

## CHRISP STREET MARKET (East London)

Formed in 2013, Tower Hamlets Renters are a housing action group based in the East London borough of Tower Hamlets. They focus on improving conditions and legislation, mainly for private renting, through meetings, demos, information and skills sharing and lobbying. They are part of the wider Radical Housing Network in London, which despite its name also has groups who campaign around urban issues beyond housing.

While their focus is still private renting, TH Renters have also addressed social rented housing and recently also branched out into challenging whole regeneration schemes, namely the Chrisp Street area in Poplar. This is an area of dense social housing, shops and a small street market. The main social landlord, Poplar HARCA, is undertaking a (delayed) major regeneration of housing and shops around Chrisp Street, including 750 new homes and new shops and amenities such as a cinema, restaurants and cultural space. TH Renters, local residents and traders are concerned that the regeneration will permanently displace social housing tenants and leaseholders due to rising rents and a recomposition of proportions of the types of housing. There are similar issues with Poplar HARCA properties nearby, where demolition and refurbishment has significantly reduced the quantity of social and 'affordable' housing. As with many other struggles over the affordability and access of public/urban places, there has been a sustained underinvestment in the infrastructure of buildings, despite reliable profits from tenants. At Chrisp Street Market (actually in a shopping precinct square, the first ever built in the UK), around 10-15 traders sell food, clothing and household items daily. Traders have told activists that they are frustrated by 5 years of delays to the regeneration and have been given little information about their place in the new development. One key issue is the lack of parking provision in the new scheme, which will almost certainly reduce trade. TH Renters are focusing on gathering information, raising awareness and forcing local councillors to scrutinise the development and make sure tenants and traders are genuinely included and supported in new developments. Their strategy is to continue to engage with the redevelopment in terms of all those affected, including traders, partly in order to find more people who want to actively participate in campaigning around housing and local development. As well as having stalls, they have also started their own consultation on the future of Chrisp Street, before planning permission is submitted. The first 'Save Chrisp St Market' organising meeting happened in September 2015.

MORE INFORMATION: <https://towerhamletsrenters.wordpress.com>