

LUDLOW MARKET



REPORT

Ludlow Town Council

LUDLOW MARKET & LOCAL SERVICES DURING COVID -19

Report No. FC/20/08

**Full Council
3rd June 2020**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides information to assist member's decision making regarding provision of local services during the pandemic

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To reopen a socially distanced market of 14 stall and one van pitch
- 2.2 To reduce the three types of markets to two, namely the regular market and the whole market lets.
- 2.3 To retain rent free trading in June, and review in July and monthly thereafter.
- 2.2 That the public toilets remain open at Castle Street and Smithfield and Linney Riverside Park toilets are reopened.
- 2.3 To note the status of other town council services and facilities.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 16th March 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that to fight coronavirus everyone in the UK needs to stay at home except for

infrequent visits to shops for provisions, medical need, to exercise once a day, or to assist those who are vulnerable; keep a distance of 2m from people in public places, and wash hands frequently.

The measures were introduced to reduce the spread of the virus, and prevent the health service from being overwhelmed.

3.2 Town Council services have been affected. Play areas were closed to stop people from gathering together. Public toilets are kept open, but only for the benefit of key workers. Ludlow Museum at the Buttercross was closed. The Town Council announced that the market would close because public safety has to come first, and people needed to stay at home and save lives.

3.3 The compliance of the majority of people has also meant the R rate is fallen to below 1. The R number also known as reproduction number, refers to the average number of people that one infected person can expect to infect with coronavirus.

Scientists use it to predict how far and how fast a disease will spread. Scientist and government officials have been using the R value to help them determine how to tackle the spread of Covid-19 and easing of lockdown measures.

3.4 The health service did not become overwhelmed, but unfortunately Britain achieved one of the highest worldwide death rates from Covid-19.

Over time the number of ICU beds has been increased to create more capacity to treat critically ill Covid-19 patients, so there is less chance of overwhelming the service.

3.5 From 13th May, the government began to encourage those who could not work from home to go back to work where it was safe and legal to do so. The government also revealed an outline of the steps to ease the lockdown. .

3.6 The government identify the following challenges ahead:
As the Government moves into the next phase of its response to the virus, it is important to be clear about the challenges that the UK, in common with other countries around the world, is now facing.

- This is not a short-term crisis. It is likely that COVID-19 will circulate in the human population long-term, possibly causing periodic epidemics. In the near future, large epidemic waves cannot be excluded without continuing some measures.

- In the near term, we cannot afford to make drastic changes. To successfully keep R below 1, we have little room for maneuver. SAGE modelling suggests that either fully opening schools or relaxing all social distancing measures now, will lead to a resurgence of the virus and a second wave that could be larger than the first. In a population where most people are lacking immunity, the epidemic would double in size every few days if no control measures were in place.
- There is no easy or quick solution. Only the development of a vaccine or effective drugs can reliably control this epidemic and reduce mortality without some form of social distancing or contact tracing in place. In the medium-term, allowing the virus to spread in an uncontrolled manner until natural population-level immunity is achieved would put the NHS under enormous pressure. At no point has this been part of the Government's strategy. If vaccines can be developed they have the potential to stop the disease spreading; treatments would be less likely to stop the spread but could make the virus less dangerous.
- The country must get the number of new cases down. Holding R below 1 will reduce the number of new cases down to a level that allows for the effective tracing of new cases; this in turn, will enable the total number of daily transmissions to be held at a low level.
- The world's scientific understanding of the virus is still developing rapidly. We are still learning about who is at greatest personal risk and how the virus is spread. It is not possible to know with precision the relative efficacy of specific shielding and suppression measures; nor how many people in the population are or have been infected asymptotically.
- The virus' spread is difficult to detect. Some people carry the disease asymptotically, which may mean that they can spread the virus without knowing that they are infectious. Those who do develop symptoms often do not show signs of being infected for around five days; a significant proportion of infections take place in this time, particularly in the two days before symptoms start. Even those who are not at risk of significant harm themselves may pose a real risk of inadvertently infecting others. This is why a significant part of the next phase of the Government's response will be to improve its monitoring of and response to new infections.
- The Government must prepare for the challenges that the winter flu season will bring. This will have wide-ranging effects, from impeding any efforts to trace the virus (because so many people without COVID-19 are likely to have symptoms that resemble COVID-19), to increasing the demand for hospital beds.

- The plan depends on continued widespread compliance. So far people have adhered to the measures well, as depicted in Figure 5 below. However, to avoid R tipping above 1 and the epidemic increasing in an uncontrolled manner, very high continued levels of compliance are essential. The risk is an unbalanced one; if the UK tips back into an exponential increase in the spread of the infection, it could quickly get out of control.

4. SOCIAL DISTANCING

- 4.1 Ludlow Town Council has met with Shropshire Council and the Chamber of Trade to discuss how social distancing might be successfully introduced in Ludlow. The measures introduced will be temporary to enable the streets of our historic town to be as safe as possible.

5. LUDLOW MARKET

5.1 Contextual Information

As of mid-May 2020 the National Association of British Market Authorities reported that, only 15% of the 1,120 traditional markets in the UK were understood to be still operating with the vast majority being closed since 23 March. The markets still trading, primarily for food, were experiencing an approximate 80% drop in daily footfall. Over 90% of markets were operating without charging trader rents, or had suspended all rental payments.

On 29th May, NABMA reported that from initial feedback yesterday it is becoming apparent that only a small number of outdoor markets will be open on Monday, many of which have been trading during recent weeks for food and essential items.

Different reasons are mentioned but compliance to be COVID19 safe in the short lead in period is clearly a significant challenge to many operators.

- 5.2 Ludlow market is naturally a town centre hub that attracts people to visit the town and to gather in the town centre, and in normal circumstances this is brilliant for Ludlow, but safety must be put first during the pandemic.
- 5.3 Whilst the government has said that reopening the market is possible from 1 June, markets must be 'COVID-safe' before opening. The current layout of the market is not 'COVID-safe'. Changes to the layout and trading practices are required.

- 5.4 The **APPENDIX 1** provides an explanation of the construction of the market, and an overview of possible configurations that will provide the space required for social distancing.
- 5.5 Reducing the number of stalls being used to trade and signposting social distancing measures will create a COVIC-safe market.

Staff would need to manage the flow of people at busy times. The market officer may be able to get occasional assistance from Castle Street staff, but they also have to travel other sites during the day.

- 5.6 The market is also let on two externally managed whole market lets. Each market that is traded must be safe and therefore must agree to follow the same market layout, and management plan.
- 5.7 The table below outlines considerations for each market trading day. A more comprehensively detailed documentation will be prepared in advance of trading.

Market Trading	Preparation	Set up	Stow away
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocating stalls / trading days, creating lists of traders to help customers to visit on the right days communicating regulations to traders including PPE and payment requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Distancing Signage, Barriers, Water tap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Distancing Signage, Barriers, Water tap

- 5.8 Ludlow market usually trades up to six days a week so there is not much scope to increase trading days to make up for the loss of trading capacity due to the reduced number of stalls that can be used.

- 5.9 However, there are other ways that trading capacity may be increased.

Usually there are three different types of market in operation in Ludlow and they co-exist very successfully and support each other with the variety they offer Ludlow's customers.

Regular market	Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday
Whole market lets	First and third Sunday; and second and fourth Thursday

Specialist markets (organised by LTC)	Second and fourth Sunday; first and third Thursday – traded on a casual basis
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- 5.10 Temporary changes are required to help support the long term survival of the market. Members could consider reducing the three types of markets to two, namely the regular market and the whole market.
- 5.11 **The whole market lets** would retain their trading days.
- 5.12 **The regular market** are the largest contingent of traders and therefore present the most issue regarding fairness of trading opportunity with a reduced number of stalls.
- 5.13 There are opportunities to temporarily increase the trading opportunities by increasing the trading days to include Tuesdays, and the Second and fourth Sunday; first and third Thursday. This would create six trading opportunities in each week.

For illustrative purposes only:

First week of month	Mon / Tues / Wed / Thurs / Friday / Sat
Second	Mon / Tues / Wed / Friday / Sat / Sun
Third	Mon / Tues / Wed / Thurs / Friday / Sat
Fourth	Mon / Tues / Wed / Friday / Sat / Sun

5.14 Rents

Whilst the market's value to the town is so much more than the income it generates for the Town Council. The financial impact on the Town Council is a loss of revenue to support local services.

Loss of income for Ludlow Town Council during the pandemic to the end of June 2020

Type of income	£
Market stalls	38,984.00
Small pitches	4,490.00
Large pitches	2,082.00
Van Pitches	2,659
Buttercross Market	1,281.00
Whole market let	5948.00
Total losses	55,444.00

6. LOCAL SERVICES

Ludlow Museum at the Buttercross

At present, the museum must remain closed. Staff are using social media to highlight exhibits, and are working on plans for creating an online presence for Ludlow Museum at the Buttercross.

4.2 Play Areas

At present play areas must remain closed.

4.3 Public Toilets

The public toilets at Castle Street and Smithfield have remained open for key worker's use.

People are now able to spend time in family groups, or in social distanced small groups. Whilst it is important that people are encouraged to stay at home as much as possible, there is a need for adequate facilities for those outside the home. Ludlow Town Council took over the provision of the public toilets when Shropshire Council stopped funding them in 2011. The decision regarding the opening, signage and cleaning of the facilities rests with the Town Council.

If the Town Council decide that the toilets at Linney Riverside Park, Smithfield and Castle Street should remain open. All open toilets will have hand washing signage, and social distancing queue management signage.

Touch point signage will be introduced to advise the public to wash their hands after entering and upon leaving, and external bins provided for paper towel waste that may be used to pull doors to exit the toilets.

Cleaning staff will be provided with Covid-19 cleaning advice and appropriate PPE.

4.4 Grounds Maintenance

Staff have continued maintaining the outside areas and are working to Covid-19 safe procedures.

4.5 Burials at Henley Road Cemetery

Staff have continued to manage burials and grave digging at Henley Road Cemetery, and are using Covid-19 safe procedures.

4.6 Meetings

The Town Council's first virtual meeting took place on 29th April 2020

4.7 Administration & Financial Management

Town Council staff have continued to provide telephone and email support to residents and also social media posts to help people get access to the information. Payment of suppliers has continued using digital payments.

Town Clerk
May 2020

Implications

Wards Affected (All)

Financial (ongoing)

Health & Safety (considered within the report)

Law & Order (considered within the report)

Environmental Implications (ongoing)

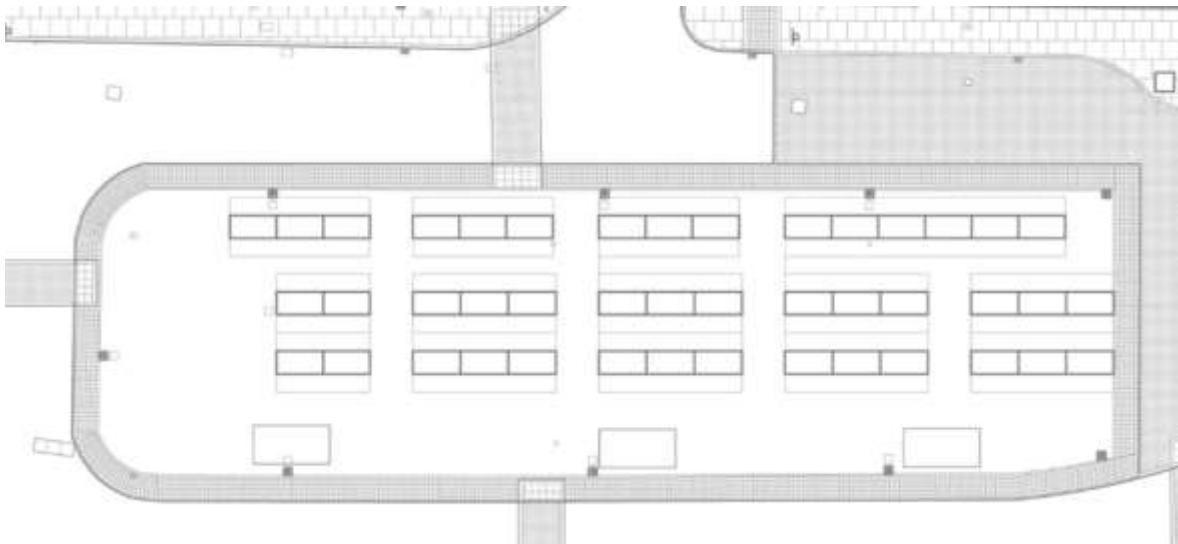
Key points

Ludlow Market Social Distancing

The Plan View of the Market Stalls Layout

There are 43 fixed stalls on Ludlow market. Their design is a very large overhanging canopy means that they are unstable if not fixed. The domed shape of the market means that all the legs of the stalls are cut to fit their exact location so it is not possible to relocate the stalls on the market.

The location of the van pitches are also restricted by the supply of electricity.



Two Types of Stall Construction.

There are two types of stall construction single width stalls are denoted in yellow and double pitch stalls are denoted in pink. Both are explained below.



Single row stalls – elevations

The trades stand behind the stalls closest to the road and serve customers in the market



Ludlow Market Social Distancing

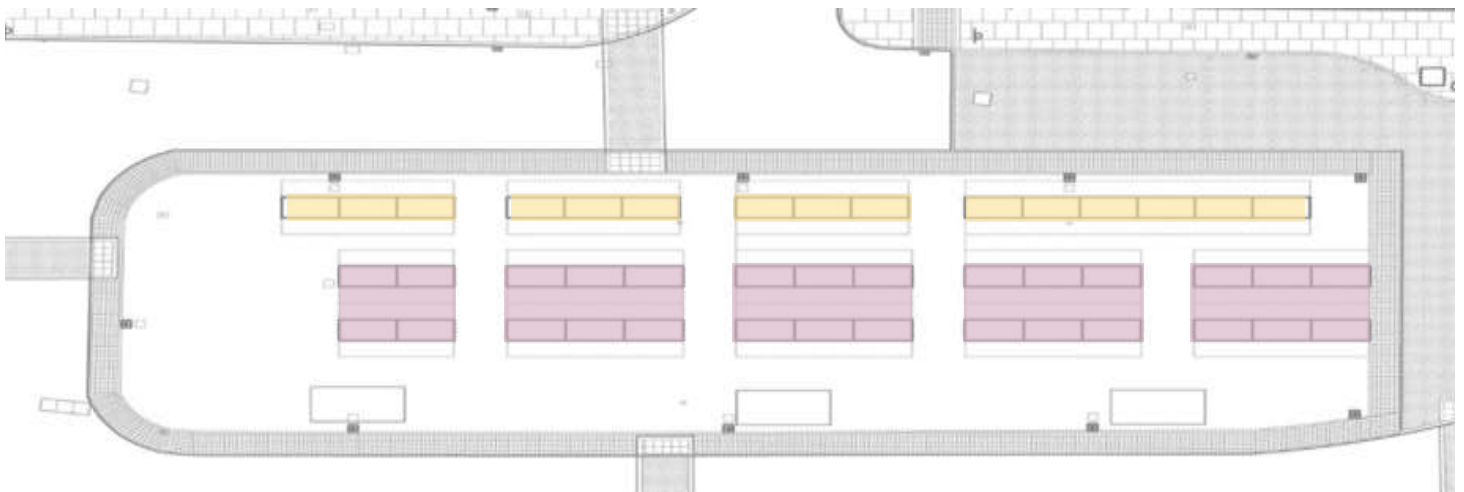
Double Row Stalls – elevations

The traders stand in the middle of the stalls and serve outwards



The Practicalities of the Market Layout as existing

The market is 50m long and 13m wide. The market layout is confusing with multiple points of entry and exit. The footpaths around the market edge must remain clear.



- Each individual trader must be treated as equal to all other stall holders in terms of access to stall and queuing provision.
- All traders require payment at their stall.
- Each stall requires a queuing system that is clearly understandable and safe.
- The customer passageways are not wide enough for stalls each side with queues and other customers passing by.
- Traders need to be able to safely stand 2m apart from other traders behind their stalls
- Even for collection only there is not enough space for customers, and passers-by.

Exploring as many options as possible will hopefully help to identify all the issues and assist with reaching the best decision.

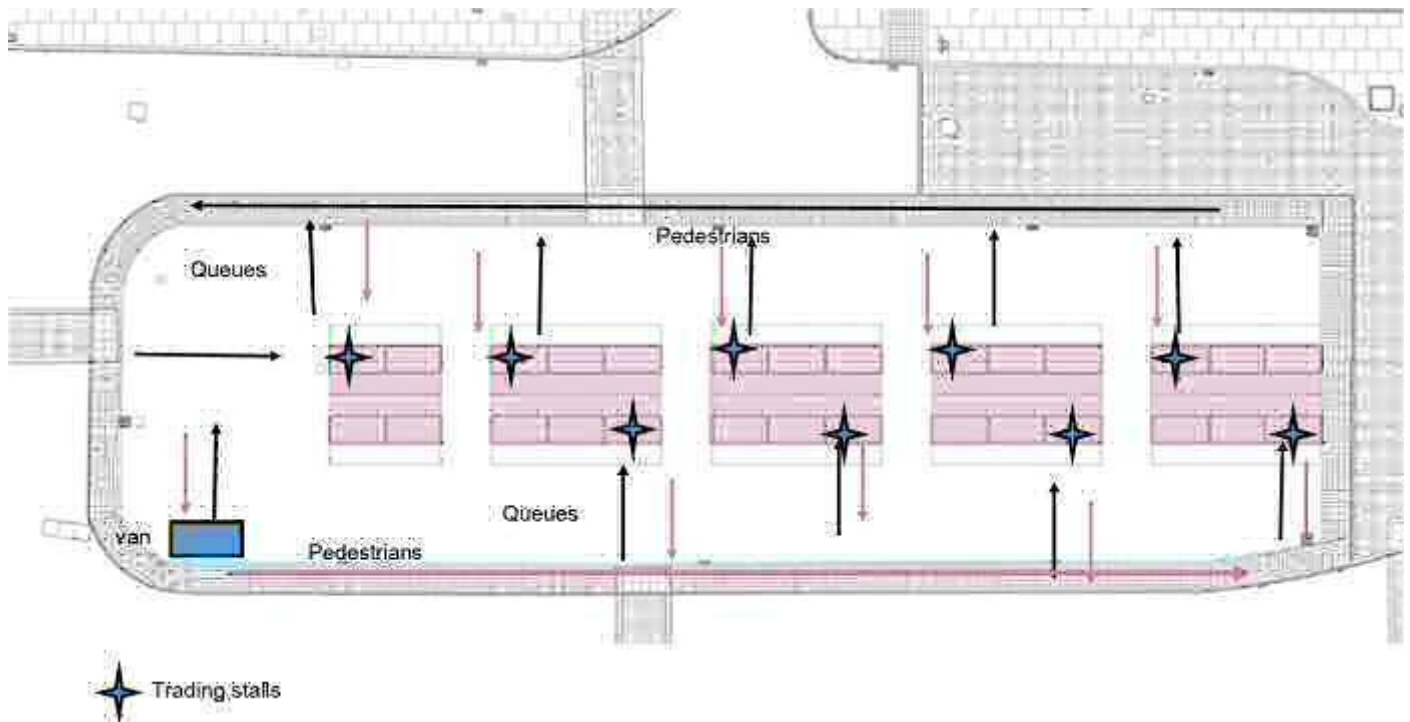
Ludlow Market Social Distancing

Considering Options for removing stalls

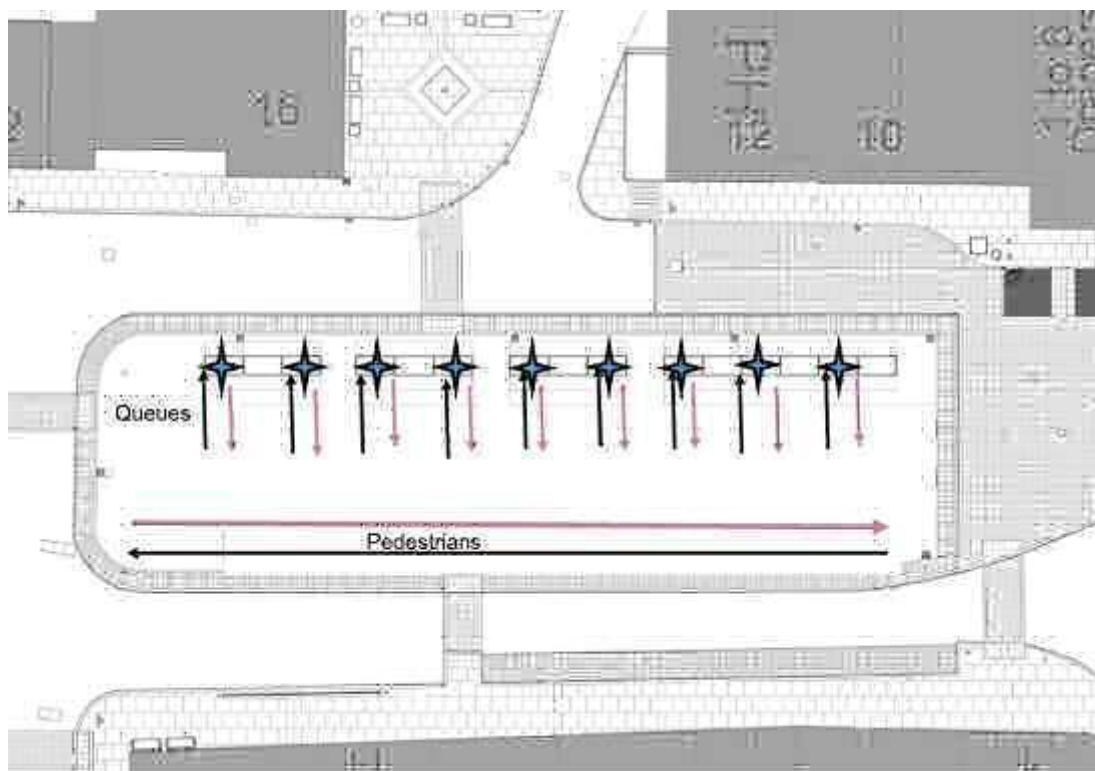
The position of the stalls is fixed and the structural integrity of the stalls means that it is not possible to remove individual stalls.

It is possible to remove a blocks of stalls

Option 1 – remove the yellow stalls. Traders have to keep 2m apart behind the stalls. There is approx. 5m of space for customers - which is a queue of two people.



Option 2 – Remove the pink stalls. Traders will need back sheets as the distance to the footpath is only 1.25m. There would be room for up to three vans.



Ludlow Market Social Distancing

Limitations and costs of removing stalls

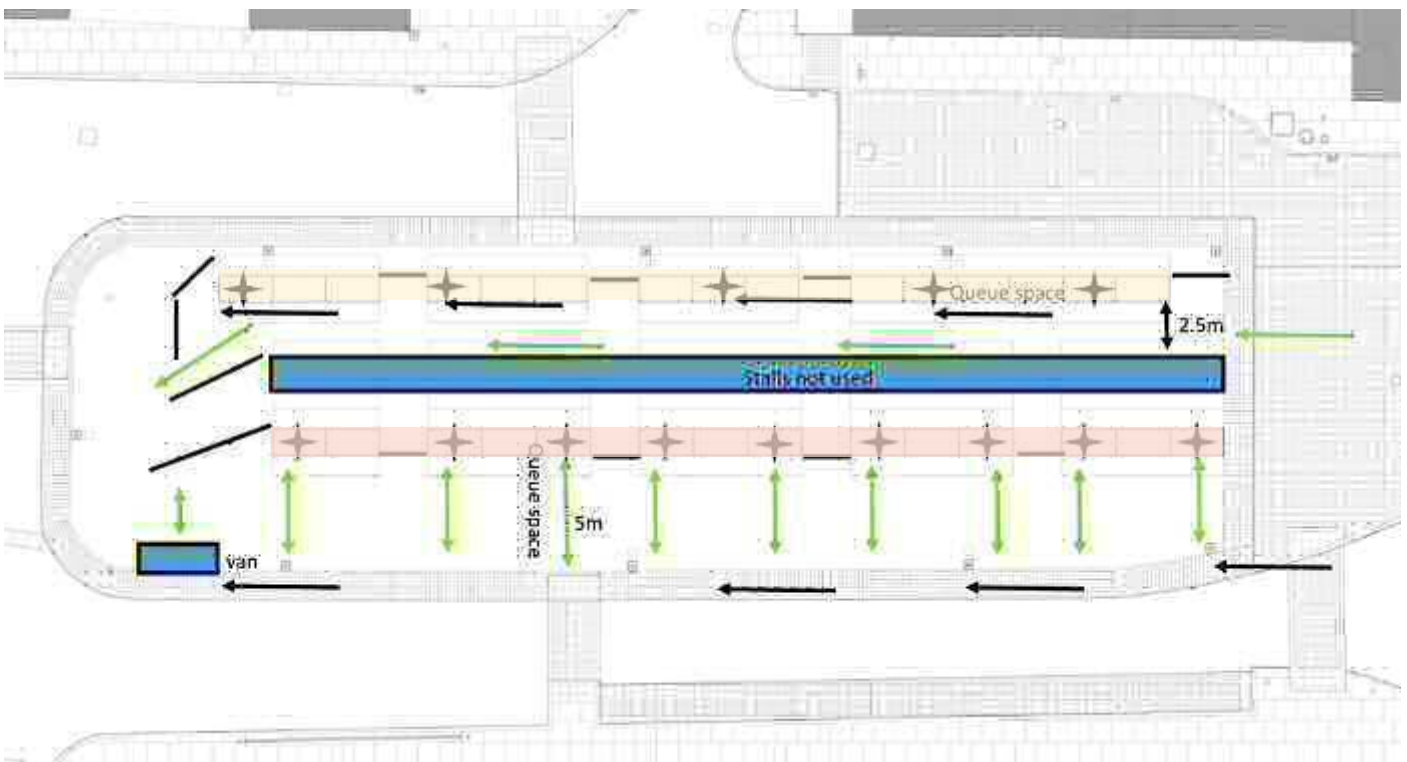
- Only a max of 9 traders will be able to trade from stalls, and up to three more from van pitches.
- Taking down the stalls would take 4-5 people at least one day
- The stalls will need to be safely transported and stored. To do this trailers would need to be hired for the duration of the temporary change. **Estimated cost: £1,800 for 3 months**
- Barriers and signage - **Estimated cost: £500- £1,000**

Retaining the current market layout

LTC has received a number of suggestions for stall layout, and this assistance is appreciated. Leaving the stalls in place will probably achieve the highest number of usable stalls, but it creates the most problematic layout to manage in terms of customer flows – this layout introduces risks related with crowds gathering and losing social distancing safe guards.

In terms of risk management, heavily relying on people to do as they are asked is considered a poor method of managing a risk. But we are in very challenging times so all options need to be considered.

It has been suggested that the market could operate as a supermarket with a one way system one entrance and one exit, but a supermarket only has one point of payment / sale. A market is a mass of individual traders each with their own points of sale, operating completely independent of each other. This situation is much more difficult to manage because it is easy to disadvantage some traders if the layout is not planned properly.



- The layout above permits 14 stalls and one van pitch to trade.
- There would be two different queuing systems because of the layout of stalls. One system for the single width stalls, and one for the double width stalls.

Ludlow Market Social Distancing

Yellow single width stalls

There would have to be a one way system for this row of stalls. Customers would enter at Post Sq. end and exit at other end of the market.

- Traders will need back sheets as the distance to the footpath is only 1.25m.
- The customer aisle is only 2.5m wide.
- The stalls are widely spaced to create queue space indicated by black arrows. Other customers could move past the que if they wanted to visit a different stall.
- There would have to be queue control at very busy times.

Pink double width stalls

- Queues would be in front of the stalls.
- A max of two persons per queue as there is approx. 5m of queuing space
- Staff would be required for queue control at very busy times.

Costs

- Barriers and signage - **Estimated cost: £500-£1,000**

NMTF has published useful practical advice for COVID19 safe trading. It can be downloaded at <https://www.nmtf.co.uk/info/bounceback/>