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12 February 2021

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Dear Mayor Fiaz

## QUEEN'S MARKET CAPACITY AND VIABILITY CONSULTATION

We are writing to you regarding Newham Council's Capacity and Viability consultation on Queens Market. For the last 3 years we have researched this market as part of our Research Council-funded project ***on the community value of markets in the UK***, in which Queens Market emerges as a strong case study. We have also had a positive meeting about these issues with regeneration officers and provided a full written response to the consultation, appended to this letter. We have taken the time to engage fully with the Council's work on the future of the market because Queen's Market currently provides a strong example in the UK of how markets can deliver community value.

Our research at Queen's Market has involved a survey of 500 market users (capturing a representative sample in terms of age, gender and ethnicity), two focus groups with selected user groups and 12 interviews with key local actors, including yourself as Mayor of Newham. In the context of the Good Growth programme and the planned capacity and viability study, the research provides a timely snapshot of ***how Queen's Market is used and valued by its existing customers***. The research team presented our findings to council representatives and other key stakeholders in early 2020, and a full report is in the final stages of preparation.

In summary, ***the research did not reveal a need for major 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, and driving footfall and spend in the wider Green Street town centre. It also evidenced Queen's Market's current success and importance as a social, welcoming and supportive community asset. Significantly, the research established the particular importance of Queen's Market to ethnic minority groups, migrants, people on low incomes and older people. While users rate Queen's Market

highly across a wide range of economic, social and cultural indicators, the research found that they want to see a number of basic improvements, in particular to the lighting, floors, cleaning, security and toilet facilities.

These research findings suggest there is a strong rationale for **delaying any further work on the capacity and viability study at this point**. This would allow time for the long overdue and much-needed improvements to the market environment and facilities to be delivered as part of the Good Growth programme, and for the Council to assess their impact before exploring the need for further interventions. This approach would also allow the Council time to re-build trust and confidence with traders and the community through the Good Growth programme. It would also allow time for the Covid-19 pandemic to ease, given the particular risks and pressures it poses for Black and Asian, low-income and elderly market users in Newham, whom our research shows rely on and value the market the most.

Pressing 'pause' would also enable the Council to ensure its **approach to the future of Queen's Market is informed by your community wealth building strategy**. There is by now considerable evidence showing that existing approaches to market improvement and redevelopment in the UK, based on attracting new, higher-income and younger customers, tend to alienate and displace existing traders and users. As specialists in markets, we are regularly asked to provide best practice examples of market redevelopment schemes which have avoided these problems. We struggle to do so. Newham Council's community wealth building strategy and Queen's Market's exceptionally strong community value provide the ideal opportunity to trailblaze much needed alternative approaches to improving markets informed by community wealth building principles. There is considerable interest in and demand for such approaches in the wider markets and local/community economic development sectors.

We understand that the previous administration's local plan provides the main rationale for the current consultation. Queen's Market and Hamara Ghar were listed as a major development site, and therefore the need arises for a capacity and viability study to inform the Council's thinking on potential development options for the site. We believe, however, that the issues outlined above provide a strong rationale for not continuing further with the study at this point. Your new community wealth building strategy will presumably inform a new version of the local plan, including potential changes to the council's ambitions for specific sites. Pressing pause on the capacity and viability study at this point would also allow time for your new community wealth building strategies to bed into the council's approach to managing and improving Queen's Market and inform your planning aspirations for the site.

We would be happy to discuss these issues in a meeting if you feel this would be beneficial

Yours sincerely



Drs Myfanwy Taylor and Sara González