

The Canterbury Society

1 December 2013

Kent County Council
Highways and Transport
1st Floor
Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone ME14 1BR

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: St Dunstan's Regeneration Scheme

The five options put forward by Kent County Council only address the problems in one particular part of Canterbury, and we believe that none of these plans will deliver an entirely satisfactory result unless it is linked to a wider proposal that addresses traffic issues in the Sturry Road and Wincheap areas. We do not believe that the problems of congestion and air pollution can be resolved without creating a traffic plan for the whole of Canterbury, in particular the ring road. So instead of opting for one scheme we would like to stress other issues which will be relevant whichever option is chosen.

With regard to the St Dunstan's proposals, we would like to emphasise the importance of landscaping and the ability of pedestrians (both residents and visitors) to navigate this area safely. There are some large expanses of tarmac and unattractive hard landscaping on either side of the Westgate Towers: the walled flower bed on the corner of North Lane and St Dunstan's Street, which could be incorporated into a pedestrian zone/riverside walk; the area outside Ocakbasi kebab shop on the corner of St Peter's Street and St Peter's Place; the expanse of tarmac on the St Dunstan's side of the Westgate Towers. These areas are left-over spaces created when buildings were demolished and traffic schemes changed. The St Dunstan's regeneration scheme should look at the use of space in general around the Westgate Towers, including pedestrian zones as well as roads.

The success of the St Dunstan's regeneration scheme should not only be measured in terms of traffic flow and congestion but also in terms of ease of pedestrian access between Canterbury West Station, St Dunstan's Street and the town centre. There are two issues which need to be addressed to ensure that this area is a safe and civilised place for pedestrians, neither of which appears in the options generated by the regeneration scheme.

First, there should be measures to calm the traffic by reducing speed. The regeneration proposal does mention the option of introducing a 20mph zone, but we

think that more can be done. The use of setts or cobbles on the road surface immediately in and around the Westgate Towers will not only look attractive but the change in road surface will encourage drivers to slow down and drive more cautiously. Similarly, if traffic is to be allowed through the towers (rather than just around them), there could be a narrowing of the lane on either side of the entrance to force drivers to slow down (planters were used to create a similar effect during the trial). At the moment, some drivers passing through the towers heading toward St Peter's Place accelerate as soon as they pass through the towers, making the concept of crossing the road at that point quite intimidating.

Secondly, the number and placement of pedestrian crossings needs urgent consideration. There used to be a pedestrian crossing at the end of Station Road West, where it meets St Dunstan's Street. When the trial (which kept the crossing there) ended, the pedestrian crossing was also removed. This is a highly desirable place for people to cross as it connects student accommodation, a Sainsbury's Local and access to the train station with the lower part of St Dunstan's Street and the entrance to the town centre. People do still cross there, but not safely. Similarly, the trial saw the creation of a pedestrian crossing where North Lane meets St Dunstan's Street (closing the pelican crossing further down North Lane). When the trial ended, the crossing was removed and the pelican crossing reinstated. However, people still cross (or try to cross) where the temporary crossing existed, as this is a more desirable crossing point. People also try and cross directly in front and behind the Towers, preferring not to use the pedestrian crossing in St Peter's Place. With the current speed and volume of traffic, this is not always safe, although it does indicate where people find it desirable to cross the road (that is, not where the existing crossings are placed).

Improving the link between Canterbury West Station, the St Dunstan's area and the town centre is a vital part of this regeneration scheme. The Westgate Towers are one of the most significant aspects of Canterbury's heritage and the approach to the town centre through the Towers is one of the first things many tourists and visitors to Canterbury see. We hope that Kent County Council takes the overall appearance of the area and the needs of pedestrians into account when considering the future of the traffic layout in this area.

Yours sincerely

Jan Pahl CBE, Chair
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