



2 May 2006

Our Community Plan  
Christchurch City Council  
P O Box 237  
Christchurch 8003

Dear Sirs

We enclose our Submission for the Long Term City Plan – “Matters Relative to the Inner City”.

It is our wish to speak to this Submission. In anticipation, we thank you for the opportunity to do so.

Yours faithfully



Richard Ballantyne  
**Managing Director**

J. BALLANTYNE & CO. LTD

## Your submission

You may use this form for your submission on the draft Our Community Plan if you wish. Whether you use this form or not, please include your name, address and contact telephone number with your submission.

Tick one

I do NOT wish to present my submission at the hearing, and ask that this written submission be considered

OR

I wish to talk to the main points in my written submission at the hearings to be held between Thursday 25 May and Wednesday 7 June 2006

Are you completing this submission:  For yourself  On behalf of a group or organisation

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Do you also want to respond to:  Development Contributions  Aquatic Facilities  Other

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May 2006

## **Matters Relative to the Inner City**

**Submission by:- J. Ballantyne & Co Limited**

## **Introduction**

J Ballantyne & Co Ltd is a specialist Department Store, employing 530 people in three locations. Its main location is in City Mall where it has been trading as an entity since 1854. It also trades actively at the Airport and Timaru.

The Firm and the people who work in it have a 'feel' for the City possibly like no other entity or persons by virtue of their contact with many citizens and tourists.

Like many, it is greatly concerned about the displacement of people from the Central City, due to suburban growth of shopping centres and office space. Concerned also at the lack of control Council seems to have had in the direction and nature of growth.

The City has changed forever – as per attachment. Therefore, the signals the Council gives to its citizens and investors over the next few years are probably the most important in the City's history. In this Submission, we have tried to look forward to what the City could be like rather than look back and rue the changes (some would say) for the worse. By necessity, it is visionary as well as attempting to be practical. At least we would like to see some of its ideas debated seriously and see "what could be" rather than dismissed out of hand due to politics and agendas.

We would like to congratulate Council on the document produced for the public. It is a most challenging and difficult process. It also illustrates that one should never put off things that have to be done. Many items should have been tackled in the past and haven't. Christchurch must tackle them over the next few years or the state of the City and its environs could be disadvantaged for a long time; if the Council and prominent businesses lead this proactively, the underpinning pride of Cantabrians will ensure it succeeds.

### **1. Our Vision for the Centre of Christchurch...**

**An exciting, attractive destination with retail, entertainment and visitor facilities comparable with the best in the world.**

**We see the City Centre:**

- **Making Central Christchurch a Five Star destination**
- **Having a wide range of quality retailers, within an attractive shopping environment**
- **Being an enjoyable entertainment experience, ensuring the City Centre is the first entertainment choice**
- **Having a vibrant and lively visitor focussed ambience that reflects a uniquely Christchurch and Canterbury flavour**
- **Because of its range of attractive facilities and activities, enhances the international reputation of Christchurch as a superb long stay visitor destination**

- **Being a clean, friendly, safe and easily accessible environment for everyone**
- **Being a place where people choose to live due to its ambience, services and eclectic precincts**

The Firm attempts at all times to try and work its own business in line with this vision.

## **2. Issue: - Roading Systems and Traffic Control**

### **Our Views -**

- 2.1 It is our view that traffic that has no cause to enter inside the four Avenues should be encouraged to use Bealey Avenue, Fitzgerald Avenue, Moorhouse Avenue and Deans Avenue.
- 2.2 It is our view that the traffic engineers should investigate the lifting of all or some one way streets and thus make all inner City streets two way especially if 2.1 could be implemented. The aim being to make access and maneuverability around the Central City as easy as possible. The current system does not do this due to the increase in the number of vehicles. This would also help the buses whose drivers, we are led to believe, prefer two-way systems. Human common sense always finds solutions to traffic.
- 2.3 With the expansion of shopping in the suburbs, Blenheim Road, Ferry Road and Tower Junction, the traffic in the inner City is not as busy as previously, which is the basis of this proposal. It would give traffic greater freedom to find its inner City destination and help bus movements. Linkages between inner City precincts would be easier for all vehicles – Jade Stadium, Turners & Growers, Cashel Street, High Street and Victoria Street.
- 2.4 The current traffic system was designed 30 years ago and requires reexamination.

## **3. Issue:- Buses and the Bus Exchange**

- 3.1 Although the buses are subsidised by the ratepayer, there is a great need for an efficient public transport service.
- 3.2 The Firm endorses the spending of capital on an additional exchange to help alleviate the pressure on the current exchange, traffic congestion and to plan ahead for the greater use of public transport. There should be facilities for tourist buses in the City.
- 3.3 The traffic system must be organized in such a way that the buses can move easily around the City and keep to timetables. Frequency of service and the ability to keep to timetables are critical.

## **4. Issue:- Car Parking Strategy**

- 4.1 Ownership and development of the City's car parks should rest with the City Council on condition that they are run efficiently and perform the purpose for which they were built.
- 4.2 We believe that the management of the car parks could be greatly improved with the use of modern systems and technology. We would endorse and encourage expenditure on systems and security to make the car parking much more flexible, safe and affordable by decreasing operating costs.

- 4.3 We firmly believe that it is wrong of Council to compare Auckland and Wellington car parking policies and prices with Christchurch because their problems and issues are different. Mr Ian Athfield's view on these issues is worth considering. We would urge Council to listen to him as he is a man of great experience and looks at things from a "users" point of view.
- 4.4 Council should work with private enterprise to examine different methods of charging for parking to achieve the following objectives.
- 4.5 To provide affordable parking for those who work in the City. Otherwise offices and businesses who require parking for staff and clients will keep moving out of the City.
- 4.6 Encourage Christchurch citizens and visitors to use their City by the provision of efficient and affordable car parking for people who want to visit the City because it is worth visiting and for those who want to shop or transact their business in the City because it is the place where businesses should be and want to be.
- 4.7 The car parking strategy must work in line with Council's strategy for the inner City and not against it. For instance, to keep putting up prices for car parking contradicts the City Council's promotional campaigns to encourage people to come into the City Centre. The public and businesses are highly critical of the current approach.
- 4.8 The monitoring of on-street car parking also requires better management. Sundays, public holidays and even Saturday early morning and after 3pm should be free. People get very annoyed when they get a parking fine on a Sunday when there is plenty of parking space. The Firm even receives letters from the public asking us to do something about this! It drives people out of the City.

## **5. Issue:- Drift to Suburbs of Office Buildings**

As mentioned previously, we believe the City Council should strengthen the by-laws to control the erection of new office buildings to prevent unlimited drift to other zoned areas.

The inner City has a number of buildings that present earthquake risk and something needs to be done to ensure they are redeveloped in a way that benefits the inner City and certainly not allowed to be left to become run-down and derelict.

The drift to suburbs of office accommodation and other commerce is very damaging to the vitality and the viability of the City inner.

## **6. Issue:- City Mall**

Rename the Mall – Remembrance Boulevard

The Firm is against a targeted rate. The Firm believes the City can only spend what it can afford. There are obviously some projects of higher priority than City Mall and we appreciate the Council's problem. However, if the City cannot afford City Mall it should look at alternatives.

We would like the following to be considered:-

- 6.1 Allow slow roads through the whole of City Mall – around the Triangle Centre and Cashel Street of old.
- 6.2 Allow short-term car parking in City Mall.
- 6.3 Ensure the pavements are wide and well kept.

- 6.4 Have nice seating on the pavements. It is our belief this would do more to liven up the centre of the City than anything else.
- 6.5 The City now is divided into inner City precincts. Accessibility of buses and traffic in and around these precincts is what is required. The Mall is too big and the concept out of date. Rename the Mall – Remembrance Boulevard. Do not try and revive a concept that is outdated. The City is changing and Council must lead the change.
- 6.6 This idea goes hand in hand with the new era of urban design for Christchurch based on Turner and Growers (a future precinct), Victoria Street, High Street, New Regent Street, South of Lichfield Street, and a Cashel Street precinct. This together with the lifting of the one way system would create a lively City.

In Wellington and Auckland, inner City living is reality. Christchurch has huge potential for inner City living to develop, but it requires long term vision and leadership. Once inner City living objectives have been met then one can put up the car parking fees, which is what Auckland and Wellington have done.

## **7. Issue:- City Council Offices**

We would urge Council to put its offices as close to the Square as possible. It is such an important building and sends an important message to the citizens of Christchurch. We believe it should be West of Manchester Street, East of Oxford Terrace, North of Tuam Street and South of Armagh Street.

## **8. Issue:- The Square**

Rename – “Cathedral Gardens”

This is the most important hub of the City. It has been designed as a hub and not a Square and this is why it is not working for the benefit of Christchurch.

- 8.1 It should be redesigned so traffic can move around it and move out of it North, South, East and West.
- 8.2 The Square is too big for the size of the City.
- 8.3 In the 1950's and 60's it was the hub and heart of the City. People loved the Square and used it as it was designed to be used.

The solution is so simple.

We believe the Square should house a beautiful inner City garden, which could be world class and therefore a world class attraction. A must for people to visit, whether locals or visitors (Why is the Cathedral and Square most visited during the floral festival and the floral carpet is in the Cathedral?) We purport to be the “Garden City”. Let us make it a reality.

The pavements should be wide and business and Cafés encouraged where there used to be milk bars and picture theatres.

It has come to our attention that private enterprise could partly fund a world class garden. This would certainly enhance and facilitate the new era of urban design and inner City living.

If Council did away with City Mall but enhanced it as outlined and did something outstanding in the Square, the City and Square would again become the focal point that the original designers of the City intended.

## **9. Issue:- Inner City Living**

'The City' has to be a desirable address for an eclectic mix of people from the top socio-economic strata to people who love inner City life and can only afford lower rentals in simple, but quality residences. The precincts have to be also desirable to attract businesses to service inner City living.

Therefore transport, cleanliness, lighting and safety, as well as good urban design are "must haves". This will occur of its own accord in the North, South and West of the City. The East is the issue and where Council must concentrate its resources. The Turners and Growers development is a good start, provided there is easy inner connectivity with other inner City precincts.

Without a substantial increase in the number of people living within easy walking distance of the inner City or with easy access to it, we doubt whether good retailing, services or many types of businesses will survive. In essence without a good class of retail that appeals, the City will lose its vitality.

## **10. Issue:- Interconnectivity of Inner City Precincts**

If one buys into the concept of the City in the future being made up of a series of inner City precincts – each with a distinct character, these should have "interconnectivity".

There needs to be interconnectivity North, South and East, West.

Starting in the East, one starts with Jade Stadium, the Catholic Basilica, The Turners and Growers site, the CPIT, High Street and the Square.

Through to the West, one has New Regent Street, the Square, the Worcester Street Boulevard, the Arts Centre, Art Gallery, Museum and Gardens.

Going North East, one has the Square, Victoria Square and the Victoria Street precincts.

Going South, one has the Square, City Mall (could we be so bold to rename it Remembrance Boulevard!) Lichfield Lanes and the South of Lichfield Street development.

Note that the Square appears in every "spoke of the wheel". It was designed and should be the hub. Hence, its importance as a focal point for the City. If there are to be major enhancements to Jade Stadium – maybe the back office functions of the City Council could be housed at Jade and the Civic or public side of the Council's functions be at an appropriate site in the inner City. We understand the Council offices will need to be the size of PriceWaterhouse or larger!

The point about this part of the submission is the interrelationships and connectivity between important precincts.



## **11. Issue:- Transport within the Inner City and Inter Connectivity**

The current tram is limited by the rails it has to follow. However, it is a great means of transport and a beautiful vehicle.

In Europe they use authentic modern trams that run on rubber wheels and are therefore unlimited in their use around the cities they serve.

In order to build on the "trams", we would suggest that Council looks into the viability of having several special character trams to transport people around the central City precincts at regular intervals.

This would do two things:-

- 11.1 Give the central city some unique character, which would attract people into the City.
- 11.2 Would be used as a means of transport – not only for tourists, but the local populace. People love trams or a different mode of transport than being totally dependent on the car.

## **12. Issue:- Christchurch Airport**

Having had a participative relationship with both Christchurch International and Domestic Airport operations since their inception on the present Harewood site, the Firm would urge Council to use its influence to ensure that the Airport has a Christchurch, Canterbury and New Zealand ambience. We believe it presents Christchurch with a wonderful opportunity to have a domestic and international gateway with a "difference: or "local flavour". This can be done in many ways and make the City distinctive to the important visitor market.

## **13. Issue:- Striking the City Rate**

The Firm has examined the list of essential capital projects that Council must undertake. It is our belief it is best and in the long term the cheapest method to get on and do a large percentage of them. All citizens will benefit in the medium to long term.

We believe, so long as the ratepayer's money is wisely spent and there is a robust methodology or priority/necessity applied that a rate increase of between 8-10% for a period is reasonable.

## **14. Conclusion**

The important features of this are Council's own collective responsibility and leadership. Provided the right processes have been followed, Council collectively should sell its programmes to the citizens. Show imagination, innovation and leadership.

Should some ratepayers find the financial burden too great, Council could have a process whereby people can register and come to an arrangement of payment over time for any balance over the current rate. In other words operate it similar to a business debtors ledger!

Councillors must paint the big picture as to where they want to take the City and then sell it. If Christchurch establishes itself as clearly a "leading City" in almost all aspects – all will benefit and the payback will happen surprisingly quickly. If it does not, it will languish and other centres will prevail. This is not a good legacy and is unnecessary, when we have so much to offer.

## A Considered View of the City 1966 – 2006

The recent publicity over retail closures must be examined in the light of huge changes in the demographics of the City and the people that live within it.

1966

- The bicycle was still very prevalent
- Many people used public transport
- The suburbs were well defined and compact and there was little “sprawl”
- There was a different local body structure and councils competed with each other to draw business and industrial development – in fact competed with the City
- Zoning laws were tighter and there was no Resource Management Act
- The City had a wonderful Square, which was its heart. Traffic could flow easily East/West and North/South. It was used by people and vital
- The City had a strong commercial heart with many Head Offices
- Hereford Street was the home of legal and accounting Firms
- Lichfield Street, the home of the famous warehousing firms, such as Bing Harris, Pearsons, Sargood, Son and Ewen and Bains
- Moorhouse Avenue the home of the wool stores at the rail head
- Head Offices of Stock and Station Companies and the Freezing Companies were all in the commercial area
- North of the Square, the shops comprised Armstrongs; Hays; McKenzies and Woolworths
- South of the Square, there were the names of DIC; Beaths; Ballantynes; Mason Struthers; Reece Bros; Drayton Jones; Millers, Ashby Berghs, Kincaids and Wardells and MacKenzie and Willis

- To the East was the Farmers Co-op and AJ White and a little earlier, Stranges Department Store
- The Malls were just making their appearance in the form of Riccarton Mall
- The Square was a hive of activity with picture theatres, milk bars and grand hotels, such as Warners and United Service – not forgetting the Press and Government Departments
- The University was part of the City and gave it special character
- All the large Banks had their presence in the City

2006

Practically all of the aforementioned has disappeared altogether or changed. This is a world wide phenomenon except in the world's very large cities.

One cannot turn back the clock but there is an onus on Civic and business leaders to show that this generation has the vision and care for the City that its Founders obviously showed.

The reasons are quite straightforward. Whilst the Malls have born the blame often directed at them for the cause of this situation, there are other changes such as those in agriculture; the changes in the retail industry; the changes in wholesaling; the changes in transport; the moving of the University; dominance of the motor car; changes in local Government and zoning laws, the growth and sprawl of the City and the services that will naturally grow around urban sprawl, the advent of the Warehouse and other Big Box retailing concepts such as those at Tower Junction. The change in the use of land and buildings is forever present, the Square – is a good example. The advent of cheap air travel is another major change.

One cannot stop this, but the community can influence change and the nature of growth through the law and zoning and particularly our elected representatives.

The question is “what sort of City do we want to develop over time for the benefit of citizens and visitors to the City?” Do we manage the growth or allow it to be haphazard and lacking structure?

Tourists often say that Christchurch is one of the most beautiful and well serviced cities in the world. Some come back many times and use it as a base to tour the South Island. They are amazed at the excellent cultural activities and amenities provided for such a small population. Our schools, both public and private are some of the best in the country.

Well then, what sort of City do we want – especially the inner City because it has been affected adversely by these changes. Whereas the areas outside the Four Avenues, have had the benefit of major development over the years.

The inner City is changing and having difficulty adapting. It is how the changes are managed now and in the future with the right investment – through both Council and private initiatives which will determine whether future generations will say, “that was a clever and visionary generation” rather than “what a mess we have been left to clean up”. After all, we praise past generations for their vision of Hagley Park and other bold initiatives, which we all still enjoy.

The inner City requires the same sort of care, planning, communication, co-operation and most importantly civic leadership with a determination to “get it right”.

Whilst the reporting has been poor regarding the City recently, the Press must realize that they too have a civic duty to promote the positive rather than dwell on the negatives.

The City will have a rebirth if, firstly, people care enough and, secondly, have the will to do something constructive.

The careful use of buildings and urban design required to attract commercial activity back into the City is crucial. However, it is the Council's intention that the City becomes a place for inner City living, which should excite businesses as well as citizens alike. There is no reason why the inner City should not become a "suburb with a difference" – our preeminent suburb. The City has disintegrated into small destinations – all with their own services. This is not necessarily a bad thing – it is the result of change. For instance one has the Malls, Big Box retailing, Blenheim Road development which is creeping South fast, Moorhouse Avenue, South City, City Mall, High Street, Victoria Street, New Brighton, Tower Junction, Hornby and so on.

However, all citizens would support the need for the inner City to have the following and to world class standard

- good urban design, lighting, cleanliness, security, a vibrant shopping and nightlife precinct, commercial area, transport, cultural precincts – all to world class - a place of which we are proud, want to visit and will attract and excite visitors and tourists.

This picture would benefit all citizens. The converse is frightening – litter, crime, poorly kept and empty buildings, little lighting, foul smells and graffiti. A place where people are frightened to visit let alone run a business or shop. The latter would reflect the attitude of the City's people and poor leadership to any visitor. It

would condemn the City to a bleak future. Christchurch people are not like this, they defend the province and are as patriotic as any group of people in the world.

Let us please give our elected representatives the mandate and clear message to produce a plan for the "City, the way we want it" and then execute the plan with the same fervor with which we support our sporting teams.

**Richards Ballantyne**

08 February 2006