

Letter from Angela Chadwyck- Healey, 25 Nov, 2020 to Sarah French, City Council, concerning The Market Square Project

Dear Sarah

I was delighted to attend the presentation on the planned development of the Market Square on 9 November 2020; thank you for inviting me.

I have a few points of concern following the meeting. I gather from the press that the market traders held an advance meeting a couple of days earlier, and that not all the points raised then were covered at the meeting on 9 November.

I think that the market is of such great importance and concern to residents of the City and the wider region that everything that is being planned will be of great public interest. I can understand that the City Council is anxious to generate more income to maintain and enhance the Market Square, and that they also want it to serve a more civic role for the community. However, here is an opportunity to create something of excellence which will serve the whole of the region and beyond, and make the market a destination for everybody who cares about the quality of produce and its local character. Sadly, most recent developments in the City have been to the detriment of its unique character, for example the bland and unattractive development in the Station Square, and I fear that this may be the fate of the Market Square. This is a market which is based in history and is, in itself, a marker for the City; for example its colourful stall canopies are part of the local television news introduction.

Why has there been no creative thought about how to develop the market? Have farmers' markets been investigated, or research done on the now famous markets such as Borough or the very successful farmers' market at Snape Maltings in Suffolk? There is an abundance of small specialist producers in East Anglia, for example Suffolk Gold cheese, who could be attracted to Cambridge if it built a reputation for excellence.

I think that fast food stalls should form part of the market but currently leave a great deal to be desired. How do they meet minimum hygiene requirements? Street food is increasingly popular and maybe provision for food vans should be included, not in the Square, but on the periphery.

The bar should be set high to achieve excellence, emphasising local producers and crafts. People travel to Saffron Walden, Bury St Edmunds and Ely because they offer more creative and extensive produce than Cambridge currently does.

I can understand the desire to replace fixed stalls, as most other markets use collapsible canopies. For example, you could look at Tavistock Market, where the income generated from a large market funds a 'Market Reeve' who supervises the stalls, while the council employs staff who erect and dismantle them. The traders are concerned about the wind funnel and the days that they might not be able to sell their produce, but surely some ingenious thought could overcome those issues and an elegant and simple solution found.

The collapsible stalls that I see at other markets fold up; they need a space to be stored but surely that might be overcome by investigating the vaults under the Market Square?

I attended a workshop at the beginning of this year at the Cambridge Hotel, and I noted that Joel Carre said that there were no funds available to implement many of the ideas that we discussed. I would be interested to know how funds have now been found to fund the extensive design work undertaken by the Mace Group overseeing the project, the LDA design team and specialist market consultants Quarterbridge.

Please can you pass my concerns on to the relevant people and I would be delighted to discuss these issues with them further. I write as a resident of Cambridge and to notify you of the concern that is growing within the community.

Yours sincerely

Angela Chadwyck-Healey
Committee Member, FeCRA