

Part 2: Cambridge as a 'liveable' City

Question 1: What will make Central Cambridge a great place to be in?

2.1 Defining the need for positive change

2.1.1 Liveability describes the degree to which a place is suitable or good for living in. Cambridge needs to continue to be a great place in which people can enjoy working, studying and visiting. The public realm has an important role to play in ensuring that happens.

2.1.2 The commitment of the Councils to substantially reduce the volume of traffic and their determination to tackle climate change provides an exciting opportunity to rethink streets and other spaces to support Central Cambridge as the heart of a liveable City.

Three key factors have created a significant opportunity in Central Cambridge, namely:

- GCP's commitment to traffic reduction including demand management measures and improved public transport will free up road space that can be used for other purposes;
- All Local Authorities with responsibilities for the city centre have made a commitment to addressing air quality, climate change and a zero-carbon future,

and this creates opportunities for change; and

- Recent public engagement as part of the Making Space for People Project and Choices for Better Journeys have demonstrated strong stakeholder support for change.

2.1.3 The sections below begin to describe how the opportunity presented by rethinking our approach to the way in which people access and experience Central Cambridge.

2.2 A Walkable City

2.2.1 Central Cambridge, with its compact scale and flat topography, is pre-disposed to being 'walkable'. A walkable place is designed to be inclusive and one that creates the right conditions for moving around easily as a pedestrian or cyclist and which connects seamlessly into an accessible and well planned supporting public transport network. The strategies in the forthcoming SPD will make for a more attractive and accessible City Centre that is easy to navigate. Figure 4: Central Cambridge 5 and 10 minute walking catchments helps to illustrate the compact form of the City Centre.



Figure 4: Central Cambridge 5 & 10 minute walking catchments from Market Square



2.3 Economic and social benefits

2.3.1 Increased footfall and creating comfortable places for people to dwell can improve the prosperity of existing local businesses and encourage new businesses to develop. A high-quality public realm that is well-managed, people focussed and responsive to contextual and functional needs will create the best conditions for sustaining and boosting the economic vitality that supports an attractive and vibrant City. Evidence has shown that improvements to public spaces and the reallocation of road space in favour of walking and cycling can boost town centre and high street footfall and trading.

2.3.2 Central Cambridge is not just about retail provision and in a rapidly changing 'high street' environment, cultural and entertainment activities play an ever-increasing role in how and why people come to city centres.

2.4 Health benefits

2.4.1 Getting people to move more and make healthy and active travel choices means improving the network of streets and spaces that support healthy and active lifestyles. Removing the dominance of cars, delivery vehicles and buses from streets and spaces will make walking and cycling more attractive options. Combined with a well-integrated, convenient and accessible public

transport system, this will support healthy travel choices and reduce the reliance on private motor vehicles.

2.5 Change and adaptation for climate and biodiversity

2.5.1 Change and adaptation for both climate and biodiversity are a crucial consideration right now and going forward. Cambridge is fortunate to have a network of green spaces that allow easy access from the Central Cambridge out to the surrounding countryside. Whilst providing an invaluable wildlife and aesthetic resource, they play a significant role in managing environmental quality and helping to address climate change. Improving the green infrastructure in Central Cambridge will enhance Cambridge's ability to adapt to our changing climate. The integration of sustainable drainage features (blue infrastructure) can help provide urban cooling to help lower air temperatures through the process of evaporative cooling. Evidence shows that green infrastructure also improves air quality, helping to mitigate vehicle emissions as well as having wider social benefits in improving people's health and wellbeing.

2.6 Air Quality

2.6.1 Air quality is becoming a prominent issue across the world and is a key issue in Central Cambridge. A reduction in motor vehicle traffic and move over to zero emissions vehicles, especially vehicles that serve Central Cambridge such as taxis, delivery vehicles and buses, will create significant benefits for people living, working, studying and

visiting. Improving air quality will help deliver health benefits and support economic growth.

2.7 Public Art

2.7.1 Cambridge has a great track record in delivering thoughtful and integrated public art as part of new buildings and in the public realm; contributing to place making by joining the best contemporary public art practice to community engagement, architecture, landscape and urban design. Public art can shape and improve the experience and understanding of the City as a place of creativity and innovation that offers a high quality of life. When successfully integrated such works compliment, inform and delight. Our streets and spaces must be thought of in the context of the City's Cultural offer, past, present and future, as part of continuing the rich tradition of art linked with place.

Figure 5: The components of the Liveable City

