

# Chester City Centre Logistics Study

## Executive Summary

February 2026



Senator



MDS Transmodal Ltd



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 861540

# Disclaimer & acknowledgements

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## DISCLAIMER

This report has been compiled from public domain information and evidence obtained from primary research by MDS Transmodal Ltd in Chester, UK and its work as a partner in SENATOR project. This report reflects our opinion on issues related to freight transport and logistics in Chester city centre provided in good faith. This report should not be construed as a recommendation to any party to proceed with any transaction and has been compiled based on information gathered between December 2022 and November 2025 inclusive.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Introduction



MDS Transmodal (MDST) carried out a **study on freight deliveries and collections in Chester city centre**, with the objective of finding an appropriate balance between the needs of the city's businesses, residents and visitors.



The study took place against the background of the **economic difficulties that have been experienced by town and city centres** nationwide. The decline in traditional 'bricks and mortar' retailing, at the expense of e-commerce, has resulted in a revamped retail offering alongside a need to re-invent the 'high street' as a destination for tourism, leisure, and hospitality.



These re-invented town and city centres will continue to need servicing with goods. A trend towards **goods being delivered more frequently** is likely to form an important component of future delivery operations in city and town centres.



The study was completed in 2025 which marks the **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pedestrianisation of Chester city centre**. Despite being well-established, the pedestrianised city centre continues to pose certain issues for the delivery and collection of freight.



The Eastgate at Chester, which forms part of the city's pedestrianised area

# Research tasks

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One of the main objectives of the project was to **establish the nature and extent of any issues related to freight deliveries and collections** in Chester city centre based on primary research.

The results of the research could then be used as the basis for determining what ‘problems’ exist before developing some potential solutions.

Three research tasks were completed, as follows:



An **observational survey of movements of freight vehicles** in and out of the centre of Chester;



A **survey of businesses** located in Chester city centre; and



A **survey of residents** living in the city centre.

# Commercial vehicle observational survey

## Purpose of the survey

Quantify the number and type of commercial vehicles (LGVs, HGVs, waste collection vehicles and bicycles) used for deliveries in Chester city centre during the morning “peak” freight delivery period of 07:30 to 10:30, when the central area of the city becomes pedestrianised.

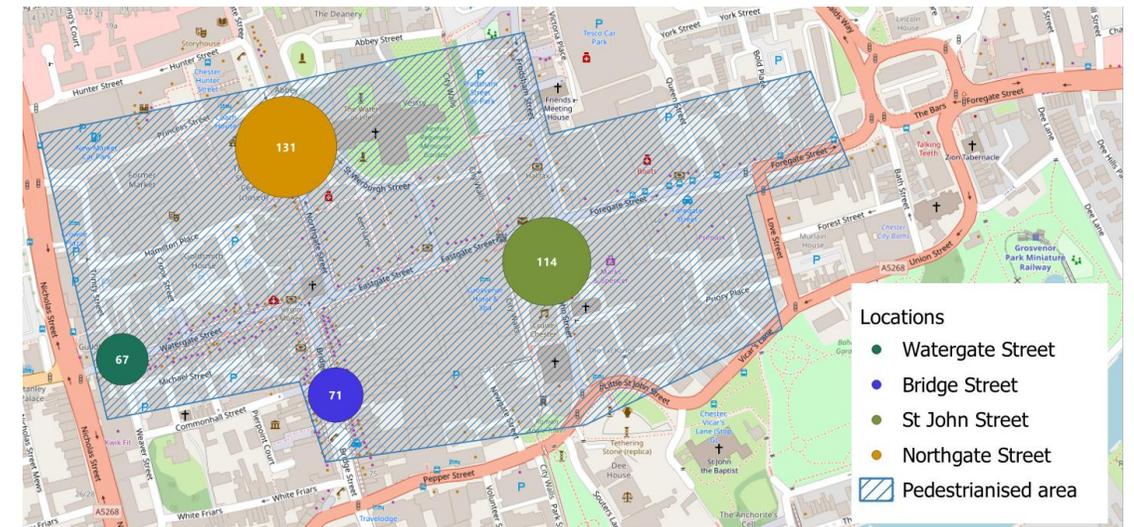
## Methodology

Vehicle movements were recorded at the four entry points to and exit points from the pedestrianized area of Chester city centre.

## Key findings

- Freight vehicle movements were distributed across the whole survey time period from 07:30 to 11:00, but with a **peak between 09:30 and 10:30**.
- In addition, some 23% of freight movements were **between 08:00 and 09:00**, which would mean that they would have been affected by any congestion caused by peak hour traffic within Chester itself.
- Of the vehicles that are assumed to have been carrying out deliveries or collections of freight, some 43% spent only 15 minutes in the city centre, a cumulative total of **66% spent up to 30 minutes** and 86% spent no more than an hour.
- 2% of LGV or HGV movements** were carried out by **zero-emission** vehicles.

Movements in and out of Chester city centre between 07:30 and 11:00 on a weekday by location



Proportion of survey traffic movements by vehicle type



LGV  
75.5%



HGV  
18.0%



Waste collection  
5.7%



Bicycle  
0.8%

# Survey of Chester city centre businesses

## Purpose of the survey

- Understand the nature of the businesses and how they relate to freight deliveries and collections;
- Establish the nature and importance of any issues related to deliveries of freight to, and the collection of freight from, the businesses; and
- *Establish the nature and importance of any issues related to the collection of business waste.*

## Methodology

An online survey of city centre businesses was designed and then completed with the assistance of Chester Business Investment District (BID) during the period October to early December 2022.

Follow-up interviews were undertaken with some businesses, located both inside and outside the pedestrianised zone.

## Role of businesses in relation to freight

**87%**

receive good deliveries

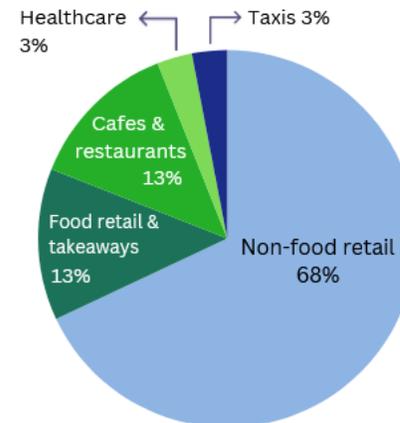
**23%**

ship goods requiring collection

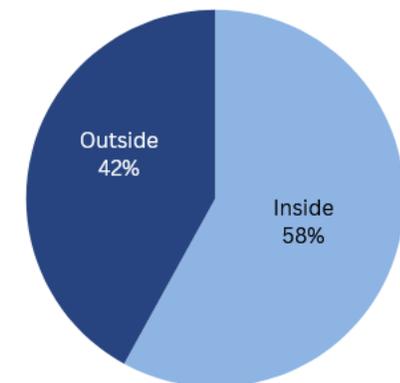
**65%**

are customers of waste collection

Survey respondents by type



Survey respondents' location in relation to pedestrianised zone

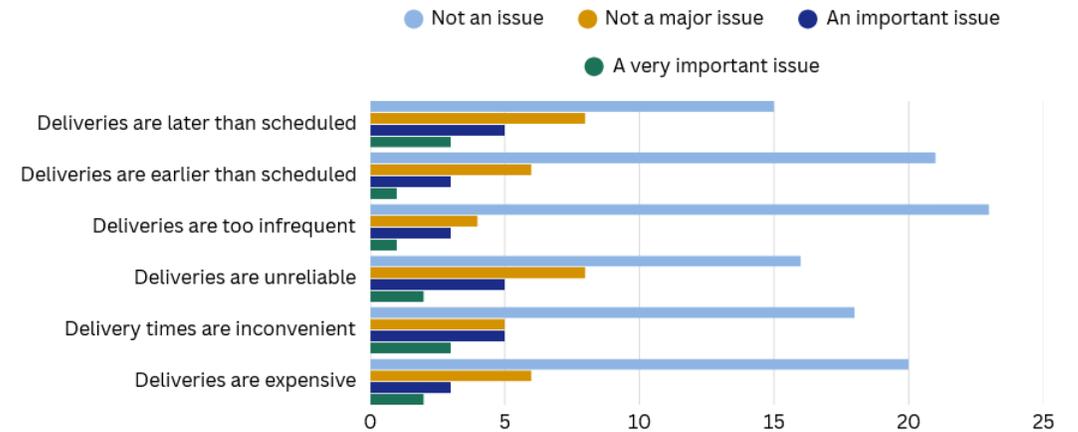


# Responses to the survey of Chester city centre businesses

## Key findings on freight deliveries and collections

- Most freight deliveries and collections were in **the form of parcels and boxes**, implying they are relatively lightweight and can be handled by a single person;
- Deliveries are generally made **before the city centre is closed** to vehicles with a peak from 09:00 to 10:30 (when 61% of businesses receive deliveries), leaving a significant proportion after this time at a time when the city centre of closed to vehicles;
- The **majority of deliveries are by operators using an LGV ('white van')**, while some are by specialist logistics companies using a mix of light and rigid heavy goods vehicles;
- The vast **majority of collections** are by parcels companies, specialist logistics companies or Royal Mail using LGVs;
- Deliveries to businesses in the city centre are likely to come mainly from **Regional or National Distribution Centres**, but also on occasion even from abroad;
- Goods that are collected from businesses in the city centre are being **despatched to outside the North West region and to the North West region** beyond the immediate Chester area;
- Most businesses **did not report significant issues with deliveries**. The minority that did referenced late deliveries, unreliability of deliveries, and the inconvenience of delivery times as being significant issues.
- Most businesses **did not report significant issues with collections**. The minority that did regarded late collections, the infrequency of collection services and the inconvenience of collection times as being a significant issue.

## Responses to: What are the issues you have experienced with freight deliveries?



# Survey of Chester city centre residents

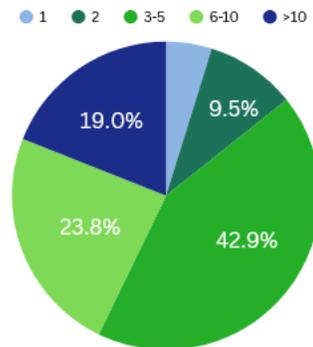
## Purpose of the survey

Understand key problems relating to deliveries and collections of parcels and freight that affect residents in the city centre and to seek their views on potential measures to address them.

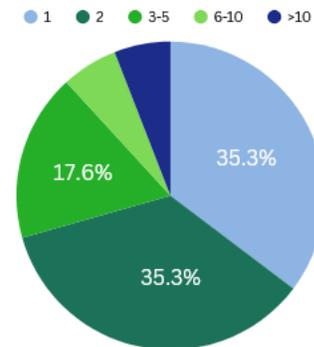
## Methodology

An online survey was designed with support from Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C) and was distributed by the Chester Residents' Associations Group (CRAG) via its member associations who represent residents living in the city centre, either within or just outside the city walls.

How many deliveries do you receive on average each month?  
21 responses



How many times on average do you collect parcels and other goods away from your home each month?  
17 responses



## Key findings

- 52% of respondents were retired and 30% were self-employed. This may indicate that a relatively high proportion of respondents are not required to be working away from home and are **more likely to be able to receive parcel deliveries at home** during the working day.
- 91% received e-commerce parcels, while far fewer received deliveries of groceries or made to order food. This highlights how **online shopping** is the main reason for home deliveries to the households in Chester city centre.
- Many deliveries were being made at a time when the **pedestrianised area of Chester is operative** and vehicular access is not possible.
- This indicates that the **parcel delivery companies do not adapt their delivery schedules in Chester because of the existence of the pedestrianised area** and may park their vans outside the zone so that delivery operatives can then walk into the 'closed' city centre to make final deliveries.
- The most significant problems with deliveries highlighted by residents related to the **indirect traffic and environmental impacts** of deliveries on the street where they live, rather than to the quality of delivery service provided.
- The most significant issue with collections highlighted by residents related to **the lack of convenience of collection of e-commerce parcels**.
- The main potential solution cited by respondents was **a city centre parcel hub** so that parcels could be delivered there for residents to collect.

# Summary of key issues & potential interventions

The evidence obtained did not highlight many significant issues related to the delivery and collection of goods in Chester city centre, despite it being closed to vehicles during much of the working day. This may be due to the pedestrianised area being so well established, which means that city centre businesses and many of their logistics providers have adapted their operations to allow for deliveries and collections before 10:30 in the morning. However, this leads to some knock-on impacts on the logistics operators' efficiency. In addition, some parcels operators need - or choose - to make deliveries when the city centre is closed to vehicular traffic, which generates some issues for residents in streets close to the city centre. While discussing other potential interventions by the public sector, the key issues and main recommended interventions suggested by MDST are shown in the table below.

Issues	Key stakeholders affected	Summary of main recommended interventions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Illegal parking of freight vehicles close to the city centre when it is closed to vehicular traffic.</li> <li>2. Drivers of freight vehicles receiving parking tickets as they are forced, or prefer, to park illegally.</li> <li>3. Lack of flexibility for city centre businesses in receiving deliveries inside the pedestrianised area during much of the working day.</li> <li>4. Lack of logistics efficiency as freight vehicles delivering in the city centre are required to negotiate peak hour traffic.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents in streets just outside the city centre</li> <li>• Logistics operators &amp; their drivers</li> <li>• City centre businesses</li> </ul>	<p>Develop network of loading bays dedicated to LGVs and HGVs close to the edge of the pedestrianised area, so that 'last mile' deliveries and collections can be made by drivers on foot even when the city centre is closed to vehicular traffic and without parking illegally (would require effective enforcement action).</p>
<p>Inefficient deliveries and collections by logistics providers, particularly due to any newly recruited drivers of freight vehicles being unfamiliar with the routes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logistics operators &amp; their drivers</li> <li>• City centre businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve clarity of kerbside signage</li> <li>• Develop digital map for Chester city centre deliveries</li> </ul>
<p>Lack of convenient, centrally-located parcel lockers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Logistics operators &amp; their drivers</li> </ul>	<p>Provide additional cargo lockers in a strategic location in the city centre.</p>

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