calfordseaden

Budget and Value Engineering Review Report

Cambridge Civic Quarter

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28 OCTOBER 2026

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Date	27 October 2026	**Date**	

Budget and Value Engineering Review Report
Cambridge Civic Quarter

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 A comprehensive value engineering (VE) exercise has been undertaken across the Guildhall, Corn Exchange and Market Square elements of the Cambridge Civic Quarter project. The exercise has identified substantial opportunities to reduce project expenditure while maintaining deliverability of the core scheme.

1.1 The latest budget update indicates a total project budget (RIBA Stage 5 onwards) of approximately **£83.8m**, compared with the August 2026 budget position of approximately **£97.5m**, representing a potential overall reduction of **£13.66m.**

1.2 The majority of savings are derived from:

- Scope rationalisation and reduced fit-out standards.
- Omission of selected heritage, architectural and accessibility enhancements.
- Energy performance and EnerPHit-related scope reductions.
- Removal or rationalisation of structural and MEP elements.

Professional fee and construction-stage allowance reductions.

2 BUDGET POSITION

2.0 **August 2026 Position**

Total construction, design and on-cost budget:

£97.50m

2.1 **October 2026 Position**

Total construction, design and on-cost budget:

£83.8m

2.2 **Overall Improvement**

Item	Value
August 2026 Budget	£97.50m
October 2026 Budget	£83.8m
Reduction	£13.66
Percentage Reduction	c.14%

2.3 The updated budget incorporates significant VE savings but also reintroduces client contingency allowances previously embedded within construction cost plans.

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3 PRINCIPAL VALUE ENGINEERING SAVINGS

3.0 The VE register identifies approximately **£11.7** of construction-related savings opportunities, primarily affecting the Guildhall package. Refer to Appendix A which includes the itemised VE list for each project.

3.1 **Largest Individual Savings Identified**

Item	Value
Omit EnerPHit insulation and airtightness strategy	£2.50m
Parsons Court commercial and members' facilities and associated rear toilet facilities omitted	£1.45m
Reduce façade cleaning scope	£1.11m
Rationalisation of lighting and MEP specification	£0.60m
Atrium roof change	£0.55m
Omit former void area ceiling works	£0.45m
Repair large hall roof rather than replacement	£0.46m

3.2 These items collectively account for the majority of the savings currently reflected within the revised budget.

3.3 After conducting an initial review the following VE options have been disregarded by CCC:

- Omit Rainwater Harversting to Market Square – negliable impact
- Omit Dais Lift to Council Chamber – Accessibility risk
- Commercial Office Space to be delivered to CAT A Shell & Core Specification – detrimental business plan impact
- Omission of cycle storage to Guildhall basement – Significant planning risk

4 PLANNING AND CONSENT RISK ASSESSMENT

4.0 Several VE proposals introduce varying levels of planning risk. Refer to Appendix B which includes commentary of the assessed planning risk associated with each VE option.

4.1 **Low-Risk Changes**

The following items are considered low planning risk and appear capable of implementation through existing approvals or condition discharge processes:

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- Reduced façade cleaning scope.
- Roof repair instead of replacement.
- Rationalisation of heritage lighting.
- MEP specification optimisation.
- Scaffolding reductions.
- Rationalisation of staircase design.

4.2 **Medium-Risk Changes**

These items may trigger non-material amendment (NMA) or Section 73 applications depending on detailed design outcomes:

- Reduction in atrium roof performance specification.
- Removal of ceiling works within former void areas.
- Omission of the fourth-floor extension where future implementation remains possible.

4.3 **High-Risk Changes**

The following proposals present significant consent risk:

4.3.1 **EnerPHit Removal**

The proposed omission of the EnerPHit insulation and airtightness strategy is identified as likely requiring a Section 73 planning application, as energy performance formed a material consideration during planning determination.

4.3.2 **Omission of the fourth-floor extension where future implementation does not remain possible**

If the structural strengthening works are omitted, the fourth-floor extension could not be delivered in the future, as the existing structure would not have sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional loading. This would remove the option of future implementation under the current consent and would therefore necessitate a Section 73 planning application to amend the approved scheme. As a result, the proposal carries a high planning risk that should be considered alongside the capital cost saving.

4.4 **Programme Implications**

4.5 Typical approval timescales are as follows:

- **Non-Material Amendment (NMA):** approximately 28 days.
- **Section 73 Application:** typically requires pre-application engagement before submission, followed by a statutory 13-week determination period. In practice, determination periods often extend beyond this, and a four-month approval period should be assumed. Including pre-application consultation and design development, a total programme impact of approximately **five months** should be anticipated.

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4.6 This is particularly relevant to options involving the removal of EnerPHit principles, as these would require significant redesign work before any substantive planning discussions could recommence.

4.7 The principal cost-saving opportunities carrying the greatest planning and programme risk are:

4.8
- Omission of the fourth-storey extension.
- Omission of EnerPHit principles.

4.9 Given the potential impact on programme certainty and deliverability, it is strongly recommended that options requiring a Section 73 application or a fresh planning consent are avoided unless there is a clear strategic justification for pursuing them.

5 ENERGY PERFORMANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACTS

5.0 One of the most significant savings opportunities arises from the proposed removal of EnerPHit-related requirements, generating combined savings in excess of **£2.5m** including construction and associated fees.

5.1 However, this option carries:

- risk of planning review.
- Higher operational energy consumption.
- Potential departure from Net Zero Carbon aspirations.
- Reputational considerations for the authority.
- Requirement for revised energy modelling and sustainability assessments.

5.2 Further evaluation is recommended before progressing this element of the VE strategy.

6 ACCESSIBILITY RISKS

6.0 Several savings proposals impact accessibility provisions:

- Declassification of evacuation lifts.
- Omission of the Large Hall stage lift.

6.1 While generating meaningful cost savings, these items may attract stakeholder scrutiny and require careful consideration against Building Regulations, Equality Act obligations and planning commitments.

7 PROFESSIONAL FEES AND ON-COST REVIEW

7.0 The October budget incorporates reductions in:

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- Stage 5 project management allowances.
- Legal fees.
- Design guardian allowances.
- Meeting room hire allowances.
- Net Zero Carbon guardian costs.
- Inspection and consultancy allowances.

7.1 Overall fee and on-cost reductions amount to approximately **£1,078m** compared with the previous budget position.

8 MARKET DECANT POSITION

8.0 The revised market decant budget has reduced from approximately **£2.43m** to **£2.29m**, delivering a saving of approximately **£145k**.

8.1 Savings have been achieved through:

- Reduced planning condition allowances.
- Reduced EA/QS fees.
- Reduced contingency provisions.

8.2 The principal implementation cost remains the SRM decant works at approximately **£1.43m**.

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9 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1 As part of this review, consideration has been given to whether alternative development strategies may provide a more cost-effective route to delivering the Council's long-term accommodation requirements. Whilst the current Civic Quarter proposals focus on the comprehensive refurbishment and adaptation of the existing Guildhall, Corn Exchange and Market Square assets, an alternative approach would be the delivery of a purpose-built civic complex on an alternative site. Such an approach would avoid many of the constraints associated with working within existing historic buildings, including structural limitations, heritage requirements, complex phasing arrangements and the extensive temporary works necessary to maintain operational continuity throughout the construction programme.

9.2 To provide a high-level comparison, calfordseaden prepared a separate Rough Order of Cost (ROoC) 22.10.26 (included at Appendix B) assessing the potential construction cost of a new-build civic facility within Cambridge. The assessment considered both a standalone civic office and public chamber building (Option A) and a larger facility incorporating a 780-seat public hall (Option B). The benchmark assessment indicates an estimated construction cost range of approximately £15.9m to £21.6m for Option A and £28.6m to £38.6m for Option B, inclusive of allowances for professional fees and client contingency but excluding site-specific acquisition, abnormal, planning and enabling costs. The assessment was prepared as a high-level benchmark using industry cost data and is intended only as an indicative comparison.

9.3 Whilst a direct comparison cannot be made between the benchmark new-build options and the Civic Quarter proposals, the order of magnitude assessment demonstrates that the construction cost of a modern civic facility may be materially lower than the current Guildhall element of the budget. However, any such alternative would need to be balanced against wider strategic considerations including site availability, planning policy, heritage objectives, town centre regeneration aspirations, stakeholder requirements, relocation impacts and the future use of the Guildhall and Corn Exchange assets. Accordingly, whilst the benchmark assessment provides a useful sense check against the current proposals, it should be viewed as informing the Council's strategic decision-making rather than representing a fully developed alternative scheme.

9.4 It is also important to recognise that the option of deferring or significantly reducing investment in the Guildhall does not remove the Council's ongoing liabilities associated with ownership of the asset. The asset assessment undertaken by Sir Robert McAlpine describes the Guildhall as a deteriorating heritage asset with an established maintenance backlog and notes that visible defects have continued to worsen during the course of the Civic Quarter pre-construction phase. Areas of concern identified include water ingress, deterioration of masonry and façade elements, aging building services, fire safety and accessibility deficiencies, and potential risks to occupier and public safety arising from the condition of ceilings and external fabric. The report further observes that continuing deterioration may increase the complexity and cost of future remedial works and could ultimately result in parts of the building being removed from operational use.

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9.5 Accordingly, whilst alternative development solutions, including the provision of a new-build civic facility, may offer a potentially lower capital construction cost when compared against the current Civic Quarter proposals, the Council would still need to address the future of the Guildhall and its associated statutory, maintenance and heritage obligations.

9.5 As custodian of a significant listed heritage asset, the Council would remain exposed to ongoing repair liabilities, health and safety responsibilities, reputational considerations and the risk of escalating remediation costs should intervention be deferred. The assessment therefore suggests that a 'do minimum' approach is unlikely to represent a cost-neutral option and may simply defer expenditure whilst increasing long-term asset management risk.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

10.0 Prioritise implementation of low-risk VE items that do not materially affect planning permissions, accessibility obligations or operational requirements. In particular, savings associated with specification optimisation, reduced façade cleaning, rationalisation of lighting and MEP installations, roof repair in lieu of replacement where technically justified, and other measures capable of being accommodated within the existing planning consent should be progressed at the earliest opportunity. Adoption of these measures would allow a proportion of the identified savings to be secured with a high degree of certainty whilst maintaining project momentum and reducing overall budget pressure.

10.1 The Council should also prioritise the early progression of design development and the procurement of planning, heritage and statutory authority advice in respect of any value engineering proposals that materially alter the approved scheme or the basis upon which planning consent was secured. Particular attention should be given to proposals such as the omission of EnerPHit measures and amendments affecting the approved fourth-floor extension, as these may necessitate a Section 73 application or other consent variations.

10.2 Advancing the design and consent strategy for these items at the earliest opportunity will help establish the extent of any redesign requirements, confirm the approval route and programme implications, and mitigate the risk of delays to the planned commencement of construction works. Given the potential for planning-related approvals to extend project timescales by several months, early intervention is essential if the Council wishes to retain these options whilst maintaining programme certainty.

10.3 Prior to accepting any reduction in building performance standards, the Council should commission revised energy modelling and operational cost assessments to fully understand the long-term implications of the proposed changes. Whilst the omission of EnerPHit measures offers a significant capital cost saving, this must be weighed against increased operational energy consumption, future carbon emissions, alignment with the Council's climate objectives and the potential reputational consequences of reducing sustainability ambitions on a flagship civic project. Consideration should also be given to the potential impact on future maintenance costs and building performance throughout the operational life of the asset.

10.4 Review accessibility implications of lift omissions with Building Control and access consultants.

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10.5 Given the complexity of the project, the heritage nature of the assets, the ongoing development of the design and current market uncertainty within the construction sector, it is recommended that the reinstated contingency allowance of approximately £2.28m is retained at this stage of the project.

10.6 A phased approach to implementation of the value engineering proposals is recommended to ensure that immediate savings can be realised without prejudicing the delivery programme or introducing unnecessary planning risk whilst higher-risk items are subjected to further technical, planning, heritage and stakeholder evaluation.

11 CONCLUSION

11.0 The VE exercise demonstrates a credible route to reducing the Civic Quarter budget by approximately **£13.66m (14%)**, bringing the forecast project cost down to approximately **£83.8m**. While many of the identified savings appear achievable with limited impact on project outcomes, some of the largest savings carry planning, sustainability and accessibility risks that will require careful evaluation before adoption.

Signed:

Mark Watts MRICS MAPM
Partner
For and on behalf of calfordseaden LLP

Date: 28 October 2026

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Appendix A – VE Schedule

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EXTRACTS FROM THE VE SCHEDULES ISSUED FROM AUG 26 - OCT 26		PLANNING RISK	MARKET SQ	CORN EXCHANGE	PARSONS COURT	GUILDHALL
Omit Rainwater Harvesting provision	MSQ	Probably not worth it given the size of the saving and focus on water scarcity	NOT ACCEPTED			
Omit Public Artwork allowance	MSQ		-£ 75,000.00			
Reduce scope of fountain repairs	MSQ		-£ 40,000.00			
Omit fountain movement monitoring	MSQ		-£ 10,000.00			
Reduce scope of scaffolding allowances	CE			-£ 25,000.00		
Parsons court Bar/ Shopfront and private members facilities omitted form scheme	CE	Low risk of Completion Notice being served			-£ 1,000,000.00	
SRM to continue with the toilet facility only to the rear of the Main building as Toilet facilies are an issue	CE	Potentially more Building Control related than Planning			-£ 450,000.00	
Main Stage Lift - Repair in lieu of replace	CE			-£ 250,000.00		
Omit ceiling to 'Back of House' areas	CE			-£ 7,500.00		
Downspec commercial kitchen to provde domestic style kitchen	CE			-£ 50,000.00		
Reduction in provision for acoustic treatments	CE			-£ 125,000.00		
Reduce Diathonite specfication to standard insulation	CE			-£ 10,000.00		
Change hard landscaping from Yorkstone to Granite Setts	CE	Condition		-£ 10,000.00		
Reduce extent of façade cleaning	CE	Planning drawings are silent on façade cleaning. Planning condition refers to cleaning of stone and prior to any cleaning the cleaning method should be approved by the planners. Therefore low risk		-£ 478,000.00		
Reduce scope of scaffolding allowances	CE					-£ 25,000.00
Asbestos - Review of options to encapsulate rather than remove and disposal.	GH					-£ 100,000.00
Remove Asbestos to three Committee Room Ceilings on first floor. Cost Includes full ceiling removal and reinstatement	GH					-£ 200,000.00
Reduce the external stone façade cleaning scope, focus on structural and key repairs and one cleaning system.	GH	Planning drawings are silent on façade cleaning. Planning condition refers to cleaning of stone and prior to any cleaning the cleaning method should be approved by the planners. Therefore low risk				-£ 637,220.00
Omit Enerphit Insulation and Air Tightness Principles and provide Part L Building Regs compliance.	GH	Certainly a s73 application because it significantly increases the amount of energy the buidling is using. This was a material considertation during the planning process and changing this could have changed the outcome of the committees decision.				-£ 2,000,000.00

Omit the Ceiling demo and works in former void area	GH	Depending on the increase in energy use caused by this change it could slip from an NMA into a s73.							-£	450,000.00
Historical Protection - Manage scope and allowances	GH								-£	200,000.00
Floor Finishes - rationalise scope of parquet floor repairs	GH								-£	350,000.00
Floor Finishes - omit timber and provide carpet to offfices	GH								-£	100,000.00
Atria 1& 2 - Declassify one lift from Evacuation Lift to standard	GH								-£	325,000.00
Declassify second lift from Evacuation Lift to standard	GH								-£	350,000.00
Large Hall Stage - Omit lift	GH	Low risk of Completion Notice being served							-£	61,500.00
Omit Dais Lift in Council Chamber	GH	Phasing point - as designed for accessibility. Option 1 - submit through NMA Option 2 - do not implement it but risk a Completion Notice							NOT ACCEPTED	
Omission of 4th extension inclusive of all structural enhancement works	GH	If the fourth floor extension could be implemented in the future this is seen as a medium risk. Planners could issue a Completion notice. If the strengthening works are not undertaken then the the fourth floor extension could not be implemented. This would then require a s73.							-£	1,700,000.00

Omission of restaurant services diversions to 4th floor	GH	As above							-£	50,000.00
Rationalise feature stairs design to Atria	GH								-£	25,000.00
Structural steel supports reduced to acoustic louvre to roof line market elevation	GH								-£	135,000.00
Bases for plant part of singular composite system. Reduce current value by 50% no longer needs to fix to main sub strucutre with complex works	GH								-£	40,000.00
Heritage lighting re-wiring and new lights, cost allowance is reduced and work to reduced value	GH								-£	120,000.00
Digital and satellite system; throughout, review requirements with Max Fordham.	GH								-£	30,000.00
Reduce access gantry for PV to main Hall sloping roof, Review through design and focus on reducing	GH								-£	25,000.00
Allowance for IT equipment and cabling; throughout. Tenant to provide own system so infrastructure only	GH								-£	30,000.00
Rationlise spec of lights and other MEP items across the scheme to achieve cost target	GH	Captured in discharge of conditions							-£	600,000.00
Atrium 2 glass canopy / Consider change both to PTFE	GH	Likely NMA application subject to the % impact on energy use. If the change significantly increases the amount of energy used by the building then it could move into a s73 application.							-£	550,000.00
Remove feature stair to Atria 2 by Fit out	GH								-£	75,000.00
Reduce glazing specfication to rooflights - high performance single glazed	GH	Captured within details at condition discharge							-£	30,000.00
Commercial Office Space to be delivered to CAT A Shell & Core Specification	GH								NOT ACCEPTED	
Omit cycle store to basement & lift. Stair 7 to be retained without adaptation	GH	Moving cycle parking – this fundamentally changes the redline boundary of the application and a new planning application would be required. VERY HIGH RISK							NOT ACCEPTED	
Further saving on the omission of evacuation Lifts	GH								-£	41,100.00
Extension of S&C specifcation to Level 2	GH								NOT ACCEPTED	
Repair Large Hall Roof in lieu of replace	GH	Low risk of Completion Notice being served							-£	456,560.00
Enerphit Omission (additional fee allowances omitted)	GH	Certainly a s73 application because it significantly increases the amount of energy the buidling is using. This was a material considertation during the planning process and changing this could have changed the outcome of the committees decision.							-£	500,000.00
			-£	125,000.00		-£	955,500.00		-£	1,450,000.00		-£	9,206,380.00

Appendix B – New Build Civic Building Rough Order of Cost Estimate

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Rough Order of Cost Estimate Range
Option A (office & public chamber) & Option B (with 780 seat hall)
22 October 2026

Cambridge based new build office, public chamber and 780 seat hall

Introduction

calfordseaden LLP have been requested to provide a high level indicative cost range of possible build costs for a hypothetical building comprising:

Option A - new build commercial office and public chamber building to CAT A specification with an approximate gross internal floor area (GIA) of 2,600m2; and

Option B - as Option A but also including a 780 seat hall building with an approximate GIA of 4,750m2.

We note that no drawings, specifications, accommodation schedules or detailed scope of works have been provided from which to assess the potential construction costs. Accordingly, this estimate has been prepared using comparable benchmark data and industry cost intelligence to establish an indicative range of likely construction costs.

The estimate assumes delivery under a single, continuous construction programme with minimal phasing and a single Design and Build procurement route. The cost ranges are based on a 1Q28 commencment and assume compliance with current statutory and regulatory requirements.

Assumed Floor Areas

	Total GIA (m2)	Total GIA (SqFt)
Option A	2,600	27,986
Option B	4,750	51,129

Order of Cost Estimate

Option A (CAT A commercial office space and public chamber)	£ Lower	£ Upper
Order of Cost Estimate	15,939,000	21,563,000
Overall Rate per m2 (GIA)	£6,130	£8,293
Overall Rate per ft2 (GIA)	£569	£770

Option B (as Option A but also including a 780 seat hall building)	£ Lower	£ Upper
Order of Cost Estimate	28,556,000	38,633,000
Overall Rate per m2 (GIA)	£6,012	£8,133
Overall Rate per ft2 (GIA)	£559	£756

Assumptions & Exclusions

a) Excludes VAT
b) Based on 1Q28 start on site
c) Based on single stage design and build procurement route
d) Includes a mean allowance of 15% for professional fees
e) Includes a mean allowance of 10% for client contingency
f) Option B scope assumed as being a "concert grade" hall
g) No allowance has been made for risks that cannot reasonably be identified from the information available

Notes

We have undertaken this work without fee and solely as a high-level indication based upon the limited information currently available. Accordingly, this estimate should not be relied upon for acquisition, funding, contractual, tendering or any other commitment purposes. Any party choosing to rely upon the contents of this email does so at its own risk. This advice is provided exclusively for your benefit and may not be disclosed to or relied upon by any third party without our prior written consent. calfordseaden LLP accepts no responsibility or liability to any third party in connection with this estimate or its use