

# Cambridge Civic Quarter

## RIBA Stage 3 Planning - Executive Summary

August 2025

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Revision: P4.0



# Executive Summary

## Guildhall

### The Guildhall

The Civic Quarter development provides a unique opportunity to deliver a reinvigorated, thriving, sustainable, accessible, inclusive and welcoming seat of democracy in the heart of the city.

These proposals to transform the Guildhall include a combination of council offices, civic functions, commercial office space and a Guildhall which is welcoming and open to the public. The designs gives the Council a high degree of flexibility for future adaptations.

To operate efficiently and allow the Council to deliver services effectively, we are proposing a transformed workspace to maximise flexibility and accommodate agile and hybrid working styles, that are the bedrock of modern collaborative working methods.

The building will be upgraded to accommodate modern requirements for refuse and recycling storage, internal cycle storage, changing and shower facilities, modern WC provision, accessible lifts to make the building fully inclusive, fabric improvements to improve thermal comfort and dramatically reduce energy consumption.

Inclusivity is key to the proposals. The provision of several accessible entrances, new and improved lifts and the provision of Changing Places, gender neutral toilets and parents room, will open the Guildhall to all the residents of Cambridge.

The analysis carried out to date by the design consortium shows that, subject to opening up and careful construction methods, the Guildhall's energy use can be reduced by 66%, and that the Council's aspiration of Net Zero carbon in operation, is achievable without carbon offsetting.

**As a testament to the Council's commitment to achieving a Net Zero Carbon in operation Guildhall the project is taking part in the UK Net Zero Carbon Building Standard Pilot study.**

The proposed works will protect a valuable and much loved Listed heritage asset. The upgraded Guildhall will contribute greater revenue, through the letting of commercial office space, and therefore help protect the Council budgets and front-line services.

### Key Changes

### Accessibility and Inclusivity

### Modern Council Offices - fit for a Unitary Authority

### Open to the Community

### Sustainability - a Net Zero Carbon Guildhall

### Reduction in running costs



### The 'Heart Space'

A publicly accessible vibrant centre of the Guildhall offering a cafe bar, soft seating and space to work

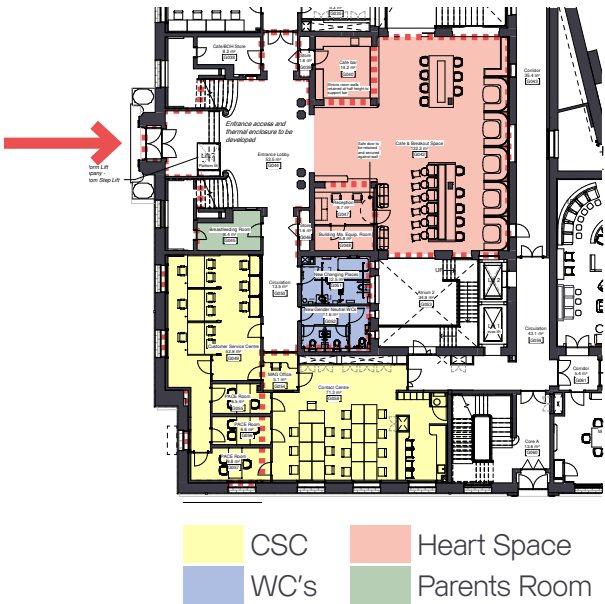
### Public Access

A key change to the Guildhall is the increased level of public access. The proposals provide a Guildhall open to all members of the community through a range of measures.

The publicly accessible 'Heart Space', on the ground floor, at the centre of the Guildhall, will contain the reception, a coffee bar and a variety of seating options.

The Customer Service Centre (CSC) is also located on the ground floor just to the right of the main entrance.

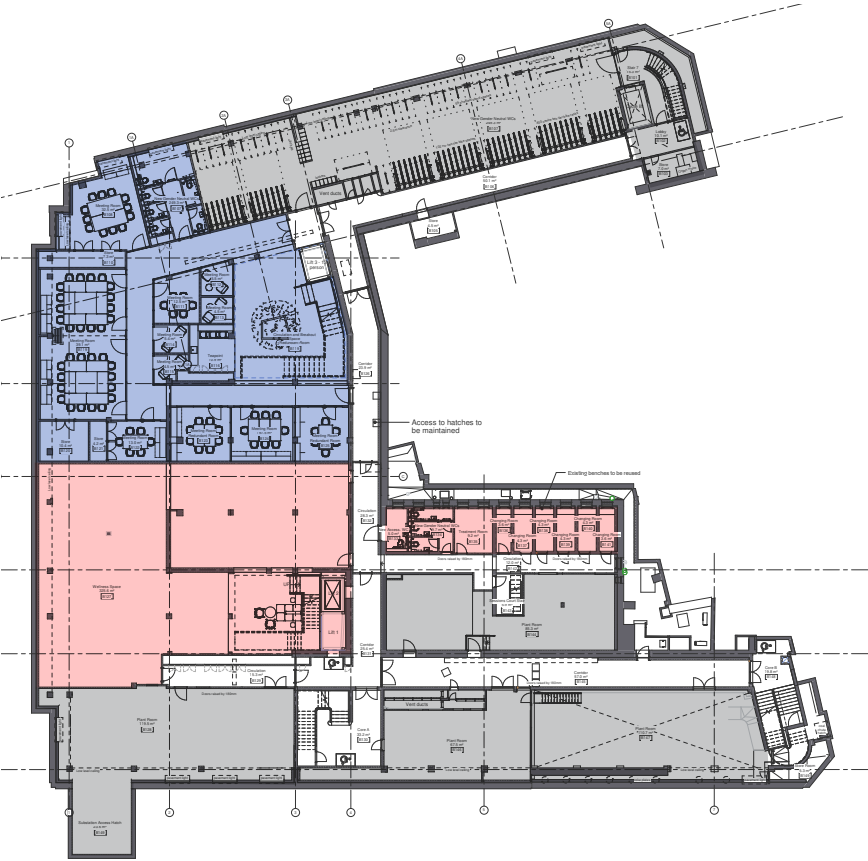
These facilities are supported by a Changing Places facility, a wheelchair accessible WC and three gender neutral toilets. A parents room provides a space for parents with children, it will be a private, comfortable and calm space to help parents with feeding or changing.



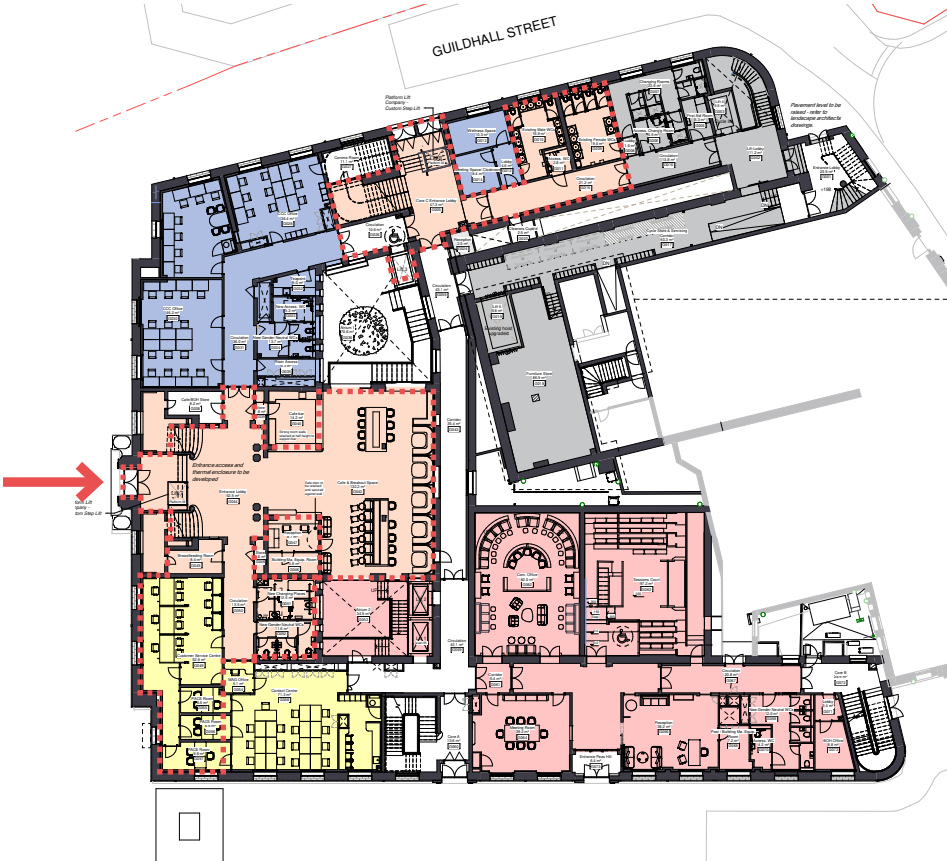


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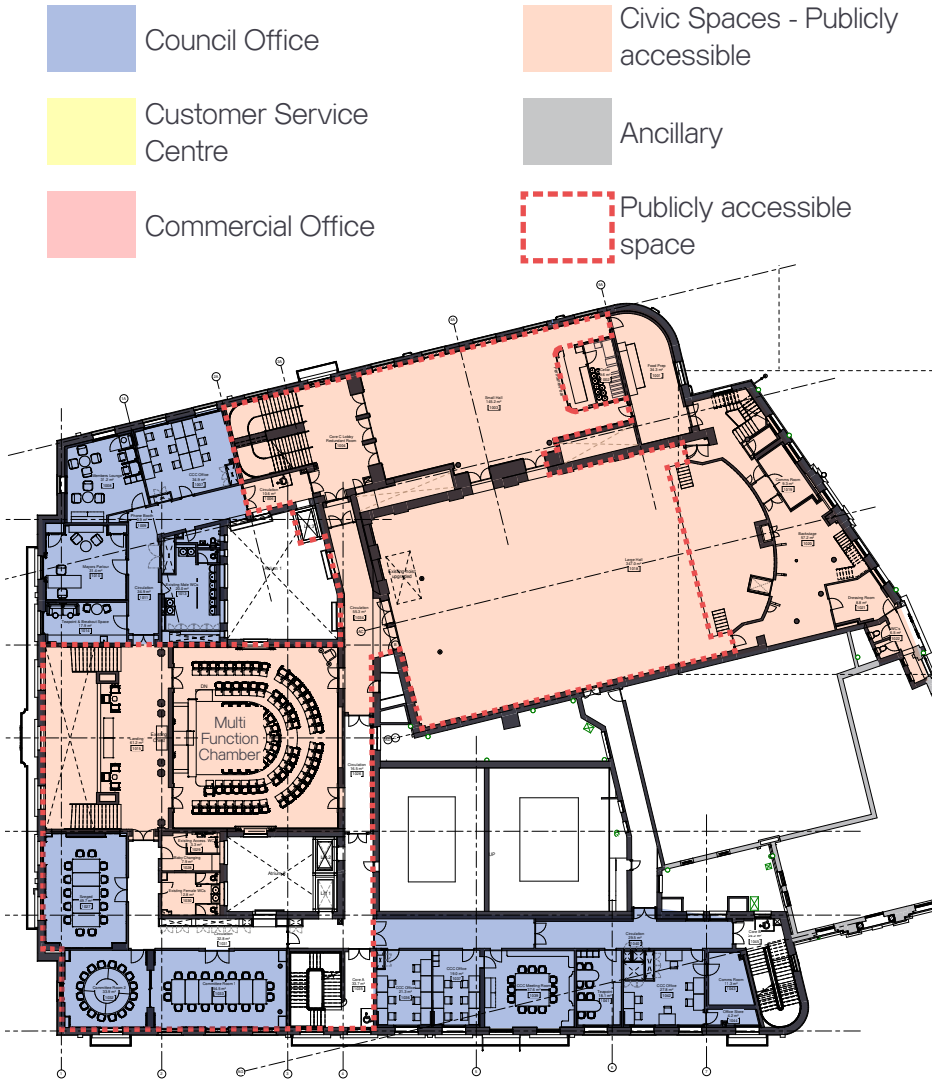
## Guildhall



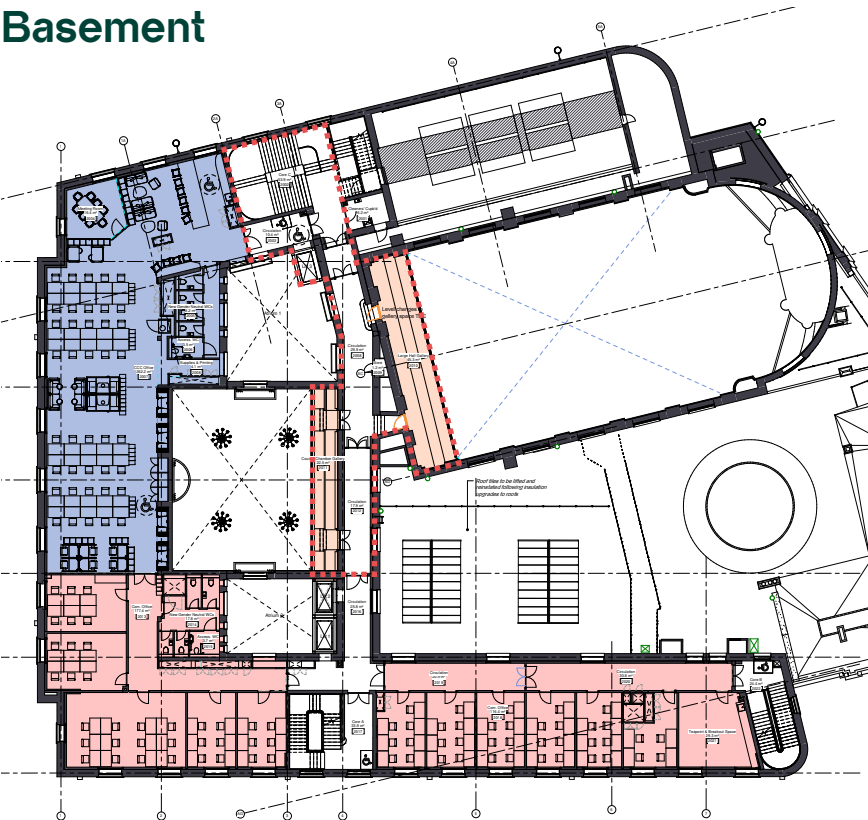
Basement



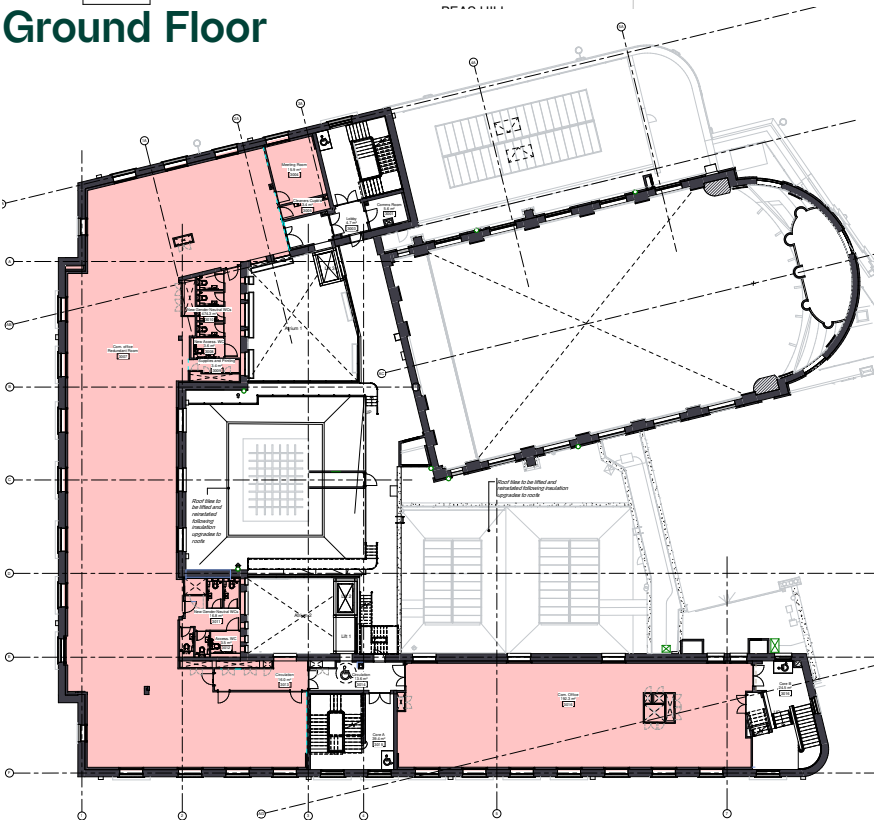
Ground Floor



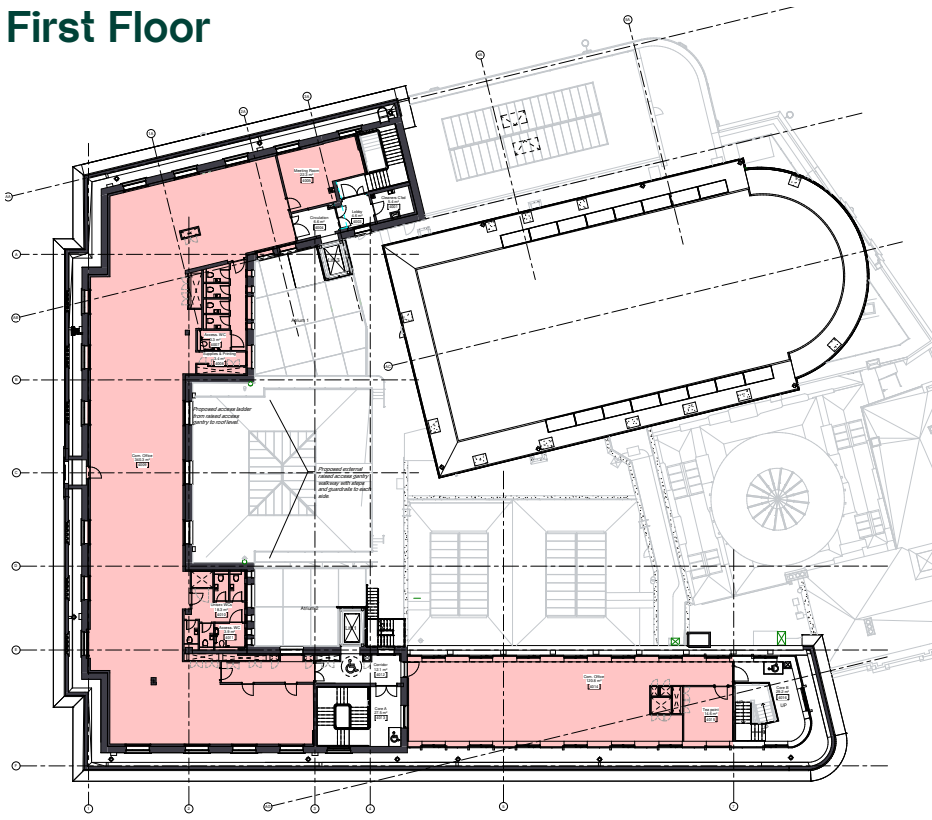
First Floor



Second Floor



Third Floor



Fourth Floor



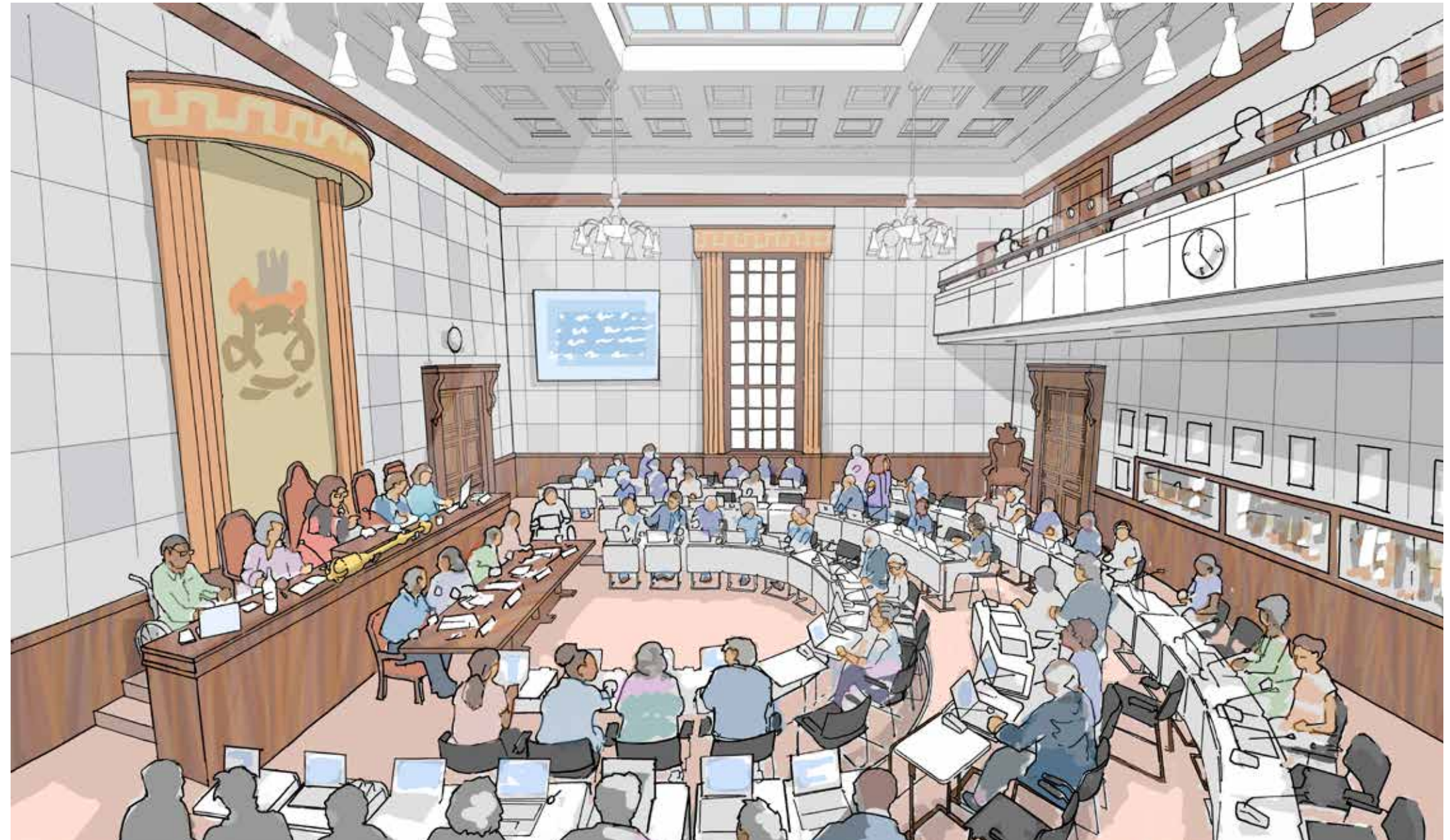
# Executive Summary

## Guildhall

### Council Chamber Proposals

The proposals aim to strike a balance between flexibility and conservation of the architectural significance and character of the chamber. The intention is to enhance the chamber and elevate its value to the community of Cambridge by increasing inclusivity and accessibility, use and function.

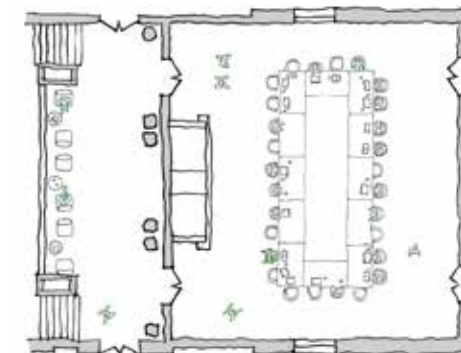
- Improving accessibility and flexibility - By installing an adaptable raised access floor to level the existing raked floor will greatly improve accessibility across the chamber. The adaptation will allow either a level floor or two levels of tiering.
- Facilitating Wider and Greater Public Use - Greater flexibility of furniture layout and type enabled through the levelling of the floor, with historic furniture removed and reused elsewhere within the Guildhall
- Expanding Civic Functions - the above proposals for a level floor and modern furniture will facilitate a Unitary Council Meeting
- Enabling Modern Ways of Working - the provision of a level floor with void beneath above the existing stepped floor will allow for service routes to be included facilitating power & data to a range of furniture arrangements.
- Provision of Modern IT/AV/Power/DATA - modern IT/AV/power & DATA will be provided within the chamber.
- Improved User Comfort - The provision of modern seating and laptop desking which is designed in a more ergonomic way will improve user comfort.
- Improved Internal Environment - The existing ventilation routes will be surveyed for retention or replaced where required with connections to new efficient modern services
- Reviewing Supporting Spaces - The low existing balustrade to the gallery will be retained with a higher balustrade set behind it improving health and safety in this area.



Greater flexibility of furniture layout and type enabled through the levelling of the floor and removal of the existing historic fixed furniture would allow greater use of the chamber. These changes will accommodate a multitude of furniture arrangements with accessibility addressed through the levelling of the floor. We hope to bring new faces into the Guildhall and into the Chamber allowing greater connectivity and enjoyment of this historic building in the heart of Cambridge.



Community Event



Meeting in the round



Public Exhibition



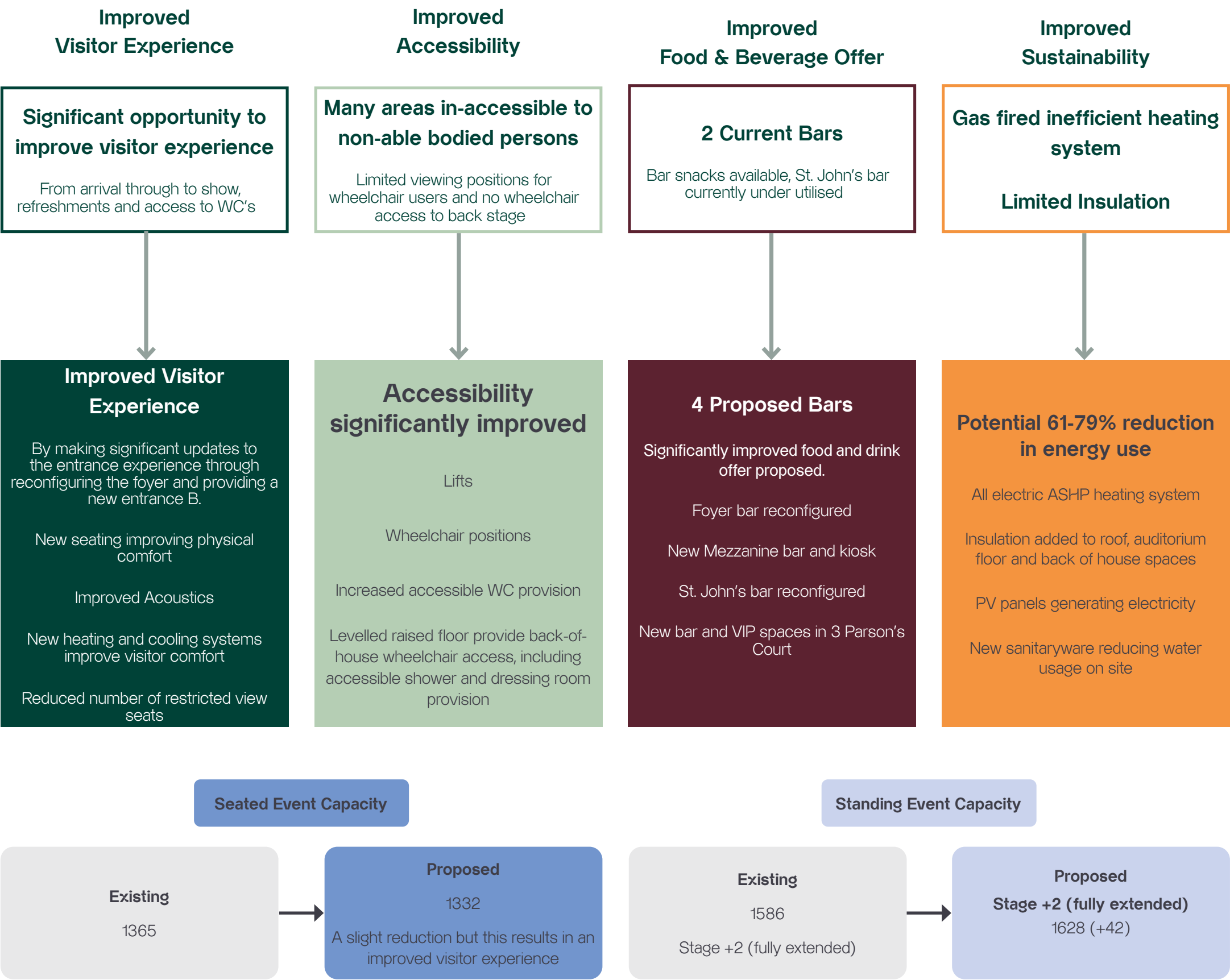
# Executive Summary

## Corn Exchange

The Corn Exchange is one of the largest venues for concerts outside London and within East Anglia. It is a much loved arts, entertainment and conference venue. The proposals contained within this document have been developed to build on the success of the Corn Exchange and give one of Cambridge's key cultural assets a much needed refurbishment and renovation.

The Corn Exchange is a key components of the Civic Quarter project and will deliver the following key benefits;

- The reinvigoration of a thriving, sustainable, accessible, welcoming cultural venue, one fit for the world class city of Cambridge
- A venue that attracts a high-quality, wide range of performers and contributes to the cultural quarter, along with Cambridge Arts Theatre and the Guildhall
- A combined cultural offer that supports a wide range of other businesses in the area, from food and beverage to hotels
- A Corn Exchange that is accessible to all, with new lifts, better wayfinding and improve wheelchair seating positions
- The proposed works will protect a valuable and much loved Listed heritage asset, exposing more of the original Corn Exchange and removing insensitive latter additions
- The upgraded Corn Exchange will contribute greater revenue to Cambridge City Council and therefore help protects Council budgets and front-line services
- The creation of a new social space in Parson's Court
- A sustainable future Corn Exchange, with the works reducing energy consumption by between 61-79%.





# Executive Summary

## Corn Exchange

### The refreshed approach will deliver:

A broader, more dynamic programme, expanding beyond core music and comedy to include family entertainment, spoken word, contemporary events, community programming, and enhanced classical and orchestral offers, attracting wider and more diverse audiences (this element is work in progress but reflects the conversations to date).

An improved customer experience, supported by reconfigured front-of-house areas, more intuitive circulation, upgraded facilities, and a more welcoming environment throughout.

New hospitality experiences, including flexible bar and café offers, premium packages, and event-led food and drink propositions – generating greater dwell time, increased secondary spend, and enhanced audience satisfaction.

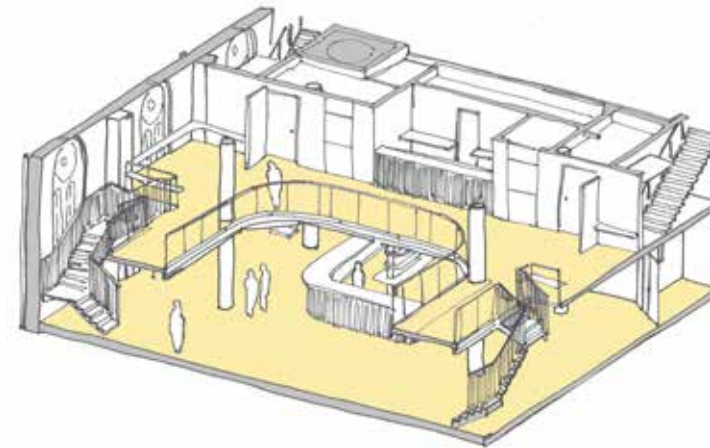
Improved access and inclusivity, with step-free access throughout, upgraded accessible toilets, inclusive signage and navigation, and new backstage provision to support artists and staff with access needs – significantly increasing the venue's inclusivity credentials.

Enhanced community and educational use, supported by a more welcoming and inclusive venue environment, creating new opportunities for learning, outreach and audience engagement in partnership with local groups and institutions.

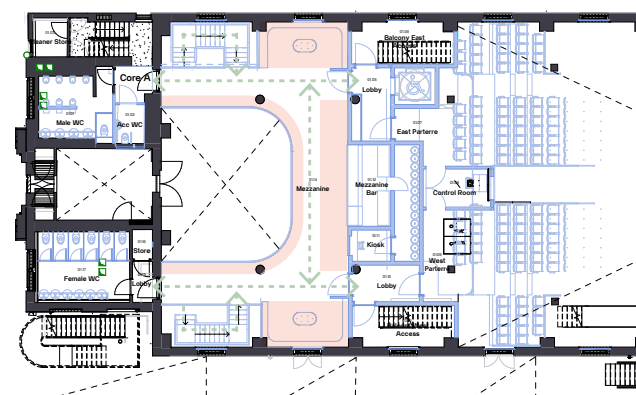
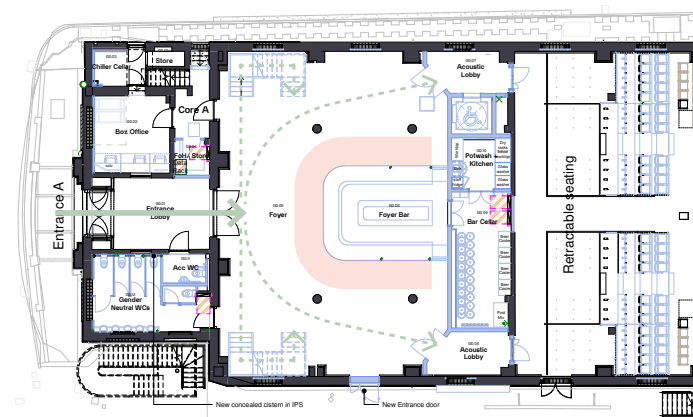
Significant economic and social impact, through increased footfall, extended opening hours, new employment and volunteering opportunities, and greater engagement with under represented groups – reinforcing the Corn Exchange's role as a major contributor to the local cultural economy.

Together, these improvements will future-proof the Corn Exchange, enabling it to thrive as a distinctive, inclusive, and financially sustainable venue serving the people of Cambridge and beyond.

New ground floor and mezzanine level bars will dramatically transform this underutilised and inefficient space within the Corn Exchange, increasing visitor numbers, along with boosting bar and ticket sales.



Upgraded Ground Floor & New Mezzanine Bar



Upgraded Ground Floor and New Mezzanine Bar Area

### Transformation of the space

The configuration of the current Corn Exchange, ground floor and mezzanine zones, will be transformed by knocking through the current blockwork walls, to reveal the beautiful, listed brickwork behind. This will create a much more spacious and open feel to transform the arrival experience for visitors to the Corn Exchange. The underutilised space of the mezzanine level will be transformed, creating a new destination for customers to enjoy the space and performance.

### Accessibility & Inclusivity

The provision of two new lifts and upgrades to existing, with level access provided back of house, the venue will become far more accessible.

Wheelchair positions are improved by the provision of spaces on the parterre with direct views of the stage. Toilet provision is increased, including additional accessible facilities, making the Corn Exchange a more accessible, inclusive and welcoming performance venue.

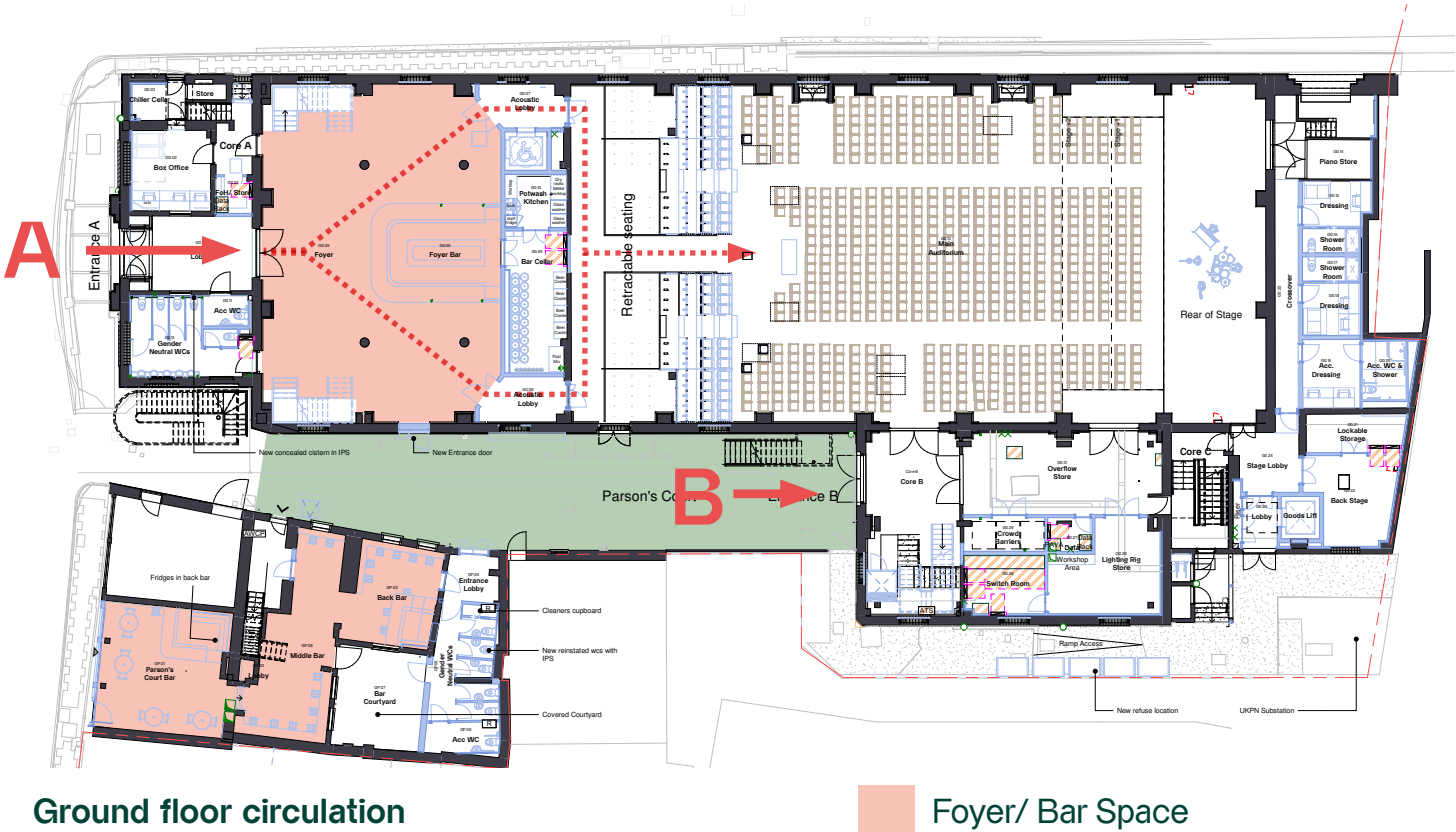
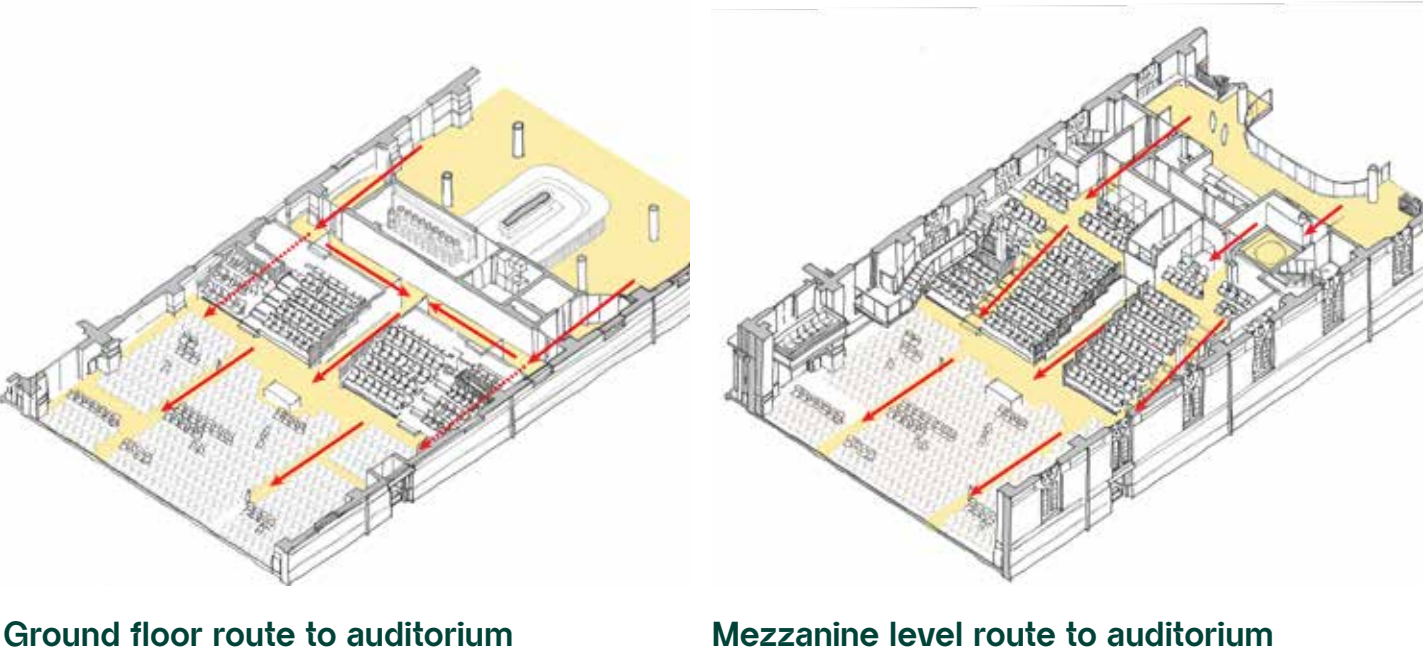


# Executive Summary

## Corn Exchange

Re-arranged seating configuration allows for improved circulation through the Corn Exchange, with disabled access to Mezzanine Bar. Additional Entrance B, in

Parsons Court will reduce the amount of people moving through the main building and enliven the proposed new social space.



A re-imagined Parsons Court creating a vibrant place for Corn Exchange visitors to use



# Executive Summary

## Market Square and Public Realm

### Market Square and Public Realm

The Market Square has been in existence in some form possibly for more than 1000 years. It has clearly gone through many changes in that time, resulting in the space we see today.

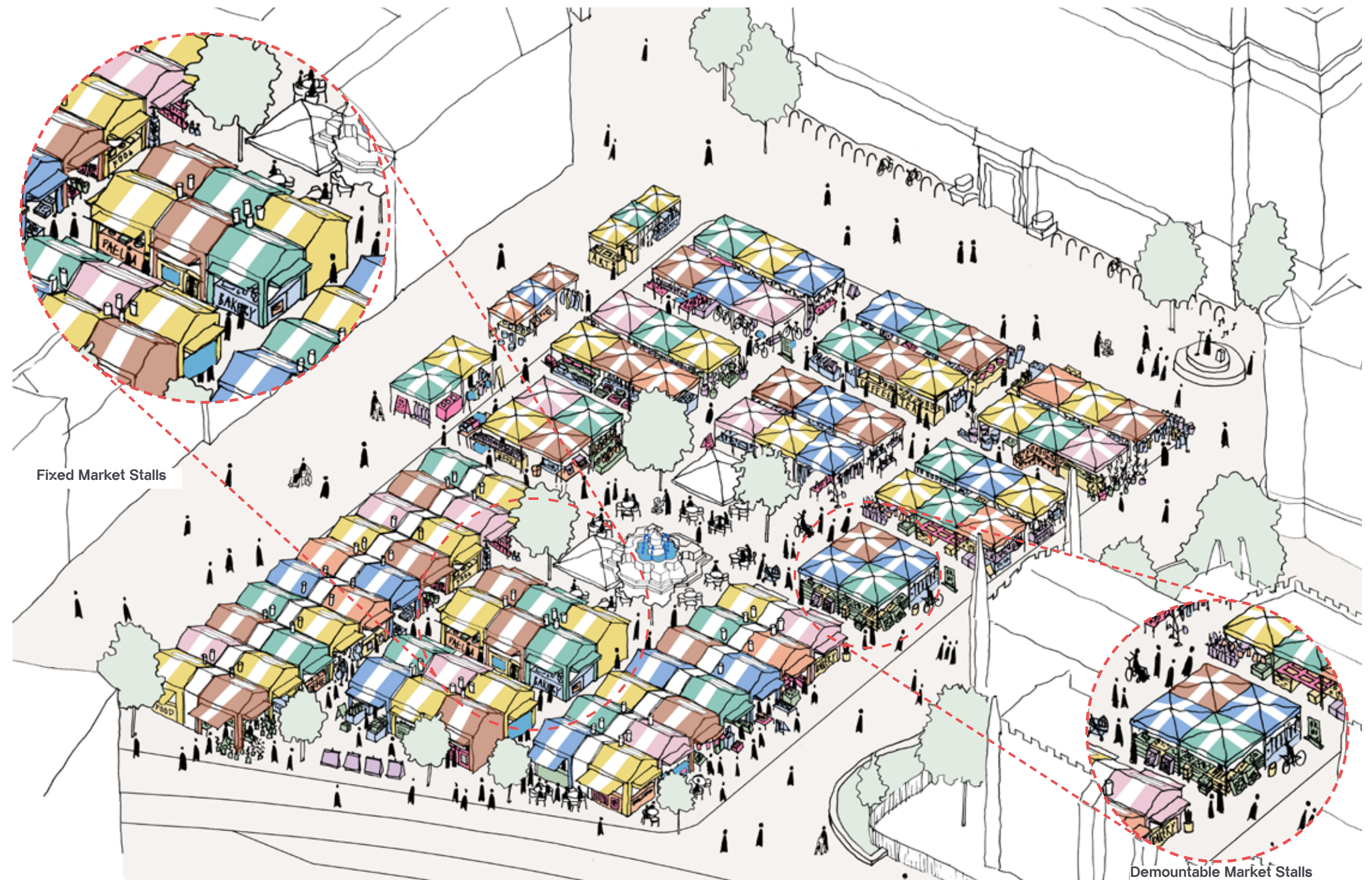
The design consortium has carried out extensive stakeholder engagement and consultation, in particular with market traders, adjacent University colleges, members of the public and the council officers responsible for planning, conservation and transport.

When compared with some of the beautiful and vibrant market squares in other European cities, this Market Square falls a long way short of being an attractive and inclusive destination and a place that people will want to visit. To secure the long-term future of the market a significant refurbishment and visionary transformation is required.

The Public Realm and Market Square are key components of the Civic Quarter project and will deliver the following key benefits;

- The creation of an inspiring piece of public realm at the heart of the city centre, reinvigorating and reinforcing the Civic Quarter. One that attracts residents of and visitors to Cambridge
- The creation of a thriving, sustainable, accessible, safe and open environment, linking the Civic Quarter with surrounding streets with spaces to shop, wander, dwell and socialise
- Supporting the reinvigoration of the much loved 7-day market with space for seating and eating in all weathers
- Securing the long term future of the market and the traders that operate from it and building on the unique character of Cambridge's 7-day a week market
- Reducing vehicle movements in and around the Civic Quarter, through the introduction/ amendment of TRO's to prioritise those walking and wheeling
- The creation of a fully accessible public realm, including the Listed market square setts.

- Bringing the Listed fountain back to life, with careful and considered use of water
- Exemplar high quality public realm, setting a benchmark for future public realm works in the city
- The introduction of planting and trees to encourage increased levels of Bio-diversity, with a target of 20%.
- Improved trading conditions for Market Traders with the introduction of secure, lockable, fixed Market Stalls.
- Transformation of Trader storage facilities, with additional provision of an accessible WC and wheelchair accessible storage areas.





# Executive Summary

## Market Square and Public Realm

### A flexible Market Square

A flexible space is proposed to allow the Market Square to operate as a Civic Space as well as a Market.

The 7-day Market will remain the main purpose of the Market Square, these proposals will allow other functions to happen on quieter days or into the evening, events that will complement and support the market not work against it.

The proposals show the southern side of the market utilising demountable stalls, with fixed, secure stalls to the north.



Fixed Market Stall Cutaway View



- Secure gate
- Fixed Market Stalls
- Demountable Market Stalls
- Storage + Acc WC



#### 1. Fixed Market Stalls (x44)

Lockable Market Stalls with integrated canopy, counter and signage. Integrated storage cupboards for market trader use

#### 2. Demountable Market Stalls (x52)

3x3 and 2x2 stalls fixed to sockets embedded in the ground

#### 3. Covered Seating

Parasols around the fountain, along with trees providing shelter

#### 4. Restored fountain

Bringing water back to the fountain at the heart of the market

#### 5. Storage

For demountable stalls and furniture

#### 6. Welfare facilities

Accessible WC & storage plus basement level facilities

#### 7. Subterranean Bins

For Market Trader use, located adjacent to Market Street, reducing vehicle movements

#### 8. Security Gate

To be closed and locked at night.

### Fixed Market Stalls

44no. stalls totalling 373m<sup>2</sup>

### Demountable Stalls

46 3x3m stalls and 6 2x2m stalls - totalling 52no. and 438m<sup>3</sup>

**Total - 811m<sup>2</sup> (+1m<sup>2</sup> over existing market)**

### Trader Amenities

Additional storage and welfare facilities are provided totalling 57m<sup>2</sup> (+30m<sup>2</sup> over existing market)



# Executive Summary

## Market Square and Public Realm





# Executive Summary

## Public Realm Improvements Overview

### Urban Greening

The plan opposite brings the key principles together with green routes along Peas Hill and St Mary's Street / Market Street linking together green spaces outside the churches as well as connecting to other green spaces and street trees within the historic creating landmarks. Significant additional planting of shrubs, flower and street trees is introduced in these corridors.

### Historic Route

The 'blue' route follows the historic line of Hobson's Conduit as it brought fresh water into the heart of Cambridge and today as a route to bring people from their arrival point at the Grand Arcade car park through the city to the Market Square.

### Blue Badge Parking

To improve accessibility to the Civic Quarter the proposal increase the number of Blue Badge spaces from 5 to 6.

### Cycles

The cycle strategy forms part of a wider exercise of managing cycle routes and parking areas around the city.

The proposals include improvements to cycle storage beyond the redline and result in a total of 219 parking bays, a circa 10% increase in provision. This is bolstered by 131 additional spaces in the Guildhall, for office users.

### Traffic Regulatory Orders

To reduce and control traffic moving through the Civic Quarter it is proposed to amend one existing TRO and introduce two further.

1. Market Square - expansion of existing TRO to include Sunday 10am-4pm
2. Corn Exchange Street/ Wheeler Street/ Guildhall Street/ Bene't Street - implement a new TRO to prohibit vehicles other than permit holders between 10am - 4pm Monday - Sunday.
3. Banning of the right turn out of the Grand Arcade car park, applied to all users with no exceptions or permit holders, 24/7 Monday - Sunday.





# Sustainability

## Approach to Net Zero

### Defining the brief

Delivering a Net Zero Carbon Civic Quarter is a key aspiration of the Council's brief.

At the outset of the project there was no industry agreed definition of what 'Net Zero Carbon' means. There were many definitions and we therefore undertook early engagement with the Council's Principal Sustainability Officer, at Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, to establish an agreed approach for the project. Towards the end of RIBA Stage 2 the Pilot Version of the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard was published. The proposals are now aligned with this standard.

**As a testament to the Council's commitment to achieving a Net Zero Carbon in operation Guildhall, the project is taking part in the UK Net Zero Carbon Building Standard Pilot study.**

The application of EnerPHit principles was agreed as the most appropriate approach to the Civic Quarter.

To achieve the Net Zero Carbon aim operational energy demand must be reduced significantly. Energy Use Intensity (EUI) targets are established in the UK and we are aligning with these.

Renewable energy sources should be maximised to supply energy to the Guildhall, Corn Exchange, and Market Square.

Reducing operational energy demand will require optimised thermal insulation levels, reduced thermal bridges, improved air-tightness, the use of ventilation system with the most efficient heat recovery, and efficient heat generation. The EnerPHit approach stipulates performance targets for these interventions and provides a calculation methodology, governance during design and on site for achieving them.

### Summary of approach

Working with Max Fordham we have established an approach to fabric upgrades. This is primarily influenced by the heritage significance of the different spaces.

### Key Design Strategies

The design for the Guildhall is underpinned by the following principles:

**1. High quality well insulated building fabric** help control heat loss, and protect the building fabric against mould growth:

- Where possible, Internal wall insulation, verified by the hygrothermal modelling.
- Insulated pitched and flat roofs and insulated basement floor.
- Well-insulated walls of the 4th floor extension.

**2. High performance glazing:** triple glazing limits unwanted heat transfer, and helps keep people comfortable by avoiding cold surfaces:

- Triple glazing as secondary glazing to most spaces.
- Triple glazing over the two atrium and as new replacement rooflights.

**3. Designing out thermal bridges** to minimise heat loss and surface moisture risk.

- Careful design of key junctions and details informed by the thermal bridge modelling.

**4. Excellent airtightness** also avoids cold draughts, protects the building fabric, and limits energy use.

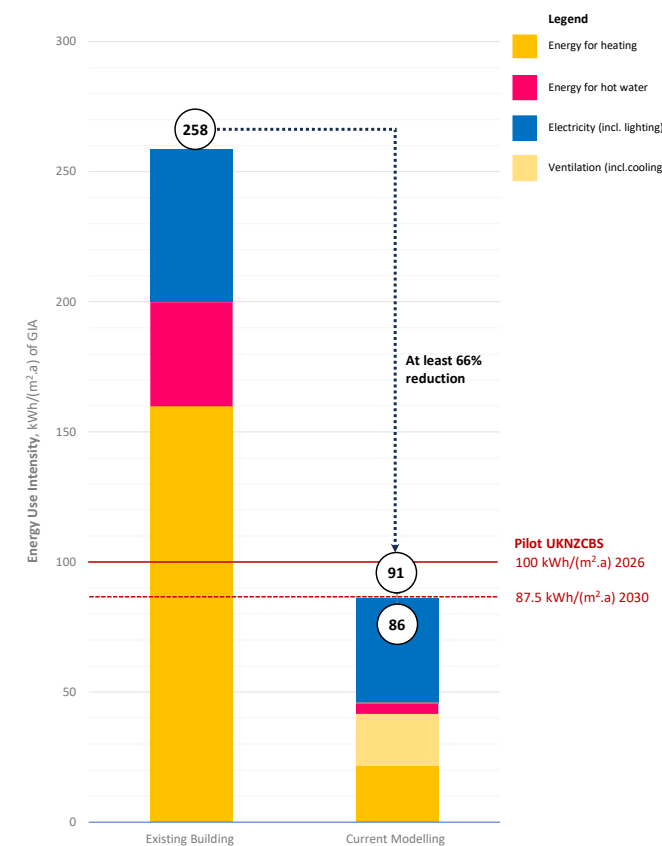
- The building is designed to achieve airtightness <1 ach @50Pa.

**5. Low energy reliable ventilation:** mechanical ventilation with heat recovery delivers good indoor air quality with minimal energy use, and avoids cold draughts.

- Demand controlled mechanical ventilation with high heat recovery rate to all spaces in the building.

### Enerphit – High Level Outcomes

Through the application of Enerphit principles it has been shown that it should be possible to reduce the energy consumption of the Guildhall by approximately 66%. Based on the definition contained within the, UK Net Zero Carbon Building Standard, the Guildhall would be defined as a Net Zero Carbon (in operation) building without the need for any Carbon offsetting.



Energy Use Intensity Graph

### Corn Exchange

The Corn Exchange presents a larger set of challenges than the Guildhall due to the decorative features present on the external walls.

The brickwork walls, forming the external envelope, have decorative features internally and externally. They are constructed from solid masonry. These factors remove our ability to insulate this part of the building.

Our focus has therefore been on the roof, floor, extension and the MEP systems. Providing higher levels of insulation and, where possible, making the construction airtight will reduce energy use. Installing modern MEP systems will improve the internal environment and also reduce energy use.

The large roof provides a significant area of 486m² for photovoltaic panels.

Coupling these improvement together modelling has shown a 61-79% reduction in energy use is possible.

### Market Square

The refurbishment of the Market Square proposes the mixed use of collapsible and permanent market stalls. The permanent market stalls therefore have the opportunity for mounted photovoltaics (PVs) to provide renewable energy. These PVs will be placed on the side of the market stalls pitched roofs with the highest irradiance.



### Water

Cambridge is a water scarcity area due to increasingly low and sporadic rainfall and increasing demand from an expanding population. Following the water hierarchy to reduce water consumption and recycle water where possible is a key project objective.

Re-introducing water into the Market Square fountain is a key aspiration of the design, how this is done will be carefully considered so as not to waste this scarce resource.

### Biodiversity

The proposals include significant new planting, shrubs, flowers and street trees. Where possible, biodiverse green roofs are included on the Guildhall. We will also be incorporating bird and bat boxes to support existing and new wildlife on site, along with the potential for insect hotels. The site is currently lacking in any significant areas to support wildlife, so these proposals will have a significant positive impact.

The proposals have been reviewed MKA Ecology and calculations are being produced to support the extent of Biodiversity Net Gain.



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