

## Chapter 4: River Dee Park Masterplan

### A River Dee Park Masterplan: Overarching Framework

- 4.1 This Masterplan has been built upon the key principles described in Chapter 1. Our recommendations draw on the results of the research and interpretation of the evidence gathered to respond to the needs of Chester's communities, economy and environment.
- 4.2 We believe that the River Dee Park Masterplan should set the framework for:
- Creating a multifunctional network of routes and spaces
  - Managing sites in a way that maximises functionality
  - Supporting the visitor economy and growth of Chester
  - Enhancing habitats and access and reducing flood risk in new developments
  - Linking with existing and proposed strategies and initiatives
  - Creating an identity for Chester's green and open space network

### **Creating a multifunctional network of routes and spaces**

- 4.3 Within Chester the distribution of open and green spaces and their typologies is varied. Some parts of the city have little or no access to particular types of spaces, for example the north east of Chester has limited access to natural open space, and conversely Handbridge in the south has access to The Meadows a site of over 20 hectares. Whilst the creation of new spaces is not always practical, improving access to and between sites can help address this inequality, providing a wider choice of activities and destinations to a wider audience. The enhancement of existing networks and the creation of new routes is therefore a key principle of this Masterplan.

### **Managing sites in a way that maximises functionality**

- 4.4 With a limited number of green and open spaces and recreational access routes there is clear need to maximise the benefits that they can provide. These benefits can be economic, societal and environmental and the way in which sites are managed has a direct affect on the ability of spaces to deliver these benefits. Simple changes to the structure of a site or type of management regime will often provide a wider range of benefits or functions such as access, improved habitats for wildlife or climate change mitigation. It is important that this Masterplan must therefore recognise the opportunities within Chester's green and open spaces for increasing the functions/benefits they deliver.

### **Supporting the visitor economy and growth of Chester**

- 4.5 Cheshire West and Chester is one of the North West's Growth Points, within Chester 4,500 new dwellings are proposed between 2009 and 2016/17, with a further 17,573 planned for the rest of West Cheshire. With this increase comes increasing pressure on the City's green and open spaces and with Chester's historical interest and its position as a major North West city, a potential increase in the number of visitors to the City. The River Dee Park should therefore endeavour to support Chester in maintaining its position as a destination of quality and interest whilst providing and protecting recreational opportunities for existing and new communities.

#### **Enhancing habitats and access and reduce flood risk in new development**

- 4.6 With growth comes development and as such there is clear need to protect the existing natural and recreational resources. In addition, climate change brings further challenges that must be factored into design and location of new development. The River Dee Park Masterplan must consider how the location of new development could affect these resources and provide an appropriate response in the context of maintaining access, protecting biodiversity and the environmental function within the wider Park area.

#### **Linking with existing and proposed strategies and initiatives**

- 4.7 It is important for the Masterplan to relate to and compliment existing strategies and programmes such as the Chester Culture Park, the proposed River Dee Regional Park and the Growth Point Green Infrastructure plans, as both the Masterplan and these existing initiatives share many of the same aims and objectives. This Masterplan has therefore been developed with this in mind, helping to support the economic, social and environmental regeneration of Chester.

#### **Creating an identity for Chester's green and open space network**

- 4.8 The Masterplan provides the spatial and thematic framework for the River Dee Park. This must be supported by a comprehensive approach to promoting the River Dee Park as a distinct 'brand': creating an identity for the Park, actively promoting the spaces and links between them to local communities and visitors alike. The branding programme should involve a range of media, including on-site locational and directional signage and interpretation, as well as leaflets, brochures and internet information, and perhaps the development of a River Dee Park logo to badge sites. This element of the Masterplan must link with masterplanning and Heritage Interpretation work being undertaken by Chester Renaissance.

- 4.9 These key recommendations provide a framework for the thematic and spatial recommendations described below.

#### **A River Dee Park Masterplan: Themes**

- 4.10 We have developed seven themes each of which has a direct relationship to the key principles outlined above. In addition to this there are several areas which have important strategic value, for both the River Dee Park and Chester's green infrastructure as a whole. The themes for the Masterplan are:

- Access
- Biodiversity
- Multifunctionality
- Provision of green / open space
- Viewpoints
- Corridors
- Gateways to greenspace.

- 4.11 Figure 4.1 provides a spatial illustration of these themes and the particular areas where interventions are recommended.

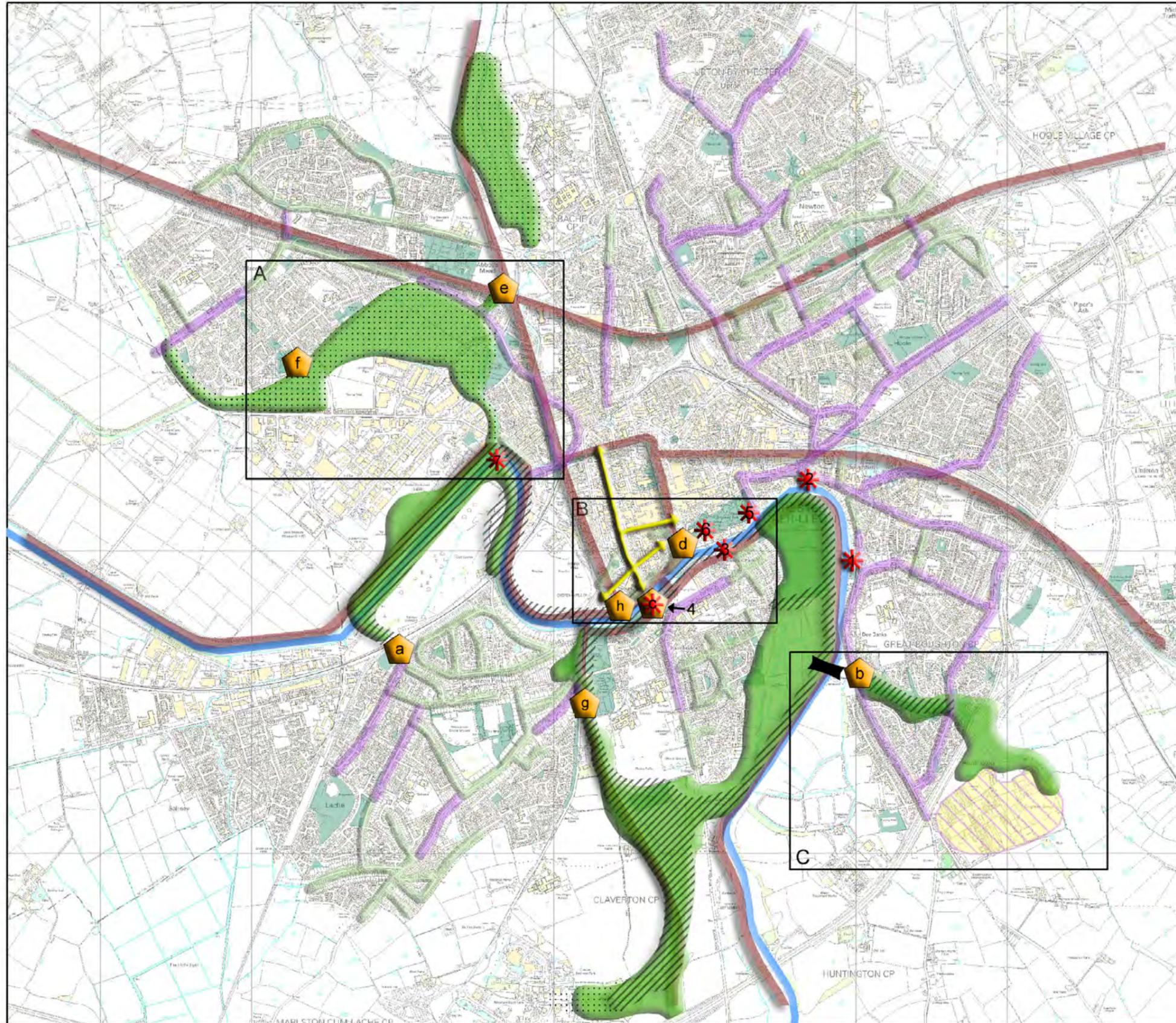


Figure 4.1  
River Dee Park Masterplan

-  Access Enhancement
-  New Access
-  Existing Strategic Routes
-  Biodiversity Enhancement
-  Viewpoints
  1. Sandy Lane Amenity Area
  2. Richmond Hill Gardens
  3. Queen's Promenade
  4. Edgar's Field
  5. Grosvenor Park
  6. St John's the Baptist Church
  7. The Cop
-  Corridors
-  Existing Street Trees
-  Access to the River
-  Gateways to Green Space
  - a. Mount Pleasant
  - b. Butter Bache Bridge
  - c. Edgar's Field
  - d. The Groves
  - e. Abbot's Mead
  - f. Blacon Nature Park
  - g. Duke's Drive
  - h. Little Roodee
-  Proposed Growth Point Site
-  Other Green Spaces
-  New Dee Bridge
-  Key Strategic Areas
  - A. Sealand Meadows
  - B. City Centre & Waterfront
  - C. Saighton Camp
  - New Dee Bridge
  - Caldy Brook



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### **Access**

- 4.12 Chester already has a substantial access network that serves most of the City and its communities. Main routes include The Chester Greenway, Shropshire Union Canal, Riverside Path, Queen's Promenade and the public footpath network. In addition to this Chester is well served by the National Cycle Network and is embarking upon an ambitious programme of developing cycle routes in and around the City.
- 4.13 There are however some sections of the City which are poorly served by the existing access network which limits communities' options for accessing green and open space and recreational opportunities. Where provision does exist it can be of varying quality and condition, which not only affects the usability of a route but can also negatively affect the City's image among visitors.
- 4.14 The access interventions for the Masterplan are separated into two distinct parts: *enhancement* of existing routes where the functionality of the routes could be improved and the *creation* of new access routes.

### Access Enhancement

#### *Curzon Park Golf Course*

- 4.15 The riverside boundary of Curzon Park Golf Course can provide access to the river for the communities of Lache, Saltney and Curzon Park as well becoming part of a more strategic route connecting to the City centre via the railway bridge. The wildlife value of the riverbank in combination with improved access could provide access to more natural open space which particularly Lache, Saltney and Curzon Park are lacking.



Poor path conditions at Curzon Park Golf Course



Natural area north of Curzon Park Golf Course

#### *Mount Pleasant to Curzon Park Golf Course*

- 4.16 To support access improvements around the perimeter of the golf course and to enable the communities' use of the route other enhancements are also needed. The Mount Pleasant Amenity Area provides an ideal route with which those communities can access the golf course and the riverside.



Access link to Curzon Park Golf Course



Poor path conditions at Mount Pleasant

*Edgar's Field to Overleigh Cemetery (Nowhere)*

- 4.17 The pathway between Edgar's Field and Overleigh Cemetery is currently in poor condition with issues over ownership and responsibility. The strategic value of this route is enhanced by its location between the Old Dee Bridge and Edgar's Field and Overleigh Cemetery and The Dingle. It could also be seen as an extension to Queen's Promenade further supporting the need to consider this route as part of the wider River Dee Park access infrastructure.

*Riverside Path*

- 4.18 Already an important part of the access network, the Riverside Path still requires some further work in order for it to reach the standard that the City and its residents and visitors should expect. In some stretches the surface conditions are less than perfect with a variety of materials being used. Uniformity is needed along its length to identify it a single entity/promoted path.

*Queen's Promenade*

- 4.19 As with the Riverside Path, Queen's Promenade is already an important route used predominately by Chester's residents. Poor signage, undefined entrances and lack of promotion mean that this potential attraction is underused by visitors to Chester. The Action Plan (see Appendix 3) for Queen's Promenade outlines the key measures needed to raise the quality and profile of the site, the main element of which is improving the surface condition. As with the Riverside Path the surface can help define the route and make it easily recognisable to users as an accessible part of the River Dee Park.



Uninviting access to Queen's Promenade



Uneven path surfaces on Queen's Promenade

#### *The Meadows to the New Dee Bridge Crossing*

- 4.20 There has already been substantial improvement to the pathways that pass through The Meadows. The only exception is Bottoms Lane where the surface is of a poorer quality. Growth proposals and the lack of access to the River Dee are driving forward the proposals for a New Dee Bridge connecting Boughton and Huntington to the City centre via The Meadows. The path that passes through the land to south of the Meadows will be subject to increased user pressure due to increased numbers of people accessing the site. To withstand this pressure the path may well need improvements to the quality and resilience of the surface.

#### New Access Provision

- 4.21 Within the River Dee Park there are some areas that will require new access routes to enable communities and visitors to fully enjoy the network of spaces and routes that the Park provides. Potential new development and the possibility of a New Dee Bridge can help drive these proposals forward.

#### *Butter Bache Bridge to New Dee Bridge*

- 4.22 Should the New Dee Bridge become a reality there will be a need to improve the access between the River Dee and the B5180 close to Caldly Nature Park. This may include provision for cyclists as well as pedestrians.

#### *New Dee Bridge to Chester Business Park and the City centre*

- 4.23 The building of the New Dee Bridge will open up a greater range of opportunities for Chester's residents to enjoy the City's green and open spaces. In addition, the communities of Great Boughton, Huntington and potential new communities at Saighton Camp will have greater access to the City centre and the Chester Business Park.
- 4.24 In the future it may be necessary to consider upgrading the current access network to accommodate cyclists, allowing commuting between those communities, the City centre and the Business Park. The Glebe area to the east of the Business Park is an ideal route through which access improvement could be made. This can in turn improve access to the Park & Ride area at Moat Farm, increasing the options for those visiting Chester and allowing cyclists to travel along the green corridor offered by Duke's Drive right into the heart of Chester.

#### *Finchett's Gutter to Blacon via Sealand Meadows*

- 4.25 The communities in Blacon do not currently have safe traffic free access to the river corridor in the centre of Chester, the busy roads that surround the retail park further compound the problem. Between Blacon and the City lie the Sealand Meadows an important flood defence and wildlife area with informal access routes traversing the site. Between Sealand Meadows and the City lies an open stretch of land that is physically joined to the river corridor via Finchett's Gutter. Both this land, Sealand Meadows and Finchett's Gutter could become an important traffic free pedestrian route between Blacon and the City.



Existing community use of Sealand Meadows



Informal access point to Sealand Meadows

### **Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement**

- 4.26 The River Dee is a designated wildlife area of international importance with many endangered and regionally rare species. The re-connection and expansion of habitats is essential for maintaining and enhancing the City's biodiversity (consistent with the requirements of PPS9). Innovative and considerate development design can minimise disturbance and loss of habitat and in some cases can increase the biodiversity carrying capacity of development areas. The provision of a network based on increased size and connectivity of habitats will enable the City's wildlife to adapt to future climatic changes and developmental pressures. Within Chester there are several key areas that can contribute to enhancing the existing wildlife value of the City and others that can become important wildlife areas.

#### *River Dee Corridor*

- 4.27 As a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and one of Cheshire's and the North West's most important sites, the River Dee corridor must be considered the highest priority for protection and enhancement. Whilst little can be done to the river itself in terms of increasing biodiversity, supporting the wildlife that uses the river corridor can be achieved by changing or improving land use adjacent to the river's bank. In some places stock using the river for drinking has damaged the banks; this is compounded by other users accessing the river's edge. Over-grazing directly adjacent to the river also reduces the cover for wildlife travelling along the river. Interventions along the river are likely to be engagement with landowners/managers and local wildlife groups including Natural England as to how best the land can be productive and yet still benefit wildlife.



Habitat management on the River Dee



Habitat area sectioned off from disturbance for wildlife

### *Sealand Meadows*

- 4.28 This site has the potential to become a key site for wildlife in Chester whilst providing many of the City's residents with access to open natural green space. Already a nationally important habitat, this site could with more informed management contribute considerably to the biodiversity of the Chester area. In addition to this, measures to improve the wildlife value of the site could in fact help reduce the risk of flooding from Finchett's Gutter.



Open grassland habitat at Sealand Meadows



Potential for the creation of ponds and scrapes

### *The Meadows*

- 4.29 The Meadows is Chester's most valuable natural green space providing access to a wildlife area for a great number of the City's residents, should the New Dee Bridge become a reality the value of the Meadows as a recreational resource will be greatly increased. There is scope within the Meadows and the adjacent area to the south for increasing the biodiversity holding capacity of the site. The creation of a series of small ponds and scrapes and the relaying of the hedge line on the site will increase the value of the site for wildlife.



Looking south across The Meadows, with the River Dee on the left of the picture behind the trees and Handbridge on the right

### *Saighton Camp*

- 4.30 The land adjacent to Saighton Camp is important for wildlife as a habitat and as a connecting feature provided by the Caldý Brook and its feeder streams. There is clear need to protect and/or enhance the existing habitats and maintain the corridor function of the stream network. Should the suggested development

proposals at Saighton Camp be approved through the statutory planning process, enhancement to these natural areas could be delivered through planned development and design. The retention and enhancement of these natural areas will also provide a natural setting for new communities in this potential growth area.

*Curzon Park Golf Course*

- 4.31 The riverside at the golf course is also a site that contains nationally important habitat, in combination with its position on the internationally important River Dee this area can contribute substantially to Chester's biodiversity. Engagement with the landowners/managers will be key to enhancing and protecting the area for wildlife.

*Land between Sealand Industrial Estate and the River*

- 4.32 The disused refuse tip between the River Dee and Sealand Industrial Estate has limited development opportunities and so could become a wildlife area. This would provide a low cost, low impact use of the land that would yield benefits beyond the initial expenditure. The site could become a resource for the employees at the industrial estate, delivering a quality environment and amenity resource. In addition, the installation of a cycle path connecting the estate to the riverside walk can connect the employment area to the wider cycle network. This extension of the wider cycle and access network, the greenway extension and the possibility of the New Dee Bridge would mean that most areas of the City would have a traffic free route to this employment area. Improvements to the site would also raise the image of the area and would help screen the industrial estate from the Riverside Walk.

**Flooding**

- 4.33 Flooding is an issue that is likely to increase as our climate changes, not only through increases in the intensity of rainfall predicted for the North West but also the increasing threat of sea-level rise. Sealed surfaces and culverted watercourses can also raise the risk of localised flooding. It is therefore important that new development and land management regimes ensure that this risk is minimised. Actions under this theme dovetail with the findings and recommendations laid out in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

*Sealand Meadows and Finchett's Gutter*

- 4.34 Sealand Meadows is a storage basin/reservoir for Finchett's Gutter. Finchett's Gutter is already responsible for flooding at present and this situation is likely to increase as the climate changes. Sealand Meadows is currently drained by ditches that feed into Finchett's Gutter and the Sealand Main Drain, meaning that during heavy rainfall the site can become waterlogged. Removing some of the ditches and creating a series of ponds on the site will help water retention capacity of the site, reducing the rate of run-off into Finchett's Gutter (and so reducing flood risk) and adding to the biodiversity value through the creation of new habitat areas.

*Saighton Camp*

- 4.35 The Growth Point location proposed at Saighton Camp sits within the Caldry Brook catchment. Sealing of surfaces within the proposed development area could raise the level of run-off through the reduction of absorbent surfaces. This

can be addressed through the design and layout of any proposed development and would be subject to testing through planning processes.

### **Viewpoints**

4.36 The topography, historic interest and landscape of Chester are an integral part of its attraction, both for visitors and its residents. There are several sites within Chester where these views of the City can be appreciated, but for a number of reasons such as management or lack of interpretation, the visual experience is less than it could potentially be. The key locations within the City are:

- **Richmond Hill Gardens**

The size of the Gardens restricts its use to a degree, but with better seating, improved access and regular management this site could become a key viewpoint across the River and The Meadows

- **Queen's Promenade**

The existing recreational nature of this site lends itself to becoming somewhere to sit and relax. With more seating and the clearance/thinning of vegetation the views of Chester can be enjoyed by regular users and visitors alike.

- **Sandy Lane Amenity Area**

This site has direct access to the River and requires little work to bring it up to a reasonable standard. Located at the level of the River and looking across to the Meadows, Sandy Lane is an ideal place for quiet relaxation.

- **Edgar's Field**

This site already has a considerable historic interest, and is a hub due to its location close to the Queen's Promenade, the city centre and Overleigh Cemetery. The views across to the City and the natural bank side vegetation are ideal for interpretation.

- **Grosvenor Park**

Grosvenor Park is a key site for both local communities and visitors. Its elevation and existing infrastructure means that the Park is already a viewpoint, although lack of interpretation and the obstruction of the view mean that this quality is not exploited to its full benefit.

- **St John the Baptist Church and/or The Bowling Green**

Similar to Grosvenor Park, the elevation and existing access make the rear of the Church and the Bowling Green ideal viewpoints. In both cases thinning and/or removal of some vegetation and installation of seating will rapidly increase the functionality of these spaces.

- **The Cop**

The views from The Cop along the River are expansive and its location on the Riverside Promenade route and topography make the Cop an ideal viewpoint.



Condition of the viewpoint in Grosvenor Park



View from Sandy Lane towards The Meadows

View from Queen's Promenade towards the City



Viewpoint at Edgar's Field

### Corridors

- 4.37 Naturally, the River Dee Park is centred on the green and open spaces that are located along the river corridor. The 'Access' theme of the Masterplan has concentrated on linking those sites and routes within the Park to each other. However outside of those main routes and sites many communities are still not connected either physically or visually to the Park and the River. This theme is therefore designed to visually connect those communities to the more strategic routes such as the Chester Greenway and The Shropshire Union Canal, enabling better access to other green and open spaces outside of the immediate area.
- 4.38 This can be achieved by identifying corridors through neighbourhoods that naturally lead to those routes, using signposting, public art and where practical the planting of street trees to define the corridor. The design of the signage and public art should be consistent with interpretation and branding across the River Dee Park as a whole.
- 4.39 The planting of street trees can also reduce the negative effects of the urban 'heat island' effect, help reduce airborne particulates, and become habitat and connecting feature for wildlife.

### Gateways to Green Space

- 4.40 Within the River Dee Park there are some areas that act as natural hubs or nodes where several recreational routes converge, clusters of sites can be found, or where areas on the edge of communities lead to open space. These gateways should be promoted as such not only within the visitor literature but also within Chester's local communities. The hub/node theme is about interpretation, information and direction in places where it can deliver the greatest benefit to users of the River Dee Park.

#### *a. Mount Pleasant*

For the communities of Lache, Curzon Park and Saltney this site is a key gateway to the pathway that runs around the Curzon Park Golf Course. Currently the connection between the two sites is uninviting (see earlier image) and fails to inform the user that beyond the railway underpass lays the River Dee

#### *b. Butter Bache Bridge*

The possibility of a New Dee Bridge located close to the Caldy Nature Park will mean that Butter Bache Bridge will become an important gateway to both Caldy Park and the wider River Dee Park. The bridge will connect the new and existing

communities in Boughton and Huntington to the River Dee and The Meadows and provide traffic free access to the city centre. Interpretation and signage at this point is therefore vital to create a focus at this crossing point.

*c. Edgar's Field*

Edgar's Field is a natural node or hub for the local community and potentially for visitors: it has connections with the City centre, Queen's Promenade, Overleigh Cemetery and on to Duke's Drive and as such lends itself naturally to being a gateway to the River Dee Park.

*d. The Groves*

The Groves is ideally situated to adopt the role as a hub; its proximity to Grosvenor Park, St John's Church, The Roman Gardens, the Amphitheatre, Queen's Bridge and Queen's Promenade as well as the site's own attractions make this a key strategic site. The role of the Groves as a hub is also consistent with the Culture Park Strategy.

*e. Abbot's Mead: Shropshire Union Canal & Chester Cycleway & Sealand Meadows*

In addition to the suggested Nature Park gateway in Blacon, the area close to Cranleigh Crescent where the Chester Cycleway and the Shropshire Union Canal cross is defined as a gateway, recognising the importance of the junction between these two major strategic routes and also the access point to Sealand Meadows.

*f. Blacon Nature Park & Sealand Meadows*

Improvements to the access and biodiversity value of Sealand Meadows must be supported by well defined entrances and interpretation. In Blacon one such area which should be considered as a gateway to the meadows is the Nature Park close to Muir Road.

*g. Duke's Drive*

Duke's Drive is a natural gateway to open space providing access to the south of Chester and is part of a circular route that takes in The Meadows, River Dee and Queen's Promenade. Currently the entrance to the Drive is unclear and unsigned and gives the impression of being private and inaccessible. There is a need for signage to welcome people and directional signage displaying recreational options accessible from this gateway.

*h. Little Roodee*

This is a key gateway for visitors arriving in Chester; it already has infrastructure designed with visitors in mind, including a café, toilets and car-parking. It is physically linked to the river corridor, providing easy access to many of the River Dee Park sites. The Little Roodee is supported as a gateway to the River Dee Park and the City within the Culture Park Strategy as part of the Castle Gateway. Interpretation at this gateway should reflect its connections to other sites and is an ideal place in which to start and end tours of the city.

**Provision of Green/Open Space**

- 4.41 All of the above themes are aimed at increasing access to and improving the experience of Chester's green and open spaces for the communities of the City and its visitors. Through increasing access and biodiversity improvements to spaces such as The Meadows, Sealand Meadows, the land adjacent to the

Countess of Chester Hospital and Lapa Fields, the City can meet some of the ANGSt standards laid out by Natural England for access to natural spaces.

- 4.42 Should the issues of land ownership and access be addressed, the designation of a Local Nature Reserve at Sealand Meadows would also go some way to meeting Natural England's target of 1ha local nature reserve for every 1,000 people.

### **Key Strategic Areas**

- 4.43 In consideration of the evidence collected and analysed to prepare this Masterplan several areas in Chester have emerged that merit special attention. For reasons of socio-economic and environmental benefit and to address the issues arising from climate change, these areas are key to the River Dee Park. These areas are highlighted in Figure 4.1.

#### *A. Sealand Meadows*

In terms of flood protection, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and providing Chester's communities with access to green space, Sealand Meadows is the outstanding site within the River Dee Park. It already has an important part to play in reducing the flooding risk of Finchett's Gutter and has the potential to further reduce the risk of flooding through changes to its management. The size, biodiversity interest and location between Blacon and the city centre make Sealand Meadows an obvious choice for designation as a Local Nature Reserve. Its location adjacent to the Chester Cycleway and the Shropshire Union Canal means that this site will also be accessible for the communities in the north east of Chester who currently have little access to natural green space.

To compliment Sealand Meadows access to the city centre will need to be improved, and Finchett's Gutter would provide the ideal location for a new traffic free access route.

#### *B. City Centre and Waterfront*

The City Centre and Waterfront is at the core of the River Dee Park: it contains many of the City's historic assets and is the main entrance/access point to the River for visitors to Chester. The Groves, Amphitheatre, Grosvenor Park, Roman Gardens, City Walls, Edgar's Field, Queen's Promenade, Salmon Leap and the Old Dee and Queen's Park Suspension Bridges are all within this part of the City. For visitors to enjoy the attractions that the River Dee Park has to offer there must be a clear and consistent system of signage along the main thoroughfares in the City Centre (Bridge Street, Northgate Street and Pepper Street and particularly those routes identified as Gateway Routes in the Culture Park Strategy) to direct people towards the River. Much of this core area is within the Culture Park Strategy as the Castle Gateway, Amphitheatre Park and The Groves and Riverfront Zones.

The proximity of Little Roodee to the historic river corridor and its car parking facilities make this site an important part of Chester's visitor infrastructure. Its location close to the gateways of Edgar's Field and The Groves requires that the Little Roodee must also have in place adequate signage and interpretation to direct visitors to the wider River Dee Park.

The Groves and Edgar's Field are both gateways to the River Dee Park and it is important that these gateways are obvious to visitors and easy to find. Way-markers or signage must direct people to these gateways. Where it is feasible

appropriate interpretation boards could be situated on the City walls, it is from the height of the City walls that the location of particular routes or assets can be seen with ease. In combination with the number of people that visit the walls and the ease of interpretation at the height of the walkway, the City walls could make a substantial contribution to the success of the River Dee Park.

*C. Saighton Camp, New Dee Bridge and Caldry Brook*

Potential new growth at Saighton Camp (and in other areas) will require specific measures to reduce the impact of development on both the environment and the surrounding existing communities. The extent of development proposed in the Growth Point plans for Saighton Camp will mean the existing local green and open space will also come under increasing pressure. The location of the site adjacent to the Caldry Brook and nationally important habitats requires that protection of wildlife and mitigating against flood risk should be an important element of the design and layout of any new development on this site and would be a fundamental consideration within planning tests.

The problems associated with access to the River Dee for the communities of Boughton and the possibility of new development at Saighton Camp mean that the New Dee Bridge will be a key strategic link for Chester. Its installation will create traffic-free access routes for those communities to the city centre and to the Chester Business Park. The possibility of linking Boughton and the Business Park may make moving to the potential new developments at Saighton Camp a more attractive option.

## Chapter 5: Sites Assessment & Action Planning

- 5.1 The River Dee Park comprises a variety of 27 green and open spaces including parks, nature areas, allotments and corridors. These sites were identified by Chester City Council because of their strategic importance and close association – geographically and thematically – with the River Dee (see figure 1.2).
- 5.2 The Masterplan provides the overarching framework within which these sites sit, but it is important that each is considered in its own right. To this end, we have carried out assessments on each of the 27 sites, considering their condition, functionality and potential to deliver public benefits. These site assessments form the basis of a series of recommendations for each site, with 10 ‘priority’ sites identified for further attention via site specific Action Plans.
- 5.3 This chapter introduces the approach taken to the sites assessment, our key findings overall and how the 10 priority sites were shortlisted. Action Plans for the 10 priority sites are included in Appendix 3. Completed assessment forms for each of the sites alongside our recommendations for improvement in the associated Site Analysis Forms are available as a separate document (available at Chester City Council’s website).
- 5.4 **The Need for Sites Assessments**
- 5.4 Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) sets out the green and open space provision policies needed to be taken into account by local planning authorities in the preparation of development plans. It requires that planning authorities deliver a level of open space provision for their communities that is consistent with their needs.
- 5.5 The 2007 RSvP Residents Panel Survey for Open Space Provision raised several issues with particular sites but also gave an insight into the wider issues for green space management and how people use their spaces.
- 5.6 The survey found that natural green space and natural corridors were amongst the most coveted of the types of open spaces, but it also found that provision within Chester generally was below national standards such as the Accessible Natural Green Space targets set out by Natural England, with some areas of the City having very poor access.
- 5.7 The sites assessment begins to address these issues, helping to identify sites’ key strengths and weaknesses, the relationship of these assets to each other, to neighbouring communities and to the wider park area. Each assessment also records the site’s PPG17 typology<sup>19</sup> and the primary function/s that each space fulfils.
- Sites Assessments: Methodology**
- 5.8 The City Council is keen to achieve Green Flag status for its best sites and to raise management standards in all spaces to meet local needs. The Green Flag standards are a nationally recognised set of standards that are used to determine the quality and functionality of parks and gardens. To this end, the sites assessment was based on the criteria for assessment used in the Green Flag Award.

- 5.9 Although more commonly associated with large parks, the Green Flag Criteria as set out by CABI Space provide a useful method of scoring sites and identifying measures that can be taken to raise the quality and function of a site as appropriate to the needs of the community, providing a useful benchmark on which future improvements can be based. In Chester's case, the criteria can also be considered in relation to supporting the tourism industry through improving the image of the City's green and open spaces.
- 5.10 The Green Flag Criteria are split into 8 categories, each addressing different aspects of green and open space management:
- A Welcoming Place: the overall impression for someone approaching and entering the site should be positive and inviting, considering good, safe access and effective signage that is appropriate to its function;
  - Healthy, Safe & Secure: the site must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all users and potential users;
  - Well Maintained & Clean: considering the potential health and safety and aesthetic implications, the site should be free of litter, waste management, dog fouling and general maintenance;
  - Sustainability: management and maintenance methods and materials should be environmentally sound;
  - Conservation & Heritage: paying particular attention to the conservation and appropriate management of natural features (wildlife and habitats), landscapes and buildings and structures (such as bridges);
  - Community Involvement: assessing how involved members of the community and different user groups are in site facilities, management and development;
  - Marketing: considering the provision of information and ease of access to that information about the site to its visitors and local communities;
  - Management: assessing whether current management is sufficient and appropriate to the site and its functions.
- 5.11 Throughout, a critical element of the assessments was appropriateness. The diversity of sites being assessed meant that the criteria above were more relevant to some sites than others, or may be wholly inappropriate on some sites. This has been built into the assessment with the inclusion of a "Required" field, which identifies which of the criteria each site should reasonably expect to address according to its function. A copy of the assessment form and more detailed explanation with illustrated examples is given in Appendix 2.

#### **Sites Assessments: Results**

- 5.12 Based on the findings of the assessments, site analysis forms have been produced for each site<sup>20</sup>. These record the strengths and weaknesses of the site against each of the assessment criteria with an associated set of recommendations, and highlighting any other issues or measures that can be taken to improve the site.
- 5.13 The results have been summarised in Table 6.1.

- 5.14 This indicates that signage is the most frequent feature needing attention on sites, with 17 of the 27 sites needing some work on entrance, directional and/or information signage. Biodiversity and pathway improvements are the next frequently recorded issues (on 12 and 11 sites respectively). Lighting was the least frequently recorded issue, with only 4 sites needing attention in this area.
- 5.15 Critically for the wider River Dee Park, 17 of the sites are already part of an existing network, with up to 7 of the remaining sites having the potential to become part of a network. 10 of the sites already show some multifunctionality, and it is a main recommendation for the Park that this is increased (where appropriate to the features on site).

#### **Priority Sites Selection and Action Planning**

- 5.16 Several criteria were considered for identifying the 10 priority sites. These considered both the value of the site (in its own right and as part of the wider River Dee Park) and the potential for delivery.
- 5.17 This range of criteria, as presented in Table 6.2, were discussed with delegates at the stakeholders workshop, considering the relative importance of the criteria and identifying from that their 'top 10' sites.
- 5.18 However, it was felt that developing an action plan for those sites that already have detailed management plans or are part of on-going initiatives for their management and maintenance would be inappropriate, so several of the sites included on this initial list were subsequently discounted<sup>21</sup>.
- 5.19 From the remaining sites a final list of 10 sites were identified, taking into account the stakeholders' prioritisation, type and distribution of sites:
- |                        |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Shropshire Union Canal | The Groves          |
| Queen's Promenade      | Overleigh Cemetery  |
| Dukes Drive            | Riverside Walk      |
| The Cop                | Roman Gardens       |
| Richmond Hill Gardens  | Farndon Picnic Area |
- 5.20 Action Plans for each of these sites have been produced and are presented in Appendix 3.

**Table 5.1: Summary Results of the Sites Assessment**

No.	SITE	Overall Score	Existing Network	Network Opp	Current Function	Potential Other Function	Information Gathered from Sites Assessments										Work Needed		
							Interp. Boards	Bins	Dog Bins	Recycle Bins	Lighting	Clean up	Biodiv. Imprvmt	Seating	Signage	Pathway Imprvmt		Other	
1	GROSVENOR PARK	73%	✓		Formal Park	-								✓		✓	Refurbishment	Signage at entrance, play area & railings refurbishment	
2	THE MEADOWS	88%	✓		Wildlife Area	-	✓	✓	✓				✓					More ponds, more litter bins, dog bins, interpretation boards	
3	CALDY NATURE PARK	74%	✗	✓	Wildlife Area/public amenity	-	✓							✓	✓			Directional signage, interpretation boards, some pathway maintenance	
4	SANDY LANE AMENITY AREA	71%	✗		Children's play area/amenity area	Sports (angling)		✓						✓	✓		✓	Road crossing, fishing pegs, fencing	Safe road crossing, signage, opening of toilets, refurbishment of seating, better fencing, installation of fishing pegs
5	SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL	55%	✓		Green corridor	-	✓	✓						✓				Directional signage, interpretation boards, more litter bins	
6	THE GROVES	65%	✓		Tourism	-								✓	✓			Signage at entrance, refurbishment of seating, promotion of events on site	
7	QUEEN'S PROMENADE	59%	✓		Green corridor	-					✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	Vegetation clearing, fishing pegs	Signage at entrance, improvement of fishing pegs, clearance of vegetation, regular cleaning, pathway maintenance
8	EDGAR'S FIELD	59%	✓		Tourism/Historic	Green corridor	✓			✓		✓		✓				Signage at entrance, interpretation signage, more naturalistic planting, better lighting	
9	OVERLEIGH CEMETERY	62%	✓		Cemetery	Wildlife/historic			✓							✓	✓	Road crossing	Installation of road crossing, more dog bins
10	DUKES DRIVE	61%	✓		Green corridor	-	✓							✓				Signage at entrance, directional signage, installation of small play area, interpretation boards	
11	THE DINGLE	30%	✓		Wildlife	Green corridor			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Signage at entrance, directional signage, better pathways, clearance of some vegetation, seating, litter and dog bins, removal of litter	
12	THE ROODEE	71%	✓		Sports/green corridor	-			✓		✓					✓	✓	More sports facilities	Recycle bins, more naturalistic planting, more sports facilities within central area
13	RIVERSIDE WALK	67%	✓		Green corridor	-			✓	✓		✓	✓					More lighting, more naturalistic planting, more seating, more recycle bins	
14	THE COP	56%	✓		Children's play area/amenity area	-			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				Replacement of signage, repair of surfaces, more recycle and dogs bins, more seating, new trees planting	
15	SAUGHALL ROAD ALLOTMENTS	48%	✗	✓	Allotments	-		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	Rain capture	Signage at entrance, formal footpaths, litter bins, rain capture, cleaning of stream, more tree planting around the perimeter
16	BEESTON VIEW ALLOTMENTS	35%	✗	✓	Allotments	-		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Rain capture	Signage at entrance, formal footpaths, litter bins, rain capture, cleaning of stream, more tree planting around perimeter of the site
17	CURZON PARK GOLF COURSE	45%	✓		Sports/green corridor	Wildlife		✓			✓		✓	✓				Signage at entrance, pathway improvements, litter bins, seating, habitat management	
18	ROMAN GARDENS	78%	✓		Tourism/Historic	Corridor		✓										More litter bins	
19	AMPHITHEATRE	65%	✓		Tourism/Historic	-										✓	✓	Temporary mural	Open up access on southern side, temporary mural on southern wall to add interest when viewed from road
20	ST JOHN'S, BOWLING GREEN, ANCHORITE CELL	64%	✓		Tourism/Historic	-								✓	✓	✓	✓	Vegetation clearing	Signage at entrance, clear vegetation obstructing view of the river, decide on function of bowling green
21	WATER TOWER GARDENS	77%	✓		Sports/CPA/historic	-			✓	✓		✓						Lighting, recycle bins, some naturalistic planting	
22	SEALAND MEADOWS	24%	✗	✓	Flooding/wildlife	Green corridor	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			Signage at entrance, directional signage, interpretation boards, management for biodiversity, boarded walkways, creation of ponds	
23	RICHMOND HILL GARDENS	44%	✗		Amenity	Sports (angling)								✓		✓	✓	Access to the river	Clearance of vegetation, seating, access to the river
24	MOUNT PLEASANT	24%	✗		Sports/amenity	Wildlife			✓		✓			✓	✓			Signage at entrance, formal path around perimeter, recycle bins, clean-up	
25	APPLEYARDS LANE PLAY AREA	44%	✗	✓	Children's play area/amenity area	-			✓	✓	✓							Lighting, recycle bins, clean-up, dog bins	
26	FARNDON PICNIC AREA	61%	✗	?	Amenity area/sports (angling)	-			✓			✓		✓				Path improvements, recycle bins, more naturalistic planting	
27	ECCLESTON FERRY	38%	✗	?	Amenity area	Sports (angling)		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	Cycle route	Signage at entrance, path improvements, more dog and litter bins, recycle bins, cycle route along the Dee, creation of a meadow.

**Table 5.2: Criteria Used for the Prioritisation of Sites**

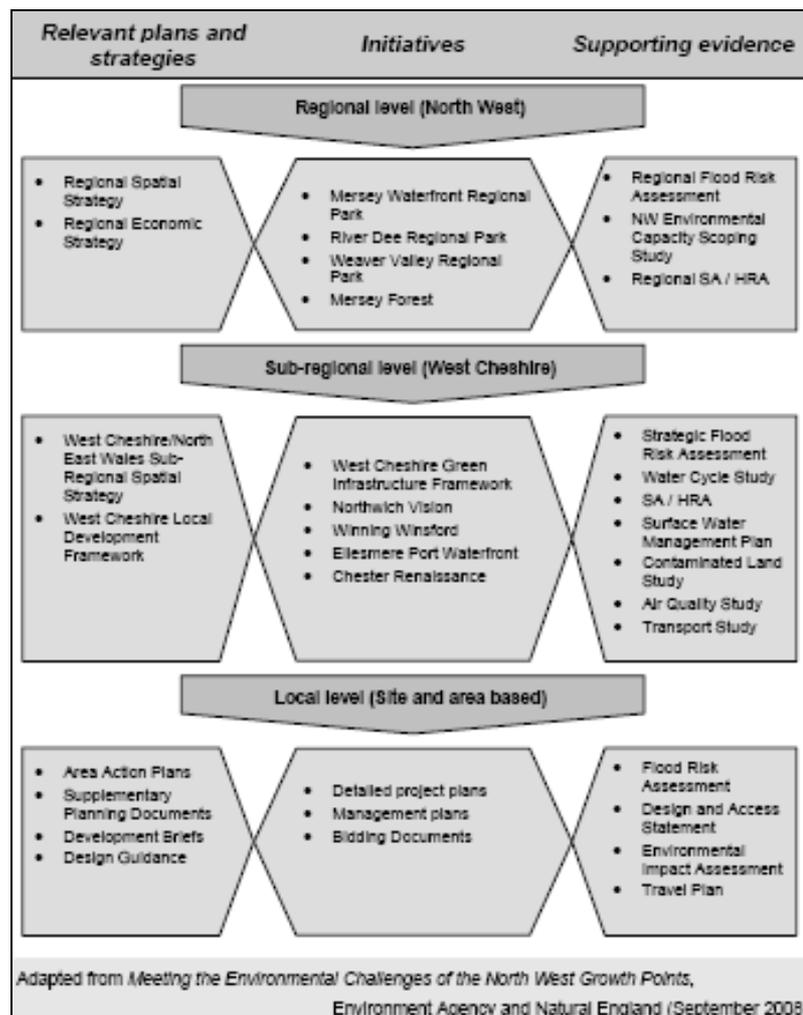
No.	SITE	Potential Criteria												
		Overall Score	Rank: high-low	Rank: low-high	Existing Network	Network Opp	Existing Mgt Plan	Quick Win	Long-term Project	Green flag	Strategic	Community Value	Tourism	Friends of Group
1	GROSVENOR PARK	73%	6	22	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
2	THE MEADOWS	88%	1	27	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	CALDY NATURE PARK	74%	5	23	✗	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
4	SANDY LANE AMENITY AREA	71%	7	20	✗		✓	✓	✓			✓		
5	SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL	55%	18	10	✓			✓			✓	✓		
6	THE GROVES	65%	10	17	✓			✓		✓			✓	✓
7	QUEEN'S PROMENADE	59%	15	12	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	EDGAR'S FIELD	59%	15	12	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
9	OVERLEIGH CEMETERY	62%	12	16	✓				✓				✓	
10	DUKES DRIVE	61%	13	14	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		
11	THE DINGLE	30%	25	3	✓				✓			✓		
12	THE ROODEE	71%	7	20	✓			✓	✓					
13	RIVERSIDE WALK	67%	9	19	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	
14	THE COP	56%	17	11	✓			✓				✓		
15	SAUGHALL ROAD ALLOTMENTS	48%	19	9	✗	✓		✓				✓		✓
16	BEESTON VIEW ALLOTMENTS	35%	24	4	✗	✓		✓				✓		
17	CURZON PARK GOLF COURSE	45%	20	8	✓			✓	✓		✓			
18	ROMAN GARDENS	78%	3	25	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	
19	AMPHITHEATRE	65%	10	17	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	
20	ST JOHN'S, BOWLING GREEN, ANCHORITE CELL	84%	2	26	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	
21	WATER TOWER GARDENS	77%	4	24	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	
22	SEALAND MEADOWS	24%	26	1	✗	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		
23	RICHMOND HILL GARDENS	44%	21	6	✗			✓	✓			✓		
24	MOUNT PLEASANT	24%	26	1	✗			✓				✓		
25	APPLYARDS LANE PLAY AREA	44%	21	6	✗	✓		✓				✓		
26	FARNDON PICNIC AREA	61%	13	14	✗	?		✓				✓		
27	ECCLESTON FERRY	38%	23	5	✗	?		✓	✓				✓	

## Chapter 6: Next Steps

- 6.1 This Masterplan and associated Action Plans are the first stage of a broader requirement for a spatial planning approach that fully incorporates the natural environment in terms of current and future needs.
- 6.2 In this chapter, we consider the next steps for the River Dee Park, its potential role as a Regional Park and place within green infrastructure planning, and how policy developments can incorporate the principles and proposals that have been suggested. We also look at funding options, and consider the range of possible funding options that could contribute towards the delivery of the Park's recommendations.
- 6.3 This element of the study also formed part of the Stakeholders Workshop, with delegates asked to review a range of possible delivery vehicles and programmes that could help to take recommendations forward.

### Policy & Planning

- 6.4 It is essential that the River Dee Park is recognised in local policies and broader spatial plans. Consultation with stakeholders affirmed that the Local Authority (Cheshire West & Chester) must take a lead role in this area, primarily through local planning policy (Local Development Frameworks) but also through promoting the Park within wider strategic initiatives.



### The Planning System

- 6.5 The planning system aims to maximise design quality and environmental sustainability of development, while still enabling the developer to achieve his objectives. Planning Policy Statement 12 (Local Spatial Planning - PPS12) sets out government policy on Local Development Frameworks (LDFs): a 'portfolio' of local development documents which present the spatial planning strategy for an area. Crucially, the guidance notes state that LDFs must create a strong relationship between service delivery and planning for the built and natural environment in order to create strong and prosperous communities.
- 6.6 Robust policy measures should deliver high environmental standards in keeping with the principles underpinning the Park. This will require commitments in Core Strategy and in Local Development Framework documents, while supplementary planning documents (SPDs) can provide the Authority with the flexibility needed to guide and control delivery across a broad range of development locations, footprints and types. This Masterplan should be approved by Cheshire West & Chester's LDF Panel as part of the evidence for the LDF and be used as a material consideration on planning applications.
- 6.7 Cheshire West & Cheshire's LDF needs to specifically recognise the River Dee Park clearly advocating the need to safeguard and uplift the assets within the Park during the course of all developments. The LDF's Core Strategy should also ensure that the deficiencies in green/open spaces identified in this study are addressed as part of any development proposal, and that any development should safeguard and enhance existing assets and functions delivering an overall gain.

### The River Dee Regional Park Concept

- 6.8 Alongside several policies for the protection of the natural environment and provision for communities, the West Cheshire/North East Wales Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy has a particular policy under its 'Leisure & Tourism' strand for the creation of a River Dee Regional Park (Policy L2) straddling the boundaries of England and Wales and providing benefits to both. In addition to this the North West Regional Spatial Strategy Policy EM4 identifies the River Dee as an Area of Search for the location of a Regional Park – a concept being investigated by the Mersey Dee Alliance. Policy EM3 of the Spatial Strategy also considers that Regional Parks should have an important role in the delivery of green infrastructure.
- 6.9 The principle behind the Regional Park concept is that economic development, environmental enhancement and community regeneration can be integrated within a cross-boundary delivery vehicle that encourages a true 'sense of place' for those living and working in and visiting the area. A River Dee Regional Park would take account of the many tourism and leisure advantages the Dee Valley presents to improve the offer of the sub-region and provide added value in terms of spend and employment.
- 6.10 Two Regional Parks already exist within close proximity of the River Dee (the Mersey Waterfront and Weaver Valley in the North West of England) whilst the All Wales Coastal Path connects Chester and the Dee Corridor to Prestatyn in Flintshire and beyond.

6.11 The River Dee Regional Park is at the concept stage only, and this Plan can be considered a pilot for examining how the natural environment can be considered alongside socio-economic elements in a spatial planning framework. However, as a geographically broader area crossing political (and country) boundaries, plans for the Regional Park would also need to consider other issues that are not as significant at the scale of this study, including:

- Establishing a vision, aims and objectives that encompass the variety of landscapes, communities and functions included in the River Dee Regional Park;
- Strategies for influencing policies and organisations;
- Options for governance and management;
- Co-ordination with and complementarity to existing Regional Park initiatives.

#### Green Infrastructure Planning

6.12 The future of the River Dee Park needs to be considered within the context of Green Infrastructure, described in the North West Green Infrastructure Guide as:

*"..... the Region's life support system – The network of natural environmental components and green and blue spaces that lies within and between the North West's cities, towns and villages which provides multiple social, economic and environmental benefits."*

6.13 Green infrastructure planning integrates robust evidence with policy requirements to identify areas of need and/ or opportunity for green space protection, enhancement and extension. The public value of investment in green infrastructure (in terms of health, biodiversity, access, economic performance and image) has been confirmed in an independent economic appraisal<sup>22</sup>, and numerous national and regional strategies and policies implicitly recognise that many policy priorities may be delivered through green infrastructure<sup>23</sup>.

6.14 The River Dee Park will be a significant element of two up coming GI projects. The West Cheshire Growth Point is required to produce a GI strategy as part of its agreement with Government for investment in housing and associated development, with a specific objective to:

*"Create a network of open spaces across West Cheshire to bring social, economic and environmental benefits to local people and communities and to deliver high quality open spaces, strategic environmental enhancements and contribute to high quality development; (known as 'green infrastructure')"*

6.15 A key objective of the West Cheshire Green Infrastructure Plan will be to build on a range of existing plans and initiatives, and it is essential that the River Dee Park is considered within this – particularly in relation to the stated need to develop better east-west links across the sub-region, and for making wider connections within the North West and beyond.

6.16 This process is beginning, with work to be commissioned in March 2009 by the Mersey Dee Alliance that will examine the feasibility for a green infrastructure plan within the River Dee Corridor. It will address a number of key issues and specifically consider the role of the River Dee Park to set the context for a wider River Dee GI Plan.

## **Implementation**

- 6.17 Implementing the recommendations laid out in the Plan and Action Plans will call on various bodies to help fund and physically deliver the activities, including:
- Partnerships & co-provision
  - Community & voluntary sector engagement
  - Planning conditions, obligations & tariffs
  - General funding sources

### Partnerships & Co-provision

- 6.18 It is vital to demonstrate that investment in green and open spaces delivers wide-ranging public benefit; in particular supporting healthy lifestyles, economic performance and community cohesion. This will help to advocate for “co-provision” within partners’ activities and funding programmes.
- 6.19 The graphic “Translating Strategy to Implementation at the Local Governance and Partnership level” illustrates the documents and partnerships which should be influenced positively, summarising how each might be influenced, and what outcomes might be anticipated.
- 6.20 Partnerships influence delivery and can add value to projects by introducing match-funding, joining-up initiatives and stimulating community action. These partnerships are being strongly encouraged by Government to increase their role in service delivery and project implementation. They also review their business plans on a rolling basis, so it is important to ensure appropriate levels of representation on Partnership Boards, to maintain close working relationships with them, to provide them with information and evidence to bid for funding to implement the River Dee Park Plan.

### Community & Voluntary Sector

- 6.21 Local communities are critical to the success of any plan or project, and their views should be sought at the earliest stages of planning through to long term management and maintenance of sites. The involvement of voluntary and community sector groups will be essential for the delivery of the River Dee Park Plan. There are a number of very active ‘Friends Of’ groups associated with individual sites, offering a valuable and unique resource that can help generate funding, and assist in physical site development and long term management.
- 6.22 Currently, the ‘Friends Of’ groups tend to operate independently, with some sites having strong representation from over 100 members (e.g. Caldys Nature Park) whilst others are struggling to get off the ground. A ‘Friends Of Forum’ may help encourage sharing of experiences and good practice, so that groups can learn from each other and act in a more co-operative (particularly in relation to funding) and efficient manner.
- 6.23 The role of local communities is also vital in relation to new built development (particularly housing development) in line with the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement. This Plan provides the basis for delivering community cohesion, providing connections with nature, recreational choices and options for improving health by integrating community needs and aspirations into site designs and development. Engaging with local people (from existing and new communities) can include them in shaping their own environment – building a sense of ownership and engendering community cohesion.

## Translating Strategy to Implementation at the Local Governance and Partnership level

<b>Green Infrastructure Strategy</b>	» Shows how green infrastructure supports local social, economic and environmental objectives »	<b>Sustainable Community Strategy</b>	» – Incorporates GI into cross-cutting strategies » – Sets GI priorities for Local Partnerships » – Sets framework for LAA / LPSA targets to uplift GI »	<b>Green Infrastructure Implementation</b>
	» Shows how GI can contribute to LAA Key Objectives » Shows how service delivery can be improved through partnership-working »	<b>Local Area Agreement</b>	» – Secures funding for improved service delivery (including GI projects) »	
	» Defines local needs and identifies opportunities to improve quality of life through investment in GI »	<b>Local Public Service Agreement</b>	» – Secures funding for GI projects »	
	» Defines investment priorities for sustainable growth »	<b>Local Authority Corporate Plan</b>	» – Sets GI investment priorities » – Commits to GI on corporate estate & in corporate activity » – Advocates co-provision of GI with other infrastructure »	
	» Shows how GI will contribute to neighbourhood objectives » Defines green networks for the neighbourhood »	<b>Neighbourhood Partnership</b>	» – Encourages co-provision of GI with neighbourhood improvement and regeneration projects » – Builds community capacity to fund and undertake GI projects »	
	» Defines GI deficiencies for area » Defines GI investment priorities » Provides evidence for environmental funding bids »	<b>Environmental Partnership</b>	» – Secures funding and implements GI projects » – Advocates for consideration of GI during planning and infrastructure decision » – Identifies opportunities for work with allied Partnerships »	
	» Shows how GI can contribute to “non-environmental” objectives of a socio-economic nature »	<b>Allied Thematic Partnership</b> e.g. children, older people, safety, health, business	» – Encourages co-provision of GI with other programmes »	

### Planning Conditions, Obligations and Tariffs

- 6.24 We have seen that the River Dee Park (or elements of it) can be delivered as a co-product of investment in new or refurbished infrastructure. Such development provides potential additional users of existing green space assets and potential environmental threats to biodiversity and other environmental indicators. This therefore justifies seeking contributions from developers of both housing and employment land to assist in the continuing management of existing and the establishment of new assets where deficiencies have been identified.
- 6.25 Despite the current economic situation, obligations defined in Section 106 Agreements and the proposed planning tariff to provide community infrastructure (Community Infrastructure Levy) are likely to continue as a means of supporting environmental enhancements. These can generate the finance and land for not only the implementation of new green space assets, or improvements to existing greenspace assets, but also endowments for long term management.
- 6.26 Chester City Council/Cheshire West and Chester Authority needs to show the political will and policy direction to set a realistic level of support for the River Dee Park as part of the sub-region's wider green infrastructure resource, to encourage the flexible use of financial contributions to be applied to priority areas across the District, and not be restricted to the particular locality of the development.

### Sources of funding

- 6.27 There are several sources of funding opportunities available that can contribute to site specific enhancements. Government derived initiatives include:
- *New Growth Point Funding:*  
As a designated New Growth Point, West Cheshire & Chester will benefit from increased funding from central government to put into place the infrastructural requirements associated with growth point housing development. Infrastructural funding is essential, particularly because of the "front-loaded" need for investment ahead of development – both for major capital projects and continued revenues support for the planning and organisation of green infrastructure delivery
  - *Landfill Communities Fund*  
A percentage of the tax that landfill companies are charged for disposing waste can be given to fund community or environmental projects within 10 miles of a landfill site, including projects which provide or improve a general public amenity (including greenspaces) or protect or enhance a species or habitat. To date, 15,120 public parks and amenities projects have been funded totaling £414.3 million<sup>24</sup>.
- 6.28 The 'good cause' funding generated by the National Lottery in England also offers several opportunities for funding environmental activities from the local to sub regional scale. Each fund has its own rules on the type of projects and bodies it can support, as well as variances in the amount of funding available. Funding streams that are currently available and have relevance to the River Dee Park include:

- *Heritage Lottery Fund: Parks for People*  
Grants range from £250,000 to £5m, with a project aim of supporting the regeneration, conservation and increased enjoyment of public parks, improving the local environment and placing parks at the heart of communities.
- *BIG Lottery Fund: Changing Spaces*  
The Changing Spaces programme comprises a number of schemes including 'Community Spaces' (to help community groups create or improve green spaces so that the quality of life in neighbourhoods across England is enhanced) and 'Access to Nature' (to encourage and enable people from all backgrounds to understand, access and enjoy our natural environment).

6.29 It is a criteria of many of these funding streams that the recipient is a non-statutory body or charitable (not for profit) organisation, and some do have a requirement for match funding. It is therefore critical that partnership working and engagement with communities discussed earlier is a priority for Chester City/Cheshire West and Chester, so that they enable and empower bodies such as the 'Friends Of' groups to apply for and hold funds for the benefit of the Park and its sites.

#### **Taking Forward Green Infrastructure Policy**

- 6.30 Despite the clear leading role of Chester City Council/Cheshire West & Chester Authority, it is important that the River Dee Park Plan and Action Plans do not stand alone and remain the sole responsibility of the Authority to implement.
- 6.31 As this chapter has demonstrated, the Masterplan needs to be integrated with other LDF documents and with green infrastructure planning as part of the requirements within Growth Point proposals. The concept of the River Dee Park needs to be established within other district wide strategies and research findings, and the implementation of recommendations progressed in tandem. Depending on the detailed staffing and departmental arrangements of the new Authority it may be worthwhile establishing an inter-departmental working group of officers to push forward the implementation of the Plan, using the Action Plans as 'early wins' to demonstrate the value of the Plan and of the River Dee Park to a wider audience.

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- 3 The North West of England Plan: Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008) GONW
- 4 The North West Green Infrastructure Guide version 1.1 (2008) North West Green Infrastructure Think Tank
- 5 Habitats Regulation Guidance Note (1997) English Nature
- 6 Adapted from the Draft Chester Biodiversity Audit (2009) Wardell Armstrong for Chester City Council
- 7 Chester District Local Plan 1996-2011 (Adopted May 2006) Chester City Council
- 8 West Cheshire Growth Point Programme of Development (2008) Cheshire West & Chester Authorities
- 9 Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) Natural England
- 10 Draft Chester District Open Space Audit (2008) Wardell Armstrong for Chester City Council
- 11 Chester Cycle Strategy 2008-2011 (2008) Chester City and Cheshire County Councils
- 12 Open Spaces in Chester: Residents Survey Panel (RSvP Survey) (2007) Chester City Council
- 13 Draft Chester Culture Park Strategy (2006) Chester City Council
- 14 The North West Regional Economic Strategy (2006) NWDA
- 15 Chester's Local Distinctiveness Strategy (2002) Chester City Council
- 16 West Cheshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008) Faber Maunsell for Chester City Council
- 17 Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity & Geological Conservation (2005) CLG
- 18 Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007, CLG
- 19 PPG17 typologies: parks & gardens; outdoor sports facilities; amenity (non sports); provision for young people; civic & heritage space; green corridors; allotments, gardens & farms; cemeteries & churchyards; natural & semi-natural space
- 20 Assessment and analysis forms for all sites are available in a separate document via the Chester City/Cheshire West & Chester websites
- 21 Grosvenor Park, Caldley Nature Park, Sandy Lane Amenity Area, Amphitheatre
- 22 Economic Analysis of Forestry Policy in England (2003) CJC Consulting
- 23 E.g. the Urban White Paper 2000, Sustainable Communities Plan 2003, Rural Strategy 2004, Citizens Engagement in Public Services 2005, Securing the Future 2005
- 24 Figures from ENTRUST as at 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009

