

**Response to consultation on Newham Council's Good Growth programme for Queen's Market**  
Myfanwy Taylor, Rosie Wilkinson and Sara González, Markets4People research team  
November 2020

## **Background**

The Markets 4 People (M4P) project offers a new way to understand the community value that traditional markets offer. Markets have played a significant role in UK towns and cities for centuries and, in more recent times, they have particularly supported deprived neighbourhoods by providing affordable food and start-up business opportunities, as well as fostering social inclusion in increasingly diverse cities. However, they have been affected by radical changes in global retail trends and public sector cuts. At the same time, markets aimed at high-income shoppers and tourists, specialising in food, local produce, fashion and crafts, have become more prevalent.

There has been a concerted effort over the last 10 years, including by the National Market Traders Federation, National Association of British Market Authorities and the Greater London Authority, to improve the evidence base for the economic value of markets. There has been much less focus on demonstrating the social and cultural value of markets. Our research responds to an urgent need to understand and enhance the holistic community value of traditional markets, to prevent their decline through neglect or damage caused by redevelopment processes. The overall aim of the project is to develop an innovative methodology and analytical framework for the study of the community value of traditional retail markets. In doing so, we hope to enable more holistic approaches to investment and redevelopment, that retain and enhance markets' social and cultural roles as well as their economic roles.

In 2019 we conducted a [large-scale survey](#) with 500 customers each at Queen's Market, Bury Market and Newcastle Grainger Market in order to gain an in-depth and rigorous understanding of markets users' experiences. A number of market users were also invited to take part in focus groups to help us develop our understanding of the survey data and build a richer image of the everyday experience of shoppers. Interviews were also undertaken with 10 key local actors, including council representatives, market traders and community groups. Queen's Market was selected because of its size (being large enough to support a representative user survey) and because of its existing community value. Aspects of its economic and social value – in particular the market's role in providing access to affordable fresh food, supporting jobs and intercultural interaction - have been documented in various reports and studies (see, for example, the New Economic Foundation's [study](#)) but no systematic user survey has been undertaken. It is one of London's most ethnically diverse markets, selling a range of goods and particularly specialising in Asian, African and Afro-Caribbean foods. Traders are informally organised and the market is supported by a committed and long-standing group of campaigners, the 'Friends of Queen's Market'. Newham Council (which owns and manages the market), market traders and Friends of Queen's Market all expressed interest in our research and we have enjoyed strong support and an open dialogue with all parties throughout the process.

In February 2020, we presented a summary of our research findings to key local actors, which can be found on our website [here](#). A full report will be available on our website (<https://trmcommunityvalue.leeds.ac.uk/>) in the coming months.

## **Introduction to Newham Council's Good Growth programme**

In 2020, having secured match-funding from the Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund, Newham Council began to engage with key stakeholders on four interlinked projects, outlined on its Co-create website at <https://newhamco-create.co.uk/en/folders/queen-s-market-good-growth-fund>:

1. Improvements to the 'look, feel and function' of Queen's Market, including new lighting, flooring and toilets (£1.3m)
2. Converting part of the car park above Queen's Market into 1,500 sqm affordable workspace (£2m)
3. Converting the vacant retail units and first floor space below the Hamara Ghar sheltered housing block adjacent to Queen's Market into a new flexible multi-use arts, meeting and workshop space (£760k).
4. Improving the public space around Queen's Market, including new trees, greenery and a pedestrian crossing (£90k).

Members of the Markets4People research team have attended consultation meetings and enjoyed an open dialogue with all parties. These meetings and the co-design process offer a valuable opportunity for Newham Council and other Queen's Market stakeholders to benefit from the research findings of the Markets4People project. In order to make the most of this opportunity, this document sets out a number of observations in response to a consultation on the draft briefs to consultants to deliver the four elements of the Good Growth programme which began in September 2020. Our response draws on data and analysis produced in the course of the Markets4People research project. We would be happy to discuss these issues further and provide any additional information to Newham Council's Regeneration Team as well as any other Queen's Market stakeholders.

## **Improvements to the market environment**

Newham Council's proposed draft brief focuses on updating core aspects of the market environment such as lighting, flooring and creation of a modern, accessible toilet block in a safer location. Our research provides firm evidence (summarised below) about the need for these improvements, as well as security (including CCTV). We therefore recommend that improvements to security are woven into the draft brief and that an additional option for improving CCTV infrastructure is also included.

Our research revealed a historic underinvestment in Queen's Market. Interviews with council representatives, traders and Friends of Queen's Market revealed widespread concerns that customers are being deterred from using the market by its poor environment. Problems identified include a leaking roof, blocked drains, shabby flooring, poor lighting, ineffective security cameras, unsatisfactory cleaning and refuse collection and increasing theft, drug use, antisocial behaviour and rough sleeping in the market. The cleanliness and security of the market's toilet facilities, located in the immediately adjacent public square, is a particular concern. Council representatives and others believe that the deteriorating market environment is the result of a historic lack of investment and the absence of a strategic plan, caused in part by uncertainty over the market's future.

Results from our market survey and focus groups show that these concerns about the market environment are shared by market users. Just 10% of market users surveyed used the toilet facilities and just 29% used benches and seating. Of the 68% of market users who want to see changes at Queen's Market, the main responses included improvements to cleaning (mentioned by 51% of those users who want to see changes) and to toilets (23%), refurbishment of the structure (10%), seating and benches (8%) and safety and security (5%). These proposals also came through strongly in our focus groups, where participants stressed the importance of improving security, cleanliness and toilets at the market.

In relation to Newham Council's priority proposal for *new flooring*, we have the following more detailed comment. Reference is made here to the possibility of *zoning the market*, and designing the new pitch layout into the flooring. This is a complex proposal which represents a significant change from the current approach to managing the market based on separating traders selling similar product lines. We suggest that it is made clear in the brief that any proposals for zoning should be co-designed with traders to ensure they meet their needs and do not adversely affect individual traders or the functioning of the market as a whole. In our research, users often referred to traders by their location, so it would also be important for the brief to also ask consultants to consider how to assist market users in finding their usual traders in new locations after any changes were made.

The draft brief and community engagement materials also include a number of *other proposals*, including market power bollards, canopy refurbishment, public wifi, a new market sign, ceiling art and real wall art. The need for these improvements was not evidenced through our research; they were not raised by market users or interviewees. Of course, we appreciate the Council may have other reasonable justifications for exploring these options. We would recommend the focus remains on addressing the historic underinvestment in the market environment, however. While the market remains in such a poor state and the council's plans for the future of the market remain uncertain, our research at Queen's Market as well as the experiences of traders in other markets undergoing similar projects elsewhere in London suggests that art projects and new colourful signage may raise concerns amongst traders and the wider community about 'artwashing' and an underlying desire to gentrify the market.

### **Other proposals**

As our research focused only on Queen's Market, we will limit ourselves to commenting only on directly-related aspects of the other elements of the Good Growth programme, which includes proposals for affordable workspace, creative wellbeing space and improvements to public space. In addition, our comments above regarding the need to focus on addressing the historic lack of investment in the market and the risk of artwashing/gentrification also apply here. We appreciate that the purpose, requirements and conditions of the GLA's Good Growth fund may shape and influence the Queen's Market programme in certain ways. Our research suggests that wherever possible, however, funds should be focused on securing basic improvements to the market environment.

*Affordable workspace*: data from our research about the percentage of market users travelling to the market by car are mentioned on page 2 of the draft brief in relation to the proposal to repurpose

part of the car park for affordable workspace. Please ensure that the source of these findings is acknowledged in the final version and include a link to the presentation available on our website<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, we believe this finding is being misinterpreted. In the course of our research, we heard from traders about their concerns that customers were being put off from visiting Queen's Market by the increased cost of car parking and removal of the facility to pay for parking by cash. As these changes were in place at the time of our survey (March 2019), it is possible that some customers that would previously have travelled to the market by car had *already* been put-off by these changes and were either travelling by other means or not coming at all. In addition, participants in our focus groups expressed concerns about security and disabled access around the market and car park, which may be discouraging shoppers from using the car park. Furthermore, it is possible that customers who do continue to travel to the market by car are more important to traders as they may be spending more at the market; our focus groups revealed some users shop for multi-generational households or several households at once and are therefore purchasing large quantities of certain items.

To explore this specific issue further, we looked at whether there were any differences in spending at the market for survey respondents who travelled to the market in different ways. We found that market users who travel by car spend significantly more on food and drink at Queen's Market than market users who do not travel by car: £34 compared to £25 on average, a difference of £9 per person. Moreover, market users who travel by car spend significantly more in total at the market than those who do not travel by car: £72 compared to £59, a difference of £13 per person. More recently, Covid-19 has drastically altered attitudes to public transport and, though we recognise that local authorities have a duty to promote sustainable transport in the long term, this is highly likely to be on the minds of shoppers and the traders who are currently struggling due to low footfall in city centres.

Please take the above issues into account when using the data on car parking produced by the Markets4People research project. To avoid drawing very selectively on the research, we also suggest relevant research findings are also referred to elsewhere in the draft briefs in particular in relation to improvements to the market environment (see above). More broadly, we suggest that the research could be included within or referred to within the draft briefs to provide consultants with an understanding of the existing value and function of Queen's Market.

*Improvements to public space:* Concerns about antisocial behaviour, safety and decline through neglect came out strongly in our research, as set out above. There is therefore a good case for making the public space around the market a more pleasant, welcoming and safer place. In addition to the priority proposals for new greening, street trees and a pedestrian crossing, we therefore suggest there is evidence to support the inclusion of additional proposals for new functional lighting.

In addition, our research provides evidence to support proposals for new and improved seating and a new more attractive and functional market noticeboard. Use of seating and benches is relatively low at just 29% for Queen's Market, compared to 48% for Newcastle Grainger Market and 76% for Bury Market. Particularly in light of the demographics of market users (83% of market users are between 50 and 70 years old), we suggest any seating should first and foremost be functional and

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://trmcommunityvalue.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2020/04/200420-Queens-Market-Presentation-Revised-v13.pdf>.

comfortable. Use of the current market noticeboard is also low at just 5% (it was even lower for our other two case study markets, suggesting considerable scope for improvement here).

### **Community engagement**

*Prioritisation process:* We are not clear why the prioritisation exercise undertaken to inform the final Good Growth bid was repeated through this consultation exercise ie community members were asked to consider again proposals that they had already voted on. This repetition may have raised concerns amongst community members that the council hadn't listened or didn't want to hear what they had said the first time. This is particularly problematic in light of the lack of trust that already exists between the council and the community in relation to Queen's Market, highlighted in our research. As the briefs ask consultants to consider delivering additional proposals in addition to the three priority proposals, we are also concerned that the available funding may be diverted away from the priorities determined through the previous round of community engagement, which may have a further negative impact on relations between the council and key stakeholders. Again, we appreciate that the Good Growth fund itself may require the Council to do certain things. However, we would suggest that wherever possible funding is focused on priority proposals and not diverted away to deliver additional proposals of a lesser priority to traders, customers and the wider community.

*Translation of consultation materials:* It is great to see the translation of consultation materials into relevant languages. However, the draft briefs have not been translated. We recommend this is rectified in future to allow all groups the possibility to engage.

*Digital inclusion and literacy:* Our user survey revealed relatively low levels of online shopping amongst market users: just 12% shop online for food and drink and 35% for other goods. In addition, 50% of market users live in neighbourhoods classified as 'Passive and Uncommitted [online] Users'. This suggests a particular need to engage market users in alternative means, which is of course a particular challenge at present given COVID. In addition, when we were planning our survey we were advised, informally, that some market users may not be proficient in reading in the languages and dialects they speak. We suggest that efforts are made to engage groups which may otherwise be excluded from the online co-creation portal in other ways, and that information about alternative means of engagement are made available at the market and via the online co-creation portal.

*Consultants' engagement strategy (p2 of the draft brief for Queen's Market):* Market users are not currently listed as stakeholders on the site. We suggest it will be important to include them in the list of stakeholders that consultants are asked to engage in order to ensure the improvement works can draw on their intimate knowledge of the market and how it is used. Friends of Queen's Market is also not currently included in the list of stakeholders. In interviews carried out as part of our research, councillors and officers confirmed that Friends of Queen's Market were a legitimate stakeholder group and that the Council was now positively engaging with them, acknowledging that they had been excluded by the previous administration. In light of this change in approach, and Friends of Queen's Market's long-running activities in support of the market, we suggest the group is added to the list of stakeholders consultants are asked to engage.

*Tendering process:* It is not clear from the consultation materials what the tendering process will be in practice. We suggest that details about the tendering process are included as part of the

consultation and engagement with key stakeholders, to improve transparency and offer people opportunities to shape the process.

*Monitoring of consultation and engagement programme:* How are you monitoring the success of the consultation and engagement processes underpinning the Good Growth programme? We recommend these details are included in future materials for transparency, in particular in light of the lack of trust highlighted by our research.

### **Delivery**

We could find little mention in the draft briefs about delivery of the improvement works. Research on market redevelopment shows that it is very easy to (intentionally or unintentionally) negatively impact or displace existing traders unless clear commitments are made and support put in place to prevent this. We suggest that the briefs include clear statements that no existing traders or commercial tenants should be negatively impacted or displaced through the improvement works, and that consultants be explicitly asked to set out how they will ensure this. These commitments should be given to market traders and commercial leaseholders by the Council, if they haven't already been. Without such commitments, it will be difficult for traders and commercial tenants to engage positively with the Good Growth programme as it will not be clear whether or not it will benefit them.

### **Vision for the market**

Building on our comments about delivery, we suggest there may be a need to develop - in dialogue with key stakeholders - an overarching set of principles to guide the Good Growth programme. Given that Queen's Market is already delivering economic, social and cultural value, as evidenced through our research, we would expect to see a strong commitment from the Council to retaining and enhancing these functions in particular for the specific groups which use, rely on and highly value the market. Without such commitments, existing customers and other key stakeholders are likely to be uncertain about whether the Good Growth programme is really intended to strengthen and support the market as they know and love it. There is a wealth of research demonstrating that even well-intentioned regeneration schemes can damage markets unless such commitments are made to existing traders and customers, and resources put in place to support them. Communicating these commitments to the Council's consultants via the draft briefs will be essential if the Good Growth programme is to support and further strengthen (rather than damage) the market's existing strengths and functions. Setting out a programme of monitoring and evaluation by which the Council will assess the impact of the Good Growth projects on existing traders and customers will also be important.