
Leicester Market Redevelopment

Economic Development, Transport and Climate
Emergency Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 6th November 2024

Lead director: Mike Dalzell

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: 1

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide members of the commission with details of the proposed option for the redevelopment of Leicester market, the rationale behind the proposal and to invite members to comment as part of a consultation period that runs until December 9th 2024. After the consultation period has ended a final decision will be confirmed.

2. Report

- 2.1 The original scheme to redevelop Leicester market was paused in May 2024. Once the old market had been demolished the potential of the space was revealed, and the City Mayor and others questioned whether returning to the traditional layout of the market in that location was the best use of the space. Whilst the area had been used as a market place for around 800 years, for much of this time its use had been flexible to include uses other than markets. This pause has allowed options for the best use of the space to be considered.
- 2.2 Several options have been under active consideration:
 - Returning to the original proposal which has the market occupying the bulk of the space now cleared
 - Keeping the market permanently on Green Dragon Square.
 - Locating the market in the link between Green Dragon Square and Cank Street.
 - Locating the market in front of the Food Hall, on space now cleared
 - Not having a market at all
- 2.3 The City Mayor has met with market trader representatives several times throughout this process, and this has been a constructive dialogue. During these discussions traders felt strongly that they would prefer to return to a site in front of the Corn Exchange. They also indicated that they would not need to occupy all of the space for a market, as had been envisaged in the original scheme.
- 2.4 Many comments were received from people following the decision to pause the scheme. The majority welcomed the proposal to create a major new event space in the heart of the city, including many local businesses and representatives of the heritage sector. Some also questioned the need for a market at all and felt it was no longer viable or necessary. However, it is considered that the market remains a key ingredient of the city centre offer and an important part of the fabric of the city which we should retain, though it is accepted that concerns regarding the current offer also need to be addressed.
- 2.5 The options reviewed have concerned the respective advantages of location and scale of the market and how best to combine that with making maximum use of the

cleared area. The option now proposed would create both a new market building immediately in front of the Food Hall together with a substantial new flexible space on the remaining cleared area. This would allow Leicester's historic market to return to the traders favoured site, while keeping the market place as a flexible space for a range of uses – as it was for hundreds of years. Artist impressions of the proposed option are attached in the Appendix.

- 2.6 The proposal would create a new home for Leicester Market in a light and airy structure adjacent to the existing food hall. The steel-framed building would feature a distinctive saw-tooth roof with automated shutters. This would enable the building's open sides to be closed to secure the site when the market was not in use. The scheme would provide 48 new stalls that could be fully dismantled and cleared if needed to support events and speciality markets in the adjacent public space.
- 2.7 Keeping the market place as a flexible space for public events would enable the area to host speciality markets, live music, festivals, Christmas events or sporting celebrations. The whole site would be paved in high-quality porphyry, with colourful planters helping to create an attractive, versatile space.
- 2.8 Subject to a final decision following this consultation and planning approval for the proposed option, the new events space could be available in early 2026, with the new market building opening by spring/summer 2027.
- 2.9 The majority of market traders relocated to the temporary market on Green Dragon Square in November 2023. Rents charged have been discounted to support traders. Under this new option all market traders would continue to trade there until spring/summer 2027 when the new market was completed.
- 2.10 The proposed option has a number of advantages. Firstly it is the preferred location for traders. The new market can both act as a destination to help animate the wider area by drawing footfall whilst also directly benefiting from the footfall generated by other uses of the remaining space. It is also immediately adjacent to the food hall, supporting a combined destination food offer. The remaining space is also the most obvious location for 'spill over' specialist temporary markets that can enhance and support the permanent offer. The other options considered did not offer these advantages. It is considered that the flexible events space would be a very useful addition for the city which would be lost if we returned to the original design.
- 2.11 Remaining on Green Dragon Square was not considered viable in the long term. Some additional minor improvements to the current layout and facilities are being delivered now to improve the current offer but the structures were never designed to be permanent. Access to and through the space is tight and some design elements are inherently problematic. For example the drainage system for the square was not designed for structures to sit on it and it is not feasible to secure the site out of hours, other than by fencing which has to be taken up and down on a daily basis and which is not economic in the long term.
- 2.12 Careful consideration was given to the option of relocating the market to the area between Market Place North and Cank Street. In addition to the issues noted above, this option in construction terms is technically more challenging and risky. It requires the demolition of all the council owned properties (Nos 12-20) fronting Green Dragon Square, substantive buttressing of the remaining walls and dealing with existing

basements. That option would also rule out alternative uses of the location which could offer better value for the wider area.

- 2.8 A consultation inviting comments on this proposed option opened on Monday 28th October 2024 and is open for six weeks until Monday 9th December 2024. Details of the consultation have been published on the Council website at <https://consultations.leicester.gov.uk/communications/leicester-market>.
- 3.8 Scrutiny member's comments on the proposed option will be included as part of the consultation. All feedback received will help inform the final decision, paving the way for a scheme that will bring new life to Leicester's market place and contribute to the regeneration of the wider area.