

MINUTES

Market Square Liaison Group Meeting

Date: Wednesday 27 September 2023
Time: 16:00-17:30
Venue: Microsoft Teams call
Chair: Cllr Rosy Moore
CCC Market Square Team: Fiona Bryant, Dave Prinsep, Cath Conlon, Sarah French, Tim Jones
Apologies received: Cllr Martinelli, Daniel James, Jane Wilson, James Littlewood, Jeremy Lovell, Sarah Tovell

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| 1. | <i>Introduction & Meeting rules</i> | |
| | The meeting principles were reiterated upon the start of the meeting, with Cllr Rosy Moore in attendance as chair. | |
| 2. | <i>Liaison Group terms of reference</i> | |
| | <p>The purpose of the task and finish group was to share information, discuss issues and provide input to the Market Square Project. Although this is a very important group for sharing updates and sharing ideas, this group does not have any decision-making powers.</p> <p>The project brief for this project is to develop a design and proposal that conserves the existing value of the Market Square and enhances the quality and design of the outdoor public space consistent with that of the wider historic core and the priority to retain the seven day a week general market.</p> <p>We will prioritise making space more accessible for visitors through improvements to the surface and optimise access for pedestrians and cyclists. The design will include seating space for social activity and small-scale event.</p> | |
| 3. | <i>Heritage Engineering & Access Update</i> <i>Alan Wright (AW) – Conservation Accredited Engineer</i> | |
| | <p>Alan Wright from Wright Consulting presented to the group to outline the progress in considering the condition and repair of the listed granite setts (which are thought to be late 19th century, Leicester Pink's) and what remains of the 1850's Listed Fountain. He emphasised the importance of respecting the heritage of the square while meeting modern requirements, such as accessibility.</p> <p>Characteristics and challenges are summarised as:</p> <p>1. <u>Topography:</u> The square is mostly flat from northwest to southeast in terms of levels and gradients but has a significant drop when moving from southwest to northeast, resulting in a general fall from east to west.</p> | |

2. **Ridge and Furrow Pattern:** Purple lines on the square indicate a ridge and furrow pattern, likely a relic of historical farming practices, with drainage troughs running north south and draining into surface water drains.
3. **Historic Construction:** The square has been constructed over a long period, with various types of sizes of setts (paving stones) ranging from 2 to 300 millimetres square, indicating a lack of uniformity in construction.
4. **Impact of Infrastructure:** The 20th century and earlier infrastructure development, including surface water drains, electric cables, and a gas main, has had a significant impact on the square. Many setts have been lifted and re-laid, leading to an uneven surface.
5. **Repair Considerations:** Repairing the square involves addressing load-carrying capacity for vehicles, considering the historical layout, and upgrading drainage systems to prevent local flooding. Ensuring accessibility and reducing slip and trip risks are also vital.

In consideration of the heritage and accessibility challenges, the Council engaged an Access Consultant to assess the square, focusing on issues like cross falls, drainage, and potential trip hazards. The subsequent report highlights that the Equalities Act applies to the square and recommends solutions to improve accessibility, such as altering the paving, addressing gradient issues, and considering different surface types.

The next steps include undertaking health and safety assessments and short-term repairs of the granite setts where needed. A long-term plan for ensuring the square's accessibility to all will also be brought forward as a key element of the project proposals.

The fountain also needs to be stabilised, to prevent further deterioration before the project begins. This involves resolving issues related to pointing, cracks, voids, and loose mortar.

Wright Consulting will be overseeing the repair of the Fountain base and stones as part of the plan.

Questions and answers from AW presentation:

There were a series of questions regarding the granite setts:

1. Are there any other markets or spaces that have similar setts?
2. Is there a location that has been completed already which can be visited to see what the outcome is and how it looks.

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| | <p><u>On the potential test panels for sett options, the questions included:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can we include options/test panel for level service setts? 2. Is there a limit to the number of setts that can be included in the test panels? 3. Can the setts be picked up, moved, or relayed during the testing process? 4. Does a test panel process comply with the Listing requirements for the setts? <p>AW responded by saying that he has a number of photograph examples of similar setts such as in Edinburgh. The setts in Edinburgh are not, however, completely flat and have some slight roundness, which are known to still cause issues and vibrations, especially for wheelchairs. He also referenced locations like Nottingham Market Square and St. James Square in London, as well as Clink Street in London, where the setts are flat surfaced. He also referred to Green Street, Cambridge highlighting similarities.</p> <p>The compliance with the Equalities Act is clearly very important and there is case evidence involving a wheelchair user whose wheelchair broke due to being on cobbles for an extended period.</p> <p>The Chair referenced known issues with a colleague who uses a wheelchair when on a City Centre tour where navigating Green Street was a barrier. Cllr Bick confirmed that functionality is needed as well as recognising the history of the Market Square.</p> <p>The Council confirmed that Historic England and City Conservation staff will continue to be engaged in the process for developing proposals for achieving an acceptable surface design proposal.</p> <p>The immediate plan involves agreeing a final brief for the more immediate repair works to setts and fountain, with the goal of obtaining approval from the Conservation Officer and undertaking repairs by a specialist contractor soon. It will be important that these immediate works are agreed within the framework of the long-term proposals to ensure efficiency etc.</p> <p>There was a separate question on whether the repairs to the fountain would be disruptive to the stalls around the fountain.</p> <p>The direct area will be cordoned off. Market Traders will be given notice if any works are planned that will impact them.</p> | |
| <p>4.</p> | <p><i>General Update</i></p> <p><i>Dave Prinsep, Assistant Director – Assets & Property</i></p> | |
| | <p>DP provided context about the recent changes in the Council’s structure explaining that Joel Carré who had been heavily involved in this project had left the Council in July. The Market Square Team Operational Management is being managed under the City Services Group led by James Elms. Further discussions are taking place around the plan for formal development project leadership.</p> | |

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| | <p>The Council is continuing consolidation of office space post-Covid. This has implications for refurbishing the Guildhall and repurposing spaces, including the former Tourist Information Centre. These developments take time and are relevant to the Market Square project as while the two projects are distinct, here may be opportunities for synergy between them due to their proximity.</p> <p>In the next few months, the Council is expecting to develop early concept proposals for the Guildhall and Market Square following on from the current and previous work done. This involves collaboration with architects, budget identification etc.</p> <p>The goal is to better understand the opportunities and initial options for both projects. In the long-term, implementation of the two projects may be separate or aligned, but the opportunity at the design stage, at least, is to combine them.</p> <p>We plan to provide more advanced update at the next Stakeholder Liaison Group Meeting.</p> | |
| | <p>Questions and answers from DP:</p> <p>A previous question was raised again about the location of public toilets near the market. It was suggested that having toilets closer to the market could prevent people from leaving the market area to use the restroom and not returning.</p> <p>In response it was suggested that there is no specific evidence that this is occurring and that the nearest public toilets in Lion Yard are extensive and less than 50 metres from the square. However, it is an important consideration for the project to ensure that signage to such facilities is clear and appropriate.</p> <p>A further question was raised around extended use of the basement of the Guildhall to help the market in a practical way.</p> <p>It was confirmed that, as suggested at the previous MSLG meeting, the Council is actively exploring various opportunities for utilising the available space differently in the future, and this is another reason for linking the design stage with the proposed Guildhall changes.</p> | |

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| | <p>Cllr Bennett expressed appreciation for the new tourist office in the Guildhall stating that it looked welcoming and complimented the Orlene’s Café as another pleasant addition, expressing optimism about the potential for more improvements in the future.</p> <p>DP advised that Allia, the organisation responsible for the business centre in the Guildhall, has several small business tenants already in place. They also manage the former Tourist Information Centre area and the Courtroom, which can be used for short-term purposes, such as by community groups or for cultural activities. People interested in utilising these spaces are encouraged to make enquiries with Allia at the Guildhall.</p> | |
| <p>5.</p> | <p><i>General Update</i></p> <p><i>Sarah French, Contract Project Manager – Development Streets & Open Spaces</i></p> | |
| | <p>SF updated the group on the current work by the Greater Cambridge Partnership, to review options for the city in the light of recent decisions around the Sustainable Travel Zone proposals. The Road Hierarchy project outcomes, which is outlined the proposed status for the City Centre streets, is also under the review as part of the process.</p> <p>The plan remains, if possible, to prioritise walking and cycling in streets surrounding the Market Square and the historic centre. A paper detailing the modelling results is in development and will be presented to the GCP Board.</p> <p>There is also an integrated parking strategy in progress with the city and county councils, focusing on car parks and street parking for a coordinated approach, although a specific timeline is not provided.</p> <p>The Council team will continue to work with County and GCP colleagues to ensure that the work on these projects informs, and is informed by, the market square project proposals.</p> <p>The Council has previously raised a potential dependency on the emerging proposals for a District Heat Network, which has been a factor impacting the progress of the project. An initial feasibility study has now been completed, and confirmation has been received that the Market Square won’t be affected by the network’s route.</p> | |
| | <p><u>Questions and answers:</u></p> <p>A couple of questions were raised, not directly related to the presentation, but around the relationship between the City Access and connectivity projects with the</p> | |

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| | <p>proposed emerging City vision, and the Destination Management Plan (DM), and what stage the DMP has reached to date.</p> <p>The Chair advised that work is indeed underway on the destination management plan and a broader vision for the city centre but clarified that these plans are not expected to significantly affect the current Market Square project core objectives, owing partly to the practical constraints of the square. As the Market Square project advances and the destination management plan work continues, there will be engagement, but the primary focus for the project remains on the market and making improvements for the space for all.</p> <p>The need for a comprehensive vision for the city centre that aligns different projects, including the Market Square, with the broader goals and purpose of the city centre was emphasised. There was concern expressed about the vision and strategy for the city centre, whether it is focused on offices, science parks, and tourists and how residents fit into the picture.</p> | |
| | <p>The Council advised that the Market Square project is being developed with consideration for various dependencies on other projects, including the city vision, destination management plan, city access and road hierarchy work, district heat networks and wider sustainable development. The emphasis of all aspects of the city's development are being considered for technical requirements and constraints to the cultural and placemaking strategies. As the work progresses, it will continue to consider who currently uses the space, who will use it in the future, and how it aligns with the broader city proposals.</p> <p>Cambridge BID, as partners in Visit Cambridge and leading on the Destination Management Plan specifically, were asked if they had any further comments on the DMP.</p> | |
| | <p>MM provided an overview of the destination management plan, explaining that the tender for the plan is scheduled to be released soon.</p> <p>The Destination Management Plan is being reinvigorated due to changing structures within the city, with the aim of completing it by March 2024. The plan encompasses infrastructure, the city's identity and story and the funding structure for a new destination management organisation.</p> <p>It aims to strike a balance between marketing the city for all and providing an excellent experience for visitors. It recognises the importance of residents in supporting the visitor economy and aims to ensure residents feel part of the city and have access to its services and facilities.</p> <p>In terms of tourism, the focus is, on extending overnight stays and positioning Cambridge as a world-class destination. The plan will address how to convey Cambridge's story and enhance its assets to create a world-class experience that aligns with the city's international reputation.</p> | |

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| | <p>A group member highlighted her involvement in the Paradise Nature Reserve public inquiry and how it has raised questions about preserving the essence of Cambridge's wild and rural spaces, which many residents value.</p> <p>She felt that residents want to see these unique qualities genuinely reflected in policy to protect what makes Cambridge special. She emphasised the importance of ensuring that the policy aligns with the city's district character and values, which have garnered national and international attention, and asks how these aspects will be considered in the decision-making process.</p> | |
| | <p>MM discussed the various facets included within the DM plan, which aimed to tell the story of Cambridge effectively. The plan is expected to provide a framework for both the short and medium terms but may need periodic updates to adapt to changing city dynamics and evolving aspirations.</p> <p>She emphasised the symbiotic relationship between visitors and residents, noting that visitors play a vital role in supporting and funding various services within the city – ultimately benefiting both residents and tourists. The destination management plan aims to identify any areas that require attention, respond to various factors, and address emerging trends achieving a balance between different considerations that is crucial for the city's future development.</p> | |
| | <p>A further question was raised about the extent of planned public engagement in the destination management planned its focus, and whether the plan's vision is centred on commerce or aims to create something remarkable for the city. An example was given of involvement with an organisation called Cambridge Heritage and a proposed interpretation centre that was developed to benefit both visitors and local residents. Insight was sought into how the public will be engaged in shaping the management of the visitor pressures and what the overarching vision for the DMP entails.</p> <p>MM from Cambridge BID responded that the DM plan includes a wide range of stakeholders, including civic societies. Input from residents is considered through local authority research and other data, such as well-being and prosperity surveys by the City Council.</p> <p>Regarding whether the plan is driven by commerce, she acknowledged that commerce plays a role due to its impact on the economic well-being of the city. However also emphasised that the plan considers the social well-being of the city, and the combination of economic, environmental, and social considerations. She does recognise the importance of businesses in the city that rely on tourism as a key part of their income and operation, making commerce a significant aspect of the plan.</p> | |
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| | <p>Further assurance was sought that residents and resident groups will be consulted in the development of the destination management plan. Concerns were raised about the impact of high volumes of tourism, emphasising that tourism can be an “extractive industry” and about managing the sheer numbers of people using limited spaces. It was agreed that the proposal for extending stays to enhance the quality of the tourism is an important facet, but that the challenges relating to quality of tourism within limited space need to be fully considered.</p> | |
| 6. | <i>Meeting Close</i> | |
| | <p>The Chair thanked all the presenters and attendees for their participation in the meeting and advised that the next meeting will be arranged once the date has been agreed.</p> | |
| 7. | <i>Date of the next meeting</i> | |
| | <p>To Be Confirmed</p> | |