

# HANDBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

PLAN PERIOD 2025 to 2040

Made – July 2025



PUBLISHED BY

Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum

Referendum Version under the Neighbourhood Planning  
(General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

# GUIDE TO READING THIS PLAN

Of necessity, this Neighbourhood Plan is a detailed technical document. The purpose of this page is to explain the structure and help you find your way around the plan.

## 1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

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This section explains the background to this Neighbourhood Plan and how you can take part in and respond to the consultation.

## 2. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

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This section summarises the key facts and features of the designated Neighbourhood Area.

## 3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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This section identifies the key national planning policies and those of the local planning authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council that relate to this area and have guided the preparation of the plan.

## 4. COMMUNITY VIEWS ON PLANNING ISSUES

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This section explains the community involvement that has taken place.

## 5. VISION, OBJECTIVES & LAND USE POLICIES

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This key section firstly provides a statement of the Neighbourhood Plan Vision and Objectives. It then details the land use planning policies designed to achieve those objectives over the plan period, which are accompanied by some explanatory text. The Policy Maps in the document show where area or site-specific policies will apply.

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION

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This section explains how the Plan will be implemented and future development guided and managed. It also proposes priorities for how the S106 contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) should be invested in support of the plan objectives. Finally, it proposes how any issues that are outside the scope of land use planning (and therefore this Neighbourhood Plan) may be taken forward by the community.

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## FOREWARD

The Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum volunteers, working since January 2021, using commissioned research and with ongoing consultation with the local community. We have worked closely with AECOM consultants, Cheshire Community Action, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Cheshire West and Chester Council and ONH Planning for Good consultants.

The objectives and proposed policies in the Plan have been driven by the views of the local community. The intention is that once the Plan has completed the regulatory process and been endorsed by a public referendum that it will ensure that those making decisions on planning applications in Handbridge take account of the specific requirements for Handbridge now and into the future.

External work was funded through the government neighbourhood planning grant scheme and administered by Locality. The Forum is very grateful to Cheshire West Voluntary Action (an incorporated charity) for holding our grant funds and paying suppliers on our behalf.

The Forum benefited from contributions from the Ward Councillor Member's Budgets and gratefully acknowledges the support and encouragement received from our Councillors during the drafting of the Plan,

Dr Conor O'Gorman

Chair of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1. The Localism Act 2011<sup>1</sup> presents the opportunity for the community of Handbridge, a distinct non-parished area within the south of Chester, to establish a Neighbourhood Plan to augment the Local Plan made by Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC), to ensure that planning policies facilitate and enhance the continuing vitality of the area for its residents.

1.1.2. The process for the drafting and approval of any neighbourhood plan is governed by The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (the Regulations)<sup>2</sup>.

1.1.3. The Handbridge community is bounded by clear geographical features and has significant historical significance that differentiates it from Chester City Centre to the north, the western part of Handbridge Park Ward (Curzon Park and Westminster Park) and the rural parish of Eccleston to the south. The area is bounded to the north and east by the River Dee and to the west by the A483 Wrexham Road.

1.1.4. On 12 February 2019 CWaC in association with the two councillors for Handbridge Park Ward arranged a public meeting facilitated by Cheshire Community Action (CCA) to discuss the possibility of producing a neighbourhood plan for the Ward or sub-areas of the Ward. The meeting was attended by well over 100 people and there was a strong indication that a neighbourhood plan should be considered.

1.1.5. On 23 September 2019 a further public meeting facilitated by CCA was attended by around 40 people and discussed the best boundaries for any neighbourhood area. There was a clear consensus that Handbridge should be the focus with the boundaries shown in Map A.

### 1.2 THE DESIGNATION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA AND NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

1.2.1. Where parish councils exist, they are responsible for preparing Neighbourhood Plans. Where they do not exist, as in Handbridge, a Neighbourhood Forum needs to be established to produce the plan.

1.2.2. During 2020, a group of volunteers, assisted by CCA, drafted a constitution for a Neighbourhood Forum and applied to CWaC for the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area and Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum to be designated.

1.2.3. On 26 November 2020 CWaC issued a public notice indicating the intention to designate the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area (the Area) and to establish the Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum (the Forum), seeking comments from anyone over the age of 16 living, working or studying in the Area.

1.2.4. Following the statutory period of public consultation, on 18 January 2021 the CWaC

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<sup>1</sup> [Localism Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/22/contents)

<sup>2</sup> [The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2681/contents/make)

Head of Planning on behalf of CWaC Council under delegated powers designated the Neighbourhood Area and Neighbourhood Forum.

1.2.5. The formal designations were publicised on the internet<sup>3</sup>, in the local media and through a Facebook group. Anyone over the age of 16 who lives, works or studies in the Area is eligible to be a member of the Forum.

1.2.6. The inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Forum took place on 29 March 2021, the constitution was agreed and officers were appointed.

1.2.7. Details of the officers of the Forum, the principal volunteers who have worked on the Plan and the Forum constitution are included in Appendix A.

### 1.3 THE PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS

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1.3.1. Once adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the local development plan and will be used by CWaC to determine planning applications in the Area. It may also influence future public and private sector investment. A made Neighbourhood Plan has statutory status which gives it more weight than some other local planning documents such as supplementary planning documents.

1.3.2. The process for drafting the plan has been driven by a Forum committee consisting of the officers and principal volunteers, with significant assistance from CCA, CWaC Planning Department, Forum members and contracted experts.

1.3.3. During 2022 and 2023 the Forum committee undertook a comprehensive set of activities to build an evidence base for the Plan.

- i. January 2022: A short paper questionnaire was delivered to over 2000 households in the Area with opportunities for either a paper response or an on-line response.
- ii. September 2022: A short paper questionnaire was delivered to all 28 businesses in the Area with a 'shop front' for either a paper response or an on-line response.
- iii. January to March 2023: A comprehensive questionnaire, facilitated by CCA, was delivered to all 2200 households in the Area for either a paper response or an on-line response.
- iv. May to October 2023: The government-approved consultancy AECOM was commissioned to produce Design Guidelines for Handbridge.
- v. December 2023: The demographics of the Area were analysed using the published results from the 2021 Census.
- vi. September 2023 to February 2024: Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) was commissioned to produce a Natural Environment survey of the Area.
- vii. February 2024 to March 2024: Consultation with landowners on relevant draft policies.
- viii. January 2024 to March 2024: Drafting of the Plan with the assistance of ONH Planning

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<sup>3</sup> [www.handbridgeneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.handbridgeneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)

for Good consultants

ix. April 2024 to June 2024: Public Consultation as required by Regulation 14 of the Regulations.

1.3.4. Reports on each of these investigations are available on the Forum website and collectively form the evidence base for the Plan.

1.3.5. The Forum committee also made use of the neighbourhood planning resources provided by the government through Locality <sup>4</sup> and the Council <sup>5</sup>, discussed the plan development process with several neighbourhood groups, including the principal authors of the Upton by Chester neighbourhood plan, and reviewed numerous neighbourhood plans already made for other areas of England.

1.3.6. The Design Guidelines, published as a separate document, are formally incorporated in the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.3.7. This version of the Plan and the associated documents are designed to meet the requirements of Regulation 15 of the Regulations.

#### 1.4 THE PRE-SUBMISSION PLAN CONSULTATION

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1.4.1. The Pre-Submission Plan gave the opportunity for the Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum to formally consult with the Handbridge community, statutory consultees (CWaC provided the list) and other interested parties on the proposed vision, objectives and policies of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4.2. Comments were received from 38 members of the community, CWaC, other statutory consultees, and the Academy Trust that operates Queen's Park High School and Chester International School.

1.4.3. Following the public consultation, that ended on 30 June 2024, the Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum Committee reviewed all comments received. There was significant support for all except one draft policy. The majority of CWaC comments related to relatively minor textual changes to improve clarity, improvements to the maps and the addition of photographs.

1.4.4. The draft policy that resulted in the majority of community comments concerned the possible future use of an area of currently unused playing field to the east of Queen's Park High School. The policy was drafted with the intention that in the event that the school decided that this land was no longer required for educational purposes that it should be used for development that would benefit the community as a whole, such as a new Medical Centre or a community-based housing scheme. Whilst there was support for community uses the majority of responses indicated that they did not want any development of the land.

1.4.5. The Academy Trust that owns the land east of Queen's Park High School has indicated that they intend to utilise the land for education purposes in the future and therefore the Forum Committee decided to remove the draft policy from the draft neighbourhood plan.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.locality.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning](http://www.locality.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning)

<sup>5</sup> <https://consult.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/kse/folder/44565>

## 1.5 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT & THE HABITATS REGULATIONS

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1.5.1. Cheshire West and Chester Council screened the draft Neighbourhood Plan to determine if a strategic environmental impact assessment (SEA) is required in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). In doing so, it was also screening to determine if an Appropriate Assessment is required in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

1.5.2. The Council concluded in June 2024 that the nature and scope of the Neighbourhood Plan policies are such that there is no potential for any significant environmental effects or adverse effects on an internationally important ecological area. Consequently, the Forum has not carried out either assessment and no reports are published alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

## 1.6 PUBLIC NOTICE, INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION & REFERENDUM

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1.6.1. The Neighbourhood Forum reviewed all the submissions from the consultation and incorporated amendments in an updated version of the Plan. Additionally, a Consultation Statement was published to review the quality and effectiveness of the consultation. A Basic Conditions Statement was prepared with the assistance of planning consultants.

1.6.2. The Plan, Consultation Statement and Basic Conditions Statement were submitted to Cheshire West and Chester Council on 6 December 2024 for any further consultation and to arrange for its examination by an independent examiner and subsequent referendum.

1.6.3. Cheshire West and Chester Council publicised the Plan on 19 December 2024 and requested any representations be made by 13 February 2025 in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Regulations.

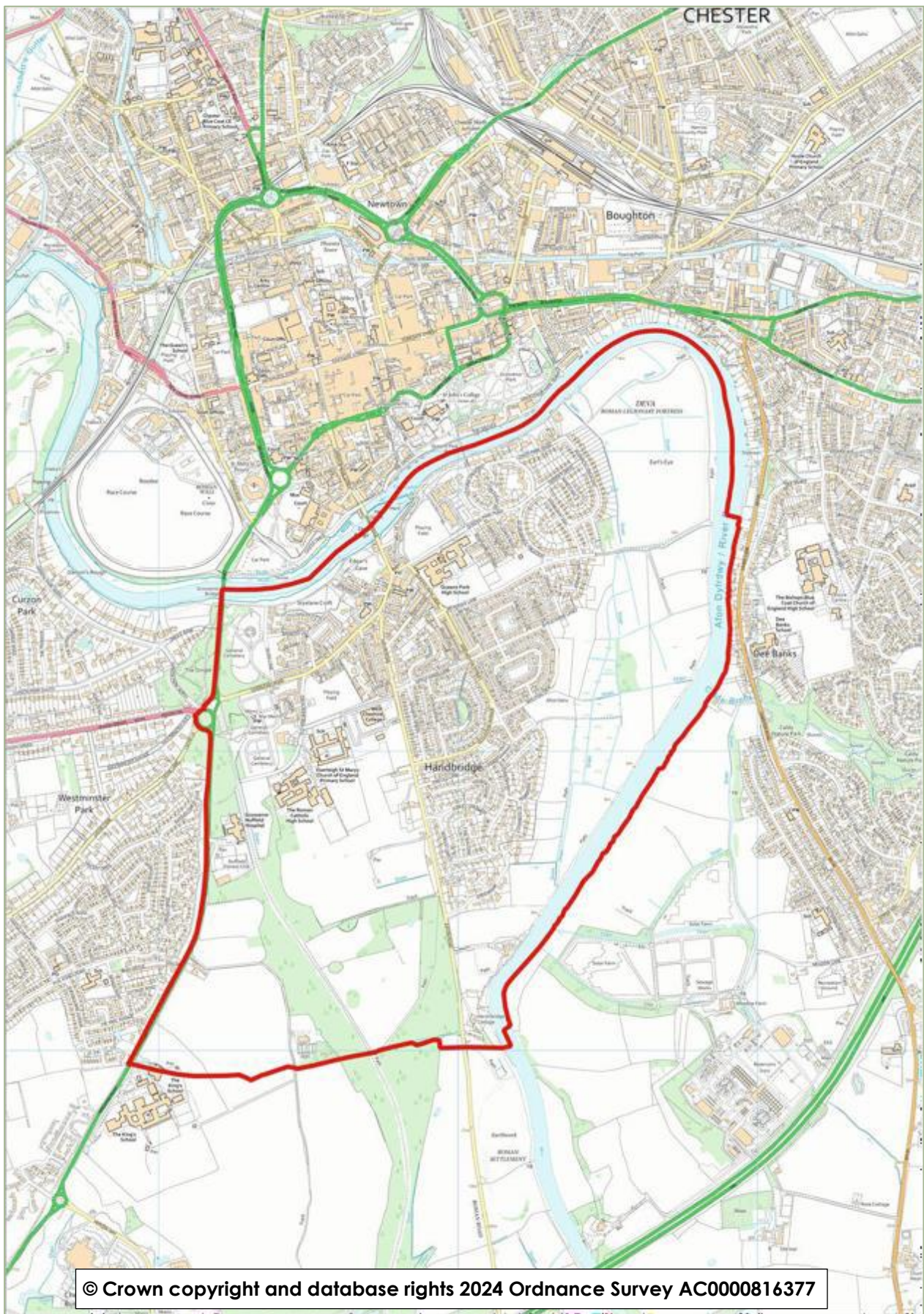
1.6.4. Following the completion of the publicity period, Cheshire West and Chester Council submitted the documents and the representations that they had received to an independent examiner in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Regulations.

1.6.5. The independent examiner reported on 3 April 2025 that the Plan satisfied the Basic Conditions and other statutory requirements subject to a small set of minor amendments and typographical corrections which had been agreed by both Cheshire West and Chester Council and the Forum.

1.6.6. The final version of the Plan incorporated all the amendments required by the independent examiner and was subject to a referendum held on Thursday 24th July 2025. The referendum resulted in a 'yes' vote for the Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

Further information on the Plan and its evidence base can be found on the project website at: [www.handbridgeneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.handbridgeneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)





**Map A: Designated Neighbourhood Area**



## 2. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

### 2.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

2.1.1. The population of Handbridge is recorded as 4,600 in the latest results from the 2021 census. This is an increase of 12% from the 2011 census.

2.1.2. There are around 2200 residential properties and households in the Area and this number has not changed significantly in recent years as there has only been minor infill development. 36% of households have one person, 36% two persons, 17% three persons and 11% four or more persons.

2.1.3. The Age Profile of residents indicates a number of differences compared to the England age profile:

- There are significantly fewer residents aged up to 44 except for the Age 15-19 band.
- The Age 15-19 band has many more residents than the England average.
- There are significantly more residents aged 45 and above than the England averages, particularly in the Age 50-54 band and Age 70 and over band.

2.1.4. The occupation, highest education qualifications and socio-economic classification of Handbridge residents all indicate that the Area has a higher proportion of well-qualified managerial and professional staff than the England averages. There are generally fewer residents engaged in skilled trades and in caring, leisure and other service occupations. Similarly, the level of apprenticeships is lower than the England average. Relatively few residents are involved in manufacturing, but those involved in sales and customer service occupations are similar to the England average.

2.1.5. Overall, the Census information confirms that Handbridge is an attractive location with a stable and modestly growing residential population with an age profile that is generally somewhat older than the England average.

### 2.2 HISTORY

2.2.1. Handbridge is that part of Chester that lies across the river, and its history has long been defined by what, until 1830, was the only bridge. Not much is known about Handbridge in Prehistoric, Roman or Early Medieval times, except as the settlement beyond the river crossing. The Minerva Roman Shrine is preserved in Edgar's Field Park and remains of Roman burials have been found alongside Eaton Road at Netherleigh.

2.2.2. Handbridge's component manors at the time of the Domesday Book were Handbridge, Overleigh, Netherleigh and Redcliffe, which encompass a larger area than the neighbourhood plan.

2.2.3. The bridge is first mentioned in 1280, when funds were raised to repair a wooden bridge damaged by floods. The stone Old Dee Bridge with its seven arches dates from the late 14th century. This bridge originally had fortified gates at both ends and a drawbridge at the Handbridge end which was dismantled in the 17th century.

2.2.4. Handbridge was important in the Civil War, when Chester, held by the Royalists, was besieged by the Parliamentarians for eighteen months from 1644 to 1646. The Royalists held the bridge, with several redoubts on the high ground overlooking it. The Roundheads had secured the east part of Chester, and constructed a bridge of boats below Grosvenor Park, and a fortification in the vicinity of Queen's Park guarded it. On 23rd September 1645 King Charles came to Chester, and he watched the defeat of his forces at Rowton Heath near Christleton. When he crossed back over the bridge on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1645, he had effectively given up and left England. Chester held out for another three months to give him time.

2.2.5. Because of the weir, just upstream of the bridge, Handbridge was able to provide water power for mills in the 18th and 19th century. Initially these were fulling mills but they were adapted for snuff and other tobacco products. These mills were the main employers, together with a salmon fishery and agriculture. There were shorter term brick making and chemical works. Otherwise, people living in Handbridge probably found employment across the bridge in Chester. As a result, the community was quite compact on the roads leaving the bridge, in the form of courtyard housing. Water supply was a limiting factor; water piped via the bridge from the water works in Chester could only reach the lower parts, and houses higher up depended on a small number of wells and water carriers. This contributed to overcrowding near the bridge.

2.2.6. However, Handbridge benefitted from travellers seeking accommodation south of the bridge, who wanted to avoid tolls, or did not need costlier accommodation inside Chester. So, there was good business for inns and public houses. The same circumstances meant that vagabonds and dubious characters would tend to prefer being in Handbridge. Fairs held in Handbridge tended to be rowdier, because the authorities had to cross the bridge, so it acquired a reputation for rebellious character.

2.2.7. A planned estate of villas was laid out in 1851 at Queen's Park, in conjunction with the suspension bridge constructed in 1852 (rebuilt 1923). This provided stimulus for new houses on Eaton Road and elsewhere.

2.2.8. In 1928 Chester Corporation created an estate of new houses, on a rent or buy basis, forming the community around Hartington Street, and with the intention of removing the overcrowded courtyard housing. With an improved water supply, including the water tower by Overleigh Road, and improved sewerage, it was possible to sustain more extensive modern housing. Lastly, the Belgrave Park estate in the south was added in the 1970s and 1980s.

2.2.9. Two books provide more detailed information on the history of Handbridge: "Crossing Place" by Ken Waldie, and "20<sup>th</sup> Century Handbridge" by Len Morgan and Noel St John Williams.

## 2.3 CONSERVATION AREAS

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2.3.1. Most of the northern part of Handbridge has conservation status, comprising The Meadows, Queen's Park, the old village and the old cemetery. These encompass most of the

listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments.

2.3.2. In the village conservation area, the designation covers all the land between Overleigh Road and the River Dee as far west as River Lane. Areas south of Overleigh Road are delineated by the rear of Percy Drive, and houses around Pyecroft Street (with the Water Tower), and Eaton Road north of Appleyards Lane.

2.3.3. This leaves heritage interest in the southern part mainly dependent on local designations.

2.3.4. Handbridge falls within the southern part of the Mersey Forest Plan which includes an indicative woodland cover target of 30% for the mapped area "C3 Around Chester" and includes the following recommendation: "Plant trees and woodlands around Chester to provide a buffer with the surrounding landscape, but maintaining important and valued views. For example, plant trees at the Countess of Chester Country Park. Create copses and woodlands in the agricultural land to the south of Chester and around the River Dee."

## 2.4 SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND LISTED BUILDINGS

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2.4.1. There are two scheduled monuments: the Old Dee Bridge, and the Roman quarry in Edgar's Field, which includes the recess called Edgar's Cave and the effigy of Minerva carved in the adjacent rock face. Just outside the south east corner of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary, Heronbridge Roman site is also scheduled and remains may extend into the area.

2.4.2. There are 69 designations on the British Listed Buildings website, some of these are grouped buildings. The list is summarised in Appendix B. The main groups of listed buildings are in the conservation areas, with eight exceptions, mainly close to Eaton Road. Consequently, Handbridge has an impressive grouping of distinctive buildings, which can be supplemented by the Local List in preparation by CWaC. The Plan also lists other properties and features which should be considered for local designation in Appendices C and D.

## 2.5 CHARACTER AREAS

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2.5.1. The history, geography and development timeline of the Area has been used to sub-divide Handbridge into distinct Character Areas for planning purposes as shown in Map B. These areas cover the whole of the Area rather than just the settled areas close to the river that were considered by the Chester Characterisation Study<sup>6</sup>.

2.5.2. Each of the seven Character Areas and their constituent sub-areas are described in detail in the Design Guidelines developed for and incorporated in the Plan.

2.5.3. The four Urban Character Areas are:

- Historic Core: The historic and commercial heart of the Area leading from the Old Dee

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-and-performance/council-plans-policies-and-strategies/planning-policy/chester-characterisation-study>

Bridge and close to Handbridge (road) and Overleigh Road

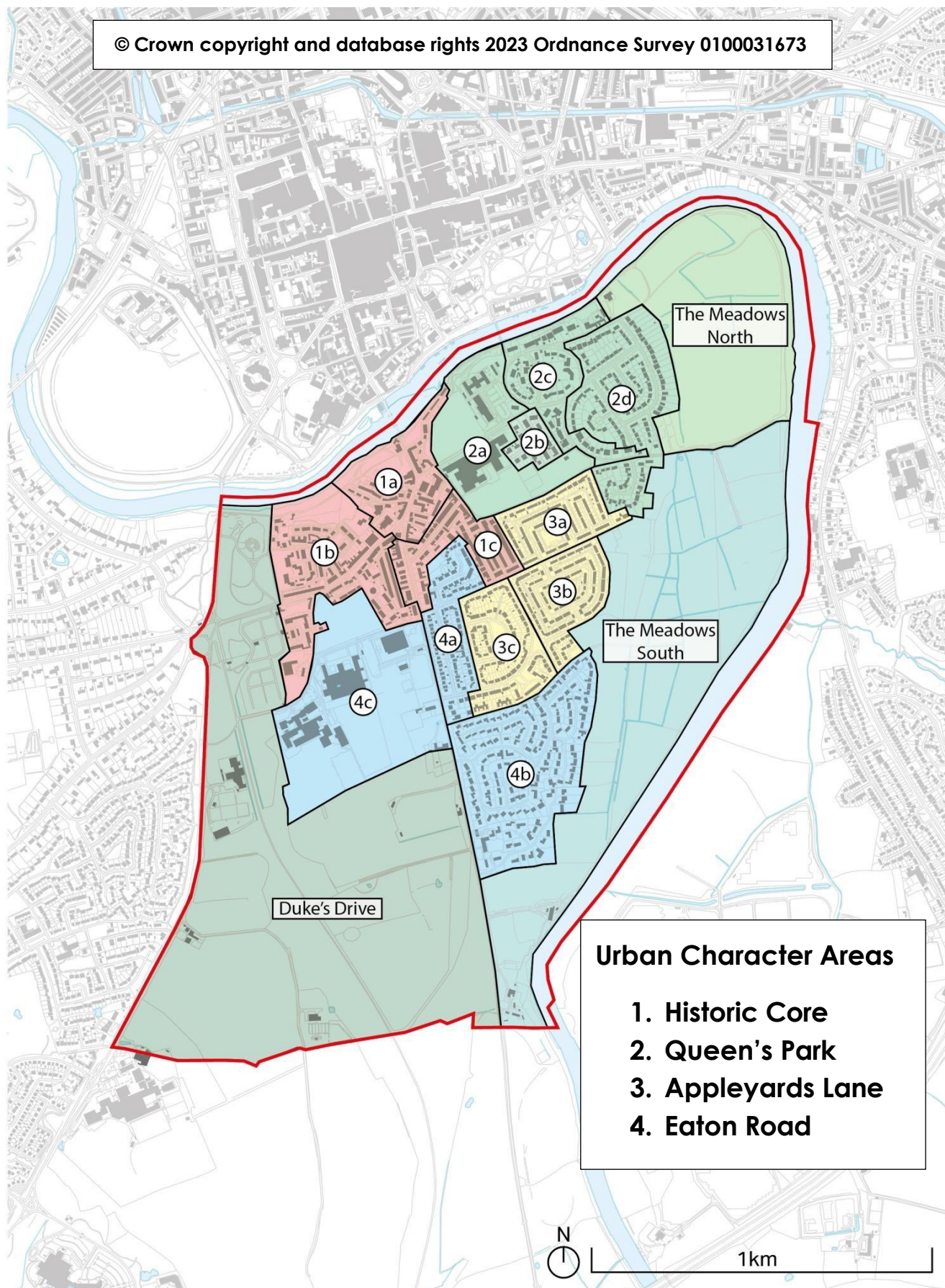
- Queen's Park: The 19<sup>th</sup> century villas to the east, the schools and university buildings and 20<sup>th</sup> century development of predominantly detached private houses.
- Appleyards Lane: A series of tree-lined residential areas with predominantly semi-detached and terraced housing on both sides of Appleyards Lane that incorporates the southern section of Hartington Street and is bounded to the south by Eccleston Avenue and Beeston View.
- Eaton Road: The school and college sites to the west of Eaton Road and the later 20<sup>th</sup> century predominantly detached house to the south of the Area.

2.5.4. The three Rural Character Areas are:

- The Meadows North: The Council-owned Earl's Eye field at the northeast of the Area.
- The Meadows South: The privately-owned fields that abut the river to the south and east.
- Duke's Drive: The mixed-ownership woodland and fields either side of Duke's Drive and the Council-owned cemeteries at the northwest of the Area.

2.5.5. All businesses within the Area that have 'shop windows' are located within the Historic Core Character Area.





Map B: Handbridge Character Areas

### 3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Handbridge lies within the Handbridge Park Ward of Chester, within the part of the historic county of Cheshire now administered by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

#### NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

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3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by the Government is an important guide in the preparation of local plans and neighbourhood plans. The following paragraphs of the NPPF version published in 2023 are considered especially relevant:

- Neighbourhood planning (§28 - 30)
- Identifying land for homes (§70)
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres (§90)
- Promoting healthy and safe communities (§96 – 97)
- Local Green Spaces (§105 – 107)
- Promoting sustainable transport (§108)
- Achieving well-designed and beautiful places (§131 – 135)
- Meeting the challenge of climate change (§158)
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (§180 – 181, §185)
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (§195 – 196)

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY

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3.3 The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) Council. The development plan primarily comprises the CWaC Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies, adopted in January 2015, and the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies, adopted in July 2019. Its key policies applying to the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan Area are:

##### Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies

- STRAT 1 (Sustainable development)
- STRAT 2 (Strategic development)
- STRAT 3 (Chester)
- STRAT 9 (Green Belt and countryside)
- STRAT 10 (Transport and Accessibility)
- STRAT 11 (Infrastructure)
- ECON 2 (Town centres)
- ECON 3 (Visitor economy)
- SOC 1 (Delivering affordable housing)
- SOC 3 (Housing mix and type)
- SOC 5 (Health and well-being)
- SOC 6 (Open space, sport and recreation)
- ENV 1 (Flood risk and water management)
- ENV 2 (Landscape)



- ENV 3 (Green infrastructure)
- ENV 4 (Biodiversity and geodiversity)
- ENV 5 (Historic environment)
- ENV 6 (High quality design and sustainable construction)
- ENV 9 (Minerals supply and safeguarding)

#### Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies

- CH 1 (Chester settlement area)
- CH 4 (University of Chester)
- CH 5 (Chester conservation areas)
- CH 6 (Chester key views, landmarks and gateways and historic skyline)
- GBC 2 (Protection of landscape)
- T 1 (Local Road network improvement schemes)
- T 5 (Parking and access)
- M4 (Proposals for exploration, appraisal or production of hydrocarbons)
- DM 1 (Development on previously developed land)
- DM 2 (Impact on residential amenity)
- DM 3 (Design, character and visual amenity)
- DM 4 (Sustainable construction)
- DM 9 (Visitor accommodation)
- DM 11 (Safeguarded areas around aerodromes)
- DM 15 (District and local retail centres)
- DM 16 (Shopfronts)
- DM 17 (Advertisements)
- DM 18 (ICT and telecommunications)
- DM 19 (Proposals for residential development)
- DM 20 (Mix and type of new housing development)
- DM 21 (Development within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse)
- DM 22 (Change of use to dwellinghouses and residential conversions)
- DM 23 (Delivering affordable housing)
- DM 26 (Specialist accommodation)
- DM 27 (Student accommodation)
- DM 28 (Houses in multiple occupation)
- DM 29 (Health impacts of new development)
- DM 30 (Noise)
- DM 31 (Air quality)
- DM 32 (Land contamination and instability)
- DM 35 (Open space and new developments)
- DM 36 (Provision for sport and recreation)
- DM 37 (Recreational routeways)
- DM 38 (Waterways and mooring facilities)
- DM 39 (Culture and community facilities)
- DM 40 (Development and flood risk)
- DM 41 (Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS))
- DM 43 (Water quality, supply and treatment)

- DM 44 (Protecting and enhancing the natural environment)
- DM 45 (Trees, woodland and hedgerows)
- DM 46 (Development in conservation areas)
- DM 47 (Listed buildings)
- DM 48 (Non-designated heritage assets)
- DM 49 (Registered Park and Gardens and Battlefields)
- DM 50 (Archaeology)

3.4 Since the Local Plan was adopted, CWaC have also published a number of [Supplementary Planning Documents](#) (SPDs) to guide development.

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## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING POLICY

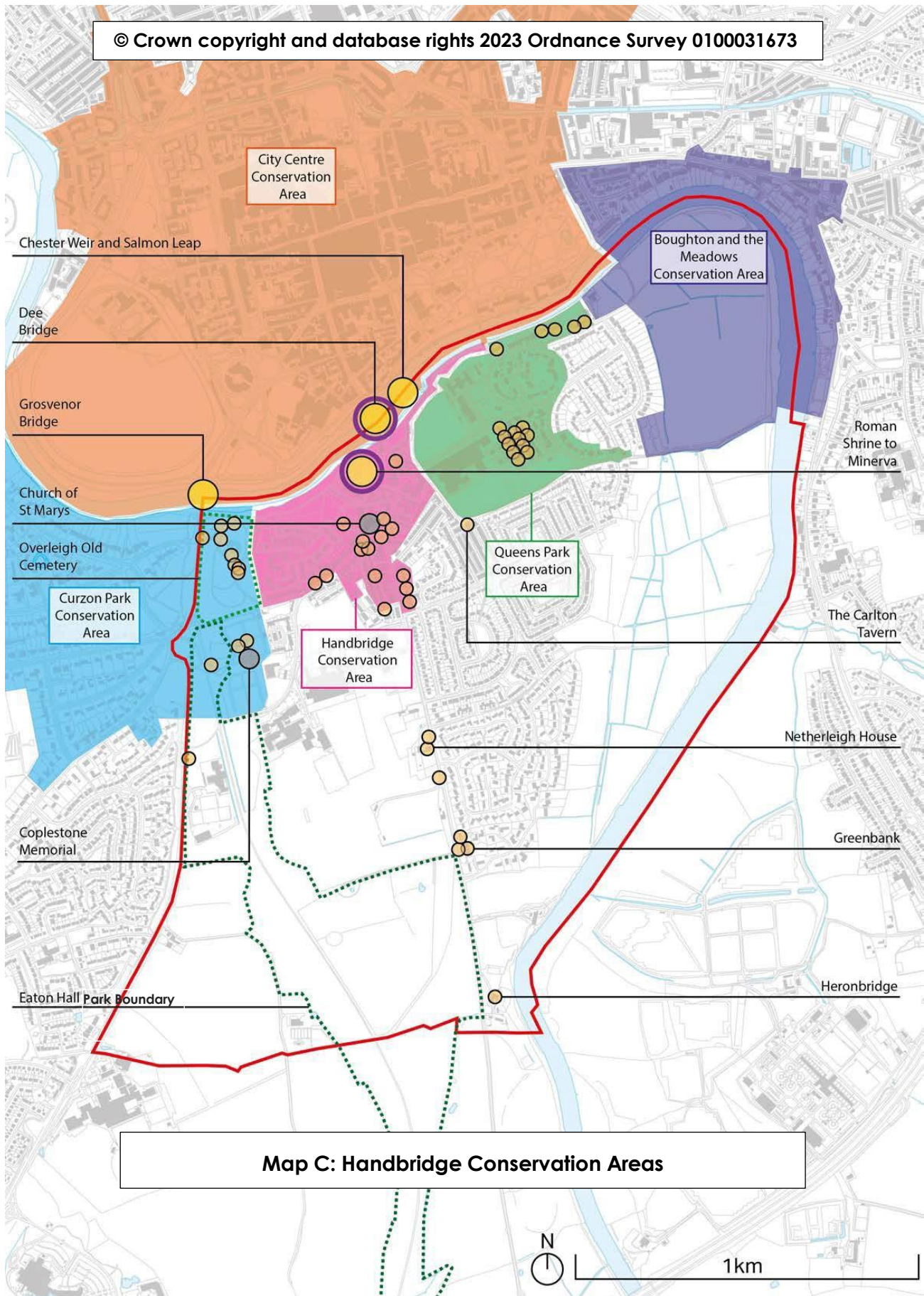
3.5 There are no other development plans that apply in the Neighbourhood Plan Area. There are no made neighbourhood plans in the areas abutting the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area. Within Chester, the Upton-by-Chester and District Neighbourhood Plan was made on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2022 and some other non-parished areas of Chester have begun the process of preparing Neighbourhood Plans.

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## HANDBRIDGE'S CONSERVATION AREAS

3.6 As set out in Section 2 and shown in Map C, the Neighbourhood Plan Area benefits from four Conservation Areas – Queen's Park, Boughton and The Meadows, Handbridge, and Curzon Park – covering most of the northern part of Handbridge. The Conservation Areas were designated in 1979 and all four were amended in 1999. Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, to protect areas of special interest as opposed to individual buildings. Since 1967 some 8,000 conservation areas have been designated in England. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 local authorities have a duty to designate conservation areas and from time to time to review the boundaries. Such areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

3.7 The main attributes that define the special character of an area are its physical appearance and history, i.e. the form and features of buildings and the spaces between them, their former uses and historical development. Where there are a number of periods of historical development, the character of individual parts of the conservation area may differ. Contrasts between the appearance of areas and the combination of buildings of various ages, materials and styles may contribute to its special character.



## 4. COMMUNITY VIEWS ON PLANNING ISSUES

4.1 A comprehensive survey of all households in the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area was carried out in early 2023.

4.2 From the survey responses, it is evident that the community of Handbridge values its natural environment, historical heritage, and local amenities. There is overwhelming support for initiatives that conserve and enhance the natural environment, protect local green spaces, and preserve historical assets. Additionally, residents express a desire for well-designed, sustainable, and contextually-appropriate new developments that respect the area's character.

4.3 Parking and transportation are significant concerns for residents, with many expressing difficulties in finding parking, especially in certain areas including near the shops and near schools. There is a call for improved transportation options, including better cycling infrastructure, public transport, and resident-only parking schemes.

4.4 The community strongly supports independent retail traders and values their contribution to the local economy and community. There is a preference for diverse retail and hospitality offerings that cater to the needs of both residents and visitors.

4.5 To reduce the need for driving and encourage walking and cycling, residents suggest implementing various measures, such as cycle lanes, traffic calming, secure bike parking, and improved walkways.

4.6 Residents also identify potential sites for designation as Local Green Spaces expressing a desire to protect and enhance these areas. Suggestions for additional Local Green Spaces were also provided, highlighting various green areas, open spaces, footpaths, and riverbanks in Handbridge.

4.7 The current Medical Centre arrangements in Greenway Street are felt to be inadequate and have poor access and parking arrangements. There is strong support for a new Medical Centre within the Neighbourhood Area but a suitable site has not been identified.

4.8 The issues raised through the survey range from planning, to highways and transport, street scene, community development, local services and healthcare. The Neighbourhood Plan can tackle land use planning issues – where development is taking place, and where land needs to be protected. However, the feedback on non-planning issues such as maintenance of public spaces and footpaths, provision of better public transport and residential parking schemes all provides useful data, which the community may act on outside the context of the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.9 Overall, the responses reflect a strong sense of community and a desire to preserve the unique character and identity of Handbridge while promoting sustainable and environmentally friendly policies.



### VISION

**In 2040, 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.**

### OBJECTIVES

To conserve and enhance Handbridge's natural environment, biodiversity, and local landscape character.

To protect local green spaces and enhance access to them.

To mitigate existing parking problems and encourage and support safe and sustainable transport.

To ensure that new development is well designed, sustainable, and in keeping with local character and the designated conservation areas.

To conserve and enhance Handbridge's heritage assets.

To protect and enhance local amenities and community facilities.

To maintain a diverse retail and hospitality offer to serve the residents of Handbridge and neighbouring areas, and to attract visitors from Chester City Centre.

5.1 The purpose of these policies is both to encourage planning applications for proposals that the local community would like to support, and to discourage applications for development that the community does not consider represent sustainable development in the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Collectively the policies aim to deliver the community-endorsed objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.2 The planning framework for the Neighbourhood Plan Area will continue to rely on national and local policies in addition to the policies introduced under the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.3 Set out below are the proposed land use policies. Each policy is numbered and titled, and it is shown in bold for ease of reference. Where necessary, the area to which it will apply is shown on a map in the supporting text as referenced in the policy wording. After each policy is some supporting text that explains the purpose of the policy, how it will be applied and, where helpful, how it relates to other development plan policies.

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### **POLICY HNP1: LOCAL NATURE NETWORK**

**The Plan Area contains a variety of green and blue infrastructure that provides an environmental support system for the community and for wildlife. The Neighbourhood Plan designates this as a Nature Network, as shown on Map D below, for the purpose of promoting nature recovery and for mitigating climate change.**

**Development proposals that lie within or adjacent to the Network must demonstrate how they will maintain or improve the functionality of the Network in the design of their layouts and landscaping schemes, proportionate to the scale of the development, and the mitigation hierarchy must be applied in all cases.**

**Development proposals that lead to the development of land lying within the Network and that would undermine its integrity will be resisted unless clear evidence is presented to justify any impact with associated mitigation proposals. Proposals that would enhance or extend the Network will be supported, provided they are consistent with all other relevant policies of the development plan.**

5.4 The conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is one of the core objectives of the planning system. The residents of Handbridge are keen to protect wildlife and nature conservation interests. Recognising the importance of the countryside to local residents, the Neighbourhood Forum commissioned Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) to undertake a study of Handbridge's natural environment, in order to inform and produce appropriate policies for the Neighbourhood Plan. The report 'Protecting and Enhancing



Handbridge's Natural Environment' was finalised in February 2024 and published as part of the Evidence Base for the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.5 Policies ENV 3 and ENV 4 of the Local Plan (Part One) respectively support the creation, enhancement, protection and management of a network of multi-functional green infrastructure and seek to safeguard biodiversity and geodiversity through the identification and protection of sites and/or features of international, national, and local importance. These strategic policies are implemented by policy DM 44 of the Local Plan (Part Two), and this policy of the Neighbourhood Plan expands these policies at a Neighbourhood level.

5.6 Utilising the CWT report, the Neighbourhood Plan identifies a Local Nature Network based on the report's Indicative Wildlife Corridor Network. In doing so, it seeks to protect sites that are identified as having high habitat distinctiveness from development and secure enhancements to the overall Network where possible. Proposals that would undermine the integrity of the Network through failure to follow the mitigation hierarchy, inappropriate development that would not support the aims of the Network in encouraging biodiversity, or severing or weakening links between different parts of the Network will be resisted.

5.7 The report identified areas of high distinctiveness habitat which are natural or semi-natural habitats that are of significant or critical importance to wildlife due to their high biodiversity and ecological values. These should be a priority for conservation. The report also identified medium value habitats (medium distinctiveness) which provide important wildlife habitats in their own right. Additionally, the report identified key wildlife corridor networks within Handbridge that should be protected through Neighbourhood Plan policies.

5.8 The study identified numerous major areas of high value (distinctiveness) habitat in the Neighbourhood Plan area which are recommended for protection. These are natural or semi-natural habitats which are of significant or critical importance to wildlife due to their high biodiversity and ecological value. They should be a priority for conservation and appropriately managed in order to maintain or enhance their ecological features. They include the River Dee Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a number of Local Wildlife Sites, wetlands, grassland and woodlands.

5.9 Undesignated areas of medium habitat distinctiveness were also identified as they provide important wildlife habitats in their own right as well as acting as ecological stepping stones. These include woodland, grassland, field ponds, hedgerows and scattered trees.

5.10 The report also identified areas that act as a wildlife corridor network with high ecological connectivity within and beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area. Wildlife corridors are a key component of wider ecological networks as they provide connectivity between core areas of high wildlife value and habitats of high distinctiveness, enabling species to move between them to feed, disperse, migrate and reproduce. In conjunction with the results of the National Habitat Network Mapping (2018) and the Ecological Network for CWaC, the CWT report has identified a number of indicative wildlife corridors (Map D) with ecological connectivity throughout and beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area. The National Habitat Network map and Ecological Network for CWaC provide a broad map of

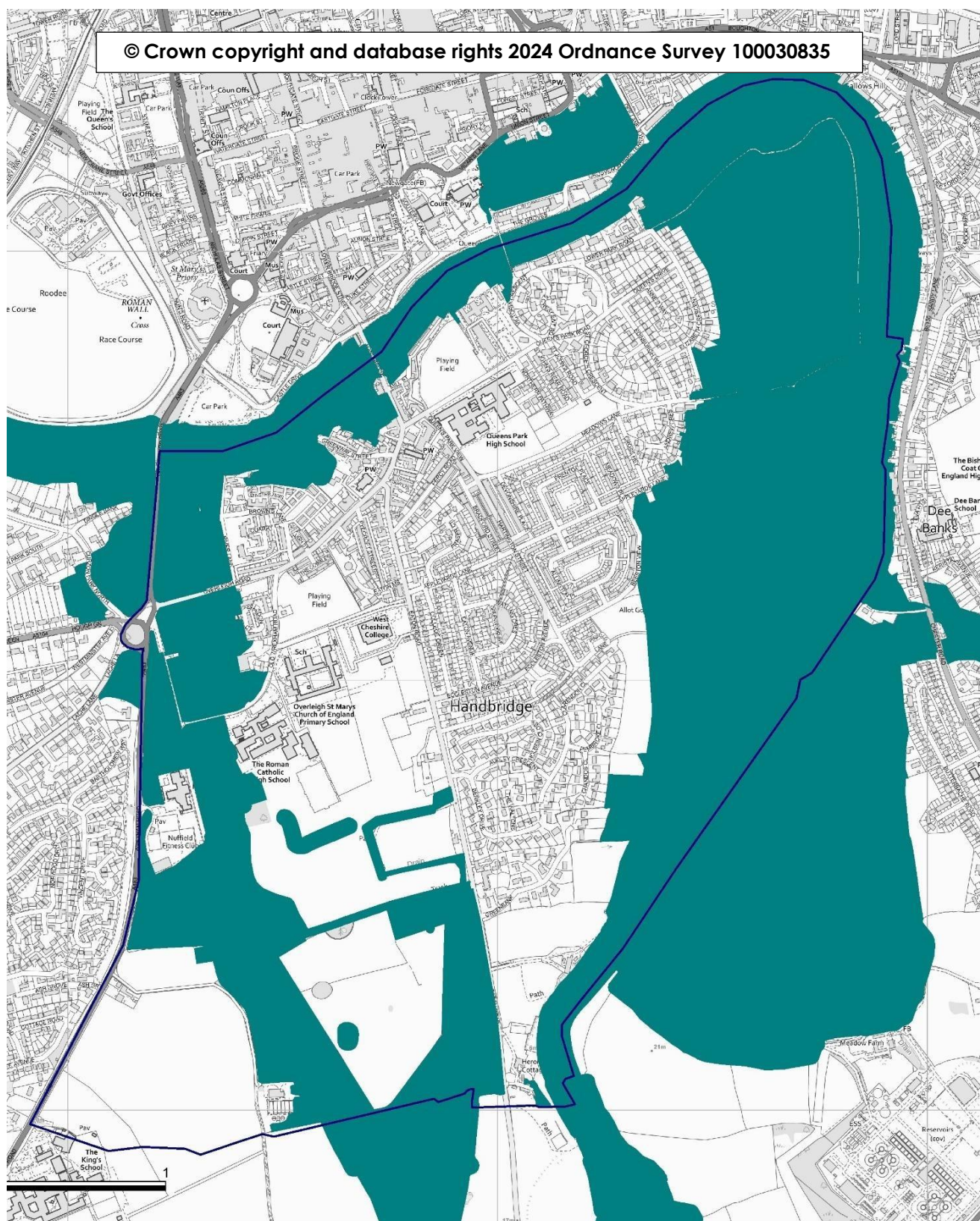
the networks across England and Cheshire West and Chester respectively. The wildlife corridors identified by the CWT report supplement these, while also being more specific to ecological networks that are important for conserving and enhancing biodiversity at a local scale. The CWaC Ecological Network mapping and the wildlife corridor map both identify primary habitat or core areas for biodiversity within Handbridge.

5.11 The identified corridors link areas of valuable habitat with good connectivity, including the River Dee and its associated wetland and grassland habitats, as well as extensive areas of woodland. Some of the mapped corridors do cross over roads where direct connectivity will not be maintained, however in these instances the maximum gap is less than 30 metres meaning more mobile species should not be affected.

5.12 The CWT report recommended that the indicative wildlife corridor network is identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and protected from development so that the guidance relating to ecological networks set out in the NPPF may be implemented at a local level. This network shown in Map D includes a buffer zone of 15 metres in places to protect notable habitats. Any potential developments should ensure that high distinctiveness habitats, wildlife corridors or core areas for wildlife are avoided. Access to these sites by local wildlife and ornithological groups would be of benefit to the community.

5.13 Any future development of sites which lie within or adjacent to the Network should apply the mitigation hierarchy to lessen any potential impacts on wildlife. The mitigation hierarchy is based on a sequence of four iterative actions: avoiding and minimising any negative impacts (prevention), before restoring and finally offsetting residual impacts (remediation).

5.14 Providing net gain for biodiversity is embedded in the guidance in the NPPF. Future development in Handbridge should respect the natural environment. The most intact landscapes, in terms of biodiversity, landform and historical/cultural associations should be valued highly when planning decisions are made. Protection and enhancement of Handbridge's natural assets is of the utmost importance for nature conservation and ecosystems but is also important for the enjoyment of future generations.



Map D: Nature Network



## **POLICY HNP2: LOCAL GREEN SPACES**

**Inappropriate development on any Local Green Space will not be supported unless there are very special circumstances which outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space. In these instances, the Local Green Space to be lost should be replaced by alternative green space that will benefit the community and the area.**

**The Plan designates the following areas of Local Green Space, as defined on Map E below, at the following locations in the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area:**

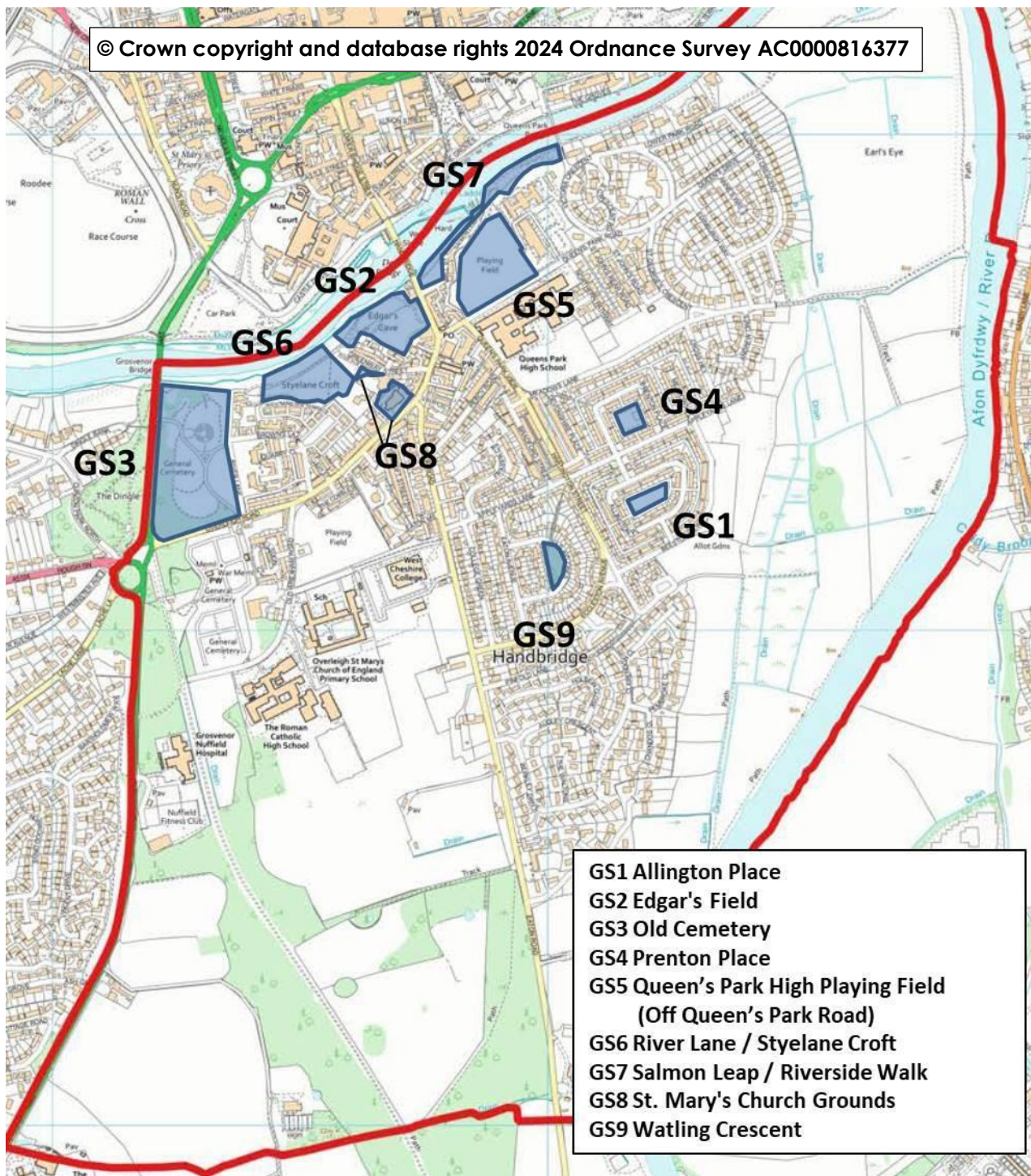
- **GS1 Allington Place**
- **GS2 Edgar's Field**
- **GS3 Old Cemetery**
- **GS4 Prenton Place**
- **GS5 Queen's Park High Playing Field (Off Queen's Park Road)**
- **GS6 River Lane / Styelane Croft**
- **GS7 Salmon Leap / Riverside Walk**
- **GS8 St. Mary's Church Grounds**
- **GS9 Watling Crescent**

5.15 Within the Neighbourhood Plan there is the opportunity to identify and designate green spaces valued by the community as Local Green Space, which should be protected from inappropriate development.

5.16 22 locations were submitted for consideration by the public and following assessment against the required criteria (paragraph 102 of the NPPF) a total of 9 are proposed for designation. A Local Green Space Assessment Report detailing the evaluation process forms part of the evidence base of the Neighbourhood Plan. Those listed are considered to be 'Local Green Space' in recognition of their importance to the amenity and wellbeing of their neighbourhood and to protect them for the continued enjoyment and appreciation by local people and visitors. They include areas for formal and informal recreation; areas of importance for nature conservation and wildlife; sites of historic importance; and sites that make an important contribution to the visual beauty of Handbridge. They all share a similar regard by the people and communities that have nominated them and supported their designation.

5.17 Development on sites designated as local green space should be limited to that which is deemed appropriate by being ancillary to its existing use and small scale. 'Very special' circumstances to justify other forms of development will not exist unless the potential harm to the designated space by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations such as where the public benefit would clearly outweigh

the loss.



**Map E: Local Green Spaces**

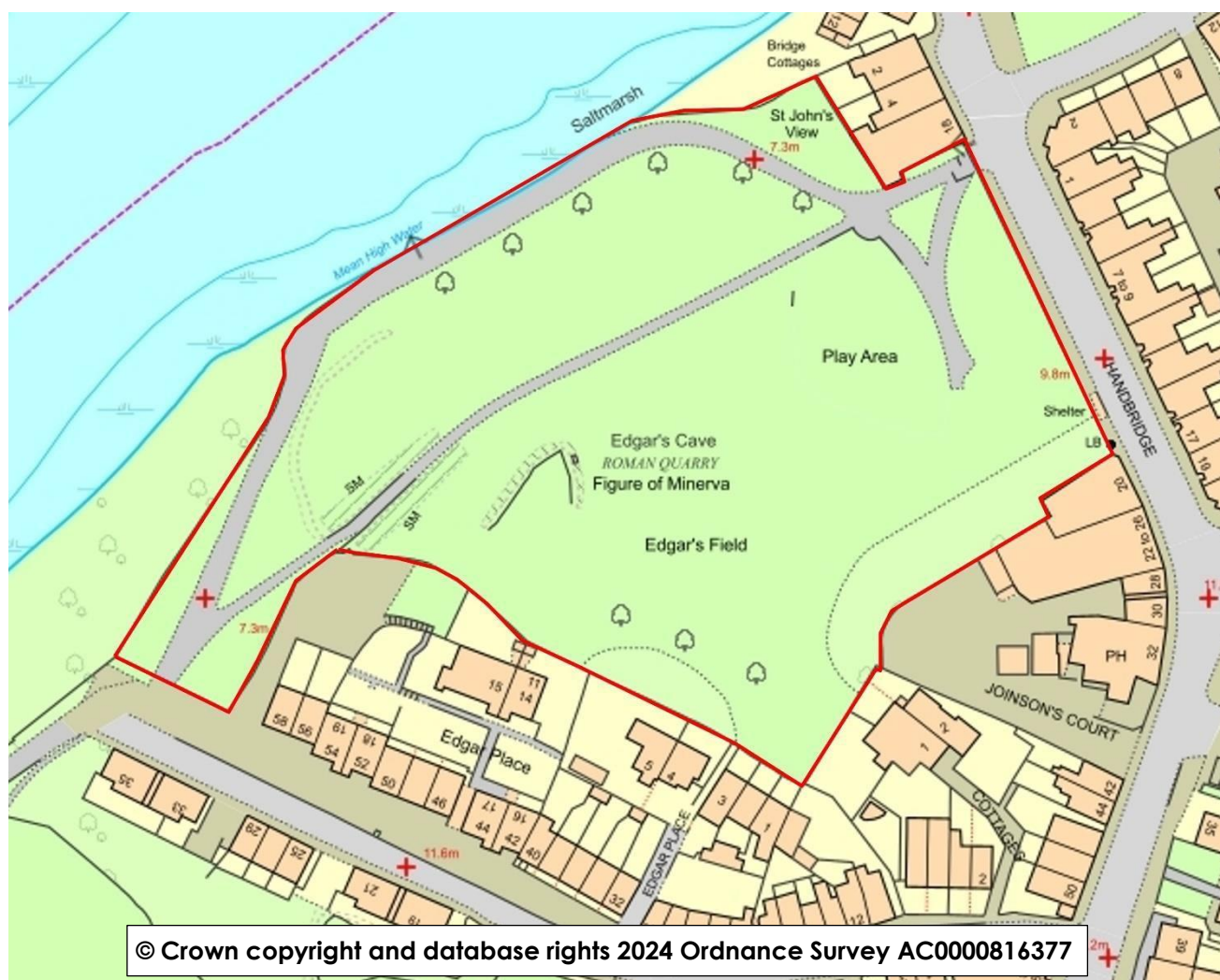
The following detail maps show the specific locations of each of the local green spaces.





**Map E-1: Local Green Spaces GS1 Allington Place, GS4 Prenton Place and GS9 Watling Crescent**

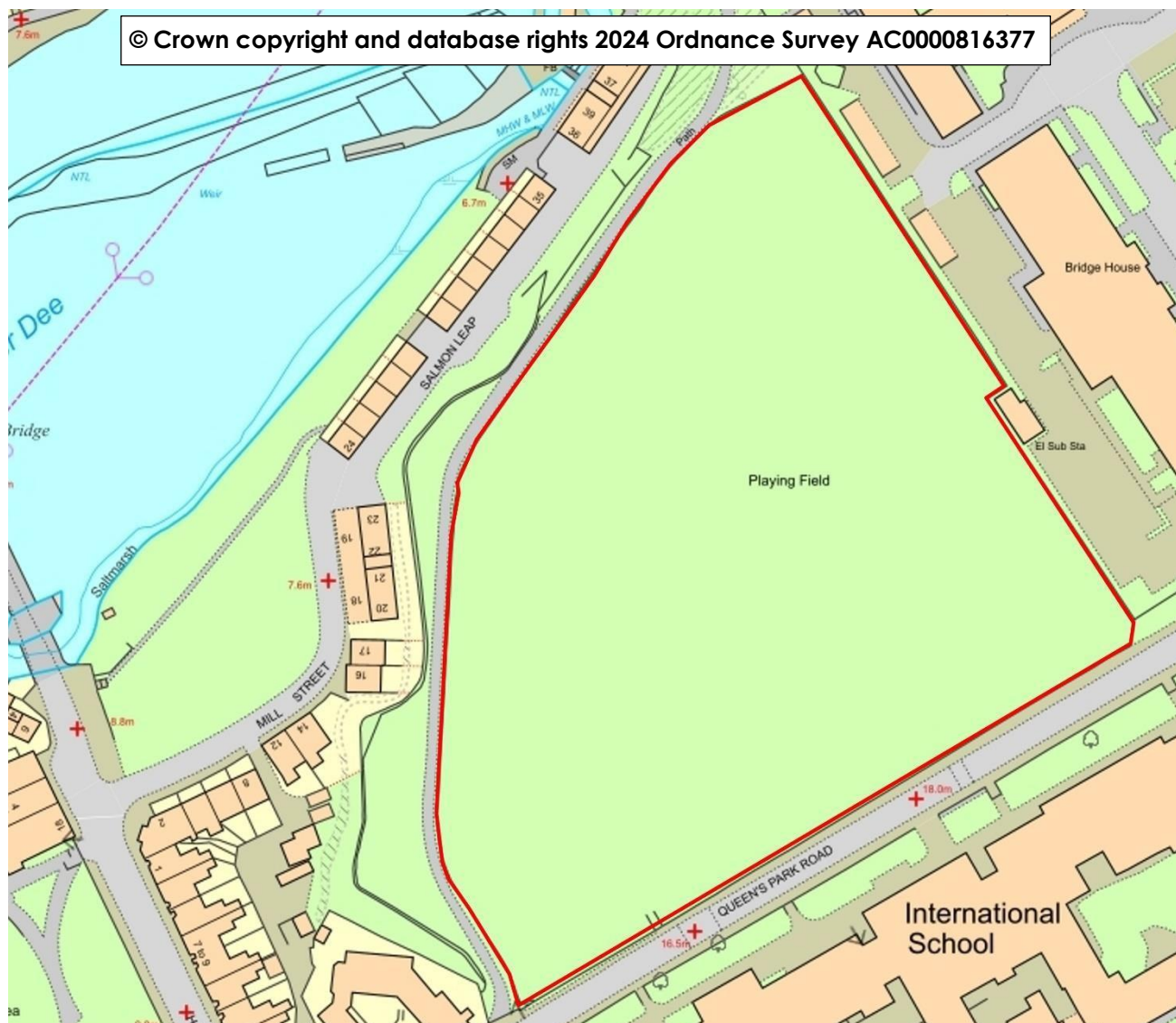




**Map E-2: Local Green Space GS2 Edgar's Field**

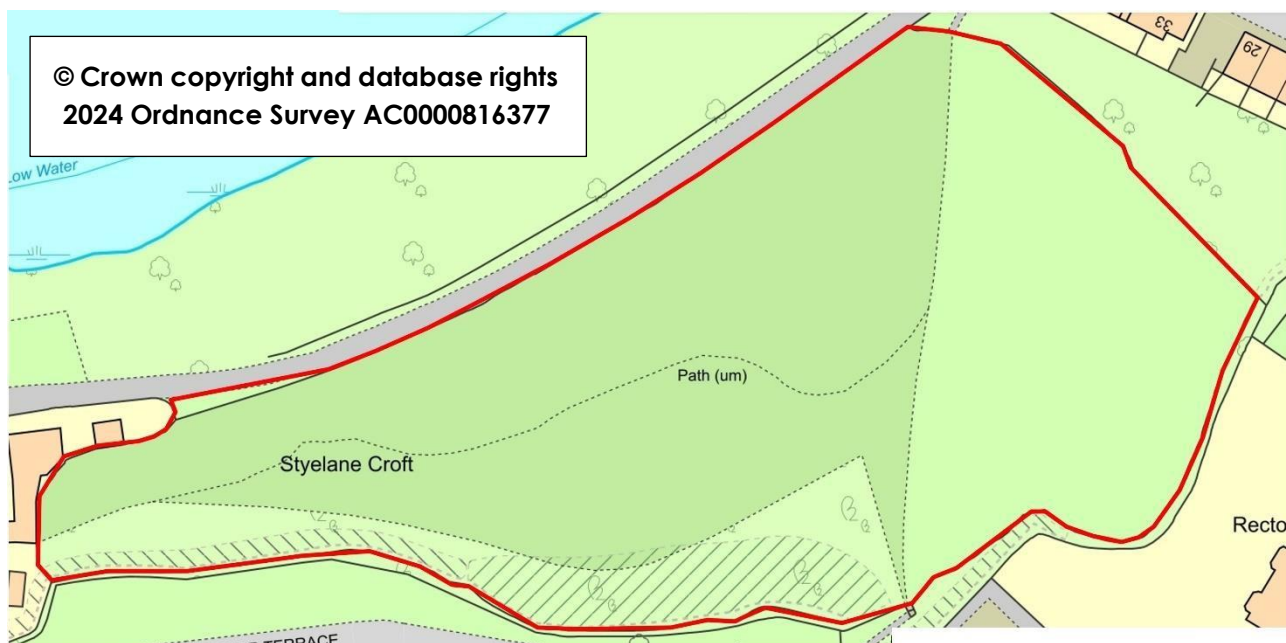


**Map E-3: Local Green Space GS3 Old Cemetery**



**Map E-4: Local Green Space GS5 Queen's Park High School Playing Field**

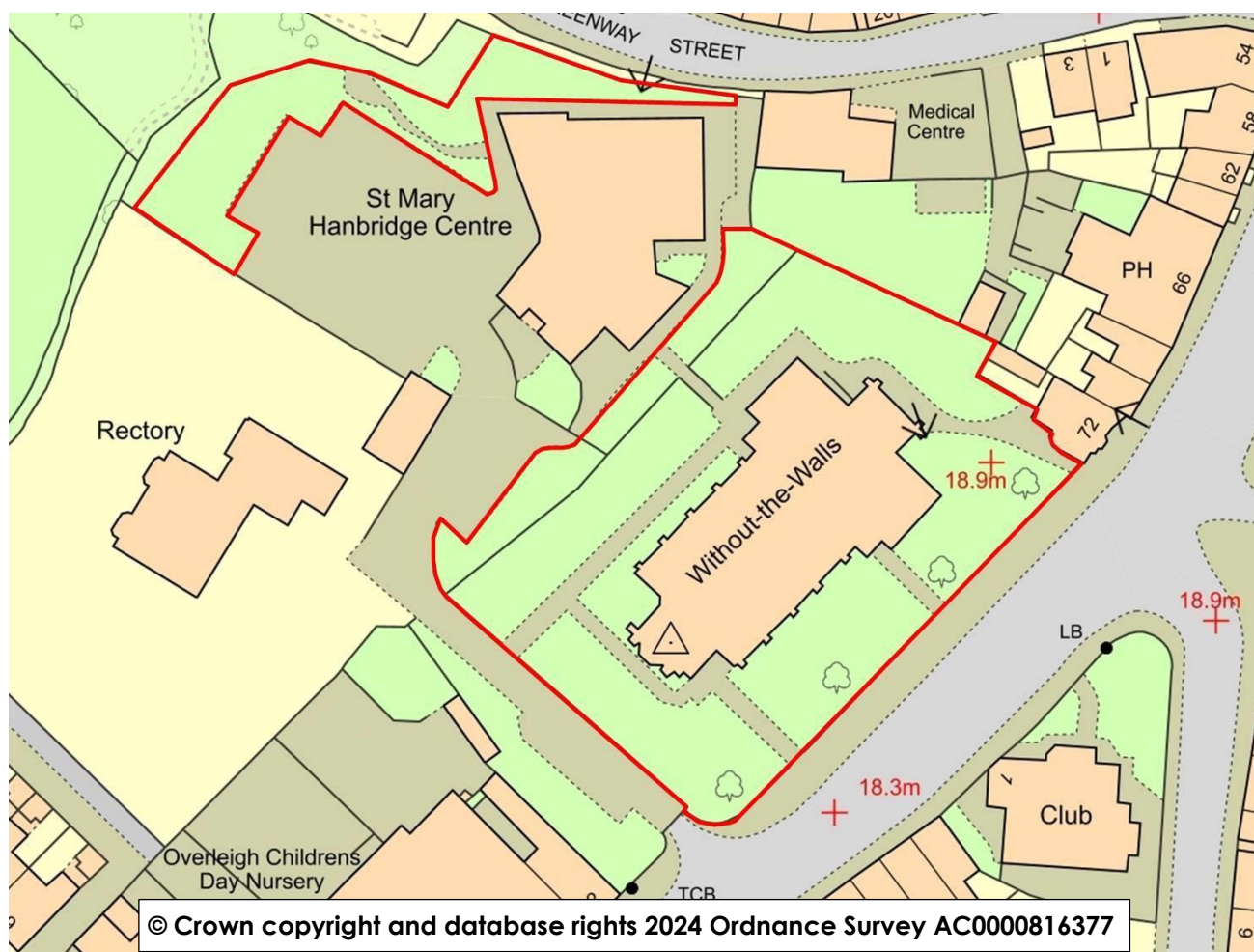




**Map E-5: Local Green Space GS6 River Lane / Styelane Croft**

**Map E-6: Local Green Space GS7 Salmon Leap / Riverside Walk**





**Map E-7: Local Green Space GS8 St Mary's Church Grounds**

## **POLICY HNP3: INCIDENTAL OPEN SPACES OF COMMUNITY VALUE**

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following as Incidental Open Spaces of Community Value, as shown on Map F below:

- IOS1 Queen's Park Road/Victoria Crescent
- IOS2 Westminster Terrace
- IOS3 Westminster Green
- IOS4 Selsdon Court
- IOS5 Eaton Mews
- IOS6 A & B Paradise
- IOS7 A-F Prenton Place
- IOS8 A-K Allington Place
- IOS9 Appleyards Lane/Beeston View
- IOS10 Eccleston Avenue/Harlington Street
- IOS11 Beeston Pathway
- IOS12 A & B Pinfold Court
- IOS13 A & B Eaton Road/Belgrave Park roadside verge
- IOS14 St George's Crescent/Meadows Lane junction

Development of any kind within an Incidental Open Space of Community Value will only be supported where it:

- preserves and, where possible, enhances the contribution of the Space to public amenity and community wellbeing;
- is ancillary to the community use;
- retains the openness of the Space; and
- has full regard for relevant parts of the Design Guidelines.

Development resulting in adverse impacts to an Incidental Open Space of Community Value must:

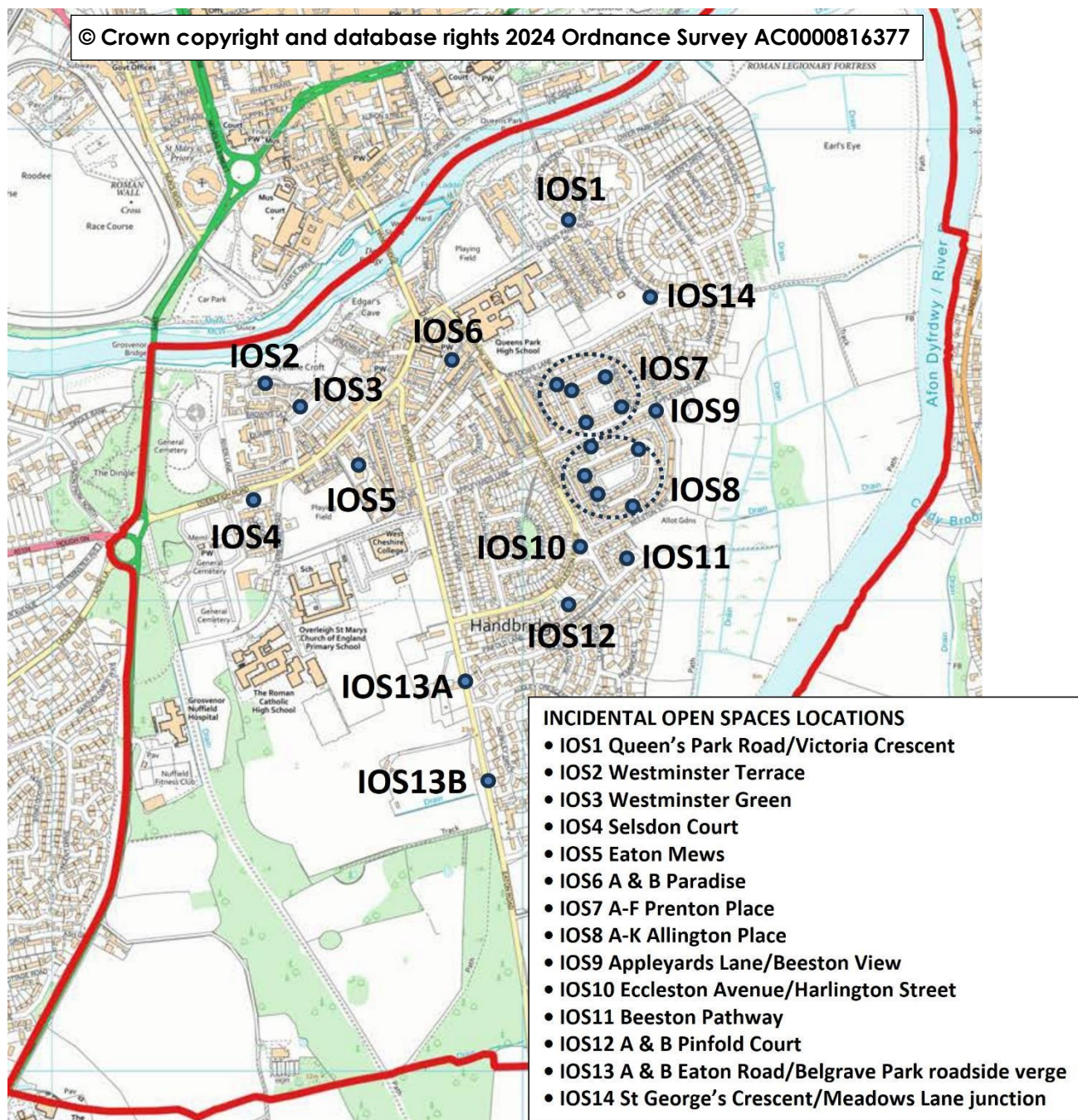
- make appropriate new alternative provision to compensate for localised loss of public amenity and community wellbeing; and
- demonstrate that damage to green infrastructure and/or local character arising from the development can be satisfactorily mitigated.

5.18 Some of the housing areas of Handbridge were designed and developed with areas of incidental open space included in the layout to provide amenity and/or a shared recreation space for residents. These, now mature, open spaces are part of the essential character of the residential areas such as in the Allington Place / Prenton Place area. They are an integral part of the design of the housing area and together form an essential part of its attractive open and green character and pleasant living environment, as identified within the Design Guidelines. Of particular pertinence within the Design Guidelines are the following:

- Character Area 2: key takeaway 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.
- Character Area 3: key takeaway 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.
- Character Area 3a: key takeaway 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.
- Character area 3b: key takeaway 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.
- Character area 4: key takeaway 2: The Eaton Road corridor has a changing character along its length from green verges in the south to historic stone wall opposite Cheshire College South & West. Development should respect this changing green character and degree of enclosure.
- Character area 4b: key takeaway 2: Retain the green landscaped setback to Eaton Road in order to preserve the area's green character.
- Design guidelines E1 (Extending and maintaining the green infrastructure network) and G1 (Public realm improvements).

5.19 Some of the spaces are used for informal play and several contribute to local biodiversity and form an important part of the green infrastructure by serving as green corridors through the built-up area. However, these incidental open spaces are considered too small and numerous to be included under Policy HNP2 as Local Green Spaces. In acknowledgement of their value and the purpose they were designed for, policy HNP3 applies to all areas of incidental open space within the residential areas. The policy recognises all incidental areas within these residential areas as 'sites of open space value' and places a protection upon them unless the community they serve is supportive of their change of use.

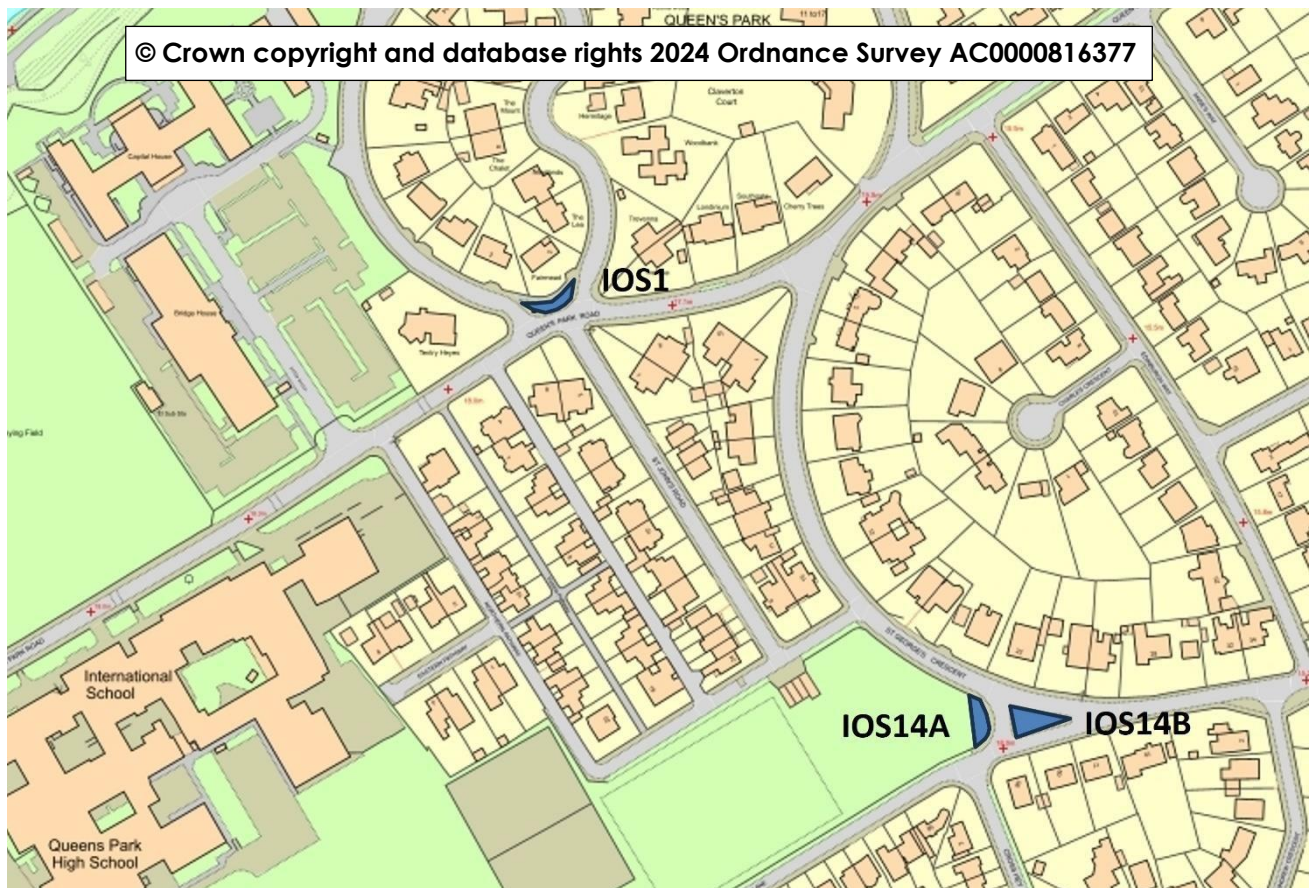




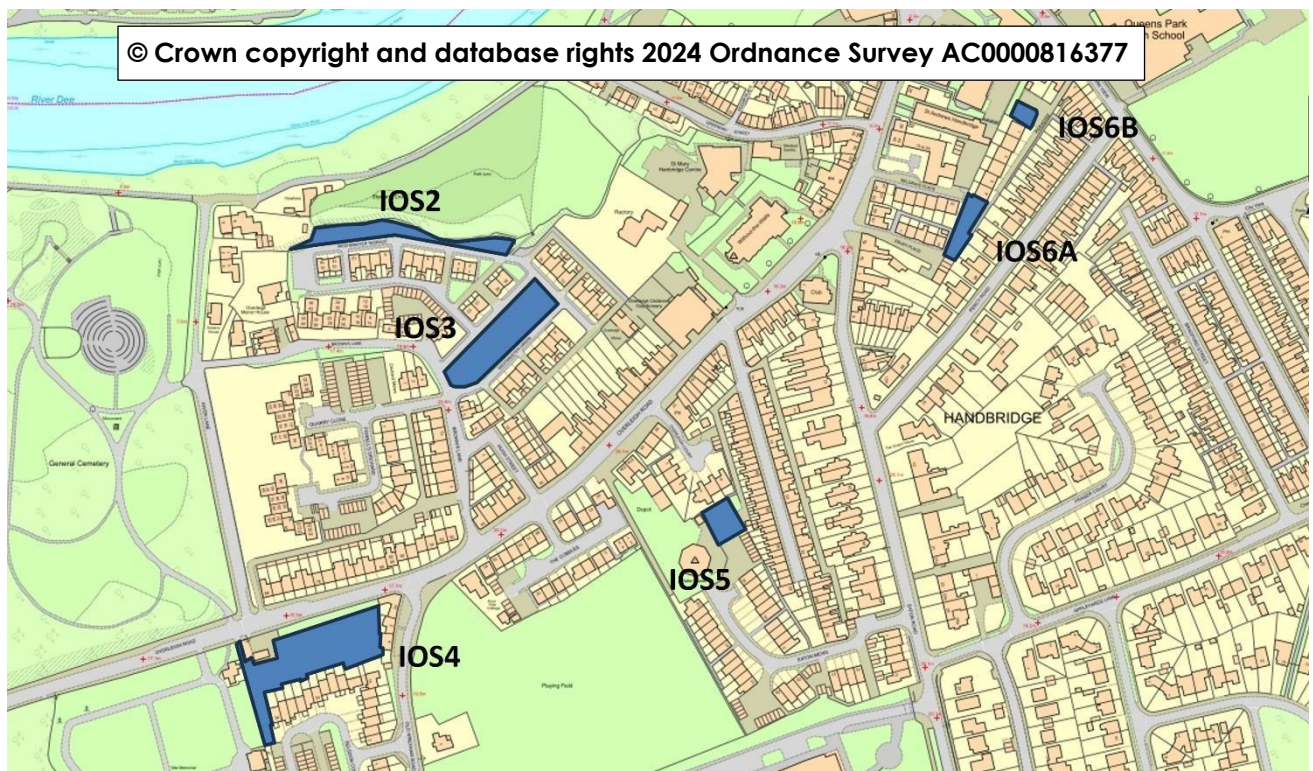
**Map F: Incidental Open Spaces of Community Value**

The following detail maps show the specific locations of each of the incidental green spaces.



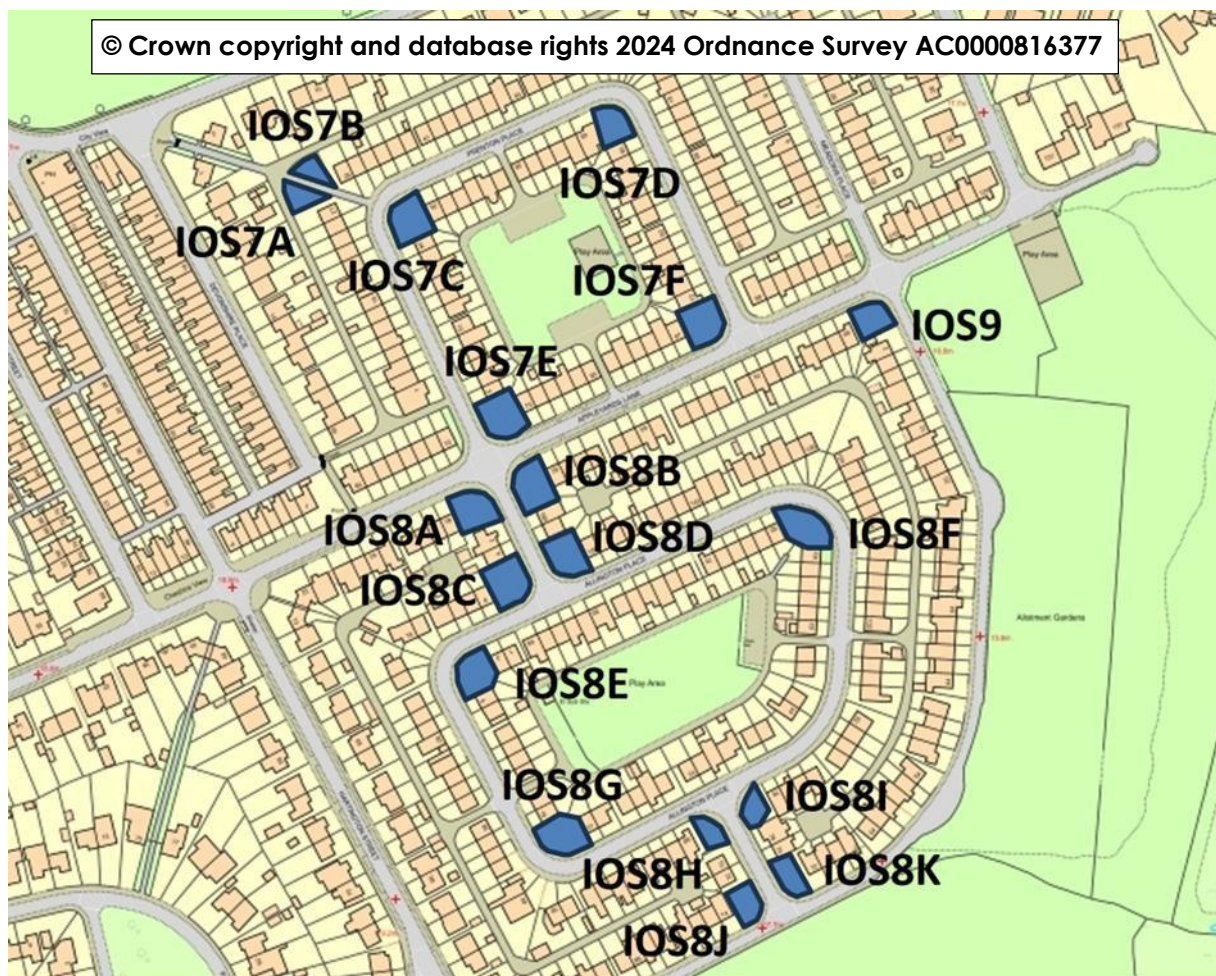


**Map F-1: Incidental Open Spaces in Queen's Park**



**Map F-2: Incidental Open Spaces in Historic Core**









**Map F-4: Incidental Open Spaces in Eaton Road and Appleyards Lane South**

## **POLICY HNP4: SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT**

**Sustainable Transport Development that reduces car usage and congestion on the local road network will be supported. Any development that results in a significant increase in congestion or risks to road safety will not be supported.**

**In order to improve the sustainability of travel, transport and road safety, all developments that are likely to generate significant amounts of movement shall be accompanied by a Transport Assessment. This should include an assessment of the impact that any increase in traffic would have on the roads in the Neighbourhood Development Plan area, especially at peak times for journeys to and from school and work. The assessment should incorporate steps to mitigate any harmful effects and the timetable to deliver that mitigation and, where appropriate, a Travel Plan consistent with the provisions of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan.**

**Proposals for development that meet the sustainable transport needs of those with disabilities or of elderly persons and provide appropriate facilities for them within the transport infrastructure will be supported.**

**Proposals that promote better integration between different modes of transport including links to local facilities and to the railway station, and / or to improve bus routes, services and passenger facilities will be supported.**

5.20 Early community engagement indicated widespread concern in relation to the current parking situation, with respondents highlighting that parking difficulties are experienced by both residents and those working in the area or utilising local facilities and services. Desire for a residents' parking permit scheme was expressed, along with additional off-street parking facilities. The initial survey also demonstrated that traffic congestion is a problem and a desire for improved public transport services, and support expressed for measures that would encourage people to walk and cycle, including the provision of cycle lanes and secure cycle storage.

5.21 CWaC Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies (2015) STRAT10 'Transport and Accessibility' highlights that new developments must demonstrate that additional traffic can be accommodated safely and satisfactorily within the existing or proposed highway network. Opportunities will be sought to extend and improve access to local footpath and cycle networks. Adequate levels of car and cycle parking should be provided. Developments should provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in the borough and the surrounding area, and reduce carbon emissions from transport adapting transport networks to the effects of climate change. Developments that would generate significant amounts of movement should be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan. Measures should be incorporated to improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility, especially for disabled and older people.



5.22 STRAT 11 'Infrastructure' highlights that the Council will facilitate the provision of additional facilities and infrastructure to meet identified needs in locations that are appropriate and accessible, where appropriate through CIL regulations or successor regulations and other planning obligations.

5.23 CWaC has published a Supplementary Planning Document on Parking Standards (updated February 2022) that provides recommended guidelines for parking provision for new development and changes of use. It aims to address traffic congestion and poor air quality through the appropriate control of the amount and design of car parking associated with development.

5.24 The Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with these local plan policies, seeking to ensure that development does not lead to unacceptable impacts on the road network and road safety, and that sustainable transport initiatives are supported.

5.25 Neighbourhood Plan policy HNP4 seeks to help deliver the NPPF's aims of promoting sustainable transport, promoting healthy and safe communities and addressing climate change. Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued. Para 112 indicates that developments should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements and as far as possible to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use.

5.26 Neighbourhood Plan policy HNP contributes to the achievement of sustainable development by performing a social role, creating a high quality environment where people feel safe, an environmental role, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport, and an economic role, ensuring that the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan, namely: Handbridge, Queen's Park, and Belgrave Park remain an accessible and attractive place to live, work, and visit.

## **POLICY HNP5: SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL NETWORK**

**The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the existing Sustainable Travel Network, as shown on Map G below, for the purpose of prioritising active travel and encouraging the use of public transport in the Area.**

**Development proposals on land that lies adjacent to the Network should sustain, and where practicable, enhance the functionality of the Network by virtue of their layout and means of access and landscape treatment.**

**Proposals that avoid harm to the functioning or connectivity of the Network, or include opportunities for improvements to the Network, will be supported. Development that leads to the loss of any part of the Network will only be**

**supported if a suitable and appropriate alternative can be provided. Proposals to divert active travel routes within the Network should provide clear and demonstrable benefits for the wider community.**

**Development proposals that connect to the Network and provide easily-accessible traffic-free routes for non-motorised users (to include pedestrians, wheelchair users, people with prams or baby-buggies, and cyclists) will be supported, and the needs of these users will be taken into account in assessing the traffic implications of all proposals.**

5.27 Handbridge has several large areas of green space, such as The Meadows, Edgar's Field, and Duke's Drive, which are linked to populated areas by public rights of way. Many of these are designated footpath only, and might need to be re-designated to permit use by cyclists. These are important for recreation and leisure use. Neighbourhood Plan surveys have indicated that green spaces and access to them was important to 98% of respondents, and attempts to restrict or fence in access would therefore be detrimental to local residents and the wider community.

5.28 CWaC Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies (2015) STRAT10 'Transport and Accessibility' sets out that new development should incorporate measures to encourage alternative means of transport to the private car and provide for safe and attractive routes to and within the site for all road users. These could include: footways, pedestrian crossings, cycleways, secure cycle parking, cycle crossings, and convenient routes for buses, bus stops, bus shelters and traffic calming measures, with additional priority given to the introduction of traffic calming schemes near to schools and on pedestrian and cycle routes. CWaC have developed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan<sup>7</sup> to address areas for possible improvement.

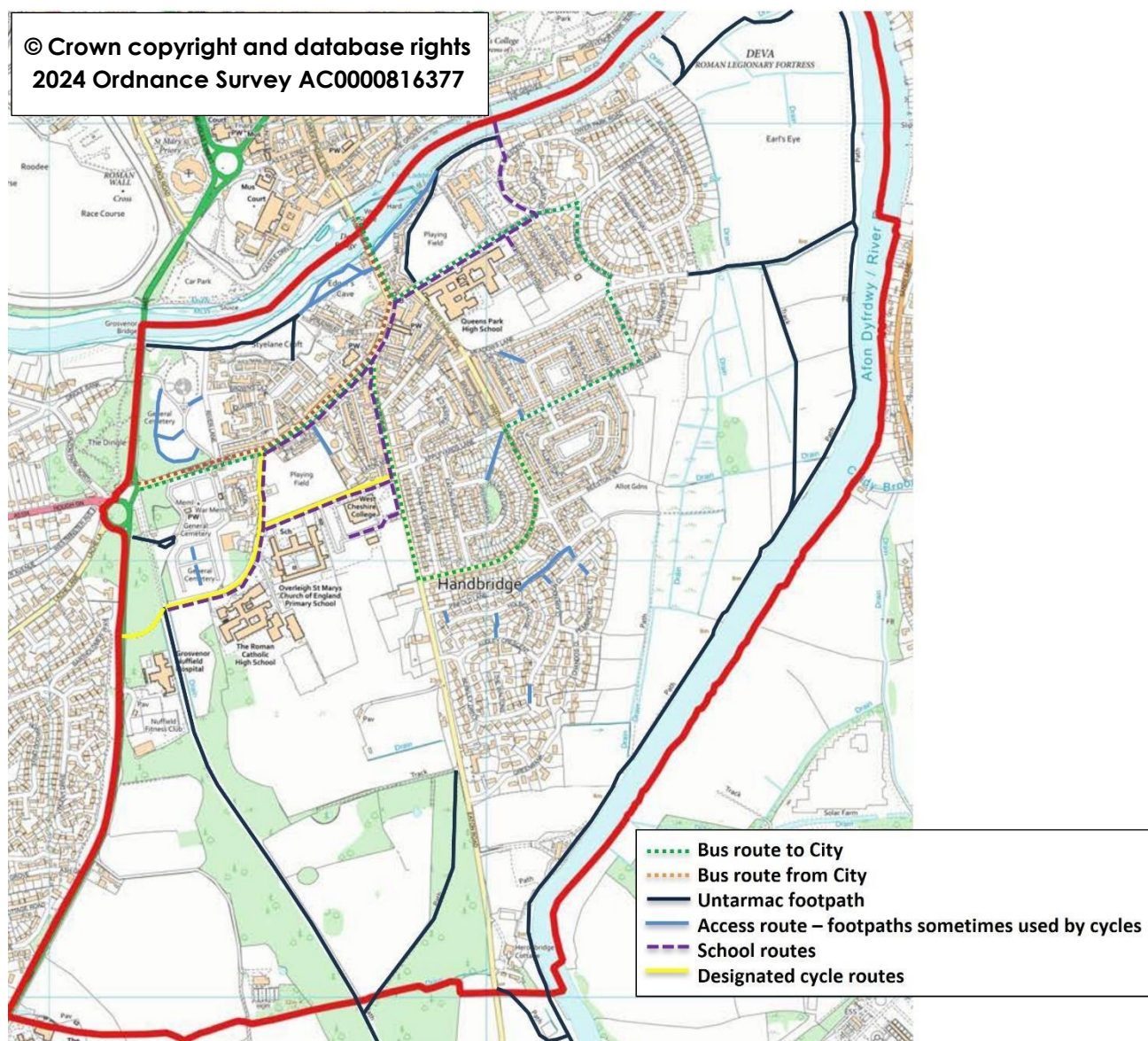
5.29 Neighbourhood Plan policy HNP5 protects and enhances existing public rights of way, along with other active travel routes, and encourages opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing public rights of way. It is in general conformity with relevant policies of the Local Plan and seeks to help deliver one of the NPPF's key planning aims of conserving and enhancing the natural environment, and also of promoting healthy communities, along with promoting sustainable transport and addressing climate change. The NPPF highlights that policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and that opportunities should be sought to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing public rights of way.

5.30 The Sustainable Travel Network includes bus routes, which it is acknowledged are not subject to planning regulations. Their inclusion in the Sustainable Travel Network should therefore be viewed as primarily for information purposes.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/asset-library/transport/cycling/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan-2020-2030.pdf>

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Map G: Sustainable Travel Network

## POLICY HNP6: PARKING

New residential, retail, commercial and business developments shall make adequate provision for on-site or other appropriate parking facilities to avoid or minimise on-street parking requirements arising from the development, having regard to the number of spaces defined in the Cheshire West and Chester Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document, or any document that supersedes it.

The loss of existing parking provision for shops and businesses will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it is no longer required, or that

**adequate replacement provision will be made, or that an agreed alternative transport facility will be provided to mitigate for the loss.**

**The provision of additional residential off-road car parking in the Plan Area will be supported for those terraced streets with parking problems that do not have on-site frontage on which to park any vehicle, and where such proposals comply with other relevant policy considerations.**

5.31 Large areas of Handbridge are used by commuters and shoppers to park due to the proximity of Chester City Centre. Parking capacity is already strained due to the number of terraced houses facing directly onto the pavement. The vast majority of these were built before the era of major car ownership and therefore have no designated parking space. Due to the narrowness of the roads, cars often park illegally on the pavement or grass verges, causing obstruction to both pedestrians and other road users. If prohibition of pavement parking was rigidly enforced several roads would be too narrow if on-street parking continued. The provision of convenient and adequate parking facilities is an important consideration in sustaining local businesses.

5.32 In light of this, the issue of parking is of much concern to the community, and has been raised in the initial survey of residents and larger survey of residents indicated that 96% of respondents saw parking as a problem. It has been repeatedly raised at Neighbourhood Planning meetings, and 30% found it difficult to park by local high street shops. In addition to this, a survey of local businesses indicated that short term parking places were essential for their viability.

5.33 Policy HNP6 supports parking development that would reduce existing parking problems in the area, subject to compliance with other Neighbourhood Plan policies such as HNP4 above, as well as other local and national policies and guidance, for example in relation to conservation areas and the Green Belt.

5.34 CWaC Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocation and Detailed Policies (2019) T5 'Parking and Access' sets out the key priorities and opportunities in relation to transport and highlights the importance of balancing the transport system in favour of sustainable modes and supports the overall strategy of the Local Plan of reducing the need to travel by locating development in the most sustainable locations. Promoting walking, cycling and public transport gives people a real choice about how they travel, and can also generate health, social inclusion and air-quality benefits. However, it is recognised that the private car will remain the dominant form of transport for the foreseeable future and, as such, improvements to the highway network and parking provision will be needed.

5.35 The policy seeks to help deliver the NPPF's key planning aims of building a strong, competitive economy and making the best use of land, as the retention and provision of parking will help services and businesses to thrive. By performing a social role, creating a high quality environment where people want to visit, and where community facilities, businesses and services can be easily accessed by all, and an economic role, ensuring that Handbridge, Queen's Park, and Belgrave Park remain a valued accessible and attractive place to live,



work and invest, and allowing for the continued viability of existing businesses, the policy contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

## **POLICY HNP7: DESIGN**

Development proposals will be supported provided they accord with the Design Guidelines, where applicable, relevant to the character area typologies within which they are located as set out in the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines. All new development should, where applicable:

- i. Protect and increase the use of local character features, and provide an appropriate response to the character area, as detailed in Design Guideline A (Character);
- ii. Design in relevant environmental sustainability measures such as passive design principles, renewable energy provision, and biodiversity gains, as detailed in Design Guideline B (Sustainability);
- iii. Incorporate natural features that create and integrate new green infrastructure networks and add to the aesthetic appeal of the area, as detailed in Design Guideline E (Natural Features);
- iv. Contribute to the enhancement, preservation and/or creation of contextually responsive frontages and boundary treatments as detailed in Design Guideline F (Frontages and Boundaries); and
- v. Where possible, contribute to the enhancement of the public realm as set out in Design Guideline G (Public Realm).

Proposals for infill development should have particular regard to Design Guideline C (Infill Development), which details relevant considerations in relation to scale, massing, enclosure, access, storage, and proportionality.

Development proposals located on the settlement edge should have particular regard to Design Guideline D (Settlement Edges), which sets out provisions to ensure a sensitive and considered design response to the contrast between urban character areas and landscape character areas.

5.36 This policy implements the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines (published as a separate document), which incorporates the following aims and objectives in support of the Neighbourhood Plan Vision:

- ◆ 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.

5.37 The Design Guidelines build on and complement the existing Chester Characterisation Study, undertaking a detailed analysis of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and identifying and describing four main Character Areas, each with a number of sub-areas. Design Guidelines explain how development should respond to this analysis and the identified characteristics of the Character Areas.

5.38 The policy provides additional guidance as to how a number of strategic policies – most notably ENV 5 'Historic Environment' and ENV 6 'High Quality Design and Sustainable Construction' – and the associated policies of the Local Plan (Part Two) – including but not limited to DM 3 'Design, Character and Visual Amenity' – should be implemented at a local level. Reference should also be made to Supplementary Planning Document: House Extensions and Domestic Outbuildings (dated January 2021).

## **POLICY HNP8: KEY VIEWS**

**The Neighbourhood Plan identifies Key Views on Map H.**

**Development proposals should recognise and positively respond to the identified Key Views through their design, height and massing.**

**Development proposals that would have a significant adverse impact on an identified Key View will not be supported.**

5.39 This policy identifies and seeks to protect a series of views from public vantage points in and beyond the Neighbourhood Plan Area that are considered especially important in defining the relationship between Handbridge and its surroundings, notably the city of Chester, the River Dee, and the swathes of green open space around the eastern and southern edges of the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The following photographs illustrate these views. The Design Guidelines report identified a number of landmarks across the neighbourhood area, the most important of which terminate or punctuate the Key Views, and are designated as Local Landmarks in Policy HNP9. In doing so, it also identifies some of the heritage-related attributes (Policy HNP10) that form an essential part of the character of Handbridge. The policy does not seek to prevent any development lying within an identified Key View but requires that proposals recognise and take account of these in their design. In each case, only the minimum area of land necessary to define the view has been identified.





**V1 Riverbank view to Chester City Centre: Chester Castle from the top of Edgar's Field**



**V2 Riverbank view of the Groves**



**V3 Riverbank view of Boughton**



**V4 View to West of Water Tower and St Mary's Church**



**V5 View to East of Water Tower and St Mary's Church**



**V6 View of Edgar's Field**

## **POLICY HNP9: LOCAL LANDMARKS**

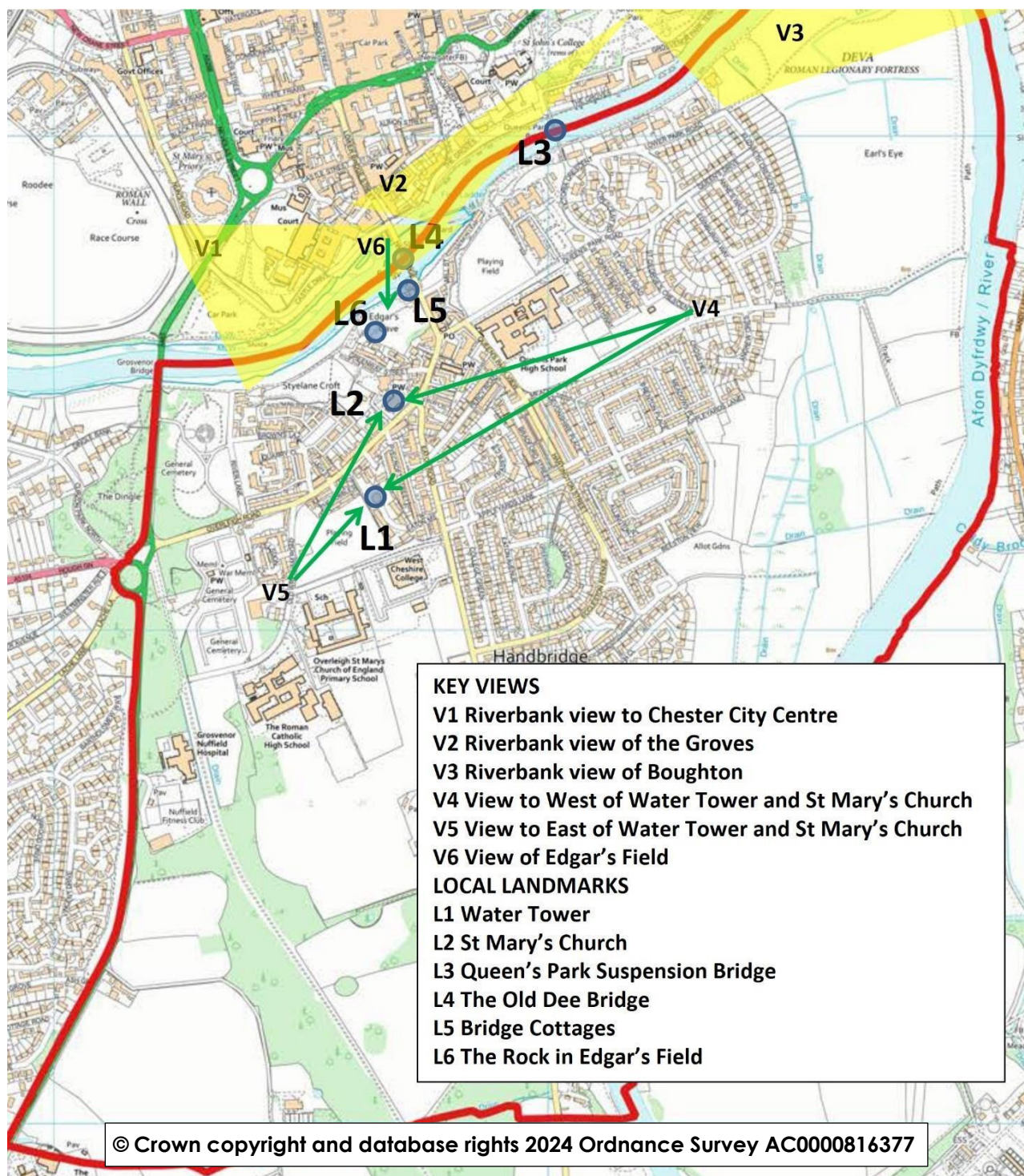
**The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following Local Landmarks, as shown on Map H:**

- **L1 Overleigh Water Tower**
- **L2 St Mary's Church**
- **L3 Queen's Park Suspension Bridge**
- **L4 The Old Dee Bridge**
- **L5 Bridge Cottages**
- **L6 The Rock in Edgar's Field**

**Development proposals that preserve or enhance Local Landmarks and their settings will be supported. Proposals that would adversely impact or lead to the loss or significant reduction in the height of a Local Landmark will not be supported.**

5.40 This policy identifies 6 structures as Local Landmarks by virtue of their communal and striking aesthetic value, which single them out as landmarks within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. They are considered to be the most important of the larger number of landmarks identified in the Design Guidelines report in respect of the high quality of key views of them from within the neighbourhood area and beyond (see Policy HNP8). Photographs of each are provided at Appendix E along with a brief description justifying their inclusion. Identification as a Local Landmark affords these structures protection as non-designated heritage assets in conformity with CWaC Local Plan (Part One) policies ENV5 'Historic Environment' and ENV6 'High Quality Design and Sustainable Construction', and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM48 'Non-Designated Heritage Assets'.





Map H: Key Views and Local Landmarks

## POLICY HNP10: LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS

**The Neighbourhood Plan identifies Local Heritage Assets, as listed in Appendix C and shown on Map J, by way of their local architectural and historic value to the area.**

**Development proposals that preserve or enhance the significance of a Local Heritage Asset will be supported.**

**Development that would result in harm to or loss of the significance of a Local Heritage Asset will only be permitted where the benefits of the proposal have been demonstrated to outweigh the resultant harm, having regard to scale of the harm and the significance of the asset.**

5.41 Designated and non-designated heritage assets enhance local distinctiveness and should be preserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance. Designated heritage assets, including listed buildings and conservation areas, are afforded a high degree of protection in both local and national policy (CWaC Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV5 'Historic environment' and Local Plan (Part Two) policies DM46 'Development in Conservation Areas' and DM47 'Listed Buildings') and Section 16 of the NPPF, specifically paragraphs 199-202), as well as under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended. In addition to this, Local Plan Policy ENV5 makes provision for the protection and identification of non-designated heritage assets and their settings, including local assets, and paragraph 203 of the NPPF requires that the effect of a development proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the planning application.

5.42 In addition to its conservation areas, the Neighbourhood Plan Area has a number of designated heritage assets, which fall into two groups: scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings. The Plan Area has two scheduled ancient monuments – the Roman Quarries and Minerva in Edgar's Field, and Dee Bridge – both of which are also Grade I listed buildings, and two further Grade I listed buildings: Grosvenor Bridge and the Weir.

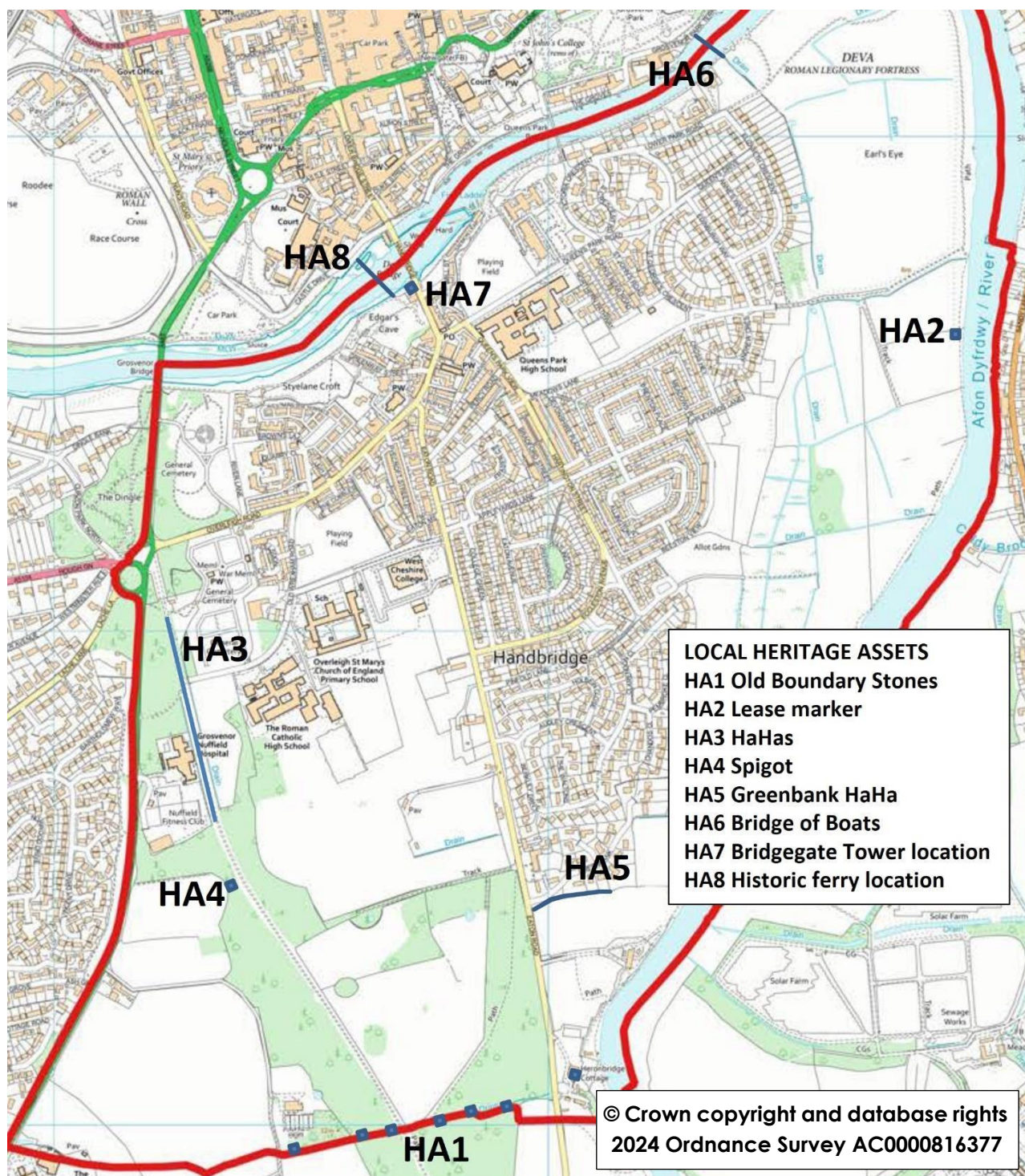
5.43 The remainder of the Plan Area's listed buildings fall within specific groupings. In Queen's Park there are 7 properties between Lower Park Road and the River Dee, and thirteen around St John's Road & Victoria Pathway. The shops by the old bridge, 1-19 Handbridge are listed grade II. There is a cluster around St Mary's Church, and Eaton Road and Pyecroft Street. Overleigh Cemetery has listed tombs, gatepiers, chapels etc. The lodge, gates and screens by Dukes Drive Gates are listed, and features around Netherleigh. Dukes Drive and Pageant Field and the woods around have a Grade II listing as part of Eaton Park even though Pageant Field was a late acquisition and not a design part of the park.

5.44 This policy identifies a number of buildings and structures within the Plan Area as Local Heritage Assets, affording them additional protection in recognition of the important contribution that they make to the special character and appearance of the area. Inclusion on this list affords these structures protection as non-designated heritage assets in conformity

with CWaC Local Plan (Part One) policies ENV5 'Historic Environment' and ENV6 'High Quality Design and Sustainable Construction', and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM48 'Non-Designated Heritage Assets'.

5.45 The Neighbourhood Plan project has utilised local knowledge and the Heritage Gateway to identify these structures, and assessed them for inclusion on the Local Heritage Assets list using the guidance provided in 'Historic England Advice Note 7. Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage'. Photographs of each asset are provided at Appendix C along with a brief description detailing how they meet the criteria for inclusion.





Map J Local Heritage Assets

## **POLICY HNP11: LOCAL HISTORIC LANDSCAPES**

**The Neighbourhood Plan identifies Local Historic Landscapes, as listed at Appendix D and shown on Map K, by way of their local historic and archaeological interest to the area.**

**Development proposals that preserve or enhance the significance of these landscapes will be supported. Where relevant, proposals should demonstrate how they have taken account of the visual and historic relationship between the landscape and the settlement, and how this has been preserved or enhanced.**

**Proposals that would result in harm to or loss of the significance of a Local Historic Landscape will only be permitted where the benefits of the proposal have been demonstrated to outweigh the resultant harm, having regard to the scale of the harm and the significance of the asset.**

5.46 The Neighbourhood Plan Area benefits from a long, rich history, and is recognised as being in the Prata Legionis of the Roman Legionary Fortress. That is to say that, based on international Roman models, it is considered that the fortress used Handbridge to grow crops and graze livestock, and that precludes any Roman settlement in the area. The nearest Roman settlement is Heronbridge, just outside the Plan Area, and there is one in Chester Business Park. It is also believed that a strip of land either side of Eaton Road (considered to be Roman 'Watling Street') was reserved for high status burials, with evidence for this at Netherleigh and in the former allotments now under College Green, Eaton Avenue, and between Appleyards Lane and Eccleston Avenue. However, both the course of Watling Street and the extent of burials has been inadequately proven. Finally, southern parts of Handbridge along with Claverton were common fields for the medieval inhabitants of Chester. There were several of these zones, and much of Newton is another example. People living in Chester itself had heritable rights to specific strips of land in Handbridge and Claverton, which tends to mean that, apart from barns and the odd dwelling, it was sparsely populated. The Meadows (Earl's Eye) was leased as common grazing and for a hay crop, and there is a lease marker stone just south of the end of Bottoms Lane.

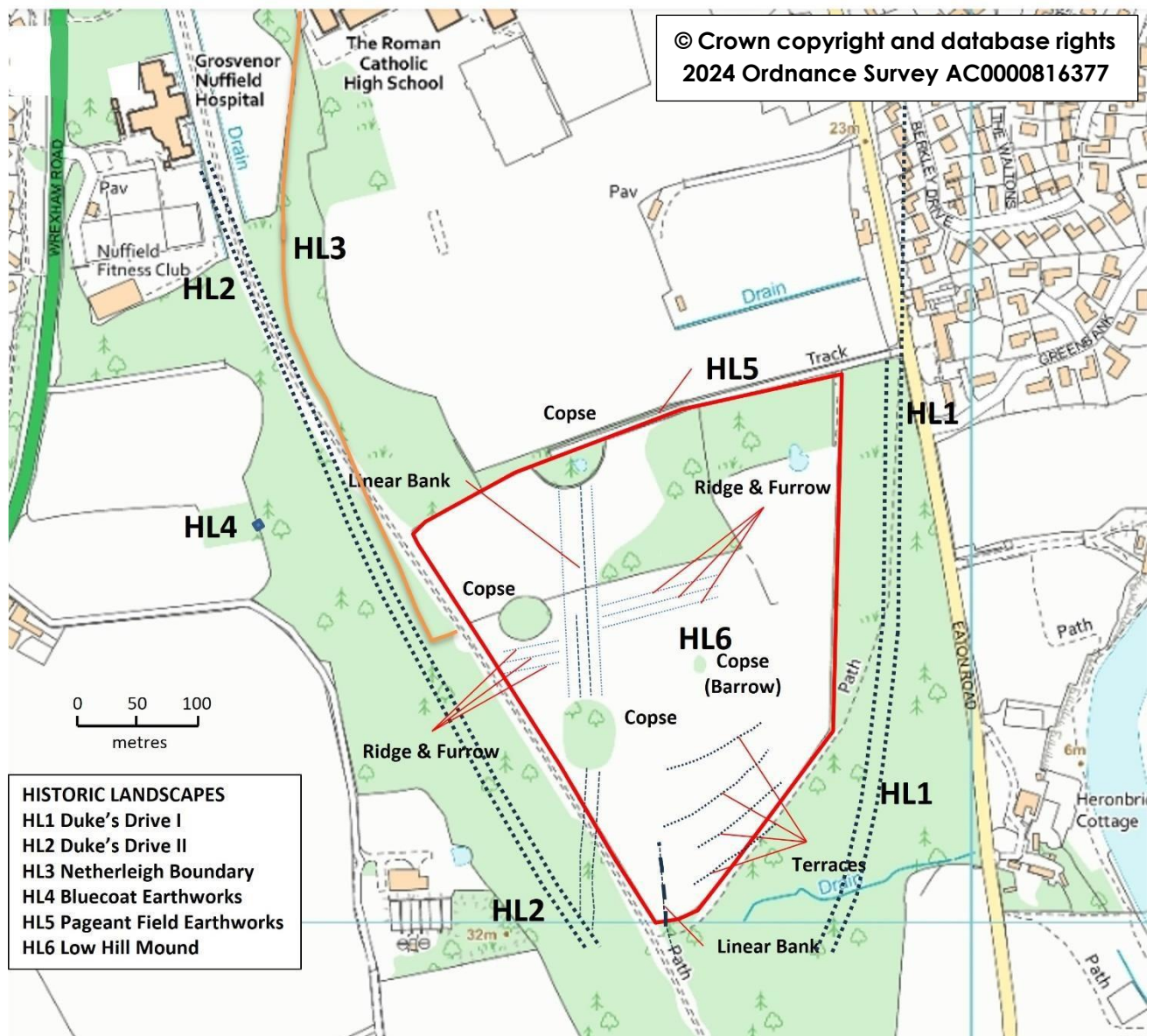
5.47 For much of its history, Handbridge was a Royal Estate attached to Chester Castle. Certain parts of Handbridge, together with parts of Chester, had this designation up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Handbridge parts were permanently granted to the Grosvenors. But prior to that the Honour of Handbridge was granted on fixed term leases of 21 years and had to be re-applied for – that is, for some lease periods it was not held by the Grosvenors as someone outbid them. It tends to be assumed that the whole of Handbridge belonged to

the Grosvenors, but it actually involved parcels of land, and these parcels influenced the way that Handbridge developed.

5.48 Evidence of the area's history remains legible in the landscapes and their features surrounding the settlement, and this policy identifies these in order to provide them additional protection in recognition of the evidence they provide of past human activity and the substance and evolution of the area. The Neighbourhood Plan project has utilised local knowledge and the Heritage Gateway to identify these sites, and assessed them for inclusion as Local Historic Landscapes using the guidance provided in 'Historic England Advice Note 7. Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage', which states that *"although local heritage lists have long been developed successfully for buildings, all heritage asset types, including monuments, sites, places, areas, parks garden and designed landscapes may be considered for inclusion"* (p.11) and explicitly includes 'Archaeological Interest' as a criterion for assessment. Photographs of each asset are provided at Appendix D along with a brief description detailing how they meet the criteria for inclusion. In a number of cases the features are archaeological in nature or are difficult to observe purely from photographs. In these cases, the photographs included with the Plan indicate the general location of the historic landscape features.

5.49 Identification as Local Historic Landscapes affords these sites protection as non-designated heritage assets in conformity with CWaC Local Plan (Part One) policies ENV5 'Historic Environment' and ENV6 'High Quality Design and Sustainable Construction', and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM48 'Non-Designated Heritage Assets'.





Map K: Local Historic Landscapes

- A. Proposals for new commercial, business, service, pub or drinking establishment uses within the Handbridge Local Retail Centre, as defined on Map L, will be supported provided the following criteria are met where relevant:
- i. It would not lead to the loss of an existing retail or pub or drinking establishment use which would harm the vitality and viability of the Centre;
  - ii. There would not be an excessive concentration of non-retail or pub or drinking establishment uses in the primary frontage onto Handbridge (Road) that would undermine the social and cultural function of the Centre; and
  - iii. Development is consistent with the scale and social and cultural function of the Centre.
- B. Within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the loss of existing Class E uses, or Sui Generis (p) or (q) uses (drinking establishments or drinking establishments with expanded food provision), to other uses will only be supported where the above criteria are met, it does not harm the vitality and viability of the area, and the site has been adequately marketed and is demonstrably no longer viable in its current use, or where the proposal is for a community facility.
- C. Proposals for new residential uses on upper floors of retail or pub or drinking establishment premises will be supported provided they:
- i. Are carefully designed to achieve a good quality of life for residents;
  - ii. Achieve well-designed development that creates a safe and comfortable living standard, and which positively addresses the townscape through good design that enhances the external appearance of the building;
  - iii. Take account of existing ground floor uses and mitigate accordingly to minimise the scope for conflict with existing commercial operations and ensure that future residents have a good quality of life in amenity terms and that existing commercial operations are not unduly restrained;
  - iv. So far as possible, avoid residential access via rear service yards in order to enhance natural surveillance and assist legibility. Where this is unavoidable, measures to enhance legibility such as lighting should be incorporated into design, and clear distinction should be

made to delineate between residential access routes and areas required for commercial activity; and

- v. Minimise street clutter by directing supporting infrastructure such as bin stores and secure bicycle storage facilities away from active frontages.
- . Development proposals that require loss of ground floor floorspace in a local retail unit, or pub, or drinking establishment to facilitate access to upper floor residential or other appropriate use (e.g. office, financial, or professional services) will be supported where this can be achieved without undermining the integrity and viability of the existing unit(s); and provided it will not result in a proliferation of residential accesses that would undermine the vitality and viability of any shopping frontage.

5.50 Community engagement has established that the community values the presence of independent traders, especially those that contribute positively to the area's character, diversity, and uniqueness. While there were different opinions regarding attracting visitors and the role of chain stores, the majority of respondents to the comprehensive survey expressed a preference for supporting and maintaining local independent businesses in Handbridge. Both the comprehensive survey and the survey of existing businesses indicated that the limited number of premises with 'shop fronts' need to be retained and predominantly operated by retail businesses, rather than offices.

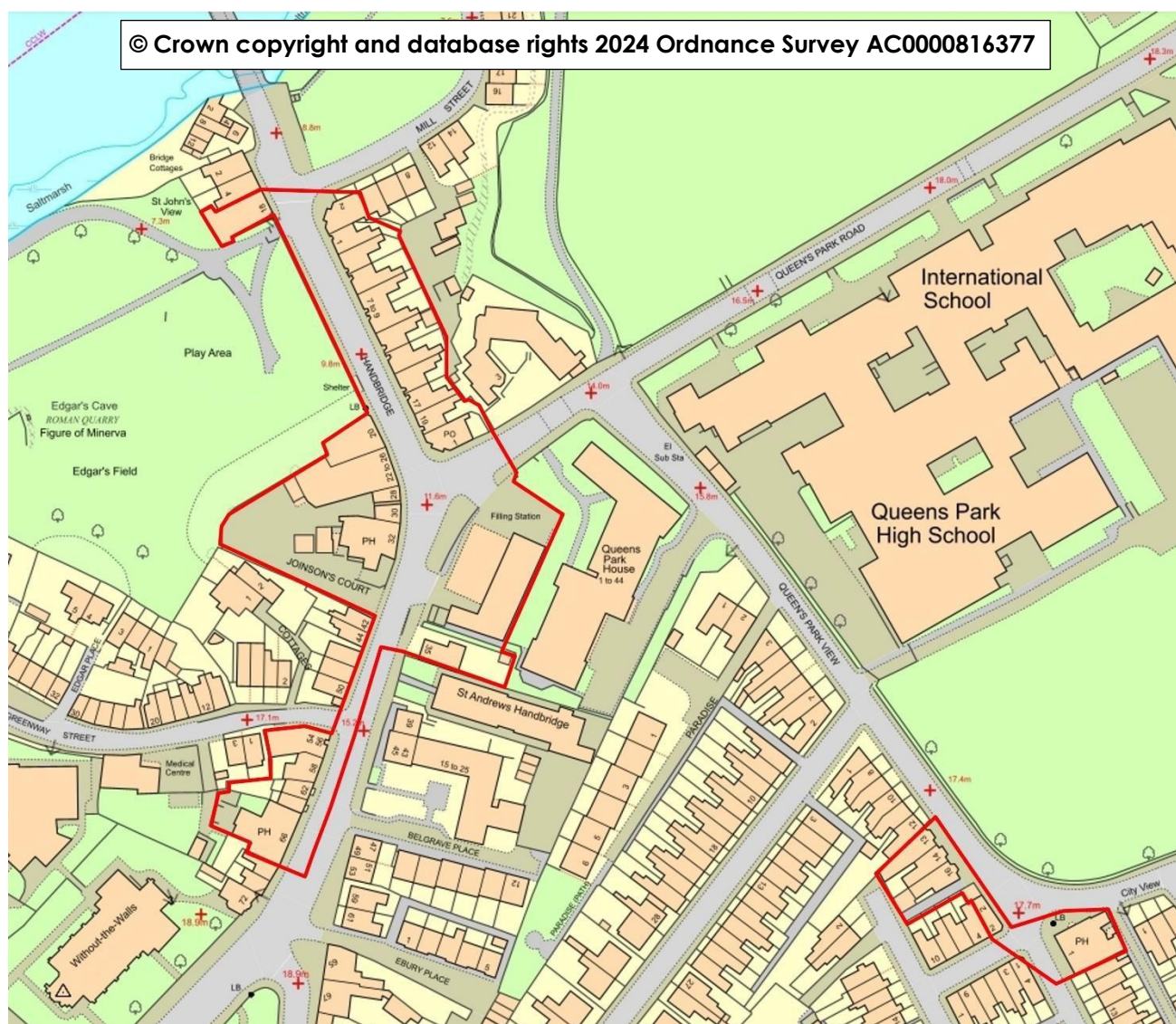
5.51 The Local Plan identifies the northern section of Handbridge (Road) as a Local Retail Centre, and this policy is intended as an expression of how the community wishes to see this area thrive. It seeks to sustain and build on the success of the area as a vibrant and vital heart of the Plan Area, making local provision for a variety of everyday needs and contributing the maintenance of Handbridge's identity as a neighbourhood in its own right.

5.52 This policy takes account of the Use Classes Order 2020, which defines commercial, business and service uses by combining previous retail, financial services, café/restaurant, offices and other social uses. The Neighbourhood Plan project has reviewed the Local Retail Centre boundary defined by the Local Plan and found that it continues to serve this purpose. The majority of retail uses and 'shop fronts' are concentrated along this section of Handbridge (Road), hence its designation in clause A(ii) as a 'primary frontage', but the policy recognises the important local role played by occasional outliers as well and provides protection against their loss. The role of the Plan Area's public houses as both visitor attractions and community facilities contributing to the vitality of the neighbourhood is recognised, and the policy also therefore safeguards against loss of these uses. The policy will operate alongside other local and national policies relating to heritage assets, including the design guidance of this Plan, as the Local Retail Centre lies within a Conservation Area, of which much of its heritage significance is derived from this vibrant mix of uses.



5.53 The policy also encourages the use of upper floors by augmenting Local Plan policy DM15 to acknowledge the challenges of doing so in an historic environment, and provides clarity of expectation as to how this should be achieved without adversely affecting the viability or vitality of ground floor businesses nor the residential amenity of upper floor occupants.

5.54 The policy seeks to ensure that non-retail or pub or drinking establishment usage in the primary frontage onto Handbridge (Road) should not exceed 20% of the available primary frontage. In addition, its clause A(iii) excludes industrial uses (Class E(g)) and other uses that may fall in that use class that are better located elsewhere.



**Map L: Handbridge Local Retail Centre**

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 The Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented through Cheshire West and Chester Council's consideration and determination of planning applications for development in the Neighbourhood Area.

### DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

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6.2 The Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum, or its successor body, once the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan is made, will use a combination of the Local Plan and this Neighbourhood Plan's policies to inform and determine its planning application decisions. The Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum, or its successor body, will be a statutory consultee on planning applications made in the Neighbourhood Area and it will be made aware of any future planning applications or alterations to those applications by the planning authority. It will seek to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been identified and applied correctly by applicants and by officers in their decision reports.

6.3 Where necessary, the Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum, or its successor body, may seek to persuade the Secretary of State to call-in a planning application that it considers is in conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan but which the planning authority has deemed to consent. Similarly, it may also seek to persuade the Secretary of State to recover an appeal of a refused application, where the conflict with one or more Neighbourhood Plan policies has been important in the reasons for refusal. In both cases, the Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum, or its successor body, will do so if it considers matters of national policy significance (for neighbourhood planning) are raised.

### LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

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6.4 Where opportunities arise through Section 106 agreements (or through the Community Infrastructure Levy) to secure financial contributions to invest in improving local infrastructure, the Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum, or its successor body, will review the evidence base and community consultations for the Neighbourhood Plan to inform its view in liaising with the local planning authorities.

### OTHER NON-PLANNING MATTERS

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6.5 During the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, there have been many ideas for improving or addressing current problems in the Neighbourhood Area that lie outside the scope of the land use planning system to control. The Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum has noted these issues and will take them forward through its day-to-day business and in partnership with the local community and relevant parties.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A – Neighbourhood Forum Officers and Constitution

Appendix B – Designated Heritage Assets

Appendix C – Local Heritage Assets

Appendix D – Local Historic Landscapes

Appendix E – Local Landmarks



## APPENDIX A – NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM OFFICERS AND CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum was approved by Cheshire West and Chester Council as part of the designation process in January 2021. The Constitution is available on the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan website:

<https://handbridgeneighbourhoodplan.files.wordpress.com/2021/06/constitution-1.pdf>

The officers of the Neighbourhood Forum and key volunteers who have been active in drafting the Neighbourhood Plan for the community are:

Alan Morris (natural environment lead)

Brian Everett (design lead until 2022)

Christine Robinson (treasurer and communications lead from 2023)

Conor O'Gorman (chair)

Helen Speke (secretary)

Jacqueline Hughes (treasurer until 2024)

Martin Smith (vice chair)

Tom Welsh (heritage lead)

## APPENDIX B – DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

GRADE	HERITAGE ASSET
<b>Grade I Listed</b>	Chester Weir and Salmon Leap Grosvenor Bridge Old Dee Bridge Roman Shrine to Minerva
<b>Grade II* Listed</b>	Church of St Mary's Overleigh Cemetery (South): Coplestone Memorial
<b>Grade II Listed</b>	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 Pycroft Street: 1 Pycroft Street: 2 Pycroft Street: 1A and 3-37 Pycroft 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

**Old city boundary and boundary stones** (HA1). The city boundary of Chester dates back to 13<sup>th</sup> century and was perambulated at least twice a century, these events being recorded. The only significant survival of this circuit is contained in Dukes Drive woodlands and at Heronbridge. It is a composite of documented banks and ditches with permanent marker stones emplaced in 1785 and 1857, which supplemented the ditches where now poorly defined. They run from the south-west corner of the water treatment works to the River Dee at Heronbridge, and include a 1950s extension to include the cottages south of Heronbridge. They constitute a rare example of a surviving historical boundary, but are totally unprotected. This has been manifested in recent years with one stone being vandalised by someone drilling holes in order to uproot it with a winch, and someone re-erecting fallen stones badly and without authorisation. There are three extant 1785 stones, one relocated within Heronbridge House garden, and five 1857 stones. These stones bear the initials of the Mayor at the time, with the date.

**Meadows lease marker** (HA2). There is a 17<sup>th</sup> century lease marker stone for grazing rights just south of the end of Bottoms Lane on the Dee levee, which is not protected.

**Ha-has** (HA3). Duke's Drive from the Overleigh Gates to the Nuffield, and thence along part of the 1830-1850 drive was bounded by grass verges and deep ditches faced on the drive side with drystone walling, and were effectively ha-has to prevent grazing livestock coming onto the drive. Unfortunately, they have been filled in in places by utilities and damaged because they are not protected.

**Spigot** (HA4). There is a wartime gun mount or spigot within SJ 403643, comprising a metal reinforced concrete cylinder with a metal spike on top for mounting a machine gun.

**Greenbank ha-ha** (HA5). There is a ha-ha on the south side of Green Bank, bounding the gardens of Greenbank House, comprising a high drystone wall on the north side, and a steep slope on the south, floor width about 2 to 3 metres.

**Bridge of Boats** (HA6). During the Civil War the Parliamentarians constructed a bridge of boats in order to bring supplies across the river because the Old Dee Bridge was in Royalist hands. Officially it has been placed at the north-west corner of The Meadows, but a more likely location is by the Grosvenor Rowing Club. Opposite this point there are a number of post-holes or slots in a rock face, inside a garden wall, and one possible explanation is that these mark the anchor point on one side of the Bridge of Boats.

**Site of south bridge gate** (HA7). There was an arched gateway with a room over at the south end of Dee Bridge, which ought to be included in the Scheduled Ancient Monument designation. The wide pier on the east side indicates one side of this. Bridge Cottages are on the site of the other part and the Gatekeeper's Lodge. Next to the cottages is a passage leading down to the Dee which was for horses, and corresponds to one now lost east of the Bridge Gate on the north bank. There is periodic interest in a commemoration marker being placed here as the point where Charles I left Chester and England.

**Earlier Bridge and ferry crossing** (HA8). The rock below the one with the effigy of Minerva does have potential as a bridge head for the Roman Bridge, and was so believed to be until modern archaeologists decided the Romans used the axis of the present bridge, despite having no grounds for this except a hunch. So, this site is unprotected. There was a ferry here in conjunction with the Ship Gate, which lies under the Waterside Campus Innovation Centre.



Photographs of each of the Heritage Asset sites are copied below, with the exception of the Bridge of Boats (HA6) where the precise location has not currently been confirmed by historical experts.



**HA1 Old Boundary Stones**



**HA2 Lease Marker**



**HA3 HaHas adjacent to Duke's Drive**



**HA4 Spigot: WWII gun emplacement overlooking Duke's Drive**





**HA5 Greenbank HaHa**



**HA7 Bridgegate Tower location: West-side projection and east-side platform**



**HA8 Historic ferry location**

**Dukes Drive precursors** (HL1 and HL2). The Duke's Drive or Chester Approach was created to provide a private drive from Chester to Eaton. The original drive came off Eaton Road at Greenbank, and appears to follow an earlier terraceway that branches off on its own. The drive can still be followed, but the first two hundred metres are overlain by the modern footpath. It reached the present Dukes Drive a hundred metres outside our area. When the Grosvenor Bridge was completed in 1830 a new drive was created from Overleigh Lodge, but the Grosvenors couldn't get all the land they wanted until the 1860s. This second drive is the one shown on the Tithe Award map. The present drive from the Nuffield to the old city boundary cuts across the angle of land acquired from Netherleigh. The previous drives still exist in woodland.

**Netherleigh Estate Boundary** (HL3). As mentioned above the Grosvenors could not initially acquire the route they wanted for Duke's Drive because of land held by Netherleigh and other landowners. This land was contained within a massive ditch and bank boundary, which still mostly survives, and may be of greater antiquity. It ran up the east side of Overleigh Cemetery from Overleigh Road, up the west side of Catholic High School in a woodland strip, and then within the woodlands between Dukes Drive and the playing fields, crossed by the present drive, coming to an angle with a ditch next to the 1830-50 drive, a total distance of over 800 metres. It mostly consists of a 15 metre broad bank with a ditch on one side or the other. At one point on the edge of the bank a Roman coin was found in the 1970s. This bank is both an interesting extant feature and a bank with possible significant antiquity but is totally undesigned and unprotected.

**Earthworks** (HL4) at site of Bluecoat School field SJ 403643– part of what appears to have been a rectangular ditched enclosure, wide, broad ditch on two sides and a short bit of a third. The enclosed space on east is partly covered by brick piles from former sports field changing rooms. It might indicate a utilitarian moat (protecting a barn, animal housing, beehives etc.) The Bluecoat land is documented., but there is no protection

**Pageant Field** (HL5) This is the field contained within Dukes Drive Woodlands east of the drive and west of the path from Greenbank extending to the old city boundary (around SJ 407643). The main part belongs to Cheshire Farms but the fences are down. Just north of this is a rough field that was partly used as a sports field and, and it is crossed by a 1970s water main. These fields and part of the playing fields to the north were used for a Chester's Historic Pageant event in 1910, which had mock castles and re-enactments. The main field contains distinctive cultivation ridges and terraced fields, divided by contour lynchets, an unusual and distinctive combination.

Whereas similar field survivals are included in the Heronbridge Scheduled Ancient Monument, between Dukes drive and Eaton Road, there is no such protection here. Yet this is a particularly interesting group with good Inclosure Award and Estate documentation. The major linear banks formed headlands to blocks of ridge-and-furrow. The ridge-and-furrow has also been inserted within an earlier pattern of contoured terrace scarps, and this in turn seems to have been influenced by a sub-circular enclosure two hundred metres in diameter. There are traces of other circular enclosures.

In particular, three distinctive earthworks converge on a point a hundred metres north of the old city boundary on the locus of the 1830-1850s Duke's Drive. The first is the Netherleigh Estate boundary described above. A distinctive earthwork joins from north-north-east, 550 metres long. It comprises a bank 13 metres broad with lower banks either side. A Roman coin was found on this bank at its northern end in 1971. There is a parallel bank in the south-west corner of the Pageant field. There is a third linear



running north-east to south-west from near Greenbank, deeply scored through by overlying ridge-and-furrow, and therefore older.

**Low Hill mound (HL6).** This is a stony mound, at SJ 407642, capped by a clump of Scotch Pine which is avoided by the ridge and furrow and is clearly older. There is an angular structure to the mound, a rectangular hollow let into the north side. The HER classifies this as an Eaton Park landscape feature though this land was not Grosvenor until quite late. A recent change to the HER ref 11211/2 adds a designation "Bronze Age Barrow".

**Overleigh House site.** By the Dukes Drive Gates at Overleigh and north of the lodge are remains of the platform that supported Overleigh House, its garden and associated structures pre-1880s. These remains are heavily overgrown. Some are designated part of the Eaton Hall Grade II parkland.

**Civil War fortifications.** There was a Parliamentary one on the south side of the Bridge of Boats, and a Royalist one in the vicinity of Queen Park High School. The former is allegedly marked by old ridge and furrow on the edge of The Meadows. Neither are known by any extant remains.

Photographs of some of the Local Historic Landscapes are copied below. The Duke's Drive Precursors (HL1 and HL2) are not readily photographed but their locations are shown on Map K.



**Netherleigh Estate Boundary (HL3).**



**Earthworks (HL4) at site of Bluecoat School field  
SJ 403643**



**HL5-1 Pageant Field Earthworks: Southern linear bank looking north alongside the smaller linear bank near the bottom of Pageant Field that is parallel to the main one. There is a distinct scarp on the left of the picture rising towards about one third of skyline. Terraces are to the right of the picture.**



**HL5-2 Pageant Field Earthworks: Northern linear bank looking south from the top of Pageant Field next to Townfield Lane (the path opposite Greenbank that runs along the southern boundary of the playing fields). The fence of the horse field is in the middle distance and the big copse towards the bottom of Pageant Field is behind.**



**HL5-3 Pageant Field Earthworks: Photograph taken in the horse field, looking north-north-west obliquely across the axis of the northern linear bank, which shows as a steep edge running from left to right, the distance hides the fence between the horse field and the field south of Townfield Lane.**



**HL5-4 Pageant Field Earthworks: The terraces in the south-east part of the horse field, one in foreground, one middle and one far distant.**





**HL6 Low Hill Mound: Viewed from the north.**



## APPENDIX E – LOCAL LANDMARKS

**Water Tower (L1).** An octagonal structure built by the Chester Waterworks Company in 1935 and located to the south of Overleigh Road. The tower is constructed of reinforced concrete and has a brick facing. As noted in the Chester Characterisation Study, the Water Tower is strongly art-deco in character and a visible local landmark from many locations in Handbridge, Chester City Centre and the surrounding countryside. Local opinions vary on the architectural merit of the structure, but it remains a valued feature which in due course of time may be repurposed as a residence whilst retaining its current form.

**St Mary's Church (L2).** The National Heritage List for England designated Grade II\* listed building is constructed in ashlar Waverton stone with dressings of Runcorn sandstone and dates from 1887. At the west end is a three-stage tower with a recessed spire that is a highly visible and valued landmark from many locations in Handbridge, Chester City Centre and the surrounding countryside.

**Queen's Park Suspension Bridge (L3).** The footbridge crosses the river Dee from Queen's Park in Handbridge to the Groves in Chester. The current bridge was opened in 1923 and is a visible landmark from the river bank on both sides of the river between the Old Dee Bridge and the edge of the Earl's Eye Meadows. Glimpses of the structure are visible from Victoria Crescent.

**The Old Dee Bridge (L4).** The bridge is the oldest in Chester and crosses the River Dee from Handbridge to Chester Bridgegate. The present bridge is largely the result of a major rebuilding in 1387. It is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a Grade I listed and is a scheduled monument. The bridge is a visible landmark from a substantial stretch of the river bank on both sides of the river.

**Bridge Cottages (L5).** The cottages date from the eighteenth century and occupy a prominent position on the south western corner of the approach to the Old Dee Bridge in Handbridge. They form a visible landmark both from the adjacent river banks and for those transiting the bridge from Chester City Centre.

**The Rock in Edgar's Field (L6).** The rock contains the National Heritage List for England designated Grade 1 listed Roman Shrine of Minerva. The outcrop is a visible landmark from all points in Edgar's Field and from the river bank.





**L1 Water Tower**



**L2 St Mary's Church**



**L3 Queen's Park Suspension Bridge**



**L4 The Old Dee Bridge**



**L5 Bridge Cottages**



**L6 The Rock in Edgar's Field**