

Appendices

To support Expert Solutions Report

February 2024

HASSLINGDEN



**HIGH
STREETS
TASK
FORCE**



1

Landlords and vacant properties

“Vacant properties owned by absentee landlords are the scourge of community, holding back the transformation of our high streets.”

Mark Robinson, chairman of the [High Streets Taskforce](#)

“Without taking a broader view of local vitality, the risk is that landlords are less concerned with being responsible stewards and more concerned with avoiding vacancies.”

[Centre for London](#)

“...one of the great challenges to regenerating high streets has been the absence of responsible landlords. Ownerships have been fragmented and there has been little incentive or interest in coordinating earnings or intent”

[Property Week](#)

“Almost a fifth of UK high street property is owned by distant landlords, overseas investors and corporations with no connection to the local places where they own property.”

[Take Back the High Street](#)

Challenges on empty space

- Sometimes change doesn't happen as it's too difficult
- Planning Use can add delays and prevent changes happening quickly
- Developers can sell sites pre-completion meaning agreements made at pre-build are then void
- Housing developers often show limited interest in the commercial space
- In new builds landlords often prefer units to be empty rather than be adapted for temporary use
- New builds are often left unfinished to avoid business rates



Image: [The Construction Image](#) showing ground floor commercial space in a new housing development

Reducing vacancy rates in Altrincham

In 2011, more than 30% of properties in Altrincham town centre were vacant and there seemed little appetite from property owners to invest in the town.

Interventions taken to reverse further decline focused on landlords and included:

- Sharing information on business enquiries to ensure that the enquiry is not lost to the town
- Developing an investment pack to attract new businesses
- Sharing best practice examples and solutions to improving properties
- Developing a confident approach with landlords of vacant properties over two years which included:
 - Identifying via business rates, planning and asset management teams who owned the properties
 - Writing to property owners with a list of improvements to be actioned (by a deadline) and highlighting that enforcement or CPO were options available to the council if these changes were not made
 - An offer to support with temporary/meanwhile use of properties

Image: [Visit Altrincham](#)

More information on Altrincham case study: [Future Retail City Centre](#)



- Vacancy rates reduced from 30% (2010) to 8% (2017) and there was an improvement in appearance in 90% of buildings and increased private investment
- There was a big focus on sharing the vision for the town to enable property owners to see why they should get behind it

Public intervention in town centre property for community benefit

Responding to the inequalities in the local economy has been a priority for Islington. Adopting a “community wealth building” approach has meant a focus on local wealth retention as well as the provision of good jobs and working conditions for local people.

[Fonthill Road in Finsbury Park](#) is a high street with a long-established specialism in fashion, garment production and accessories, historically attracting shoppers from across London.

Islington Council had identified that there were a significant number of residents in the area running small and micro-enterprises in sectors such as fashion. However, in discussions with the local traders’ association, traders had raised concerns about their long-term viability. Even prior to the pandemic, the council had recognised that providing affordable workspace and retail units would be key in sustaining this unique small business cluster.

With support from the Greater London Authority (GLA), the council purchased long leases on a number of units on Fonthill Road. One of the units has become a retail space operated by fashion enterprise Fashion Enter: it provides a space for local people to sell their work and get established in the garment industry, tapping into an established local cluster

In lieu of rent, Fashion Enter provides business mentoring and training for local people, according to social value criteria agreed with the council. 15 female designer-maker entrepreneurs have taken space in the shop, and a group of local women have completed accredited training with the local college. They put their new skills to good use during the pandemic by making face coverings for vulnerable members of the community. ([Centre for London – Community Town Centres](#))



Further reading

[Platform Places](#)

Stories of unlocking buildings for community benefit and getting buildings back into use

[High Street Rental Auctions](#)

Institute of Place Management

[The role of community businesses on high streets](#)

[Place investment and engaging landlords](#)

High Street Task Force





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Activating empty buildings

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From retail to cinema and multifunctional space



The Really Local Group created a 3-screen cinema, live music venue, a bar, café, 3-F&B pop-ups for local start-ups and a flexible community space in a former Poundland in south east London called Catford Mews.

For decades, the residents of Catford and the wider borough of Lewisham has been underserved with leisure offerings.

The company worked with the council's dedicated regeneration team for Catford to develop proposals and deliver the project.

Future: Department Stores, Nexus Planning (2021) provides further examples of reuse of large buildings.

Retail incubator

Southwark Council (London) established an innovative retail incubator, Nunhead Corner located in a local neighbourhood.

A competitive application process provided entrepreneurs with a high street presence with a no strings opportunity to trial their business in a prominently located and carefully designed shop for a six week period. Nunhead corner hosted an antique shop, a collaborative makers' outlet, a specialist vinyl shop and a flower shop before a permanent tenant was found.



Images: Jan Kattein Architects

Performance space on the high street

Morden is a suburban town centre in south London. Crown House Creative is Morden's first open access performance and exhibition space located in a former HSBC branch and was established as part of Merton Council's wider efforts to regenerate the town centre.

It is a 1960's concrete frame building and contains a food and beverage outlet. A programme of events and exhibitions animates the space and the project has brought a new type of visitor to the high street while providing emerging talent with a space for experimentation.



Image: Jan Kattein Architects



Pop-up offers on the high street



Climate change and sustainability centre



Art and fashion in a shopping centre empty unit showcasing the work of local young people



A former Dorothy Perkins store taken over by a local authority and managed by Pop-Up Club with a changing roster of retailers every six weeks and events



3

Events & Festivals

glasston-Boty

29th August 2022

TICKET INFORMATION

GENERAL ADMISSION (AGE 12+): £10

CHILDREN (AGE 5-11): £5

OAP: £5

UNDER 5'S: FREE

- ONE FREE CARER PER PAYING DISABLED CUSTOMER
- UNDER 16'S MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT
- ALL WRISTBAND HOLDERS MUST BE PRESENT AT THE TICKET OFFICE

Music festival – of small, local and covers bands takes place in Bury town centre – 5 open air stages and 14 hospitality venues simultaneously host a line up of 200 acts – raising money for Bury Hospice.



Mala Secret Garden – enclosed space of temp structures on underused corner site in Manchester’s Northern Quarter – offers Instagramm-able moments – sharing of images of food/drink/ events across multi-channel social media accounts.





Evening activation / Night Time Economy

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Taking the historic but often forgotten part of Stockport town centre...



...and turning it into the place to be on the last Friday of each month

Wentworth Market looks to have a Foodie Friday offer already so there is precedent for this working locally



ART BATTLE
MANCHESTER



10 ARTISTS
YOU DECIDE
THE WINNER

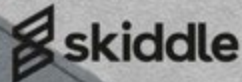
23RD
SEPT
2022

19.00 - 23.00

DEBENHAMS
STOCKPORT
SK1 1TS

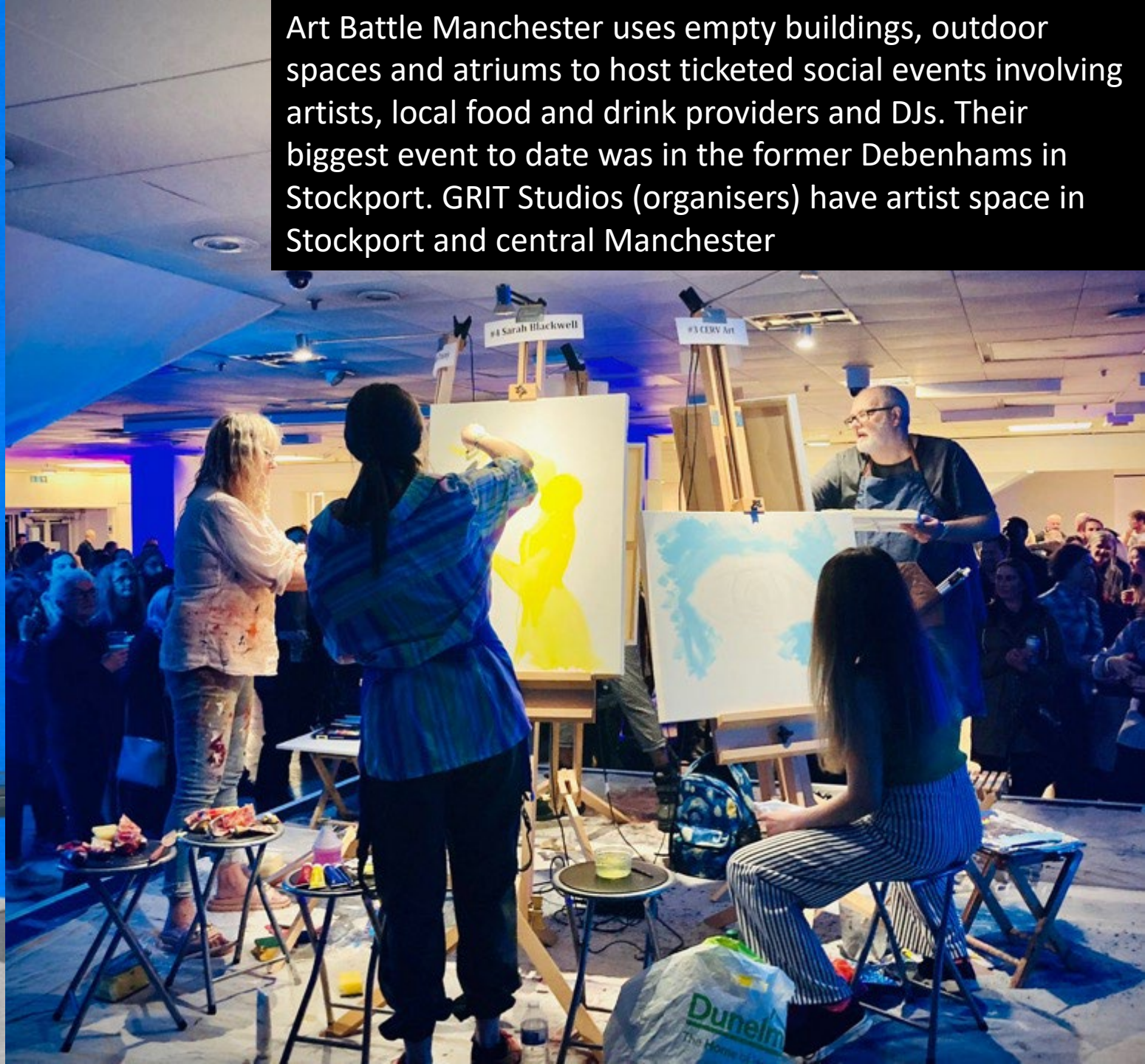
UP BEAT ON THE HIGH STREET

Stockport Edition



Totally
Stockport
BID Company

Art Battle Manchester uses empty buildings, outdoor spaces and atriums to host ticketed social events involving artists, local food and drink providers and DJs. Their biggest event to date was in the former Debenhams in Stockport. GRIT Studios (organisers) have artist space in Stockport and central Manchester



Free Autumn event the whole family can enjoy!

IN PRESCOT TOWN CENTRE

TWILIGHT MARKET AND LANTERN PARADE

Artisan Market Stalls, Live Music, Food & drink and Family Entertainment

**Sunday 6 November
3.30pm - 8.30pm**





Public Realm Improvements & Greening

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Great Northern Development, Manchester. There is a secret street animated with planting, lighting and artwork on to the steps



Adding family activities to the high street



A toy and book exchange



Play on the high street



Simple interventions to build a sense of place and identity



A mix of owner occupier and leased buildings all agreed to take part in this street art programme in New Brighton, Merseyside





Project Darling, an initiative in Darlington, which saw investment go into improving the look and aesthetic of the alleyways and yards in the town.

More information

<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/business/town-centre/skinnergate-and-the-yards/>

<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/16000/project-darling.pdf>

<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/16001/project-skinnergate.pdf>





Wilderness Street (temporary), Ilford



InStreatham BID (London), a town centre with the A23 running through it. As part of their place making and place branding strategy they installed seating and planting funded by local businesses to add colour, drive footfall and boost local pride



INCREDIBLE EDIBLE NETWORK



Incredible Edible have a Rossendale Group and are active but not in Haslingden



What can be done with hoardings when work is in progress to build excitement?



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