# Spudman’s rise divides Tamworth as market stall tension grows



The ongoing saga of Ben Newman, popularly known as 'Spudman', in Tamworth reflects not just the local controversies surrounding a market trader but also highlights broader issues related to community dynamics, local business interests, and the impact of social media fame. After a turbulent period during which Spudman faced the threat of relocation by Tamworth Borough Council due to redevelopment, he emerged triumphant, but not without significant backlash from fellow traders and local residents.

Spudman, a viral sensation with over 4.2 million TikTok followers, sells jacket potatoes from his trailer, boasting a diverse menu priced around £5. His popularity soared during the pandemic, propelling him into the spotlight and turning his humble food venture into a local phenomenon. Following announcements of planned redevelopment at St Editha's Square, Spudman was initially informed he would need to move to a side street, sparking a significant outcry from his dedicated fanbase. A petition, rapidly garnering over 113,000 signatures, ultimately compelled the council to reverse its decision, allowing him to retain his prime spot after renovations.

Despite this victory, Spudman's success has become a double-edged sword. Local café owners have expressed complaints about his customers, claiming they occupy their facilities without permission. Coleen Mills, who runs the Side Walk Café, lamented that Spudman's patrons often use her café's toilets and tables, leading to tensions that she finds increasingly untenable. Mills accused Spudman of displaying a sense of entitlement, saying he has "become very arrogant" and seems to presume ownership over the market area.

Critics have accused him of running a poorly-maintained operation—depicted disparagingly as a 'manky old spud wagon'. Complaints have been made about hygiene practices and customer behaviour, with some locals asserting that Spudman's influence has exacerbated issues rather than alleviating them. Sue Vaughan, who owns the Market Café, voiced her frustrations over incidents involving Spudman's customers using her facilities, leading her to padlock them as a preventive measure.

In response, Spudman has countered such criticism by emphasising the challenges of his position. He argued that it is beyond his control where customers choose to eat their purchases, suggesting that local café owners’ anger stems from jealousy rather than legitimate grievances. In his view, Spudman is providing a boost to the local economy, even if it disrupts established trading patterns.

Moreover, Spudman's persona has been marred by allegations surrounding his business operations. Questions have been raised regarding hygiene and waste disposal, with an anonymous source claiming he was seen improperly discarding waste and even pouring cooking oil down a drain. Spudman has staunchly denied these allegations, asserting that he observes all necessary regulations, including waste management and employee background checks.

This conflict is emblematic of the struggles faced by traditional businesses adapting to new market competitors. While Spudman's stall draws health-conscious visitors and food enthusiasts, it also raises questions about the responsibilities of fast-growing enterprises to local communities. According to local resident Monique Dennis, Spudman’s meteoric rise has led to a reckoning in Tamworth, prompting some to view him as a divisive figure within the community.

Despite these polarised views, there are many who sing Spudman's praises. Supporters highlight his contributions to local charities and community events, suggesting that his influence has revitalised aspects of Tamworth that had been declining. His enduring popularity indicates a nuanced perspective—many embrace his character, viewing him as a sign of the town's resilience amidst changing circumstances.

As the redevelopment of St Editha’s Square nears completion, all eyes will turn again to Spudman. With plans for a 'mega wagon’ underway, he aims to solidify his presence and business model amid ongoing tensions. It remains unclear whether the community can reconcile its differing opinions on Spudman's operation, but the underlying narrative reflects a broader discourse on success, competition, and community sentiment that resonates beyond Tamworth.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4gempm7p2ro)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/central/2025-02-17/thousands-sign-petition-calling-for-spudmans-pitch-to-be-reinstated), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/06/04/jacket-potato-spudman-kicked-off-trading-pitch-tamworth/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/06/04/jacket-potato-spudman-kicked-off-trading-pitch-tamworth/), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/central/2025-02-18/council-apologises-to-spudman-as-potato-sellers-town-centre-pitch-in-limbo)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjllxwpj251o), [[7]](https://www.inkl.com/news/over-65-000-sign-petition-to-save-pitch-of-tamworth-tiktok-star-spudman)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/central/2025-02-18/council-apologises-to-spudman-as-potato-sellers-town-centre-pitch-in-limbo), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/central/2025-02-17/thousands-sign-petition-calling-for-spudmans-pitch-to-be-reinstated)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjllxwpj251o), [[7]](https://www.inkl.com/news/over-65-000-sign-petition-to-save-pitch-of-tamworth-tiktok-star-spudman)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4gempm7p2ro)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/06/04/jacket-potato-spudman-kicked-off-trading-pitch-tamworth/), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/central/2025-02-17/thousands-sign-petition-calling-for-spudmans-pitch-to-be-reinstated)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 10 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/06/04/jacket-potato-spudman-kicked-off-trading-pitch-tamworth/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745973/Spudman-jacket-potato-tiktok-success-allegations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/06/04/jacket-potato-spudman-kicked-off-trading-pitch-tamworth/> - Ben Newman, known as 'Spudman', has been asked to move his trailer by Tamworth Borough Council due to redevelopment of St Editha's Square. He expressed concerns about relocating to the high street, fearing it might hinder other traders due to his high footfall. The council stated that all market traders are being temporarily moved while the square is refurbished as part of a town centre regeneration programme.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjllxwpj251o> - Ben Newman, aka Spudman, revealed he will be temporarily moved from his town centre spot in Tamworth while the area is redeveloped. He expressed concerns about relocating to the high street, fearing it might not be ideal for his business. Tamworth Borough Council stated they are working with traders to find suitable spots during the redevelopment of St Editha’s Square.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/central/2025-02-18/council-apologises-to-spudman-as-potato-sellers-town-centre-pitch-in-limbo> - Tamworth Borough Council apologised to Ben Newman, known as Spudman, after informing him he might have to move from his town centre pitch to make way for a new flowerbed. The council acknowledged the need for better communication with street traders and is committed to improving engagement in the future.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/central/2025-02-17/thousands-sign-petition-calling-for-spudmans-pitch-to-be-reinstated> - A petition calling for the reinstatement of Ben Newman's pitch in Tamworth has gained over 63,000 signatures. The council plans to create a more welcoming public space in St Editha’s Square, which may affect Spudman's trading spot. The council is seeking a meeting with Spudman to address the concerns raised.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4gempm7p2ro> - Ben Newman, known as Spudman, has been granted the freedom of Tamworth by the local borough council in recognition of his entrepreneurship, innovation, and courage. He started selling hot jacket potatoes from his trailer in 2003 and gained popularity on TikTok during the Covid-19 pandemic, attracting thousands of followers worldwide.
7. <https://www.inkl.com/news/over-65-000-sign-petition-to-save-pitch-of-tamworth-tiktok-star-spudman> - Over 65,000 people have signed a petition urging Tamworth Borough Council to reinstate the pitch of Ben Newman, known as Spudman. The council plans to redevelop St Editha’s Square, which may affect Spudman's trading spot. The council stated that all market traders are being temporarily moved while the square is refurbished as part of a town centre regeneration programme.