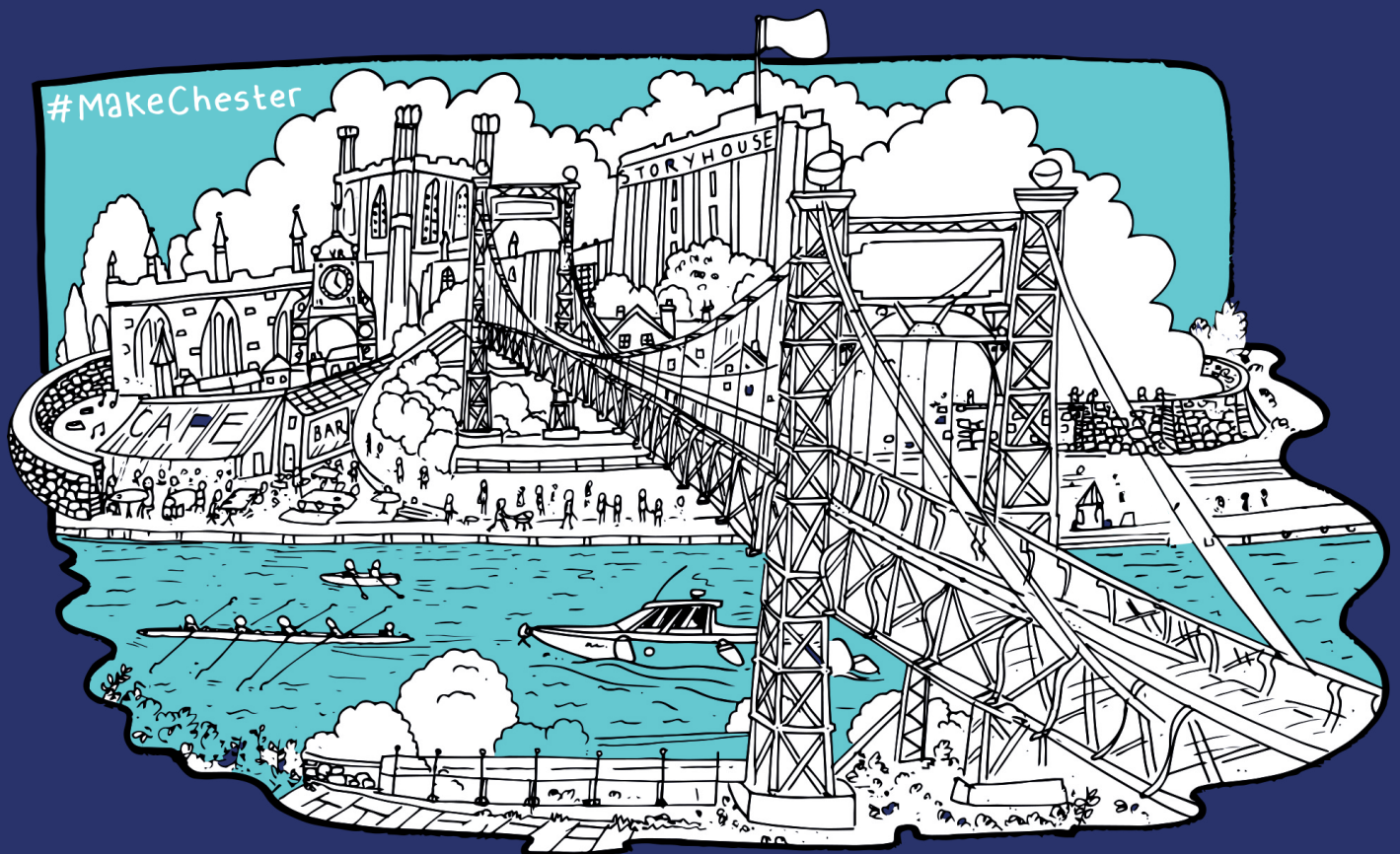


# CHESTER ONE CITY PLAN



2022 – 2045  
VISION



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# THE ONE CITY PLEDGE



There is only one city of Chester. Recent global events have taught us that when we come together we can withstand even the most testing of crises.

We are committed to working together as public services, private businesses, charities, faith groups, voluntary organisations and residents, to ensure we are able to meet the challenges ahead and to achieve 45 actions for Chester by 2045.

We pledge to work together to utilise The Chester Test, ensuring Chester is a truly sustainable, inclusive and participatory city. We will utilise the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals adapted for a localised context to achieve the One City Plan's 45 actions by 2045.

Our vision for Chester is one that is proud of its history and confident about its future. We will create a unique city that prioritises inclusivity and sustainability to ensure a healthier, greener and fairer future for all its people.

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# FOREWORD

The original One City Plan was published in 2012. Since then the city and wider world have faced new challenges which were elevated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 provided an opportunity to ask fundamental questions about how we work and interact across the community; and accelerated the longer-term challenges for sustaining traditional 'bricks and mortar' retail in our city centre.

We took this as an opportunity to pause and reflect on whether or not the One City Plan was still relevant and important to the future of Chester. Unlike previous consultations, we utilised a grassroots community organisation, Good For Nothing Chester, to lead a community consultation like no other. This consultation led to a huge and wide input, one of the largest the Council has ever seen. Participants, from five-year-olds to city leaders, all shared their perspectives on what is special about Chester, and their vision for the future. We took the decision to create a new plan that adopts an inclusive and participatory approach, so that Chester can realise its full potential.

Now is the time to trail-blaze and ensure our city doesn't return to the pre-pandemic status quo. Chester is brimming with makers, doers and thinkers, who care passionately about their city. They want to help drive a new grassroots-led model that supports pioneering practice and celebrates the city's unique assets.

Extraordinary times demand new approaches. Becoming a participatory city, with Cheshire West and Chester Council co-creating with citizens, will ensure Chester thrives as a go to destination.

This One City Plan will build on the successes of the first plan with relevant actions carried forward. However, it will also be reflective of the new groups that emerged in response to the pandemic, creating a governance structure that recognises the Council

cannot do this alone. It will include voices from industry, education, housing, health, the third sector and the environment, as well as local neighbourhoods.

The refreshed One City Plan will be in two parts. This document is the vision, developed in partnership with people who live, work, learn and play in Chester. It will form the basis for the action plan to follow, and this will include the 45 actions we will deliver as a city by 2045.

The plan will use the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, adapted for a localised approach, to create what will be known as The Chester Test. This will ensure projects, initiatives and large economic developments all support Chester in becoming a greener, fairer society for all.

We are lucky to have a city filled with people willing and able to share their expertise - and are excited about this new collaborative approach where the Council and the people will drive the plan forward together.



*Councillor  
Louise Gittins*

Leader,  
Cheshire West and Chester Council

# WHERE WE ARE



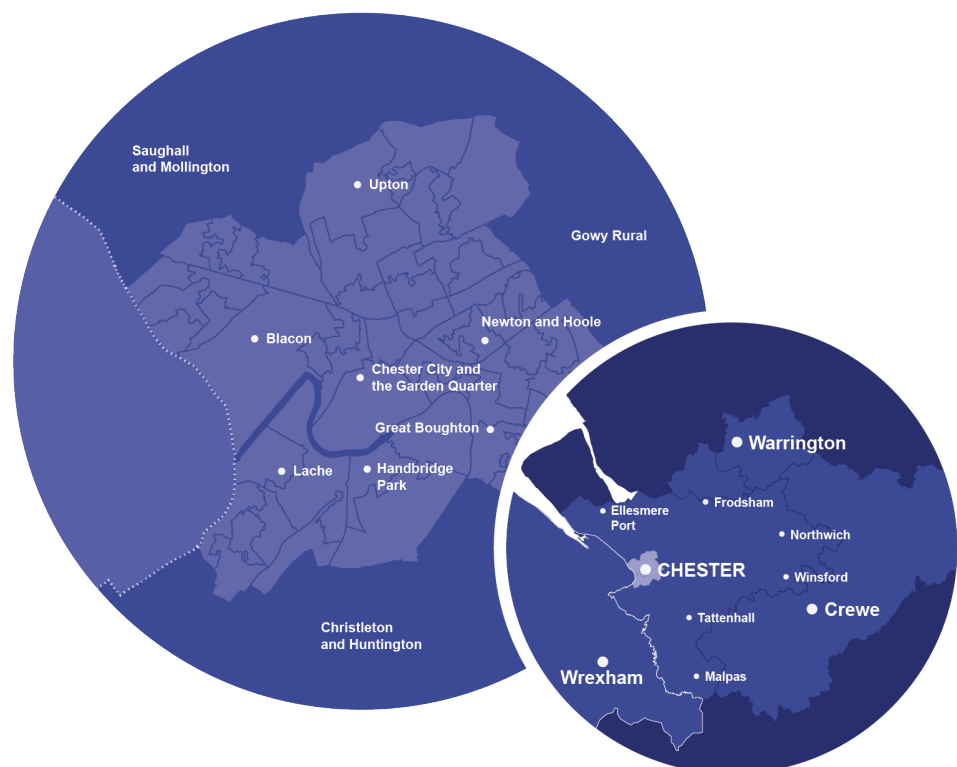
## THE ORIGINAL ONE CITY PLAN

The Chester One City Plan was published in 2012 setting out the direction and vision for the future of Chester's city centre over a 15-year period. The key principles were informed by, and informed, the Council's Local Plan. For the last 10 years, the One City Plan has guided development decisions in and around Chester.

Since the inception of the original One City Plan, the needs and desires of Chester city users have evolved dramatically, and the economic and political landscapes have experienced a major shift. Sustainability, growing inequality, and lack of opportunity in specific areas of Chester have become increasing priorities for city users. City plans have historically been about bricks and mortar - focused on city design and the built environment. Yet the impact of Covid-19 will have a lasting effect on how our city operates, as will the increased focus on Net Zero targets by 2045 for Chester and Cheshire West.

2020 saw people and communities forced to reconnect with their neighbourhoods and cities, finding ways to look after one another and to learn how to survive together. The way we worked, lived, and played became localised in an unprecedented manner.

Now more than ever, there is a need to build on the views of local people and experts across our city, taking on board their advice to help shape this, and future iterations of the One City Plan in a participatory way which embeds sustainability and play, connects communities, and has support from all decision-makers through a transparent and accountable governance structure.





## **AN INTERCONNECTED CITY**

Chester is a city of interconnected neighbourhoods located along transport corridors - like the hub and spokes of a wheel - where main roads lead to the city centre. These neighbourhoods are broadly reflected in the electoral boundaries for the Cheshire West and Chester Council Wards.

If we are to be a truly participatory city, the One City Plan must incorporate these surrounding neighbourhoods and nearby rural villages. Taking action on the four themes which have emerged following the community consultation will deliver sustainable benefits city-wide, better connecting all the communities in Chester, and responding to challenges that will reimagine and grow a successful city centre.

## **CHESTER IN THE NORTH WEST, NORTH WALES AND THE WORLD**

Chester is a regional gateway and economic driver to North Wales, Merseyside and the North West. It is an important economic hub in the Mersey Dee Alliance area and a key location in the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership. The city is the principal settlement in the borough of Cheshire West and Chester, and a world heritage city with global appeal for tourists, students, and business investment.

The One City Plan must recognise the role of education, culture and tourism in Chester's economic future, as well as maximising the benefits of its close proximity to the Ellesmere Port Industrial Area, where exciting opportunities exist for innovative local organisations to deliver a world-leading Net Zero industrial cluster and fulfil the vision of a circular economy in the heart of the North West.

## **THE CITY CENTRE**

The city centre supports and connects local neighbourhoods, providing important services to these communities, as well as driving footfall and visitors to the area. Chester city centre has experienced the same structural changes as all centres in the UK in terms of the decline of traditional 'bricks and mortar' retail - particularly in terms of national brands vacating and large stores closing due to the growth of internet shopping and the convenience of out-of-town retail parks.

We should focus on what makes Chester unique. We have visitor appeal, a buoyant independent retail sector, a successful hospitality offer, and growing investment in a quality visitor experience. We must diversify the city centre to attract people throughout all hours of the day and night.

A specific opportunity exists to embrace the concept of play and the needs of younger users in terms of the form and function of physical spaces, the uses and the availability of different activities within the city centre. The ease of access to the city centre using safe, connected routes is of paramount importance.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The original One City Plan achieved a great deal, and there is much to be proud of. Since 2012, more than £222 million of investment has been made in regeneration projects from the public and private sectors. Some of these projects began as an idea and evolved over years, whilst other projects had an instant impact. Regeneration can take time and the impact is not immediately visible.

We recognise the need to celebrate and showcase One City Plan successes. The following examples celebrate collaboration from the private and public sector, and demonstrate that regeneration does not happen in isolation.

### STORYHOUSE



Thanks to public funding (£36m), private funding (£0.6m) and the imagination of its creators, Storyhouse is an award-winning cultural centre in the heart of Chester, supported by over 160 volunteers. It delivers an extensive array of community arts, cultural, health and wellbeing activities.

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*Chester was in great need of cultural activities and Storyhouse offers this in bucket-loads. It is a real hub of the community and accessible to all ages, social backgrounds etc. We need more of this type of cultural and leisure activity in the city centre.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

”

“

*Storyhouse is the highlight in Chester for me that really shows people what you can do if you try with accessibility. It is my safe space and I love everything about it.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

”

Previously the Odeon Cinema, which had been boarded up for over a decade, Storyhouse has transformed the economic potential of Chester. It supported the regeneration of the Northgate Street area and increased footfall in Chester city centre by 15% following its launch. Just one year after opening it had recorded 1 million visitors.

## THE BOUGHTON CORRIDOR



“

*It has made the area much more aesthetically pleasing and shows off Chester's waterways. The changes to the area of the canal are really welcome. It is a positive change to the area and would be good to see further development continued canal side towards Gorse Stacks and beyond.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

”

This area has been regenerated through a mix of uses which has included Waitrose, the Moxy Hotel, office space, and a diverse residential offer of new apartments and remodelled existing properties. The improvements to the canal paths have provided a safe travel route into the city centre and attracted new businesses along the waterside. The creation of a bridge linking the Shot Tower residential development and the Station Gateway area has proved incredibly successful for active travel users and those accessing the railway from surrounding neighbourhoods.

“

*It's excellent! Very enjoyable area to walk and cycle, great transformation and wide pedestrian space. Has encouraged new businesses. The overall development has made this a much more attractive environment and encourages people to visit and support the locale. Feels safer at night with the lighting.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

”



## OTHER MAJOR INVESTMENTS



Several major investments have been made in Chester since 2012 which we are now all familiar with including the new bus interchange at Gorse Stacks, and the resurfacing and shared use of Frodsham Street, a scheme that won the National Healthy Street of the Year award in 2019.

We have also seen the introduction and establishment of large hospitality units and a new hotel in Pepper Street, transforming underused space into a new vibrant area of the city. In 2022 we saw the launch of Northgate (Phase 1) – a major new leisure development based around the new Exchange Square and including a new indoor market, cinema, eateries, and office accommodation.

# DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

## THE NEW ONE CITY PLAN

Extraordinary times demand new approaches. Whilst the original One City Plan focussed on top level issues, with ‘major stakeholders’ consulted, a resounding cry from consultation participants was that a participatory approach was called for. They emphasised a critical need for the plan to be created and owned by ‘the people’, handled as a living, breathing document that can be adapted to meet the differing needs of the city. They called for collaboration between the Council and the people, and for better communication.

### **INCLUSIVE CITY**

Chester will be participatory and inclusive, interventions will take place that support the ambition of no-one being left behind. This is an important thread of the borough’s inclusive economy work. Opportunities should be open and accessible to all and collectively work to make a fairer economy.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**


The general sense from participants was that although the One City Plan is a well-regarded and important plan, a better framework for co-creation and participation is required, to ensure an updated set of actions are defined, and achieved, by 2045.

Consultation participants asked for an inspiring and diverse team of people to drive the plan forward, and emphasised the importance of accountability. They said it should be owned, evaluated, and driven forward by all. Those leading the drive should all be aligned in their understanding of the One City Plan and how it is to be delivered.

As a result there is a new governance framework that will ensure there is accountable ownership for delivery of the One City Plan actions, and which outlines the structure of the working groups accountable for defining, agreeing and delivering actions under the priority themes that emerged from the city-wide consultation. There is a renewed commitment to ensuring the plan and actions are embedded across all areas of Council activity (see Section 3. How we will get there).

### **CO-PRODUCTION & COLLABORATION**

The consultation gave people a space and platform to share their views, and revealed the need for more meaningful and sustained engagement with the Council, in the shaping of their city. It also highlighted that our city is teeming with experts willing to share their knowledge to shape the future of Chester.



The Council will harness the power of five existing working groups to deliver the One City Plan, except with renewed membership and revised Terms of Reference. It will ensure memberships include a cross-section of Cestrians working, living and playing in Chester so that there is a diversity of life experience, professions and skills, as well as representation from children and young people. Be you five or 95, your voice will be heard.

This revised membership across all groups will create a truly participatory framework and enable co-creation at grassroots community level. The new framework and governance structure will ensure a diverse group of city users will lead the groups that own the evolving actions and themes of the new One City Plan.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

Sustainability emerged as an overarching theme of the consultation, and participants across all approaches, from community leaders to significant landowners and developers, identified sustainability as a key priority. Sustainability will permeate the new One City Plan.

The Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan commits to hit Net Zero by 2045 and sets out the scale of the challenge the area faces, as a borough, to achieve this. As such, the new One City Plan sets out the vision and aims of the city that will take us to 2045.

The Council will prioritise the three pillars of sustainability – social, economic and environmental – in all future decisions and consequently the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals have been adapted for a localised context to achieve the 45 emerging actions by 2045. In addition, the new governance structure will harness available expertise to develop tangible and actionable plans to address all areas of sustainability for Chester citizens.

By addressing sustainability, each of the emerging major themes can be tackled in meaningful and connected ways to reimagine Chester as a truly participatory city for all.

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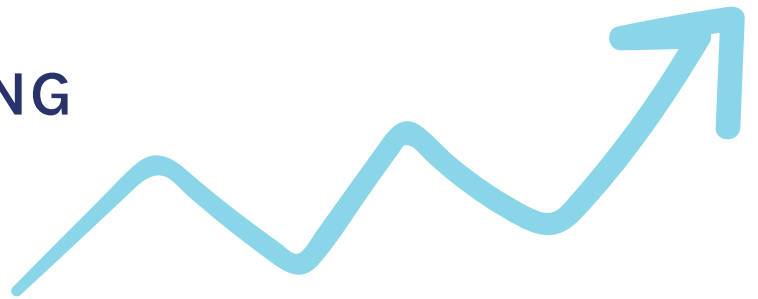
*It would be a very smart move for Chester to prioritise sustainability as this is only going to grow in the future.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

”



# WHERE WE ARE GOING



## CONTEXT

The purpose of the One City Plan is not to preclude development or constrain new opportunities that emerge. Indeed, it welcomes new ideas and opportunities and sets a framework to ensure that 45 actions are achieved by 2045.

The plan sets out the basis for the stitching and weaving of a mosaic of new and existing ideas, plans, strategies, and projects, into a single coherent framework. All of the existing Council documents will continue to play a key role in delivering specific actions or projects within the city. These documents have not been replaced by the One City Plan, but rather joined together into this one overarching plan - with a renewed focus on sustainability and the emerging themes of the community consultation.

These other documents themselves will change and evolve over time, as opportunities and challenges in the city arise and include:



- Council Plan 2020-2024
- West Cheshire Climate Emergency Response Plan
- West Cheshire Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan
- The Fairer Futures Strategy
- Cheshire West and Chester Place Plan
- All together Fairer (Cheshire West and Chester)
- The Local Plan
- Land Action Plan
- Chester High Street Covid Recovery and Renewal Plan
- Lache Community Masterplan
- Chester Transport Strategy
- Integrated Transport Taskforce
- Culture and Heritage Strategies
- Green Spaces Strategies

The One City Plan and action plan is a living, breathing document which will be regularly reviewed under a new governance structure.

The One City Plan consultation process engaged the wider communities across Chester's suburbs. There will be further opportunities for local communities to



engage in the One City Plan as it is implemented (see Section 3. How we will get there). The One City Plan does not preclude any planning at neighbourhood level. In these urban wards, locally-driven visions will be included within the One City Plan with delivery reported back and monitored through the governance structure.

## WHY WE NEED A PLAN

The vision of any future city should be bold, unique, exciting, achievable, and specific to the city itself. And every action emerging from the One City Plan will need to support the city in achieving its vision.

We have a responsibility to ensure that our city creates a greener, fairer future for all those that live, work, learn and play in Chester, and that decisions do not disadvantage today's or tomorrow's Cestrians.

This is why we have created The Chester Test. The Chester Test is a decision-making wheel, based on the Kate Raworth Doughnut Economics model. This wheel will be used by all project leads to ensure the plan's actions feed into the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

The Raworth model focuses on developing a balanced approach that allows for humans and the planet to thrive. The Chester Test will demonstrate how decisions will affect our environment and people when designing, implementing or evaluating projects. The wheel places the four themes of the consultation at the centre with two additional rings that highlight the need for co-production and participation between organisations and the Council, alongside adapted United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and further priorities identified from the community consultation.

The Chester Test is a new way of working and will require considerable stakeholder engagement to ensure decision-makers understand both its purpose and how to interpret each of the categories. See 'Section 3. How we will get there' for more on The Chester Test.

The long-term aim of this approach is to place people and our planet at the centre of everything we do. We recognise this is a journey and we will all learn together to do better for our city.

For the refreshed One City Plan to have a lasting impact and legacy, it is important that it is not only visionary and meeting the needs of the city, but is also owned, evaluated, and driven forward by all. Those decision makers leading the drive should be aligned in their understanding of the One City Plan and how it is being delivered.

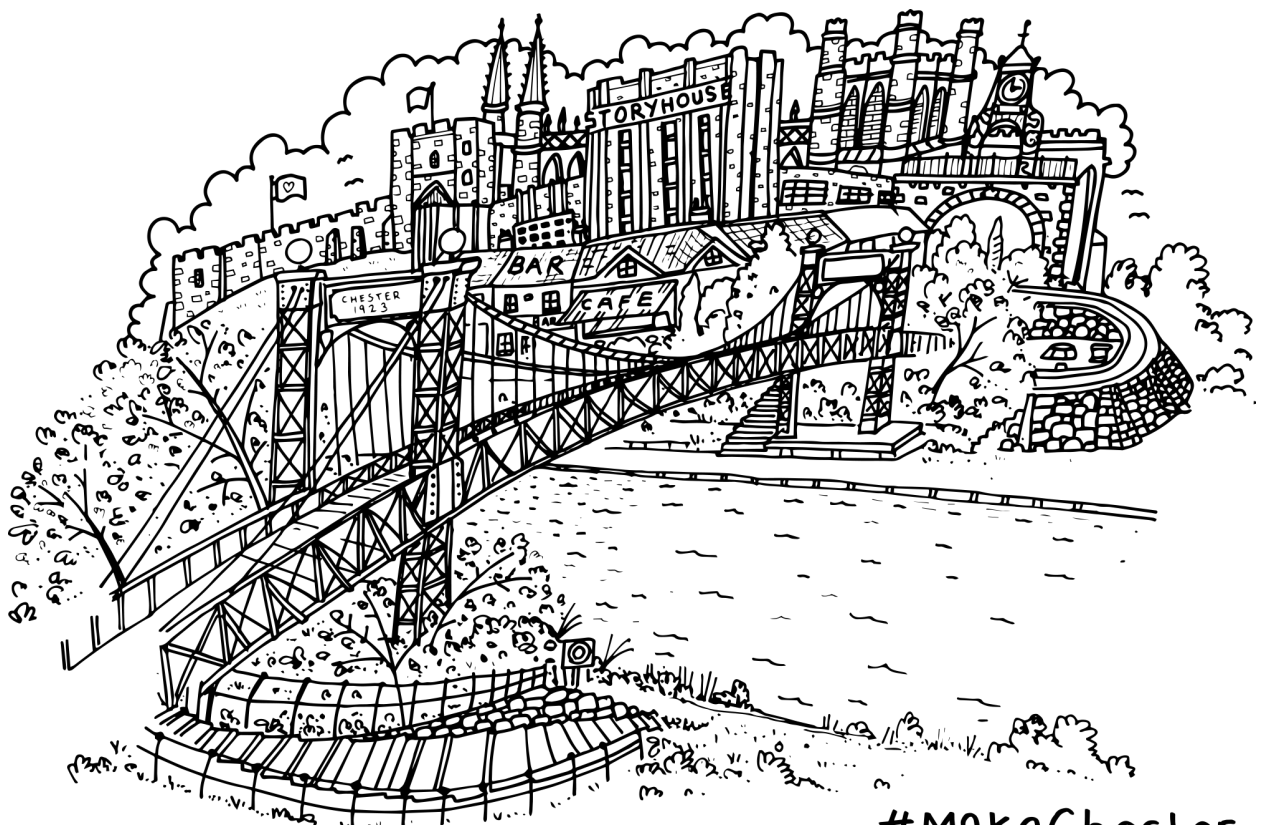
## A PLAN THAT MEETS THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Alongside the climate emergency priorities, we have to take action to address increasing inequality across our communities. Although we have a relatively well-qualified workforce and a high proportion of professional occupations, people are having to travel out of the city to secure better jobs.

Moreover, these city-wide statistics mask some marked disparities. People in some parts of Chester have a poor life expectancy - ten years less than those who live in the most prosperous neighbourhoods. Claimant rates in some wards are more than twice the national average, fuel poverty is up to a third higher, and anti-social behaviour significantly more prevalent than in the rest of the borough.

We have individuals living in isolation due to inadequate access to public transport. We need to provide more connected, affordable, frictionless ways into the city. As a multi-tiered, historic city, innovative consideration needs to be given to accessibility, wayfinding, and creating safer routes.

There is also a need to make bold decisions with respect to repurposing and reimagining our city centre in a post Covid-19 world, with a mixed retail offer including quality independents, markets, and a small selection of national brands, supported by the already growing hospitality sector. Further improvement will be required across transport, infrastructure, accessibility, the residential offer, education and skills, business and investment, and the city experience, all underpinned by sustainability and play, to create a legacy for the future.



#MakeChester

## VISION


The vision of any future city should be bold, unique, exciting, achievable and specific to the city itself. And every aim, objective and action in the One City Plan should support the city in achieving the vision. Decision-making should always be driven by whether each decision will help achieve the city's vision.

Our shared vision gives a sense of purpose and direction for the revival and growth of Chester city centre for today and tomorrow. It sets out the peoples' ambition for Chester and the way we wish the world to see us.



### CHESTER'S VISION

**PROUD OF ITS HISTORY AND  
CONFIDENT ABOUT ITS FUTURE,  
CHESTER IS A UNIQUE CITY THAT  
PRIORITISES INCLUSIVITY AND  
SUSTAINABILITY TO ENSURE A  
HEALTHIER, GREENER AND FAIRER  
FUTURE FOR ALL ITS PEOPLE.**





## POSITIONING STATEMENT

The One City Plan is a long-term strategy to galvanise healthier, greener and fairer futures for the city and its communities. With bold ambitions and robust actions that place people front and centre, to achieve equity and confront the climate crisis, we are building a stronger, kinder city for all.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

According to the OECD, Governments and local authorities cannot achieve the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals alone. It is acknowledged that most people live and work in cities, with existing policies already in place to address areas such as inequality, inclusive economy and the climate emergency. By centering all future projects alongside our adapted (for Chester context) Sustainable Development Goals, we will ensure that the three pillars of sustainability - social, economic and environmental - are considered at the beginning and in the ongoing evaluation of every project.

By addressing sustainability, each of the emerging major themes can be tackled in meaningful and connected ways to create a truly participatory city for all. The incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals within The Chester Test have allowed us to create a roadmap as to how we will work together to meet the challenges now and in the future, to ensure a healthier, greener and fairer future for all.

This is important environmentally to help achieve Net Zero targets by 2045 as we work with businesses and communities to help reduce the city's carbon footprint and channel actions to demonstrate Chester's contribution to the Cheshire West and Chester Climate Emergency Response Plan. It will also ensure we take opportunities to build a green economy with more active residents, less congestion, warmer homes, and a more efficient use of our resources.


Sustainability is also economic and social - we want everyone in the city to have access to the education and skills they need to fulfil their potential and to have the opportunity to access high quality, well-paid jobs. We will support local businesses to thrive and become more resilient by ensuring that we evolve our sectors, support growth and job creation, and harness new and emerging sectors to drive competitive advantage.

We will encourage residents to shop local and help businesses with different ownership models to get started and grow, all as part of an economy that creates and shares wealth and opportunity within our city. We will work with residents to identify opportunities for regeneration, considering community projects and Council-led developments. By designing services together, we can build stronger communities.



We want to ensure every community feels safe, has quality local amenities, is well-connected, and enjoys a positive identity with plenty of things to do.

Chester is a city with a prosperous centre and a number of neighbourhoods. However, the contrast with some of Chester's outlying suburban communities can be stark. These communities demonstrate concentrations of:

- 
- Low skills levels
  - Limited qualifications
  - High incidences of child poverty
  - Rising household unemployment
  - High benefit claiming
  - Low incomes

The One City Plan will channel Chester's contribution to the Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan, ensuring that actions address the pockets of intense disparities in opportunities and incomes, housing, health, and both digital and transport connectivity. Unlocking the economic potential of the resident population and tackling these issues will be critical.

Health inequalities are widespread across the city and there are several identifiable health challenges in specific neighbourhoods in the city. Tackling these issues will require increased opportunities to lead active lifestyles and improved access to high quality healthcare services.

Chester has benefited over the past decade from new business investment and employment opportunities, leading people to seek to move into the area to access jobs. However, this has been slowed by more recent economic circumstances including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Underemployment has led to a mismatch of skills and low wages, and cost of living increases pressure on households.

Chester has higher than average house prices and, compared to the wider borough, prices have continued to increase within and in close proximity to the city centre. There remains a strong desire for people to live in the heart of Chester, but limited opportunity. As a result, there is little affordability for first-time buyers, graduates, families, and low-income households wishing to reside in the city. Due to the limited housing offer within the city centre, there's not enough buzz in the city outside of business and retail hours.

Chester has a diverse make up of residents, ranging from those born and bred in the city, to students and graduates, and elderly households. We need to do more

to meet the needs of these groups, including retaining talent, providing better affordable mixed-purpose housing as well as securing additional social and healthcare facilities.

Chester's communities are active, passionate and committed and this is a huge asset for the city, which it must embrace at every opportunity. The Government's Localism Act (2011) introduced new mechanisms to empower communities to take charge of growth and development in their own neighbourhoods. Chester is no exception. It must grow first and foremost with and for its residents, with a renewed commitment by the Council to create a participatory city that encourages all to play their part.

## THE FOUR THEMES

The four themes of the refreshed One City Plan are drawn from the community consultation's findings, and are the foundations on which the new plan is built. By working across Council departments, working groups, with councillors and with people across the city we will define the 45 actions we must take by 2045, and their measurable outcomes.



# CITY EXPERIENCE AND PLAY



## THE VISION FOR CITY EXPERIENCE AND PLAY

Chester will develop a city experience that places people and play at the heart of its plans to support all of its communities and that celebrates its identity as a leading heritage city. Chester will be a modern, accessible and culturally-rich city that is safe and well-connected, with a vibrant evening economy and a reimagined city centre.

## CONTEXT

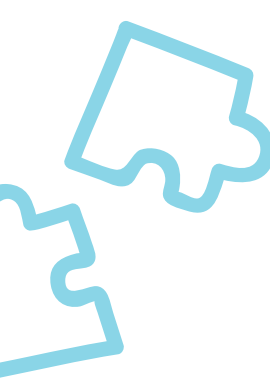
Chester has a truly unique heritage and cultural offer, which provides a strong basis for maximising opportunities to deliver quality placemaking and neighbourhoods that are safe, well connected with a vibrant evening economy and a reimagined city centre. We will ensure that its unique assets are accessible, safe and consider city user needs at different times of the day.

This is particularly important with respect to responding to the opportunities for young people and families by better understanding and embedding the concept of play in our actions. From scenic views to the tiniest of details, children are affected by what they see, hear, find and feel around them and this influences their play. The beauty to be found in the city centre is not lost on five-year-olds but what children appreciate and how they make use of the most mundane of features is often overlooked by adults.

Cheshire West and Chester Council will make a high-level and cross-cutting commitment to the principle of play sufficiency. Those responsible for play within the new One City Plan will continually look for opportunities to enhance play across the city, and as part of a drive to encourage families into the city centre and to support the local economy.

Chester city centre is well known for providing a unique shopping experience centred on the historic two-tier Rows. Retail is changing and in the future Chester will utilise its unparalleled cultural and heritage offer to create a truly bespoke and comprehensive user experience- one that reappropriates the city's heritage to create an offer within which retail and leisure are seamlessly integrated.

The visitor economy is a key contributor to the economic performance of Chester and the wider Cheshire area. The visitor framework is about investing in, focusing on and maximising opportunities. This includes enhancing and fully using the attractive and distinctive network of waterways, which are central to the city's development. The River Dee - the reason Chester came into existence in the first place - is a valuable natural and health amenity and its waterside at the Groves offers a beautiful recreational environment for socialising and relaxation. However, the city has developed to turn its back on the Dee, making it difficult for visitors



to find their way there and for residents and visitors alike to make the most of this leisure asset.

Managing Chester's cultural and heritage infrastructure is challenging - with many historic areas including the City Walls and Towers, Cathedral, and Castle requiring support from long-term investment programmes. These assets are invaluable to Chester - symbolising its historic and cultural evolution and providing a substantial contribution to the city's income and reputation.

Chester needs its development initiatives to talk to each other and be part of the city as a whole and to embrace technology which will lead to opportunities for visual and creative arts to be completely interactive. Music, film, entertainment, and gaming industries in the future will be completely immersive and will require new space to complement Storyhouse and Northgate.



Chester is a proud Cathedral City and whilst the Cathedral is a physical space and a centre for worship in the heart of the city, the Cathedral also plays a much wider role in the civic programme, visitor economy and community of Chester. Protecting and preserving its historic estate, whilst remaining open and welcoming comes with its challenges, but the Cathedral achieves this by providing a regular space for arts and cultural events, as well as a place for educational visits, celebration, debate, performance and processions. This exciting programme of activity makes it a major driver of footfall in the city centre, attracting visitors from the suburbs of the city and from international destinations seamlessly. Being sustainable both financially and environmentally is an important feature of the Cathedral's operating model and it merges 'free to enter' with chargeable activities like the dining area, gift shop and the Cathedral at Heights Tour. This is a model that other historic buildings in the city could follow.

# BOLD AMBITIONS FOR CITY EXPERIENCE AND PLAY

We will ensure Chester becomes a sustainable city, and make certain the Sustainable Development Goals are always considered when developing city experience and play.

We will develop Chester as a playful city for all.

We will ensure a broad range of activities take place simultaneously, creating a rich mix of culture, arts, and creativity during the day, twilight and evening hours.

We will ensure we respect, reveal and celebrate the city's rich historical heritage and architecture - improving public realm and open spaces and encouraging developments of the highest standards.

We will work with businesses and investors to create a compelling retail offer and to drive our economy.

We will ensure the city feels safe and accessible, day or night, for all city users, especially the vulnerable and young.



# CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY



## VISION FOR CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Chester will be accessible for all city users, with seamless transportation links that provide safe passage in and around the city for all modes of transport, improving accessibility and quality of life for its communities to achieve the city's vision of a healthier, greener and fairer city.

## CONTEXT

We must ensure the principles of sustainability, accessibility and connectivity are captured at the core of this plan to further enhance Chester as a unique liveable city, with seamless movement principles, protected for future generations that people want to interact with. This overarching outcome is at the forefront of setting deliverable actions and supporting the wider social, economic, and environmental ambitions for the city.

A user's experience of transport, parking and the city centre offering must be front and centre, alongside a thorough examination of Chester's unique assets to ensure these are accessible, safe and consider city user needs at different times of the day.

Our desire is to improve the quality of life for all through the provision of a connected and green suite of transport options- making Chester a great place to live, work, learn and play. We want to ensure that the decisions we make, the services we provide and the places we develop are focussed on making the community of Chester thrive, by addressing health and wellbeing, promoting active travel, enhancing our local environment and neighbourhoods, and improving safety for all.

## WHAT CESTRIANS SAY

“

*You could make it easier for people to travel other ways, not just cars. There is the new bus station. We need more options and routes to get into town. More bike racks where people can leave their bikes safely... stuff like that.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

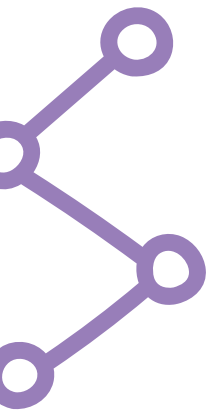
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*We must develop fantastic transport systems to serve all residents and visitors to the city... lots of cities are great to visit because they have better public transport. We must help the elderly so they don't feel trapped and can participate in the city more easily.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

”



# BOLD AMBITIONS FOR CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

We will build on Chester's strengths as a compact, connected centre surrounded by '15 minute' neighbourhoods.

We will enable effective regional and national travel, to and from other major cities, by enhancing Chester Railway Station.

We will embrace the need to transition to Net Zero by enhancing opportunities for sustainable travel, promoting active travel and placing Chester at the forefront of Net Zero carbon connectivity.

We will make Chester accessible, easy to travel around and welcoming – encouraging and promoting safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable travel options, and meeting the access needs of less mobile people.

We will make Chester a community of connected places, ensuring all communities and mobility needs are considered and planned for.

We will support behavioural change by helping all city users make informed travel choices. People will have access to clear, reliable and coherent information and wayfinding at the right time, through the right channel.

*We have to broaden the idea of what we mean by transport; walking and cycling are part of that. We really should be trying to be as innovative as possible in trying to keep cars out of the city centre.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation



# THRIVING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES



## VISION FOR CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Chester will prioritise the people that live in our city and surrounding neighbourhoods to ensure that both the physical infrastructure and supporting services enable everyone to thrive.

## CONTEXT

The One City Plan consultation identified that Chester should develop a clear strategy to increase the number of city centre residents. This should include a review of current housing stock and redevelopment of existing sites to create a residential offer that is both sustainable and diverse. The process should consider the needs of all age groups, prioritising the provision of health, education, and wellbeing. This will also include the opportunities to repurpose and convert existing buildings, including the upper floors of the historic Rows to create distinctive and sustainable homes for the future. It should also encourage consultation and collaboration with citizens through community placemaking.

Like many historic settlements in the UK, in addition to having unique strengths, Chester has long-standing social challenges. Social challenges exist within and around the city with some experiencing poor health, vulnerability, and low qualifications, alongside economic challenges including poverty. As a unique city with communities of differing needs, we must consider how to support individuals and create communities that people are proud to live in.

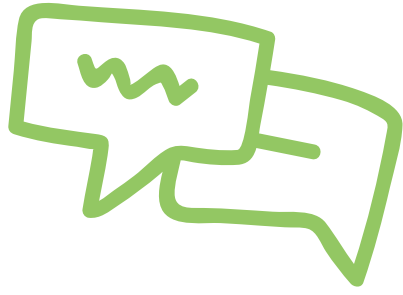
We must deliver a housing strategy which tackles the homelessness crisis, providing supported housing schemes and pathways out of homelessness that are reflective of the needs of homeless people, and which seeks to end rough-sleeping on Chester's streets.

We must continue to invest in regeneration schemes that enable local residents, community organisations and the private sector to reimagine their neighbourhoods. This is an opportunity to reimagine the types and mix of uses to bring forward exemplar placemaking schemes that deliver sustainable benefits to local residents.

Chester's residents should be able to take pride in their city and be active in its evolution. We want to encourage the city to 'live' rather than simply exist, to be of the highest quality, repositioned as a contemporary city that lives up to its residents' and visitors' expectations.

We need to prioritise the health and wellbeing of children and young people, alongside their education. This will ensure all Cestrians have a fair start in life. This should include access to good schools, youth services, and healthcare.





As an age-friendly city, Chester will enable people at all stages of life to actively participate in community activities, to access local services and to be treated with respect, regardless of their age.

We want to create sustainable communities across the city, with a variety and diversity of property types which support a broader range of needs and are influenced by the concept of a '15 minute' city.

The opportunities to improve the quality of housing and community placemaking should be spread across all the neighbourhoods of the city. Active engagement with residents should be undertaken and opportunities to invest in more sustainable, lower carbon adaptations and to look at the housing needs of communities and address any gaps in provision wherever possible.

Cities are first and foremost the meeting places of people, of cultures and of life. Because culture and life is not about buildings, but about the life and happenings between them and the opportunities such places and spaces create for activity and social interaction. A successful city establishes a sense of place – determined by the surrounding physical environment, its history and the people acting out their lives in it today. By effectively defining, encouraging, and investing in such a sense of place, culture and history, people are drawn to live, work, learn and play.

Chester already has such a strong sense of place – defined by its rich architectural, archaeological, and historical environment, which creates a unique identity. As a result, the city has become a rich mixture of citizens and visitors – each wanting to share in the culture of the city.

### WHAT CESTRIANS SAY

“

*Fundamentally you can see towns, cities, and the world changing. If places aren't compelling to live, work and visit, that will have a fundamental effect on the economics and welfare of the area.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

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“

*We need to blur the lines between students and residents. The more they can be integrated as people living together the better.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

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# BOLD AMBITIONS FOR THRIVING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES



We will generate opportunities for all local communities to prosper by promoting wellbeing, active lifestyles, learning and reducing inequalities.

We will create safe, clean, vibrant, healthy and pleasurable places to live, work and play, bringing life to Chester's streets, green parks and outdoor spaces.

We will ensure residential offers encourage a diverse range of residents and ensure people are connected to quality services and infrastructure including digital connectivity.

We will identify the needs of each neighbourhood to ensure health and wellbeing is supported alongside access to quality education for all.

We will deliver a housing strategy which tackles the homelessness crisis, providing supported housing schemes and pathways out of homelessness that are reflective of the needs of homeless people, and which seeks to end rough-sleeping on Chester's streets.

We will develop a specific housing offer that enables and attracts key workers to remain in the city.

We will create safer neighbourhoods for all our residents, improving access to green spaces and the ability to live in a lower impact, more sustainable world. We will develop a specific housing offer that enables and attracts key workers to remain in the city.



*If you want young people to stay in Chester when they grow up, you should listen to what they want... I don't think people will stay if the city doesn't reach their needs.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation



*If we prioritise the needs of children and young people we will prevent a lot of the later life healthcare.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

# BUSINESS FRIENDLY ECONOMY AND SKILLS




## VISION FOR BUSINESS FRIENDLY ECONOMY AND SKILLS

Chester will grow and diversify to support individuals, graduates, innovators, SMEs and multinationals in making Chester the place to invest and grow, supporting our innovators with the need for quality coworking hubs, early-stage and grow-on space. This will contribute to an inclusive and fairer economy, supporting innovation, social enterprises and entrepreneurship. Through collaboration we will develop our local workforce by investing in skills and training to attract and retain talent to meet the demands of future private and public sector workforces.

## CONTEXT


We will create a meaningful framework to support the development of business opportunities in Chester. The framework will allow individuals to access opportunities and will support businesses of all sizes – from social enterprises and co-operatives, to SMEs and national chains – to embrace the sustainability agenda and the creation of green jobs. To support this, we need to invest in the city’s business infrastructure and attract and retain graduates as a university city and to support the next generation of enterprise and innovation. This will include looking at how best we use assets and create the incubation spaces to nurture new businesses and provide the necessary grow-on support.



In recognition of the recent partnership agreement signed by University of Chester and Cheshire West and Chester Council, the One City Plan must be responsive to the opportunities of becoming a thriving university city. This recognises the key role the University plays in developing and retaining a highly skilled workforce, tackling the climate emergency, and diversifying the residential population, and driving the local economy forward, both in terms of workers and spenders.

Along with local communities, many students and postgraduates feel a strong sense of connection and belonging to Chester which is seen as a safe city by prospective students and their families, and an attractive place to visit, celebrate academic success, and settle into quality graduate employment.

The One City Plan will nurture new and existing partnerships between Chester organisations and the University of Chester, to ensure a learning and innovation culture supports our collective ability to achieve the four themes underpinned by the Sustainable Development Goals.



The city centre should be the sustainable ‘beating heart’ for innovation, business, and networking. Opportunities to create jobs in the city will need to be mindful of new ways of working and appreciative that traditional ways of working are not universally attractive and do not meet the needs of a flexible and digitally able workforce.

Through access to super-fast digital solutions in residential and business premises across the city, and by expanding opportunities to work in a vibrant city centre, we will make Chester an exciting place to live, work and learn.

Coworking and studio space for creatives, start-up businesses and charities will be available on flexible, short-term rents as well as providing more specialist support for tech start-ups and business incubation. Exploring opportunities to accommodate business ventures and start-ups originating from the University of Chester is a direct way of cultivating and consolidating relationships with the University and increasing Chester’s ability to retain its student population.

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*We think the cultural and business revolution happening right now is grassroots led.*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

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Quality office space should also be available to cater for employers looking to relocate to Chester to take advantage of its growing labour force and revitalised city centre.

In order for Chester to achieve its full economic and business potential we need to increase connectivity with Deeside, North East Wales, and parts of the Wirral, as well as looking for opportunities to improve transport links with the east of the borough, where high skilled professionals are commuting outside of Cheshire West and Chester to Manchester, Warrington and Cheshire East.

Chester has strong professional and financial services sectors and is home to several leading financial institutions including Lloyds Banking Group (MBNA), M&S Bank, Bank of America, Virgin Money and White Oak. Linked to the finance sector are professional, legal, accounting services and consultants. These are based across the city centre, in City Place and Chester Business Park in a range of premises including in new and converted accommodation. These sectors are really important to the economy of the borough directly. They also support a range of other sectors and industry including energy, manufacturing and engineering.

Other key sectors include local government, health and education. There are a number of health facilities and assets across the wider Chester area including in the city centre itself with the Medical Centre at Gorse Stacks and the Countess of Chester Hospital is located just a couple of miles from the centre.

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*Talent drains from small towns and cities to London. If you retain that talent within the local area you drive entrepreneurs and wealth creators. Wealth creators are aged 25-40, starting companies - we've got to keep that talent and create communities and ecosystems for them to thrive...*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

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The University of Chester has a number of campuses in Chester and beyond with an ambition for increased city centre activity and presence, current sites include Exton Park, the Business School and Tim Wheeler Building next to the Riverside. The University of Law, with world class educational facilities has relocated within the University of Chester's Business School in Handbridge. Cheshire College South & West has campuses in Chester, Ellesmere Port and Crewe with high specification industry standard facilities including workshops, science laboratories, and digital zones.

Other key business locations in the immediate area include Chester West Employment Park, Sealand Road and Capenhurst. Capenhurst is home to one of the UK's largest nuclear engineering clusters, and Chester's close proximity to the Ellesmere Port Industrial Area offers the city a unique opportunity to become a home for new business innovation in energy and technology, and a leading location for a new and emerging circular economy.

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*Now you can work remotely, why not live in Chester?*

Participant in the One City Plan Consultation

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# HOW WE WILL GET THERE




## GOVERNANCE, OWNERSHIP AND DELIVERY

The One City Plan is a framework, underpinned by a set of ambitions and actions, to which a collective of public, private and community sectors will sign up to. This will ensure everyone works towards a shared goal of achieving the One City Plan's vision by 2045. And a new, inclusive and participatory governance structure will coordinate activity, galvanise resources, build consensus, and inspire and advocate with one voice on behalf of the city.

In order for Chester to be a truly participatory and co-constructed city, the One City Plan must empower individuals and groups to take a positive role in its delivery and realise the common goals inherent in its four cross-cutting themes.

To ensure the ambitions and actions are achieved we have created a governance structure that truly celebrates what is helping Chester thrive in a post-pandemic world. This structure is a result of listening to the city-wide consultation participants and stakeholders invested in the future success of the city. This governance structure will:

- 
- build on and connect the diverse networks and organisations which have emerged in recent years to champion and drive change across Chester and all its neighbourhoods.
  - make use of the existing groups, strategies and policies that have been implemented to address priorities including the climate emergency and inclusive economy, as well as major partnership agreements.

The One City Plan consultation has engaged the wider communities across Chester's suburbs to understand their perspectives and future vision of the city. There will be further opportunities for local communities to engage in the One City Plan as it is implemented. The One City Plan does not preclude any neighbourhood planning processes in these urban wards and locally driven visions, such as those developed in the Lache Vision in 2022, will be included within the One City Plan with delivery reported back and monitored through the governance structure.

## **THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL**

The Council has a key role as an enabler and facilitator of positive change. We will instil a ‘can do’ attitude to drive decisions and investments, creating the right conditions for growth and delivery – proactively and supportively, underpinned by the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Council will have an important role in enacting the management actions of the One City Plan. They will also act as a key stakeholder overseeing progress on delivery of the plan, and as a key service provider, contributor, and developer of projects and core work streams. This will include statutory provision and governance of services, and a key strategic role in translating national policies into a Chester context.

The Council is an important advocate to deliver responses to achieve Net Zero by 2045 and promote social and economic sustainability amongst residents, and it will also need to consider how its assets, including land and property can be used to help deliver actions against the core themes in this plan.

Council Members provide local accountability to the delivery of the actions in the plan and form an important link to engage with local groups, networks, and grassroots organisations to ensure the voices of communities across all the neighbourhoods of the city are heard and engaged with.

## **THE ROLE OF THE GROUPS**

The One City Plan can only be achieved if it is coordinated and aligned across organisations that are invested and mandated to deliver a positive impact on the city by 2045. The plan will be delivered by Council, Cabinet, private and public sector, and the people.


The One City Plan defines five working groups that build upon existing networks and established groups. They will refine and deliver a series of actions informed by the four themes. The group will shape, influence, advise, challenge, champion and coordinate the physical development of the city to meet the sustainability objectives of the One City Plan. It will aim to ensure the city agrees and achieves 45 actions by 2045.

Each group will be chaired by a lead partner and will include representatives from the Council and relevant individuals and organisations.



# ONE CITY PLAN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE





**Being in Chester** - a group that will embrace a Team Chester approach to coordinate, manage and respond to issues in the city, including response to safety, protecting and safeguarding the environment and regulatory services. This will build on the success of the collaborative networks that evolved during the Covid-19 outbreak for a coordinated approach on the ground.

Its focus will be creating and maintaining a safe, clean and green city, overseeing and coordinating janitorial functions, ensuring a fair, supportive and enabling regulatory regime, coordinated public and private sector management of the public realm, and joining up visible frontline services.

**Visiting Chester** - a group that will ensure our heritage, marketing and the visitor economy are world class. Building on the success of the cross-city collective Destination Chester, this group will curate and promote the One City Plan brand and its associated communications strategy. It will build and support a network of One City Plan champions, gathering and sharing data and intelligence on the economic performance of the city. It will be responsible for developing, coordinating and promoting a year-round programme of events and activity, ensuring the best possible pre and post arrival experience for visitors that embraces our sustainable future.

**Experiencing Chester** - a group focussed on Chester's cultural ambitions and partnerships. This includes our cultural strategies, strategic programmes and attractions development. Working in partnerships to support growth of the creative ecology, including talent development, progression routes, opportunities for engagement and participation. Maximising opportunities to revitalise our city in collaboration with our communities throughout the year.

**Connecting Chester** - a group focussed on strategic transport opportunities, integrated travel options, mobility as a service, safe routes and wayfinding. This will build on the work of the Integrated Sustainable Transport Task Force to take forward projects and initiatives which promote an accessible city. It will do this through the expansion and enhancement of public transport, the development and promotion of active travel, delivering digital infrastructure and the roll out of new electric vehicle and parking infrastructure.

**Making Chester** - this group will support living, learning, working and investing in Chester. This will include placemaking, housing needs, access to high-quality green spaces, education and wellbeing facilities, supporting enterprise and business infrastructure, start-ups, the University of Chester, and adapting to new ways of working. The group will progress masterplans and frameworks for future development, ensuring full community engagement and co-creation, and identifying and promoting investment opportunities.

The group will comprise a collective of representatives from a range of disciplines including:

- environment and sustainability
- neighbourhood and community renewal
- education and wellbeing
- public health
- planning
- housing
- urban design
- heritage and conservation
- energy and infrastructure
- property development and investment



The Making Chester group will require development to establish membership and a Terms of Reference to ensure that all of these disciplines are properly managed and reviewed.

It will require leadership from a range of people and organisations, and this needs to be representative of the people the plan serves. It will have a focus on listening and responding to the multiplicity of voices, shaping and focusing resources and actions to realise shared ambitions, overcoming barriers to progress, and championing the interests of the city locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

### **HOW THE GROUPS AND THEMES ALIGN**

The five groups will be accountable for ensuring that the One City Plan themes - Experience and Play, Connectivity and Accessibility, Thriving People and Communities, and Business Friendly Economy and Skills - intersect as golden threads through all of the groups. They will do this by using The Chester Test, which will help Chester achieve a healthier, greener and fairer future for all its people, and ensure that projects have a positive impact on the city.

To embed the One City Plan, existing working groups will be brought together under a collaborative governance structure for the city. This will provide an exciting opportunity to review memberships and refresh the Terms of Reference for the groups.

By harnessing the power of existing networks and building on what is already established, we will re-focus this energy on delivery of the plan. It will be critical that the groups' members are demographically and geographically representative of the city as a whole, including representation of young people and those from beyond the city centre.

## HOW THE GROUPS OPERATE

The groups will utilise a range of media, including virtual platforms, for continual two-way communication, engagement, pooling of information and reporting on performance.

The Chairs of the groups will come together on a quarterly basis to oversee progress with the plan as a whole, to ensure that priority projects are being delivered in accordance with agreed principles and objectives. Making connections, joining up activity and aligning it to the overarching themes is a key priority.

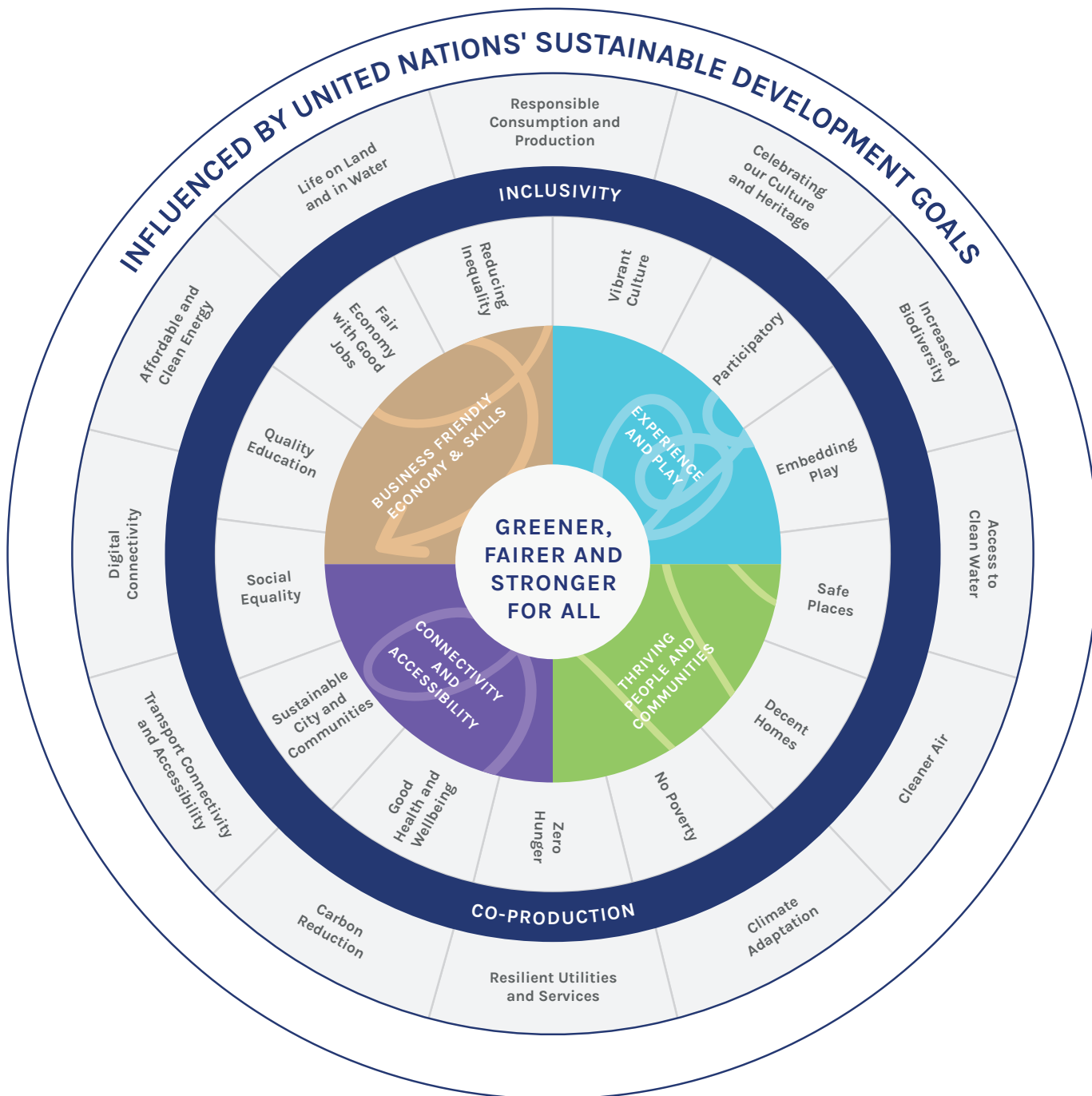
On an annual basis a wider stakeholder event will be convened to share and account for progress, celebrate achievements, and set out priorities for the future. The Council's officer team (Programme Office) will coordinate the coming together of the Chairs of the groups and will assist with programme management, information and intelligence, reporting and internal communications.

## MEASURING PROGRESS AND PERFORMANCE

It is essential to have in place a clear performance framework to enable members, officers, partners and the public to assess whether the Council and its partners are on track to achieving the One City Plan's vision by 2045. Regular performance reporting will therefore be integrated with the Council's corporate performance management approach.

Key performance indicators will sit alongside every action and will be measured to ensure that they pass The Chester Test. If the impact assessment in a segment of the wheel is deemed to have a negative impact, this will need to be reported and discussed with stakeholders. There will be a suite of meaningful indicators and 'deep-dives' into these areas of interest or concern. This will keep the tracking of performance relevant and focused.

# THE CHESTER TEST



Performance reports will be freely accessible and will be provided by the groups, through a combination of annual whole plan reports and a dynamic dashboard of ongoing live information.

The first task for each group will be to agree the actions within their remit. The 45 actions by 2045 will be developed and agreed collectively at a summit in Autumn 2022 and published in an accompanying action plan document shortly after.

These actions and their key performance indicators will be sensitive to changing circumstances and the plan will be flexible enough to respond to that change. A full review of the One City Plan will take place every three years.

The plan will be visible and open for everyone to see, and the governance framework will give a voice for people to influence and shape its direction.

2022 – 2045

