

Market Square Re-development Consultation July 2021 Response of Cambridge Green Party



First and most importantly, the current consultation should not have taken place, and stands on very shaky ground, given that such a major development is proposed (*"...a multi-million-pound project to transform the design, appearance and day, evening and night time use of this key city centre space"*¹). The consultation should start with a realistic, accurate and proven examination of the need for such a transformation – the way in which it has become focused on the design of demountable stalls, which is a very small part of the proposal, is unacceptable in our view and hides much more important issues from the Cambridge public and those whose livelihoods depend on the market. The original consultation was not undertaken in user-friendly manner: VR or computer 3D models would have been much more sensible and helped people imagine the design. The focus on demountable stalls is missing the point of what the market needs.

Most current problems are to do with neglect and mismanagement, rather than planning. The square has been in a sorry state for many years, with the repair of the cobbles and stalls well overdue. Good upkeep would have prevented much of the current need for action. Cleaning has been totally inadequate, with the square regularly used as a toilet by rough sleepers and market traders having to clean their stalls in the morning, despite paying the council to give them a "fit for purpose" workplace. Prices for stalls have been raised above inflation nearly every year, and new charges were introduced for cancellations, license detail changes, and electricity which many don't use (it is inadequate for a lot of hot food traders). The COVID related closure was extremely unfair and regrettable.

The market is key to promoting and encouraging the **local** economy in that allows producers in the surrounding area to sell locally-produced food and goods, resulting in ultra-low transport emissions.

Response to the design

We agree with the proposals for water availability and waste disposal, and also that rotating the layout of the market square has some value for permeability

However, we object to many aspects of the design. The observations of Cambridge Past Present and Future should have been heeded. The proposed use of demountable stalls is a totally unacceptable deviation from the heritage use of the space. The proposals would not automatically lead to a change in behaviour and development of a sophisticated cafe culture, and the opportunity to improve access to the Guildhall has been missed.

¹ <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/cambridge-market-square-project>

Concerts and film screenings in the market square are not a good use of the space. These are urgently needed in the city but should be located in open spaces in areas, such as Barnwell, Kings Hedges and Queen Edith's, with poor access to the centre where people are reported as "not feeling part of Cambridge". This would respect the "15 minute city principle", making things happen closer to where people live so there is less transport needed.

We believe that 70% of current stalls closest to the Guildhall should be kept permanent but improved. The side of the market nearer to the Guildhall and Great St Mary's is in effect the "heritage" side.

A small number of demountable stalls might be acceptable on the North side by Rose Crescent, as this gets more sunlight during the day and so is more appropriate for flexible use and daytime seating. 30% of these could be used to make space for small night time events, or providing additional sitting space on weekdays when there is often lower occupancy. As described in the document, this is also the "commercial" side and more suited to pop-up seating, food vans, and small events.

The market has lower occupancy on weekdays, especially in the winter, and empty stalls can deter people from visiting the market. Flexible stalls on the North could help to reduce the overall size on low occupancy weekdays, and maintain the appearance of a full and bustling market. This should have been explored at the early design stage.

The row of seating in the middle of market is unnecessary and unsuitable: it will be noisy, crowded and often in the shade. As mentioned above, the appropriate areas for seating are to the North, and the public domain areas currently used by restaurants for seating should be retained for public use.

We firmly do not believe that the colours of the market stall canopies need changing from the current primary colours. These contribute to the heritage value of the town centre and emphasise the important role of the city as a traditional market (not just an elite university and tourist attraction).

Consideration should be given to permanent stall coverings with solar panelling - PV is attractive and inspiring and could help to generate a little of the energy used on the site.

USB charging sockets should be provided, as well as 13A sockets - many modern socket installations have these for convenience recognising that phones and ipads only require USB.

Part 7.2 of the document proposes using AV to broadcast discussions from inside the Guildhall to the outside; although laudable in spirit, we object strongly to this idea which is not appropriate for the market where people need to be able to talk and enjoy themselves without interference.

The proposals do not address the issue of fat from hot food stalls, which can spread and spoil merchandise of nearby traders. Decent sized stalls with solid walls would help partially to protect goods from this.

The amount of publicity that traders are given in return for their fees is not good enough. The discussion of permeability should include advertising and signage of what the market offers. Norwich have signs that show a complete map of the market and the traders operating in there, which is possible because it has permanent stalls with single tenancy. This wouldn't quite work in Cambridge, but what about digital display boards which adapt to show the traders who are there each day? This would just need to use the smart cards which are already being discussed for the waste system, it just requires imagination.

Traders should be strongly encouraged to avoid disposable packaging, and move towards refilling, for both drinks and food. Running water should be provided for refilling and rinsing.

We are agree that there may be potential for a night market, and that this should be tested. The lighting design seems to take the night market concept into account, but could be clearer about how it create an inviting and safe space where the products can be viewed adequately.

The design proposal appears to ignore the fact that transport to and within the city centre will change radically over the next ten years, assuming even a minimum of the various transport and active travel schemes are implemented. There is no evidence that the consultants have looked at last-mile delivery systems, bicycle trailers or autonomous vehicles. The proposal is already dated as it mentions the Palmer CAM. We would like to see the transport plans the new mayor will bring forward and how they will affect the city centre.

There is no plan for resolving conflict between cyclists and pedestrians. The market square, has a lot of cycling the wrong way up one way streets, frustrated cyclists unable to go at normal speed, and pedestrians wandering into the road without looking. Cycling on Kings Parade and Market St is full of conflict. This should be addressed by the County Council who should be asked to provide some proper cycle routes to get through here, like Amsterdam, and adequate markings to make pedestrians cautious and alert. We welcome the proposal to unify the surface of the market but note that this will encourage more erratic omnidirectional cycling. Clear signage and good routes need to be provided to encourage cycling in a planned and ordered way. Cyclists and pedestrians respect each other more if each have their own space.

Market traders sometimes have days when they need to leave early, due to weather conditions, lack of trade, or personal reasons (feeling ill or family emergencies). The strategy must provide the flexibility for traders to pack up early without negative consequences.

We also don't want the costs of this project to be passed onto traders, who already pay some of the highest rates in the country. Where markets have been upgraded in many places it has meant that for many of the traditional market traders the rent has been unaffordable and led to failure or gentrification of the market site. Spitalfields Market in Shoreditch, London which had been a large diverse hub of the local community is no longer affordable for many local people as it has become very expensive. Also many of our larger cities market failed when they were upgraded.

The market square redevelopment project will clearly have to integrate well with the Making Space for People Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)² which has sadly been postponed. Proper integration with this initiative could ensure that: - pedestrians and cyclists are put at the top of the "street user hierarchy"; city centre signage is improved; the pedestrian area is significantly increased.

² <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/making-space-for-people-spd>