EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2006

IOS.82/06   CARLISLE RENAISSANCE – DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND MOVEMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Carlisle Renaissance, Mr McNichol, introduced the matter, commenting that it represented the continued involvement of the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the development of the land use and transport policy in the Carlisle area, which had commenced at the beginning of the year. He had been closely involved in the Carlisle District Local Plan, which was also out to public consultation, and was aware that certain Members of the Committee were involved in the Carlisle Renaissance Cross-Party Working Group.

Mr McNichol then presented report CE.20/06 attaching report CE.19/06 concerning the second stage consultation on the Carlisle Renaissance Development Framework and Movement Strategy.

The consultation exercise was a mechanism through which the resident and business community and other stakeholders could:

-       Find out more about how the work on the Development Framework and Movement Strategy was progressing;
-       Put forward views and opinions on the outcome of work to date and help to shape its future direction;
-       Influence the City Council, County Council and other organisations involved in making decisions affecting the City.

The exercise was designed to secure both quantitative and qualitative information from a cross-representative sample of groups, including children and young people, urban and rural residents, large employers, small businesses, voluntary and community groups, local, regional and national public sector organisations and visitors to the City.

The Executive on 29 August 2006 had considered report CE.19/06 and approved the scope and content of the second phase public consultation on the Development Framework and Movement Strategy.

Members were requested to note report CE.19/06 and put forward their formal views on the proposals set out in the accompanying supplementary document entitled 'Your city's future. Get involved!'

Discussion arose during which Members raised the following questions and observations –

1. Mr McNichol clarified that the supplementary document had firstly been issued along with the Cumberland News on 8 September 2006. It had since been circulated throughout the City along with a questionnaire and pre-paid envelopes to assist response. The intention was to encourage people to visit the various public consultation events. He added that they were beginning to get to the business end now and it became more complex.

2. Although two differing approaches were suggested for Rickergate and Caldew Riverside the public was not being asked to chose one or the other. There were numerous ways in which the scheme could be taken forward and the consultation exercise was about obtaining views on the strengths and weaknesses of differing approaches.

   Urban design work was being done by Mr Higgins, the Council's urban designer.

   Members asked whether Mr Higgins could be present at the Planning Training event for Members of the Development Control Committee and this Committee.

3. A Member asked whether public money would be involved in the development. Mr McNichol replied that that would be dependant upon the end mix of development.

4. A Member recognised that clearly a scheme on the scale of Carlisle Renaissance would take many years to come to fruition. He was concerned that "Compulsory Purchase Order junkies" would move into areas such as Rickergate. That would have a detrimental effect on those areas as had happened in Liverpool for example.

Mr McNichol replied that speculation was always an issue, and could be both public and private. There was already some evidence of it taking place in Carlisle.

Compulsory purchase was always the last resort and negotiated settlement was the preferred approach.

5. Flooding was an issue for the City Centre and Caldew Riverside, and schemes would incorporate undercroft parking.

6. Mr McNichol confirmed that discussions had taken place regarding pressure and demand for large scale retail units other than those currently available in the Lanes and English Street. Feedback had been very positive so far, and the City Centre Management Group and Lanes Shops did not see the development as a threat.

   A natural flow of retailers occurred over time, which was a particular issue in Lowther Street, and would be picked up within the Movement Strategy. The manner by which movement schemes were financed would also required to be addressed.

7. Certain Members considered the proposals to be complex as a result of which they had difficulty getting to grips with them.

8. Referring to the regeneration of Rickergate, a Member noted that under the strengths column point 5 of approach one was to significantly reduce the number of

car parking spaces in the area, whereas in approach two it was to significantly increase the number of car parking spaces in the area. That appeared to conflict.

Mr McNichol commented that a balance required to be struck. The consultation document was a starting point and a whole range of policies would flow out e.g. car parking and environmental strategies.

9. In response to a question on the Environment Agency's role as regards Caldew Riverside, Mr McNichol said that the Agency had not yet made a statement but more innovative designs may be required depending on their response.

10. A Member asked whether there was an identified need for additional retail space within the City.

Mr McNichol replied that evidence of demand came through the Retail Capacity Study. More tangible, however, was the interest of retailer investors who had approached the Council and expressed an interest in retail led development in Carlisle if appropriate sites were available.

There was evidence of a migration to industrial estates for office use, issues being around the quality of office space currently available. The Council was trying to facilitate the establishment of an office market within the City Centre and discussions had taken place with a number of developers in that respect.

11. In response to a question, Mr McNichol advised that consultants had been asked to define what constituted a city centre. The regeneration of Rickergate was not about shifting the centre of gravity northwards.

12. A Member said that certain rail operators appeared to be restricting their operations from Carlisle. He noted that a new city square in front of the Railway Station was proposed under plans to revitalise the City Centre and questioned whether that would be a false economy if rail services were deteriorating.

Mr McNichol accepted that those two issues were linked. However, the Railway Station would remain for the foreseeable future and the scheme was about refining the area in front of the Station.

13. The term 'gateway parking' meant parking at the edge of the City Centre. A Member stated that she would like to see increased parking closer to the Railway Station so that people did not have to carry luggage across the road to the taxi rank.

14. A Member stated that, although complex, overall the supplementary document had been produced in an understandable form. However, the final page was rather difficult to understand and it would have been beneficial if text explaining the various options had been included.

15. Members asked that Mr McNichol report to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee with a development timetable and detailed plan as to how Carlisle Renaissance would be scrutinised.

16. Mr McNichol reminded the Committee that a public meeting would take place at the Civic Centre at 6.00 pm on 19 September 2006.

RESOLVED – (1) That the issues raised by Members, as detailed above, are the Committee's observations on the Carlisle Renaissance Development Framework and Movement Strategy.

(2) That the Director of Carlisle Renaissance be requested to report to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee with a development timetable and detailed plan of how Carlisle Renaissance would be scrutinised.