

QUEEN'S MARKET (East London)

Queen's Market in Upton Park, East London, is owned and managed by Newham Council. The neighbourhood is one of the poorest in London. It is an ex-manufacturing district with a long tradition of migrant workers from around the world. It has the highest unemployment rate in London and high rates of ill health. Queen's Market is a key resource for the community in Newham because of the affordability and variety of foods. Today, Queens' Market has a simple architectural design and although it has a long history, the current hall was built in 1968 and has around 150 stalls.

Friends of Queen's Market (FoQM) was born in 2003 when long-term traders and customers learnt from a newspaper advert that their market was up for sale. In 2004 Newham Council revealed that it had partnered with a private company – St Modwen – for a regeneration plan that involved the demolition of the existing market, the construction of a residential tower block, an ASDA supermarket and a much smaller market. According to the council and the developers, this regeneration was needed because the market had “reached the end of its useful life” and “traders are working in the dark ages”. These plans attracted much opposition from the local community. In 2006 a petition was submitted against the St Modwen plans with 12,000 signatures and over 2,500 individually signed objection letters and only 3 letters of support were sent. A revised scheme received 115 objections and 2 letters of support. The planning application was approved by the council, although later revoked by the London Mayor, Boris Johnson in 2009. The decision of the Mayor to stop this development was allegedly to do with the height of the proposed residential tower, but he did visit the Market and shown around by members of the campaign. Queen's Market was saved from demolition and a redevelopment that would have put in danger its affordability and inclusiveness. Friends of Queens' Market however carried on campaigning, as they believe the market is under permanent threat; this is because in 2011 Newham Council earmarked the market site as strategic site for a “mixed used development”. This was contested by FoQM and eventually the threat removed by an independent planning inspector. However the struggle has continued as traders and customers feel that the market is still not properly maintained by the council; for example, there are leaks in the roof. FoQM have also been involved in a campaign for 100% social housing on the site of the adjacent West Ham football ground redevelopment. This is in recognition that affordable housing is just as essential for the residents of Newham as affordable food. In September 2015, after years of campaigning, Queens' Market was recognised as an Asset of Community Value.

MORE INFORMATION: <http://www.friendsofqueensmarket.org.uk>

