

The area was first created for public amenity at the end of the 19th century – at this time 81,095 square feet; half gravel and half green area. During the past hundred years or so, the size and shape of the area has changed: housing on New Street was cleared to create the car park at the north of the Mallett building; the green space to the west, between the Mallett and York Street, was created when Cambridge Regional College's classrooms were removed following relocation to the north of the city, and many would argue that the most significant change came in the early 70s when the City Council honoured its pledge to extend public open space in compensation for the construction of the Howard Mallett Centre. More than 20 households were demolished between Lower York Street and Abbey Walk and the area greened over to create the southern extension to St Matthew's Piece.

The Howard Mallett centre was conceived and built in a decade when polyester, nylon, mini skirts and tights were born; and stockings died. Mary Quant came to lead the fashion world, Ted Heath came to lead the Conservatives and England came to lead the world at football. It was the summer of '64 when the City Council conceived, debated and took the decision to build the Howard Mallett Centre on land that had, for 66 years hitherto, been used as a recreation ground at St Matthew's Piece. By February 1965 they had made public the plan to compensate for the loss of the (in the words of Ald. Amey at the time 'asphalt not green') space with the extension then described: fair exchange being no robbery.

The centre was built between 1966 and 1968 and became a youth club, to this day, held in enormous affection by those who used it – though some of the local constabulary and not all local residents felt the same way; with space to accommodate over 300 people night and day, some of the boxing nights, band nights and Northern Soul nights were legendary! Public open space at St Matthew's piece was now at its smallest – under 42,000 sq ft.

By the early 70s the City Council had not only sold the Mallett site to the County Council as promised but had transferred Mallett operations to the County Council too. The promised extension was, however completed and the area of public open space increased to over 66,000 sq ft.

As the 20th century drew to a close The County Council's education policy no longer required the Centre for its original purpose and a lease on it was sold to Dawe Media. Following the termination of this arrangement the Council sold Citylife a 125 year leasehold interest in January 2006.

Now, some 40 years after the Mallett centre began Citylife plans to replace it with the Cambridge Community Innovation Centre and to deliver 10% more open space than ever existed – 89,304 sq ft! Its plan would bring not only a superb incubator for Social Enterprises in Cambridge but a facility for Petersfield itself: a café in the park, new landscaping, meeting rooms and a large, double height facility suitable for use by, for example, arts groups to dance or rehearse or perhaps for sports such as badminton.

1901

1960

1966

1972

2000

2006

1901 site areas

- Grassed area
41,591 square feet
3,863 square metres
- Asphalt/Tarmac
39,504 square feet
3,670 square metres
- Total Public Amenity
81,095 square feet
7,533 square metres
- 0.75 hectares**

1960 site areas

- Grassed area
41,591 square feet
3,863 square metres
- Asphalt/Tarmac
39,504 square feet
3,670 square metres
- Total Public Amenity
81,095 square feet
7,533 square metres
- 0.75 hectares**

1966 site areas

- Grassed area
41,591 square feet
3,863 square metres
- Asphalt/Tarmac
39,504 square feet
3,670 square metres
- Total Public Amenity
81,095 square feet
7,533 square metres
- 0.75 hectares**

1972 site areas

- Grassed area
41,591 square feet
3,863 square metres
- Total Public Amenity
41,591 square feet
3,863 square metres
- 0.39 hectares**

2000 site areas

- Total grassed area including paths
75,034 square feet
6,971 square metres
- Total Public Amenity
74,034 square feet
6,971 square metres
- 0.62 hectares**

2006 site areas

- Total grassed area including paths (excluding CCIC site)
66,372 square feet
6,166 square metres
- Parkland on CCIC site up to rear of car park
22,932 square feet
2,131 square metres
- Total Public Amenity
89,304 square feet
8,297 square metres
- 0.83 hectares**

YOUTH CLUB, EAST ROAD, CAMBRIDGE
Gordon Logie, City Architect and Planning Officer

CLIENT: Cambridge City Council.
SITE: St. Matthew's Piece, 0.91 acre on part of existing recreation ground within East Road redevelopment area.
ACCOMMODATION: 12,281 sq. ft. for average nightly attendance of 300. Entrance route at upper level leads members past variety of activities at lower level. To be open day and night 7 days a week.

STRUCTURE AND FINISHES:
Loadbearing brick walls support r.c. slab at upper level, roof of light steel beam and column structure. 3 elevations of patent glazing, 4th of sandlime facing bricks.
SERVICES: Oil-fired low pressure hot water heating, ducted warm air to halls.

COST: £57,750.
BUILDING PERIOD: March–December, 1966.
Deputy city architect, G. W. Cartmell. Principal assistant, J. C. Williams. Senior assistant, John Barrow. Quantity surveyor, Henry Cooper and Sons. Mechanical and electrical consultant, H. W. Tuckey and Partners.

