

Watney Street Market Action Plan

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Markets Improvement Plan



Overview

The market

Watney Market is a pedestrianised street, located between Commercial Road and Shadwell DLR and Overground stations, and next to an Ideas Store (with 350,000 visitors a year). The stations create footfall as the market is used as a direct route across the area. Barts & The Royal London Hospital and student accommodations are also nearby, as well as the local Idea Store.

The area has undergone development with the population increasing by 15,000 since 2011 as new housing has been built and the Overground line extended.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the market operated with reduced stalls and a one-way system.

Market customers are local with 77% walking to the market and 71% of traders recognise more than half of their customers. 79% of shoppers buy fresh food with the next most popular category being clothes at 21%.

88% of businesses say that the market brings footfall however 38% say that stalls obscure shops and reduce visibility. 75% of businesses shop at the market.

Traders are optimistic with more than half hopeful about the future.

Snapshot

Trading days: Monday to Saturday, 830am – 6pm

Footfall: The market is generally performing well with Friday as its busiest day (7,253 – 4 June) at 17% more than Saturdays (6,182 – 5 June) based on June 2021.

Commodities: Fruit and vegetables, fish, clothing, bedding and fabrics

Customers: Local residents

Reasons for shopping here: Location (60%) and value for money (51%)

Pitches: 62 | 67% full

Household income

16% less than £15,000 | 53% less than £30,000 | 13% higher than £60,000



WATNEY MARKET

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Challenges

The Tower Hamlets High Streets & Town Centres Strategy 2017 – 2022 identified the market as having limited customer facilities and issues with antisocial behaviour and graffiti, waste management, cleanliness of the area, poorly maintained public realm and high traffic volumes in the surrounding area. Some of these problems have been addressed and as outlined work is currently taking place. Additional challenges are:

Appeal: The customers are local regulars (77% walk to the market) however despite its high footfall, the market is struggling to attract passing trade. There is a Twitter account for this market, but the bio reads 'Once one of the East End's biggest and most popular street markets with over 100 shops and hundreds more stalls. Now, not so much' further promoting its lack of appeal.

Environment: The quality of stalls is poor and there is an issue with oversizing creating many competing factors in how the space is used. There are also issues with lack of rubbish collection areas and large bins taking up space in the middle of the market leading to an overall poor and uninviting appearance. Some goods are on the floor and not displayed on a stall.

The neighbourhood: There is limited shopping provision in the area. The market and the railway arches by Shadwell station / around the square sell very similar products.

Partnership: More than a third of businesses consider the market stalls to obscure their shops.

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:

- 7 traders (4% of trader responses)
- 47 shoppers (12% of shopper responses)
- 8 businesses (6% of business responses)
- Responses: 62

Traders would like:

- **A roof over the market** to protect against the weather (57%)
- **Special events** were seen as the best activity to increase trader income (57%)
- Mention was made of the lack of **toilets** (this was not specific to trader or customer toilets however it is assumed that the request is for trader facilities as no customers (in the survey results) mention a need for toilets at Watney Market) and **parking facilities** as well as having to set up daily
- **Less fruit and vegetable sellers and more variety of goods** with flowers, antiques and home décor mentioned.

Residents and businesses would like:

- **More variety of goods** sold with bakery items (17%) and fresh produce (11%), such as herbs and artisan foods requested.
- **Less fruit and vegetable traders** (38%)
- The most popular changes requested to improve the success for businesses around the market were **better waste management, special events and an online presence** (all 75%)

Appendix III provides an overview of survey feedback for Watney Street Market.

Action plan

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

Phase 1	
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New gazebos for all permanent traders. • Anchor points installed to all market pitches • Action on waste management issues with the introduction of new lockable bins, branded market refuse sacks and specific food waste separation. • Improve storage units and access to them • Improve waste management
Commodities	<p>Introduce new goods to the market that are not sold there already or in the shops surrounding it. There is the potential to add more artisan food produce, bakery, fish and store cupboard items.</p> <p>There is also potential for lunchtime takeaway prepared food, rather than street food. Price points need to be considerate to local income.</p>
Enforcement & Regulation	<p>Enforce pitch sizes to create easier access to the market area and regulations on trading from a stall - this should be easier with new gazebos.</p>

Theme	Action
Medium term (2-3 years)	
Marketing	<p>As part of the Moving Markets Online funding create social media channels and a website for the market where the improvement works to the area can be noted.</p> <p>Initial work here must include a branding exercise to articulate this market's identity and position in the community going forward. It is a local market for local people, and the voice and tone of the marketing should reflect this.</p> <p>Relaunch with a full marketing campaign at the end of the proposed works.</p>
Place	<p>Undertake public realm and highways improvement to the square to improve access and movement around the market, subject to funding being identified</p>
Programme	<p>Link to schools and students in the area to bring new life and goods into the market via a trading programme for young people.</p> <p>Encourage traders to participate in celebrations with special products / offers and decorations to bring people to the market. These celebrations will be creating content for online channels and embedding the stalls more firmly in the community they serve.</p>
Phase 3	
General	<p>At the end of the current proposed works, evaluate the success and create a maintenance and monitoring plan for the next phase. New waste management, storage and gazebos to be continuously assessed and enforced. Consider trader numbers, commodities, programme and marketing.</p>

