

## IT'S OUR CITY

### MINUTES of a WORKING PARTY with CENTROS MILLER et al held on Wednesday 29 November 2006 at 6pm at Pizza Margherita, Moor Lane, Lancaster

Present were:

**David Lewis** (associate director, CM)

Paul Stocker (transport consultant, Mayer Brown)

**Steve Bryson** (public relations and consultation, Halogen)

**Lancaster Chamber of Commerce (CoC)**

**Lancaster Canal Trust (LCT)**

**Lancaster Civic Society (LCS)**

**IOC:** Billy Pye and Michael Nunn (with John Burkinshaw, registered carer)

**Lancaster and Morecambe Vision (LMV)**

**Lancashire Constabulary (LC):** Insp Mike Adamson (Lancaster geographic Inspector) and ANOther

*David Lewis (DL) opened the proceedings and welcomed all to the room which was rather more cramped and claustrophobic, round heavy iron tables, than the last Working Party. Coffee and soft drinks were offered.*

*He explained that the Agenda would follow the Key Points on the flip chart from the last Working Party. All comments in 'single inverted commas' are what CM said verbatim.*

- 1 Why have we dismissed the access/road option through the site?** The tunnel idea (see notes from last Working Party) was neither practicable nor deliverable. 'It will promote car-borne use .. making car use in and out of the city easier', CM said, and 'through traffic will grow'. CM has spoken to both City and County Councils about this matter, and will circulate their responses. Regarding the tunnel or an alternative route for the A6 near the City Centre, 'we can't take this any further'.
- 2 Why is the department store so far away?** This is to encourage shoppers to walk eastwards through the while development to get there. Retail parts of the whole development were shown highlighted on and OHP. They are at the centre and the top (North) of the area. Retail is to occupy 40% of the whole development. CM said they would also plot [sic – presumably on a large map] all other retail in Lancaster centre.
- 3 What is the distance from Market Sq to the dept store? – emphasise scales of difference with larger context map; space/distance comparisons with Metro Centre/Trafford Centre.** It will be 370m from the centre of the Market Square to the 'Central Piazza', and 250m from M&S. CM had not provided comparisons with other towns 'with the same retailing pitch'.
- 4 Exposure to elements on the bridge – enclose/open?** This debate 'will run and run'. CM doesn't want to block the view etc, and there was a wish to enclose the North side. The 'back of the St Nicholas Arcades must be dealt with'. There was considerable discussion about the bridge, and CM agreed that the answer was a 'difficult balance'. They pointed out that there was a bridge from M&S to the Arndale Centre in Manchester.  
  
BP asked about scrapping the bridge and leaving Stonewell as it is. CM felt that that would place a 'barrier' to the development, and that the City Council think the bridge is important. There was a risk of polarisation. Another question wondered if lowering the road to drop the bridge would be possible, but CM felt that the gradient would be too steep to meet the obligatory 6.5m clearance for the bridge above road level.
- 5 Vehicle exits from Moor Lane to S – how?**
- 6 Base for police on site?** CM agreed that there would be a police base in the development, and it would have a police sign and provide operational control for patrolling the City centre. The police will liaise with CM on this; there was an emphasis on the importance of a police presence in the community.
- 7 No nightclubs – condition requested.** CM undertook to provide no nightclubs.

- 8 **How have we arrived at the number of parking spaces?**
- 9 **Can Lancaster cope with 3,000 extra car journeys?**
- 10 **Consider stepping residential block on Moor Lane down towards church building (Youth Theatre).** The proposed residential building between Bath Mill and the Youth Theatre will consist of five floors, one of which will be below ground. The top one will be clad in glass and the structure constructed of re-used stone. On the question of the use of local stone in the total development, CM stated that 'sourcing materials locally addresses sustainability issues'. They will research the local availability of construction materials.
- 11 **View expressed that LCC was not impartial.** CM felt not, and Graham Cox, from the City Council's Estates department was present.
- 12 **Access to alleyway behind Alfred St terrace?**
- 13 **Could use more mooring space on canal, but keep soft edge where possible.** CM wondered what people wanted: mooring, the rural look etc? The Canal Trust (CT) advocating clearing reed growth, but a 'halfway' option would be to 'pave' the towpath with grass edges. CM will clean the Canal and its immediate environment. The CT undertook to ask residents for their views.

BP asked what the importance was of the reed beds. CM was keen to achieve a balance, and will be doing an environmental study. They have not spoken to British Waterways recently, but 'will' get back to them before the January Working Party. They have done 'some Environmental Assessment' and will release this data. Evidently no bats were found, and the survey was done for CM by Watermans, paid for by CM and scrutinised by the City and County Councils.
- 14 **Keep vegetation at low level.**
- 15 **What to discuss shortlist of other architects.**
- 16 **Concern expressed about genuinely affordable housing.** The town houses will be opposite Alfred St, and the 'affordable housing' facing St Leonardsgate.
- 17 **Consultation needed with Alfred St residents re residential parking.** CM will do this and is keen to strike a right balance between the Council and residents. BP wondered if there would be provisions for one car per household; CM explained that they are estimating on 0.7, but that level can be increased. It was noted that, in Freehold, 25% of houses have no car, 50% have 1 and 16% have 2 [note: these percentages only sum to 91%]. It was asked whether residents would let CM know how many cars they wish/have [not sure here] per house. BP noted that there was a variety of housing in Freehold: single-tenant owned, sheltered etc.
- 18 **Air pollution.** A survey on this is 'being done'. BP was concerned that stationary cars produce more pollution in congestion, and wondered if CM had any data on this. CM will get the appropriate data. It was agreed that this is a matter which needs to be looked at very, very carefully.
- 19 **Alfred St trees – opinion divided about partial removal/replanting or retention.**
- 20 **Christmas period peak time parking requirements.**
- 21 **Lancaster 'flavour' required – not 'clone town'.** There was some inconclusive discussion here.
- 22 **What impact on local retailers?**
- 23 **Level of consultation could have been better, but are very glad to have been involved in the process.** IOC has not been alone in expressing their dissatisfaction about this. CM apologised for the late arrival of the notes of the previous Working Party and assured all that this 'won't happen again'. The next Working Party will serve as a 'catch-up' for unresolved and undebated issues.

*At this point the Working Party briefly adjourned.*

The second part of the Working Party was largely devoted to Highways and Transport matters, and Meyer Brown (CM's Traffic Consultants) contributed to this part of the evening.

The procedures used in assessing transport matters were: initial appraisal, data collection, consultation and development. The main topics explored were: Congestion, Car Parking and Rat Running. In February 2006 surveys were carried out at 17 car parks, 19 junctions and some rat runs. Number plate tracing was used to track vehicles in and out of particular areas.

In October 2006 8 counts were taken of different types of vehicle at 8 locations. This allowed some calculation of journey times. Automatic Traffic Counts (ATCs) were also being conducted using tubes sensors on roads obtained from the County Council.

The PARAMICS and TRANSYT models were being used on 18 junctions in three regions, focussing on the City Centre and noting traffic light behaviour. CM is presently updating and fine-tuning the County Council's model.

The critical junctions were South Rd/Thurnham St; Parliament St/Caton Rd, Bulk Rd/Caton Rd, Bulk St/St Leonardsgate, and Kingsway/Caton Rd. 75% of the traffic heading for the new development would be coming from the North. Levels of traffic through the site would be between 700 and 1,000 movements per hour at peak times, and 175 – 200 on rat runs. Estimated peak trips would be between 350 and 600 per hour.

Some of these trips were for parking purposes. CM will provide non-peak data. Some complex data and analysis relating to Alfred St, rat runs and residential development flows were shown on OHPs. The trip from Morecambe Rd to South Rd/Ashton Rd junctions varied between 5 and 21 minutes, and between 5 and 16 in the reverse direction. There was some feeling that these figures were underestimated.

Trips from Langdale Place to the Pointer Roundabout took between 4 and 21 minutes, and between 5 and 16 in the reverse direction. The following timings of passing vehicles were noted at peak times:

<i>Location</i>	<i>am</i>	<i>pm</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
Town Hall	1546	1358	1600
Skerton Bridge	1845	1621	1930

A map showing rat runs in some detail was displayed on OHP. There was significant traffic through Freehold and Bowerham, eg trips to the University, the hospital etc. It was agreed that there was a huge rat run problem. These data were compiled in term-time with 1,000 vehicles [per day/hour? – sorry, didn't note that] and the most popular rat runs were those using Kentmere Rd, Ullswater Rd and Derwent Rd.

These data apply to now. CM stated that we must ensure that we don't make it worse. Ridge Lance carried 1,100 vehicles per hour, and Cm was surprised at the very heavy levels.

Car park surveys were based on gross floor area/trips. Debenhams would generate 2.1 trips per space on Saturdays and daily levels between 1400 and 1700 would be 800, possible rising to 2,000. Turnover at the Lakes Centre, Carlisle, were 2.5 trips/space (ie 650 movements per day); the main stores there are Debenhams, BHS and virgin. For Lancaster, some 1,550 to 1,650 trips per day ere predicted – ie similar levels to Carlisle. CM stated that car turnover would not exceed 3 uses/space per day.

Improvements will be made to Bulk Rd and Caton Rd. From the North, Morecambe traffic would continue along Parliament St (thus reversing the direction of flow), and City-bound traffic will follow Caton Rd. There will be a direct link from Caton Rd to the CM development. The new link would pass Lancaster Carpets and go directly in front of sheltered housing. The link will incorporate cycling and pedestrian facilities, and include pelican or other road crossings.

Access from Morecambe to the South will remain as now. Moor Lane will remain bi-directional. The County Council is looking at provisions for Park and Ride; CM sees the development as Park and Walk. The development will be 'ideally located to take traffic off the main system'.

CM has not investigated a bus link to the Railway Station, noting indeed that it is 'a long way' from the proposed development. Use of demographics from the Census will be made.

The next steps, explained CM, were to carry out: detailed modelling, analysis, calibration and testing. They will further examine the rat runs, do more consultation and produce a Transport Assessment. BP wondered about Christmas and other seasonal fluctuations as well as future growth: CM will build in 'sensitivity tests'. The proposed M6-Heysham link is 'not included yet' in their analysis; CM were sure it 'won't make things worse'.

It was noted that some 30% of traffic coming in on Caton Rd was destined for Morecambe. The Civic Society had various concerns, and it was noted that rat runs were a release valve. Cm 'wouldn't close all rat runs down', and the Civic Society noted that 'daily traffic itself is enough to cause gridlock'.

The proposed development's car park will be 'pay as you leave', be open 24 hours a day, staffed and secure. The City Council has been asked to look at its parking strategy. The Chamber of Commerce noted that 'it's a mess now, you can't do anything more to it'.

Winding up the evening, Steve Bryson explained that CM will hold meetings around 9 – 11 January 2007 with the Chamber of Commerce, IOC and the Civic Society. The next Working Party will take place on Wednesday 30 January 2007. A week-long public exhibition (Saturday to Saturday) and household leafletting will take place during the middle of February. The Chamber of Commerce will canvass the views of City centre retailers on the proposed development in January.

*The Working Party closed at 8.30 pm.*

**Michael Nunn**

*8 December 2006/14 January 2007*