

The Story of Chester Bus Interchange and Surrounding Public Realm –

Transforming a city with Sustainable Transport

Summary of Presentation by Nick Ovenell and John Ingram

The presentation we would like to make to the ‘Smart and Healthy Transport in Cities Conference – 2019’ discusses the origin, design and construction of the recently opened Chester Bus Interchange. It also highlights the complimentary public realm scheme that was undertaken to coincide with the interchange’s opening, specifically a shared-use scheme on Frodsham Street which forms the key route from the interchange to the retail core of the city.

The presentation starts by introducing the context of the city of Chester before describing the inception of the proposal to relocate the bus interchange and create an architecturally important and highly sustainable development on the site of a former surface car park. The presentation discusses the issues that existed at the former interchange location before explaining how the Gorse Stacks site was identified for the new bus interchange location and the various stages of planning that were undertaken. The segment on the interchange itself discusses the improvements to Chester’s public transport offer that have been made as a result of the project and presents the various design elements of the building itself, focussing on its sustainable credentials.

The second part of the presentation then focusses on the surrounding public realm schemes that were implemented to improve the accessibility of the bus interchange and to resolve some existing issues with the environment on the adjacent streets. In particular it focusses on Frodsham Street on which a major shared use scheme has been implemented to remove traffic dominance and prioritise walking and cycling. After describing the context in which the scheme on Frodsham Street was conceived, the presentation discusses the opposition from multiple user groups including visually impaired parties, and how they were won over by incorporating their concerns and requirements, identified through thorough consultation, within the design of the scheme. Ultimately the Frodsham Street scheme has been well received by all parties and has received multiple accolades from various influential bodies.

Finally the presentation discusses the benefits to Chester’s integrated sustainable transport offer since the construction of the interchange and the public realm components. It notes the awards that it has won and describes the improvements to integration, accessibility, viability of developable land, and safety that have followed its implementation. The conclusion of the presentation is that sustainable transport schemes can have a major beneficial impact to the towns and cities in which they are implemented, and that these impacts are not always in the areas you would necessarily assume. It attempts to dispel the myth that by removing car traffic from streets, the local economy must necessarily suffer, and instead points to the example of Chester in which bus patronage, retail footfall and frontage activity are all showing signs of improvement.