

Chester Rows

Design Guide

March 2022

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Local Plan Policy	5
3. When is permission required?	7
Ownership Diagram	8
4. Guidance	9
4.1 Shopfronts	9
Shopfront Quality Grid	15
4.2 Signage	16
Signage Quality Grid	22
4.3 Stall Boards and Walkways	23
4.4 Painting and Decorating	28
4.5 Building Numbers and Adresses	32
4.6 Private Lighting	33
4.7 Visually Intrusive Services	34
4.8 Other Alterations	34
Case Studies	35
Appendix I	39



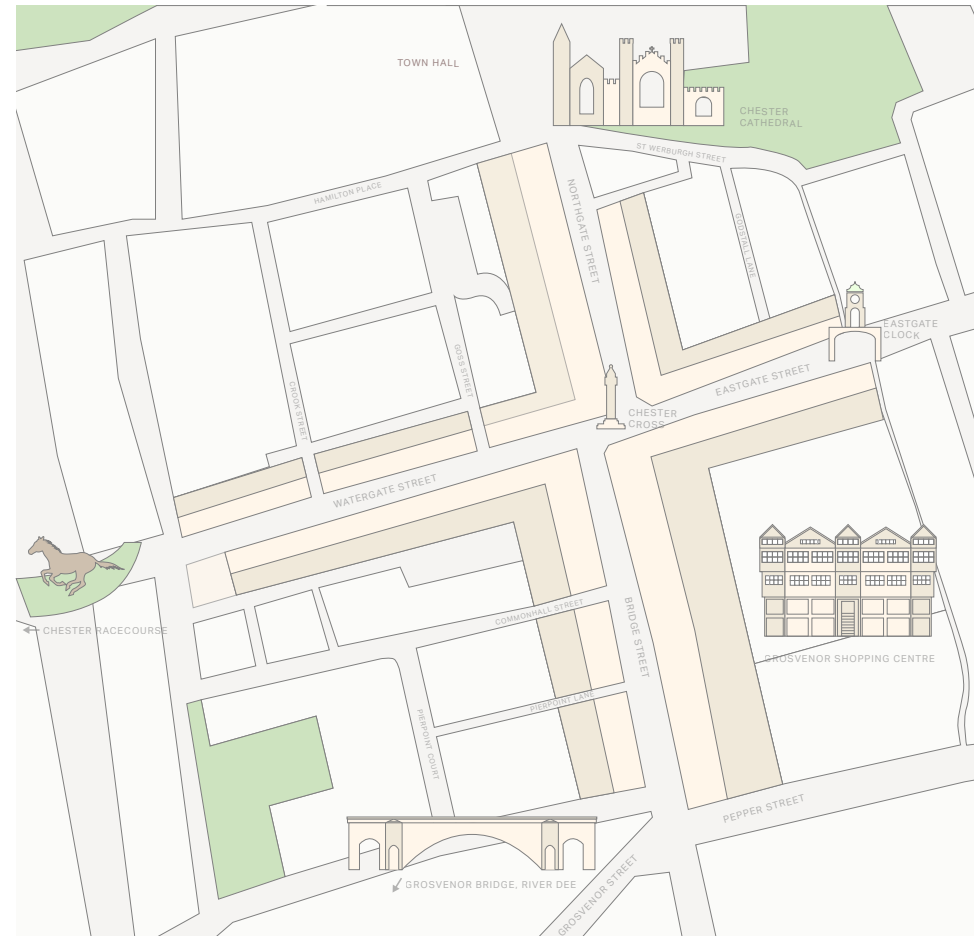
1. Introduction

Vision

The Rows have been part of Chester for over 700 years, providing a truly unique place to do business, to live, work and spend leisure time. The Rows can continue to adapt to changing needs yet still retain their essential character. Our role is to be good stewards; to make wise use of the Rows for our own benefit and ensure we leave them in a better state for those who come after us.

Chester's Rows are a unique and ancient historic place. Some buildings date back to 1290 or earlier. Hiding behind a Victorian façade there may be a medieval house, beneath our feet there may be a stone vault as beautiful as any church.

The rich mix of historic buildings (the majority of which are listed), two-tier system of shops and complex web of walkways, steps and passages are a defining aspect of Chester city centre which is recognised in its conservation area designation.



Navigation map taken from interactive gazetteer, showing street frontages and walkways covered by the Design Guide

The Rows are made up from parts of individual buildings and all these parts join together to create the unique walkways; each small part adding up to make a greater whole. Work to every Row building's exterior needs to be handled carefully, to suit the host building as well as the centre of Chester more generally.

Consumer demand and retail trading patterns are changing fast and other uses such as residential are having an increased presence on our high streets. The Rows however offer something different and truly unique; harnessing these special qualities and investing in their heritage value and quality design will support the growth of economic activity. Owning or operating a business from a historic building in the heart of a city like Chester is a fantastic opportunity, however everyone who owns, occupies or uses The Rows needs to do their bit to ensure that their essential character is preserved whilst meeting changing needs.

This design guide is intended to assist property owners by expanding and explaining the Local Plan policies, providing detailed design guidance and best practice examples for reference. It is underpinned by a [Conservation Management Plan](#) which describes the history and significance of The Rows, identifies common problems and makes recommendations

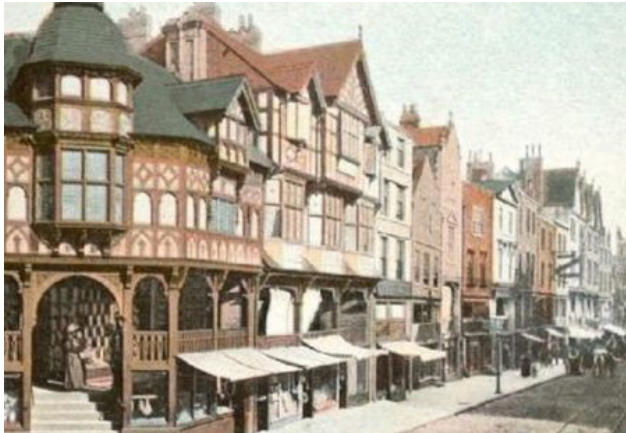


Striking examples of Chester's 19th century "black and white" revival buildings at The Cross

to address them and a [Gazetteer](#) which provides information and advice for every single property. The guide seeks to achieve the preservation and enhancement of The Rows. It will be useful to anyone proposing to carry out alterations to buildings within The Rows, informing their proposals and planning applications and therefore speeding up these processes.

Chester Rows: Then and Now

The following images show the impact that both new development and incremental change can have on the character and atmosphere of The Rows. The following images show the impact that both new development and incremental change can have on the character and atmosphere of The Rows.



C1910, the cross looking down Bridge Street East



Same view, Cistern Building intact c1860



Same view today



Eastgate Street Row



The same view along Eastgate Street Row today



Bridge Street Row East (looking South) from no.49 1950s



Bridge Street Row East (looking South) from no.49 today



Bridge Street West looking South from Cross



Bridge Street West looking South from Cross today

2. Local Plan Policy

The key policy relating to The Rows is Local Plan (Part Two) policy **CH 5 - Chester Conservation Areas**.

The Rows

Development proposals on the Rows will be supported which meet the requirements of policy DM 46 and where they:

- include new uses for buildings on The Rows which encourage pedestrian footfall, retain the predominant public access to The Rows, improve natural surveillance, and promote commercial viability in accordance with Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 14;
- are for two-storey units which have a street level and a Row level presence which sensitively retain or reintroduce access into the retail unit at both street level and Row level;
- ensure that new facades or alterations to existing facades of shops or commercial premises within The Rows preserve or enhance those elements which contribute to the significance of the building or its setting;

- ensure that the design, location and materials used for business signage applied or attached to Row beams or posts are sympathetic to the character and appearance of The Rows.

Proposals for projecting box signs or signs projecting from a shop fascia will not normally be supported. Hanging signs on street frontage elevations will only be supported where they advertise the businesses at the premises; are of appropriate size, design and materials; and are sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building and The Rows. One hanging sign at balustrade level and fixed to the piers (which support the upper floors) will usually be supported for street level shops or businesses. One hanging sign at Row opening level or up to Row fascia level will usually be supported for Row level shops or businesses which have no street level frontage.

The remainder of policy CH 5, alongside DM 14 (City and Town Centres), DM 46 (Development in Conservation Areas), DM 47 (Listed Buildings), SM 48 (Non-Designated Heritage Assets), DM 50 (Archaeology) and ENV 5 of The Local Plan (Part One) should also be considered as part of any development proposal and are contained in [Appendix I](#) of this guide.

Image: The Boot Inn on Eastgate Street



3. When is permission required?

Seeking permission for development and other “red tape” is commonly seen as a nuisance. These types of control over development are, however, one reason why areas like the Rows have survived so well, underpinned by Chester’s proud tradition of combining regeneration and conservation.

Before commissioning a design, before appointing a contractor and before starting work ALWAYS check what permissions are required and if your building is listed.

Planning Permission

Planning Permission is required for ‘development’ which affects the external appearance of a building (whether it is listed or unlisted) and for a ‘change of use’.

Whilst some works and changes of use benefit from ‘permitted development rights’ they are subject to a number of restrictions including being located within a conservation area and subject to the building’s existing use.

Advertisement Consent

Many advertisements benefit from ‘deemed consent’, this is dependent on the location, type and size of the sign proposed. Further guidance can be found in the DCLG document: [‘Outdoor Advertisements and Guides’](#).

Advertisements on listed buildings require listed building consent.

Listed Building Consent

Listed Building Consent is required for any alteration to a listed building which affects its special architectural or historic interest such as physical alterations, new signage and major colour changes. This includes alterations to the interior as well as the exterior of a listed building.

If in doubt – contact CW&C planning team.
planning@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Ownership Diagram

The Rows have a complex blend of public and private ownership and management. The diagram below shows the key elements of the Rows, highlighting the areas which are the responsibility of landlords and/or tenants and where planning permission, listed building consent or advertisement consent may be required.

1. Row Level and Street Level Shops

(including other uses such as offices, restaurants or flats)

Landlord and tenants are responsible for repairs, decoration and alterations including to shopfronts and signage for which planning permission, listed building consent and/or advertisement consent may be required.

2. Walkway Floor Surfaces

Landlords and tenants are responsible for repairs and alterations to the walkway surface for which planning permission, listed building consent and/or advertisement consent may be required.

CW&C are responsible for ensuring that the walkway is free from obstructions and is safe for pedestrians. It is a public right of way and falls under Highways legislation.

3. Stalls

Landlords and tenants are responsible for repairs and alterations to the stall board and surroundings walls and ceiling for which planning permission, listed building consent and/or advertisement consent may be required.

CW&C are responsible for ensuring that the stall area is free from obstructions and is safe for pedestrians. There is a public right of access.

4. Other Parts of the Walkway

Landlords and tenants are responsible for repairs, decoration and alterations to these buildings elements for which planning permission, listed building consent and/or advertisement consent may be required.

5. Steps, Ramps, Bridges and Streets

CW&C are responsible for the treads, risers and handrails of the steps, ramps and bridges, along with streets and pavements, in their role as Highways Authority.

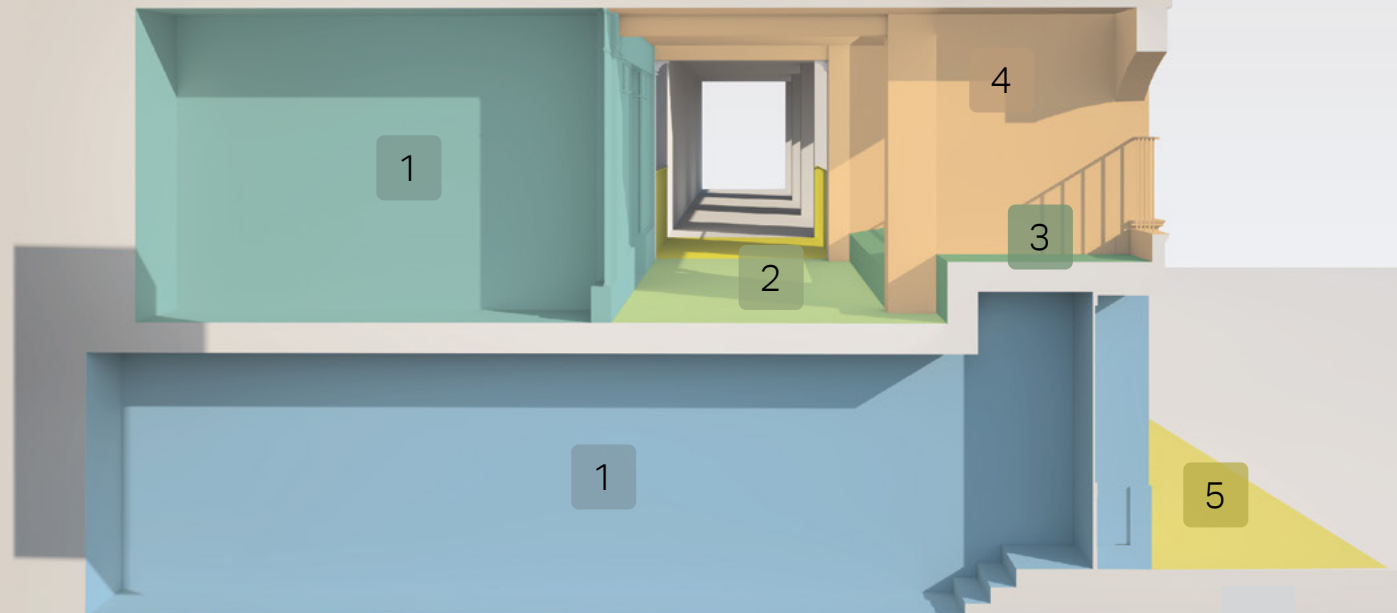
6. Lighting and Services

Individual properties may choose to provide their own private lighting and services for which planning permission and listed building consent may be required.

CW&C street lighting team manage the public lighting of the Rows walkway on a voluntary basis; CW&C also provide power for Christmas lighting, CCTV and for an alarm system.

Key

- 1 Row level shop
- 1 Street level shop
- 2 Walkway floor
- 3 Stalls
- 4 Other parts of the walkway
- 5 Steps, Ramps, Bridges and Streets



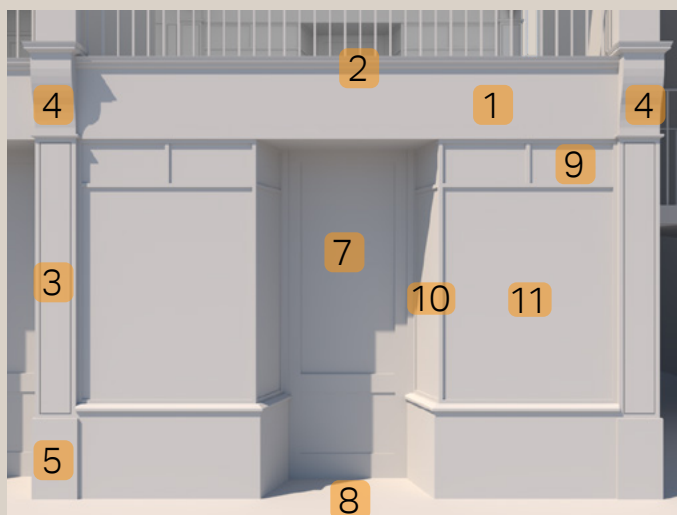
4. Guidance

4.1 Shopfronts

The shopfront itself is traditionally built up of a number of key elements, some functional and some more decorative. Together the fascia, pilasters and stallriser visually frame the shopfront. The proportions of these are a key element in whether a design is attractive or awkward. These components (along with door framing) visually 'support' the building above and in good designs they relate to the overall design and character of the building. The material used to construct the shopfront, and its colour, can also have a big impact on its character.

Image: A historic shopfront on Watergate Row





Example of a Traditional Shopfront



Example of a Modern Shopfront

Key

1	Facia	7	Door
2	Cornice	8	Door recess
3	Pilaster	9	Fanlight (or transom light)
4	Console	10	Mullion
5	Plinth	11	Glazing
6	Stallriser		

Glazing:

Shopfronts to Georgian buildings typically comprise smaller panes, whilst larger glazed sheets (11) subdivided by mullions (10) and transoms (9) are appropriate for Victorian properties. For 20th century and contemporary buildings large plate glass windows (11) may be appropriate.

Doors:

Doors (7) to shopfronts and to the upper floors should be designed to suit the character of the building and to match the design of the frame within which they are set.

Stallriser:

Stallrisers (6) are an important element of historic shopfronts providing solid structure below the glazing, and should be included in any traditional shopfront design.

Pilaster:

Shopfronts should include framing at the sides of the frontage (3). In Georgian designs they are often narrow with a capital and plinth (5); Victorian can be wider and normally have a console (4); whilst on modern shopfronts these might be simple flat jambs.

Facia:

The fascia board forms the broad panel across the head of the frontage, which carries the name of the shop. In period frontages they are often edged with brackets (known as consoles) (4) and may have a moulding or cornice (2) to the head. The design of signage is considered more fully in the following section.

Awning:

Awnings are an appropriate addition to traditional shopfronts to provide shelter; they should form a canvas canopy on a roller which retracts fully into the fascia cornice (2), with iron support brackets.

Shape of frontage:

Replacement shopfronts should be set at the edge of street (or Row); symmetrical frontages are common but in the case of small frontages, entrance doors may be positioned to one side. In some instances a splayed alignment of the windows and door(s) or set back to increase the visibility of the display may be appropriate.

Entrance steps:

Where there is a drop down in level between the street and shop, steps should be accommodated within the shop unit itself.

Security gates or shutters:

Solid external roller shutters are visually intrusive and have a deadening impact on the street frontage. Lattice grilles are an appropriate means of securing shop windows. Internal fittings tend to be less obtrusive than external ones. Where entrance doors are recessed (8), grilles or see-through gates can be used to prevent access to the recess when the shop is closed.

Colours and materials:

Woodwork to traditional shopfronts should be painted (unless it is an original high quality late-19th century mahogany or other similar hardwood frame). If cast iron ventilation grilles are present they should also be painted.

4.1 Shopfronts

Aim

To preserve and enhance the character, appearance and special interest of The Rows, lifting the quality of the urban environment and making it a more attractive place to visit, do business and live.

Principles

- 4.1a Historic shopfronts must be retained. Where parts survive (such as pilasters or awning boxes) either visible or hidden, these must also be retained and incorporated into a new design.
- 4.1b New shopfronts must be in-keeping with the character and appearance of the host building, relate satisfactorily to the period and style of the upper parts of the façade and respond to the rhythm and characteristics of the street/Rows.
- 4.1c New shopfronts must preserve those elements that contribute to the traditional character of the building, including historic corbels, pilasters, fascias and stallrisers, or seek to reinstate them where missing. Size, scale, elaborate or simple design and detailing, the use of correct materials



50 Bridge Street Row.
A good quality reproduction shop front of traditional design.



67-69 Bridge Street Row.
An intact historic shopfront with high quality details and materials.

and colour schemes are all important in ensuring shopfronts are sympathetic to their host building.

- 4.1d Replacement shopfronts must preserve or enhance those elements which contribute to the significance of the building or its setting. Existing features should be identified on the shopfront quality grid 'sliding scale' and a commitment made to undertaking improvements so they achieve the next higher category.
- 4.1e When applications for works to buildings are proposed it will be expected that detracting elements of shopfronts will be removed.
- 4.1f Where commercial premises span two storeys (street and Rows level) an active frontage and access should be maintained at both levels as far as is reasonably practical. Where businesses span two buildings the distinction between the two should be maintained with access provided into both as far as is reasonably practical.
- 4.1g Should a shopfront no longer be required owing to a change of use any proposed alterations will be subject to the same assessment of the impact on the architectural character of the host building and the role of the active frontage in the street scene, with the retention of historic frontages a priority.



23 Bridge Street. The business name is on the front edge of the awning, and on the "facia" in plain planted-on letters. Warm natural timber adds colour to a simple modern shopfront.



41 Bridge Street. Elements of the historic shopfront survive, including pilasters and "Tudor arch" shop window frame; could be further enhanced with a different facia and less obtrusive ventilation grilles.

- 4.1h Solid external roller shutters will not be permitted unless the need for them can be robustly demonstrated; lattice grilles or internal roller shutters would be acceptable alternatives.
- 4.1i Where an existing shopfront or roller shutter was installed without the correct permission then improvements will be sought through negotiation and, where necessary as a last resort, through enforcement action.
- 4.1j Minor changes required to improve physical accessibility will be encouraged, however, they must be designed to be sensitive to the host building.
- 4.1k Changes in the colour or surface finish of a shopfront require planning permission, and for listed building listed building consent is needed. Colour should be used to enhance the character and appearance of the individual frontage and wider townscape. (See the Shopfront grid and Section 4.4 for more information on colours).

Please refer to the accompanying shopfront grid for guidance on improving shopfront design and their contribution to the special character of The Rows.



26 Bridge Street.
Example of a lattice shutter.

Shopfront Quality Grid

	Excellent	Good	Medium	Poor
Historic shopfront (or equivalent frontage)	Intact or largely intact historic shopfront	Historic shopfront with minor loss or damage	Partial survival of historic shopfront	No historic features visible
Modern shopfront (or equivalent frontage)	Exceptional Modern shop design in high quality materials and which respects the overall design of the building	Simple and effective, well-detailed modern design in good materials and which respects the overall design of the building	Plain modern design in reasonable materials	Poorly detailed plain frontage, poor materials
Reproduction shopfront (or equivalent frontage)	Authentic reproduction of traditional shopfront, respects the overall design of the building	Well-designed traditional shopfront which respects the overall design of the building	Traditional design with some awkward or clumsy elements and/or which relates poorly to overall building	Clumsy attempt at traditional design, badly detailed
Security measures	No visible security measures OR historic wooden shutters	Internal scissor grille or lattice shutter not visible during day time	Well integrated external perforated roller shutter	External solid roller shutters, obvious tracks and/or external housing
Awnings/canopies	Traditional fabric roller-retractable awning on hinged or scissor supports, in original and/or fully integrated housing	Traditional fabric roller-retractable awning on hinged or scissor support, well integrated new housing / existing external box	Modern awning with telescopic supports and/or external boxing	Plastic, "pram hood" or other similar awning types
Colours/finishes	Matt or soft sheen paint in dark, muted, neutral or monochrome* colours, or polished hardwood	Glossy paint in dark, muted, neutral or monochrome* colours, or varnished timber. Limited use of brighter colours for emphasis	Glossy monochrome* or modern colours. Use of brighter colours for emphasis	Shabby decoration, bright primary / secondary colours, day-glo and other vivid colours
Vents/service	No vents or other services visible	Well disguised vents or other services	Noticeable vents or other services	Intrusive vents or other services

*Monochrome here refers to black, white and shades of grey

4.2 Signage

As well as the general form, components and colour of a shopfront, its appearance is very much affected by the use of signage. It is important to strike a balance to provide adequate signage for businesses, avoiding a bland 'corporate' signage and the visual chaos that the proliferation of unsuitable signage can bring. The overall design of individual advertisements, their size, what they are made of, whether they are illuminated, their position on the building and their cumulative effect, are all important factors in the impact of a single advertisement on the street scene.

Image: A variety of signage on Eastgate Street



Facia signs:

Painted facia signs are the most appropriate for traditional shopfronts; originally these would be of painted letters on facia board. Facia depths should be reduced to suit the humble proportions of the Rows (or removed entirely) to avoid being overbearing and to maximise display glazing.

Bressumer signs:

Many buildings have a heavy bressumer beam across the opening between the Rows and the street. When Row level shops have restricted visibility and limited other signage options, then hand-painted lettering on the bressumer might be appropriate to give them a street presence. Not all locations will be suitable, due to their size or the overall design of the building. Signs hanging from the bressumer are not appropriate.



Shop facia and hanging sign



Bressumer beam signage

Projecting/ hanging signs:

Hanging signs to street level shops should be located at balustrade level fixed to the piers which support the upper floors. Historic signs and brackets are part of the special character of The Rows and should be retained. Traditional signs such as barber's poles and pub signs are welcomed. Signs along the walkway, stalls and over steps must not provide a convenient roost for pigeons.

Wall and other signs:

The cross beams which line the ceiling along the walkway provide appropriate location for signage to units at Row level; the surfaces of flanking walls may also be appropriate. Businesses are encouraged to work together to provide co-ordinated signage to each Row walkway at prominent access points.



High level hanging signs



Cross beam signage

4.2 Signage

Aim

To ensure that all signage and advertising is of high quality, well suited to the building and the street or Row for which it is proposed and makes a positive contribution to the appearance and character of the conservation area.

Principles

4.2a Signage must be of a high standard of design, be integrated into the shopfront and should be visibly compatible with the traditional appearance of the street or Row; size, form, materials, colours, positioning and lettering of advertisements are all important considerations. It must not dominate the building façade and should relate to its character, scale, proportions, period and architectural features.

Signage must be constructed of a material which blends with the surroundings and be finished and coloured carefully without detriment to the overall street scene. Non-traditional materials such as perspex or vinyl and harsh or gaudy colours will not be acceptable.



29 Bridge Street. The use of bold red is softened in combination with black and cream. The choice of colour relates to the business's name and differentiates between structure and joinery. The hanging sign and fascia sign (hidden by awning) have matching gold lettering, a theme continued with lettering inside the glass. An alternative colour for the large bracket could be a further small enhancement.



34 and 36 Bridge Street. Good use of fascia sign (planted on letters), bressumer, projecting signs and awning. The brands are distinctive but not over dominant. Also a well-lit, inviting interior.

The depth of the fascia should be in proportion to the design of the shopfront as a whole and should not encroach on the upper floors above. The fascia should respect the original division between properties even where a business extends into the neighbouring property. Box facias which project from the face of the building will not be acceptable.

- 4.2b Signwritten text on painted facias is encouraged, individually cut letters may be an acceptable alternative, they should be in a matt finish, slim section and face mounted. Non-illuminated or the use of halo-illuminated letters (if the principle of illumination has been previously permitted) will be acceptable; internally illuminated box fascia or projecting signs will not be acceptable.



Matt gold letters on the fascia, forsted lettering inside the window and a good window display



Traditional hand painted lettering on the bressumer beam

4.2c Hanging signs will only be supported where they advertise the businesses at the premises; are of appropriate size, design and materials; and are sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building and the Rows. One hanging sign at balustrade level and fixed to the piers (which support the upper floors) will usually be supported for street level shops or businesses. One hanging sign at Row opening level or up to Row fascia level will usually be supported for Row level shops or businesses which have no street level frontage.

4.2d Where fascia signs are not incorporated into shopfront design, owing to limited heights, painted and applied film signs on the inside of the window are an appropriate alternative. Swapping elements, such as a poor quality projecting hanging sign for a painted bressumer sign of better quality, should be considered at Rows level. The design, location and materials used for business signage applied or attached to Row beams or posts must be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Rows.

4.2e Row level businesses are permitted a small sign on the side wall of the nearest safe flights of steps, one each facing up and down the street.



Beam signage, display cases, hanging signs and facias are all visible along the Row walkway



Unusual, high quality glass fascia sign

- 4.2f Signage should be designed and located so as to not create a safety hazard to pedestrians or traffic.
- 4.2g The use of standard corporate signs may not be acceptable in the historic context and firms may need to adapt their standard design and image in order to be acceptable.
- 4.2h Temporary banners and the proliferation of multiple signs is not acceptable.
- 4.2i When preparing designs for new advertisements, the opportunity should be taken to improve their impact on the appearance of the building, reduce the number of signs and remove those which are redundant according to the signage quality grid 'sliding scale'.

Please refer to the accompanying signage grid for guidance on improving and reducing the amount of commercial signage.



Handpainted fascia sign on an historic frontage

Signage Quality Grid

	Excellent	Good	Medium	Poor
Signage	Fully integrated and well-proportioned fascia for signage	Well integrated and/or well-proportioned fascia sign	Facia sign too large or not well integrated into overall shopfront	Very large and/or roughly stuck on fascia
Facia design	Timber facia with painted lettering or small non-illuminated mounted lettering, matt or soft sheen finish OR traditional painted glass sign	Facia sign with painted, printed, mounted or halo-illuminated lettering, small to medium size in matt or soft sheen material	Glossy modern materials, visible joints in facia and/or printed or mounted lettering of medium to large size, bright halo illumination or small external lights	Shiny modern materials or plywood, unsightly joints, very large/bright/brash lettering, internal illumination or large external lighting
Additional signage	Any additional/alternative signage sits within over design of building and is kept to a minimum	Any additional/alternative signage pays attention to overall design of building	Any additional/alternative signage takes some account of overall design of building	Extra signage which proliferates and/or ignores overall design of building
Branding	Minimal or no corporate or chain brand identity	Low key corporate or chain branding or heavily modified to suit historic setting	Low key corporate or chain branding or slight modifications to suit historic setting	Overtly dominant corporate or chain branding with no modification to suit setting

4.3 Stall Boards and Walkways

Any proposals for use or alteration to the stall boards, walkways or their finishes will be assessed against their impact on the historic significance and physical characteristics of the particular Rows building affected. Some buildings are just too important or sensitive to allow change to the stall boards. A number of buildings can accommodate loose cafe style seating on their stalls without any modification; others have stall board areas which are relatively modern or otherwise less sensitive to change. Any platform must be of a design commensurate with its setting and have the potential to be removed in future.



Stall boards were originally used for the display of goods, and timber boarding is the traditional material for this part of the Rows. Wide oak boards were typical on the oldest buildings, through the 18th century and into the early 19th century, sometimes with horizontal battens to prevent displayed goods from sliding off. . Some Georgian buildings may have used high quality, slow grown pine. In Victorian buildings a range of timber boards were used, including tropical hardwoods, and were typically narrower and tightly jointed. The boards were untreated, polished or in some cases painted. Some late 19th century and 20th century buildings used concrete for the stall board area. Many of the replacement finishes used since the mid-20th century are unattractive or inappropriate, such as bitumen, thin tiles, less durable softwood boards, decking boards, plywood and vinyl.

The continuous elevated walkways were paved with wide oak boards or stone flags, from the earliest buildings through to the 19th century. In the Victorian period narrower timber boards became common, and high quality mosaic and terrazzo were also used in some buildings, along with an early form of concrete. 20th century buildings feature tiles, brick pavers and smooth concrete walkway surfaces. Many of the replacement finishes used since the mid-20th century are unattractive or inappropriate, such as bitumen, thin tiles and less durable softwood boards.



Aim

To enliven and enhance the unique and intimate environment of the Rows walkaways without detriment to their special character and appearance or public safety.

Principles

- 4.3a The stall boards and walkway can form an integral part of a business on the Rows, however they may not have the same lawful use and therefore planning permission may be needed to put temporary displays or seating on the stall area. Physical alterations here will require planning permission and (for listed buildings) listed building consent.
- 4.3b Historic surfaces to the stall boards, including timber boarding, must be retained. Modern finishes such as asphalt, granolithic finishes, plywood and tiles to the stalls should be replaced with high quality and well detailed hardwood timber boarding. The addition of waterproof underlay and edge details will ensure that the shop unit below is fully protected from rain penetration and spillages.



The covered walkway and stall boards of the Rows are truly unique. In date and style they range from Tudor to Georgian, Victorian to Modern, but all share the same essential features.



Natural oak boards were the original material for most stalls, until the late 19th and 20th centuries, and must be retained. These were fixed parallel or perpendicular to the Row. Some areas of the walkway have oak floor boards.

- 4.3c Signage on the flank walls, display cases with effective “window dressing” and approved freestanding A-boards on the stalls will all increase the visibility of a business to pedestrians walking along the Row walkway.
- 4.3d For properties that have little scope for effective signage, some form of temporary display/ showcase on the stall board can be an acceptable alternative.
- 4.3e Historic timber floorboards, stone flags and mosaics to the walkway floor must be retained. Asphalt, granolithic and concrete finishes to the walkway should generally be removed; repaving in stone flags or timber boards is encouraged. Reproduction tiles or mosaics may be appropriate in some locations where they suit the age and character of the building.



Riven York-stone flags are widespread along the walkway. They are durable and high quality but heavy. Many of the steps are constructed in natural sandstone too.



Tropical hardwood, and painted softwood, came into use on the stalls in the later 19th and 20th centuries. Hardwood floor boards are durable and attractive on the walkway too. Natural timber should be left bare or waxed.

New platforms for outdoor seating on the stall boards will be given consideration where the following characteristics are present:

- Height at the front of the stall board is around 220mm or less (to allow the creation of a safe step)
- The stall board is horizontal or has a low gradient
- There is adequate headroom
- The existing stall surface is unattractive and/or modern (e.g. asphalt, vinyl tiles)
- The proposed new surface is of high quality, appropriate to its particular location and setting, and is well detailed (e.g. for durability and in relation to surrounding historic fabric)
- Any proposed alteration to the stall are reversible
- No changes in level of more than 600mm will be created (so that new guard rails are not required).



Flat stall areas may lend themselves to al-fresco seating.

Platforms will not be allowed where:

- It would cause irreversible alteration to historic fabric of a listed building or other historic asset
- The historic finish such as mellow old boards which is of significance
- Any new access steps would project into the walkway (causing an obstruction and altering the appearance of the Rows walkway)
- The new platform height would require a balustrade
- Insufficient headroom
- The existing balustrade to the street frontage is too low and/or would require alteration to meet Building Regulations requirements
- Unsuitable materials and details are proposed (such as modern grooved decking) which are not of high quality and are not appropriate to their particular location and setting.

4.4 Painting and Decorating

As the Row walkway passes through each property its character changes, as if walking through a series of rooms. This character is created by factors such as the form of construction, architectural features, the height of the ceiling and many other elements which relate to the age and style of the building. The way each space is decorated has a strong role to play in this character.

Many buildings forming the Rows were built and altered at different times in history, but most fall into one of the following categories:

- Late medieval, 16th and 17th century. These are typically timber framed buildings and might be described as Tudor, Elizabethan or Jacobean. (For simplicity, these are referred to below as “Elizabethan”).
- 18th and early 19th century. Usually brick built, and often re-fronting earlier buildings, these can be described as Queen Anne, Georgian and Regency. (“Georgian”)
- Later 19th and early 20th century. This period saw a wide range of architectural styles, including Neo-Classical, Gothic Revival and Chester’s famous “Black and White” timber framed revival, and can be described as the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Some are new fronts on older buildings. (“Victorian”)
- 20th century and up to the present day. Some of these most recent building copy historic styles while others are overtly contemporary. They can be loosely categorised as Modern. (“Modern”)



Aim

To preserve and enhance the character, appearance and special interest of each building along The Rows, lifting the quality of the urban environment and making it a more attractive place

Principles

- 4.4a Decoration of the Rows walkway area (walls, ceiling, balustrade, stall boards etc) is primarily the responsibility of the owner or tenant of the Row level unit.
- 4.4b Walkway and stall areas should be redecorated regularly, not just the shopfronts. The side walls of steps should generally be decorated in keeping with the adjacent shop colour scheme or walkway area above.
- 4.4c Colour palettes should relate to the dominant architectural character and date of the building; falling into one of the four categories above. Sample colours for each category are shown in the colour chart on page 30.



The light blue, cream and white décor highlights the elegant Gothic Revival character of this space. The decorative ceiling is picked out in two colours and the walls blend with the natural stone arches.



This stretch of the walkway forms a coherent historic interior. Natural stone flags (mainly) and timber boarding, matt black ancient timber framing and balustrade, soft cream on the ceiling and flank wall, and dark slate-blue for the shop front and sign.

4.4d For **street frontages** the following colours apply:

“Elizabethan” and “Victorian” timber framed buildings should retain the strong contrast between the timber frame and plaster panels, with black or nearly-black timber and white or off-white plaster.

Brick and stone should not be painted unless it is already painted. Painted masonry and render should be decorated in stone-colours and off-whites. Similar colours, plus black or white, are suitable for window frames. The balustrade at walkway level should generally be painted to match the existing colour, which is usually black, nearly-black, white, off-white or occasionally a stone colour or natural timber.

4.4e For the **walkway areas** the following colours apply:

“Elizabethan”. Posts and beams should be left as natural timber, or a nearly-black. Plaster panels and ceilings should be off-white.

“Georgian”. Soft, neutral colours reflecting the limited range of natural pigment available in this period of history should be used, with ceilings in an off-white.

Examples of colours for the walkway area

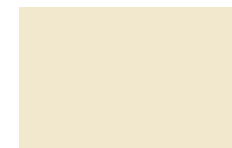
Georgian / Regency



Victorian / Modern



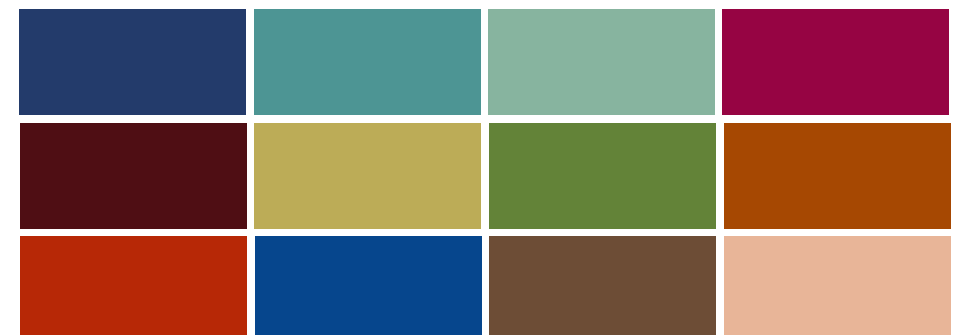
Ceilings



Balustrades and Timber Framing



Examples of shop front colours



“Victorian”. A slightly wider range of colours were available from the 19th century onwards, but were still generally muted. Ceiling should be off-white.

“Modern” buildings vary in style. For those which copy an earlier or traditional style, the appropriate colour palette for the period being imitated should be used. For those in a distinctly contemporary style, matching the existing colour scheme or taking advice from CW&C is advised.

- 4.4d The type of paint used makes a big difference to the finished effect, to its durability and the well-being of the building. Good preparation is essential. Wherever possible “breathable” paints should be used. Matt finishes should be used for walls, ceilings and masonry. Low-sheen paints should be used for joinery. Lime-wash and pigmented washes may be suitable for late medieval, 16th and 17th century buildings

- 4.4e For shopfronts, rich, dark, muted or traditional historic colours, neutrals, off-whites, blacks and greys are all suitable. In any one street, too much use of the same or a similar colour to neighbouring properties should be avoided. An illustrative range of suitable colours are shown in the colour chart on page 30.
- 4.4f High solids oil-wax finish is best for polished timber boards, traditional oak boards can be left bare or treated with oil such as “Danish oil”. External quality gloss paint is only suitable when stall boards are already painted. Coloured stains should not be used. Varnish should be avoided because it can wear badly and quickly looks shabby.
- 4.4g Buildings should be maintained in a good state of repair and opportunities taken to design out pigeon roosts by means such as boxing in above display cases and adding sloping surfaces on projecting facias at Row level subject to the necessary consents. Where they cannot be designed out existing pigeon deterrents such as tatty, damaged and dirty pigeon netting, mesh and spikes should be replaced on a regular basis.

4.5 Building Numbers and Addresses

- 4.5a All businesses should display their street number, discretely located, within general shop signage. Accurate postal addresses should also be displayed on business websites.
- 4.5b Owners should consult the maps used in the Rows Gazetteer or their property deeds and Land Registry for clarification. Owners should provide suppliers and delivery companies with details of the nearest ramped or level access point to upper level units to minimise risks from handling goods and trolleys on steps and reduce impact damage to the historic steps too.



Street numbering should always be displayed. In this example it is incorporated into the overall signage scheme.



Brass door numbers of traditional design.

4.6 Private Lighting

- 4.6a Landlords and/or tenants should remove redundant lighting to buildings and Row walkway.
- 4.6b External lighting should be avoided with internal shop lights providing spill through windows and display cabinets onto the walkway. Exceptions to this may include dark areas with very low ceilings and wide stallboards or modern buildings of lower sensitivity. It is important that new lights do not create pigeon perches.
- 4.6c Fairy lights on the stallboard and balustrade area should only be used for limited periods of time.



Well-lit interior lighting spills out to illuminate the Row walkway.



An inconspicuous, neat uplighter.



Unobtrusive spotlights pick out architectural features and complement CW&C's background lighting

4.7 Visually Intrusive Services

4.7a Whenever new services are installed redundant wires, cables, pipes etc should be carefully removed.

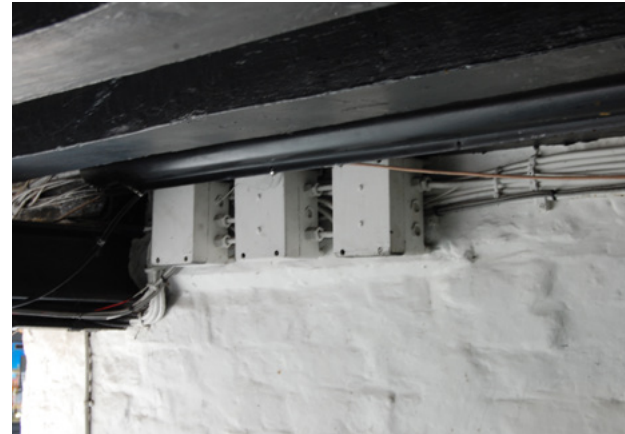
Surface wiring and air extract grilles to the street or Row frontages should be avoided.

4.7b Visually intrusive services such as air conditioning units should be located to the rear of premises whenever possible, not visible from the main street or side streets. If a property has no back elevation then it may not be suitable for certain uses, service requirements must be fully considered before proposals for change of use are developed.

4.8 Other Alterations

4.8a Change of use proposals even when a formal application is not required can often bring the need for physical alterations which will be subject to planning permission and listed building consent. All alterations must be sympathetic to the architectural character of the building.

4.8b The insertion of blank or inactive frontages to the Rows level will not be supported; whilst obvious security measures should be avoided and access from the walkway maintained wherever possible.



Messy bundles of wires and junction boxes.



Poorly sited exposed wires and equipment.

4.8c Where uses span across two historic buildings the distinction and varying character of the individual buildings must be maintained, with doorways retained active, where possible, and the insertion of double width frontages and signage (if applicable) avoided.

Case Studies

9 Watergate Street and 11 Watergate Street Row (God's Providence House)

This beautiful building illustrates several examples of good practice:

- Historic shopfronts, painted in soft colours (“sandstone” colour at street level and cream at Row level) that complement the Gothic style of the building.
- Shop interiors are well-lit, to allow views in.
- Although neither shop has a fascia, good use is made of signage on the inside of the glass (street level), flank wall (steps) and small projecting sign (Row level).
- Display case on the stall is illuminated and contains stock from the shop.
- The “black and white” colour scheme for the walkway and main frontage (at upper floor level) suit the timber framed construction.
- Natural timber boarding on the sloping stall.



32 Bridge Street

A street level café with many positive features:

- Traditional shopfront design painted a mid-tone, neutral colour.
- Traditional canvas awning, in matching colour.
- Subtle signage on the fascia (hidden from view when the awning is extended), inside the glass and on the awning.
- Well-lit and inviting interior.
- Neat planters (on castors) acting as barriers to define the Al-Fresco seating area



21 Bridge Street Row and 19 Bridge Street

A two-level business with frontages at Row level and street level:

- The Row level and street level frontages are both open and active.
- Bright interior, colourful posters and desks arranged facing outwards are inviting and friendly.
- Traditional shopfront with branded signage that is clear but not overbearing.
- Upper and lower levels are linked by an internal staircase for the staff.



6 Northgate Street and 8 Northgate Row

A good blend of historic and modern design:

At Street level:

- The modern shopfront reflects the proportions and structure of the Row level columns and upper floor windows.
- The modern design has the traditional elements of fascia and pilasters to "frame" the windows. The recessed entrance adds interest and looks inviting.
- Strong but not gaudy colour scheme.
- Simple lettering.
- Good interior lighting.

At Row level:

- Historic Georgian shopfront to a café, with a separate door serving the upper floors.
- Good quality hand painted signage, using the narrow fascia and the street frontage bressumer.
- Pale colours to reflect light in what could be a dark location.
- Street number clearly displayed.
- Historic boarding on the stall, timber flooring on the walkway and fresh, white paint on the balustrade.
- Use of the narrow, level stall for café furniture.



Appendix I

Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies (adopted January 2015)

ENV 5 Historic Environment

The Local Plan will protect the borough's unique and significant heritage assets through the protection and identification of designated and non-designated heritage assets* and their settings.

Development should safeguard or enhance both designated and non-designated heritage assets and the character and setting of areas of acknowledged significance. The degree of protection afforded to a heritage asset will reflect its position within the hierarchy of designations.

Development will be required to respect and respond positively to designated heritage assets and their settings, avoiding loss or harm to their significance. Proposals that involve securing a viable future use or improvement to an asset on the Heritage at Risk register will be supported.

Development which is likely to have a significant adverse impact on designated heritage assets and their settings which cannot be avoided or where the heritage asset cannot be preserved in situ will not be permitted.

Where fully justified and assessed, the Council may consent to the minimal level of enabling development consistent with securing a building's future in an appropriate viable use.

Development in Chester should ensure the city's unique archaeological and historic character is protected or enhanced.

*Heritage assets are defined as a building, monument, site, place, structure, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets identified in the Cheshire Historic Environment Record, including local assets.



Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies (adopted July 2019)

CH 5 - Chester Conservation Areas

In line with Local Plan (Part One) policies STRAT 3 and ENV 5, development within Chester's conservation areas, as identified on the policies map, must meet the requirements of policy DM 46.

Development proposals will be supported where:

1. it can be demonstrated that they have been sensitively designed, to have regard to their location and considering the location of ventilation equipment and plant; fire escapes and service areas;
2. it can be demonstrated that Chester's key views, landmarks, gateways and historic skyline will not be adversely affected in line with Local Plan (Part Two) policy CH 6;
3. they show careful attention to spaces between buildings, scale, height, mass and architectural detail, respecting the building lines, building hierarchy and urban grain;
4. they use high quality and durable materials appropriate to the building and its setting;
5. the proposal, adopts visually appropriate and discreet security fixtures and fittings to minimise their visual impact;
6. they will not result in the loss of any historic routes. Where possible, historic routes should maintain their existing widths and alignments unless historic evidence suggests otherwise. Proposals which would result in the reinstatement of any historic routes will be supported.

Proposals for roof extensions to existing buildings (which may include the installation of conservatories, roof terraces, telecommunications equipment or solar collectors) should be carefully designed so that they do not:
 7. adversely affect either the architectural character or unity of a building or group of buildings;
 8. be visually intrusive or unsightly when seen in longer public or private views from ground or upper levels;
 9. result in the loss of unusual or historically significant or distinctive roof forms, coverings, constructions or features.

Within the city centre, proposals for illuminated signage will only be supported where they relate to night time uses where the level of street lighting and lighting from the shop window is inadequate for trading purposes and the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the building and the area.

The Rows

Development proposals on the Rows will be supported which meet the requirements of policy DM 46 and where they:

- include new uses for buildings on The Rows which encourage pedestrian footfall, retain the predominant public access to The Rows, improve natural surveillance, and promote commercial viability in accordance with Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 14;
- are for two-storey units which have a street level and a Row level presence which sensitively retain or reintroduce access into the retail unit at both street level and Row level;
- ensure that new facades or alterations to existing facades of shops or commercial premises within The Rows preserve or enhance those elements which contribute to the significance of the building or its setting;

- ensure that the design, location and materials used for business signage applied or attached to Row beams or posts are sympathetic to the character and appearance of The Rows.

Proposals for projecting box signs or signs projecting from a shop fascia will not normally be supported. Hanging signs on street frontage elevations will only be supported where they advertise the businesses at the premises; are of appropriate size, design and materials; and are sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building and The Rows. One hanging sign at balustrade level and fixed to the piers (which support the upper floors) will usually be supported for street level shops or businesses. One hanging sign at Row opening level or up to Row fascia level will usually be supported for Row level shops or businesses which have no street level frontage.



DM 14 - City and Town Centres

In line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ECON 2, main town centre uses will be supported within the city and town centre boundaries, as identified on the policies map. A1 retail uses will be supported within the primary shopping area, the allocated Northgate site area or Weaver Square Development Area, as identified on the policies map.

The loss of an A1 retail use within the identified primary shopping frontages in Chester and Northwich will normally be resisted, unless the unit has been vacant, adequately marketed and meets criteria one to four below.

Within secondary shopping frontages in Chester and Northwich or the primary shopping area in the other town centres, the loss of A1 retail uses to A2, A3, A4, A5 or D2 uses will only be supported where the overall vitality and viability is not undermined, they complement the existing retail offer and all of the following criteria are satisfied:

1. a shop window and active frontage is retained;
2. the centre's pedestrian footfall, vitality and viability is maintained and enhanced;
3. the proposal positively contributes to the centre's

historic cultural identity and accords with Local Plan (Part One) policies ENV 5 and ENV 6;

4. ground floor residential use is not included as part of the development

Proposals for alfresco dining/outdoor seating will be supported where this would be located directly in front of a café, restaurant or drinking establishment, not harm the safety of users of a highway, including pedestrians, the vitality and viability of the centre and the character of the centre. Promotion of the evening economy, especially cultural, civic and family activities in the city or town centre will be supported.

Residential development in the city or town centres will be supported, including specialised accommodation, where this meets balanced and mixed communities, subject to criteria one to four above, other relevant development plan policies, and would not prejudice the current or future functions of the town centre.

Chester

Within the historic Rows, as identified on the policies map, new development must encourage footfall and provide interest through active frontages, with the retention of historic frontages as a priority. The provision of A1, A3 and A4 uses will be supported

and the loss of these uses resisted. Other uses that contribute to the visitor economy will be supported. Residential, office and other main town centre use development on upper floors of the Rows will be supported, providing there is no harm to the character of the historic buildings. Where a proposed use occupies both ground floor and Row level, access and an active frontage must be included at both ground floor and Row level to promote footfall on each level.

DM 46 Development in Conservation Areas

In line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 5, development within or affecting the setting of conservation areas, as identified on the policies map, will be expected to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, taking account of the significance of heritage assets.

Where applicable, development proposals should take into consideration:

1. topography, landscape setting and natural features;
2. existing townscapes, local landmarks, views and skylines;
3. the architecture of surrounding buildings;
4. the quality and nature of materials, both traditional and modern;
5. the established layout and spatial character of building plots, the existing alignments and widths of historic routes and street hierarchy (where physically and historically evident);



6. the contribution that open areas make to the special character and appearance of the conservation area;
7. the scale, height, bulk and massing of adjacent townscape;
8. architectural, historical and archaeological features and their settings;
9. the need to retain historic boundary and surface treatments;
10. the local dominant building materials, the building typology that best reflects the special character and appearance of the area and features and detailing; and
11. minimising and mitigating the loss of hedgerows, trees and other landscape features.

Development proposals which will not be supported include the following:

12. demolition of non-listed buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of conservation areas, other than in exceptional circumstances;

13. the erection of buildings and structures which are unsympathetic in design, scale, mass and use of materials;
14. alterations and extensions which are unsympathetic in design, scale, mass and use of materials;
15. the erection or extension of buildings and structures which will obstruct important views within, or views in or out of conservation areas.

Where consent for demolition is granted, conditions will be attached to ensure no demolition shall take place until a scheme for redevelopment has been approved and a contract for the works has been made. Where appropriate and on a case by case basis, where permission is granted for the demolition of non-listed buildings, they should be appropriately recorded before demolition.

Applicants will be expected to submit a Heritage Impact Assessment for all applications which affect heritage assets, including as a minimum, a description of their significance and the impact which proposals may have upon this.



DM 47 Listed Buildings

In line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 5, development proposals or works, including alterations, extensions and changes of use shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Where relevant, development proposals or works will only be supported which would:

1. conserve the significance of a listed building and its setting, securing its optimum viable use;
2. preserve or enhance a listed building or structure, and any curtilage listed structures or features of special architectural or historic landscape interest. Development proposals or works within or affecting the setting of listed buildings will be expected to achieve a high quality of design, making a positive relationship between the proposed and existing context by taking account of:
 3. topography, landscape setting and natural features;
 4. existing townscapes, local landmarks, views and skylines;
 5. the architecture of surrounding buildings;
 6. the need to retain trees;

7. the quality and nature of materials, both traditional and modern;
8. established layout and spatial character;
9. the scale, height, bulk and massing of adjacent townscape;
10. architectural, historical and archaeological features and their settings; and
11. the need to retain historic boundary and surface treatments

In the rare event that permission for demolition is granted, conditions will be attached to ensure no demolition shall take place until a scheme for redevelopment has been approved and a contract for the works has been made. This will also apply to any curtilage buildings of the listed building or structures. All applications for development proposals or works to listed buildings must be accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment which clearly identifies, as a minimum, the significance of the building; the proposed works of alteration; any loss of historic fabric; and the effect on the character and appearance which the proposed works will have. A copy of this statement should also be submitted to the Local Authority's Historic Environment Record.

DM 48 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

In line with Local Plan (Part Two) policy ENV 5, development proposals will be encouraged and supported where they are designed to preserve or enhance the significance of non-designated heritage assets.

The significance of non-designated heritage assets and their setting should be assessed in development proposals or works, against the following criteria, namely the:

1. special qualities of architectural and historic interest;
2. features of interest and the setting of the non-designated historic asset;
3. contribution the non-designated historic asset makes to local distinctiveness; local townscape; or rural character; and
4. conservation of interesting or unusual features; architectural detail; materials; construction; or historic interest.

Development which would remove, harm or undermine the significance of such non-designated heritage assets, or their contribution to the character of a

place, will only be permitted where the benefits of the development outweigh the harm having regard to the scale of the harm and significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

Prior to the loss of the non-designated heritage asset, an appropriate level of survey and recording will be expected including where appropriate archaeological investigation. The results of which should be deposited on the Historic Environment Record.



DM 50 Archaeology

Development proposals affecting archaeological heritage assets which meet the requirements of Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 5 will be supported.

Development proposals will need to take into account the significance of the heritage asset and their setting, and the scale of any loss or harm.

For sites of known or potential archaeological interest, applications must be accompanied by an appropriate archaeological assessment of the archaeological impact of the development. A field evaluation prior to determination of the planning application may also be required. Where remains are of national significance e.g. within a Primary Archaeological Zone as defined by the Chester Archaeological Plan, detailed agreement on ground impacts should be secured before planning permission is granted.

Where necessary to secure the protection of the heritage asset or a programme of archaeological mitigation, conditions will be attached to permissions. These may include requirements for detailed agreement on ground impacts and programmes of archaeological investigation, building recording, reporting and archiving.

For development proposals within Chester, the Chester Archaeological Plan must be consulted which defines Areas of Archaeological Significance and the Primary and Secondary Archaeological Character Zones.



