

Sent via: Transform Kingston [transformkingston@kingston.gov.uk](mailto:transformkingston@kingston.gov.uk)

15th May 2024

Dear Duncan and Anna,

### **Response to Consultation on Revitalising Kingston's Ancient Market Place**

In response to Kingston Council's consultation on Revitalising Kingston Ancient Market Place, please find below Kingston First's representation for consideration.

Kingston First recognises and values the cultural, historic and economic significance of the Ancient Market Place and the important role it plays for the community and the success of Kingston town centre. We welcome and are excited by this once in a generation opportunity to transform and revitalise the space and its assets to create a destination for the community, visitors and employees to enjoy and spend time in. We also welcome the consultation indicating the Council's ambition for the space and the opportunity to contribute ahead of the formal selection process for a new operator.

As the town's business improvement district, our role is to represent over 600 businesses and organisations from 12 different sectors across the town centre as well as to create a welcoming and attractive town centre and quality experiences for those that visit, work and live in Kingston. In recent weeks and months, we have engaged with and sought feedback on the future of the Ancient Market Place with our members through workshops, surveys and conversations.

Our representations bring together this feedback which centres on a future tender opportunity creating a cleaner, greener and more flexible space that works with and supports the town. We have outlined more details under themes below. As you're aware, we've shared our feedback as the incumbent operator for the market and space separately, so do not cover these aspects in this response.

#### **Facilitating Markets in the Space**

- Our members are in agreement that a market should continue within the Ancient Market Place to mark and celebrate Kingston's history and legacy and we agree this needs to be urgently revitalised.
- There is a strong appetite for a dynamic space that can easily adapt to different activities and functions, enhancing the overall vibrancy of the Ancient Market Place.
- We recommend that the viability and appropriateness of permanent units should be considered in this context. With a review of the spatial arrangements of the space, there is an opportunity to provide a more diverse market offer to attract different consumers and to keep people coming back. For example, the space could be designed to be more flexible to allow for a rotation of markets and other activities and small events.

### **Planting and Sustainability**

- This is an opportunity to focus on even more sustainable management processes and approaches, encouraging traders, event organisers, and suppliers to contribute to these.
- We recommend exploring opportunities to incorporate more green elements to the space which can help create a welcoming and attractive destination.

### **Amenities and Seating**

- Our members highlighted that there is a lack of amenities in the Ancient Market Place which impacts on people's experiences and dwell time. Specifically, the space lacks public toilets and changing facilities and this has been cited as a challenge for the space and it would be good to see this addressed.
- The fountains are popular and we'd encourage these are retained.
- We also recommend consideration is given to bringing more diverse and accessible seating into the areas.

### **Shelter and Shade**

- The Ancient Market Place is exposed to weather elements with no access to shelter or shade which can also impact on experience and dwell time. We recommend future providers are encouraged to address this to enable the space to be used during all types of weather conditions.

### **Night and Day Programming**

- Our members recognise the opportunity for the space to be activated during the evenings and we encourage the Council to consider both the day and night economy, ensuring that the Market Place remains lively and functional throughout different times of the day.
- We've also heard strong feedback from members that the Council strikes the right balance between programmed activity and interventions that can also be drivers to increase dwell time and unprogrammed time. It's recognised that as a key town centre space, there should be time allocated for it to 'breathe' so people can freely use and socialise in the space without organised activity.
- There was a strong consensus from our members for a focus on enabling and supporting community and cultural interventions and initiatives.

### **Infrastructure and Connectivity**

- We encourage the Council to work with a future operator to improve lighting infrastructure for safety around the Ancient Market Place which is a huge concern for our members and needed if the space is to be activated during the evenings.
- It is widely acknowledged that wayfinding around the town is poor which includes to/from the Ancient Market Place and we strongly encourage the Council to enhance connectivity within the town, and make movement to and around the Ancient Market Place more enjoyable and interesting as well as signage within the space.

## Market House

- In our engagement with members, there was a strong view that the Market House would be best suited as an accessible and agile community space with opportunities for education, performances, cultural exhibitions and events.
- We encourage any future use of Market House considers the impact on businesses in close vicinity to it.

## Collaboration and the selection and appointment of an operator

- Creating successful partnerships helps ensure a thriving Kingston town centre and nurtures our unique community spirit. We encourage the Council to consider applicants that can demonstrate strong partnership working during the selection process to ensure cohesive and quality experience across the town, including at peak community and commercial periods such as Christmas. Consideration of this could be set out within the tender.
- It is worth noting that Kingston First manages the consumer brand *Kingston Upon Thames* which is primarily aimed at raising the profile of Kingston as a destination and highlighting what's on in the town and showcasing local businesses. We develop and deliver several marketing campaigns throughout the year to help drive footfall to the town centre. We recommend this is taken into consideration if a new brand identity is developed for the Ancient Market Place. We would be happy to work with the successful appointee in this area.

We are pleased to share our representations for this unique and exciting opportunity that has the potential to revitalise and improve the space for all to enjoy, in the heart of the town centre.

We look forward to hearing next steps and developments in the weeks and months ahead.



Kirsten Henly  
Chief Executive Kingston First