

Public Questions for 29 January 2024 Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Our special thanks to the Chair for allowing this late question in exceptional circumstances.

We are Cambridge residents and market shoppers, involved in the Market Square Liaison Group. We have also been engaged with proposals for the Market Square for many years.

The last meeting of the Market Square Liaison Group was on 27 September 2023. Its next meeting, announced only on 17 January, is in 2 days' time. Why is that meeting being held only AFTER this one? This one being presented with the recommendation that the current Liaison Group is replaced by a Civic Quarter Liaison Group. This sequence has denied a vital opportunity for public consultation prior to the recommendations and decisions you may now make.

It is also particularly unfortunate because para 1.10 of the report claims that key issues have been resolved in relation to the Market and the public space. These key issues, raised by ourselves and others over the course of years, have not been resolved. Neither the public nor vitally the market traders have been informed by report, or any other means of:

What and how frequent the evening events might be?

How exactly it could be possible to accommodate both a thriving market and evening events, given the Square's limited capacity in both space and time, and the logistics of setting up and dismantling? The total fiasco of the trial of demountable stalls is still fresh in our minds.

RIBA Stage 1 is "agree a brief and establish that it can be accommodated on the site". This vital step has not yet been achieved for the Market Square project: what was approved 2 years ago was only aspirational. No REALISTIC vision for the Market Square has been presented for public approval.

That said, we welcome the widening of scope to include the Guildhall and Corn Exchange, but the recommendation to take all these to RIBA Stage 2 is premature.

As well as taking all three elements to RIBA stage 1, we call for a realistic vision to be developed. This in actual consultation with the market traders, so that our existing market can be sustained, and with our Cambridge public as the ultimate client.

