



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report of the Annual Review of Outcomes Tour

October 2024

Report Summary



On the 4th of October 2024, a group of twenty-six council members and planning officers took part in a tour of recently developed and emerging schemes in Stockport. The purpose of the tour is to review developments that have sparked interest in past committee meetings.



The tour started in the heart of Stockport's Underbanks and made its way through Bredbury, Marple, Heaton Mersey and Cheadle Hulme. As each site was visited, participants were asked to fill in questionnaires based on the development of the schemes.



This report gives a brief overview of each site followed by an analysis of the responses from the questionnaires.

The Underbanks and Hillgate

Proposals

The first stop on the tour was to the Underbanks, part of Stockport's historic old town. It boasts a range of retail, art, and hospitality businesses. Regeneration of Hillgate and the Underbanks is well underway and gathering pace with the Rediscovering Underbanks programme continuing. While walking through the Underbanks, 5 sites were observed all with varying degrees of development.

35-37 Great Underbank (DC/081590)

The development at this location saw the demolition and reinstatement of the front facade, new rear access, enclosed bike store and the replacement of windows and the installation of rooflights. These changes were proposed to facilitate the change of use from a vacant unit to an 8 bed HMO and retail unit on the ground floor. The site is in the Market and Underbanks Conservation Area.

13 Little Underbank (DC/072745)

For this development there was a change of use of the second floor to from vacant space to create office workspace. It also included alterations to the ground floor shopfront and the second-floor fenestration details. The property is Grade II Listed and located in the Market and Underbanks Conservation Area.

28 & 25 Little Underbank (DC/075539)

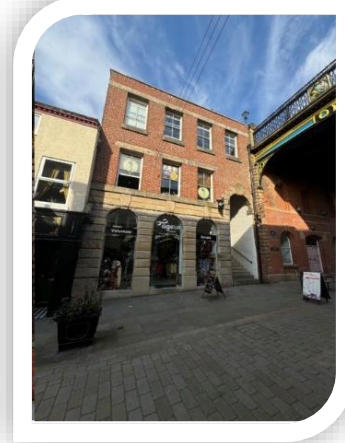
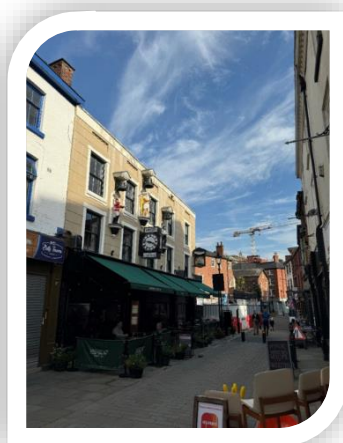
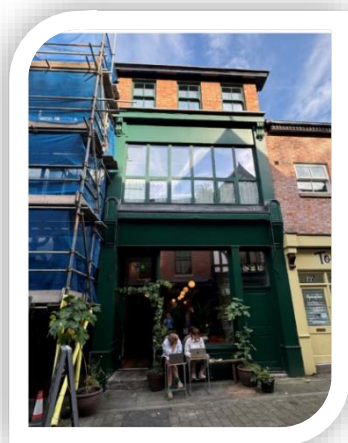
The refurbishment of Winters with a change of use from class A4 (drinking establishment) to A3 (restaurants and cafes). This involved a range of internal and external works to facilitate the change of use. The property is Grade II Listed and located in the Market and Underbanks Conservation Area.

15 Lower Hillgate (DC/071303)

The development to the former Tudor Café saw alterations to the elevations including installation of a rear dormer and sun tubes. It also saw the change of use of the Lowry Buildings Harvey Street & parts of 15 Lower Hillgate to form 4 no. self-contained flats: retention of the A3 unit and installation of a flue. The site is within the Hillgate Conservation area.

18-20 Lower Hillgate (DC/081205)

Refurbishment of an existing vacant 3 storey building into a hairdresser on the ground floor (which included the installation of a new shop front) and bar on the first and second floor. The site is within the Hillgate Conservation area.



Attendees were required to answer the following joint questions for each of the sites.

How significant do you believe the impact of heritage grant funding has been on changing people’s perceptions of the area, attracting private sector investment and driving regeneration?

Respondents noted that funding has been a significant contributor to the developments seen within the Underbanks and has ensured the quality and sympathetic nature of the development. The development has also been vital in arresting decline and neglect. Uncertainty was raised on whether certain developments would have progressed the way they have, or at all, without the heritage grant funding.

What contribution has the addition of street art made to enhancing the character and appearance of the area?

There was an overall feeling that the street art adds character and is a positive contribution to the area. Some said that it gives a sense of place to Stockport's historic old town through helping to make the area feel lived in and well-looked after.

However, some disagreed, noting that the street art doesn’t align with the area’s historic character and emphasising the need to distinguish between street art and graffiti.

Do you believe the pedestrianisation of Hillgate has helped animate the street scene through the introduction of awnings, tables and chairs on the public highway?

Respondents stated that the pedestrianisation of Hillgate has proven positive as it has created a better atmosphere and animates the area by providing a ‘Parisian’ and ‘Continental’ feel. It was said that the street scene feels more inviting, and it clearly shows that the area is 'open for business'.

“The developments in the Underbanks and Hillgate area have improved the wider character as well as the built character and have addressed the heritage matters positively.”

Officers have needed to carefully reconcile the close proximity of residential properties with noise generating food and drink uses whilst ensuring noise mitigation measures are sympathetic to the heritage context in which they sit. Do you think this has been successfully achieved on the schemes you have seen today?

It was noted that due to the low numbers of complaints received from residents the relationship between residents and the noise generating properties seems to be going well. Joint business/resident forums should provide a critical tool in keeping the harmony and ensuring an early opportunity to resolve and mitigate issues as, or before, they arise.

Sympathetic secondary glazing, which enhances acoustic insulation, was mentioned as being an example of a mitigation use for the area, to reduce noise travelling between properties.

Due to the area’s often challenging topography, dense urban character, sensitive heritage context and the recent intensification of business activity, bin storage is an ongoing and significant challenge. Do delegates have any views on how this would be best managed?

There were a few views on how this would be best managed including: daily overnight collection, communal bin stores, use of underground bin stores and shared solutions amongst businesses.

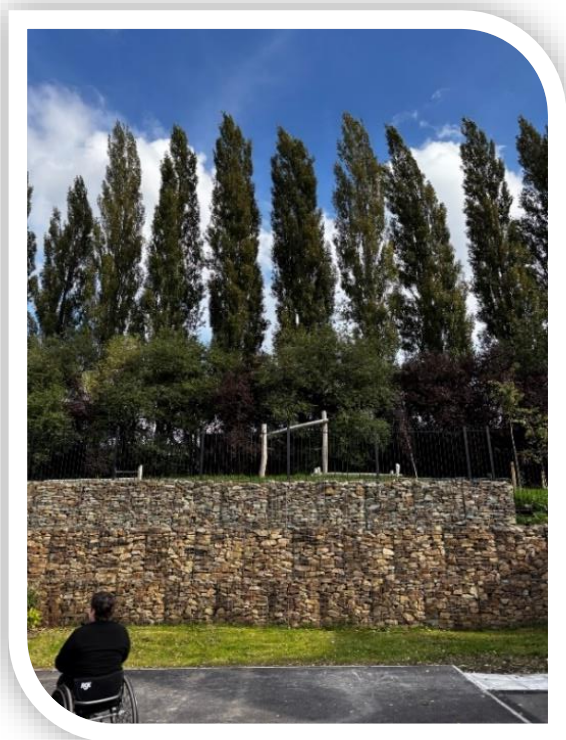
The Poplars – Heaton Mersey

Proposal (DC/076883)

Full planning permission at the former Cranford Golf Course was sought for the demolition of all the existing structures and the erection of a residential development with 106 residential dwellings (with 101 units being affordable). This comprises 79 houses and 27 apartments, with associated access, parking, private amenity spaces and public open spaces.

Is the level of affordable housing provided at the site considered to be acceptable?

Respondents recognised that this development has a substantial level of affordable housing, above the policy requirements. However, it was said that the scheme is not tenure blind, with low levels of landscaping and cheaper looking materials.



Do you consider that the development is acceptable in terms of the scale, design, materials, setting and relationship to the surrounding Heaton Mersey Common Nature Reserve, Sports Club, and residential properties?

The overarching response was that the development was acceptable in many respects. However, it was noted that there is a lack of a relationship with the adjacent sports club and Heaton Mersey Common.

The comments on the design aspect of the development were that the units are functional, however, a darker red brick and an improved mix of house types would have been preferred.



Do you consider that the development has any detrimental impacts on residential amenity in terms of overlooking, overbearing, or overshadowing?

The Poplars development does not appear to have an adverse impact on residential amenity. It was seen to be well spaced and in keeping with the urban environment. However, some commented that it could have been a denser scheme.

One respondent noted that the play area to the east of the development was not very accessible or well overlooked (as seen to the left of the page).

Do you think the development delivers sufficient added value through landscaping, play areas, links to the adjacent Heaton Mersey Common?

The development was seen to meet minimum requirements and that the connectivity to adjacent spaces is disappointing and needs

to be improved. However, many commented that the scheme is still a work in progress and is not finished.

The LAP (Local Area for Play) was criticised for having poor landscaping and the LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play) was deemed inaccessible, especially for those with mobility issues or with buggies. Landscaping on the rest of The Poplars site was minimal and in difficult to maintain areas with prominent levels of tarmac present.

Do you consider that the development delivers an appropriate amount of car parking, including charging facilities for electric vehicles, in a well-designed way?

The level of parking provision appeared to be sufficient but was said to be poorly designed and dominates the street scene. Permeable material for drives would have been preferable. The apparent lack of accessible parking spaces for blue badge holders near the flats, as well as limited dropped kerbs, was also noted.

Seashell Trust - Cheadle Hulme

Proposal (DC/060928)

This was a hybrid application for detailed planning permission for a new school building (which has now been completed and occupied) and outline permissions for the redevelopment of the wider Seashell Trust campus and enabling development in the form of up to 325 dwellings on the land north of the campus.

During the Public Inquiry there was significant debate around the use of the bronze cladding on the school building. Do you think that the use of the high-quality bronze cladding is justified when balanced against the development within the Green Belt?

The bronze cladding used on the school building was seen as timeless, high quality and was said to give the development a welcoming feel rather than a clinical feel. Since it is dark in colour, the cladding gives a rural effect, helping the building fit the surroundings. Overall, the use of the bronze cladding when balanced against the development within the Green Belt was justified with some saying that the benefits provided by this scheme outweigh its impact on the Green Belt.

There was debate around the new hydrotherapy pool versus the refurbishment of the former facility. Having seen the new hydrotherapy pool/learn to swim facility and its features, do you consider that this responds positively to the needs of the Trust such that its provision weighs in favour of the development?

Overall, respondents noted that the significant benefits that the hydrotherapy pool and the learn to swim facility provide for the children at Seashell Trust weighs in favour of the development.



Overall, do you consider that the benefits of the improvements to the Seashell Trust outweigh the harm to the Green Belt?

Overall respondents noted that the benefits derived from the improvements to the trust do outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, however, the harm to the Green Belt resulting from the Bloor homes development is hard to justify.



Canal and River Trust Yard - Marple

Proposal (DC/074338)

The proposal at this location was for the change of use and conversion of the former canal warehouse building for a mix of uses including cafe (Use Class A3) with shared space for heritage and visitor display/information, community meetings (Use Class D1) and ancillary gift shop on the ground floor, and wellbeing and fitness room for floor-based activities (Use Class D2) on the first floor. It also included the erection of 7 no. dwelling houses (Use Class C3) and the erection of a storage building incorporating a waterway service station.

Do you consider that this is an appropriate mixed-use scheme for the area, in respect of delivery of housing, provision of facilities for canal users and securing a community-led future for the listed Canal Warehouse building?

This development was seen to be an appropriate and well thought out mixed-use scheme. The houses were thought to be well built and in keeping with the surrounding area.

There were fears for the financial sustainability of the non-commercial elements.

Do you consider that the siting, scale, design, and materials of the dwellinghouses and waterway service building are acceptable in terms of their impact on heritage assets and the visual amenity of the area?

Respondents noted that the dwellinghouses are of a sympathetic design for the area and don't dominate the heritage asset. It was said that they are expected to age well, however, the colour of the stone of the dwellinghouses is quite light and jars against the warehouse.

Do you consider that the limited soft landscaping to the front of the site is justified to enable an appropriate access road and parking facilities to be provided to serve the development?

Although it was mentioned that more soft landscaping and street trees would be beneficial, a point was made that to some extent the lack of soft landscaping extenuates the local heritage.

There is a level of inaccessibility within the site as the od for wheelchair users.



Cow and Calf Hotel - Bredbury

Proposal (DC/081474)

The development on this site saw the retention, conversion, and extension of a pub to form 3 dwellings. It also included erection of 5 houses and 1 bungalow together with new access and parking.

Do you consider that the development has any detrimental impacts on residential amenity of neighbouring properties in terms of overlooking, overbearing impact, or overshadowing?

Respondents felt that no detrimental impacts were identified as it is in keeping with the grain and character of the surrounding area.

Do you feel that the officer's negotiation to retain the heritage asset on site was justified in respect of the quality of the development?

Respondents noted that the scheme has presence and adds character, however, the focus on heritage may have impacted the developer's ability to deliver more dwellings on this site.

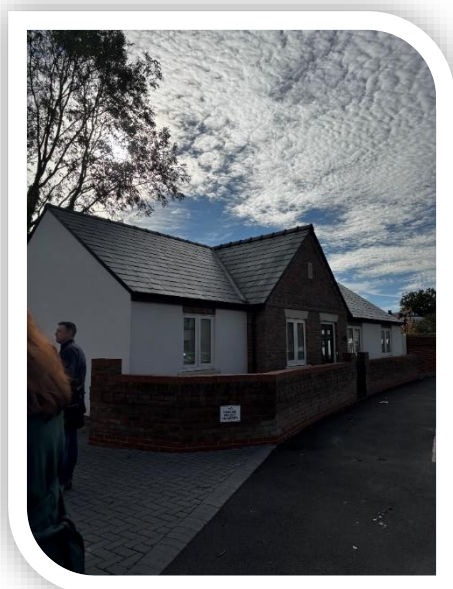


It was also mentioned that the façade of the pub should have been retained for the development.

Do you consider that the sites access, and parking arrangements are satisfactory?

The number of homes that have been delivered on the site has not been optimised due to the level of parking which appears to be more than necessary and dominates the site.

The hardstanding is expansive and has become the focal point of the development at the expense of soft landscaping. There are no dropped kerbs on the site and the path between the pair of semis is very narrow.



“An apartment scheme would have been a more effective use of land.”

Conclusion

The annual review of outcomes tour on October 4th, 2024, provided council members and planning officers with valuable insights into the various developments that have garnered interest in recent meetings. By visiting key sites in The Underbanks, Bredbury, Marple, Heaton Mersey and Cheadle Hulme, participants engaged directly with the developments and contributed their observations through targeted questionnaires.



This report highlights the significance of each site and analyses the responses gathered, offering a comprehensive overview of the current progress and community sentiments surrounding these projects. The findings underscore the importance of continued learning from previous schemes as the council moves forward in its planning and development initiatives.

