

LTP4 Comparator Case Study - Chester (DRAFT)

1. Context

Background

Chester (a walled city) is now part of the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester ('the Council'). Population approx 120,000, about one-third of the total unitary authority's population. Like York, it has a large university (c 15,000 students compared with over 20,000 in York) with five campus sites in and around the city and a racecourse

Governance

Unitary authority (established 2009). Limited involvement in public transport management: central interchange and bus stop infrastructure, Cheshire stored value travelcard, concessionary fares and supported services (see below). Three park and ride services into the city centre.

Thumbnail of current transport provision

Bus transport in the city is provided by Stagecoach Merseyside & South Lancashire¹ and Arriva Buses Wales² (The council ran its own bus service until 2007) The Council funds a number of supported services.

To be completed

2. Transport planning

Local transport plans

LTP3 Published 2011, with a 15 year time frame, then updated in 2017 and extended by four years to 2030 so that it runs concurrently with the Council's Local Plan (Part One) which was adopted in 2015³⁴

Priority objectives of the Plan

1. Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area.
2. Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change.
3. Manage a well maintained transport network
4. Contribute to safer and secure transport in West Cheshire and to promote types of transport which are beneficial to health.
5. Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity.
6. Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire.

Strategic approach

Chester Transport Strategy Phase 1 Recommendations, Options etc including new bus interchange and rail improvements (February 2014); Phase 2 Reports A56 Park & Ride (June 2015); Western Relief Road – Interim (September 2015) and A4 Pinch Points (February 2016)

1 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stagecoach_Merseyside & South Lancashire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stagecoach_Merseyside_%26_South_Lancashire)

2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arriva_Buses_Wales

3 <http://consult.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/file/4848345>

4 <http://consult.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/file/4848344>

Principal policy measures

See 5 above.

The Council was successful in securing Government funding to work with local employers to deliver a package of sustainable travel measures as part of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) project between 2012 and 2016

A successful £ 1,075,000 bid to the Dft Rural Mobility Fund was announced on 15/3/21 as part of the new National Bus Strategy⁵ This will fund a three-year trial of an innovative public transport service for residents living in rural and suburban areas.

Modal shares

74% of residents use a car to travel to work compared to 5% by bus and 13% who walk or cycle. Nearly 6% of residents mainly work from home. Commuter trips by bus and rail are low, apart from trips to Merseyside (22% by rail) and Manchester (8%). The highest level of inbound rail commuting is from Merseyside (16%) Projected traffic growth 2015 – 2030 for Chester was 6.9%⁶

A number of successful workplace travel plans have been introduced in West Cheshire and in a number of locations car use has been reduced by as much as 15%. Where appropriate, new developments within the Borough are required to produce a Travel Plan and submit this as part of the planning application. The Council assesses these to make sure that suitable measures are in place to reduce the impact of any new development on the local highway network and to encourage sustainable travel.

Key performance measures

To be researched

Provision for disabled travellers

Chester was crowned the most accessible city in Europe in 2017. There are also tour guides, city centre access guides, signs and online help via <https://www.accessable.co.uk> All of the city's public buses are fully accessible. Council policy requires all of its licensed taxis to be suitable for wheelchairs. They must also include additional features, such as induction loops and colour-contrasted grab handles. The city has seven Changing Places toilets, which include hoists and a changing bench for disabled people who can't use standard accessible toilets. And there's a council commitment to include one in any future renovation throughout the city.⁷

3. Relevance to York

Useful lessons and pointers

Economy highly dependent on visitors. The city walls alone – two miles of Roman, Saxon and medieval fortification that surround the city – have seen an annual investment of £500,000 since 2009⁸. Development of park and ride to reduce cars entering the city (see 5 above) in the same way as York, but on a lesser scale. New bus interchange and rail improvements carried out (see 5 above). Traffic congestion measures (eg new Ring Road) but without improvements to alternatives. A number of bollards have recently been installed in the city centre to protect it from a future terrorist attack.⁹

5 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-mobility-fund/rural-mobility-fund-successful-bids>

6 <http://consult.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/file/4848344> - Section 4.3 and Table 4.1

7 <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/sep/20/chester-europes-most-accessible>

8 <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/sep/20/chester-europes-most-accessible-city>

9 <https://www.cheshire-live.co.uk/news/chester-cheshire-news/anti-terror-bollards-installed-chester-19400496>

Any aspects which make it less relevant to York

Chester is part of a larger Unitary Authority whereas the York city area is smaller with a lower population. Chester is a more prosperous city than York, with more high-end cafes and shops. There appears to be less emphasis on sustainable transport measures eg walking and cycling.

Demonstrator new neighbourhoods

There are no obvious examples.

A 1300 high quality homes development on former green belt land in Wrexham Road, Chester was approved by the Council, despite strong objections, in January 2019. A frequent bus service runs past the site, but there is no suggestion that sustainable transport was considered in the development proposals.

Best practice in engagement and consultation

The Council offers a “digital engagement platform” (‘Participate Now’) for any resident to provide feedback on their current consultations and an online citizens’ panel (‘Participate Panel’). This panel is made up of “a cross section of local people, who volunteer to take part in regular research and engagement activities, to help us understand residents’ views and ideas about a range of important issues.”¹⁰

Possible contacts

To be identified.

Author: Graham Collett V2.1 21st May 2021

¹⁰ <https://participatenow.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/participate-panel>