

Chester Harbour

Summary – historical value:

This character zone is based on the modern harbour at Chester and has a strong industrial character. Following the canalisation of the river in the late 18th century, a large area of new land was created around the old harbour temporarily revitalising the harbour industry. In addition, to protect this new land from flooding, flood defences were created, known as ‘the Cop’ this substantial earthwork extended from the Cheese Wharf on Sealand Road round to the Grosvenor Bridge, parts of which still survive. Although no longer able to perform as it once did, the harbour survived throughout the 19th and 20th centuries based primarily on a boat building industry, this led to the creation of a number of private boat building yards along the waterfront resulting in what was once a highly industrialised zone.

This zone also includes the Roodee Workhouse, originally built in the late 18th century following the canalisation as a large square building with a central courtyard and its own extension to the Cop flood defences, later extended in the mid 19th century to include a second courtyard. By the late 19th century the workhouse was deemed too small and the inmates were moved to a new location and the site converted into a preserve and confectionary factory. It was destroyed by fire in 1911. Archaeological investigations have recorded substantial surviving structural remains of the former workhouse buildings indicating a good preservation potential in the area.

Further industrial complexes are recorded in this area, including a timber yard along New Crane Street, later the site of the Electric Light Works (the facade of which survives today), as well as lime kilns on the Roodee and finally the Roodee Gasworks. The Gasworks were built in the mid 19th century along the waterfront and despite the switchover to electric lighting in the city from 1905 they continued to operate, supplying to a largely domestic market until 1970 when the gasworks was closed. The Roodee viaduct also passes along the south eastern boundary of this zone, built in the mid 19th century Chester to Holyhead line it represents a substantial and highly recognisable structure in the landscape of the Roodee area. A former air raid shelter from World War II is also recorded at the Cop recreation ground.



Existing Designations:

Listed Buildings: 2

Conservation Area: Yes

AAI: Yes

Chester Approaches Areas: J4; K4; K5; K7; K8; K9

Although there are unlikely to be significant features of an earlier date than the 18th century in this zone, antiquarian discoveries of several timber posts at the gasworks were dated to the Roman period and were believed to represent a substantial wooden pier associated with the Roman harbour.

Archaeological Potential:

The key feature of this character zone is its industrial character with standing structures associated with the harbour, railway, public utilities and manufacturing sites still present within the area. There is also an abundance of below ground remains in this area including excavated remains of the former Roodee Workhouse, electricity station and harbour.

There remains a strong potential for industrial structural remains at a relatively shallow depth including boat building yards, cranes and warehouses along the port frontage. In addition there is a good potential for both above ground and below ground remains of the Cop earthworks.

The present ground level in this character zone is low lying, with artificially higher ground along the railway viaduct at around 13m AOD dropping to around 5-7m AOD across the remaining area of the zone.

Key Considerations:

- This zone has preserved archaeological remains that may influence regional perspectives with the potential for further discoveries of significant archaeological remains.

Built Heritage:

- Recording of built elements of the harbour and its associated industries.
- This zone primarily dates to the late 18th to mid 20th century representing a cohesive area of industrial activity; further investigation of the industrial archaeology here has the potential to influence local and regional perspectives.
- Preservation of standing structures currently under threat including the air raid shelter at the Cop and the Electricity Station facade at New Crane Street.

Below Ground:

- This zone lies partially within the **Area of Archaeological Importance** and planning and development here should be approached with particular sensitivity to the potential for archaeological remains of at least a national level.
- Strong potential for industrial features at a relatively shallow depth.