

The Central Business District (CBD)

(By Dhruv Rishi Joshi)

The CBD acts as the main perhaps the most important part of a city, where the centre of a city's business is found together with its commercial activities, forming the core. Large cities such as London may have more than one CBD and may have experienced a decentralisation of offices and relocation of retailing. However many large cities do suffer many problems particularly on the trade front even in the pollution point of view. It has the greatest concentration of traffic which in itself acts as a major problem. However there are other issues acting as just of importance, especially to people most affected. We can see quite clearly, that there is nowhere near as much trade as there used to be in certain towns mainly due to the 'outer town shopping centres'; for example in Canterbury- much of its trade is taken away by stores such as PC World or Curry's, even the supermarkets which are becoming a regular occurrence in almost all cities. However the larger cities are not affected as much, but still trade is not like it used to be. However we still see the packed London or Manchester. The shopping centres, for example Lakeside, draw people in from the nearby towns, the trade now concentrated there not in the CBD where it should be. Offices also are built on the urban fringes, which once again act as a problem in terms of trade as well as a loss in economic wellbeing. However many people prefer the city centre to the nearby super store, there is little they can now do about it. The huge companies have 'stolen' their trade leaving the smaller ones little to do. The shops, or the Central Business District on the whole, are left with relatively little money and leads to its eventual breakdown. The people's money is spent in Tesco's for example, not in the city, so drastic changes have to be taken in some cases. Perhaps the main problem that shops face in the CBD is the fact that there is little way to compete with the bigger shops/stores. However larger shop which are situated in the CBD, for example Marks and Spencer in Canterbury, do bring trade in. Because of this, more of the larger shops are

encouraged to develop in particular cities in order to combat the problem of the outer town stores.

Combating the Problems

Many cities today face the problems listed above, and the news of new commercial shopping areas can only bring bad. However Canterbury is a good example, like many other cities around Britain, in that is trying to solve the problem. As I have said before, up until recently trade in Canterbury hasn't been too bad until the recent opening of, for example, Curry's and even a new McDonalds in the Sturry estate. Despite this problem, the council is setting up the 'White Friars' plan which tries to help the problem of lack of trade. Even at the moment, the plan is under action, redeveloping the areas particularly to the north of the city (i.e. near to Ricemans). It hopes to do away with Ricemans completely, redesigning it like many other shops nearby who suffered the post war development.

That was another problem many cities faced. After the war, when many commercial areas were destroyed, poorly built, yet substantial buildings were erected to replace the damage which occurred. Of course this did not only happen to Canterbury- all over Britain, post war development took place. Now when we look at the buildings, we generally get the idea that they are very ugly, something that a city does not want. This is one of the reasons why people shop elsewhere. Continuing, the White Friars Development scheme will demolish nearly all those effected by the previous development, instead building shops, which on the whole look nicer. Hopefully, by doing this, the cities should restore the trade which previously they had once lost. The plan also hopes to leave the shopping stores on the outskirts of the city improving the actual CBD, therefore drawing people in. The old look has once again come in fashion. The shop Gap is an example, especially in Canterbury, where it was only recently built. The scheme hopes to make the redeveloped shops look like this, a great improvement to that previously. The cities across Britain were originally all designed for the people, however now it is for trade. But still obviously people come into the matter.

Once again the White Friars hope to have people actually living around and in the CBD, an 'all-in-one' if you like, where the people do become part of this city. Once again this hopes to bring trade back into the city.

The schemes that have been set up all around Britain, hope to make them more attractive, in some cases far more so than at present. Even the new shops hoping got be built have to pass the criteria of the Council- if they don't look right than the offer is turned down: people just want to make the city a better place, not allowing it to become run down. Even the shops that are open now will have to pass the certain criteria's. Another problem that the cities on the whole hope to overcome, is the problem of crime, which plays such a big part. More police obviously have to be included in the problems which are apparent. As I have said before, schemes have been set up, which keep the people away from crime.

Success has been shown in the new Park and Rides that have been built in certain areas. These rides are able to take people to almost any places they want, at a relatively cheap price which seems very fair. Not only does it encourage people to come to the city but it also prevents traffic congestion which is quite a big problem in many areas. The congestion sometimes puts off people coming to a city, so by removing of this problem, more people will visit, thus adding to the trade. Traffic also won't come in so will once again prevent the pollution problems which are gradually destroying cities and towns. Business suffers because of traffic so by carrying out these schemes people will be doing it a great favour. However most of the Park and Ride's that have been developed tend to be on the outskirts, away from where congestion can take place. Perhaps a slight problem that cities may be faced with is the fact that more and more offices are being built further away. However, because of this it may mean that there may be less trade fewer people attracted to coming to the city.

Pedestrinisation-taking traffic away from the CBD

Obviously all cities have undergone some sort Pedestrinisation, helping it in

many points of view. In Canterbury, for example, many parts have undergone this, preventing pollution of vehicles as well as traffic, which can cause so many problems. The fact that cars or for that matter lorries do not pass through the high street, in some ways encourage trade, few people put off the idea of visiting. Streets have been redeveloped so that they are the same height as pavements. Delivery vehicles are now only allowed to enter the city either during the morning or late in the evening, not during shopping areas thus not affecting it (the trade).

Perhaps another problem that faces British Cities, particularly the CBD, is the price of property. As land values increase, fewer people seem able to afford the high prices, meaning in general less trade. Only the larger shops, such as Gap or M&S, are able to afford these rents, so there is a smaller abundance of the smaller shops- they are unable to survive. Less trade is a result of this; the shops that people want are no longer there. In some ways this means that the city on the whole suffers not just the effects of the high prices. There is the constant fight going on for different shops to buy areas of land, actually owning them, is the important thing. This eventually leads to the demand of more properties being built, the need for them increases. This may cause the CBD to expand, in some ways something it does not want. Only the richer shops are able to afford the rents, so the increase of these shops are more apparent. Most importantly they take other shop's trade away, but do increase the number of people coming to the city- that is one advantage. So perhaps a solution to this problem would be to do lower the cost of rents, which would be to the advantage of the city, on the whole.

The main solution to the problems of traffic in the CBD has been the creation of precincts or streets that consider first the needs of the walker. These have taken a variety of forms: streets in New Towns that were built solely for Pedestrian use, covered shopping precincts and streets that have been closed to varying categories of vehicles or excluded them altogether.

The first example of Pedestrianisation is thought to have been a converted

street in a German town, Essen in 1929. The same thing soon happened in Britain: advantage was taken of the closure of London Street because of a collapsed sewer, and the passing of the Traffic Regulation Act, to make closure permanent. The 1971 Town and Country Planning Act gave added impetus to the movement, and by 1980 there were more than 1,000 pedestrian streets, arcades or enclosed centres.

The exclusion of traffic from urban centres and related environmental improvements not only helps to retain residents and encourage others to return, they also attract more users and visitors, maintaining the traditional function of urban centres.

As I have said before, Canterbury is an excellent example that has proved successful in the development of pedestrianisation. We can see quite clearly that few cars travel through the city, and has thus taken advantage of this. More people now use the Park and Ride schemes, because of this fact helping towards the city.

As well as the schemes that have taken place in Canterbury, many other cities have done much the same thing. Tonbridge Wells is an example. Recently it has opened the Victoria centre which obviously has attracted more people to the city, but has also caused other problems. It has decreased the amount of trade in the other parts of the city, the high street, especially the minor shops which in no way can compare. That is one problem about these huge shopping malls being opened- at the same time of attracting people to Tonbridge Wells, it also declines the amount of trade in other parts. Bromley has done much the same thing, opening an indoor shopping centre.

Changes in Canterbury- how the problem of lack of trade is being solved

In the past decade there have been changes in the distribution of major shops within the city and this has been reflected in pedestrian flows. There always has been a heavy flow of pedestrians along the main north west south east artery from ST. Peter's Street to St George Street, which has over 50% of all the shops in the city.

All the major shops, banks and departmental stores are situated within the

areas having 500 pedestrians per hour, with the exception of Marks and Spencer and Woolworth's, which are old establishments.

There is a gradual decline in the number of pedestrians along the north West End of St. Peters street and this is a region of mixed small shops. A location such as Burgate Lane, which joins ST. George's Street and Burgate, and faces the walls is also an unfavourable environment for shops as few pedestrians pass this way though it is close to areas of high pedestrian density and shops here often change businesses.

There is a fundamental relationship between pedestrian numbers and the type of shops in different parts of the city.

Dominance of the Large Supermarket chains

The retail revolution has seen 750 supermarkets come and 10,000 small independent shops go in the last twenty years.

Just 2% of British food outlets now account for 52% of food retail sales.

Many retail chains have closed their smaller branches and concentrated sales on large reorganised stores. Perhaps the best example of this are the co-operatives which at one time would have had shops on most small shopping parades but now only have branches in the larger cities.

The out of town development is basically due to the rapid advancement of tertiary activities, related to the manufacturing in the growth of the economy. As people have become more affluent, a greater proportion of their income is spent on retail goods and services.

As cities have grown, the locational pattern of industry, like that of service activities, has become more complex. In the beginning industry would be concentrated around the core of the city and nearby along a waterway, rail line or some other land route which provided the cheapest transport for the raw materials needed and the finished product. With time, shortage of land, congestion, other problems associated with older industrial areas, the

development of rapid road transport and technological changes have led to the decentralisation of industry. Established industries have moved out and together with new industries occupied more desirable locations.

Traffic in Canterbury's CBD

In Canterbury there has been a change in traffic flow. As road traffic increased after the Second World War, and the road freight passing through Dover climbed, and inner ring road was built in the 60's to ease the burden of heavy traffic passing along the main shopping street. This inner ring road followed a line just outside the City walls. It was heavily used and finally supplemented by outer by pass in the mid 80's/ Both of these by passes reduced the through traffic using city roads and shortly after wards the Main Street was pedestrianised almost from end to end. The first part to be pedestrianised was to rebuild St. George Street because, when it was rebuilt, rear access to the shops was provided, and now lorries are only able to make use of it during the early morning and at night.

Transport

Transport, in relation to the CBD, is an important factor in the economic prospects of the inner areas, because mobility and congestion affect the job prospects of their residents and the efficiency of local businesses.

Transport management has been reformed over the last decade with new style transport authorities, plans and financial arrangements. The transport Act in 1969 introduced Passenger Transport Authorities in the major cities, following the model of London Transport. The Greater London Council's plans for a motorway box in inner London and a massive restructuring of the primary road network were abandoned in 1973 and following the increases in oil prices metropolitan county councils reviewed their road building programs.