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Carlisle Station Gateway Project,
 Cumbria County Council,
 The Courts,
 Carlisle,
 CA3 8NA

1st November 2021

Dear Project Team,

Carlisle Station Gateway

TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in NW England. We are pleased to give our views as follows to this consultation.

Overall we think that the proposals are well thought out and are to be commended, but we do have some suggestions. The consultation document [CD] is presented in four sections. Our main comments follow those sections, but we have some additional comments concerning train working in the station that should have an influence on the scope of the project.

1. Court Square

Overall the pedestrianisation of Court Square will certainly make the station entrance more attractive. We agree that the present situation is rather untidy - with no clear pedestrian access route, and conflicts with traffic. The proposal goes a long way to resolving these issues.

It is noted that it is proposed to close the public car park alongside Collier Lane which is to be replaced by a new larger car park in the George Square Area (see 3 below). We also note that Collier Lane itself is to be made a one way street in the direction of Crown Street. But nothing is said about access to the hotel – not only hotel guests being dropped off, but also delivered to the hotel, e.g. laundry – how is this to be dealt with?

If the car park alongside Collier Lane is to be closed, future use of the land should be planned for. The area should not just be left to become a derelict area where junk and rubbish accumulates, but should form part of the proposals with some constructive use for it found.

Also within Court Square, but not shown on page 5 of the CD, is the car park to the east. Will cars still use this car park? In the diagram on page 5 a loading bay is shown, and this appears to be on the site of the disused underground toilets which do not appear to be referred to.

It would be better to have a plan for the whole of Court Square, not just the bit owned by the railway.

Although the drop-off point is being moved to the George Square (west) side of the station, nothing is said in the CD about taxis. Is the taxi rank in Court Square Brow to be retained, or is it to be relocated to the west side of the station?

2. Station Interior

Opening up the entrance arches is a good idea. Despite the main vehicle access being moved to the west side of the station, a very significant proportion of passengers using the station will still arrive and depart at the present (east) side through Court Square. Opening up these arches will mean that a number of facilities will need to be relocated elsewhere, including the ticket office, and W H Smith's. Page 6 of the CD just states "Optional pod for ticketing and retail to be determined". The diagram at the bottom of page 7 shows ticket machines located at a lower level. The fact that there are going to be in future two significant entrances to the station requires careful consideration. It will be unacceptable for passengers arriving via Court Square to have to go to the lower level to buy a ticket. Furthermore, what would happen if a need for ticket barriers is identified?

We are not convinced that creating two different levels within the station – platform level and George Square entrance level has been carefully thought out. How does a passenger arriving at the George Square entrance then get to platforms 4 to 8 – up the stairs shown on page 7, and then over the existing footbridge, or is there a more direct way? The existing subway between the lifts on platforms 3 & 4 is both narrow and tortuous. Is this going to be widened and straightened, or is there a new subway to be constructed? From a passenger convenience viewpoint we would always recommend consideration of escalators rather than stairs wherever possible and appropriate. We are also aware that there is a disused tunnel from Court Square Brow to what will now be the George Square area – could the feasibility of incorporating this into the design be considered?

3. George Square Enhancements

The use of the George Square entrance for traffic access and rail replacement buses would appear to be an acceptable compromise as long as there is good and plentiful signage within the station.

In particular we welcome a dedicated location for rail replacement buses. In 2018 when large sections of the West Coast Main Line were closed as well as the Settle Line, there were up to 10 buses on Court Square. The new set-up will obviously be much better, but will it have sufficient capacity?

Another important area is short stay parking. There needs to be about 12 – 15 spaces available for at least 20 minutes.



4. Sustainable Transport and Junction Improvements

Our comments relate exclusively to the last bullet point on page 10 of the CD, and the last row of the table on page 4.

We have recently responded to the County Council's proposals regarding bus services, so some of the following comments are related to that consultation.

We always advocate and champion the creation of better integration between rail and bus services. At present there is very little information on the station about bus services. The Carlisle Station Gateway proposals should take the opportunity of initiating significant improvements to integration and associated information.

Whilst recognising the constraints of bringing buses any nearer than at present (i.e Botchergate and English Street), there is potential for improved integration. Specifically, there needs to be good information at the station about the location of bus stands and how to get to the bus station in Lonsdale Street for those buses that don't call in English Street or The Crescent. Ideally there should be a digital real-time departures board for buses at the station.

It should be noted that the buses departing from English Street and The Crescent are **not** exclusively local services: the X85 to Galashiels starts from English Street. This service is effectively the bus service that replaced the rail service from Carlisle on the Waverley Route when it closed in 1969. There are two other such bus services which presently do not come near to the station. These are the 127 service to Newcastleton operated by Telford's whose terminus is in Devonshire Street. This service should come via English Street in order to give better interchange.

There is also the service 400 to Silloth – a replacement for the rail service withdrawn in 1964. Some of these services do come by the station when the service is extended to Blackwell, but not all the Silloth services do so; they should.

5. Platform Capacity

There is no reference to this in the CD but it is very relevant for passengers.

Carlisle Station has three through platforms (No 1, 3 & 4), and five bay platforms (Nos 2, & 5 – 8). Under normal timetabled services, these are adequate. But there are occasions when being limited to three through platforms, and ones that are long enough to deal with 9+ carriages, is severely challenging. This happens when some charter trains come which terminate or start in Carlisle, and which need to be serviced – water tanks re-filled which with present safety regulations has to be done in a platform, so such trains can occupy a platform for over 15 minutes; also often these trains have steam locomotive which then require complicated shunting movements, which has an impact on station capacity.

Another challenge is when the East Coast main Line is closed north of Newcastle, and East Coast trains are diverted via the Tyne Valley and Carlisle. This happens for several weeks in October every year. In such circumstances platform availability is very challenging.

Of significant relevance in the future will be the coming of HS2 services to Carlisle. We understand that some station platforms at Carlisle will be lengthened to accommodate 18 coach HS2 trains. If a further through platform is required this could be achieved by converting Siding A (alongside platform 1) to a platform line, the platform being built on top of Sidings 1 & 2, which we understand are now rarely used.

All of the above needs to be taken into account when aligning this project to future rail service needs at Carlisle

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully,

John A Moorhouse

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary

(Response prepared by Ian Watson)