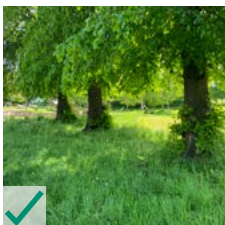


Blank wall and facade with poor interaction



Front courtyard parking undermines streetscene

Public Realm and Landscape



Centrally located Edgar's Field Park



Natural materials for play equipment



Flexible planters greening the street



Non-responsive to context

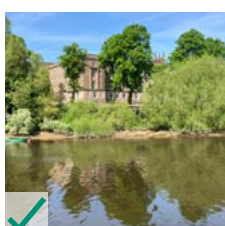


Space undermined by parked cars

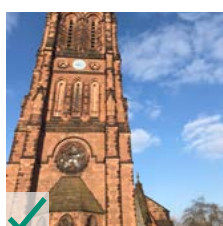
Views and Landmarks



Views towards Handbridge



Views towards Chester's city centre



St Mary's Church can be seen across the area



Good corner-responsive building



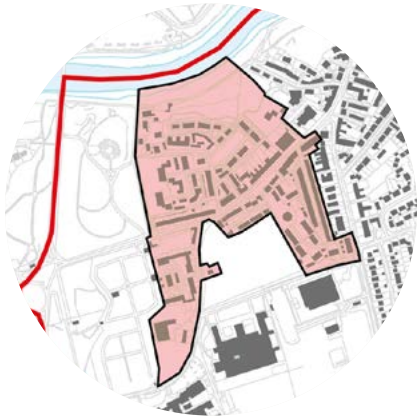
Poor termination of street scene



Figure 44: River Lane looking east.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 1a: Handbridge

1. Relatively uniform in built form character with red-brick and sandstone materials and active frontages set to the back of the pavement.
2. The area should aim to maintain and preserve its retail offering as this is a primary generator of footfall.
3. The set-back of development from the street should generally be 0-2m in order to respect the tighter historic grain and retain the urban character in the centre and interface of entrances/ shopfronts to the street.
4. Authentic, traditional shopfronts in form, scale and materials are encouraged. Modern (e.g. UPVC imitations) are discouraged. Well-designed and sustainable modern alternatives may be acceptable.
5. Townhouses, terraces and linked cottages form a mostly continuous streetscene. Infill development should continue this pattern without encroaching on local open spaces. Special buildings which relate to historic, community or institutional functions can stand out due to their relative importance.
6. This area has the highest footfall and the pedestrian experience could be enhanced by improving the public realm design of Handbridge (street), increasing footway widths and incorporating level crossings for pedestrians at side-junctions.



Sub-Area 1b: Overleigh Road

Overleigh Road forms the spine to this residential area. It includes the west of Handbridge Conservation Area.

3.3.2 Overleigh Road

Land Use: Predominantly residential (other than the Red Lion Inn) but in close proximity to the commercial parts of the Handbridge sub-area.

Built Form: Mainly high-density terraced red-brick 2 storey buildings from the Victorian period onwards. The main exceptions are the 3 storey apartment blocks at Quarry Close and Powell's Orchard built in a modernist style in light brown brick.

Streets and Movement: The area generally surrounds the primary route of Overleigh Road. Other streets form dense cul-de-sac and dead-end terrace arrangements in formations largely responsive to topographical variations. River Lane is a key pedestrian route alongside the River Dee.

Boundaries: Many buildings front the street and some are set back by small front yards. Materials include brick and sandstone walls and hedgerows. Selsdon Court is an exception with houses facing an inward courtyard but interacting poorly with the street due to high brick walls.

Open Space and Green Infrastructure: A green walkway along River Lane provides open riverside walks. There are numerous green courtyards which provide a network between Edgar's Field Park to the east and Overleigh Old Cemetery to the west.

Views and Landmarks: A tall octagonal 1930s concrete water tower can be seen across the area. There are views across the River Dee towards Chester's city centre from River Lane.

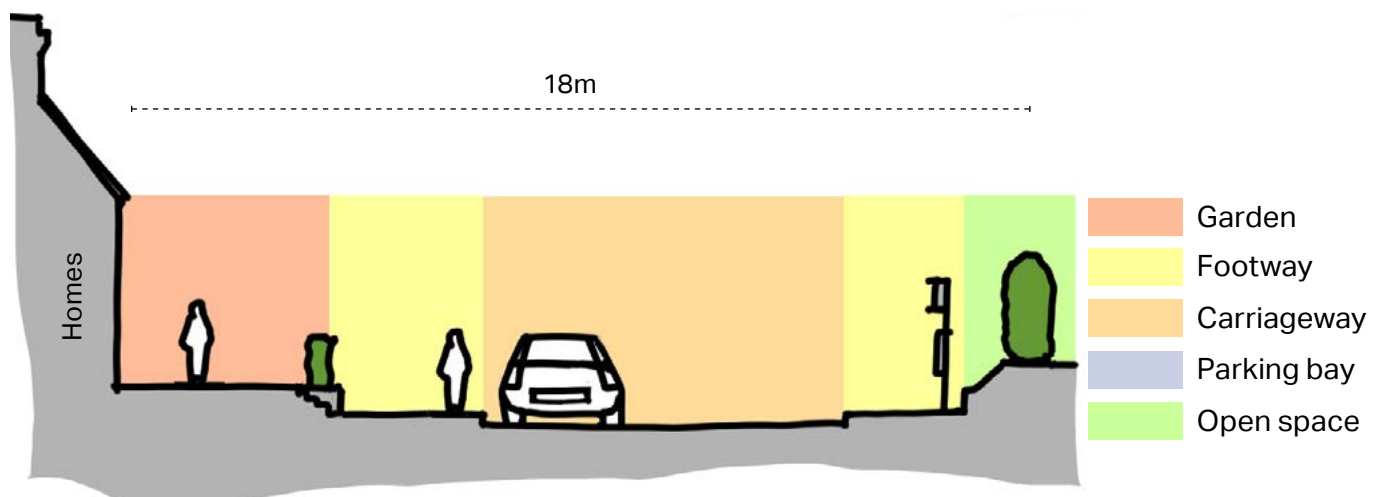


Figure 45: Street cross-section of Overleigh Road.



Figure 46: Terraced houses bordered by hedgerows and responding to the topography of Overleigh Road.



Figure 47: Characterful Victorian terraced homes.



Figure 48: A yard entrance facing a residential street.



Figure 49: Public green space surrounded by houses at Westminster Green.

Land Use



High density terraced houses



Historic residential character



Sympathetic modern residential



Homes alongside public green space



Poorly utilised land in front of homes

Built Form



Good response to topography



Traditional windows and doors



Good corner-responsive building



Diaper brick detailing adding richness



Non-traditional form, scale and massing

Streets and Movement



Green pedestrian route on River Lane



Some wide and overlooked footpaths



No footpath on some streets



On-street parking dominates roads

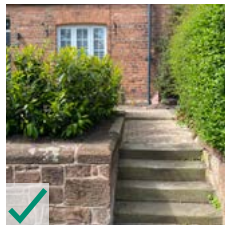


Heavy traffic on Overleigh Road

Boundaries



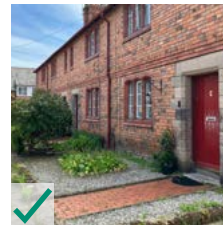
Local sandstone wall



Entrance responsive to topography



Street-facing terraced houses

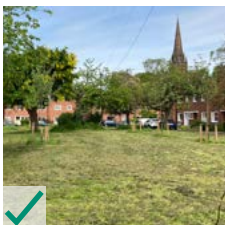


Small front yards

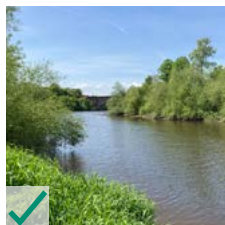


Blank wall and no clear boundary

Public Realm and Landscape



Public green space at Westminster Green



The River Dee at the northern border



Houses interacting well with green space



Poorly utilised back alley



Key space taken up by garages

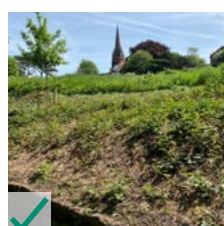
Views and Landmarks



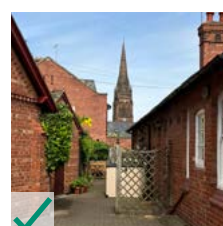
The landmark water tower



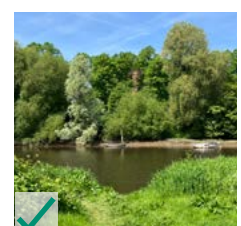
The landmark Red Lion Inn



Rural views towards the Church of St Mary's



Urban views towards the Church of St Mary's



Views across the River Dee



Figure 50: Houses facing Overleigh Old Cemetery.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 1b: Overleigh Road

1. Relatively uniform in built form character with red-brick terraced housing set close to the back of the pavement.
2. Refer to the forthcoming Handbridge Conservation Area Statement of Special Interest for additional information and guidance see <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/total-environment/conservation-areas-and-conservation-area-appraisals>.
3. Sandstone walls defining streets on primary and other streets are a key local characteristic and should be maintained and restored.
4. The set-back of development from the street should generally be 0-3m to respect the tighter historic grain and retain the urban character of streets, unless space for people to access / congregate is required.
5. Townhouses, terraces and linked cottages form a mostly continuous streetscene on primary routes. Infill development should continue this pattern but should remain more informal closer to the river corridor and landscape edges (e.g. Curzon Park Conservation Area).



Sub-Area 1c: Urban Fringe

Three key streets (each with distinct house types): Eaton Road, Percy Road and Hartington Street form this 'urban fringe' on the edge of the historic core.

3.3.3 Urban Fringe

Land Use: Predominantly residential, with a small cluster of takeaways, a café, a corner shop and the Carlton Tavern on the corner of Queen's Park View and Meadows Lane.

Built Form: 2 storey red-brick terraced houses to the east. 2 storey semi-detached houses along Percy Road with ground floor red-brick and upper-storey light render or pebble dash. Imposing 3 storey red-brick Victorian villas along Eaton Road along with some large detached houses.

Streets and Movement: Percy Road links the primary route of Eaton Road to the west with the area's terraced streets to the east. The terraced streets back onto alleys which are used for pedestrian access along with some parking. Hartington Road has a very narrow effective carriageway due to parking on both sides.

Boundaries: To the east of the area, many buildings front the street and some are set back by small front yards. The houses on Eaton Road generally have larger front gardens bordered by mature trees, hedgerows and sandstone walls.

Public Realm and Landscape: Public realm is limited although the area is adjacent to the public realm of other sub-areas. Green infrastructure is generally a result of mature trees and planting within the front gardens. Public tree planting is limited.

Views and Landmarks: The landmarks of other sub-areas such as the Church of St Mary's and the local water tower can be seen across the area. There are views from Queen's Park View and Meadows Lane across the school playing fields.

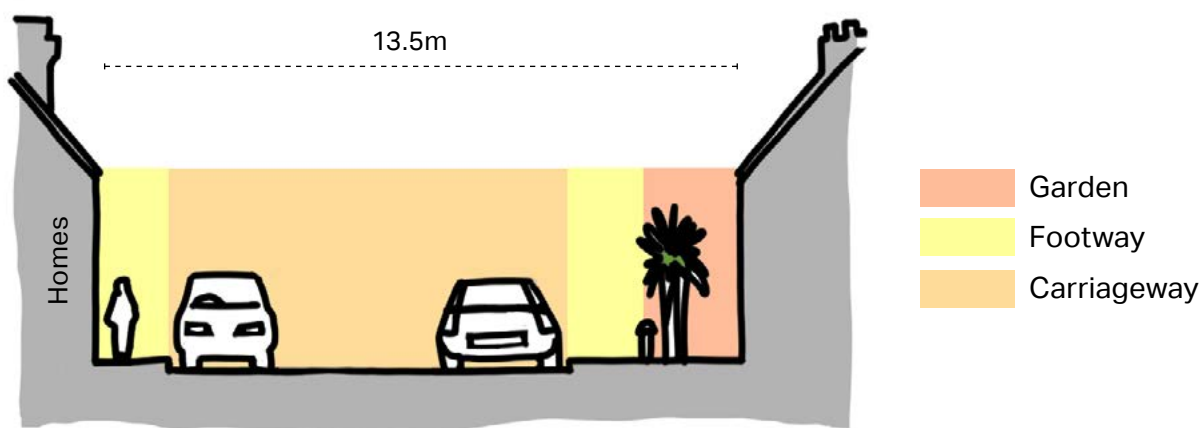


Figure 51: Cross section of Hartington Street.



Figure 52: Grand Victorian villas fronted by mature gardens along Eaton Road.



Figure 53: Wysteria and local red-brick.

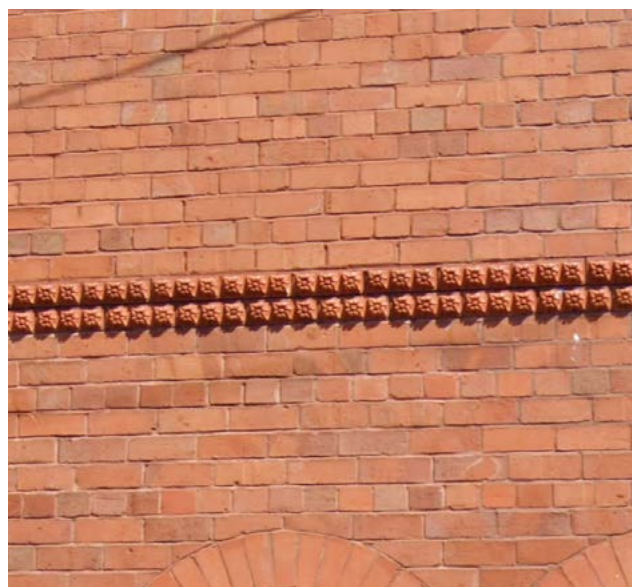


Figure 54: Decorative rosettes and bricks arranged in an English garden bond on Hartington Street.



Figure 55: Wide-fronted red-brick terraces on Eaton Road with large front gardens.

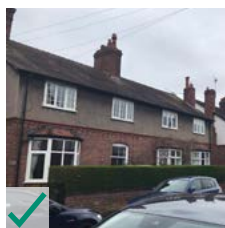
Land Use



3 storey semi-detached residential



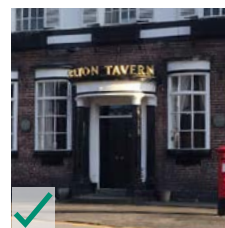
Terraced houses



2 storey semi-detached residential

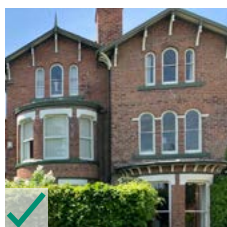


Commercial units on Queen's Park View



Active public house frontage

Built Form



Traditional but varied window forms



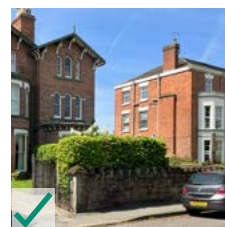
Red-brick and consistent elevations



Characterful entrance treatment

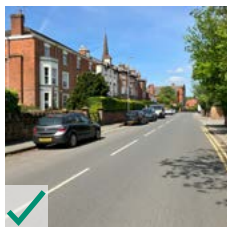


Traditional chimney stacks



Different styles but overall harmony

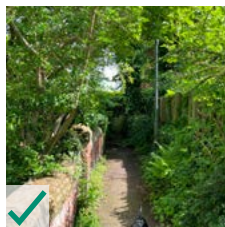
Streets and Movement



Eaton Road is a key link to Handbridge



Good street enclosure



Pedestrian alleys increase permeability

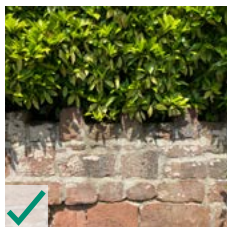


On street parking reduces path width



No cycle infrastructure

Boundaries



Local sandstone wall



Capped red-brick wall



Mature hedgerow

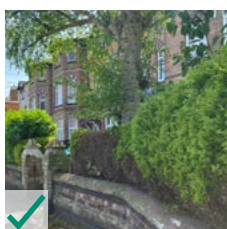


Street-facing houses

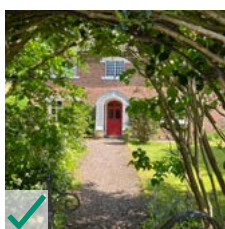


Undefined boundary

Public Realm and Landscape



Front gardens contribute to GI



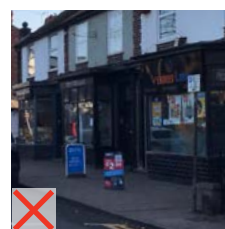
Well-maintained front gardens



Lack of provision for bin storage



Undefined hard space

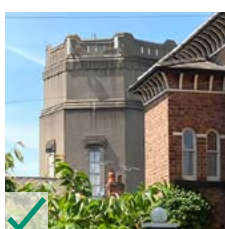


Barriers to pedestrian movement

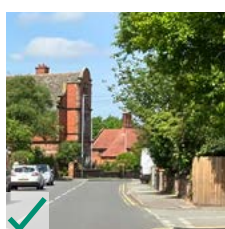
Views and Landmarks



Views of the spire of the St Mary's Church



Views of the water tower



Views towards Handbridge's centre



The landmark Carlton Tavern



Small businesses act as local landmarks

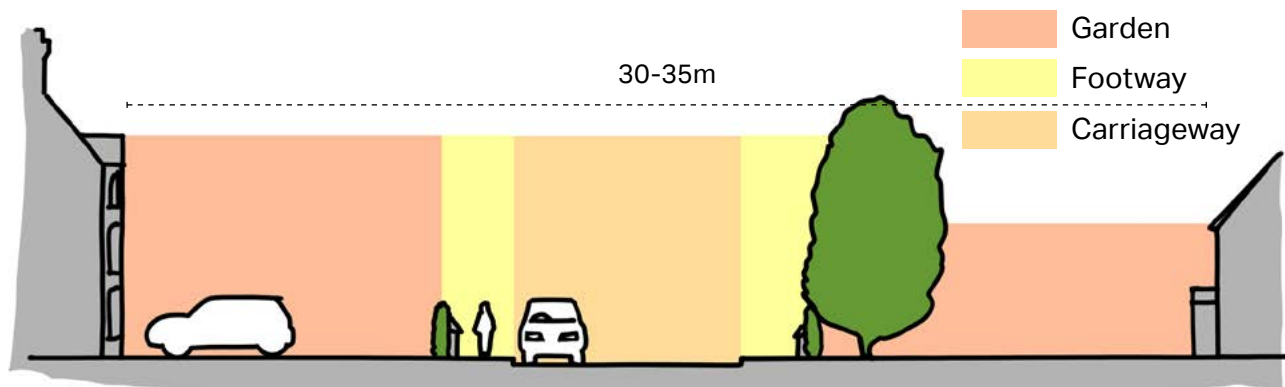


Figure 56: Eaton Road cross section (looking north)



Figure 57: Eaton Road facing north.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 1c: Urban Fringe

1. Relatively mixed in built form character.
2. Due to the dense, terraced form of Hartington Street there is a significant amount of informal on-street parking on both sides of the street which significantly constrains the carriageway. A study should be undertaken to assess the benefit and suitability of redesigning the street to include additional planting, trees, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), parking bays and accessible pedestrian and cycle routes. Making the street one-way might provide sufficient space to enable this.
3. The variations within this character area make the analysis of a site's neighbouring character even more important. Infill development that is appropriate for Eaton Road, with its imposing 3 storey red-brick Victorian villas, is unlikely to be appropriate on eastern streets such as Hartington Street, with its 2 storey red-brick terraced houses.
4. Good urban design interventions could help to further tie this character area together. Green infrastructure is more visible on Eaton Road due to the large front gardens. Urban greening on eastern streets such as Hartington Street would help to create a continuous network across the character area.

2

Character Area 2: Queen's Park

Includes the Queen's Park Conservation Area. It has a wealth of heritage assets and a leafy campus / suburban character.

3.4 Queen's Park

This area is surrounded by the River Dee to the north, Chester Meadows to the east, the Historic Core character area to the west and the Appleyards Lane character area to the south.

The west of the area is dominated by the large educational institutions of Queen's Park High School, Chester International School and the University of Chester (Queen's Park Campus) which line Queen's Park Road. These are surrounded by large playing fields which separate the area from Handbridge's commercial core.

The east of the area is mainly residential consisting of large detached homes surrounding grand tree-lined streets. This area has a strong interaction with its surrounding geography. Imposing houses overlook the River Dee to the north and pedestrian routes link the area to the large open space of Chester Meadows to the east.

The architectural styles vary across the sub-areas. However, there are numerous elements that bind them together. The streets generally form broad curvilinear patterns and are lined by grass verges, mature trees and hedgerows.

The houses are mainly large and detached, along with some semi-detached houses in The Pathways character area. Roofs are mainly pitched and covered in a range of materials including grey slate, rosemary and concrete tiles. Brick (of varying colours) is the predominant building material but there are examples of white stucco and other architectural flourishes.

The streets are generally pedestrian-friendly with less on-street parking than other character areas. However, there are some wide-junctions where the allocation of pedestrian and vehicular space could be better considered in order to make crossing the road more seamless.

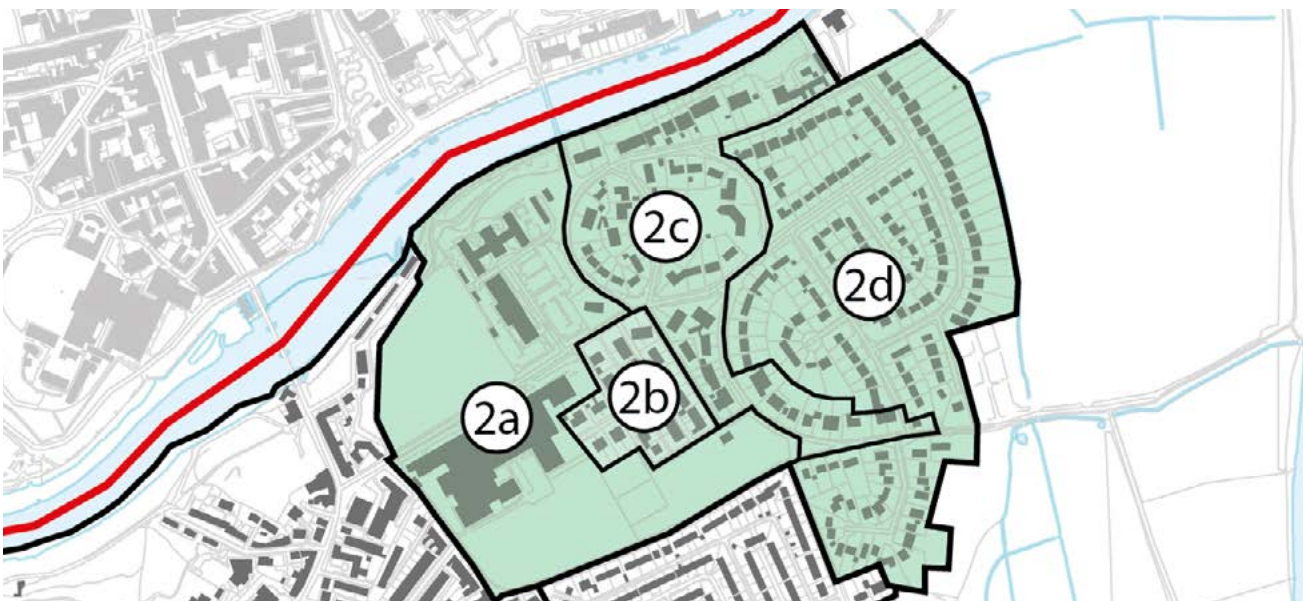


Figure 58: Map showing the Queen's Park character area divided into sub-areas.



Figure 59: Grand detached houses along Lower Park Road.



Figure 60: Abundant green infrastructure.



Figure 61: A cobbled private courtyard.



Figure 62: Varied boundary treatments.

Connections

The area has good pedestrian connections to the centre of Chester due to the landmark Queen's Park Suspension Bridge; a pedestrian suspension footbridge completed in 1923 and spanning the River Dee. The main route from the city centre to Chester Meadows crosses this bridge and through the area meaning that Victoria Crescent and Lower Park Road have a higher pedestrian footfall than may be expected of residential streets.



Figure 63: Queen's Park Suspension Bridge.

River Dee

The area is strongly defined by its relationship to the River Dee with the houses to the north of Victoria Crescent and Lower Park Road located on an elevated position overlooking the river and towards Chester's city centre. Salmon Leap is a pedestrian footpath close to the river banks which provides a well-used connection between Handbridge's commercial centre, Chester Meadows and beyond.



Figure 64: Salmon Leap along the River Dee.

Opportunities

There is potential for a characterful space at the street junction where Queen's Park Road, Victoria Crescent, South Crescent Road and St John's Road meet. Several large detached houses with plots marked by stone walls and mature planting create a characterful backdrop to the space.

This place has the potential to be even more memorable and characterful still if the space was surfaced with high quality materials and improved for pedestrian accessibility with level crossings of the space. Currently it is diminished due to the tarmac carriageway and road markings in a quiet residential area. The hard landscape could be designed holistically (e.g. block-paved) to make an attractive place for people and movement.



Figure 65: South Crescent Road looking towards Queen's Park Road.

Legibility Plan

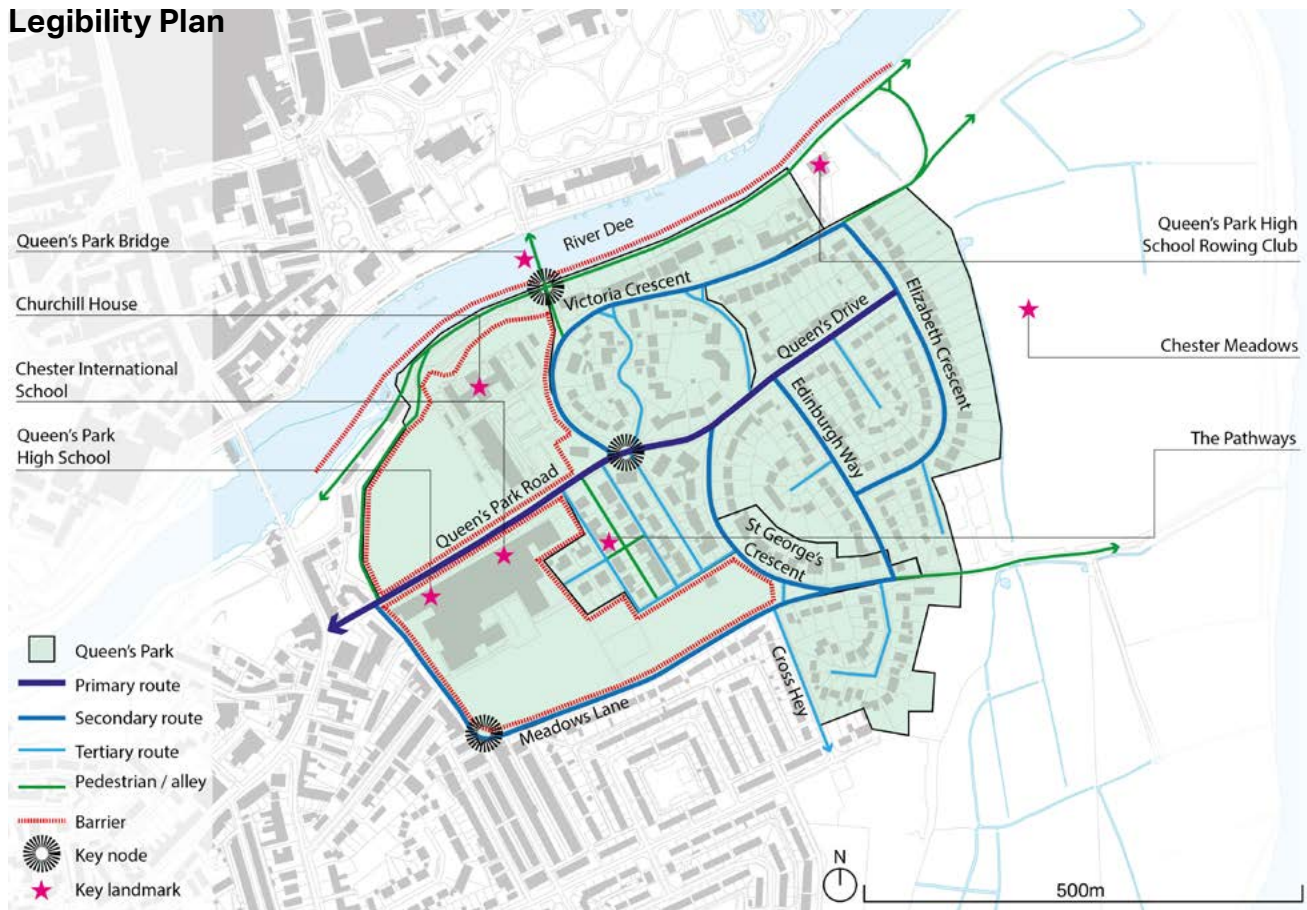


Figure 66: Plan illustrating the key components of legibility within the Queen's Park character area.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Character Area 2: Queen's Park

1. The integrity of the Queen's Park Conservation Area must be maintained. Chester West and Chester Council are undertaking a review of its Conservation Area Appraisals. The Council's website: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk should be checked for updates.
2. The area contains numerous characteristic small grass verges at street junctions which should be retained and enhanced, not overrun with utilities, signage and clutter that negate their attractiveness.
3. The River Dee and the adjoining green space create a key green and blue infrastructure corridor for Chester as a whole. All development should take into account the key views and routes to and from this space which form a key part of the area's character.
4. The Queen's Park Suspension Bridge is a key pedestrian gateway linking Grosvenor Park and Chester Meadows. Views to and from this key landmark and link must be maintained and enhanced to protect the setting of this heritage assets and the legibility of the area.



Sub-Area 2a: Institutional

This spacious area includes part of the Queen's Park Conservation Area and several educational institutes.

3.4.1 Institutional

Land Use: Educational with Queen's Park High School and Chester International School and their playing fields to the south and the University of Chester (Queen's Park Campus) and its playing fields to the north.

Built Form: Large 2-3 storey buildings including neo-classical Victorian, 20th Century art deco and modern buildings. Predominant building materials include red and brown brick with ornate stone features including columns and decorative gables.

Streets and Movement: Queen's Park Road is the main east-west road connecting the institutions. This is a 2-way vehicular road and the pavements are narrow considering the high student footfall. The roads within the university grounds are private.

Boundaries: The schools are bordered by hedgerows and low brick walls with buildings set-back several metres from the street. The university campus is private and separated from the street by brick walls, railings and a large entrance gate.

Public Realm and Landscape: Most of the land is private due to its educational use. The playing fields include large grassed areas surrounded by trees. Mature trees (within the school boundaries) line Queen's Park Road. There is green landscaping within the private university grounds.

Views and Landmarks: The imposing main buildings of each institution are landmarks due to their grand historic architecture and imposing scale.

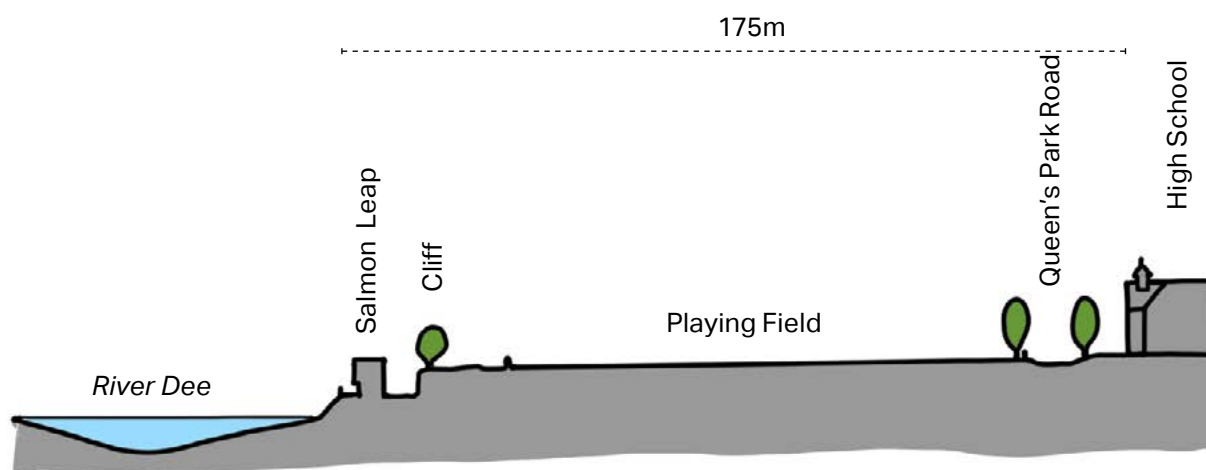


Figure 67: Site section from the River Dee to Queen's Park Road.



Figure 68: The art deco hall of Queen's Park High School bordered by mature trees and grass verges.



Figure 69: University of Chester's Churchill House.



Figure 70: Queen's Park High School.



Figure 71: The entrance to the University of Chester (Queen's Park Campus).

Figure Ground

A figure ground analysis shows this area to be dominated by three large institutional blocks positioned at right angles against the open space of the playing fields. These blocks are significantly out of scale with the fine grain arrangement of the surrounding houses and represent the educational use of the buildings. The southern block, which includes both Queen's Park High School and Chester International School, dominates the south of Queen's Park Road with no routes through for pedestrians.



Figure 72: Institutional figure ground.

Appearance

Grand architecture of varying styles make it clear that these buildings are formal places of learning. Styles include symmetrical neo classical and art deco. There is a mix of classical and modern style columns, ornate gables, quoins and other decorative features. Building materials include red and brown brick, grey slate tiles and civic stone. Window styles include sash, round Victorian and large statement windows spanning two storeys.



Figure 73: Characteristic architectural features.

Barriers

The buildings in this area are part of private institutions which means much of the grounds, and surrounding playing fields, are publicly inaccessible. This has a negative impact on permeability with the large campus' acting as barriers between Handbridge's commercial centre and the residential areas to the east and south. The attractive Queen's Park Road is a main thoroughfare but the pedestrian experience could be improved due to narrow footways and high walls and hedgerows securing the campus' isolating (rather than activating with entrances etc.) some adjacent streets.



Figure 74: Gates preventing access to the University of Chester.



Figure 75: The University of Chester in its green setting.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 2a: Institutional

1. Relatively uniform in built form character with large scale buildings situated within open spaces.
2. Refer to the forthcoming Queen's Park Conservation Area Statement of Special Interest for additional information and guidance see <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/total-environment/conservation-areas-and-conservation-area-appraisals>.
3. Safe routes to the schools and university should be promoted for students to walk and cycle to surrounding residential areas. Design that enables and improves active travel routes will increase safety and modal shift. The speed and dominance of vehicles within streets should be reduced with expanded pavements, improved cycleways and planting schemes to improve the quality of streetscapes.
4. The area is characterised by its secondary and tertiary educational uses along with associated open space and development should consider the significant footfall of young people and the need for spaces to safely move and congregate throughout the day.
5. The area consists of large private campuses with significant lengths of external boundaries. The balance of openness and security should be retained. The boundaries used must ensure the public realm also feels safe and remains attractive.
6. There are key views from Chester city centre looking towards Handbridge. The quality of the frontages facing the River Dee should be maintained in order to protect these views.



Sub-Area 2b: The Pathways

This small area has a concentration of listed buildings within one main block which contains attractive interior pathways.

3.4.2 The Pathways

Land Use: Residential but in very close proximity to the educational institutions of the Institutional character area.

Built Form: 2-3 storey Victorian villas. Mainly semi-detached and built from red-brick. Architectural features include tall chimney stacks and large gothic, sash and bay windows. Gables, dormer windows and tall pitches protrude in various directions creating visual interest.

Streets and Movement: Houses are arranged around the pedestrian alley known as Victoria Pathway which is set out in a cross formation. The other roads consist of residential streets accessible by car but with very little through-traffic other than local residents.

Boundaries: Tall hedgerows and low to medium red brick walls. Unusually, the houses surrounding Victoria Pathway front onto the pedestrian alley with their backs facing the vehicular road. All buildings are set back by front gardens.

Public Realm and Landscape: All houses have generously-sized gardens containing mature planting and trees. Victoria Pathway is a public route but is mainly used as an access route for residents. Public realm is otherwise limited.

Views and Landmarks: This area is historically very significant with 11 Grade II Listed buildings. The unique pedestrian nature of Victoria Pathway is a local landmark.



Figure 76: Bay and sash windows and mature gardens.



Figure 77: Neo-gothic Victorian windows.



The houses have rear entrances backing onto Northern Pathway and St John's Rear Road. These streets are mainly used for parking but there are footpaths on the opposite side.



The north-south section of Victoria Pathway is wider and is lined by front gardens. Gates lead to the fronts of the houses and boundaries include brick walls, hedges and metal railings.



Bay and sash windows are dominant architectural features along with red brick and grey slate tiles. Most of the houses are semi-detached and the front gardens are generously sized.



One of the houses at the Victoria Pathway crossroads. The roof pitches are typical of this area. The wall and railing curve leading the pedestrian in each direction of the alleyway.



The east-west section of the pedestrian Victoria Pathway is narrower and is lined by tall hedgerows. There is limited surveillance due to the houses not overlooking this section.

Figure 78: Map showing the unique features of The Pathways.



Figure 79: Houses backing onto the lane with a variety of pitches, gables and chimney stacks.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 2b: The Pathways

1. Relatively uniform in built form character with unique inverted block layout layout and characterful detailing.
2. Refer to the forthcoming Queen's Park Conservation Area Statement of Special Interest for additional information and guidance see <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/total-environment/conservation-areas-and-conservation-area-appraisals>.
3. The variety of pitches, gables and chimney stacks should be maintained in order to protect the interesting forms and roofscapes as seen from within the block and the surrounding streets.
4. The area is characterised by a dense concentration of architecturally harmonious Grade II Listed buildings which are unique within the neighbourhood area. Any development is likely to be householder in scale but must respect the form, character and context of the listed buildings.
5. The area's unique inverted block layout should be maintained and protected through application of appropriate boundaries, including brick walls and hedgerows.
6. Buildings should remain double-fronted as both elevations are important to the character of the surrounding streets and internal pedestrian alleyways.
7. The landscaping and boundaries on the pedestrian alleys should be maintained for visual appeal and to continue the area's green character and as a corridor for biodiversity.



Sub-Area 2c: The Crescents

This suburban area has a concentration of curved crescent streets within the layout as well as a key riverside frontage.

3.4.3 The Crescents

Land Use: Residential but in close proximity to the River Dee, Chester Meadows and their various amenities.

Built Form: Mainly large detached houses built between the Victorian era and the present day. These are generally built from brick in various shades of red, brown and cream. There is also some light render and architectural detailing including tiling, ornate gables and quoins.

Streets and Movement: Curvilinear arrangements set out around several residential crescents. Limited on-street parking due to the large front gardens and driveways. Extensive pedestrian footpaths but some very wide junctions that can be difficult to cross.

Boundaries: Varied styles including brick walls, railing, hedgerows and wooden fences. Most houses are set-back by large front gardens. The houses to the north of Victoria Crescent back onto the River Dee. The other crescents surround large back gardens.

Public Realm and Landscape: Extensive grass verges and mature trees as well as mature landscaping from the large front gardens. Chester Meadows, with its extensive green and blue infrastructure, is directly accessible from the area.

Views and Landmarks: Views towards Chester across the River Dee and to the east of the city across Chester Meadows. The Queen's Park Suspension Bridge is a local landmark.



Figure 80: Houses in the Crescents character area.



Figure 81: Large detached Victorian houses with tall chimney stacks, prominent gables and large gardens.



Figure 82: Detached house in cream render.



Figure 83: Detached houses on Victoria Crescent.



Figure 84: A variety of architectural styles with varied roof pitches and brick tones.

Figure Ground

A figure ground analysis shows large plots in a loose curvilinear arrangement along a series of crescents. There is a more linear arrangement to the north along Victoria Crescent and Lower Park Road with the building line facing the River Dee. There is some consistency of other building lines but the arrangement is largely informal due to houses being built at different times and with front and back garden of varying sizes.



Figure 85: The Crescents figure ground.

Appearance

A variety of building materials can be seen across the area including brick of varying shades and white and cream render. Roof materials include grey slate tiles, red pantiles, rosemary tiles and modern concrete tiles. Windows range from elaborate Victorian and Edwardian styles to more modern PVC. Overall harmony is achieved through the heights of the detached houses, usually either 2 or 2.5 storeys with pitched roofs and tall chimney stacks.



Figure 86: Characteristic architectural features.

Opportunities

The pedestrian experience could be improved by addressing the wide vehicular junctions, often unnecessarily bisecting, with no clear pedestrian crossings. This is particularly significant in this area given the relatively high pedestrian footfall between Chester's city centre and Chester Meadows.



Figure 87: South Crescent Road looking towards Victoria Crescent.



Figure 88: Varied architectural forms on South Crescent Road.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 2c: The Crescents

1. Relatively mixed in built form character.
2. Refer to the forthcoming Queen's Park Conservation Area Statement of Special Interest for additional information and guidance see <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/total-environment/conservation-areas-and-conservation-area-appraisals>.
3. There are key views from Chester's city centre looking towards the grand houses of this area positioned facing the riverside. The quality of the frontages facing the River Dee should be maintained in order to protect these views, and likewise the rear elevations on Lower Park Road.
4. The area's lower density and mix of architectural styles form a harmonious whole due to positive boundaries treatments of walls and hedgerows defining the streets, to retain and enhance. The mature landscape settings also helps to settle and integrate the various building forms and styles.
5. Organic building lines that aren't strictly offset from the carriageway varies the spatial experience of the streetscene, together with the plot boundaries. This should be continued by new development.
6. The area's curvilinear streets, moderate the view and reveal the spatial experience gradually as one moves through the area. Plot boundaries that follow this dynamic help to reinforce this aspects of the streetscene character.



Sub-Area 2d: Handbridge East

This suburban area has a concentration of lower density housing on looping streets, and backs on to the meadows.

3.4.4 Handbridge East

Land Use: Residential but in close proximity to Chester Meadows.

Built Form: Mainly detached houses and bungalows built in the 20th and 21st centuries. These are generally built from brick in various shades of red, brown and cream. There is also some light render and architectural detailing including hanging tiles and weatherboarding .

Streets and Movement: Curvilinear and cul-de-sac arrangements with generally low traffic except for residents. Wide pavements provide good pedestrian connections to the neighbouring areas as well as to the two main entry points to Chester Meadows from Elizabeth Crescent and Bottoms Lane.

Boundaries: Varied styles including low brick and stone walls and hedgerows. Most houses are set back by large front gardens. The houses to the east of Elizabeth Crescent and Andrew Crescent back onto Chester Meadows. Buildings are set back with generally consistent building lines.

Public Realm and Landscape: There are grass verges as well as mature trees and landscaping contained within the large front gardens. Chester Meadows, with its extensive green and blue infrastructure, is directly accessible from the area.

Views and Landmarks: Views to the east of Chester across Chester Meadows and the River Dee.



Figure 89: View of the area from across the River Dee.



Figure 90: Detached houses of varying styles with large front gardens on a quiet residential street.



Figure 91: Detached house bordered by hedgerow.



Figure 92: Hanging tiles and red-brick.



Figure 93: 1960s/1970s housing with varying pitches, materials and size.

Figure Ground

A figure ground analysis shows a structured arrangement of cul-de-sacs and curvilinear streets with a formal building line of houses facing the street due to equally-sized front gardens. Back gardens differ in size based on the location of the properties with the largest gardens facing Chester Meadows to the east.



Figure 94: Handbridge East figure ground.

Appearance

A variety of building materials can be seen across the area including brick of varying shades, occasional light render and architectural detailing including hanging tiles and weatherboarding. Roof materials include grey slate tiles and modern concrete tiles. Windows are generally wide and made from modern PVC. Overall harmony is achieved through the heights of the detached houses, usually 2 storeys with pitched roofs and chimney stacks. There are also several bungalows.



Figure 95: Commonly seen features.

View

There are views of the area, specifically the houses to the east of Elizabeth Crescent from across Chester Meadows and the River Dee looking west. This highlights the area's strong interaction with the surrounding green spaces and the consistent roofline which sits below the heights of the surrounding mature trees.



Figure 96: View across the North Meadows towards the area.



Figure 97: Houses from a range of periods but with scale and proportions creating overall harmony.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 2d: Handbridge East

1. Relatively mixed in built form character.
2. Several of this area's street frontages face the Queen's Park Conservation Area and therefore any development on these frontages is within the setting of the conservation area and listed buildings within it and will be subject to scrutiny accordingly.
3. There are key views looking towards this area from Chester Meadows (and Boughton beyond) which makes it crucial that all development is integrated in terms of scale and materials within the landscape setting. No single building should dominate this view and stand out incongruously.
4. The remaining area consists of large plots with individual detached houses. With fewer heritage assets within, there is a greater opportunity for a mix of householder development, extending or replacing buildings.
5. Although brick and white render is most common on some streets, there is a mix of architectural styles and building materials elsewhere, allowing more flexibility to make changes to individual properties and add to the eclectic-character.
6. The area's landscaping, setbacks and boundaries should be retained in order to maintain the streetscene character and integrate the mix of buildings styles and forms.



3

Character Area 3: Appleyards Lane

Appleyards Road forms an east west spine to this suburban residential area. This 1920s/1930s development is divided into three sub-areas.



Figure 98: Map showing the Appleyards Lane character area and sub-areas.

3.5 Appleyards Lane

This area is surrounded by Chester Meadows to the east and the other character areas to the north, west and south. The sub-areas are split by the key tree-lined streets of Appleyards Lane and Hartington Street.

This area has similarities to other residential character areas. However, its architectural and historic unity set it apart. The houses were built between 1928 and 1932 with large front and back gardens, green and spacious streets and good access to open space. There are consistencies in architectural style including the widespread use of brick and herringbone brick detailing on some windows and gables.

Each of the three sub-areas orbits a central green space. The differences in character are generally due to the size and style of houses. The houses surrounding Watling Crescent are mostly larger and consist of semi-detached and detached homes.

The houses around Allington Place are either semi-detached or set in terraces of up to six homes. Here, there is a wider use of stucco, particularly on the upper storeys. The houses surrounding Prenton Place are higher density and arranged in terraces of up to eight homes.

The three central green spaces are also different in character. Watling Crescent contains some seating amongst mature trees. Here the surrounding houses front the green space. For both Allington Place and Prenton Place the surrounding houses back onto the green space. Allington Place contains a more varied set of play spaces including swings and a basketball court. Prenton Place has a smaller playground but is surrounded by the largest area of open grass.

There is a third play area at Handbridge Park which is located next to the large green space of Chester Meadows.



Figure 99: Green spaces on key corners.



Figure 100: A pedestrian alley under a house.



Figure 101: Brick terraced houses.

Legibility Plan

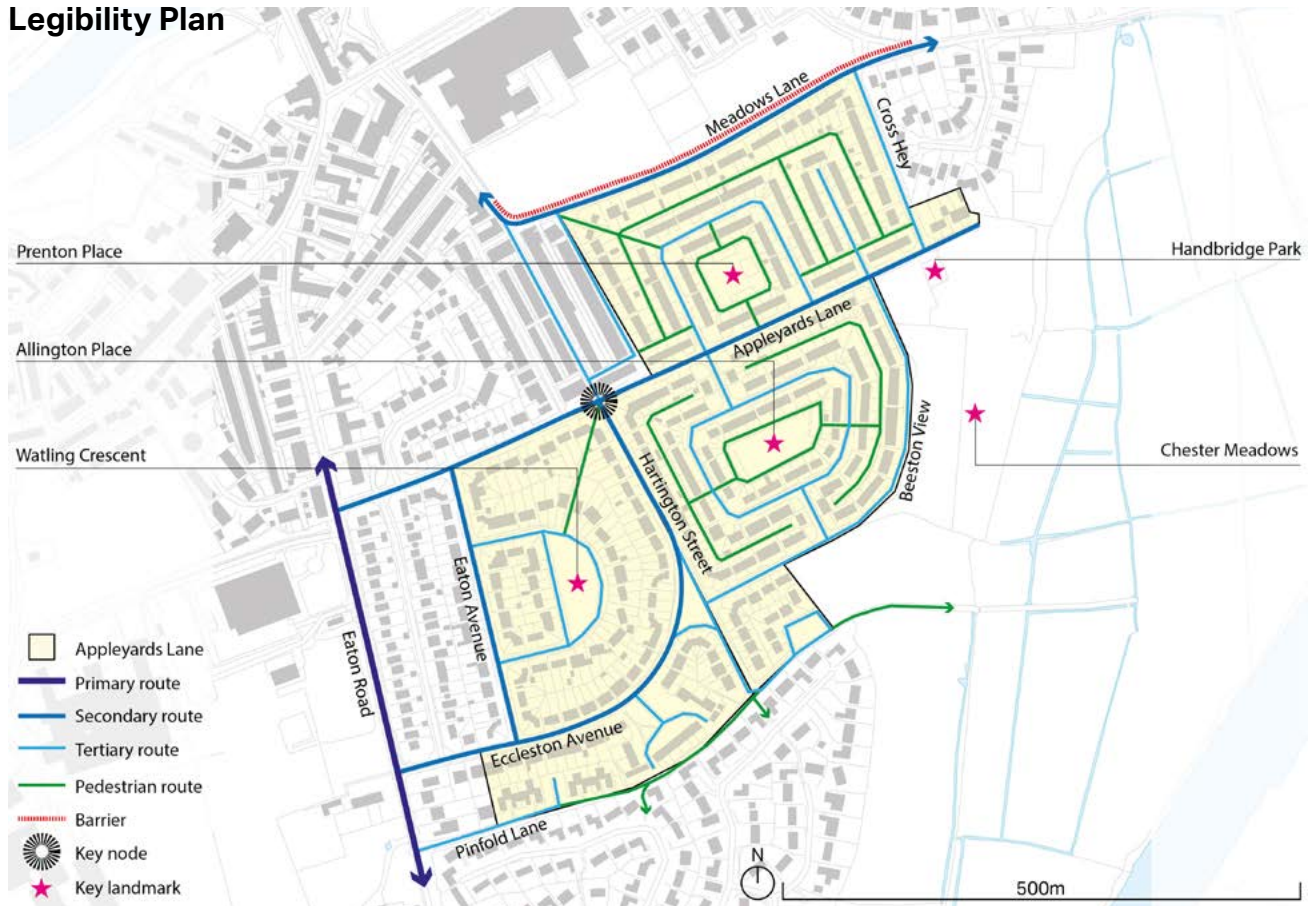


Figure 102: Map showing the legibility of the Appleyards Lane character area.

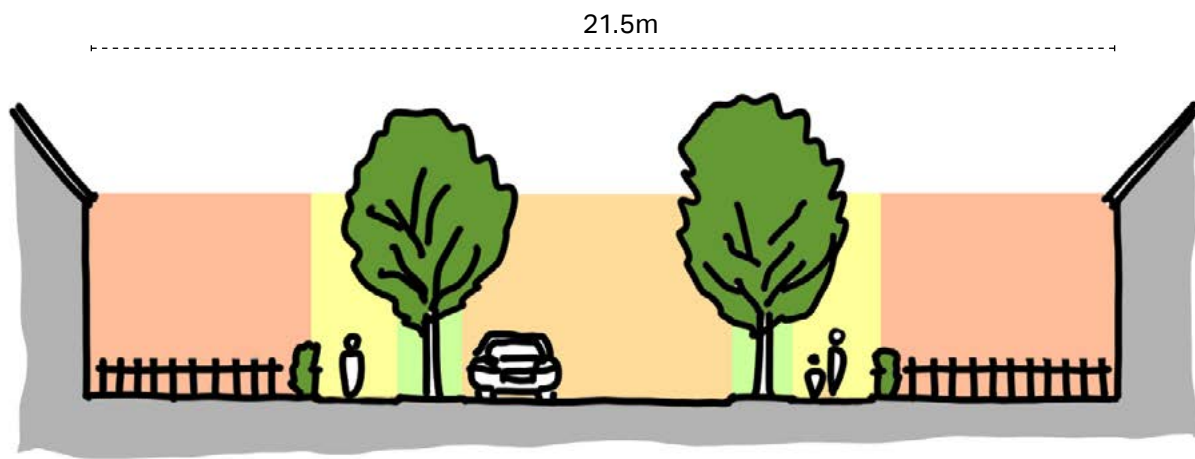


Figure 103: Appleyards Lane cross-section

Carriageway
Verge

Garden
Footway

Key takeaways and design considerations for CA 3: Appleyards Lane

1. The inter-war period of housing is highly consistent across the area although there are some variations - the sub-areas have some distinct building types with individual features explored in further depth in the following guidelines.
2. The green network running through the area includes street trees on Appleyards Lane and other streets that link a network of green spaces at the heart of the three sub-areas and also green corner plots which should be maintained.
3. Some streets are long and straight making them suitable for cycling and potential horizontal traffic-calming measures.
4. The tree planted verges on the area's main streets should be retained and the trees within replaced when necessary.
5. The junction of Appleyards Lane and Hartington Street would benefit from a public realm improvements to make a safe, green, memorable space within the character area.





Sub-Area 3a: Prenton Place

This terraced suburban area has a concentration of medium density housing on rectilinear streets, and has an under-enhanced green space within the centre.

3.5.1 Prenton Place

Land Use: Residential.

Built Form: Unique 1920s/1930s terraced houses, mainly in rows of between four and eight homes built from brown brick and with repetitive chimney stacks. Some of the terraces include one or two homes with a decorated gable containing a herringbone brick pattern. There is also an arched brick pattern over most of the ground floor doors and windows.

Streets and Movement: A crescent form radiates from the central green space connecting to the key route of Appleyards Lane. The other roads are mainly used by residents with much space taken up by on-street parking. Alleyways separate some of the terraces.

Boundaries: Mainly low brick walls and picket fences bordering medium-sized front gardens. Some gardens have no boundary, often where the garden is hard-surfaced and used for parking. Some corners contain grass surrounded by black metal railing.

Public Realm and Landscape: There is a central green square including a playground and surrounded by a wide open grassed area. The surrounding houses back onto the square and there is some courtyard parking. Several street corners are landscaped with grass and mature trees.

Views and Landmarks: Some houses on Appleyards Lane overlook Chester Meadows and the River Dee with expansive views towards the eastern suburbs of Chester.



Figure 104: Several corners are landscaped with grass, hedgerows and mature trees.



Figure 105: Brick terraces with arched windows.



Figure 106: An alleyway separating the terraces.



Figure 107: The playground appears dated and the surrounding grass has little character/ biodiversity.

Figure Ground

A figure ground analysis shows a formal arrangement radiating around the central green space with streets turning at hard right angles. The fine urban grain is achieved through the layout of similar length terraces with equally sized front gardens creating straight building lines. The regular alleyways increase permeability across the area.



Figure 108: Prenton Place figure ground.

Appearance

There is a consistent use of brown brick across all facades with no houses painted or covered in render. This gives a satisfying unity to the area. Roofs are covered in grey slate tiles. There are modest brick arches over the ground floor windows and doors with a more elaborate herringbone brick pattern on the more prominent gables. Chimney stacks are spaced at regular intervals.



Figure 109: Characteristic architectural features.

Central Green Space

There is a generous section of green space in the centre of the area. This includes some parking to the north and south and a children's playground to the east. The rest of the space could be better utilised as there is no landscaping, seating or alternative activities. The backs of the houses face this green space and their gardens are bordered by an unappealing mix of wooden fences and brick and breeze blocks which limits the overlooking of the space.



Figure 110: Prenton Place.



Figure 111: Red-brick terraced houses define Prenton Place.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 3a: Prenton Place

1. Relatively uniform in built form character with red-brown brick terraced homes and slate tiles.
2. Some of the accessible back alleys are poorly maintained which creates a security risk. Public realm and lighting interventions could improve this.
3. The central green spaces should not be encroached upon for parking. It is important to invest in the green space for planting, play and recreation. The diversity of uses exhibited in the adjacent Allington Place is preferable.
4. The consistent layout of terraced houses across the area creates a uniform streetscene which should be preserved.
5. Many front boundaries have been lost in order to accommodate on-plot parking. Future developments in the area which encourage on-street parking should not be permissible.
6. Development should respect the consistent use of materials and detailing across the area including red-brown brick and slate tiles.
7. The narrow streets with on-street (or pavement) parking creates barriers along the pavement which could be improved by a shared surface street with identified bays and space for rain gardens, swales and planting.
8. Green corner plots should be retained for planting. There are opportunities for communal uses of these spaces such as for informal growing and allotments.



Sub-Area 3b: Allington Place

This terraced suburban area has a concentration of medium density housing and a green space in the centre that is well planted and play-equipped.

3.5.2 Allington Place

Land Use: Residential.

Built Form: Unique 1920s/1930s terraced houses, mainly in rows of three to six homes built from brown brick and with repetitive chimney stacks. There is often a light render covering either the top half or the entire frontage of the homes. Some of the terraces include one or two homes with a decorated gable containing a herringbone brick pattern.

Streets and Movement: A circular form radiates from the central green space bordered by the key route of Appleyards Lane to the north and Hartington Street to the west. The other roads are mainly used by residents with much space taken up by on-street parking. Alleyways separate some of the terraces.

Boundaries: Mainly low brick walls and picket fences bordering medium-sized front gardens. Some gardens have no boundary, often where the garden is hard-surfaced and used for parking. Some corners contain grass surrounded by black metal railing.

Public Realm and Landscape: There is a central green space including a variety of play areas and a basketball court. The surrounding houses back onto the space and there is some courtyard parking. Several street corners are landscaped with grass and mature trees.

Views and Landmarks: Some houses on Beeston View overlook Chester Meadows and the River Dee with expansive views towards the eastern suburbs of Chester.



Figure 112: Residential Allington Place with its brick and stucco terraced homes and on street parking.



Figure 113: A gable with herringbone brick features.



Figure 114: The central green space amenities.



Figure 115: Several corners are landscaped with grass, hedgerows and mature trees.

Figure Ground

A figure ground analysis shows a formal arrangement radiating around the central green space with streets turning at hard right angles to the west and a crescent arrangement to the east. The fine urban grain is achieved through the layout of similar length terraces with equal sized front gardens creating straight building lines.



Figure 116: Allington Place figure ground.

Appearance

The most common style of facade is brown brick on the lower storeys and the prominent gables with light render on the upper storeys. Unlike neighbouring Prenton Place, roof materials include a mix of grey slate tiles, rosemary tiles and modern concrete tiles. There is a herringbone brick pattern on the prominent gables. Chimney stacks are spaced at regular intervals.



Figure 117: Characteristic architectural features.

Central Green Space

There is a good variety of uses in the central green space including a central circular basketball court with routes extending east and west. The rest of the green space is taken up by swings, slides and seating. The green space is further broken up by wildflowers and young trees. The backs of the houses face this green space and their gardens are bordered by an unappealing mix of wooden fences and brick and breeze blocks which limits the overlooking of the space. There is some parking to the east.



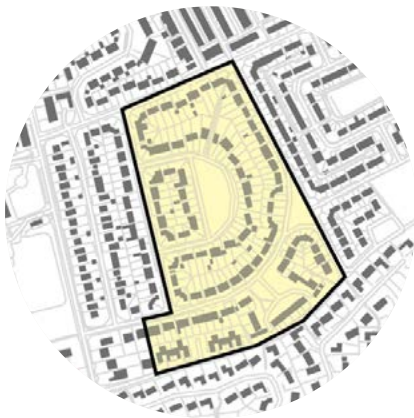
Figure 118: Allington Place.



Figure 119: A variety of uses in the central green space.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 3b: Allington Place

1. Relatively uniform in built form character with red-brick half-rendered terraced homes.
2. Development should respect the consistent use of materials and detailing across the area including brown brick, cream render (applied with a clear logic to upper storeys, or occasionally the whole building but leaving a feature half-gable) and a mix of rosemary or slate roof tiles.
3. The narrow streets with on-street (or pavement) parking creates barriers along the pavement which could be rectified by a shared surface approach with identified bays and space for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and planting.
4. Many front boundaries have been lost in order to accommodate on-plot parking. This has a negative impact on the street-scene aesthetic making perpendicular plot boundaries and landscaping important to prevent cars from dominating the street scene.
5. The consistent layout of terraced homes across the area creates a harmonious backdrop which should be preserved and enhanced.
6. The tree-planting and high-quality upkeep of the central green space should be maintained and not be encroached upon for parking.
7. Green corner plots should be retained for planting. There are opportunities for communal uses of these spaces such as for informal growing and allotments.
8. Some of the accessible back alleys are poorly maintained which creates a security risk. Public realm and lighting interventions could improve this.



Sub-Area 3c: Watling Crescent

This grander suburban area has a concentration of lower density homes and a green crescent that forms a green heart to the area.

3.5.3 Watling Crescent

Land Use: Residential with recreational green space.

Built Form: Unique 1920s/1930s detached and semi-detached houses, built from brown brick and with tall chimney stacks. Some houses are covered in render of various pastel shades including white, green, pink and blue. Some of the houses have decorated gables containing a herringbone brick pattern above the upper-storey windows.

Streets and Movement: A crescent form radiates from the central green space bordered by the key routes of Appleyards Lane to the north, Hartington Street to the east and Eccleston Avenue to the south. There is a diagonal pedestrian alley that directly links Appleyards Lane to the central green crescent.

Boundaries: Mainly low brick walls hedgerows and wooden fences bordering medium to large-sized front gardens. The pedestrian alley is lined with tall hedgerows.

Public Realm and Landscape: Watling Crescent contains mature trees and irregular daffodil beds. The surrounding houses face the space making it feel safe and overlooked. There are additional green squares and triangles along Eccleston Avenue. Several street corners are landscaped with grass and mature trees. Some key streets such as Eaton Avenue are lined with mature trees and grass verges.

Views and Landmarks: The green spaces are the local landmarks and their openness provides views towards the houses.



Figure 120: Detached and semi-detached homes with decorative brick features and tall chimney stacks.



Figure 121: A public alley lined by hedgerows.



Figure 122: Houses covered in light render.



Figure 123: The green space at Watling Crescent overlooked by houses.

Figure Ground

A figure ground shows a largely formal arrangement surrounding the central green crescent and radiating outwards. Houses are mainly detached and semi-detached but there is some variation on the sizes of front gardens meaning that the building line isn't always consistent.



Figure 124: Watling Crescent figure ground.

Appearance

The dominant style is brown brick with rosemary tiles, tall chimney stacks and steep pitches. There are modest brick arches over the ground floor windows and a more elaborate herringbone pattern above the upper storey windows. Some windows are round and surrounded by a brick pattern. There are numerous examples of these houses being covered in render of varying pastel shades.



Figure 125: Characteristic architectural features.

Central Green Space

The central green space is in a crescent formation immediately surrounded by the vehicular road, then the pavement, and then the houses which front the space. Mature trees, new plantings and daffodil beds loosely cover the space.



Figure 126: Watling Crescent.



Figure 127: Semi-detached houses typical of the sub-area.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 3c: Watling Crescent

1. Relatively uniform in built form character with brown brick semi-detached houses with rosemary tiles, tall chimney stacks and steep pitches.
2. Several houses front the central green space and there is an opportunity to surface the lanes around the crescent with brick paving to create a more informal and low speed traffic environment.
3. The larger setbacks provide more room for on-plot parking. However, several front boundaries have been lost in order to accommodate on-plot parking which has had a negative impact on the area's aesthetic harmony.
4. Development should respect the consistent use of materials and detailing across the area including brown brick, cream render (more consistently applied to the whole building) and a mix of rosemary or slate roof tiles.
5. The mature trees within the central green space should be retained as an important character feature and part of the neighbourhood area's green infrastructure network.
6. The houses in this area include grand semi-detached homes. The plot series and space between buildings should be maintained.
7. Buildings address corners with an inverted form - giving an attractive green setback of large front gardens. This should be maintained and replicated on any developed corners.
8. There is a variety of house types with a number of visible decorative features and details which should be retained and encouraged in new development.

4

Character Area 4: Eaton Road

This mixed-use area is focused around the spine of Eaton Road and includes three sub-area, one education campus and two residential.

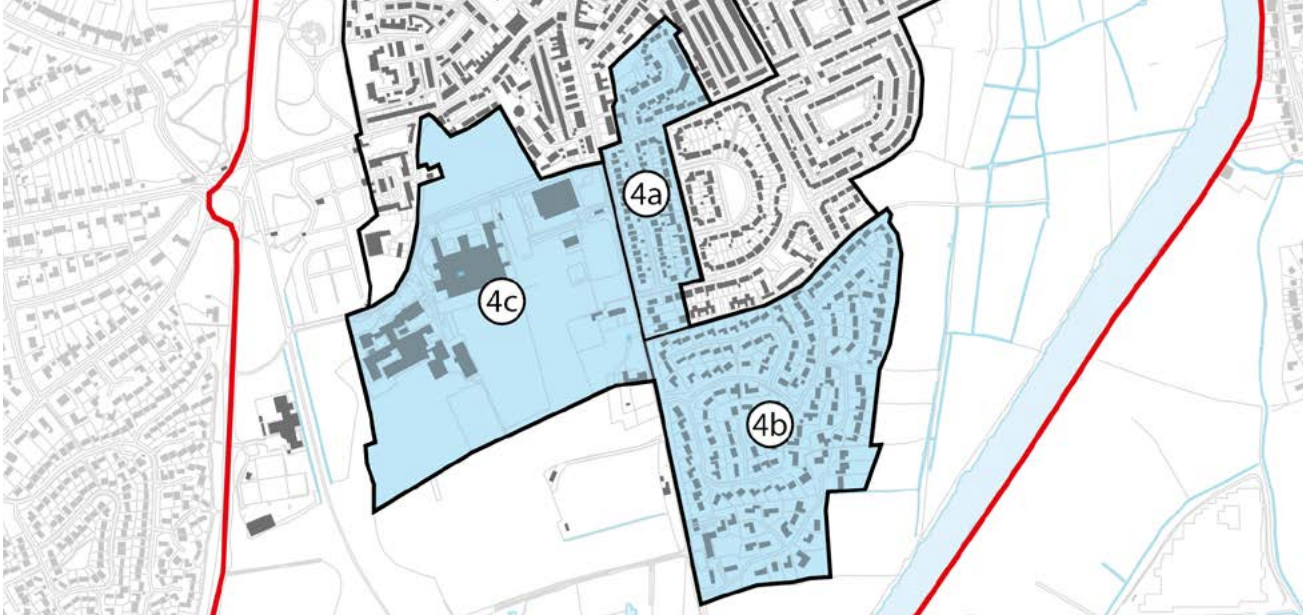


Figure 128: Map showing the Eaton Road character area divided into sub-areas.

3.6 Eaton Road

This is the southernmost area of Handbridge bordered by residential areas to the north and surrounded by open green space on all other sides. Eaton Road is key vehicular entry point into the neighbourhood area and links the three sub-areas to the centre of Handbridge to the north and the village of Eccleston to the south (which falls outside the neighbourhood area).

This area's unity is due to most buildings dating from the mid-20th century onwards with several exceptions including the 19th Century Grade II Listed former country house at Greenbank at the South of Eaton Road. The area feels suburban, safe and well-maintained. Most buildings are two storey detached houses with several examples of semi-detached houses and bungalows. There is little architectural consistency with houses built from brick of varying colours but also clad in hanging tiles, weatherboard and other materials.

The urban form predominantly consists of cul-de-sacs and there are limited vehicular connections between the sub-areas other than via Eaton Road. There are however numerous pedestrian alleys which improves permeability. Front and back gardens are generously sized and there is neat landscaping of grass verges and mature trees on many of the streets.

The numerous colleges and schools to the east of the character area are larger in scale than the other buildings in the character area. However, they are surrounded by open green space and landscaping which makes the area feel similarly suburban to the other sub-areas.

The area has a strong relationship with its surrounding countryside which includes Chester Meadows and the River Dee to the east and wooded areas and fields to the west.



Figure 129: Detached homes on quiet residential streets.



Figure 130: Mature trees and grass verges.



Figure 131: Varying building materials.

Legibility Plan

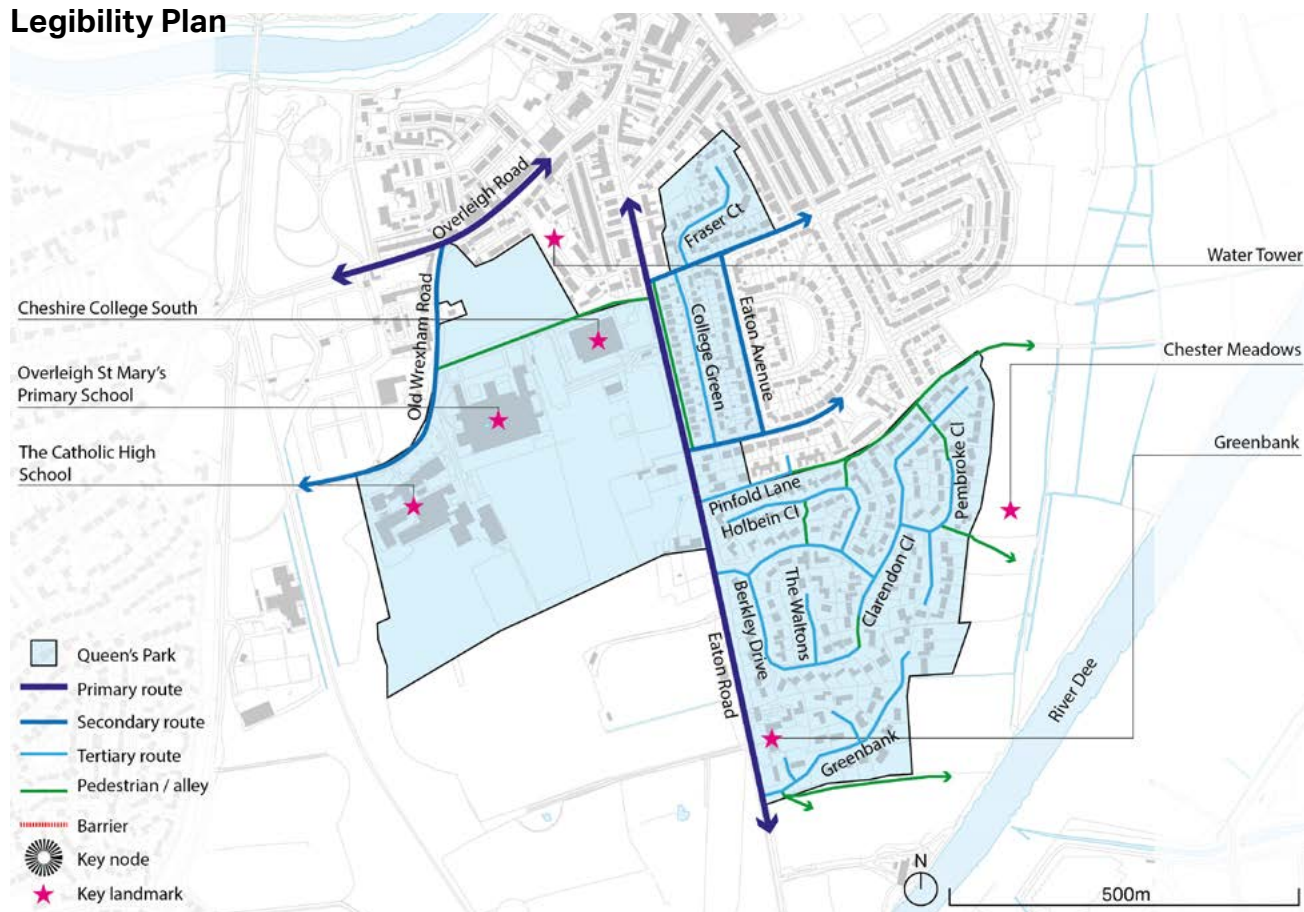


Figure 132: Map showing the legibility of the Eaton Road character area.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Character Area 4: Eaton Road

1. The Eaton Road radial is one of the three main vehicular gateways into Handbridge and links to the Eaton Estate and development should be fitting of its historic character and grand associations.
2. The Eaton Road corridor has a changing character along its length from green verges in the south to historic stone wall opposite Chester College. Development should respect this changing green character and degree of enclosure.
3. Housing areas to the east back on to the River Dee and the Chester

Meadows. It is important that development integrates within the landscape context and respects potential views from the river's public rights of way.

4. Greenbank is a grand country house (now converted to apartments) and a landmark Grade II Listed building on the edge of Handbridge. Modern high quality development within its immediate curtilage respects its status whilst being of its time and is an example of how modern design can respect and complement heritage assets.





Sub-Area 4a: Eaton Road East

This 1960's suburban area has a concentration of medium density homes set back to the east of Eaton Road.

3.6.1 Eaton Road East

Land Use: Residential but in close proximity to the neighbouring Cheshire College South & West (Chester Campus).

Built Form: Detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows dating from the 1960s onwards, mainly built from brick of varying shades and often clad in other materials including hanging tiles and weatherboard. PVC windows are generally wide and roof tiles are mainly concrete.

Streets and Movement: The cul-de-sac of Fraser Court to the north and linear streets running parallel to Eaton Road to the south. Eaton Road is a primary route but other streets are more residential. Footpaths are generally wide but there is some on-street parking, particularly on College Green.

Boundaries: A long red sandstone wall separates the houses on Eaton Road from the busy traffic with a pedestrian footpath sitting between the road and the houses. Boundaries around the individual houses include hedgerows, brick walls and wooden fences. The houses generally have large front and back gardens.

Public Realm and Landscape: There is limited public realm and most of the green infrastructure is a result of the hedgerows and mature front gardens rather than trees and grass verges on the streets.

Views and Landmarks: The landmarks of other character areas such as the Church of St Mary's and the local water tower can be seen across the area.



Figure 133: Appleyards Lane looking east.



Figure 134: 1960s detached homes on College Green bordered by hedgerows and wooden fences.



Figure 135: Hanging tiles and wide PVC windows.



Figure 136: The area's sole historic building.



Figure 137: The red sandstone wall separating houses and a pedestrian footpath from busy Eaton Road.

Figure Ground

A figure ground analysis shows a linear of detached and semi-detached homes arranged along parallel streets. The building lines are generally consistent reflecting that the houses were mainly built at the same time and in a similar style.

Appearance

There is a mix of detached houses and bungalows built in a generally consistent architectural style from the 1960s, mainly in brick of varying shades but with upper storeys covered in materials such as red hanging tiles and white weatherboarding. There is a mix of houses with and without chimney stacks. Windows are mainly wide and PVC and roofs are mainly modern concrete.

Separation of Routes

A red sandstone wall runs along Eaton Road and creates a segregated walkway which allows access to the fronts of the homes facing the road. This protects against the traffic of Eaton Road. There is another pavement running directly alongside the vehicular road which is where the bus stops are contained. The only access points to the walkway are at the north and south with no other breaks along the wall.



Figure 138: Eaton Road East figure ground.



Figure 139: Commonly seen features.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 4a: Eaton Road East

1. Relatively mixed in built form character.
2. Retain the stone walls and segregated pathway on Eaton Road with vehicular access maintained along the parallel College Green.
3. Houses should generally be oriented parallel to the street or at 90 degree angles presenting the gable end to the street to retain the existing layout.

4. The style of houses is relatively consistent with many detached homes from the 1960's, along with some bungalows on Fraser Court and development should respect this.



Sub-Area 4b: Eaton Road South

Mainly houses and bungalows from the 1960s onward on a lower density spacious landscaped suburban layout on the rural fringe of the settlement area.

3.6.2 Eaton Road South

Land Use: Residential but in close proximity to Chester Meadows and the River Dee.

Built Form: Mainly large detached two-storey houses and bungalows dating from the 1960s onwards, mainly built from brick of varying shades and often clad in other materials including hanging tiles and weatherboard. Many houses have large attached garages.

Streets and Movement: Cul-de-sac arrangements with the access points on Eaton Road at Greenbank and Berkley Drive. Some cul-de-sacs such as Chandos Close have no footpaths. There are some pedestrian routes that link to other areas.

Boundaries: Houses are set back some distance from the street by large front gardens. Some are bordered by hedgerows, mature landscaping and wooden fences but many have no front boundary.

Public Realm and Landscape: The wide streets are generously landscaped with wide grass verges, mature trees and the neat shrubs and hedgerows in the front gardens. There is a public route from Pinfold Lane that leads to open green space.

Views and Landmarks: The 19th Century Grade II Listed Greenbank acts as a striking entry point to Handbridge with its regency architecture and manicured lawns. There is also a Grade II Listed milepost on Eaton Road. The Grade II Listed Heronbridge is located further south at the neighbourhood area boundary. There are views to the east towards Chester's eastern suburbs across the River Dee.



Figure 140: View from the sub-area looking north along Eaton Road.



Figure 141: A large detached house with a large front garden and no front boundary.



Figure 142: 1960s detached houses.



Figure 143: Detached houses separated by generous outdoor space.

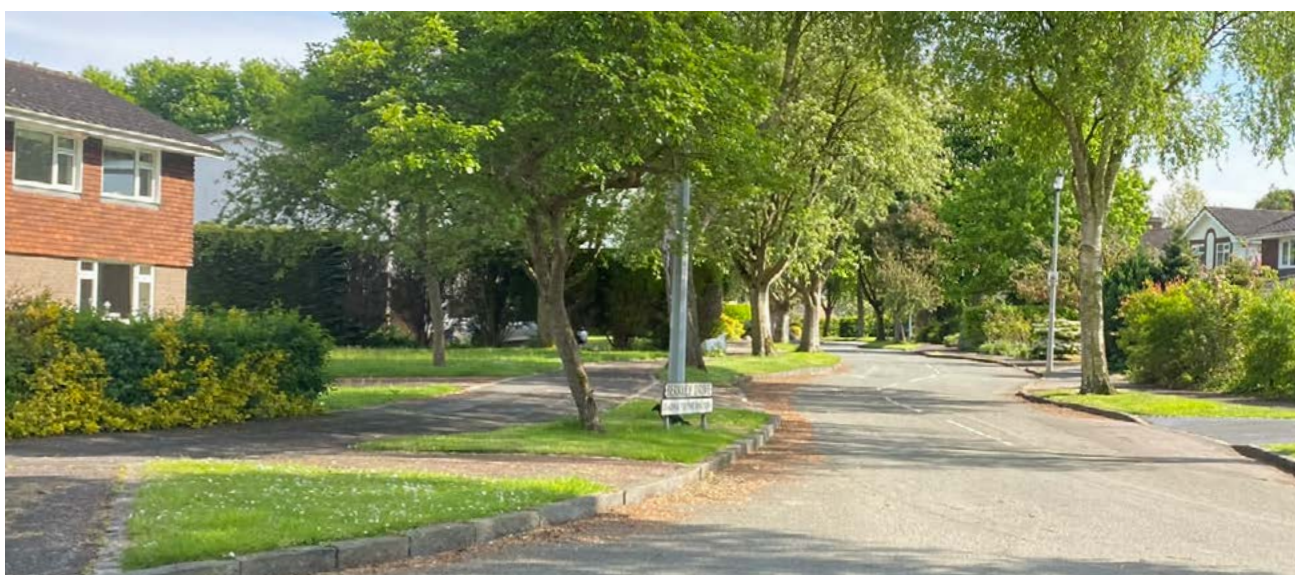


Figure 144: Mature trees and grass verges line the residential streets.

Figure Ground

A figure ground analysis shows a loose curvilinear cul-de-sac arrangement extending into random directions and with detached houses positioned at varying angles. Large front and back gardens dominate the space. The arrangement makes it difficult to determine the main routes and makes permeability challenging.

Appearance

A variety of building materials can be seen across the area including brick of varying shades, occasional light render and architectural detailing including hanging tiles and weatherboarding. Roofs are generally covered in modern concrete tiles. Windows are usually wide and made from modern PVC. Overall harmony is achieved through the heights of the detached houses, often 2 storeys with pitched roofs and modest chimney stacks. There are also several bungalows.

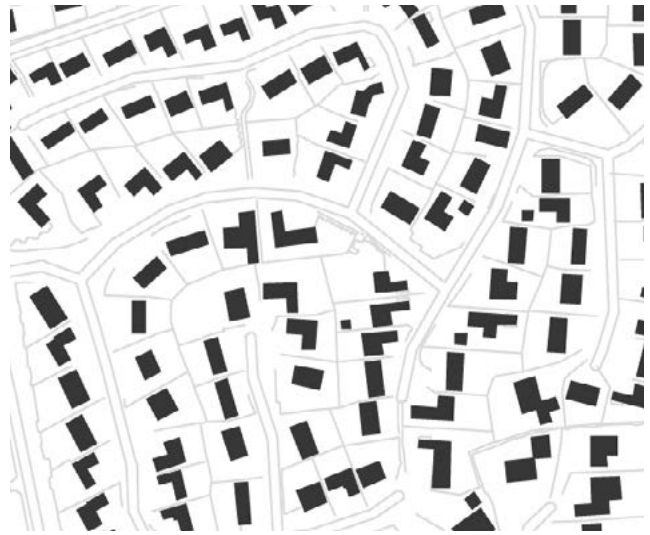


Figure 145: Eaton Road South figure ground.

Views

The area's proximity to Chester Meadows and the River Dee to the east creates expansive views looking towards Chester's eastern suburbs of Great Boughton and Huntington. This section of the meadows includes mature and wild planting and hay fields.

Key takeaways and design considerations for Sub-Area 4b: Eaton Road South

1. Relatively mixed in built form character.
2. Retain the green landscaped setback to Eaton Road in order to preserve the area's green character.
3. The area's low density rural-suburban development character should be respected and maintained.
4. House styles generally consist of houses and bungalows on large plots - there is capacity for adapting homes and introducing varied styles of architecture due to the green settings separating them but the large individual plots should be retained.
5. There are no pavements along the streets in some areas but several paths run between cul-de-sacs for pedestrian accessibility.



Sub-Area 4c: Eaton Road West

This spacious area includes several educational institutions including a primary school, high school and college and associated playing fields and grounds.

3.6.3 Eaton Road West

Land Use: Educational cluster including Cheshire College South & West (Chester Campus), Overleigh St Mary's Primary School and The Catholic High School along with their surrounding playing fields.

Built Form: Similarities in large scale and massing. The Catholic High School and Overleigh St Mary's Primary School are built from brown brick and date from the 20th Century. Cheshire College South & West (Chester Campus) is a modern three storey glass block unlike any of its surroundings.

Streets and Movement: Eaton Road to the east and Old Wrexham Road to the west linked by a private route that connects the educational institutions. Much of the land in this area is private.

Boundaries: Brick walls and metal railings separate the campuses from the surrounding streets. The playing fields are surrounded by a combination of red sandstone and brick walls and mature hedgerows

Public Realm and Landscape: The buildings are set within extensive grounds mainly consisting of playing fields and school playgrounds. Within this land there are mature trees, hedgerows and expansive grassed areas. Informal public access for exercise is accepted on some of these fields.

Views and Landmarks: Views to the south across open countryside and views to the north towards Handbridge and its landmark water tower. There are several Grade II Listed assets including Netherleigh House along with its walls, gates and former coach house.



Figure 146: Overleigh St Mary's Primary School.



Figure 147: Red sandstone wall.



Figure 148: The view to the landmark water tower.



Figure 149: Playing fields looking north-east towards Handbridge.

Figure Ground

A figure ground analysis shows this area to be dominated by three large institutional blocks surrounded by the open space of the playing fields. These blocks are significantly out of scale with the fine grain arrangement of the surrounding houses due to the educational purpose of the buildings. The private land makes permeability challenging and the buildings act as a barrier between Old Wrexham Road and Eaton Road.



Figure 150: Eaton Road West figure ground.

Key takeaways and design considerations for CA 4c: Eaton Road West

1. Relatively mixed in built form character.
2. The spacious campus layout with educational uses along with the associated open spaces gives some capacity for change and introduction of new facilities and infrastructure within the campus grounds.
3. Retain and add to the historic stone wall boundaries adjacent to the public realm.
4. It is important to retain the balance of openness and security amongst the large campuses with long stretches of boundaries using boundary types that ensure the public realm feels safe and remains attractive.
5. Maintain high quality public realm and traffic calming close to school and college gateways to ensure a safe pedestrian-focused environment.
6. Promote safe routes to the educational institutions to allow students to prioritise walking and cycling to and from the residential areas.





Design guidelines

04

4. Design guidelines

This section prioritises the character and quality of new development, sustainable design approaches and several key topics of community importance.

4.1 Introduction

This section supports developers and development managers when producing or reviewing planning applications in the neighbourhood area. The guidelines apply to the whole neighbourhood area including major development sites or allocated sites, infill development and windfall development.

Whilst there is not always agreement on aesthetic issues and architectural taste, these guidelines are focused on topics that help designers and decision makers objectively respond to context, character and community priorities.

Development proposals can apply these guidelines as part of a clear design process to improve and enhance the setting and sustainability of the neighbourhood area while not detracting from its context and local character or sense of place.

The following topics are addressed by design guidelines in this section:

- **Design Guideline A: Character**
- **Design Guideline B: Sustainability**
- **Design Guideline C: Infill Development**
- **Design Guideline D: Settlement Edges**
- **Design Guideline E: Natural Features**
- **Design Guideline F: Frontages and Boundaries**
- **Design Guideline G: Public Realm**



Design Guideline A: Character

4.2 Design Guideline A: Character

This section contains design guidelines that apply to the character areas or sub-areas. The guidelines apply to infill, major development, allocated or windfall sites.

A1 – Protect and increase the use of local character features.

Existing local character features should be protected and where appropriate incorporated in new developments. For example: red sandstone walls and other period architectural features (e.g. slate roofs and red brick facades with patterned brickwork (e.g. diaper, herringbone, corbelled and English garden bond), where it is a feature of the existing character area).



Figure 151: Well-built brick terraces on Hartington Road form strong backdrop architecture with a consistent appearance and street character.

A2 – Response to character areas.

This guideline sets out how to respond to the character areas listed in section 03. Designers must take the following steps in order to set out a design response to the character area(s) in which development is sited or adjacent.

- Establish which character area the development falls within.
- Review that character area's analysis along with the key takeaways and design considerations.
- Review the following three general approaches and determine which is appropriate depending on whether the relevant character area has a relatively uniform or relatively mixed built character:
 - A - Reflect;
 - B - Complement; and
 - C - Innovate.
- These approaches are described in further detail on the following three pages.
- Supplement the above with a site visit and analysis of the characteristics relevant to the development. For example: building type, scale and massing, set-back on plot, materials and detailing.

Approach A - Reflect

Where the existing character area, sub-area or street is largely uniform in built form character, then following the existing materials palette, building type, building height, plot series and boundary treatment is the default sympathetic design response.

This is because where buildings are prominent on plot, with short setbacks and small gaps between buildings (or attached building types) then differences in style form, material and position are likely to be more apparent.

This is likely to apply in more urban areas or terraced streets which may have small scale infill opportunities that can 'complete the street' (see below example).

Areas with a recognised historic character to preserve and enhance, including the conservations areas will benefit from infill development that seeks to harmonise and not to undermine the character, particularly with more modest building types and uses that should aim to be 'backdrop architecture'. High-quality schemes may stand out more if they have a special use (e.g. community use).

"Reflect" example

Stepped pitches tracking the topography

Stone capping

Red brick facade continued

Recessed doors

Same building line setback to back of pavement



Figure 152: These infill houses (left) on Greenway Street conform to some important aspects of the historic building's (right) form and materials, creating a continuous streetscene, where the historic character is not ruined.

Approach B - Complement

Where existing residential streets are less defined by building facades (ie. they have larger plots/ setbacks and more planting) or are already mixed in terms of building types, forms and materials, development that adds to the overall character and design quality in a way that is fitting (in scale and position on plot) may include variations in form, styles, and details that are nonetheless complementary to the overall character.

This response may be appropriate in less dense or more mixed housing areas (see example below).

Infill housing within institutional grounds, campus' or historic estates that may have building/s of a different type and/ or scale may mean a new character is introduced but this should be subservient or thematically linked to the original building type, use or site heritage (see below example).

"Complement" example

Variety of roof forms and pitches

Trees in front and behind homes create a green setting

Subtle variety of materials and colours do not seem out of place within the more spacious plots

Hedgerows provide consistency of character & enclosure to the street-scene

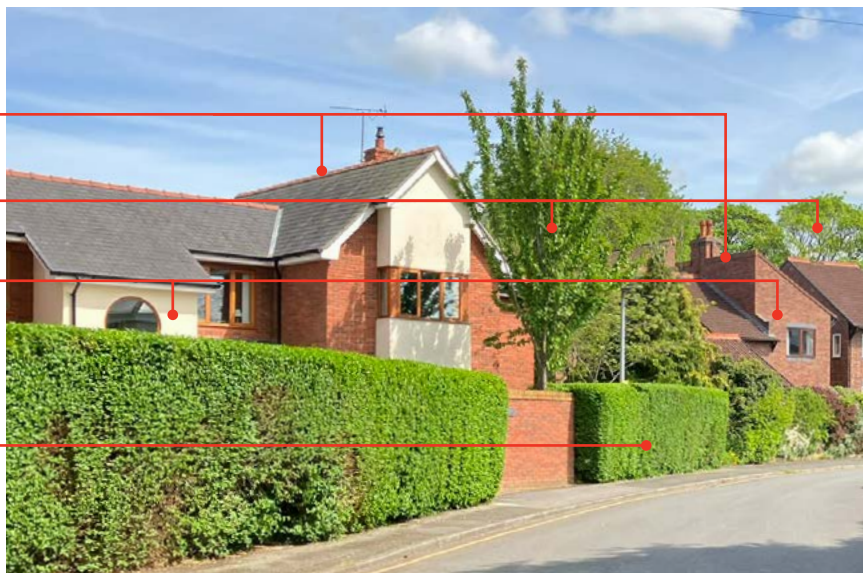


Figure 153: Larger plots and established green landscape allow a mix of styles and materials to blend comfortably on South Crescent Road.

Approach C - Innovate

Doing something of high design quality that may be different in some aspects of style, form and appearance to the area, but adds positively to the streetscene in urban design terms in built areas (or landscape design in rural areas), and demonstrates an exemplar approach to sustainability is the type of positive innovation that Handbridge welcomes.

For example: Passive house design principles, on site generations or low embodied energy materials should be favoured and given significant weight regardless of the area in which it is proposed. This approach should also be combined with Approach A or B so that there is a clear connection between the building and its context (see adjacent).

"Innovate" - historic estate example

New buildings subservient in terms of form and scale to the historic Greenbank house.

Modern architecture references rural estate building type in terms of barn-like form and fenestration.

Block paving details and low key lane without footways, minimises impact of infrastructure on the heritage setting.



Figure 154: Modern designs can sit comfortably with heritage assets as shown by this high-quality scheme beside Greenbank on Eaton Road.

"Innovate" - suburban example

Contemporary window proportions and unique copper cladding

Light cladding over modern sustainable insulation.

Harmonious scale, height and set-back.

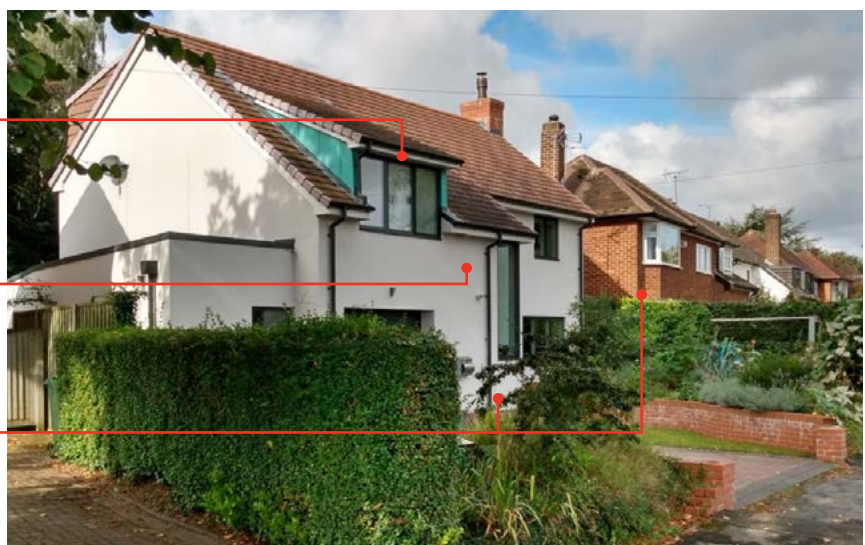


Figure 155: A modern house in Handbridge built following sustainable passive house design principles.

B

Design Guideline B: Sustainability

4.3 Design Guideline B: Sustainability

The climate emergency has created the need to decrease our carbon footprint to net-zero by providing innovative solutions to transportation (electrification) and the energy use of buildings. Sustainable design incorporates innovative practices at all scales of design to achieve less impactful development footprints, whilst future proofing homes, settlements and natural environments. Reducing the use of limited natural resources whilst increasing utilisation of local resources and sustainable natural resources can help to achieve this.

B1 – Resilience to the climate emergency

All new development should work to moderate extremes of temperature, wind, humidity, local flooding and pollution within the neighbourhood area:

- Avoid siting homes in high risk flood areas and mitigate increased risk of storms and flooding with sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). These reduce the amount and rate at which surface water reaches sewers and watercourses. Often, the most sustainable option is collecting water for reuse,

for example in a water butt or a rainwater harvesting system. This reduces pressure on valuable water sources.

- Eco-systems cannot adapt as fast as the climate is changing, leading to loss of biodiversity. Protecting and enhancing woodlands, watercourses and green infrastructure can combat this. Aim to increase ecology through biodiversity net-gain on major development sites. Use street trees and planting to moderate and improve micro-climates for streets and spaces.

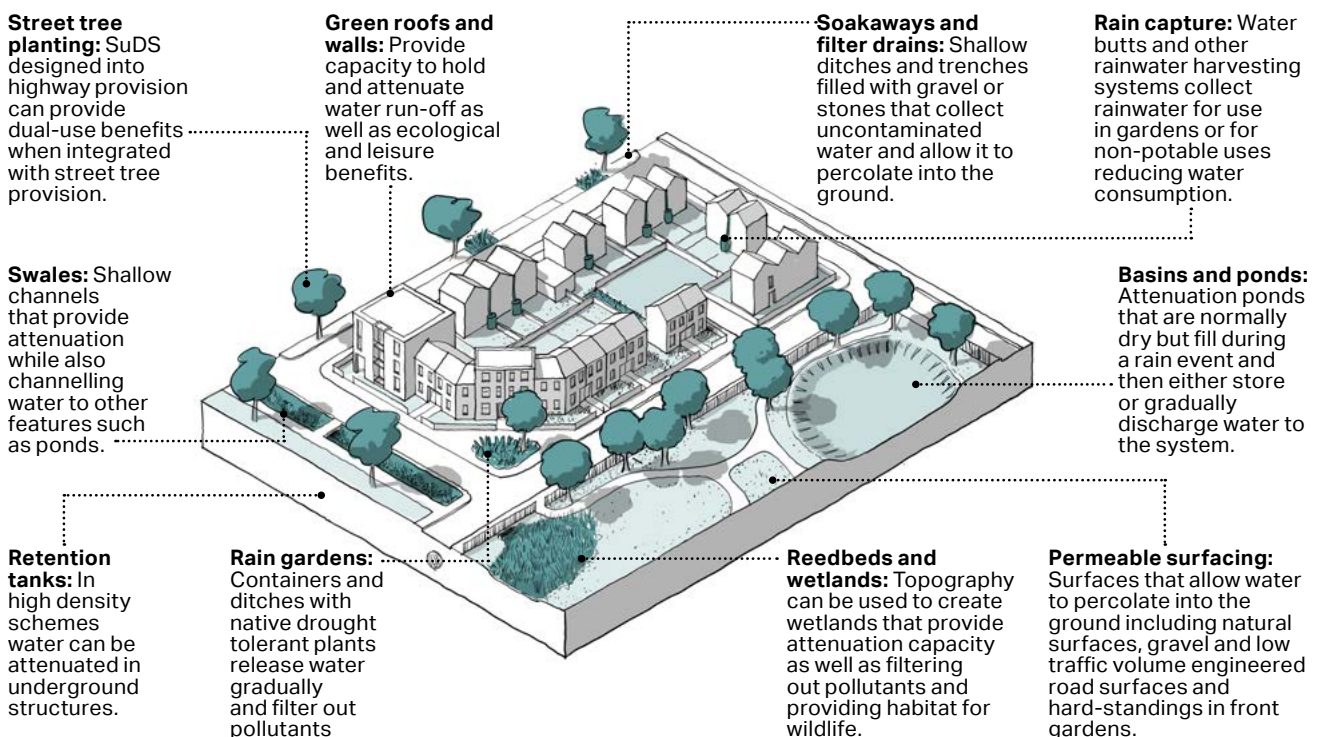


Figure 156: Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as set out in the National Model Design Code.

B2 – Assessing renewable energy sources

Key considerations in the assessment of renewable energy sources for development to be net zero for power generation may include (but are not limited to):

- Optimising solar orientation of streets and buildings. Aim to increase the number of buildings on site that are oriented within 30° of south (both main fenestration and roof plane) for solar gain, solar energy (photovoltaics) and natural daylighting.
- A heat network for larger new developments or conversion of buildings with big space heating requirements such as schools and colleges.
- Ground conditions to accommodate loops for ground source heat and space for air source heat pump units.
- Links to local estates for sustainable coppicing, harvesting or recycling of biomass fuels.
- Local wind speed and direction for micro-generation wind turbines.
- Collaborating with utilities, highway authorities, telecoms companies and other stakeholders when designing and delivering projects to minimise energy usage and disruption during the construction stage and reinforcement of the electricity grid for additional electric vehicles and renewables.

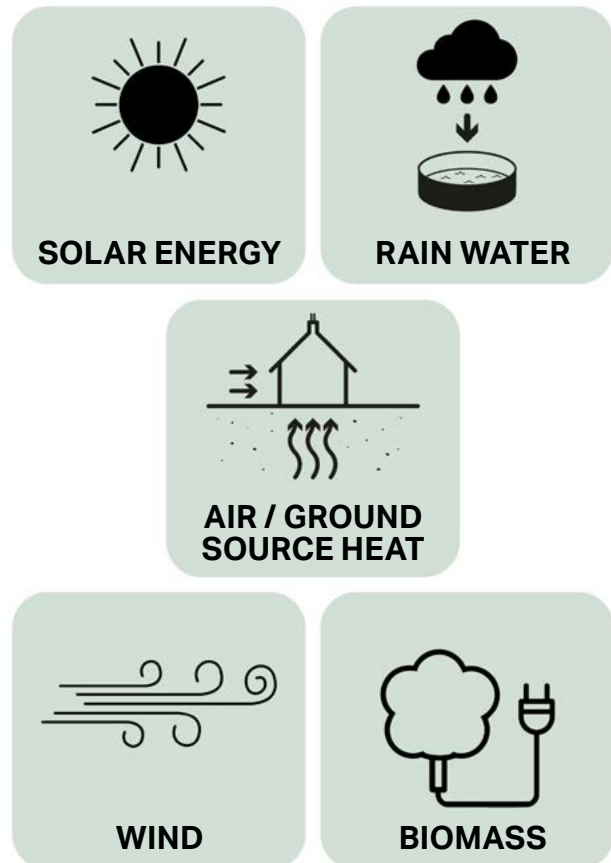


Figure 157: Key alternative natural energy sources.



Figure 158: Solar panels on a building in Handbridge.

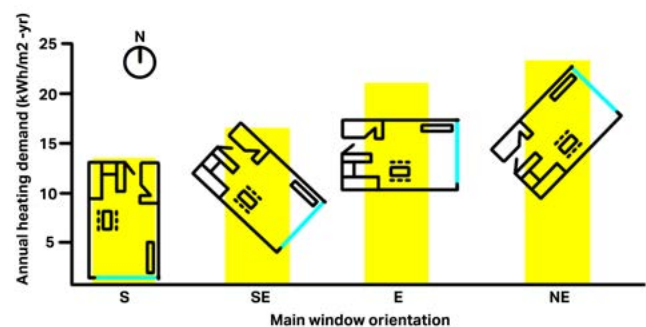


Figure 159: Building orientation influences the annual heating demand.

B3 – Electric vehicle charging and cycle storage

Current transition to electric vehicle technology and ownership comes with related issues that must be addressed by new development. Two key areas are explored below - public parking areas and private parking for homes.

Design issues to address for public parking:

- Provision of adequate new charging points and spaces, and retrofitting existing parking areas.
- Serving remote or isolated car parks (e.g. in woodland areas).
- Retrofitting existing public parking and upkeeping design quality of streets and spaces (attractiveness and ease of servicing and maintenance).
- Integrating charging infrastructure sensitively within streets and spaces, for example, by aligning with green infrastructure and street furniture.
- Sensitive integration of charging infrastructure within conservation areas.

Design issues to address for parking and cycle storage at the home

- Convenient on-plot parking, charging points and cycle storage close to homes.
- Potential to incorporate charging points under cover within car ports and garages.
- Integrate car parking sensitively within the streetscene. For example, parking set behind the building line or front of plot spaces lined with native hedgerow planting.
- Consider visitor parking and charging needs.
- Existing unallocated and on-street parking areas and feasibility to provide electric charging infrastructure not linked to the home.
- Potential for providing secure, serviced communal parking areas and cycle storage for higher density homes.
- Consider potential to adapt existing infrastructure (e.g. lamp posts) for charging connections.



Figure 160: Public electric vehicle charging points.

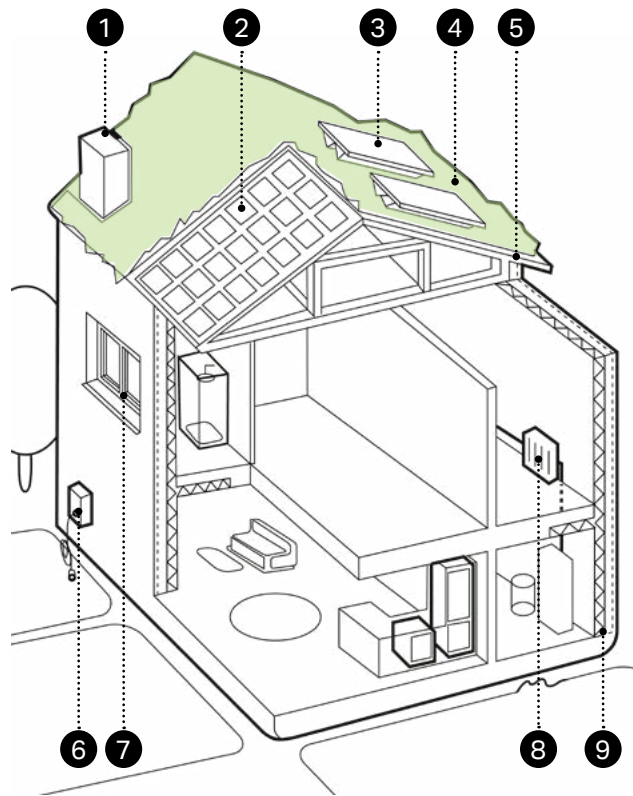


Figure 161: Home electric vehicle charging point.

B4 – Energy efficiency measures to net-zero carbon

It is paramount that new development adopts a fabric first approach in line with the Government's emerging Future Homes Standard and Part L of the UK Building Regulations (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conservation-of-fuel-and-power-approved-document>) in order to attain higher standards of insulation and energy conservation.

- Reducing energy demand further by employing passive design principles for homes is desirable and can make development more acceptable to the community (window orientation, solar gain, solar shading, increased insulation, ventilation with heat-recovery).
- Maximise on-site renewable energy generation (solar, ground source, air source and wind driven).
- Incorporate domestic batteries (to store excess electricity) or other energy storage (i.e. large hot water tanks) to enable intermittent renewable electricity supply (e.g. from solar panels) to be stored to match demand and maximise renewable energy potential. Grid balancing and managing periods when it is cold, not sunny and not windy is going to be a big challenge of the 2030s and something new homes should be adapted for.
- Consider building form and thermal efficiency: point-block / terraced / semi-detached / detached all have different energy efficiency profiles. Local design preference and character considerations could ease acceptance for development.



1. Mechanical ventilation system.
2. Integral solar tiles.
3. Solar panels.
4. Green roof.
5. Roof insulation.
6. Electric vehicle charging point.
7. Insulated windows and doors.
8. Efficient utilities and appliances.
9. Wall insulation.



Figure 162: Houses on Handbridge where recently installed double-glazed windows have improved energy efficiency whilst matching the traditional design of the original windows.

B5 – Digital Infrastructure

- Where new sites for radio and electronic communications masts are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed or camouflaged where appropriate. Situating equipment in locations which will negatively impact the character of the surrounding area should be avoided. A mast has recently been proposed on a residential street in Handbridge which would be better located somewhere that its appearance is less impactful such as amongst trees within the campus of Cheshire College South & West on Eaton Road.



Figure 163: A camouflaged mast integrated amongst green infrastructure in Worcestershire.





Design Guideline C: Infill Development

4.4 Design Guideline C: Infill Development

Infill development is smaller scale development (generally fewer than 10 homes within an existing urban and developed context. This type of development commonly consists of three main types:

- Gap site development within a street frontage;
- Backland development; and
- Site redevelopment (for example, replacement of existing building/s).

The overarching aim of these design guidelines is to promote context-sensitive infill housing of a high quality. This should help reinforce local character and create sustainable growth in Handbridge.

C1 – Infill development

- **Scale and massing:** Building scale and massing should be in keeping with the prevailing development pattern and not be overbearing on existing properties or deprive them of light, including overlooking or overshadowing of both windows and amenity space.
- **Enclosure:** Building scale and position on plot should help to define and enclose the space within the street corridor or square to an appropriate degree based on the existing street section (building to building) and level of enclosure (ratio of street width to building height).
- **Fenestration (window pattern):** The positioning of windows should be in keeping with the predominant positive building character on the street or harmonise with adjacent buildings of good character.

- **Access:** Building entrances should address the street with a main access and main frontage. Corner buildings should address both streets with frontages but the main entrance could be on either subject to access requirements.
- **Building heights:** Building heights should vary from 1.5 to 3 storeys depending on adjacent plots. A variable eaves line and ridgeline is allowed to create interest but variation between adjacent buildings should be a maximum of 0.5 storeys in general.
- **Refuse and cycle storage:** Access for bin and cycle storage should be provided with stores being integrated within plot boundaries. Ginnels / alleyways should be considered for terraced buildings with 4 or more units in order to allow access to the rear of properties for cycle and bin storage.

- **Parking provision:** Parking should be integrated on plot where possible with parking spaces set behind the building line, generally to the side of plot being preferable. For narrow dwellings it is preferred to retain a small front garden with a boundary wall as opposed to an open hard surface parking space. Where parking is required to the front of the plot it should be afforded sufficient space and utilise hedgerows to screen cars laterally from the street.
- **Proportionate backland development:** In the event of backland development, proposals should ensure that the density, scale and appearance reflect the immediate context (i.e. the original dwelling). Backland development should not be larger in height, massing or scale than the existing

dwelling. The privacy, integrity and amenity of the existing dwelling must be protected from that proposed on the backland. Only on exceptionally large plots would it be deemed acceptable for any backland proposal to be larger or vary in character to that of the original dwelling.

- **Access and spacing within backland development:** Backland development must avoid tandem development by ensuring appropriate spacing, access and the overall configuration does not adversely affect the amenity of the original (or surrounding dwelling(s)). Backland access should minimise the removal or alteration of existing boundary treatments within the original plot where feasible.

Scale and massing in keeping with the prevailing development pattern.

Variation between adjacent buildings should be a maximum of 0.5 storeys in general.

Ginnels / alleyways allow access to the rear or terraced properties for cycle and bin storage.

Providing a similar setback to adjacent development produces a cohesive building line.

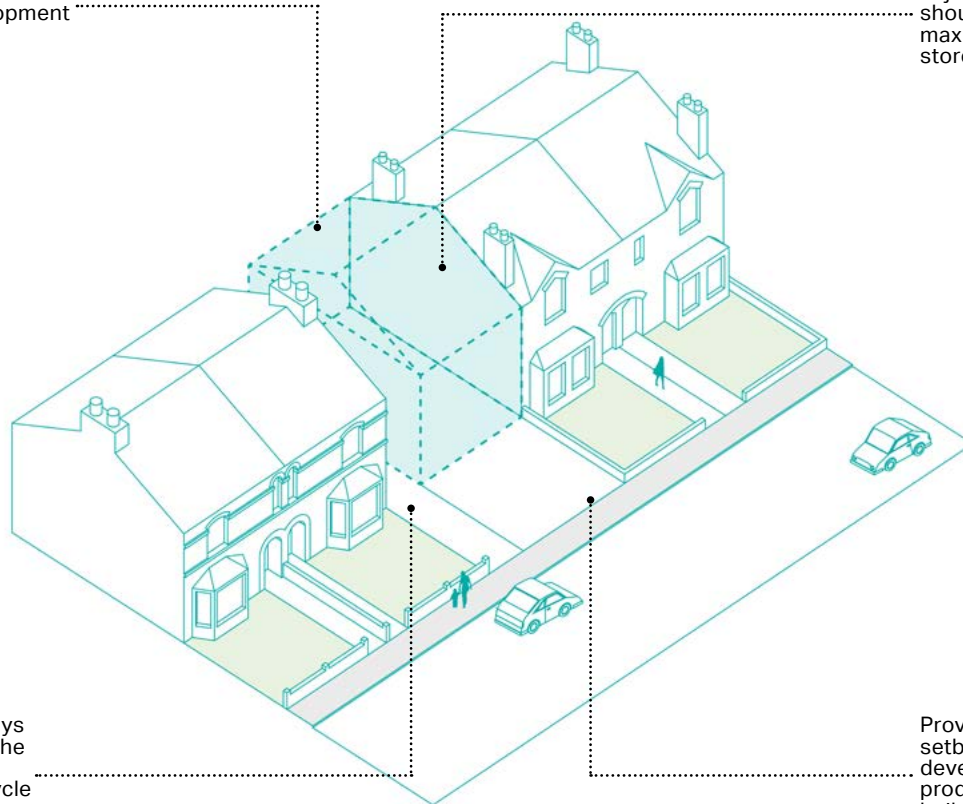


Figure 164: Contextual infill development diagram.



Design Guideline D: Settlement Edge

4.5 Design Guideline D: Settlement Edge

Handbridge's urban area is surrounded by important natural features on all sides, including the River Dee, Chester Meadows, Overleigh Cemetery and Chester's Green Belt. Both the townscape and landscape features of the neighbourhood area provide a series of key views. Such views should be protected from within and outside of Handbridge's urban area. The following design guidelines respond to the contrast in character between the urban character areas and the landscape character areas. This contrast requires a sensitive and considered design response.

D1 – Landscape, views and the settlement edge

- **Sensitive peripheral development:** Integrate development sensitively with the surrounding landscape, particularly on the periphery of Handbridge's urban area. Lower building heights and smaller scale development are most appropriate for peripheral locations such as these.
- **Transitioning between city and landscape:** Proposals that include buildings of lower heights (i.e. 1-1.5 storeys) should be considered in areas with key view and landscape sensitivities. Proposals on the settlement edge should be configured to produce a harmonious transition between both the surrounding landscape and the urban area. This can be achieved via a mixture of lower height development and using natural screening (i.e. hedgerows, tree cover, green roofs etc) to mitigate a development's visual impact.
- **Protecting views at the settlement edge:** Proposals on the settlement edge should not obstruct key views looking both inwards and outwards of the settlement. Views of the neighbourhood area's landscape and built form are a locally defining feature that contribute to the legibility and wayfinding of the area.
- **Protecting and creating views:** Buildings should be oriented to maintain existing key views or to create new views or vistas to contribute to local wayfinding. Views of both landmark buildings within Handbridge's townscape (e.g. the Church of St Mary's) as well as landscape features should be utilised to promote legibility across the neighbourhood area. Such views also contribute to the character and overall attractiveness of the area and should therefore be considered within proposals.

- Settlement edge gateways:** Handbridge has a number of gateways primarily located along its strategic roads (e.g. Old Dee Bridge, Overleigh Road and Eaton Road) which are located at the settlement edge where the landscape abuts the urban area. Gateways into Handbridge should maintain a sense of visual prominence by fostering a sense of arrival. This can be achieved through the use of landmark features, utilising key views and vistas, large setbacks and public realm.



Figure 165: A house on River Lane facing Overleigh Old Cemetery.



Figure 166: Houses on Beeston View facing Chester Meadows.

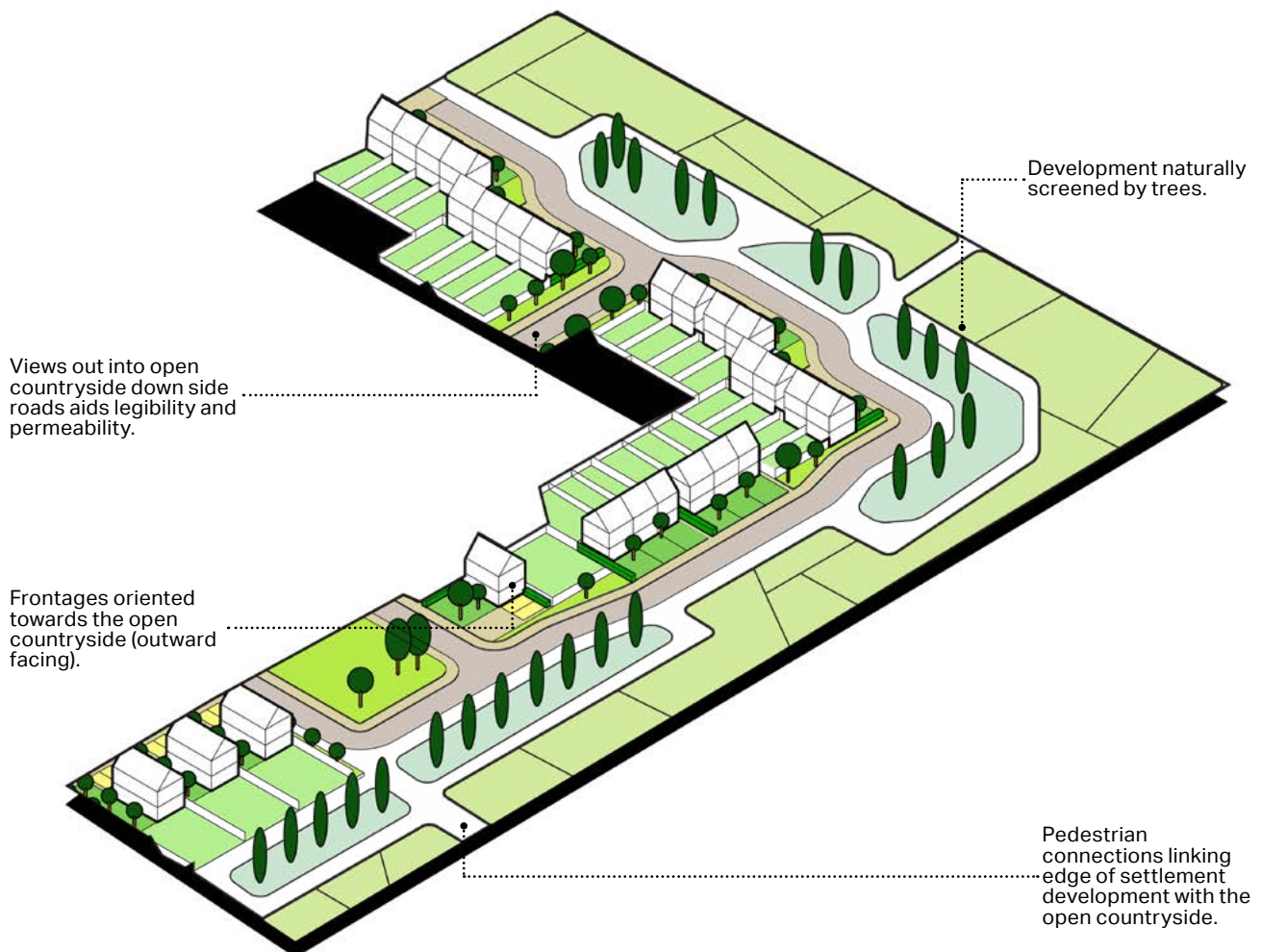


Figure 167: Landscape sensitive edge of settlement development diagram.



Design Guideline E: Natural Features

4.6 Design Guideline E: Natural Features

Handbridge is surrounded by high quality natural space including Chester Meadows and Overleigh Cemetery. It is equally important that these surrounding spaces are connected across the urban area via a green infrastructure network. Handbridge's parks, playing fields and tree-lined streets all contribute to this network. New development should create and integrate new networks which add to the aesthetic appeal of the neighbourhood area whilst also addressing sustainability concerns. The following guidelines set out how to consider the retention, provision, amount, type and locations for trees and other planting as a critical part of new developments.

E1 – Extending and maintaining the green infrastructure network

- Maintain Handbridge's green credentials by protecting important and valued existing open spaces.
- Create new public open spaces that contribute to the development of a comprehensive green infrastructure network including walkways, cycleways, open spaces and natural and water-based corridors.
- Promote multi-functional green spaces and networks by implementing sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) alongside public spaces that will serve a dual purpose of promoting mental and physical wellbeing whilst mitigating flood damage.
- Promote nature positive green spaces, gardens and views by maintaining, strengthening and creating green spaces that will enhance biodiversity by attracting local wildlife. This can be achieved by incorporating wildlife boxes and shelters into developments or by maintaining naturally green spaces such as meadows or ponds.



Figure 168: Handbridge's green infrastructure network softens the urban environment and creates semi-natural transitions between development and natural areas such as the river-side or meadows.



Figure 169: New tree planting on River Lane.

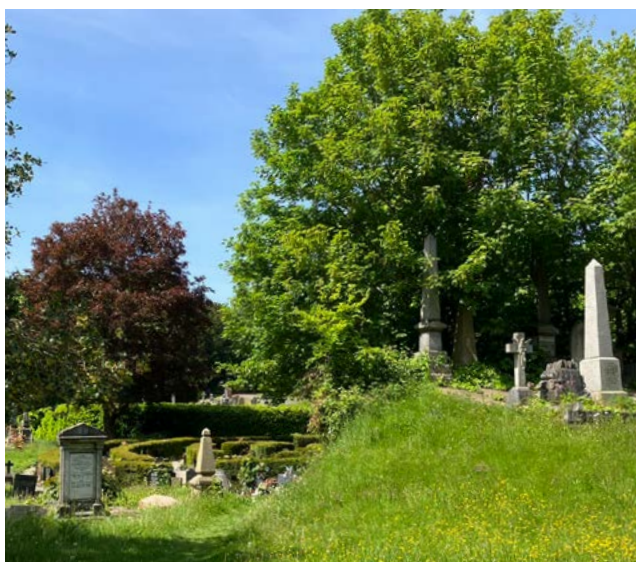


Figure 170: The mature landscape of Overleigh Old Cemetery



Figure 171: Mature trees lining Berkley Drive.

E2 - Tree planting

Urban trees can improve air quality, moderate micro-climate and help transform public spaces into attractive places for meeting, resting and socialising. A variety of appropriately scaled native tree types, correctly planted in appropriate space should be considered to add quality to public areas and improve their attractiveness for public use.

E3 – Retain, replace, improve

The National Design Guide (NDG) and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) put great emphasis on tree-lined streets and integrated green infrastructure design to provide 'green islands' and connected corridors which contribute to localised cooling and provide habitats and public amenity.

Retain

Tree surveys and impact assessments should be provided which highlight the trees on a site which are to be retained and those which are to be removed. It is preferable to retain a good quality tree than to replace it.

- Where significant trees are located on site, independent surveys to assess the development impact must be completed. This should inform the local community and could lead to objections where significant trees are impacted.

Replace

Ensuring trees removed from development land are proportionately replaced is important to maintaining current levels of canopy cover and green infrastructure. A common misconception is that replacing on a 1-for-1 basis is proportional. This is not necessarily the case. 1-for-1 replacement can reduce canopy cover, green infrastructure habitat and public amenity. Policy DM45 of the Local Plan requires at least 2 new trees for every 1 tree lost.

- Where trees are to be replaced, consider using a proportionate scale to determine numbers of replacement trees required based on the size of tree removed.

Improve

To just replace removed trees or do nothing if trees are not removed is commonly misunderstood to be acceptable. However, the NPPF requires 'improvement', 'enhancement' and 'net gain'. These are not words that aim to maintain a status quo on trees.

- For major development sites, an area of development land could be dedicated for tree planting in the form of a multi-functional community woodland. Relative population density and designated land use types put pressure on a greater density of development and often results in side-lining tree planting and biodiverse green infrastructure design.

E4 – Right tree, right place

The overall aim should be to plant trees and other soft landscaping. This should form part of each development regardless of size. How appropriate a tree is for any given urban location must also be determined based on space requirements.

This may simply be stated as:

- Small to medium trees for small spaces such as front gardens and narrower streets.
- Larger trees for avenues and more open environments such as parks, grass verges and landscaped areas.
- Other native or suitable planting to soften the appearance of plots and buildings.

The climate emergency is the biggest challenge for species selection as we don't yet know the extent of this. We can assume greater variance from the form with greater hot, dry summers and greater wet and windy winters. Weather extremes tend to push native trees to the limit of what they can cope with genetically. As such, we should also look at trees more suitable to northern and central Europe.

A significant challenge is finding species that provide similar habitats for native birds, bats and insects.

- For now, native UK trees should be preferred or non-native trees where a specific reason exists.
- Native UK trees are preferred but non-native types could be incorporated which are suitable for the biodiversity of our native species. The climate emergency will change the environment over the next 50-100 years and we may need further qualities of resilience that our native trees cannot provide.

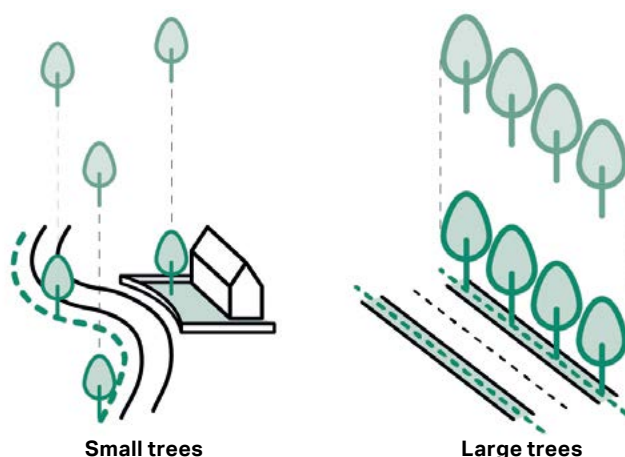


Figure 172: Info-graphic about tree positioning depending on size.



Figure 173: Mature trees in Edgar's Field Park.





Design Guideline F: Frontages and Boundaries

4.7 Design Guideline F: Frontages and Boundaries

Both frontages and boundary treatments significantly contribute to the character of a streetscape. They have a direct and strong relationship with the spaces they front, making their overall appeal an important design consideration within any proposal. Handbridge's small commercial centre includes buildings adorned with traditional timber frontages and red brick. They have a distinct and attractive character and contribute significantly to Handbridge's placemaking. Boundaries in the residential areas include an attractive mix of brick and sandstone walls and mature hedgerows. Adhering to the following design guidelines will contribute to the enhancement, preservation and creation of contextually responsive frontages and boundary treatments.

F1 – Residential frontages and boundary treatments

- **Boundary walls:** Red brick or red sandstone boundary walls with brick or stone coping are seen across the neighbourhood area and are appropriate for future development depending on the surrounding context.
- **Boundary railings:** Metal railings are less frequently seen but may be suitable depending on the context, e.g. on the green corner plots on Prenton Place and Allington Place.
- **Native hedgerows:** should be incorporated at every opportunity with walls and railings, or instead.
- **Car park boundaries:** Boundaries to car parks that are open to the street should include landscape buffers with tree planting to reduce the negative visual impact of cars.

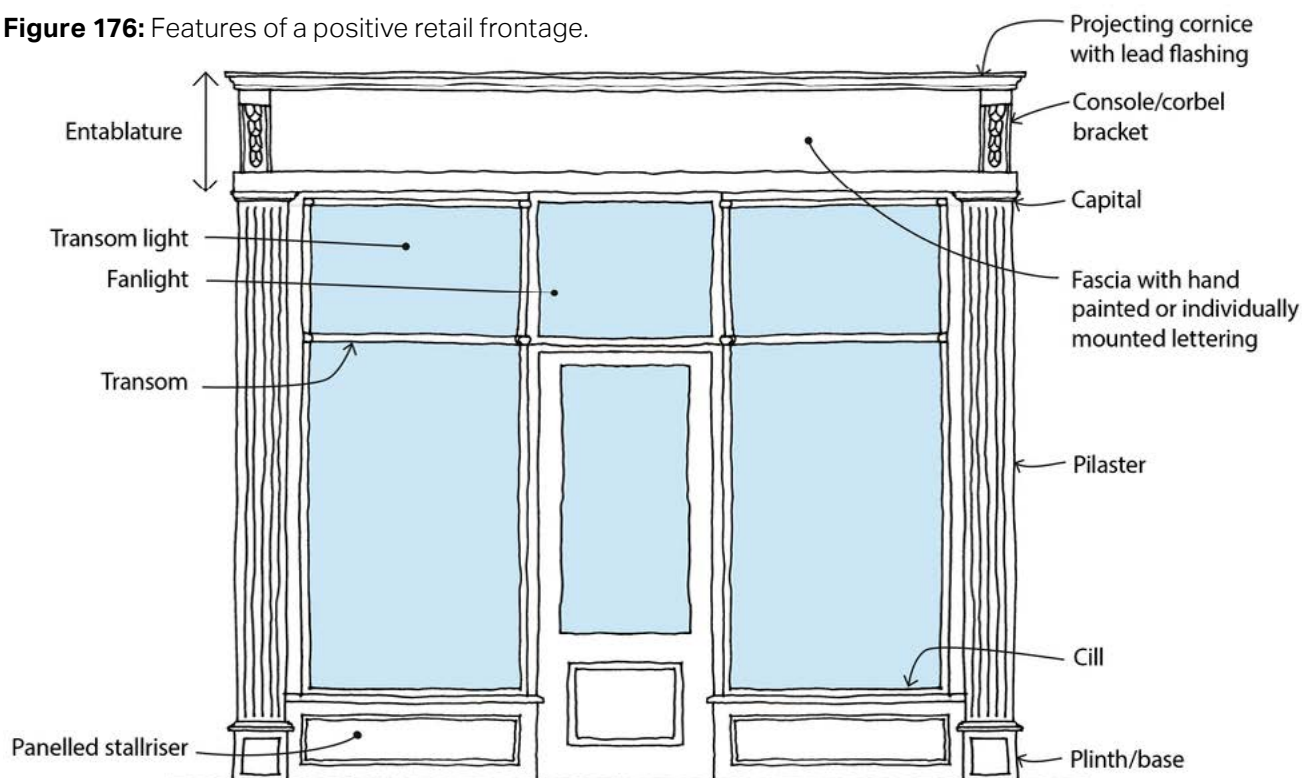


Figure 174: A contextually responsive retail frontage on Handbridge.



Figure 175: Red sandstone wall, Old Wrexham Road and A red brick wall on St George's Crescent.

Figure 176: Features of a positive retail frontage.



F2 – Retail frontages and boundary treatments

- **Preserving traditional retail frontages:** Traditional timber shop fronts should be preserved and enhanced to uphold the historic character of Handbridge's commercial centre.
- **Proportional retail frontages:** Shop fronts applied to historic buildings should always consider the full building elevation and reference the vertical and horizontal architectural elements to create a strong relationship between the shop front and the host building.

- **Achieving contextual and modern retail frontages:** Modern shop fronts may be appropriate but should typically employ a 'less is more' approach to their design. Back-lit box signage will not be acceptable. Lettering should be clear and of a medium size to complement the fascia board, shop front and building. The colour, style and materials used within shop frontages should be respectful of the host building's character.
- **Retail setbacks:** Typically, buildings in Handbridge's commercial centre are positioned up against the edge of the pavement (i.e. no setback).



Figure 177: Historic shop frontages on Handbridge.



Design Guideline G: Public Realm

4.8 Design Guideline G: Public Realm

Handbridge's small commercial centre is a key gateway to the neighbourhood area and a unique extension of Chester's city centre. Ensuring that the public realm is of the highest standard will improve the experience of both residents and visitors and will enhance Handbridge's sense of place, and attractiveness to visitors.

G1 – Public realm improvements

- **Increasing paved spaces and at level junctions:** Extending Handbridge's paved and people-centric spaces and crossing points will foster a more safe, accessible, and inclusive centre that attracts footfall for business.
- **Contribute to a sense of place:** Incorporate public art (e.g. murals and statues) and visual references of local identity (e.g. heritage signs and community symbols and motifs) within streetscapes.
- **Surfacing:** The key thoroughfare of Handbridge and Overleigh Road should have a consistent paving scheme which ties the area together. New hard-landscape should be holistically designed to avoid fragmentation of the public realm. Areas that are surfaced with sett paving or other natural stone paving should be protected to retain the area's character.
- **Green streets and spaces:** Add street trees and planting within the public realm. There may not always be spaces for trees on narrower historic streets but this could be offset by hanging baskets, boxes, planters, and innovative planting installations such as 'green walls'.



Figure 178: A missed opportunity for high quality public realm at one of Handbridge's key junctions.



Figure 179: Street planters improving the pedestrian experience on Overleigh Road.



Figure 180: High quality natural stone paving along Handbridge.

G2 – Streets

- **Hierarchy:** Streets should follow a simple well-defined hierarchy that creates a visual character distinction for more and less busy streets. Key elements of street hierarchy can be defined with a narrowing of street width, use of materials and planting strategies.
- **Slow-speeds:** Change in materials, raised tables at junctions and variations in width can moderate vehicle speeds as well as improve legibility and permeability within development.
- **Inclusive design:** Consciously discharge the duty of care to all street users particularly the most vulnerable, such as prioritising design from a wheelchair, pedestrian and cyclist perspective first, over and above less vulnerable vehicle users.
- **Accessible and safe design:** Route design should take account of various abilities such as hearing and sight impaired pedestrians with guide dogs or young children who may not be able to judge traffic speed above 20mph accurately when out playing.
- **Permeability:** The arrangement of streets, routes and spaces should be permeable for pedestrians and cyclists with a focus on access to services and facilities, public transport and existing routes. Proposed development must promote connectivity and access to adjacent urban and landscape areas.
- **Gateway features:** Legibility can be improved through the use of landmark buildings, tree planting and way-marking features (e.g. public art) and signage.



Primary Streets

Building height 2.5 storey
Street trees and grass verges
Cycle lanes
Street-building enclosure ratio < 4:1
Greater building setback (2-5m)



Secondary Streets

Building height < 2.5 storey
Street trees and verges with inset parking bays
Street-building enclosure ratio < 3:1
Medium building setback (1.5-4m)



Tertiary Streets

Building height < 2 storey
Informal street surfacing with protected areas for people / parking
Street-building enclosure ratio < 2:1
Lesser building setback (1-3m)



Figure 181: Key junction where several streets join Queen's Park Road - opportunity to make a place for people and movement with high quality streetscape



Figure 182: A shared surface precedent scheme at a much busier junction in Poynton, Cheshire.

About AECOM

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