Oxford Covered Market
Future Retail Strategy & Business Plan

Report commissioned by Oxford City Council

The Retail Group
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Report Contents

1.0 Background 2
2.0 Project Objectives 3
3.0 Project Methodology 4
4.0 Current Situation 5
5.0 Why Maintaining the Status Quo is Not an Option 14
6.0 Future Vision for the Market 18
7.0 Future Plan and Strategy for the Market 20
8.0 Short to Medium Term Tactical Action Plan 21
9.0 Future Market Strategy 27

Appendix A – Research Findings
1.0 Background

1.1 Company Background

The Retail Group is the foremost specialist markets consultancy in the UK, and has worked on many of the country’s leading markets, including Spitalfields, Portobello Road, Manchester Arndale and Newcastle Grainger Markets.

Our approach is inclusive and engaging and has the needs and requirements of consumers at the core of every markets project we do.

The right future market offer is one that is totally in tune with the future needs of the consumers, whatever their reason for being in or near to the market.

All our strategies are based on extensive programmes of research, to ensure they are bespoke, robust and appropriate.

1.2 Project Background

The Oxford Covered Market is an iconic and historic market in the centre of Oxford City Centre. The market has a rich history and reputation as a centre of excellence for independent traders selling fresh food and provisions. The fresh meat offer is renowned and has long anchored the market.

In recent years the market offer has diversified and the mix now contains a catering offer, other fresh food and a wide variety of clothing and accessories. However on many levels the market has not evolved or improved. This lack of change has led to it slipping behind the demands and expectations of customer.

Oxford City Centre’s retail offer is about to take a quantum leap forward in terms of its appeal and delivery as a result of the new Westgate Centre.

Oxford City Council is aware of the need to improve the performance of the Covered Market; it is an important asset for the Council and the city.

The Council has asked The Retail Group and its project partners, GVA and Dally Henderson, to undertake a detailed assessment of the current market and to identify a vision, strategy and detailed actions to improve the performance and secure its role within the future city centre retail hierarchy.

The Oxford Covered Market has a strong reputation and a great location. It has the potential to be one of the best markets in the country.
2.0 Project Objectives

The project objectives are:

**Stage 1**  Identify a vision and future role for the market

**Stage 2**  Develop a long term strategy to create a successful, viable and sustainable commercial operation post 2017

**Stage 3**  Develop a plan to vitalise performance in the short to medium term
3.0 Research Methodology

A wide variety of primary and secondary research areas have been undertaken for this project. These include:

**Catchment Analysis:** Analysis of the catchment profile of Oxford today and post new Westgate. This includes assessment of the socio-demographic, lifestyle and expenditure profile of residents. The study has also considered the needs of city centre workers, students, tourists and day visitors.

**Consumer Survey:** Focused consumer survey of circa 500 consumers inside and passing the market. Survey covered usage patterns, reason for being in the centre, likes and dislikes about the market and improvements wanted for the market.

**Trader Survey:** Survey of all market traders in the covered market (85% response rate achieved). Included questions on shopper profile, trading patterns and performance, likes and dislikes and improvements wanted for the market.

**Stakeholder Discussions:** A wide variety of stakeholders have been consulted in regards to views, opinions and experiences of the market, including Council Officers (Market Management, Planning & Regeneration, Property and Heritage), traders, tourism bodies, adjacent property owners, civic societies and colleges.

**Best Practice Reviews:** The project has assessed the leading markets in the UK and Europe in terms of best practice and lessons learnt. This process has also included a guided visit to some of the leading markets in London, including discussions with Market Managers.

**Retail Review:** An analysis of the market from the perspective of shoppers. i.e. sightlines, environment, mix, facilities, customer service, layout, signage and general experience. This workstream has also included an analysis of how the market fits in within the context of the wider city centre offer today, and how it’s likely to change going forward.

**Footfall Analysis:** The project has accessed a number of sources of information on footfall patterns, including studies commissioned by the Council, as well as traders. This has also included analysis of real time footfall information from counters in the city centre. This workstream has produced the most thorough and complete analysis of footfall patterns in and around the market that has ever been undertaken!

The results of all of the above research areas have been presented to the Council Team, traders and key stakeholders in a number of presentations and workshops. These are attached as Appendix 1.

The body of this report focuses on the major findings and conclusions of the various research areas completed, in order to map out the optimum future vision, strategy and plan for the market, for the short, medium and long term.
4.0 Current Situation

4.1 Introduction – the market today

The market is located in the heart of the city centre, within 100m of prime retail and peak footfall levels (Cornmarket).

It can be accessed via High Street, Market Street or through the Golden Cross Shopping Centre. The market has circa 50 traders, mostly in small lock-up shops. It offers shoppers a diverse range of goods in a historic and heritage setting.

The market offers a unique internal experience for shoppers in Oxford City Centre as a result of its environment, offer and nature of shops within it. These are all strengths to build on.

There are however a number of observations and issues that are holding back performance of the market, as mapped out over the next few pages.
4.0 Current Situation

4.2 The “stealth” market

Unfortunately, unless the consumer is aware of it or a regular user of it, it’s very easy to look in the broad direction of the market and not see it.

In particular, from Cornmarket the market is more or less invisible; through a lack of directional signage, trader vans blocking the entrances of the market and sightlines to it (both Market Street and High Street), as well as ineffective signage on the building itself.

Market Street does not operate or feel like the main customer route to the market; it appears to be the service and delivery area.

The market does have entrances on Market Street but they have very limited visibility, poor customer welcome and disappointing sense of arrival.

There is no signage, information or impact at all through the Golden Cross Shopping Centre access route, which seems a huge missed opportunity both for the market as well as the private owners of the centre.

The market has no “presence “on High Street, and it is possible to walk past it and not notice there is a market inside. This is a result of poor sightlines, low lighting levels and lack of impactful signage in the access corridors.

So overall, the market does not have a visible main entrance or frontage.

Whilst the Market has benefitted from new signs recently, much more is required. The listed building status and congested pavements do undoubtedly present challenges for delivering effective signage, however there is a significant opportunity to convert more passers by to entrants into the market.

The market can clearly benefit by attracting more footfall through better and more effective horizon appeal.
4.0 Current Situation

4.3 A dated and dark internal environment

The market’s existing internal environment is mostly a significant strength, but also contains some major issues that need addressing by the Council as well as traders. The internal roof space, beams, floor finishes and varied street pattern present a unique and very attractive historic retail environment.

Unfortunately there is significant clutter visible throughout, including external racking above shop units (relatively recent additions, not the historic ones), seasonal lighting left in place and cleaning / maintenance equipment. Many light panels appear in poor condition and their translucent nature appears to be reducing the amount of external lighting filtering in the building.

This is compounded by ineffective and insufficient internal lights, which lessen the consumer shopping experience as well as reduce the external impact of the market.

Much of the internal environment at first floor level is in need of refurbishment by the Council, especially at the High Street end of the building.

The internal ambience is not helped by the external condition of many shop units. Whilst a few are good, most external fascias are dated, in need of decorating and present an historic outlook (not in a positive sense!) in terms of retail environment. Traders have a responsibility to ensure that external facades are well maintained and achieve modern retail standards.

The market appears structurally sound and is an appealing venue, however the general maintenance, cleaning and upkeep of common areas and shop fronts / shopfits are reducing the benefit of this heritage asset.
4.0 Current Situation

4.4 Ineffective signage

The market currently has a poor signage package (internally and especially externally).

Directional signage from Cornmarket is not prominent enough and easily missed. There is also not enough of it.

Whilst signage has been improved, the restrictions of the listed building consent have resulted in entrances that are too low key and do not stand out. Furthermore there is insufficient signage on entrances at eye level to announce what is available inside.

There is no branded market promotional activity visible internally.

Layout plans are not visible and repeated enough.

Given the issues with regards to lack of visibility and impact already identified, it is essential that signage employed is effective and clear.
4.0 Current Situation

4.5 Fresh food dominated mix, some good, too much basic

The existing market is and has been historically dominated by fresh food / provisions. With seven butchers (of mostly great quality), it has one of the best butchery offers in any market in the UK.

Furthermore, the other fresh food offers (including fishmonger, cheese and bread), all combine to provide a major asset and daily / high visit frequency hook for the market.

Unfortunately, the fresh food offer is let down by the majority of catering units in the market which offer a basic, mass market and dated experience. There is little in the way of modern, high quality and contemporary dining or takeaway offers available.

The non food offer is diverse and again offering some nuggets and attraction stores, however a number of retail offers have not evolved and kept up with consumer demand.

Of the circa existing 55 stall / shop units, 20% are food / daily needs convenience, 11% are service providers, 48% comparison goods and 20% caterers.

Another way to look at the offer is to look at the customer usage / appeal. Aside from the butchers, shoe shop and cake shop, other footfall generators and destination stores do not stand out, which was confirmed by the Operator Survey.

The market needs more anchors and trip generators, across all product categories and Sections 8 and 9 of this report contain our recommendations as to how the mix and quality positioning of the market need to improve to satisfy more of the aspirations and requirements of consumers.
4.6 Retail standards are not high enough

Whilst there are three or four examples of exemplar retail delivery, many retailers offer one or more of the following negative experiences:

- dated product ranges
- poor use of space
- dead frontages
- basic delivery of product
- ineffective window displays
- dated and tired shop-fits
- poor use of promotions
- limited external impact
- “inward looking” shops
- poor lighting levels
- limited services.

These are countered to a limited extent by great service with a smile, but this is not enough.

There are a number (circa 10) of very basic external shop fronts that appear to be 20-25 years old. The minimum ‘bar’ of standards is not high enough.

Clearly many traders have not invested in their shops and have not evolved with the rest of the city centre retail offer (including many nearby) and on a category basis, the market is collectively losing the battle for market share.

In many instances, there are better operators in other parts of the city centre.

There is little consistency in delivering high levels of customer experience or retail delivery.
4.0 Current Situation

4.7 There is no proactive market management function

The management of the market is piecemeal and disparate.

Leasing of the market appears reactive and opportunity driven. Recent tenants do not seem to have been selected on the basis of what they add to the market mix, but on their interest and ability to pay rent.

Whilst cleaning of the floor surfaces is adequate, most of the entrances at wall and ceiling level are dirty and full of cobwebs.

There is no single person or function that has the proactive development of the market (both ongoing and strategically) as a focus.

Whilst rents are collected, the market is not operated as a commercial and revenue generating entity, nor focussed on satisfying the needs of its various consumer groups.

4.8 The market needs considerable investment

Whilst ongoing basic upkeep and maintenance has clearly been occurring, the market internal environment is in need of urgent refurbishment. This includes the need for the Council to invest in the shared public areas, as well as traders to invest in their units.

Lighting levels in particular are ineffective and insufficient (both natural and artificial). There is too much clutter at 1st floor / roof space level. Entrances are dirty, cluttered and create a poor sense of arrival. The market needs much better external branding and effective directional signage and would benefit from new signage and branding guidelines.

The Market Street entrances in particular need significant upgrading and modelling. It is crucial that the market puts its best foot forward externally if it is to capitalise on the considerable potential it has.
4.0 Current Situation

4.9 Many more customers available

On a positive note however, there are four broad target consumer groups available for the market, as identified by the various research areas undertaken as part of the project. All provide some existing users of the market, and all offer significantly more potential consumers.

Residents are the biggest group identified in the catchment analysis, based on data shared by Land Securities.

Indeed, Oxford has a current catchment in excess of 300,000 residents. These are dominated by mid and up market consumers with high aspirational values as well as high service standards. This catchment is a high spending catchment (at levels significantly above UK average) and generates a comparison goods expenditure pot of circa £800m each year.

There are over 100,000 jobs in the city centre, with circa 50,000 workers based in the city centre. Many of these consumers work in white collar jobs, predominately public sector, IT, legal and financial professions. They are typically discerning, well educated and well travelled.

The city centre also attracts in excess of 5.6 million day visits per annum, as well as over 1 million staying tourists each year. Again, these consumers share an aspirational and discerning profile (typically ABC1).

Their combined visitor expenditure on shopping in Oxford is estimated at circa £180m p.a.

Finally, Oxford has one of the biggest student populations in the UK, with at any one time an estimated 30,000 students resident in the city centre.

Again, these consumers share an aspirational and bohemian outlook and welcome change.

These customer groups result in peak footfall volumes on Cornmarket in excess of 250,000 per week, yet the market is only capturing 25,000 at its busiest point and as low as 7,000 in many parts.

It is therefore clear that the market is only scratching the surface in terms of available customers and spend.

Indeed, using the above figures, combined with the results of the footfall analysis and consumer survey undertaken for this project, it can be estimated the market is only capturing 5% of the city centre workforce on a weekly basis, and 3% of available day trippers / tourists.
4.0 Current Situation

4.10 Declining performance

The picture is mixed. Some traders appear to be thriving and some struggling. Too many traders appear to be achieving low capture rates of passers by to entrants, as well as conversion of entrants to purchasers. Those that have invested in their shopfits and provide a modern retail experience appear to be faring better.

It is clear both anecdotally and from the Operator Survey that overall the performance of traders in the market has declined in recent years. However, this generalisation is not universal and covers a very broad spectrum of different businesses and trades, and the impact of the economic recession and rapid change in consumer patterns are also at work. As we have noted some of the fresh food offers are a daily/high frequency hook for the market, and some are part of larger, successful enterprises.

A small number of traders who expressed concern in our discussions showed us their sales performance figures, which showed a decline over the last three years of 10-20%.

This is supported to a lesser degree by the footfall analysis which shows a decline of footfall in the market over five years of 10-15%.

This needs to be balanced with anecdotal recent evidence that traders have sold their leases for sums between 2.5 and 3.5 their annual rental value, which suggests that some businesses can still see a good trading opportunity here.

So, in summary, the market retains many strengths to build on (including history, heritage, environment, reputation, location and fresh food mix) and already sustains businesses here. However, there are important areas that need addressing if the market is to maximise its considerable potential.
5.0 Why Maintaining the Status Quo is Not an Option

5.1 Introduction – the need for change

There are many factors which are driving the need for change.

Whist the market has considerable goodwill, especially in the eyes of the consumer, the retail world and Oxford are moving on at a pace and there is urgent need for the market to up its game.

Land Securities’ New Trinity Leeds scheme

5.2 The market is being left behind

The market has not evolved on a number of different levels. Many retailers near or adjacent to the market on (High Street, Turl Street and Market Street) have invested in their shop fronts and shop fits, making the market retail offer look increasingly dated. Many retailers across the city centre have over the last three years either refurbished their existing units or opened new ones. The market appears to be an unloved and underinvested retail asset.

Around 2017, Land Securities will open the new redeveloped Westgate Centre, which will offer state of the art retail facilities and deliver “the first shopping centre designed for the internet generation”. The market has the opportunity of delivering a unique and real experience to counter balance the threat of e- and m-commerce; it needs to significantly up its game if it is to offer a unique and real experience.

5.3 The market is out of sync with consumer demand

Oxford’s various shopper groups are informed and aware in terms of retail experiences. They are used to high levels of customer service, good product offers, great environment, clean welcoming retail premises, high quality retail shop-fits and facilities. The various target shopper groups will be used to the level of experience provided by the likes of JLP / Waitrose, The Oracle Centre and Bicester Village.

It is clear the market needs to up its game in terms of retail offer, product quality and environment if it is to appear modern and relevant.
5.0 Why Maintaining the Status Quo is Not an Option

5.4 Other markets do it much better

It is clear from the review of the leading national and international markets including Borough Market, Covent Garden Market, Les Halles de Lyon and Mercado de San Miguel in Madrid that the Covered Market could be and should be offering a much better customer experience.

Typically, these markets have excellent signage packages, clear branding, product clearly visible externally, high impact entrances, great quality product, high quality visual merchandising, lots of information available, bright lighting and extensive catering offers.

The Covered Market has much to learn from all of the benchmark markets, not to copy but to inspire and direct improvement. Continuing in the current manner will lead to accelerated decline.

5.5 The Market is becoming disconnected from the city centre

The market occupies a fantastic location in the heart of Oxford City Centre.

Unfortunately, it has hardly any impact whatsoever. The market is very easily missed or overlooked from any core retail area of the city.

There is no effective directional signage from any direction and especially from Cornmarket. The market is difficult to see on any city centre pavement street signs. It doesn’t stand out on city centre maps. It’s not mentioned on website guides promoting the city centre.

There are some fantastic retailers adjacent to the market (e.g. Turl Street Kitchen, The Missing Bean, Objects of Use etc.) but these don’t feel in any way connected to the market despite being located within 100m.

The market is not acting as an anchor for its area; it is not enough of a destination.

Although it’s clearly part of the city centre core, the market is physically and virtually disconnected from it.
5.0 Why Maintaining the Status Quo is Not an Option

5.6 The Market’s message is becoming lost
“its voice is a mere whisper”

Other than a basic website with links to many static trader websites, there is very little active marketing of the market. Whilst the Council provided some initial funding to the traders association a couple of years ago, much more needs to be done by the Council and traders (collectively as well as individually).

There appears to be no programme of events or activities. Trader promotions (joint or individual) appear non-existent.

The only active publicity campaign would appear to be the negative one regarding the ongoing rent disputes.

Traders do little individual marketing, and no collective marketing. Consequently the market has very little remote exposure or promotion. This situation is not improved around its periphery, at the arrival points on in each shop.

It is clear from the recent negative press coverage that there is widespread interest in the market. The marketing of the market is a major area of improvement needed.

5.7 Catering is becoming increasingly important

The market catering offer is basic and mostly mass market in its appeal / offer. It is punching below the weight of the rest of the mix. There are few anchor or destination cafes that stand out.

Yet this is against a backdrop of the explosion in eating out and grazing. The Food and Beverage sector is one of the fastest growing and best performing elements of the current UK retail market.

Over the last 15 years, the average proportion of units selling F&B in shopping centres has grown from 2-3% to 20-25% in the latest schemes to be opened (Westfield Stratford and Trinity Leeds).

This is even more relevant to Oxford when the discerning, well travelled and bohemian nature of its consumers are taken into account.

There are only two catering offers in the market actively and effectively targeting students, and are evidently trading well as a result.

There is no healthy eating option targeting office workers for meetings out of the office.

Catering is not only a massive missed opportunity for the market, and it has to be an essential and much more effective anchor component of the offer going forward.
5.0 Why Maintaining the Status Quo is Not an Option

5.8 The market is underperforming

This applies to the market on a number of different levels. The retail environment (both inside shops, as well as the market in general) is not good enough and could be much better.

Footfall levels in the market are low and declining, yet footfall in the city centre is going up. The market attracts typically only circa 10% of the peak footfall, which is low considering it only 150m away.

Footfall within the market is uneven in its distribution and many areas are achieving low levels of footfall (despite abundant footfall available nearby).

Retail performance is average and could be much better.

This strategy report is not intended to comment on the rent reviews, and the outcome of the arbitration is pending. It is clear that there is conflicting evidence on this aspect.

However, for some of the weaker traders the outlook is poor, and the retail sector remains a competitive environment.

The market is generating an insufficient share of voice within the Oxford retail offer. Given its heritage, location and widespread public support, it should be one of the loudest voices in Oxford.

Traders, the traders’ association and the market management are not working well together. Communication between all the parties needs to improve. There is a lack of trust, and this also exhibits itself in media commentary, which is seen as often negative, and this is not helping trade or the image of the market.

The current operating structure, communication with traders and trader support is clearly not effective enough.

5.9 The need for change

So, overall it is clear that standing still and maintaining the status quo is not an option. The market needs to change its retail offer and its operation if it is to succeed.

The market has considerable potential, considerable goodwill and many of the strategic success factors in place suggest that is could thrive again and regain its place as the jewel in Oxford’s retail crown.

The following section maps out our recommended vision for the market, which when delivered will enable the market to thrive, for the good of consumers, traders and the Council alike.
The recommended future vision for the Oxford Covered Market is:

“Oxford Covered Market will be a very visible, relevant and integral part of the city’s retail landscape.

It will host high quality, best in class independent retailers and innovative caterers in an outstanding and memorable environment and building.

It will be a must-visit experience, with a local, national and international reputation that will have multiple attractions and be focussed on the needs of all key Oxford consumer groups.”
6.0 Future Vision for the Market

In order to achieve the vision for the market, many attributes need to be in place, as shown below.

Some are present already but most need enhancing.

It is anticipated the future market will continue to be owned by the Council, with a commercially and customer focussed management regime in place.

The market will have more anchors, more destination retailers, more eat-in food, more best in class retailers but with a retained focus on independents.

The internal environment will be clean and well lit and will enhance the appeal of traders within the market.

The future market will have a strong, impactful and recognisable entrance on Market Street.

The market will have an extensive directional signage package in place, as well as new recognisable and shared umbrella brand, which will be clearly visible on all entrances.

The future market will earn its place at the top table of Oxford’s future retail offer. It will be well promoted and offer an annual events programme, including lunch time recitals and occasional later opening nights.

The market will be larger in terms of number of units and will enhance the nearby and adjacent retailers to create a recognisable “quarter” of the city centre.

In summary, the future market will offer a unique, relevant and memorable shopping experience totally focussed on the needs of it’s various customer groups.
In order to deliver the future vision for the market, there are many actions and initiatives that need to be delivered. For ease of understanding and clarity, a number of strategic objectives have been developed for the market. These include:

- Improve the retail appeal of the market
- Improve the market’s visibility
- Improve the customer experience
- Increase footfall
- Increase performance of the market, including traders’
- Improve the marketing and promotion of the market
- Improve the operation and management of the market.

Some of these objectives can be part or wholly addressed by specific tactical actions or initiatives, and these are described in section 8.0 of the report, the short to medium term Tactical Action Plan.

Many of the objectives will require further careful planning and investment, and the initiatives that will help to deliver these are described in section 9.0 – Future Market Strategy.
The following tactical actions are practical steps that can be implemented in the short to medium term, listed by priority / ease of implementation. All will have a direct effect on the performance of the market. They will also need careful cascade to key stakeholders with clear rationale and evidence.

### 8.1 Appoint Interim manager

A new management regime with control and complete responsibility is need to deliver a successful market.

In the short term the market needs a dedicated Head of Market or specialist management company appointing, with a focus on delivering this action plan, and working towards implementing the longer term strategy described in the following section.

It is unlikely that the Council employs anyone currently with the right skill set, i.e. commercially and profit focussed, probably with a retail management background at a relatively senior level, i.e. at least area or ideally regional level. Indicative salary range £50,000 to £70,000 on an employed (PAYE) basis.

### 8.2 New events programme

The market has a fantastic opportunity to act as a host for events such as lunchtime string quartets, or choral recitals.

Whilst they may require some initial seed funding to get them off the ground, typically events are self funding and provide promotional opportunities for local companies and organisations.

It is important that performers are licensed and the scheme is managed (e.g. London Underground Busking Scheme where performers are badged, the designated performance area has to be pre-booked and permissions displayed).

A new promotional calendar is needed, which traders need to co-develop and co-deliver.

### 8.3 Trader support initiatives

The retail performance of traders in the market is very variable and typically its difficult for independent traders to access support in training and development.

It is clear from the Operator Survey that most existing retailers are achieving low conversion levels of passers by to entrants to sales.

Traders need to be much better at converting existing footfall into sales, as well as drive more footfall themselves.

The Covered Market traders would benefit from one-to-one business support and business planning services provided by specialist training providers or organisations such as the Oxfordshire Skills Board.

Ideally this would focus on revenue growth initiatives, such as action plans to generate additional sales, space optimisation, range reviews and business analysis. Likely support cost will be circa £500 - £750 per trader.
8.0 Short to Medium Term Tactical Action Plan

8.4 More external trading

The strategy section of this report describes in detail a key recommendation of this study, namely the extension of the market and creation of a new facade on Market Street.

In the interim, it is recommended that more market events are created on Market Street, to animate the street and attract consumers from Cornmarket, as visualised opposite.

Clearly the road would need to be subject of a new Traffic Management Order, preventing road traffic (including trader vehicles) between 10.00 and 16.00 whilst the events are underway.

Example events could include slow food fairs, vintage fashion and international food events. It will be important to offer and accommodate existing market traders should they also want to take a stall on the event market. These events should be self-funding, and generate a small profit, which could then be used to promote future events. There maybe an initial capital outlay to buy some quality branded (Oxford Covered Market) stalls.
8.0 Short to Medium Term Tactical Action Plan

8.5 New website

A new consumer website is urgently needed for the market. The existing website is static and the content feels dated (although it looks ok) and in many cases has out of date information, e.g. historic traders listed as trading.

The new website needs to be co-funded by the Council and traders (to ensure joint buy-in and participation), regularly maintained, have sufficiently aspirational imagery, have current promotions and events, market and traders features, up to date blog, have clearer contact details, clear and effective map and so on.

The site should also link through to trader specific content (and to traders’ own websites if they attain minimum website quality and content standards.

It is important that the website is fit for purpose, and a budget one-off development cost of £5,000 would be prudent.

8.6 Introduce new marketing campaign

The market is in need of a marketing review, with a view to the Council and traders co-funding a new umbrella brand. It is important that traders are involved, participate and buy into the process.

The aim is to develop an umbrella brand to be used and shared by all parties connected with the market. This will include consumer marketing (residents, shoppers, workers, tourist / day visitors and students), as well as marketing to new traders.

It is important traders also adopt the brand and use it in their own marketing collateral, e.g. correspondence, business cards, website and social media etc.

Traders will need support and training in how to deliver effective promotions on an individual basis as well as participate in collective promotions. The cost of developing the brand could be up to £20,000, and the ongoing yearly promotional budget in the order of £20,000 (jointly funded).

8.7 New signage package

The market at the moment has very ineffective directional signage, especially from Cornmarket. It is important that the Council invests in all three access points from Cornmarket (Market Street, Golden Cross Centre and High Street) and upgrade them in terms of effective signage announcing and directing consumers to the market.

The market would also benefit from more remote signage both across the city centre as well as major points of arrival (train, bus stops, park and ride, car parks etc.).

Whilst the new branded signs recently added to the market on High Street are aesthetically pleasing and attractive, they are ineffective in terms of announcing the market. It would be advantageous for the market if the lighting levels on these signs could be upgraded.

Costs are difficult to estimate at this stage, until the proposed signage package (number and materials) is identified.
8.0 Short to Medium Term Tactical Action Plan

8.8 Covered Market Quarter

Extending the virtual reach of the market to envelope the surrounding streets will help to create more of a recognisable and attractive destination. There is benefit in retailers and caterers in the market joining forces with their counterparts on Market Street and Turl Street to create a “Covered Market Quarter” to present a bigger and more appealing virtual offer.

Whilst there may be some resistance from external traders to join in with the market in its current guise, it will be important therefore to focus on selling the future vision and plan for the market.

Notwithstanding the costs to integrate within the website and signage package, the expenditure needed will be mostly time not financial.

8.9 Car and van free entrances

The main entrance of the market is the one at the junction of Market Street and Avenue 1, which is currently hidden by parked vehicles.

The road immediately outside this entrance (and five metres either side) should be a car and van free zone. It is unacceptable to have vehicles parked directly outside the main entrance of the market and the market’s impact and visual appeal is being considerably reduced by doing so.

The Council will need to engage with the County Council and of course traders to work up a suitable solution to this problem. Whilst it will undoubtedly be challenging, the upsides and benefits to the market of overcoming this problem will be considerable.

Costs will mainly relate to planning and meeting time, then the ongoing costs of TMO’s

8.10 New cleaning regime

The existing cleansing team do a good job of keeping the market alleyways and central areas clean. However their focus is typically on the floor.

Too many of the market entrances, especially from High Street are untidy and cobweb ridden. The Council needs to programme a new focus on cleaning the walls and ceiling spaces to overcome this problem. Traders need to play their part by regular cleaning of their external facades and windows.

There is also the need to ensure that all public areas, especially the alleyways near the entrances are also kept free from obstacles such as cleaning equipment or maintenance equipment.

This action is not likely require much investment, more of a change of approach and focus.
8.0 Short to Medium Term Tactical Action Plan

8.11 Improve the F&B provision

It is clear from a number of research areas conducted for this project that the market needs better quality catering. This is more likely to be fast casual type dining as opposed to more formal eat-in traditional three course meals.

Suitable examples include tapas, sushi, moroccan meze, patisserie, traditional afternoon tea specialist, along with quality hot drinks (coffee, specialist tea etc.).

These offers typically attract social interactions and occasions, therefore the market would benefit from more tables and chairs outside cafes and restaurants where space permits.

No additional budget requirement.

8.12 The Covered Market Oscars

It is recommended that an annual event be jointly created by the Council and traders to feature the best performing and most improved traders. Awards could be for the best customer service, window display, promotion, website or retail innovation. This will generate excellent PR capital and provide traders with an incentive to up their game and improve their standards of retail delivery. The event and / or awards could be sponsored by local organisations or companies.

8.13 Trader handbook

Council and traders to work together to introduce new guidelines that defines best practice and agreed levels of retail delivery. This could include aspects such as agreed opening hours, customer service guarantees, merchandising and display guidelines, as well as principles of delivering effective promotions and creating effective consumer websites. Estimated budget of £5,000 to produce.

8.14 Tenant strategy

It is important that existing and new tenants for the market are suitable in terms of adding customer appeal and additional layers in terms of reasons for visit. Additional product categories could include hand made jewellery, home fashion, toy shop, young designers, vintage, local art, independent stationers, fancy dress, specialist off licence etc.

Additional convenience food categories include deli, vintner, charcuturie, chocolatier, sweet shop, artisan breads, herbs & spices, jams & chutneys, honey, nuts & olives.

The market needs a retail offer suitability checklist (for existing and new traders), to assess any proposals that come forward. This could also be used to identify other suitable traders in other regional cities who may have an interest in opening an additional unit in Oxford.

Checklist areas might include delivery of exemplar customer service, retail theatre, excellent promotions, innovative retailer, unique product offer, quality of proposed shopfit etc.
8.0 Short to Medium Term Tactical Action Plan

8.15 Refurbish the offer

The market is clearly in need of widespread refurbishment. Whilst ongoing maintenance has clearly been occurring, it is important that the Council invests in the market. Areas of focus should be entrances, floor finishes, alley ways, public circulation spaces, internal market walls (especially above shop units, lights and roof light panels).

This will require a full costed building appraisal and refurbishment assessment.

All retailers (with the exception of 3 or 4 newly refurbished units) also need to look at refurbishing the internal shop fits and external facades. A cost per retailer of £5,000 to £10,000 would be more than reasonable. It would be beneficial if the Council could make available grants to retailers (paid back over time) to enable them to invest in their units.
Section 7.0 earlier identified the strategic objectives for the market going forward i.e.

- Improve the retail appeal of the market
- Improve the market’s visibility
- Improve the customer experience
- Increase footfall
- Increase performance of the market, including traders’
- Improve the marketing and promotion of the market
- Improve the management of the market.

Further to short to mid term initiatives identified in the previous section, the following longer term solutions will help to deliver these objectives as well as the vision for the Oxford Covered Market.

Clearly, they will need considerable further planning as well as investment.

They will also require the market’s multitude of stakeholders (internal council and extended) to work together for the good of the market.

Successful implementation will help the market to become one of the best markets in the country, as well as be structured to be capable of meeting the future evolving needs of it’s various customer groups.

Before we get to the strategy, it is perhaps worth briefly reminding ourselves of the art of the possible in terms of an exemplar market.

Stunning canopied entrance to Santa Caterina Market, Barcelona
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.2 Increase the size of the market

Currently the market is almost invisible from Cornmarket due to trader vans blocking sightlines of the market, low impact entrances, dead frontage and lack of signage.

It’s clear the external appearance is preventing the market from performing effectively. This results in a poor sense of arrival / initial impressions, lack of credibility, even significant loss of sales.

This is further compounded by considerable under utilised retail space, given over to ancillary uses such as toilets, cupboards and storage areas. Furthermore a number of traders have dead or under utilised frontages, especially towards the Market Street end of the market.

It is therefore recommended that useful non-retail space be converted to usable retail space, as well as plans be developed and commenced for creating a new market entrance on Market Street.

The plan overleaf illustrates that through a combination of extending the building line forward onto Market Street, relocation of non-retail areas (e.g. public and trader toilets, cupboards, part of the service yard) it is possible to create a significant amount of new and in many cases, prime retail space.

The plan also allows for the creation of additional trading and circulation space at first floor level, more likely to be a couple of signature restaurants similar to Borough and Covent Garden Markets.
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.2 Increase the size of the market (cont.)

The yellow areas are additional retail space. As can be seen, a number of units have been expanded to create either better shaped space or more appropriate space in terms of overall trading area.

Eight units are totally new at ground floor.

Additional floorspace created at first floor is shown highlighted in red.

It is anticipated this floorspace be dedicated to specialist good quality F&B operators, with significant dedicated and shared table and chairs available.

It is estimated that this will create circa 410 sqm of additional retail floorspace at ground floor and 300 sqm of trading space at first floor, which is an increase in selling area of circa 32%.

There is an additional option of building above the Service Yard to provide additional trading and mixed use commercial or residential floorspace, although this has not been included within the current opportunity assessment.

The diagram also highlights as blue ellipses, additional areas where if possible it would be advantageous to create additional 1st floor trading space. Initial discussions with GVA’s internal construction experts suggest the costs may be prohibitive, however this needs further investigation as the benefits are significant.
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.3 Create a new entrance on Market Street

Based on the opportunities to create the additional trading space, our project team architects Dally Henderson have been tasked with illustrating how the new Market Street facade / entrance could look / be delivered, as shown opposite and overleaf.

Given the brief and project budget allocated to this task at this stage, the designs are meant to be illustrative not formal designs.

As can be seen the designs shown a much more impactful and attractive market frontage.

Entrances to the market are clear, as is external visibility to and access to retail product.
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.3 Create a new entrance on Market Street (cont.)

As can be seen, this option includes the construction of a new facade for the market on Market Street. Seven new external facing units on Market Street have been created at ground floor. The market entrances are much clearer, as is the external visibility and accessibility of product.

A new open balcony has been created at first floor level to above the service yard for customer seating and tables and chairs for the F&B units.

This space could also be potentially used for music events / recitals.

Two of the units under the existing roof-spaces have been brought forward to the new building line, providing “conservatory” style dining with views over the Colleges.

A new glazed extension at the rear of the market (Turl Street end) also has some external seating with the option of opening up the external facade during warmer weather.

It is anticipated that 4 or 5 additional F&B units could be created at this level.

Clearly both the market extension and creation of a new entrance will require a detailed feasibility exercise, as well as reflect the sensitivity of the location and listed building consent.

The whole of the frontage is active, including at first floor level.

The new scheme has endeavoured to incorporate a variety of designs and building forms, rather a single block approach.
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.4 Investment and return

The research areas undertaken for this study have confirmed that the creation of additional trading space as well as the creation of new recognisable frontage for the market are essential drivers of its future success of the market.

Based on the illustrative visuals, additional trading space estimates and view of the scale of work required to deliver the physical changes needed, GVA have provided the following indicative cost estimates.

These costs do not include professional fees, contingency nor VAT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of demolition and clearance</td>
<td>£200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of moving utilities</td>
<td>£50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of construction (including materials)</td>
<td>£3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of fit out</td>
<td>£500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of reconfiguring existing units</td>
<td>£150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£3,900,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.4 Investment and return (cont.)

The new retail floorspace will provide a selection of good quality and appropriate (fit for purpose) trading units that will generate a premium commercial rent.

In terms of additional rental income, it is estimated the potential new rental space income will be as indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Space</th>
<th>Floorspace sqm.</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Additional Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional internal retail ground trading floorspace (+25% uplift in rent / sqm)</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>£562 /sqm.</td>
<td>£129,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New external ground floor space (+50%)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>£675 / sqm.</td>
<td>£122,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New first floor F&amp;B trading space (at current)</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>£450 / sqm.</td>
<td>£135,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>710</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£386,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, the additional rents generated by the new floorspace produces an annual rental uplift of £386,000, which is a 39% increase on existing rents received, based on average existing rental levels.

The new space will attract anchor status traders that will improve footfall, make the market stand out, be noticeable from Cornmarket; all of which will benefit existing traders.

The F&B units will also increase footfall, but also improve the customer experience as well as generate longer visits.
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.5 Sources of Funding

Local authorities and government are increasingly looking at innovative methods of funding for new capital projects, which either provides direct funding into a development or reduces the investment risk.

It is therefore important to engage at an early stage in order to access some of these funding mechanisms if they are considered to be potentially suitable.

Mechanisms available may include:-

- EU funding opportunities such as ERDF & ESF.

Funding is available via these channels for the support of SME businesses, in particular for business growth and support. There may be the opportunity to access funds for some of the proposed market initiatives.

- O.C.C. Capital Programme; access to funding from this stream would be based on the opportunity to generate additional rental income to repay loans, as would any draw down from the Capital Receipts and Development contributions.

Other public sector funding mechanisms do exist and there are a limited number of other appropriate mechanisms available. Each will need to be assessed in detail as to which are appropriate and applicable.

In conclusion the assessment conducted by GVA (and summarised here) would indicate that funding can be accessed; based on the ability to create additional rental income, additional employment, a major USP for the city; and even through other Local Authority funding vehicles.
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.6 Optimum mix and leasing model

It will be essential that Oxford City Council strike a careful balance when they come to consider the future of their leasing strategy. From the Council’s perspective the Covered Market is an asset for the wider community, is a local heritage, retail and tourism draw and fills a particular niche in the City of Oxford’s retail offer, and provides income that supports essential Council services (along with the Westgate Centre the market one is the most valuable investment property assets for the Council).

Given the findings of the study, it is recommended the mix of the market migrates towards more fresh food and catering. A split of 40% comparison goods, 25% fresh food / convenience, 25% catering and 10% service would be appropriate over the next 5 years.

The aim is to have a best in class retailer in each and every product category (i.e. best in Oxford).

Going forward it is also important that whilst the mix of the market is closely tuned to the needs of customers at any point in time, a degree of flexibility is also built in. What is right for the customer today or in 5 years, may well be out of date in 10.

It is likely that that in applying a stricter management and tenant mix model there will be less flexibility on lease assignments and a progressive move towards shorter personal leases rather than the traditional landlord and tenant leases which have not encouraged active retailing and management.

It would therefore be prudent to have a number of tenants (circa 20% is common) on leases outside the traditional Landlord and Tenant Act.

Furthermore a number of these could be on turnover leases, where the tenant commits to pay 80% of the open market rent and then pays a further rent based on a % of revenue.

As per Borough Market, these retailers would typically be on shorter lease terms, usually 3 years with a break on each side. This way the market offer is more readily adapted to suit consumer and retail trends.

It will be even more important with these retailers to have an open book relationship. The provision of additional revenue growth and performance enhancing support will benefit both parties. Initiatives already discussed in Section 8.

Finally another area to build into the future leasing strategy is business reviews with tenants. This will help to identify the businesses suitable for growth, help or in some cases removal due to poor performance / non satisfaction of customer requirements.
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.7 New management structure

The market in recent times has not had a single person or Council department proactively managing its growth and development. Whilst it has been managed as a property asset, this approach has not focussed on consumer marketing, tenant strategy, trader performance, retail standards, web presence, reputation and service standards. These are all areas that are essential for the structured growth of the market.

It is recommended that a new management model be implemented where the market is at the centre of policies.

In the exemplar Manchester Markets model, support functions such as leasing, cleaning and licensing have indirect reporting lines to the Head of Markets, who has overall responsibility for the proactive development of markets, and this model would be appropriate for the Oxford Covered Market.

Roles and responsibilities of the Market Director are likely to include:
- Delivery of tenant strategy and recruitment
- Operational control for cleansing, hygiene, security, Environmental Health etc.
- Marketing and promotions
- Events program
- Online presence
- Social media strategy
- Stakeholder consultation
- Sales growth
- Cost control
- Profit generation
- Business planning
- Customer service
- Team development
- Project management of physical improvements.

This could be achieved through recruitment of specialist resource employed directly by the Council. This would have the benefit of more control for the Council.

Alternatively, the Council could engage a specialist retail asset management company, such as Workman & Partners or Munroe K to manage the market on its behalf.

Both of these companies have expert consumer marketing / website development, events management, promotion and trader liaison as capabilities within their skill set.
9.0 Future Market Strategy

9.8 And finally ...

The prognosis for the Covered Market is positive. It has huge amounts of goodwill and occupies a strong location within the city centre.

It has an almost unique environment, history and heritage.

There is much that needs to delivered if the market is to reach its potential. It will also require all key stakeholders to work together for the good of the market.

The good news is, with careful upgrading, management and development, it has the potential to be one of the best markets in the country, if not Europe.
Appendix A

Research Findings
Content

- Research Findings
  1. The Customer
  2. Footfall Analysis
  3. City Centre Retail in Context
  4. Review of Benchmark Markets
  5. Trader Survey
  6. Market Retail Review
Research Findings -
1. The Customer
The Oxford Catchment

Excerpts from Oxford: Retail Study 2010, CACI

- Primary catchment population 181,473 and secondary catchment of 131,259 gives Oxford a core catchment of 312,732 (source: CACI)
  - Oxford itself and its immediate surrounding area – the origin of circa 75% of shoppers
- It is an affluent region with a large number of ‘Wealthy Achievers’
- Oxford itself also has a high number of ‘Urban Prosperity’ (includes students)
- Blackbird Leys is the main concentration of less affluent residents
- Compared to the UK, Oxford is over-represented in ‘Wealthy Executives’; ‘Prosperous Professionals’, ‘Educated Urbanites’, ‘Aspiring Singles’ and ‘Starting Out’
- Compared to the region Oxford has a greater proportion of those classified as ‘Wealthy Executives’, ‘Urban Prosperity’ and ‘Starting Out’. The report concludes that ‘Wealthy Achievers’ and ‘Urban Prosperity’ are under penetrated
- Forecast changes based on additional floor space in Oxford City Centre see an increased catchment population and in particular more affluent residents
The following table highlights the dominant Acorn categories and groups within the catchment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acorn Category</th>
<th>Acorn Group</th>
<th>Oxford</th>
<th>UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy Achievers 31% (UK 25%)</td>
<td>Wealthy Executives</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affluent Greys</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flourishing Families</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Prosperity 22% (UK 12%)</td>
<td>Prosperous Professionals</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educated Urbanites</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspiring Singles</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortably Off 30% (UK 27%)</td>
<td>Starting Out</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secure Families</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Pressed 12% (UK 21%)</td>
<td>Struggling Families</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number

Quality mid to up market 83%
Wealthy Executives (16%)

- Some of the most affluent people in the UK. They live in wealthy, high status suburban, rural and semi-rural areas of the country. Houses tend to be large and detached with four or more bedrooms, with many owned outright.
- For their clothing, furniture and electrical appliances, the first preference of the Wealthy Executives is John Lewis, their shoes are more likely to come from Jones or Russell & Bromley. Their second choice in almost all categories is House of Fraser.
- The Wealthy Executives, although the most affluent, are relatively prudent with their cash when spending on themselves. They do however, spend the most of all ACORN Groups on household goods.
- Since incomes in this group are high, the shoppers favour upmarket, quality retailers such as Jigsaw, Austin Reed and Jaeger.

Source: ACORN
Secure Families (15%)

- These consumers live in suburban, well established locations. Containing both young families and empty nesters, these consumers have above average incomes and are typically home owners, often with more than one car.
- Occupying middle management jobs, these consumers are hard working and enjoy foreign holidays with their families.
- Spend is focussed on themselves, their children and the home. PC use is high and these consumers are avid online purchasers. Leisure is focussed round the cinema, exercise & sport, satellite TV, DVD’s / music, eating out, and outdoor activities such as walking, golf & gardening.
- These consumers have traditional upper mass market tastes, and look for quality & value for money.

*Source: ACORN*
Educated Urbanites (9%)

- These young people are highly qualified. The majority live in and around the UK’s major cities. Most are in professional and managerial roles and many working hard to further their careers. They have high incomes, and those that have been working for some time will be buying their flats and making other financial investments. The others are renting and have high disposable incomes.

- The Educated Urbanites featured retailers reflect their youthful tastes. Mass market retailers feature quite highly in their choices (e.g. H&M & Benetton). Shoes come from the likes of Russell & Bromley and House of Fraser. Other favoured stores are Harvey Nichols, John Lewis, Selfridges and IKEA.

- The Educated Urbanites have high disposable incomes, the are the top spenders on clothing and footwear with almost £20 being spent per week per person. They also spend a lot on eating out – restaurant and hotel expenditure is £43 per week per person. Their urban location also reflects the cost of housing, whether rent or mortgage, over £40 per week per person is spent, this is by far the highest of all ACORN groups.

Source: ACORN
Prosperous Professionals (8%)

- These are the most prosperous people living in our main cities. They are very well educated and tend to be employed in senior managerial and professional occupations.
- Given the urban nature of these areas, property is a mix of terraced and detached houses, and converted and purpose built flats.
- This affluent group tend to keep up with the latest trends in clothing, using upmarket retailers for all of their comparison shopping. Their expenditure on clothing and footwear is, therefore, high at £17.78 per week per person. This is the second highest of all ACORN groups, as is their expenditure on furnishings (£18.29).
- Having chosen an urban lifestyle, these consumers use their money to make the most of what the big cities have to offer. Their expenditure is again the second highest of all groups with £36.06 per week per person going on recreation and culture.
- This group uses premium retailers to ensure their clothing and homes have the latest look. Harvey Nichols and Jigsaw are favourites for men and women’s clothing, while Habitat and House of Fraser feature for furniture.

Source: ACORN
Starting Out (8%)

- These are young adults, many just starting out on their careers.
- Housing is a mix of smaller terraced houses, with two or three bedrooms, and converted and purpose built flats. Many of the houses are being bought on a first mortgage but renting from private landlords is also common. Many of the students and young single professionals in this group will be house or flat sharers.
- Incomes in this group are 14% above the UK average and this is reflected in where they choose to spend their money. Whilst coping with their first mortgage, they keep a relatively tight rein on expenditure. Their main extravagance has been eating out at good restaurants, with an above average spend. They are also keen followers of TV cooking programmes and are purchasing in household and kitchen goods for their new homes.

Source: ACORN
Catchment Expenditure

Extracts from Oxford: Retail Study 2010, CACI

- The core catchment spend £794.3m per annum on comparison goods
- It is a **high spending** catchment; spend is above the UK average on everything except footwear (98)
- Durable goods (£176.2 million) followed by clothing and footwear (£141.1 million) are the largest spend categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Expenditure per Annum (£m)</th>
<th>Annual Household Spend (£)</th>
<th>Household Spend Index v UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>£121.0</td>
<td>£1,431</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footwear</td>
<td>£20.1</td>
<td>£237</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House &amp; Home</td>
<td>£23.2</td>
<td>£274</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Goods</td>
<td>£107.3</td>
<td>£1,269</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Goods</td>
<td>£34.5</td>
<td>£408</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care</td>
<td>£70.1</td>
<td>£829</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durable Goods</td>
<td>£176.2</td>
<td>£2,083</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison Goods</strong></td>
<td><strong>£552.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>£6,532</strong></td>
<td><strong>114</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>£416.5</td>
<td>£4,925</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>£134.7</td>
<td>£1,593</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Retail Spend</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1,103.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>£13,050</strong></td>
<td><strong>114</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Retail Footprint ‘10*
The Customer Survey Said...

- Customers would like to see
  - More eat in places
  - More events
  - Cheaper prices
  - More local produce
  - More homemade produce
  - More...
  - Just more
  - Customers like the market
  - Those that use it continue to do so
  - There are lots of aspects to improve

**Reason for being here**
- Leisure (35%)
- Shopping (30%)
- Eating / drinking (7%)
- Visiting the Market (4%)

**Visit pattern**
- Visiting about the same (54%)

**Customers like:** Fresh food offer, convenient location, range and choice of shops, atmosphere and history heritage

**Like less (don't like):** non food shops, prices, place to meet, events and promotions, cafes and restaurants
Workers

- Around 50,000 of the city's 107,000 jobs are in the universities, NHS, councils and other public sector bodies.
- In Oxford the 100 largest employers account for approximately 66,600 jobs, equivalent to 60.1% of total employment.
- Key employers include Oxford University; University Press; Oxford and Cherwell Valley College; City and County Council offices; together with Westgate and Clarendon centres, and Hotels (Randolph, Malmaison, Old Bank, Parsonage).
- There are 110,900 jobs in Oxford, equivalent to 72.2 jobs per 100 residents. This is a very high job density in comparison to both the county as a whole (51 jobs per 100 residents), the regional average (46.5) and the national average (46.1).
- Public sector occupations account for just over half of all total employment in the City, with 55,900 jobs. Finance, IT and business and professional services account for a further 21,800 jobs.
- Commuting plays an important role in the economy. Only 54% of people who work in Oxford also live in Oxford, which indicates that nearly half of the city’s workforce commutes in from outside the city boundary (majority of in-commuters come from other parts of the county).
- Most Oxford residents (79%) work in the city, with the remaining 21% working in areas outside the city – again, usually other parts of the county.

*Source: Information provided by the Council including ‘Oxford Profile 2012 – Key Facts’*
Students

Extract from Oxford Profile 2012 – Key Facts

- In the UK, Oxford is the place with the highest proportion of students in its population (26% of working age residents)
- 32,000 students studied full time at the two universities in 2009/10 (Higher Education Statistics Agency)

The Oxford Retail Study 2010, CACI, identified that;

- Oxford has two universities and 23 Oxford colleges
- Circa 11.8% were students
- The student areas are likely to be identifiable by Educated Urbanites, Starting Out and Aspiring Singles ACORN Groups
- Almost 10% of retail spend by the shoppers within the Oxford Retail Footprint catchment is made by students
- They are considered to make a significant contribution to spend in Oxford
Tourists

Extracts from The Economic Impact of Tourism, Oxford 2011

• Over 1 million staying trips of which 27% domestic and 43% overseas visitors
• Compared to 2010 domestic trip expenditure increased by 6.1% and overseas by 2.4%
• Approximately 5.6 million daytrips were made to the city (lasting more than 3 hours) generating £225m expenditure, both volume of daytrips and expenditure had increased from 2010
• Total expenditure to Oxford is estimated to have been in the region of £540m up 2.4% on 2010, of which shopping, the largest single category at 33%, was circa £180m
Tourist Profile

Extracts from Oxfordshire Visitor Survey 2009

- 847 surveyed; 72% were day visitors (28% from home, 44% on holiday) and 28% overnight visitors
- Just over 86% of all groups to Oxfordshire contained only adults; Oxford City had the lowest number of groups containing children 8.3%
- Age profile; 45-64 years olds represented 43% an increase compared to 2007 (35%)
- Employment status (Oxford City); 56% employed full-time, 20% retired and 11% self-employed
- Socio-economic profile (Oxford City); 41% AB, 45% C₁, 9% C₂ and 5% DE
- Oxford City had the highest proportion of overseas visitors at 42% compared to Oxfordshire at 24%; 58% domestic
  - Just over a quarter of all domestic visitors came from other districts in Oxfordshire
  - U.S. was the highest for overseas but they were broadly widespread
- Main purpose of visit described as ‘holiday or leisure based visit’ 63%; Oxford City 70%
- Average length of stay for day visitors from home was highest in Oxford City 5.57 hours (compared to 3.80 for Oxfordshire)
Tourist Profile contd.

• 49% of visitors to Oxford City were visiting for the first time, 51% had visited before

• Key influences to visit Oxford City
  – We just wanted to explore a new area (40%),
  – There is plenty to see and do (43%)
  – It has a good reputation (46%)

• Activities undertaken in Oxford City;
  – Visiting a place to eat / drink (58%)
  – Shopping (45%)
  – Visiting a tourist attraction (60%)
  – ‘Going to the market’ mentioned by 23 visitors, quite high when compared to ‘visiting the town centre’ 30 visitors

• Popular ‘likes’ about Oxford City
  – Buildings / architecture 33%
  – History 27%
  – Atmosphere / ambience 24%
  – Colleges / universities 21%
  – Shops 7%
Research Findings -
2. Footfall Analysis
Footfall: Covered Market

Oxford Covered Market (bespoke report) March 2012
• 20 count points throughout the market counted over two days 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} March 2012, actual counts aggregated to estimate weekly levels
• Oxford Cheese Company, Avenue 1 is the busiest count point and entrance point with estimated weekly footfall 28,476
• Golden Cross is the second busiest entrance 21,982 followed by Cardew and Co, Avenue 4 (19,328)
• Count points near entrances from Market Street achieved higher counts than those from the High Street
• Count points in Avenues 1 and 4 achieved the highest counts;
  – Avenue 1 88,591 (total) and Avenue 4 78,257 (total)
  – Both significantly higher than Avenues 2 and 3; Avenue 1 is double that of Avenue 2
• Overall the busiest count points are on Avenue 1 and 4 and the transverse walkways – possibly a sign of ‘cut-throughs’ / main footfall routes and / or key destinations / traders
• The Covered Market achieves average weekly footfall of 16,919
Footfall: Covered Market contd.

* Footfall figures shown are estimated weekly counts – March 2012
Footfall: Oxford City Centre

The table shows average weekly counts for count points in the city centre near to the Covered Market (Feb 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oxford University Press Books</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>77,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Whistles</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>106,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Fat Face</td>
<td>Cornmarket Street</td>
<td>195,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Pret a Manger</td>
<td>Cornmarket Street</td>
<td>177,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Plain Leather Goods</td>
<td>Golden Cross Arcade</td>
<td>18,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Boots</td>
<td>Cornmarket Street</td>
<td>169,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Superdrug</td>
<td>Market Street</td>
<td>53,720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Overall the city centre achieved an average weekly footfall of **82,980** (Feb 2012)
- The highest city centre count was **195,750** at Fat Face on Cornmarket Street
- The highest count point in the market is circa 14% of the highest count point in the city centre
Footfall Trends

The table shows average weekly footfall counts, taken from standard footfall studies undertaken by PMRS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covered Market</td>
<td>18,992</td>
<td>20,427</td>
<td>22,906</td>
<td>22,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford City Centre</td>
<td>82,980</td>
<td>83,100</td>
<td>87,230</td>
<td>82,350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- While the covered market shows a slight decline in footfall, similarly Oxford City Centre also shows a decrease, in particular when comparing the February counts.
Research Findings -
3. City Centre Retail in Context
Oxford City Centre: Retail in Context

The aim of this section of the report is to assess the broader retail offer (including F&B catering and services) of Oxford City Centre in order to be able to compare and contrast the offer of the Covered Market.

- Oxford City Centre has a compact and high impact retail offer.
- The Covered Market is surrounded on 3 sides by other retail, some of it best in class.
- Post new Westgate, the retail centre of gravity will migrate towards the south west.
Oxford City Centre: Retail in Context

• The dominant retail streets of; Cornmarket, Queens Street, Broad Street and to a lesser extent High Street have highly visible stores, accessible retail offers and highly permeable environments. They are home to a wide cross-section of national multiples and major high street / consumer brands

• Clarendon Centre is currently the most modern shopping centre, forming a covered link between Queens Street and Cornmarket; it is anchored by Zara, GAP and H&M

• The Westgate Centre is due for a major redevelopment and extension to include John Lewis, this will bring a plethora of new better quality names to the city centre as well as another injection of new F&B operators. Currently the centre is tired and serves as a conduit to the main city centre car park

• Major anchors include: M&S (Queens Street) and Debenhams (Broad Street) and the local independent department store Boswells
Unsurprisingly food / catering (not convenience) is a dominant sector, given the tourist customer base with over 75 units across the city centre, approximately 20% of the offer.

The broad category of ‘fashion’ dominates the offer accounting for over 25% (circa 100 units) and is a visible sector as you walk the city centre.

Oxford had below average vacancies, with few visible long term gaps.

Beyond the core retail areas New Inn Hall Street and George Street provide a further offer of mainly independent shops and a few more multiples.

The Oxford Castle area has become a destination for contemporary family eateries, although it suffers from being ‘beyond Westgate’ and lacking direct visibility to the passing footfall.

The Covered Market including Market Street and Turl Street accounts for a significant component of the city centre retail offer but has nothing of the impact of the Clarendon Centre, Cornmarket, etc.
• Oxford City Centre benefits from a wide cross-section of national multiples and strong consumer brand names. Not only the everyday brands, but a selection of the more mid market and aspirational brands
• It also has a diverse and large food and catering offer and three recognised anchor stores
• The retail offer is easy to access, on pedestrianised streets
• The offer is evolving and improving with a constant change of new retail occupiers
• The major retail areas are clear, visible, accessible, appealing and possibly a little bland
• This provides the Covered Market with a variety of key factors to learn from and a few to take advantage of
Research Findings -
4. Review of Benchmark Markets
Aims of Benchmark Market Review:

• To identify critical success factors
• To identify aspects to replicate and lessons to adopt

Process:

• Review of accepted industry best practice and award winning markets; UK and Europe

Scope:

• Lyon – Halles des Lyon
• London – Borough Market
• Bristol – St Nicholas Market
• Madrid – Mercado de San Miguel
• Newcastle – Grainger Market
• Brixton – The Village Market
• Others considered; Swansea, Manchester Arndale, Belfast St Georges, Barcelona La Boqueria
Lyon: Halles des Lyon

- External Impact poor, but clearly branded
- Clear and consistent quality throughout
- Excellent hygiene
- Wide diversity
- ‘Theatre’ delivered through presentation, stall design and facilities
- Food and F&B combined
- Licensed and popular
London: Borough Market

• Secondary location with destination status
• Historic poor visibility
• Evolving
• Food focus; ‘to go’ and ‘to eat’
• Quality F&B has followed
• Strong anchors
• Poor environment but visible trading and theatre
Bristol: St Nicholas Market

- Secondary location, limited external impact
- Proactive external trading (see website)
- Strong F&B offer
- Less strong comparison and gift offer – segmented
- External trading from stalls, positive use of frontage
- Trying hard to overcome physical issues – proactive Manager
Madrid: Mercado de San Miguel

- Secondary location
- Big external impact, lots of competition
- Branded
- Modern units; contemporary and classic styling
- Everyday products eat in and take home
- All food offers had a grazing offer
- Licensed, central grazing area
- Busy, multi-customer base
- Own brand merchandise
- Visible offer
- Lots of ‘theatre’
Newcastle: Grainger Market

- Secondary location, poor entrances
- Strong anchor stalls
- Active external stall trading
- Strong café offer, very traditional
- Destination attraction
- Breadth and variety
- Slow to evolve
- Big units
- Destination status for range and diversity
Brixton: Village Market

- Secondary location
- Adjacent to street markets and market arcades
- Critical mass established
- Destination status for F&B; 15 cafes in the Village (on the website)
- Themed external markets
- Traditional market offers retained
- External seating / eating and merchandising provides the theatre
Summary

• **External impact** is essential, either through visibility of offer, signage, branding and / or external trading activity

• **Destination status** is the target, achieved through collective appeal, scale, anchor operators and / or attractions

• **Consistent quality** is a consistent element, doesn’t have to be high quality, but at least good quality

• **Theatre and high impact presentation** ensure repeat usage and popularity

• **Trader external trading and trader exterior activity** is a consistent trend

• **Planning for change** and evolution leads to better quality traders and fit out
Research Findings -
5. Trader Survey
Trader Survey - Methodology and Response

- A survey of traders in Oxford Covered Market was carried out week commencing 22 April 2013
- The methodology adopted was ‘direct distribution’ with surveys handed directly to traders and collected the following day or posted / emailed back to us
- The survey achieved an excellent response with 35 completed surveys received to date
- Individual confidentiality was pledged and therefore responses have been analysed collectively
- What follows is a “first cut” analysis
## List of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fresh</th>
<th>Oxford Aromatics</th>
<th>Prices Pet Supplies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timpsons</td>
<td>J Lindsey &amp; Son</td>
<td>The Farm House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macsamillion</td>
<td>M Feller Son &amp; Daughter</td>
<td>Collectors Corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolitas</td>
<td>Oxford Sandwich Company</td>
<td>Browns Café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarthy’s</td>
<td>CH Brown &amp; Son</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayman’s Fisheries</td>
<td>Ricardo’s</td>
<td>The Cake Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nash’s Bakery</td>
<td>David John</td>
<td>Fasta Pasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jemini Flowers</td>
<td>Pieminister</td>
<td>Market News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocology</td>
<td>Pingui</td>
<td>The Garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Fresh Ltd</td>
<td>Helen &amp; Douglas House</td>
<td>Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofi de France</td>
<td>Market Barber</td>
<td>Brothers &amp; Georgina’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber Treasures</td>
<td>The Oxford Cafe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Customer Base

• There is a distinct bias towards female customers and two age bands dominate 25-44 year olds, followed by 45-64 year olds
• Local residents, local workers and tourists are all equally important customer groups and many describe their customers as ‘destination shoppers’
• The market enjoys a frequent visit pattern with most customers stating that their customers visit at least once a week, for many it is even twice a week and / or daily
• However the majority of traders (over 80%) state that they are serving fewer customers than last year
Trading Patterns

• Saturday is considered unanimously to be the busiest day of the week and afternoons the busiest time of day, in particular lunchtime 12-2pm
• Current trading is difficult with sales for many (over 70% of responses) down compared to last year and in a number of cases more than 10% down (14 traders)
• Reasons given for the current trading pattern is primarily the declining footfall in the Market, the economic situation and to a lesser extent, increased presence of supermarkets in and around the city centre
• Parking costs and difficulty in using a car in and around Oxford are also considered to be deterring shoppers
The Market in General

• Many consider that trading hours meet customers’ needs however circa a third of traders feel they don’t, many would like to see the trading hours extended later in the evening, particularly during the Summer months. Many would also like more consistent Sunday opening

• Over half of the traders that responded to the survey (circa 56%) consider that they do not have sufficient storage onsite, a few are able to rent cellars or units offsite but many don’t have access to any

• Over half are members of the Covered Market Traders Association, with a number who are not members stating that they plan to join or in a couple of cases re-join

• Popular stalls (where stated) include; Ben’s Cookies, Moo Moos and Hayman’s Fishmongers

• Gaps in the offer most commonly included a delicatessen, and wine shop or off licence
Strengths and Weaknesses

**Strengths** focus on:
- Independent and independents!
- History
- Character
- Uniqueness
- Diversity and variety
- Central location
- Friendly / personal service

**Weaknesses** focus on:
- Its general appearance
- Maintenance and cleanliness
- Lack of advertising, marketing and promotion
- Signage and lighting
- Cold
- Council / Market Association / Management (direction / support / attitude)
Respondents rated the market on a list of attributes (table shows the broad rating of responses):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>OK</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern shops / kiosks</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High standards of presentation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servicing / delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrances and sense of arrival</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage and information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotions and events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet presence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Improvements Wanted

• Improvements traders would like to see focus on the **general appearance** of the market with specific areas for improvement;
  – Entrances
  – General refurbishment
  – Lighting
  – Signage
  – Roof
  – Enclosing it

• Other improvements commonly cited included awareness and promotion and issues to do with rents and policies

• There is clearly goodwill and a historic loyalty / support and love of the market, traders appear frustrated that it could be so much better!
  – “It is, or should be, a real asset for Oxford”
  – “Keep it authentic and traditional – its old character is its charm”
  – “It is an amazing architectural jewel” – but needs serious investment
Research Findings -
6. Market Retail Review
Retail Review

**External Impact**

- The market has very little impact to passing trade
- The entrances from High Street are typically dark and a little shabby

- The rear entrances on Market Street appear to be service and access corridors
Retail Review

**External Impact contd.**

- The external impact of the building on Market Street is blighted by trader vans
- Many of the stalls facing the entrances are often the weaker stalls

- The market offer is almost invisible, very little stall frontage, product or shop fascia is visible externally
Retail Standards

- There appears to be little consistency in whom the target consumer is
- A number of stalls are in poor physical condition externally
- Retail standards vary significantly, ranging from very good to basic
- There is little consistency in quality aspirations of tenants
Marketing and Promotion

• External promotion is especially poor, especially from but not limited to Cornmarket

• The online presence of the market is poor (notwithstanding the market website which is not bad)

• Few traders appear to be effectively promoting themselves online or offering delivering instore to home

• There is little cross promotion or trading

• Events and activities seem to be non-existent
Mix and Offer

- Whilst cleanliness & tidyness are acceptable, there are major issues to do with housekeeping, e.g. Xmas lights are still up, as are the “nooses”

- The route through the Golden Cross shopping centre is not an enlightening experience!
- 1st floor space is not typically utilised as trading space
- Catering is especially week and mass market focussed
- There is insufficient theatre within the market
The Retail Group
Informed Solutions

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