



Cheshire West
and Chester



Chester
Renaissance



Chester Cathedral

PLANS ANNOUNCED FOR FIRST PHASE OF CATHEDRAL QUARTER TRANSFORMATION

The first phase of exciting plans for the transformation of Chester's historic Cathedral Quarter was announced today (Wednesday).

Vital to Chester's reinstatement as an international tourism and cultural centre, the £7.5m project will re-model the area to provide an ideal setting for the city's top heritage destination.

The Cathedral, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Chester Renaissance have combined to drive a project which, it is hoped, will attract an extra 130,000 visitors annually.

Phase one will be centred on the medieval Cathedral and its immediate precincts with designs for new iconic entrance and visitor centre being developed.

"The Cathedral is a fascinating and intriguing complex, making a significant contribution to the life of the city, spiritually, culturally and economically" said the Dean of Chester the Very Revd. Professor Gordon McPhate.

"However, it is often said that it is 'hidden in full view' and we want to improve its setting to allow greater appreciation and easier access to this wonderful complex."

The initial stage of the scheme will also feature internal and external improvements designed to improve the Cathedral's 'visitor appeal' including lighting, heating and a new terrace café.

A new flexible stage in the Nave will provide the Cathedral – and city- with scope for sustaining a wider range of events capable of housing audiences ranging from 1,200 to 1,800.

And it is hoped to open up areas of the building previously closed to visitors to provide viewing platforms with stunning views of the Cathedral and city centre.

Public realm work in St Werburgh Street will create a new square linking the city centre and leading more visitors to the gothic masterpiece, originally erected as a monastery by Hugh Lupus, first Norman Earl of Chester, in 1092.

The project is being led by Cheshire West and Chester Council and the Cathedral.

Said Cllr Richard Short Executive Member, Culture and Recreation: “The Cathedral is one of the jewels of our rich heritage - but it is a jewel that deserves a better setting.

“We are confident that this project will result in a major increase of visitors to the Cathedral and city bringing considerable economic benefits to Chester and the whole region”.

The Cathedral together with Chester Renaissance Special Projects Team are currently co-ordinating project management of the scheme, led by Building Design Partnership’s Liverpool Studio and involving specialists in the fields of conservation, architecture, archaeology, engineering, lighting and acoustics.

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At present, work is continuing on all aspects of the scheme and options will form the basis of widespread consultation with all interested groups.

Chester Renaissance Chief Executive, Rita Waters said: “The Cathedral Quarter is a vital area of historic Chester and we are determined to enhance its potential in a way which will provide a perfect backcloth for a magnificent building.

“This is a hugely exciting and unique opportunity for the city to show its support for its Cathedral which will continue to welcome and increase the many visitors it will bring into our city”.

A planning application to both the local authority and the Cathedral Fabrics Commission for England will be submitted in the Spring. Determination should take place by October, with completion of the first phase scheduled for March 2012.

STORY NOTE:

Chester Cathedral was founded as a monastery in 1092 and became a cathedral in 1541 on the orders of King Henry VIII. The present building is now one of the finest examples in the country of a medieval monastic complex, the result of many centuries of building work. It contains unique and extraordinary treasures, ranging from incomparable medieval woodwork to stunning modern stained glass and beautiful Russian icons.

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