



Towards a **Chester at Night Strategy** An Integrated Approach



“Making Chester a vibrant, colourful and safe place for everyone to enjoy at night.”



Chester City Council

Towards a
Chester at Night Strategy
- An Integrated approach

DRAFT

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document is the first step towards producing a strategy and action programme, which seeks to better manage and promote Chester's evening economy. The City's evening economy is an important component of the Districts overall economy and an important source of local employment. The evening economy is also important to the culture, local distinctiveness and tourism product the City has to offer.
- 1.2. In many places, Chester included, the evening economy can be seen as a problem and the City is described as being a different place at night. The corollary to this is that the City Centre is the focus for leisure, entertainment and cultural activity for people of all ages but is a particular focus for young people.
- 1.3. Chester has a very good range of restaurants, bars, clubs and other venues for evening activity and City living is going from strength to strength. The issue at the moment is that drinking by young people is seen as the most obvious activity in Chester at night. The simplistic reaction to this is to try to limit and reduce this activity. This approach is very negative, does not recognise the social and economic value of the evening economy, and is counter-productive – this approach is usually unsuccessful and would only damage the potential the evening economy brings.
- 1.4. **The approach suggested here in this strategy is to grow (within the capacity of the place) and promote the evening economy in the City Centre so that it continues to develop as a colourful, vibrant and busy place, while ensuring that it feels safe and that it is a place where everyone can visit and enjoy themselves. However, that this growth be undertaken in a controlled way and should focus on cultural, civic and family activities in order to obtain a greater balance of evening uses.**

2. Strategy Aim:

Make Chester a vibrant, colourful and safe place for everyone to enjoy at night.

3. Objectives/Themes:

- To build a safe foundation – to make Chester a safe place to be and reduce the fear of crime at night
- To grow the experience (a City for everyone)
- To promote activity throughout the evening and night time
- To create greater ownership of the City Centre
- To manage the spatial distribution of evening uses to minimise conflict
- To improve how people get into the City and away afterwards
- To market the City Centre as a safe/vibrant and colourful place to be in the evening
- To work with the operators of venues to provide essential facilities/customer care and staff training
- To designate the City Centre a 'Business Improvement District' with tackling crime and community strategy as its core theme
- To work with young people to make the City Centre safer at night for them
- To build a partnership approach to fostering the successful growth and management of Chester's evening economy

3.1. Objective 1

Building a safe foundation – to make Chester City Centre a safer place to be and to reduce the fear of crime.

3.1.1. Action

1. Enhance Street lighting / architectural lighting – focus on key walking routes and 'dark areas'. The Council will promote the 'Living Streets Community Street Audit' approach to street improvement – this is where the community itself audits and with the Council develops improvement ideas based upon the community's knowledge and experiences of the streets they regularly use.

2. Extend CCTV coverage (particularly outside clubs and pubs), Cosign radio network and Pub Watch initiatives
3. Work with the Community safety Partnership to implement those parts of the Community Safety Strategy which will improve the City Centre.
4. Re-establish Police presence in the City Centre through the establishment of the Community safety Centre beneath the Town Hall. This would have great symbolic as well as operational benefits.
5. Establish a joint action programme by the Community Safety Partnership to address drugs and anti-social behaviour issues.
6. Co-ordinate training schemes for Door Supervisors.
7. Provide attractive, safe and secure late night opening public toilets.
8. Provide safe and attractive late night opening public car parks – identify and staff designated evening car parks.
9. Enhance key walking routes – environmental improvements and enhanced street lighting / CCTV.
10. Through implementation of development briefs and development control – achieve active building frontages (avoiding ‘blank’ ground floor frontages). Development Briefs define key active frontages.
11. In all new developments, e.g. the Northgate scheme and the regeneration areas, ensure crime is ‘designed out’. The Council’s Planning team will work closely with the Police Architectural Liaison officer on ensure this. Developers should also contact the Police Architectural Liaison officer at the early stage of the design of developments.

3.2. Objective 2

Growing the Experience – a City for everyone

3.2.1. Action

1. Implement Area Development Briefs covering:
 - Boughton Canal Corridor
 - Railway Lands
 - Gorse Stacks
 - Chester Riverside
 - Chester Ports
2. Ensure Active street frontages in all new developments.
3. Promote the establishment of small, high quality bars, restaurants and cafes (less than 100 sqm).

4. Work with traders to promote evening and late night opening of shops and cafes.
5. Co-ordinate and promote increased cultural activity in the evening – festival and events.
6. Open civic buildings in the evening – museums, Council Offices, galleries.
7. Promote the evening street scene – ‘Chester Alfresco’ and street entertainers.
8. Co-ordinate temporary street activity in key City Centre space, Town Hall Square in particular – evening street markets and fairs.
9. Deliver the Northgate development with its proposed new ‘Theatre Square’ comprising restaurants and cafes.

3.3. Objective 3

To promote activity throughout the evening – continuous activity.

3.3.1 Action

1. Work with traders to extend shop opening hours.
2. Open Civic and Cultural buildings and promote cultural events in the evening.
3. Extend café opening times.
4. Co-ordinate and promote evening events particularly those with a family focus
 - venues
 - streets
5. Evening opening of key Park and Ride sites and provide secure and safe City Centre car parks in the evening.

3.4. Objective 4

To promote greater ownership of and presence in the City Centre

3.4.1. Action

1. Deliver the regeneration of mixed use City Centre brown field sites.
2. Active promotion and delivery of ‘City Centre Living’
 - Delivering new homes in City Centre regeneration areas (delivering the Area Development Briefs)
 - Promoting mixed use development projects
 - Delivering the Northgate development project
 - Co-ordinating a new approach to ‘living over the shop’

- Delivering the joint development of West Cheshire College and indoor sports at the Northgate Arena
 - With Chester Collage, delivering the College's expansion / development plans – including student accommodation and leisure activities
3. Provide improved layout and design of new development areas to enhance community safety and minimise residential disturbance
 - Promote active streets
 - Careful spatial mix of evening venues and homes
 - Increase development density
 - Promote developments which comprise homes which are more tolerant of location next to busy evening venues – e.g. smaller households and student accommodation
 - Ensuring the creative design / layout of new developments - designing out problem areas:
 - Loading/unloading areas
 - External storage and refuse areas
 - Avoiding blank frontages
 - Avoiding 'forgotten space'
 - Ensuring that new development and alterations to existing property is of the highest design quality using durable and easily maintained materials
 4. Through City Centre Management and the Council's Street Scene initiatives improve the care and maintenance of Chester's Streets and public spaces.
 5. Improve essential City Centre evening facilities – public toilets, public car parks and taxi ranks / bus facilities.
 6. Work with the Police Architectural Liaison Officer on the design and layout of new developments and street improvement schemes.

3.5. Objective 5

To manage the spatial distribution of evening uses to minimise conflict and disturbance

3.5.1. Action

1. To identify predominant evening activity theme areas. Theme areas to be:
 - Cultural zone – theatre, restaurants, cafes, and small bars. Night-clubs and large pub / clubs - excluded
 - Quiet zone – predominantly residential – small number of small café, restaurants and bars only
 - Riverside / canal sides – waterfront cafes, bars and restaurants – no superpubs (above 100sqm)
 - General zone – restaurants, bars, clubs and cafes – there will be a capacity limit set.

- Residential – no evening uses other than residential
- Rail Station zone – clubs and bars encouraged.
- Key active streets – street frontages where restaurants, cafes and bars will be encouraged to promote lively streets

(See Plan attached)

2. To identify areas where the Council will refuse certain specific evening activities and venues. (A spatial and criteria-based approach to avoid conflict between activities and homes) – This will form a basis to determining planning applications and licensing applications for evening uses

This will explore:

- Size of venues
 - Number of venues in an area
 - Nature / theme for an area
 - Proximity to residential property – including consideration of walking routes
3. Carefully manage the location of new evening venues in relation to
 - Public toilets
 - Taxi ranks and offices
 - Evening bus facilities
 - Takeaways
 - City Centre secure / safe public car parks

3.6. Objective 6

To improve how people get to the City Centre and away afterwards.

3.6.1. Action

1. Increase number of / review evening Taxi rank locations – provide shelters at taxi ranks.
2. With Taxi operators enhance the quality and external management of Taxi Offices including taxi queue supervision.
3. With bus operators and the County Council Transport Co-ordinator explore the feasibility of providing Night Buses – these would use Foregate Street as the key pick up point.
4. Enhance bus driver radio links to City Centre Community Safety Centre.
5. Provide a new bus station as part of the Northgate development.
6. Provide safe, secure and attractive evening public car parks – including possible designated and staffed evening car parks.

7. As part of the railway station enhancement project, promote the use of the station as an evening gateway to the City Centre.

3.7. Objective 7

To market the City Centre as a safe, vibrant and colourful place – changing people's perceptions

3.7.1. Action

1. Co-ordination of safety and security information campaigns with the Crime and Community Safety Partnership.
2. Develop a partnership to market the City Centre as a single evening venue – co-ordinated place marketing campaign
 - Throughout the year
 - Venues and places to go
 - What's on- Festivals and events
 - Late opening shops
 - Hotels
 - Pubs, restaurants, club – places to go
 - Eating out
 - Civic openings and late opening cultural venues
3. Use the above partnership to marketing – the City's diversity and not just pubs and clubs.
4. Promote more evening events to increase the diversity of choice available in the evening.

3.8. Objective 8

Management & Training - To work in operation of venues to provide essential facilities / customer care and staff training.

3.8.1. Action

1. Explore providing 'chill out' times / areas in clubs to:
 - allow users to 'wind down'
 - spread people's leaving times
 - allow taxis to better service clubs
 - avoid street crowding at closure times

For example 'chill out times' could be one hour after normal bar closure time where non-alcoholic drinks are served with 'chill-out' music and food. 'Chill-out' areas would be areas to relax with comfortable seating.
2. Enhanced management of club street queues (including training of door supervisors).
3. Enhance taxi offices:
 - higher quality / comfortable/ sheltered / warm waiting areas.
 - taxi office operators to provide external queue supervisors.

4. Provide enhanced training for:
 - Venue staff
 - Door supervisors
 - Taxi / bus staffThis training would be a combination of customer care, customer friendliness and dealing with difficult / aggressive customers / situations.
5. Produce club/bar/evening venue 'good practice notes'. These would be a relevant consideration in licensing and planning application determination.
6. This strategy to be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance

3.9. Objective 9

To designate the City Centre as a 'Business Improvement District' – with Crime and Community Safety as its core theme.

3.9.1. Action

1. Chester to participate in NWDA Pilot BID.
2. When legislation/power is available designate the City Centre as a Business Improvement District. This again should focus on Crime & Community Safety (Chester at Night being an important facet). This should be progressed in partnership with local business people and business partnerships.
3. Identify funding made available through BID to implement this strategy.

3.10. Objective 10

To work with young people to make the City centre safer at night for them.

3.10.1. Action

1. Work with club venue operators to explore the development of a city centre based evening dance venue without alcohol sales
2. Explore providing 'chill out' times and areas in clubs so that people can wind down and eat / have coffee or water before leaving at the end of the night
3. Enhance the provision of high quality and modern evening public toilets
4. Work with schools, colleges and the voluntary sector to provide more and more exciting educational messages on drugs and alcohol misuse.

3.11. Objective 11

To build a partnership approach to fostering the successful growth and management of Chester's evening economy.

3.11.1. Action

1. Establish a broad partnership to focus on fostering and managing the City Centre's evening activity, comprising:
 - Local Authorities, for service provision – lighting, street cleaning, facilities, planning, licensing, transport co-ordination, car parking, etc
 - The Police, for operational issues and architectural liaison
 - Private sector representatives – businesses, licensees, developers
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - City Centre Management
 - Community Safety Partnership
 - Community representatives – residents, local councillors, the MP
 - Colleges
 - Transport operators – taxis, buses, trains

4. Funding

4.1. Funding for the delivery of this strategy will be a package approach via:

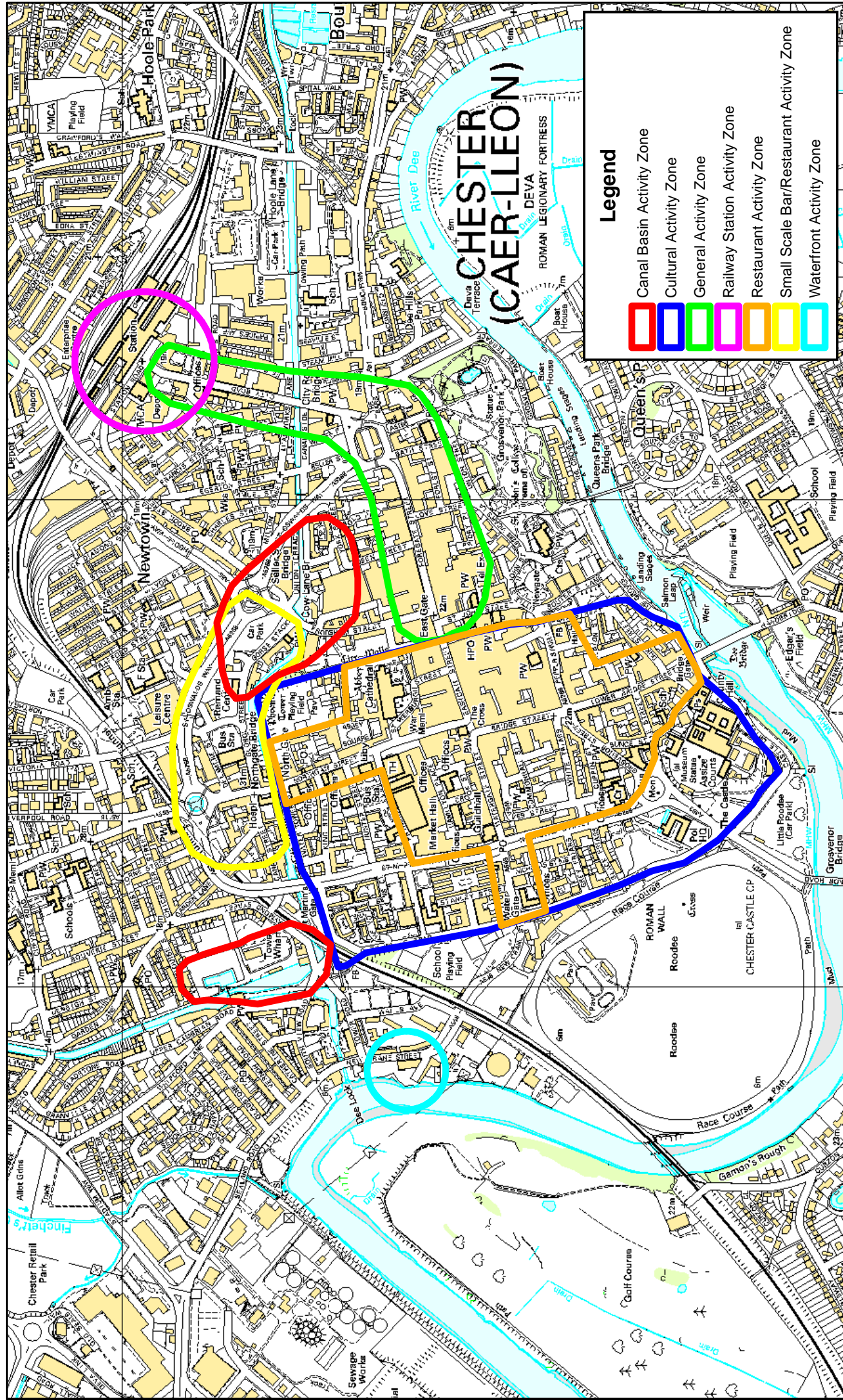
- The private sector led Business Improvement District approach.
- City Council mainstream activity
- County Council
- Community Safety Partnership
- Partnership and joint working with evening venue operators in the City Centre
- Home Office – for Community safety and CCTV
- NWDA – regeneration / economic funding
- City Council / County Council resources
- Development Commuted sums from private development schemes
- Potential European grant bids
- Sponsorship campaigns
- Private sector investment

This now needs to be developed.

5. Next Steps

- Share this 'Towards' document with key partners, stakeholders and interested groups
- Prepare the strategy, and then consult.

- Amend and adopt the Strategy as:
 - Supplementary Planning Guidance for determining planning applications
 - Licensing policy
 - Policy of participating agencies and partnership, including: Community Safety Partnership and City Centre Management
 - Prepare a detailed action plan for the strategy and implement it.



Legend

- Canal Basin Activity Zone
- Cultural Activity Zone
- General Activity Zone
- Railway Station Activity Zone
- Restaurant Activity Zone
- Small Scale Bar/Restaurant Activity Zone
- Waterfront Activity Zone

N

Scale
1:10,000

Chester City Council Chester at Night Strategy - Night Time Activity Zones



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