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Markets, Growth and the High Street Strategy



APPMG Briefing – Key Points

Markets should be recognised and funded as core civic infrastructure within the High Streets Strategy and wider devolution framework. They are not simply retail spaces but local economic engines that drive footfall, support small businesses and jobs, and provide affordable access to goods, particularly for lower-income communities. They also deliver wider public value through community cohesion, public health outcomes and social inclusion, making them essential to any serious approach to inclusive growth.

The evidence states that Market-led regeneration delivers strong returns from relatively modest investment, with over £550 million of regeneration funding already supporting schemes that include markets. Where markets are positioned as anchor assets within wider place strategies, they generate increased footfall, stronger local spend and enhanced civic pride.

There is now a strong body of evidence that markets can deliver significant place-based and policy outcomes when properly integrated within wider regeneration strategies. Experience in County Durham, Bury, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge, South Tyneside and Huntingdonshire demonstrate that targeted intervention can increase footfall, support enterprise, improve market infrastructure and strengthen the evidence base for future policy development.

Taken together, these examples make a clear case for recognising markets as strategic civic infrastructure capable of contributing to economic vitality, local identity and inclusive growth, not as standalone traditional retail.

However, current funding and policy frameworks do not fully support markets to deliver their full potential. There is too much emphasis on capital investment in buildings, with insufficient attention given to operations, management and the activity that makes markets successful including trader support, day to day activity and events.

Funding structures often favour large, complex bids, limiting access for smaller, practical interventions, and too little focus is placed on long-term commercial viability and sustainability.

With advocacy from the APPMG, Government now has an opportunity to correct this. Future policy should recognise markets as civic infrastructure within regeneration and funding frameworks, ensuring they are treated as central to





town centre renewal rather than peripheral retail. Funding programmes should allow markets to be supported within wider place-based strategies, combining capital investment with revenue funding where needed to secure viability.

The Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 can be used to unlock more flexible local funding routes, similar to the opportunities presented through UKSPF, enabling strategic authorities and market operators to invest in renewal, trader development and activation aligned with local priorities.

At the same time, regeneration proposals should be required to demonstrate social value, affordability and accessibility alongside economic return, ensuring that investment benefits existing communities. Markets should also be more clearly embedded within public health, food access and anti-poverty policy, reflecting their proven role in supporting everyday access to affordable goods.

Funding must protect affordability, support existing traders and avoid displacement, preserving the very community value markets deliver.

Markets are one of the few public assets capable of delivering economic growth, social value and public health benefits through a single intervention. With the right policy and funding framework, they can act as drivers of inclusive growth and sit at the heart of thriving, resilient high streets.

It is requested that the APPMG advocate to:

1. Recognise markets in regeneration policy and funding criteria as civic infrastructure that delivers inclusive growth, town centre vitality and community resilience.
2. Design future MHCLG programmes so markets can be funded within wider place-based regeneration, with revenue as well as capital where viability depends on it.
3. Use devolution to help strategic authorities and market authorities access flexible local funding for renewal, trader development, public realm and town centre activation, aligned with MHCLG's high street strategy.
4. Require business cases to assess social value, affordability, accessibility and distributional impact alongside economic return.
5. Embed markets more directly in public health, food access and anti-poverty policy.
6. Use regeneration funding to protect affordability, support existing traders and prevent displacement.

[Link to the larger briefing document](#)



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