



West
Northamptonshire
Council

Northampton Markets Development Plan

April 2024 v0.3 (DRAFT)



Document version control

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Change history

Issue	Date	Comments
0.1	26 Sep 2023	Initial draft
0.2	1 Mar 2024	Revised draft for sharing
0.3	23 Apr 2024	Final version prior to Cabinet

NB: Draft versions 0.X - final published versions 1.X

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1. Executive summary

Northampton's markets are an intrinsic part of the identity and character of the area, serving both the town and its hinterland. The current regeneration of Market Square, from which they have largely operated since 1235, creates an opportunity for the markets to, once again, form a vibrant part of central Northampton. This plan sets out the ways this will be achieved, with the aim being to create and sustain Northampton markets which support a flourishing and active central Northampton.

Whilst historically important, Northampton's markets entered a decline in the 1980s, as changing social, economic, and technological factors provided alternative ways of retailing and occupying time. The markets ceased to be financially valuable and became a cost to the Council, and, as public surveys have shown, increasingly did not offer goods and services attractive to many people. However, experience from Northampton and elsewhere has shown it is possible to draw people back to markets, and make them a vibrant and attractive part of a thriving centre. Using those lessons is central to the approach proposed, as is responding to public views. In surveys, people called for a range of quality products and events, including specialist markets.

The 'new' Market Square is central to the rejuvenation of the markets, but they will also benefit from, and support, a wide range of changes in the town centre, including the renewal of the Grosvenor Centre, the introduction of STACK, the regeneration of Greyfriars, and wider developments.

It is therefore proposed to:

- a) Procure specialist and event markets to work alongside the regular markets.
- b) Continue actions already underway to ensure the environment is welcoming to market customers.
- c) Invest in the existing traders, helping them to move into the 'new' market with confidence and the right approach.
- d) Adopt a new approach to management of the regular markets, so that all traders present are making a positive contribution to the whole, and there is a perception of quality.
- e) Develop and implement, with partners, an events and animation strategy.
- f) Explore developing indoor or semi-indoor markets as an additional level of attraction to Northampton.

Overall, these changes are expected to result in a step change in the experience of visiting the markets, drawing more people into central Northampton. They should also, over time, reduce the net costs of operation.

2. Introduction

The Council is currently engaged in the largest change to Northampton's Market Square in many decades, bringing a new atmosphere and potential. This forms part of a wider set of transformations of central Northampton, undertaken both by the Council and by the private sector. The purpose of this strategy is to re-establish Northampton's markets as a key driver of vibrancy in the town centre, taking advantage of the projects underway.

The markets have been at the centre of Northampton for many centuries. They have traded in Market Square since 1235 when Henry III forbade the selling of goods in the churchyard of All Saints and ordered that the markets be moved. The markets provided not only a place to buy, but an

experience of social interaction and vibrancy. As the town grew, the central role of the markets remained, although gradually diminished as fixed shops increasingly became major places for retailing. Nonetheless, the markets flourished. They reached a peak in the 1980s, with trade on the markets and in fixed shops mutually reinforcing the attractiveness of the town centre. After this, a decline set in, with out-of-town shopping, discount food retailers, and latterly the rise of Internet shopping, profoundly changed where people spent their money and time. From generating a surplus for the Council as owner of market rights, the market came to make a loss. Not only the markets, but their historic home in Northampton Market Square, underwent decline, with a loss of shops, perceived and actual anti-social behaviour, some poor quality development, and the physical quality of Market Square public realm declining over time.

The transformation works currently underway, in Market Square and in the surrounding areas, provides a key opportunity to bring the markets back into their central role in Northampton, playing a positive role in the future economic and social life of Northampton and the surrounding area.

3. Aim and objectives

The Council's aim for Northampton's markets, consistent with its Corporate Plan and Sustainability Strategy, is:

To create and sustain Northampton markets which support a flourishing and active central Northampton.

This is supported by the following objectives:

1. Operate markets with a varied high-quality range of traders.
2. Provide opportunities for local people to develop new businesses and create employment.
3. Engage local students including with opportunities relating to their courses.
4. Support an active and attractive Market Square.
5. Over time, to achieve at least a break-even for delivering the markets.

4. Current condition of the markets

4.1 Context

The markets are currently located in the Commercial Street car park, Northampton, whilst the regeneration works in Market Square take place (see below). It is therefore necessary to consider the condition of the markets prior to their relocation to Commercial Street as well as reflect on the experience of operating at Commercial Street.

4.2 Overall position

At its peak in the 1980s the market had 225 stalls and generated significant revenues for the Council. The number of days the market operated was increased, reflecting demand. Since that time the number of stalls has declined, with the overall quality of the market also declining. Before the Market Square regeneration project got underway, there were 24 permanent stall holders and 11 that operated on pay as you go basis. The market ran from Monday – Saturday, but with Monday providing fresh fruit, vegetables and cut flowers and plants only. A sizeable portion of the current semi-permanent market stalls were not occupied.

In 2021/22 the markets were subsidised by the Council: expenditure of £289k against income of £177k left a deficit of £112k. Further details can be found in Table 1. The figures for 2022/23 are

partly, and those for 2023/24 wholly, affected by the temporary relocation to Commercial Street and the removal of trading fees during that time and therefore should not be regarded as comparable with previous years. Conversely, 2020/21 was particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore cannot be considered a guide to market net costs in normal times (2019/20 and 2021/22 were also affected, but to a lesser extent).

Table 1: Market income and expenditure over time

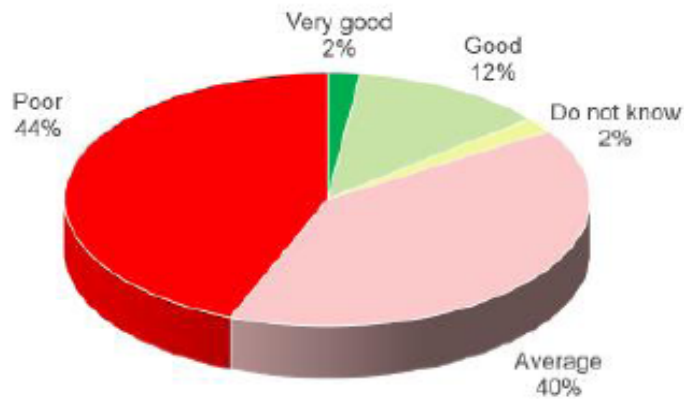
	£k						
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Employment costs					178	186	195
Professional fees and services					18	18	18
Business rates					45	35	0
Refuse					14	20	18
Vehicle expenses					10	18	18
Advertising					4	4	4
Licences (footfall monitoring)					10	10	10
Sundry items					9	10	10
Actual/projected expenditure	358	331	331	272	289	301	273
Actual/projected income	(268)	(254)	(219)	(248)	(177)	(127)	0
Deficit/(surplus)	90	77	112	23	112	174	273

4.3 Public perceptions

The Council consulted on a masterplan for Northampton town centre in September 2019. The forward-looking elements of that consultation are considered below (see 5.3), but the public's recorded view of the quality of the market should be noted here. This is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: View on products and services available on the markets (September 2019)

What do you think of the current products and services available on the market?



Base: all answering question (n=548)

It can be seen that the markets were failing, to a very large degree, to attract people.

4.4 Market Square footfall

As shown in Figure 2, there was a 14% reduction in footfall from 2014 to 2019 (Figure 3 shows the location of the footfall counter with the market layout prior to the Market Square reconstruction works commencing).

Figure 2: West Northamptonshire Council Market Square monthly footfall figures 2014 – 2022

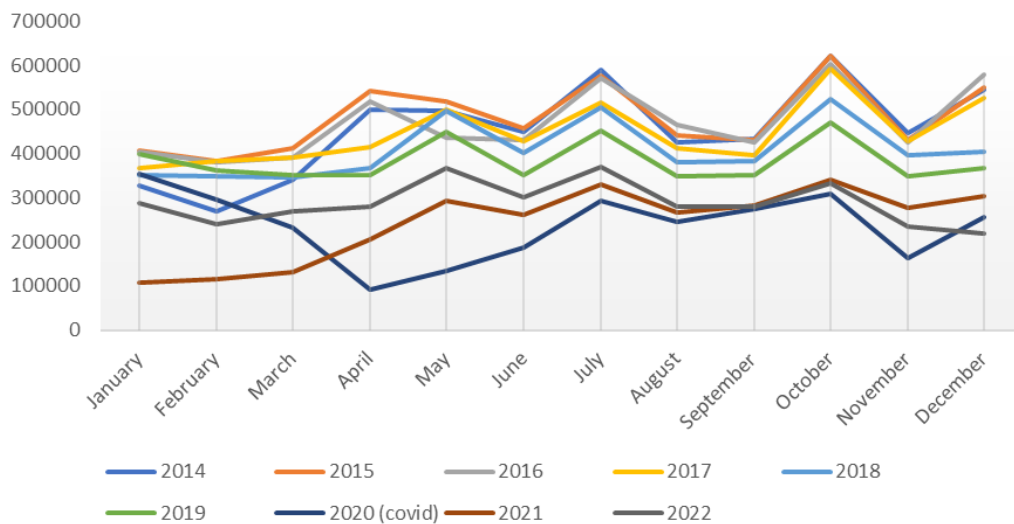
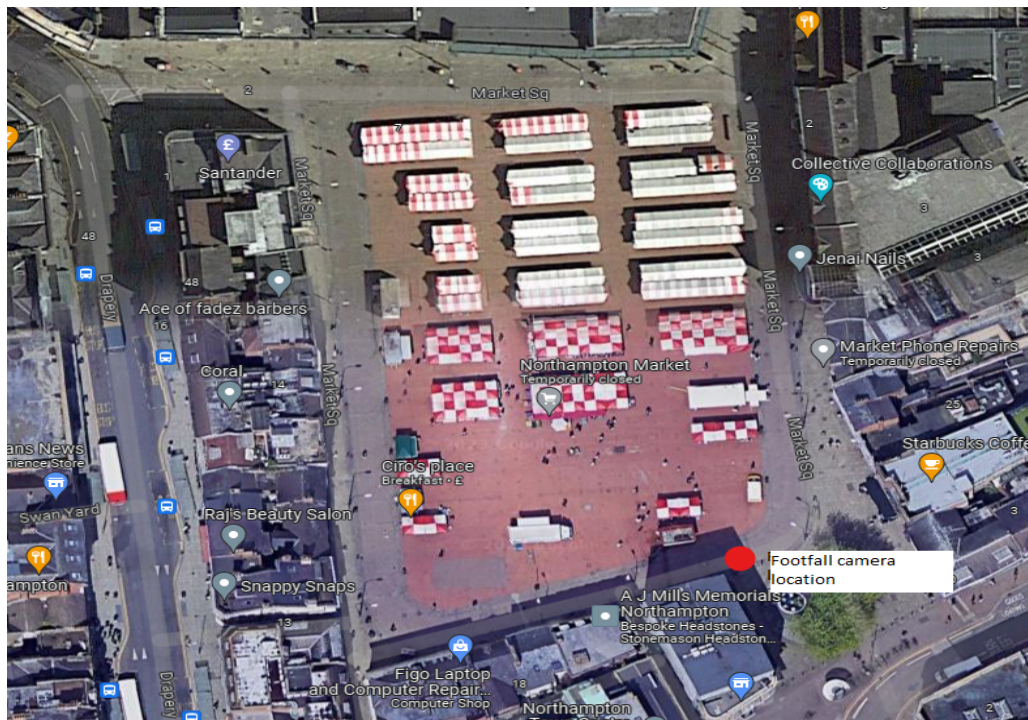


Figure 3: Footfall camera location and previous market layout



It is reasonable to assume that the perceived quality of the offer, both in the markets and the fixed shops (with an increase in vacant ground-floor buildings) has been a significant factor in the decline in use. The public engagement (see section 5.5) was clear that in addition to the limited offer provided by the market, it was important to create an environment which felt secure and clean.

4.5 Commercial Street experience

During its temporary relocation to Commercial Street, the market has struggled to attract shoppers except during some special events.

To assist the traders and working in collaboration with them, the Council commissioned an events programme for the summer of 2023. This included a beach similar to that used previously on the Market Square as well as crazy golf and circus skills workshops. Unfortunately, the particularly inclement weather throughout the summer, particularly at weekends, made it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from these activities other than to say that they were well attended when the sun shone. The market traders reported there was very little effect if any on their income during this period.

Two specialist markets were run in April and in July/August:

- A “Bite Street” street food event with a similar antiques and collectible offer. This was a success for all attending, proving that customers will spend if the offer is of sufficient quality. As the regular traders were not present the impact on their takings cannot be known.
- The traders also ran two ‘antiques & collectibles’ markets during the same period. These were well attended, although the regular market traders did not report an uplift in sales.

4.6 Conclusions

The conclusion to be drawn from the information available is that the regular market stalls are not capable of sustaining a viable and attractive market by themselves. Conversely, specialist markets,

offering higher quality, or at least different goods and experiences, do appear to be capable of being successful, even in the ‘off pitch’ area of Commercial Street.

It will also be essential to overcome the strong public perception of the area where the market is held as dirty and (at least at times) unsafe. However, achieving a perception of safe and clean should be regarded only as a starting point, on which an attractive offer can build successful markets.

The broader factors which can deliver a successful market are addressed below.

5. What makes successful markets?

5.1 Lessons from elsewhere

5.1.1 Introduction

Whilst Northampton has its own unique characteristics, many of the factors which make for a successful or unsuccessful market are common within England and indeed more widely. The summaries given in Appendix B set out how other markets with a degree of comparability are performing and what factors appear to have driven those changes, for good or ill. The focus is on markets in the surrounding area, but some examples from further afield are also given where these appear to teach useful lessons. These lessons from each market are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Market success factors from elsewhere

Location	Type	Changes over time	Factors appearing to be linked to success or failure
Leicester	Outdoor & food hall	Significant investment since 2014 including new food hall, events space, and outdoor covered market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website and social media channels are instrumental in the markets continuing success. • Constant investment has also been important.
Stratford-upon-Avon	Outdoor	Historic charter market operated by third party for last seven years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outsourcing the operation has been positive for this location, the operator offers a turnkey solution providing traders and the required infrastructure.
Warwick	Outdoor	Operated by third party for some time. Trying to add an additional Wednesday market was not successful as it was not supported by the surrounding businesses nor potential patrons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outsourcing the operation has been a success for Warwick, the operator offers a turnkey solution providing traders and the required infrastructure. • Extending operating days may fail if there is insufficient demand.
Coventry	Indoor	Little has changed with the market since built in 1958.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small events and a social media presence helps generate footfall.

Location	Type	Changes over time	Factors appearing to be linked to success or failure
Kettering	Outdoor	Outsourced to private operator then back to Council again. Moved location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of location to busy shopping street had positive effect. • Town Council's introduction of events and social media channels has uncertain impact so far. • Use of third party event market operator did not seem to work.
Milton Keynes	Fixed outdoor	Privately operated for over 30 years, recently taken over by Milton Keynes Development Partnership (which is owned by Milton Keynes City Council).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing fixed, lockable units has been key to its success. • A number of small 'events' and high-quality food offer trials were not successful as a result of a combination of perception of low-quality offer, location, and effective competition from fixed food businesses.
Loughborough	Street	Thursday and Saturday only. Research showed that what was being sold on the market was not what the students wanted. New manager appointed in the past 18 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of research into customer demand was useful. • Strong ties with students making use of the market to sell their goods. Vintage markets attract the biggest crowds with a student led demographic. This has led to increased popularity of the regular market amongst students. • Use of digital marketing & web design intern/ apprentice to improve online footprint.
Nottingham	Indoor, outdoor	Very little has changed in the regular general markets, all of which have struggled to recover post Covid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insistence upon market trader business plans has shown some results with sustainability.
Norwich	Fixed outdoor	Complete refurbishment in 2006 installing new units but with same look and feel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on street food has increased occupancy rates and footfall.
Altrincham	Indoor	Refurbished as part of the town revival plan in 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street food and evening entertainment with themed

Location	Type	Changes over time	Factors appearing to be linked to success or failure
			markets keeps the space animated creating high footfall.

5.1.2 Success factors

Drawing from Table 3, the main factors which appear to have driven the success of markets are:

- Varied events and specialist markets supplementing the existing market offer drive a more diverse customer base.
- Street food traders are attracting new customers to markets.
- Consistently active websites and social media channels when used effectively provide positive engagement.
- Student presence, and market offer relating to that, can be useful.
- Contracting market operations to a third-party has proved successful in some instances. Private operators provide everything required for a successful market. They are also able to adapt to current trends quickly, using the multiple traders on their books.
- Asking for and reviewing business plans may help securing a better quality of trader.

5.2 Market operating models and their impact on success

There are various operating models that can be applied to markets. The current model employed in Northampton is local authority managed and has been so historically.

Studies were conducted into these operating models in 2010 by the then Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)¹. Whilst fairly old, the information is still relevant. The details are given below, with the case studies being taken directly from that document. The types of market operation are outlined in Table 3, and described in more detail Appendix C.

Table 4: Main types of market operating model

Type	Percentage of markets operated*
Local authority managed	84.7%
Fully privately managed	9.6%
Partnership model	5.7% (collectively)
Arms-length LLP	

Note: * According to the 2022/23 NAMBA markets survey

Based on the examples given in Appendix C, the nature of management appears to be less significant than the skills and experience of the management team, its freedom to act, and the ability to secure necessary investment. To the extent an operating model supports this, it may be beneficial.

5.3 Market Square masterplan consultation results

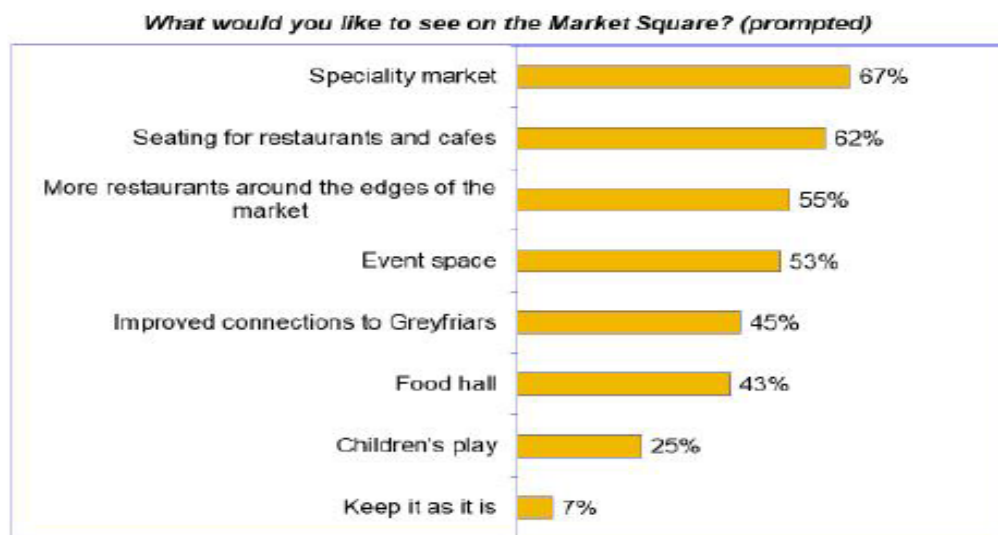
The Council consulted on a masterplan for Northampton town centre in September 2019. This identified two key themes:

¹ Retail Markets Management models, CLG, 2010.

- Improving the retail experience is essential.
- The need for greater provision of the food and drink offer. More than four out of five stakeholders thought that food and leisure use should be encouraged within the town centre.

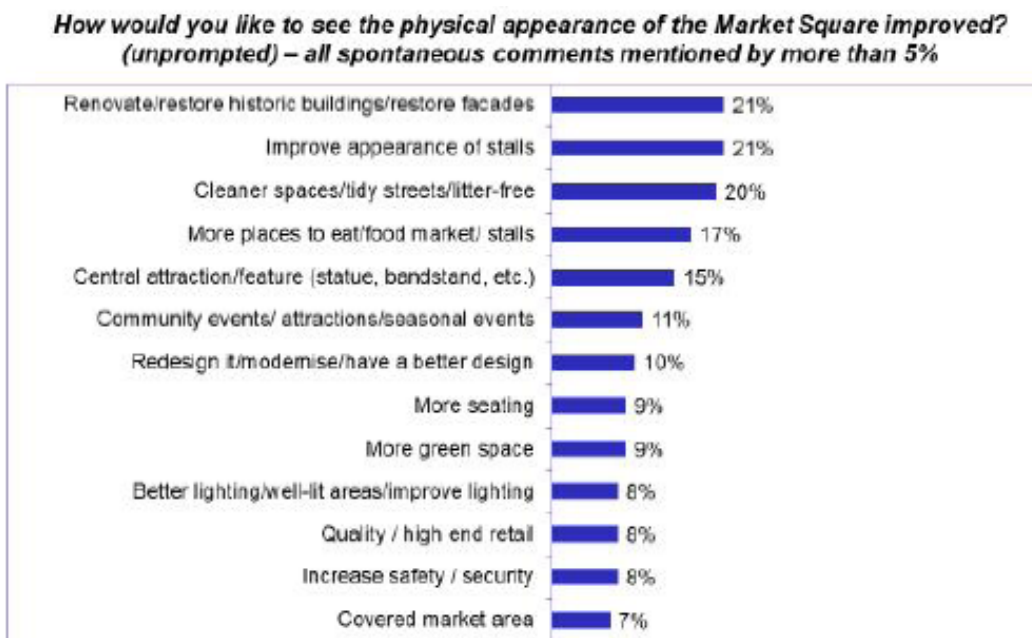
The consultation identified prompted (Figure 4) and unprompted (Figure 5) views on desirable improvements to the Market Square, and thus at least tangentially to the markets.

Figure 4: Prompted views on desirable changes to Market Square



Base: all answering question (n=547)

Figure 5: Unprompted views on desirable physical changes to Market Square



Base: all answering question (n=488)

In the prompted responses, it can be seen that support for speciality markets was the highest, at over two-thirds of prompted respondents, and that space for outdoor eating was apparently also strongly supported (explicitly in the second item and implicitly in the third). Whilst a food hall, also

strongly supported at 43%, cannot reasonably be provided in the Market Square, it is a possible market intervention for other locations.

Whilst all such 'customer' survey results should be treated with a degree of caution, as people's statements are not always reflected in their behaviour, at least a general indication of the types of things likely to lead to successful markets may be gained from these results.

5.4 Northampton Market Square Viability Study (Quarterbridge)

The Council commissioned Quarterbridge to make proposals for the development of the markets. Quarterbridge is a specialist markets consultancy and also part of a group which operates markets on a commercial basis. This link to commercial operations is a potential source of bias but also provides very useful access to practical knowledge of making successful markets. The final report was published in December 2021.

Quarterbridge's advice, taking into account the physical changes planned for Market Square (see section 6) was, in summary:

- Adopt lockable, physically secure fixed units. These should account for traders' varying needs and must not be designed to a one-size-fits-all model.
- Provide pop up stalls to enable flexibility for the increasing population of transient market traders.
- Provide good quality seating around the square.
- Create a flexible, serviced space.
- Create a regular programme of events and activities to draw footfall and use the market square as the focus for community and civic life in Northampton, keeping the space animated.
- A strong brand and social media presence with a robust marketing and promotions strategy posting daily content is necessary to realise the market's full potential.
- Further resource is required for marketing and events.
- Every effort must be made to discourage anti-social behaviour.

5.5 Northampton Market Square community engagement report

The Council commissioned the Social Integrated Agency to carry out a community engagement consultation from February to April 2022. Figures 6 and 7 are the most relevant results when considering what is likely to be successful for the markets.

Figure 6: Responses to ‘What type of businesses would you like to see on the Market Square?’

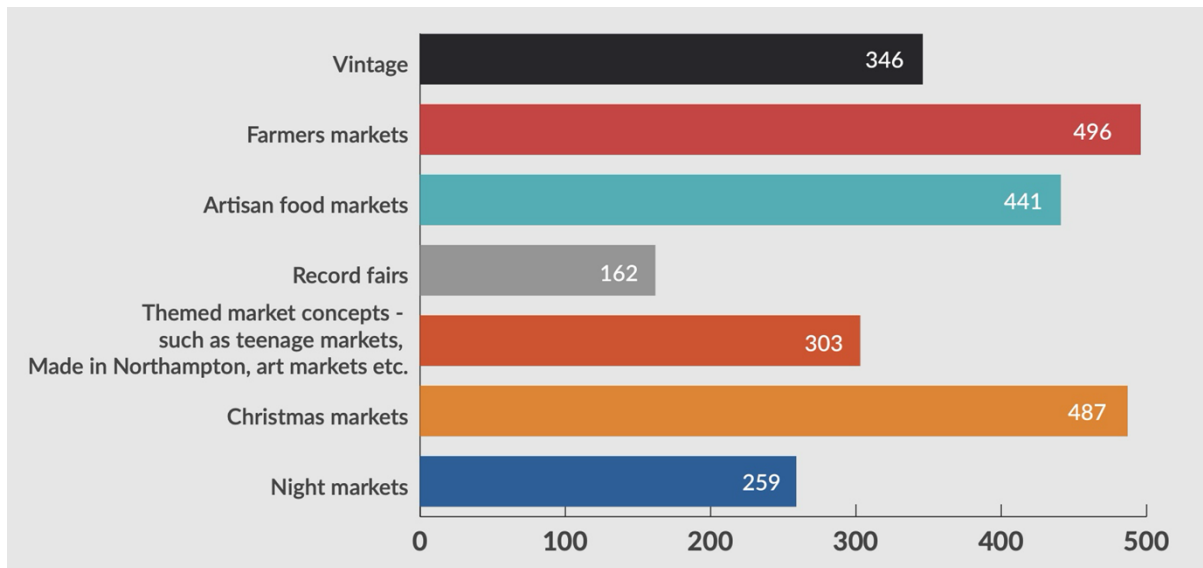
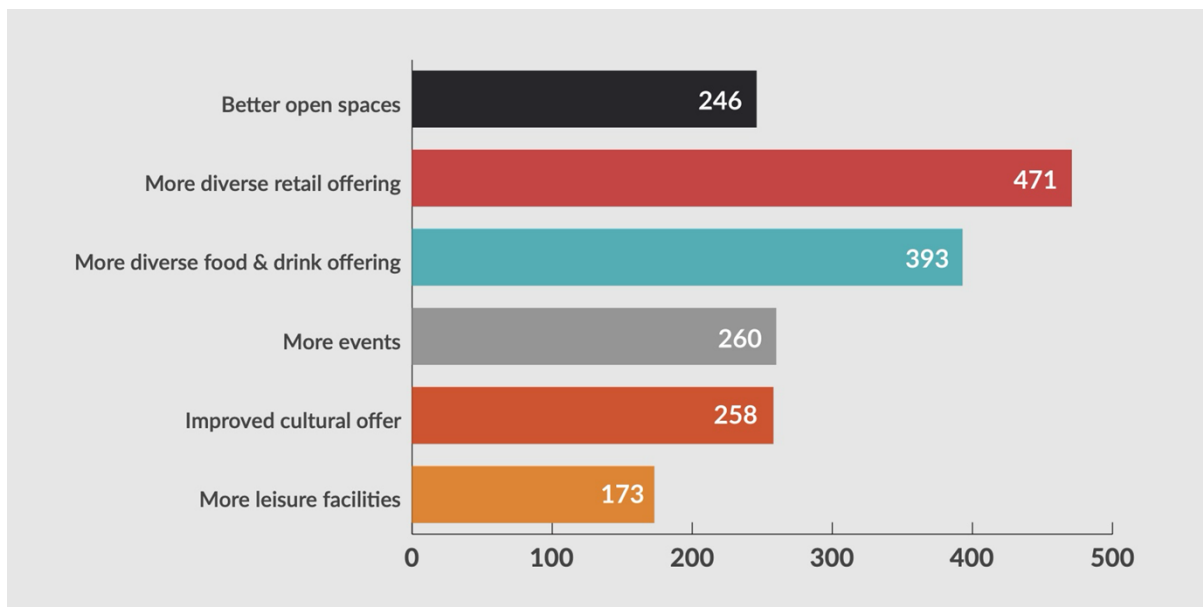


Figure 7: Responses to ‘What would make you want to spend a day in the town centre?’



There was overwhelming support for the market operating ‘pop up’ stalls for people to try new businesses.

There was support for events, although most of those identified (outdoor theatre, outdoor cinema, big screens for major sporting events, and leisure and sporting activities) may not support markets to a great extent as they can absorb people’s whole attention, meaning that whilst they may be in the town centre they do little shopping. The ideal form of event for a market is one which allows interspersed shopping and engagement. The most popular suggestion, live music, can work in this way; this is reflected in STACK’s business model (see 6.3).

The following quotations from the report illustrate the types of market content people said would attract them.

“It just needs to be more “happening” – quirky stalls and decent events will help with that.”

“I love the fresh fruit and veg stalls but I would be encouraged to stay longer if there were stalls selling different foods, street foods and maybe live music or entertainers etc. It would be great if it had the atmosphere of somewhere like Covent Garden.”

“More business surrounding the market that do food, coffee etc. with tables and chairs outside making a family friendly culture more like you see abroad.”

These conclusions are similar to those of the previous studies, and thus reinforce the messages that they identified.

6. Changing context

6.1 Physical transformation of Market Square and Abington Street

The Council has committed to a physical transformation of Market Square; construction work is currently underway. The £12m investment to create an attractive and welcoming environment for visitors is seen as the catalyst regeneration project for the Town Centre attracting increased footfall and leveraging substantial private investment in Northampton.

The aspiration for the Market Square was set out² as follows:

An aspiration for this project is to deliver meaningful change within the heart of the town centre. Following the redevelopment the market must feel like a completely new experience for customers, appealing to a wider demographic. This can be achieved through a combination of infrastructure change, public realm design and operational interventions.

The Market Square must be seen as, and operated as, more than just a trading space. It should be an active and animated space in which music, street food, speciality markets and regular events can be found, integrating seamlessly with the regular market operations to provide a high-quality customer experience.

Following the redevelopment, the market should feel like an exciting new space, creating meaningful change.

Figure 8 shows an indicative layout based on user mix proposed in the report and Figure 9 as Market Square is currently being constructed. The entrance to STACK (see 6.3) is highlighted.

² Northampton Market Square viability study, October 2021. Appendix 1.

Figure 8: Indicative layout from Northampton Market Square viability study (October 2021)

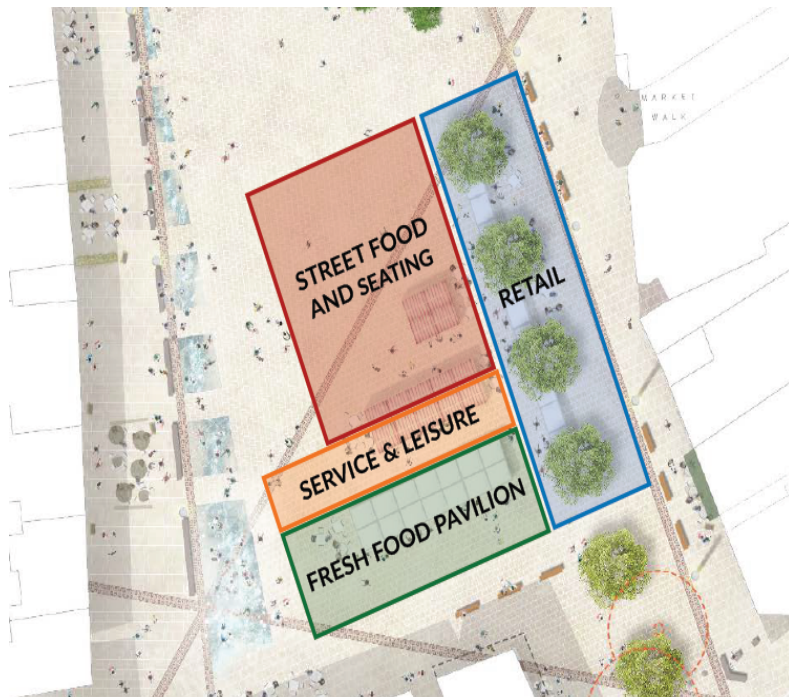
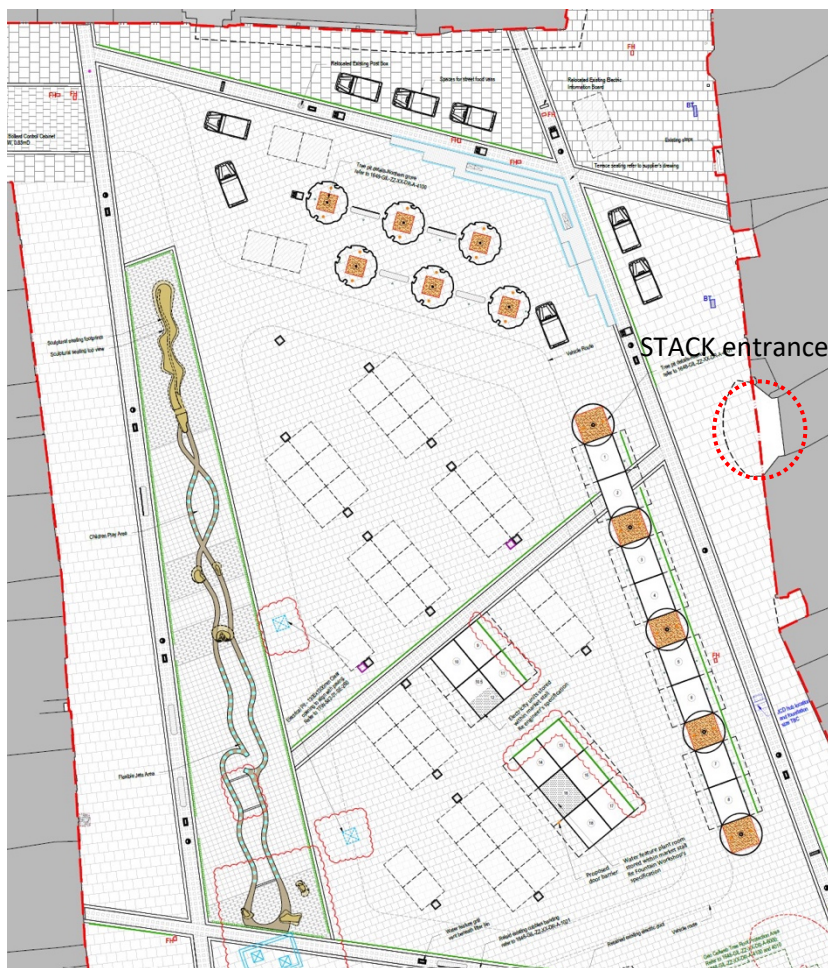


Figure 9: General arrangement for the scheme final design



The 'new' Market Square will provide:

- 16 fixed market stalls with a total trading area of 192m² (12m², c.130ft², per stall). These would be capable of being locked, allowing goods to remain when trading is not occurring.
- 19 locations for demountable market stalls with a total trading area of 171m² (9m², c.97ft², per stall). These would be much lighter structures, suitable for being removed each evening if required.
- A further 26 locations for demountable market stalls in the events space with a potential total trading area of 234m². This allows for flexible extension of the market. Additionally, if useful it is still possible to locate demountable stalls in other locations, using weights to secure them.
- Up to 10 locations for food concession vehicles.
- A large, tiered seating area and ample seating to accommodate the general public.

The works on Market Square will be complemented by works to renew the physical layout of Abington Street. Particularly at the western end of Abington Street, this should provide a more attractive context for activities taking place in the Market Square, including the markets.

6.2 Renewal of the Grosvenor Centre

The Grosvenor Centre is a large shopping centre built in the 1970s. Historically it had a helpful synergy with the markets in Market Square, as large numbers of people passed into and out of the Grosvenor Centre through Market Square. However, like many such centres, the Centre entered into a period of decline with shops closing and footfall decreasing. However, it has now been acquired by Evolve Estates, an active asset manager which has stated it intends to remain the owner for the long term and is therefore seeking to enhance the uses of the Centre in both retail and leisure sectors.

It is therefore likely that pedestrian flows through Market Square will increase over time. The Centre may also, in the longer term, open later into the evening.

6.3 Introduction of STACK into Market Walk

The Council has supported the introduction of STACK into the disused Market Walk shopping arcade. STACK is a leisure operator providing a range of up to ten street food 'stalls', bar, and leisure within a covered environment, but ideally spilling out into the adjacent area. Based on STACK's performance in other cities and towns, it is expected to achieve a footfall between one and three million per year. As even in a good year existing footfall was something like five million per year (see Figure 2), this suggests the impact of STACK may be to significantly increase footfall locally.

STACK Northampton is expected to be open all days of the week, from 10 am to late with daily live music and entertainment.

6.4 Greyfriars regeneration

Whilst a longer-term project, it is relevant to the context of the markets that the Council is working up a masterplan for the regeneration of the wider Greyfriars area (see Figure 10). Over time this is likely to result in a large number of new dwellings being built on the site. This should provide an increased market for the goods and services sold on Northampton markets. Whilst this is unlikely to generate any significant benefit before, say, 2029 it should be borne in mind for longer-term market developments.

Figure 10: Greyfriars Masterplan area



The emerging thinking on the masterplan is that there will only be a small amount of retail and business space, given Greyfriars' location immediately adjacent to the town centre. However, it is expected that the master plan will propose that Emporium Way becomes a focus for small-scale retail and leisure activities. This is intended to make it an active and safe space; it would also help deliver the public desire for 'Improved connections to Greyfriars' (see Figure 4).

6.5 Four Waterside and Mare Fair development

A further major development scheme is expected to bring a range of houses, a hotel, and grade A office space to the area between Greyfriars and Northampton Station. The Council has procured a development partner to deliver this scheme. Whilst somewhat more distant from the core town centre than the Greyfriars scheme, this development also offers the potential for a new customer base for the market, including residents, hotel residents, and occupiers of the office space.

6.6 Student presence

The main campus of Northampton University, home to over 16,000 students, relocated to a site known as Waterside, around 1.1km on foot from Market Square, in 2018. This should have benefited the town centre, including the market. A new (private sector) student accommodation block is currently being constructed on the Drapery, close to Market Square, and more student accommodation appears likely to be constructed in the town centre.

In 2023/24 the average student will spend circa £133 per month on groceries, £66pm on takeaways and eating out and £48pm on clothes and shopping³. If just 10% of this across the 16,000 students was spent in the market it would equate to £4.7million of turnover or nearly £50,000 pa per stall if there were 100 stalls. Whilst of course such numbers are only indicative, they give an idea of the scale of potential from better serving the student market.

6.7 Car parking changes

The Council is reviewing its strategy for managing car parking serving central Northampton as demands change and, in particular, the Mayorhold multi-storey car park (MSCP) is reaching the end of its life. It seems likely that within a few years the Mayorhold MSCP will have been removed. The other three MSCPs (Grosvenor Centre, St John's, and St Michael's) are all likely to remain for many decades. A new MSCP is proposed at Northampton Train Station, but this is dependent on the scheme becoming financially viable, and it may therefore not be built. More generally, the Council will be developing a parking strategy for central Northampton. This will seek to ensure there is sufficient parking whilst supporting an attractive place to enjoy on foot. This should support the markets.

7. Analysis

7.1 Introduction

As the Market Square viability study noted, the Market Square transformation project will deliver an enhanced environment, but it is vital that the space is animated appropriately with a quality, diverse and financially sustainable market. Without this, the regeneration works will not achieve their full potential.

³ www.finder.com/uk/student-spending-statistics

The section of the Plan assesses the factors likely to lead to success or failure for the markets, and how the Council can plan for success.

7.2 SWOT analysis

Northampton's markets have a range of strengths and weaknesses and face a range of opportunities and threats. Some of these are outlined above, in section 6. To help understand the factors and consider what they mean for delivering successful markets, a SWOT analysis has been conducted.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>S1. Historic identity.</p> <p>S2. Large open space with room to grow the market.</p> <p>S3. Proximity to bus interchange and car parking.</p> <p>S4. Proximity to main shopping areas.</p> <p>S5. Established community and civic events calendar</p>	<p>W1. Weak existing offer.</p> <p>W2. Vulnerability to the weather.</p> <p>W3. Poor quality public realm.</p> <p>W4. Limited complementary retail in fixed shops.</p> <p>W5. Actual or perceived anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>W6. Lack of brand identity and online/social media presence</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>O1. New physical Market Square layout.</p> <p>O2. Grosvenor Centre renewal.</p> <p>O3. Introduction of STACK.</p> <p>O4. Emporium Way re-invention (as part of Greyfriars regeneration).</p> <p>O5. New access provision as part of parking strategy.</p> <p>O6. Access to spaces for indoor markets.</p> <p>O7. Multiple developments, including conventional and student accommodation, offices, and hotel, in the proximity.</p> <p>O8. Interest from speciality market operators.</p>	<p>T1. Introduction of STACK.</p> <p>T2. Loss of Mayorhold MSCP.</p> <p>T3. Further development of Internet shopping and leisure.</p> <p>T4. Lack of interest in running market stalls.</p> <p>T5. Grosvenor Centre potential competitive development of 'micro shops'.</p>

7.3 Constraints

The Council has wide choices about how it operates the Northampton markets. However, there are practical and legal constraints which do constrain those choices.

The Council is permitted to operate markets under the Food Act 1984 as applied by the Northampton Act 1988. This means that the special powers previously held by the Corporation of Northampton and latterly Northampton Borough Council ceased to apply in 1988. However, the definition of 'market' in the Food Act is extended by the Northampton Act to include fairs, and the power to open a market to include a power to close or move it.

The practical effect of this is that the Council's ability to hold a market on the highway (which most of central Northampton not built on, a churchyard, or open space is) is limited to:

- a) Those places where highway rights are subject to market rights. This is a matter of fact, with highway rights overriding market rights if 20 years pass when no market is held. In consequence, it appears that only in Market Square can markets be held on this basis.

- b) Where legislation allows markets or street trading more generally to take place. This is a complex area of law.

Additionally, there is case law defining, although without complete precision, what a 'market' is. This is essentially a concourse of buyers and sellers. Essentially this relates to the ability of people to turn up and trade, although this does not require unfettered access. However, it does limit how long the Council can commit any particular stall or pitch to one trader. 13 weeks is often taken as the limit for a legal commitment to any specific trader in a (legal) market.

Where the Council is not relying on market rights or powers to hold a market as defined in law (for example, stalls not on highway) these limitations do not apply. In those cases, the Council can use its normal powers to 'dispose' of land (let it out) and there are no particular limits on lengths of agreements.

7.4 What does this mean for Northampton markets?

It is clear that Northampton town centre is at the start of a significant programme of change with the Market Square being the first in a string of regeneration schemes. New housing, student accommodation, hotel places, and offices will present a new opportunity for the Northampton markets if they are positioned correctly. The refreshed appearance of the centre offers an opportunity to recapture its place, with the market as part of that, as a centre for Northampton as whole, and the villages beyond.

The evidence from trading data, the master plan, and consultations is that change is required, some of which has already been addressed in the schemes currently under construction. This Plan must ensure that we curate a cleaner, safer space with a diverse offer that attracts demographics from across Northamptonshire and beyond. A high quality offer with strong brand identity is important and will be fundamental to success, as will an active online presence. We must also take advantage of the opportunities presented by STACK and the renewal of the Grosvenor Centre; this will involve both co-operation and healthy competition with them.

Opportunities to expand the offer of the markets must also be explored, whether in space surrounding Market Square or separate premises.

8. Proposals

8.1 Introduction

To ensure the market provides a vibrant and diverse offer which is attractive to the residents of West Northamptonshire and its visitors, it is vital to get the basics right first time at the same time as curating the experience. This is addressed by exploring the normal outdoor markets as well as 'event' markets, and the potential for indoor and/or semi-indoor market spaces in the centre of Northampton.

8.2 Strategic choice – 'make or buy'

The Council has a strategic choice about whether to continue to operate the markets itself ('make'), or to bring in an operator ('buy'). Examples elsewhere (see above) indicate that a commercial operator can bring significant benefits. However, it is not a 'magic bullet' and some councils have concluded they are better able to make their markets successful by bringing operation back in house.

It was notable that in soft market engagement operators expressed at least a theoretical willingness to operate events markets in central Northampton, and even pay the Council a fee for this.

For the present, it is proposed that:

- a) Regular markets will continue to be run by the Council, with the changes in approach outlined below.
- b) Operators of specialist and event markets (see 8.6) will be procured.
- c) After two to three years, the operation of both will be reviewed and consideration given to whether the results suggest further changes would be beneficial.

This approach should allow the Council to manage risks and costs, whilst maximising the opportunity to enhance the markets' offer to Northampton and the surrounding area.

8.3 Ensuring a good starting point

In addition to positive steps, which are covered in the section below, the Council needs to eliminate, at far as possible, negative factors which discourage people from visiting and spending time in and around Market Square. These factors are actual or perceived anti-social behaviour, and perceived 'dirtiness', which is largely associated with the presence of commercial waste bins and matter surrounding them.

The Council is therefore:

- a) Ensuring the Market Square and surrounding area is a focus for attention to proactively address anti-social behaviour, including through use of its neighbourhood wardens and by working with the Police.
- b) Developing and implementing a strategy to remove visible commercial waste storage on and around Market Square.
- c) Ensuring there is a high level of cleansing of Market Square and its surroundings.
- d) Ensuring there is rapid and effective repair of damage to the surface or fittings of Market Square.

8.4 Existing traders

The Council values the contribution of those who traded for a significant period on Market Square prior to the start of rebuilding, and of those who traded substantially at Commercial Street during that period. It wants to help them secure their future in the 'new' Northampton markets. To this end it will:

- a) Provide each eligible trader⁴ with a package of support including formal business training, and a mentor.
- b) Allow each eligible trader a period of six months prior to charging rent on demountable stalls and food concession pitches needed for their business.

8.5 Regular outdoor markets

As identified above, there are substantial opportunities to grow the regular outdoor markets. To take advantage of these, the Council will:

- a) Plan the layout and uses of stalls to address the expected patterns of movement, especially once STACK opens.

⁴ A detailed definition of eligible traders will be developed, covering those who traded for significant periods.

- b) As appropriate, operate different days or zones, potentially branded as different markets, so that the attraction of the core market is not diluted with stalls which undermine its character. These could be, for example, the 'new business' market.
- c) Require traders to meet defined quality standards, including the appropriate use of sustainable products and packaging.
- d) Give priority when allocating stalls to those market traders who submit a business plan showing they are likely to have a successful business and whose presence would contribute to the success of the market. In particular, traders who do not meet these requirements would not be allocated a fixed stall.
- e) As a partial exception to (d) above, provide access to time-limited low-cost stalls for start-up businesses, including opportunities for university and college students. Whilst these stalls would not be required to demonstrate credible business plans, they would need to show they had a product or service which (i) was likely to be attractive to buyers, and (ii) would be likely to contribute to the success of the market overall. It is likely these stalls would be in a distinct zone, advertised for its experimental offer.
- f) Develop relationships with the University of Northampton Arts & Design and other relevant units, and similarly with Northampton and Moulton Colleges, to provide a channel for students and staff to trade on the market.
- g) Providing all traders who appear likely to benefit from it with business support provided by WNC's Economic Growth & Inward Investment team and partners.
- h) Develop and sustain a strong social media presence for the markets.
- i) Develop a communications strategy for traders, including work to attract suitable traders, with a particular focus on those identified as desired in the consultations, such as quality fresh food/produce and street food offers, baker, delicatessen, and fishmonger.
- j) If the actions described in this Plan are particularly successful, develop additional market zones in suitable places in central Northampton, allowing for a greater variety of trading and supporting the vibrancy of Northampton town centre.

As further specific action in support of the markets re-opening on Market Square the Council will:

- k) Provide fit-out of fixed stalls designed to meet the needs of the traders' businesses. A capital budget of £50,000 is set aside for this.
- l) Use the Business and IP Centre (BIPC) business support programme or similar arrangements (funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)) to provide business support for traders on the Northampton markets.

The Council would, of course, continue to require that all traders met legal and regulatory standards including those for hygiene and display.

To capture the above formally, the Council intends to produce a Balance of Trade Policy.

8.6 Specialist and event markets

Specialist markets were a key resident desire, as disclosed in the various consultations discussed above. They are also, as seen elsewhere, a potentially powerful tool to bring people into central Northampton, making the place more vibrant and enjoyable, and supporting the viability of town centre businesses.

The Council will therefore procure a range of specialist and event markets, such as vintage clothing, vinyl records, farmers', Christmas, and continental markets, with an aim of 15 in 2025 increasing to 26 by 2028. These should, overall, not incur cost and may generate some income for the Council

(some markets may come at a cost, and others make an income, with the aim being to at least break even overall).

These markets should make a marked impact on the vibrancy and attractiveness of central Northampton.

Practically, to ensure continuity of the core market offer, these event or specialist markets would run alongside the traders using the fixed stalls and, in most cases, also those in the core area for demountable stalls.

8.7 Events

Aside from event or specialist markets, other events are valuable in their own right and also, if designed correctly, support successful market trading. Animating Market Square successfully will improve the public perception of Northampton as a destination which in turn will increase footfall. The events space being created will act as the civic and community hub for Northampton and will be valued by residents, visitors and businesses. The market square already hosts a rich and diverse mix of events; this can be built on.

The Quarterbridge report stated:

“Event markets must sit within a wider town centre events and animations strategy. Establishing a programme of events will be a challenge, nevertheless, developing a programme of event markets, which will start small and be nurtured, alongside heavy promotion and discount stall fees will be crucial to reviving Northampton’s reputation as a market town.

However, events don’t have to be large-scale to be effective. A ‘little and often’ animation strategy which makes every trip to the town centre feel like an experience can be hugely beneficial, changing perception of the town at lower cost than a major events programme.

This can be through encouraging or commissioning buskers and musicians, bringing in street food and café culture, offering family-friendly performers and face painters and co-ordinating ‘treasure trails’ in shop fronts across the town centre.”

The Council will therefore:

- a) Develop and implement a town centre events and animation strategy.
- b) Intensify its engagement with Northampton BID, Northampton Town Council, and other key stakeholders to secure the delivery of a varied and interesting events programme in and around the Market Square.

These events may include opportunities such as for major sporting events such the Rugby World Cup in 2027, cultural activities, and celebrations of local heritage and identity.

8.8 Indoor markets?

It is notable from consultations there is strong support for an improved food offer or to have a food hall. There is also a wider interest in ‘vintage’ and other non-standard products, and general strong support for a more diverse retail offer. It is unlikely all of this demand can be met in Market Square or even in other outdoor locations in the centre of Northampton.

The Greyfriars masterplan is also likely to recommend that Emporium Way becomes a focus for small-scale retail and leisure activities. This will help it be a secure and welcoming environment. Since Emporium Way is under cover, although open on one side, it represents partially indoor environment. It is also immediately adjacent to the Market Square. As Emporium Way is not highway, the restrictions on lettings of stalls mentioned in 7.3 do not apply.

Looking further ahead, there is potential to develop a fully indoor market (again, not one subject to the constraints of a legal market) in disused or poorly used space in the town centre. This would provide further opportunities for vintage sales, for a food court, and for art and craft activities.

The Council will therefore:

- a) Develop proposals for semi-indoor market operation in Emporium Way. This would provide locations for traders who need a more settled location than Market Square can provide, or services not available in it.
- b) Explore and if appropriate implement an indoor market, to extend the range of what can be offered.

9. Expected impacts including financial implications

9.1 Stall fees

It is necessary for the purposes of assessing practical and financial implications to define a starting point for stall fees for Market Square. In order to apply a fair yet commercial set of fees and charges, Northampton markets' most recent fees, a desktop survey of markets within a forty mile radius, correspondence with markets that have similar permanent stalls, a 2022 survey of markets conducted by Wakefield markets team, NABMA national markets survey 2022 and the recommendations of the Northampton Market Square Viability Study have been reviewed and taken into account.

Northampton's historic fees and charges were complicated and required a disproportionate amount of administration, comprising of different charges for each day and seasonality reductions for the 'kipper season' or leaner months of January to March.

Table 5 shows the mean average existing charges, Northampton Market Square viability study recommendations and the proposed charges for the market square per day, based on the findings of the information gathered and considering the use types suggested within the viability study. Careful consideration has been given to existing rental levels and ongoing commercial sustainability.

Table 5: Proposed starting daily fees and charges per day

Type	Proposed charges, £	
	Per stall	Per m ² of stall
Demountable stalls	15	1.67
Fixed stalls	30	2.50
Mobile food units (pitch only)	30	N/A

Fees would change each year, and if necessary more frequently, typically reflecting inflation but also changes in demand and performance of traders. The rate for fixed stalls is set 50% higher than demountable stall per square metre, reflecting the additional benefits traders would receive from using them.

Electricity use would be covered by charges to traders. Where possible this will be metered, where this is not possible a reasonable approximation will be used to set a service charge.

Waste disposal would be charged to traders, where possible based on cost of disposal for each trader's waste, but where necessary based on reasonable approximations of waste disposal costs by

type of trading. Traders would be encouraged to re-use and recycle packaging and other materials, to reduce residual waste.

As referred to in 8.5(e), for start-up businesses lower rates would be offered.

9.2 Expected take-up

By creating a more attractive environment supported by removal of the negative factors and addition of positive actions, as well as the support from the Council's wider approach such as the opening of STACK, it is expected that take-up of stalls will increase, both initially and over time. Whilst it is not possible to be precise about these effects, those set out in Table 6 are considered reasonable. In preparing them, reference has been had to the scenarios from the Northampton Markets Viability Study. To be conservative, the lowest numbers have been used; it will be seen that even this requires the use of demountable stalls in the additional area. This model is based on achieving a total of 630m² (6,800ft²) of trading space. It is assumed this is achieved in the fifth full year (2029/30), with each year before that being 5% lower than the one before. Mobile food units are treated as having a nominal trading area of 9m² for these purposes. Of course, single traders may well use more than one stall.

Table 6: Projected stall occupation over time

Type	Max	Year				
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Demountable stalls core area	19	19	19	19	19	19
Demountable stalls additional area	26*	9	10	11	13	17
Fixed stalls	16	16	16	16	16	16
Mobile food units (pitch only)	Circa 10	6	8	9	10	10

Note: * This may be increased through the use of weighted stalls.

9.3 Income projections

The income projections in Table 7 are based on the occupancies shown in Table 6. For these purposes no inflation is allowed for, as this is uncertain and would affect both income and costs. The projections are based on the costs per stall or pitch per day given in 9.1 together with the assumptions as follows:

- 51 trading weeks per year.
- Mobile food units trade six days per week.
- Fixed stall traders five days per week.
- Traders from demountable stalls in the core area trade four days per week.
- Traders from demountable stalls in the additional area trade three days per week.

No net income is assumed from event or specialist markets.

Table 7: Projected income over time, £k

Type	Year				
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Demountable stalls core area	58	58	58	58	58
Demountable stalls additional area	21	23	25	30	39
Fixed stalls	122	122	122	122	122
Mobile food units (pitch only)	55	72	83	92	92
Total	256	275	288	302	311

9.4 Operating approach and costs

Estimated operating costs are shown in Table 8. These exclude (see below) additional costs for daily erection and dismantling of the demountable market stalls. The costs are based on the Council's draft 2024/25 budget, with a further inflationary 3% added, the 'vacancy factor' removed (this assumes some posts are vacant part of the time; this is impractical in a service such as the market), and a correction to the business rates costs based on the last rateable value of the market. Future business rates may be higher or lower but are likely to reflect, at least broadly, the performance of the market.

The staffing costs are based on the current staffing model (a Market & Urban Activities Manager, Markets Officer, and two Market Operatives. In practice some of the Manager and Officer's time is taken on non-market activities such as oversight of events on the Council's land. However, this may well be balanced by time from other staff in the Assets & Environment team and across the Council, such as Communications, supporting market activity.

Accordingly, the figure of £289k is used as a benchmark of the core cost of operating the markets.

Table 8: Estimated core operating costs

Cost area	£k
Business rates	26
Internal recharges	2
Maintenance and services	14
Marketing	5
Staff costs	211
Supplies	11
Transport	19
Total	289

However, as noted above, the vacant stalls on the market previously attracted anti-social behaviour. At the inception of the Market Square regeneration, the consultations and feedback from partners, including the Northampton Forward board, businesses and the public all highlighted this as an issue that could not continue into the reworked space. To help achieve this, the plan was the

demountable stalls would be erected and removed each day. Historic England also favoured the erection and dismantling of the stalls on a daily basis when contributing to the Market Square planning application.

The stalls will need to be stored and transported to and from site, erected by 6.30am and removed from 5.30pm up to seven days per week. To provide for this without efficiencies would be likely to require two additional operatives and associated equipment, at a cost in the over of £75k per year. Based on informal market soundings, this is comparable to the costs of achieving the same result by using a third-party contractor. However, it is considered that it should be possible to make efficiencies through greater internal alignment of services. A figure of £40k pa is therefore proposed as the net cost of enabling daily set-up and dismantling of the demountable market stalls. This would result in an overall market operating cost of £329k pa.

9.5 Overall financial impacts

It can be seen, based on Tables 7 and 8 and the discussion of additional costs of market break-down and set-up each day, there is a projected net loss of £73k in 2025/26, falling to £18k in 2029/30. Of course, given the number of factors which will affect success, both figures, and the net position in the intervening years, is liable to change, potentially significantly. However, as realistic position as possible has been presented. Subject to those caveats, Table 9 shows the expected yearly position (again, excluding inflationary effects).

Table 9: Projected net cost (income) over time, £k

Type	Year				
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Total income	-256	-275	-288	-302	-311
Costs	329	329	329	329	329
Net position	73	54	41	27	18

Once the market is established in the regenerated Market Square, these figures will be reassessed and any necessary changes to the Council’s medium term financial plan made.

10. Conclusions

The Council is seeking to capitalise on the valuable asset of the historic Northampton markets, coupled with the extensive investment in Market Square, Northampton, and the surrounding area. This development plan sets out a robust strategy for maximising opportunities to make the markets a success, not simply for their own sake but to help make central Northampton a vibrant and interesting place, building civic pride and identity.

11. Appendix A: Northampton Markets Development Plan Action Plan

This section sets out the actions needed to deliver the Development Plan. This plan will undergo regular review and refinement as part of the overall management review cycle. The abbreviations for service areas are 'A&E' for Assets & Environment, 'PS' for Place Shaping, 'CM' for Communications, 'H&C' for Housing & Communities, 'RS' for Regulatory Services, 'H&T' for Highways & Transport, 'WS' for Waste.

No.	Service areas	Source	Action	Target delivery date	Resources
1.	A&E	8.2(a)	Regular markets will continue to be run by the Council, with the changes in approach outlined below.	Immediate	Staff time
2.	A&E	8.2(b), 8.6)	Procured operators of specialist and event markets.	As soon as possible	Staff time
3.	A&E	8.2(c)	After two to three years, the operation of both will be reviewed and consideration given to whether the results suggest further changes would be beneficial.	2026	Staff time
4.	RS, H&C	8.3(a)	Ensuring the Market Square and surrounding area is a focus for attention to proactively address anti-social behaviour, including through use of its neighbourhood wardens and by working with the Police.	Immediate	Staff time
5.	RS, WS	8.3(b)	Developing and implementing a strategy to remove visible commercial waste storage on and around Market Square.	As soon as possible	Staff time
6.	WS	8.3(c)	Ensuring there is a high level of cleansing of Market Square and its surroundings.	From reopening of Market Square	Refocusing of existing contracted resources
7.	A&E, H&T	8.3(d)	Ensuring there is rapid and effective repair of damage to the surface or fittings of Market Square.	From market reopening in Market Square	Staff time, approved budgets

No.	Service areas	Source	Action	Target delivery date	Resources
8.	A&E, PS	8.4(a)	Eligible trader support package	As soon as possible	Staff time, existing grant budgets.
9.	A&E	8.4(b)	Allow each eligible trader a period of six months prior to charging rent on demountable stalls and food concession pitches needed for their business.	From market reopening in Market Square	None.
10.	A&E	8.5(a)	Plan the layout and uses of stalls to address the expected patterns of movement, especially once STACK opens.	From market reopening in Market Square	Staff time
11.	A&E	8.5(b)	As appropriate, operate different days or zones, potentially branded as different markets, so that the attraction of the core market is not diluted.	From market reopening in Market Square	Staff time
12.	A&E	8.5(c)	Require traders to meet defined quality standards.	From market reopening in Market Square	Staff time
13.	A&E	8.5(d)	Give priority when allocating stalls to those market traders who submit a business plan.	From market reopening in Market Square	Staff time
14.	A&E	8.5(e)	Provide access to time-limited low-cost stalls for start-up businesses, including opportunities for university and college students.	2025	Staff time
15.	A&E	8.5(f)	Develop relationships with the University of Northampton Arts & Design and other relevant units, and similarly with Northampton and Moulton Colleges.	2025	Staff time
16.	PS, A&E	8.5(g)	Providing all traders who appear likely to benefit from it with business support provided by WNC's Economic Growth & Inward Investment team and partners.	From market reopening in Market Square	Staff time, existing grant budgets

No.	Service areas	Source	Action	Target delivery date	Resources
17.	CM, A&E	8.5(h)	Develop and sustain a strong social media presence for the markets.	From market reopening in Market Square	Staff time
18.	CM, A&E	8.5(i)	Develop a communications strategy for traders, including work to attract suitable traders.	Immediate	Staff time
19.	A&E	8.5(j)	If the actions described in this Plan are particularly successful, develop additional market zones in suitable places	2026	Staff time
20.	PS, A&E	8.5(k)	Use the BIPC business support programme or similar arrangements to provide business support for traders on the Northampton markets.	As soon as possible	Staff time, existing grants
21.	PS, CM	8.7(a)	Develop and implement a town centre events and animation strategy.	Immediate	Staff time, approved budgets
22.	PS, CM	8.7(b)	Intensify engagement with key stakeholders to secure the delivery of a varied and interesting events programme in and around the Market Square.	Immediate	Staff time, approved budgets
23.	A&E	8.8(a)	Develop proposals for semi-indoor market operation in Emporium Way.	2026	Staff time
24.	A&E	8.8(b)	Explore and if appropriate implement an indoor market	2027	Staff time

12. Appendix B: Lessons from elsewhere

12.1.1 *Leicester market*

Leicester traditionally had a large market, with mix of fixed and table top stalls in a covered area with an indoor market provision close by. This market has always been regarded in the industry as an exemplar. However, Leicester's vision for the future has seen significant investment to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

The Council embarked on a significant investment programme despite the markets' success and in 2014 a new £7 million food hall was opened to accommodate the fresh meat, fish, deli, and bakery businesses, replacing the run-down indoor market. In addition, the creation of a new high quality public square to stage specialist markets and events and festivals was completed in 2019, the purpose being to drive additional footfall, aiding the regeneration of the area. This was the first part in the transformation of the market area, phase two commenced in 2023 with a £7.5 million upgrade to the outdoor covered and fixed stalls area.

Leicester operates an excellent independent website promoting the traders and events and has active social media accounts with over 9,000 Facebook and nearly 10,000 followers on X (formerly Twitter).

12.1.2 *Stratford-Upon-Avon market*

Stratford-on-Avon District Council operates markets under two charters in different locations in the town, Friday and Saturday at Rother Street and Sunday by the river. In addition to this there are four further annual market events, including the very popular Victorian Christmas market.

All of the market operations are outsourced to LSD Promotions, which is in its second contract period having been successful in a competitive tender process. It provides the stallholders, infrastructure, and staff. It pays the council an operator's fee which is currently circa £170k per annum.

The four-day Victorian Christmas market, which uses many of the towns' streets, consists of over 320 stalls as well as side shows and funfair rides attracting many thousands of visitors. This market, which was introduced a few years ago, has become something of a victim of its own success, costing the council over £60k per year in hostile vehicle mitigation measures, security, and infrastructure. The council receives many complaints annually from local population due to the physical disruption it brings. However, anecdotally local businesses, especially the independents, see a significant uplift in sales whilst the market is operating.

12.1.3 *Warwick market*

In 2014, Warwick District Council offered the operation of Warwick market for tender with CJ Events the eventual winner. The market operates on Saturday only, when they took over there were under 20 traders, but now have anything between 90 and 145, depending on the time of year. CJ Events provides the stall holders, staff, and infrastructure.

The council sets the stall rents which are reviewed each year, with CJ Events paying the council a percentage of the rents collected. This is currently around £60k per annum.

This third-party operator has developed their model and added over 2,000 traders to their books, meaning that, as well as general markets, they are able to provide more specialist markets such as

food fairs, arts and crafts, and vintage markets. They also run markets in Kenilworth and Leamington Spa for Warwick DC, and now also operate Rugby BC's markets, as well as various event markets across the UK. A good website and social media presence enhances its offer.

12.1.4 Coventry market

Coventry market operates in a market hall constructed in 1958 as part of the post-war reconstruction of Coventry city centre. Its quirky, round construction has given it listed status. Little has changed in the years it has been opened and there are a number of multi-generational businesses operating there. Like Northampton's market it is held in high regard with the local population. However, it is facing an aging client base despite some newer, diverse stall offerings.

It maintains active Facebook pages, its own and a market trader site which has a good following. It also hosts exhibitions and small indoor events that are well attended.

12.1.5 Kettering market

Historically operated by the former Kettering Borough Council (KBC) in Kettering Market Place, the market was outsourced in the mid 1990's to try to rejuvenate it. Two separate operators tried with varying degrees of success but KBC took back control in the early 2000s and moved it to its current location in the main shopping street. The plan had not been to keep it in this location, but the traders preferred it and noted an increase in business.

The market declined over time and Covid took a toll. Free rent was given but this had little effect. The operation of the market was passed to the newly formed Kettering Town Council (KTC) in 2022.

KTC introduced modest charges and have introduced a series of events to keep the space animated throughout the year. Various themed markets such as food fairs, arts/crafts and Christmas have proved a success with the latter being oversubscribed. KTC is also beginning to use social media to promote these as well as trader focus features.

Footfall is not measured in the area but anecdotally the current traders are happy and are sustained by current levels. The event markets, on the whole, are well attended. However, of note, CJ Events delivered an arts and crafts market for them in 2022 but declined to return in 2023 due to lack of interest from their traders. KTC feels it is because the stall fees were too high.

12.1.6 Milton Keynes market

When Milton Keynes was created as a new town in the late 1960's, a market was not part of the plan. This was rectified in the early 1990's when a private operator was invited to start one on its current site just outside Centre: MK. This market is predominantly comprised of low-quality shuttered units but despite their quality, they have good occupancy levels, driven by the regular footfall the centre delivers. Most recently operated by Bray Associates Ltd on behalf of Milton Keynes Council for approximately 30 years, the market has had reasonable success. However, control has recently been taken over by the local authority in conjunction with Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP, a council-owned entity). Some investment is required but as Bray Associates Ltd only had a three-year rolling contract it was reluctant to invest with no guarantee of future tenure. This is not seen as failure but instead the partnership is taking the opportunity to take control and to invest in infrastructure with an eye on future requirements.

Whilst Centre: MK has low vacancy rates in comparison to most other areas, what it lacks is an independent offer and this will be the focus for the market going forwards. A new market 'brand' is being developed and an improved social media presence is starting to gain traction.

Interestingly, a year-long experiment with a different operator tasked with creating a more upmarket, artisan food offer did not work with most of these traders reporting poor sales. Despite heavy promotion and its prominent location, it is felt that the big chain restaurants already present in Centre: MK retained the available custom.

12.1.7 Loughborough market

Loughborough market was granted a royal charter in 1221. It operates as a street market in the centre of the town, with the area being expanded when the A6 was diverted from the core of the town. Operating on Thursday and Saturday it still appears to be successful, as does Loughborough town centre as a whole, with very few vacant shops evident. This reflects substantial growth in the town and the presence of Loughborough University very close to the town centre. Strong ties with the University contribute to the success of the markets, with students trading on and using the market for some of their needs. Vintage clothing markets are proving extremely popular for the student population which is leading to increased use of the regular market. There are over 130 businesses currently being operated by students in the vicinity, some of whom have regular market stalls. Recent new management is looking to strengthen this relationship and has taken on a Digital Marketing & Web Design student as a work placement apprentice as part of their degree.

12.1.8 Nottingham markets

There has not been a traditional market in Nottingham's Old Market Square for over 50 years. Nottingham's weekly markets are held in various locations across the city, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Nottingham traditional markets by location and day of operation

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Bulwell		✓	✓		✓	✓
Clifton					✓	✓
Clinton Street	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hyson Green			✓			✓
St Ann's		✓				
Victoria Centre	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

These are all 'general markets' with the anchor for each one being fresh produce, the flagship being Bulwell which is about six miles from Nottingham city centre. All but Clifton and the Victoria Centre are located in neighbourhood centres. Most suffer from a lack of investment and are tired. The Victoria Centre market within the city centre is of poor quality and has seen a downward trend in traders and footfall. The City Council is considering its future. £20million of Levelling Up funding has been secured for Bulwell, some of which will be used to regenerate the market.

There are, however, a number of special events markets held each year in Nottingham's Market Square. This Square had become dilapidated and was extensively refurbished, re-opening in 2007. Key features being a single tier of flexible space for markets, events and activities, a bold water feature with jet fountains and waterfalls and active tiered dwell space, along with greenery and attractive public realm features.

An active events programme is a key principle of the management of the Square. In 2018, there were only 42 days where there was no activity on the Square. This drives considerable footfall into the area, particularly the Christmas Fair, benefitting the local economy. These events are licenced under Royal Charter by the markets team but are administered by a separate events team.

Norwich market

Norwich market place was rebuilt in 2006. It is an outdoor market with 189 fixed, permanent steel shuttered units laid out in parallel rows in a prominent central location. The market trades from Monday to Saturday, with some traders opening on Sundays as well.

In 2019, occupancy was 79%. A strategy focusing on expanding the street food and pop-up offer has since seen occupancy increase to 91%. These traders use the existing fixed stalls.

There is a strong focus on the street food offer, now with 24 street food and more traditional cafe food offers available. 19 fresh food retail stalls are also available, including greengrocers, butchers, and a range of packaged goods. Other offers include service businesses, predominantly hair and beauty.

Limited fixed seating is provided to the north of the market which, combined with the fixed stall layout gives little flexibility to host events and activities.

12.1.9 Altrincham market

Altrincham's charter dates back to 1290. Situated at the intersection of the fertile Cheshire farm belt and the commercial commuter zone of Manchester the town has a long and important history.

With redevelopment starting in 2014, Altrincham Market is now at the heart of the re-invention of the town following circa £40million investment in the public realm. The Market House has been converted into a "permanent gusto hub and canteen where people can eat from a variety of top notch food slingers"⁵. Weekends host the very popular themed markets covering regional food producers, vintage fashion and furniture, home house and garden, and contemporary craft.

⁵ According to *Olive* magazine.

13. Appendix C: Market operating models

The CLG report⁶ identified the following market operating models.

Local authority managed – Assures accountability giving the ability to link the market in with the Councils' wider strategic goals, but potentially less flexible or able to adapt to current market forces. The large majority of markets are still directly provided and managed in this way although there is no statutory requirement to provide the service.

Fully privately managed – This option ensures the ability to respond proactively to changes and raise investment capital, it also aids focus on the core business and has the advantage of reduced bureaucracy. It is usually permitted under licence from the local authority.

Worthing Seafront Market

The Worthing Town Centre Initiative is a community interest company with an objective to enhance Worthing and to provide a vibrant and exciting town centre. Its aims include increasing footfall and helping to ensure that the businesses that choose to trade in Worthing are successful.

The town centre partnership's aim was to use a rejuvenated market as a catalyst to bring Wednesdays back to life in the town, increase footfall and allow the market to become a feature of the shopping week. This would also have a spin-off benefit for the shops within the town to increase their custom.

Following a tendering process, Town & Country Markets were selected to develop the market. Working in partnership with Worthing Town Centre Initiative, the private market operator introduced a new Wednesday market near the sea-front area of the town.

Before the market moved into Montague Street, Wednesday was the quietest trading day of the week with an average of 11,000 shoppers; since the market started there has been an increase to an average of 18,000 shoppers each Wednesday making it the second busiest day of the week in terms of footfall.

Partnership model – These can range from the local authority retaining the strategic management of its markets but outsourcing the operational management, to a formal medium to long-term joint venture between the public and private sector. These models are useful where the local authority lacks the in-house capacity and capability to effectively manage the markets, or where external capital investment is required.

A variation on this model is the emergence of public-public joint venture companies whereby local authorities at a sub-regional or city-region level transfer the management of their markets into a separate company. This not only has the potential to create economies of scale and increased purchasing efficiency but also can allow for strategic planning.

Liverpool City Council joint venture

Faced with a market portfolio operating at a significant loss, a need for capital investment, a lack of in-house expertise and a desire to expand the range of markets on offer, Liverpool City Council undertook a 'best value' review of its markets service. The outcome of this was a decision to seek a formal partnership with an external provider.

⁶ Retail Markets Management models, CLG, 2010.

Following a formal tendering process, Geraud Markets UK was selected as the preferred partner. A joint venture company was set up with board of directors from Geraud Markets and the City Council. The management of the council's market portfolio was transferred to the company.

Since the market partnership was established significant progress has been made:

The operation no longer trades at a loss and has returned to a small annual surplus.

There has been significant investment into the outdoor markets infrastructure (stalls and chalets).

There is now an extensive specialist and farmers' market offer in the city.

Arms-length LLP – This model offers the advantage of reduced bureaucracy and costs, an increased focus on the core business, and the opportunity for directly raising investment capital.

Glasgow City Council

Faced with a need for significant capital investment into its markets portfolio, Glasgow City Council decided to establish a limited liability partnership. This was a model that the council had already used for other council services and offered the advantage that an over-arching management framework was already in place.

The board of directors of City Markets (Glasgow) LLP currently consists of four elected members (councillors) and two officers. The council retains ownership of the assets (the wholesale market) but has transferred them to the partnership under long-lease arrangements. A management agreement for the delivery of retail markets has also been set up.

Since the arrangements were put in place there has been:

Capital investment of £6.5m by the council in essential repairs to the wholesale market

Additional external capital is being sought through the EU Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas initiative.

Expansion of the retail market offer in the city.

Other models include:

- **Trader operated** – There are a number of traditional and farmers' markets that are directly managed by the traders themselves. This offers the advantage of reduced bureaucracy and costs, and an increased sense of ownership by the traders.
- **Social enterprise** – Privately operated but reinvestment of profits, usually with a focus on ethics.
- **Voluntary sector** – Some markets, usually community-focused, infrequent, and relatively small-scale, are managed by volunteers. This has the advantage of creating a sense of community ownership of the market as well as reducing operational costs.
- **Shared management** – The CLG Select Committee Report on retail markets recognised the potential benefit of small markets/town and parish councils sharing the costs of employing a more senior and experienced market manager to run a portfolio of markets.