

9. CATHEDRAL SQUARE STAGE FIVE

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Corporate Plan Output: On Street Management	

The purpose of this report is to introduce and initiate the last stage in the upgrading of Cathedral Square. This fifth stage is the final stage in the programme of works approved in 1996 to remodel Cathedral Square. In general, it involves completing the north-western quadrant of the Square, which is presently occupied by the commuter buses. The construction of the Bus Exchange means that the commuter buses will cease using the square in April 2001.

The early relocation of buses will require a staged upgrade of this section of the Square. The focus of this report, is a decision on traffic measures that could be introduced as a result of the buses leaving the Square and a decision on whether to proceed with the creation of a pedestrian mall.

A separate report on the terms of reference for the development of stage five of the Square was considered by the Environment Committee and the recommendations of that Committee are contained in their report to the Council.

THE VISION

The plan adopted by the Council in November 1996 as its "vision" for Cathedral Square is attached as Diagram A. This plan, which was developed as a result of extensive consultation over a 4-5 year period, shows the extension of the central pedestrian area into the north-western sector of the Square and the termination of Worcester Street (The Boulevard) at the Godley statue.

The "vision" gave pre-eminence to pedestrians with vehicles permitted as "visitors in a pedestrian environment". The design of the north-western quadrant has been in accordance with the recommendation adopted by the Council, which stated:

- "1. That the plans for Cathedral Square as so far developed, incorporating the long term concept plan (The Vision), together with the interim use of the north-western quadrant for buses, be adopted.*
- 2. That it be recognised that this interim use of the northern quadrant of the Square for buses will continue until such time as the Council has decided the issue of off street bus terminal/transit centre.*
- 3. That the detailed design for Cathedral Square now proceed, leading to the staged implementation of the final plan for all part of the Square other than the north-western quadrant*

The "vision" indicated that the link between Worcester Boulevard and Colombo Street becomes a pedestrian area. For this to occur either the road is required to be stopped as 'road' or is designated as a 'pedestrian mall'. Both these process take time and if the Council wishes to introduce traffic control measures at the time when the commuter buses leave the Square it is necessary for the Council to reaffirm the 'vision' as proposed or adopt an alternative. While, there are a wide range of activities that can take place in this north-western Quadrant, the roading options are limited .

ROADING OPTIONS

There are three general roading options for the vehicles to service this north-western quadrant:

1. To maintain two-way traffic movement between Worcester Boulevard and Colombo Street.
2. To provide for one way traffic flow from Worcester Boulevard to Colombo Street. (The reverse movement was not considered to be an option because of problems with right turning vehicles from Colombo Street.)
3. To eliminate the through movement and provide a turning head in the square at the eastern end of Worcester Boulevard.

The third option is the scheme adopted by the Council as its "Vision" for the last stage in the remodelling of Cathedral Square. This option provides the greatest opportunity to give prominence to pedestrians, which was the Council's principal focus in the redevelopment.

The one way option has the advantage of less road space required for manoeuvring vehicles and provides a simple junction with Colombo Street. It could still leave reasonable sized pedestrian areas to the north of the road if all parking was banned.

The two way option gives the greatest flexibility of vehicle movement but provides very little improvement to the pedestrian amenity.

TRAFFIC FUNCTIONS

The section of road through the Square between Worcester Boulevard and Colombo Street serves the following functions as well as its present function as a commuter bus terminal:

- Vehicle access to two underground car parks
- Traffic servicing of adjacent buildings
- Traffic servicing of activities in the square
- Tourist vehicle terminal
- Intra City bus terminal
- Part time Taxi Stand

The feature of these activities is that they are all trip destinations or origins and the through movement of vehicles is not an important part of the road function. In terms of the efficient movement of traffic in the inner city there is no need to maintain through traffic. In fact the traffic modelling for the improvements on Colombo Street has assumed that there will be no through traffic and that the lights at the intersection with Colombo Street will not be required.

All of the functions mentioned above can be provided with all three roading options. If a pedestrian mall is created then it will need to be designed to provide access to the existing underground car parks and to allow access for service vehicles in a similar way access is provided for servicing the Cashel and High Street Malls.

The type of vehicle and the number of vehicles that visit the area is an important consideration as these factors place large space demands on how the area is laid out. There are quite different space requirements if there is one or two way movement or if vehicles are required to U-turn. However the more space that is given over to vehicle parking or movement the less there is for pedestrian use or open space.

DISCUSSION

There are pressures from taxis, tour bus operators, and owners and tenants of buildings in the Square to provide more parking space and to maximise ease of use for vehicle accessibility into and from the Square. These groups see the removal of the buses as an opportunity to gain more space for their own use. The taxis in particular are keen to see a much larger taxi rank and continued access through the square.

It is possible to meet many of the demands of these groups if the present bus area adjacent to Chancery Lane is used as a turning and stopping area for vehicles and the bus area nearest Colombo Street is used for pedestrians. While this results in a slightly larger vehicle area than that initially shown on plan A it still provides for good pedestrian use of much of the NW quadrant.

The creation of a pedestrian mall is by a Special Order procedure. The order is passed by Council resolution. There is then a period for public comment followed by a hearing, if there are objections. The Council must then pass a second resolution confirming or amending the first within 70 days of the first resolution. The Council decision can be appealed to the Environment Court.

The first step in the development of stage five is for the Council to confirm that it wishes to proceed with the 1996 "vision" to extend the central pedestrian area into the NW quadrant. Staff would then be a position to prepare a plan for consultation with the key stakeholders with the aim of commencing the Special Order procedure at the February 2001 meeting.

Recommendation:

1. That the Council confirm its 1996 decision to close the north-west quadrant of the Square to through traffic.
2. That the Council proceed with the creation of a pedestrian mall in the north-west quadrant of Cathedral Square.
3. That a subcommittee consisting of the Chairman and Councillors Manning, Howell and Stonhill work with staff to develop a traffic management plan and terms of reference for consultation.
4. That the Mayoral Forum on Central City Revitalisation be requested to formulate a design concept for the pedestrian area for public consultation purposes.