

11. CHESTER STREET PEDESTRIAN MALL

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Corporate Plan Output: On-Street Management	

The purpose of this report is to discuss the submissions of the Cathedral Grammar School to introduce a section of Chester Street as a pedestrian mall. At the last meeting of the Community Board, representatives of the school made submissions for the joint use of the street.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Chester Street is a local access street that runs between Park Terrace and Cranmer Square. The street is some 150 metres in length and all but one of the properties that are serviced by the street are presently owned and occupied by the School.

The principal generator of traffic in the street is the School. Consequently the peak periods are between 8am and 9am and 2:30pm and 4pm. During these periods there is a heavy demand for short-term parking generated as a result of parents picking up and dropping off children. The school now has a roll of over 300 pupils and includes both boys and girls and junior and intermediate age groups.

Existing traffic volumes are estimated to be less than 1000 vehicles per day during periods when the school is operating. At other times the volume is anticipated to be less than 400 vehicles per day. There are a number of different parking restrictions, which are all principally associated with the activities of the school. These restrictions include a P30 time limit and a P5 loading zone between the hours of 8-9am and 2:30-4:30pm on both sides of the road.

The Council reconstructed the street in 1994 replacing the old dish channel and introducing additional planting areas. These works show how at that time special recognition was given to the needs of the School. From an asset management point of view it will be some time before any additional works are planned for the street. An important feature of the street is its function to provide both a visual and a pedestrian link between Hagley Park and Cranmer Square

THE PROPOSAL

The proposal put forward by the School is to encourage joint use of the street and the adjacent properties. It is intended that during school hours the use of the central section of the street be restricted for use by pedestrians. Vehicle access will still be permitted at either end of the street during these periods. Outside school hours or those to be determined, the road will function as a normal street. It is intended that there will be no restriction to the use of the street by pedestrians or cyclists.

The school has indicated in their proposals for the street that the area should be paved and laid out as more of a pedestrian area. Bollards would restrict motor vehicles from using this area during the hours the area is set aside as a pedestrian mall. At this stage there has been no mention of who should fund these works and no provision has been made in any Council estimates.

It is intended that the central pedestrian area be used as a parking area during those times when children are being picked up and dropped off at school. The use of this area for this purpose provides the opportunity to allow for more vehicles to park and at the same time provide an environment where the emphasis is on pedestrians and slow vehicle speeds.

COMMENTS

The Council has the power under the Local Government Act, by Special Order Procedures, to declare a section of a street as a Pedestrian Mall. It can prohibit or restrict the hours that the control applies, as well as any conditions for the use of the area and controls to the driving and parking of any vehicles. This is a publicly advertised process where there is a formal hearing process to deal with the concerns of any persons.

There are other processes that the Council could take, such as a road stopping or closure. These processes are however more restrictive, but do have the advantage of providing the opportunity of selling the land in the road to the school. In the past there was an attempt to stop the section of Chester Street, but this was unsuccessful. It would be necessary if the Council was to take action along these lines, to introduce a change to the City Plan. At the same time it would need to evaluate all of the functions and the impacts such a road stopping would have. The advantage of the proposed process is that it provides the opportunity to meet the wishes and needs of the principal property owner in the street and at the same time, the needs of the wider public.

There are some advantages to the wider public with the pedestrianisation of this central section of Chester Street as it will add variety to the central city area, create a large area of open space and safer environment. There are of course advantages to the school in providing more short term parking, a safer link between different parts of the school and better security from increased public surveillance.

There are some disadvantages to the proposal and these are generally related to vehicle movement around this locality. An example is that a resident in the section of Kilmore Street between Park Terrace and Cranmer Square will then be required to travel via Armagh Street, in place of Chester Street, when approaching their property from the north along Park Terrace. This inconvenience is not expected to be significant if the time that the proposed pedestrian mall is restricted to school hours.

The cost of any works associated with the proposal would normally be a Council responsibility because a pedestrian mall would generally be of direct benefit to the wider general public. This, however, is somewhat different from a conventional pedestrian mall and while there is some public merit, the principal benefits are to the school. The fact that the Council has recently upgraded this section of Chester Street would put any Council funding of any works at a low priority. Consequently any works as a result of the proposed introduction of the pedestrian mall in the near future would need to be funded by the School.

CONCLUSION

This section of Chester Street is unique and the proposal to develop a section as a pedestrian mall has direct benefits to the school. There are also benefits to the wider public and while there are disadvantages, the benefits are considered to more than outweigh them. The Special Order process will enable these factors to be given their true weight.

There are some details that still need to be confirmed before a recommendation is made to the Council to commence special order procedures. These matters relate to the hours that the pedestrian mall applies, the costs and definition of responsibilities.

Recommendation: That the Community Board advises the Cathedral Grammar School it supports the proposal to develop Chester Street as a pedestrian mall in principle subject to the following conditions being met:

1. Definition of the hours and periods the proposed pedestrian mall is to apply.
2. Allocation of construction costs.
3. Responsibility and arrangements for the day to day administration of any vehicle barriers.

**Chairman's
Recommendation:** For discussion