

13. LICHFIELD LANES

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The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee on progress being made with the refurbishment of the area becoming known as “Lichfield Lanes”, to identify issues which may involve the Council, and to establish some guidelines for public/private partnerships, in relation to the roads, lanes and accessways.

BACKGROUND

The potential for refurbishment and general revitalisation of the area bounded by Manchester Street, Lichfield Street, Madras Street and Tuam Street was first recognised in a study undertaken for the then Environmental Policy and Planning Unit by Ian Athfield in 1997-98 - “Christchurch Heritage - a New Life”. The Council and the Central City Mayoral Forum have acknowledged this with work undertaken in High Street and Bedford Row in conjunction with property owners and occupiers.

“Lichfield Lanes” is a concept being developed by a group of local property investors, the Business Buildings Systems Group, and comprises the area within Lichfield Street, Madras Street, Tuam Street and High Street, and focussed on two narrow internal public roads, Poplar Street and Ash Street. They have now purchased a significant number of the properties within this area and have adopted many of the rejuvenation principles and ideas of the Athfield Report. Their proposal is to retain and refurbish most of the existing buildings, and “repopulate” them with a range of new uses, including arts and crafts, retail, cafés and restaurants, offices and residential. This will include recreating old accessway/lane areas that had been built over and providing new accesses out to High Street through existing shops and yards. The European-like narrow streets and generally small scale of the existing environment is seen as a positive attribute to be built upon and enhanced to the point where the owners see the area becoming a marketable tourist destination.

The Central City team, a working party of the Mayoral Forum and Athfield Architects have been working with the owners to develop a plan which will integrate the public and private spaces and provide good linkages through to other key areas of the central city, including High Street and the Turners and Growers site which is in the street block adjacent to the Madras Street boundary of the Lichfield Lanes area. A presentation was recently made to affected and adjacent owners and occupiers and was well received. Work is now well under way with some of the properties, and a number of new tenants are already in place.

ISSUES FOR THE COUNCIL

There are several areas as detailed below, where the Council’s involvement has been sought, or is considered appropriate. These include the desire to change the name of Poplar Street and Ash Street to Poplar Lane and Ash Lane, the upgrading of the ‘public’ spaces, both Council and privately owned (paving and street furniture), the ownership of the public spaces, the use of public spaces for commercial activity (eg café tables and chairs), provision of services, and issues of traffic access and flow.

Name Changes

This is currently being progressed with consents being sought from other affected owners. A formal resolution for change will be presented to the Council as soon as all consents have been obtained.

Upgrading Of Public Spaces

A design for future repaving, and suggested designs for street furniture have been developed by Athfield Architects and have the support of the developers and the Mayoral Forum. Indicative costs ranging from \$100,000- \$270,000 (depending on the extent of paving to be undertaken) have been calculated. Because of development works on adjacent sites and the possible need for new or renewed services, final paving will not be required for some time (say two years). There is, however, a need for some short-term asphalt paving in some areas and this needs to be undertaken as soon as possible.

Ownership Issues

There are several areas, currently owned by BBS, where it may be appropriate to transfer ownership to the Council (see attached plan). These include; an area of 136 m² on the corner of Ash Street and Poplar Street which is proposed, together with part of the adjacent street, to be developed as a small public square or piazza, and all or parts of existing privately owned lanes, off Poplar Street and Lichfield Street. It is proposed that such areas be transferred to the Council at no charge, in return for the Council undertaking paving and other works. At this stage it is suggested that the 136 m² area plus an 130 m² area of the lane currently being created off Poplar Street be considered for public ownership.

Public Space Use

It is anticipated that there will be a number of cafes and restaurants in the area, requiring tables, chairs and other street furniture. This can be dealt with under delegated authority.

Provision of Services

A survey undertaken has indicated that some of the existing services have been upgraded. There is a section of private sewer in legal road that may need to be upgraded prior to the paving work being built. New stormwater piping will be installed as part of the redevelopment work. Discussions are being held with Orion, Telecom and Telstra Clear regarding their future reticulation requirements for the area.

Traffic Flow And Access Issues

At present Poplar Street is a one-way street (northbound) while Ash Street is two-way. There is some evidence of Poplar Street being used as a short-cut between Tuam Street and Lichfield Street and while it remains important that vehicles servicing or visiting properties within the Lichfield Lanes area should continue to have access as required, extraneous traffic should be discouraged. More appropriate traffic flow systems are being investigated and will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

FUNDING OPTIONS

There is at present no funding specifically assigned to this project, although the City Streets Budget does from year 2005/06, have an annual sum of \$70,000 for such developments. There is funding available in the Central City Revitalisation budget for further improvements in the High Street vicinity and some of this could be used in the meantime to get urgent matters underway. The Mayoral Forum has also put in a submission to the LTCCP for funding for this project.

Staff

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Committee support in principle the proposals as outlined for Lichfield Lanes.
 2. That the Committee endorse the proposal for Council acquisition of land for public use as appropriate, to be negotiated with the owners and reported for approval to the Property and Major Projects Committee.
 3. That the other issues continue to be progressed and reported back for approval where necessary.

Chairman's

- Recommendation:**
1. That the above recommendation be adopted.
 2. That the report be referred to the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board for information.