

Public Inquiry into Outline Planning Permission for Canal Corridor, North Lancaster

I/T-01A

Proof of Evidence on Tourism, Local Identity and Inheritance: Summary

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Submitted on Behalf of It's Our City

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Evidence is given about the impact of the proposed development on three connected issues: Tourism, Local Identity and Inheritance.

Tourism

Tourism and the economy

1. The total revenue from tourism for the whole District in 2007 was £267m and for Lancaster City £84m (31% of the whole district).
2. Lancaster hosted over two million tourist days, nearly 1.5 million visitors and tourism employed the full-time equivalents of 1,300 workers
3. In 2001 tourism accounted for approximately 6.7% of employed people in Lancaster and this is likely to have grown in line with the 12.5% growth in Lancashire's tourism employment between 2001 and 2007.
4. Domestic tourism offers resilience to financial recession, attracting domestic visitors 'downsizing' from holidays abroad and day visitors, while a weak pound attracts more overseas visitors.

The Development and the Visitor Economy

5. Despite the importance of tourism to Lancaster, no appraisal of the impact of the proposed development on tourism has been undertaken. Only 14% of the anticipated retail turnover comes from outside the area (zones 1-6).

Types of Visitor and Lancaster as Visitor Destination

6. The majority of visitors to Lancaster are independent and innovative rather than 'mass market'. They are attracted by the heritage offering, independent eating and drinking establishments, local shops and markets.
7. The tourism visions for Lancaster, developed by the City Council stress: historic city, heritage 'backdrop' quality of life, unique sense of place, small independent traders, '*cobbled streets and hidden alleyways*'. This is echoed in the way Lancaster is depicted in official tourist information with pictures of historic buildings and streets and its portrayal in the media.

Impact of Proposed Development

8. The proposals for the site make little provision for the kind of facility preferred by Lancaster 'visitor types'. Although not providing for tourism, it will impact on the tourism offering.

Demolishing Clusters of Historic Buildings

9. The proposed demolition of Stonewell, at the bottom of a major pedestrian route from the Historic Quarter of Lancaster and other historic buildings will remove some of the historic 'backdrop' prized by tourists. It will reduce the area of older buildings which reflect the organic growth of the City and break the historic and spatial continuity linking the City Centre with the Canal and Williamson Park.

10. Replacing these buildings with modern shops and car parks, visible from the Castle precinct, the most visited attraction in Lancaster, will reduce the quality of the tourism offering, in particular the 'historic gaze', an essential aspect of tourist satisfaction with visits to heritage sites.

Increasing Traffic

11. The severance currently caused by traffic on the A6 'loop' has already been identified as a problem to developing tourism. It separates the Historic Quarter containing most of Lancaster's heritage sites (The Castle, Priory, Roman Baths, Quay, and Judges Lodgings) and the Tourist Information Centre from the City Centre, where tourism expenditure is most likely to occur in the small cafes, restaurants, shops and market stalls. The traffic to and from the additional 800 parking spaces will increase this severance, reducing overall satisfaction and potentially reducing the number of visitors venturing into the City Centre and their duration of stay with subsequent loss of spending.

Moving the Retail Centre of the City

12. The proposed development would abstract trade from existing small businesses in the City Centre, causing some, reliant on a variety of markets, to close. This would reduce elements of tourist offering known to be popular with the type of visitor coming to Lancaster.
13. These small business are extremely efficient at generating and retaining local wealth through a process known as the Local Multiplier, whereby money spent locally is 'recycled' into the local economy, rather than 'leaked out' to outside contractors, consultants and shareholders. Loss of businesses in the City Centre would make the centre less attractive, so reducing the visitor experience, numbers of visitors, duration of stay and volume of spend.

Lost Opportunity

14. The proposed development would undermine the use of the area to forward Regional, County and District policies and strategies relating to tourism, which stress developing the heritage, culture and individuality of Lancaster as a tourist destination.
15. These policies and strategies include:
 - Lancaster City Tourism Strategy and Update
 - Lancashire Environment Strategy
 - Northwest Strategies: Transport Strategy Objectives
 - NorthWest of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021
 - North West Regional's 'The Strategy for Tourism in England's Northwest: Developing *the Visitor Economy*'
16. Opportunities will be lost to provide more sustainable tourism using well-designed and renovated buildings, selling locally produced goods and food.
17. The development also undermines attempts to attract low-carbon/high spend visitors arriving by public transport and exploring the historic area on foot or other non-car means. They will be discouraged by the lack of continuity of historic

architecture, the reduction in cycle routes, failure to improve walking and cycling routes and public transport provision to attractions such as Williamson's Park.

18. Bringing 'any-town' architecture close to the City Centre blocks building more high quality, individual and possibly iconic buildings which would boost Lancaster's attractiveness to residents and visitors.
19. Such buildings can accommodate use-change more easily to adapt to changing conditions than mono-purpose retail outlets.
20. By ignoring tourism, the scheme removes potential to improve and increase it.

Sense of Identity

21. Evidence is offered that failure to consider tourism and its need for uniqueness, heritage and sense of place would impoverish Lancaster for its residents. Replacing familiar clusters of diverse historic buildings on established street patterns with standard retail architecture on new alignments reduces attachment to the City.
22. Because the proposed development lacks the scale and distinctiveness to attract people from other areas, it will inevitably undermine the existing City Centre's trade creating more empty shops and signs of decay, making it unattractive for both visitors and residents.
23. Examples are given of contrasting policies and their impact on tourism:
 - a. The Isle of Thanet, where a new shopping centre has '*siphoned off*' local trade, resulting in empty shops in the established centres and tourist destinations of Margate and Ramsgate.
 - b. Whitby, which has built a thriving tourist trade through developing its own distinctive character, historic buildings, family-run restaurants and pubs evoking the traditions and atmosphere of the English seaside.
24. Examples are given of successful iconic buildings which build on the identity of the place, including the Midland Hotel, the Ashton Memorial, the Millennium Bridge and Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum. These have proved popular with visitors and residents because they have resonance with the history and geography of their locations. Evidence is presented of how, when developments do not have that resonance, they are unlikely to engender local pride or attract visitors looking for 'authenticity', a major motivator of tourism.

Inheritance

25. As well as proposing to demolish well-loved parts of the city which enhance a sense of belonging, the scheme would result in the privatisation of a large area of land for 250 years. Studies have shown how such privatisation and conversion of the public realm into a consuming space results in sections of the community being excluded for not conforming to the desired image. This can happen without

others being aware of it, but results in a sense of rejection and alienation, especially amongst young people and ethnic minorities.

26. The controlled and security conscious environment of such developments results in sameness, rather than distinctiveness, again damaging ties with the place, whereas diversity of buildings, uses and users engenders more creative and distinctive places which can enhance more inclusiveness.
27. The state of the area, currently blighted by neglect, is unattractive to tourists and residents, but represents an opportunity to create an area which respects the historic scale and complexity of the site.

Conclusions

28. Tourism is important for the economy of the city of Lancaster, as employer and income generator.
29. Lancaster's visiting public is drawn disproportionately from independently-minded families, seeking out distinctive places and experiences. Although incorporated in the Tourism Strategy it is ignored by the developers
30. The Canal Corridor Proposal's lack of consideration of tourism implies a negative impact on Lancaster's tourism volume or profile.
31. The Canal Corridor scheme would damage Lancaster's tourism economy by undermining the viability of the existing central commercial district and render it less attractive to the visitor types on which Lancaster's strong and growing tourism industry depends.
32. The scheme would undermine Lancaster's historic distinctiveness, contribute to the erosion of attractive historic townscapes and compromise the capacity of the city centre to generate feelings of comfort, affection and familiarity among residents and repeat visitors.
33. An alternative proposal on a more human scale, showing respect for the historic environment and offering detail, texture, diversity and individuality, could become a positive attribute in developing Lancaster's tourist economy.