



Transport & Access Policy January 2016

Introduction

Canterbury Connected BID represents the 650 levy paying businesses in the city centre BID area. Created following a ballot in July 2014, Canterbury Connected BID began work in October 2014 and has an annual budget of £550,000 per annum for the five years of this term.

In 2014 Canterbury City Council produced its Canterbury District Transport Strategy 2014 - 2031 as part of the development of the District's Local Plan submission.

Since launch, the Canterbury Connected BID Board has been aware of a number of contentious issues arising from the plan with reference to Canterbury city centre and so has convened a Transport & Access Working Group, comprised of Canterbury Connected BID levy payers (see Appendix 1), to determine Canterbury Connected BID's response to these issues both as standalone concerns and also as a response to them in the wider context of the plan.

The group has also taken this opportunity to set out Canterbury Connected BID's policy on relevant issues raised in the Plan and to make a number of constructive comments and suggestions on the way forward.

Canterbury Connected BID's priorities

Canterbury Connected BID was endorsed at ballot by 242 votes to 137, a 64% majority on a turnout of 54% of all eligible businesses. The vision outlined in the ballot campaign and supported by a majority of businesses is

"Canterbury will be a vibrant, exciting, well connected and successful business community; an attractive, green, safe and enjoyable destination for customers and clients, shoppers and staff, residents, students and visitors; a profitable place in which to do business."

On this basis, Canterbury Connected BID's priorities are the interests of:

- Levy paying businesses and their staff
- People who come to the city to spend money
- People who come to the city to study
- Residents, who also spend money in our businesses

The wider context

Canterbury has a catchment area that encompasses six Kent Districts as well as, to a lesser extent, the rest of the county; London with the advent of High Speed rail in 2009; and the near continent, especially for shopping trips and student group visits. The city is also a global centre for tourism and pilgrimage.

While the city's economy is subject to a number of particular variables, such as the value of Sterling versus the Euro, disputes at the Channel ports and other global issues that impact on visitor numbers regionally and nationally, the Canterbury and its surrounding sub region has survived the recession and the loss of substantial employment at Pfizer in Sandwich reasonably well, with a return to growth in recent years.

Investment in Higher Education, in economic regeneration at Discovery Park following the scaling back of Pfizer there and the development of high quality facilities in the arts and culture regionally, including the

Marlowe Theatre, the Turner Contemporary, the Beaney House of Art & Knowledge and Dreamland have all contributed to a growing and more sustainable economic outlook for the sub region.

The next 15 years should see this growth accelerate, notwithstanding global and national trends. The pressure to build more homes, in the south east of England in particular, will fuel the Kent economy and the proximity of London will ensure that this is likely to be sustained, both as people look to move out of the city to travel back for work and also as businesses that serve the London economy seek less expensive locations close to their customers.

Here are the number of households in the six Districts within the region in which Canterbury is located and the number of additional homes proposed by 2031 in each:

| District | Households 2011 | New Homes planned* |
|------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Canterbury | 60,771 | 15,600 |
| Dover | 48,310 | 14,000 |
| Thanet | 59,513 | 12,000 |
| Shepway | 47,379 | 8,000 |
| Ashford | 47,787 | 14,000 |
| Swale | 55,585 | 15,000 |
| Total | 319,345 | 78,600 |

*Subject to Local Plan consultations

This indicates a 25% increase over the next 15 years in the households in the Canterbury catchment area.

However, the threats to town and city centres, both now and in the future, have been well documented: out of town centres with free car parking and the growth of the internet as a commercial platform being the most significant.

In order to remain competitive Canterbury has to have a superb range of businesses offering customers what they want and an equally high quality experience in accessing them.

The road network

Canterbury Connected BID supports a number of projects described in the Strategy that support the Local plan, currently under review. In particular:

- *The provision of a slip road into Wincheap from the coast-bound A2 by 2020. This is the single most effective way to reduce congestion in the city centre and should be the absolute priority.*
- *The level crossing at St Dunstons is a persistent cause of congestion in the city centre. Canterbury Connected BID supports any and all actions that will reduce delays and congestion and in particular, any activity that would resolve the issue permanently.*
- *The use of information technology to manage the network better and assist those coming into the city to make better travel choices that have less negative impact on the city and its road infrastructure (see also using Technology to Improve Access to the City)*

The priority must be to reduce ‘through-traffic’ and unnecessary journeys and encourage use of public transport while enabling visitors and residents to access the city centre as a place in which to do business, spend money, study and reside.

In particular, two issues should be addressed:

- The lessening of congestion during school holidays indicates that education has a significant role to play in reducing congestion during term time too. Canterbury Connected BID is committed to working with partners and education providers to look at ways to do this and urges Canterbury City Council to lead on this issue.
- Traffic approaching the city is often unaware of potential congestion, routes to avoid and also, if wanting to spend time in the city, where the available parking is located. Better signage to direct traffic to an alternative route if it is through traffic, and if it is coming to the city, towards available car parking and away from that which is full, is essential.

Access to Canterbury

The Plan sets out the Council Priorities as follows: *Walking, Cycling, Public Transport, Park & Ride, Private Car* (in that order of importance)

The Canterbury Connected BID business community lists these modes of transport in importance to their business, however, as follows: Private Car, Park & Ride, Public Transport, Walking, Cycling.

There are a number of reasons for this difference:

- Historically, access to car ownership has signified aspiration, freedom and choice. Without incentives to do so, travelling on public transport or either walking or cycling, are seen as a poor alternative while action to ‘deter’ private car use is seen as a curtailment of these privileges. Businesses usually reflect the views of their customers.
- Cost: car use is relatively expensive but individual journeys do not often reflect the underlying costs of running a car: car parking is the only directly associated cost as fuel is seen as a more general personal cost not associated with individual journeys. Indeed, when compared to public transport, where the cost increases with more participants, the reverse is true for car travel, making it appear cheaper.
- Car ownership: since 1994, car ownership has increased by 37% and in 2013, new car registrations increased by 10%, the highest since 2007. The relationship between car ownership and aspiration is firmly fixed for both consumers and the businesses that serve them. Places that are clearly and demonstrably unwelcoming to private cars, for whatever reasons and without any positively attractive alternatives, can be seen as ‘anti-visitor’ and ‘anti-business’. Business owners mostly reflect this view.

On this basis, we will look at each element of the Plan in the priority order that Canterbury Connected BID levy payers are concerned about:

By Car

Congestion has been an enduring feature of access to the city for many years and is an inevitable consequence of a number of factors, one of which is the popularity of the city as a destination. It is important that the Plan addresses ways in which to reduce or mitigate this issue.

However, the focus on alleviating congestion by reducing car parking in the city centre is completely unacceptable to Canterbury Connected BID levy paying businesses for the following reasons:

1. Car parking in Canterbury is a finite resource and any reduction will be permanent as it is difficult to envisage a situation in which additional public car parking will ever be provided in the city centre on a permanent basis. The city centre therefore has its entire 'lifetime supply' of car parking spaces right now. What is being outlined in the Plan is an 18% decrease in city centre parking (excluding Park & Ride)
2. Simply retaining that supply is a 25% reduction in real terms. The additional housing proposed south of the city centre, added to that proposed in the surrounding Canterbury District and in the other five Districts means that the city's catchment area is growing over the next fifteen years while the resource is staying the same.
3. The example of car park usage cited in the Plan demonstrates that the number of available spaces on the given date, 17th November 2012, exceeds the proposed reduction in spaces. However, 231 of these spaces are at Sturry Road P&R, the least accessible of all available parking for those wanting to visit the city. A further 105 spaces are located in Castle Street Multi Storey, which is the least used parking asset in the city centre and which requires significant review to understand how to make best use of this facility.

This scenario means that, if the closures had been enacted and the stock reduced by 439 spaces, this would have left only 1.2% of available spaces (46) across the network, effectively closing the car parks (and the city) to additional customers on that day.

4. Investing in existing car parks is a key requirement. In particular, Castle Street Multi Storey is an underused asset while Whitefriars Multi Storey can cause congestion when it is full and cars queue onto Watling Street. Both of these issues can be resolved with existing and well tested methods and technologies.
5. A thriving business services community is vital for the city and the sub-region. Enabling this sector to operate effectively requires sufficient business parking to be available and for access in and out of the city during the day to facilitate the needs of these businesses and their clients.

For many people working in business services, working both early and late means that Park & Ride does not meet their needs and their clients will often only need to come in to the city for a short time to do business with them.

Additionally, located as many of them are in the Castle Quarter of the city, the provision of traffic control measures to enable those working in this sector to travel into and out of the area easily throughout the day are a priority.

Supporting the business services sector is important for the future prosperity of the city and its surrounding area and their needs must be considered as part of any future changes to parking and city access and egress in the future, as a priority.

6. Finally, hotel, conference and event parking in the city centre and perceived congestion in the city in accessing it adjacent to venues is a major constraint on developing this business in Canterbury city centre. The opening of the Premier Inn with limited dedicated parking and the opening of the new Slatters Hotel with 130 rooms but again no dedicated parking will increase the potential pressure on the city's parking stock.

This is a lost opportunity for the city and impacts on jobs, growth and investment, especially as those wishing to use these facilities may well seek them out in places outside the Canterbury District. Canterbury city centre is a very attractive location for hotel stays, weddings and small conferences but the issue of parking is a major concern for operators and limits their ability to develop this business.

Canterbury Connected BID would like to work with Canterbury City Council to ensure that creative ways are found to remedy this situation and enable the growth of this business in the city for the benefit of everyone.

By Park & Ride

The Plan also sets out the expansion of Park & Ride as part of the solution to reducing congestion while enabling people to access the city. Canterbury Connected BID welcomes expansion of Park & Ride and would like to see this happen as soon as possible. For those visiting for the day, or working in the city centre on regular hours, this is a good solution. Canterbury Connected BID would like to see:

- Expansion of Wincheap P&R as a priority, accompanied by the provision of the A2 coast bound off-slip by 2020. The off-slip will also reduce congestion in the city centre by enabling access to the city centre directly from the A2 at that location rather than coming in to the city to then drive out again through Wincheap. The decision to abandon plans for a P&R site at Harbledown now makes this a vital component of the city's transport infrastructure.
- Greater involvement in marketing the service by the operator, Stagecoach with Canterbury City Council, potentially incentivising the operator for use of the service. Currently the marketing of P&R is low key and while good value at £3 per day per car, this is not appreciated by either the local community or visitors.
- Wincheap P&R is closed on a Sunday to accommodate a Boot Fair. This is now inappropriate as Sunday trading has grown significantly and the service should operate for the benefit of the city centre from this site.

Car park pricing

Canterbury Connected BID would like to see the following:

- Car park pricing reviewed every three years, with no increases in intervening years.

- Tariffs set in relation to the following: 3 year inflation; car park usage (no increase if numbers are falling); level of empty commercial premises in the city centre (no increase if the percentage is 2% or above the level at the last increase); business performance (figures supplied by Canterbury Connected BID to Canterbury City Council). Car park income should not be used as a revenue generating mechanism to support the Council budget.
- Park & Ride differential pricing: consideration should be given to the following:
 - P&R Open Days to offer free/reduced parking to encourage locals to try the service, in association with promoting the 20% Season Ticket Discount.
 - A cheaper tariff after 10.30am to encourage travel outside peak.
 - A cheaper tariff at Sturry Road as this is the least well used of the three sites.

By public transport

Perceptions of public transport by business are relatively low, often because the owner/managers themselves don't use it. However, the increase in bus passenger numbers has maintained congestion levels at static levels over the past 10 years in the face of increasing numbers of people using the city and so is now a core component in enabling access to the city centre and its businesses.

Canterbury Connected BID has a number of priorities for public transport:

- Buses to return to St Peters Place as soon as possible. This is dealt with in more detail in the section on the St Dunstons and Westgate Traffic Improvement Scheme.
- Improvements to Canterbury Bus Station. This facility is over 10 years old in its present form and requires updating on a regular basis to ensure that the facilities keep pace with expectations to ensure that existing customers continue to use the service and new ones are attracted to it.
- Canterbury Connected BID supports the completion of a bus lane on the A28 Sturry Road and the provision of better bus access along the New Dover Road and also into the city centre from Wincheap.
- Canterbury Connected BID supports additional parking provision at Canterbury West Rail Station to support use of the service there and also the traders in that part of the city centre.

By foot

Canterbury is fortunate in having a high and increasing number of people who access the city on foot. The pedestrian core is heavily used and this is to the great benefit of city centre businesses.

Encouraging more pedestrian access is in the interests of Canterbury Connected BID levy payers and Canterbury Connected BID supports the following:

- Improved subways, with regular maintenance and cleansing
- Improved pedestrian signage across the city, with the use of a single clear city map, available for partners to also use. The system should tell the visitor where they are in relation to the wider city centre,

what is interesting about that place and enable them to navigate away from there to their next and future destinations.

- Regular and effective cleansing of all pavements, pathways and pedestrian through routes, including graffiti and the clearance of litter from adjacent spaces, irrespective of land ownership (too often these spaces are deemed 'too difficult' and left in a poor state). Poorly managed space discourages walking.
- The maintenance of the pedestrian access by the Westgate Towers is of particular importance. This heavily used passage is currently in poor condition, is a frequent begging location and needs attention immediately.
- City wide policy and enforcement on the issue of 'A' boards and external advertising to ensure businesses are able to promote themselves without causing unacceptable obstruction to visitors.
- Upgrading of the city centre streetscape. The success of the Palace Street and the new Northgate schemes should be rolled out as quickly as possible. In particular, the 'city spine' from St Georges to the Westgate has had little or no investment since pedestrianisation over 30 years ago and should be the strategic priority for Canterbury City Council. However, one area that is not contained in the Plan is Castle Street and this should be developed as soon as possible as 25% of all city centre parking is in this area and so this is a major pedestrian access route into the city while the businesses in that location would also benefit from the improvements.

By cycle

Canterbury Connected BID businesses both sell cycles and also benefit from the increasing leisure aspect of cycling and so there is broad support for it. The opportunity for the sub region to become a major destination for cyclists of all ages and abilities is significant and Canterbury Connected BID supports the Plan in all its aspirations for cycling.

However, there is an increasing issue of cyclists using the city centre in a dangerous manner (cycling quickly, no lights or bell) both during and outside the pedestrian zone time period. This will be covered in City Centre Deliveries and Access Section.

City Centre access and deliveries

As a medieval city, a large number of businesses have no reception facilities other than taking goods in through the front door. This leads to the requirement to allow delivery vehicles into the core city centre every day to service the businesses between 4pm and 10.30am the following morning. Additionally, cyclists use the high street as a route through the city at these times. A number of other vehicles, such as cash in transit deliveries (CIT) are allowed into the city at any time.

There are a number of issues arising from this which must be resolved:

1. The regulations date back to the 1980s when the area was first pedestrianized. They need to be reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose as this presents a dangerous situation and adverse impression for visitors. Canterbury Connected BID would like the Council to consider a change from 10.30am to 10am to clear the city of vehicles earlier, and from 4.00pm to 5.00pm to keep it clear later.

2. Vehicles regularly reverse into side streets at busy times to turn round then leave by the Whitefriars entrance to the city. Vehicles also turn toward Whitefriars when entering from side streets. Both of these manoeuvres are dangerous as it increases the amount of two way traffic in narrow often crowded streets, while the vehicle movement also presents a dangerous occurrence.
3. Cyclists often travel through this area at speed, both during the traffic free period and outside it, without lights, bells or consideration for pedestrians causing a number of accidents. The potential to use Burgate as part of an alternative route into and out of the city centre between 10.30am and 4pm for cycles should be explored.
4. Finally, the actual regulations are either poorly understood or unknown and they are absolutely unenforced by anyone. This leads to a situation where the city is not in control of its own space. This is exploited by both delivery operators using Canterbury as a location to schedule later, after locations that DO enforce their delivery slots, and by businesses for whom later/bespoke deliveries/access are convenient.

Canterbury Connected BID believes Canterbury City Council is the appropriate authority to lead a review of this as soon as possible.

St Dunstan and Westgate Traffic Improvement Scheme

This scheme was by far the most contentious change to the city's traffic network in recent years and feelings ran very high during and afterwards. The key changes that have been adopted subsequently are the 20 mph zone in the area, the wider pavement in St Dunstons (which has been very successful and well received) and, critically, the cessation of buses in to St Peters Place, which has had a damaging impact on businesses in St Peters Street.

Canterbury Connected BID has had discussions with Stagecoach and it is clear that buses will not be returning through the Westgate Towers again due to the width of vehicles and the scheduled monument designation of the structure, making any damage, deliberate or inadvertent, illegal. The effect on businesses in St Peters Street has been very detrimental as the businesses there have benefited for many years from the bus users, mainly older people and students, with around 100 people an hour alighting at that stop when the service ran into there.

One option would be to close the Towers and route traffic round them with a two way traffic control to enable buses to return to St Peters Place. However, the impact on the wider city traffic network would be a critical issue and significant research and discussion would be needed before this could be countenanced, even as a trial.

St Peters Street is an area of strong potential in the city centre but recent changes and the controversial nature of them has meant it is difficult to envisage a way to explore how to achieve that potential. It would be helpful to have a discussion with the City Council about this to find a way forward for the businesses in this part for the city. One potential opportunity would be the appointment of an independent consultant to review options for St Peters Street and the surrounding area.

Using technology to drive improved access to the city

Canterbury Connected BID uses the MyCanterbury platform, developed by local company, Think Agency, to promote the city's businesses. Developing this platform as an aid to improved access into the city is an opportunity for everyone. The key elements that could be developed are:

- A car sharing platform enabling people to link up with others who share all or part of their journey pattern. Car sharing is an important way in reducing congestion and also the cost of travel for individuals but cars passenger numbers have dropped.
- Car parking availability, by location, in real time.
- Car parking payment. The length of stay is critical in encouraging spend in the city and so an easy way in which to 'top up' parking using RingGo or similar, linked to the platform, would be important.
- Traffic and congestion information in real time.
- Bus availability in real time.

Appendix 1

Members of Canterbury Connected BID Transport & Access Working Group:

Andrew Stark, Stark Gallery & Sowley

Samantha Seager, Castle Street Dental Surgery

Paul Mallion, Conker Conservation

Dam Bateman, Fenwick

Declan Kelly, Abode Hotel

Paula Gillespie, The Marlowe Theatre

Clive Relf, Kreston Reeves

Nick Betts, Nasons

David Lilford, Lilford Gallery & Lilford Framing