



# Chester

Public Realm Design Guide

September 2010

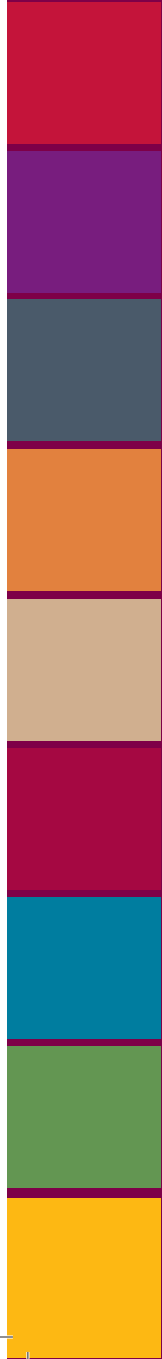




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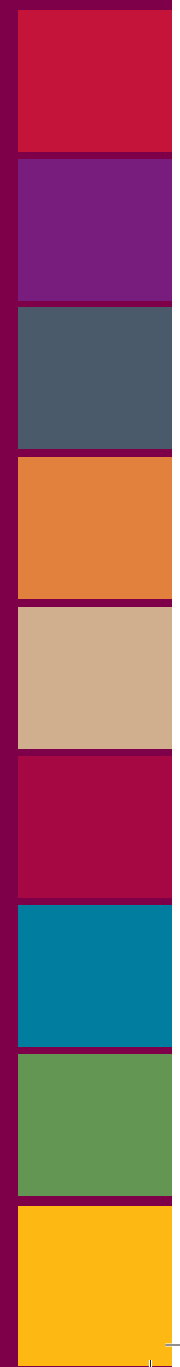




# One

## Introduction

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## Introduction

### 1.1 ~ Introduction and Vision

Chester is a beautiful and intriguing historic city. Established by the Romans as the fortress 'Deva' and strategically located close to the Welsh border on the River Dee, the city has evolved over many centuries into the place we know today. Each subsequent era has left its own mark in terms of buildings, streetscape, open space, landscape and public realm. Today the many layers of history are manifest in what is a distinct and attractive city. These include some of the world's most intact and unique heritage features, such as the City Walls, The Rows, The Groves Riverside Promenade, Chester Cathedral and The Roman Amphitheatre. Together these features combine to create a special sense of place and Chester is internationally recognised for its historic character and identity.

Chester is home to 120,000 people who are attracted to live and/or work within Chester and its surrounds. These residents share Chester with approximately 7 million international, national and regional visitors annually. One key characteristic of Chester's public realm is the intensity of use by local people and visitors, particularly in its heart and in core retail hours. This creates a vibrant and bustling city centre public realm. As well as supporting a healthy tourist industry, Chester is also a regional centre for commerce, retail and leisure. Hence Chester has many strengths and assets upon which to build.

Whilst Chester has much to celebrate, Cheshire West and Chester Council, The Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) and Chester Renaissance recognise that complacency now could result in a missed opportunity to realise the full potential of Chester as an internationally renowned

heritage city of the highest quality. Looking at what could be possible; Chester offers scope to become one of the tourism jewels in the northwest's crown, able to compete with and in particular complement the neighbouring cities of Liverpool and Manchester.

Reflecting this, Chester Renaissance's overall aim is to make Chester a 'must see' European city by 2015. Chester Renaissance is a government funded agency, whose three main partners are Cheshire West and Chester Council, Visit Chester and Cheshire and the Northwest Development Agency. Chester Renaissance's aim is to support the efforts of the partners to complete and accelerate the economic growth of the city.



Eastgate Street

## Public Realm Design Guide

A key component in achieving Chester Renaissance's aims is investment in Chester's public realm. This is about enhancing the public realm for public use and enjoyment. Chester deserves a 'world class' and high quality public realm which complements and is the equal of its architecture, urban form and historic features. Recognising this, Chester Renaissance, in association with Cheshire West and Chester Council and the NWDA, has commissioned this Public Realm Design Guide (PRDG) for the city centre to set the framework and quality standards for transformational change.

### The PRDG's key objectives are to:

- Provide a coherent approach to improving connections across the city centre, particularly between severed parts of the public realm;
- Improve the physical and visual quality of streets for the benefit of residents and visitors, and in turn the city's economy;
- Reinforce Chester's distinctiveness throughout its public realm; and
- Redress the balance within the city centre between vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists, such that street design enables civil and social interaction between the two.

It is important to note that this PRDG precedes the planned production of an Access and Movement Strategy by Cheshire West and Chester Council's Highways Team. As identified above one of the key objectives of the PRDG is to establish an aspiration to redress the balance between vehicles and pedestrians. However, this PRDG can only make recommendations and is reliant on the completion of the Access and Movement Strategy to set out a feasible approach that will bring about real change on the ground.

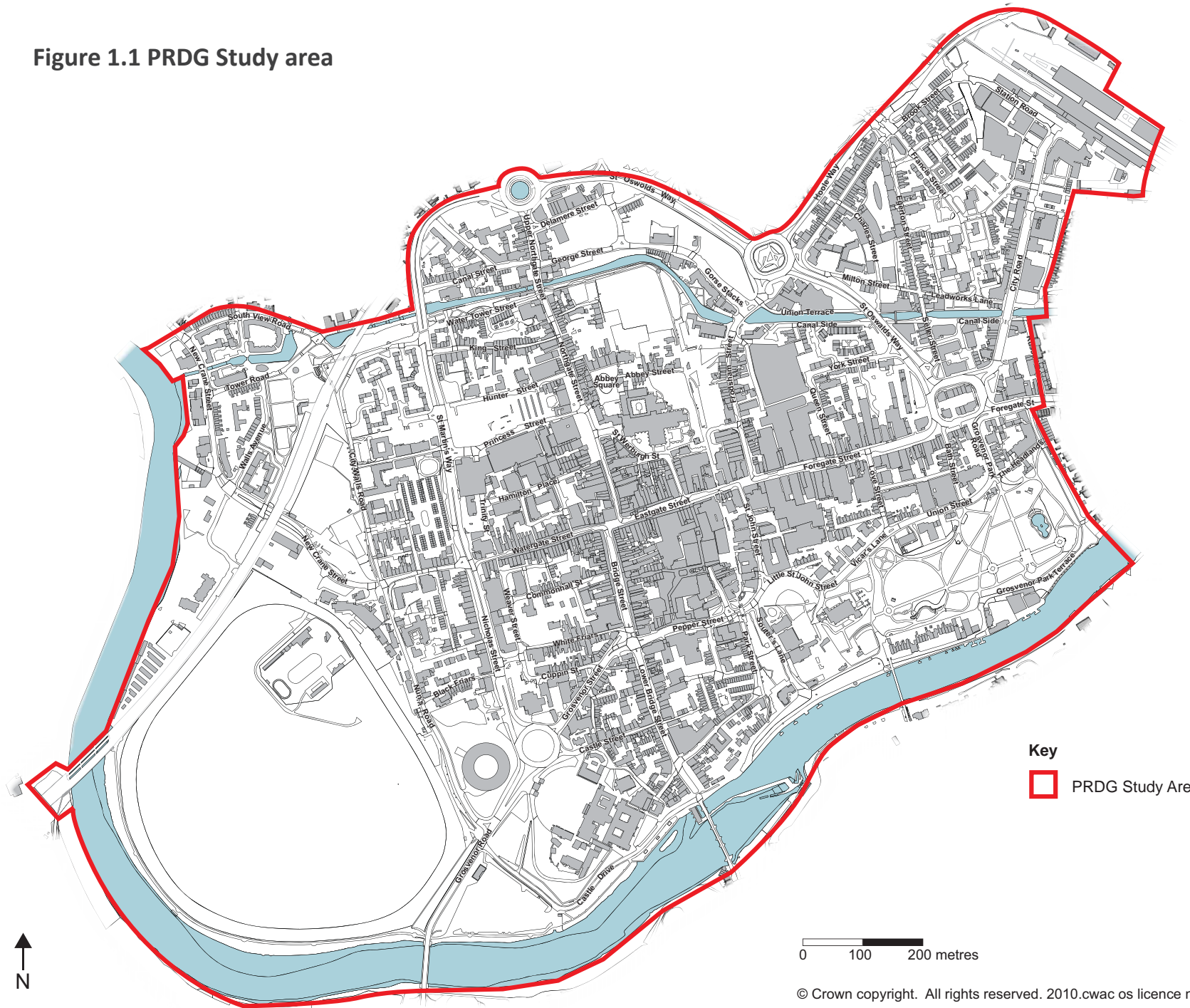
The study area for the PRDG is shown in Figure 1.1 overleaf. The study area boundary is formed by natural and man-made features and infrastructure which mark the extent of the city centre, namely the river, the canal, the inner ring road and the railway station.



Queens Park Suspension Bridge over the River Dee



Figure 1.1 PRDG Study area



Key  
PRDG Study Area



## Introduction

# 1.2 ~ Guide to Using the Document

The PRDG is aimed at all those involved in the investment in, or design or maintenance of the public realm, whether they are overseeing public investment in the public realm or private sector development in the city centre. This will include council employees as well as private sector organisations, developers and consultants. In addition, local businesses may retain an interest as they will benefit from an improved public realm.

There are a vast number of individual and corporate interests in Chester's public realm and various points of view on how best it should be improved and what functions it needs to serve. In drafting Chester's PRDG, extensive consultation has been carried out with a wide range of stakeholders to understand and balance these different points of view.

The work began with a series of workshops facilitated to gather opinion on Chester's public realm. Following this, a series of targeted consultations were undertaken to meet specific individuals and discuss their priorities further. In addition, a number of council representatives have been involved in commenting on and shaping the PRDG as it has developed. A summary of this consultation process is provided in Appendix D.

### Key Examples of How the PRDG Should be Used:

- To inform and support Chester Renaissance's ambitious programme of masterplanning initiatives already underway.
- To inform the design of new and enhanced public spaces and streets.
- To help coordinate and prioritise investment in public realm projects.
- To provide a framework for external bids for public funding to support improvements to public realm.
- To assist council highway officers to secure section 278 agreements to make improvements to highway and public realm.
- To assist council development control officers to secure section 106 monies and to ensure that developers deliver public realm that is of a consistently high quality and appropriate to the relevant part of the city.
- To guide the council, statutory undertakers and private developers in the selection of surface materials and furniture for the public realm.
- To help clarify management and implementation arrangements for streets and spaces.

## How to use the PRDG

It is important to note that strategies and design guides by their very nature offer broad principles and often bold approaches, which cannot address the subtleties of design required for every specific location. Part of Chester's appeal is its distinctive character and idiosyncrasies, which vary on a street-by-street basis and should be celebrated. It is not the intention that this design guide stifles site specific design solutions which respond to the history and character of place. Rather, the aim is to provide initial parameters and guidance which set a high quality standard and future aspiration for Chester's public realm and should form the basis for the preparation of more detailed designs.

The PRDG has been divided into 9 parts, including this introduction. A summary and guide to each part is provided at the start of each part. This provides users with an overview of the purpose of that part of the PRDG along with a summary of key content as a quick reference guide.

## Purpose and Content of Each Part of the Document:

### Part 1 – Introduction

This provides a brief background and introduction to the PRDG, introducing the purpose of the PRDG, its anticipated audience and a guide as to how it should be used.

### Part 2 – Public Realm Context

This section offers information on the existing public realm and forms the basis of all the subsequent design guidance. As well as completing the story of how the PRDG's proposals were reached, this part also offers background information for designers and 'specifiers' of the public realm, as to what is distinctive about Chester's streets and spaces.

### Part 3 – Public Realm Framework

This section provides the strategic spatial framework and design principles in relation to Chester's future public realm. Part 3 proposes a hierarchy of streets and spaces, as well as 'street type' designs which provide an overview on the use of surfacing materials and layout. This section is a key reference for designers/'specifiers' carrying out works affecting the public realm within the PRDG's study area.

### Part 4 – Public Art Strategy

The public art strategy forms a stand-alone strategy for future public art projects and commissions, which has been prepared with reference to the wider PRDG. Part 4 outlines proposed locations and themes for future public art, as well as providing further advice on how to go about commissioning and procuring artworks.

### Part 5 – Lighting Strategy

The lighting strategy also forms a stand-alone strategy. Part 5 contains information on the hierarchy of street lighting proposed for streets and spaces, as well as specifications and products for use in various parts of the city centre. The lighting strategy also provides additional guidance on the use of architectural feature lighting and contains a series of conceptual designs for architectural feature lighting projects.

### Part 6 – Wayfinding and Signage Strategy

The wayfinding and signage (non-vehicular) strategy has been prepared to draw together a substantial amount of work that has already been completed in relation to wayfinding and interpretation signage. This work, which includes current implementation projects, has been drawn together in the strategy set out in Part 6. This strategy defines a suite of signage for both wayfinding and interpretation and identifies locations for these along with further guidance on detailed design.

### Part 7 – Materials and Specification

Part 7 forms a substantial part of the PRDG and provides detailed design guidance on surfacing, drainage, street furniture, CCTV cameras, accessibility, trees and ornamental planting and management and maintenance. This part is directly informed by the principles set out in Part 3 and should be referred to by any designer/specifier working within the city centre.

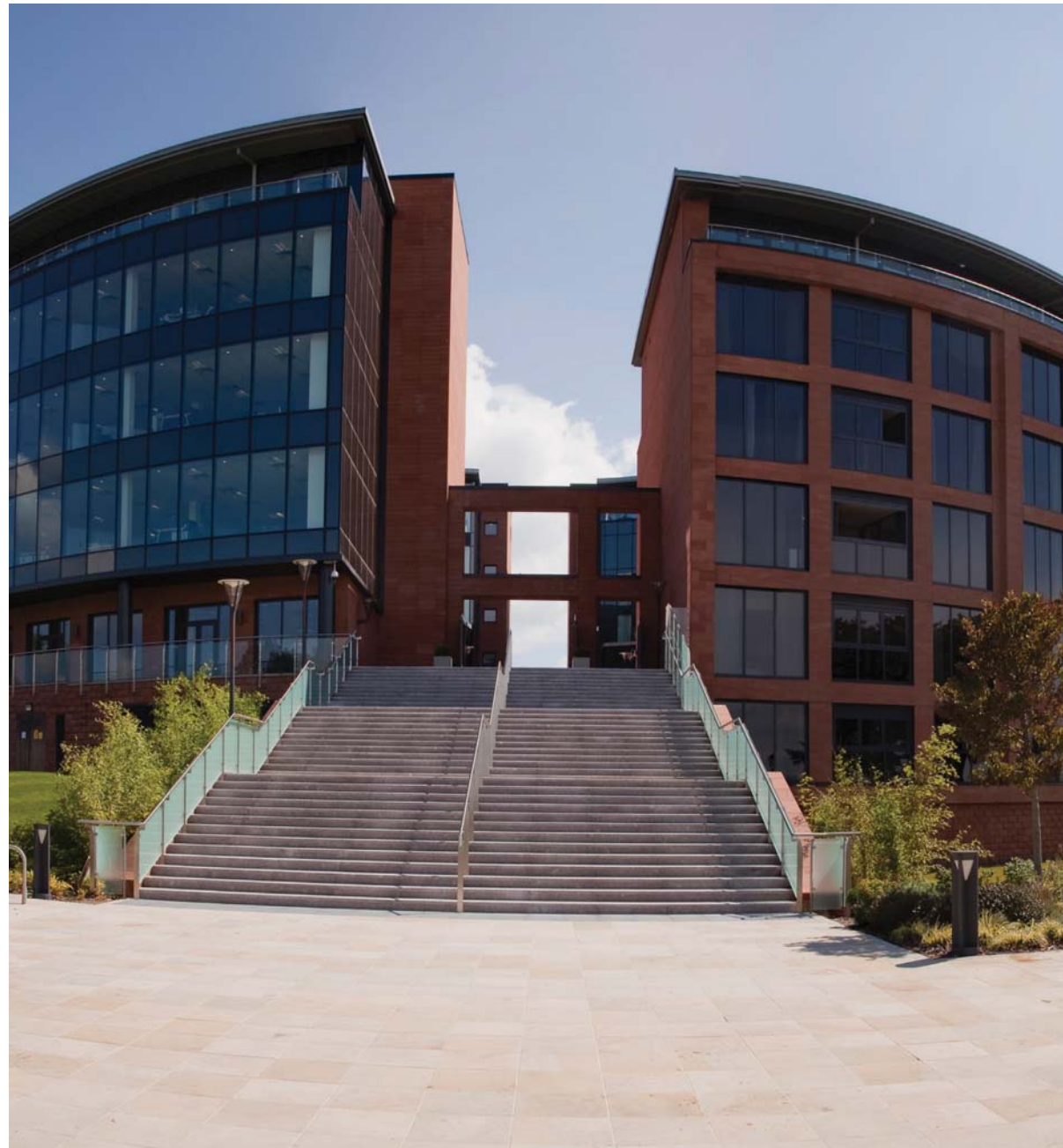
**Part 8 – Outline Designs for Key Locations**

Using the principles and design guidance from Parts 3 to 7, Part 8 offers outline designs for 15 key locations within the city centre. As well as providing initial schemes that can be developed at a later stage, this part also provides designers with a useful demonstration of how the PRDG should be applied to actual schemes.

**Part 9 – Detailed Designs**

Part 9 takes the design of two streets, Frodsham Street and St John Street to a more detailed design stage (RIBA Stage D) and also presents a stage D design for St Werburgh Street (prepared by other consultants). As well as providing detailed design schemes that could be taken forward for implementation, these schemes act as guide as to how the PRDG should be applied.

There is a significant amount of information contained within the nine sections of the PRDG. In most cases the guide can be ‘dipped into’ for key information from different sections relevant to particular situations. The intention is that the PRDG is a live document and as such it is designed to be used and to be useful. In this regard the PRDG will be monitored and reviewed going forward.



New public realm outside the HQ