

# Bethnal Green Market Action Plan

London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
Markets Improvement Plan



## Overview

### The market

Bethnal Green Market is located on a main road running between Bethnal Green underground station and Shoreditch High Street. Bethnal Green Road is a pathway into central London and Shoreditch, and the road also has a good number of shops, pubs and cafes.

The road offers a different perspective at each end, with both areas being busy. The Shoreditch end (incorporating Brick Lane and Sclater Street markets) attracts tourists and Londoners as a destination in its own right, whilst the area where Bethnal Green Market is located is a high footfall local neighbourhood used primarily by residents and those passing through to buy day-to-day goods.

Household income in the catchment area is below the borough and London average meaning the market provides an important role in providing access to low cost goods to one of the denser areas of the borough, with an estimated 58,000 population within the catchment area.

Monday to Friday the market generates good footfall and its fruit and vegetable traders were able to continue trading throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Now the market is fully reopened, the non-clothing stalls appear to attract more customers with the luggage and key cutting stalls trading well.

Work has been carried out to upgrade the visual appearance of the market with uniform stalls provided and see-through covers.

Traders have had support from Trading Standards and advised that they need to ensure that their goods are safe, genuine and priced.

#### Snapshot

**Trading days:** Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm

**Commodities:** Fruit and vegetables, clothes, perfume, jewellery, household goods

**Customers:** Local residents

**Reasons for shopping here:** Location (66%) and value for money (46%)

**Pitches:** 102 | 55% full

**Household income:**

15% less than £15,000 | 56% less than £30,000 | 10% higher than £60,000

**68%** of shoppers travel to the market on foot and **17%** of respondents use the market primarily for convenience, emphasising the importance of this market to local people. This is further supported by **38%** of traders recognising **25-75%** of their customers.

The most popular goods purchased by shoppers are food including fresh, prepared and street food (**89%**) followed by household goods (**40%**), clothes (**29%**) and jewellery (**14%**).

**46%** of shoppers use the market as it offers value for money, however only **36%** mention the quality of goods as being motivation for using it. Similarly **60%** of businesses say they use the market, but mainly for reasons of value and convenience.

For traders, **29%** of those surveyed live close by and enjoy trading at the market however **8%** cite that there are no benefits to trading here whilst only **13%** think footfall is good, indicating that the market is not seeing the high volume of people who pass through this area regularly. Only **21%** of traders were hopeful or very hopeful about the future.

The market is functioning relatively well on weekdays and its good location and high footfall mean there is opportunity to encourage more weekend traffic, either by encouraging traders to trade on a Saturday or bringing new traders in.



## Challenges

The Tower Hamlets High Streets & Town Centres Strategy 2017 – 2022 identified the market as having limited customer facilities, issues with antisocial behaviour, graffiti, waste management, cleanliness and high traffic volumes. Many of these factors are still an issue in addition to:

**Declining footfall and traders:** The market is in decline with Saturdays proving particularly difficult to attract traders as they move away to trade at markets with higher footfall in the borough or in neighbouring boroughs (e.g., Hoxton Market in Hackney).

**Low profile:** It is not well known amongst east end markets and has low visibility online with only 17 Google reviews.

**Congested location:** The market's location is close to a busy junction with narrow pavements. Space is tight between shops, stalls and pedestrians, making it difficult to pass or stop amongst the market stalls. 45% of the businesses say their biggest challenge of having the market nearby is overcrowding and obscured views of the store fronts impacting their trade.

This has led to rising tensions between the traders, local businesses and residents. There is also an ongoing issue with food delivery riders with mopeds/bikes being parked on the pitches and demonstrating rude behaviour. Market Services have been working closely with Parking to improve this issue.

**Lack of trader amenities:** Traders have been blamed for litter on the street and there is no storage space for market equipment which has encouraged anti-social behaviour where it is left out.

**Lack of variety and low quality goods:** The market offer is narrow with multiple traders selling similar clothes, bedding, luggage and fruit and vegetables. Many of these items are available in the shops on the street, the market offers little in terms of expanding the range of goods available.

**A neglected neighbourhood:** The view locally is that the area has been neglected and with its proximity to Shoreditch and wealthier neighbourhoods, traders feel that they may be priced out.

## Consultation feedback

In the consultation traders, shoppers and businesses were offered the opportunity to comment on one or more markets that they shopped at, traded at or had a business near to. Responses were received from:

- 24 traders (14% of trader responses)
- 90 shoppers (13% of shopper responses)
- 20 businesses (15% of business responses)
- Responses: 134 total

### Traders would like:

- **Special events** which they believe will increase their income (55%)
- **Better facilities** - electricity, water and cover in bad weather. Traders would also like toilets (50%) and for parking issues to be resolved when they find vehicles parked in their pitch. 54% would like there to be better parking facilities for them and customers.
- **New commodities** to be introduced with shoes, food, menswear, flowers, childrenswear and homewares mentioned, with a reduction or no further stalls for ladies' fashion (54%), fruit and vegetables (13%) and jewellery (8%).
- **More advertising**; 8% mentioned the lack of advertising contributing to low footfall.

### Shoppers and businesses would like:

- **New commodities** in the form of more street food (10%), a wider variety of fresh, healthy produce including artisan foods, fresh fruit and vegetables (beyond what's there already) and a bakery (10%)
- **Better quality goods**, with approximately a third of comments using quality or its synonyms as an adjective when describing the products they would like to see more of in the market.

Appendix III provides an overview of survey feedback for Bethnal Green Market.

## Action plan

Actions have been identified and prioritised within the context of the five-year Markets Improvement Plan.

Phase 1	
Business support and enterprise	<p>Support and training for traders on display, pricing and set-up to make the market stalls tidier and more appealing to customers.</p> <p>Create advisory resources for traders, working with them to troubleshoot barriers to change. This could be useful across several markets.</p>
Commodities	<p>Create a robust commodities policy that presents a solution to attracting new traders with desirable commodities, ensuring no further duplication of existing commodities.</p> <p>Agree commodities to fill vacant pitches and appeal to the local community for new traders – consider meal kits, take-home food to account for those returning to work and passing by this market during commute times.</p>
Enforcement and regulation	<p>Strongly enforce pitch markings, working with parking to remove vehicles from market pitches and ensure vans are only parked in designated areas.</p>

Theme	Action
Marketing	<p>As part of the Moving Markets Online funding create social media channels and a website for the market which should include updates to show that change is coming.</p> <p>Initial work here must include a vision for this market; a clear line on what the market provides, why people should visit and who the target audiences are.</p>
Partnerships	Build relationships with fast food outlets to better share the highway by continuing the work between Market Services and Parking.
Trading days and hours	<p>Review Saturday as a trading day given this is light on traders and low footfall</p> <p>Consider Sunday as a trading day with an adapted offer, linking to Columbia Road and Oval Night Market (monthly) which are open on this day.</p>
Trader Facilities	Review waste management in order to improve the cleanliness and tidiness of the street, working with the Bethnal Green Regeneration Programme LIF project for food waste.

## Action plan

Theme	Action
Phase 2	
Trader Facilities	Explore options for a storage unit and access to power, water and toilets for traders.
Phase 3	
Place	If these actions are not successful, review the market's location in the context of the high street changing, pressure on space and lack of trader facilities.