

# IT'S OUR CITY

## Questions for Centros Miller Working Party, Wednesday 25 October 2006

- 1. How would a surface transport carbon allowance scheme (as being worked up by DEFRA currently) impact on this development, given its reliance on greater numbers of car-borne shoppers?**

A: We consider it unlikely that such a scheme would have any adverse impact on the development. With a green travel plan, the development could attract shoppers to Lancaster using a variety of forms of transport – the site is walking distance from the rail and bus stations, and local pedestrian and cycle facilities are to be improved as part of the scheme. Shoppers within the catchment may be travelling further to shop in other cities at present, so improving the retail facilities within the city could actually reduce some distances travelled, and the allowance could provide further encouragement. New residents living within the scheme could walk to work if employed in the town centre, and could shop locally without use of the car, thus using up less of their allowance.

- 2. Will CM calculate the carbon foot-print of the development scheme?**

A: The carbon or ecological footprint of the development scheme could be calculated once the design has reached an appropriate stage. We will discuss this with the council.

- 3. Has Tesco expressed an interest in leasing or buying part of the site?**

A: Tesco has a strong wish to have a large store in Lancaster. As part of its exercise to identify potential locations, Tesco approached Centros Miller about this site, but we have told them that we cannot accommodate their requirement.

- 4. Is Tesco specifically excluded from the development?**

A: No retailers have been specifically excluded. The letting strategy is specifically aimed at attracting new retailers to the city and, as the retail element of the development is intended to form an extension of the city centre's prime shopping area, the retailers most likely to be attracted will be those selling fashion and household goods.

- 5. What proportion of retail space in the development needs to be let before construction commences?**

A: This is commercially sensitive information. However, the market norm is in excess of 50%.

- 6. What data on forecast comparison goods expenditure do CM use to justify the viability of the development to themselves?**

A: Our planning consultants, Montagu Evans, are currently reviewing the data within the White Young Green retail study, which the Council commissioned to assess shopping patterns in the Lancaster area. They will be producing a Retail Assessment to support the application, which will consider both the appropriate scale of floorspace and how it integrates with the existing part of the city centre in terms of expenditure patterns.

**7. How will CM deal with the issue of sustainability?**

A: From the outset, all aspects of sustainability from sourcing and re-use of materials, energy conservation, design and construction of the buildings, as well as the employment of local labour, has been considered as part of a sustainability review and audit. More detailed analysis and a Sustainability Statement will be prepared to accompany the main planning application. This will set out Centros Miller's environmental, social and economic aspirations and targets for the scheme. A renewable energy feasibility study is to be completed for the development by specialist consultants, which will then be developed into detailed sustainability proposals for the development.

**8. Will features such as extensive living roofs, sustainable landscaping and all hard landscaping to be permeable to rainwater be incorporated into the design?**

A: At this stage we are investigating all these issues to see which are viable to be incorporated. Sustainable urban drainage systems will be considered as part of the drainage strategy and the Flood Risk Assessment to be completed for the development. (In addition to run-off rates to be agreed with the Environment Agency, any such measures to be incorporated into the design will need to take account of other factors such as microclimate, the surrounding built environment/city centre context and potential contamination on what is a brownfield site.)

**9. Will the development be carbon neutral?**

A: The development is unlikely to be carbon neutral, but Centros Miller hopes to incorporate measures to reduce carbon emissions in the construction and operation of the scheme in comparison to a normal build of this type. All such measures will be described in the Sustainability Statement.

**10. It is accepted that congestion on Caton Road needs addressing; this seems a sensible way to improve things there, avoiding an unnecessary loop caused by the gyratory system. If it can be done so simply, why can't and why hasn't this and other solutions been implemented to reduce existing congestion in the gyratory?**

A: The solutions to relieve congestion on Caton Road were identified by our transport consultants during the masterplanning process. Initial analysis of the highways scheme using the County Council's PARAMICS micro-simulation traffic model indicated that the proposals will result in a considerable benefit to the ring-road system. We are in the process of updating the model having carried out extensive traffic surveys of the highway network and expect to have completed our modelling at the beginning of 2007.

We cannot comment further on why this or a similar scheme has not been implemented previously, as we were not involved prior to this development proposal.

**11. What is the likely impact of the plans on the rat runs along Derwent and Kentmere/Ullswater roads? It seems that more traffic (a lot more if the development is to be successful) will mean people will be more attracted to the rat runs, which could make this part of the city very unpleasant and dangerous.**

A: The simple philosophy behind our traffic solution is to improve the access to the city from the north by freeing up Caton Road. Visitor and shopper traffic from this direction will then be intercepted by the new car park, which will act as a 'Park & Walk' scheme for the city centre, thus reducing pressure on the ring road.

With an improved and quicker access to the city centre, and with the possible implementation of rat-running deterrents along Derwent and Kentmere/Ullswater roads, we believe we can reduce the problem in this area.

We commissioned number plate recognition surveys in February to ascertain the extent of the rat-running problem through the site and the residential areas to the east of the site. Following feedback from the public consultation meetings in May, additional surveys were undertaken in October to take account of residents' concerns and to ensure that a full analysis of the rat-running problem through the residential areas of Freehold, Moorlands and Bowerham can be undertaken.

All the survey work and traffic modelling being undertaken is checking the validity of our proposed solution.

**12. CM have stated that they intend to sell on the development lease after 5 or 6 years – is this correct, and what implications will it have? In particular, what are the access and security issues stemming from this?**

A: Centros Miller is and will be the developer of this scheme and this will be done under a development licence. Upon completion, the council will grant to Centros Miller a 250-year leasehold interest in the development. Whilst it is intended that Centros Miller and its shareholders will hold and manage this property investment post completion, no time limits can be put on this continuing ownership.

There are covenants within the head lease that cover the security and management issues, and in any change of ownership the lease and its obligations will be assigned to the new owners.

**13. What guarantees do the residents have if the new owners have a very different attitude to the area and its population – maybe in a future period of difficult economic/social circumstances for instance?**

A: See above.

**14. Why were the original plans for a new footbridge dropped – is it Centros' intention to exclude/control the 'dangerous classes' from their development – and if so why?**

A: In this question IOC has put 'dangerous classes' in quote marks as if it was a term that we had used. This is not a term that we even understand let alone would ever use.

This development is intended to form an extension of the city centre and, as such, we expect (and want) it to be used by everyone in Lancaster. Our initial idea for a footbridge over the canal was dropped as a direct response to comments made by It's Our City and others in the first round of masterplanning consultation in December 2005. This was mainly because people perceived that

a footbridge might encourage shoppers to avoid city centre parking charges by parking in Freehold.

**15. What are the actual details of the 'housing' planned and what about a childrens' play area and more green space for visitors and residents alike?**

A: Whilst the design is still being developed, what we do know is that the new housing on Alfred Street will be reflective and appropriate in scale to the existing houses in the area. Approximately 30% of the new homes on the site will be offered to a registered social landlord on an affordable basis. The remaining residential elements are likely to be apartments, in keeping with urban living.

We have already doubled the size of the green space in our plans and through further consultation with local residents will decide whether to include children's play facilities in this area.

**16. Do you think that a development that relies on people travelling in cars is viable in the long term given the issue of climate change and the possibility that people may not use cars as much, if at all, in the near future?**

A: This development does not wholly rely on people travelling by car. Lancaster is very well served by the rail network and studies have shown that nearly 60% of the catchment population have easy access to a bus route. However, it cannot be forgotten that Lancaster also has a significant rural catchment who do rely on car transport.

The development will substantially reduce trip lengths for those people living within Lancaster's catchment but presently travelling to Preston, Manchester and Carlisle for a large proportion of their comparison shopping.

This development will also regenerate brownfield land to form an extension of the city centre and bring more people to live in the city centre. As such, it is inherently more sustainable than any development that relies solely on car borne visitors.

The aim is for the retail elements of the development to add to the city's existing retail provision to fulfil the needs of its natural catchment population. Many of these people already use other modes of transport and we expect this proportion to increase substantially in the future [and indeed, we will do our best to encourage it].

City centres thrived long before the mass ownership of cars and we see no reason why they shouldn't continue to do so in future. As our development will not be solely reliant on the car, we are very confident that it will remain commercially viable in the long term.

**17. Why is this type of retail development appropriate given the increases in internet shopping?**

A: City centres are not just about shopping and this site in particular offers a diverse range of attractions that add to the vibrancy of Lancaster.

Internet shopping is a threat to our towns and cities, so they need to respond to that threat through regeneration and provision of a high-quality environment and experience for shoppers and visitors.

Internet shopping to date has affected certain retail sectors far more than others (for example electrical goods, books and music retailing, where the products on offer are uniform). With many other types of comparison shopping – particularly clothing and footwear – shoppers generally want to see, feel and try on the products, so these sectors, in combination with cafés, restaurants and other cultural attractions, are continuing to thrive in the high street.

**18. Please itemise and detail all your planned consultation meetings, surveys and other similar initiatives.**

A: We are currently holding monthly update briefings with an all-party group of LCC cabinet members, plus monthly progress workshops with representatives of all the main interest groups (It's Our City, Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, Lancaster Civic Society, Lancaster Canal Trust, Lancaster & Morecambe Vision, and Lancashire Police).

During the next two months we shall also hold full meetings with the members of each of these interest groups. In addition, we shall be circulating newsletter updates, and providing updated information on the project website [www.castle-view.info](http://www.castle-view.info) In February, we plan to hold a public exhibition in the city centre and deliver an explanatory leaflet with a Freepost feedback form to households across the city.

This is all prior to our main planning application to be made in the spring. A full report on the consultation feedback will then be submitted to the council and uploaded to the project website. Following the planning application, we will continue the consultation plus the council will undertake the necessary statutory consultation on our scheme.

**19. Please explain in detail how you came to be 'preferred developer' for this site, giving dates and major initiatives**

A: As previously explained to It's Our City in early December 2005, Centros Miller approached the council in late 2004 to ask if they had identified any development opportunities within the city. From our local knowledge, we knew that Lancaster does not fulfil its potential and from our work with retailers in other towns we were aware that there are quite a few not currently represented in Lancaster who would like to be.

The council pointed us towards the Canal Corridor North Development Brief and Mitchell's. They also clearly set out the site's previous history with Chelverton.

We studied the opportunity and quickly realised the potential it offered. Before Mitchell's would agree to work with us, they had to be convinced that we were the right people to partner with to develop this site. We did that by showing what we have done in the 10 developments we have completed in the last 10 years, and how we have worked in partnership with councils and landowners in every instance. Once we had become Mitchell's partner, we re-approached the council, which then took references from other local authorities. They also wanted to

understand our development philosophy, ensure that we did not want to build a shopping centre or a retail park, and that we saw the site as a mixed-use opportunity encompassing the theatres, other cultural uses and the canal.

After many months of due diligence by both Mitchell's and the council, we now have agreements with both to be their development partners. Our agreement with the council is conditional on us undertaking a detailed master planning and consultation exercise, working with them and the other stakeholders and interest groups (including It's Our City) on the principles of the scheme and obtaining the appropriate planning consents.

**20. Please tell us which retailers have shown serious interests in the developments.**

A: While Debenhams has already committed to the development, we have only just started the marketing process. So far, both Primark and Next have both expressed interest.

We have previously published a list of retailers that have either expressed their requirements for retail space in the city, or which we believe will be attracted to Lancaster by the development. This can be found on the project website: [www.castle-view.info](http://www.castle-view.info)

We will not reveal details of any negotiations with prospective tenants as these are commercially sensitive. During the course of development, it is our practice to release the names of tenants only once lease agreements have been exchanged.

**21. What plans, if any, have been made to include Homeless Action within the scheme?**

A: We are discussing a suitable relocation with both Homeless Action and the council.