

Canterbury Connected BID Transport and Access Working Group

Formal response to Canterbury City Council Transport & Parking Plan: 2016 – 2020

29/01/2016

Station Road West expansion

The expansion of the Station Road West car park is welcomed as a hub for the city and those who either work in London and live in the city and the surrounding area or those who work in the city and need to be able to access London easily. Indeed, it seems that the case for as much parking in this location as possible is very strong and so we would urge the Council to build this in at the outset rather than plan for it and respond at a later date with potentially higher costs.

The car park will also support businesses within the St Dunstons area and this too is welcome.

However, it should be noted that this expansion is not a direct replacement for the reduction in car parking places elsewhere in the city which support access to the core city centre and in particular those shopping in and visiting the city.

Park & ride

The expansion of Park & Ride is a vital component of the city's Park & Ride and is fully supported. The marketing of P&R is something that should be developed and the operator, Stagecoach, given a role in this as well as an incentive to grow the usage.

Additionally, using P&R to service Canterbury West Station as a further enhancement to using the station for commuters should be considered.

P&R buses exclusively serve the Bus Station in the city; consideration should be given to the P&R buses serving other locations in the city as part of the service they offer: St Peters, St Dunstons, and Northgate.

Car park disposal

There is significant concern within the business community about the loss of any car parking in the city centre. The growth of housing in the District and surrounding sub region will add 25% more dwellings in the next 15 years and Canterbury will be under even more pressure as a desirable location in which to spend time and money, do business and study. It is estimated that an additional 18,000 cars will potentially be owned by those occupying the District's planned additional housing stock in the next 20 years, let alone similar growth in the surrounding Districts.

- **Rosemary Lane:** this is the most contentious of all the closures. Evidence needs to be provided that the additional capacity that has been described in the adjacent multi storey car park is available in reality and that the reduced capacity will not adversely impact on the surrounding businesses in that area. The business community across the city views the loss of these spaces as a real concern.

Additionally, it is vital that, if these spaces are lost, what replaces them on that site has genuine value for the city, its businesses and the Castle Street area in particular. More student accommodation would not be viewed in this way.

- **Hawks Lane:** considerable concern has been expressed by local business services companies: property agents, law firms, accountants, architects and marketing companies. For these businesses, a car is a tool of their trade and access to it and the ability to drive in and out of the area relatively easily are key components of their business models. As one of them has said:

“Even a 5 minute walk extra to our vehicles would be inconvenient and detrimental to business.”

Also, the actual development potential of this site is seen by one local property professional as doubtful:

“Before financial implications can be considered, I have reservations over the ability for the site to tolerate development given the undoubted archaeology beneath the existing surface, along with the presence of listed buildings and ancient trees on the boundary. There is also the possibility of having to retain rights of way through the car park to the privately owned spaces to the rear.

...parking spaces in the City have been trading privately at upwards of £15,000 to £20,000 around the corner in Stour Street and the rental market for City Centre parking is exceptionally buoyant. I would consider £750 per annum per space to be conservative and with investment yields of sub 5% this would push the value of the car park well in excess of £600,000. This is the same price at which the Highways Depart traded in the market, in an identical location but larger site and with a substantial existing building setting a precedent for development. I cannot see how Hawks Lane could possibly generate a value significantly in excess of its existing car park use, notwithstanding the fact that the time, cost and risk of planning would still need to be factored in. Indeed, were the property to be presented to the market today seeking unconditional bids I am certain that it would generate interest at below existing use value.”

We would strongly recommend that this car park is retained.

- **Longport:** given the relatively small number of spaces involved, this would seem an appropriate opportunity for the Council to derive value from the land as residential use.

The Castle Quarter and business services community

The majority of the changes proposed in the Council’s plan 2016 – 2020 are focussed on this area of the city: St Margarets Street, Castle Street, Stour Street, Watling Street and Beercart Lane.

This area of the city is the business services hub, with property, financial, legal, business support and marketing companies located there, as well as a number of accommodation providers and other diverse businesses.

Given the changes, and the development of the Slatters Hotel site with 130 bed spaces and a new restaurant, it is vital that a single vision is developed for the area, in consultation with the businesses that trade there to ensure:

- Access to the area throughout the day and the ability, for those who need it, to use their cars to serve their client base.
- Easier access onto the Wincheap Roundabout to reduce delays in getting in and out of Castle Street.
- A streetscape that encourages pedestrians but also enables vehicle movements into and out of the area for the businesses that trade there.

Hotel, conference and event parking

The issue of available 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 the 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.

ANPR

This is strongly supported as is the open access of all car parking data in real time for use on mobile platforms. Canterbury Connected BID would like to trial this on the MyCanterbury platform as soon as possible.

Wincheap park & ride development and A2 slip road

Both of these are strongly supported as strategic components of managing the transport and access network for the city for the future.

City Centre pedestrian improvements

The principle is strongly supported with a number of comments:

- **Involvement:** Based on the successful Kings Mile extension where the business community was engaged from the beginning, this should be a template for all development of the streetscape in the city.

In particular, if Rosemary Lane car Park is disposed of (in spite of concerns from the business community), then the Castle Street/Stour Street business community must be involved in the discussions on what will happen in their area and the timing of it, at the very earliest stages.

In Orange Street and The Friars, the Marlowe Theatre has to be engaged to ensure that both during the work and subsequently, the theatre has the logistical support and access it needs to operate successfully.

- **St Georges Street:** this is the busiest street in the city, sitting as it does adjacent to the bus station and Whitefriars and at the gateway for the south of the city. The amount allocated to the refurbishment of

this area appears insufficient to initiate a streetscape that will reflect this; when St Georges Street is refurbished it should reflect the city's ambition as a centre for business, education, heritage and culture and also ensure that there is a coherent architectural linear 'journey' running from St Georges to the Westgate and through to Canterbury West Station. In particular, St Georges Clock Tower is an asset that has been sadly neglected for too long; finding a 'job' for this structure, especially given its connection to Christopher Marlowe should be at the centre of whatever happens in this area.

St Georges is the only public open space in the city centre as there is no city square/civic space in Canterbury. Developing it to meet new and innovative opportunities is essential in the development brief.

It is important that this opportunity, which will not recur for many years hence (the current 'scheme' was developed in the 1980s, over 30 years ago; the next refurbishment after this could be sometime after 2050!) is developed as an exciting place in which to spend time, especially as it is the only open public space within the city centre. Using Council funds as part of a wider HLF funded project could be one way to achieve the space the city deserves.

- **Design:** the Kings Mile development has been very successful and there will be a temptation to roll out something that looks very similar elsewhere in the city. While this may be appropriate, it is important that each area reflects its own character if possible and that new and innovative ideas are embraced; one size may not fit all.

Parking charges

While never welcome, if the car parking offer in the city can be modernised and developed for the future of the city then this is seen as a 'necessary evil'! It is very positive that the Council has a plan that is both comprehensive and innovative and it is understood that this is something that has to be paid for. Ensuring the city is an attractive and exciting destination is as important as making it accessible.

However, the Council must not use parking income as a support for general finance in the budget. The link between affordable parking and business prosperity is very clear and must not be put at risk.

Future developments

The city will experience new and exciting developments in the next few years: the Slatters Hotel will re-open (with no allocated parking!) and will regenerate St Margarets Street; the Flying Horse will re-open as a quality restaurant; St Peters Street is likely to see new opportunities if Barretts site is developed.

Additionally, as already mentioned, there is a planned 25% increase (80,000 dwellings) in the Canterbury District and the surrounding Council areas of Thanet, Dover, Shepway, Ashford and Swale by 2031. The impact of this growth on the city has to be a major strategic consideration in the Council's plans for the future to improve the city's status as a centre for business and education as well as a place to live and visit.

It is important that to the greatest extent possible the Council plans are 'stress tested' to ensure that they can cope with this anticipated growth.