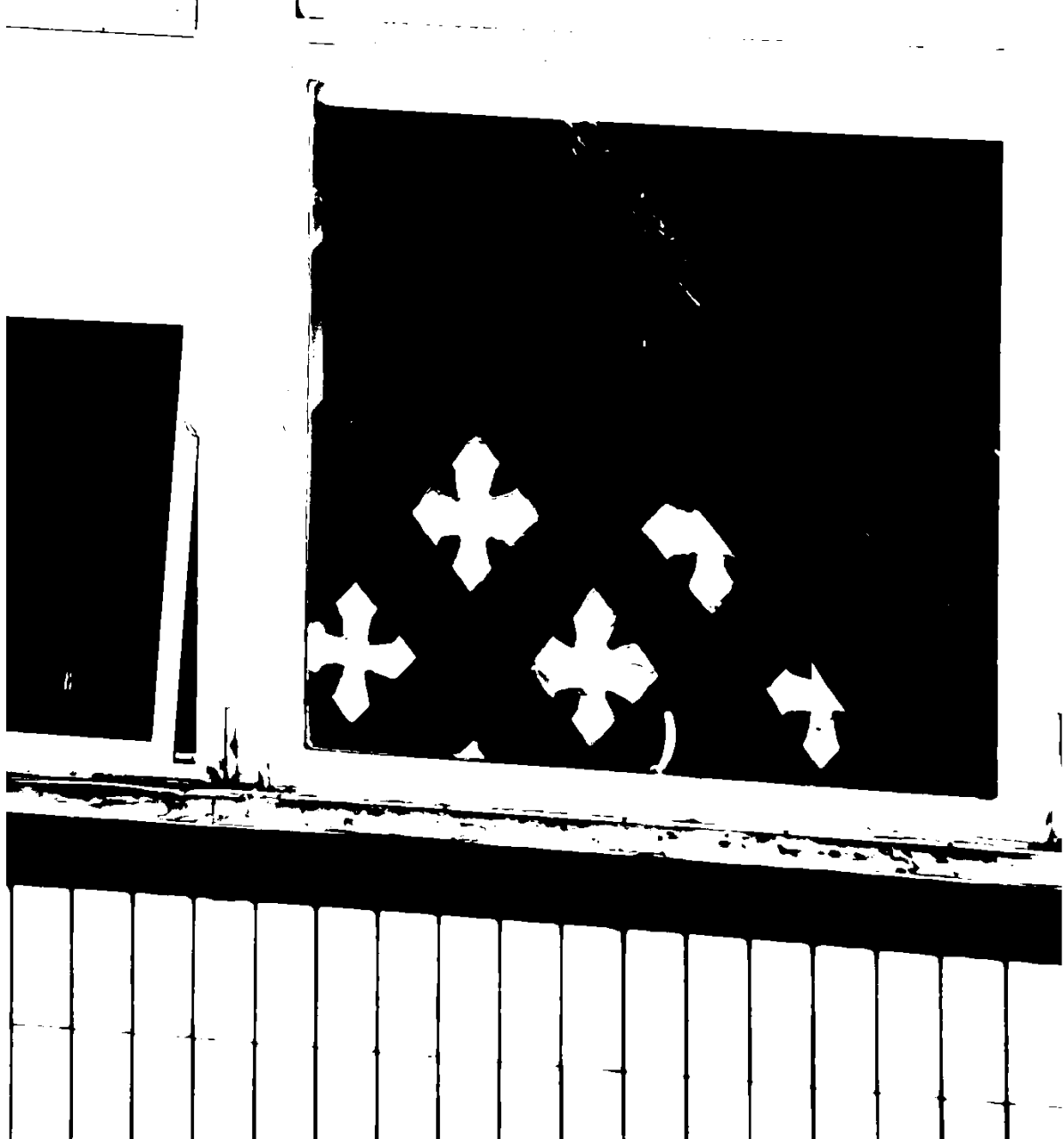


# STOCKPORT: *bricolage town*



*Four close study projects for urban happiness at the boundaries between the post war new town & its roads and the ancient heritage town: Royal Oak Yard, Great Underbank at Adlington Walk, High Bankside and River Goyt at Park Bridge and Portwood Bridge.*

MA Thesis. Architecture and Urbanism. Manchester School of Architecture

David Chandler 2015

Many thanks to Jackie Wagg and Jim Dyson

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# Stockport: Bricolage\* Town

*Four close study projects for pedestrian happiness at the boundaries between the post war new town and roads and the ancient heritage town: Royal Oak Yard, Great Underbank at Adlington Walk, High Bankside and River Goyt at Park Bridge and Portwood Bridge.*

*\*Bricolage; "the jumbled effect produced by the close proximity of buildings from different periods and in different architectural styles. The deliberate creation of such an effect in certain modern developments: the post-modern bricolage of the new shopping centre"<sup>1</sup> Stockport town aspires to city status.*

## Introduction

The aims of this thesis are to consider the optimistic scale of 1960s urban masterplans and design ambitions and their interface with the legacy fabric of the town. Four studio projects offer solutions to some of these challenges. This thesis will interrogate the "fault lines" where large concrete structures, often including roads, meet the very different scales and materials of several centuries of previous town growth before 1945. In the case of Stockport this is the Merseyway Shopping Centre 1964- 1970 at 32,516 square metres and its urban margin with Stockport 1650 – 1945. This thesis will consider these as demonstrably embattled zones, hindered by very large roads inserted inside the old town. These margins are the areas where the contractors vacated the 1960s Merseyway site, spaces where labourers' and materials camps, vehicle parks and delivery access sites were established. Spaces where the masterplan was shaded grey and where the "old town" fabric anticipated the process of listing buildings of historic value. After the seismic shift in scale and planning that modernist urbanist ambition demanded there seemed to be no return to traditional old town building processes, but neither could there be any interventions to rectify "modernist mistakes" without enacting the full machinery of further, bolted on, master planning on a comprehensive scale.

Stockport spent 20 years planning and building Merseyway but has spent forty years managing and patching the consequences of its margin zones, many of which remain derelict, disruptive, or functionally ambiguous. The "make do and mend" solutions to these zones merits the term "bricolage". The term even covers some master plans designed to fill the vacant urban pockets at the edge of the initial Merseyway project.

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<sup>1</sup> bricolage. (n.d.). Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition. Retrieved July 08, 2015, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/bricolage>



*Architectural bricolage; a fault line. Merseyway north eastern edge (at left) meets the retail units at Tiviot Dale and Lancashire Bridge built in the 1980s. 60s Modernism and 80s provincial Post Modern create a bricoleur boundary line and an idiosyncratic stylistic narrative.*

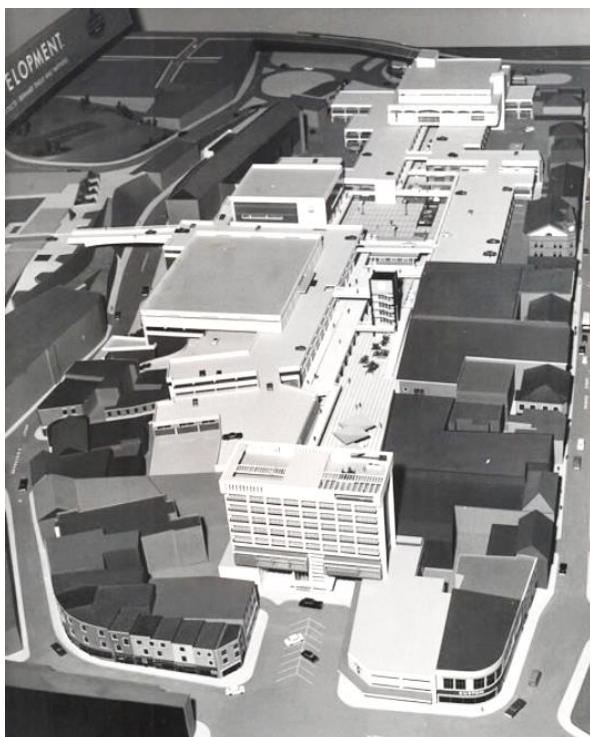
The aim is to present urbanist studio projects for these areas with the scope of preparing the town for a future that is differentiated from its many suburbs inserted into the town edges, as unsigned sprawl. This future is here explicitly recommended as comprehensively pedestrian, based on the best practice of the happiest urban pedestrian case studies from the wider European experience, the narrative of which has mirrored the Stockport situation to a certain extent.

The economic crisis that the town encountered in the 1950s left a legacy of urban challenges that are still not solved 50 years later. Stockport rebuilt itself from its river valley centre in the 1960s in the form of a gigantic shopping centre at Merseyway that represented all that was needed to finally demonstrate to its population that it could meet a 20<sup>th</sup> century European definition of progress. In a strategy initiated by the virtual cancellation of the town from 1964 to 1969, Merseyway development, later in conjunction with the M60 motorway replaced the identity of the ancient town with a planned new town map.

However the modernist town planning that was set in train has rapidly joined the fossil record. New urban growth is being formed upon the footprint of a town that was substantially obliterated. Such was the scale and ambition of the 1963 Savoy Hotel Proposal that it would have appeared in popular perception that old towns could literally be replaced by new towns, imported in a new style, part of an international modernist fellowship synergising the spirit of Milton Keynes, Harlow and Cumbernauld. Although it is not formally part of this canon, Stockport is a 1960s new town, a concrete matrix that was constructed to predict and satisfy many aspects of citizen and civic aspiration. It was indeed a very important cultural beacon in an area that was eager to provide its children with an authentic, modern, post war future. Newsreel features shop signs and material culture that would be seen as progressive; household décor and carpets, supermarkets, fashion clothing, large chemists and popular music stores.

The siting of Merseyway consisted of a colossal platform of piers engineered to occupy the land that had been the focus of a fast moving wide, deep and polluted River Goyt/Mersey, accelerated by the flows of the River Tame that also drew water from the high rainfall levels of the surrounding hills. When the river was culverted into a huge semi-sewer the decision was only a continuation of an already capped section from the 1930s. The axial plan just made sense of the river valley and created a level platform for the creation of the 1960s “new town”. The town centre no longer smelled bad although clean air had not yet arrived.

The designers of Merseyway gifted its design with progressive means of overcoming the two stories of the shopping centre; several external staircases from the plaza to the very wide balcony terraces on the first floor, a restaurant bridge (like a motorway bridge) lifts and a radical new ramp escalator. There was a utopian instinct driving this vision. Although not walled, the new town had emphatic boundaries. To the south it met a road margin with Chestergate and High Bankside. In the west its limits were defined by the A6 and the railway viaduct beyond, in the north by the natural sandstone gradients of Heaton Norris and the Tiviot Dale railway line hugging the edge of the valley. At the east end it was to contain a substantial office block perched on a bridge to mark the terminus of the town and screen the view of industrial Portwood, a dense, obsolescent and polluted engineering district that occupied the field set apart by a natural curve in the river and its three road bridges, all of which remain substantially obscured from public view.



*Merseyway Shopping Centre Development 1963; Ritz Hotel. Model looking from east to west from Portwood to the A6 with the Adlington Square – High bankside Tatton Street bridge clearly visible at left. The generic features of New Town planning are in evidence.*

*The ten storey office block in the foreground would have acted as a boundary screen for the heavily industrialised Portwood zone. Unbuilt.*

*Note the tonal difference in the representation of the light colours of the model and the tonal darks of old Stockport. This difference has become endemic.*

Source: <http://www.stockport.gov.uk/services/leisureculture/libraries/libraryonline/stockportimagearchive/sia/?accessionno=15162&picResultsNo=34#picInfo> Photo: 15162 : S/C 75



*Stockport - Portwood in 1939.*

*Characterised by a massive cooling tower and large gas holders and factory chimneys, this zone was most decisively condemned by the clean white painted concrete of the Stockport Merseyway new town, often framed in the distance as a dystopian vision of blackened brick beyond the limit of the new concrete pad often with a smog hanging across it.*

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk/services/leisureculture/libraries/libraryonline/stockportimagearchive/sia/?accessionno=5798&Album=True&picResultsNo=21#picInfo> Reference 5798 : S/25 C30 Photo G.C. warren 1939

Little architectural value could be retrieved from the town by the planners who encouraged closures, clearances and depopulation. To the extent, even, of the removal of social

infrastructure amenities that had apparently out-lived their use; opera house, non-conformist churches, public dormitories, public baths and small cinemas.

But the Merseyway plan somehow contrived to define itself as not a new town. It is not included in the typologies of these U.K. developments. It was only conceived as a shopping centre, albeit a large one, built by means of the contemporary reinforced concrete (Brutalist) technology that would be discouraged by post millennium architectural practice. It stopped very abruptly on all points of its boundary, no housing was integrated into the scheme and the Portwood east side office screen was abandoned. The scheme stopped and the developers left. Ironically the undersized masterplan generated the urbanist problems that exercise me here.

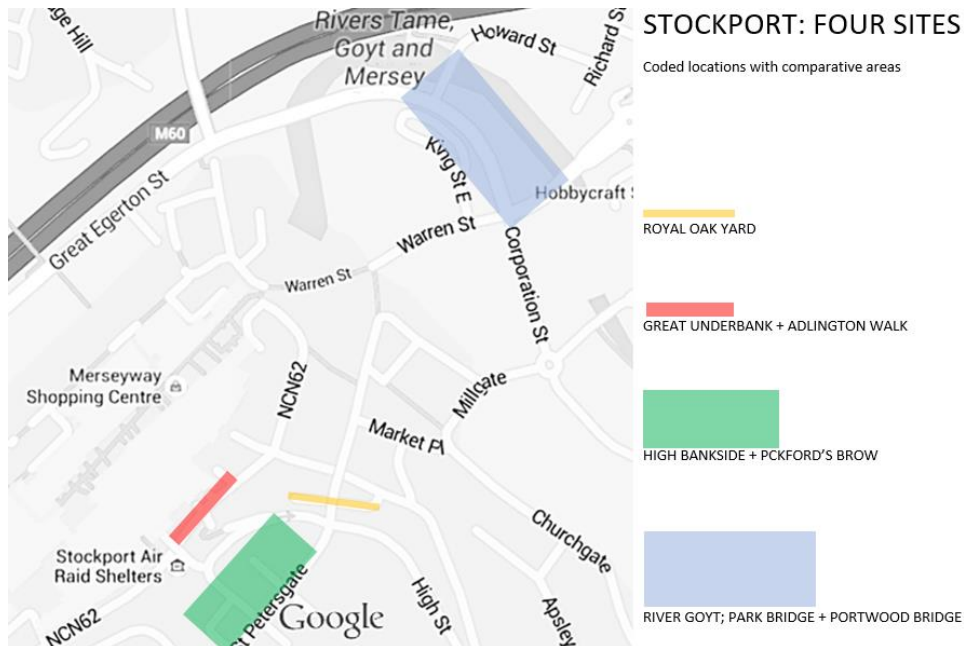


*The axial corridor of the Merseyway Shopping Centre in 1979 looking west. A separate system of aerial roads and parking places is clearly visible. The M60 motorway is under construction at far right.*

After 1968 Stockport enjoyed a twenty five year town centre renaissance. However the heavy industries that fed this prosperity disappeared with alarming speed. The mills and their service communities simply shut down. By 1988, twenty years after the completion of the Merseyway there is virtually no industrial work available in what was a manufacturing town. The retail revolution that was the core of the planners' vision lost its inflow of disposable income. The council stepped in by supplying the town with government agency office employment, relocated government departments and welfare infrastructure. It mandated a boundary circuit of car show rooms and social housing tower blocks to ring the town. The addition of more retail units in the 1990s at the Peel Centre completely covering the industrial legacy of Portwood was constructed with a view to collecting retail traffic literally delivered by the M60 and all of Greater Manchester from Altrincham to Oldham. This effectively admitted that the concept of the 1960s retail precinct that was Merseyway, that town residents using the town centre, was dead. A nomadic motorist enabled "drive-in" retail model with surface level parking and mall style shopping would replace it. Stockport effectively subverted its own prosperity. Multi-storey car parks represented too much driver effort and were rarely seen as an architectural asset. Drivers would seek to use other shopping centres at will.



My thesis looks at four close study points on this unplanned urban boundary; areas where the mismatch in 1960s planning vision meets, co-exists and clashes with the mostly 18<sup>th</sup> century scales and function of the old market town. They are the (1) the Royal Oak Yard cul de sac (2) Adlington Walk exit to great Underbank (3) High Bankside and a "Children's Town" experience that might include a redundant part of the Merseyway car park (4) the River Goyt boundary including Park Bridge and Portwood Bridge with the superstores zone at Park Bridge.



*The four project zones selected for this report. These are also the colour codes used for each area. Source Google Maps*

What the planners of Merseyway could never have contemplated was the widespread undercurrent of urban nostalgia that their clearances would trigger. When the old town was replaced it generated urban folk memory. Unintentionally a quiet urban cultural bereavement process was started. New buildings inside Stockport challenged the users to discover what it once had been. The paintings of Lowry were reconsidered and admitted into the Tate Gallery collection, television offered documentaries, and Pevsner, Nairn, Cullen and Betjeman encouraged the British to seek out their architectural heritage. The listing process was inaugurated to protect buildings and sites. Stockport turned out to be very gifted in this respect.



*The boundary and between the "new town" and what is perceived as of heritage value is very clear. Polarised, but the retail and bank functions are no different across the two zones. The map contains minimal residential property although this will change in the next decade.*

- STATUTORY LISTED BUILDINGS
- LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS

Stockport, Merseyway Shopping Centre and the Old Town from [http://stockport-consult.objective.co.uk/events/12417/images/web/1664841\\_0\\_1.jpg](http://stockport-consult.objective.co.uk/events/12417/images/web/1664841_0_1.jpg)

Tourists who visited Stockport found both the neo-constructivist design principles of Carl Andre and Donald Judd at Merseyway and heritage yet to be discovered in the parts left untouched by the great sixties masterplan. A series of 90 degree angled shallow platforms floated across the valley, with weightless pearlised cornices. These were at odds with the vertical curtain walls of mills and chimneys of Victorian industry and the majestic Italianate Town Hall, built on a gradient and without a civic square. The picturesque North West, unrepentant, was comprehensively editing and erasing itself.

My thesis is also informed by the instinct to selectively untangle the urban past from the complexity of the modernist redevelopments and their subsequent neo-modernist trim applied to the fabric of these buildings by local authorities. The local council remit currently oversees local planning applications and the road network. The Stockport that has emerged since the 1968 Merseyway shopping centre is at the mercy of corporate and independent planning applications and franchised masterplans supplied by BDP and Muse for example. The contemporary town morphology is the result of small site projects, infilled with local authority infrastructure such as paving and parking. It is a town that ironically continues as it did before the vogue for science fiction in the urbanist ethos; before the futurist Merseyway concrete starship landed. Its current small retail projects resemble in an unexpected way the scatter of little ventures seen in images of pre-war Stockport. Master plans certainly continue at the vacated urban islands remaining at Bridgefield by the M60 and at Stockport Exchange by the railway station; in confident expectation that these will confirm the town's matriculation into a European corporate modernist architectural fellowship. Or at least a Manchester fellowship.

Just as the tide turned against this trend. Old town memory is more than souvenir lust. It was born logically out of post- modern architectural directions and is happy to combine sympathetic fusions of contemporary design into the archaeologies of earlier plans. This relates in many respects to the Italian abundant heritage experience as set out in its "innesti" <sup>2</sup>(graftings) pavilion at the 2014 Venice Biennale.

The challenge then will be to fuse these urban changes with very recent but functionally obsolete modernist structures. Such a structure is of course the 1968 Merseyway project with all of its subsequent subtractions and modifications.

The other and less obvious modernist structure are the road systems built to service these projects. They now carry their users to mostly different and unrelated objectives unintended by their original planners. Used just because they are there, but a posing a serious and urgent obstacle to any future town planning. The future prosperity of so many of these small towns, anywhere in the UK, not just the North West, is the removal of roads as motor traffic routes and the exploitation and celebration of their vast surface areas as public realm. People are fundamentally wary of motor vehicle traffic, and its presence inside the town does not diminish that anxiety.

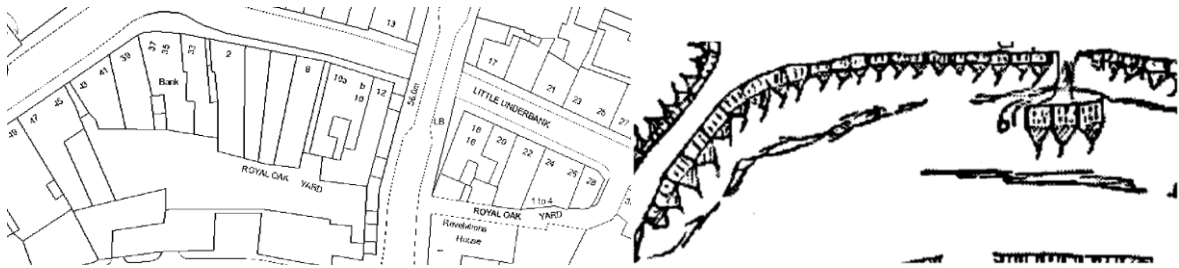
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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.innesti-grafting.it/en/>

# Stockport; Royal Oak Yard

- i) Site
- ii) Urban walk July 2015

## Royal Oak yard: Site



1. For comparison; Greater Manchester Development Plan 2015 indicating the current site of Royal Oak Yard.

2. Inverted detail of a map of Stockport c. 1680. Showing the long line of houses along the north side of Little Underbank, 'The Royal Oake' is marked as 19 on the original key to the plan. The Tin Brook is also sketched in as a useful back yard water tract for the medieval dwellings. Source; Arrowsmith (1997) p.66, fig. III 4.2



The Tin Brook at Royal Oak Yard; now a culvert Source; [28DaysLater.co.uk](http://www.28dayslater.co.uk) - **28DL** - The UK Urban Exploring / Urban Exploration / Urbex Forums. <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/secret-stockport-mersey-paradise.t60342>

The route of the Tin Brook is very prominent on the 17<sup>th</sup> century map of Stockport, as is the curve of Little Underbank as it joins Great Underbank. It joined the Mersey from the red sandstone gorge that it had originally cut on its descent into the river valley, large parts of this are still visible. Cavers have accessed the subterranean Tin Brook which is now in a culvert although has been known to flood

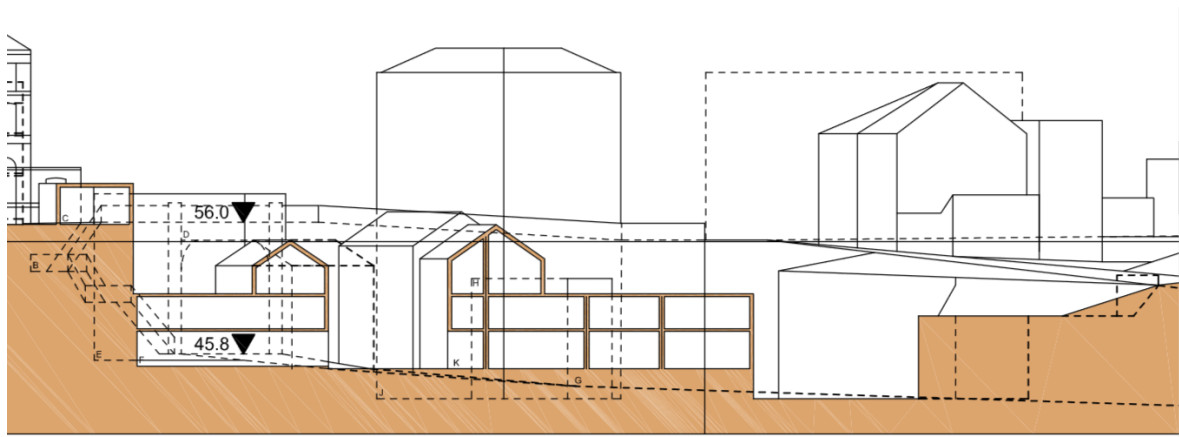




*Above; Royal Oak Yard at street level looking towards the entrance showing the parapets and steps of St Petersgate Bridge from 1868. The Queen's Head public house is at left opposite the sandstone cliffs and top heavy foliage of the brow at High Bankside Photo; David Chandler*

*Below; Stockport; view of Royal Oak Yard from the Tatton Street bridge over Great Underbank. The Queen's Head public house is in the centre Photo; David Chandler*





*Cross section through the valley of Royal Oak Yard.*

*Source; James Dyson*

In the decade before the 19<sup>th</sup> century the cliffs were physically cut back to form a vertical face to create space for workshops and a silk mill. The Yard takes its name from the Royal Oak public house that was situated opposite the entrance to Little Underbank. In terms of land use the yard was tied for two centuries to the fortunes Adlington Square. The enclosure of the yard has visibly truncated a route that would have logically joined Great Underbank.

The need to restore this inarticulate space could probably be one of the most important and understated urbanist interventions inside the heritage/listed town. The Yard is does not immediately sit on one of the so called “fault lines” between the modernist masterplan of the 1960s and pre-war Stockport but a closer consideration reveals the rebuilt “insula” of the red brick buildings that fit between Pickford’s brow and Great Underbank are part of a late 20<sup>th</sup> century consolidation of the plan of the boundary of the yard.



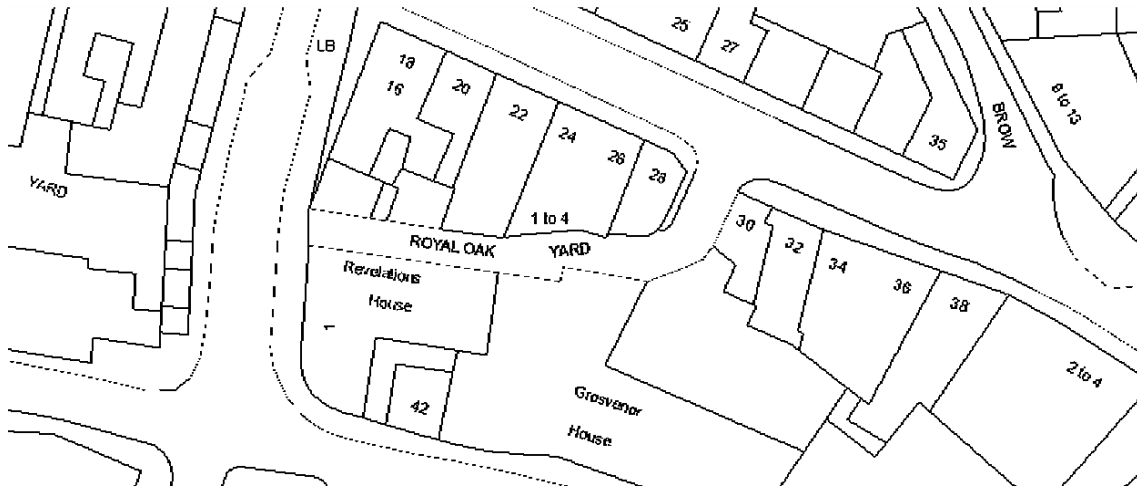
*Left; Astoria Theatre Cinema at High Bankside Source NWFA 4544. Right; Royal Oak Yard O.S. map 1938*

The red sandstone cliffs have been progressively cut back to create a proto-street that was not naturally formed in the space. The demolished Astoria Cinema was a major landmark that put this Yard into shadow and kept its identity as an unsavoury urban gully. The demolition of the cinema opened the possibility of an urban steps link from this deep section of Stockport to the summit of Pickford’s Brow. Contract car parking terraces also reveal an attempt to organise the High Bankside brow from 1968 and these simple bricoleur structures built from breeze blocks and cement pads settled the high gradient side of the yard with a sense of 20<sup>th</sup> century motor town purpose; highway, car parks, roadside splay and fences. Even part of the primitive cobbled road of the original Victorian High bankside was sealed into a walled precinct in sight of the yard and is documented in the site



reports of 1968. The only factor that prevented the yard becoming a road was that it was locked in by landlords and listed properties. So it too became a default car park, without any sense of the devalued potential of such an identity. The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century industrial archaeological fragments of factory spaces also condition the shape of the yard.

### Royal Oak Yard; urban walk July 2015



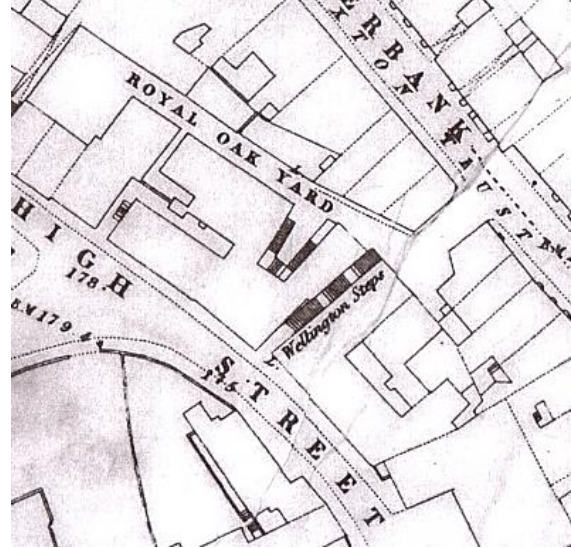
Royal Oak Yard introduces itself as a gap in the south side of Little Underbank with minimal sense of its importance. In the afternoon a shaft of sunlight breaks the line of the medieval main road once a main route into Manchester. A shop on the corner as we enter is vacant and the old iron place name sits above its hoarding.

There are three routes offered to the traveller as we enter the yard. To the left a promising little cobbled piazza with a raw sandstone cliff at its far end. There are some padlocked exits into Grosvenor House facing south on the High Street above. This space has been overlooked as a pocket of real heritage potential. To the right an independent stair (*Wellington Steps*) descends at an angle that is not a conventional doorstep, rather this flight rises all the way up the concealed red sandstone cliff to the High Street through a very well-trimmed plain brick arch, clearly marked on a plan of 1851.



From left to right; three points of access at Royal Oak Yard; the Grosvenor House car Park, the 18<sup>th</sup> century “Wellington Steps” to High Street (detail of the entrance)

This tall arch forms a typology repeated elsewhere in Little Underbank and should be seen as a remnant of the distinctive, even idiosyncratic spaces that are found in the many drawings of steps by L.S. Lowry. The route is gated and boarded off from public access. It sends a message that will be consistent for the full extent of this Victorian yard; a form of urban despair permeates all sections of the place. It assumes a defensive attitude to such town centre spaces. There is a culture of consensus amongst all the landlords in this yard that seems to assume widespread public criminal activity. This is the public façade of Royal Oak Yard; surveillance, DIY railings, gates and razor wire. The third route is that of the yard itself



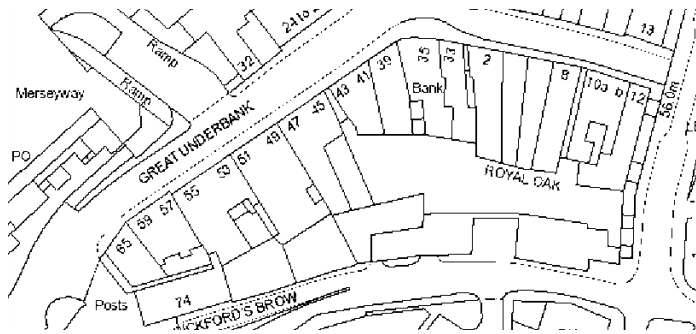
threading beneath the superb 1868 brick barrel vault of St Petersgate Bridge above. The six stories of Revelations House marked on 18th century maps of the area rises from a narrow granite cobbled passageway like a Victorian skyscraper, supported by its sandstone cliff. The buildings rise in area that denotes density and is the original eighteenth century business district of central Stockport. A precarious fabric that has seen some sympathetic restoration. The St. Petersgate Bridge parapet rises some 14 metres to the upper street. To the right a series of walls block a narrow access route from Little Underbank running parallel to the right of us.

Under the brick barrel vault the sides of the passage work hard as warehouse and storage. This is still a commercially functioning mews. Nevertheless the cobbled road is just over 2 metres wide and continues to welcome private car traffic as we are about to experience.

*Royal Oak Yard; iconic 18<sup>th</sup> century urban morphology. Revelations House at left and St. Petersgate Bridge. Photo David Chandler*



## The Yard to the West of St Petersgate Bridge



Once through the arch there is an area of distinct dilapidation and neglect that promises lack of safety and unhappiness to the visitor. The beautiful sandstone cliff face is a public refuse dump with large household items sitting among refuse attracting vermin. The upper part of the cliff has



*Stockport Royal Oak Yard; 1; the current extempore car parking structures, 2; the exit to Great Underbank locked for public access*

been protected by temporary canopies that protect the parked cars from falling debris and litter thrown from the street above. The steep bank side gradient is wrapped in a blue webbing fabric intended to impede vegetation, which it does not do very well. The space is further defaced by car parking structures that seem to suggest that the area has been subjected to competing land grabs.



The space seems to have become private property, covered in asphalt and sliced into parking spaces being situated only 30 metres distance from an 880 space public car park at Merseyway. The key to this area is to understand private land sales and is central to the current morphology of the yard. It is emphatically locked in as a cul de sac but has the seductive scale of a Venetian campiello, but struggles to celebrate any visitor interest in its legacy of changing use. The space represents an extensive document of urban historical archaeology. It is a Stockport narrative considerably at risk in its current condition. As we get accustomed to the space, evidence of former industrial use becomes occasionally coherent and readable as its cobbled road comes to an abrupt end. This lost piazza, whatever the future offers, is a genuine urban collage, restored, patched and piecemeal rebuilt as only bricolage can achieve over time.

The space is unseen by the public and conceals complex small scale fire escapes, air conditioning, pipe work and secured gates. Ironically the attentions of the contract car park landlords prevent the area from suffering greater destruction as CCTV is installed to watch the parked cars. We leave the

Yard along the same route that I entered with a passing consideration that this space is as wide as the Campiello del Remer in Venice.



*Stockport Royal Oak Yard looking North. From left to right. The sandstone cliff to High Bankside, a breeze block structure that forms the platform for a car park on High Bankside and storage area flanked by working access door into the sandstone cliff. The white tiled wall of a former factory building, the rear of shops, some of which are vacant, Centre, the steps to no. 33, St Anne's Hospice charity shop with its first floor book shop. More retail and delivery shuttered spaces. The extent of the original road is clearly visible.*

# Stockport; Great Underbank at Adlington Walk

- i) Site
- ii) Urban walk July 2015



## Site: Adlington Walk + Merseyway Car Park



1851 Ordnance Survey map of Stockport. The shaded area denotes the area demolished in 1964 to permit the Merseyway masterplan to be imposed

In 1557 Adlington Square had been the site of a yarn croft in an area enclosed by the converging courses of the Tin Brook and the River Mersey was built on land that was owned by the Leghs of Adlington Hall. Later known as the 'Schole Croft'<sup>3</sup>. The land adjoining the Grammar School was later bought by Joseph Dale, owner of the Adlington Square silk mill.



Merseyway car park; Adlington Walk at ground level 1964 with shops at Great Underbank at left and the original Chestergate department store at right. Source; May 1965 site documentary report; NWFA 4544 © Stockport MBC

<sup>3</sup> Arrowsmith, P.; 1997 p. 106





*Left; Merseyway Car Park 1968 with the 2 wings of Adlington Walk. Right; Great Underbank with its emerging public spaces*

The walk is from the ancient junction at the White Lion Hotel from Little Underbank down to the road space that flanks the Merseyway car park. The entire length of this walk is demonstrated in the panorama photograph below, reading from right to left down a low hill towards the basin that opens up in the distance far left. The walk is one of the most interesting of any town in the UK because of the highly visible fault line between two distinct urban visions. Literally rupture by a fissure that opens up in the plan to allow for vehicle access and exit on discrete ramp structures.



*Stockport. Great Underbank; panorama of the western section leading into Chestergate*

*Photo; David Chandler*

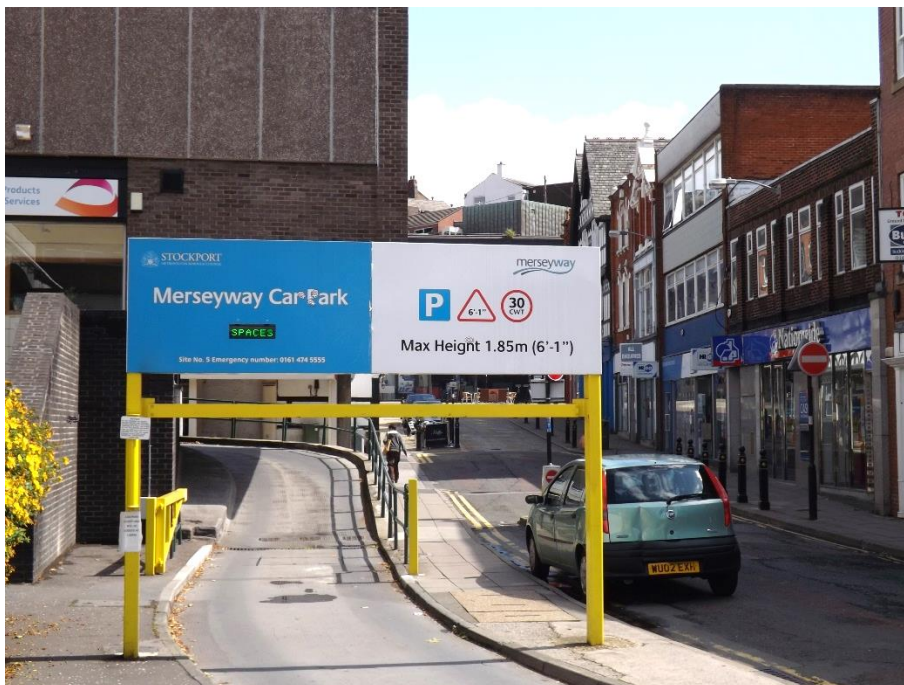


*Worcester; 1960s car park inserted into Friar Street. Source; Google images*

The morphological shift in building types is strongly redolent of another 1960s city masterplan to be seen in the Friar Street helical car park embedded into the medieval street in Worcester where the structure required the destruction of a medieval lich gate. In Stockport a dressed stone arch, some 18<sup>th</sup> century brick fronted shops and a road were taken away but the medieval cruck built shop was preserved. In a 1965 site survey documentary it became clear that the south side of the street was carefully preserved but the north side was cleared to allow for the assembly of site materiel. Many properties on this preserved south side back on to the Tin Brook that flows beneath Royal Oak Yard

and most are grade II listed. The north side contains three interlocking vehicle access ramps all subject to height restrictions from the outset. Opposite the half-timbered building the pavement has been narrowed and rising bollards inserted. This also requires large signs that warn the drivers about the functions of these devices

As we pass the ramp area the full architectural scale of the Merseyway car park comes into view. The structure is tall enough to launch a road access bridge from its upper car park across to Tatton Street on High Bankside. The articulation of the structure is consistent with the design aims of the 1960s elevation; small segmental arched concrete canopies, mosaic cornices and mezzanine windows all of which emphasise the horizontal. The structure is faced in prefabricated concrete panels which have all weathered differently, according to their location. The elegant bridge creates a colossal frame for the urban view but no particular vista seems to have been planned. The view back along the way we entered is at times edited out by the use of signage. At every opportunity, highways management has branded this part of the town leaving the visitor struggling to find the identity of the place.

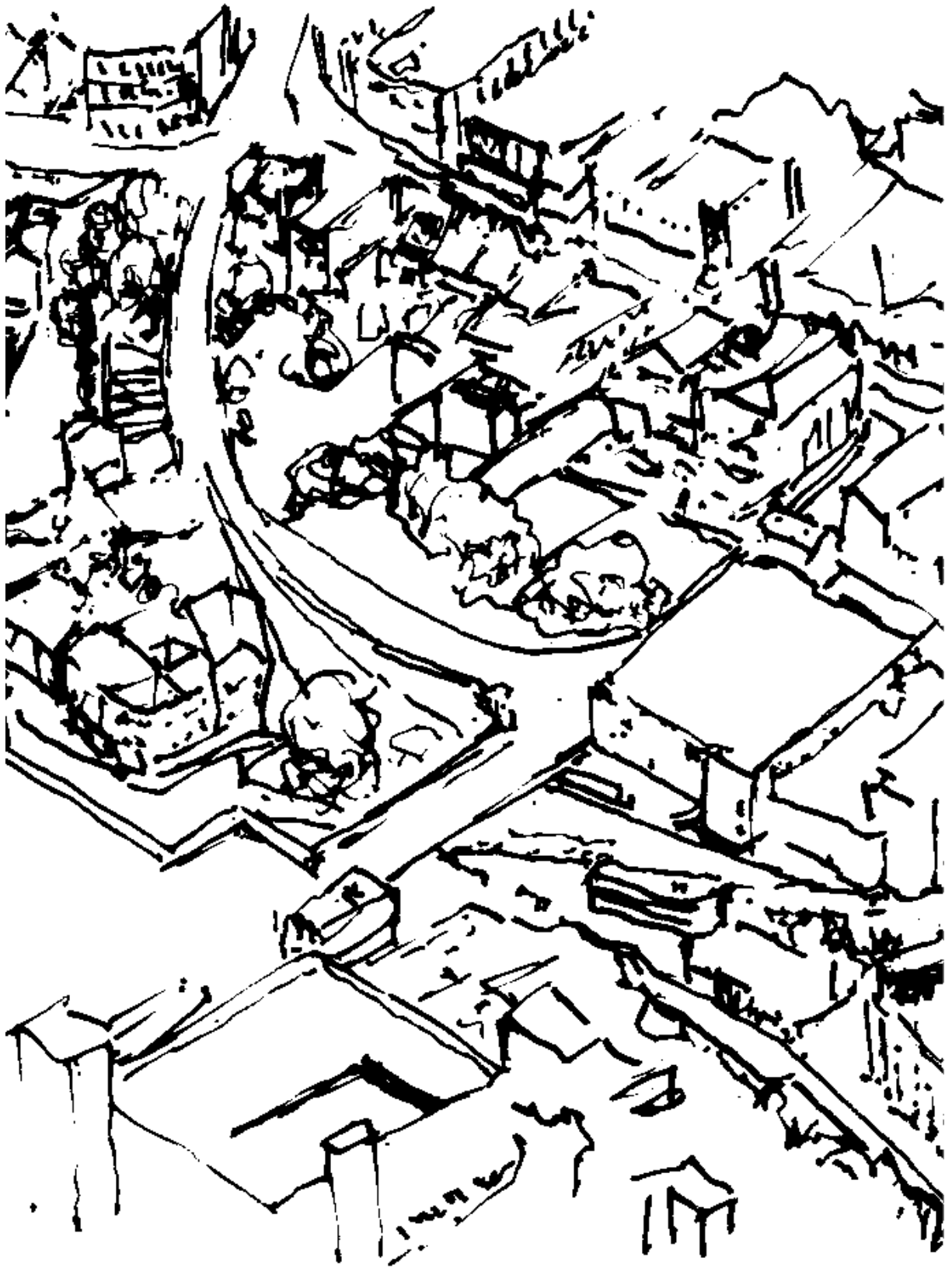


*Merseyway Car Park at the entrance to Great Underbank; problems with area identity, use and vista*

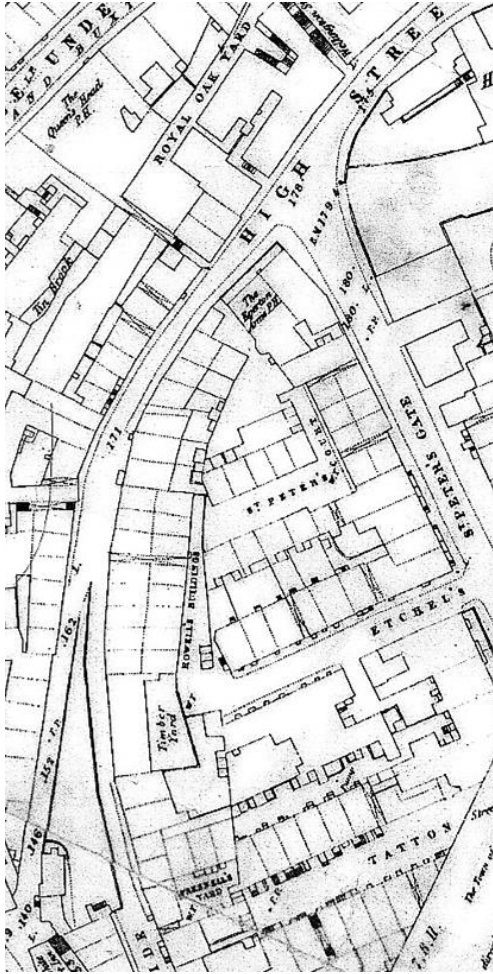
The space beneath the bridge is generous and promises a type of piazza but is employed as a turning space at the base of Pickford's Brow. Drivers see the no entry signs at Great Underbank or the low headroom car park ramp and turn around at this point, so the pedestrian is discouraged. The two large wings of the Merseyway Car Park flank a system of ramps to take visitors from the basin up to the raised level of the 1960s shopping precinct. The ramps are flanked by local authority planting which is part of original architects' vision. The massive modernist structure faces the stone ramp work and exposed sandstone face leads us up to the last part of our walk at High Bankside.

# Stockport. High Bankside

- i) Site
- ii) Urban walk July 2015



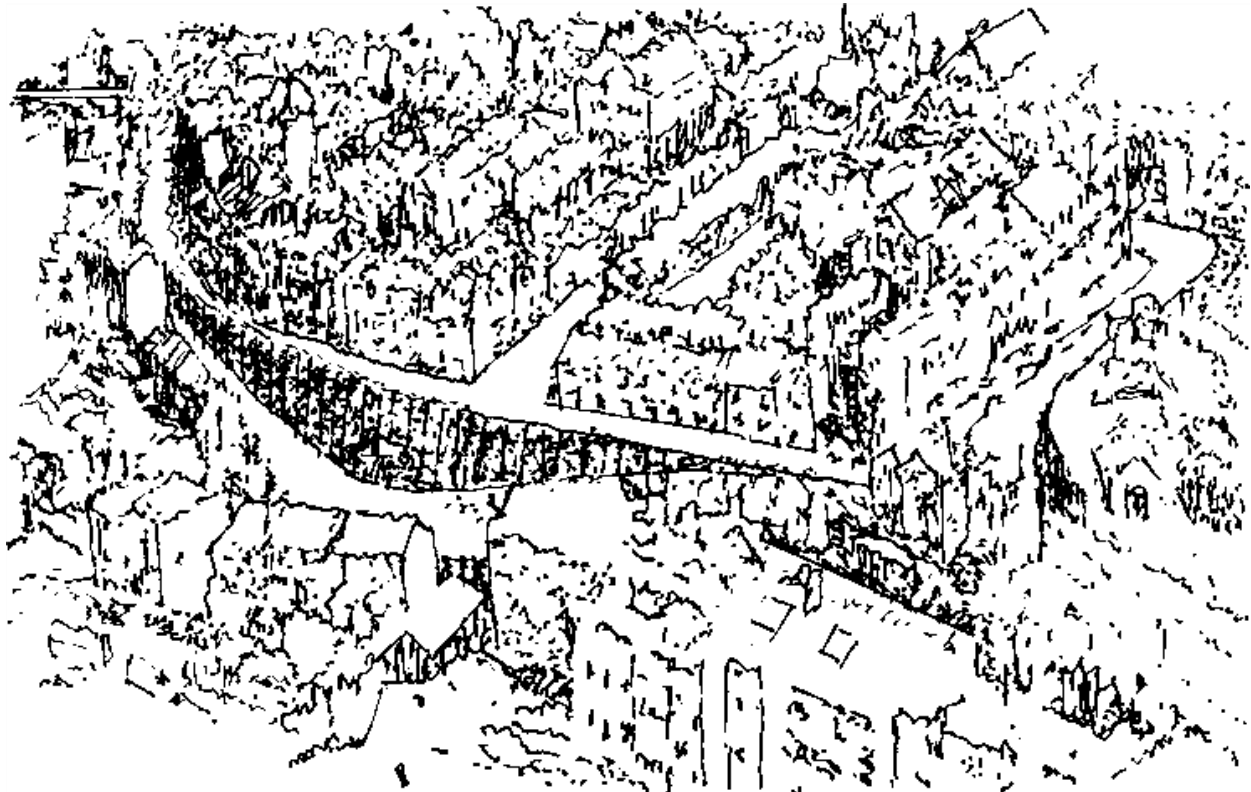
*High Bankside. Drawing; David Chandler*



### High bankside; site history and description

In 1851 the area at the top of the eastern brow of the Mersey Valley was dense working class community. Predominantly (Irish) Roman Catholic it was one of many areas of population that shared working patterns in the nearby mills still in the in town banks of the rivers and the St. Joseph's Church. The Road name reflect Tatton and Etchells who are major 17<sup>th</sup> century landowners in the borough. Some aerial views of this brow survive showing the mix of pubs, particularly the Egerton Arms on the T junction of the High Street before the St Petersgate Bridge was constructed over Royal Oak Yard cutting east to join the Market Place beside the Queen's Head Public House. It also housed cottage industries very much associated with the building trades, a timber yard in particular. It is referred to in the 1960s as "Paddy's Brow" and even now some UVF graffiti crops up in this area. The zone was very well placed to accommodate the Merseyway site cabins and workers' cars during the 1960s construction phase. For this purpose the entire hill underwent considerable clearance and demolition. The buildings facing "St. Peters Gate" as it appears in the plan were largely preserved, but an Opera House was demolished.

Above; Stockport; High Bankside as community; a cluster of back to back dwellings and courtyards. Source; OS 1851 Below; sketch view of the same area from an aerial photograph, indicating density. St. Petersgate Bridge at far left.







*Stockport St. Joseph's Church; axial view from Mersey way car park. Photo; David Chandler*

The area offers a shallow gradient (see section below) and is the site of road improvements and some interesting industrial archaeology which will be worth preserving. The caramel red tiled wall of the Astoria cinema is still visible surviving as part of the back wall of the Egerton Arms delivery yard. The other unexpected survival was a part crescent shaped length of High Bankside with its early cobbled surface framed in a rustic stone wall.

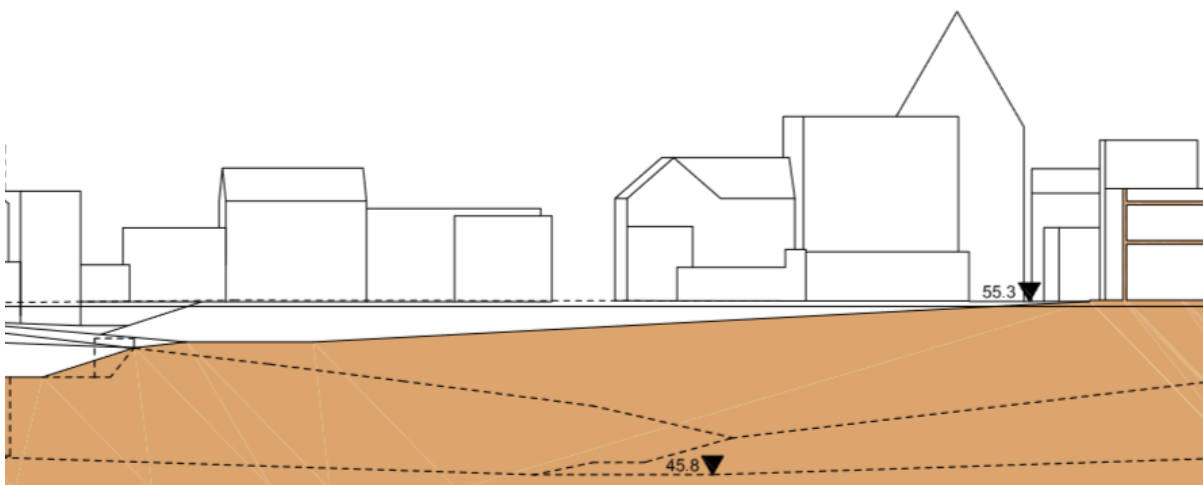
The western edge of the brow is colonised by three contract car parking pads, evidently in continuation of the car parking legacy that goes back for half a century. Elsewhere the rear of the St. Petersgate properties have secured small private parking spaces. For the rest of the area in view there is a substantial verge splay that is well maintained, but it is not a park, just an urban screen for the bricolage of backs of buildings. There is an axial view to Tatton Street and the

Church façade of St. Joseph's Church. This was well exploited in the form of the road bridge into Merseyway car park, but as a result of traffic calming and road narrowing there is currently no conscious effort to make use of this urban sight line.



*Above; silhouette and morphology of High Bankside with St. Joseph's Church and Tatton Street at right and the Astoria Cinema at left. Car parking is a tradition well established at this time. Source; May 1965 site documentary report; NWFA 4544 © Stockport MBC*

*Below; section across High Bankside for comparison with the panorama above. Source; James Dyson*



High Bankside is therefore another fringe area of bricoleur urbanist growth, now entirely at the service of the Stockport MBC "access" policy; permitting driving and parking at will. The area is one

of close territorial competition. The population density of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been ceded to the scattered footprints of lucrative contract parking businesses.



*The High Bankside Brow in 1965 and 2015; comparative images. On the left, the summit of the brow before the addition of the bridge across to Merseyway Car Park. The narrow pavement and railing survive in the section of original road preserved as part of the Merseyway master plan in 1968. The function of this space lacks clarity although a bench has been provided. It would certainly have provided a good view of the new town centre in 1969.*

*Still from the May 1965 site documentary report; NWFA 4544 © Stockport MBC and right; David Chandler 2015*



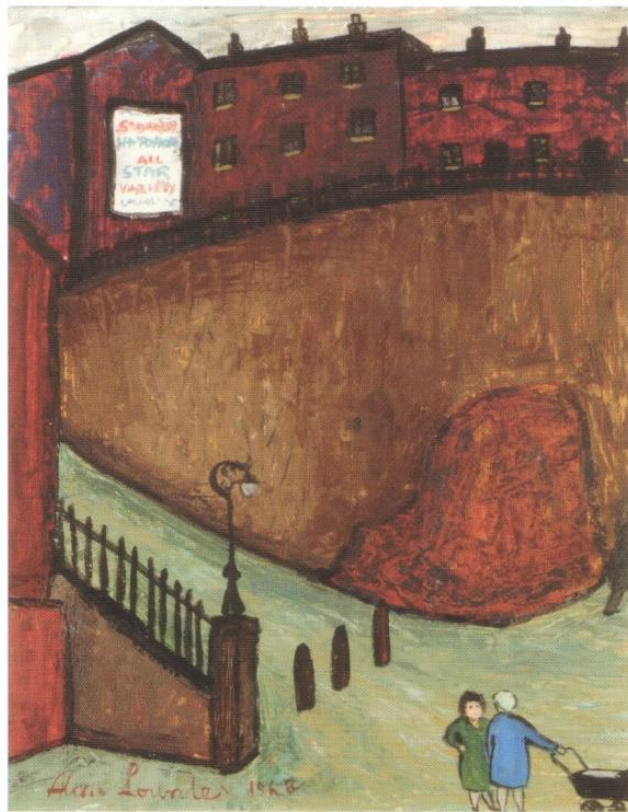
*High Bankside; walled section of original road set aside as part of an urban terrace, designed in the 1960s as part of the Merseyway development  
Photo: David Chandler*



## High Bankside: a site walk



*Pickford's Brow rising from Great Underbank.*



*"Paddy's Brow". Alan Lowndes 1968 Source; Riley, J. (2010) p.160*

Starting in Great Underbank at the Adlington Walk space the route takes us up Pickford's Brow, a place that has been given heritage street furniture. A large sandstone outcrop emerges from the sandstone rusticated wall at the top of the first ramp. We are reminded that this was a place of caves for several centuries. We then walk up past a small industrial unit and a series of small car parks full of warning signs to the prospect of an emerging urban park that is unuseable as a recreational space despite its well mown grass. Maybe a bench here would be welcome beneath the semi mature trees. Continuing up the brow we see the remnants of the old cobbled road on our right. Both this area and the trees are targeted for litter, possibly because they are not used for recreation. At the summit on Tatton Street the 2-3 storey brick face of "Choices" a fertility clinic, challenges the presence of the Roman Catholic Church at the end of the street. Its functional brick materials and towers hint at a castle like provenance which is never acknowledged because it has a serious purpose. Pay barriers control the traffic entering and exiting the Merseyway Car Park. There is so much street furniture in these pavements it is starting to resemble a sculpture park, or certainly an event space with its yellow steel hedges and stranded black bollards modelled on ships' cannon. The rest of the surrounding space is well used private car parking land, at times in unfeasibly small parking lots with plenty of warning signs. 30 metres away from where I am standing 880 car spaces await of which 400 are in use during the week.





*Above a panorama of High Bankside with the division of clinic at right and an emerging urban lung on the left. Photo; David Chandler*

*Below; "Choices" Fertility Clinic on the summit of High Bankside looking along Tatton Street with plenty of yellow steel in the foreground. This building is part of a community of interconnected institutions which offer social and health welfare and support to the region. Photo; David Chandler*



# Site and walk; The Goyt River bank at Park Bridge and Portwood Bridge

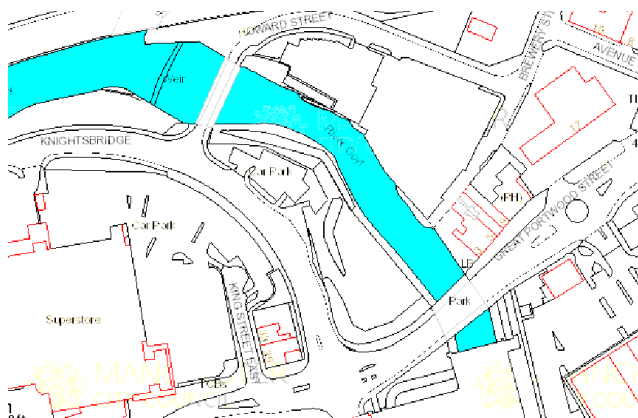
## Site and urban walk

I approach the town from great Portwood Street with an extensive “field” area of levelled land at the foot of the hill town I am expecting to see. Flanked by the Peel Centre large warehouse shops from the 1990s on the left beyond a very generous area of kerbside and grass and a massive car park. To my right a rising ramp slip road feeds the constant background of traffic entering the M60 motorway. Marsland Street opens through a motorway underpass tunnel and gives me a glimpse of Tesco supermarket in the distance. There is a promise of an entire community through this tunnel framed view but land ownership issues have blocked any further urban growth in a northerly direction. This is unusual because the site occupies a very attractive curve in the course of the River Tame which at present arrives in Stockport virtually unannounced and completely invisible.

The buildings on the right of Great Portwood Street would be associated with short term leases of semi derelict two storey shops and other retail situations where the stock such as carpeting, bedding and small car sales is bought cheap.

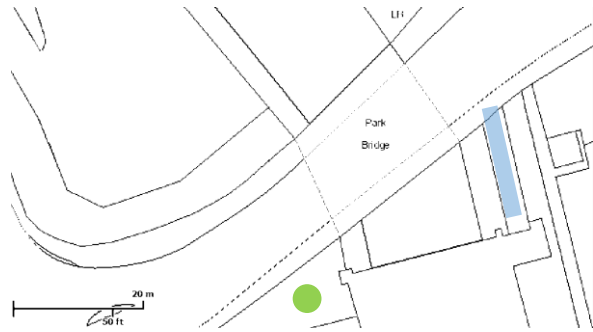
A factory has lost its roof in this blighted area at the start of Richard Street. The little Railway Inn is a reminder that the lines from Tiviot Dale railway once passed to the north of this area. The M60 was to take the place of a zone of mixed factories and manufacturing. Near to where I am walking was once a large cooling tower and many chimneys that gave the town the highest death rate in the UK a century ago. The result is an axially planned development that allows for a wide exit route for shoppers through the hub of Portwood roundabout behind me. An iron railing reveals the presence of bridge parapets. Park Bridge, built in 1857 was widened in 1894 indicating that Stockport planning required responsive flexibility in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and traffic was heavy before the motorised vehicle. On the right by the bridge railings a black boarded up derelict building on the east bank signals a riverside property that is almost tragic in its desolation. The black has recently been refreshed to smarten up the despair. A west facing site by a bridge in other UK contexts would certainly a popular family pub and hotel. But here there is razor wire and unchecked tree growth.

I am approaching Park Bridge on the pavement but there is no indication that a river runs beneath it because the double tier of a two storey car park appears on my left. It is the ASDA car park that is unknowingly the left pier of a city gate, clad in a brick red panels capped with anti-climb spikes. I look over the bridge parapet with its wrought iron guilloche frieze and see a tunnel over the deep gully of the Goyt River six metres below its visible edges fringed with fly tipped waste. The water is blackened by this shade, but is not polluted. Urban vandals seem to generate the first signs of disease in the body of the urban patient. Here is a symptom of planning that no longer seems as beneficial or generous as it once appeared.



*Stockport; the Knightsbridge development area (detail). The route of the urban walk. Note the two bridges. The area has multiple ownership problems, but the west bank is MBC land and has the potential to become a new riverside town centre, situated between Merseyway and the later Peel shopping centres. The small car park in the curve of the bend of the River Goyt, 10 metres from the Sainsbury's car park to the west of Knightsbridge is screened from the Goyt river view*

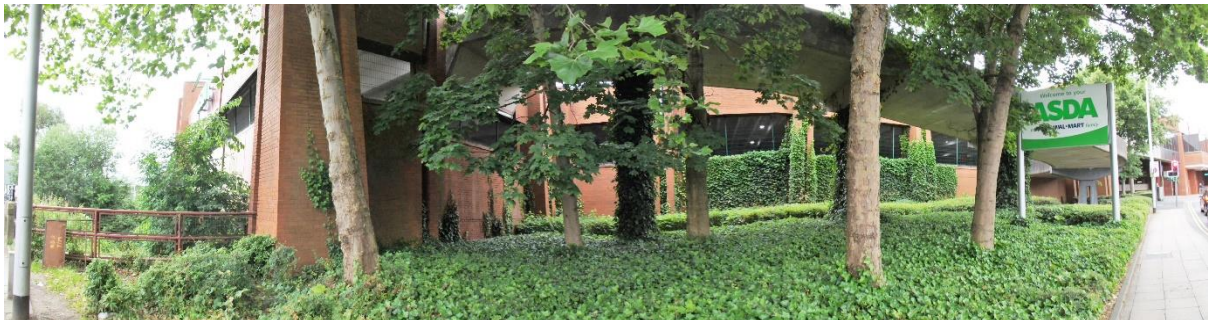




*Left; The Goyt as it enters the town at the ASDA car park. Above; a plan of the same area with the route of a “blind” Goyt viewing path, the only river walk inside the town. Below the “grove” that has emerged on the crossroads, marked in green above.*

A fifteen metre path turns to my right before I get to the bridge and ends in a locked door. A pedestrian cul de sac that is unselfconscious in its inappropriate place by a river; the invitation to a river view that cannot be seen.

This is a bellwether for the opposite bank. Here the planners have created or permitted a perplexing corner garden on the unused ground that opens onto the ASDA junction. As if the space could sometime in the future become a continuous



extension of this little grove with its sycamores and ivy. Except there is something very wrong with this little park. It is in a permanent shadow from a large concrete access ramp that is partly concealed beneath the foliage. A huge airborne roof with no walls. The ambiguous green space looks as if it is both inviting yet somehow seems to be a place that warns off trespassers. We might ask if the original planners were looking at the plan or model of the ASDA car park from above and omitted to consider its impact on the pedestrian. An ASDA sign has been “planted” in this green space but it is actually not where the supermarket road entrance is situated, neither is the pedestrian entrance at this point but it does suggest that a walk through this vernal grove will take us into the supermarket with its ivy clad brick walls. It will not.

Stockport therefore introduces itself via ASDA as a place on a river that has no river views and as a park space that is not a park. What sort of town can this be? It should possibly be better known.

The opposite side of the road is comprehensively clad in advertising billboards that turn north towards Knightsbridge. Images of motor vehicles in the adverts Great Portwood Street at Park Bridge seem to offer a pertinent narrative to the paradoxes at this town entry point.



One even offers a promise of “power” in this area of urban impotence. Powerless, and a little cynical, because the wooden hoarding backs onto a derelict riverside car park and one of the most promising sites in Stockport now grown into inaccessible forest and a magnet for the homeless and fly tippers.



The wide pavement has now narrowed by two thirds to a cramped waiting area and road crossing into the town of Stockport with its two supermarkets challenging each other across the entrance to Warren Street. Our driver route into town is now blocked. The traffic here is deeply discouraging and leaves me with the sense that I lack the means to prosper in this town because only drivers have a priority at this complex junction. Pedestrians queue patiently, waiting for the traffic lights to complete their programmed sequence. There seems to be a sort of cycle lane yet large city buses are leaving the town along Warren Street. Taxis are parked outside ASDA yet I can see a large car park at Sainsbury's 10 metres from this junction. There are no cyclists using this vestigial cycle lane, because this junction is very difficult and impolite.

This is a crossing where amber is the most dangerous of the traffic lights, because driver impatience and frustration results in regular use of the horn. Drivers take chances on amber. No pedestrian would dare challenge such bad tempered metal. I am in Stockport, a motorist's town designed, as the planning literature reiterates, “for access”. I am very aware of my secondary status being on foot. This junction is much easier to cross from the vantage point of the driver's seat. Bent traffic bollards are evidence of past road skirmishes.



If only all this conflict could be made to disappear. If only the only traffic was on foot and this was a happy space with its face turned to the river. A green park, winter garden and riverside walk possibly?

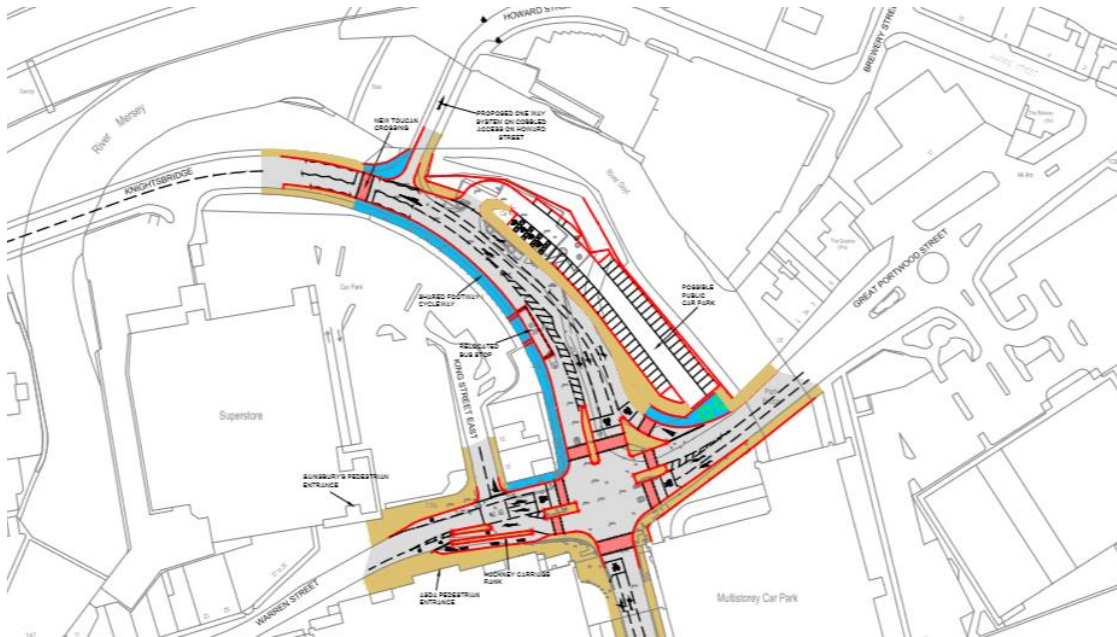
## Knightsbridge and Portwood Bridge

My pavement journey continues north into Knightsbridge towards the site of the meeting of three rivers and the Portwood Bridge. Much of this area was devised as by product of the engineering of the M60 in the mid-1960s. It has resulted in the channelling of the River Mersey into a concrete sided culvert with a small woodland fringe. Knightsbridge is another optimistic wide road that occupies generous space left over from the demolition of an iron foundry and some residential streets. Early community clearances, because the motorway was going to be a difficult companion in terms of noise and pollution. I walk as far as the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Portwood Bridge, which is now completely obscured by a small car park and foliage from the riverbank. This town does not seem to be at ease its heritage at present. If this road were to be taken as public realm then there could be a continuous park space by the Mersey and Goyt through to Park Bridge and even the little dysfunctional ASDA parklet, described above. Two bridges would prove an asset to the town. At present neither are visible. The current planning proposes a car park on this river bank. The MBA Town Centre Planning map 402 of the same area from 2014 is worth a comment because it is represents a limited application of the experience of possibilities of a Northern European town's future.



*Above; The meeting of three rivers beneath the M60 as it was nearing completion in the 1960s. The area to the right is to be occupied by Sainsbury's and Knightsbridge (road). In the centre the confused zigzag of streets from the ruptured community remains unplanned. Portwood Bridge is thus orphaned by these projects. Below; detail of an OS map of the area from 1851*





Source; Stockport Town Centre consultation 2014 Knightsbridge/ASDA Junction plan 402

The area has been flagged as one of major concern. The plan runs the risk of the exclusive aerial view that seems to have plagued the ASDA car ramp parklet. I have just travelled the route of the yellow dotted lines in my essay above.



A central element of the plan is a car park on a long ramp level on the west bank of the River Goyt. The archaeology of the factory footings provides a stone spur into the fast flowing River Goyt. The area designated as a car park in MBA plan 402 is currently blocked from use and is town centre derelict land owned by the local authority. This is a wilderness that could become an urban lung near to the M60. More parking activity in this area would seem to be an excessive use of motor vehicles especially as the traffic is often

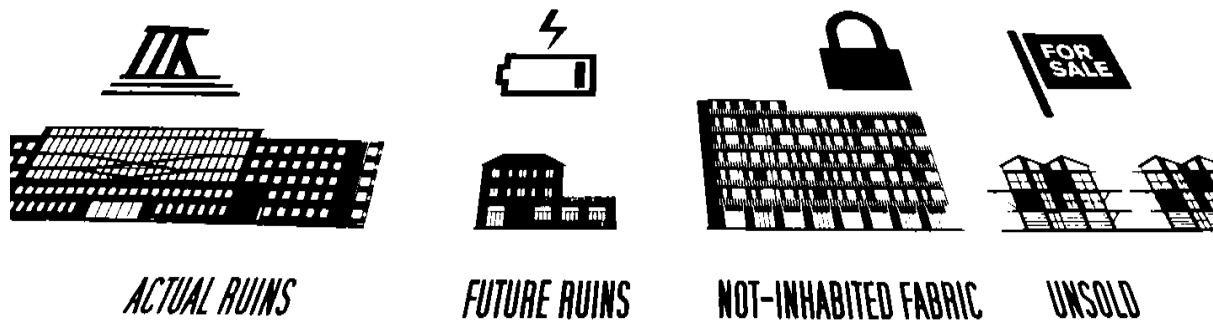
queuing along Knightsbridge with idling engines joining the ASDA junction. Portwood Bridge does not merit its current exclusion from the urban fabric. In plan 402 it is only referred to as Howard Street which may be granted a “proposed one way system on cobbled access”. The old bridge would not look out of place in Chatsworth Park and is a monument that could play a greater part in urban regeneration and tourism.



A Stockport river narrative; Left; The Goyt River weir; Portwood Bridge c. 1975 and in 2015.



# What Need for Urbanist Intervention in Stockport? Some challenges



At the 'Monditalia' pavilion at the Corderia of the Architectural Biennale in Venice 2014 "**Radical Pedagogies**"<sup>4</sup> raised questions about the contemporary problems that were beginning to impact on Italian towns as they migrate and sprawl into their suburbs. With this emerges the perceived "waste" of built structures. The causes are seen to be complex and derive from planners' attempts to compensate for underinvestment or to influence the emphasis on land use and communications routes. Italian planners have needed to build extensive industrial units for retail warehousing and have become conscious that architectural style has given way to the cumulative needs of population density.

The four icons above are worth a brief explanation if they are to be valid tools to identify the needs of these selected Stockport sites.

**Actual ruins** were reported in Little Underbank on 21 November 2013. There are further signs of decay in some of the other buildings in Little Underbank, Royal Oak Yard and Great Underbank. The water channelled into the valley site requires a vigilant approach to conservation. Part of Royal Oak Yard is still in use as a public dump, possibly from the persistence of folk memory, as it appears on early town maps as a public lavatory (just opposite the Egerton Arms) and was probably equipped with ductwork directly into the Tin Brook below. Currently it is a site of 20<sup>th</sup> century archaeology.

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<sup>4</sup> from Beatriz Colomina, [http://www.world-architects.com/en/architecture-news/insight/2014\\_Venice\\_Biennale\\_Monditalia\\_550](http://www.world-architects.com/en/architecture-news/insight/2014_Venice_Biennale_Monditalia_550)





*Royal Oak Yard is not isolated in being targeted for in town refuse disposal. The zone illustrated above is at the juncton of 19<sup>th</sup> centure bridge and exposed sandstone, which has genuine tourist potential. Photo; David Chandler*

“Derelict building collapses and crushes parked car in Stockport”<sup>1</sup>



*“He said he and other residents had complained to the council about the ‘dangerous’ former furniture shop, which has been empty for eight years”.*

*There were “fears about adjoining buildings”<sup>5</sup>.*



**Future Ruins** is given a battery graphic icon to imply that, like batteries, the power and energy of certain recent functional structure is running down. The facings and fabric at the Adlington section of the Merseyway Car Park is 47 years old. The changes in car use and the necessity of such colossal in town structures is now in question. The viability going forward to 2050 of these types remains an open question.

The issue of the style needs of the town is largely narrative. There are sections of the site which have exercised architects and planners since the 1950s. These debates will always focus on heritage, conservation and the shifting arena of aesthetic. It might be argued that the succession of large scale projects at Stockport will require the dismantling, removal and re-siting of late Tudor facades into a version of a new “heritage zone” as seen in the purpose built ‘Shambles Square’ in central Manchester in 1974 when the new Arndale Shopping Centre footprint demanded such a solution.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/stockport-building-collapse-owner-lucky-6334581>

These structures, despite their incidental charm, offer little defence against the momentum and rationale of post millennium masterplans. Ironically it is listed heritage monument time that may be running out. The Adlington Walk car park will survive in situ because it is integrated with the entire shopping centre and supports the largest of the roof top car parks.



*Stockport: Great Underbank; the historical narrative; 1958, 1965, 2015*

*Note; the narrowing of the road exit from Great Underbank to Adlington Walk in combination with rising bollards and the street furniture. Posts replace double yellow road markings. Demolition has created a boundary not seen in the pre-1965 view. Clearly marked by the change of road surface.*

*Stockport; Great Underbank at Pickford's Brow looking towards Chestergate; an unexpected cul de sac as a result of the height restriction for vehicles on the car park access ramp and the no entry signs into the old town. The generous piazza on the edge of the old town has become an all-day three point turning space.*

*Photo; David Chandler*





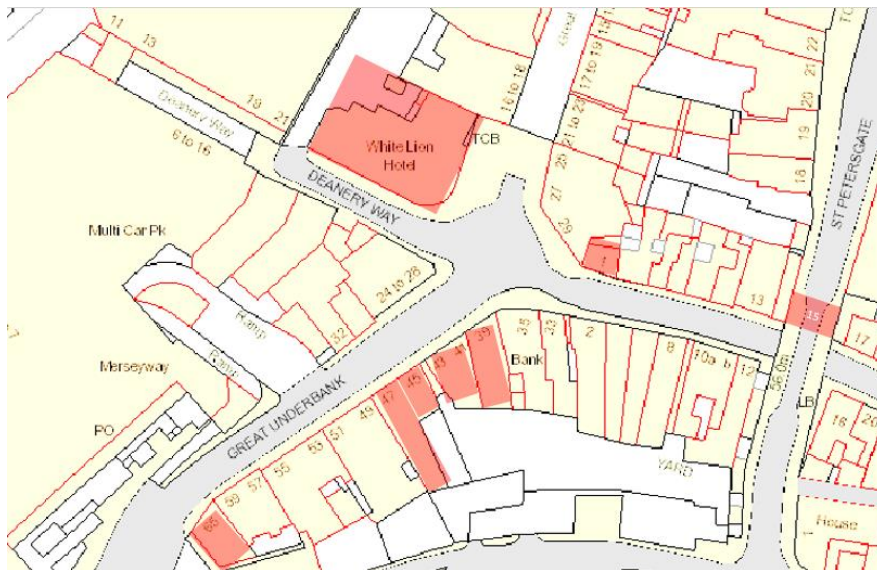
**Non inhabited fabric** is the third of the Radical pedagogies. The audit of vacant property at the time of writing is generating a justifiable unease amongst the few shop traders still working in the Little Underbank zone near St Petersgate Bridge. The vacancy rate is near to 50 percent, but this fluctuates. It is too high to be viable and does not compare well with the very high state of occupancy in the adjacent Merseyway shopping centre which seems to enjoy the advantage of comprehensive traffic free pedestrianisation. This happy state is achieved only by having deliveries and other essential road traffic access from the historic Underbanks area, particularly the hard hit is the White Lion hotel and its car park.

*Stockport; the White Lion Hotel 1904.*

*Monumental structure designed in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that offers a synthesis of fin de siècle Stopfordian design; brick and ashlar art nouveau (described elsewhere as “baroque”<sup>6</sup> detail, fused with a faux half-timbered decorative repertoire readable at St. Petersgate Bridge height. The hotel is designed on scenic principles with an angled lower right hand bay and wide front door that connotes a type of dramatic urban role. The visually embedded circular tower and dome is of exceptional importance as monument within the context of the town close to the crossroads of the principal medieval routes. It conveys the new confidence as the industrial status of the town was consolidated and points to the emergence of a progressive and localised vernacular syntax. The paired ground floor windows supporting a shallow oriel window is very interesting*



<sup>6</sup> <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-358701-the-white-lion-hotel-#.VZIDa-l8N2E>]



## VACANT PROPERTY AUDIT at UNDERBANKS

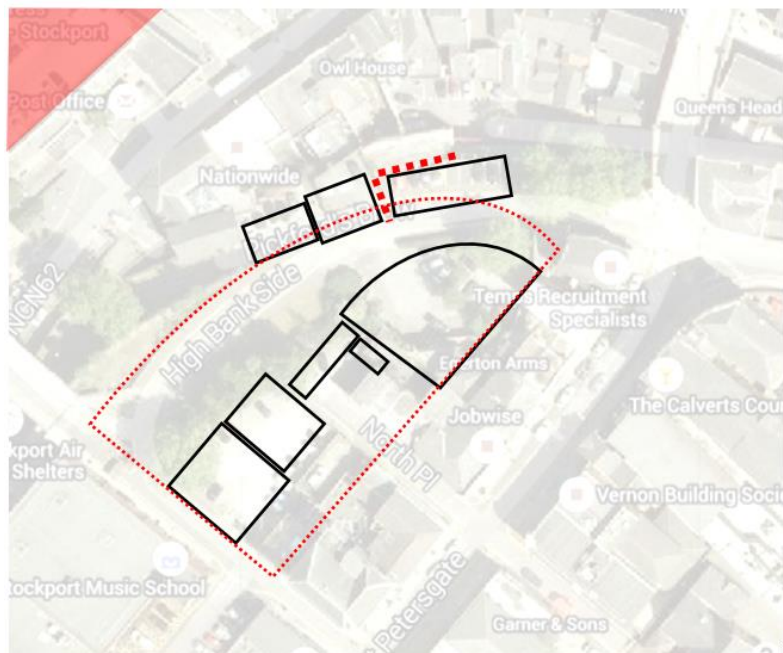
*The vacant property signs in Royal Oak entrance and Little Underbank in clear sight of the 1868 St Petersgate bridge. The backs of these shops face south onto Royal Oak passage. June 2015*

The role of the Underbanks as central to the provisioning of the safe Merseyway experience has demoted the area and consigned it to secondary status, with inevitable political repercussions amongst Little Underbank stakeholders who have attempted to rectify the perceived loss of their livelihood and to apportion blame. (See petition below). A key initiative for the regeneration of the historic town centre which ran between 1997 and 2005 was the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) project undertaken by the local authority. The plan overlooks the significant area of the historic town that has been sold to private parking agencies.



*Above; Stockport; private car park contractor's "bricolage". Photo; David Chandler Below; eight private contract car parks fill the spaces of High Bankside*

**Unsold** is the fourth paradigm offered by the Monditalia workshop. There is a body of extensive media response to this problem and the "Portas Project"<sup>7</sup> has featured on national television. Stockport is frequently presented as a cause celebre for urban renewal. MBC reports and new initiative websites work hard to counteract the failure to sell or let town centre property.



<sup>7</sup> "Stockport's Town Team has failed to reflect the Portas Pilot principles" <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/the-northerner/2013/mar/21/retail-mary-portas>

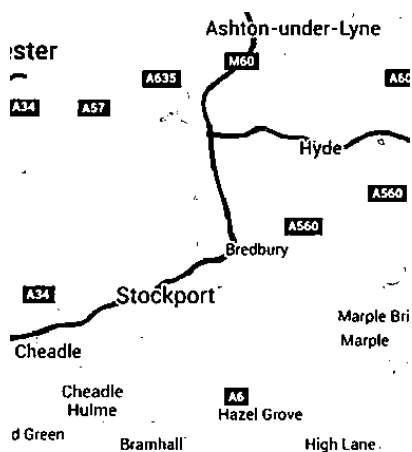


## The regional context for urban intervention in the Old Town area

The four target areas of this thesis are vulnerable to consumer forces far from the town. In 2006 one of several reports and masterplans offered supported a popular perception that the immense redevelopment and investment that Stockport had seen since the 1960s had somehow not created a stable and optimistic basis for urban life.

*The town centre does not provide the amount and quality of retail and leisure opportunities that its location and catchment suggests should be possible – in development jargon the town centre is ‘underperforming’<sup>8</sup>*

The observation is succinct in its allusion to the “catchment” area. This can be defined as the prosperity of the satellite towns such as Didsbury and Marple but also the opportunities presented by the M60 which seemed to be exporting the prosperity that might have been flowing inwards. Two bitter debates undermined the self confidence of the town. IKEA chose Ashton-under-Lyne as an M60 motorway junction access to the North East and John Lewis rejected the town as a site for a superstore twinned with Sainsbury’s in favour of another location and catchment hub at Cheadle in the West.



These commercial ventures left Stockport searching for an elusive commercial engine. The town responded by liberalising vehicle access in an attempt to make itself available to the drivers who were presumed to be going elsewhere to spend money. The double blow exacerbated the nineteenth century entropot functions that had been initiated by the great railway viaduct and the A6 through town bypass into Manchester. This was compounded by the M60 at its two Stockport junctions that seemed to have only gained a large Tesco sited at the Portwood roundabout, certainly out of town for pedestrians. And even that development arrived with its measure of controversy. Tesco did not add to the footfall in Merseyway or the shops in Little

Underbank. A further challenge has been created by the regional centre for international small scale industry at the proposed Airport City. Stockport is not even signposted on the Airport City website road map<sup>9</sup>.

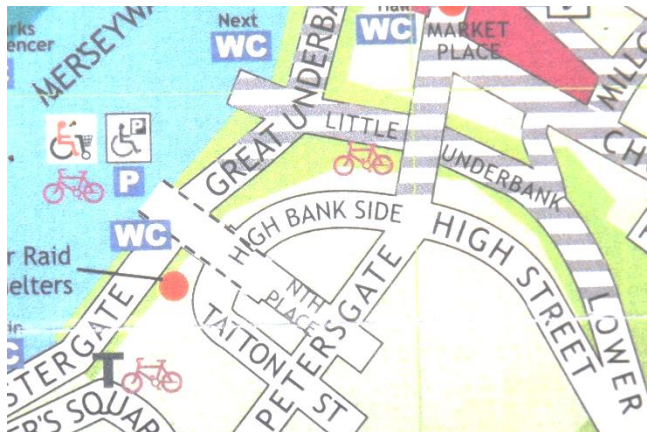
Stockport’s expansion fell off the edges of its heritage town map and squandered its strategic development land leases. Some of these might even have remained fallow, in hindsight. Stockport lacks town centre and riverside public parks and this restricts its user demographic.

Town users nevertheless retained a loyalty through these economic calamities. Heritage as a resource as valuable as any gathered some momentum during this period of sustained economic haemorrhage and failed bids. The town had run a few restricted initiatives at the Hat Museum, Memorial Art gallery and Market Place Staircase House which were well received and continue a level of popularity today. The local authority commissioned a glossy history from Peter Arrowsmith in 1997, which was an apology for its history of clearances but promoted the formation of an urban

<sup>8</sup> STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE VISION AND MASTERPLAN Final Report prepared by Building Design Partnership with Cushman & Wakefield Healey & Baker and Faber Maunsell. January 2006

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.airportcity.co.uk/>

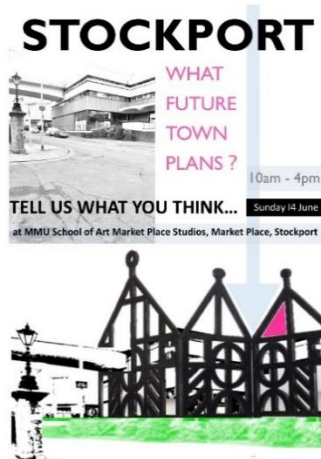
identity with heritage in the lead. Despite all of its efforts with motor vehicle retail, in town superstore parks, the town was slowly gaining an industrial heritage identity that adherents were keen to endorse. But this was at odds with town hall administrations eager not let big brand opportunities slip away. From the 1950s to the 1990s lorries full of Stockport's industrial chimney bricks, Stockport's Victorian villas and terraces, Stockport's Victorian theatres, Stockport's non conformist churches and Stockport's Victorian mills left for landfill. Heritage might turn out to be a lucrative brand if handled with skill and confidence. If heritage was moved to the centre of the commercial engine, it might ultimately constitute a customer magnet that would compete with the necklace of shopping islands weaving along the M60 motorway.



*Marketing Stockport; current tourist map. Royal Oak Yard is omitted and replaced by an enigmatic bicycle motif. Source; Stockport MBC*

## Urbanist survey 14 June 2015

A survey conducted from the Marketplace Studios was designed to assess the motivations behind heritage use of the town. A short publicity campaign in print and social media created a limited awareness of the opportunities to answer a questionnaire. There were male: 26 female: 25 respondents.

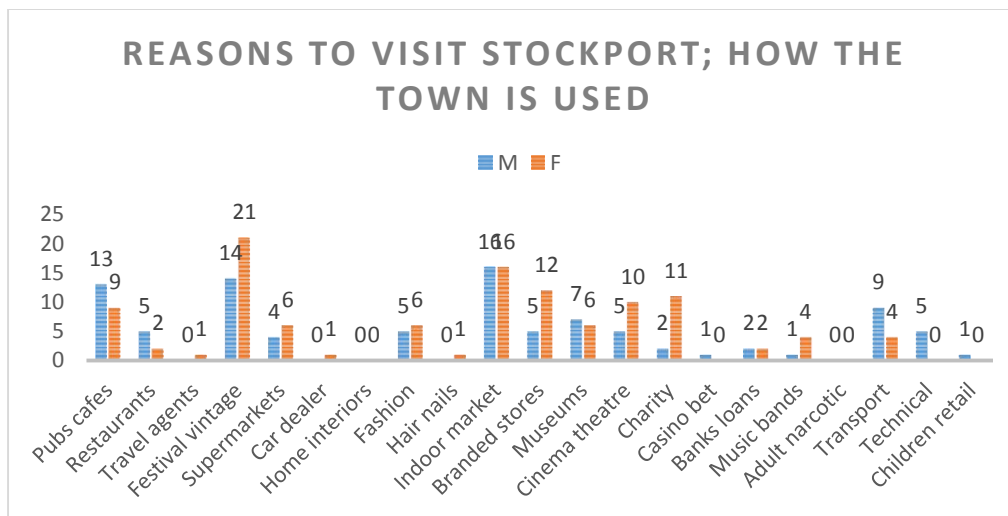


*The "What Future" poster designed to pitch an image of Adlington Walk side of the Merseyway Car Park wrapped in colossal half tudor screens (part of an early project draft).*

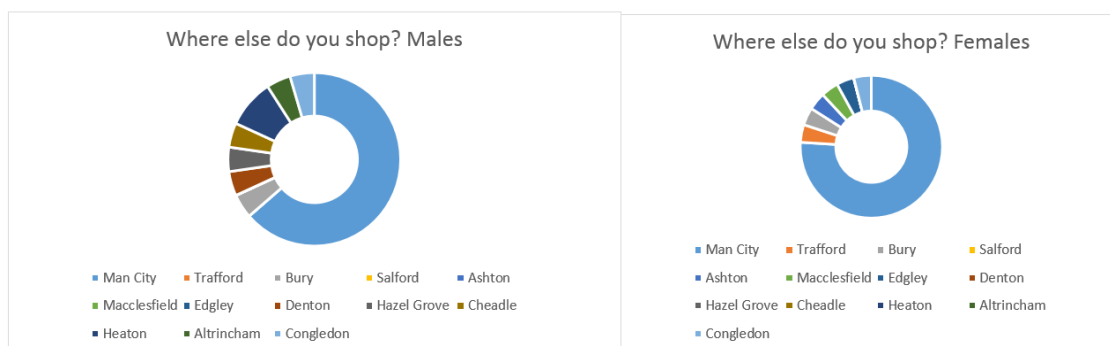
The questionnaire (appendix A) did not aim to establish more than a simple gender demographic. It was divided into two categories that reflect Lynchian principles. Part one reflecting how the town is used by festival day visitors and part two on specific urban structures such as routes and buildings. It also had a question on the urban palette, specifically the materials most commonly associated with the town.



Great Underbank; the complex ramp entry and exit system at ground level for the Merseyway Car Park. Height restrictions have The delivery exit ramp is emphatically signalled as one way because rising plates will damage vehicles mistaking the space as entry only.

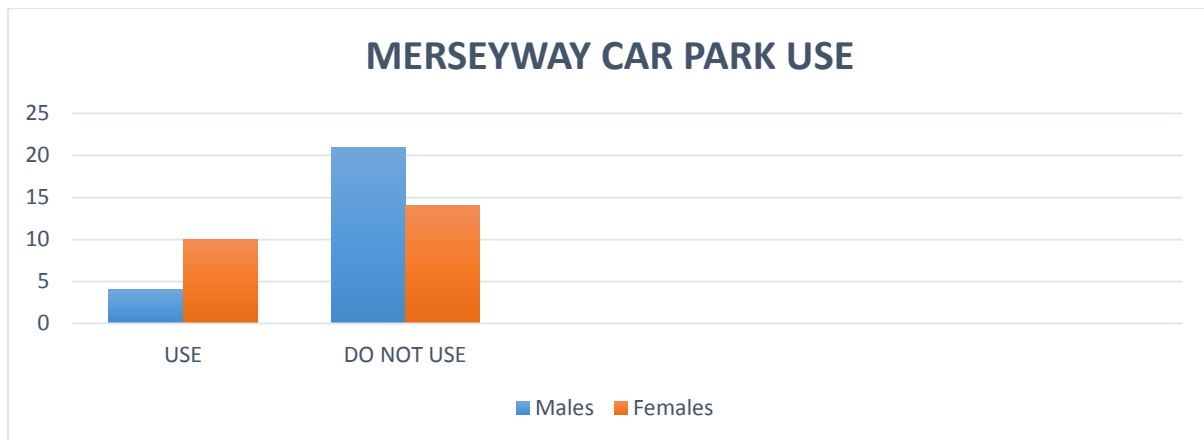


The use of the town as the questionnaire defined it was narrow as it omitted sport, education and employment. However the enthusiasm for the Vintage fair and marketplace festivals is a useful indicator of public aspiration to participate in the “Old Town” leisure offer. This links well with the sustained loyalty to “indoor markets” despite a large ASDA looming on the edge of the market square. The town is targeted for cafes and pubs as much as ever. The shopping demographic was predictable. More surprising was the percentage who return to museums, given the limited provision. The town has almost no public provision for children, but is seen as useful as a transport hub.





There was a question that aimed to find out more about the catchment area. The most consistent and useful response seemed to be the proximity of Manchester as an accessible retail and leisure centre. Other centres such as Ashton-under-Lyne and Cheadle were briefly mentioned but they had not monopolised the interest of this sample.

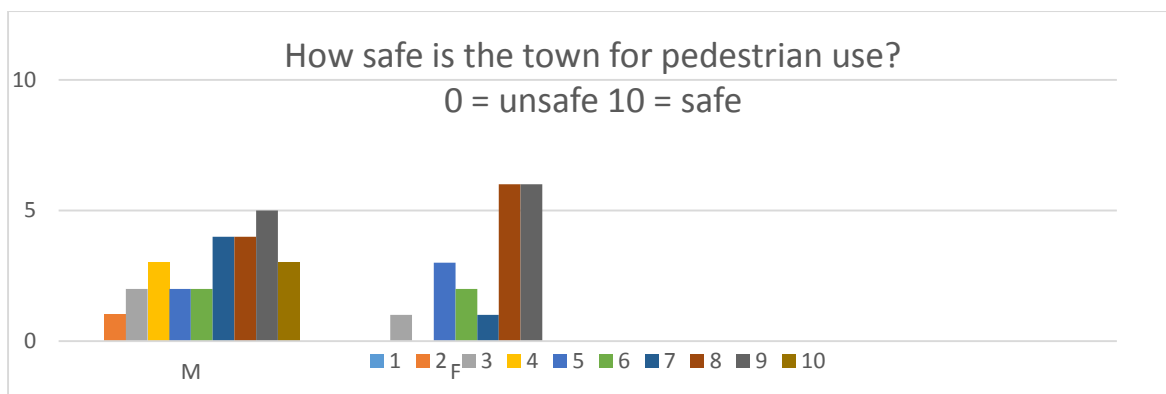


The use of the Merseyway Car Park is of great interest in the context of this study. Women tended to use the car park and pay the hourly tariff. Men tended not to like to use this facility. Given the ground level scatter parking all over the town it is not a surprising answer. The challenge seems to be to hunt for a clever parking opportunity, hopefully without a charge. This set of responses was a significant encouragement to plan alternative social uses for this colossal multi storey, multi platform facility.

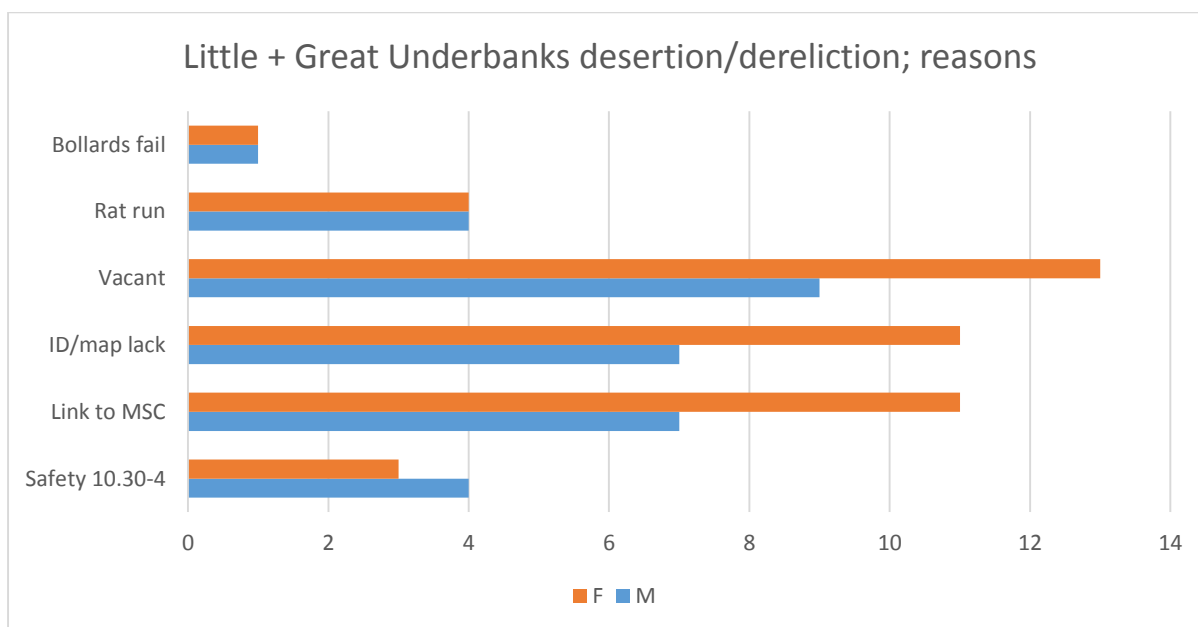
*Right; Orange zone Merseyway Car Park; roof level pedestrian stairwell access closed for “maintenance”. This is the now shut pedestrian access for the Orange Zone car park that may be surplus to current needs. (see project 3 coda)*

*Photo; David Chandler*





The question on pedestrian safety could not be answered effectively by the sample demographic who reflected the pressures of the pedestrianised Vintage market area and Merseyway in their replies. Had they experienced the walk from the Peel centre to ASDA there may have been a different set of answers.



On the topic of the way the town has been constructed the answers on the Underbanks were of interest. Vacant property is perceived as a dominant factor in public desertion of the area. This certainly appears to be a well recognised aspect of “underachievement”. The fact that these simple streets lacked a marketing identity and map was also noted as was the fact that pedestrian links to the grand pedestrianised mall of the Merseyway are not easy.



*Stockport activism. A group of independent Underbanks Traders have drawn up a petition that has helped to reinforce the confusion about the status of the zone; if it is either a short cut for motor vehicles or a pedestrianised branch of the Merseyway Shopping Centre.*

*Source; David Chandler*

The question on the urban palette of Stockport was interesting as brick and slate remain popular. Cobbles also seem to get a majority vote even though, as Cullen noted they indicate the areas where drivers should not go. Half timber retains a material that generates limited loyalty, as might be expected.

The sample answering a question on “retail versus residential” were mostly balanced in their answers on how the town should encourage residential building. Stockport is perceived as mixed retail and business use and this sample is not clear enough to influence any aspect of my research.

There were some additional written comments that had some relevance to the current work. Some argued to remove cars, impose speed limits and remove certain buses that seem to dominate the shopping streets. A smart comment noted that it was at times unclear if certain zones were pedestrianised. This is the result of rustic finish of the road surface in the Underbanks and patterning associated with pedestrian priority. The difficulty of crossing the A6 and the poor state of Princes Street were noted. The poor value of paying for parking was a consistent issue and this factor impacts on the popularity of private contract parking spaces in my target areas.

When it came to choosing favourite buildings many of the most popular choices were interesting from an urbanist point of view. The Plaza with its tiled deco façade was much admired as was the Rostron Brow Dance Hall, a derelict masterpiece near St. Mary’s Church.

When it came to the buildings that should not be preserved then ASDA and the newly built Exchange/Gateway NCP attracted votes. Road closure suggestions reflected the already partly pedestrianised areas; Market Place and the Underbanks. But of interest were the suggestions that Chestergate and High Bankside should be closed, which are themes pursued by this research.

Final comments reflected the car parking costs, lack of a town centre park and the need for an Art Gallery inside the town

## **Urban futures in Stockport and its catchment area**

Stockport has lacked belief in future heritage as a result of the self inflicted demolitions through half a century of wholesale clearances. It could invest in and accommodate a very idiosyncratic and combative architectural star building, one that attracts tourism and distinct from the directions taken by recent Manchester projects. It has yet to make a statement, although the 1987 project for 5 Mersey riverside pyramids, now just the single Co-Op Pyramid<sup>10</sup>, Red Rocks and Exchange projects may help its identity.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/business/business-news/curse-of-the-co-op-pyramid-is-lifted-1076577>





## ‘Little Underbank’; an urban panorama



Panorama 1270mm x 3055mm painted from observation from late September 2014 to 9 August 2015

### Technical information

Canvas total area; 3.879 square metres. Painted from right to left order. Acrylic on three stretched canvases. I-II-III. The viaduct painting (III) was the first to be started.

There were five acrylic artists' colours used; Mars Black, Cadmium Yellow, Cadmium Orange, Quinacridone (Burnt) Orange and Titanium White. The palette is displayed lower left in the painting, like a colour test.

Tools; masking tape, rulers, permanent marker pens, photograph derived stencils and several additional drawings of chimneys and bridge bollards. Figures added for scale are portraits of Jackie Wagg and Andrew Darke

### Painting as urban research process. Some conclusions

I started painting the town in very close detail to try to deepen my understanding of why so much of planned seemed equally matched by so much that was unplanned. I researched 3 interconnected sites (a,b,c) as a result of this attempt to understand what was not working as well as it might. Could each site help its neighbour to improve? The ethos was Lynchian in that the town became a journey or a narrative.



View from studio 7 at the Stockport Market Place Studios, July 2015. Composite photographic collage. David Chandler

The intention was to conduct a close study of the morphology of the view south east to west from a second floor studio at Market Place studios. A panorama type of painting emerged, not from planning, but from a left hand development of the first canvas. This raised a number of questions about typologies, techniques and traditions that have at least four centuries of this way of seeing the town, including an organisation dedicated to the science of the panorama<sup>11</sup>. The activity became miniaturist at times. Close observation allowed me to interrogate the growth of the town in ways that would never have been possible even in large format photography (see above). It is as if I was joining together a large model of this place with its road improved extended pavements, gradients, copper clad cisterns and different chimney styles. I found myself re-enacting and tracing the angles of the upper edges of the ancient town and imaginatively re-building the place, in all of its wet or dry material surfaces. Panoramic photographs have the tendency never to fit together because of the curve of the lens. If the foreground datum is level then it is likely the horizon will curve. By curving the ground upwards into a large arc then I could follow the rise of the town southwards out of the valley. The painting is a work of constant visual editing. Once an element was painted it only existed as a type of “good guess” but it was always then moved and adapted to fit with its surrounding elements. It was quite usual to move entire clusters of forms as one part was sensed to be out of place. This is clear in the struggle with the flat roof in canvas III. Perspective was a challenge as was scale. Some sections of the work are still out of scale (usually underscaled through caution). Perspective was mostly read horizontally through the tilt of building cornices and string courses. The perspective orthogonals are not numerous, but influence the positioning of two extensive flat roofs in the foreground. They also drive into the space at St. Petersgate Bridge which curves and takes the line of the parapets with this imperceptible arch. The best point of view for the triptych is above 1.5 metres above the floor line. The elision of objects in a line of sight is one of the problems that needed remedy. Foreground structures sometimes seemed to slip behind background objects in the middle and far distance. Large tracts of the town are illegible and thus unintelligible, so the process became a series of linear journeys. This was particularly difficult in the area of the gables of Rock Row the roof plant in an office building that rises from Chestergate and the great roof of the Plaza (*below*). These elisions created a sort of natural proto-cubism, because all of the intended “model making” was two dimensional



The task was like recording the facets of a coral reef; parts of the town were clinging to the geology and steep cliff gradients, ever present, but visually missing. I was recording a “floating” town as a result of the high viewpoint. Very little of this triptych records any contact between a building and its footprint.

Canvas II documents a small landscape of mini car parks in the middle distance. Attempts to consolidate the small car parks that fringe High Bankside had produced their own typologies; a concrete pad and slope, a concrete filled brick framed terrace and a breeze block buttressed concrete platform, where the buttresses conformed to the change of gradient in their spacing. All of these car parks retained some relationship to the footprint of the 19<sup>th</sup> century semi commercial structures that were constructed above the sandstone gorge of Royal Oak Yard and had been demolished, along with the Astor Cinema, whose footprint extend across the centre

<sup>11</sup> The Panorama Council. [http://panoramacouncil.org/en/what\\_we\\_do/fields\\_of\\_activities/panoramas/](http://panoramacouncil.org/en/what_we_do/fields_of_activities/panoramas/)



middle distance of canvas II. I was painting the curve of a large shallow saucer but there was very little certainty in this attempt.

The middle painting has a detailed representation of the remaining wall of the 1930s Astoria cinema with its chevron of brickwork steps and is dominated by the white tiled casino on St. Petersgate with the office district beyond marking a central summit of post 1970s modernism and commercial office space at Wellington Street.

The left hand painting is a detailed study of St. Petersgate Bridge with its iron railings and town coats of arms. Built in the 1860s it cuts through the Queen's Head public house with its large slate roof. The crossroads is also a showcase for a number of different brick types and uses, which was part of the challenge for the chosen palette. The burnt orange quinacridone was of real value here as it helped to create the reddish orange brick types but also generated the transparent red tiles of the Egerton Arms. This where the colour performs at its most pure and synergises with its subject matter; glazing the glazing. This family of pigments is coincidentally used extensively in commercial exterior paintwork so the paint generates a paradigmatic function. Elsewhere the pure cadmium yellow generates the colour of the parking pay machines in canvas III and the cadmium orange is worked hard in the mixture of the brick courses of the walls of the large 2-3 storey clinic "Choices" that straddles the top of the hill. The town is full of signage and the insignia of parking, but only a few of these have been included in the triptych.

Mars Black is so versatile that it can imitate a blue in the right context but is used at full strength it appears in the gloss black painted iron railings of the Victorian bridge. All the greens in the triptych were made from black added to yellow so that all the music plays in the same key.

The passage of time was also problematic, not only through the daytime and cloud cover, but also from autumn into late spring. The trees at the centre of the embankment cover the Egerton Arms but were painted in their winter form. This is part of the warp and weft of the town, with parts of it seen through the grids of trees, parking railings and fences or through bridges. Mixing colour for these grids also produces optical fabric and seems to represent one of the pleasures of urban views. The trees in canvas I line the horizon of Hillgate and seem to rhyme with the uphill development of the town around the town hall offices that seem to have been designed to mimic the profile of a medieval fortress.

In canvas I (left) the approach is probably closer to the concept of assembling a polychromatic relief sculpture. Because every piece of colour was applied within the boundaries of at least 4 strips of masking tape the result was closer to the sometimes surprising spatial impact of perspective intarsia. The arena of brick buildings allowed me to create a sense of a visual weight and was revisited and repainted because the perspective required redrawing. I did not employ under drawing because it would dictate the structure. The outlines of buildings were enacted by cornices and window frames. The finished surface is a presentation of multiple erasures, but this has only reinforced the sense of the solid and the material under-structures. Painting "out"- deleting, a wall seemed to put it back with greater certainty. Paintings grow out of their scar tissue. Occasionally I primed out a passage but found this to be disruptive. Each roof in the foreground was repainted to give it materiality and authenticity as the light changed. Combinations of the yellow lichen clinging to the purple greys and traces of clusters of avian droppings gave me the key to the colour mixtures. Occasionally I painted in the facsimile of the local colour of the material surface. Asphalt is exceptionally fugitive: dark when wet, silvery when dry in full sun. No element was as powerful as the presence of the sky reflected on the flat roofs and glazed roof lights of the town. Puddles had their own time line to evaporate, leave a stain or create a mirror for the sky. These use flashes of titanium white that evoke

the bare white canvas and the liquid wet medium that is used to paint areas of standing water. Prominent amongst these was the flat roof of the foreground of canvas I with its blocked gully and its wild grass island surrounded by city litter. Some of this has been left out as have double yellow lines and the heritage style parking street bollards on St. Petersgate Bridge.

The lighting was always going to present the greatest challenge as the panorama covers about one quarter of the 360 degree compass so the painting was devised to contain an overcast cloudy day with the sky clearing from the east (left canvas) something that documents a frequent event. The area is a valley that sinks more than 40 metres from the chosen point of view and is strongly defined by the sunlight. The medieval route of Little Underbank is seen in the foreground beyond the flat asphalt covered roofs of storage buildings that form a base for the view. At times the application of wet paint seemed to mimic the action of rain especially when a dry brush was dragged across an area of underpainted colour so only the weave of the canvas picks up the brushwork in little dots, like pixilation. The choice of colour generated the possibilities of limitless mixtures that might imitate the surface pigmentation of the bricks of Stockport, many of which are still smoke stained.

Canvas III (right) required four months of work to flex the possibilities and to train in this craft. The initial response was in the manner of impressionism; to blur the view to generate a poetic response. It led the way into a process that was to become intolerant of the calligraphic weaving of brushstrokes. In its place I aimed to establish the size of a form. Once established then it could only be allowed to exist in relation to all the other elements surrounding it. This entailed a long process of spatial deductions. The angles of the roofs and in particular the gradient and direction of the viaduct in the distance; a few millimetres up or down would suggest the arcades emerged from the left to rise towards Manchester on the right coming towards me revealing the interior of their arches on the left of each one.



*A sequence that charts the change of method from impressionism to a measured and constructed realism*

*Photos; David Chandler*

The final version persuades us that the space is not made from paint but instead has tried to establish an authentic scale and colour of the palette of the fabric of the town on an overcast day. The town slots together like a series of screens, many at an angle that is foreshortened, such as the 1930s roof level gable of the Chestergate shopping centre.

The three details (above) also reveal how the loss of autumn foliage allowed for the painting to be researched from its furthest distance towards the nearest foreground space. The arches of the A6 appear beneath a viaduct arch that had an up-light frequently switched on during the day. This

added a special intensity to the surrounding bricks that seems artificial or exaggerated. The Chestergate clock is stuck at 3.45 or 9.15 which are both reasonable times of day to document the town in this form.



The most fragile area is best illustrated in a photograph of the terracotta finials on the property at No.37. These were amongst the most articulate evidence of how 19<sup>th</sup> century planners saw Little Underbank; as worthy of an early Renaissance screen that would add to the roovescape when seen from the market place (St. Petersgate Bridge). In sunlight they perform an almost orientalisising decoration, lost from sight to the pedestrians below.



The quality of these finials draws attention to an overlooked Stockport terracotta renaissance from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with local materials and local craftsmen assembling architecture with great finesse. The roof finials became part of my planning for a studio project for the Merseyway Car park at Adlington Walk.

The quality of the external rendering on this structure became a matter of doubt. The upper parapet is finished in small grey glass mosaic tiles, discussed below. Their palette is then juxtaposed with the cream coloured paint used for the bridge sides and the external car park barriers on the second floor. Beneath this the car park has been lined with pink aggregate concrete screens because the car park has many complex functions

at first floor level, many of which are cosmetic. A very subtle red-yellow-blue horizontal stripe system seemed to emerge. Painting could detect this. My point of view was fortunate in its opportunity to compare the mottled green slate of the roofs of the bank buildings at 39 the terracotta finials at 37 and the visible sections of Adlington Walk. My deduction is that the town lacked roof level finials, which is ironic in an age of telecoms masts, satellite dishes, cameras and small power generating windmills.

This is a challenge worth the pursuit because it reverses a historical progression that might seem inevitable. I assumed that the Modernist Car Park was an effective plinth for new towers that might add to the visual excitement of inner town zones. It led to thinking about the car park as a space for child's play.



*The airbus approaching Manchester Airport is following the line of the M60 regularly appears in a puddle and should be seen as part of the transport fabric of the town, like an aerial road. The inclusion of the plane is precise. Its appearance on the ground is intended to make it look like a fly trapped against the window and is a challenge to our sense of scale.*

Much of the town is itself physically painted. The choice of external rendering on the upper floors of Little Underbank shops highlights the importance of the first floor identity of these retail units with a livery of different tones of cream and white. More interesting are the graphic outlining of the windows of the Egerton Arms, the variety of colours that slate roofs offer in particular because they will shine as white and plunge into deep grey when wet. During the process of painting some graffiti appeared on some walls overnight as if to brand areas of emerging decay. Windows reflected contorted surfaces of the buildings opposite in the sunlight. In the case of Revelations House there were bricked in windows surviving from 18<sup>th</sup> century window taxation or later conversions

Painting the colours of the town seemed to be a debate about the materials which prompted a survey of certain recurring materials as urban palette. The next section emerged out of this interest in the choices made by builders and architects who left their presence on the sightlines of this complex urban collage



## An urban palette

**Half timber**

**Ceramic tiles**

**Mosaic panels**

**Painted town; urban livery**



## Half timber

The town is woven together in every direction with a theme of half-timber facings. The survival of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Underbank Hall sets a standard that the town has improvised upon up to the 1930s.



*Underbank Hall with later half timbered and terracotta façades*

*photo: David Chandler*

The display of this type of facing tends to be mostly cosmetic and evokes an Arts and Crafts ideologies. This is best exemplified in the John Douglas designs to widen St. Werburgh Street, Chester in the 1890s. The pervasive taste for this finish was mostly on the impulse of wealthy philanthropist - aristocrats such as the Marquis of Westminster and Lord Leverhulme at Port Sunlight. The result is a coding of half-timber as a retardative influence on English architectural history. Then, by presumption, it becomes synonymous with a parochial version of the garden suburb town.

This suits Stockport as it is also a style that is synonymous with trade, banking and commercial prosperity and was given a prominent place in several facades at the junction between Little and Great Underbank. The main routes into the south of the town at Churchgate and in the North at Tiviot Dale/Lancashire Hill were given well constructed public houses; the Full Shilling and another on the corner of Lavenders Brow and Spring Gardens. The town was set to match the late Victorian appetite for this decorative medievalising vogue. The Market Place also gained a five bay half-timbered landmark next to St Petersgate Bridge to perpetuate the illusion of an aristocratic mercantile heritage, opposite the Stockport Bank, one of the greatest Stockport structures built in brick and ashlar. Half-timber became the gateway brand for the town in the half century 1880 -1930.



An audit of the siting of these half-timbered structures reveals an understated but consistent planning strategy that continued until modernist architecture imposed a new direction on the town and discouraged the building of these types.



*Stockport; half-timbered gables from left; the Three Shires near Adlington Walk, The White Lion Hotel at Great Underbank and the Half Shilling at Tiviot Dale. The gable of the Three Shires in Great Underbank from 1580 has also been well preserved. White Lion Hotel has a particularly fine gable from 1904. It forms part of the Stockport morphology and is part of the town's monumental tradition and the Full Shilling has an embossed hub mounted into the pattern.*

Recent sympathetic restoration in 2004 of Staircase House has put this medieval approach to construction back in the spotlight and has become a source of pride to the local authority. The timbers have been allowed to show their original colouring, not black.

## Ceramic tiles

*The use of glazed tiles is particularly relevant to the response of the painter. Here are three examples all of which have been factored into the final studio projects. Clockwise; the tiles at the Egerton Arms, the remaining*



*tiles of the Astoria Cinema revealing the imprint of steps and tiers and the Royal Oak white tiles which are the most interesting part of the bricolage of the area.*



## Mosaic panels

The use of pearlescent glass tesserae from the later 1960s became a key component in the modernist refacing of the Merseyway shopping centre



*Chestergate mosaic facings on Merseyway Car Park and documentary still of mosaic cutter at work 1968 in the Merseyway Shopping precinct from Merseyway documentary. Photo: David Chandler and ©Stockport MBC*



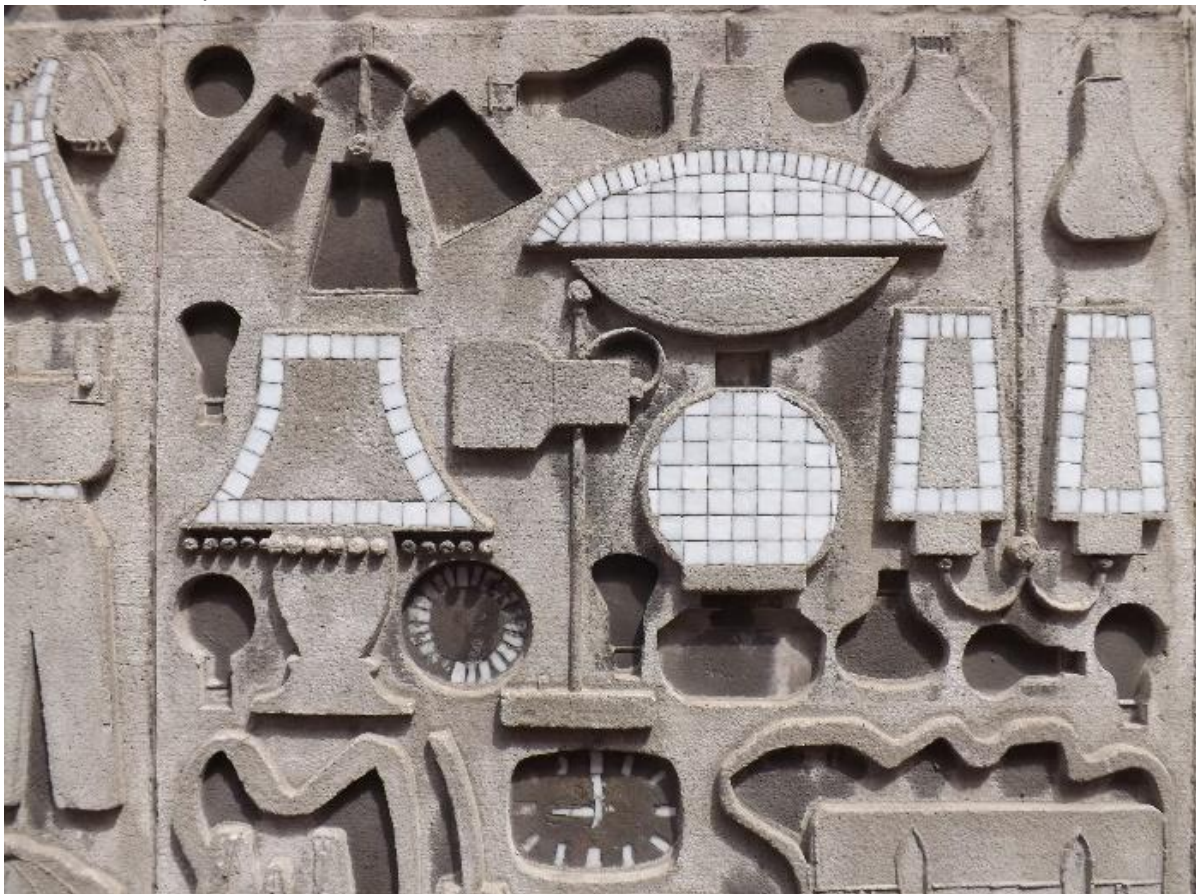
These tiles form a consistent element in the large banded cornice of Merseyway and also become important in the presentation of the Adlington/Chestergate car park façade. They have survived well for the most part. Of real interest is their insertion into the 1978 British Home Stores Deanery Way concrete murals designed in 1978 by Henry Collins (1910-1994) and Joyce Pallot (1912-2004)



*British Home Stores Deanery Way concrete murals designed in 1978 by Henry Collins and Joyce Pallot*

Skilfully clipped and crafted these prefabricated sheets of mosaic are part of a broad 1970s European urban decorative impulse. They are contemporary with the Gentleman and Paolozzi mosaic schemes on the London Underground. Note in particular the use of these clipped tiles as part of a faux fluorescent clock face. The pearlescent tiles are employed to represent light, even lighting products, and help us to interpret their role in the Stockport modernist replanning during these 2 decades. They also refer to the presence of planning in the town centre as the embossed designs pun on some of the neo Futurist city designs of the 1960s. They seem intentionally constructed to be mistaken for utopian urbanist schemes.

*BHS Deanery Way mural (detail) photo: David Chandler*



In the BHS mural a range of consumer items are presented as coded with a version of a possible Stockport “brand”; the start of a comprehensive design vision and an answer to the traditional materials of the town. The display of concrete aggregates is also commonplace and is evidence of a cautious Brutalism that is happily in keeping with the car park on the roof of the building that flanks Deanery Way.

### Painted town; a choice of urban livery



Stockport has adopted a comprehensive commercial phthalo blue paint as a palette and brand for the metalwork on civic structures which is not easy to interpret as locally derived. It is employed in banners and other street furniture to a consistent standard and is a very stable colour much trusted in commercial applications. Unfortunately it is readily recognised as quotidian and unexceptional. The colour has also been deployed to convey the promise of a river landscape near the Primark terraced car park, but with a subtle “River Goyt” embossed into its structure (a brief pleasure as the river disappears beneath the ASDA car parks seen in the middle distance).



The iron railings on the 1868 St. Petersgate Bridge have been trimmed in black, yellow, pale blue and red which seems to be based on the heraldic palette of the town coat of arms, displayed prominently in the centre of the bridge on both sides. A pale blue shield with yellow crosses and diamonds anchors the palette with a clear logic. This structure still functions as a key monument and popular pedestrian focus for the town.

This seems to be a public demonstration of the original heraldic pale blue which was also quoted in the mosaic inserts in the Deanery Way murals in 1978.





# Four Studio Projects



## STOCKPORT: FOUR SITES

Coded locations with comparative areas

ROYAL OAK YARD

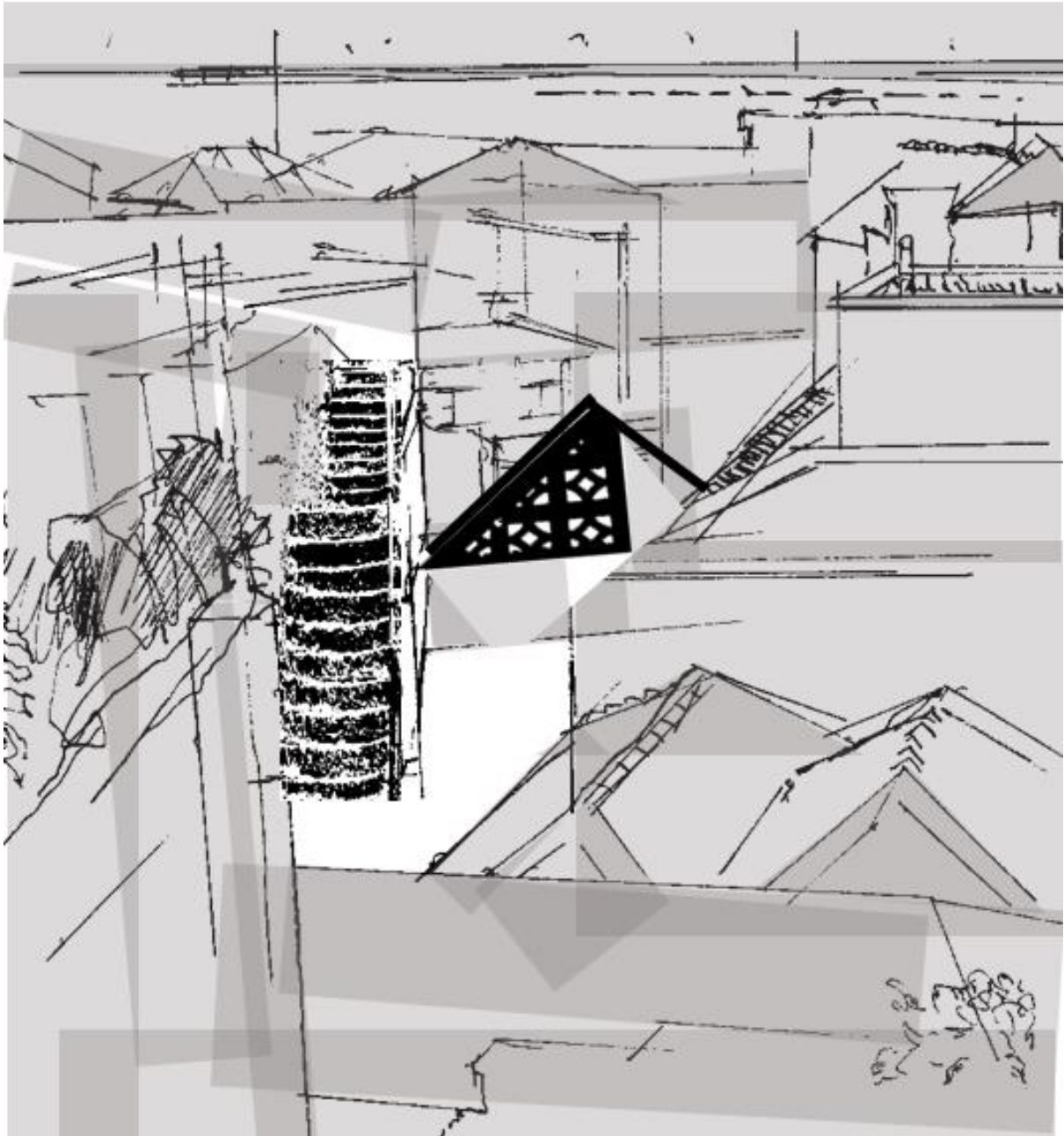
GREAT UNDERBANK + ADLINGTON WALK

HIGH BANKSIDE + PCKFORD'S BROW

RIVER GOYT; PARK BRIDGE + PORTWOOD BRIDGE

# Stockport; Royal Oak Yard

Project: Royal Oak Yard; an urban node; paths, a sottoportego and a campiello

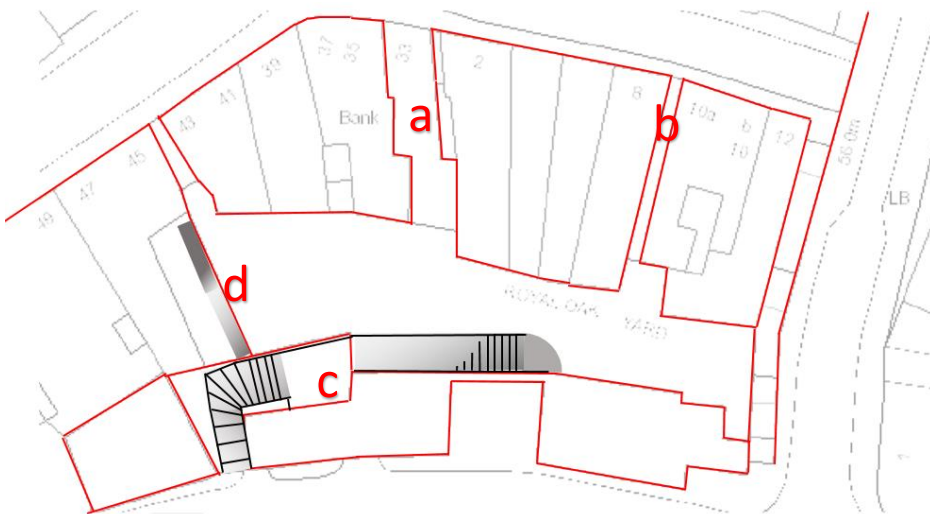


*Royal Oak Yard from St. Petersgate Bridge. Urban sketch and collage. David Chandler 2015*

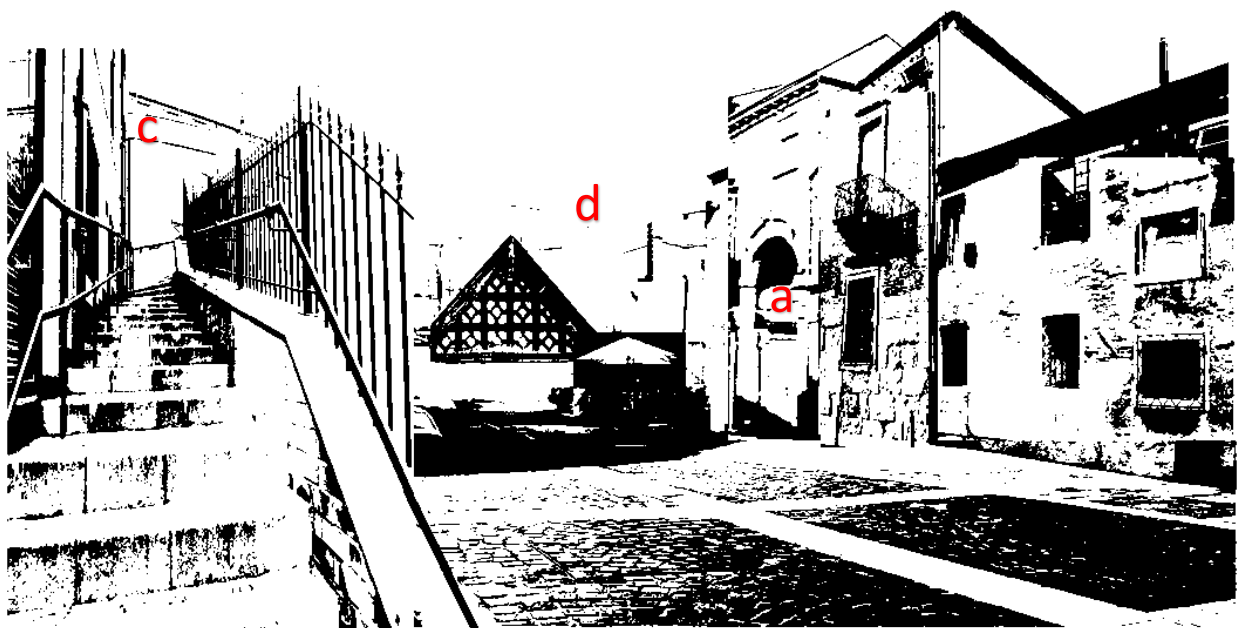


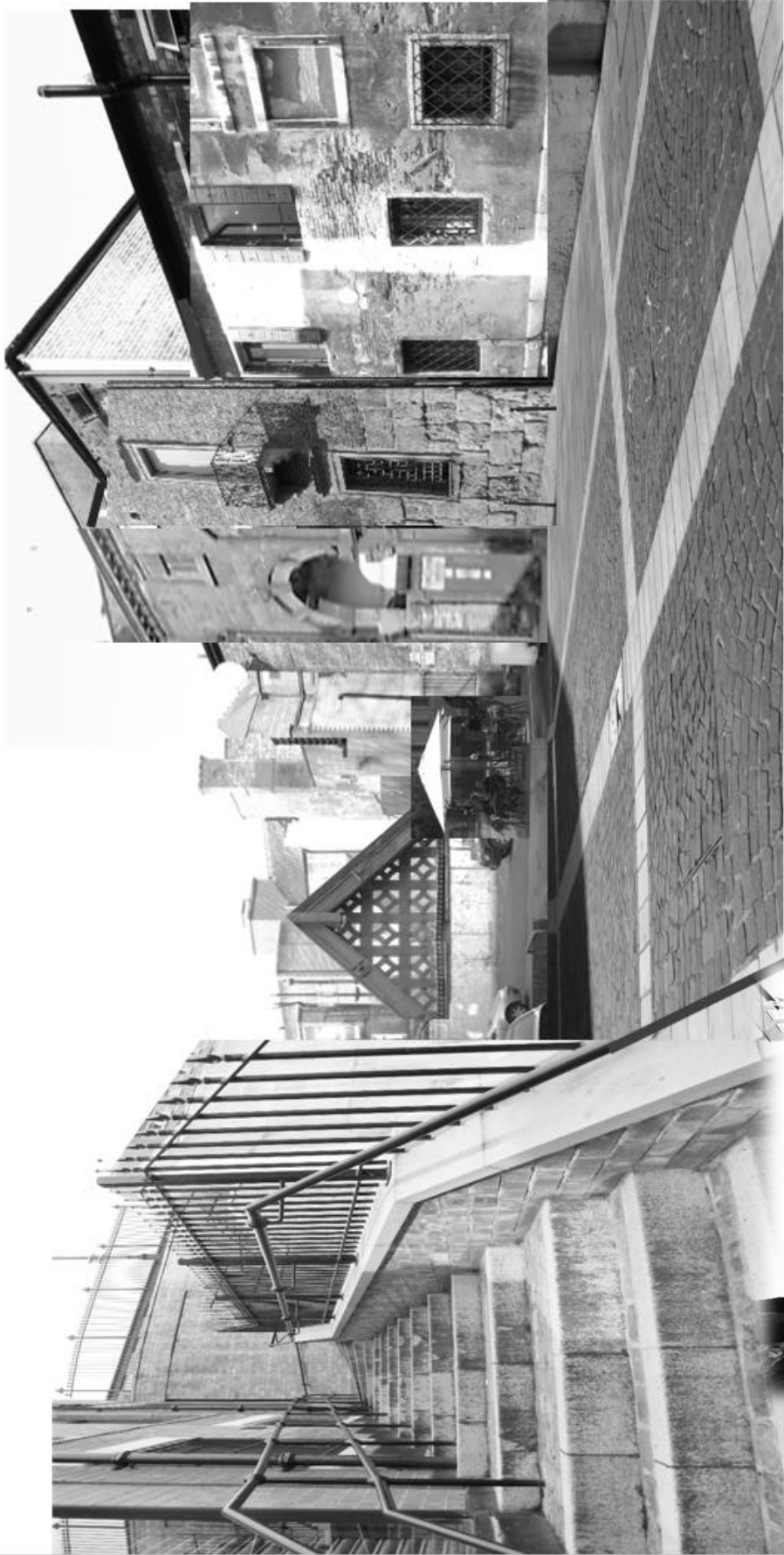
The question of civics is central to Royal Oak Yard. As it stands, interpreted as a type of back yard waste space it will continue to fail and further more contribute to blight the Stockport Underbanks. If on the other hand it was provided with the “T” instead of its present “I” configuration it would release a pressure valve on the urban fabric. The results would be an economically productive three way set of walking routes instead of the current post industrial land impasse. In this studio project, by creating a pedestrian walk from High Bankside through to Little Underbank one route has become three routes. Studio projects within this zone are a conservation measure and seem to entail demolition in equal measure to building

1. Path, node and alley
2. Steps up to a brow boundary
3. Landmark monument
4. Placemaking paving, lighting and planting

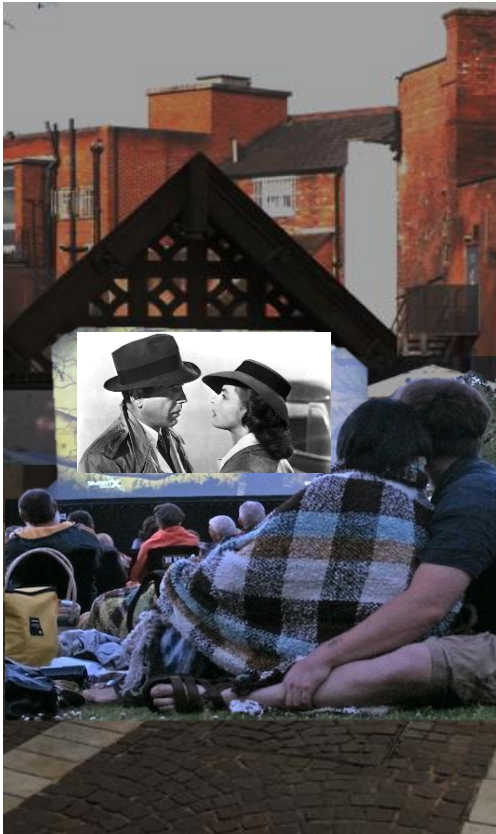


**The I becomes a T:** plan and graphic view of Royal Oak Yard with the new “Royal Oak Passage” (a) inserted into the footprint of the retail unit at no.33. A narrow alley reopened for public use at (b) new brow steps to the top of Pickford’s Brow (c) and a screen in the form of a colossal half-timbered gable to brand the public space using a post-modern sculptural/monumental design like a “scaenae frons” or as an occasional cinema screen(d)





*Royal Oak Yard. Collage proposal. Elements to note; the archway is a replica of the one that existed in Great Underbank before it was demolished. Mews style buildings including an ornamental balcony at the right are derived from antetypes in Padua and Venice. The pavement is based on a Paduan source. The steps are adapted from the recently constructed flight at Coopers' Brow in Stockport. The large gable screen feature is a facsimile of the White Lion half-timbered gable from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*



*Royal Oak Yard; the half-timbered gable of the White Lion Hotel, Stockport as seasonal monument; for open air cinema and as café space*

This should be developed as a monumental screen as a focus for the yard. It presents a post modern type of pictorial focus and heritage brand to the square. It could also be used as a projection screen to enhance the space as an auditorium generating revenue for the café and pubs that back onto this space.



*The half timbered gable of the White Lion Hotel, Stockport. Right; Studio Weave's postmodern gable 2015 project, Midden Studio*

Source: <http://www.dezeen.com/2015/08/05/studio-weave-midden-studio-scotland-west-coast-cabin-zinc-facade/>





## Royal Oak Yard; urban landmark

Currently omitted from tourist maps of Stockport and not rewarding to photography from its street level. However its roof level morphology is much appreciated from St. Petersgate Bridge and has become a part of the “heritage trail” that selectively guides the visitor around the medieval town.

The process of close study has revealed the effects of seasonal change that impact on this lost space.

The overhanging trees and embankment growth has had the effect of hiding the space which will require a sympathetic planting which I propose in my High Bankside Park proposal.



Royal Oak Yard allows the spectator a classic Gordon Cullen urban “serial vision” from its present point of entry through the massive barrel vaulted brick arch with its stone parapets.

It has a fundamental potential for theatre. The space that results is very flexible and could be used for performance, certainly music, because the acoustics of the space may work well. There are also opportunities to create small spaces for an open air café. The Queen’s Head pub also backs onto the Yard and there is room for a small deck area at the end of the passageway (b) above.

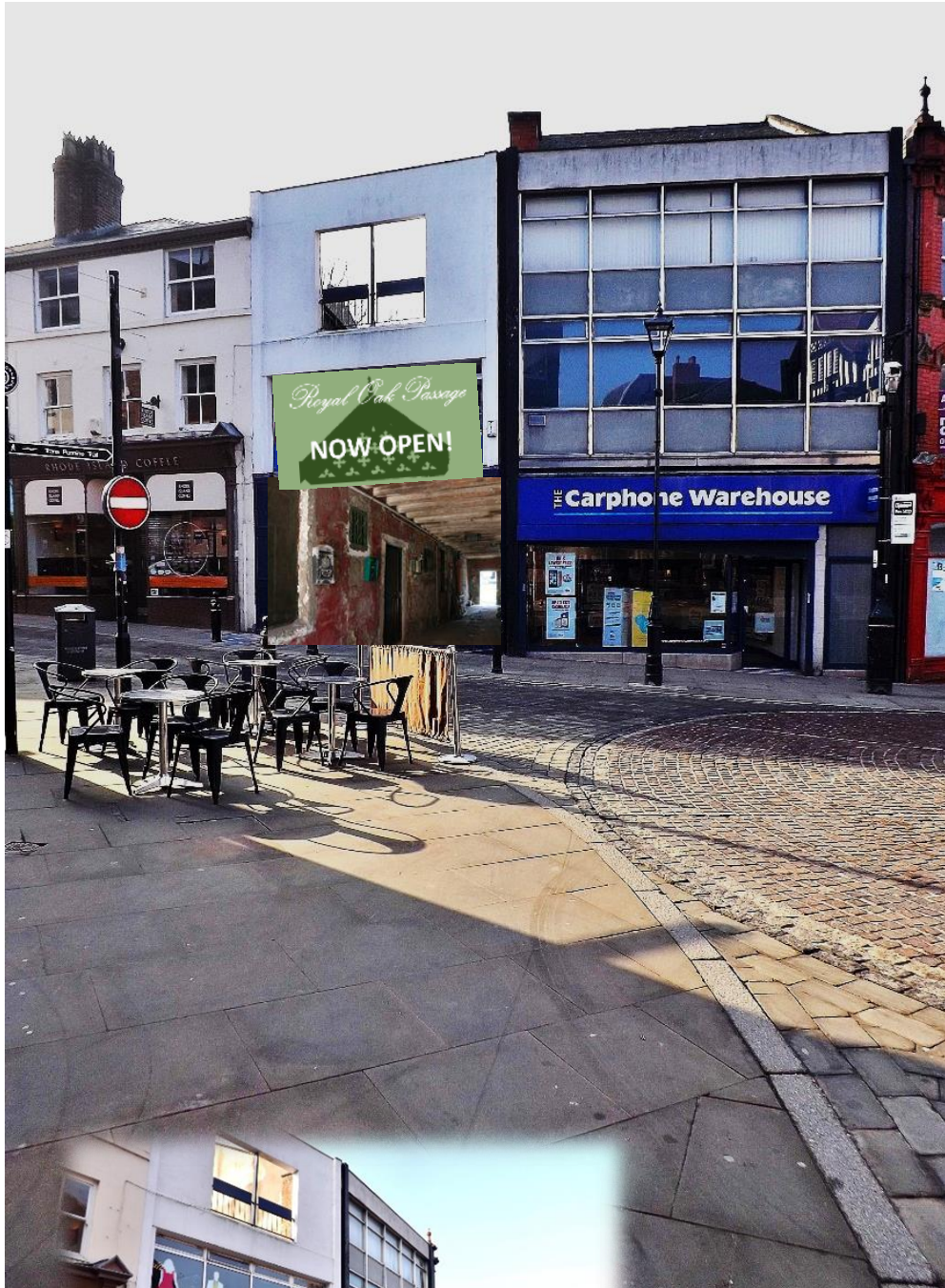
## No 33 ‘Royal Oak Passage’ as brand



St. Anne’s Hospice Shop is currently a charity shop that occupies the narrow space between its two neighbours and has a small unused flat on its terraced roof and a false window that adds to the character of the junction between Little Underbank and Great Underbank. Insertion of a ramp and steps would still allow for access steps within a narrow pedestrian corridor. This is a central part of the urbanism of this area, where subtraction gains more than was there before.







## The passageway through no.33 St.Anne's Hospice

*Royal Oak Passage; collage showing the urban impact of creating a Venetian style "sottoportego", a single storey tunnel like passage that issues onto the partly pedestrianised junction of Little Underbank and Great Underbank*

*Below; the current structure of no.33 with its early Modernist false window attached to a flat roof terrace*

# Stockport; Great Underbank at Adlington Walk

Project: Adlington Walk, Great Underbank;  
restoring Adlington Square as public realm





*Great Underbank from the Merseyway Car Park 2015. Urban sketch.*

*David Chandler*

The success of any urbanisation of this area depends on changes its function and use. Currently it acts as a filter from the long route of Chestergate into Great Underbanks and, like Royal Oak Yard, it becomes a cul de sac from the main arteries of the A6 into Manchester. It represents the best example of the fault line between urban tectonic plates of the old and new town described in the introduction. The Savoy 1963 Model described above reveals the nature of the “isolation” of Merseyway Shopping Centre, literally like an island that is reached by a bridge over the ravine of the Great Underbank, like a drawbridge over a moat. The “access” policies of the MBC result in motor vehicle slow manoeuvres and competing traffic needs that occupies a very large diamond shaped footprint of the small town. This space has the potential to become a Lynchian hub of the happiest type and merits the sort of status that is found in terminus market spaces in Pisa, such as the Piazza Sant’Omobono; part car park, part restaurant terrace, part market and public realm in an urban poché. The road is very well lit as it is west facing and also benefits from the unfolding vista of the arc of Chestergate shopping centre, which was largely mothballed in the 1960s as the Merseyway shops made it appear surplus to needs.



*Left; the diamond shaped substantial urban space of Great Underbank as it emerges into the road space at Adlington Walk, seen from the Tatton Street bridge.*

*Photo: David Chandler*

*Below left; Piazza Sant’Omobono, Pisa. Controlled vehicle access, market place furniture and café decking co-exist.*

*Source; <http://unacittaincomune.it/>*



The greatest **real-time** obstacle to the design of this light and beautiful space is the very unorthodox vehicle access apparatus sandwiched between the **Three Shires** heritage building and the right hand block of the Merseyway car park. This consists of private vehicle entry and exit ramps and commercial service vehicle exit from basement level beneath the Merseyway shopping centre. It generates traffic queues, waiting vehicles, and heavy goods vehicle traffic and turns the area into a commercial transport yard where pedestrians dart for pavements.





This solution is therefore only practical if substantial civics can be enacted. The space could be effectively transformed if the anachronistic<sup>12</sup> access private vehicle ramp was dedicated only to cyclist use and Chestergate was pedestrian priority. Private motor vehicles already have two other entry points at Bridgefield and across the Tatton Street/High Bankside bridge. The heavy goods exit can be limited to use in early and late hours.

*Left; Great Underbank; vehicle ramp configuration. Note; the substantial concrete canopy that creates an island between the three routes. Below; Great Underbank as “fault line” between new and old town planning. Bricolage town.  
Photo; David Chandler*



## SOLUTIONS

This offers at least four opportunities for studio projects;

1. Opening up Adlington Walk and adapting the three sided courtyard façade of Merseyway car park so that it creates a vista of High Bankside and offers an all-weather awning and arcade that creates a focus for retail regeneration. The Piazza acquires a marketplace identity.
2. Create public space in the road cusp of Pickford’s Brow that leads into the pedestrianised spaces at High Bankside and Pickford’s Brow.
3. The creation of southern gateway into the town facing the newly established High Bankside Park and its links to Royal Oak Yard and the heritage town.
4. Monument. The possibility of creating a platform for sculpture at the confluence of the three traffic ramps next to the Three Shires heritage site. An heraldic identity heralds the boundary of the ancient town.

<sup>12</sup> It can accommodate car heights up to 185cm; derived from 1960s vehicle sizes and design

## ADLINGTON WALK; light and vista from restoration of 1960s project



*Stockport Adlington Walk. The original Adlington Walk approach as it appeared in 1968. Note the north steps and the south ramp. The central podium was to be later employed as a foundation for a retail unit that creates a visual boundary and blocks the view of the ramp of Pickford's Brow that was envisaged by the 1960s project.*



*Above. The original configuration of Adlington Walk 1968 with the ramp to Pickford's Brow visible in the documentary still.*

*Photo; NWFA 4544 © Stockport MBC*



*Right; Adlington Walk 2015 with its current retail unit. The railings of High Bankside in the distance are visible above the shop sign*



*Adlington Walk; the restored view after the removal of the terminus retail unit. A flight of steps would lead directly from the gallery into the pedestrian priority piazza and offer a new route up to the proposed High Bankside Park. The gallery would benefit from the natural light from its southern aspect. The new social space is here presented with a half timber screen and rustic café structures for barbecue/pizza restaurant.*

## DESIGN COMPONENTS for a new 'ADLINGTON SQUARE' public realm

The iron work canopies of the Adlington Walk are based on the typology of Stockport Market. The structure would cover an area of 120 square metres on two levels and the original 1968 Adlington walk canopies and the pavement of Great Underbank. A central flight of steps will be extended to provide access through the footprint of the current retail unit replacing the retail unit and podium.

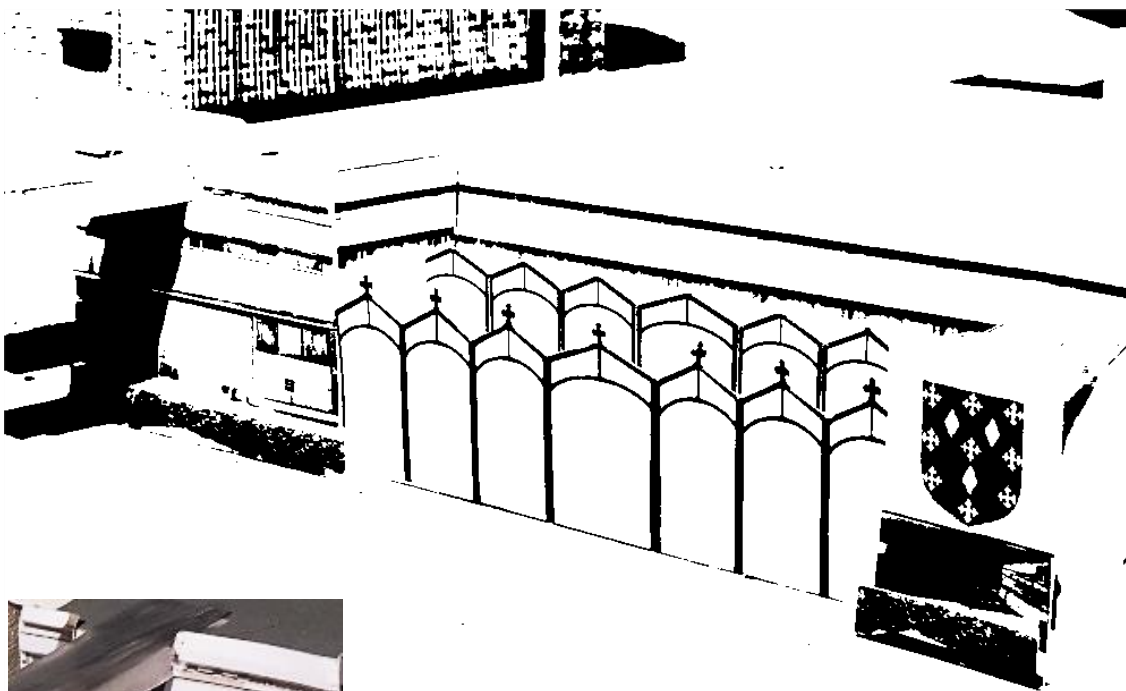
### Retrofit: arcades on Adlington Walk



*Stockport; Market Hall arcades. Cast iron. Elevation of proposed arcades for Adlington Square*



*Stockport; Market Hall arcades, details of segmental arches*



*Adlington Walk; South elevation; wrought iron glazed arcade detail infill featuring design source derived from Stockport Market Hall. The rhythm of the seven bays AAABAAA is reflected in the arcade which extends the 1960s design of the concrete canopies. At left the design is applied to the aggregate panels attached to the carpark. These suggest a central point in the elevation of the larger wing and create a heraldic motif that is echoed in the large shield on the opposite wing. The car park could even be restored to its modernist form in future after this intervention*





## The public space at Great Underbank



*Great Underbank at 'Adlington Square'.*

*Solutions to the small space. A half timbered entrance to sign post heritage zone, imported from Southwell, Saracen's Head Hotel and its quarter circle piazza. Cobbled street surface to indicate pedestrian priority. Economic regeneration for unlet units on this pivotal location. Below left Saracen's Head and Old Stage Café Southwell. Photos; David Chandler*



## Urban monument; sculpture on the access ramp



*Stockport. Merseyway Car Park. A dynamic modernist pedestal was unwittingly created in the 1968 treatment of the concrete safety barriers. The platform/concrete canopy to be strengthened and consolidated to provide a platform for permanent sculpture "Pediment" 2012; aluminium + steel+ graphite paint by David Chandler. Photos; David Chandler*

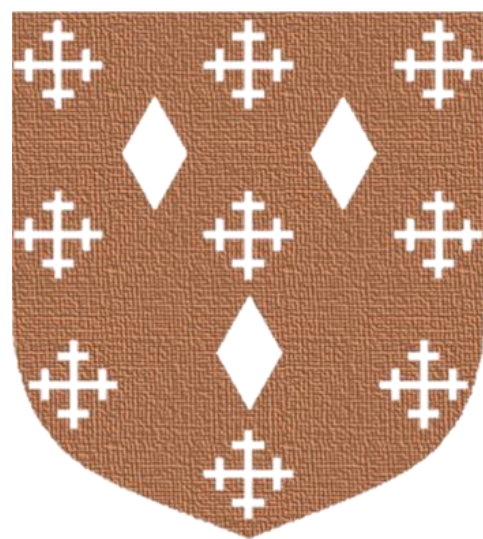
## The gable end of the Merseyway Car Park north wing: heraldic identity



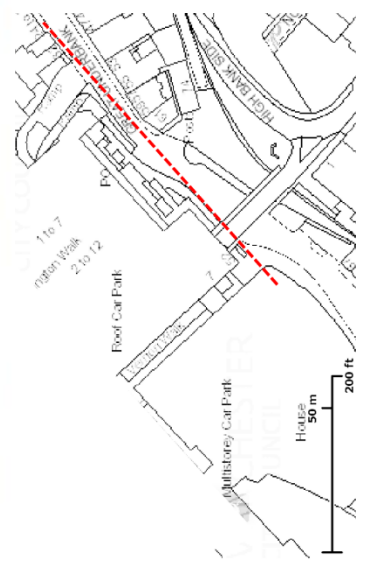
*Left; This solution is one of the more challenging aspects of the project and is directly inspired by the iteration of Stockport heraldry on the St. Petersgate Bridge. The central design is here executed in brick to continue the crosslet double crossed heraldic device that appears as a final design on the cast iron canopies of the proposed Adlington arcade.*

*The survival of Carrara heraldry at a city gate at Cittadella in the Veneto is a source/precedent and appears in city literature and tourist souvenirs*

*Photos; David Chandler*

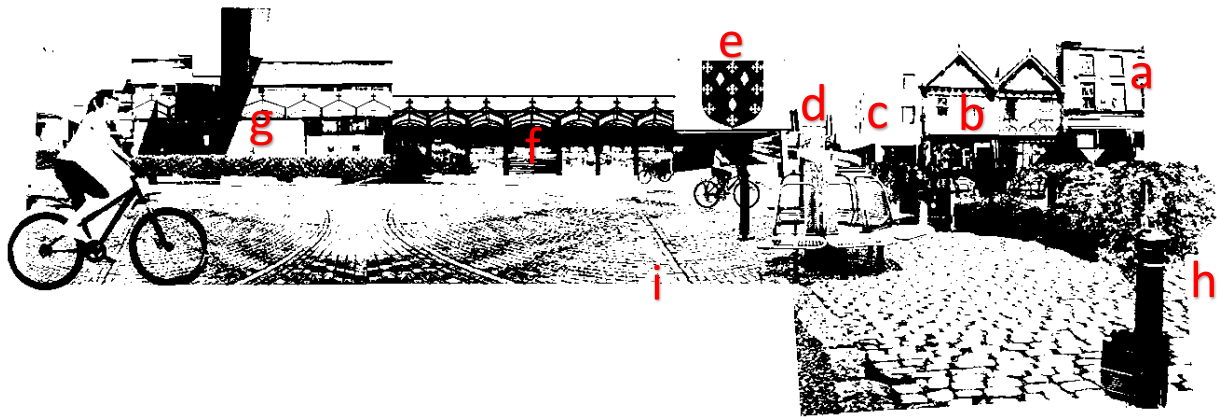






Stockport; Great Underbank projected restoration. Above; Merseyway Car Park at Adlington Walk in 2015 and below, Studio composite collage of key elements, (excluding sculpture). The red dotted line indicates the area covered by the model.

### Evaluation; studio composite elevation; 'Adlington Square'<sup>13</sup>



The project takes as its centre the architectural arcaded infill of the available space of the Merseyway Car Park at Adlington Walk (f). Seven black painted arcades rhyme with and complement the white modernist canopies of the original project and unify the asymmetrical wings of the car park, creating a palazzo style structure and evoking heritage styles; market place and half timber. The pattern of the arcades will be continued as a stencilled pattern that continues on the left wing of the car park (g). These will appear like shadows on the concrete prefabricated panels, that merit cleaning and restoration. The advantage of this design will create the sense of a centre point of the massive wing as a result of the widened central arch. This should enhance its monumentality and draw attention to the off centred access bridge which should now form the upper frame of a new town prospect.

The challenges of this urban scheme are seen, reading from right of the collage, as the road gradient descends from the 18<sup>th</sup> century brick structure (a) to the Three Shires half timber double bay façade (b) and the 1990s legal office (c) next to the car park ramps. A parade of styles that is the best of Stockport bricolage. The hiatus of the car ramps (d) could be brought to life using a sculptural event. The gable end of the car park (e) cannot be extended without closing the road, but it forms one side of a “gateway” into the ancient town. The colossal heraldic shield declares urban triumph without damaging the modernist car park and seems to hang from the mosaic cornice that fringes the project like a flag from a horizontal pole.

The cast iron arcade declares the complex apron of Adlington Walk (f) access ramps and steps to be a public space. The central steps create an invitation to enter the better lit arcade tunnel. The glass canopies allow for full sunlight and provide shelter for shoppers who can use this as a temporary waiting space. Cycles can be rented from here to continue the initiatives already started at Bridgefield and that will allow shopper access to the lower town routes. Cyclists can collect their cars after returning their bikes to the pay racks.

The arcades (f) will draw attention to the rusticated cliff face opposite. High Bankside can be made more accessible and will be defined more clearly as a parklet. A restaurant café (h) will serve the new space with greater confidence offering pizzeria or barbecue opportunities. The view from the brow will be of a self contained community within the oval arena marked into the cobbles of the road (i). The Air Raid Shelter Museum will have a greater urban status within this plan as it will have a clearer recreational function. The shops struggling to survive at the entrance to Chestergate will benefit from the pedestrian access. The entire area beneath the Tatton Street bridge can may

<sup>13</sup> An Adlington Square existed and is buried beneath the Merseyway Shopping Centre, this road is still called Great Underbank

occasion be used as a lower town market and will have the advantage of preventing Little Underbank as a short cut by pedestrianising the entire area with only emergency vehicle access.

With reference to the “future view” collage below, it emerges that the proposed glazed ironwork structural intervention literally rotates the direction of the town 180 degrees. The sunlit south aspect resembles a more unified grand façade; a city villa, facing a new park on High Bankside that would be become a revived social focus, even with limited pedestrianisation. It will offer all weather cover and provide a space for social interaction, not unlike a winter garden. The new residential schemes unfolding in this area will acquire a new town gate.



*Photo + painting representation of Stockport heritage district in 2050; High Bankside Park, Royal Oak Yard and Adlington Walk will be reconnected and interdependent. The Merseyway Car Park provides a new focus for the growth of the town towards its southern aspects. Photo/collage; David Chandler*



# Stockport. High Bankside

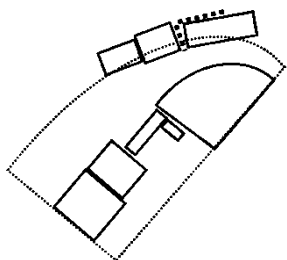
Project: High Bankside; Stockport at play

## High Bankside; a small park

The area most in need of urban focus is the bricolage of contract car parks, roadside splay, pay-parking furniture, small lock up yards and the neglect of retail building rear facing aspects.

The success of this proposal depends on two civics initiatives;

1. The complete closure of the High Bankside road from the Merseyway Tatton Street Bridge to the High street at the Egerton Arms. Currently a one way street it was designed at full B road scale (two way traffic) and then is forced into single lane width at the crossroads where it meets St. Petersgate Bridge. This closure becomes a very happy piece of planning in terms of



space generation for a new public park on the brow, because no addresses are served by commercial services along this road. It would also place four private contract car parks beyond use, but the capacity of the Merseyway car park means that the economic impact is negligible. Rather the resulting benefits of a town centre park are considerable and completely outweigh the loss of proliferated car footprints

2. BDP and other MBC reports have noted since 2005 that the town lacks facilities for children's play. The statement should be taken much more seriously in the light of the emerging parcels of in-town residential development. Stockport is taking steps to reverse its depopulated status and will need to provide more than undercover play groups and indoor nurseries. A small day nursery is already established on St Petersgate on the edge of this site and St Joseph's Primary School is also visible in this aerial view, to the left of the church. The demographic aspirations for play and recreation in this part of the town are unfortunately still placed second to the need to park cars within white lines. Full pedestrianisation of the area within the red line boundary could result in a flexible park space. Every part of this area even now in its current bricolage state urges a definition of proto-parklet. It actually looks like a little park, but cannot be used for recreation



*High Bankside; panorama of existing space seen from the roadside splay 2015. Extensive town views and across the valley form this artificial hill.*



*High Bankside inside red boundary. The new cross route through Royal Oak Yard in yellow dash line. The cornice of Adlington Walk (car park) is clear in this view. Source Bing maps*

The area within the red boundary is closely tied to the fortunes of Royal Oak Yard. As it is neglected, so the (public) space on this 400 square metre urban meadow deteriorates. There are already two access roads into the car park bridge so the closure of High Bankside is feasible. The High Street terminates at Lower Hillgate in a heritage area that functions with great uncertainty as the start of the brow divides. The new park should result in the complete pedestrianisation of this neglected part of the old town. St. Petersgate would also benefit as it is used as a short cut to the Market Place.



*Stockport; Lower Hillgate. Both routes access a medieval street plan that makes highways management a challenge. Here a queue of motorists wait for traffic lights on the opposite side of a yellow box and are blind to their left hand route.*

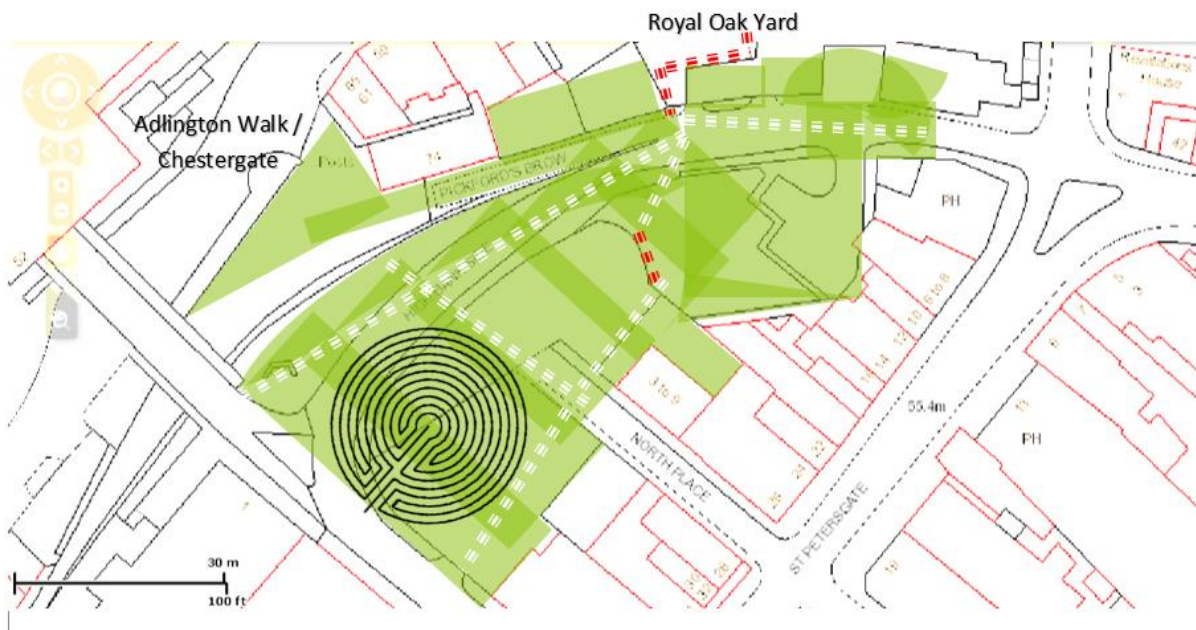
*Source; Google Satellite maps*



*Stockport; Lower Hillgate and High Street. The ramifications of the creation of a new park and the closure of High Bankside will permit the further development of residential recolonisation of the higher parts of this town as safe space. All pedestrian space marked in blue.*

*Source; Google Satellite maps*





**High Bankside Park; phase 1;** footpaths (white dash) and Cretan maze play area. Steps to upper park and Royal Oak Yard (red dash). The six car parks could be exchanged for a 450 square metre parklet.



*High Bankside Park; a discovery garden and parklet with industrial archaeology. Photos; David Chandler*



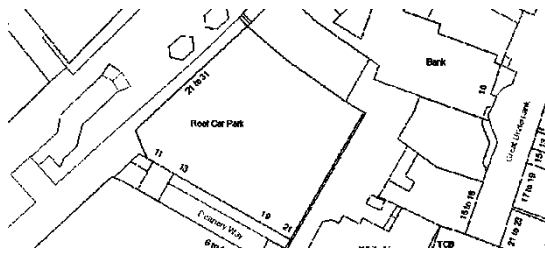


*High Bankside Park; views across the valley and down into the proposed Adlington Square and across to the Market place and the restored Royal Oak Yard. An outdoor gym is provided in the walled section at left. A cretan maze design would be behind the trees on the far right. Photos; David Chandler*



## Coda: a reassigned Merseyway car park

A parallel initiative requires a constructive approach to Merseyway Car Park and its underused urban space. I am attaching a short coda to this part of the studio report to suggest that one of the one of the Merseyway car park platforms is surplus to the parking needs of the town. The roof car park north of Deanery Way is a candidate for an urban experiment that could be linked to the emergence of a youth centred safe provision of play spaces in this part of Stockport. The terrace of this space in fact is on the High Bankside level and offers a view across the valley to the fledgling park opposite. The children could be led across to the proposed new green park from a multi functioning ex car park platform equipped with a helter-skelter, play mats, games, a small running track, play equipment and adaptable spaces to shelter for year round use.



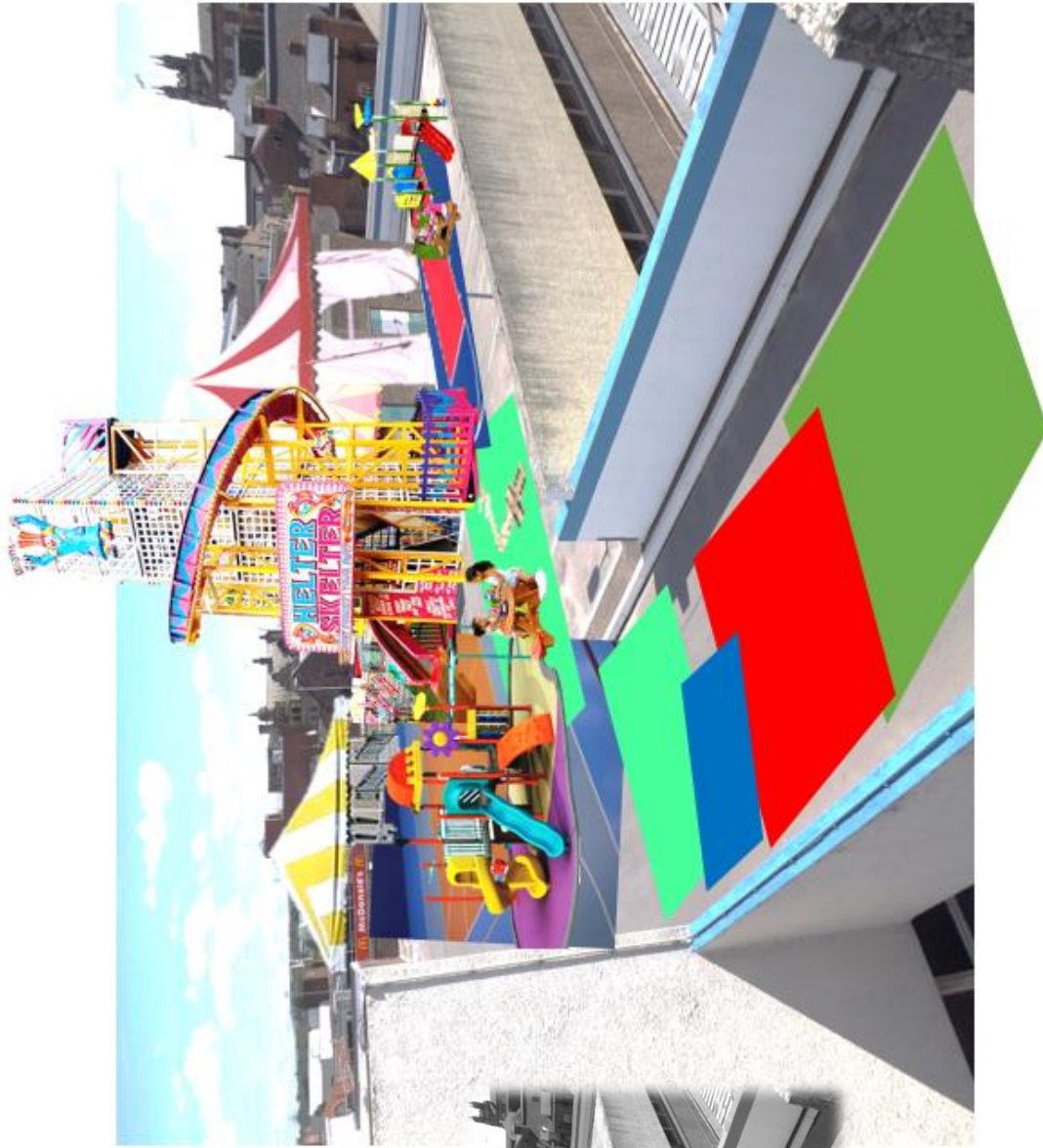
*Merseyway 'Orange Zone' surplus car platform and plant housing. High parapets and very adaptable surface area. Photos David Chandler*



*From Market Place Studios Stockport; from left; High Bankside, Adlington Walk, White Lion Hotel and Merseyway Orange Zone Car Park. Photo; David Chandler*



*Merseyway 'Orange Zone' surplus car park and plant housing converted to play. Part of the emerging children's town that links with St Joseph's Primary School on St. Petersgate and other private nurseries nearby. Photos; David Chandler*



Project: The Goyt River bank at Park Bridge and Portwood Bridge; Winter garden and riverside amenities

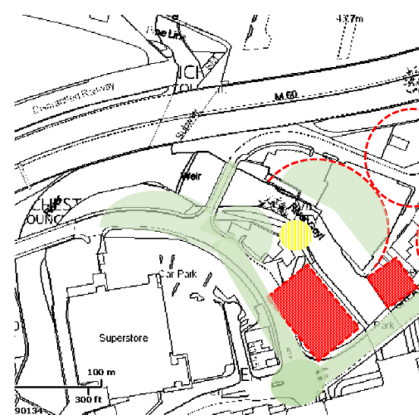


superstores. Source; Google maps

Above: aerial view of the Goyt River and its weir. Portwood Bridge is upper left and Park Bridge is visible lower right. A queue of traffic is waiting to cross the ASDA junction completely unaware of the presence of the river

A new Stockport bypass; re-routing the A560 over Lancashire hill and across to Marsland Street through a purpose built and underused motorway tunnel. Source; Google maps

Stockport; the Goyt and the ASDA junction; only if the traffic is circulated out of the town can this park be established. As an area subjected to extensive demolition during the 1970s as part of the huge M60 infrastructure work it might now seem appropriate to place an urban lung here so close to the MBC recorded high pollution levels. Below the proposed Winter garden and opposite a riverside restaurant would seem to offer aspects of urban happiness and recreation. Both facilities could form economic partnership with their neighbouring







*Park Bridge pedestrian area #1; Neolithic Standing Stone and Goyt Winter Garden*

*The area is currently a node used as a crossroads. Its position between The Peel Centre (quasi extra urban shopping centre) and car park and the Merseyway Shopping Centre and Car Park is pivotal because it represents a classic urban dilemma. That dilemma is the perception of "access" by the highways administration and the need for pedestrian and shopper footfall and possibly the need for cycle access. This proposal is based on an unreconstructed area of urban waste that announces the identity of the town from its Portwood roundabout. Described by an estate agent in conversation as "Chernobyl"; a metaphor for a toxic mix of waste land and land ownership impasse.*



*Park Bridge pedestrian area #2; Neolithic Standing Stone and Goyt Winter Garden with a possible water feature based on the Diana Fountain in Hyde Park. The riverside pub complements the area and regenerates the currently derelict bankside area*



The component of this project is the creation of a winter garden at the junction of Warren Street and the A560 Knightsbridge roads. Here the complete closure of the crossroads is to be given moorland landscape park land qualities with rock circles including a 6 metre “Neolithic” red sandstone obelisk (celebrating the sandstone of Royal Oak Yard and M60 “Red Rocks” valley). The Winter Garden /conservatory; a glazed area with solar heated glass growing area, ponds, waterfalls and aquarium is based closely on the London Borough Market glazed market space completed by Jestico + Whiles in 2012



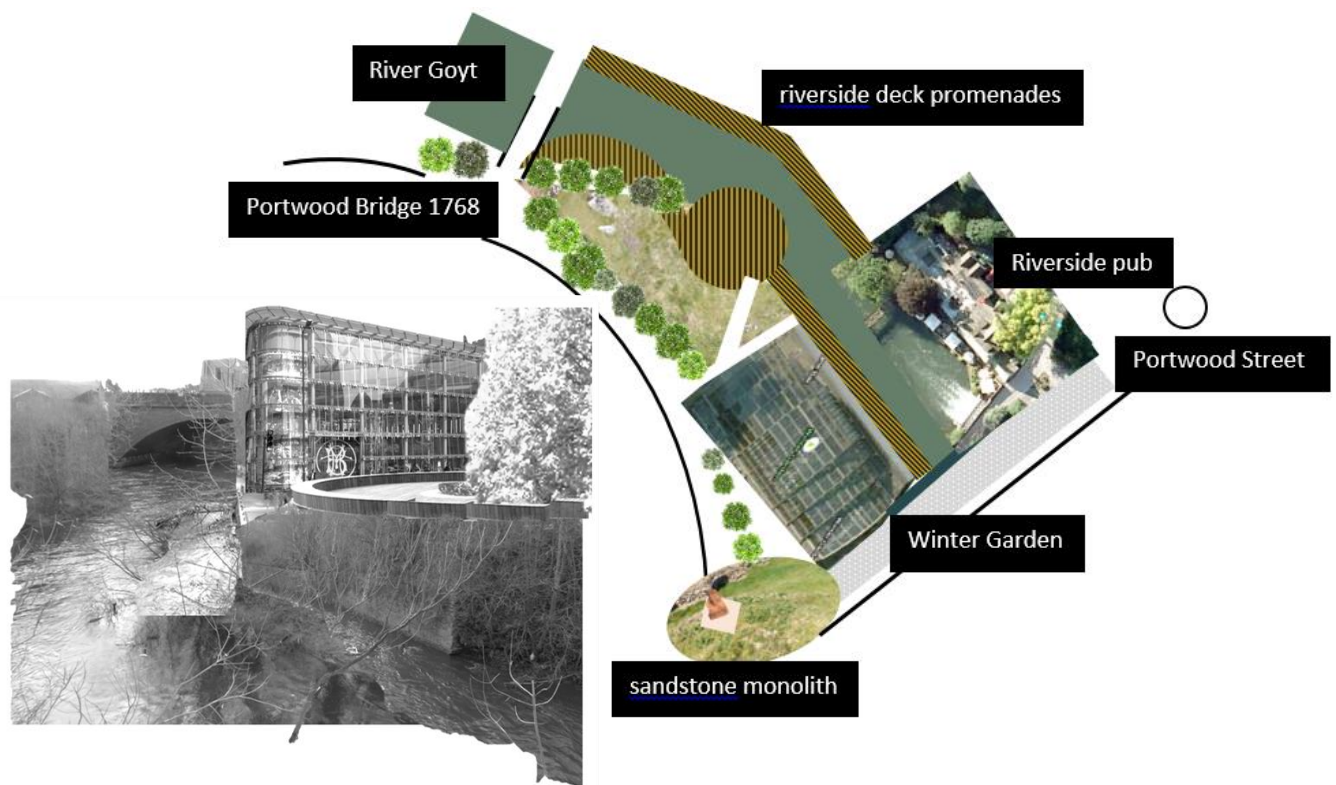
Left; Borough Market.<http://www.jesticowhiles.com/projects/cultural/borough-market-viaduct/>

Below; Park Bridge approach to the new ASDA crossroads.  
Photos/collage; David Chandler



This garden space will filter and pump Goyt water into ponds, tropical planting and vivarium content. In the park a circular viewing deck and waterside balcony deck walk (access to winter garden) will be built so that both Portwood and Park Bridges can be seen. Towards the motorway an there will be an open Air Park and children’s play area with rocks, with sight lines to bridges. Sainsbury’s (or ASDA) to provide refreshments /café in collaboration with the proposed riverside scheme.





*Stockport, River Goyt. Plan and collage view of the circular riverside deck placed on the stone spur at the curve in the river with the winter garden in the distance Collage; David Chandler*



*Stockport; Park Bridge from proposed new park and river walk looking across to the new "Portwood" riverside pub and restaurant on the east bank. ASDA appears in the centre distance. Photo/collage; David Chandler*

## Conclusion

In 1978, ten years after the finishing of Stockport's Merseyway town centre development Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter assembled a critical catalogue of utopian schemes from Filarete to Le Corbusier in *Collage City*. At the midpoint of their thesis they turned their attention to the possibility of an antidote to the "total architecture" that had permeated the heroic plans of several recent modernists. For this argument they considered the possibility that the design constraints of the garden might be better understood to introduce its morphology to local authority town planning offices. They adduce a very compelling comparison between the autocratic master planning of Versailles and the scrap book qualities of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli which he based on the pleasures of varied architectural types from his ancient and mythical world, scattered untidily across a vast garden site; "the hybrid mix which the Empire represented"<sup>14</sup>

The ethos of my proposal is very much informed by an appreciation of the possibility of a complete reduction of the Stockport town site to a comprehensively pedestrian town, a "garden" of connected footpaths and appropriate planting. If this is not a park, then I am advocating, at least, the supremacy of the archaic footprint of the town and an imaginative return to some of its ancient forms; Royal Oak Yard converted to alleyways and steps as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Adlington square transformed into a regency town oval piazza from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, High Bankside restored to the glebe pasture and parkland of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and the Park Bridge river area reclaimed as a "Neolithic" park albeit with attractive and energy efficient winter garden and riverside facilities.



The razing of much of central Stockport through 1963-65 produced a far reaching identity change for the town. In fact the lust for demolition eradicated certain worthy structures (such as the Fire Station with its Italianate tower at Mersey Square; *left*) that have not been replaced. Extensive collateral damage was brought about by the thorough preparations for the foundations of a utopian shopping centre scheme that seemed only to want to avoid the embarrassment of its elderly neighbours. By proposing a future that is very strictly walkable, (a town like Hadrian's Villa<sup>15</sup>) Rowe and Koetter also addressed the issue of the bricoleur who "addresses himself to a collection of oddments left over from human endeavours"<sup>16</sup> These

builders create structures by means of events. The authors use the example of a Picasso still life collage that derives its beauty from the disparate, scavenged, sources of its pictorial elements; chair caning wall paper, the rope frame, newspaper graphics, glass and lemon. All flourish within the oval boundary of a small site just as the most pleasing mélange of buildings of different ages might generate urban beauty as they coexist inside the city plan. This collage of styles is to be found in each of the "raw" sites I have chosen above. My proposals have employed descriptive collages in order to empathise with this approach. Urbanists are obliged to imaginatively "remake" the town for themselves.

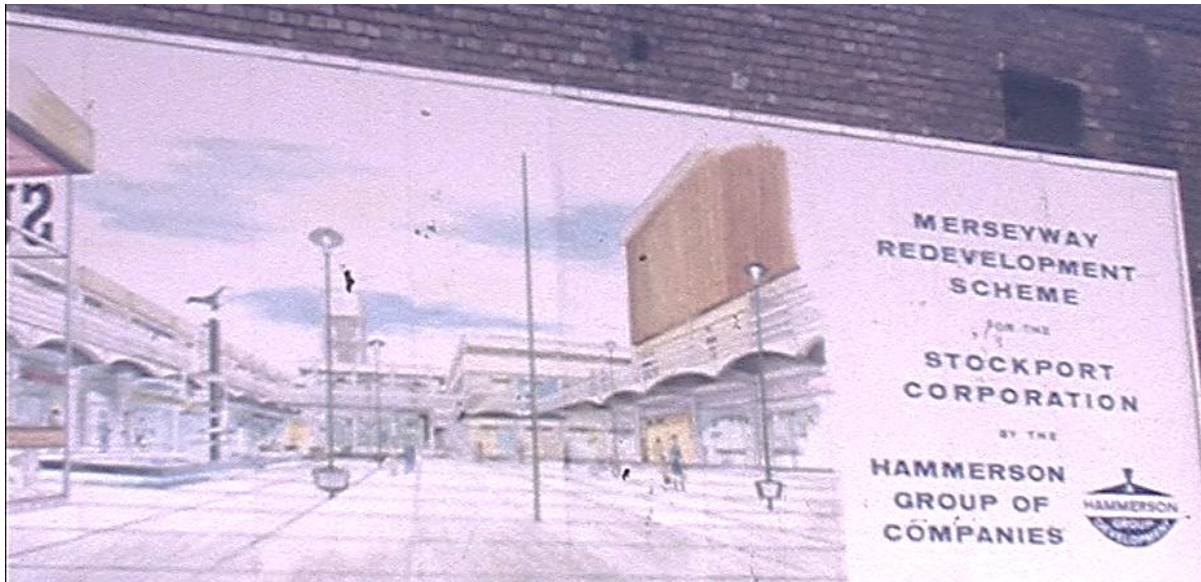
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<sup>14</sup> Rowe, C. and Koetter, F.; 1978, p.94

<sup>15</sup> Archaeologists have realised that Hadrian's Villa sits on top of an extensive labyrinth of subterranean service corridors. [www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2010-190.pdf](http://www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2010-190.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Rowe, C. and Koetter, F.; 1978, p.101

The projects that have been assembled have arisen from my close familiarity with site lines, textures and materials that presented themselves over the course of a close study panoramic painted survey and are all designed “to foster a sense of ownership” of the town centre<sup>17</sup>. It has been a privilege to read this town from the viewpoint of a visitor on foot, ironically, precisely in tune with the urban principles set in motion by the Merseyway planners who placed cars out of sight on the roof of their new shopping centre in 1965.



*A utopian panorama on a brick wall; Merseyway Development Scheme, advertising poster. Report, May 1965. Documentary still; NWFA 4544 © Stockport MBC*

*Source; Site Progress*

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<sup>17</sup> Song, Y. and Stevens, M.; 2012 p.508



## Appendix A

**STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE: QUESTIONNAIRE for URBAN RESEARCH 14 June 2015**

female	male
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## **STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE: QUESTIONNAIRE for URBAN RESEARCH**

14 June 2015

*This is conducted as an independent survey to find out how the public responses to Stockport might help to reveal why some parts of the town might be experiencing difficulties and how architectural and town planning design might improve the image and function of the town*

### **PART 1; THE USE OF THE TOWN**

### **PART 2; BUILDING THE FUTURE TOWN**

*Please answer as many of these questions as possible.*

*The data will be used to write a post-graduate report for Manchester School of Architecture in September 2015. Copies will sent to Stockport MBA for their information. No personal details, except gender, are required.*

*Thank you very much for your time and contribution.*

**PART 1; THE USE OF THE TOWN**

What service or product does Stockport town centre specially provide that makes you visit the town? Tick only **your top 5 choices** please

Pubs, cafes	
Restaurants	
Travel agents	
Festival days; vintage markets etc	
Supermarkets	
Car dealerships	
Beds, carpets and interiors	
Fashion and accessories	
Hair and nails	
Indoor market, market + Old Town shops	
Branded stores; Smiths Boots M&S etc	
Museums	
Cinema / Theatre	
Second hand / charity shopping	
Casino / betting shops	
Banks / loan shops	
Music shops / buskers / bands	
Narcotic related / adult retail related	
Transport – train - bus - taxi	
Technical / computing / white goods	
Children's shops	



Apart from Stockport where else do you enjoy regular shopping in this region? Please name only **one** place;

**For example only:** *Trafford Centre, Arndale Shopping Centre, Salford Quays etc.*

**Mersey Way Car Park** Do you usually/often use this car park when you visit the town? Tick one please

YES	NO
-----	----

**Vehicle traffic and public transport access.** Is the town centre safe for pedestrians, children and elderly disabled people during the day?

1= not at all safe    10 = completely safe.    Tick one box please

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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**Please add any comment on the above issues that you think might help to improve the use of town**

## **PART 2; BUILDING THE FUTURE TOWN**

Stockport has a number of beautiful buildings. Name one or two that you think are specially worth preserving

1.

2.

Please name or describe ONE building in Stockport town centre that should not be preserved. Say why if you wish. If none please tick the box.

	NONE
--	------

Name one street or road that you think should be permanently closed to vehicle traffic in the historic town centre. If none please tick the box

	NONE
--	------

**Little Underbank** and **Great Underbank** are beautiful medieval streets but seem to be not as prosperous as they used to be. What do you think might be the reason for this problem? Tick as many as you like, or suggest a reason.

Lack of pedestrian safety between 10.30am and 4.00pm	
Links to Merseyway Shopping Centre are not clear	
The area does not have clear identity or shopping map	
Existing shop types are too specialised, or vacant	
Short cut (rat run) for private motor vehicles	
Bollards at entry and exit are not functioning	
Other; your idea	

Which of the following materials (and building styles) do you think is the best for the future building of the historic town centre? Tick **up to five** please

BRICK	
SLATE	
HALF TIMBERED (Tudor style)	
CONCRETE and concrete panels	
ASPHALT flat roof coverings	
GLASS WALLS	
STONE; ashlar, sandstone	
CERAMIC TILES	
COBBLED streets	
TARMAC streets	
Other	

Do you think that Stockport historic town centre should develop more residential accommodation or build more business and retail property? Tick one box please.

1= no residential (business + retail only)      10 = entirely residential (no business + retail)

Tick one box please

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Please add any comment on the above issues that you think might help to improve the town

**Thank you**

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