Appendix 1:  Policy Drivers for Green Infrastructure

Appendix 2:  Sites Assessment Form & Explanation of Scoring

Appendix 3:  Sites Action Plans
Appendix 1: Policy Drivers for Green Infrastructure

The North West of England Plan: Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021
GONW (2008)
This regional policy document recognises the importance of environmental infrastructure as both delivering environmental, economic and societal benefits. It has a GI specific policy within EM3 Green Infrastructure and EM4 Regional Parks.

The North West Regional Economic Strategy
NWDA (2006)
GI and the River Dee Park can contribute directly to the improvement of Chester’s ‘Attack Brand’ status through supporting the tourism industry. Equally the need to reduce CO2 emissions is also a function of the River Dee Park in that the provision of travel alternatives that support walking and cycling can effect a reduction in greenhouse gases. Investment in the public realm, green space and environmental quality is also a key part of the Strategy.

Rising to the Challenge: the North West Climate Change Action Plan 2007-9
NWDA (2006)
This action plan recognises that Green infrastructure has an important role in helping to mitigate against the effects of our changing climate. This is mainly through its function of reducing flood risk through soft end use and design and reducing the effects of the urban ‘heat island’ effect through cooling and shading.

Sustainable Communities North West
ODPM (2003)
Quality of Life and Quality of the environment are consistent themes within this document. Regeneration of the environment is seen as a key part of the regional regeneration initiatives.

West Cheshire Growth Point Programme of Development
Cheshire West & Chester Authorities (2008)
West Cheshire’s Growth Point Programme makes direct reference to the need for Green Infrastructure provision within new development, particularly in its role in helping to conserve nature, providing quality of place, creating recreational and leisure opportunities, providing visitor attractions and reducing/preventing flooding.

West Cheshire/North East Wales Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy
Hyder Consulting for West Cheshire & NE Wales Partners (2006)
With sustainable development a major thread within this document the River Dee Park can help this become a reality. Climate Change, Natural Resource Protection and Sustainable Communities are 3 of 4 priorities in the strategy, each of which can be delivered by the green infrastructure principles on which the Park Masterplan has been developed. Areas identified as being in need of regeneration such as West Chester can also benefit from the Park. At the wider sub-regional level the River Dee Park fits well into the concept of the River Dee Regional Park highlighted as future programme in the Strategy.
Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plans

The River Dee Park and associated sites can all have a role in helping Cheshire’s BAPs achieve their goals. Its function as a natural corridor and the location of nationally important habitat types means that through integrating management regimes employed within the park with the objectives of the various Cheshire BAPs, biodiversity can be both protected and enhanced.

Interpretation of wildlife on specific sites is seen as an important aspect of helping to protect the County’s wildlife. Interpretation of sites will be a theme throughout all of the River Dee Park Sites.

West Cheshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
Faber Maunsell for Chester City Council (2008)

Land management is an important part of reducing the flood risk in the Chester area. Inappropriate location of development and/or inadequate consideration of flooding issues within design are both aspects of flood management that are highlighted within the report. The multifunctional approach of land management in the River Dee Park and associated green infrastructure is in line with these considerations.

Investing in Success Action Plan 2008-11
Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance & Partners (2007)

The contribution of a quality environment is a priority within this action plan. There is recognition that Chester’s ‘Attack Brand’ is not as strong as other cities in the UK, citing a lack of attractions and visitor experience as the main reasons. The River Dee Park provides a network of spaces, places and attractions that can support and widen the visitor interest in Chester. Adaptation to climate change and environmental quality are also seen as themes that cut across all of the sub-regional priorities. Ecological networks and environmental quality are areas in which the River Dee Park will have a positive input and influence.

Chester’s Way Ahead: Community Plan for Chester
Chester in Partnership (2005)

Chester’s community plan cites road safety, health, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, amongst other issues, as issue that need addressing. The Quercus Project has provided an insight as to how GI and management can reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in public spaces, the continuation of this work throughout the River Dee Park can only improve the situation. Road safety and health are both aspects of the Community Plan that the network of pedestrian and cycle routes provided by the Park can have a positive contribution.

Draft Chester Culture Park Strategy
Chester City Council (2006)

The Culture Park Strategy is directly linked to the creation of a River Dee Park, in that is aims to link-up spaces and places around the City. Themes such as the Green Network, Dee Corridor and Waterfront Scenic Route are all elements of the Park Masterplan. Its ‘Routes of Discovery’ and ‘Stories to be told’ themes can all be supported by the network of managed spaces delivered by the Park.
Draft Green Space Strategy  
*Chester City Council (2008)*

This draft version of the Strategy has several key objectives that can be delivered through the River Dee Park:

- Ensure access to a diverse range of green spaces, and activities, events, public art and features within them, with something for everyone.
- Ensure green spaces are welcoming and have adequate signage and interpretation.
- Link green spaces together to provide a network of green space for people and wildlife, e.g. railway, footpaths, green corridors.

Cycle Chester Strategy 2008-2011  
*Chester City & Cheshire County Councils*

The Cycle Chester Strategy is consistent with the delivery of the River Dee Park, Chester and the wider green infrastructure provision within the West Cheshire/North East Wales sub-region. Many of the key issues and projects identified within the strategy will be deliverable as part of the Park, conversely the cycle strategy can add value to the Park, in that it will deliver a choice of routes and better infrastructure.

The Park will add value to the cycle network in that several spaces could be improved to facilitate cycling such as Curzon Park Golf Course, where the strategy hopes to deliver improved cycle access across the bridge, the Park Masterplan can deliver routes around the golf course.

Chester Local Plan 2006-2011  
*Chester City Council (2006)*

Many of the retained policies from the Chester District Local Plan including:

- ENV 15 – strategic green space
- ENV19 – urban corridors
- ENV 20 – improving or increasing the value of green space
- ENV26 – green network
- ENV27 – identified nature conservation value
- ENV28 – designated sites (SSSIs, SAC)
- ENV29 – features of local importance
- ENV30 – strategic wildlife corridors
- SR1 – provision standards
- SR3 – land allocations for recreation
- SR5 – play
- SR6 – sports pitches

This plan will be the main planning and development document until West Cheshire adopts a new Local Development Framework.
Chester’s Local Distinctiveness Strategy  
*Chester City Council (2002)*

This Strategy shares several objectives that could be considered as outcomes from the development of the River Dee Park including:

- To reinforce Chester’s economy (through an improved/increased tourism offer)
- To take full advantage of Chester’s unique location
- To reinforce Chester’s varied and distinctive townscape
- To promote and conserve Chester’s 2000 years of distinctive architecture and buildings
- To actively market Chester’s distinctive characteristics - ‘the distinctive city’ nationally and internationally
- To enhance and coordinate Chester as a focus for events and enhance its attractions

Sustainable Development SPD  
*Chester City Council (2008)*

Setting the scene for the future of development within Chester District this supplementary planning document has a set of objectives many of which are consistent with the River Dee Park and green infrastructure, including:

- To deliver safe, secure and healthy environments where communities can grow and prosper.
- To minimise the need to travel, reduce car dependency and promote other sustainable forms of travel such as public transport, cycling and walking.
- To provide clear guidance for developers about adapting to or mitigating the harmful impacts of climate change.
- Reduce the risk of flooding and surface water run offs.
- To reduce pollution emissions to water, soil and air and minimise noise and light pollution.
- To enhance the landscape, biodiversity and nature conservation interests and the built and historic environments.
- To ensure the prudent use of natural resources and sustainable management of existing resources.

Cheshire Local Transport Plan  
*Cheshire County Council (2006)*

Cheshire’s Local Transport Plan sets out the County’s objectives for travel until 2011. Many of the objectives laid out in the plan can be delivered in some way by the River Dee Park, in particular:

- Enhancing the quality of life of those who live in, work or visit Cheshire
- Promoting social inclusion and accessibility
- Improving safety for all travellers
- Supporting regeneration and sustainable growth
Protecting and enhancing the built, natural and historic environment.

Chester Tourism 2000

Chester City Council (1999)

The River Dee Park’s contribution to the tourism economy of the City is in its role as enhancing the visitor experience and providing and alternative or extra set of attractions and activities. Widening of the tourism offer and the provision of other attractions can lengthen the stay of visitors; this has a direct input into the economy. Whereas some sites cannot charge for entry or sell souvenirs etc, they can still provide income in the City. Chester’s competiveness with other destinations will be enhanced through quality, well maintained and informative attractions. Several of the principles behind this strategy are related to the services the Park can provide including:

- **Spreading the load**
  Seeking to spread visitors from the sometimes congested central zone to the outlying city centre area including the Canal and Tower Wharf, the Dee front and Old Port, Dee House, the Roodee, Grosvenor Park, Northgate Street and Watergate Street. Encourage visitors into other parts of the District to spread economic benefits.

- **Providing basic tourist facilities**
  Including *good information/signage, interpretation*, coach parking and drop off, places to eat and drink and toilets.

- **Attracting visitors to stay longer**

- **The Public Realm**
  Ensuring the *quality of experience* enjoyed by visitors
Appendix 2: Sites Assessments Form & Explanation of Scoring

Assessment Ranking

The ranking system contained within the site assessment form is designed to enable the surveyor to distinguish between the qualities of the sites on a range of criteria. The system allows the surveyor to quantify the quality of facilities on site and allocate a ranking score to reflect this quality. The ranking system includes four tiers with an additional tier for sites where the facility is not present. The system ranks the facilities on whether they fulfil the requirements of the space. This allows the scores generated to be site specific, and not reliant on a set of generic requirements for all greenspaces. It was important to build into the survey process an appreciation of the facilities expected of the different greenspaces types. For example a user of a town park would not expect similar facilities to be replicated at a playing field, therefore the surveys forms had to take account of this. This system allows an accurate picture of strengths and weakness of each site to be gained.

Below is an example of how the system is used to assess signage at the entrance of a site.

NP - Not present:
The facility is not present on site in any form

No welcome sign is present at any entrance to the site. The user is unaware of the nature, name or access restrictions as they enter the site.

This photograph shows Mount Pleasant (Site 24) where no welcome signs are present.

0 – Fails to meet the needs of the space:
The quality of the facility is not appropriate to the needs of the space, and fails to meet expectations of such a site.

A welcome sign in some form is present; however it does not meet the requirements of the site. The welcome sign may be in need of repair, poorly positioned, difficult to read, suffering from heavy graffiti or displaying inadequate or incorrect information.
This is an example of a sign that fails to meet the needs of the space. This sign is actually contained with The Cop (Site 14), however it must be stated that this is not a welcome sign at The Cop and has not been judged in that manner on The Cop’s site assessment form. The picture does however illustrate the inadequate quality of some signage and why a welcome sign of this quality would receive a ranking score of 0.

1 – Meets basic the needs of the space:
The quality of the facility fulfils the basic or minimal requirements of the space. The facility does not exceed expectations, and may be considered by the visitor as disappointing.

A welcome sign is present, and it does meet the minimal requirements of the space. A welcome sign may only be present at the main entrance to the site, with other entrances remaining unsigned. The welcome sign states minimal information such as the name of the site, and does not advertise the facilities the site has to offer. The sign may be suffering from low levels of graffiti or damage, but remains legible and states the correct information.

This signage at The Groves (Site 6), offers a good example of a score of 1. Although the signage is present, it does not exceed expectations. No additional information directly relevant to The Groves is present, and a visitor may enter the site unaware of the name or nature of the site.

2 – Meets all needs to a satisfactory level:
The quality of the facility fulfils the need of the space of to an acceptable level. The facility meets the expectations of the visitor and in some circumstances exceeds them.

A welcome sign is present at the main entrance, with possible smaller signs at other entrances to the site. The sign is clearly visible and contains accurate information about the site. The sign may include contact numbers, advertise facilities in the site, offer a history or description of the site and generally look pleasing to the observer. The signs are not suffering from damage and are welcoming and attractive to the visitor.
The sign in the picture opposite is a good example of a score of 2, and is present at Beeston View Allotments (site 16). Although the site is not the most aesthetically pleasing, it contains all the relevant information required for signage at an allotment and therefore meets the needs of the site to a satisfactory level.

3 – Meets all needs to a high level:
The quality of the facility fulfils and exceeds the need of the space. The facility exceeds the expectations of the user.

Welcome sign is present at entrance, with smaller signs at other entrances to the site. The sign is visible and attractive and contains a raft of information including contact details, site history, site information, attractions, events and possibly a location map. The entrance sign is an aesthetically pleasing design, and acts as an attraction itself to the site. The sign could also contain information relating to nearby green spaces and attractions.

This photograph was taken at The Roodee (Site 12), and is a good example of a welcome sign incorporating additional information such as the site history and location map.

These photographs from Caldy Nature Park (Site 3) are a good example of a welcome sign incorporating additional information such as advertising local events and groups, as well as a detailed map of the site.
“Required” Column

The required column contained within the site assessment form determines whether a facility is required in the type of space being assessed. This approach again helps to assess spaces based on what type of space they are. For example, at Caldy Nature Park it was determined that the site did not require a Children’s Play Area as the site is a nature reserve and it would be incorrect for the site to be judged negatively for not including such a facility. In contrast, at the Appleyards Lane Play Area (Site 25) it was determined that the site did require a Children’s Play Area because of the nature and purpose of the site. If the required box is ticked, it does not indicate that facility is not present on site. It simply indicates that the facility would be expected at that type of space. The quality of the facility (including its presence) is assessed separately to the required status through the ranking system explained previously. Using the above example, the required column would be ticked for Children’s Play Area on the assessment form for Appleyards Lane Play Area (Site 25), the quality of the Children’s Play Area would then be assessed using the ranking system.
## Site Information

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Surveyor</th>
<th>Assessment Ranking</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3 Meets all needs to a high level</td>
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<table>
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<th>PPG 17 Typology</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sports Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenity (non sports)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for Young People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic &amp; Heritage Square</td>
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</table>

### 1. WELCOMING PLACE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required?</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Potential Considerations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Signage at entrance
- Signage throughout site
- Access to Public Transport
- Safe crossing near road
- Cycle route
- Car Parking
- Gateway to greenspace

| TOTAL | |

### 2. HEALTH, SAFE AND SECURE

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</table>

- Toilets
- Water Fountains
- Children’s Play Area
- Hard Surfacing
- Lighting
- Open and Safe Environment

| TOTAL | |

### 3. WELL MAINTAINED AND CLEAN

<table>
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<th>Rank</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Bins
- Dog Bins
- Recycle Bins
- Vegetation Quality (Natural)
- Vegetation Quality (Amenity)
- Buildings
- No Graffit / Fly Posters
- Sports Facilities
- Paths / Hard Surfacing
- Overall Site Cleanliness
- Quality of Seating

| TOTAL | |

---
### 4. Sustainability

<table>
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<th>Required?</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On site compost / biocycle tank</td>
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<td>Presence of Paed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Particular near children's play areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of Recycled Materials</td>
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<td>Use of recycled materials</td>
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<td>Leaking Water Features</td>
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<td>All terms of water feature</td>
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### 5. Conservation and Heritage

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<td>Culture</td>
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<td>Appreciation of historic environment</td>
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<td>Water Features</td>
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<td>Marginal Water Vegetation</td>
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<td>To allow wildlife to establish</td>
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<td>Sleeping Margins to waterbody</td>
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<td>Water safety</td>
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<td>Woodland Structure</td>
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<td>Ecological balance / Natural structure / Species</td>
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<td>Woodland Management</td>
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<td>Effective woodland management</td>
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<td>Meadow Grass</td>
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<td>Present for ecological value</td>
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<td>Quality of Grass</td>
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<td>No patches / Healthy grass / Well maintained</td>
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<td>Ecological Diverse Areas</td>
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<td>Covered off areas for species</td>
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<td>Buildings</td>
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<td>Monuments / Buildings / Sculptures / Historic</td>
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### 6. Community Involvement

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<tr>
<td>Friends of Group</td>
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<td>Advertised presence of Friends of Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attractions</td>
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<td>Cast / Branding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Advertised events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Ranger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Present on site / Location of office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changing Rooms</td>
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<td>Present on site / Accessible / Quality</td>
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<td>Suitability for Community events</td>
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<td>Education or community based events</td>
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<td>Links to adjacent greenspace</td>
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<td>Links encouraged</td>
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### 7. Marketing

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<tr>
<td>Publicity</td>
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<td>Website / Newsletters / Advertisements</td>
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### TOTAL

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<th>? out of ?</th>
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### PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Sports (including Angling)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passive Recreation (walking, dog exercise, sitting down)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildlife (Reserve)</td>
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<td>Historical and Cultural Interest</td>
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<td>Flood Remediation</td>
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<td>Food Production (Allotments, Farmland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access (River side path, Cycle path)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Play Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amenity (Separating development)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape (Visual amenity, Quality of Place)</td>
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<td>Economic (development setting)</td>
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### ACCESS

<table>
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<td>Restricted Access</td>
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<td>Closed Access (Physical)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closed Access (Private Land)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>DDA compatibility</td>
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### NOTES


### OVERALL MANAGEMENT


Appendix 3: Sites Action Plans

From the 27 sites within the River Dee Park, 10 have been selected as priority sites for Action Planning. Their selection relates to the value of the site (as described in Chapter 5) and the absence of any other management plans or initiatives on the site.

The 10 priority sites are:

- Shropshire Union Canal
- Queen’s Promenade
- Dukes Drive
- The Cop
- Richmond Hill Gardens
- The Groves
- Overleigh Cemetery
- Riverside Walk
- Roman Gardens
- Farndon Picnic Area

Action Plans for each site follow.
Shropshire Union Canal Action Plan

Location

![Map of Shropshire Union Canal](image)

Description of the Site

The Shropshire Union Canal is a linear green space running east to west through the city centre and is bordered by both residential and commercial areas. The Canal is accessible for its entire length through the city centre on the southern towpath and the Canal path incorporates a well used and maintained cycle path which runs from Ellesmere Port through the city centre to Waverham. As such, the Canal offers safe, secure and sustainable travel through Chester.

In some sections the Canal is set below street level, with several access points differing in quality, whilst the towpath itself differs greatly in quality, material and width as it makes its journey through Chester. To the east of the city centre the path is predominantly 1.5 metres wide and is made of tarmac. As it passes through the city centre the path widens to approximately 2.5 metres whilst remaining tarmac in construction. As the Canal begins to leave the city centre, the width of the path once again reduces with sections of cobbles and flag stones.

Although the route of the canal passes directly though the city centre, limited signs highlight this as well as the surrounding attractions, and there is no interpretation to show the historic value of the Canal to the development of the city of Chester.

Limited areas of waterside vegetation are present, particularly within the city centre section.

In terms of the River Dee Park, the only other site the Canal links with is the Water Tower Gardens.
Figure a.
As the Canal passes through the east of the city centre, the path is narrow in sections with access points which are not suitable for all users.

Figure b.
The cycle route offers opportunities for sustainable travel through the city centre.

Figure c.
The Canal passes the adjacent Water Tower Gardens and offers access into the site which is not suitable for all site users.

Issues Affecting the Site

Welcoming Place
Minimal signage is present at a few access points to the Canal but not at all. Although some direction signage is present this could be expanded to advertise adjacent spaces and attractions. The cycle route is only clearly defined in particular sections and not throughout the length of the site. There are no intensively designed gateways onto the Canal from the adjacent residential areas.

Healthy, Safe and Secure
The quality of path varies greatly along the length of the Canal with improvements required at key intervals. Although lighting columns are present in some sections of the site, they are not present for the entire length.
Well Maintained and Clean

More refuse, recycle, and dog bins are required at intervals along the route of the Canal; this would help to improve the levels of litter and general cleanliness. Formal grass cuts to the Canal path appear to be carried out satisfactorily, however there are only limited numbers of trees and naturalistic planting. An expansion of the number of seating areas along the Canal may attract more people to use the site on a regular basis.

Conservation and Heritage

There is no information or interpretation regarding the history of the Canal, or how it aided the development of Chester. Although the Canal passes by many historical buildings no information is provided to the site user.

Community Involvement

The Shropshire Union Canal, River Dee and the Chester Greenway are the three main green links currently operating within Chester. The Canal does link spaces within the city, but much more could be done to promote this and indeed the site as a whole.

Marketing

Although events on site are actively advertised via the internet, there is little evidence of the presence or qualities of the site advertised within Chester city centre.

Access

The footpath is largely satisfactory in quality, with small areas of improvement required. Many of the access points onto the Canal are not suitable for all users with many having slippery steps. Although the improvement of access is important, the historic nature of the Canal and its largely built up surroundings means that changes to the access infrastructure may be difficult to carry out.

Management

The overall appearance of the site does not give the impression of poor management; neither does it give the impression of a site that is cherished and promoted. Management of the site is primarily British Waterways responsibility, and co-operation between BW and Chester City Council will be needed to enhance the appearance and functionality of the site as part of the River Dee Park.

Opportunities for the Site

The Shropshire Union Canal should be central to any improvement plans for Chester’s green spaces. Along with the Riverside Promenade, the Canal offers excellent opportunities for clean, safe and sustainable travel. The series of short term and long term actions below will allow the site to fulfil its full potential whilst improving the site for all.

Actions

Short Term Goals

A. Create management plan for the site

This is an important part of the action plan in that the management plan can address some of the negative issues that affect the site. A management plan would also help to prioritise the improvements required on site.
B. **Install directional signage**  
Directional signage on site would help to advertise the nearby attractions and spaces.

C. **Installation of information boards**  
Information boards similar to those present on the Riverside Promenade would help to highlight the history and culture of the Canal whilst also advertising green spaces in and around Chester city centre.

D. **Install more refuse bins**  
Refuse, recycling and dog bins are all required at key locations along the length of the Canal to reduce the amounts of litter present.

E. **Improve gateways**  
Key designated access points onto the site should be agreed, and then attractively designed gateways installed to help attract people on to the site.

**Long Term Goals**

F. **Improve access**  
Several access points along the Canal are only suitable for able bodied users; where it is practical and can respect the historic environment some access points should be improved to allow a wider range of users to enjoy the site.

G. **Connection to the Riverside Walk (The Promenade)**  
As the Canal passes by the Water Tower Gardens, it is in very close proximity to the Riverside Promenade. A connection between these two strategic routes would offer numerous benefits the City. This could be achieved through a street cycle route and footpath and through the implementation of signage.
The Groves Action Plan

Location

Description of the Site

The Groves is located on the north bank of the River Dee between Old Dee Bridge and Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge, running parallel with the River which in essence is part of the site. The site stretches for approximately 270m and is accessible from the Old Dee Bridge and the Roman Gardens at the western end and from Grosvenor Park and the Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge at the eastern end.

The site contains a large amount of seating facing the River and River-edge steps both provide protection from alluvial erosion and double up as seating in dry weather. There are several cafes and bars at the eastern end, with a small shop and bandstand acting as focal points within the site. A road runs through the site to the rear of the seating area and there is some limited parking available.

The Groves is an historic site that has been in use for generations. It is popular with visitors and residents alike with seasonal attractions including live music events and boat trips upstream.
Figure a:
Looking west towards the Old Dee Bridge with the bandstand on the left and the majority of the seating on the right.

Figure b:
Although not clearly visible in the photograph, the site experiences heavy compaction of the soil around the trees. The poor condition of the seating can be seen in the foreground, while a damaged tree is present to the left of the picture.

Figure c:
The moorings for the boats that provide the river trips can be seen in the background left of this photograph. The steps fronting the River act as extra seating, indicating that this site can absorb and withstand a high number of visitors.

Issues Affecting the Site

**Welcoming Place**
The entrances to The Groves are insufficient when its role as a significant visitor attraction is considered, whilst the entrance at the western end does not announce that you have left one area and entered another. It would be beneficial to have an interpretation board within The Groves showing it in context with the other sites along the river corridor. There are large areas of open ground which make the area look empty and bland (figure b), planters may help address this.

**Healthy, Safe and Secure**
The Groves’ most obvious failing is the condition of the surface, which in places (mostly around the seating areas) is damaged and worn away.
Well Maintained and Clean
On the whole this site is clean and maintained; however there are some issues which are affecting both its functionality and appearance. Several of the trees are suffering from soil compaction; this in turn affects the way the soils drain, which can further increase the rate of soil erosion. Some of the seating and the condition of the paintwork is beginning to look tired and is making the site look dated.

Conservation and Heritage
Arboricultural management is the key issue regarding conservation at The Groves. All of the trees are Lime trees, which generally make good street trees but they are experiencing stress probably due to issues including soil compaction. There is also a severely damaged tree that has been left to regenerate which adds nothing to the overall image of the site.

Community Involvement
A “Friends Of” group exists in conjunction with Grosvenor Park, although there is no evidence on site to publicise this.

Marketing
The Groves offer a distinct and relaxing destination for residents and visitors, enabling them to appreciate the City from a different viewpoint and have access to other key assets and activities such as The Meadows, Queen’s Promenade, Grosvenor Park, St John’s, Roman Gardens and the River Dee footpath. The Groves is a key visitor hub for Chester and the site should be marketed as a key destination and departure point for the River Dee Park.

Access
Access into and around The Groves presents no real barriers to the less-able bodied or those with young families. Access from The Groves to some of the other River Dee Park assets is somewhat different: access to Grosvenor Park is either up a steep cobbled slope at the western end or via steps at the eastern end of The Groves. Access across the Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge is severely limited due to the topography at the southern (Handbridge) end of the bridge, meaning that wheelchair access across the River is limited to the Old Dee Bridge.

Management
The overall appearance of the site is good, with almost no litter present. Visitor pressures mean that site infrastructure such as seats are subject to constant use and need constant repair and refurbishment, and it is in this area that some further work is needed.

Opportunities for the Site
The Groves is an important gateway site for Chester and the River Dee Park. Its proximity to many of the Park’s other sites and recreational routes means that this is the key site for visitors to Chester wanting to explore the Park. The Groves should be promoted within Chester and for the River Dee Park as a leisure destination in its own right but also recognising that it provides access to almost all of the Park’s key sites.
Actions

Short Term Goals

A. Create management plan for the site
This is an important part of the action plan in that the management plan can address some of the negative issues that affect The Groves, in particular the state of the seating and the poor surface conditions and the compaction of the soils around the bases of the trees.

B. Protect the root areas around the trees
This can be achieved by cordon off the trees creating a root protection zone; some seating may require moving to maintain freedom of movement around the site.

C. Repair the existing seating
Repainting of the seating is required to maintain the sites standing as a prime destination within Chester.

D. Install interpretation/destination information boards
In view of the fact that The Groves is an important visitor destination/hub/gateway there is a need for clear information to show how other important River Dee Park sites can be reached from The Groves.

E Consider other uses for the site
It is possible that during quiet periods the Groves could be used for other events such as angling competitions.

F. Improve signage
A key issue for The Groves is the poor signage at the key entrance point at the western end of the site; the sign should be one that announces to the visitor that they are in the Groves. It is important that visitors know that they have arrived in the Groves as this site will become a major gateway for the River Dee Park and must be recognisable to visitors.

G. Install planters
There are several areas where The Groves look empty and bland and monochromatic, particularly in winter, the addition of several planters will add colour to the site, seasonal variation in planting should ensure colour year round.

Long Term Goals

H. Resurface the seating area with a more resilient material In the future there may be a need to resurface the site; it is possible that there are more appropriate materials available that can withstand the footfall the site experiences.
B. Reduce soil compaction around the bases of the trees

C. Recondition existing seating

D. Information board describing other River Dee Park Sites

E. Consider other uses for The Groves such as an Angling Competition Venue

F. Improved signage at key entrance points

G. Install planters

H. Resurface the seating area
Queen’s Promenade Action Plan

Location

Queen’s Promenade is opposite to The Groves, running between Old Dee Bridge and The Meadows along the south bank of the River Dee, which in effect forms part of the site. The western entrance of the site is located near to the Old Dee Bridge, with the Promenade predominantly used as a recreational route providing access to The Meadows approximately 800 metres from the Old Dee Bridge. Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge is halfway along the Promenade and can be accessed via a long flight of steps; Handbridge and The Groves can be reached from here.

Along most of its length on the northern side the riverside vegetation consists of Willows and Alder, with several riparian grass species including Rush and Lesser Reed Mace. The trees for the most part obstruct the view across the River to the city centre. Between the Old Dee Bridge and Queens Park Suspension Bridge the southern side is a mix of woodland and open amenity grassland, whilst the stretch between Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge and the entrance to The Meadows consists of high walls that form the garden boundaries of private houses.

There are several seating areas between Old Dee Bridge and Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge, but the narrowness of the path due to the private houses between Queen’s Bridge and The Meadows limits seating availability to a single bench at the entrance to The Meadows.
Figure a.
Looking east along the promenade as it leads towards The Meadows. The overgrown nature of the riverside vegetation can be clearly seen on the left.

Figure b.
Here the uneven nature of the existing path is visible; much of the promenade is constructed of flags which have loosened over time and in some places has become a tripping hazard.

Figure c.
The western entrance to the promenade close to the Old Dee Bridge is not a welcoming place and gives the impression of being private land due to the proximity to the buildings.

Issues Affecting the Site

Welcoming Place

The entrances to the Queen’s Promenade are insufficient considering its role for Chester’s visitors and its value for local residents. Neither the access from the Old Dee Bridge or Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge is particularly welcoming or well signposted. The entrance at the western end of the Promenade (figure c) is not obvious to the user, is badly signposted and passes under a building which gives the impression of being private land. This is likely to dissuade those without local knowledge from using the Promenade. The views of Chester that can be enjoyed from the Promenade would benefit from interpretational signage describing the scene.
Healthy, Safe and Secure
The Promenade’s most obvious failing is the condition of the path surface, which in places is damaged and becoming a tripping hazard. Its uneven nature also means that access for those using wheelchairs or pushchairs is difficult. The Promenade also lacks sufficient lighting and in combination with the enclosed nature of part of the route this could give the perception of being unsafe. The fishing pegs that have been created appear unsafe, and it is likely that further use combined with flooding will lead to the bank being further damaged and potentially dangerous.

Well Maintained and Clean
On the whole the site is clean and well maintained; however there are some issues which are affecting both its functionality and appearance. The riverside trees are quite dense in places, blocking the view across the River to Chester and hiding the Promenade itself from view. Although the trees provide an important wildlife function, it is possible to remove or coppice some of them to create a viewpoint without causing loss to the wildlife value. Litter is also a problem, not actually on the site but in the form of flotsam from the River collecting in the bank side vegetation.

Conservation and Heritage
Woodland management is the key issue regarding conservation on the Promenade, with unmanaged trees blocking the view across the River and reducing the recreational amenity on the fishing pegs. The condition of the paintwork on Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge is poor and the presence of graffiti impacts of the perceived quality of the site. The quality of the view over Chester’s historic core demands an increase in number of the places from which to enjoy it, as current seating provision is insufficient.

Community Involvement
This site is a key link to The Meadows and to Handbridge and forms part of the larger circular walk that includes Duke’s Drive. Currently these links are not obvious to visitors or residents, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that some people living in Chester did not know there was a route along the south side of the river.

Marketing
This site offers a quiet and relaxing distraction for visitors to the city, enabling them to appreciate the City from a different viewpoint and providing access to other key assets such as The Meadows and the River Dee footpath. The Promenade offers much more than a means to go from one place to another though and is an experience in itself. However the site is rarely presented in visitor information, and is most notably absent from the Riverside Promenade Trail.

Access
This site offers wheelchair access from the City to The Meadows; however the variable quality of the surface makes access along this essentially open and level route more difficult. Access across Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge and down to the Promenade at the Handbridge side of the bridge is impossible for those using wheelchairs or pushchairs because of the high number of steps.
Management

The overall appearance of the site gives the impression of being well managed although there are some areas that could be improved upon. The main issues are the overgrown nature of some of the river trees, obstructions to the view and the build-up of flotsam at the river’s edge detracting from the experience.

Opportunities for the Site

This site is a key strategic route within the City and the River Dee Park, although at present it is not promoted or accessible enough to fulfil its potential. Access The western end of the Promenade and Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge provide the main access points and yet it requires local knowledge to find either. Addressing these access issues could make the Promenade into an important part of Chester’s visitor assets as well as providing an attractive place for residents of all mobilities. Improving the condition, infrastructure and appearance of the Promenade will help increase access to open and natural green space, considered by many of the City’s residents to be the most valued of public space.

Actions

Short Term Goals

A. Create management plan for the site
This is an important part of the action plan in that the management plan can address some of the negative issues that affect the Promenade, in particular the overgrown vegetation, poor path conditions and the problem of litter in the river. Regular inspection and ground-works will be needed as the site usage increases.

B. Open up the views of the River Dee and the City
This can be achieved by the removal or coppicing of the trees and bushes at the water’s edge in some sections of the site.

C. Install seating in way which maximises the view
In order for opened-up views to be enjoyed additional seating will be required. This will need to be weather proof and to some extent vandal proof.

D. Install interpretation boards
The view from the Promenade captures many of Chester’s historical features that would be complimented by installing an interpretation board explaining the elements of the scene to the viewer.

E. Install more resilient angling pegs
There is a need to provide dedicated and more permanent fishing pegs and where needed steps down to the pegs, particularly where existing areas have been subject to erosion due to angling

F. Improve signage
The key issue for the Promenade is the poor signage at the key entrance points of Old Dee Bridge and Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge (both sides), and to some extent at the entrance to The Meadows.
Long Term Goals

G. Install a handrail and add a pushchair/wheelchair friendly access slope from the Handbridge side of Queen’s Park Suspension Bridge down to Queen’s Promenade
Access to this site is currently only available to those of able body, and to allow everybody the opportunity to enjoy the site it will be necessary to add a handrail to the existing steps on the Suspension Bridge and to install a ramp to provide access to those in wheelchairs or with pushchairs.

H. Resurface the pathway
The existing pathway is uneven and in several places is a tripping hazard. It should be resurfaced to a high standard, using materials that can withstand heavy usage including wheelchairs and bicycles.

I. Continue the cycle route through The Meadows to Duke’s Drive
In the future the riverside path may become an important strategic route within the River Dee Regional Park, whilst the New Dee Bridge is likely to increase the number of people with access to The Meadows and Queen’s Promenade. The creation of circular route passing through Queen’s Promenade, The Meadows and Duke’s Drive should be promoted; this may require a more resilient surface that is suitable for regular cycle use to be laid, particularly in the southern parts of The Meadows.
Overleigh Cemetery Action Plan

Location

Description of the Site

Overleigh Cemetery is one of the largest cemeteries in Chester. It is located to the south of the city centre, and is split into two distinct sections either side of Overleigh Road. The Cemetery is adjacent to the Duke’s Drive and The Dingle and borders the River Dee at its northern-most end. Grosvenor Bridge is adjacent to the Cemetery, and provides attractive views across the site and the River Dee.

Overleigh Cemetery has two main access points offering safe and comfortable access for all users. A path network also runs through both sections of the site, offering ease of movement on site.

The site is clean and tidy and is well managed. Formal grass cuts and maintenance are performed around the burial area, whilst more naturalistic planting and trees towards the perimeter offers an attractive contrast to the more formal areas, and to some extent cocoons the site from the surrounding city noise to allow opportunities for quiet reflection.

Refuse bins and seating areas provide the site with the facilities expected of a large cemetery site.
Figure a.
Looking towards one of the main entrances of the Overleigh Cemetery from Overleigh Road.

Figure b.
The smooth and easily accessible footpath network with benches at regular intervals.

Figure c.
View looking down from Grosvenor Bridge towards the thick vegetation and naturalistic planting around the perimeter of the site.

**Issues Affecting the Site**

*Welcoming Place*
Formal entrances off Overleigh Road allow access into the site. However this is an extremely busy road especially during the morning and evening rush hours, and the lack of a pedestrian crossing near to the entrances can cause difficulty for visitors. It is unclear for people visiting the site whether car access is allowed within the Cemetery or not, as no signage informing of this is present.

*Healthy, Safe and Secure*
All exits and paths are clear and visible. The majority of the footpath network is in excellent condition, with only small areas requiring minor repairs.
Well Maintained and Clean
Overall the site has a clean and tidy appearance with a high number of refuse and recycle bins, although the lack of dog bins could result in dog fouling in grassed areas. Site maintenance is of a high standard, with only small areas of the naturalistic sections requiring some thinning and pruning work. Some seating within the site requires improvements due to the deterioration of materials.

Conservation and Heritage
The Cemetery has been in use since the 1800s, and so contains many listed and important historical features particularly from the 19th Century. Such features should be protected and interpretation as to their significance for the City should be provided on site.

The structure and health of the woodland surrounding the site is positive, with only small amounts of work required.

Community Involvement
Although the site is located directly adjacent to two large green spaces, links between the sites are not promoted as such. This should be remedied.

Access
The path network is in good condition allowing all site users to move freely within the site. The main entrances are ramped allowing easy wheelchair access.

Management
The overall appearance of the site gives the impression of good management, although there are some areas that could be improved upon. Many of these are cosmetic, and will not require high levels of investment.

Opportunities for the Site
This site is a key strategic green space within the overall context of Chester’s green infrastructure. It is generally well-managed and is maintained with the necessary sensitivity and dignity required.

Actions

Short Term Goals

A. Create management plan for the site
A management plan will provide the framework for addressing some of the negative issues that affect the site, and for ensuring that regular inspection and necessary ground-works are carried out. This is fundamental to the site’s future management.

B. Install new/replacement seating
New seating should be installed, with a particular focus on the replacement of some of the more weathered benches currently on site.

C. Install dog bins
An appropriate number of dog bins should be placed adjacent to existing refuse bins.

D. Landscape works to naturalistic areas
A regime of pruning and minor vegetation clearance should be instructed, ensuring that naturalistic areas are managed in a manner which allows ecosystems and habitats to be established and protected.
**E. Improve signage and interpretation**

The signage at the main entrances to the site should be improved and interpretation panels provided in appropriate locations to inform visitors of the historical significance of the site. These must be sensitive to the on-going use of the site as a burial ground.

**Long Term Goals**

**F. Creation of a pedestrian crossing near to the main entrance**

Creating a pedestrian crossing over Overleigh Road near to the main entrance would improve access for visitors.

**G. Encourage links to adjacent green spaces**

Directional signage or small information boards highlighting the adjacent green spaces would do much to improve the connectivity of the green spaces to the south of the River Dee. Signage would have to be well designed and sensitive to the main function of the site.

**H. Conservation of the Mausoleums and other structures**

Work is needed to repair and maintain the site’s historic structures and mausoleums. It is recommended that a list of priority structures is identified and an action plan implemented to conserve this element of Chester’s historic legacy.
**Duke’s Drive Action Plan**

**Location**

Duke’s Drive lies to the south of Chester city centre. Essentially a footpath with associated greening and adjacent facilities, the site runs from the main junction of the A483 (south of the River) to the water works. Importantly the site offers a key green link running from south Chester to the heart of the city centre.

The site includes both formal and informal pathways, and contains a short cycle route. The footpath is made of tarmac and fluctuates between 1 and 2 meters wide with some areas of decay.

The main entrance to the site is grand, although the lack of signage and formal welcome sign may cause some confusion to visitors. There are various access points along its length, with seating and refuse bins installed at various locations. Sculptures within the site add much to its aesthetic value.

Vegetation is thick on both sides of the pathway, offering a good range of habitats for a variety of flora and fauna.
Figure a.
The site has grand formal entrance, but lacks any welcome signage.

Figure b.
Main linear pathway running though the site with lampposts positioned at key points.

Figure c.
Sculptures at key points along the footpath are attractive and add much to the overall aesthetics of the site.

Issues Affecting the Site

Welcoming Place
Duke’s Drive has a very formal and attractive main entrance; however the site is not named (by a sign, notice board, etc) which combined with the lack of general welcome signage and the presence of ‘no parking’ notices may dissuade potential users. This lack of signs persists throughout the site.
The cycle route is of a good quality and appears to be well used, however it only runs for a small section of the total Duke’s Drive site.

**Healthy, Safe and Secure**

The majority of exits and paths are clear and visible giving the site a safe and secure feel. Small parts of the pathway are showing signs of decay, presenting a trip hazard. This becomes steadily worse as the site progresses southwards. Path improvements will also be essential for any extension to the cycle path.

**Well Maintained and Clean**

On the whole this site is clean and maintained, however there is littering in some areas. Refuse bins and dog bins are present on site, but there are no recycle bins. Although seating is present, some benches are showing signs of deterioration.

**Conservation and Heritage**

The formal grass cut directly at the side of the path is contrasted with adjacent naturalistic areas. This appears to be well managed; although the inclusion of more dead wood would improve the diversity of habitats. Sculptures on site add an interesting cultural element; however a lack of information relating to the sculptures or site itself leaves the visitor unaware of the site’s culture and history.

**Community Involvement**

Duke’s Drive plays a fundamental role as a strategic green link running into the heart of the city, although the lack of directional or location signage makes it difficult for the user to know its potential. There was no evidence of any ‘Friends Of’ group or any on-site events.

**Marketing**

There is little evidence of any marketing of Duke’s Drive being carried out despite its role as one of the premier green linkages within Chester.

**Access**

The site’s path network is mainly in good condition allowing all users to move freely. The main entrance into the site is wide and allows easy wheelchair access. Other access points along the site are not so well managed or maintained and require work to make them accessible for all.

**Management**

The site’s overall appearance gives the impression of good management although improvements to basic facilities and path network would be beneficial.

Many of the issues highlighted above are cosmetic, and will not require high levels of investment to rectify. The site as a whole is a well managed green space which offers much to local communities and visitors.

**Opportunities for the Site**

This site is a key premier green space within Chester, which offers an excellent green linkage to the heart of the city centre. The series of short term and long term actions below will allow the site to fulfil its full potential whilst improving the site for all users.
Actions

Short Term Goals

A. Create management plan for the site
A management plan should be developed to address the negative issues that affect the site, setting plans and landscape regimes for management of the more naturalistic areas.

B. Install new and improve existing seating
New seating areas should be installed at appropriate points within the site, whilst existing seating should be improved.

C. Installation of welcome signage
A well designed and attractive welcome sign at the main entrance would attract people to and inform users about the site. Several smaller welcome signs at other entrances would also promote the site as a key travel route.

D. Installation of directional signage and information boards
Directional signage at key points throughout the site (particularly pathway junctions) would highlight the potential of the broader green network and show users the value of the site as a green link to the city centre. Coupled with information boards, directional signs can also highlight other key locations along the path.

E. Install recycle bins
Recycle bins should be introduced at appropriate locations (e.g. near to current refuse bins) to promote sustainability.

Long Term Goals

F. Extension of cycle route
Extension of the existing cycle route to Chester Business Park should be a fundamental aim of any plans for improvements to Duke’s Drive, providing a safe clean travel option for Business Park workers. Improvements to the cycle route would also promote Chester City Council’s commitment to sustainability.

G. Resurface the pathway
Improvements and resurfacing of the main pathway are essential if the cycle route is to be extended south. The path should also be widened in some sections to allow safer routes for both cyclists and pedestrians to use.

H. Marketing of Duke’s Drive
The site should be actively promoted. The creation of a ‘Friends Of’ group would do much to safeguard the site whilst marketing the attractions of Duke’s Drive.

I. Improvements to access points
Several of the access points running into the main linear path need to be improved to meet the standard of the main footpath. Improvements should include cutting back of vegetation and the implementation of appropriately surfaced paths to a width suitable for wheelchair users.

J. Creating a sculpture trail
Introducing new and incorporating existing sculptures in a formal sculpture trail would enhance the attractiveness of the site and provide additional interest for users. Coupled with information boards, this would provide a unique cultural attraction on a site that otherwise is constrained by its size.
K. Creation of green gym facilities
As a clean, safe linear path, Duke’s Drive is used by a number of users for running. This could be developed with the installation of green gym equipment which would offer the user an ideal setting for a more extensive fitness session. The equipment could be sourced from local sustainable or recycled material and positioned in the grass areas adjacent to the path.
A. Create a management plan for the site
B. Install new seating
C. Installation of welcome signage
D. Installation of directional signage and information boards
E. Install recycle bins
F. Extension of cycle route
G. Resurface the pathway
H. Improvements to access points
I. Incorporation of additional sculptures to create a trail
J. Creation of green gym facilities
K. Creation of green gym facilities
Riverside Walk (‘The Promenade’) Action Plan

Location

The Riverside Walk (known locally as ‘The Promenade’) runs from the city centre (near Bridge Gate) westward towards Sealand Industrial Estate. It connects a number of sites along the River including The Cop and The Roodee, and leads directly to the cluster of sites around The Groves, making it particularly valuable to the connectivity of sites within the River Dee Park.

Although it is only the stretch show on the location map above that is included in the River Dee Park (as the section under Chester City Council’s control), the route actually stretches beyond the England-Wales border, and joins the Greenway cycle route at Connah’s Quay to create a circular route. As such it is also a critical element of the wider Dee Corridor / North East Wales-West Cheshire green infrastructure resource.

The Riverside Walk consists of a 2 metre wide Bitmac footpath running alongside the River Dee, with seating and facilities at various points along its length. Large information signs are located at various points along the length of the site, providing maps and advertising other premier green spaces within Chester city centre.

The Riverside Walk appears to be well used and is well designed in sections, promoting clean sustainable travel throughout the city.
Figure a.
Looking down towards the Riverside Walk as it passes along side the Roodee.

Figure b.
One of the information boards placed at various locations along the length of the Riverside Walk. The information board houses text and photographs of green spaces in Chester city centre.

**Issues Affecting the Site**

*Welcoming Place*

There are several welcoming access points along the length of the site, with the majority being clear and accessible. However, access points around The Roodee area are slightly confusing and need to be clearer. This section is also closed on race days and for a number of days either side, which limits access and causes further confusion as to the accessibility of the route to the general public.

The absence of lighting columns in some sections may result in people not using the Riverside Walk to its full potential.
Healthy, Safe and Secure
The site generally has a safe and secure feel with all exits and paths being clear and visible, although the section behind the stables may feel unsafe at night. Small areas of the pathway on the site are becoming worn; however these could be easily remedied with minimal work.

Well Maintained and Clean
On the whole this site is clean and maintained, although more dog bins and recycle bins could be installed at key points along the route. More seating areas are required at key intervals to encourage people to use the site for quiet reflection.

Conservation and Heritage
Areas of waterside planting could be expanded to create more habitats for flora and fauna. Tree planting could also be encouraged in various sections, although care would need to be taken that this did not obstruct river views (a key attraction of the site).

The Riverside Walk lies directly alongside the internationally important River Dee SAC, and any activities or enhancements must be sensitive to the biological value of the SAC.

Community Involvement
The route provides a key strategic green link running through the city, offering several communities access to some of Chester’s premier greenspaces and the city centre.

Part of the route is promoted as part of Chester’s ‘Health Routes’ programme. This initiative aims to inspire communities to become more active, and includes a number of walking groups around the city which aim to bring local communities together in a social environment as well as improving fitness levels.

Marketing
The Riverside Walk is primarily advertised via the large information boards at various points along its length. No evidence was observed for any ‘Friends Of’ group.

Access
The path network is mainly in good condition and the main entrances into the site are easily accessible, allowing all site users to move freely along the route.

Directional signage within the city centre would help to attract people to the site.

Management
Facilities are in good condition and the site appears to be clean and well managed.

Opportunities for the Site
The Riverside Walk is one of the key strategic green links within Chester, offering a clean, safe and sustainable travel route into the city centre. The walk links several River Dee Park and other sites, highlighting its strategic function and the potential for city wide management of green spaces.
Actions

**Short Term Goals**

A. *Create management plan for the site*
   A management plan would help to establish an overall future vision for the Riverside Walk and provide a framework for addressing some of the negative issues that affect the site. This is a fundamental element of the action plan.

B. *Install new seating*
   New seating areas should be installed on site, offering visitors areas for quiet reflection and relaxation.

C. *Installation of directional signage*
   Directional signage at key locations within the city centre would help to advertise the presence of the Riverside Promenade, and so promote its use to a wider audience.

D. *Install more refuse bins*
   Installation of recycle bins and dog bins at locations near to current refuse bins would help improve the cleanliness and sustainability of the site.

**Long Term Goals**

E. *Create or expand current waterside vegetation areas*
   Expansion of current waterside vegetation and the creation of new areas (in keeping with the management plans for the SAC) would do much to improve the overall ecological potential of the Riverside Walk.

F. *Expansion of cycle route*
   Extending the current cycle route towards the city centre and The Groves would improve options for and help to promote sustainable travel.

G. *Installation of lighting*
   Installation of lighting either in small sections or along the entire length of the site would help to encourage people to use the site during the evening, and also improve the overall feeling of safety and security.

H. *Expansion of the Riverside Promenade to the east*
   A long term vision should incorporate the possible expansion of the formal footpath to the east. This expansion would allow the Riverside Promenade to not only travel the width of Chester city centre, but promote linkages with several other premier green spaces such as The Groves, St John’s Church and Grosvenor Park.
The Cop Action Plan

Location

Description of the Site

The Cop is a local linear park located to the west of the city centre, offering facilities for the surrounding residential areas. It is bordered on one side by the busy Sealand Road, and on the other side the River Dee, and is adjacent to the Riverside Walk, highlighting the importance of this site as a stop off point for users of the Promenade and as a link to surrounding green spaces which are advertised on good quality display boards.

The Cop has a wide variety of good quality recreational facilities, including a play area and skate park. Footpaths run around the perimeter of the site and are tarmac in construction, and are mainly in good condition.

The site still contains the original banks or ‘Cops’ from which the site takes its name, and an appreciation of the park’s historic nature has been successfully incorporated into its design.

Small natural areas with trees offer an attractive contrast to the more formal play areas.
Figure a.
Looking towards the main entrance of the Cop from Sealand Road. The well designed gateway is attractive to site users.

Figure b.
The inclusion of a skate park extends the site’s appeal and appears to be well used by the local community.

Figure c.
The raised banks are very much a design feature. The inclusion of the Riverside Walk attracts other visitors to the site including cyclists.

Issues Affecting the Site

Welcoming Place
The Cop is a welcoming place with a well designed gateway and signposts. However, signage at the play area entrance is very unclear, with the text illegible in parts.

Healthy, Safe and Secure
The site has a safe and secure feel, with all exits and paths clear and visible. Small areas of the pathway in the site are showing signs of decay, with breaks in the tarmac surface presenting trip hazards to users. Consideration should be given to the installation of lighting, particularly along the Riverside Promenade, to encourage use in the evening.
**Well Maintained and Clean**

On the whole this site is clean and maintained; however there are some issues which are affecting the appearance. Refuse bins on site have been vandalised and need replacing, and the lack of dog bins and recycle bins should also be addressed. Graffiti throughout the site affects the appearance and creates a slightly untidy feel. The quality of seating in The Cop is acceptable, however the site does require more seating, possibly near to the children’s play area allowing parents or carers to keep children in sight.

**Conservation and Heritage**

Although areas of naturalistic planting are present, an expansion of these would offer the potential for improving the site’s overall biodiversity. The incorporation of the raised banks in The Cop is a good example of creative design within the restrictions and the practicalities of flood defence; however an information board explaining their history and purpose would offer increased interest to users.

**Community Involvement**

Its location on the Riverside Walk promenade means that the site is integrated into one of the key green links running through Chester, with the promenade’s information boards highlight the location of The Cop alongside other key green spaces with Chester.

No evidence was observed of any ‘friends of’ group or any events in relation to The Cop.

**Marketing**

Although the site is advertised via the Riverside Promenade signs, there is little evidence of any other marketing of The Cop. As the site is one of the premier green spaces within Chester, more marketing would have been expected, this should be rectified in the future.

**Access**

The path network throughout the site is mainly in good condition allowing all site users to move freely within the site. The main entrance into the site is ramped allowing easy wheelchair access into the site. Knee high railings on the River Dee side of the site reduce the risk of falling into the river.

**Management**

The overall appearance of the site gives the impression of generally good management; although there are areas of litter and graffiti throughout the site which need to be addressed.

Many of the issues highlighted above are cosmetic, and will not require high levels of investment to rectify. The site as a whole is a well managed green space which offers much to visitors and the surrounding community.

**Opportunities for the Site**

This site is a key green space within Chester, offering a good range of facilities for the local community. The site is linked to other spaces via the Riverside Walk promenade and therefore has a strategic role within the River De Park. The series of short term and long term actions below will allow the site to fulfil its potential whilst improving the site for all.
Actions

**Short Term Goals**

A. *Create management plan for the site*
   This is an important element of the action plan in that a management plan can address some of the negative issues that affect the site, in particular the cleansing of the site and possible plating of more naturalistic areas, as well as setting guidelines for regular inspection and ground-works on a site that will subject to heavy usage.

B. *Install new seating*
   New seating areas should be installed, with particular focus given to areas near to the children’s play area and the skate park, and to make the most of views overlooking the River Dee.

C. *Installation of information boards*
   An information board charting the site’s history of the site would do much to improve the user experience.

D. *Install more refuse bins*
   Replacement of vandalised refuse bins is required, as well as installation of new bins to reduce the litter problem on site. Recycle and dog bins should also be introduced.

E. *Improve signage*
   The sign at the entrance to the children’s play area should be replaced.

**Long Term Goals**

F. *Create or expand current naturalistic planting areas*
   Current naturalistic areas should be expanded or new areas created to improve the biodiversity of the site (guided by the site management plan). Good management and maintenance of these areas will also be essential to ensure their contribution to the City’s biodiversity.

G. *Resurface the pathway*
   Small sections of pathway that are currently crumbling should be repaired to ensure safe access throughout the site.

H. *Marketing of The Cop*
   The site should be actively managed to promote its positive aspects. The creation of a ‘Friends Of’ group would do much to safeguard and market the attractions The Cop has to offer.
A. Create a management plan for the site

B. Install new seating offering views of the River Dee

C. Installation of information boards

D. Install more refuse bins

E. Improve signage

F. Create or expand current naturalistic planting areas

G. Resurfacing of pathway

B. Install new seating near to children’s play area
The Roman Gardens Action Plan

Location

The Roman Gardens are situated between Little John Street and The Groves, running parallel to the City Walls and Souter’s Lane. The site an important link between the city centre and the River Dee corridor, provide a safe traffic free route between the centre and the River.

The Gardens are formal in nature and contain various Roman artefacts and a reconstructed hypocaust, providing visitors with an insight into the history of the city.

High quality seating in the Gardens’ central section provides a focus for the site, particularly when used by school groups. The walking surface is of equally high quality and can withstand large numbers of visitors without detriment to its condition. The Gardens also provide the visitor with a close-up view of the City Walls, with interpretational signage describing the various elements and artefacts present throughout.

The Gardens are locked at night helping to reduce levels of litter and incidences of anti-social behaviour.

Description of the Site
Figure a
Looking north towards the exit on Little John Street. The quality of the paving can be clearly seen in the foreground.

Figure b
Here the quality of the seating area is visible with a central area used during school visits. In the background the City wall can be seen.

Figure c
This photo is looking towards the River Dee and The Groves; again the quality of the seating is apparent and one of the many interpretation points can be seen on the left.

Issues with the Site

Welcoming Place
The entrance at the northern end of The Gardens is somewhat hidden by the railings that form the northern boundary. In addition to this there is no indication that The Gardens lead down to the River and connects to other sites.

Well Maintained and Clean
On the whole this site is clean and maintained. However further management of the vegetation is needed, as in some areas bushes and trees are a little overgrown and other areas ground cover is rather bare leading to the formation of desire lines. The existing litter bin is of an open cylindrical pebbledash design and does little to support the historic nature of the site.
Community Involvement
The site does not have a ‘Friends Of’ group at present; such a group could help with maintenance and work needed on the site.

Marketing
This site offers a quiet and relaxing distraction for visitors to the city and is a good link between the city centre and the River Dee. However, there is no information available at entrances to promote this route or to indicate that the site is part of a network of green spaces within the vicinity.

Access
The site has recently been adapted to improve access for wheelchair users, however because of the topography access remains difficult.

Management
The Gardens are relatively well managed, although attention is needed to address the overgrown nature of some of the trees and the many bare patches that exist between the widely space planting, which in some case are becoming desire lines.

Overall the Roman Gardens is a site with high quality infrastructure and considerable historic interest. Therefore the main issues that this action plan will consider are those of regular management and general uplifting of the site’s appearance.

Opportunities for the Site
This site is a key strategic route within Chester and for the River Dee Park, and is a connecting route between the city’s assets, although at present it is not promoted to fulfil its potential. The concentration of Roman artefacts makes this site important for visitors wishing to experience this particular era of Chester’s history; it must therefore be promoted as part of the city’s wider access network.

Actions
Short Term Goals

General Site Management:
Ensure that the planting is maintained in a way that reflects the original design of the gardens, particularly the tall cypresses.

A. The Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) hedge at the northern entrance requires trimming to improve both its appearance which helps maintain the formal nature of the gardens and to stop encroachment onto the path.

B. The large circular depression at the northern entrance is the first part of the park that visitors see. There is a need for a formal ornament, fountain or perhaps a mosaic that represents the function and historical content of the gardens in this space.

C. Ensure that the regular cleaning of the Roman stonework is part of the management routine.

D. Remove or thin some of the planting that currently obscures the City Walls from view.

E. There are several patches of bare ground amongst the small bushes between the entrance to Albion Street and the central seating area. These will need ‘filling out’ with extra planting to deter walking across these areas (Figure 4). Generally within the gardens the spacing between the planting is poor and several areas are in need of extra planting. The area next to the wall at the southern end of the site is one area in particular where extra planting is needed.
**F. Information & interpretation**

Currently the northern entrance signage is in the form of two attractive markers (Figure 5), but there is a need for signage at both entrances to The Gardens on the outside of the site, directing people to and through The Gardens to The Groves and the River Dee.

*Infrastructure improvements:*

- **G.** Replace existing rubbish bin with a design more in keeping with the theme/feel of the gardens

- **H.** Ensure existing paving stones are pointed and secure to prevent tripping hazards.

Figure 4: Bare areas near seating

Figure 5: Entrance signage
A. Trim holly hedge to a more formal design
B. Create feature at the entrance
C. Regular cleaning of artefacts
D. Clear some of the vegetation from the walls
E. Directional and information signage at entrance
F. Plant up the gaps and bare soil areas
G. Replace existing rubbish bin
H. Ensure paved area is free of tripping hazards
Replace felled trees with planting
Richmond Hill Gardens Action Plan

Location

Description of the Site

Richmond Hill Gardens occupies land to the south of the A51 adjacent to where Barrel Well Hill joins the A51 opposite Mount Street. The site is divided into two separate areas: a large overgrown section that reaches down to the River Dee and the upper section close to the main road.

Currently the upper section is used as a small pocket park with ornamental shrubs and a small central grassed area, with a path running between the borders and the central grassed area. The rear (north) part of the upper section consists of a raised planter which unofficially doubles as a bench, because at present the site has no seating. The site is reached by descending the steps next to the bus stop; this is the only entrance/exit to the site.

The site assessment that was carried out for The Gardens was only concerned with the upper section of the site; however, recommendations in this action plan also consider the future of the lower section.
Figure a.
Looking south towards The Meadows and Great Boughton. The overgrown nature of the planting scheme can be clearly seen in the foreground.

Figure b.
Here the overgrown and unmanaged vegetation in the lower section is obscuring the view of the River Dee.

Figure c.
The entrance to the site is to the rear of the bus stop opposite Mount St on the A51. Seen here are the existing steps which reduce the number of people that are able to access the site.

Issues Affecting the Site

Welcoming Place

Richmond Hill Gardens is currently not a particularly welcoming place; there is littering and a lack of management detracts from what could be an attractive space. There is no signage at the entrance to inform potential visitors that this is a publicly accessible site, and whilst the site is relatively small compared to others, its main function is as a place to relax and enjoy the view requires that some form of interpretation is needed.
**Healthy, Safe and Secure**

The pathway around the site is adequate for the space, although regular clearing of weeds and mosses would improve its appearance. In terms of safety the overgrown nature of the vegetation and large amount of littering gives the impression of an abandoned space and as such it could be perceived as not being safe and as a focus for some antisocial behaviour.

**Well Maintained and Clean**

The planting is in need of management with large overgrown shrubs dominating the centre and edges of the site. The shrubs and trees in the lower section are obscuring the view of the River Dee and require removal or thinning/coppicing. Litter is a serious issue on this site; most of the litter appears to have dropped into the site from the adjacent bus stop or has blown in from elsewhere. For a site with such an interesting vista there is a serious lack on seating on which to enjoy the views, currently the planter at the rear of the site doubles as a seat.

**Conservation and Heritage**

The limited horticultural management on the site has resulted in the bushes occupying most of the space available. The grassed area is poorly maintained and appears not to be mown on a regular basis, although the design and layout does not make this a simple process. The main reason for visiting this site would be enjoy the view of the River, The Meadows and Chester; however its overgrown nature is preventing this site from fulfilling its potential and allowing visitors and local communities to enjoy Chester’s heritage.

**Marketing**

This site offers one of the best publically accessible views of The Meadows and the River and yet it does not appear in any of the tourist publications for Chester. Its proximity to the Shropshire Union Canal means that it is quite close to an important recreational route and more could be made of this connection.

**Overall Management**

The current management of Richmond Hill Gardens has a direct effect on the ability of the site to ‘sell’ itself to passers by. The inadequate management of the vegetation and lack of regular cleaning mean the site is unlikely to improve without further action.

**Access**

Access to the site is down steps, these are difficult for less-able bodied people and impossible for wheelchair users or those with pushchairs.

**Opportunities for the Site**

Although this site is not quite on the main visitor routes within the City, the Gardens could certainly become a valuable community asset as a place to sit down and relax and enjoy the view, or, should the lower section become available, a place to access the River Dee itself. At present the site is perhaps an eyesore and certainly unwelcoming, yet with appropriate management, careful design and the possibility of opening up the rest of the site, Richmond Hill Gardens can become a key asset for the River Dee Park and the surrounding communities. In addition to this the site could become a viewpoint of Chester which is accessible from the canal corridor.
Actions

Short Term Goals

A. Create management plan for the site
A management plan for the site will address some of the negative issues that affect the site, in particular the overgrown vegetation, poor path conditions and the problem of litter, as well as setting a regime for regular inspection and ground-works.

B. Open up the views to the River Dee and The Meadows
This can be achieved by the removal of or the coppicing of the trees and bushes in the lower section of the site that run parallel with the retaining wall and obscure the view.

C. Install seating in way which maximises the view
In order for those newly opened-up views to be enjoyed there will be need for seating on the site. The seating will need to weather proof and to some extent vandal proof, due to the proximity of the bus stop where people are likely to gather. It will also need to be high enough to allow the viewer to see over the retaining wall.

D. Install interpretation board
The view from this site is full of interesting features that would be complimented by installing an interpretation board explaining to the viewer the elements of the scene before them.

E. Remove railings
Due to the level of the grassed area and the height of the wall, the view is somewhat spoiled by the presence of the railings; their removal will further open up the view.

F. Install covered litter bin at the bus stop
The litter that collects in this site has either blown or been thrown in. The installation of a covered bin at the bus stop area should help reduce the level of litter entering the site.

G. Provide signage on the canal directing visitors to the site
The Shropshire Union Canal is only 300m from the Gardens; a promoted route along the Canal could certainly feature the Gardens as a destination.

Long Term Goals

H. Create a pushchair/wheelchair friendly access slope
A wheelchair/pushchair friendly access ramp will complement the current stepped access, providing access to the site and the views it offers to all abilities.

I. Redesign the layout of the Gardens to accommodate more seating and better access to the views
The space in the garden is not at present being used to it full potential, with the existing layout dominated by two large bushes in the centre. A complete redesign of the gardens would offer more seating opportunities, wheelchair access and more appropriate planting.

J. Adopt the lower section and open access to the river
The lack of access to the River from the Boughton area could be partially addressed through the extension of the existing site down to the river. A set of formal/informal garden terraces and paths leading down to the river front would be positive addition to the River Dee Park and Chester’s green space resource.
B. Removal or thinning of trees and bushes to open-up the view of the river and Chester

C. Provide seating

D. Install interpretation board

E. Removal of railings

F. Provide covered litter bin

G. Provide signage from the canal

H. Install access ramp

I. Redesign garden to incorporate seating, ramp and the lower section

J. Adoption of lower section and landscaping to allow access to the river
Farndon Picnic Area Action Plan

Location

![Location Map]

Description of the Site

Farndon Picnic Area is located approximately 10 miles (16km) along the riverside path south of Chester city centre in the small affluent rural village of Farndon. Bordering the River Dee, the site is fairly small and is made up of a small designated picnic area and a long access road/path running the entire length of the site.

The site is adjacent to the Dee Cliffs, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC). An interesting information boards explain the importance of the Dee Cliffs SSSI.

There is easy access on to the site via Bridge Street, with safety enhanced due to the traffic lights directly opposite the access road. The area downstream of the bridge and the section at the southern end is reached via an accessible boardwalk.

The access ramp is made of tarmac whilst the rest of the surfacing is stone. This is quite uneven in parts and will require a good deal of improvement.

The site contains formal grass cuts around the picnic area and some waterside vegetation is present. Fishing pegs are installed at several locations on the side of the River Dee.

Life saving equipment is installed and operational near to the River Dee.
Figure a.
The small picnic area is pleasant with good quality seating and an attractive view over the River Dee.

Figure b.
The information board is very informative and explains the nature and importance of the site.

Figure c.
The public toilets adjacent to the site are clean and offer basic facilities for people using the picnic areas.

Issues Affecting the Site

**Welcoming Place**
There is appropriate signage both at the entrance and throughout the site. Although access on to the site is good, there is no formal designed gateway.

**Health, Safe and Secure**
The site has a safe and secure feel, with the main exit and paths being clear and visible.
The main footpath and access road has several potholes and is uneven and requires treatment. The only lighting on site is incidental, coming from the road rather than on-site.

One major issue that affects the site more than any other is flooding; this was observed during site survey. This may be a hazard to users and has implications for the durability of any infrastructure on site.

**Well Maintained and Clean**

On the whole this site is clean and maintained with the appropriate levels of refuse bins, although it may benefit from the installation of recycle bins (there are currently none on site).

**Conservation and Heritage**

The site contains a mixture of formal grass cuts and more naturalistic areas, although there are no trees. These areas would benefit from an organised landscape management regime (which may include tree planting) to ensure they are managed appropriately and with sensitivity to the adjacent SAC and SSSI.

There is a derelict building adjacent to the site which could be brought into use as a small club house or for equipment storage (for example by the anglers using the site).

**Community Involvement**

No evidence was observed of any ‘Friends Of’ group or any events in relation to the site. The site is linked to Chester and the River Dee Park greenspaces via the River Dee; however this link is not actively promoted.

**Access**

The path network throughout the site requires good levels of investment to improve access for all. Improvements to the path are essential as it offers access directly to the River; as well as being important to current users and particularly anglers, this also offers potential for a landing stage and boat link to City.

The site is linked to a circular route around the village via an accessible board walk at the southern end of the site.

**Management**

The site appears to be well used and looked after by the local community. In addition the angling pegs were in good condition with almost no sign of angling-related litter. However, the site is looking a bit tired and would benefit from a coherent plan of management and improvement.

**Opportunities for the Site**

This site is an attractive local greenspace servicing the needs of the local community, and the actions outlined below should bring the site up to standard that would provide an enhanced experience for users and potentially allow the site to be promoted as a visitor destination.

The series of short term and long term actions below will allow the site to fulfil its full potential whilst improving the site for all.
Actions

Short Term Goals

A. Create management plan for the site
The management plan should address the negative issues that affect the site, in particular the cleansing and possibly planting of more naturalistic areas, as well as setting a regime for regular inspection and maintenance.

Management on the north side of the bridge should be kept to a minimum and consist of no more than regular grass cutting and thinning of some bank side trees close adjacent to the angling pegs.

B. Installation of entrance feature (‘gateway’)
A feature at the entrance of the site would provide a focal point or ‘gateway’ that would attract and inform local users and visitors. This could be in the form of a uniquely designed welcome sign or information board, providing a gateway not only to the site but to the circular route around the village as well.

C. Installation of recycle bins
Installation of recycle bins at appropriate locations near to the current refuse bins would help promote recycling and sustainability.

D. Tree Planting
Tree planting would add much to the aesthetics and ecological value of the site.

Long Term Goals

E. Reduce risks associated with flooding
Whilst the geology and topography of the site may be such that flood management measures themselves may be economically unfeasible, a long term aim for the site must be to reduce the risks associated with flooding. This may take the form of warning notices on site to alert users to slip/trip hazards, and the use of suitable materials that can withstand inundation from flood waters.

F. Installation of lighting
Installation of lighting would encourage people to use the site in the evening and would help to promote a feeling of safety and security. The design and intensity of the lighting must be sensitive to the rural nature of the site and it should be appropriately located considering the site’s size and layout.