



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION PACK

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List of Public Questions, Full Council 27 November 2025

Question 1:

Is there any plan to reopen the closed toilets in Cambridge city and to renovate the existing ones which are so well used. It has impinged on the dignity of residents and visitors alike and restricted the ability to visit the city for reasons too numerous to mention for many council tax payers.

Question 2:

Council documents state that only two options are being considered for the redevelopment of Arbury Court: a plan involving completely dismantling the court, building over the park and playground, reducing parking, and building 217 new units or doing nothing.

Will the council acknowledge that these are not, in fact, the only two options possible and that a true consultation would involve working with the local community to come up with an alternative, viable option that provides quality homes, improves council housing provision, and acknowledges the unique character of this shared public space alongside the needs of streets like Alex Wood Road and Arbury Road?

Question 3:

Unsurprisingly this is on the subject of Cambridge City's five-year contract with Re-Gen to take our blue bin recycling 400 miles to their site in Northern Ireland for sorting.

At the last full council meeting on 9th October you stated that Re-Gen were using HVO fuel (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) in order to reduce the impact their lorries had on the climate, by reducing the amount of CO₂ emitted. We were left to infer that they were using this in the lorries that come to Cambridge. This would obviously be very welcome if true.

Unfortunately, according to Re-Gen's own website, it is not true. They are only using HVO for 2 of their 159 lorries (that's 1.2% of them), and only on the short 38-mile trip between Newry and Belfast.

Please could you check and confirm whether this is still the case?

Maybe they are using biodiesel in the lorries that come here? (Biodiesel is available at more petrol stations than HVO. They are not considered to be exactly the same thing.)

Biodiesel can be bought at different strengths. Most vehicles cannot run on 100% biodiesel, so it is usually bought blended with normal diesel, eg

7% strength or 20% strength. Any reduction in emissions of global-warming gases associated with this contract would be better than nothing. Meanwhile we wait for the real solution to this situation, which is the MRF site in England that Re-Gen said would be open by April of this year.

Question 4:

The £82m North Cambridge/Arbury development has received unanimous in-principle support from all City Council parties. Council-run information sessions have been well attended, allowing many residents to review plans and raise questions.

1. Present Configuration of Plans

Will the Council confirm that, as stated at the information sessions, the current design of the proposed development is not set in concrete and reconfiguration of the design can be considered for the development.

2. Playpark / Play and Park Area

Will the Council commit to ensuring that the key elements of the existing Arbury Court Play Park will be incorporated into the plans for the proposed development, specifically:

- (a) A secure play area for toddlers and young children of an equivalent or greater area, with enhanced equipment in consultation with local residents and community groups.
- (b) Improved play equipment for older children equivalent to or greater than the current provision, also in consultation with local residents and community groups.
- (c) Open green space in the proposed central area of Arbury Court in at least the same area as the existing courtyard, with a boundary and access points allowing for pedestrian access only so that cycles and scooters are not only prohibited on that space by signage, but are unable to enter or cross the space creating a hazard and danger.

3. Trees, Grass and Greenery

Will the Council confirm that the total greenspace, number of trees, and shrubbery in the final plan will be equal to or greater than which currently exists?

Question 5:

Proposed Arbury Court redevelopment in the North Cambridge Framework for Change:

Many locals, including myself, are concerned about the current plans for the redevelopment, in particular the building on the current park and the planned re-provisioning of green space.

Arbury Ward already had the least protected open space per capita of any ward in Cambridge as far back as 2011, and the same document – the Open Space and Recreation Strategy, 2011 – says clearly that “The new land or facility should be at least as accessible to current and potential new users and at least of equivalent size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality.” Does the council feel that this is achieved by the plans shown on the consultation’s information boards, in which the green space includes three strips of land directly alongside the road, and a central green space crossed by cycle paths?

I recognise that Cllr. Bird has publicly assured locals that “We’ve heard concerns about cycle paths crossing the new park but this won’t happen.” (Press release, 12th Nov 2025). Given this, why do the council’s own information boards show those cycle paths cutting diagonally across the central green space?

And finally – at what stage will the council consult on alternative plans which do not build on the existing park, given that the requirement to re-provide the green space means no extra space for building will be available from doing so?

Question 6

Following the dismissal of the appeal to demolish the Hobson Street Cinema by the Planning Inspector last week, please can Cambridge City Council appeal to those supporting the Cambridge Pledge and similar minded persons and institutions to acquire the premises and turn it into a joint town-gown community centre so as to provide spaces for the essential shared conversations needed to shape the future of our city and county. There are a number of town and gown groups that would be interested in establishing a presence in such a facility.

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1. Councillor Elliot Tong to the Cabinet Member for Communities

I was saddened to see the unprovoked attack on the existence of the Cambridge Community Kitchen by an out-of-town politician in the Cambridge Independent.

Given Cambridge Community Kitchen's five years of demonstrably safe, hygienic and essential work tackling food poverty in Cambridge, how will the City Council ensure that this vital grassroots service is protected rather than disrupted in response to external political pressure?

2. Councillor Karen Young to the Cabinet Member for Safety, Well-being and Tackling Homelessness

Could the Cabinet member describe the current extent of proactive patrolling throughout the city that is currently being undertaken by the environmental enforcement team, how many officers are currently dedicated to this relative to the 7 that were budgeted until recently and over what parts of the week they are deployed to do so?

3. Councillor Cheney Payne to the Cabinet Member for Housing

In July 2025, it was identified that the Council has no knowledge of the condition of half of its council housing. Across the last year, there have been extensive reports of households in Cambridge suffering with high levels of damp and mould which the Labour administration had not addressed. Since then, Awaab's Law was introduced in October 2025, mandating that social landlords investigate reports of damp and mould within 10 working days and begin the necessary work to make the property safe within 5 working days of the investigation. This gives tenants legally enforceable rights to safe housing. Given the significant backlog this Council has created in addressing damp and mould, can the Cabinet Member please outline how the Council is planning to meet the requirements of Awaab's Law?

4. Councillor Katie Porrer to the Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Spaces and City Services

Could the Cabinet member please confirm whether there are any tangible plans for the replacement of the public toilets on Jesus Green, either as part of a wider scheme including improvements at the Lido or separately, and if there are, at what stage are these?

5. Councillor Dave Baigent to the Leader of the Council

This question is raised regarding the council's commitment to transparency, equity, and fairness in the context of the £80 million North Cambridge Framework for Change Consultation. Specifically, it is asked whether the leader believes that any meetings held by officers and selected community groups and ruling party councillors, can be closed to other councillors (and some local community groups). Surely officer called meetings on something so important to the whole city, should be open and accessible to all councillors who wish to attend. Especially when they write to ask to be there. The intention behind this question is to ensure that all representatives (be they councillors or local community groups) can be present, observe, and if appropriate contribute, thereby upholding the principles of openness and inclusivity within council proceedings.

Proposer: Councillor Tong

Seconder: Councillor Clough

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The Guildhall

This Council recognises the historic and enduring significance of the Guildhall as the ceremonial and democratic heart of Cambridge, having served as the home of local governance and ~~C~~civic life for over 800 years.

~~The Council affirms that, notwithstanding the transition to a Unitary Council, the Guildhall shall continue to hold its rightful status as the principle venue for local democracy and civic ceremonies, reflecting its heritage and ongoing role in public life.~~

This Council recognises that once Local Government Reorganisation takes place, the council will cease to exist and that any decision on the Guildhall and its civic role will be made by the new unitary council that replaces it.

The Council recognises that it has no power to bind its successors.

Although ministers have yet to announce their decision on the new unitary council, it is clear that South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council and part of Cambridgeshire County Council will all be part of the same new unitary council.

The Council resolves to write to the leaders and chief executives of South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to open

negotiations about where a future local authority comprising Cambridge should be based.

The Council resolves to write to the leader and chief executive of any other council that ministers decide to include in the same new council as Cambridge once a decision has been announced to open negotiations about where a future local authority comprising Cambridge should be based.

Proposed by Councillor Bird

Seconded by Councillor Gawthrope Wood

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Background:

Cambridge City Council has set out a Vision of a city where ‘everyone has a warm, safe, and affordable home.’

Cambridge City Council has been one of the top 10 councils in the country for building council homes for the last two years.

Morello Place is a social council housing area in King’s Hedges (postcode CB4 2ZH) where residents are facing significant financial challenges. Morello Place has car parking. Despite being council housing, the residents of Morello Place are required to pay for parking. Parking is protected for the exclusive use of Morello Place residents. Parking at Morello Place is charged under the same strategy as all other council homes with car parking.

A new parking strategy for residents of newly built developments was approved by Housing Scrutiny Committee in September 2021 and aimed to provide a cohesive strategy and parking management across all residential car parks owned by the City Council. The strategy provides a pricing structure which takes into account the type of parking and its location. This pricing structure was reviewed in 2024, with the updated structure endorsed unanimously in September 2024 by Housing Scrutiny Committee.

In contrast, neighbouring council housing areas, such as Hawkins Road, Atkins Close, Wilson Close, and Jackson Road, do not offer parking specifically for tenants, offer free parking for their residents, even though they share the same postcode. This discrepancy creates an unfair financial burden on Morello Place residents and leads to increased congestion in the surrounding areas.

Issues:

1. Financial Strain: Residents of Morello Place are struggling financially, and the requirement to pay for parking adds to their burden. Meanwhile, residents in nearby council housing areas receive free parking, which is fundamentally unfair.

~~2. Increased Congestion: Due to the cost of parking at Morello Place, residents often park in surrounding streets, leading to congestion, blocked driveways, and inconvenience for other road users. This negatively impacts residents' quality of life and makes the area less pleasant and more congested during peak times.~~

Motion: Council resolves:

~~1. Review and Amendment of Fees: We propose Tthat the parking fees for Morello Place continue to be aligned with those of other nearby council housing areas in Cambridge with car parking, through the existing pricing structure, ensuring fairness and relieving the financial burden on Morello Place residents for council tenants across the city.~~

~~2. To reaffirm its support for the pricing structure endorsed unanimously in September 2024 by Housing Scrutiny Committee.~~

~~2. Equity in Council Housing: We call for a consistent parking policy across all council housing areas in Cambridge, ensuring that residents of Morello Place receive the same benefits as their neighbours.~~

~~3. Immediate Reversal: We request that the Council immediately reverses the current parking policy at Morello Place to eliminate this unfairness and reduce congestion in the surrounding areas.~~

~~3. To offer support to any Morello Place residents who may be struggling financially through our tenancy sustainment service, which can help tenants to maximise benefits income and refer them for budgeting support.~~

Conclusion:

This motion aims to promote fairness and improve the quality of life for Morello Place residents and the wider community.

Proposer Hugh Clough

Seconder Elliot Tong

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A Thriving City Centre for All

Our city centre, like others, continues to experience the impact of both increased online retailing and neighbourhood convenience shopping, yet council **NOTES** that:

- Cambridge's city centre is challenged to meet an unusually wide spectrum of needs, as the core of two universities and a magnet for tourism (both important contributors to our local economy), in addition to its local residents who often feel the last to be considered;
- There continues to be a strong aspiration for a 'social crossroads' where all parts of the community can meet a variety of needs - still including physical shopping, but also access to services, employment, leisure and culture at a scale which is not possible in other locations where there is less easy public or active transport connection;
- ~~Although Our city centre is not suffering from the economic decline experienced by many others elsewhere, it is widely seen by some local residents as imbalanced towards the hospitality and tourism sectors, as not providing for some parts of the community and as dominated by chains at the expense of independent businesses;~~
- ~~The city council's current plans for full utilisation of the Guildhall, modernisation of the Corn Exchange and refurbishment of the Market Square leverage the council's own assets in expressing confidence in a centre that is for all.~~

Council **BELIEVES** that:

- There is an opportunity for the council to use the soft power of its 'convening' role for a placemaking initiative beyond the current reach of planning powers, by working with the BID, commercial landlords, the universities, cultural organisations and other public service and transport providers to develop a vision to drive future developments and uses in consultation with the public;
- Stakeholders have a shared interest in maximising value and pride in a city centre which is balanced, inclusive, vibrant, accessible, clean, safe and efficiently managed - and this common interest needs to be activated;
- The basic infrastructure of an inviting high street must be vigilantly protected - including ATMs, banks, Post Office and public toilets – and further developed, considering water fountains, wi-fi, charging points, sympathetic waste collection and reduced highway conflicts;
- A new unitary council, by bringing together all responsibilities for the public realm, offers the chance to develop an integrated city centre management team, and that it would be beneficial now to start early stage thinking about how this might be organised;
- A thriving and inclusive city centre in Cambridge must be complementary to successful neighbourhood centres in existing and new communities in and around the city, which meet equally important needs.

Council therefore **CALLS ON** the Director of Economy and Place to scope out this wider placemaking project and report back to the appropriate part of the council by summer 2026 on the form it might take, and how it could be initiated in the short run and carried forward into a new unitary council.

Proposer: Councillor Nestor

Seconder: Councillor Holloway

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A THRIVING CITY CENTRE FOR ALL

Our city centre, like others, continues to experience the impact of both increased online retailing and neighbourhood convenience shopping, yet council **NOTES** that:

Cambridge's city centre is challenged to meet an unusually wide spectrum of needs, as the core of two universities and a magnet for tourism (both important contributors to our local economy), in addition to its local residents ~~who often feel the last to be considered;~~

There continues to be a strong aspiration for a welcoming 'social crossroads' where all parts of the community can meet a variety of needs - still including physical shopping, but also access to services, good job opportunities, leisure and culture at a scale which is not possible in other locations where there is less easy public or active transport connection.

~~Although our city centre is not suffering from the economic decline experienced by many others elsewhere, it is widely seen by local residents as imbalanced towards the hospitality and tourism sectors, as not providing for some parts of the community and as dominated by chains at the expense of independent businesses;~~

Centre for Cities data shows that Cambridge has the highest high street occupancy rate of any UK city outside London, with 11 of every 12 units occupied.

Independent businesses, hospitality and tourism all play an important role in Cambridge's vibrancy and character, and in sustaining local employment.

Cambridge is safer than many UK cities, and the Council remains committed to continuous improvement in partnership with the police, the universities and local organisations.

~~The city council's current plans~~ The Council's ambitious plans for full utilisation of the Guildhall, modernisation of the Corn Exchange and refurbishment of the Market Square ~~leverage the council's own assets in~~

~~expressing confidence~~ demonstrate leadership, strategic investment, and confidence in a centre that is for all.

Council further notes the initial work underway with the County Council to convene a joint city centre steering group, recognising shared powers and responsibilities and the benefits of coordinated leadership.

Council recognises the importance of establishing a shared performance monitoring framework to understand the environmental, social and economic 'health' of the city centre, to guide future prioritisation and investment.

Council also notes that delivering meaningful placemaking interventions requires capacity and resources, and that these must be prioritised and sequenced within current budget constraints.

Council welcomes the increased capacity being created through the new Inclusive Economy team to help coordinate partners and activity in the coming year.

Council BELIEVES that:

~~There is an opportunity for the Council to use the soft power of its 'convening' role~~ build on this momentum by using the convening power of the Council for a placemaking initiative beyond the current reach of planning powers, by working with the BID, commercial landlords, the universities, cultural organisations and other public service and transport providers to develop a vision to drive future developments and uses shared vision for the city centre in consultation with the public - shaped by public engagement, working with key partners including the BID, commercial landlords, the universities, cultural organisations, NGOs and transport providers;

Stakeholders have a shared interest in maximising value and pride in a city centre which is balanced, inclusive, vibrant, accessible, clean, safe and efficiently managed - and this common interest needs to be activated;

The basic infrastructure of an inviting high street ~~must be vigilantly protected~~ should be supported – including ATMs, banks, Post Office and public toilets – ~~and further developed~~, while exploring future improvements ~~considering~~ such as water fountains, wifi, charging points, sympathetic waste collection and reduced highway conflicts;

The concept of a Tourist Levy could be explored with partners as a

mechanism to help support essential services used by visitors and residents alike;

~~A new unitary council by bringing together all responsibilities for the public realm, offers the chance to develop an integrated city centre management team, could provide a more integrated approach to managing the public realm, and that it would be beneficial now to start early stage thinking about how this might be organised; early work should be undertaken to shape how this could best support a thriving city centre;~~

A thriving and inclusive city centre in Cambridge must be complementary to successful neighbourhood centres in existing and new communities in and around the city, which meet equally important needs.

Council believes that progress should be realistic, phased, and achievable within available funding, while exploring opportunities for external and partner investment.

Council therefore **CALLS ON** the Director of Economy and Place to scope out this wider placemaking project and report back to the appropriate part of the council Committee by Summer 2026 on the form it might take, and how it could be initiated and how it could be initiated in the short run and carried forward in the short term and taken forward into a new unitary council, including: partnership governance arrangements, baseline data and monitoring, indicative resourcing, sequencing of activity, and opportunities to leverage external funding (including through GCP), acknowledging the constraints of current budgets.

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Councillor Naomi Bennett

Although the council has already started to use generative AI, it has yet to agree or announce its code of conduct for such use. A clear code of conduct is essential to maintain confidence in the council's publications and minimise risk of fines for GDPR breaches.

Will the council commit to publishing a draft code of conduct and putting it to councillor scrutiny at the earliest possible date?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

The councillor is right to raise this issue, AI is one of the most significant changes in the way we are all going to work in the near future.

Thankfully, the Council already has a generative AI policy for staff and has had one in place since January 2024. The policy has an annual review cycle to ensure it stays up to date with this rapidly moving area of technology. There is clear signposting to the policy and to our Information Governance team on the staff intranet. The policy is one of a suite developed and supported by our shared Information Governance team which is a part of 3C-ICT.

As you will be aware, there was a review of 3C-ICT in the lead up to the renewal of the Shared Services Agreement. One of the changes that was implemented was the introduction of a Chief Digital and Information Officer, Simon Oliver, who is booked to present to the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2026.

More widely AI is a global change and one we need to understand and work with. As I have said we have already got clear guidance and controls in place to manage use, now and in the future, in the workplace.

However, as the city council for Cambridge, we have a unique opportunity to go further and work with our unique innovation environment to explore and work on opportunities to use AI to support our residents and our city in a responsible way, and where possible encourage that use more widely. We fed into the development of Cambridge Can Ai statement¹, and are actively engaged with ai@cam, for example through a recent workshop bringing together real issues faced by local authorities in Cambridge with researchers who could potentially work with us to develop viable and ethical solutions.

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