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# OBSERVATIONS

ON A LETTER ADDRESSED BY MR. CHARLES FIDDIAN

TO

THE COMMISSIONERS

OF THE

BIRMINGHAM STREET ACT,

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE

PROPOSED NEW MARKET PLACE.

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BY WILLIAM HAINES,

ONE OF THE CLERKS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE BIRMINGHAM  
STREET ACT.

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# TO THE COMMISSIONERS

OF THE

## Birmingham Street Act.

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GENTLEMEN,

Mr. Charles Fiddian having published a letter purporting to be addressed to one of the Commissioners of the Birmingham Street Act, the object of which is to recommend the land and premises lying between High-street and Moor-street, (extending from Castle-street to Mr. Naden's house in High-street, and from Castle-street to Waterloo-place in Moor-street,) as a better site for the enlarged Market Place, than that between Philip-street and Bell-street, a copy of which letter has been delivered, as I understand, to every Commissioner, and it appearing to me that the data upon which Mr. Fiddian founds his conclusions are erroneous, I think it a duty I owe to the Commissioners, to point out what strike me as manifest errors in Mr. Fiddian's letter, and to recal to their recollection the several facts which have from time to time been presented to their consideration, during their extended deliberation on this subject.

I am sure Mr. Fiddian's letter will appear extraordinary to such gentlemen as were Commissioners in the years 1824 and 1825, and attended the several

meetings held in those years, at which this question was so fully discussed; but as many new Commissioners have been appointed since that period, and others might not have attended at those Meetings, or may have forgotten the estimates then formed, and the circumstances then so amply considered; it is possible that the statements in the publication (appearing upon the face of them so plausible) may create an impression difficult to be removed, without such an explanation as this, in the short space of time to elapse before the introduction of the Bill into Parliament.

It will be recollected that in the years 1824 and 1825, the Commissioners of the Street Act appointed a Committee, consisting of one fifth of their whole number, to consider the several improvements most desirable to be effected in the Town,—improvements, which, but for the disastrous winter of the latter year, and the Spring of 1826, there can be no doubt would ere this have received legislative sanction, and made much progress in their execution. The most important of these projected improvements was the enlargement of the existing Market place. The attention of the Committee was directed to, and attentively fixed upon, every situation capable of affording a Site for the proposed enlargement. The only two Sites which appeared worthy of consideration, were the space between Philip Street and Bell Street, and that between High-street and Moor Street. Surveys were made *of both these Situations*, by the Town Sur-

veyor, and submitted to the Committee. After due deliberation, the Committee reported to the General Body their opinion that the Site between Philip Street and Bell Street was the most eligible, and the Commissioners almost unanimously confirmed the opinion of their Committee. They came to this conclusion, giving a preference to the Philip Street Site for the following, among other reasons:—

**First.**—Because it is the most central situation, and has the best approaches in all directions; whereas the High Street Site has only two approaches both narrow and inconvenient.

**Secondly.**—Because it affords the most convenient Site in respect of its inclination; whereas the High Street Site has a fall from that Street to Moor Street of no less than Thirty-four feet Eight inches in the whole, or about Two inches and three quarters in a yard.

**Thirdly.**—Because it enabled the Town to avail itself of the contiguity of the present Market Place, and afforded an additional space of more than Two Thousand square yards in the Bull Ring, capable of being added to the new Market Place, but which could not be added to the High Street Site.

**Fourthly.**—Because it interfered less than any other Site with the value of neighbouring property, and infringed less upon the vested Interests of the Owners of Premises in the Neighbourhood.

Against all these substantial reasons in favour of the Philip-street Site what does Mr. Fiddian oppose at this late period? If I rightly understand his Letter, he gives preference to the High-street Site mainly for the following reasons, namely:—That the latter situation is of *more convenient form*—that it will afford *a larger space* of ground applicable to the purposes of the New Market, and that it may be procured *at less expence*.

On all these points I will trouble you with a few observations, being satisfied that on all of them Mr. Fiddian entertains very incorrect impressions. As to the *first* point, viz:—*the form* of the two Sites Mr. Fiddian has explained his notions by a sketch of that in Philip-street, by which it would appear that the end next the Bull Ring will be little more than half the width of that next Worcester-street. Surely Mr. Fiddian must have forgotten, that the Report of the Committee, and the Resolutions of the Special Meeting of the Commissioners at which he was present, have determined upon the purchase of other property at the narrow end; next the Bull Ring, and thereby obviated this objection. In point of fact, the Surveyor's plan which was produced at the Meeting, and exhibited to Mr. Fiddian, shewed the dimensions in Worcester-street to be 60 yards 1 foot, and in High-street, 42 yards 1 foot 9 inches. After this explanation, I am surprized that Mr. Fiddian should endeavour to create the erroneous impression which his sketch is calculated to produce.

With respect to the Area available for the purposes of the Market, Mr. Fiddian's data are equally incorrect. It was stated at the Meeting and appeared by the Plan, that the Philip-street Site would afford an available Area of 6540 square yards. To this must be added the contiguous space in the Bull Ring of 2256 yards, making a total of 8796 square yards. Mr. Fiddian's own estimate of the High Street Site is only 7129, or 1667 square yards LESS than the Bull Ring and the Philip-street Site, instead of 2000 yards MORE as he has stated it.

I will now call your attention to the third of Mr. Fiddian's positions, namely, the relative cost of the two situations. First, with regard to the Philip-street Site. Now, the valuation which Mr. Fiddian has attempted to impugn, was prepared by a competent Surveyor, from a survey and separate calculation of each separate property, formed upon accurate data, and having regard to the price given for the property already purchased.

This valuation amounted to something less than £32,000. And how does Mr. Fiddian attempt to impeach it? Only by a calculation of his own; loose and ambiguous in its terms, and founded on data which I undertake to prove are decidedly erroneous. He states that the buildings and land already purchased have cost nearly £14,000. He assumes that they are about one fourth of the whole, and he thence concludes that the whole will cost £56,000. Now, on each of these points he is wrong. First,

The buildings and land already purchased have NOT cost £14,000. Secondly, One fourth is NOT the correct proportion of the value. And Thirdly, I need hardly say that the conclusion derived from these premises, as the total cost, is not correct.

First, As to the expence of the buildings and land *already purchased*. Mr. Fiddian says it is nearly £14,000. Now the total purchase money paid by the Commissioners is £12,900; and in that sum was included the purchase of Market rights in the Bull Ring, without which the purchase of the other Market rights would not have been complete. These Market rights (so purchased in connection with the land and buildings,) were calculated, at the time of Sale, at £100 per annum. Take them at 20 years purchase, it would give £2000. In point of fact, the purchasers have been offered more than that sum for them. Deduct this £2000 from £12,900, and it will leave £10,900, NOT £14,000.

Secondly.—As to the extent of the purchases already effected, compared with those to be effected, I cannot help saying that Mr. Fiddian's statement is disingenuous, and certainly incorrect. The following is a comparative scale of the frontages and number of front houses, in the Bull Ring and Philip-street, already bought, and to be bought:—

	<i>Already Bought,</i>	<i>To be Bought,</i>
In the Bull-ring <i>frontage</i> 12 yards		17½ yards
No. of Houses.....2		2
In Philip-street <i>frontage</i> 93½ yards		24½ yards
No. of Houses..... 14		3

I would entreat you to compare this statement, with the sketch given in Mr. Fiddian's letter; and say on the comparison whether that sketch is, or is not, calculated to mislead the persons to whom it is addressed.

I am sure you will perceive that Mr. Fiddian's premises in these important particulars are egregiously incorrect. Let us now see how these errors will affect his conclusions.

Mr. Fiddian assumes, as before stated, that the Buildings and Land already purchased have }  
 cost ..... } £14,000  
 He supposes they are one fourth of the whole     4

Therefore, he says, the whole will cost ..... £56,000

Now I have shewn that the whole }  
 property already bought only cost } 12,900  
 which comprises market rights worth }  
 at least ..... } 2000

leaving the actual cost of the build- }  
 ings and land already bought ... } 10,900  
 Supposing they are one fourth of the }  
 whole, as Mr. Fiddian assumes ... } 4

It would make the value of the whole .. ..... 43,600

Difference between Mr. Fiddian's }  
 statement and the fact, according } ..... 12,400  
 to his own principle of calculation }

But supposing the property already bought to be one third of the whole, which is a much nearer state-

ment than Mr. Fiddian's, it would make the whole \$92,700, and make a difference of £23,300 between his calculation and the fact.

I have entered into Mr. Fiddian's calculations, and the data upon which they are founded, for the purpose of shewing their inaccuracy. Surely such calculations as these are entitled to no weight whatever, when opposed to *the deliberate opinion of a competent Surveyor, founded upon an actual survey* and an accurate estimate of the property.—Surely, they are worse than useless, introduced and published as they have been at this particular moment.

Having shewn the fallacy of Mr. Fiddian's Statement, with respect to the Philip-street Site, I proceed to consider his calculations on the proposed Site in High-street. On this subject I have not the same facility of comparison as a knowledge of the circumstances has afforded me with respect to the other Site; because I do not know the principles on which Mr. Fiddian's High-street calculation is founded. If, however, I may be allowed to judge of the latter calculation, by comparing it with Mr. Fiddian's Statement of the former, I should not be disposed to give it the most implicit credit. But I will not judge it by that criterion alone. Let us compare it *with itself*. The total estimate formed, it is said by a Surveyor of long experience, amounts to £36,542, and comprizes an Area of 11424 square yards. Mr. Fiddian calculates a re-sale of 1850 square yards in High-street, at £10 per yard, or £18,500, and a fur-

ther re-sale in Moor-street, of 1600 square yards, at £5 per yard, or £8000, so that according to Mr. Fiddian's calculation, 3450 square yards are to be sold without any buildings, at £26,500, and he supposes that 11424 square yards (being more than three times the quantity,) are to be purchased *with the buildings thereon*, at £36,542. How does Mr. Fiddian reconcile this incongruity? Does he suppose that if his calculations are accurate respecting a *Re-sale*, the Owners of the property will be satisfied with his calculations *as to the purchase*?

But there is another Criterion, arising from the few details he has given, by which we may judge of the gross estimate. He calculates, *that the whole of that part of the Castle Inn Premises, which lies on the northern part of Castle-street, and the whole of the other Property on that side of Castle-street down to Moor-street, and all the Leases and Good Wills of the premises throughout the extent of High-street, Moor-street, and Castle-street, are worth only £3458.*

Are the bases of his other calculations of a similar nature? I have a right to conclude that they are. If so, any person, by a cursory view of these particular premises, may soon satisfy himself of their fallacy.

Mr. Fiddian, in calculating upon the imaginary benefits to be derived from his proposed Market place, and in order to leave as much spare land as possible available for the Market Site, and for Re-sale, has limited the proposed passage from High-street to

Moor-street to the width of four yards. He suggests two other entrances to the Market, the width of which does not appear ; but it would seem, by the plan, and by his calculations, that each of those passages is also to be four yards wide ; consequently, after a re-sale of the front land in High-street and Moor-street, there would remain only three avenues to the Market, *of the width of four yards each*. Does Mr. Fiddian conceive that such avenues would be adequate to the approach of such a Market as Birmingham, used, as they must be, not only by foot passengers, but also for carts, &c. conveying commodities to and from the Market ? If they are not adequate, they must be widened ; and what then becomes of Mr. Fiddian's calculation as to the remaining quantity of land available for the Market and for Re-sale ?

By way of strengthening his conclusions, Mr. Fiddian has introduced one of the most singular calculations I ever met with. He assumes that the removal of the property between Philip-street and Bell-street will produce a loss in the parochial rates of £250 per Annum. He calculates this annual sum at 25 years purchase, and he thereby makes the loss to the Town, in present value, £7,250. Does Mr. Fiddian suppose that the occupiers of this property will leave the Town, and cease to contribute to the rates ? The argument really carries with it its own refutation.

I think I have demonstrated that Mr. Fiddian's calculations and statements, with respect to the comparative value and eligibility of the two Sites for

the Market place, are in all respects erroneous. If I am right in my conclusions, I would ask whether any substantial reasons exist for the preference of the High-street Site, to that in Philip-street; or rather, whether any sufficient grounds are shewn for the removal of the Market Place from its present situation? If there are none; or if, being any, they are inconsiderable; surely the Commissioners, acting for the Town, are bound to regard the vested Interests of parties, the value of whose property has long depended upon its contiguity to the present Market. I believe it to be universally admitted, that, although the Interests of Individuals should in general give way to public advantage; yet public advantage should in all cases be procured with as little Individual loss as possible.

There is only one other point of Mr. Fiddian's Letter to which I shall call your attention.

In order to shew how little available surplus of the money proposed to be borrowed, will remain, according to his calculations, after enlarging the Market, he states the present debt of the Town at £31,000, which he deducts from £84,000, thereby leaving £53,000 only available for improvements, nearly the whole of which, he would lead one to suppose, would be expended in the Market Place. Mr. Fiddian ought to know that the sum of £31,000, which he states as the present Debt of the Commissioners, includes the purchase money for the premises already bought, in the Bull Ring and Philip-street; which he estimates as an addition to the present debt, and

consequently, if they are deducted, the net debt of the Commissioners will be reduced below £20,000.

I have thought it my duty to lay this Statement before the Commissioners, to counteract the effects of Mr. Fiddian's Letter, published as it has been at this late period, and consequently incapable of Answer through the ordinary channels of communication with your Body, to which I should otherwise have left it. I shall be glad if I have rendered myself intelligible.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your very obedient Servant,

**WILLIAM HAINES.**

*Birmingham, February 13, 1828.*