

39. HEREFORD STREET-CATHEDRAL SQUARE: BUS AND COACH TOUR STOP – SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

Officer responsible City Streets Manager	Author Dave Hinman, Principal Policy Analyst Peter Atkinson, Area Engineer (Central City)
Corporate Plan Output: On-street Management	

The purpose of this report is to provide further information to the Committee in respect of the proposal to provide for tour buses and other vehicles in Hereford Street and Cathedral Square, related to the soon to relocate Visitor Information Centre. This report provides more detail about the scale of bus movements involved, the timeframe both for this move and for Cathedral Square and other changes relevant to the issue, and identifies the matters which need to be taken into account in considering both immediate and long term solutions.

INTRODUCTION

The Chief Executive of Christchurch and Canterbury Marketing, Darryl Park, has been in discussion with Council staff since April this year, concerning the needs for tourist bus and shuttle pick up, drop off and parking, following the decision to relocate the Visitor Centre from the old Municipal Building on Worcester Bridge to the former Chief Post Office in Cathedral Square.

The Visitor Centre move is long overdue, it having well outgrown its present premises, and there is general agreement that Cathedral Square is the most appropriate location. Having this facility in the Square will greatly assist in retaining and bringing more vitality to the Square. The former Post Office building was selected after a number of sites around the Square were considered. Fitout is at present well under way, and the move is now scheduled to take place over the weekend of 29-30 July.

The Visitor Centre currently attracts more than 400,000 visitors per annum and this is expected to soon exceed half a million following the move. It is a major attracter of tourist coach and shuttle services, acting as a destination and booking office for a number of companies. Statistics provided by Christchurch and Canterbury Marketing indicate some 78 vehicle movements per 24 hour period. Details of these will be tabled.

In selecting the Chief Post Office site, one of its advantages was the through access to Hereford Street. This has long been a significant pedestrian desire line and access, linking across Hereford Street via Shades Arcade, Whitcoulls etc to Cashel Mall. This pedestrian linkage will be emphasised and featured in the Visitor Centre layout.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

In considering both the short and long term possibilities for coach and other vehicle access to this site, the following matters need to be taken into account:

- (a) Present traffic/ bus arrangements in Cathedral Square
- (b) The timetable for relocating bus services to the bus exchange and the removal of commuter bus stops from the Square and adjacent streets.
- (c) The soon to commence reconstruction works in Oxford Terrace which will displace current coach stops and other parking.

- (d) The likely soon to commence refurbishment of the Avon Theatre site in Worcester street, requiring the (temporary) use of kerbside space.
- (e) The agreement between the Council and the owners of the Regent Theatre Building to retain carparking in front of the Four Ships Court area.
- (f) The Council's long term vision for Cathedral Square, adopted in 1996, which eliminates through traffic from the NW quadrant, and further emphasises the pedestrian emphasis of the Square.
- (g) Recognition of the need to service buildings and activities located in the Square without unduly compromising the vision.
- (h) Recognition of the advantages to the Square of servicing buildings from other streets where building sites and landholdings permit.
- (i) Studies currently in progress, and due to be reported in August to the City Services Committee, on the options for Stage 5 Cathedral Square development following the departure of commuter buses.
- (j) Existing provisions for coach and other pickup, dropoff and parking, and the concerns of Christchurch and Canterbury Marketing to have stopping and parking areas in close proximity.
- (k) Any likely traffic, visual or other impacts of proposed immediate and long term solutions.

SOLUTION PROPOSED

Taking all of the above into account, the officer's recommendation in the main report proposed a bus and coach park in Hereford Street, together with temporary provision for a small coach park to the north and east of the existing carpark in Cathedral Square.

Except for the shared use of the Airport bus stop, it is not practical for other areas, currently devoted to commuter buses, to accommodate tourist coaches and buses, and this situation will not change until the move to the Bus Exchange is completed in April. By then the Council should have decided upon both the traffic arrangements and the detailed aesthetic design for the NW quadrant and will be in a position to begin a programme of implementing the "final" (Stage 5) plan.

The use of Hereford Street at this stage will not compromise the longer term plan, as with both present demand and likely future growth, it is considered that it will be necessary to service the Visitor Centre activity from both Hereford Street and Cathedral Square. While there are some congestion problems in Hereford Street, it is not considered that the addition of a bus and Coach stop will significantly affect the operation of the street.

CONCLUSION

Together with the stops proposed for Hereford Street, the temporary provision of a space near the present carpark in Cathedral Square recognises the desires of operators and Christchurch and Canterbury Marketing to immediately provide some limited bus and coach stopping facilities, in sight of the Visitor Centre.

Options for the final layout of vehicle access to the NW quadrant of the Square, including buses, coaches, and taxis, are being developed for presentation to the Committee next month. The effects of the Visitor Centre move together with experiencing the proposed stops in operation over the next few months will be monitored and should assist the Council in determining the best long term solution.

Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairman's

Recommendation: Not seen by Chairman.