

# What is the project?

## The Oxford Covered Market: Securing our Future

The Covered Market has been the heart of Oxford for over 250 years. Proudly owned and managed by the City Council, this unique asset is a vital part of our community. Since 2020, Oxford City Council has been working closely with traders and the public to shape a vision that ensures the Market's long-term future.

### What has happened so far?

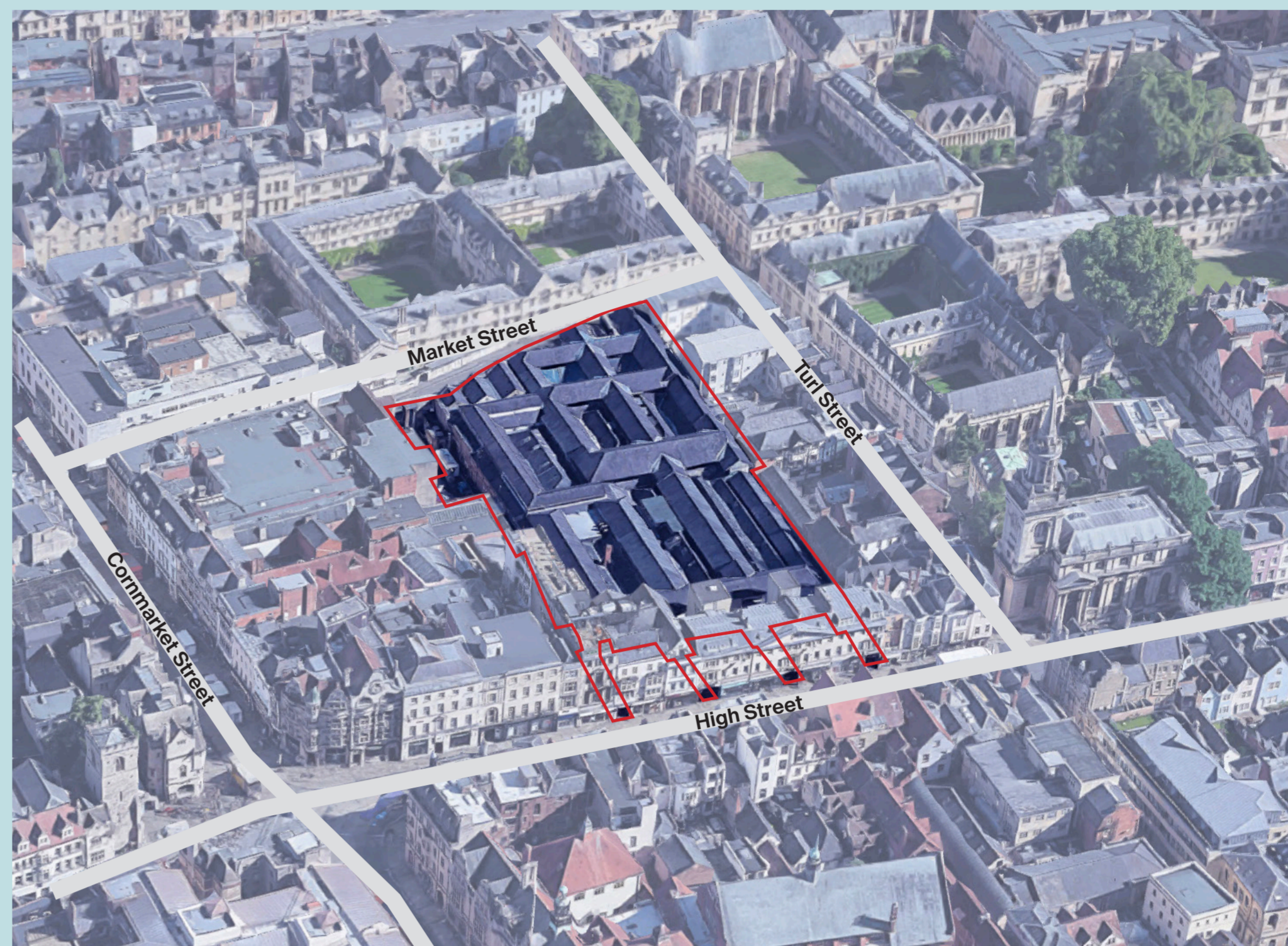
Since our last consultation, we have incorporated comments and priorities from the public and traders and have been testing the technical feasibility of proposals, carefully addressing heritage requirements and how to minimise disruption to daily trade and deliveries.

### Why are we showing you this now?

We are now nearing the submission of our formal planning application. Before we take this step, we want to show you our plans to futureproof and enhance the market and preserve the Market's character while making it a more accessible, inclusive space for everyone.

### Have your say

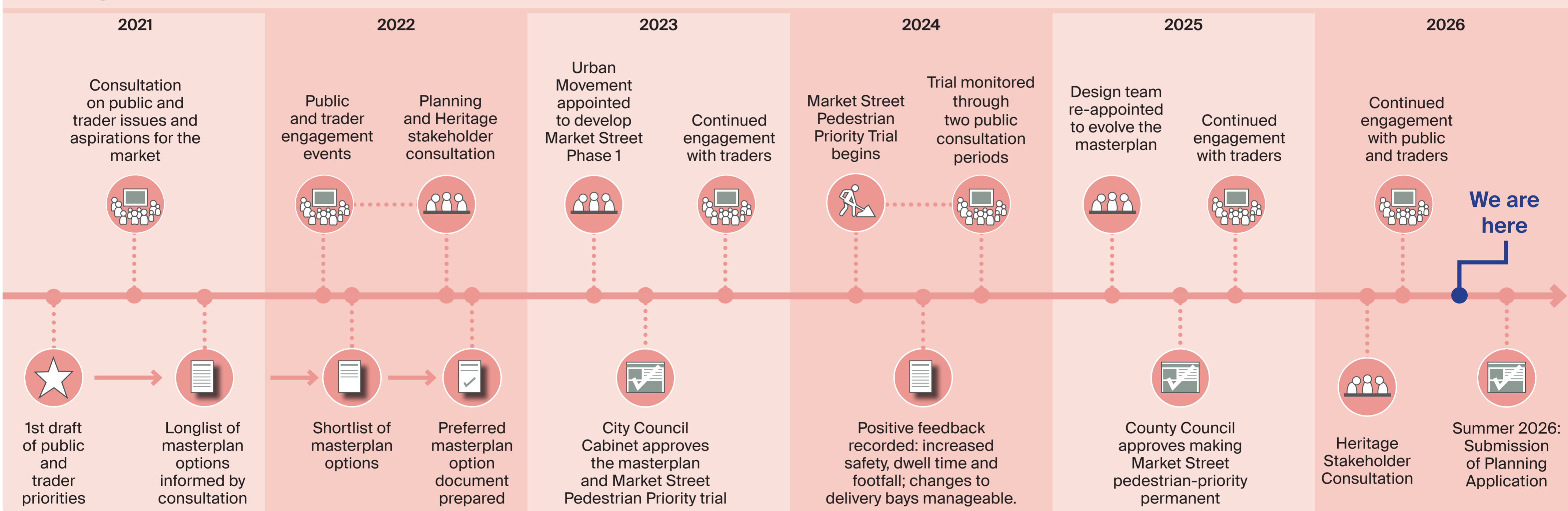
This is your market. Please explore our proposals and share your thoughts—your feedback is an essential part of this journey.



Aerial View of Covered Market

## Project timeline

Dates may change as the project develops



## Project ambitions: shaped by public and trader consultation



### 1. Evolution

Works to support the long-term success of the Market so it is distinctive, resilient, lively and purposeful.

As part of the evolution, minimising disruption to traders during building works and upgrading building services is important.



### 2. Heritage

Enhance the significance of the Market and maintain it for future generations by conserving its historic architecture and layout, using improved signage and lighting to celebrate its unique character while maintaining its focus on fresh food.



### 3. Sustainability

Make the Market a model for sustainability and support Oxford's Zero Emission Zone for current and future traders by phasing out gas, reducing energy consumption, and reusing building materials.



### 4. Inclusivity

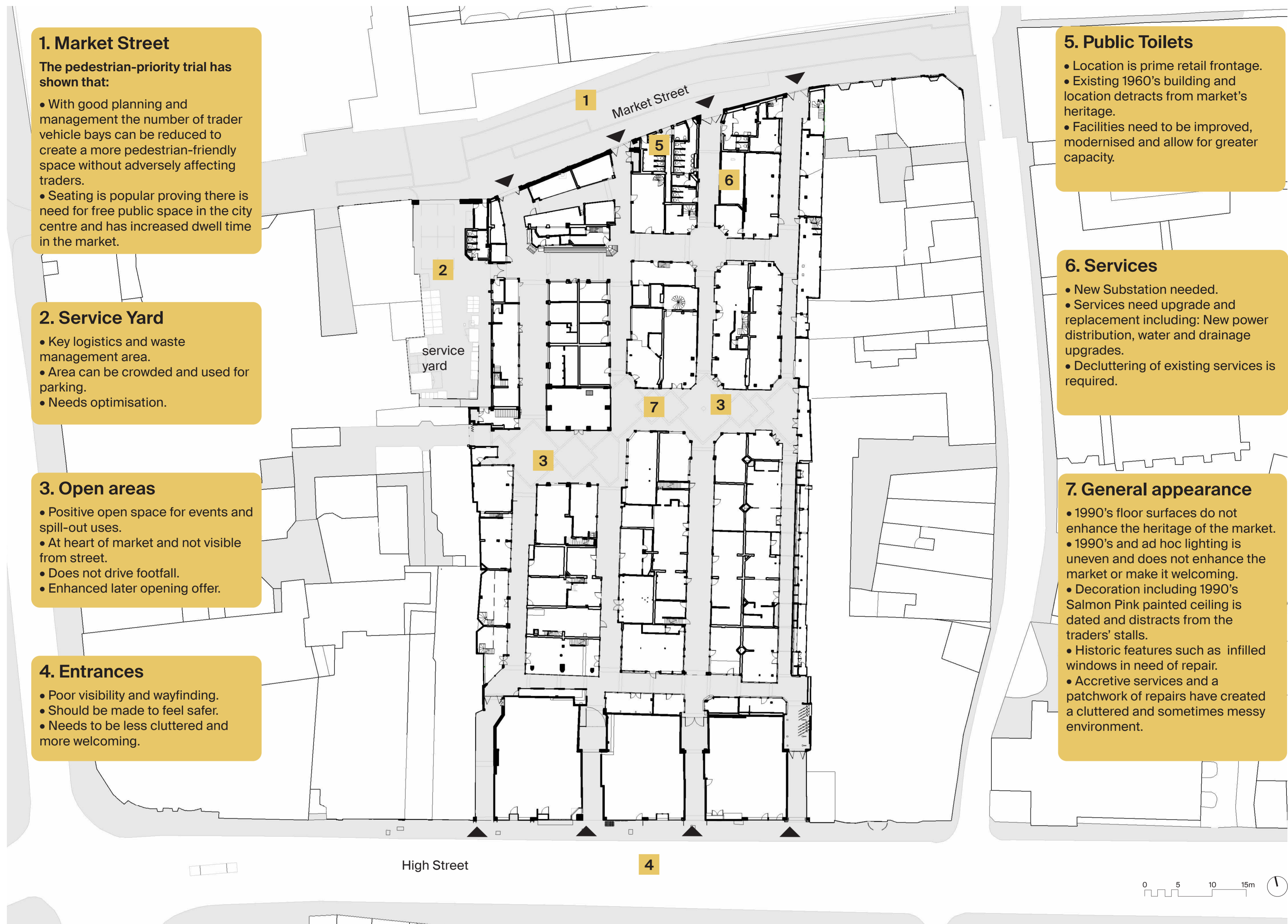
Make an inclusive place in the heart of Oxford that is accessible for all by improving physical accessibility, engaging a representative and diverse cross-section of Oxford's population, and creating dedicated and comfortable spaces for the public to dwell for free in the heart of Oxford.



### 5. Activation

Encourage more people to visit the Market and to stay longer when they visit by improving its street presence, creating new flexible open spaces, prioritising active travel, and making it a welcoming place after dark.

# Current issues and opportunities



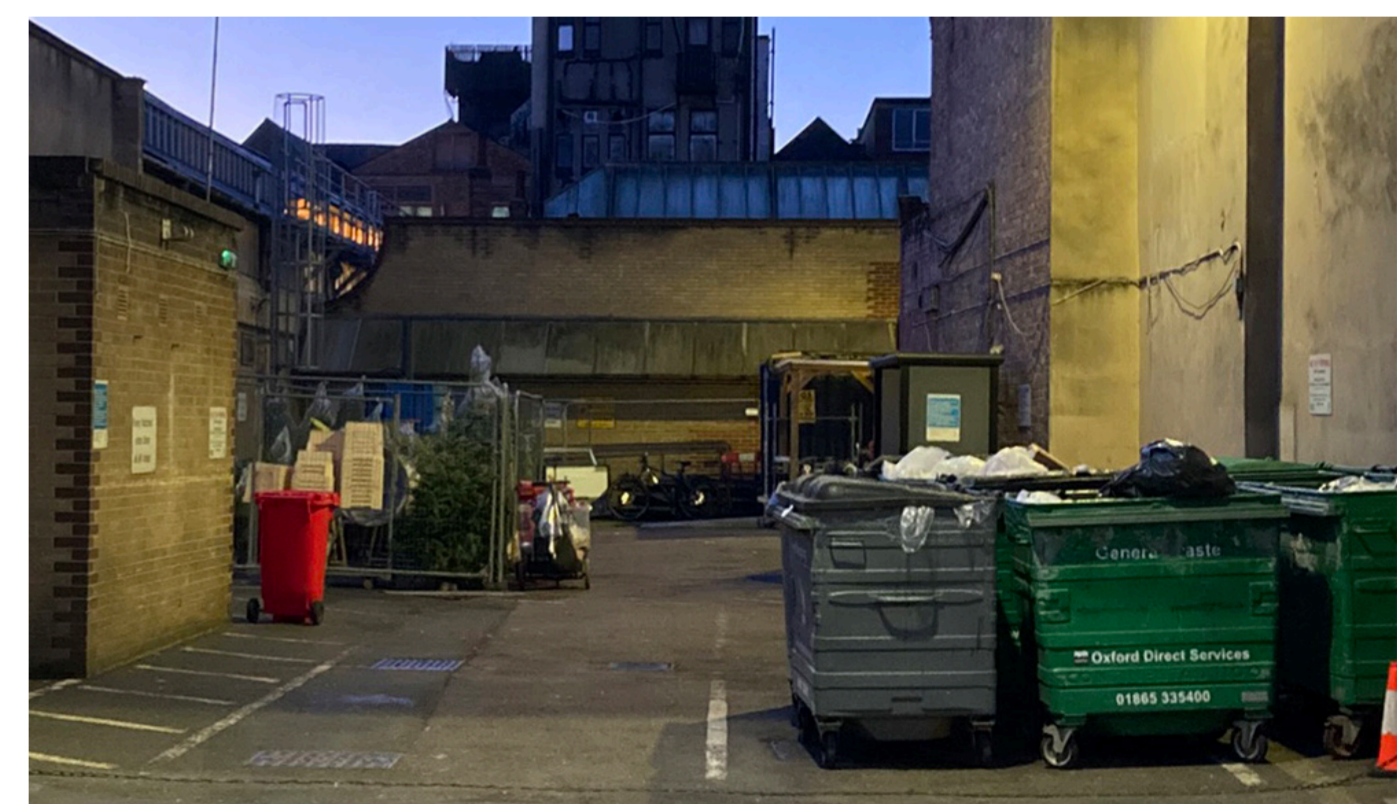
## Existing photos



1. Market Street trial has demonstrated that vehicle-dominated street with poor market visibility can be improved



2. Public Toilets: Prime location detracts from Market entrance



3. Service Yard: Could be optimised



4. Open Area: Is popular and more similar space is required



5. Decoration and decluttering could improve appearance



6. High Street entrances: Cluttered with poor visibility/signage

# Proposed Changes

## 1. Deliverability

- Making sure the project can be constructed in a way that keeps the Market safe and operational, and supports business to keep trading during the construction period.

## 2 Pedestrian-friendly Market Street is happening in parallel to the market works

- Managed timings of vehicular access and deliveries in and out.
- Pedestrian-friendly for most of the day (with continual access for cycles, electric assist cargo bikes and emergency services).
- Public realm improvements to enable a more pedestrian-friendly space, with more seating and planting in front of the Market.
- New and increased provision of cycle parking in both Market Street and in the Market.

## Reorganised service yard

- Rationalised waste, storage and trader cycles.
- Possible location for trader facilities in service yard.
- Substation moved to service yard.

## 3. New communal area opening onto Market Street

- New large entrance to the market.
- New open public space, with seating.
- Flexible, so it allows daytime and evening events, and encourages more visitors.
- Reveals the Market's historic structure.
- Increased capacity of improved public toilets.
- Support later opening hours.

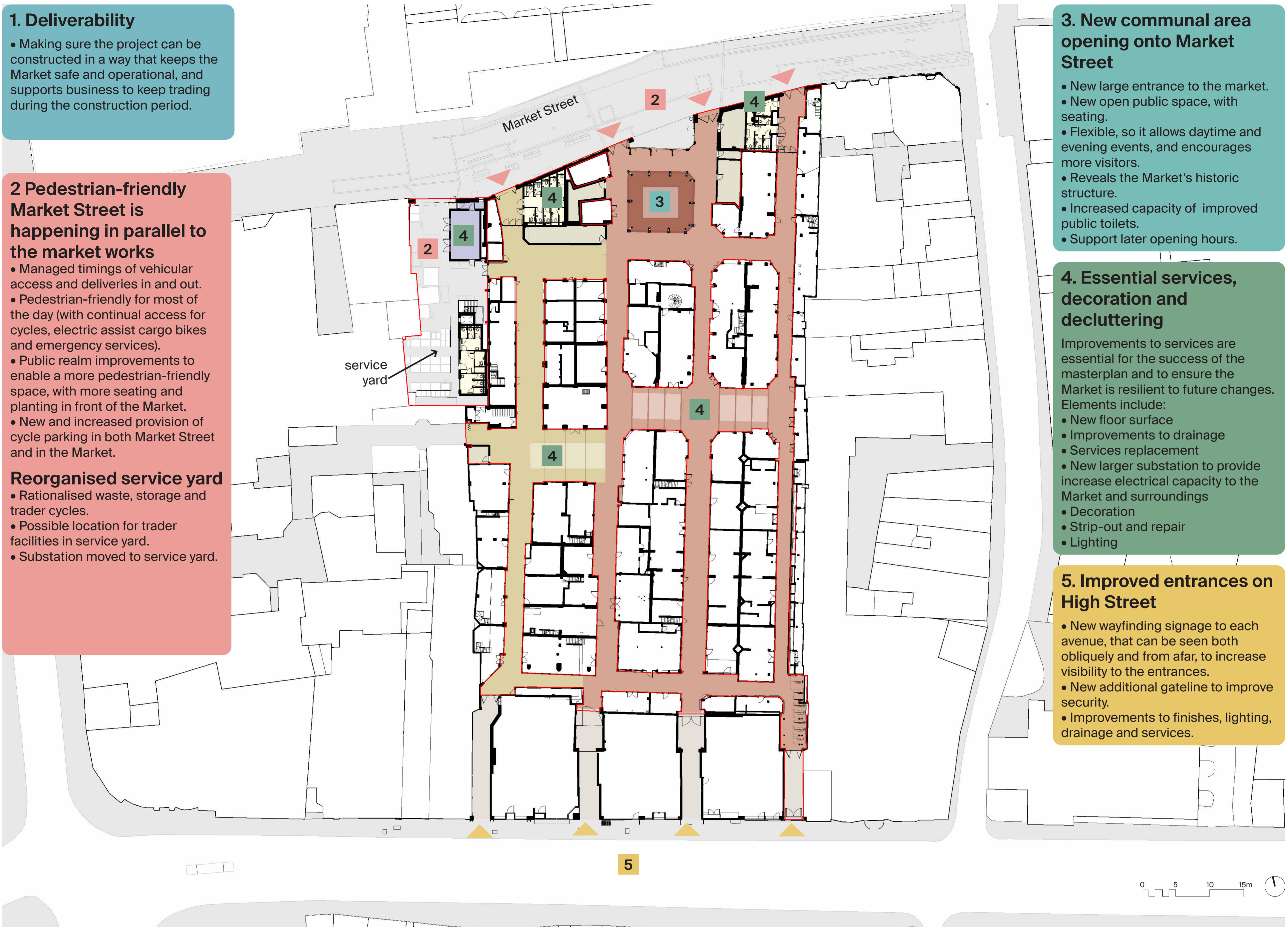
## 4. Essential services, decoration and decluttering

Improvements to services are essential for the success of the masterplan and to ensure the Market is resilient to future changes. Elements include:

- New floor surface
- Improvements to drainage
- Services replacement
- New larger substation to provide increase electrical capacity to the Market and surroundings
- Decoration
- Strip-out and repair
- Lighting

## 5. Improved entrances on High Street

- New wayfinding signage to each avenue, that can be seen both obliquely and from afar, to increase visibility to the entrances.
- New additional gateline to improve security.
- Improvements to finishes, lighting, drainage and services.



## 1. Deliverability

### What we heard:

“Allowing the Market to operate during the works, and minimising the impact to traders is important to allow the market to continue to thrive.”

### What we did:

We commissioned a specialist contractor to advise on how to phase and deliver the works.

### What we will do:

We will set out and adhere to the following principles for construction:

- Both Public and Trader toilet facilities will be available throughout construction.
- Construction will be phased into areas to limit disruption to traders and public.
- Works at roof level: Can be done separately to all other works, to allow minimal impact to traders and public.
- Works within the Market: Splitting the works between high level, shop level and below ground level works can allow continued public and trader access to the avenues and shops during high level construction. Reduced access at specific points only when below ground work requires it.
- Some works will be undertaken out of hours to minimise impact.
- The Covered Market will remain open and trading throughout the works



## 2. A pedestrian-friendly Market Street



Existing view of Market Street

### What we heard:

“Everyone wants more people to come to this end of the city centre and the Covered Market. There is hardly any free, public space in Oxford City Centre and much of the city’s famous architecture can feel ‘private’, so we should make Market Street a prestigious part of the city which isn’t exclusive.”

**How have we addressed this?** Working closely with the Traders, the Phase 1 pedestrian-priority trial on Market Street has successfully reduced traffic, created a more visible and welcoming entrance, and increased both dwell time and footfall into the Market.

**What is next?** Progressing from the trial, the Phase 2 Market Street design is being developed to connect with the new flexible open court within the market. Concurrently, we are creating a destination along Market Street to help signpost the market entrances. Market Street will be the subject of a separate application process, although it is being designed in parallel with the main market development.



Proposed look and feel of the pedestrian-friendly area on Market Street. Market Street design and modelling LDA Design.



Broad Meadow, Broad Street 2021



Altrincham Market

## 3. A new communal area onto Market Street with improved WCs



Existing view inside Covered Market

### What we heard:

“There is a lack of places to stop, sit, eat, and to relax in the city centre. These spaces need to be comfortable for everyone, and for all access needs. The public toilets at the Covered Market are essential, need improvement and more are needed. Our aim should be to create a new welcoming, visible entrance and flexible event space connected to Market Street to entice people inside to spend time.”

**How do we address this?** The Market will feature a new, welcoming entrance and flexible event space that opens onto an improved Market Street. With ample space for seating and other furniture, visitors will find it easier to spend more time in the Covered Market. Furthermore, accessible public WCs will be increased in number, improved in quality, and relocated for better visibility from both the street and the market.



New naturally lit open court with high level glazing



# 4. Improved essential services, decoration and decluttering



Existing public open area

### What we heard:

“The inside is amazing but needs a bit of love.”

“Power needs upgrading and service need overhauling, allowing for flexibility and future proofing.”

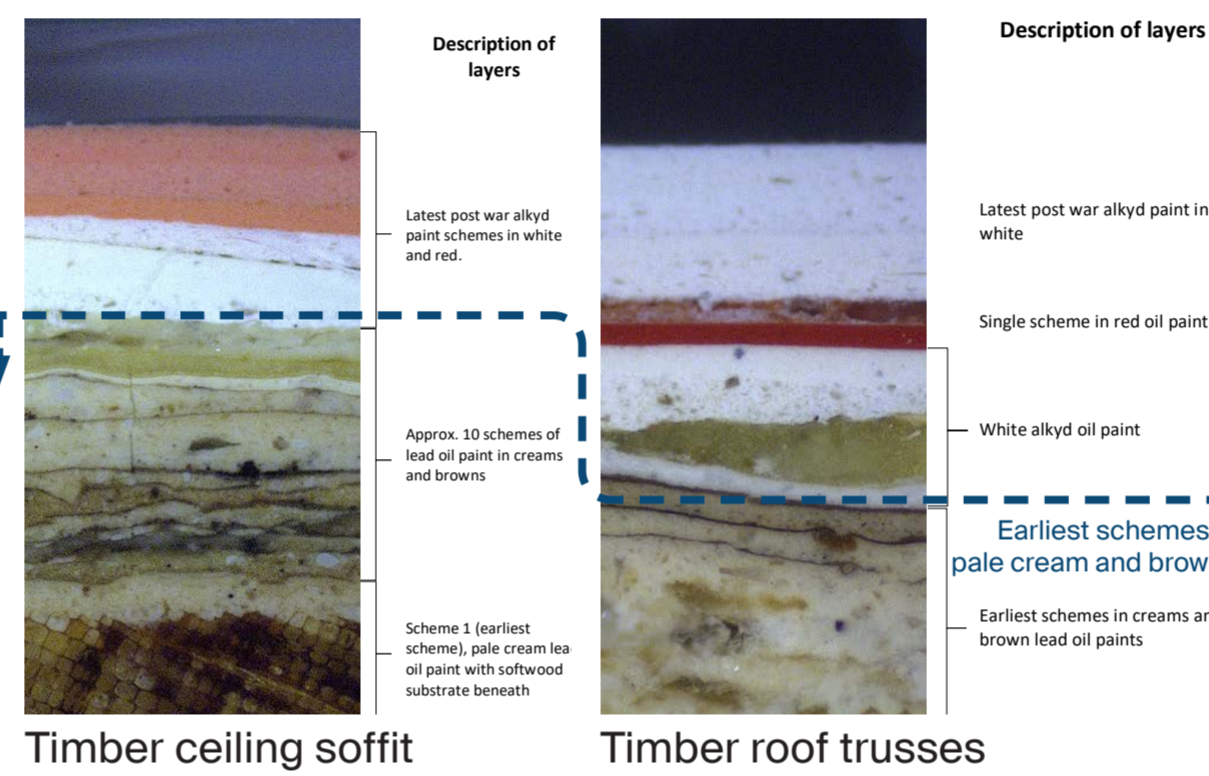


Proposed centre of the Market

### How have we addressed this?

- **Decoration:** We are following the original heritage paint colour scheme for the ceiling.
- **Let the shops stand out:** Simplify floor design whilst reusing the brick pavers.
- **Brighten up the space:** More elegant and increased quantity of lighting.
- **Declutter:** Remove redundant services and clear up the market.
- **Services upgrades:** Power distribution, new larger substation, strategic improvement and extensions.
- **Public Toilets:** Increased quantity, and improved toilets.

### Historic Paint Samples:



Timber ceiling soffit

Timber roof trusses



Brixton Village Market

### Market Street proposals

- Creating a friendly dwell space with planting, seating, cycle parking
- Flexible space for stalls and events too

### Rationalised service yard

- Substation moved from within the Market to the Service Yard.
- New and improved trader toilets.
- Rationalised layout of Service Yard for waste management, fire escapes and access, loading bays.

### Services Upgrades

- Strategic extension and improvements to below ground water and drainage.
- New power distribution that can be built and connected earlier, to reduce disruption, and allow for future flexibility.

### Decluttering

- Removal of all redundant services and clutter that has collected over time.

### New Lighting

- Replace and increase light across the Market to brighten up the Avenues.



### Improved Public Toilets

- To provide an increased number of improved public toilets, carefully located within the existing Market fabric.

### New Atrium Space

- The introduction of a new structural insert will create an open, flexible space, significantly enhancing capacity for seating and events. This intervention is designed to be highly sensitive to the building's historic fabric, carefully retaining the existing high-level windows and the new truss structure is carefully considered, to reflect the existing trusses through a contemporary version.

### Retail

- New and/or improved retail spaces in prime locations near the new open court.

### Decoration

- The decoration strategy will carefully and respectfully unify market décor to allow the shop fronts to stand out.
- This will be done by relaying the flooring, splitting out the red and yellow bricks to create consistent and unpatterned flooring areas that reflect the different historic zones and structure of the Market.
- The underside of the roof will be repainted in line with the original, historic colour scheme of pale creams. This will unify the different areas of the market and make it feel lighter. The exposed structural trusses will remain a contrasting shade to give a visual difference and allow for the historic structure to be appreciated.

## 5. Improved entrances on High Street



Existing view of one of the entrances from the High Street

### What we heard:

“The market entrances onto High Street are almost hidden, which reduces the chance of visitors discovering it or even finding it. The existing signage is discreet when seen straight on, and when seen obliquely, when walking down the pavement side, the signage is missed.”

**How do we address this?** The new entrance signage is designed as a three-dimensional intervention, projecting over the pavement to establish a strong, highly visible presence. The signs will be clearly legible from both directions, orienting visitors toward the market. By upgrading the lighting and flooring, we aim to transform the threshold into a bright, accessible, and welcoming space that encourages movement from the street into the heart of the market.



Light to the original historic entrance to Stockbridge Market



Mitre Pub Signage



High Street Entrance to Avenue 4

## Next steps and comment here

Following extensive engagement in 2022 with traders, local businesses, and city centre partners, we are pleased to report a strong consensus in support of our masterplan. Stakeholders and the wider community have backed our vision to revitalise this unique asset and create a more vibrant, visitor-friendly destination for the heart of Oxford.

We have listened closely to all feedback, particularly regarding the logistics of Market Street. We understand that striking the right balance is essential; we are now working collaboratively with our traders and delivery partners to refine the design. This ensures the final proposal effectively supports the vital daily needs of servicing and deliveries while delivering an enhanced, accessible, and welcoming experience for our customers and the wider public.

**Take part in the online engagement:**  
<https://oxford-coveredmarket.co.uk/home/marketimprovements/>

Or email your views about the proposed changes to the Covered Market to [coveredmarket@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:coveredmarket@oxford.gov.uk)

### Public Engagement

Thursday 11 June 2026  
In the Market  
4.00pm–7.00pm

Friday 12 June – Tuesday 16 June 2026  
Oxford Town Hall  
*Opening hours:*  
Friday, Saturday and Monday: 10.00am–5.00pm  
Tuesday 16 June: 10.00am–4.00pm



Please scan the above QR code with your smartphone for immediate access to the consultation website.

# Proposed Plan of the Market

The Market's heritage is a story of continuous growth and adaptation. The proposed scheme seeks to celebrate this history and make it visible, using the different coloured paving to guide visitors through the Market's unique chronology.

To sustainably minimise carbon and respect the historic fabric, the existing red and yellow brick pavers are intended to be reused - sorting and relaying the bricks on their side in a staggered format, supplemented with matching reclaimed bricks where required.

This proposed flooring layout acts as a historical map.

## The Old Market:

The red bricks pavers demarcate the original 1774 old Market and are used in Avenue 2, 3 and as well as the cross avenues that intersect these.

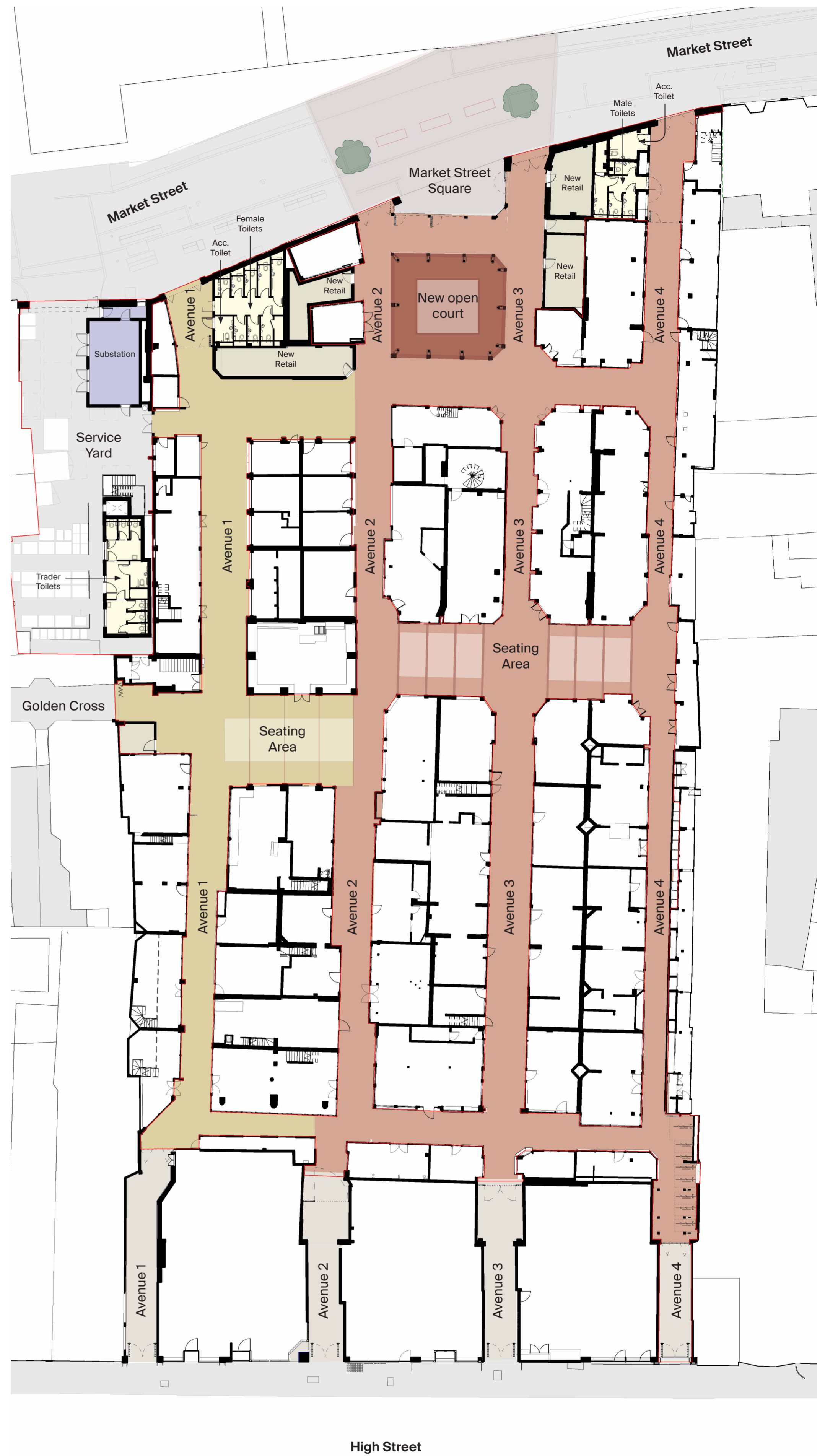
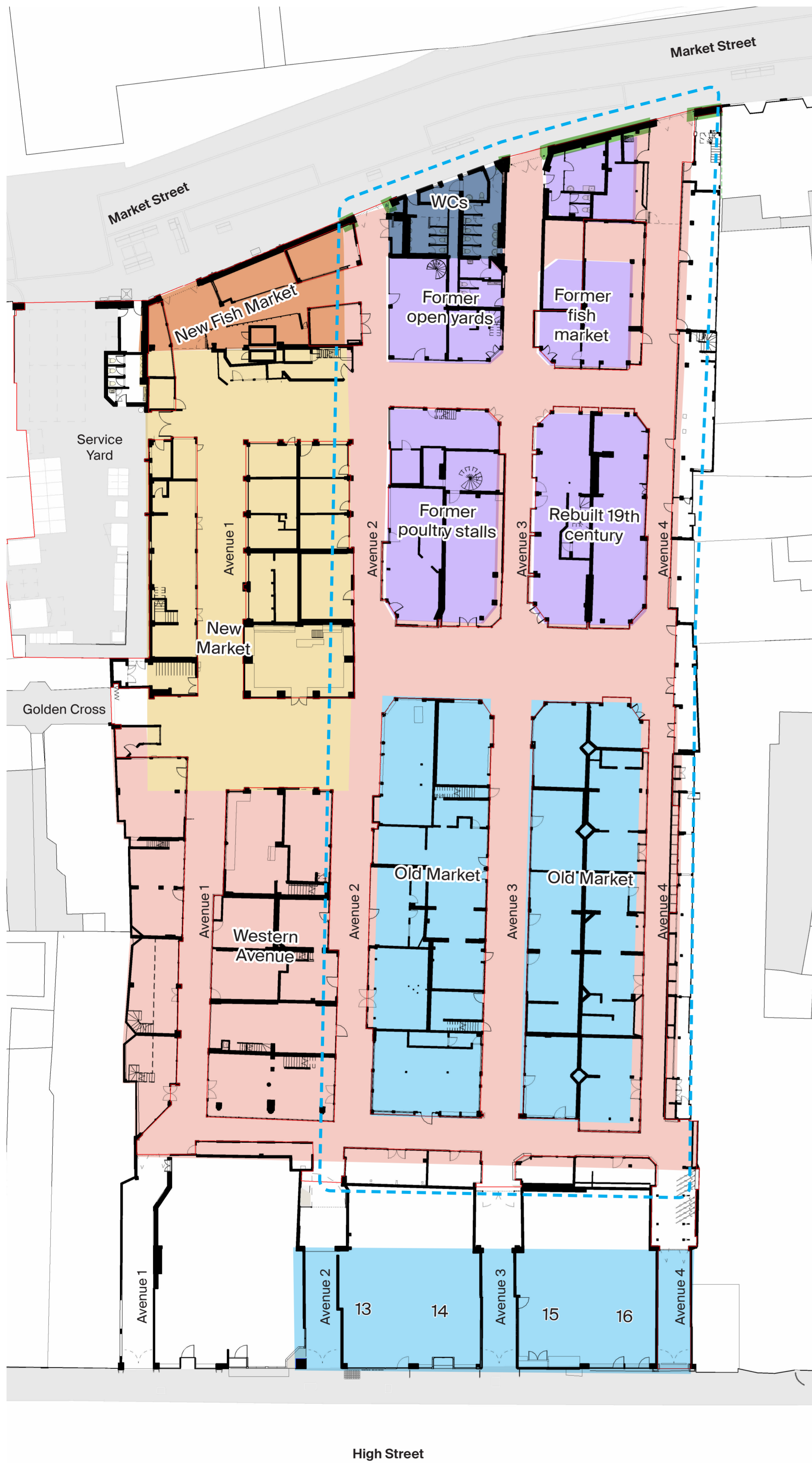
## The 1800s additions:

Then where the later Market additions of the New Court and the

New fish market were added these yellow brick pavers are used, along Avenue 1 and the cross Avenues intersecting it.

## Proposed New Open Court:

Where the New Open Court sits to the north, a new and different colour of brick paver is used signifying this newest era of Market evolution.



Existing Ground Floor Plan at 1:250 scale  
Indicating when the different areas of the Market were built

Proposed Ground Floor Plan at 1:250 scale  
Indicating Market Avenue floor finishes



### Historic Market Areas Key

<span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> 1774 Old Market	<span style="color: orange;">■</span> 1897 Fish Market
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> 1839 New Court	<span style="color: lightpurple;">■</span> Stalls
<span style="color: lightblue; border: 1px dashed lightblue;">□</span> Original Old Market demise outline	<span style="color: lightpurple;">■</span> 1960's WCs & Trader WCs
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> 1842-9 Market Street Wall	
<span style="color: pink;">■</span> 1881-1900 Western Avenue & Avenue Roofs	

### Floor Finish Key

<span style="color: red;">■</span> Reused red brick pavers
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Relayed yellow brick pavers
<span style="color: brown;">■</span> New brick pavers

# Market Street Elevation



Before: Market Street Existing Elevation



After: Market Street Proposed Elevation

# Market Street Square and New Open Court



**Market Street Square:** Proposed look and feel of the pedestrian-friendly area on Market Street. Market Street design and modelling LDA Design.



**New Open Court:** A new naturally lit open court designed for flexible use and public seating. Existing and new shop units will face onto this area, ensuring a vibrant and animated space throughout the day and into late opening hours.

# The Covered Market FAQs

## Q. The market is fine how it is, why do we need to upgrade the building?

A. The building is in need of upgrading especially to the services drains, electrics, WC's etc. which are reaching the end of their serviceable life. Replacing and, where appropriate, upgrading them will ensure that they meet the requirements of traders and public now and in the future.

We also want to encourage new visitors to come and spend time (and money) in the Market and these changes are essential to support that. Some of the changes will enable improvements to sustainability with the aim of lowering bills. For example, the works are designed to accommodate solar power in the future.

## Q. Will the character of the market be retained?

A. It's a listed building and beloved for its unique look/feel. We have an experienced team of heritage consultants and architects with knowledge of listed buildings and markets. All upgrades are sympathetic to the building's status, history and character. They will preserve what is loved for generations to come but tidy up and make it fit for the future.

A lot of the changes are "behind the scenes" addressing problems with drainage and services for example.

## Q. Have the traders been involved in these plans?

A. Yes, the traders have been involved from the beginning, and we have been working with them throughout. We continue to have regular meetings and are also discussing proposals with traders on a 1-2-1 basis when necessary. The Council has a dedicated communications officer to help keep traders informed throughout the works

## Q. Will the number of shops change?

A. We are moving the substation and changing the plan which will allow for more retail space within the market – the actual number of shops will depend on how much space traders want.

## Q. Will any traders need to move?

A. Some traders will need to move and we have discussed this with them. None of the traders will be made homeless because of the work. The latest masterplan will provide much-needed additional WC's and while this will mean the loss of some existing retail units, additional trading space is being provided and affected businesses will be offered alternatives within the market.

## Q. Will the Mix of tenants change?

A. The City Council leasing strategy prioritises independent/local businesses and this won't change. To meet future needs we may see a slight adjustment in the mix of uses going forward but the Council has no intention of the Covered Market becoming a 'food hall'.

The Council is currently undertaking its regular review of the leasing strategy to ensure the market can remain relevant and reflect lifestyle and shopping changes to respond to demand.

## Q. Will the Market have to close during the works?

A. The market will remain open as usual throughout the works, however, there may be diversions and some entrance closures for safety during the work. We have appointed a construction consultant to develop a plan for phasing and delivering the construction work in a way that minimises any disturbance and this will be developed further once a contractor is appointed.

## Q. How long is the work likely to take?

A. We expect the work will take around two years to complete but not all of the market will be affected at any one time. The work will take place in phases and some works will be out of sight or undertaken out of hours to minimise disruption.

## Q. Will deliveries and loading bays including 24/7 loading will remain?

A. Further changes to Market Street will remove one loading bay in order to provide a better public entrance to the market via the new open court. Traffic studies are being carried out to make sure this should not have an adverse impact on the need for loading.

## Q. Will accessibility be improved?

A. The latest changes to Market Street included a new disabled bay closer to the GP surgery. This will remain following the masterplan works.

Accessibility within the market will be improved with better floor surfacing, new lighting, new WC's and an additional accessible WC and baby changing facilities.

## Q. Will rental rates increase because of the Masterplan works?

A. No rental levels will not be increased because of the Masterplan works. Rental will only be reviewed through the normal rent review process and in accordance with the lease and not as a direct result of the works.

## Q. Will traders be compensated for disruption during the works?

A. The Council recognises that the Masterplan works will cause some disruption to businesses and we will work closely with traders to manage and minimise impacts wherever possible. We will also work with traders that want help on a case-by-case basis to provide support.

## Q. Why is the work happening now? Can we postpone to after completion of the All-Souls work on the High Street?

A. Much of the remedial works e.g. to drains and WC's is urgently needed and delay will add to the on-going cost of repair and maintenance as well as the risk of impacting on trade. Delay is also likely to add significantly to cost through inflation and other changes which also risks impacting on the scope of work. While disruption is always difficult, we are keen that we can complete works as soon as possible to the benefit of traders and visitors

