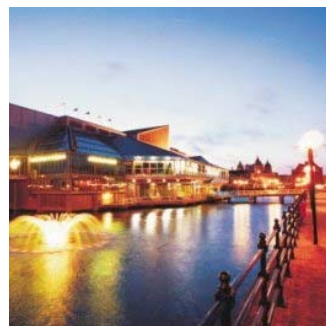


A63 Castle Street

FACTSHEET 1
January 2006



Background

- John Prescott announced a *New Deal for Trunk Roads in England* in July 1998. This included an assessment of many road schemes shelved by the Conservatives. Hedon Road was given the go-ahead, Castle Street one of a number of Multi-Modal Studies (MMS) designed to assess the range of options available to tackle the identified problem.
- Key statistics are as follows:
 - 250,000 people travel into Hull city centre on a normal weekday – 75% by car or commercial vehicle.
 - 54,000 vehicles use Castle Street on a typical weekday, a quarter of which are HGVs.
 - 30,000 of these journeys is through traffic, unrelated to the city centre.
 - It is estimated that there are over 7 million commercial vehicle trips through the HUMMS area each year – 19% port related.
 - It is forecast that there will be a 43.2% growth in port related HGVs by 2031.
 - 537 personal injury accidents in Hull MMS (HUMMS) study area were recorded between 1994-1998.
- HUMMS published its recommendations in July 2002 and put forward a package of measures including investment in public transport and crucially an online road improvement scheme.
 - Improved rail freight facilities, public transport, pedestrian and cycle access. Some demand management (i.e. city centre parking restrictions) but not road user charging.
 - Guided buses on four key routes (Hessle Road, Beverley Road, Bransholme and Holderness Road).
 - A major on-line improvement scheme for Castle Street, particularly to tackle congestion points such as Mytongate and Lowgate junctions.
- In July 2003, Transport Secretary Alistair Darling accepted the recommendations of the study and tasked the Highways Agency with developing a scheme of online improvements. Crucially however, his announcement was that he accepted this was a 'preferred' solution and that he would give the matter further consideration once the Highways Agency had completed their work. No funding was specifically committed.

Issues and problems

- The Highways Agency then set about developing a scheme, considering a wide variety of scheme which took into account the following factors:
 - *Conflict* between strategic traffic, i.e. to the port, and local traffic, i.e. city centre access.
 - *Congestion* contributing to increased and unreliable journey times.
 - *Safety* and *environmental pollution* concerns.
 - *Severance* of the city centre and particularly the isolation of Hull's waterfront.

In the meantime, Hull had put together a strong lobby comprising of Alan Johnson MP, Chamber of Commerce, Hull City Council and Hull Citybuild to press for the right scheme for Hull. It argued that there were two key issues the scheme must address:

Strategic economic importance – Castle Street is not just a Hull priority, its part of the E20 route and now the Northern Way announced by the Deputy Prime Minister last year. Freight traffic for the port and a million passengers a year make the route crucially important to the region and North of England. The port of Hull is successful and growing, but growth could be limited by transport constraints. This argument was persuasive for Hedon Road and should also be for Castle Street.

Severance – there are significant debates in Hull about how to tackle the severance of the city centre by Castle Street. Hull is a city of untapped potential with a waterfront area running from the Deep towards Humber Quays and including the Fruit Market offering real economic opportunities. With new developments planned at St Stephens, Quay West and the eastbank 'Boom', it was clear that Castle Street was both a physical and psychological barrier to fulfilling this potential.

The only solution proposed that would satisfy both of these objectives was a £180m 'cut and cover' tunnel scheme which would take traffic straight through the city centre to the port reducing the severance of the city centre. After significant development work, the Highways Agency agreed to put forward this option.

Current position—Long term scheme

2005 was frustrating as new Government policy on the funding of transport schemes delayed a decision. The 'regionalisation' agenda since 1997 which has brought Regional Development Agencies, Regional Assemblies (unelected) and stronger Government Offices has brought new decision making powers to regions such as Yorkshire and the Humber. Instead of Ministers at the Department for Transport deciding whether to include the 'cut and cover' scheme in the Targeted Programme of Improvements (TPI), it was decided Castle Street was a 'regional' scheme and a yet to be established Regional Transport Board would need to recommend the scheme for approval as a priority ahead of many other competing schemes in the region.

In January 2006, the Regional Transport Board agreed that the A63 Castle Street scheme was a key regional priority and recommended it be funded from the 2011/12 funding package. Ministerial approval is still required and there will be many further hurdles that the scheme will still need to jump before any work begins. However, the news for now is positive.

Interim measures

In the short term, the Highways Agency are working with Hull City Council and Hull Citybuild to develop some interim measures to improve safety and the flow of traffic. Two schemes are currently being discussed. The first would ban right turns at Lowgate junction to help keep traffic moving. The second is an improved pedestrian crossing facility near to Princes Dock Street to encourage people across to the Marina, Fruit Market and Humber Quays area. A pedestrian footbridge put forward by Citybuild was rejected by Hull City Council's Planning Committee a couple of years ago. There are various technical, funding and timing issues with these interim measures, and they are not designed to increase the capacity of the road, which is for the long term scheme.

The importance of the long term scheme has been highlighted by the major developments proposed in the area such as The Boom and Quay West which are crucial to Hull's economic future. With Castle Street more or less at full capacity already, the danger for it to strangle Hull's economic development must be avoided.

Further information

If you have any questions or comments about the Castle Street scheme, please contact Nick Pontone at n.pontone@hullbusinessforum.com or on 01482 324976.