

17. CATHEDRAL SQUARE REDEVELOPMENT - STAGE 5

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The purpose of this report is to record the process and issues and formally report to the Committee, the conclusions and recommendations reached by the Committee following consultation and a series of meetings and seminars regarding the traffic engineering aspects of the Stage 5 Cathedral Square Redevelopment (northwest quadrant), together with that part of Worcester Street between Oxford Terrace and the Square.

BACKGROUND

The Northwest quadrant remains the last part of Cathedral Square to be redeveloped under the plan approved in 1996-77 and generally implemented 1998-2000. This area had become the interim suburban bus terminal, pending a decision on a new site elsewhere in the central city, and the only significant 'final' work undertaken was the reconstruction of the footpath area around its edge. Following the removal of the buses to the Bus Exchange (2001) then a review of the Square design by a team led by Ian Athfield together with extensive public consultation, the Council at its meeting in December 2002 considered a substantive report on the options for completing the Square project, including changes to the areas already redeveloped. In respect of Stage 5 it resolved, inter alia, "...That design work for the north-west quadrant be implemented, with a completion date of no later than 30 June 2003" and "...that the implementation of detail design and construction now pass to the Property and Major Projects Committee provided that details of traffic engineering first be approved by the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee."

In the first half of 2003, a Council staff team, led by the City Streets Unit, developed a draft plan for Stage 5. The team involved a number of disciplines and consulted widely within the Council and also with the Cathedral Square Stakeholders Group, shuttle and tour bus operators, and the Taxi Federation as the plans were developed.

A report and draft plans were presented to the June 2003 meeting of the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee. Several options, including both one and two way traffic were proposed and the Committee selected for further consultation the option which included a one-way road, following the existing outside kerb line of the north-west sector of the Square. The Committee also requested that the consultation include the option to convert Worcester Street, between the Square and Oxford Terrace, into a boulevard, similar to Worcester Street between Cambridge Terrace and Rolleston Avenue. Plan 'A' separately circulated shows the option presented for consultation.

In summary this plan showed:

- A one-way road from Oxford Terrace to Colombo Street creating a low-traffic numbers, slower speed road, to be constructed in asphalt.
- Removal of parking in front of the First Four Ships Steps allowing creation of bigger pedestrian areas, with all pedestrian areas to be of the same granite paving as the rest of the Square.
- Planting more trees.
- The south side footpath on Worcester Street widened out to the tram track, continuing the Boulevard effect through to Cathedral Square.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Consultation was carried out with plans and comment in city newspapers, three large plans available in the Square and at Our City O-Tautahi, a model at Our City O-Tautahi, plus widespread distribution of a publicity leaflet with text, a plan, and a submission form. Information was also available on the 'Have Your Say' website. Comments were sought by 22 August 2003, and it was subsequently agreed to publicly hear submissions from those who wished to present in person.

Overall Results

A total of eighty-three submissions were received through email, the publicity feedback form, telephone call, or people coming in to the Civic Offices.

The main issues raised in the submissions were:

- 46 of the submissions (55%) supported the one-way road but some of these suggested further items needed to be considered.
- 15 of the submissions (17%) were against the one-way road.
- 18 of the submissions (21%) requested more private car parking spaces.
- 8 of the submissions (9%) requested loading zones for the businesses.
- 12 of the submissions (14%) requested more parking for the bus and shuttle bus operators. 53% of the submissions received from the bus/shuttle bus operators supported the proposed plan.
- 4 of the submissions (5%) requested more parking spaces for the taxis.

In addition two petitions were received. The first contained 247 signatures opposing the creation of the one-way traffic system and any reduction in short-term on street carparking. A second, 28 signature petition from some of the City's Tour, Shuttle and Coach operators, opposed the implementation of the plan as presented for consultation.

Below is a summary of the submissions as lodged, more particularly from those directly affected.

Cathedral Square Stakeholders

Prior to the release of the consultation option, the Square Stakeholders Group supported the proposed one-way option and narrowing of the carriageway, on the basis that additional short-term parking would be increased by utilising the areas not used for road. They believe people must have access to the Square and this means that vehicle access and consequently suitable short-term parking must be provided.

Subsequent to the consultation, and at the subsequent hearing before the Committee, their view changed and they now oppose the one-way proposal for Worcester Street, concerned it will impact on the viability of the adjacent businesses which rely on traffic being able to access the Square from both directions. They are also concerned the one-way will be confusing for tourists. However, they support the concept of widening the footpath along Worcester Street.

The Group supports the location of the shuttle bus stops. They do not believe that the shuttle operators are willing to manage this space effectively, and want the Council to be involved in the management and enforcement of this space.

They wish the design of Worcester Street to be flexible for possible future changes in the buildings. They say this could be achieved by constructing low kerbs that would allow for parking on the footpath.

They request the Council to reduce the number of Metro (suburban) buses travelling through the Square along Colombo Street.

They have also requested better policing and enforcement of the short-term parking.

Anthony Harper Lawyers

Generally are in favour of the proposed changes but see continual bus and P5 parking as simply shifting one of the main issues, being the connection of the Square with those working around it. Their preference is to minimise parking around the Chancery Lane area so as to remove the barrier to pedestrian flows and the appealing visual connection that can be made in the area.

Christchurch Cathedral

The Cathedral generally supports the proposed plan but feels the plan should be expanded on to further enhance the character of the Square, ie:

- Two-way traffic to remain. One-way would offer no benefit to anyone in the Square and would make access into the Square more difficult.
- The path in Worcester Street should be widened but include P5 parking in between the trees.

- The continuity of street paving to existing steps behind Godley to define the special character of the Boulevard leading up into the Square. The paving would create a clear pathway between the Museum and the Cathedral.
- Remove the parking from in front of the Visitor Centre as per plan, reinstate to the north of the Police Kiosk.
- Remove the Police Kiosk into perimeter ground floor retail space.

The Cathedral supports planting of more trees

Canterbury Employers Chamber of Commerce

They oppose the proposed plan for the Stage 5 area. They consider the proposal is not balanced and clearly is designed for pedestrians with little consideration given to the business and vehicle operators. The one-way slow road and removal of parking will increase the difficulty of vehicle and operators trying to access this area of the Square.

The Chamber of Commerce Group wishes the Central City Traffic Management Working Group, that was formed following consultation on the proposed Tuam-Lichfield Streets swap to include the Square in its considerations.

Christchurch and Canterbury Marketing Ltd

CCM support the continuation of the Boulevard. They fully support the footpath widening of Worcester Street but would like to continue the Boulevard paving up to the steps of the Cathedral.

However, they would like to see an increase in the number of Tourist Coach/Shuttle parking areas. In particular they suggest:

- Reducing the 60 minute coach parking in Worcester Street to 20 minutes (requiring buses to layover somewhere other than the Square).
- A coach calling station. During busy periods coaches would be called in by radio (from a layover point in another part of the city) when they are required to pick up their passengers.
- Provide additional coach parking in Gloucester Street and Hereford Street.

CCM would also like to see additional loading zones to allow servicing of businesses.

Carter Group

The Carter Group oppose the Stage 5 proposal and suggest the following changes:

- The road link through Worcester Boulevard and the northwest corner must remain two way - this can be within the meandering alignment, and,
- There be an increase in the provision for short-term parking ie (P5-P15).

Petitions

A petition was received from the owners, managers, tenants and users of the buildings in and visitors to this location of the Square (247 signatures). It would appear the great majority of the signatories are users or visitors. The prayer of the petition is that they are opposed to the creation of the one-way traffic system and the reduction in short-term on-street car parking. These proposed actions would impact adversely on the accessibility of the Square and its surrounds, the viability of commerce and are not required in order to sustain or provide enhanced pedestrian amenity and open space provisions for Cathedral Square.

The petition requested:

- That traffic flow be retained as two-way. This can be generally within the meandering format or design as shown in the stage 5 plan.
- That increased provision be made for on-street car parking within this sector of Worcester Boulevard and the northwest quadrant of the Square. The provision should be for more on-street short-term parking than currently exists.

A further petition was received from Mr R M McCarthy on behalf of those tour, coach and shuttle bus operators who oppose the proposed plan (28 signatures). The petition also requested that the Council further consults with the operators, that they want to register their position as 'affected parties' for any forthcoming resource consent applications and that they want to be heard.

Mr McCarthy has also submitted a personal submission where he wishes to see the existing alignment retained and shuttle buses able to park each side of the existing (ex-bus-stop) islands.

VIABILITY OF THE PROPOSED ROAD ALIGNMENT

On 18 August 2003 the proposed road alignment was set out with traffic cones to represent the new kerb alignment and parked vehicles. Red Bus Ltd provided a 6-wheeler Tag bus, which has the same wheelbase and overall dimensions as the tour coaches.

The trial indicated that the alignment of the road near the northern end requires a slight adjustment to be made. This change does not adversely affect the overall scheme and the plan has been amended accordingly.

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION MATTERS

Prior to the public hearing of submissions, the staff project team gave consideration to the matters raised by the submitters, and reported back to the Committee to assist the hearing process.

Two way road options

A number of requests were for the road to be a two-way road which generally follows the meandering format (as suggested in the 247 signature petition). A plan was drafted to see if this option was viable. It was found that to accommodate the paths of vehicles to allow unimpeded two-directional flow, the required area of carriageway increases significantly, there would be a significant reduction in space available for carparking and three of the existing trees would have to be removed (two near Vadal Internet email and one near Cambio Bureau De Change). While the first two could be replaced with trees of similar size the third is a very good specimen and should remain. The only practical option for two way is to retain the present (straight) alignment.

Parking

Many of the responses sought an increase in parking of one form or another - public vehicles, taxis, shuttle buses and touring buses. It is not possible to accommodate all of the parking requests as there is limited space in this section of the Square, and the objective of increasing pedestrian space and ease of access to and through the Square remains.

Some of the submissions requested that parking bays be installed amongst the trees on the south side of Worcester Street. However, if the road is to be a one-way road this would cause significant safety concerns, as vehicles would have to pull in front of the tram travelling in the opposite direction to get into the parking space. Further, if vehicles do not park correctly then this could prevent the tram from getting past.

For presentation to the hearing, the project team made the following changes to the scheme to try to satisfy some of the submissions.

- Additional short-term parking (five parks) can be accommodated outside the Tower corporation building, near the Police Kiosk. The possibility of additional short-term parking to the south of the taxi stand has been examined, but was not recommended as it is very close to the intersection of Colombo Street and vehicles manoeuvring in and out of these spaces would be in conflict with traffic exiting through the intersection.
- Two loading zones outside the Anthony Harper building were added. These can be achieved by removing one of the coach stops in Worcester Street, relocating the Airport bus toward the west and allowing the loading zone to also be occupied by the shuttle bus operators. This loading zone will be central to most of the businesses and will have a five-minute parking restriction.

On further investigation the design team have found that the six P5 parking spaces shown outside the Vadal Internet email are too narrow and need to be 3.0m wide, the implication for this is that if the six spaces are to remain then one of the existing trees would have to be removed. The tree concerned is relatively small and could quite readily be replaced with a similar size tree. The other option is to reduce the number of parks in this area and maintain the tree.

THE HEARING OF SUBMISSIONS

Following a meeting of the Central City Streets Subcommittee on 24 September 2003, when members were briefed on the submissions received, it was agreed that a Special Meeting of the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee be held to hear submissions and recommend a subsequent design process to the Council. All submitters were advised of the opportunity to be heard and the meeting took place on 11 November 2003, where 14 submitters appeared in person. A report and copies of all submissions received had been circulated to Members of the Committee prior to the hearing. The minutes of this meeting, which include detailed reports on the submissions made are attached (attachment 1).

CONSIDERATION OF SUBMISSIONS

The Committee held a further seminar meeting on 9 December 2003 to consider in detail the submissions, and possible amendments to the plan to meet submitters' concerns. A number of options for the road had been investigated by staff to further test the feasibility of meeting some of the concerns and proposals of submitters.

These options included:

1. A widened two-way meandering road to allow for cars and coaches/buses both ways. This would require the removal of three trees and would eliminate between 5 and 10 car parking spaces. This option had been tested and rejected earlier in the process and again was not considered to be a practical option.
2. A narrow two-way meandering road which allowed for cars to travel in both directions, but buses/coaches east bound only. This would require west bound cars to give way to buses/coaches. It is not a practical option as there are few spaces where cars could pause to give way to buses/coaches and there would be major safety issues due to lack of line-of-sight visibility and the need for cars to reverse in the event of a bus coming the other way.
3. The narrow one-way (east bound) meandering road as presented for consultation but amended to provide five additional P5 car parks, with two parks to be for the disabled, additional provision for shuttles and taxis and loading zones.
4. A variation of Option 3 to allow for the provision of a tram, bus and retail pavilion and separation of cars from buses/coaches (by having a direct diagonal route for buses/coaches. . Some submitters had also raised the wider issue of a central city covered coach and shuttle terminal, not necessarily to be located in the Cathedral Square. While a future tram stop pavilion is still possible, the current proposal was not supported because of potential traffic congestion (including difficulties of keeping cars on their separate route) and less satisfactory pedestrian access.
5. A two-way straight (diagonal) road (similar alignment to as at present). This was not considered conducive to improving the Cathedral Square environment and was rejected by the Committee.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having given detailed consideration to the issues raised by submitters and noting also the submissions received in support of the plan as presented for public submission the Committee has concluded that it is not possible to meet the competing needs/desires of all Cathedral Square users, and that an appropriate balance needs to be struck. Cathedral Square has long been recognised as the City's premier public space "the city's most important gathering place, the city's most important public face (with a) pivotal role... in maintaining and enhancing the central city as the principal commercial, administration, employment, cultural and tourism focus of the city." (CCC Cathedral Square Redevelopment Report 1996).

The existing traffic characteristics of this part of the Cathedral Square are quite different to east of the Cathedral, where the road forms part of Colombo Street, still a significant traffic and public transport spine for the central city, and carrying in excess of 7,000 vehicles per day. The northwest quadrant is comparatively lightly trafficked, carrying some 1,900 vehicles per day, with almost two-thirds of these travelling in an easterly direction. Surveys also indicate that 16% of vehicles in this area are taxis, which is significantly higher than average. Only one-third of vehicles passing through the area currently stop, suggesting that traffic actually having business in this part of the Square is quite low.

The Committee considers that the northwest quadrant should not be encouraged to be used as a main traffic thoroughfare, but it is important that appropriate access be maintained to adjacent properties and Cathedral Square activities, including tourism. As part of the city's premier public space, it must not be permitted to become dominated by parked cars, or long term parking of other vehicles, and the focus needs to be on short term, high turnover managed parking, to meet the reasonable needs of activities in and adjacent to the Square. Longer term parking is well provided in the vicinity with the Rydges and Farmers car parks, together with privately owned car parking serving Cathedral Square properties.

The Committee does not consider that traffic changes around the Square and Worcester Street would be significant in relation to the overall central city transport plan and therefore does not accept the need for the matter to be deferred and considered by the Central City Transport Working Party, as sought by some submitters.

The Committee has therefore concluded, taking all factors into account, that the most appropriate solution for traffic and parking in the Stage 5 (northwest quadrant) area of the Square, is an amended version of the one way meandering road as presented for public consultation (ie Option 3 above). This is separately circulated as Plan "B".

While acknowledging the concerns of some submitters about the one-way proposal, the Committee does not accept that it will have any detrimental affect, and that its many advantages outweighed the disadvantages perceived by the submitters. It notes how successful the one-way portion of Oxford Terrace (outside the Strip) has been (despite initial concerns by some adjacent occupiers), and also the one-way parts of the Worcester Boulevard. While in each case this has placed restrictions on access, such restrictions have been readily accepted by users with no harm to adjacent properties which appear to be thriving. There is no reason why this should not be the same in Cathedral Square.

The Committee notes that for a two-way option (not practical in the narrow form as requested by submitters), the size required to accommodate all forms of traffic including tour coaches is such that it would cause many practical difficulties. These include:

1. Pedestrian access.
2. Pedestrian safety - a narrow one-way slow road is safer for pedestrians to cross than the two way options.
3. Loss of car parking spaces.
4. Loss of shuttle stops.
5. Removal of trees.
6. Not in accordance with the vision for the Square.

7. Would require further traffic signals.
8. Not compatible with the wish to keep traffic speeds low in this area.

There was also a request for additional cycle provision which would require further traffic signals and this was also not considered appropriate.

The Committee is keen to keep traffic speeds low in this area, and it is noted that there is already a speed limit of 30k/m applying throughout Cathedral Square.

Some of the matters raised by submitters went beyond the traffic engineering responsibilities of the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee and are accordingly referred on to the Property and Major Projects Committee. These include issues of extending the boulevard paving from the Regent building to the Godley Statue, the need for more greening, high quality signage and a design solution for preventing vehicle access to pedestrian areas.

There are also some additional consequential recommendations which the Committee has identified, relating to better identification and changes in operating hours of the Rydges car park, better management of taxi, coach and shuttle spaces, provision of coach and shuttle stops in Hereford Street and Gloucester Street.

PROCESS FROM THIS POINT

As indicated in the introduction to this report, it is the role of the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee to resolve the traffic engineering issues before referring the overall Stage 5 plan on to the Property and Major Projects Committee for consideration and approval. To complete the traffic related part of the decision a by-law change will be required to implement the one-way road. A separate report and recommendation to that effect is included in the current Committee agenda.

The Council has sought legal advice from Goodman Steven Tavendale (commercial, primary industry and resource management lawyers), and they have confirmed that the proposed work for the Stage 5 Redevelopment does not require a resource consent. This is different from the main body of the Square where consents were required - this difference is because the working area in the Stage 5 proposal is zoned Special Purpose (Road) whereas the main body of the Square is Special Purpose (Pedestrian Precinct).

In order for the Council to meet a target of commencing Stage 5 construction by June this year (best time of the year because of lower utilisation), approval by the Sustainable Transport and Utilities and Property and Major Projects Committees and the Council (including the by-law change) is a matter of some urgency, given the time frames required for detail design, materials purchase and tendering the work.

To implement the plan as proposed, the total construction cost is estimated to be \$1,600,000. This figure includes all of the work in the Stage 5 quadrant (\$1,000,000), the south side of Worcester Street (\$200,000) and the lighting improvement works in the rest of the Square (\$400,000).

At present the allocated budget for the Square (Stage 5) will not cover the widening of the footpath and landscaping in Worcester Street. The City Streets Unit will investigate funding options and report this to the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee in the near future.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the one way (east bound) meandering road as amended (including changes to Worcester Street) (Plan B attached) be adopted.
 2. That in respect of Rydges Car Park staff investigate and report back to the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee on:
 - (a) The extension of first hour free parking, and Sunday opening to this car parking building.
 - (b) Improved and more highly visible access to the pedestrian entrance to the car park from Worcester Street.

3. That in consultation with the taxi and shuttle companies improvements be made to the management and utilisation of taxi and shuttle spaces in the Square.
4. That when required, provision of further coach and shuttle stops in Hereford Street and Gloucester Street be investigated.
5. That the following additional recommendations be referred on to the Property and Major Projects Committee for consideration:
 - (a) That consideration be given to extending the boulevard pedestrian paving from the Regent Theatre to at least the Godley Statue.
 - (b) That additional greening, including more trees be considered.
 - (c) That special high quality signage be considered to identify shuttle bus stops.
 - (d) That design solutions for preventing vehicle access to pedestrian areas be investigated.

**Chairman's
Recommendation:**

1. That the above recommendations be adopted.
2. That the Council investigate the opportunities for a partnership with appropriate stakeholders for a central city coach terminal to serve tourist coaches, intercity buses and shuttle buses.