

East Ham High Street

Towards a cleaner, safer, greener future



Alison Blunt, Alastair Owens, Emmanuella Boma, Kavita Datta,
and Mahirah Khanom

Department of Geography and Environmental Science
School of Society and Environment

December 2025

Authors

Alison Blunt is Professor of Geography and Deputy Vice Principal for Impact (Culture, Civic & Community) at Queen Mary University of London

Alastair Owens is Professor of Historical Geography at Queen Mary University of London

Emmanuella Boma is an undergraduate student in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science at Queen Mary University of London

Kavita Datta is Professor of Development Geography and Interim Deputy Vice Principal (Humanities and Social Sciences) at Queen Mary University of London

Mahirah Khanom is an undergraduate student in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science at Queen Mary University of London

Year of Publication: 2025

The report is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial 4.0 license.

Required citation: Blunt, A., Owens, A., Boma, E., Datta, K., and Khanom, M. (2025) *East Ham High Street: towards a cleaner, safer, greener future*. London: Queen Mary University of London.

Author for correspondence: Alison Blunt, a.blunt@qmul.ac.uk

Contents

Executive Summary.....	5
1. Introduction	5
2. Methods and Activities.....	5
3. Findings	5
4. Recommendations	6
1. Introduction	9
2. An introduction to East Ham High Street, Newham.....	12
3. Methods and Activities.....	15
3.1 Site visits	15
3.2 Building use survey.....	15
3.3 Engagement workshops.....	15
3.4 Stakeholder Identification	17
3.5 Surveys and interviews	18
3.6 Analysis of secondary data.....	19
4. Findings	20
4.1 Building uses	20
4.2 Shops, services and the local economy.....	22
4.3 Access and linkages	28
4.4 Environmental quality	30
4.5 Crime, anti-social behaviour and safety	34
4.6 Community diversity and connection.....	39
5. Conclusions and recommendations: towards a cleaner, safer, greener East Ham High Street	41
Recommendations	41
Bibliography	44
Appendix 1: Demographic profile of survey respondents.....	47
Appendix 2: Summary of key survey results.....	49

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Researchers and participants after the first engagement workshop	16
Figure 3.2: Participants during the second engagement workshop	16
Figure 3.3: Researchers and participants after second engagement workshop	17
Figure 3.4: Flipchart identifying people, groups and organisations who can make change happen on East Ham High Street.....	17
Figure 4.1. Building use survey area	20
Figure 4.2: Summary of ground floor building uses, East Ham High Street North	21
Figure 4.3: Ground floor building uses, East Ham High Street North	21
Figure 4.5 Reasons for visiting East Ham High Street (survey respondents).....	23
Figure 4.6 What is liked about East Ham High Street (survey respondents)	23
Figure 4.7: Most used shops, cafés/restaurants/takeaways, services (survey respondents)	24
Figure 4.8: What is least liked about East Ham High Street (survey respondents)	25
Figure 4.9: How could East Ham High Street be improved (survey respondents)	25
Figure 4.10: Does East Ham High Street provide all the shops and services you need (survey respondents).....	26
Figure 4.11: Residential proximity to East Ham High Street (survey respondents)	28
Figure 4.12: Means of travelling to East Ham High Street (survey respondents)	29
Figure 4.13: Frequency of use of East Ham High Street (survey respondents).....	29
Figure 4.14: London Borough of Newham – Annual Mean NO ₂ concentrations (2022) ..	32
Figure 4.15: London Borough of Newham: Annual Mean PM _{2.5} concentrations (2022) ..	33
Figure 4.16: Feelings of safety on East Ham High Street (survey respondents).....	35
Figure A1.1: Age of respondents	47
Figure A1.2: Gender of respondents	47
Figure A1.3: Ethnicity of respondents.....	48
Figure A1.4: Respondents with a disability	48

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Characteristics of East Ham’s population	14
Table 3.1: Site Visits	15
Table 3.2: Demographic profile of survey respondents and East Ham ward: gender, ethnicity and disability.....	18
Table 3.3: Age profile of survey respondents and East Ham ward	19
Table 4.1: Annual mean NO ₂ and PM _{2.5} monitoring results from NM4 East Ham Town Hall, 2023-24	33
Table A2.1: What do you like about East Ham High Street?	49
Table A2.2: What do you least like about East Ham High Street	50
Table A2.3: How could East Ham High Street be improved?	51

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

High streets play a crucial role in supporting local economies and social infrastructure and have become a key focus for investment and policy intervention. But they also face significant challenges, including the cost-of-living crisis, post-pandemic recovery, shifts in working and shopping practices, and the climate crisis.

East Ham High Street in the London Borough of Newham is no exception. Commissioned by local MP Sir Stephen Timms and supported by funding from Queen Mary University of London, this report summarizes research findings and identifies key recommendations about how East Ham High Street can be maintained and developed as a lively heart of the borough that is socially inclusive, economically vibrant and environmentally sustainable. It suggests that if the High Street is to thrive in the future, efforts need to focus on making it cleaner, safer and greener.

2. Methods and Activities

The research was undertaken between May and December 2025, with the main period of fieldwork from May to July 2025. Research methods and activities comprised: site visits; a building use survey; two engagement workshops with key stakeholders (including councillors, residents, representatives from neighbourhood groups and business owners); an online survey (with 158 responses); nine interviews with key stakeholders and residents; and analysis of various secondary data.

3. Findings

Building uses: East Ham High Street has high occupancy rates and retains a diverse mix of shops and businesses. Unlike some other UK high streets which have become ‘clone towns’ with often very similar chain stores, the street remains distinctive and is home to many independent cafes, restaurants and other businesses.

Shops, services and the local economy: Participants visit East Ham High Street to shop, use other services, visit cafes and restaurants, and access transport. Many appreciate the mix of businesses, valuing the continuing presence of chain stores and the major banks, alongside specialist and independent venues. However, others were less positive, suggesting that East Ham High Street is no longer a ‘shopping destination’, regretting the loss of major chains like Marks and Spencer and lamenting the redevelopment of the old market. Respondents were also worried about the proliferation of loan and betting shops, with the latter considered to attract anti-social behaviour. Businesses were concerned about barriers to inclusive future growth, including high rates and rents, and lack of investment in physical infrastructure.

Access and linkages: East Ham High Street is an important local destination and significant and valued transport hub, providing access to buses and the Tube. The street can sometimes become overcrowded and the unevenness of some pavements and roads, along with illegal parking and use of pedestrian areas by bikes and scooters, impedes access and creates hazards. Some would like to see parts of the street pedestrianised; others are against pedestrianisation and are concerned about loss of parking provision.

Environmental quality: The street is widely perceived as being dirty as a result of littering and ineffective waste management. Not all shops are well-kept, and some shopfronts are considered ‘tatty’. There is a lack of green space on the street and participants would like to see more ‘greening’ including better maintenance of existing planters and the planting of more trees. Air quality is poor with levels of nitrous dioxide and particulate pollution that are generally high and above World Health Organisation recommended levels.

Crime, anti-social behaviour and safety: Safety was a major concern of participants. Many had experienced or witnessed crimes such as thefts and muggings. Respondents felt intimidated by ‘groups of men’ hanging around at different locations on the street (such as outside betting shops) and by anti-social behaviours such as drinking and drug taking. Metropolitan Police data confirm people’s fears about crime, demonstrating higher rates of theft, violent crime, robbery, public order and drug offences than for London as a whole. Participants felt policing was inadequate and not sufficiently visible.

Community diversity and connection: Some participants see diversity as a core strength of East Ham High Street, while others suggested that there was little sense of community and felt that the street was ‘quite segregated’. There was a desire to use the High Street to foster stronger social connections by bringing people together through community spaces, events and activities.

4. Recommendations

While East Ham High Street faces a number of challenges, relative to other UK high streets it also has many strengths with real potential to thrive as one of Newham’s key social and economic hubs. To achieve this, there needs to be a concerted focus on making the street cleaner, safer and greener so that businesses can prosper and the diverse local community can enjoy the social opportunities and interactions a good high street should offer. The report makes the following recommendations:

Shops, services and the local economy

1. Evaluate the potential for East Ham High Street to become a Business Improvement District and reinstate the role of town centre manager.
2. Ensure affordable commercial rents, reduce the number of betting shops, and attract a diverse mix of businesses.

3. Enhance digital and other skills for local businesses and support entrepreneurship, including from underrepresented groups such as women and young people.

Access and linkages

1. Review opportunities for improving the pedestrian experience by considering part pedestrianisation and the widening of pavements to address overcrowding.
2. Enforce the Highway Code and parking regulations to stop the use of pavements by bikes and scooters, and inappropriate or illegal parking by cars and other vehicles.
3. Ensure pavements and road crossings are well maintained with even surfaces to support inclusive access.

Environmental quality

1. Ensure the effectiveness of waste management and street cleaning. Establish a High Street Champions Group comprising businesses and other key stakeholders (e.g. local authority representatives, community members, Transport for London, local schools, places of worship) to focus on improving the look and cleanliness of street.
2. Replant and maintain existing planters and assess options for further street greening (e.g. by planting more trees; reviving the East Ham High Street in bloom initiative; establishing a community gardening group); consult relevant stakeholders on installation of additional street furniture including benches and bins to promote positive social interaction.
3. Ensure monitoring and improvement of air quality in line with Newham's Air Quality Action Plan 2025-30.

Crime, anti-social behaviour and safety

1. Work with the Metropolitan Police to increase visible and active policing of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour, including theft, drug dealing and loitering.
2. Review lighting and CCTV and seek opportunities for their enhancement to maximise safety.
3. Building on the above recommendations, work to change the narrative and promote East Ham High Street as a welcoming destination for positive social interaction and consumption.

Community diversity and connection

1. Celebrate festivals and organise events that bring communities together.

2. Develop an inclusive and welcoming community space or hub on the High Street to enable different generations and communities to meet each other.
3. Support artistic and creative practice on the High Street that reflects the community's diversity.

1. Introduction

High streets play a crucial role in supporting local economies and social infrastructure. They are, according to Newham's Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz OBE, [the lifeblood of our communities](#), with 90% of Londoners living within 10 minutes of one of the capital's 600 high streets. But high streets face significant challenges, including the cost-of-living crisis, post-pandemic recovery, shifts in working and shopping practices, and the climate crisis.

The London Plan (2021) and London Growth Plan (2025) include a focus on the adaptation and diversification of high streets in the capital to ensure their vitality and sustainability in supporting inclusive growth and cultural and social cohesion. In July 2025, Newham secured £50,000 from the GLA High Street Place Labs programme to boost the local economy on East Ham High Street and in November 2025 secured £1.5 million capital funding from the UK Government's Pride in Place Impact programme to accelerate delivery in East Ham, Beckton and Stratford (see Box 1 on policies and funding for high streets). For Mayor Fiaz, this funding will enable the Council 'to develop ambitious plans to reimagine East Ham High Street as a more vibrant, accessible, and welcoming destination.'

This report summarizes research findings and identifies key recommendations about how East Ham High Street in Newham, East London, can be maintained and developed as a lively heart of the borough that is socially inclusive, economically vibrant and environmentally sustainable.¹ Drawing on research with residents, business owners, councillors and other stakeholders through workshops, interviews and surveys, the report focuses on shops, services and the local economy; access and linkages; environmental quality; crime, anti-social behaviour and safety; and community diversity and connection. Our principal focus was on East Ham High Street North and especially the segment between the two arches at the junction with Barking Road to the south and East Street / Plashet Grove to the north.

The project emerged in response to a request from Sir Stephen Timms MP (Minister for Social Security and Disability, Labour MP for East Ham) following a visit to Queen Mary University of London (QM) to find out about the university's [civic work](#) in East London. The resulting project involved a team of researchers from the Department of Geography and Environmental Science, funded by QM's Centre for Public Engagement, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (student bursary scheme) and STRIDE (Summer Training Research Initiative to Support Diversity and Equality) programme, and supported by Chris Hall, QM's Public Affairs lead.

¹ The project titled 'Towards a lively high street: assessing the economic, social and environmental sustainability of East Ham Town Centre' was reviewed and approved by Queen Mary University of London Research Ethics Committee. Reference QME 25:1103.

Box 1: Policies and funding for high streets

[Newham High Streets Programme](#) was launched by Newham Council in 2020, aiming to develop strategic delivery plans for the borough's high streets, based on evidence and participation. It builds on the Council's [Community Wealth Building](#) strategy and [Towards a Better Newham - Covid-19 Recovery Strategy](#) that place high streets at the heart of creating an inclusive economy that supports the health and wellbeing of residents. Phase 1 of the programme focused on Forest Gate, Manor Park, Little Ilford and Green Street. Newham's Community Wealth Building Place team has secured more than £60 million in external grant funding, including £40 million through the Government's Levelling Up fund.

[Build Back Better High Streets](#) (2021) set out the UK government's strategy to revitalise high streets after COVID-19, including £10 billion for urban regeneration and private investment in underinvested areas to help address vacancies.

[London Plan](#) (2021) *SD6 Town Centres and High Streets* encourages strong, resilient, accessible hubs offering diverse uses, including, retail, civic, social and residential spaces. It emphasises town centres as key for Londoners' sense of place and identity and supports mixed-use and residential development on and around high streets to optimise land use and improve transport access.

[London Growth Plan](#) (2025) is the Mayor of London's blueprint for growth across London. It aims to restore productivity growth to an average of two per cent a year over the next decade, making London's economy £107bn larger in 2035, and creating over 150,000 good jobs by 2028. The new plan sets out how the GLA will invest in key priorities from housing and infrastructure to skills and transport, as well as a new £20 million High Streets Fund.

[Shaping Local Spaces](#) brings together related programmes and strategies at the GLA aiming to shape equitable growth in London's town centres and high streets through place-based investment, partnership formation, original research and strategic support.

[High Streets Place Labs](#) (2025) The Mayor of London has invested £600K to boost 12 high streets across London, including East Ham High Street, to boost local economies. Newham's priorities are to make the high street 'more attractive and walkable, creating opportunities for young people and delivering green improvements that will help mitigate flooding and overheating in the area.'

Newham secured £1.5 million capital funding from the UK Government's [Pride in Place Impact Fund](#) (November 2025), to accelerate borough-wide place making and community infrastructure. This supports Newham's wider neighbourhood investment programme that takes a borough-wide, place-based approach, ensuring that investment responds to the unique needs and opportunities of each neighbourhood. The Pride in Place funding will accelerate delivery in three areas – East Ham, Beckton and Stratford.

The report is informed by research in geography, planning and urban studies on high streets as focal points for work, leisure, shopping and housing (Hill and Cheshire, 2022). Recent work has focused on the state of the high street post-COVID-19. Researchers such as Hill and Cheshire (2022) argue that it is important for local councils to understand the retail resilience of their high streets and cater to specific goals. According to Lorono-Leturiondo et al. (2022), the sustainability of the high street is influenced by economic, social, cultural, environmental and technological factors, as well as governance, policy and planning. It is important for all these factors to be met to an adequate level for a high street to thrive. When assessing the sustainability of high streets, Wrigley and Lambiri (2015) argue that the convenience of using high streets is based on the 'choice-edited' offer where consumers balance the range and diversity of products on offer with ease of proximity.

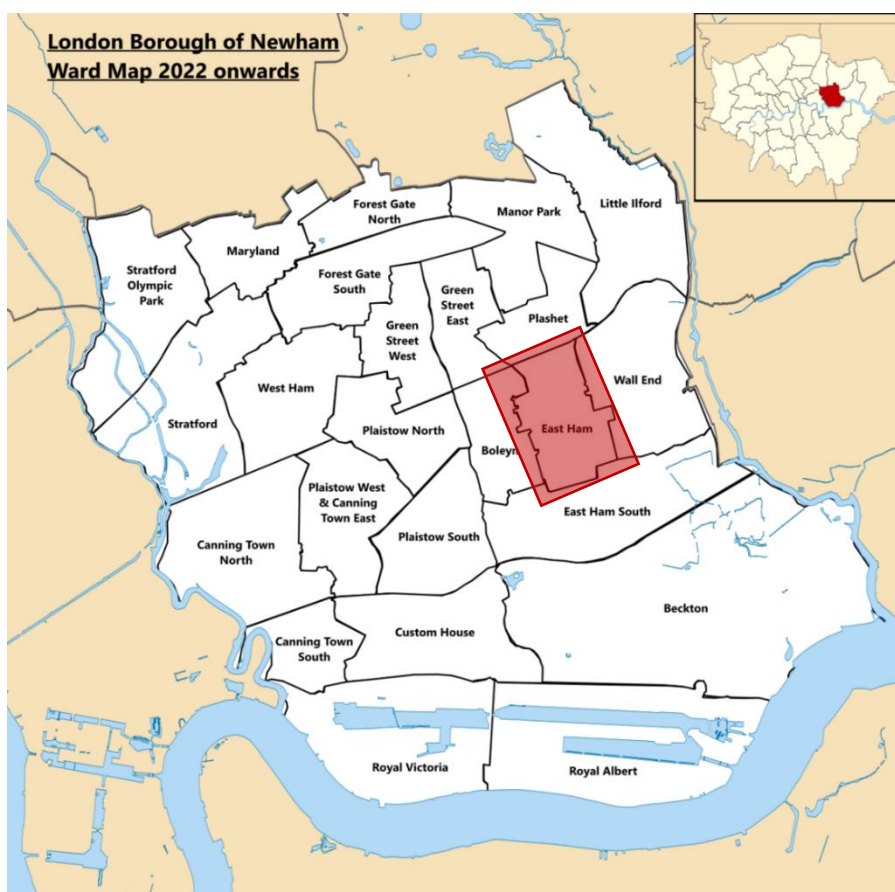
Researchers such as Theodoris, Ntounis and Pal (2017) and Fletcher et al. (2016) emphasize the engagement and cooperation of stakeholders when maintaining the high street, whilst also generating local knowledge and priorities. Focusing on Queen's Market, Newham, Dines (2007) illustrates tensions between regeneration and place identity. Operating since 1968 the market served diverse ethnic communities. In 2004, Newham Council proposed redevelopment, citing safety and underuse, while critics argued that this threatened local culture and public space.

A 2024 report published by the House of Lords Built Environment Committee, entitled [High Streets: Life beyond retail?](#) focuses on opportunities available for high street renewal in towns and small cities across the UK. The report notes that the dominance of retail on high streets has declined: 'Retail will always remain a vital component of the high street but local communities are increasingly seeking out restaurants and leisure activities as well as wanting to see more public services in their town centres' (p.5). Key considerations for the revitalisation of high streets include the importance of local authorities, communities and businesses working together to shape high streets that are reflective of local conditions, adaptable and resilient; ensuring that all members of the community are safe and welcome; improving the public realm, including through more green space and providing places for young people to socialise; and recognising that high streets will only thrive if people can travel to them easily and safely. Whilst the Committee's inquiry and subsequent report focused on high streets in towns and small cities, its findings also relate to high street renewal in large cities such as London. Building on the report's observation about the 'vital role that engaged local communities play in transforming their local places,' our research on East Ham High Street analyses the perspectives of community members, councillors, business owners and other stakeholders on shaping a cleaner, safer and greener future to revitalize the high street as a key site for inclusive growth and community connection in Newham.

2. An introduction to East Ham High Street, Newham

East Ham High Street is in East Ham Ward in the London Borough of Newham (see Figure 2.1 and [We are East Ham, we are Newham](#)). In 2024, Newham had a recorded population of 374,523, the highest of all seven boroughs in East London, and had a median age of 31, the second lowest of any local authority area in England (after Tower Hamlets) ([ONS 2024](#)). Newham is the most ethnically diverse of all local authorities in England and Wales, with 43.5% of residents identifying their ethnic group as ‘Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh,’ 30.8% as ‘White,’ 17.5% as ‘Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African’ and 4.9% as ‘Other’ in the 2021 Census ([ONS 2021a](#)). According to the 2025 ONS Index for Multiple Deprivation, Newham is more deprived than 98% of local authority districts in England and the most deprived of all London boroughs ([IMD2025](#)). It is also in the top 3% of most densely populated areas in England ([ONS 2024](#)).²

Figure 2.1 London Borough of Newham Ward Map 2022 onwards



Source: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3484/new-ward-map-2022> licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.

² See borough profiles for Newham and the other six East London boroughs in Blunt, A., McCarthy, K., Gifford, S., and Jones, M. (2026) *Research with East London communities: place-based guidance and resources*. London: Queen Mary University of London for further information.

Table 2.1 (overleaf) provides a summary of the key characteristics of the population living in East Ham ward and comparative data for the London Borough of Newham, and England as a whole. East Ham High Street is located within Newham 018B Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA) in the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Data released in October 2025 ([IMD2025](#)) shows that Newham 018B is more deprived than 91% of 185 neighbourhoods in the borough and more deprived than 87% of neighbourhoods in England. Newham 018B is most deprived in relation to crime and barriers to housing and services (more deprived than 97% of neighbourhoods in England), followed by income (91%), living environment (88%), education and skills (81%) and employment (63%). Newham 018B is less deprived than 57% of neighbourhoods in England in relation to health and disability. Compared to other neighbourhoods in Newham, the neighbourhood is most deprived in relation to crime (more deprived than 99% of the borough's neighbourhoods).

Significant areas of regeneration in Newham include Stratford as a legacy of the London 2012 Olympic Games and the Royal Docks. Two recent projects focused on public space improvement and the regeneration of East Ham High Street are:

- [East Ham High Street North Enhancements \(Shape Newham\)](#). Shape Newham was launched in 2019 to co-design and install public space improvement projects across Newham. At the community events in East Ham, residents voted for a number of Shape Newham installations along the length of High Street North.
- [The Market Place](#). This regeneration project is located at the southern end of High Street North on the site of a traditional covered market hall that opened in 1922 to provide employment opportunities for World War 1 veterans and their families. The redeveloped site opened in 2024 and comprises a new indoor retail arcade with c21,500 sq. ft of retail floor space across 15 units and 277 apartments and duplexes.

Table 2.1: Characteristics of East Ham’s population

	East Ham ward	Newham	England
Population (2024 mid-year est.)	16,071	374,523	58,620,101
Number of households	4300	115,507	23,436,100
Country of birth	%	%	%
Born in the UK	41.0	46.3	82.6
Born outside the UK	59.0	53.7	17.4
Household size			
1 person in household	19.0	23.4	30.1
2 people in household	18.3	25.3	34
3 people in household	16.1	17.2	16
4 or more people in household	46.6	34.1	19.9
Ethnic group			
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	62.0	42.2	9.6
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	8.6	17.5	4.2
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	3.0	4.7	3.0
White	21.4	30.8	81
Other ethnic group	5.1	4.9	2.2
Religion			
No religion	6.8	14.5	36.7
Christian	27.6	35.3	46.3
Buddhist	0.4	0.6	0.5
Hindu	11.4	6.1	1.8
Jewish	N/A	0.1	0.5
Muslim	45.9	34.8	6.7
Sikh	1.8	1.6	0.9
Other religion	0.2	0.5	0.6
Not answered	5.9	6.5	6
Tenure of household			
Owns outright	19.1	12.7	32.5
Owns with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership	21.3	20.5	29.8
Social rented	16.4	28.0	17.1
Private rented or lives rent free	43.1	38.8	20.6
Highest level of qualification			
No qualifications	23.8	20.7	18.1
Level 1, 2 or 3 qualifications	34.1	32.2	39.9
Apprenticeship	3.2	3.1	5.3
Level 4 qualifications and above	34.5	40.2	33.9
Other qualifications	4.3	2.8	2.8

Source: Office of National Statistics (ONS) Census 2021 data available at [Build a custom area profile - ONS](#).

3. Methods and Activities

3.1 Site visits

The team undertook several visits to East Ham High Street to observe the street and engage with project stakeholders and participants.

Table 3.1: Site Visits

When:	Where:	Purpose of visit:
9 May 2025	East Ham High Street and the Market Place	Observation of the High Street and building use.
29 May 2025	Trinity Community Centre and East Ham High Street	Engagement workshop, including conversations while walking along the High Street.
10 June 2025	East Ham High Street	Building use survey.
18 June 2025	East Ham Library	Engagement workshop

3.2 Building use survey

The uses of buildings on East Ham High Street were surveyed in the summer of 2025, focusing on a portion of East Ham High Street North, from the intersection with Barking Road in the south, to the intersection with Plashet Grove/East Avenue towards the north. Our survey aimed to identify the principal use of each building at ground floor level. The information on building use was then categorized to provide an overall picture of the range and balance of activities on the High Street. It should be noted that like most high streets, East Ham High Street is constantly changing (some properties were vacant or undergoing renovations at the time of the survey) and usage is likely to have changed even between the time of the survey and the publication of this report. It is also worth noting that building use is often mixed and as a result the categorisation should be regarded as approximate rather than exact.

3.3 Engagement workshops

The report draws on insights from two engagement workshops in East Ham. The first was facilitated by Sir Stephen Timms MP and held on 29th May 2025 in the Trinity Community Centre followed by walking together along East Ham High Street. Participants – including councillors, residents, representatives from neighbourhood groups and business owners – discussed changes to East Ham High Street over time and identified key concerns and successes.

The second engagement workshop with community members took place in East Ham Library on 18th June 2025 and was facilitated by Councillor Lakmini Shah. Participants included councillors, residents, representatives from neighbourhood groups and

business owners. During this workshop, we asked participants (i) to annotate a map of the High Street (between the arches) with key shops, services and other functions; (ii) what they liked about the High Street and what could be improved; and (iii) which people, groups and organisations could enable change.

Figure 3.1: Researchers and participants after the first engagement workshop



Figure 3.2: Participants during the second engagement workshop



Mahalakshmi Temple, Newham Islamic Cultural Association, Wells Community Centre, Sri Lankan Muslim Community of East London and Newham African Caribbean Heritage Reference; residents' and housing associations such as Katherine Road Community Centre, Green Couch and Folkestone allotments, education bodies, the local authority and the GLA.

3.5 Surveys and interviews

Following the two engagement workshops, nine interviews were conducted with councillors, business owners and residents. An online questionnaire survey, completed by 158 people, was circulated via contacts and networks (including councillors, business, faith, community and residential groups) and on social media channels including via Stephen Timms MP's X (formerly Twitter) feed and local WhatsApp groups.

It is important to note that there are variations between the demographic profile of survey respondents and the wider population of East Ham ward in relation to gender, ethnicity and age (see Appendix 1 for further information about the demographic profile of survey respondents). This is reflected by an *over-representation* of respondents who were White, female and aged from 35 to 65+ and an *under-representation* of respondents who were Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, male and aged from 18 to 34 (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3), although the second engagement workshop and interviews included a greater diversity of participants in terms of gender and ethnicity. The proportion of respondents with disabilities was slightly higher than the proportion in East Ham ward.

Table 3.2: Demographic profile of survey respondents and East Ham ward: gender, ethnicity and disability

	Survey responses (%)	East Ham ward (%)
Female	63.2	51.2
Male	32.9	48.8
White	55.7	21.4
Asian or Asian British	24.7	62.0
Black or Black British	6.3	8.6
Mixed ethnicity	3.8	3.0
With disabilities	13.3	11.5
Without disabilities	81.0	88.5

Source: ONS Census 2021 data available at [Build a custom area profile - ONS](#)

Table 3.3: Age profile of survey respondents and East Ham ward

	Survey responses (%)	East Ham ward (%)
15-24	(Ages 18-24) 1.3	15.9
25-34	6.3	17.8
35-44	27.2	15
45-54	24.1	12.6
55-64	22.2	8.4
65+	15.8	8.9

Source: ONS Census 2021 data available at [Build a custom area profile - ONS](#)

3.6 Analysis of secondary data

To contextualise and support primary research, secondary data from a variety of sources – the Office for National Statistics including the 2021 Census, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2025), Metropolitan Police data on reported crime, and environmental and air quality data – was analysed.

4. Findings

4.1 Building uses

The buildings on East Ham High Street have a wide range of commercial and other uses (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3). In total, the uses of 189 premises on the west (odd numbers) and east (even numbers) on East Ham High Street North (from the intersection with Barking Road in the south to the intersection with Plashet Grove / East Avenue to the north) were recorded.

In the section of the High Street we surveyed, virtually all buildings have a ground floor commercial use (key exceptions include the East Ham Underground station and a mosque). Unsurprisingly shops (of many kinds) dominate the street, while there are also a significant proportion of financial and business services. Significantly, despite the widely noticed decline in bank branches on many UK high streets, the presence of most of the main banking chains on the street is notable (Figure 4.3). Also in this category are money transfer shops (or bureau de change) which are equal in number of banks, perhaps reflecting the importance of these services for remittance sending among migrant groups. Money lending and other financial services are also provided by five pawnshops. The latter are identified as being commonplace in areas of higher deprivation where some residents may be less able to access mainstream financial services.

Diverse food retailers – ranging from general groceries and supermarkets to butchers, bakers, confectioners, fishmongers, greengrocers – make up a key proportion of the shops, while cafés, restaurants and takeaways comprised 16% of all premises. Unlike other high streets, there are few pubs; only one is currently in operation. There is a good mix of other kinds of shops, including clothing and footwear (some of which are specialised), home and hardware, stationery, phones and accessories, pharmacy and health products, and jewellery. Shops also sell a range of services including hairdressing and barbering, dry cleaning, travel agency, and estate agency. The significant number of betting shops (ten) corresponds with observations made in response to our

Figure 4.1. Building use survey area



Source: Map data from OpenStreetMap

questionnaire survey (see below). The overall impression is of a relatively healthy and well-used high street selling a wide range of products and offering a variety of services.

Figure 4.2: Summary of ground floor building uses, East Ham High Street North

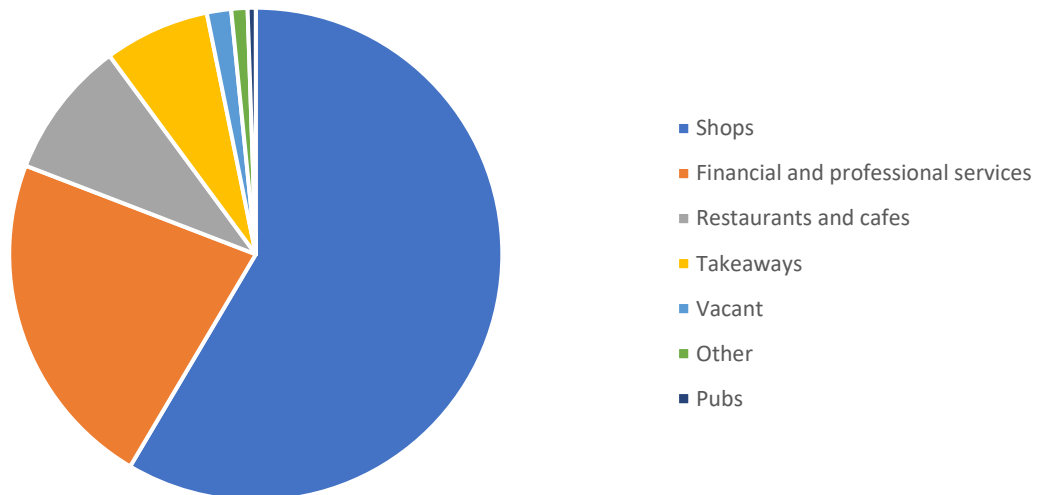
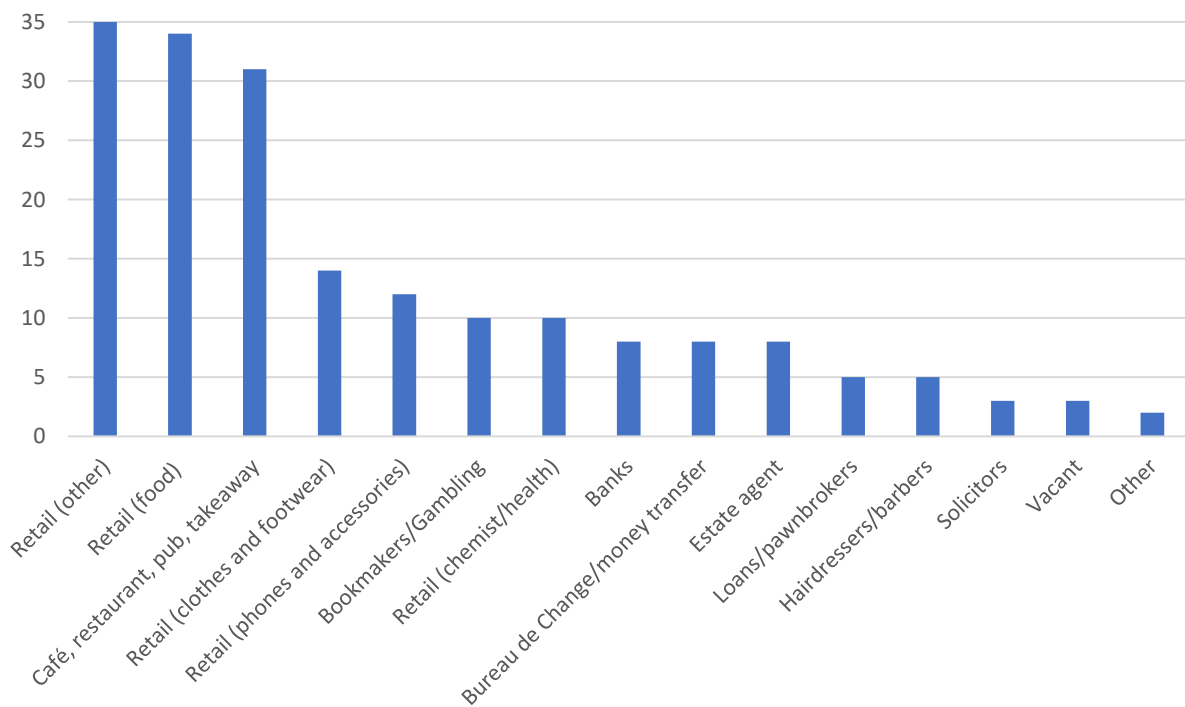
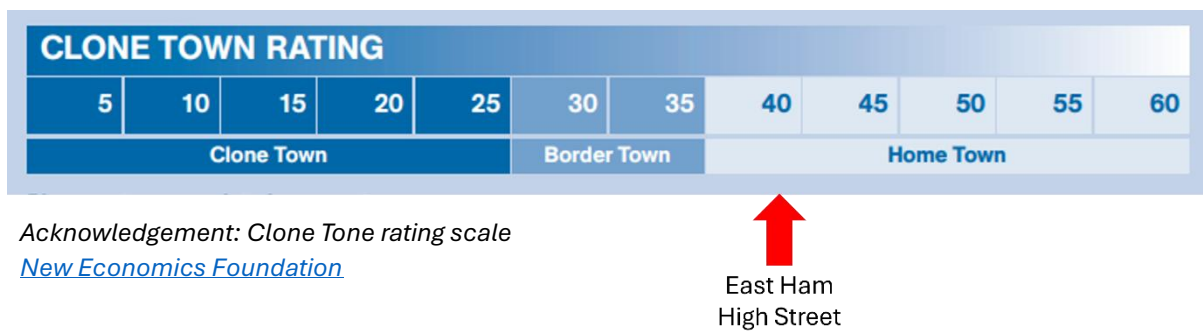


Figure 4.3: Ground floor building uses, East Ham High Street North



The street contains a mix of independent stores and chains. Just less than a quarter (24%) of premises are chain businesses including Lidl supermarket (which has two outlets on the street), Argos, Primark, JD Sports, Boots and many of the major bank and bookmaker chains. This means that around three-quarters of businesses are independent. This makes East Ham High Street distinctive and unlike many other high streets in the country which are criticised for containing a similar mix of chain shops and other businesses. The [New Economics Foundation](#) (2007) has developed a simple survey for assessing whether a high street can be considered a ‘Clone Town’ – where its mix of high street businesses are similar to other places. The methodology involves assessing the number of *types* of businesses, the number of *independently-owned businesses* and the number of *chain businesses*, to produce a ‘clone town rating’. We used our survey data to rate East Ham High Street. This produced a ‘clone town’ score of 40 (Figure 4.4), which suggests the street is not a ‘clone town’ but a ‘home town’ meaning it is ‘distinctive and recognisable as a unique place.’³

Figure 4.4: Clone town rating: East Ham High Street



Acknowledgement: Clone Town rating scale
[New Economics Foundation](#)

4.2 Shops, services and the local economy

The main reasons that people visit East Ham High Street are to shop and to use services and/or public transport. Over 80% of our survey respondents said that they go to the High Street to shop, 55% to use services, and almost half to use public transport. Just under 20% visit the High Street to go to cafes, restaurants or takeaways (see Figure 4.5).

In addition, shops and services ranked highest when survey respondents were asked what they *liked* about East Ham High Street (see Figure 4.6 and Appendix 2: Table A2.1), with particularly positive responses about the chain stores and the variety of shops available. The most popular shops and services for survey respondents were Sainsbury’s, Lidl, Primark, Superdrug, WH Smith, Iceland, the post office and banking services (see Figure 4.7). For one interviewee,

‘there’s quite a good mix of shops that offer quite reasonably priced, inexpensive kinds of fruits and vegetables in bowls and things, which from observing other parts of London, where other friends and family live, is actually

³ New Economics Foundation (2007) *Clone Town Britain Survey*, London: New Economics Foundation.

now becoming slightly more unusual. That we get this sort of access to quite good fruits and veg in this area, which considering it's kind of a quite deprived area, I think we do quite well in that respect.'

Figure 4.5 Reasons for visiting East Ham High Street (survey respondents)

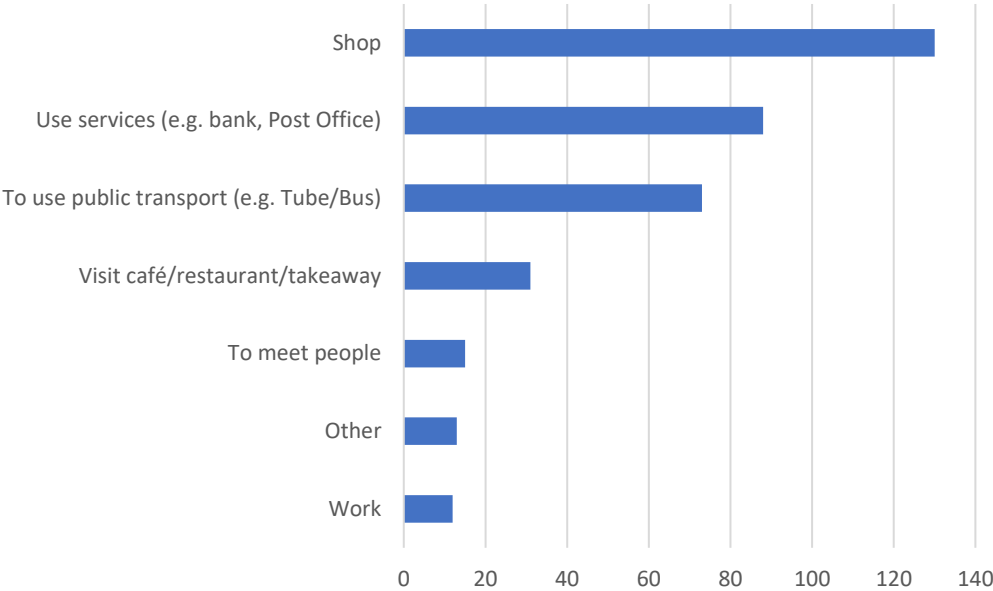
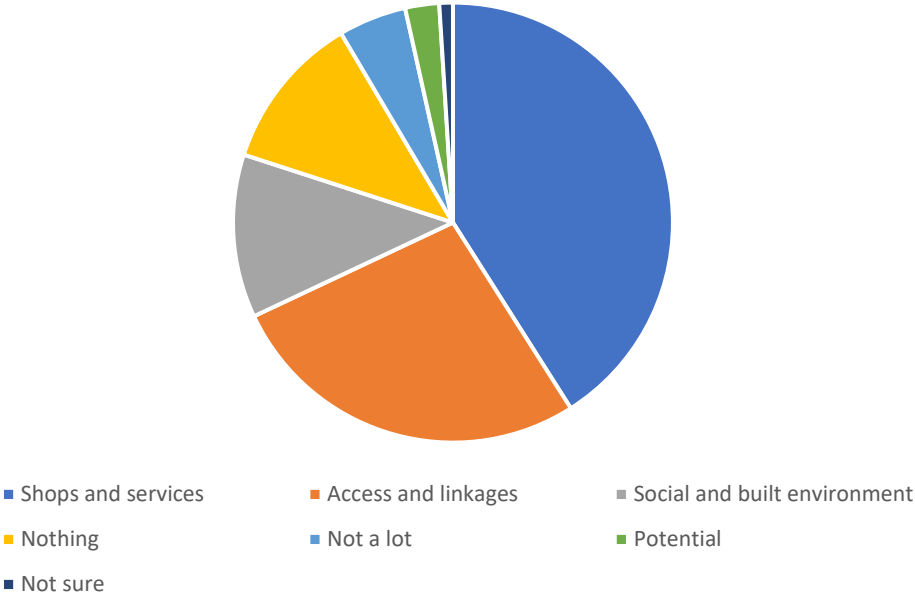


Figure 4.6 What is liked about East Ham High Street (survey respondents)



gardening and flower shop, different nationalities' delis / restaurants to add to existing local Asian shops.'

Figure 4.8: What is least liked about East Ham High Street (survey respondents)

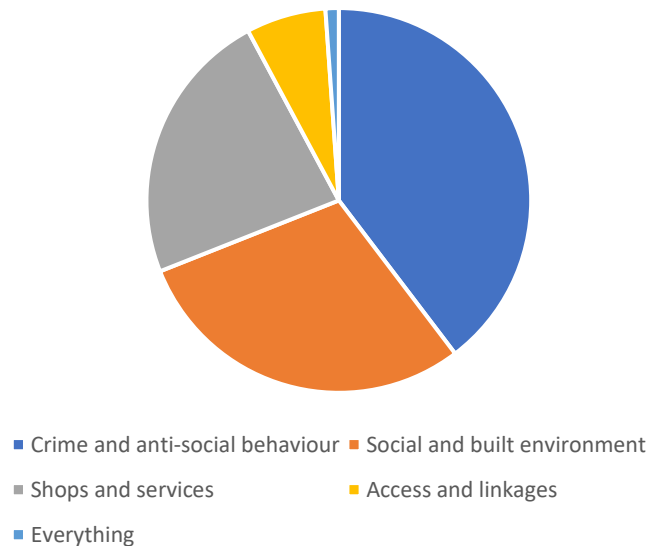
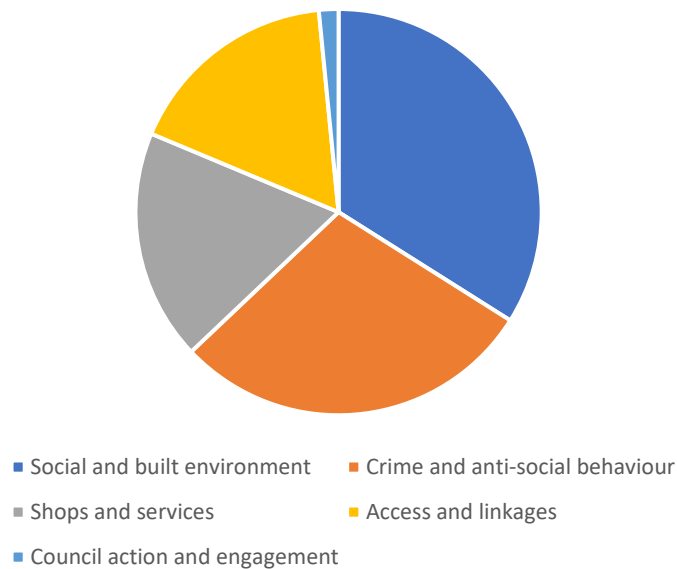


Figure 4.9: How could East Ham High Street be improved (survey respondents)



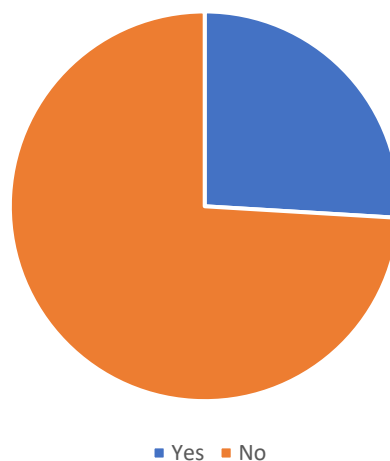
Interviewees and survey respondents noted that East Ham has become less of a shopping destination than in previous decades, with the last decade in particular seeing a shift from a 'balance of national retailers and independents to predominantly discount stores, fast food outlets and convenience shops' (though see section 4.1 on building uses). Some participants believe that while the High Street has remained affordable, the

limited variety of shops and number of ‘anchor’ stores has led to a decrease in footfall. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact, respondents noted that the decline of the High Street had begun before then, exacerbated by rising commercial rents and competition with Westfield Stratford City since 2012. One respondent claimed that ‘the High Street has become more polarised between thriving low-cost retailers and struggling mid-sized shops.’ Whilst acknowledging that East Ham High Street is no longer a ‘shopping destination,’ another interviewee said that they had been told by more than one estate agent that ‘you don’t need to worry about an area while the banks are still there. It’s when the banks pull out, you need to worry. And we still have banks very much so in East Ham. So, I think it’s more that it’s gone through a period of change.’

Almost 75% of survey respondents said that East Ham High Street does not provide the full range of shops and services that they require. Whilst the High Street was appreciated for its convenience, proximity and accessibility, concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour, the social and built environment, as well as the quality and variety of shops and services were all significant. When asked where they regularly shop beyond East Ham High Street, the highest number of survey responses listed Westfield Stratford City, Beckton Triangle retail park, and Gallions Reach shopping park. These shopping locations offer a wider range of choice than the High Street, including more chain stores, and are accessible by car and public transport. As one interviewee reflected,

‘I would like East Ham High Street to become a cleaner, safer space where there is actually a reason to go down there rather than thinking: “Well, I could go down to the High Street or I could go to Stratford or the Beckton triangle” or, you know, like there are other places for me to go. I would rather East Ham become my place where I’m like, “Oh yeah, I’m going to pop down to East Ham High Street and get a coffee and some flowers and some socks.”’

Figure 4.10: Does East Ham High Street provide all the shops and services you need (survey respondents)



The vibrancy of East Ham High Street is crucial for sustaining the local economy and enabling inclusive local growth. Whilst the regeneration of the Market Place represented considerable recent investment into retail and residential space close to the High Street, it was only mentioned by a few interviewees and survey respondents. Some were positive about the development, with one survey respondent reflecting that ‘I like the potential and the fact that clearly there has been very costly investment made to regenerate it.’ But others were critical about the loss of the traditional covered market, with one survey respondent noting that ‘They closed the market and opened the new one which is not a market – it’s just not worth going into. Stalls have opened on the street making it hard to walk along. Make the market area a market again.’ Reflecting more widely on the potential of East Ham High Street, a further survey respondent observed that ‘It’s diverse and caters to the local community. The shops and what it has to offer – and it’s potential - can be great. I just wish there was more love and care from the local community but also responsibility from the shops to look after the High Street.’

One interviewee explained the importance of the High Street as it

‘reflects Newham’s diversity, provides affordable goods, culturally specific products and employment opportunities for local people, often from migrant communities. It gives small entrepreneurs a chance to start and sustain businesses that meet the needs of a multicultural population.’

The same interviewee also identified barriers to inclusive local growth, including

‘high business rates and rents, lack of investment in physical infrastructure, limited access to finance for small business owners, and the reduced presence of anchor retailers that traditionally drove footfall. In addition, crime and anti-social behaviour can deter shoppers and discourage new investment.’

Key recommendations for supporting the local economy and inclusive growth include establishing East Ham High Street as a Business Improvement District; attracting a diverse mix of businesses, not only discount retailers; supporting entrepreneurship from underrepresented groups, including women and young people, ensuring affordable commercial rents; improving public spaces, cleanliness and safety to encourage more visitors; enhancing digital and other skills for local businesses; increasing police presence to address crime and anti-social behaviour; providing better parking spaces and/or further pedestrianisation; and reinstating the role of town centre manager to support businesses. Whilst local people use the shops, services and public transport on East Ham High Street, it also has the potential to attract people from further afield. As one interviewee explained, ‘I think if the High Street was a bit more kept up today, it would attract people who aren’t part of the community in Newham, who travel in for the food because I think the food is the biggest attraction in East Ham.’

4.3 Access and linkages

The majority of our survey respondents lived near East Ham High Street (two-thirds within a mile) and the most popular means to access the street was on foot (Figures 4.11 and 4.12). Almost a quarter visited the street every day and 57% went there at least once a week (Figure 4.13). In general, the street was considered to be convenient and accessible for local residents. In the engagement workshops, participants also spoke positively about ‘excellent’ linkages to other places provided by local buses and East Ham Underground Station (with accessible lifts to the District and Hammersmith and City Lines providing direct links to central London and beyond). Indeed, one interviewee explained that the street was increasingly less a destination for them to go shopping and instead ‘a route to go somewhere’.

Figure 4.11: Residential proximity to East Ham High Street (survey respondents)

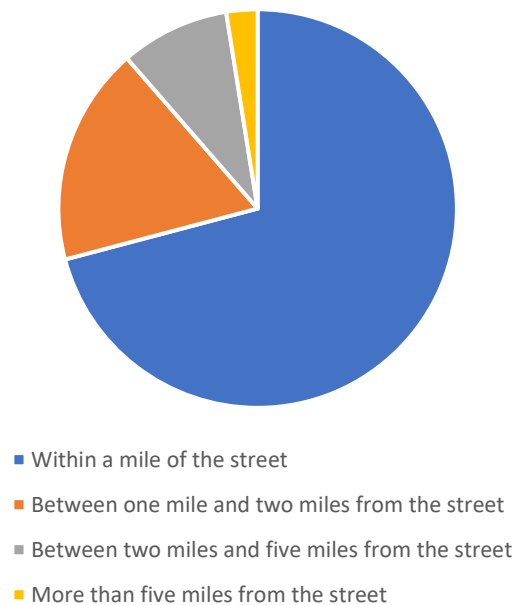


Figure 4.12: Means of travelling to East Ham High Street (survey respondents)

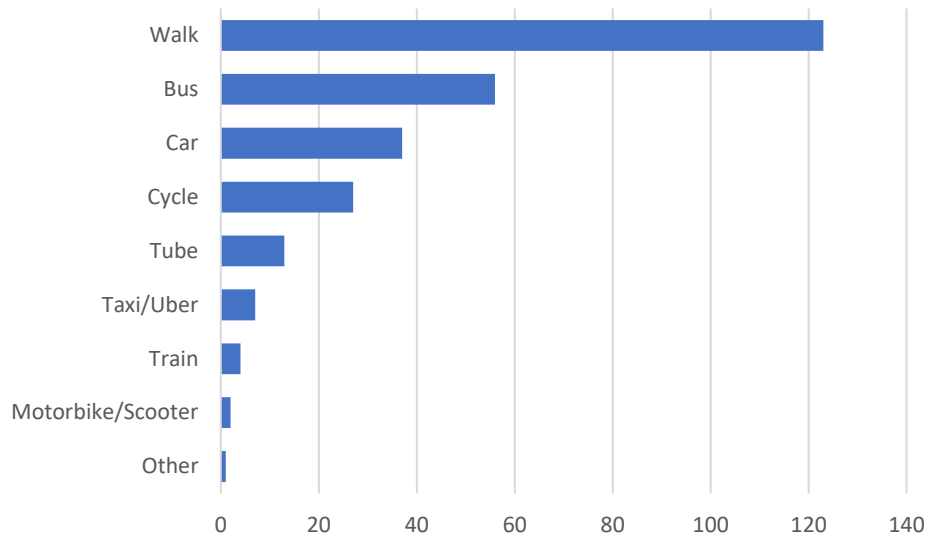
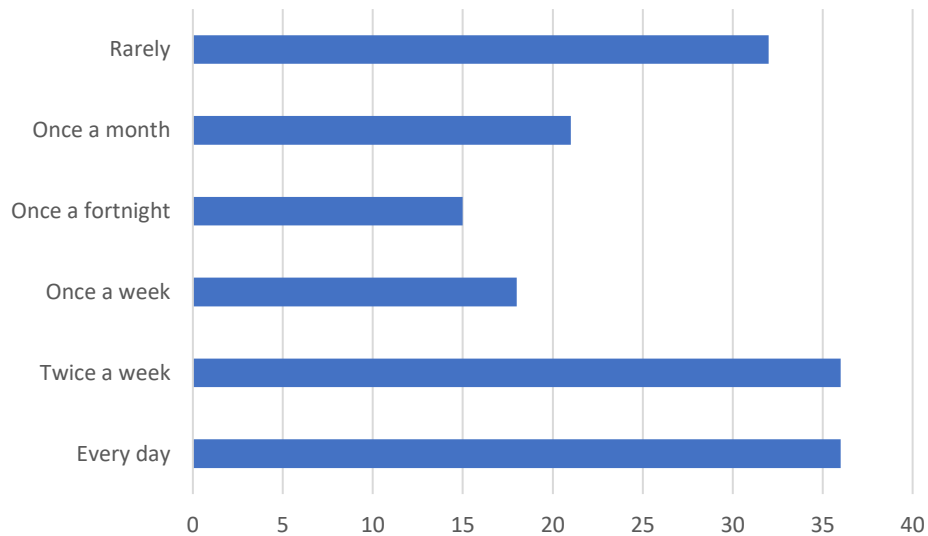


Figure 4.13: Frequency of use of East Ham High Street (survey respondents)



However, not all views on access to the High Street were positive. The street can get busy and congested: at times ‘there are too many people’ said one interviewee. The area around the station was seen a particular ‘bottleneck’ and consequently sometimes ‘intimidating’. Across the engagement workshop participants and among the survey, and interview respondents, there was a shared sentiment that the High Street does not always cater effectively to people with disabilities, older people and parents with young children. An interviewee spoke of the difficulties of navigating uneven pavements with their elderly parents, with high kerbs making it difficult to use a wheelchair. Residents also mentioned how market stalls are encroaching on the pavement and some drivers parking across dropped kerbs made parts of the street inaccessible for people with

buggies, prams and wheelchairs. Another concern, which one interviewee felt needed to be 'looked at quite urgently' was the use of pavements by those riding scooters and delivery bikes, causing a danger to all pedestrians. One resident spoke of how the pavement on the High Street was 'inconsistent' and was 'much nicer' towards Plashet Grove, but less well maintained in other areas. Access was also linked to the wider issue of safety and fear of crime – a topic we explore more fully below (section 4.5).

Participants suggested that the High Street needed to be more 'pedestrian friendly'. Ideas including providing benches throughout the street (particularly for the elderly and less mobile), widening pavements, improving congested areas (for example, around bus stops or where market stalls are sited), and providing a better and safer environment for cyclists by stopping them riding on pavements and introducing dedicated cycle lanes. It was also noted by several respondents that there is little on the street that is attractive for children and some felt it an unsafe environment for young people. Across the interviews, surveys and engagement workshops, the lack of public toilets was seen as a barrier to access.

There were, however, mixed views on the pedestrianisation of the High Street. A long-standing resident who responded to the survey felt that the one-way system introduced several years ago had enhanced the street. Some respondents thought that improvements could go further with full pedestrianisation of some segments of the street, or the limiting of motor traffic to certain times of the day. One interviewee felt that this would 'improve the area hugely' and could not 'understand why there's not been the political will to do it'. They pointed to the apparent success of schemes in other areas of London such as the Narrow Way / Mare Street in Hackney – a similar narrow shopping street that was pedestrianised around a decade ago. Others were strongly opposed to pedestrianisation because of the impacts it could have on businesses and other nearby roads, and the pressures it might place on the supply of parking spaces and access for people with disabilities. One interviewee spoke about the Browning Road Bridge, where it was previously free to park but where there are now high charges. The respondent believed that the reduction in access to this road has increased traffic stress on Romford Road and was concerned that further modifications to East Ham High Street would exacerbate traffic issues elsewhere. Indeed, several respondents requested that there be more parking provision in and around the High Street, especially for shoppers and people with disabilities.

4.4 Environmental quality

The poor quality of the environment of East Ham High Street was commented on by most of those who participated in this research. Perspectives covered a range of issues from the general upkeep of the street, including the problems of litter and waste management, to the lack of green spaces and planting, and poor air quality.

In answering the question 'What do you like least about East Ham High Street?' almost two-thirds of survey respondents referred to dirt, litter and the general poor upkeep of the

area. As one of our interviewees summed it up: ‘it just doesn’t feel like a very pleasant space.’ Several respondents pointed to poor management or inconsistent leadership on the part of the local council in dealing with these issues. Interviewees commented on waste collection practices that resulted in businesses leaving bags of commercial rubbish on pavements or outside shops. One interview respondent spoke about how the bins were often full and even sometimes set on fire, contributing to the unwelcoming state of the High Street. Residents would like the High Street to be cleaner, with more bins in prominent places, alongside other strategies to reduce littering. Feedback from our engagement workshop included the suggestion of establishing a High Street ‘caretaker’ to better co-ordinate the management of waste, litter and street cleaning to improve the overall look and feel of the area.

Another theme that participants frequently raised was the lack of green space and planting along East Ham High Street. One frustrated local resident explained how she once ‘measured how far it was between one tree and the next tree’ and found that on ‘High Street North there was actually 0.8 of a mile with no trees ... at all’. People expressed frustration that previous efforts to ‘green’ the street through the installation of planters had apparently been abandoned. As another interviewee explained,

‘Nobody’s taken responsibility for looking after those planters, so they’re now devoid of plants and they just have cigarette butts in them ... You know, that’s almost worse than not having planters at all’.

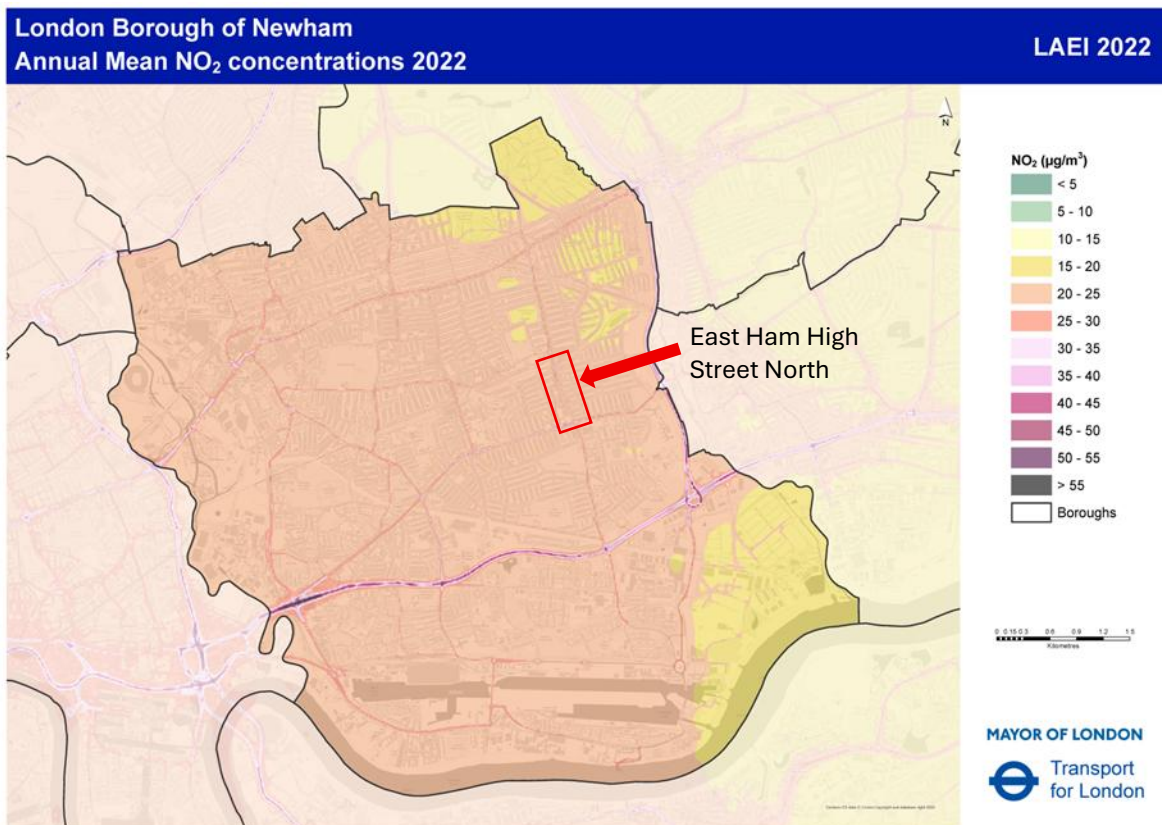
Participants would like to see more greening of the street and praised the recent planting of a small number of cherry trees. One interviewee enthused that ‘in spring they do look really nice, and I’ve seen lots of people take photos of them. You know, they could plant more of those, perhaps give East Ham a unique feature by being the destination where they are cherry blossoms, which is very unique, I think!’. Respondents cited examples of other London streets where ‘greening schemes’ have been more successful such as the area around nearby Manor Park station. Recalling initiatives from several years ago, including ‘Newham in Bloom,’ other suggestions for improving the environment of the High Street including additional planters and hanging baskets. One participant suggested the maintenance of such features might be led by a community gardening group.

Tree-planting and greening could also have a positive effect on air quality which several participants raised as an issue. As outlined in Newham’s draft [Air Quality Action Plan, 2025-2030](#), air quality is a significant concern in the borough. In 2022, an estimated 7.5% of deaths in Newham were attributable to particulate air pollution (PM_{2.5}), higher than the England average of 5.8% and equating to 108 premature deaths annually. A study commissioned by the Mayor of London in 2022 found that Newham had the highest rate of asthma admissions in London directly attributable to nitrous dioxide (NO₂) for ages 0-64. An Air Quality Management Area was declared across the entire borough in 2019 and the A134 Barking Road, which runs between East Ham High Street North and South, is one of four Air Quality Focus Areas.

As Figure 4.14 shows, NO₂ concentrations in 2022 exceeded the World Health Organisation target level of 10µg/m³ across the borough, with particularly high levels,

close to or exceeding the NO₂ national air quality objective (40µg/m³ as an annual average), along all major roads in the borough. Similarly, Figure 4.15 shows that particulate air pollution (PM_{2.5}) in 2022 exceeded the current national objective of 20µg/m³ (reducing to 10µg/m³ by 2040, and with a London Mayoral Objective of 10 by 2030) along major roads in the borough and significantly exceeded the WHO target of 5µg/m³. In both cases, East Ham High Street had high recorded levels of NO₂ and PM_{2.5}, but with slightly lower levels along the one-way section of High Street North.

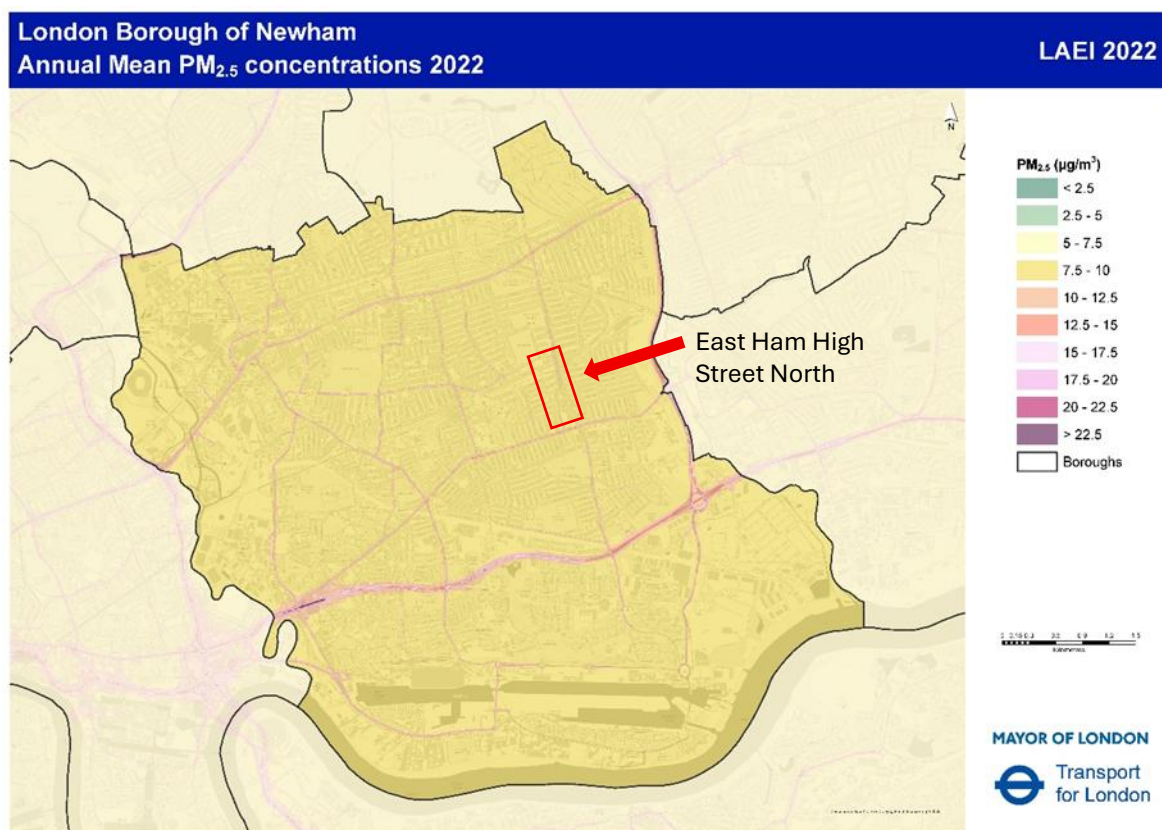
Figure 4.14: London Borough of Newham – Annual Mean NO₂ concentrations (2022)



Source: Borough level [London Atmospheric Emissions Inventory](#) (LAEI) 2022, Greater London Authority.

East Ham Town Hall is the location for one of Newham’s 12 automatic air quality monitoring sites since 2023. As Table 4.1 shows, the annual mean for both NO₂ and PM_{2.5} from this monitoring site were within national Air Quality Objectives but significantly exceeded WHO guidelines.

Figure 4.15: London Borough of Newham: Annual Mean PM_{2.5} concentrations (2022)



Source: Borough level [London Atmospheric Emissions Inventory](#) (LAEI) 2022, Greater London Authority.

Table 4.1: Annual mean NO₂ and PM_{2.5} monitoring results from NM4 East Ham Town Hall, 2023-24

	2023 (µg/m ³)	2024 (µg/m ³)	Benchmarks (µg/m ³)
NO ₂	33	30.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Air Quality Objective – 40 - WHO Air Quality Guidelines – 10 - Second highest of Newham’s 12 automatic monitoring sites
PM _{2.5}	11	10.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Air Quality Objective – 20 (reducing to 10 by 2040) - London Mayoral Objective by 2030 – 10 - WHO Air Quality Guidelines – 5 - Highest (2023) and second highest (2024) of Newham’s 12 automatic monitoring sites

Source: Newham London (2025) [Air Quality Annual Status Report for 2024](#).

Overall, there was a sense that tackling the environment of the High Street and particularly its aesthetics would have a significant impact, engendering a more positive

attitude towards the space and encouraging greater social interaction. Survey respondents were typically negative about the current look of the street, variously describing its shop frontages and businesses as ‘shabby’, ‘dishevelled’, ‘tatty’ ‘rough’, ‘messy and untidy’. One said, ‘the buildings could do with a coat paint and cleaning and regular maintenance’. But participants also recognised the scope for improvement. ‘I think we could make our high street a lot more kind of vibrant. It is already quite vibrant. It wouldn’t take much more to give it that spin where it could be, it could really take off’, said a particularly optimistic interviewee. Another shared her vision:

‘If I could, so [wave] my magic wand, it would be pedestrianised. There would be lovely shrubs planted in all the planters, maybe more seating ... I’d love to see businesses actually looking after the front of their stores a bit more. I’d like to see the Council collecting rubbish in a more sensible way. I’d love to see TfL manning East Ham station better’.

Among these suggestions, the question of providing more seating along the street was raised by several participants, noting its potential social value particularly for ‘pensioners or pregnant women or other people who need to just have a break during the shopping or maybe a couple of people who want to chat’. There was criticism of the ‘few benches’ currently on the street which were described as ‘dreadful ... very old’ and, like the planters, ‘not maintained’. But while one interviewee imagined new benches as being part of creating ‘energising spaces for people to ... hang out across generations’ others were concerned about them encouraging loitering and becoming ‘sites of anti-social behaviour’. It was noted that current benches tend to be ‘commandeered by drinkers and drug users.’ Indeed, a resident member of a local police panel suggested that the Police often see benches as a ‘hazard’.

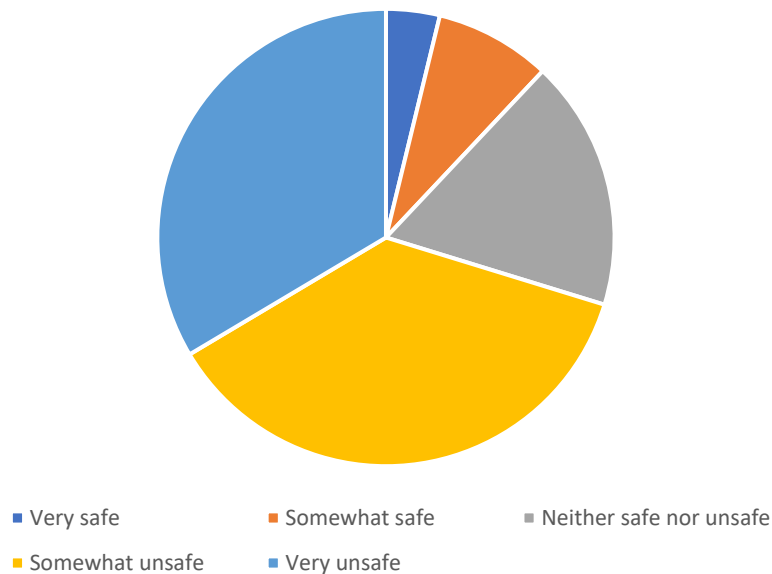
However, participants also often noted that successful high streets *do* have places where people can stop, rest and socially interact. One interviewee praised what had been achieved at Stratford Broadway, not only in relation to the provision of seating, planting and attractive street furniture, but also because of the upkeep of shop premises and the apparently co-ordinated approach to maintaining the space. The task of environmental and aesthetic improvement at East Ham was also seen as a collective responsibility. It was felt by one interviewee that ‘the Council should probably take a lead on it, but then ... try to actually actively involve the community’. The same respondent echoed the views of others that businesses should also take on some of the responsibility, not only through the better maintenance of their own premises, but potentially by contributing to the wider upkeep of the street to make it more attractive.

4.5 Crime, anti-social behaviour and safety

In all areas of this project where we directly sought the views of people, the safety of East Ham High Street was a key concern and perhaps the most significant issue we encountered. Analysis of survey data show that around 70% of survey respondents reported feeling somewhat or very unsafe on the High Street (Figure 4.16). This response

partly reflects the gender breakdown of respondents as 63% of those completing the survey identified themselves as female. More detailed analysis shows that 54% of males felt somewhat or very unsafe compared with 78% of females; in contrast just 7% of females felt somewhat or very safe compared with 21% of males. Moreover, respondents believed that the situation was getting worse with fear of crime increasing. One interviewee suggested the street was ‘less female friendly than it used to be ... [and] less family oriented.’

Figure 4.16: Feelings of safety on East Ham High Street (survey respondents)



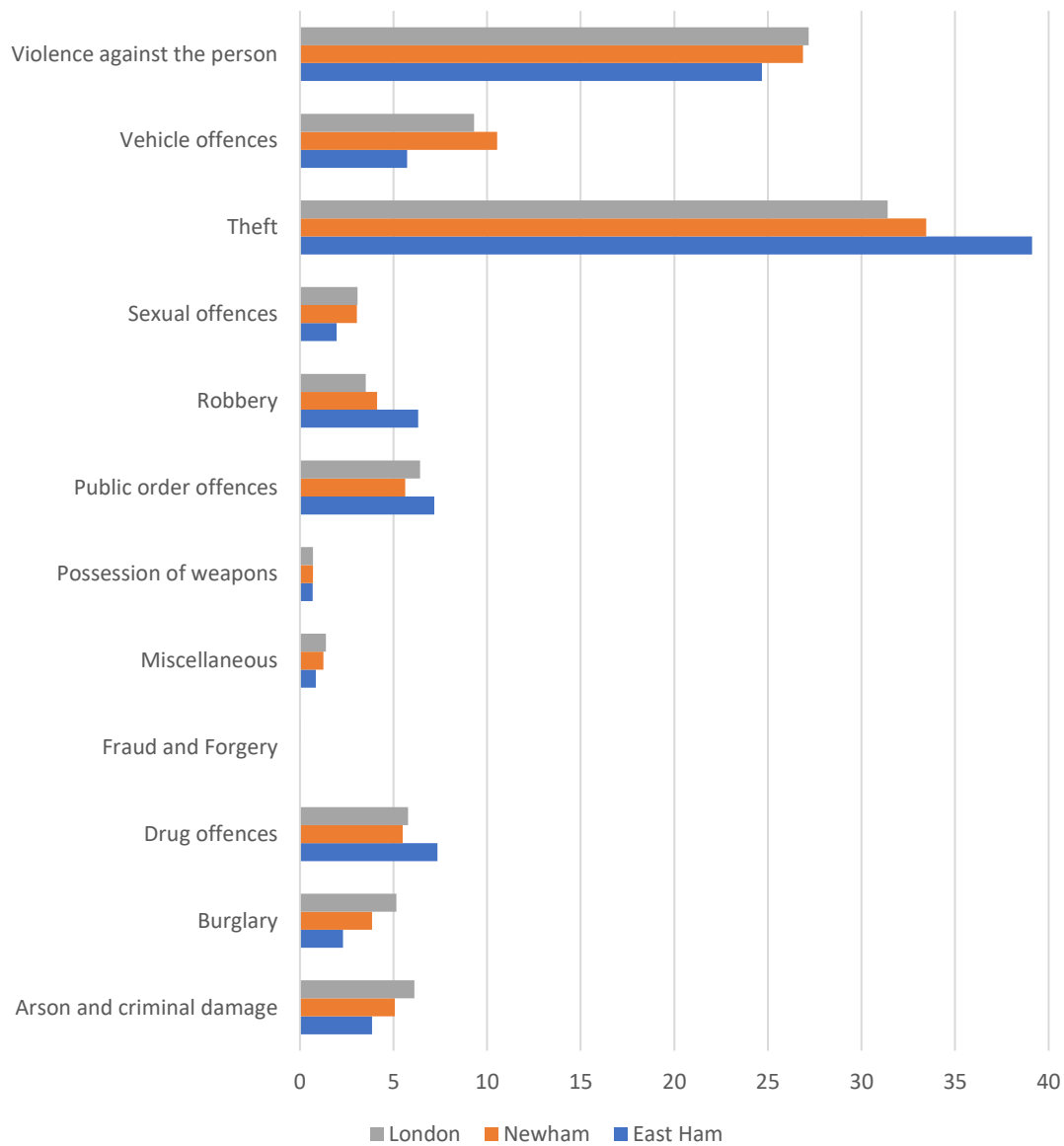
When asked to elaborate on their feelings about safety on East Ham High Street, the most common concerns were about pickpocketing, bag and phone theft, begging, shoplifting and anti-social behaviour such as loitering, illegal gambling and drunkenness. A high proportion of participants had themselves experienced a crime such as a theft or mugging, or this had happened to a close family member or friend, or they had witnessed an incident on the High Street. In one interview, a respondent said that he did not feel comfortable letting his young children go to the High Street at certain times of the day and would only give them the exact amount of change needed to purchase items from the shops, in case of them being ‘mugged’. Many survey respondents reported feeling particularly unsafe in the evenings.

Another key concern was ‘groups of men’ loitering on the street, especially outside cafés and betting shops, making female respondents in particular feel unsafe. Such groups were described as ‘threatening’ due to behaviours such as staring and leering, drinking, drug-taking and generally being aggressive. Betting shops were brought up as particular sites of discomfort for many respondents. Engagement workshop participants, survey and interview respondents alike felt there were too many betting shops on the High Street (currently 10; see section 4.1). The problem of ‘big groups of men hanging out in the High

Street' was considered by some to be a relatively recent (and growing) problem. One interviewee suggested that over 'say about 8-10 years ... that's ... really increased.' Respondents understood that, whilst not all groups of men were engaged in criminal or anti-social activity, it was rather their group presence that seemed to cause unease.

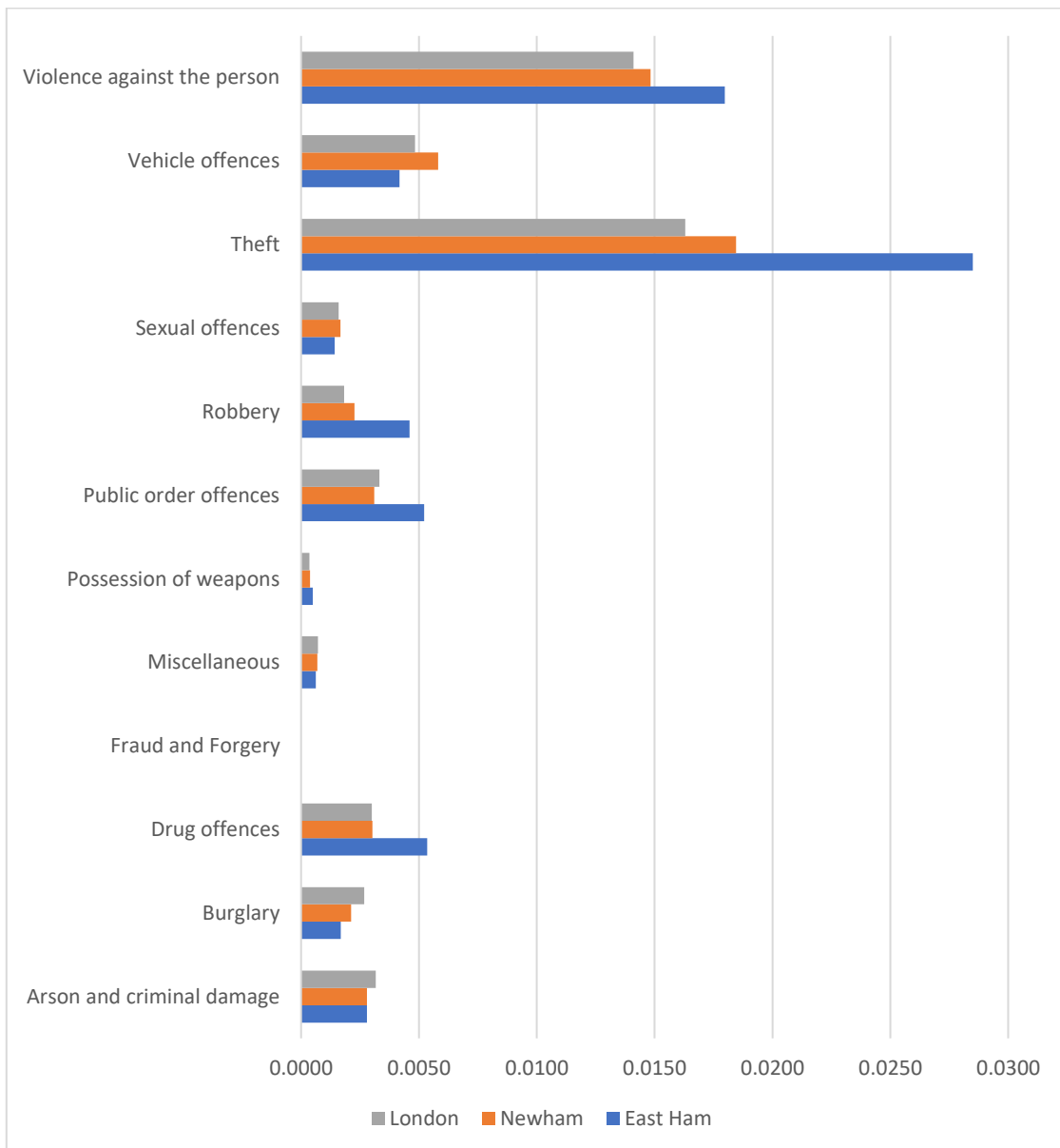
While many participants had directly experienced or witnessed crimes, our surveys, interviews and engagement workshops, arguably provide more evidence of *fear* of crime than of actual offences. Ultimately, both issues – fear of crime and actual crime – need to be addressed in order that the High Street might be improved. Before looking at suggestions for tackling those issues, it is instructive to examine data collected by the Police on the nature of offences committed in the area around East Ham High Street, and how this compares with other locations. Figures 4.17 and 4.18 compare Metropolitan Police data on recorded crimes for East Ham ward (which contains much of East Ham High Street), the London Borough of Newham, and Greater London as a whole for the period 1 June to 30 November 2025. Figure 4.17 shows that theft, robbery, public order and drug offences make up a higher proportion of the total number of crimes committed in East Ham relative to borough and city-wide trends. Figure 4.18, which shows the number of crimes committed per person, reinforces this picture of the greater significance of theft, robbery, public order and drug offences in East Ham. The rate for theft – which would include the sorts of street thefts reported by survey respondents and interviewees – is particularly notable and around 75% higher than that for London as a whole (equivalent to 28.5 thefts per 1,000 people versus 16.3 per 1,000 people for London). Figure 4.18 also shows that the rate for crimes involving violence against a person is also higher than those for Newham and Greater London. By contrast, rates for some other categories of crime – such as sexual and vehicle offences – are lower in East Ham than in the comparator areas. Nevertheless, and while only including crimes reported to the Police, these statistics suggest that people's perceptions of the sorts of offences that take place in and around East Ham High Street reflects a reality. In other words, participants' fears about community safety on East Ham High Street are well-founded.

Figure 4.17: Recorded crimes in East Ham Ward, London Borough of Newham and Greater London, 1 June to 30 November 2025: types of crime as a percentage of total crimes



Sources: Metropolitan Police Service: Recorded Crime: Geographic Breakdown; Monthly Crime Dashboard. Available at [London Data Store](#) For a full definition of crime classification categories see the [Home Office Crime Recording Rules](#).

Figure 4.18: Recorded crimes in East Ham Ward, London Borough of Newham and Greater London, 1 June to 30 November 2025: crime rates per person



Sources: Metropolitan Police Service: Recorded Crime: Geographic Breakdown; Monthly Crime Dashboard. Available at [London Data Store](#) and Office of National Statistics (ONS) Census 2021 data available at [Build a custom area profile - ONS](#). For a full definition of crime classification categories see the [Home Office Crime Recording Rules](#)

The importance of safety and security to the future of the High Street was widely recognised. As one interviewee put it, ‘I just would like the High Street to become a safer space.’ As another explained, ‘if people don’t feel safe and secure, then they’re just going to lock themselves in the house, stay as a recluse, and our community is just going to slowly disappear.’ Participants had several suggestions as to how crime and anti-social behaviour on East Ham High Street – and associated fear of those things – might be addressed. Engagement workshop participants would like to see an improvement in

street lighting and measures to address phone, bicycle, bag and card theft. A better police presence was called for by over half of the survey respondents and most of those who were interviewed. Several people who we spoke to recalled a time when there was a Police Station on the High Street (South) and believed that police visibility had been in decline ever since. Some participants would like to see dedicated town centre security and community support officers. One interviewee stated, 'we need more police presence, but at least some community officers in the High Street to improve the atmosphere,' whilst one survey respondent would like 'more police to change the narrative that it is a scary place so that bigger stores feel comfortable in investing.'

4.6 Community diversity and connection

The diversity of East Ham's communities, and spaces and opportunities for community members to meet each other and enhance the High Street as a friendly and welcoming place, were important themes in our research. As one interviewee told us,

'we're very proud of East Ham. We live here. We're born here, [and we're] probably going to pass away here. Our kids are going to grow up here. ... This is home. And we're trying to do whatever we can as residents to improve it.'

Many participants were positive about the diversity of local communities and residents, with one interviewee saying that 'I still enjoy East Ham and East Ham High Street because you get a diverse type of people there from every background and you get to meet people.' One survey respondent described East Ham High Street as 'a cosmopolitan vibrant area' and others valued its 'community – seeing people I know and stopping in my local businesses' and the friendliness of people and shopkeepers. Other survey respondents, however, felt that there is 'no sense of community' or 'not enough of a community feel. It used to have that when I lived off of it, but it has lost its charm. I loved the Market.' One interviewee felt that the High Street was 'quite a kind of segregated space to me' and a survey respondent said that shops and services on the High Street should 'encourage communities rather than one Asian community.'

The residents and other stakeholders involved in this research shared a wide range of ideas and priorities for High Street improvements, as outlined in the previous sections of this report. One further priority that emerged from our research was the potential for the High Street to foster stronger connections by bringing people together through community spaces, events and activities. For one interviewee, community use of the High Street has shifted, 'with more reliance on it as a space for services and social interaction rather than just retail. You can see certain communities using it as a space to get together.' Another interviewee saw the potential for the High Street 'to bring the different communities together ... so that people feel comfortable hanging out with each other,' with ideas including the celebration of festivals, other community events, and a

community space or hub on the High Street. For one survey respondent, the main priority was to ‘encourage people back to the High Street by creating community spaces and putting on events. Provide incentives for independent cafes and art spaces to help them get established – and place them on the High Street, not sidelined in the new development of East Ham Market.’ Other survey respondents mentioned the importance of spaces for art and other creative practices on the High Street, and the role of events and activities in bringing different generations and communities together. But, as one interviewee told us, ‘it’s often the ... gentrifiers who are coming in trying to do those things, and it’s like, ... you know what, if we want to make the High Street better, we need to kind of bring everybody in that space.’ Our research reveals a strong desire to reclaim the High Street from groups of men loitering and other anti-social behaviour, and to create spaces and opportunities for social interaction and community connection that are inclusive and welcoming to all, enabling it to become ‘a great and vibrant place where communities can come together.’

5. Conclusions and recommendations: towards a cleaner, safer, greener East Ham High Street

One of our survey respondents described East Ham High Street as a ‘shadow of its former self’. This sense of a high street in decline was common amongst those who participated in the study. Our findings show that East Ham High Street does face some significant challenges: a number of valued shops have closed; levels of cleanliness and ineffective waste management are a problem; the general upkeep of the exterior of some shops and businesses is poor; fears about crime and anti-social behaviour are widespread and well-founded; there is limited green space and features such as planters have not been maintained; air quality could be improved; the street feels crowded and can be difficult to navigate as a pedestrian. However, it would be wrong to paint an entirely negative picture of the street. Unlike high streets elsewhere in the UK, there are very few unlet properties. Our ‘Clone Town’ analysis shows that the street has a good variety of shops and a healthy proportion of independent businesses. Key services such as banks have not closed and some of the larger chains that people value – Primark, Lidl, Sainsbury’s and Argos, for example – remain. Many people value the diversity of the local community which is to a degree reflected in the shops and businesses in the High Street. East Ham High Street also remains well-connected with good bus and Tube links. While not dismissing the challenges, several respondents also spoke positively about the future of the street. A new resident who moved to the area in the past two years commented that ‘there is a lot of potential with the High Street’, which another respondent believed might be achieved ‘with more love and care from the local community’ and input from businesses.

If East Ham High Street is to thrive in the future it will require investment, effort and input from a range of stakeholders including, though certainly not limited to, Newham Council, the local community and businesses. As participants noted, there are examples of successful efforts to rejuvenate and maintain high streets not far from East Ham, including in Stratford and in the neighbouring borough of Waltham Forest. Drawing from the research and analysis presented in this report, we argue that the priority for East Ham High Street is for it to become ‘cleaner, safer, greener’. In order to achieve that goal, and so that the street can thrive in the future, we make the following recommendations.

Recommendations

Shops, services and the local economy

1. Evaluate the potential for East Ham High Street to become a Business Improvement District and reinstate the role of town centre manager.
2. Ensure affordable commercial rents, reduce the number of betting shops, and attract a diverse mix of businesses.

3. Enhance digital and other skills for local businesses and support entrepreneurship, including from underrepresented groups such as women and young people.

Access and linkages

1. Review opportunities for improving the pedestrian experience by considering part pedestrianisation and the widening of pavements to address overcrowding.
2. Enforce the Highway Code and parking regulations to stop the use of pavements by bikes and scooters, and inappropriate or illegal parking by cars and other vehicles.
3. Ensure pavements and road crossings are well maintained with even surfaces to support inclusive access.

Environmental quality

1. Ensure the effectiveness of waste management and street cleaning. Establish High Street Champions Group comprising businesses and other key stakeholders (e.g. local authority representatives, community members, Transport for London, local schools, places of worship) to focus on improving look and cleanliness of street.
2. Replant and maintain existing planters and assess options for further street greening (e.g. by planting more trees; reviving the East Ham High Street in bloom initiative; establishing a community gardening group); consult relevant stakeholders on installation of additional street furniture including benches and bins to promote positive social interaction.
3. Ensure monitoring and improvement of air quality in line with Newham's Air Quality Action Plan 2025-30.

Crime, anti-social behaviour and safety

1. Work with the Metropolitan Police to increase visible and active policing of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour, including theft, drug dealing and loitering.
2. Review lighting and CCTV and seek opportunities for their enhancement to maximise safety.
3. Building on the above recommendations, work to change the narrative and promote East Ham High Street as a welcoming destination for positive social interaction and consumption.

Community diversity and connection

1. Celebrate festivals and organise events that bring communities together.

2. Develop an inclusive and welcoming community space or hub on the High Street to enable different generations and communities to meet each other.
3. Support artistic and creative practice on the High Street that reflects the community's diversity.

Bibliography

- Blunt, A., Gifford, S., McCarthy, K. and Jones, M. (2026) *Research with East London communities: place-based guidance and resources*. London: Queen Mary University of London.
- Dines, N. (2012) The disputed place of ethnic diversity: an ethnography of the redevelopment of a street market in East London. *Routledge Online Studies on the Olympic and Paralympic Games*, 1(40), pp. 254–272.
https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203886717_chapter_14
- Fletcher, G., Greenhill, A., Griffiths, M., Holmes, K. and McLean, R. (2016) Creatively prototyping the future high street. *Production Planning & Control*, 27(6), pp.477–489.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09537287.2016.1147094>
- Greater London Authority (2022) LAEI 2022 - Borough Air Quality Data for LLAQM [online] Available at:
<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/laei-2022-borough-air-quality-data-for-llaqm-2kdj/>
- Hill, A. and Cheshire, J. (2022) An Investigation of the Impact and Resilience of British High Streets Following the COVID-19 Lockdown Restrictions. *Applied Spatial Analysis and Policy*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12061-022-09494-8>
- HM Government (2022) *Levelling Up the United Kingdom Executive Summary*. London: HM Government. [online] Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62e7a429d3bf7f75af0923f3/Executive_Summary.pdf
- House of Lords Built Environment Committee (2024) *High Streets: Life beyond retail?* London: HM Government. [online] Available at:
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/ldbuiltenv/42/42.pdf>
- Home Office (2025) *Crime Recording Rules for Front line Officers and Staff*. London: Home Office. [online] Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counting-rules-for-recorded-crime>
- Lorono Leturiondo, M., Ntounis, N., Sonderland Saga, R., Parker, C. and Warnaby, G. (2022) *The medium and longer-term viability of the high street (post COVID19): end of project report*. Project Report. London: High Streets Task Force.
- Mayor of London (2021) *The London Plan*. London: Greater London Authority.
- Mayor of London (2025a) *The London Growth Plan*. London: Greater London Authority. [online] Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/business-and-economy/mayors-priorities-londons-economy-and-business/london-growth-plan>
- Mayor of London (2025b) *High Street Place Labs Programme*. [online] Available at: [Mayor of London invests £600,000 to boost 12 high streets across the capital | London City Hall](https://www.london.gov.uk/news/mayor-of-london-invests-600000-to-boost-12-high-streets-across-the-capital)

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *Build Back Better High Streets Government's vision for thriving high streets Revitalising high streets Supporting high street businesses Improving the public realm Creating safer and cleaner spaces Celebrating pride in local communities 04*. [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60f935638fa8f50435634947/Build_Back_Better_High_Streets.pdf
- New Economics Foundation (2007) *Clone Town Britain: the survey results on the bland state of the nation*. London: New Economics Foundation. [online] Available at: https://new-economicsf.files.svdcdn.com/production/files/1733ceec8041a9de5e_ubm6b6t6i.pdf
- Newham Council (2018) *Newham Local Plan 2018 A 15-year plan looking ahead to 2033 People at the Heart of Everything We Do*. [online] Available at: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1111/newham-local-plan-2018-pdf->
- Newham Council (2020) *Towards a Better Newham*. [online] Available at: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3035/towards-a-better-newham-strategy>
- Newham Council (2023) *WE ARE EAST HAM. WE ARE NEWHAM. East Ham Community Neighbourhood Resident Engagement & Participation*. [online] Available at: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/6051/east-ham-community-neighbourhood-online>
- Newham Council (2025) *Air Quality Action Plan, 2025-2030 (draft)*. [online] Available at: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/9806/aqap-draft-for-public-consultation>
- Office of National Statistics (2021a) *How life has changed in Newham: Census 2021*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/e09000025/>
- Office of National Statistics (2021b) *Newham (E09000025) - ONS*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E09000025-newham>
- Office of National Statistics (2024) *Local indicators for Newham*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E09000025-newham/indicators#median-age>
- Queen Mary University of London (2023) *Civic University Agreement*. [online] Available at <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/about/for-east-london/>
- Theodoridis, C., Ntounis, N. and Pal, J. (2017) How to reinvent the High Street: evidence from the HS2020. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 10(4), pp.380–391. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpmd-03-2017-0031>
- UK Government (2025) *Index of Multiple Deprivation*. [online] Available at: <https://deprivation.communities.gov.uk/about-your-neighbourhood/e01003521?postcode=e61hz>

Wrigley, N. and Lambiri, D. (2015) *British High Streets: from Crisis to Recovery? A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence*. [online] Available at:
https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/375492/1/BRITISH_20HIGH_20STREETS_MARCH2015_28V2_29.pdf

Appendix 1: Demographic profile of survey respondents

Figure A1.1: Age of respondents

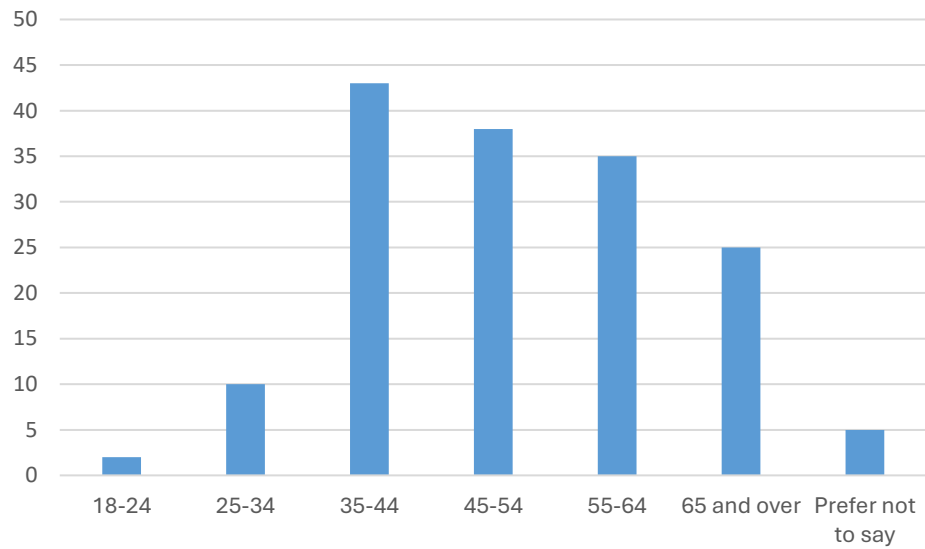


Figure A1.2: Gender of respondents

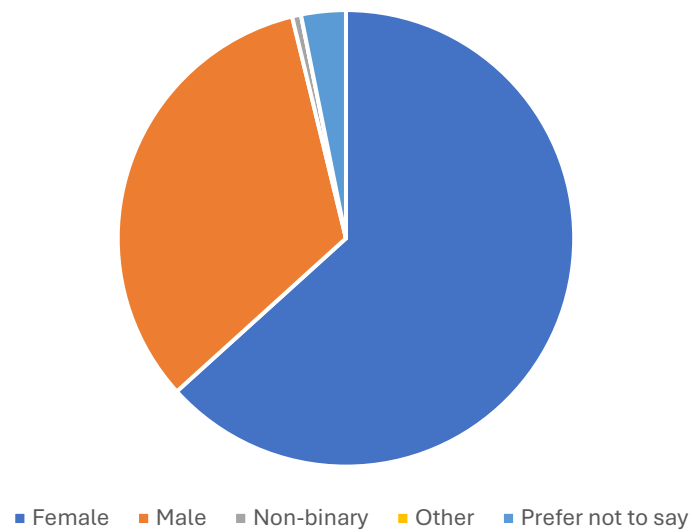


Figure A1.3: Ethnicity of respondents

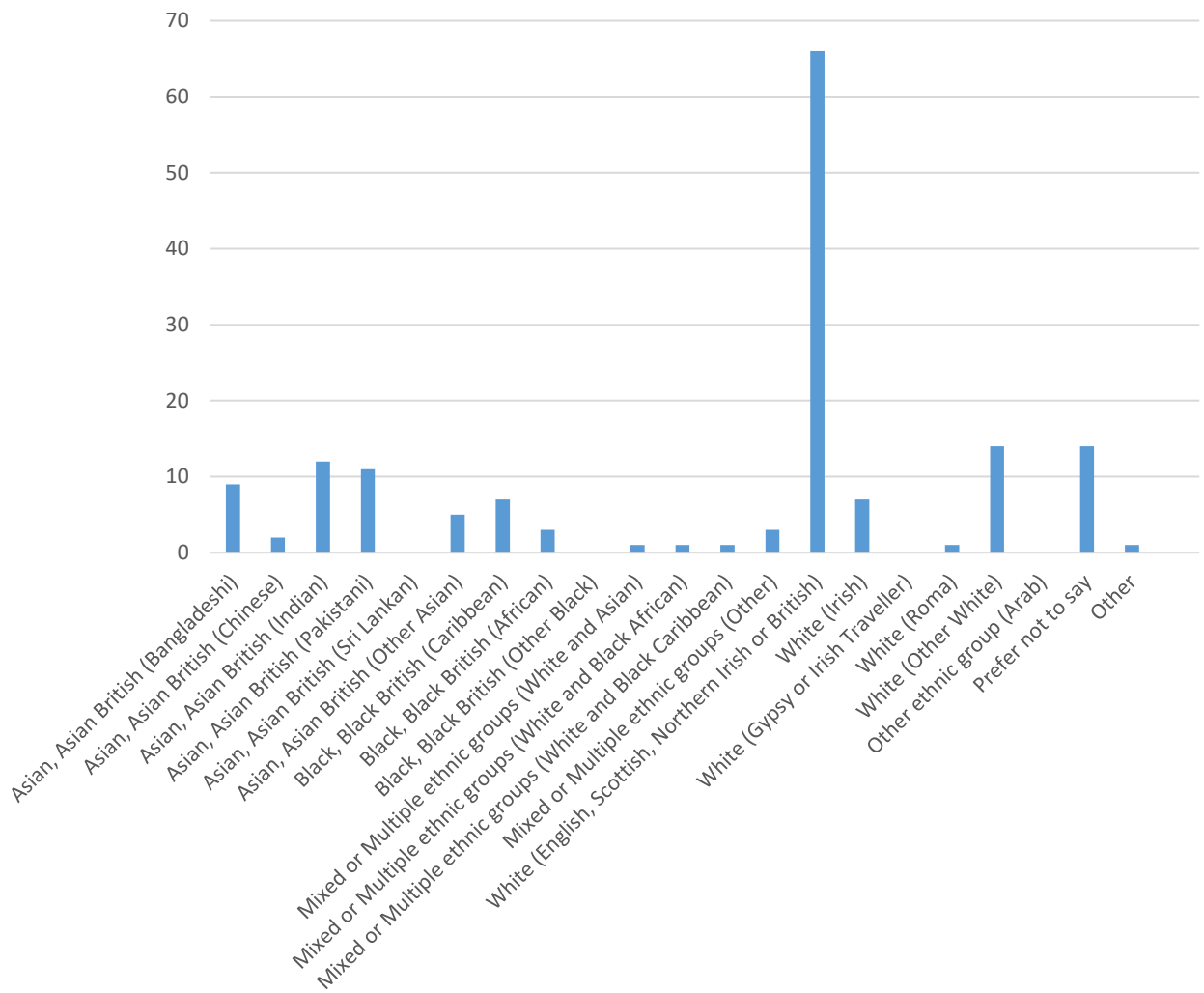
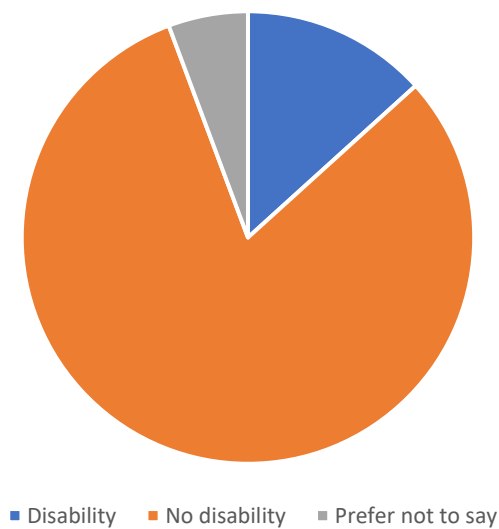


Figure A1.4: Respondents with a disability



Appendix 2: Summary of key survey results

Table A2.1: What do you like about East Ham High Street?

Shops and services (total)	84
Chain stores	23
Shops (general)	19
Variety of shops	16
Restaurants	8
Value for money	5
Friendly / long-serving shopkeepers / business owners	5
New Marketplace	4
Cafes	2
Banks	2
Other	1
Access and linkages (total)	54
Local	19
Convenience	10
Transport links	9
Semi-pedestrianization	7
Accessibility	6
Wide pavement	2
Disabled parking	1
Social and built environment (total)	24
Diversity	8
Vibrancy	5
Architecture / old buildings	5
Community	3
Quiet early in the day	2
Social integration	1
Nothing	2
Nothing much / not a lot	10
The potential of the high street	5
Not sure	2

Table A2.2: What do you least like about East Ham High Street

Crime and anti-social behaviour (total)	142
Crime	35
Loitering	35
Feels unsafe	23
Beggars	11
Anti-social behaviour	9
Public drinking	7
Lack of police presence	7
Unsafe for children and young people	6
Spitting	5
Drug users	4
Social and built environment (total)	105
Dirty	44
Litter	24
Too crowded / busy	7
Rundown appearance	7
Lack of green space, trees and/or planting	7
Fly-tipping	4
Pollution	3
Lack of community / community hub	3
Lack of benches	2
Unwelcoming	2
Lack of art and culture	2
Shops and services (total)	83
Too many betting shops	29
Too many poor quality and/or rundown shops	24
Closure or lack of good quality shops	9
Too much fast food	7
Lack of variety of shops, restaurants and cafes	6
Loss of the old marketplace	5
Empty or abandoned shops	1
No independent shops	1
No major stores	1
Access and linkages (total)	24
Parking (restrictions, expense and lack of)	6
Traffic	5
Electric bikes / scooters	4
Bikes on pavements	3
Not pedestrianized	2
One-way streets	2
Lack of pavement space	2
Everything	4

Table A2.3: How could East Ham High Street be improved?

Social and built environment (total)	109
Street cleaning	43
More green space, trees and/or planting	19
Less littering / fines for littering / more bins / signage	17
Improve shop frontages	9
Spaces for community events and activities	4
Welcoming to all	3
Public realm improvements	3
Street art and space for creative practice	3
Complete makeover / regeneration	3
Maintenance / painting of buildings	2
Better lighting	2
Reduce air pollution	1
Crime and anti-social behaviour (total)	93
Visible / active police presence	78
Deter loitering / begging	8
More effective use of CCTV	4
Ban street drinking	3
Shops and services (total)	59
Better quality shops, cafes and restaurants	22
Fewer betting shops	19
Better variety of shops, cafes and restaurants	11
More traditional market stalls	4
Support independent businesses and new traders	3
Access and linkages (total)	55
Pedestrianization / semi-pedestrianization	18
Improved seating / benches	10
Improved pavements	8
Encourage cycling (better bike racks and cycle lanes)	5
Improved parking	3
More disabled parking	3
Free parking	2
Better enforcement of parking restrictions	2
Fewer electric bike delivery riders	2
Better access, including for taxis / minicabs	2
Council action and engagement	5