

Public Questions Strategy & Resources Committee 21 November 2024

Question 1:

'What commitment can the Council make to delivering the full upgrade of the market square given that there is currently only money identified for the resurfacing. Proposals have come forward from CCC for over 30 years for renovations to the market square none of which have been forthcoming'.

Question 2:

While we understand the need for a plan to raise funding, we traders believe this vision plan will be setting the market project in stone. As it stands, this vision plan is not feasible on countless points, for example the footprint for the permanent stalls needs to be far larger, (please see notes from trader's meeting on 11th Nov and traders subsequent 36 questions sent in to ccq team on 14th+15th Nov). This is showing a great lack of understanding of the everyday running of the market and business needs of the individual stalls. This vision plan will be informing the RIBA 2 design stage. As it is inadequate to meet the business needs of the traders, and therefore a successful market, please can you adjust this vision plan, firming it up with points grounded in reality, before going through to the next RIBA design stage.

Question 3:

The papers for this decision only propose to commit to phase 1 of what appears to be an open-ended project, with phase 2 only being committed to once further funds become available.

What assurances have you been given that make you certain that funding will become available for phase 2?

And who is going to be held liable for compensating businesses which suffer loss of trade or even go out of business as a result of the work on phase 1?

Does the budget for this project include an emergency stipend for traders in the event their businesses become temporarily inoperable at times during the work?

Does the Council have liability insurance to cover compensation for interruption of business as a result of phase 1? If so can we please see the certificate?

Question 4:

I read with great disappointment the proposals from the architects and consultants regarding the proposed alterations of The Guildhall - one of the series of proposals that feels at odds with what the ambition the Minister for Housing is proposing for a massively-expanded city.

Furthermore, it doesn't appear that the consultants involved read, let alone addressed any of the points I made in my submissions during the consultation processes even though they are on record stating that they would respond to these.

(See blogpost at <https://cambridgetownowl.com/2024/01/04/can-the-development-of-the-civic-quarter-revamp-the-guildhall-in-time-for-florence-ada-keynes-mayoral-centenary/> for the specifics).

Did the consultants provide any estimates on the costs and the potential revenues for each of the concepts I came up with for the guildhall including:

- A rooftop cafe
- Separating the large assembly hall into two floors
- Adding two additional meeting rooms above the old court room and adjoining room
- Lifting the council chamber up to rooftop height and creating a new state-of-the-art corporate meeting theatre conferencing room in the void below?

Question 5:

There is a minimum of 33 market traders that currently trade for 5 or more days on the market. These traders use 54 permanent pitches between them in the form of single, double and triple pitches. The concept design only proposes 27 permanent stalls, which leaves a shortfall of 27 pitches. Can you explain why this has not been taken into consideration?

Question 6:

The Civic Quarter design report states that the proposal will 'rationalise' cycle parking around the market. The emerging plans indicate that roughly half the current on-street cycle parking spaces in the area will be lost.

The report mentions the possibility that the spaces lost will be replaced by additional 250 spaces in an expanded Grand Arcade Cycle Park. While this expansion would be welcome, it would only raise the Cycle Park capacity to the number that was originally secured through planning when the Grand Arcade was built, but never delivered by the developer nor enforced by the city council as the planning authority.

The report acknowledges that demand for cycle parking in the Civic Quarter area is already high and that is before the changes to the Guildhall, Corn Exchange and Market Square which will increase its attractiveness as a destination. If the city council is serious about ensuring that as many of these visitors travel by sustainable transport as possible, it must adopt a more ambitious approach to cycle parking. This project should enable many more people to cycle, but in its current form, it achieves the opposite.

As many public questioners made clear in the Liaison Group meeting, spaces close to the market are vitally important, especially for those with mobility issues. Over half of respondents to the public consultation said they accessed the area by cycle. The Civic Quarter needs a comprehensive cycle parking strategy that significantly increases the overall cycle parking capacity in the area – including, but not limited to an increase in capacity in the Grand Arcade – and considers the creation of additional cycle hubs at key access points.

Will the city council commit to significantly increasing the number of cycle

parking spaces in the city centre by urgently developing a city centre parking strategy?

Question 7:

Over the past 6 to 8 years we have had consultation after consultation on the market square. Consistently the Council has ignored the views of the public, who have consistently voiced their concerns and opposition regarding the broad sweeping proposals that the council have been promulgating. Cambridge residents use and want to keep their market, and are not fooled by blandishments that it is an aim of the council to keep the 7 day a week market.

The Council has separated their 'stakeholder groups' from the market traders. We can only surmise that this is so that many Cambridge residents, without detailed knowledge of the market will be fooled by the Council stating that night is day.

But Cambridge residents can see that the market is being run down. Making it abundantly clear that proposals for the market square, being put forward by the Council, will destroy our market.

Even more worrying the Council has consistently ignored everything that the traders have told them, in consultation after consultation.

This current plan from the council to make a canopy that will only cover 27 permanent stalls makes a totally mockery of any claim from the council that their aim is for a vibrant 7 day a week market.

We need our council to give real and acted upon, consideration to the views, questions, issues and concerns raised by both Cambridge residents, as well as by the market traders.

We call for, and ask that the consultation planned for Spring 2025 will finally and actually do this.

Question 8:

I ask the Committee not to accept recommendations 1,2, 1.4 and 1.5 in the Civic Quarter Update report. While supporting the Council's proposed financial commitment, and aspirations for the Guildhall and Corn Exchange, there are still major issues to be resolved, particularly in relation to the Market Square and the overall public realm, before proceeding to the detailed design stage.

The issues raised by both the Council's process and the content of the proposals are too wide-ranging and complex to be fairly covered within a 3-minute question, response, and 2-minute follow-up.

The proposals in their present form do not have a publicly-agreed brief. They lack key information particularly in relation to the Market Square and the public realm. These are essential considerations given the choices needing to be made between the many existing and proposed demands on limited spaces. Consequently, and

contrary to the impression given in the report, the project has still not met RIBA stage 1 “agree a brief and establish that it can be accommodated on the site”.

This being the case I ask you to:

1) amend recommendation 1.2, to holding a further public consultation in Spring 2025 on the brief for the project, prior to proceeding to detailed design.

2) amend recommendation 1.5 to publishing, prior to the above, details of the Council’s vision for the Market, including balance of trade, how it plans to manage and promote the market, and how the Council plans to make the market more attractive to potential traders.

3) additionally, and concurrently with the publication of the vision for the Market, to publish, for public consultation, details of the Council’s proposals for events in the Guildhall, Corn Exchange, Market Square and public realm. To include the space and time requirements of these events in terms of servicing, set up and take down.

Second part – to be included as follow-up of not within 3 minutes

Shockingly, Council officers have twice tried to exclude me (a market customer, Cambridge resident, and historic environment professional with decades’ knowledge of the market) from Civic Quarter meetings organised for the traders. It was only at the insistence of the traders (at this most recent Council liaison meeting) that I have been he allowed to stay. This did enable me to hear both vital details of the proposals and traders’ concerns that need to be publicly aired and discussed if solutions are to be found.

From the first stages of the Market Square project (6 to 8 years ago) the Council has taken a wholly misguided “divide and rule” approach. Identified stakeholders and public have been consulted separately, with no opportunity for developing mutual understanding of needs and concerns, or for cross-fertilisation of ideas.

This has been, and continues to be totally counterproductive, particularly so for the Civic Quarter where multiple users and interests have to be accommodated within limited space and time. Yet throughout the Market Square project, and now the Civic Quarter project, separate workshops have been held on individual topics. What is even more shocking is that feedback promised at these workshops was not provided prior to publication of the Consultation report.