

The Importance of Newcastle's Grainger Market as an Affordable Source of Food

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Policy Headlines

- Grainger Market is a retail asset and thriving hub for independent local businesses in Newcastle. It is also a central part of Newcastle City Council's plans for the city centre following the Covid-19 pandemic, with £9m planned investment, £7m of which come from the Government's 'Levelling Up' Fund.
- 'Markets 4 People' research from the University of Leeds has evidenced that Grainger Market is a key source of affordable food, drink and other goods for lower-income households and students, as well as being an important social space for elderly and vulnerable consumers.
- Traditional retail markets are usually overlooked in studies on urban food deserts - areas with poor accessibility to good quality but affordable food – yet they have great potential.
- We demonstrate that Grainger Market is a primary shopping destination serving a local and loyal customer base, with those households exhibiting a greater dependence on the market more likely to live in neighbourhoods characterised as 'food deserts'.
- We provide strong evidence for the social and economic value of Grainger Market in helping to address urban food deserts and retail accessibility in Newcastle upon Tyne.
- These findings are important for the Council to assess the impact of any future investments, ensuring that the low income and elderly groups that rely on Grainger Market as an affordable source of food, are not negatively impacted.

Methodology and significance of the research

'Markets 4 People' is a research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council at the University Leeds to understand the community value of traditional markets in the UK. We focused on 3 case study markets: Bury Market, Queens Market in Newham, London, and Grainger Market in Newcastle. Together we surveyed 1,500 market users and interviewed around 50 local and national experts in the sector.

Grainger Market offers an opportunity to explore consumer behaviours and attitudes towards food and drink shopping given the diverse demographic, economic and social make-up of Newcastle upon Tyne and neighbouring Gateshead and Tyneside. To understand the significance of Grainger Market we combined our survey data – outlined below - with indicators of neighbourhood type, grocery retail accessibility and the presence of characteristics associated with food deserts.

We commissioned a bespoke large-scale interviewer administered survey of users of Grainger Market. A particular area of focus for the survey was to uncover the role of markets in providing access to affordable, quality and healthy fresh food. Our survey was administered to 500 market users at Grainger by trained interviewers in March 2019, supplemented with two customer focus groups and interviews with traders, market operators and policy makers. Our survey drew on a representative sample of market users, adhering to quotas set to capture the range of age, gender, ethnicity and income characteristics among market users, as drawn from existing insight.

Grainger Market as a source of affordable food and drink

The 'Markets 4 People' project has evidenced that traditional retail markets such as Grainger are an important source of affordable food and drink, especially for elderly, vulnerable and low-income communities, which holds true at Grainger Market. Almost two thirds (65%) of our respondents were aged 50+, and 69% of respondents were women.

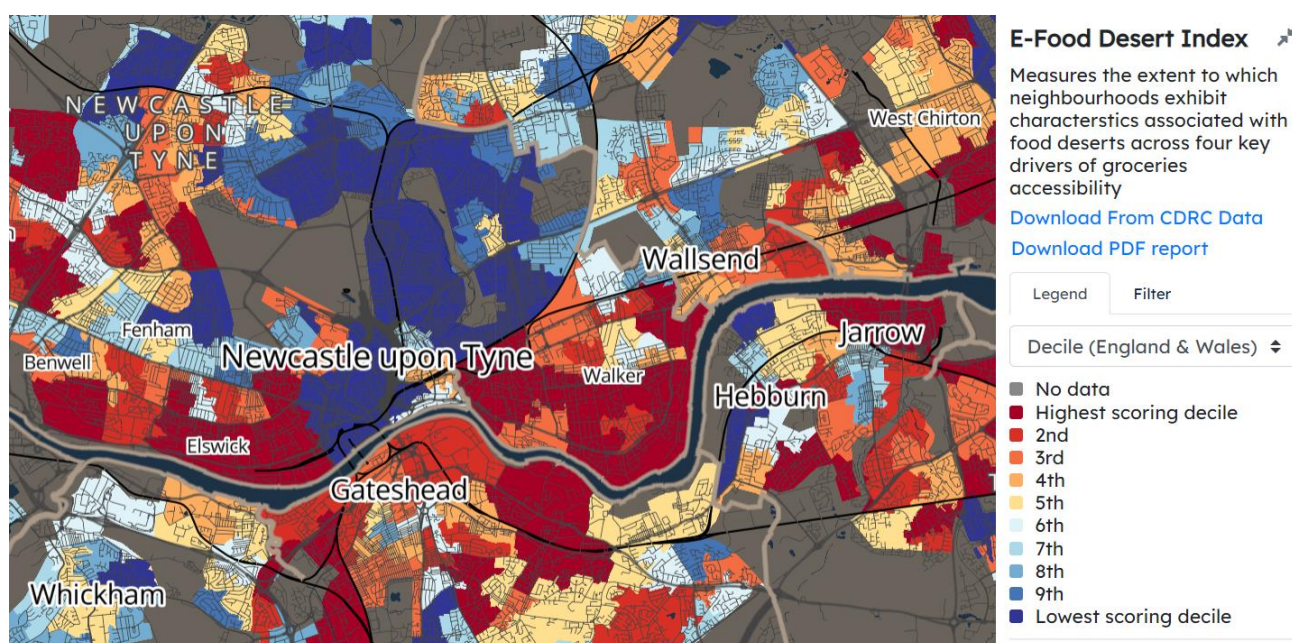
Our survey reveals that Grainger Market serves a local and loyal customer base, with over 60% of respondents visiting Grainger Market for in excess of 20 years. Consumers travel an average of 4.5km from home to reach the market, with 70% of market users reporting that they visit at least weekly, demonstrating its importance as a primary shopping destination.

Market users show a propensity to live in neighbourhoods associated with higher levels of deprivation, with half of survey respondents drawn from neighbourhoods classified as being within the 30% most deprived in England and Wales. Grainger Market is particularly well used by respondents from less-affluent households (almost 60% of respondents are from households in social grades C2DE, coded by interviewers using main salary earner occupation). These findings highlight that Grainger Market is an important source of affordable food, drink and other goods for lower-income households.

A quarter of respondents undertake at least half of their food and drink shopping at the Market, with one in two respondents spending at least £10 on food and drink on a typical visit. Younger respondents (aged 18-24, many of whom are students) and the oldest respondents (70+, most of

whom are retired) are more likely to undertake at least half of their food and drink shopping at Grainger Market than other groups. This highlights the importance of the market to these groups, with our focus groups unpicking some of the reasons, including affordability (all groups) and attributes of the shopping experience such as opportunities to socialise, advice from traders, quality and range of products sold (especially for older consumers).

Our analysis reveals that 9 in 10 respondents travel further to reach Grainger Market than they travel to reach alternative grocery stores at which they typically undertake additional food and drink shopping. Discussions in focus groups and interviews suggest that Grainger Market's attraction relative to the supermarkets is more related to the quality and affordability of the produce, the personal service offered by traders and the Market's social and cultural aspects, rather than its specialist offer.



E-Food Deserts Index extract for Newcastle upon Tyne (Source: CDRC Maps)

Drawing on an indicator of **neighbourhood-level characteristics** associated with food deserts, which captures a range of factors associated with poor access to groceries provision at a local level, our analysis highlights that those households which are most likely to experience neighbourhood level characteristics consistent with food deserts exhibit a high propensity to use Grainger Market.

In spite of relatively poor access to physical grocery retail provision among many respondents, they show a low propensity to shop online for groceries. With many respondents also self-reporting a lack of access to private transport (over three quarters of respondents access the market by public transport or on foot), Grainger Market serves as an important and accessible source of grocery shopping in Newcastle Upon Tyne, and this role should be carefully considered in any future redevelopment of the Market or the local transport provision.

Implications and next steps

The findings contribute to policy discussions about the role of the Grainger Market in Newcastle Upon Tyne, particularly considering the £7m investment it is due to receive via the Government's Levelling Up Fund and the Council's own match funding. This investment presents a fantastic opportunity to support and grow Grainger Market's role as an accessible and affordable community resource, particularly in terms of fresh food. It will be important for the Council to assess the impact on any plans on the low income and elderly groups that rely on Grainger Market as an affordable source of food, ensuring they do not negatively impact these groups or functions.

Our research has generated considerable qualitative and quantitative data in relation to Grainger Market, all of which are available for wider reuse by the academic, research and policy making communities and accessed at: <https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/dataset/traditional-retail-markets-community-value-survey-data>.

Further information


This short research briefing draws on research produced via the 'Markets 4 People' research project at the University of Leeds, in collaboration with NMTF and the New Economics Foundation. A public report with extended analysis of Grainger Market is available at: <https://doi.org/10.5518/100/56>.

The analysis reported in this briefing is currently under review for publication. This briefing note will be updated with a link to the full paper when published.

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