

Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

This tool helps the Council ensure that we fulfil legal obligations of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Guidance on how to complete this tool can be found on the Cambridge City Council intranet. For specific questions on the tool email Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223 457046.

Once you have drafted the EqIA please send this to equalities@cambridge.gov.uk for checking

1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service

Civic Quarter Project – Guildhall

2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)

<https://cambridgecivicquarter.co.uk/>

[Committee report – 29th January 2024](#)

[Committee report – 21st November 2024](#)

3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

The Civic Quarter project considers the future of three key Council assets: The Guildhall, the Market Square and the Corn Exchange. There are three primary objectives for the project.

- 1. Creating a more attractive central Cambridge destination for residents that would increase visitor numbers for the market, the Corn Exchange, and businesses in the area
- 2. Enhancing revenue streams across these three sites and reducing operational costs to ensure we can preserve services that our residents need and value most
- 3. Helping the council to meet its net zero carbon by 2030 target.

This EqIA focuses on the Guildhall element of the wider project.

The project will be delivered in phases with the Council having the opportunity to review outputs at key gateways before commitment to subsequent phases. The current phase relates to the completion of RIBA Stage 3 (detailed designs) and updated business case, business plans and preparation for the submission of a planning application in autumn 2025.

The RIBA is a widely recognised framework established by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) for Construction work. They organise the process of managing and designing construction projects into eight easy-to-understand stages. We are currently at Stage 3 – Design refinement prior to a planning application.

Guildhall

The [committee report](#) in January 2024 highlights the potential to transform the Guildhall into a more open and accessible space that retains the character and heritage of its grade II listing, meets the council's civic and administrative and customer services needs and generates commercial revenue.

The [committee report](#) in November 2024 set out that the option of a mixed use of Council office accommodation, Commercial Offices and a Cultural Attraction would be developed through detail design and community engagement. This approach retains the main entrance and the creation of a heart space, for the public and all users of the building on the Ground floor, with council staff located at Ground, First and Second floors. The Civic Spaces are retained on the first floor, and Commercial Office space, accessed separately from Peas Hill, on the upper floors. A cultural attraction could be located in the basement, alongside meeting rooms for the Council.

Key features of the Guildhall Design (at end of RIBA Stage 3)

- New 'Heart' Space: A welcoming public area with café, seating, and atria for natural light.
- Council Chamber: Upgraded for accessibility, flexible use, and modern AV/IT infrastructure.
- Office Functions: 150 work settings for staff, customer service centre, meeting rooms,
- Event Spaces: Refurbish halls, with upgraded bar and kitchen facilities
- Accessibility Upgrades: Platform lifts, compliant toilets, wellness and parents rooms, and improved wayfinding.

Project Timetable

The project outputs for RIBA stage 3 are listed below, together with indicative dates for future project milestones.

January 2025 - Detailed stage 3 design work commences

May 2025 – Community Engagement

Autumn 2025 – End of Stage 3 report to Cabinet

Autumn 2025 - Submission of a planning application (subject to Cabinet decision)

Winter 2026 – Approval to enter a works contract

TBC – First handover of completed works.

4. Responsible team

Development Team, Economy & Place Group

5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

(Please tick all that apply)

- ☒ Residents
- ☒ Visitors
- ☒ Staff

There are a wide range of stakeholders that will be affected

- General public and residents
- Market Traders
- Surrounding businesses, including Arts Theatre, pubs & restaurants and shops
- Customers of Corn Exchange, the Market and surrounding businesses
- Event promoters and performers
- Cambridge University as they own many buildings close by
- Visitors to the City centre
- Trades people working in the area
- Existing tenants of the Guildhall
- Councillors and the democratic use of the Guildhall
- Council staff and shared services staff who currently work out of Mandela House

The design work for this phase (up to RIBA Stage 3) included community engagement and stakeholder workshops and consultation on the detailed designs for the 3 assets. This was delivered between 12 May – 22 June 2025.

6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this?

- ☒ New
- ☐ Major change
- ☐ Minor change

7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

The project will be managed by the Development Team, Place & Economy Group and the Assistant Director (Development) is the Sponsor.

There are several subject matter experts from across the Council that will feed into the project, particularly from Property, Procurement, Policy, HR, Customer Services, Cultural Services, Transformation, Greater Cambridge Planning Service, Democratic Services, Economic Development, City Services and Communications

External partners include, the County Council (including Highways) and the Combined Authority, and Greater Cambridge Partnership.

The Council will work with the Design Team/Consortia as a key partner throughout the project, including Cartwright Pickard Architects, responsible for the overall architectural

design, heritage-sensitive interventions, accessibility improvements, and coordination of the design evolution, and Blue Horizon Ventures – Theatre consultants advising on commercial resilience and Event space design.

8. Has the report on your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service gone to Committee? If so, which one?

Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee - [Committee report – 29th January 2024](#)
Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee - [Committee report – 21st November 2024](#)

There was an [overarching report](#) that went to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in October 2022 on the Council's Future Office Accommodation Strategy.

The next report to Cabinet will be in September 2025, which will set out the outcomes of the RIBA stage 3 detailed design work and recommendations setting out the next phase of the project and the submission of a planning application.

9. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

Guildhall

- Information on staff members' protected characteristics from the Equality in Employment report
- Staff Accommodation Survey- November 2023, feedback on a range of design considerations including wellbeing facilities (internal document)
- **Workplace Design Guide (Government Property Agency)** [best practice design guide](#)
- Internal staff workshops on initial design requirements – April 2024 (also attended by Access Officer and Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer) and follow up detailed design workshops – March and April 2025.

A comprehensive engagement programme was delivered by ECF (the comms lead in the Design Team Consortia) for the Civic Quarter project in May 2024 and they reached out to several community and accessibility groups as part of the developing of concept designs as part of the RIBA Stage 2 work. The [engagement outcomes report](#) was published on the Council's website and informed the developing design.

A further round of Community Engagement took place in May 2025, as the part of the shaping the detailed design work. A multi-layered approach to reach different audiences was deployed including

- Workshops and drop-ins were hosted at the Guildhall and local community halls.
- Targeted sessions engaged youth groups, market traders, and accessibility stakeholders.
- Digital engagement included over 5,675 unique visits to the consultation site, social media campaigns, and local media coverage.

A full report will be published later in August 2025 but the headlines have been [published](#).

10. Potential impacts

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

(a) Age - Please also consider any safeguarding issues for children and adults at risk

The improved accessibility (e.g. platform lifts, step-free access) benefits older people and families with young children.

The creation of a new “heart space” within the ground floor entrance area will make the building feel more inclusive and the potential of a Café and informal workspaces would attract a wide range of ages.

The technical design work to follow will need to ensure seating/rest points are available throughout for older visitors and a range of seating is provided within the “heart space” and consider that lighting and signage should be age-friendly.

The provision of a Parents Room and Changing Places toilet supports carers and families.

The improvements to the large and small halls could increase the wedding market, and this could lead to attracting more families to use the space.

Community uses for refurbished space in the basement, potentially a visitor attraction could also attract more families and those from a wider age range.

Safeguarding will be relevant relating to access for visitors to the customer service centre – including recognising vulnerable customers will use same main entrance as people attending any events.

In relation to impacts for staff, the workforce is becoming older in the over 55 categories, reducing slightly from 272 (31 March 2023) to 265 as of 31 March 2025. If staff have a long length of service, they may find it harder to adapt to changes in how spaces are used (20% of staff (171) have 20+ years' service and 20% (171) have between 10 and 20 years.

Community Engagement 2024

The age groups with the largest number of respondents were people aged between **65-74 (21%)** and people aged between **45-54 (21%)**.

Community Engagement 2025

In the census data the median age for Cambridge was 31 years and 17% of the Cambridge population are between the ages of 45 and 74. The engagement, showed that respondents from an older age range are more likely to engage and share their views.

A youth workshop with the Kite Trust in June 2024 provided some insight as to how younger people perceive the Market Square and provided feedback as to improvements and issues that need to be looked at. This included: -

Market Square - Improving the CCTV and spaces between stalls to reduce anti-social behaviour, enhancing the greenery and installing additional flowerbeds. Increasing the number of cultural activities and improving the cleanliness.

Guildhall – Improving the lighting outside and installing cycle racks. Use more of the space internally for community value e.g. art exhibitions, play area, safe space for young teenagers to socialise.

Engagement exercise 2024

- Further work needs to be done to ensure a greater representation from all sections of the Cambridge community in future consultation/engagement on the Civic Quarter Project.

April 2025 Update: Community Engagement Strategy

As part of the comprehensive engagement programme has been developed by ECF (the comms lead in the Design Team Consortia) that will be delivered 12 May – 22 June, we have learned lessons from the RIBA Stage 2 consultation carried out in 2024. In this phase we are focussing on gaining views from school children and students. The project team have also carried out a focussed workshop on the Market Square for students from North Cambridge Academy with the Council's Planning Youth engagement service.

(b) Disability

The stage 3 plans include replacement lifts and the provision of platform lifts at the main entrance and Guildhall Street.

The provision of natural light into basement area will increase visibility supporting people with visual impairments

- **Positive Impacts:**
 - Step-free access at multiple entrances.
 - Accessible toilets and showers, including a Changing Places facility.
 - Platform lifts to Council Chamber and other key areas.
 - Improved wayfinding, lighting, and acoustics.
 - Provision of **calm sensory spaces** and a **wellness room**.
 -

Consideration Engage with disability groups to test usability of new features.

8.4% of staff have declared they have a disability (as at 31 March 2025) and people can become disabled or develop a long-term illness at different points in their lives (so at different points in their working life). It will be important to create office space that is

accessible for staff supporting the council's Disability Confident commitment, that is fit for the future and can support us to attract disabled people into the workforce.

The design work of the staff office space, has considered a range of spaces to reflect a range of working styles and those that require reasonable adjustments. The provision of/access to a quiet space for staff has been factored into the overall design requirements that can support staff members wellbeing.

There is level access into the new Customer Service centre

Community Engagement 2024

The community engagement carried out in June 2024, the feedback has reinforced the areas across the Civic Quarter that need attention and improvement. 17% of respondents have physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. The key areas of feedback for the Guildhall are set out below:

Accessibility was a concern, with suggestions for easier access for people with mobility issues and the provision of amenities like Changing Places toilets and baby-changing facilities. Participants also mentioned the need for better facilities, such as improved lighting and modernised equipment.

Community Engagement 2025

As part of the engagement programme, 121 meetings were held with, Mark Taylor, Access Officer, Greater Cambridge Planning Service and Cam Sight.

18.4% respondents have physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. The key areas of feedback for the Guildhall are set out below:

The Council Chamber and committee rooms were another key focus for respondents, with accessibility a major concern, particularly in the Council Chamber where tiered, fixed seating currently excludes wheelchair users. A significant proportion of respondents expressed a strong preference for improvements such as step-free access at the main entrance and the provision of hearing loops. Feedback also highlighted the need to include accessible toilet facilities in the proposed plans. In addition to this people felt that a hidden platform lift would improve access for wheelchair users in the Guildhall.

(c) Gender reassignment

The plans set out an increase in the number of toilets including providing gender-neutral toilets across the staff and public areas the Guildhall which will have a positive impact for gender reassignment and non-binary and gender fluid people. The inclusion of a wellness room is also seen as a positive impact. In the technical design stage consideration to be given to signage and privacy features are inclusive and respectful.

Consideration of safety of people using the building will be important, which is also important in light of how transgender people are subject to hate crime.

(d) Marriage and civil partnership

With the investment, refurbishment and being respectful to the heritage of the civic spaces and the Large and Small Halls a future outcome could see the event spaces being used for more marriages and civil partnerships as part of the council's commercial offer, which could be a positive impact for this group.

(e) Pregnancy and maternity

The plans include a dedicated room for breastfeeding and baby care which is a positive impact alongside step-free access into the building and the provision of a range of seating areas that support mobility needs.

(f) Race – Note that the protected characteristic 'race' refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

In relation to who will be impacted by changes to office space, 22.6% (an increase from 9.09% in 2023) of staff declaring themselves as from an ethnic minority background (as of 31 March 2023).

Consideration of the safety of people using the building will be factored into the technical design work e.g. access control, which is also important from perspective that people can be subject to hate crime motivated by hatred towards their ethnicity.

Although the community engagement focussed included diverse communities, there were very few respondents that identify themselves as Black or Asian, which is disproportionate to the make-up of the city. 82% of survey respondents did not respond to the ethnicity question. There was no specific mention of issues facing different cultures in the engagement feedback.

(g) Religion or belief

In relation to the profile of staff who will be impacted by changes to office space, the most common religions of staff as at 31 March 2025 were Christianity (304, 35%) and Muslim (20, 2.3%). 372, 43% do not have a religion.

The provision of/access to a wellness room should be seen a positive provision,

Consideration of the safety of people using the building will be factored into the technical design work e.g. access control, which is also important from perspective that people can be subject to hate crime motivated by hatred towards their religion/beliefs.

(h) Sex

In the relation to the profile of staff who will be impacted by changes to their working environment, the current proportion of women (49.7%) employed compared to men (50.3%) as of 31 March 2025.

The plans set out an increase in the number of toilets including providing gender-neutral toilets across the staff and public areas.

The technical design work will include CCTV building provision and access control measures.

(i) Sexual orientation

Consideration of the safety of people using the building will be factored into the technical design work e.g. access control, which is also important from perspective that people can be subject to hate crime motivated by hatred towards sexuality.

(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular, please consider the impact of any changes on:

- **Low-income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty.**
- **People of any age with care experience – this refers to individuals who spent part of their childhood in the care system due to situations beyond their control, primarily arising from abuse and neglect within their families. The term “Care experience” is a description of a definition in law, it includes anyone that had the state as its corporate parent by virtue of a care order in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and amendments.**
- **Groups who have more than one protected characteristic that taken together create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Here you are being asked to consider intersectionality, and for more information see: https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_l59kt25q).**

There is strong public support for transforming the Guildhall into a more inclusive, welcoming, and community-oriented civic space. A significant majority of respondents favour its use for public talks, exhibitions, and community meetings, alongside co-working areas and informal seating to encourage broader public engagement. Affordability emerged as a key concern, particularly among local voluntary groups, who emphasised the need for low-cost or free access and cautioned against commercial events displacing community use. While the Council must generate income to sustain essential frontline services, this commercial imperative may limit the availability of community spaces or restrict access to quieter periods during the week or year. Balancing these priorities will be critical to ensuring the Guildhall remains a genuinely civic space.

11. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqlA accordingly.)

Update EqlA at the following project milestones

During 2026, as part of the development of the technical design and post planning application decision.

12. Do you have any additional comments?

No

13. Sign off

Name and job title of lead officer for this equality impact assessment: Paul Boucher (Capital Project Manager), Civic Quarter Project

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted:

Helen Crowther, Equity and Anti-Poverty Manager
Graham Lewis, Community Equity Officer

Date of EqlA sign off: 27 August 2025

Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment: **May 2026**

Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website: [Click here to enter text.](#)

All EqlAs need to be sent to the Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk