



Norwich Market strategy 2016-26: A vision for the next 10 years

Formal consultation

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Foreword by the Leader of Norwich City Council, Cllr Alan Waters, and cabinet member, Cllr Paul Kendrick

Norwich Market has a proud history and is an integral part of the city's social, economic and cultural fabric. Our city has evolved around it and as such it is a key part of our heritage as well as an important economic asset.

People everywhere recognise its colourful striped roofs and, from the recent public survey we've conducted, we also know that people everywhere value the market and feel it has a crucial and unique place in Norwich.

But we know it has struggled in recent years for many reasons. This formal consultation on our draft 10-year strategy shows our determined drive to move forward and take action to rejuvenate and protect its future.

Its regeneration can help the city's overall economy and there is no reason we cannot aim higher than that and aim for Norwich Market to be one of the country's leading markets – we believe it has a huge amount of potential.

We need it to fulfil this: as a community hub; as a tourist attraction; as a great place for small businesses to start-up and trade; and as a business in itself. In this way it can maximise not only its social and cultural contribution to Norwich but also a good economic return for the city.

A huge amount of work has been going on in recent months to pull together facts and figures. We have drawn on the experience of professionals, undertaken a public survey and met with a wide range of groups in order to write our new strategy. Now it is vitally important that we take time to consult fully before moving on to the next stage of our work.

The whole purpose of the strategy is to enhance the existing market offer to develop a dynamic experience that is diverse, vibrant and adds value to the economic, social, environmental and cultural fabric of Norwich.

And ultimately we all want a full and thriving market.

Executive Summary

The case has been well established that Norwich Market is a special and unique place and that it is difficult to imagine the city without a market.

It's status encompasses: a very long history and cultural heritage; an importance socially as a public space for community cohesion for people to mingle together and become accustomed to each other's differences; a distinctive place in the hearts of many local people with various generations of families having memories of visits over the decades; a tourist attraction; and a bustling hub of activity in the centre of the city.

It is also a hub for local economic growth but, like markets across the country, it has been affected by the downturn in the economy. Nevertheless it plays a vital role in the High Street revival. In recent surveys it was found that 42 per cent of customers would not visit an area if a market was not present, which illustrates that many customers see the presence of markets as a key deciding factor in whether or not they shop in a certain area.

The outlook for the future of the market is in general good, subject to the ability to invest, change, and attract both traders and customers. There is a need to be flexible to change and to do that we must have flexible, efficient policies in place to position Norwich Market to ensure sustainability and a return on investment.

The case for action

The recent survey we carried out with local people attracted just short of 1,000 responses, mainly from local residents. This was a well-supported survey with more than 0.4 per cent of the population taking part, which equates to a strong statistical number. An overwhelming 92 per cent of participants said Norwich Market was an important part of the city and this gives us strong evidence that the market is valued and needed and that we must act to support it.

There are problems with the current market and there is need for change and improvements. Without action the market will become a burden to the council and will result in the council subsidising its existence at a time when public funding is extremely stretched. However, if we invest resource into improving it now to make it sustainable on its own terms, then this will protect it for the people of Norwich, the city, and give a financial return for the council.

If we don't take action there will be loss of businesses, more unemployment, and the city will be less attractive to developers and investors and the community could lose a vital space.

We have a 29 per cent vacancy rate at the moment and this represents a notable loss of income for the council.

Tourists will often cite markets as a key reason for travelling to an area and the rejuvenation and diversification of Norwich Market could help in attracting more visitors to the city centre.

We have limited baseline figures available, but our estimate is that the market is probably bringing in an additional £8 to £10 million a year to the local economy. We believe that if it was fully let and thriving this figure would be boosted to more than £15 million a year.

Its value to the local economy is clear. The traders are small businesses and contribute to the employment of local people. Every £1 spent by a local person with a Norwich business is worth about £1.70 to the local economy. If the trader spends that with another local business, the £1 will be worth around £2.20, whereas if it was spent with a national business it would only be worth about 22p to the local economy.

There are challenges for markets managed by local authorities, most notably achieving the budgets for the necessary investment. But the social and economic benefits of having a thriving market clearly show the benefits in maintaining and developing them.

With this in mind, it is important that we have an entrepreneurial approach to running the market with effective ways of monitoring performance and adapting and exploiting all the opportunities afforded.

The proposed work on Norwich Market is supported by the council's Corporate Plan 2015-20.

Key priority: Making Norwich a prosperous and vibrant city

- Provision of a trading space for small independent businesses at an affordable rate
- Creation of entrepreneurship and innovation
- Creation of employment in the city
- A major attraction for visitors to the city
- Links with the Business Improvement District BID that will help create and attract business to Norwich.

Key priority of making Norwich a fair city

- An area which helps with community cohesion

As with any investment, there is a need to have a vision as to its outcomes and a strategy to follow.

Purpose

The purpose of this consultation is to seek the views of a range of stakeholders on the essential aspects of how we plan to move forward with our strategy in the short, medium, and long term.

All the feedback and comments from the work we have already carried out have been fed into the resulting strategy (see Appendix A) and we now know that the majority of respondees felt:

- We need a broader range of products,
- We particularly need more varied food
- We need action to make the market feel less oppressive and more inviting.
- We need more seating
- We need better and more thorough cleaning and maintenance.

Our aim now is to carry out a more formal and shorter consultation to ensure we have gathered and represented feelings accurately and come up with a useful plan supported by the main stakeholders who know, care most, and have most influence on the market.

Audience

This consultation and the call for responses are primarily (but not exclusively) aimed at:

- Traders
- Business - Norwich BID, Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, NWES, Jobcentre Plus, key city businesses (John Lewis, Chapelfield, Jarrolds?) LEAP,
- Disability Action Group
- Educational establishments - City College Norwich, Norwich University College of the Arts and the UEA
- Tourism and heritage organisations – VisitNorwich, The Norwich Society, Norwich City Hosts
- Community cohesion interests – Age Concern Norwich, Norwich Youth Enterprise
- Arts and Crafts – Creative Arts East, Clutter City, Norwich Makers Market group
- Food – Feast on the Street, Norwich and Norfolk Food and Drink Festival

Responding to this consultation

You can respond to this consultation as follows:

Online at www.norwich.gov.uk/consultations

In writing by: email at info@norwich.gov.uk
letter to Market Services, City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2
1NH

Duration

This consultation will run for eight weeks.
It opens on Monday 1 February 2016.
It closes on Thursday 24 March 2016.

After the consultation

A summary of the responses to this consultation will be published on Friday 8 April 2016.

It will include a list of names and organisations which responded but not personal names, addresses or other contact details.

If you do not want your response – including your name, contact details, and any other personal information – to be made publicly available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your response. Please note that if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, this will not count as a confidentiality request.

Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for this information under freedom of information legislation. But, because of the law, we cannot promise that we will be able to keep those details confidential.

Consultation

Outcomes

The draft 10-year strategy has 12 key themes each with an objective, key strategic outcomes, and a set of actions required to deliver them. (See Appendix A)

Clearly this is a huge range of information and it has been pulled together following the wide range of advice, research, surveys, and feedback we have received in the last six months.

However, in order to undertake a quantifiable consultation, we have taken the main themes of the strategy and asked specific questions on these.

The main outcomes Norwich City Council wishes to achieve in the next 10 years are:

(1) A system of sustainable rents, charges and policies

This should include: a review of all policies for the market, a clear definition of what is included in the service charges, simplification where possible of payments (one payment), preferential terms for multiple renting of stalls, and the zoning of payments, and joining the Market Fair scheme.

(2) A specific new flexible balance of goods policy

Feedback to date clearly shows that people want to see more varied goods on the market. We need to adapt our policies to reflect this so we can allow more goods but prevent saturation while allowing competition and raising standards.

(3) A more inviting pleasant atmosphere

We need to create a better atmosphere which is safe and clean and encourages more people to visit and spend more time browsing/dwelling on the market. This could include fixing/removing/replacing the roof canopies, painting the walkways, involving arts students in brightening up the stalls, better use of vacant stalls, creation of seating areas, addressing issues with the canopies etc.

(4) More effective market management

We need to have more effective market management. The person and/or team, should have experience and/or relevant qualifications or be prepared to undertake them. They need to join NABMA/ATCM for sharing best practice and they need to take forward key relationships with traders and city centre businesses and organisations. They need to keep a close watch on performance with regular monitoring and forecasting to ensure the market is thriving and will continue to thrive in the future. Regular communications/meetings with traders/traders committee. The team will also need to oversee a system of regulation and entrepreneurship and lead enquiries into whether an extension of trading hours/days would be useful.

(5) Marketing and PR

We need an effective and specific plan for the marketing, communications and promotion of the market incorporating an online presence, social media, magazine content, use of brand, leaflets, editorial and paid-for advertising.

(6) Creating a dynamic community hub

We need to make the market a dynamic community hub – we will be considering holding regular events including competitions, entertainment, night and teenage markets, pop-up stalls, space for artists, and links with local educational institutions. We want to attract our diverse community and include more for young shoppers, older shoppers, families and tourists and reinstate the market's position as a major city attraction. We are also considering creating a Friends of Norwich Market group.

(7) Business mentorship

We want to encourage existing traders to develop, attract new ones, and support all our traders. We want to facilitate mentorship and support to traders on social media and digital marketing.

What is not included

It is important to be clear on the areas we are not consulting on within this exercise.

We make mention of them at this stage because they were mentioned in feedback from a range of groups in recent months. They are not included in this consultation, not because they not important, but because we are either currently doing this work, so it will be completed before the end of the consultation, or because the work in question is so detailed and large-scale that it requires its own consultation and separate project work.

(1) Cleaning and general maintenance of the market

This underpins the market and is being reviewed separately in consultation with traders. We need a proper plan of routine maintenance rather than a reactive regime. We also need scheduled cleaning and regular deep-cleans.

(2) Traders' committee

Work is currently ongoing to create a traders' committee to improve the flow of information between market traders and the council.

(3) Large-scale overhauling of the structural fabric of the market

This includes any proposals to remove stalls, create trading quarters or transfer the market to be run by any private enterprise – indeed any item which would cause major upheaval. If and when we seek to undertake any of these major changes, we will hold separate detailed consultations on them as they would be complex and have wide-ranging ramifications.