

Materials and Specification

7.7 ~ Management and Maintenance...

It is essential that sustainable investment is made in Chester's public realm in the future. This approach is advocated in this document through the specification of high quality material palettes and the provision of detailed design guidance, ensuring high standards of workmanship and consideration of maintenance implications from the outset. This approach will help to reduce the demand for maintenance and ensure longevity of the products. It is essential that the maintenance implications of newly designed schemes are discussed with those within the council who will be responsible for maintenance, prior to finalising proposals. This collaborative approach to design would be beneficial to all parties.

In addition, it is important that a well funded maintenance strategy and programme be put in place prior to the implementation of any significant new public realm schemes. The high quality maintenance of implemented schemes must be budgeted for as an ongoing cost that is accounted for within initial project planning. Regular inspection, maintenance and cleansing regimes will be important in maximising the life of the public realm and winning public support for future investment. It is important to recognise that in order to sustain the high quality transformation of Chester's public realm, set out in this PRDG, an overall increase in annual maintenance budgets will be needed.

Existing and Future Maintenance Arrangements

At present, Cheshire West and Chester highways department maintain highway surfaces and signage (including pedestrian signs). Streetscene manage public open space, as well as maintaining public open spaces, parks and carrying out street cleansing and the maintenance of street furniture. Greenspace has the management responsibility for parks. There is no reason for these arrangements to alter in the future.

Although a number of coordination meetings currently take place between the above parties, it could be advantageous to establish a recognised structure for these. Ideally these meetings would be chaired by the council department with the greatest legal duty for the maintenance of the public realm (i.e Highways or Streetscene). Regular public realm forums should also be attended by all other council representatives and parties with a responsibility,

interest or duty with regard to the city centre public realm. The role of a City Centre Manager could be beneficial in managing the interface between the council and utility companies and other relevant parties.

There is a tendency for the design of major schemes to be remote from those council employees responsible for management and maintenance. This issue must be addressed through the consultation of maintenance representatives during the design process. The use of regular forum meetings to facilitate information sharing and consultation could provide an excellent tool to achieve this.

The preparation of an overarching Maintenance Strategy and Guide (see recommendations below) will help achieve common objectives, clear responsibilities and a shared programme of work for the various parties to work toward.



Rubbish awaiting collection on Castle Drive

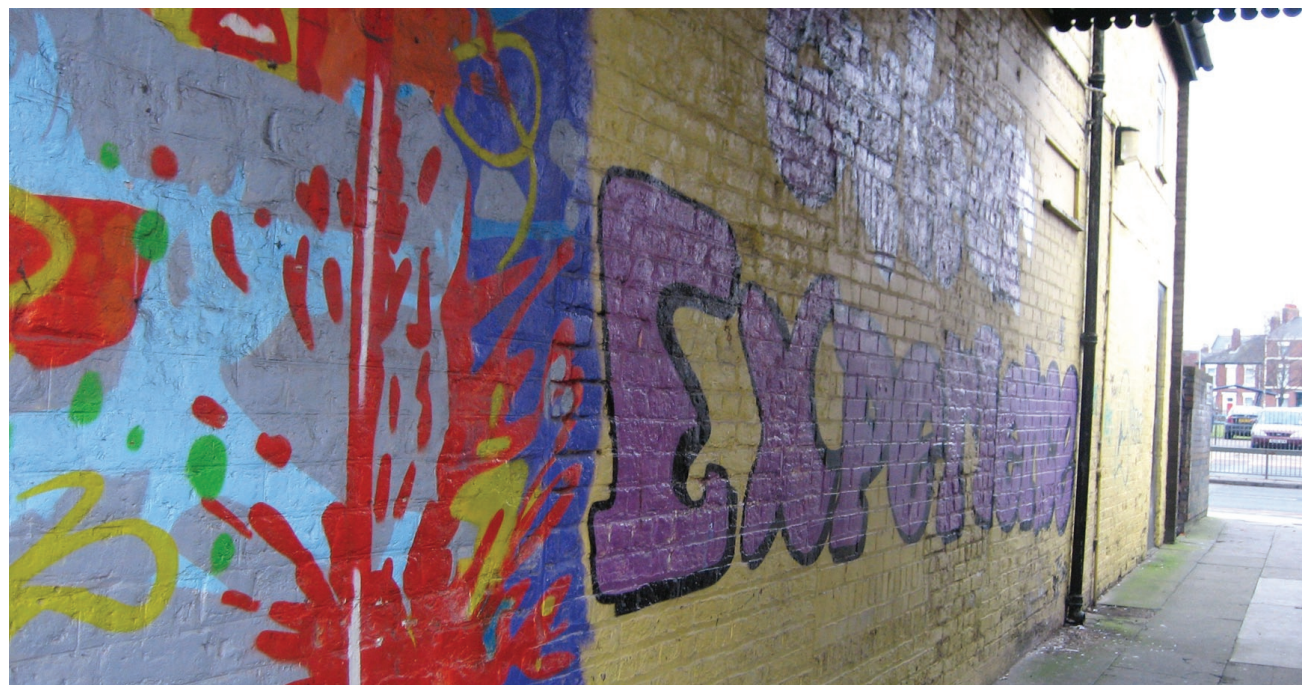
General Recommendations

- Appraise current maintenance regimes and expenditure to identify potential inadequacies and areas of saving in order to secure high quality maintenance of both existing public realm and new schemes.
- Ensure that a Maintenance Strategy document and Maintenance Guide for Chester's city centre (the study area) is developed in tandem with the progression of public realm design projects (see further detail below).
- Maintenance regimes developed should reflect the function and intensity of use of areas within the city centre public realm, in order to prioritise expenditure.
- Ensure that adequate annual maintenance budgets are put in place prior to investment in implementation on the ground (a high quality design scheme must be accompanied by an equally high quality maintenance regime).
- Regular and proactive maintenance regimes should ensure that prompt cleaning and repair maintains visually high quality streets and spaces, deterring potential 'bad behaviour', as well as maintaining a safe environment.
- Ensure high standards of implementation in the first place through the careful appointment of experienced contractors with an excellent track-record. Resources must also be allocated for the overseeing and inspection of work.

- Consider the need for reserve stocks of materials at the implementation stage, in order that materials are readily available as repairs and reinstatement is required (without the problems of lead-in times and matching colours etc). If storage is an issue then an arrangement should be made with the supplier.
- Reinstatement works should maintain the original quality. Poor reinstatement of materials following public utility and public authority work is a nationwide issue. Wherever possible establishing good working relations and lines of communication between the council and utility companies is considered the best way forward (see further detail in following text).

Maintenance Strategy Document

The preparation of an overarching maintenance strategy for the city centre will help to formalise existing and future maintenance regimes. The strategy will need to identify the personnel within the council's maintenance departments that will be involved and their roles and responsibilities. The document should set out a programme and specification for maintenance using the public realm framework hierarchy (in Part 3). This hierarchical approach will provide a means of breaking down costs by area, whilst understanding the overall cost of annual maintenance. This will inform future expenditure forecasting, allowing assessments to be made of the impact that new public realm developments will have on existing maintenance regimes as they are implemented.



Graffiti off Brook Street

Maintenance Guide

To ensure that a consistently high standard of maintenance is achieved across the city, a maintenance guide should be prepared as PRDG projects are completed. The information contained in the guide could be largely derived from the Health and Safety File prepared for each implementation scheme as part of the Construction Design and Management (CDM) regulations (2007). For each scheme, project or installation, the guide must cover:

- A specification of the exact materials and elements used (including supplier's contact details and details of any reserve stocks) and procedures for reinstatement by utility companies (this information could be made available on the council website for utility companies to access).
- How each element is to be maintained (paving, kerbs, drainage etc), including risk assessments and method statements.
- How each element is to be kept clean, including risk assessments and method statements.

Where existing areas of public realm are to be retained for the foreseeable future, similar information should be prepared and incorporated into the guide.

Highway maintenance

The maintenance of the public highway is the responsibility of the Highways Authority. Cheshire West and Chester are the Highways Authority for Chester. The Highways Authority have a duty to inspect the highway and make good defects under Section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 and so regular inspection and work already takes place.

Cheshire West and Chester Council has policies in place that determine the intervention levels for defects to the highway. These intervention levels should be reviewed in light of the aspirations for Chester city centre's public realm moving forward. However, it is important to be aware that altering intervention levels is a matter for elected members and will have budget implications. In addition, alterations to council policy will not affect the statutory requirements for utility companies, as these are set out in the New Roads and Streetworks Act.

Regardless of intervention levels, it is important to be aware that in delivering the aspiration for a public realm of the highest quality in Chester, additional budgets will need to be set aside to enable the Highways Authority to maintain increases in the use of natural stone surfacing, for example.

Maintenance by Private Land Owners

It is essential that Section 106 agreements are used to ensure that private developers are obliged to maintain adjoining streets to the same high quality standards set out in the Council's Maintenance Strategy and Guide.

Repairs and Reinstatement Works

Although previously mentioned, it is important to stress again that when specifying products and materials, consideration has to be given as to how feasible and affordable future maintenance and replacement will be.

Temporary Repairs:

Temporary repairs are generally considered inappropriate as they will not conform aesthetically and represent a waste of resources. Rather, a more efficient procedure for carrying out permanent replacement or repair should be devised and temporary solutions only used when absolutely necessary (i.e. for safety reasons). To ensure an efficient and high standard of replacement, there should be a good supply of materials in council storage. This is particularly important where materials are not easily available and in these cases a stockpile of up to 10% of the total quantity of the scheme should be set aside when the original order is made.

Where a temporary repair has to be made to surfacing, it is proposed that a self-leveling compound of appropriate strength and with a rapid set time is used. The material should be in a bright colour and a stamp or disc containing a date for replacement should be embedded in the repair to make sure the material is recognised as temporary and with an auditable expiry date. It is suggested that the expiry be set at 4 weeks from the date of the temporary repair.

Permanent Repairs:

In the case of permanent repairs and reinstatement, damaged material should be replaced like for like and workmanship should reflect the original attention to detail. Where maintenance of specialist materials is involved, a trained craftsman should be used to carry out repairs to ensure an excellent standard.

Reinstatement by Utility Companies:

As previously highlighted, the quality of reinstatement by utility companies is a common concern. Through the New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 Highways Authorities have procedures in place to enforce utility companies to reinstate finished surface materials with like for like, when servicing or maintaining apparatus. However, utility companies are only required to 'use their best endeavours' to match materials, and where this is not possible they are allowed to use the closest match.

It is the responsibility of designers to ensure that accurate details of materials and construction used are entered onto the Streetworks Register, so that utility companies and other interested parties are aware of reinstatement requirements. This information must include details of suppliers and specifications. The maintenance information that will form part of the maintenance guide can also be added.

In order to prevent inconsistent use of materials, it is advisable for the council to maintain stocks of materials for future reinstatement. It is also recommended that council's make use of the time allowed for them to inspect reinstatement works. In

areas outside adopted highway, there is a precedent established where councils have charged utility companies a penalty for failure to comply with their reinstatement policy.



Public realm resurfacing at The Groves

Historic Features

It is implicit that historical features in Chester need to be repaired and retained. The City Archeologist or Conservation Officer must be consulted prior to any maintenance or repairs to historic features. On occasions where stone is lifted and not reused in its existing location it should be stored by the council so that this material can be used for repairs or new schemes elsewhere.

Soft Landscape**Trees:**

This PRDG recommends that a tree survey be carried out to assess all existing trees within the city centre on an individual basis. Following this initial assessment and the carrying out of necessary tree works, the review and management of existing trees (including those newly planted) needs to be carried out periodically. This will result in maintenance operations involving pruning, seasonal leaf collection, watering, maintenance of grilles and replanting (to replenish stock). The standardised, best practice approach to the design of tree pits set out in this document should help ease maintenance requirements over time.

Grass:

During the summer months grass cutting should take place weekly. This will gradually decrease to monthly intervals by November, with cutting recommencing in March. Generally, the maximum height grass should not exceed is 30mm. The cutting programme should be accompanied by additional maintenance requirements as required, such as preparation, feeding and removal of arisings.

Planting Beds:

Planting beds should be maintained as weed and litter free with soil kept loose. Regular watering will be needed to ensure healthy growth is maintained. Plants should be pruned at appropriate times to remove dead, dying and diseased wood to promote healthy growth and good shape. Removal of dead flowering heads and stems from bulbs and herbaceous plants should take place at the appropriate time of year with consideration given to allowing seedheads and stems to overwinter on herbaceous perennials and grasses to maintain their decorative effect.

Street Cleansing

Cleansing of the public realm, including removal of graffiti, fly-posting, gum and oil stains, should be carried out quickly and frequently to maintain high levels of cleanliness to surfacing and vertical elements.

Streetscene are currently working to agree service standards across Cheshire West and Chester. The city's current and future street cleansing regime is and will be based on Defra's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse - COPLAR (April 2006), which bases response times on footfall levels. At present the City centre core is cleansed continuously to a grade A (no litter or detritus present) standard from Monday to Sunday. The wider area is subject to a half day response time should it drop below a grade B (predominantly free of litter/detritus apart from some small items/light scattering).

Additional resources will enhance these operations in the future in areas not necessarily covered by COPLAR which include:

- 1) Deep cleansing to pedestrian footways using high pressure hot water to remove staining (e.g. chewing gum etc) and general dirt;
- 2) Cleaning tourist and information signage;
- 3) Cleaning street furniture; and
- 4) appointment of a Rows Caretaker.

It is proposed that in the future the grading of all spaces and streets within the public realm should be based on the public realm framework and street hierarchy proposed in Part 3 of this document. This will take into account footfall levels as well as specific cleaning requirements depending on materials used. This will help to enable a prioritisation of maintenance regimes and decisions to be made as to the frequency of operations, allowing for the most efficient use of resources.

The type of paving surface materials and their construction will impact upon cleaning programmes. It is imperative that the detailed design of paving systems are designed to cope with various types of street cleansing machinery used by the council from the outset. Materials should be laid to ensure that surfaces are flush and easy to access.

It is important that clear guidance and stringent controls are used on the temporary placement of refuse waste on pavements, whilst awaiting collection.



Weed Growth Between Setts on St Oswalds Way



Street works on New Crane Street