

# Petticoat Lane Market Action Plan

London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
Markets Improvement Plan



## Overview

### The market

Petticoat Lane Market in Spitalfields consists of two adjacent street markets. Wentworth Street Market is open Monday to Friday selling street food, and Middlesex Street Market is open on Sunday selling mostly clothes and jewellery (Middlesex Market also includes side streets).

It is centrally located near Liverpool St, Aldgate station and Coventry University London. It is also only a stone's throw from the successful Spitalfields market, yet it has been identified by the council as being one of the most at-risk markets in the borough.

The mid-week food market is successful offering cheap lunches to city workers, however, as a result of this niche customer base, it struggled during Covid-19 restrictions as less people are working in the city. 63% of shoppers buy street food which is the majority of the offer on weekdays.

The market was well known for fabric (particularly leather) and clothes in its history, with entertainments for market goers, but all this is lacking now. The West African Fabric Trade still makes up a significant part of the businesses in the market streets.

The economic growth area in Aldgate, along with other developments in Bishopsgate, offers the opportunity to promote footfall into the area and generate potential customers for market traders and shops on the high street.

The Sunday market was closed due to Covid as 'non-essential' trade and there is a feeling that the market was 'going downhill' and Covid only accelerated this. Traders consider that the extension of the Congestion Charge to the weekends has reduced footfall however few customers who completed the survey drive to the market, with 75% walking there.

The businesses surrounding the market do not view it positively. Only 29% say it brings footfall while 43% say it does absolutely nothing for the area. Very few businesses responded, and many of those who did gave incomplete answers, symbolic of the general apathy and sense of hopelessness surrounding this market. Traders are not optimistic about the future with three out of five feeling unhopeful or very unhopeful

The area is not residentially dense, with the fewest people living in the market's catchment area of all of the council's markets.

Traders consider tourists and office workers to be the main customers. With tourists missing and office workers in reduced numbers (at June 2021), footfall is low but there were few ideas from traders about changes that could be made.

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

The City of London Corporation and Tower Hamlets work jointly in the area, but projects have been slow to date due to both funding timelines and the pandemic. Aldgate Connect BID and The Spitalfields Forum are also active in this area and contributed to the consultation.

Wentworth Street within the Petticoat Lane Market area has been awarded £600,000 to restore shop fronts and facades; explore how upper floors buildings can be reused; provide maintenance training for building owners and to restore the Victorian public toilets at Leyden Street.

## Snapshot

### Weekdays

**Trading days:** Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm

**Commodities:** Street food, clothes and luggage

**Customers:** Office workers

**Reasons for shopping here:** Location and range of goods (50%)

**Pitches:** 166 | 26% full

### Sundays

**Trading days:** Sunday 9am to 3pm

**Commodities:** Clothes, jewellery and souvenirs

**Customers:** Tourists and Londoners

**Reasons for shopping here:** Range of goods (50%), opening hours (50%) and location (63%)

**Pitches:** 440 | 32% full

### Household income:

11% less than £15,000 | 41% less than £30,000 | 18% higher than £60,000

## Challenges

The Tower Hamlets High Streets & Town Centres Strategy 2017 – 2022 identified the market as having limited customer facilities, issues with antisocial behaviour and graffiti, waste management, cleanliness of the area and a poorly maintained public realm. If anything, the market environment has declined further, and challenges include:

**Quality of goods:** The Sunday market is not successful with the items considered to be low quality. Brands are dated and don't attract (Debenhams, Evans etc.). Prices are competing with Primark, but the items are not as appealing.

**Weekday offer:** Local workers are not yet returning in great numbers, and those that have returned are not interested in the handful of stalls currently available.

**Environment:** The area looks untidy, unclean and run down particularly against the backdrop of the City and Spitalfields which is getting smarter.

**Market area:** Cobb Street is used as a storage area with cages, rubbish and vans in it and directly in front of businesses. Some traders are not using a stall but selling from boxes on the ground.

**Competition:** Competition locally for food is huge with Spitalfields, Devonshire Square (weekdays) and Eataly which opened in May 2021. At weekends, there are several markets within a ten-minute walk.

**Covid-recovery:** A number of trader licences were surrendered during lockdown when the market was closed. Since reopening it's quiet – traders said 80% of customers are usually tourists and they aren't here now (this high tourist element means the market is usually trading on past reputation rather than current reality).

**Dwell time:** The market doesn't keep people there for very long and there is nowhere to dwell if they wanted to; there is a lack of toilets, seating and amenities.

## 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 nearby. Responses were received from:

### Weekdays

- 5 traders and 8 shoppers

### Sunday

- 15 traders and 8 shoppers

### All days

- 7 businesses
- Responses: 43 across both markets

### Traders would like:

- Two traders felt that **evening markets** would generate a little more income for them
- Two traders felt that **bike racks** would bring more footfall
- Overall, they want **higher footfall**.
- In terms of commodities, a third of respondents consider there to be **too much ladies' fashion** while 20% believe that the **quality of the market and the goods sold has declined**.
- 20% mention **flowers/plants and fruit and vegetables** as being goods that could be added to the market, and toys were also mentioned.
- In line with the other markets, a lack of suitable **toilets and parking** were mentioned as challenges for traders.

### Residents and businesses would like:

- 38% of shoppers requested **more fresh prepared/hot food** be available and there were mentions for zero-waste stalls, better quality items and coffee.
- **Higher quality of goods:** Again, low scores for quality being an attractor (13%) while the main drivers were reported as being location and range of goods.
- 25% of shoppers would like to see **fresh / farmers market style produce**
- **Bric-a-brac and better quality clothes** were also mentioned as potential additions.

Appendix III provides an overview of survey feedback for Petticoat Lane Market (all days).

## Action plan

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

Theme	Action
Phase 1	
Business enterprise and support	<p>Create a Trader Handbook with details of what standards are expected at Tower Hamlets' markets as regards displays and set-up, to make the market stalls tidier and more appealing to customers. Establish fundamentals for stalls, e.g. clothes traders should have mirrors.</p> <p>Explore using case studies of stalls who are successful across the borough to highlight best practice. Street food stalls could learn a lot from the Falafel/Chicken stall at this market, who operate an incredibly efficient queue management system.</p> <p>Create a training programme for traders using the handbook which can be accessed online and in person. Traditionally training opportunities haven't been well attended by traders, so the format, content, marketing and messaging around this needs to be thoughtful and engaging.</p>
Commodities	<p>Develop the commodities policy; souvenir stalls are not suitable here, where traditional East End Culture is sought alongside and in the shadow of modern city life.</p> <p>Create an offer that serves local residents as well as tourists (as these will return with more than 10 hotels in the immediate area). East End tourist items could be an attraction however traders need to be encouraged to move away from generic plastic souvenirs and towards higher end handmade gifts that celebrate the area.</p>
Enforcement & Regulation	<p>Display food hygiene rating on stalls to show that all have 4* or more.</p> <p>Traders must have a physical stall, not trading from boxes on the floor.</p> <p>Ensure all stalls have prices on display.</p> <p>Clear vans from the street to improve sightlines and make the space appear less ramshackle and to source parking space for traders.</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>Physical and online wayfinding should be a priority to direct people around the area – create a “market mile” linking all local markets to elevate Petticoat Lane.</p> <p>Use this initial period to define this market's brand, create a vision and achieve clarity around the customer base. Then as changes come to fruition from these actions, they can be directed appropriately online.</p>
Operations	<p>Create a waste storage area and screen it off to clean up the area. A lot of waste in the area with rubbish out and waiting to be collected leads to general atmosphere of decline and dirty</p>
Partnerships	<p>Work to make the markets locally more joined up, incorporating council and private markets. Petticoat Lane, Sclater Street, Brick Lane and Columbia Road (with Spitalfields and Truman Brewery in the mix).</p> <p>Encourage traders to join neighbouring groups such as Aldgate Connect BID, The Spitalfields Forum and others, who work to build mutual prosperity within the community.</p>
Place	<p>Consider the layout of stalls (with City of London) to allow more space for visitors.</p> <p>The food court area could be developed into a “streatery” to provide an alternative weekday lunch spot for 2022 spring. Add tables and chairs, mobile planters etc to make the space appealing. This will rely on having a concentrated number of food stalls and a good variety in terms of the offer.</p> <p>Signage to the area and around it – the east end markets are very close together, but you wouldn't know it. Local markets could have a map indicating where you can find the others (see marketing).</p>

## Action plan

Theme	Action
Programme	<p>Following the success of the food court pre-covid, bear in mind future possibilities in zoning the market for future traders. Incorporate space to programme busking or other entertainments.</p> <p>Offer space to programmes creating Arts and Culture in the City – outdoor cinema, walking tours, to put Petticoat Lane on the map</p>
Trader Facilities	<p>Waste is a huge issue at this market with seemingly no collections or rubbish bins for traders. Work with Waste and existing traders to create a new waste management plan for this street to avoid the gradual accumulation of refuse along the street throughout the day.</p>
Phase 2	
Commodities	<p>Revisit Petticoat Lane's history and reconnect it with the fabric traders around the area. The market is currently trading at 32% allowing space for new traders and the opportunity for existing traders to adapt their offer</p>
Operations	<p>Review new waste management plan as new traders come on board.</p> <p>Work with City of London to consider adding infrastructure – toilets, parking, benches throughout.</p>
Partnerships	<p>Work with the universities and schools in the area – London Met is located on Goulston Street and several universities have London outposts on / near Middlesex Street and there are several schools nearby reconnecting the market with the neighbourhood.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Review the use of Plastic on the market and in the waste collected following the new waste management plan. Work with traders to consider ways to reduce the % of single use plastic at this market.</p>
Phase 3	
N/A	<p>If the above actions are implemented, reassess the market to consider its 'at risk' status. The market needs to consistently break even in order to be viable.</p>