

Brick Lane and Sclater Street Market Action Plan

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Markets Improvement Plan



Overview

The market

The market is in a well-known area with multiple markets (including from private operators) across the Brick Lane area attracting people from all over London as well as tourists.

This is a densely populated area with a local catchment of 60,000 people across 23,000 households, with a fair amount of development ongoing. The market is also close to the Aldgate economic growth area with new hotels, offices and retail. Overall, the catchment area household income is below the borough average and London median household income.

The council-managed market is located to the north of Brick Lane from Quaker Street to Bethnal Green Road, including the street food market at Sclater Street (Mon to Saturday) and Cheshire Street (where recent works have improved the quality of the environment though reduced pitch numbers).

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

The market is well known by tourists and Londoners alike, and this is a factor in the success of it for traders who also enjoy the community feel of trading there. 75% of traders are hopeful or very hopeful about the future, which puts Brick Lane second only to Columbia Road Market in terms of trader optimism.

Shoppers primarily walk to the market (72%) with 22% cycling. While there, 75% buy street food and 43% buy clothes.

The privately run Truman Brewery attracts around 25,000 shoppers on Sundays to the Truman Markets, most of whom are visitors rather than local residents. This adds to the footfall of the general area for all markets.

Local organisations involved with the area include Brick Lane Restaurateurs Association, Spitalfields Neighbourhood Forum, Truman Brewery, a market trader representative, a range of residents' associations and community groups.

The Spitalfields Forum considers the presence of markets on the streets around Spitalfields as being vital to the character of the area and its social and economic fabric.

Snapshot

Brick Lane

Trading days: Sunday 10am to 3pm

Commodities: Household, fashion, vintage, jewellery, furniture and street food.

Reasons for shopping here: community value of the market (58%), quality of the goods (41%) and range of goods (43%) as well as the market being conveniently located (60%). 4% visit due to good online reviews and imagery which was commented on for only three markets.

Pitches: 60 | 79% full

Sclater Street

Trading days: Monday to Saturday 8am to 4pm

Commodities: Street food

Customers: Weekdays; local workers. Saturdays; London visitors and tourists to Brick Lane.

Reasons for shopping here: Location

Pitches: 13 | 37% full

Household income:

15% less than £15,000 | 49% less than £30,000 | 13% higher than £60,000



Challenges

The Tower Hamlets High Streets & Town Centres Strategy 2017 – 2022 identified Brick Lane Market as having limited customer facilities, issues with antisocial behaviour and graffiti, waste management, cleanliness of the area and poorly maintained public realm. These remain issues now in addition to:

Crime and anti-social behaviour: Anti-social behaviour and crime concerns were cited by 25% of traders. Plans are in discussion to activate Braithwaite Street to deter antisocial behaviour.

Partnerships: There has been some tension between traders and permanent businesses who do not want the pitches in front of their shops.

Competition: It is a challenge to compete with the private markets on Brick Lane which are specifically tailored to tourists with a higher value / more niche offer. However, these visitors have come to the area specifically with the intention of shopping at a market so the LBTH market can capitalise on this already successful trade.

Covid-recovery: Reduced footfall at the Sclater Street market during the week, as there are currently fewer workers back in nearby offices.

Environment: Infrastructure in the surrounding streets contributes to the area looking run down. While recognising that this can be part of its attraction as a mecca for vintage, graffiti and alt culture fans, it is a deterrent for others. There is also a distinct lack of seating and toilets available.

Street food dominance: There are some views that Brick Lane market has lost its way. It was once the place to find second hand and vintage goods, bric-a-brac and fruit and veg.

These days Brick Lane offers a common London market experience with street food in abundance and some second hand goods, but little (besides its location) makes it distinctive from other markets. The type of goods being sold in some of the privately operated markets are of the type that Brick Lane (council) Market used to be associated with.

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 for Brick Lane (Sunday Market) were received from:

- 12 traders (7% of trader responses)
- 79 shoppers (11% of shopper responses)
- 11 businesses (8% of business responses)

In addition, Sclater Street received four responses, one from a shopper, one from a trader and two from local businesses. This low number of responses has not been included in the totals however additional comments have been noted.

Responses: 102 across both markets

Traders would like:

- **A longer trading day** - 66% of traders believe this would generate more income for them
- **Evening markets** with 50% of traders anticipating that these would generate more income
- **New products** (33%) – mainly more food traders, both fresh and street food
- **Parking, traffic/loading and crime issues resolved** with 25% of traders reporting these concerns and 50% noting that **toilets** are missing
- To see the **quality of goods** sold raised

Shoppers and businesses would like:

- **More fresh food** – fruit and vegetables and deli items (10%). Similar numbers requested more household goods including bric-a-brac, antiques and DIY stalls (9%). The one respondent for Sclater Street also requested that more fresh food be sold there based on this being a convenient location for them.
- **Recognition of how the shops and market can coexist on a Sunday** - 45% of businesses say the market obscures their premises, and while 73% agree that it does bring more footfall to the area, 27% say it does not benefit their business at all. They would not like to see more trading days for the market.
- **More seating** - 63% of businesses think that adding seating to the market area would help make their business more successful.
- Changing the layout, a longer trading day, better waste management, special events, evening markets and an improved online presence were all equally

Appendix III provides an overview of survey feedback for Brick Lane and Sclater Street markets.

Action plan

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

Phase 1	
Commodities	Add more fresh, take home food to Sclater Street when workers return in larger numbers. (Shoreditch High Street station is a busy commuter hub with no convenience shops nearby). This would also work for the morning trade when people buy pre-prepared food for lunch.
Enforcement and Regulation	<p>Work with Parking to ensure Sclater Street traders remove vans from the pavement and ensure that Brick Lane traders use designated loading and unloading areas. Be clear with traders about what parking options they have.</p> <p>Enforced road closures required to prevent traffic on and across Brick Lane, Cheshire St, Bacon St and Cygnet St.</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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • history of the market • references to the other markets in the area on Sundays in particular • a tour of local hotspots and famous places • spotlight features on traders • special focus on Sclater Street as a destination for food beyond Saturdays • information about special events locally • updates about changes to the market as they are trialled / implemented including new facilities, layouts, stalls etc <p>This is one of the few markets that needs to appeal to tourists and visitors from across London rather than local residents. Sclater Street market also needs to attract local workers for lunch and after work. Brick Lane online needs to reflect these audiences and to align with the reality of the market.</p>
Place	<p>Develop a long-term plan for infrastructure improvements in the area which will require funding allocation to be programmed in the medium term.</p>
Trader Facilities	<p>Street cleaning and waste management review to make improvements to the provision of waste collection on Sundays.</p>

Action plan

Phase 2	
Place	<p>There is plenty of space available across the many side streets which are not yet full, and changes to the wider area are attracting new customers.</p> <p>Road closures for Brick Lane were approved by Cabinet in May 2021 with the ANPR now operating from 530-11pm Thursday and Friday and 11am-11pm at weekends. Phase 2 works on wayfinding, accessibility and school streets are proposed for late 2021.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to extend the market, with carefully considered commodities, to increase the LBTH market presence. There is also potential to license a specialist private operator on Cheshire Street.</p>
Trading hours and days	<p>Consult stakeholders on extending the opening hours at Brick Lane and opening in the evening.</p>
Phase 3	
Place	<p>Consider the implication of development in the area with Bishopsgate Goodsynd and Truman Brewery proposals (subject to planning approval) which will impact movement, type of visitors and access to the area during the works, which may generate a need for the markets to adapt further in the long term.</p>