



Our visit to Borough and Camden Markets – 17/7/09

By Cllr Paul Newcombe

Our visit to Borough and Camden Markets

A delegation of Councillors left Leicester for London St Pancras on the 10.33am train, the mission for the day was to visit Borough and Camden Markets looking at what they had to offer and best practice.

Borough Market

We arrived at Borough Market, which is situated under two train lines near to London Bridge. The perimeter edge of the market had a mixture of cafes and bars.



Cafes and Bars around the perimeter of Borough Market

A new entrance to the market was being constructed which should be completed in September 2009. The materials used were steel and glass. The entrance we used for our visit is due to be closed due to forthcoming works by Network Rail which will take two years adding an additional line, which will cause some disruption to the market, however forward plans are in place to keep this to a minimum.

First impressions were that considering that this market was under two train lines, there was well presented ironwork and displays hanging from the ironworks.



Well presented ironworks and glass created lots of natural light and eye-catching displays

It is a large market, there is very good integration of stalls throughout.

This enhances the market's ambiance and generates more sales. There was lots of natural light and although the market area was busy it had a calm feel to it. There was no shouting from the stall holders, there was a good mixture of stalls, stall holders were willing and encouraging for customers to sample the merchandise they were selling.

There was an amazing variety of hot food stalls, which ranged from Thai Curry to Chinese, Spanish, local produce such as pies and sausage. On the cold side, there was lots of cheese and wine sellers, all of whose produce could be sampled. Hot cider was being sold and could be sampled.



A diverse range of goods were available, from drink, food to go, vegetables flowers and meats, it was all available here

There was also meats including kangaroo burgers, crocodile, zebra, lobster and crab and, a bit of a novelty, ostrich eggs (which took two hours to boil),. Fresh squeezed fruit juice was available at a pound a bottle. The market operates on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays; however there is also a small selection of stalls on Wednesdays. Traders are also having discussions regarding the possibility of Sunday trading.

The markets waste is disposed of via a compactor. The market collects the waste using green industrial wheelie bins, which are kept out of sight away from stalls near to the compactor area.



All waste was collected in a sealed compactor. Bins were stored out of sight of customers

There were litter bins throughout the market area and the market had a very clear environment with no obnoxious smells. There was also no smell near to the compactor or as it was sealed. The compactor is emptied twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays.

The Task Group did acknowledge that the Traders did have excellent Customer Care skills and had a great knowledge of the products they were selling.

We also noted that there was a significant difference in prices compared to Leicester Market some of which were to be expected being in London however some of the prices seemed reasonable as we were able to purchase Thai Curry and Rice or seafood curry and rice for just five pounds some of the vegetables and cheeses did seem a little expensive - £2.50 for a whole pineapple, etc.



**Prices seemed a little expensive
– but this was a tourist market**

A block of Stilton made the traditional way using raw milk varied between £4-5 but having said that with the stall holders encouraging customers to sample the merchandise and also there being a significant amount of tourists who visit the market including office staff who use the market for their lunch break business was booming so to speak and Borough Market seemed to have the right recipe for continued success.

Camden Market



**Camden's
Markets are
world famous.**

Camden's group of markets is now the fourth most-visited tourist attraction in London. It is the largest street market in the UK, and attracts around 500,000 visitors each week.

There are various markets located in Camden Town which are collectively known as Camden Market; these are Camden Lock Market, Camden Stables Market, Camden Canal Market, Inverness Street Market, and Camden (Buck Street) Market.

The area around Camden Lock was first developed in 1791 by the Earl of Camden, with the famous Regents Canal opening in 1820. The first market to appear in Camden was Camden Lock Market, which opened in 1972.

Today, there are hundreds of designer workshops, studios, stalls, shops, cafes, restaurants and bars selling an individual and extensive array of high quality goods from designer, alternative & vintage clothing and accessories to one-off pieces of art, furnishings, antiques, jewellery, records & CDs, collectables, arts & crafts and international food.

Our own reflection of the area starts with the walk up the main street shopping area, to the left there was the Inverness Street Market which was between 15-20 stalls, it was in a side street off the main road but there was a really impressive steel archway with signage.



Inverness Market and The Camden Market were on the main Camden High Street. The area is very striking in design

Further up on the left we entered the area which was Camden Stables, which was in Camden Lock Market had lots of little avenues, these little avenues were cobbled and had a Victorian feel. There were there was a vast variety of different stalls from clothing to wind chimes, food, woodcraft, gothica/rock memorabilia and fashion, music and jewellery. It had a very European feel but felt very claustrophobic. It didn't feel as busy as Borough Market. A slight downside to this area was that the toilet facilities were upstairs.



Camden's Stables Market area

On the other side of the road by the bridge was Camden Lock Village which ran adjacent to the canal and was an interesting style concept. There was seating that was the rear of motor scooters fixed to walls and was very 60's mod style. Fresh orange was being served from orange shaped stall which added character. The stalls were of a traditional seaside beach hut with Victorian lighting. It had a very open feel and was quite a calm environment for a market area, with plenty of room to wander around. Toilets were on ground level and easily accessible.



Camden Lock Village Market

Conclusion

Camden was very different in feel to Borough Market and related more to Leicester in terms of ideas and best practice. Camden's Market areas were a bit segregated but there are still things to learn from this experience. The Victorian lighting and beach hut concept seem to really work well and added a lot of character, we all liked the scooter seating. Borough Market related more to Leicester and was perhaps the best example for us in terms of ideas.

We liked the integration of stalls and we believe this is ingredient of success for future generations of Leicester's market. The lack of noise, improve customer contact with samples add to a calmer environment which was more pleasant to be in. We need to look at the historic links into the market to see if these can be incorporated as this would add to the general ambience of a plain area, if the place had more character it would be somewhere that would bring people back time and time again more naturally. The added attraction of hot food stalls were you can see fresh food being cooked would add a dimension that the market doesn't currently offer. This would bring in more custom as people would see this as "the place for lunch". This was clear to see during our visit.