

## Response to Newham Council’s consultation on a Capacity and Viability Study for Queen’s Market and Hamara Ghar

DRS MYFANWY TAYLOR AND SARA GONZÁLEZ, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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### Introduction

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1. This document sets out the Markets4People<sup>1</sup> research team’s response to Newham Council’s consultation on a capacity and viability study for Queen’s Market and Hamara Ghar. Queen’s Market is a covered street market including 164 street trading pitches, 62 small shops and 20 kiosks in the heart of Newham, east London. Located in one of the UK’s most ethnically diverse and low-income communities, it plays an important role in providing access to affordable fresh food as well as relatively low-cost trading opportunities. It is a listed Asset of Community Value, owned and operated by Newham Council, with a dedicated support group, Friends of Queen’s Market, active for over 15 years.
2. Together with Hamara Ghar, a neighbouring sheltered housing building also owned and managed by Newham Council, Queen’s Market is listed as a strategic development site in the local plan<sup>2</sup>. The local plan states that the Council would like to see ‘mixed-use redevelopment’ on the site, ‘comprising retail, residential and community uses (notably healthcare) and including retention of a viable market to provide a central focus for the site’s commercial and community role’ (p.275).
3. In November 2020, the Council began a consultation<sup>3</sup> on a draft brief for a ‘capacity and viability study’ to inform its thinking on options for development on the site. In light of the study’s findings, the Council will select its ‘preferred option’ for redevelopment, and commission further work on a masterplan, planning application and delivery models. Although this consultation is focused only on the draft brief which will be issued to potential consultants, it is extremely important as the draft brief identifies five potential options to be analysed and sets out the analysis to be undertaken by consultants. The draft brief will therefore play a significant role in shaping the decisions taken by the Council about the development of Queen’s Market and Hamara Ghar.

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<sup>1</sup> Further detail about the Markets4People research project is provided in the [Appendix](#).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1111/newham-local-plan-2018-pdf->, site 27, p.275.

<sup>3</sup> <https://newhamco-create.co.uk/en/folders/working-group>

4. In this context, the Markets4People research project provides a timely snapshot of how Queen's Market is currently used and valued by its existing customers. The research involved a survey of 500 market users (capturing a representative sample in terms of age, gender and ethnicity), 2 focus groups with selected user groups and 12 interviews with key local actors. It provides firm evidence for the importance of Queen's Market to diverse communities in Newham and beyond, in particular migrant, Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British communities. It also demonstrates the current success of the market as a shopping destination of choice, specialising in quality and affordable fresh foods, clothing and textiles, and as a social, welcoming and supportive community asset. These research findings are set out in detail in a presentation available on our website<sup>4</sup>, to be followed shortly by a full report.
5. The rest of this document sets out our response to the five options identified in the draft brief; to the draft brief itself; and to the stakeholder working group. Our comments and recommendations are limited to Queen's Market; we do not comment on Hamara Ghar as this was not included in our research.
6. **In summary, our research did not reveal a need for major redevelopment at Queen's Market. We therefore recommend that options involving major redevelopment are not progressed further at this stage, to allow time for the Good Growth programme of basic improvements to be completed and until the Covid-19 pandemic has eased. We recommend that the Council takes the time to re-build trust and confidence with traders and the community, and to ensure its approach to the future of Queen's Market is informed by its community wealth-building, inclusive economy and social value policies. There is an opportunity for Newham Council and Queen's Market to trailblaze much needed alternatives to current approaches to market improvement and redevelopment in the UK (which tend to alienate and displace existing users and traders), which enhance the community value of markets. We are happy to meet with Newham Council and any other local or interested actors to discuss the research, this consultation response and any other matters relating to Queen's Market.**
7. Our detailed recommendations on the five options identified in the draft brief are that:
  - a. An additional option should be added between A and B (Option B.i?), to modernise Queen's Market (and Hamara Ghar).
  - b. Any options involving major redevelopment at Queen's Market should not be progressed any further at this stage (Options C and E).
  - c. If the Council is intent on exploring major redevelopment options further, this should be delayed until the Council's Good Growth programme of basic improvements has been completed, bedded in and evaluated and the COVID-19 pandemic has eased.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://trmcommunityvalue.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2020/04/200420-Queens-Market-Presentation-Revised-v13.pdf>

8. Our detailed recommendations on the draft brief are that:
  - a. The draft brief should provide potential consultants with a much clearer understanding of the roles and value of Queen’s Market at present, including by drawing on the Markets4People research.
  - b. The draft brief should include much more explicit statements and commitments about the Council’s intentions for the market.
  - c. The draft brief should set out in detail, early on, the Council’s community wealth-building, inclusive economy and social value policies, and elaborate their implications for redevelopment at Queen’s Market and Hamara Ghar.
  - d. The financial modelling exercise should be reconsidered to take broad economic, social and cultural value into account, rather than just market values and financial cost.
  - e. A number of additional areas of expertise should be added to the list of consortium requirements, including the community value of markets; avoiding common pitfalls in the redevelopment of markets (set out in paragraph 17); and community wealth-building, inclusive economy and social value.
  - f. The building condition survey of Queen’s Market, obtained by Newham Council, should be released to the public to inform their consideration of and engagement in this process.
  - g. References to our research in relation to debates around car parking should be amended or removed in line with our response to the Good Growth consultation.
  - h. It should be clarified whether or not the site is being extended.
9. Our recommendations on the stakeholder working group are that:
  - a. Market users and Friends of Queen’s Market should have representation on the stakeholder working group.

## The five options

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10. The draft brief identifies five options to be further explored through the capacity and viability study:
  - A. Maintain only
  - B. Maintain and modernise
  - C. Partial redevelopment (Queen’s Market redevelopment)
  - D. Partial redevelopment (Hamara Ghar redevelopment)
  - E. Whole site strategic redevelopment
11. **The Markets4People research did not evidence a need for significant redevelopment at Queen’s Market.** It found that the market is already a *highly successful shopping destination of choice*, specialising in quality and affordable fresh foods, clothing and textiles. The vast majority of market users do at least half of their food shopping at Queen’s Market, with 21% doing all their food shopping at the

market. 95% of market users agree or strongly agree that the market provides access to affordable, quality fresh food as well as other goods and services. 51% say they buy things at the market that they couldn't buy elsewhere, and 54% travel further to shop at the market than the other grocery stores they shop at, on average travelling 3km further. While 76% of Queen's Market users live in the London Borough of Newham, its customer base extends through east London to Essex, as far as Southend-on-Sea. The average spend per visit is £27 on food and drink and £33 on other goods and services, a total of £60.

12. The research also demonstrated that Queen's Market is already *driving footfall and spend in the wider Green Street town centre*. 89% of users said it was the main reason for visiting Green Street that day, 59% said they were also visiting other shops, cafes or amenities in the town centre and 68% said they would be spending money in the town centre that day, spending on average £19. Market users are particularly important to Green Street because they visit frequently; 82% visit at least once a week.
13. It also evidenced Queen's Market's current success and importance as a *social, welcoming and supportive community asset*. Most market users interact socially with other market users and with market traders at Queen's Market<sup>5</sup>. It is also important as place of interaction between people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds: 79% of market users strongly agree or agree that they interacted with customers from other ethnic or cultural groups, and 82% with traders from other ethnic or cultural groups. It is also a caring space in which people can give and receive help and assistance in various ways, and an open and welcoming space for all. The overwhelming majority of market users feel safe (93%), welcome (92%), less lonely (92%) and like they belong (84%) when they visit Queen's Market. 96% strongly agree or agree that it is an important part of the local identity, while 92% strongly agree or agree that it is a community hub. Queen's Market is significantly more important to market users than other community facilities (e.g. libraries, parks) and other retail and food outlets.
14. Significantly, the research established the *particular importance of Queen's Market to black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, migrants, people on low incomes and older people*. 31% of market users identify as Asian/Asian British (Indian), 25% Asian/Asian British (Pakistani/Bangladeshi) and 27% Black/Black British. Even taking into account the ethnic diversity of the borough, market users are *more likely* to identify as Asian/Asian British (Indian) and Black/Black British ethnic groups than in the core and, in particular, the secondary catchment area as a whole. The majority of market users were not born in the UK; 46% have lived in the UK more than 25 years. 69% are over 50 years old and 70% are women. Long-term migrants, Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British and older market users are significantly more likely than other market users to have been visiting for more than 20 years and to visit at least once a week. 83% of Indian market users and 85% of Pakistani/Bangladeshi market users do more than half their food shopping in the market. 79% of Black and Black British market users buy fish and/or meat at the market, significantly more than other ethnic groups. Black/Black British market users also spend significantly more at the market per visit than other market users. The market is

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<sup>5</sup> Statistics on interaction amongst customers and between customers and traders are available on slides 66 to 69 of the powerpoint presentation available on our website <https://trmcommunityvalue.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2020/04/200420-Queens-Market-Presentation-Revised-v13.pdf>.

significantly more important than other community facilities and other retail and food outlets for women, migrants and Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British users than for other groups. Feelings of belonging are particularly strong amongst new and long-term migrants, Asian/Asian British market users and those from lower socio-economic groups. The market also appears to be playing a particularly important role in countering loneliness amongst older people. The market's specific importance to Black and Asian, migrant, low-income and older people has a new significance in the current COVID-19 pandemic given the particularly serious risk it presents to their health and livelihoods.

15. While users rate Queen's Market highly across a wide range of economic, social and cultural indicators, our research shows that they want to see a number of *basic improvements*, in particular to the *lighting, floors, cleaning, security<sup>6</sup> and toilet facilities*. Similar problems were also highlighted by council representatives, traders and Friends of Queen's Market in interviews. 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, was a particular concern. These problems not only cause problems for existing customers; interviewees also believe they are deterring other potential customers from using the market. This evidence provides a sound rationale for the programme of basic improvement works, including new lighting, flooring and toilets, Newham Council is currently embarking on as part of its wider 'Good Growth' regeneration programme<sup>7</sup>.
16. In light of these findings, **we recommend that an additional option is added between A and B (Option B.i?), to modernise Queen's Market (and Hamara Ghar)**. Option A is the 'do nothing' option, while Option B involves modernising Queen's Market and Hamara Ghar as well as exploring the potential to deliver a health centre, neighbourhood centre, library, youth centre, housing and affordable and market rent workspace on the site. Our research provides strong evidence of the need to improve the market environment. However, the additional facilities to be delivered as part of Option B risk reducing the size of the market or negatively impacting on its functioning in other ways (e.g. by replacing the market storage site with housing). We therefore recommend that a new option is added, which would involve modernising Queen's Market (and Hamara Ghar) without delivering additional facilities on the site. This would allow the community, consultants and the Council to explore the potential to improve the market environment further, beyond the measures contained within the Good Growth fund, without placing it under additional development pressures.
17. **We also recommend that any options involving major redevelopment at Queen's Market are not progressed any further at this stage (Options C and E)**. Queen's Market is currently performing

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that 93% of market users strongly agreed/agreed that they feel safe at the market. However, focus group discussions with market users revealed serious concerns about aggressive, targeted and organised pickpocketing at the market, as well as experiences with CCTV failing and/or a lack of action from market staff or police when incidents occurred. Interviews with council staff, traders and campaigners also raised issues around security and safety linked to a rise in antisocial behaviour, drug use and rough sleeping when the market is closed.

<sup>7</sup> <https://newhamco-create.co.uk/en/folders/queen-s-market-good-growth-fund>.

extremely strongly, bucking wider trends of decline in the UK markets sector despite a long-neglected market environment. Major redevelopment carries with it a significant risk that the existing economic, social and cultural roles and functions of the market will be damaged or destroyed. Even with the best of intentions and explicit up-front commitments, local authorities find it extremely difficult to retain existing traders through disruptive and lengthy redevelopment processes. Where redevelopment pressures require rents to be increased and/or sufficient measures are not put in place to minimise the cost and disruption of redevelopment, traders are lost from markets and, with them, their customers. Such impacts will have the most negative impact on those groups which particularly use, rely on and value the market – in this case, migrant, ethnic minority groups, migrants, people on low incomes and older people, many of whom have protected rights under equalities legislation.

18. **If the Council still wants to explore major redevelopment options further, this should be delayed until the Council's Good Growth programme of basic improvements has been completed, bedded-in and evaluated, and the COVID-19 pandemic has eased.** In addition, time should be allowed for other potential problems relating to the current management of the market to be explored and addressed. For example, the Council's upcoming review of the current restrictions on new traders wishing to sell fruit and vegetables, fish, meat and general groceries, as well as the need for better promotion of Queen's Market on social media (the Council does not currently operate a Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account for the market). It may be that the performance of the market can be further improved without the need for major redevelopment. Furthermore, major redevelopment options should not be further considered until the COVID-19 pandemic has eased, in light of the particular pressures and risks it poses for ethnic minority, low-income and elderly market users who rely on and value the market the most. Consulting these market users about major changes to an important part of their lives will cause additional stress and worry at a time when they may be struggling with many other issues. COVID-related risks and pressures may also make it harder for these market users to engage with important consultation processes, with the risk that their views and experiences are under-represented with negative consequences for the future of the market. Now is not the time to put key equalities groups most at risk from the COVID-19 pandemic under further pressure.
19. **Delaying any further work on redevelopment options would also allow time to rebuild trust and confidence with traders and community groups who are, understandably, fearful about the future of the market.** Our research identified the legacy of distrust at Queen's Market, stemming from the previous Mayor of Newham, Sir Robin Wales', (failed) plans to demolish and redevelop the market in the mid-2000s. These problems were widely acknowledged by council representatives, market traders and Friends of Queen's Market in interviews carried out as part of the Markets4People research project. Our research suggests that council representatives' efforts to address this legacy and improve relations with traders and the community (e.g. correspondence and meetings with officials and the Mayor; workshops and an online platform to support consultations) are being undermined by the consultation on the draft capacity and viability study in particular. In the absence of concrete commitments about the future of the market (see paragraph 22), market traders and users remain fearful that the market that they know and depend on will change, negatively impacting on their lives and livelihoods. Pressing 'pause' on the capacity and viability study would enable the Council to build trust and confidence with

market traders and users through working on a much-needed and long-overdue set of basic improvements as part of the Good Growth programme.

## The draft brief

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20. Notwithstanding the comments and recommendations above, we have the following detailed comments and recommendations on the draft brief.
21. Firstly, **we recommend that the draft brief provides potential consultants with a much clearer understanding of the roles and value of Queen's Market at present, including by drawing on the Markets4People research.** It is imperative that the consultants understand this, if they are to advise the Council adequately on the pros and cons of potential development options. The draft brief should also ask consultants to demonstrate their understanding of the current role and value of the market in their bids. Please reference our research and link to the PowerPoint presentation and report (when available). We would also be happy to offer key council staff and consultants briefing sessions on the research.
22. **We also recommend that the draft brief includes much more explicit statements and commitments about the Council's intentions for the market.** Some of these issues are referred to towards the end of the draft brief, where consultants are asked to assess the delivery risks. However, explicit commitments should be made up-front, so that these issues shape the options analysis rather than being considered as an afterthought. Without clarity on these matters, it will be difficult for the consultants to advise the Council. Traders, commercial tenants and other stakeholders will also want clarity on these matters. Early on, the draft brief should confirm:
  - a. Whether the Council is committed to a market of the same size (Options C and E could involve the market shrinking – which we oppose);
  - b. The Council's commitment to existing traders and commercial tenants: will they all be accommodated within any modernised or redeveloped market?; will rent levels be maintained?; will disruption be minimised?; will support and funding be available for traders and tenants to transition? (we recommend that all these commitments are made);
  - c. The Council's vision for the future of the market: is it committed to the market retaining its current roles and functions for its existing user groups? (we recommend that it is);
  - d. Whether the Council intends to continue to own and operate the market (we recommend that it does, unless traders run the market themselves); and
  - e. Whether the Council is open to the traders managing the market themselves as a cooperative, as per Friends of Queen's Market's Community Charter (we recommend that it does).
23. The draft brief makes various rather vague and tangential references to the Council's community wealth-building and inclusive economy strategies, which the Council would like to inform redevelopment options for the site. **We recommend that these strategies are introduced early on in**

**the draft brief, and set out in detail. Furthermore, the Council should elaborate on what their implications are for redevelopment at Queen’s Market and Hamara Ghar.** Consultants can be asked to develop and explore this further, but this is a matter of Council policy and strategy, which the draft brief should set out. There is considerable potential for Newham council to trailblaze new approaches to improving (and redeveloping, where appropriate) markets informed by community-wealth building and inclusive economy ideas and approaches. These new approaches are much needed across the UK markets sector as a whole, and the economic, social and cultural value of Queen’s Market makes it an ideal test case.

- 24.** We are concerned that the financial modelling exercise which consultants are asked to undertake is very narrow, and could potentially result in redevelopment options which compromise the community value of Queen’s Market. For example, paragraph 5.2.6 asks consultants to consider property market demand and market value for a range of development options. No mention is made of the need for affordable retail and other workspace or of the need to protect current rent levels for existing market traders and commercial tenants. Likewise, paragraph 5.2.11 requires consultants to work closely with the Council to ensure that ‘the most cost-effective’ solution for each option is developed; no mention is made, here, of other values and goals. **We recommend that the financial modelling exercise is revised to take broad economic, social and cultural value into account, rather than just market values and financial cost. This is a key place in which we would expect to see a different approach, given the Council’s inclusive economy, community wealth-building and social value policies.**
- 25.** In light of our comments and concerns, **we recommend a number of additional requirements are added to the list of consortium requirements** at paragraph 6.1.1. We recommend the Council also asks for consultants to demonstrate expertise in the **community value of markets; avoiding common pitfalls in the redevelopment of markets (see paragraph 17); and community wealth-building, inclusive economy and social value.** If consultants do not have this expertise, they will not be able to advise the Council adequately.
- 26.** **We recommend that the building condition survey of Queen’s Market, obtained by Newham Council, is released to the public, to inform their consideration of and engagement in this process.** It is not clear why this has not yet been released, after an initial period of consideration, as promised by the Council in early 2020; we would be happy to issue a Freedom of Information request if this would help to resolve the situation.
- 27.** We note that our research is referred to as evidence to counter traders’ proposals to reduce car parking fees. **Please refer to our response to the Good Growth consultation on this point, and amend or remove references, thank you.**
- 28.** Finally, it is mentioned, at one point, that the Council may be considering extending the development site beyond the boundaries in the local plan. Is this the case? Has this policy change been consulted on? What is the rationale for it? Its implications for the site and the capacity and viability study are

potentially significant. **We recommend that the Council clarifies whether or not the site is being extended.**

## The stakeholder working group

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**29. We recommend that market users and Friends of Queen’s Market have representation on the stakeholder working group.** We appreciate that they will be able to input into the consultation processes running alongside the development of the capacity and viability study. However, this will be extremely demanding and time consuming. The Council recognises this and is therefore supporting key stakeholders with training, IT equipment and a monetary reward in recognition of their time and commitment. Shoppers and Friends of Queen’s Market will be better able to input into the work if they are also able to access this support. There are very few spots on the stakeholder working group open to residents (six Hamara Ghar residents, who will be understandably more focused on Hamara Ghar, and just three other residents), so it is not sufficient to say that shoppers and Friends of Queen’s Market can apply through this category. We believe market users and Friends of Queen’s Market are themselves making the case to be included. Responding positively to this request is likely to lead to greater and more productive engagement from the community, and to build dialogue and trust, repairing the fractured relationships of the past. Friends of Queen’s Market have demonstrated their love and care for the market over the past 15 years, putting in countless hours of volunteer time. Including them in the stakeholder working group will demonstrate that the Council has really moved on from the problems of the previous Mayoralty and recognises Friends of Queen’s Market as a legitimate stakeholder (see also paragraph 19).

## Appendix: the Markets4People research project

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1. Traditional retail markets (TRMs), such as Queen’s Market in Newham, are at the heart of many communities across the UK. They provide access to affordable and quality food and other goods, provide opportunities for social and cultural interaction, and often play a particularly important role in the lives of low-income, Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups, migrants, elderly people, socially-isolated people and other vulnerable groups. They also provide access to low-cost and accessible trading space (sustaining employment and livelihoods for traders and generating economic value through customers’ purchases), rental income for market operators and increased footfall in towns and cities.
2. There has been a concerted effort over the last ten years by the key players in the markets sector (the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) and the National Association of British Markets (NABMA), as well as the Greater London Authority) to improve the evidence base about the economic value of markets. There has, however, been much less focus on demonstrating the social and cultural value of markets. Because of this, there is a risk that the community value of markets is ignored or damaged. This is particularly important at a time when TRMs remain under pressure from various complex processes, including cuts to local government funding, regeneration plans which displace or alienate traditional traders and customers, the power of giant retailers and fast changing consumption patterns (in particular, shifts towards online and ‘experience’ retail)<sup>8</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated these pressures in markets and, more generally, in high streets. It also threatens markets’ wide-ranging functions in new ways, placing operators and traders under extreme financial strain and restricting access to much-needed affordable food and goods, and support to some of the communities most impacted by COVID-19.
3. In this context, it is more critical than ever that market operators understand and enhance the community value of markets. Better evidence about the community value of markets is crucial to support more holistic approaches to market management, improvement and redevelopment, which retain and enhance markets’ social and cultural roles as well as their economic roles. The Markets4People research project<sup>9</sup> responds to increasing interest from policy makers and the UK markets sector in the social and cultural value of markets. It aims to develop new evidence, tools and insights for understanding and enhancing the community value of TRMs.

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<sup>8</sup> González, S. and P. Waley. (2013). Traditional Retail Markets: The New Gentrification Frontier? *Antipode* 45(4), pp.965-983. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2012.01040.x>.

<sup>9</sup> The full name of the research project is ‘Understanding and Enhancing the Community Value of Traditional Retail Markets in UK Cities’ (ESRC grant number ES/P010547/1, Principal Investigator Dr Sara González, University of Leeds). See <https://trmcommunityvalue.leeds.ac.uk/>.