



**Max Wilkinson MP**

Member of Parliament for Cheltenham  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Public Protection  
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Sent via email: [louis.krog@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:louis.krog@cheltenham.gov.uk)

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Dear Louis

I welcome the Borough Council's consultation on the location of markets. The Christmas and other regular markets are an asset to the town. However, because bricks and mortar businesses now pay high business rates and high rents alongside increased employers' National Insurance payments, it is important for the council to note the existential threat to the future of prosperity town centre businesses. And therefore, it is important that the council is proactive in doing all it can to support bricks-and-mortar town centre businesses. In this case, that means adjusting licensing policy accordingly.

I hope that you and your team will work to reduce conflict between bricks and mortar businesses and markets. While I do not subscribe to the economics of zero-sum, I understand that there is only limited consumer spending to be spread among our town centre businesses. If I put myself in the shoes of a bricks-and-mortar business owner, I feel a great deal of sympathy for those who feel their trade is impacted by occasional markets. In some extreme cases, market stalls have been placed directly outside permanent businesses selling exactly the same products. I believe in competition, but I also believe in fair treatment of hospitality businesses and retailers. I would urge you to apply specific sensitivity to the hospitality sector, which is suffering profound challenges. Cheltenham's growing reputation as a place to eat and drink has come after a lot of hard work, much of it supported ably by the Borough Council. That brand position must be protected for the sake of our local economy. While street food options are interesting, we must not place at risk our permanent cafes and restaurants. I trust you will take these points into account when deciding on the appropriate location for markets. In the longer run, developments at the front and rear of the Municipal Offices, stretching into a rejuvenated Royal Well, may provide space for markets. In the shorter term, I am certain your hardworking team will be able to think creatively to find a solution.

This consultation also provides an opportunity to give greater protection to the flagstones on the Promenade. This important part of our town centre aesthetic clearly suffers from regular motor vehicle use associated with markets in what is notionally a pedestrianised area. This has led in the past to the county council using a method known by many local people as 'tarmac cowpatting' to

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repair flagstones. I trust you will be in touch with colleagues at the County Council to understand how this consultation might align with any emerging town centre plan. With reference to the Promenade, it is also important to note the potential for emerging proposals for the development of Cavendish House.

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

Max Wilkinson MP