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 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 Cabinet Report - 25th September 2025

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 theses 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 4 (technical designs) and updated business case and business plans. We are seeking approval from Cabinet and Full Council to proceed to the construction phase (RIBA Stage 5) from January 2027.

The scheme received planning permission and listed building consent in March 2026.

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.

Guildhall

The cabinet report in September 2025 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.

Key features of the Guildhall Design (at end of RIBA Stage 4)

- New 'Heart' Space: A welcoming public area with café, seating, and atria for natural light.
- Council Chamber: Refurbishment of the Council Chamber to create a more accessible and adaptable civic space capable of supporting democratic functions, civic events and wider community use.
- Office Functions: 150 work settings for staff, customer service centre, meeting rooms within the basement.
- Event Spaces: Improvements to the Large Hall and Small Hall to provide high-quality multifunctional space suitable for conferences, weddings, events, ceremonies and community activities.
- Accessibility Upgrades: Level access via platform lifts for main entrance and Guildhall Street (where there are currently stairs or steps), new lifts (including one evacuation lift to service the Event spaces), changing places and accessible toilets, breastfeeding rooms and improved wayfinding signage.
- Commercial Office space: 50% of the building, is let as Grade A office space, occupying the 3rd and 4th Floors and partial use of Ground and 2nd Floors.

Project Timetable

March 2026 – Planning and Listed Building consent approvals

October 2026 - Report to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet seeking approval to proceed to construction phase.

November 2026 – Full Council approval to release project funding and enter into works contract

October 2026 - December 2026 – Completion of the decant of Guildhall

January 2027 – Start on site.

December 2028 – Completion of 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
- Surrounding businesses, including Arts Theatre, pubs & restaurants and shops
- 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

There has been ongoing direct engagement activity across a range of internal and external stakeholders and updates via the Civic Quarter Liaison Group.

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 is 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.

Cartwright Pickard was reappointed as design consortia lead in January 2025 for RIBA stages 3 and 4 of the project.

Sir Robert McAlpine have been appointed as the main contractor.

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
Cabinet - Cabinet Report - 25th September 2025

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 reports to Cabinet will be in November 2026 and Full Council in November 2026 seeking approval to proceed to the construction phase (RIBA Stage 5) from January 2027.

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.
- Community Engagement took place in May 2025 and outcomes report published in August 2025

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

Community engagement

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 age range were more likely to engage and share their views. The overarching message for the Guildhall was that it should remain a civic hub; better connected to the public, more flexible in its uses, and designed to be inclusive, accessible, and welcoming for all.

Impacts

Workforce

- There will be lifts to all floors (to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations) that will improve access for all people. One of the lifts that services the Large and Small Hall side of the building will be suitable for use in evacuation purposes.
- In relation to impacts for staff, a significant proportion of the workforce is in the 55 and over 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).

City Councillors

- There will be lifts to all floors (to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations) that will improve access for all people, and one lift will be suitable for use in evacuation purposes.

Visitors using council services (includes partners and service users)

- There will be lifts to all floors (to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations) that will improve access for all people and one of the lifts will be suitable for use in evacuation purposes.
- The improved accessibility (e.g. platform lifts, step-free access) at the Market Square and Guildhall Street entrances will benefit older people who are more likely to have reduced mobility and families with young children who have children in prams and push chairs.
- 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.

Spaces for public hire

- The improved accessibility (e.g. platform lifts, step-free access) at the Market Square and Guildhall Street entrances will benefit older people who have reduced mobility and families with young children who have children in prams and push chairs.
- There will be lifts to all floors (to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations) that will improve access for all people and one of the lifts will be suitable for use in evacuation purposes.
- Provision of Hearing Loops will be a positive for people who are hard of hearing and use hearing aids. The precise design details for where these will be located e.g. reception and meeting rooms will be worked up in the technical design stage of the project in 2026. Hearing loss - NHS identifies that one of the causes of hearing loss can be aging.
- 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 completed, and future fit out works will ensure seating/rest points are available throughout for older visitors and a range of seating is provided within the "heart space". The range of lighting and signage will be age-friendly in recognition that as people age, they may be more likely to experience visual impairments.
- The provision of a Breastfeeding Room, baby changing facilities, and Changing Places toilet supports carers and families.
- 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.
- Access Control security systems will benefit those hiring office space on upper floors

(b) Disability

Community engagement

Community Engagement 2025

As part of the engagement programme, 1:1 meetings were held with, the Council's Access Officer, Greater Cambridge Planning Service and Camsight.

18.4% respondents have physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more.

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. All of these areas of feedback have been factored into the designs.

Impacts

Workforce

- The provision of platform lifts at the main entrance and Guildhall Street.
    - 90.8% of people are in favour of platform lifts (CCQ Phase 3 Engagement Report, August 2025, Prepared by ECF states that 9.2% are against).
- There will be new lifts to all floors (to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations) that will improve access for all people and one of the lifts will be suitable for use in evacuation purposes.
- The internal corridor doors around the building will also be automated where possible whilst maintaining the security and fire safety integrity of the building.
- The provision of Hearing Loops will be a positive for people who are hard of hearing and use hearing aids. The design details for where these will be located has been worked through and will be kept under review as we go forward with the construction and fit out stages. British Academy of Audiology state that 1 in 6 people are affected by some level of hearing loss. They note it is a hidden disability and often goes unnoticed making it easier for those living with hearing loss to be ignored or forgotten.
- Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for disabled people who are at increased risk of hate crime, this is for both visitors and employees.
- Security systems will be upgraded to enable staff to enter work areas and feel safe and secure, whilst providing management oversight of who is in the building.
- The inclusion of a space that can be allocated as a staff wellness room within the Council, is also seen as a positive impact. This space will also be a calm sensory space available to all staff including those experiencing anxiety, mental ill health, or are living with autism where they can take time out to reflect.
- The provision of natural light into basement area will increase visibility supporting people with visual impairments
- Signage – a wayfinding approach has been developed that ensures signage confirms to the relevant British Standards and is clear, with Easy Read (words and pictures for people who have Learning Disabilities, English as second language, low

literacy). Signage at lower level and in the lifts will include braille and as existing the lifts will include informative announcements.
- The Changing Places facility will benefit staff at the Guildhall Changing Places Toilets The nearest Changing Place facilities are at Drummer Street and Cambridge Shop Mobility and further away at Parkside Leisure.
- There will be an accessible toilet on each floor of the building
- Disabled people's bike parking will be at ground floor or basement level, with the latter accessible via a cycle lift. The basement will also provide associated accessible shower and toilet facilities.

8.4% of staff have declared they have a disability (as of 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. The furniture fit out stage of the project will include a percentage of height adjustable desks and a range of seating for meeting rooms.

City Councillors

The improvements to accessibility listed above for staff will also benefit councillors with disabilities, including:
- The provision of platform lifts at the main entrance and Guildhall Street.
- The replacement of lifts to all floors (to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations, with one lift being suitable for evacuation purposes) will improve access for all people.
- The internal corridor doors around the building will also be automated where possible.
- The provision of Hearing Loops
- Improved lighting and CCTV
- Security systems will be upgraded to enable staff to enter work areas and feel safe and secure, whilst providing management oversight of who is in the building.
- The provision of natural light into basement area
- The Changing Places facility and accessible toilets on each floor.

Additionally, of particular benefit to councillors will be changes to the council chamber to include an accessible and adaptable space. This includes a removable raised floor to level the existing raked floor when required. New bespoke removal seating in this space will improve access to councillors with mobility impairments.

Visitors using council services (includes partners and service users)
Service users and external partners accessing council services are benefitted by the designs in similar ways to staff and councillors including by:
- The provision of platform lifts at the main entrance and Guildhall Street.
- The replacement of lifts to all floors (to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations) with one lift being suitable for evacuation purposes.
- The provision of Hearing Loops in meeting rooms.
- Improved lighting and CCTV
- The provision of natural light into basement area, where meeting rooms will be located.
- There will be accessible automated doors throughout the building where needed.

- Signage – a wayfinding approach has been developed that ensures signage confirms to the relevant British Standards and is clear, with Easy Read (words and pictures for people who have Learning Disabilities, English as second language, low literacy). Signage at lower level and in the lifts will include braille and as existing the lifts will include informative announcements.
- The Changing Places facility and accessible toilets on each floor.

Of particular benefit will be the level access into the new Customer Service centre.

Also, the provision of calm spaces will allow visitors to retreat to a quiet/low stimulation area, which can benefit neurodiverse people and people with mental health issues especially but protects everyone's wellbeing. There will be a paint palette for the building for the spaces occupied by the Council, so that depending on how the spaces are being used, the most appropriate colour paillette can be used.

Spaces for public hire

In relation to spaces for public hire, including exhibition space, benefits to the public around accessibility for disabled people will include:

- The provision of platform lifts at the main entrance and Guildhall Street.
- The replacement of lifts to all floors (to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations) including one lift that can be used for evacuation purposes.
- The provision of Hearing Loops
- Improved lighting and CCTV
- There will be accessible automated doors throughout the building where needed.
- The provision of natural light into basement area
- Signage – a wayfinding approach has been developed that ensures signage confirms to the relevant British Standards and is clear, with Easy Read (words and pictures for people who have Learning Disabilities, English as second language, low literacy). Signage at lower level and in the lifts will include braille and as existing the lifts will include informative announcements.
- The Changing Places facility will benefit visitors at the Guildhall Changing Places Toilets The nearest Changing Place facilities are at Drummer Street and Cambridge Shop Mobility, further away at Parkside Leisure, Cherry Hinton Hall, Royal Papworth Hospital, Addenbrookes Hospital, German Lutheran Club and Eddington.
- Access Control security systems will benefit those hiring office space on upper floors
- Changes to the council chamber which will also be a space that can be hired for public events, including installing a removable raised access floor the level the existing raked floor. This will support visibility when using the chamber, but the floor can be entirely on a single level too where needed to improve access. New bespoke removal seating in this space will improve access to councillors with mobility impairments.
- The provision of calm spaces will allow visitors to retreat to a quiet/low stimulation area, which can benefit neurodiverse people and people with mental health issues especially but protects everyone's wellbeing.

(c) Gender reassignment

Workforce and city councillors

- Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for transgender people who are at increased risk of hate crime.
- Security systems to enable staff and councillors to feel safe and secure
- The increase in the number of toilets, whilst recognising the constraints of a listed building, includes providing universal 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. We will keep this under review and the final determination how the toilets will be gendered will be made once the Council's approach to the EHRC code of practice is set in November 2026.
- The inclusion of a space that can be allocated as a staff wellness room within the Council, is also seen as a positive impact. This space will also be a calm sensory space available to all staff including those experiencing anxiety, mental ill health, or are living with autism where they can take time out to reflect.

Visitors using council services (includes partners and service users) and spaces for public hire

- Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for Trans people who are at increased risk of hate crime, this is for both visitors and employees.
- Access Control security systems will benefit those hiring office space on upper floors
- The increase in the number of toilets, whilst recognising the constraints of a listed building, 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.

(d) Marriage and civil partnership

No specific impacts have been identified specific to staff relating to marriage and civil partnership, visitors of council services or councillors.

In relation to spaces for public hire, improvements to the large and small halls could increase the wedding market. CCTV will increase safety of people who might be using the space for civil partnership ceremonies who might be subjected to hate crime on grounds of hatred towards their sexuality.

(e) Pregnancy and maternity

Of benefit to all users relating to pregnancy and maternity will be the provision of the Breastfeeding room on the ground floor, Guidance from the breast feeding network organisation will be followed, including the display of BfN Breastfeeding friendly logo

Visitors using council services (includes partners and service users) and spaces for public hire

- Platform lifts at entrances of Market Square and Guildhall Street will improve access to people who using prams and push chairs.

- Improved lift access to meeting rooms and Small and Large Hall will improve access to people who use prams and push chairs. The lift that services the halls will be able to be used in the event of an evacuation.
- Provision of a range of seating areas that support mobility needs.
- Baby changing facilities will be of benefit.

(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.

Community engagement

In the Cambridge Civic Quarter Phase 3 Engagement Report, August 2025, prepared by ECF it shows that 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.

Impacts

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).

Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for people of all ethnicities who are at increased risk of hate crime for the council's workforce, city councillors, visitors using council services, and for members of the public/those hiring space.

(g) Religion or belief

Workforce

- 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 inclusion of a space that can be allocated as a staff wellness room within the Council, is also seen as a positive impact. This space will also be a calm sensory space available to all staff including those experiencing anxiety, mental ill health, or are living with autism where they can take time out to reflect.
- Security systems and door controls to enable staff (and Councillors) to enter work areas and feel safe and secure.

Spaces for public hire

Access Control security systems will also benefit those hiring office space on upper floors

Benefits for all

- Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for people of Religion or Belief who are at increased risk of hate crime.

(h) Sex

Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for people who are at increased risk of gender-based crime and misogyny.

Workforce

- 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 present design provides an increase in overall provision of toilets/urinals from 42 to 76. We are retaining the original existing female and male toilets within the heritage areas of the Guildhall as it is a listed building. The remainder are designed as universal toilets across the staff and public areas. We will keep this under review and the final determination how the toilets will be gendered will be made once the Council's approach to the EHRC code of practice is set in November 2026.
- Security systems to enable staff to enter work areas and feel safe and secure.

City Councillors

- Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for people who are at increased risk of gender-based crime and misogyny.
- Security systems to enable councillors to enter work areas and feel safe and secure
- The plans set out an increase in the number of toilets including providing gender-neutral toilets across the staff and public areas

Visitors – areas open to the public

- Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for people who are at increased risk of gender-based crime and misogyny.

- The increase in the number of toilets, whilst recognising the constraints of a listed building, including providing gender-neutral toilets across the staff and public areas the Guildhall which will have a positive impact.

Spaces for public hire

- Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for people who are at increased risk of gender-based crime and misogyny.
- Access Control security systems will benefit those hiring office space on upper floors.
- The plans set out an increase in the number of toilets including providing gender-neutral toilets across the staff and public areas.

(i) Sexual orientation

Benefits to all

- Improved lighting and CCTV will improve the sense of safety for people who are LGBTQIA and who are at increased risk of hate crime.

Workforce and councillors

- Access Control security systems to enable staff to enter work areas and feel safe and secure. These will also benefit those hiring office space on upper floors.

(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 EqIA accordingly.)
Update EqIA at the following project milestones Review at 6 monthly stages whilst progressing through the construction phase and particularly at the fitting out stage and the commissioning/handover of the building back to the Council.

12. Do you have any additional comments?
N/a

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 Community Power Manager Graham Lewis, Community Equity Officer Date of EqIA sign off: 01 October 2026 Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment: **June 2027** Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website: Click here to enter text.

All EqIAs need to be sent to the Equity Team at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk