
Stockroom FAQs

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- These FAQs will evolve and respond to real time questions through the engagement

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1. What is Stockroom?

Stockroom is the working title for a project to create a new 21st century, universal learning and discovery space at the heart of Merseyway. In 2019, the Government launched the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) with the aim of renewing and reshaping high streets up and down the country. Stockport has received £14.5m from the FHSF to repurpose a large area of vacant retail space in the Merseyway Shopping Centre around Adlington Walk.

As town centres across the UK struggle to recover from the decline in traditional retailing and the impact of Covid-19, Stockport is pioneering an innovative plan to encourage footfall and vibrancy in the town centre.

Stockroom would create a fantastic new arrival point for the town centre, clustered around brand new toilets and customer facilities. Stockroom could be a place to celebrate the rich culture, creativity and diversity of Stockport, a place where the past, present and future come together. Stockroom would be a place to spend time exploring with friends and family, children and grandchildren, parents and grandparents.

2. **What is going to be in Stockroom?**

We want to talk with you about what uses Stockroom could have and how those uses could benefit you individually as well as the people who live, work, or visit Stockport.

Stockroom would be located in the heart of Merseyway, with easy links to public transport, car parking and close to Redrock and the Old Town. The Council believe that offering access to a wide range of services at such a convenient location would enable more people to benefit from them.

Stockroom could offer a range of services, from registering a birth or marriage to accessing help with finances, careers and parenting advice. These services are provided already by the Council at different locations in the town and may be better provided at a more central location.

3. **What about the current Central Library building?**

The Future High Street Fund bid included a concept for a new 21st library offer as one element of the wider vision for Stockroom. This could offer access to both physical and digital content and public access to Digital and IT provision as well as a host of other things; some suggested uses have been included in the survey about Stockroom.

If there is support to create a 21st Century library offer within Stockroom, this could result in library services being relocated from the existing Central Library Building on the A6. However a formal consultation on the relocation of library services from the existing Central Library Building would be held before any decision was made. This would include consulting people about potential alternative uses for the current Central Library building.

No decision about the future of the Central Library building or the service it provides would be made without full consultation with the people of Stockport, including those people who currently use the library.

There may also be support for relocating other Council services to Stockroom and it should also be noted that this may also mean they might be relocated from their current location

4. What do you mean by a “21st century library offer” ?

Over recent years, in the context of declining visitor numbers to libraries nationally, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and other national bodies have set out their vision for modern 21st Century library services.

In particular the government published in 2016, ‘Libraries Deliver – an ambition for public library services’. This set out a vision for libraries that is summed up by a quote from Malorie Blackman, the Children’s Laureate 2013 to 2015.

“What do libraries do for us? Well, they introduce many into the world of literacy and learning and help to make it a lifelong habit; they equalise; they teach empathy and help us to learn about each other; they preserve our cultural heritage; they protect our right to know and to learn; they build communities; they strengthen and advance us as a nation; they empower us as individuals.”

Continued.....What do you mean by a “21st century library offer” ?

There are plenty of examples up and down the country, of where libraries have been re-imagined and cultural and learning spaces have been located in the heart of the High Street, bringing a range of attractions and services together in a modern and welcoming environment. Where this has happened, more people have visited and benefitted from those spaces and the national trend of decline in library usage has been reversed.

The way people use libraries and their expectations of public services are changing, we need to respond to this and at the same time, help rejuvenate the High Street. A 21st Century library, with all the benefits and visitors it could bring, would be a real boost to the shops and businesses already in the town, and help to make our High Street more attractive to shops and business in the future who may want to set up in Stockport.

5. **Why can't you just spend the £14.5m on Central Library?**

The Future High Street Fund is a Central Government run initiative, the aim of which is: “To renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.”

The funding must have a clear focus on supporting the High Street and helping to repurposing vacant retail space. The funding is unable to be used for developments on the town centre periphery and not for repurposing cultural buildings.

The ideas for Stockroom so far have been inspired and informed by what's happening in towns and cities in the UK and around the world where cultural and community services have been put right in the heart of the high street.

6. **Why are you asking me when the decision has already been made?**

No decision has been made about what would be included within Stockroom and we will be talking with people over the coming months about what should be included. If you want to help shape the future of Stockroom then get involved now.

We're talking with people now about the type of things that could be included in Stockroom and that will help to shape the plans to develop the building. We plan to feedback on what people have said later this summer before taking the final plans for Stockroom to the Council's Cabinet later in the year.

7. **Why can't you just bring back more shops like M&S?**

Stockport, like many towns and cities across the country, has lost major household names such as Debenhams, Top Shop, Thorntons, and Mothercare. These iconic names will not return to the High Street. This has left a large number of vacant retail units, many with multiple floors. Empty shops don't contribute to making the High Street a place we all want to go and spend time in, so the challenge is to find new ways of using those spaces for something else. The recent news about the redevelopment of the former M&S and BHS stores will help make our High Street more attractive for those retailers who are still looking to expand.

Big High Street names are responsible to their shareholders and are private businesses, the council can't force them to open in Stockport but we can help to create the right conditions for business that are here to thrive and attract new shops and businesses to the town. Shops like to open where there is animation, vibrancy and people! We strongly believe this proposal will help bring people back into Stockport Town Centre, support the businesses that are still here and provide a great incentive for new businesses to come to Stockport.

8. Why have it in Merseyway?

Merseyway is the main high street in Stockport Town Centre and despite the loss of a number of retailers in recent years; it still attracts thousands of people every week. Before the lockdown, Merseyway attracted around 8.5m visits per year. Locating Stockroom in Merseyway would attract new people into the town centre who maybe aren't interested in what Merseyway currently offers, as well as providing a fantastic new service to all those people who do visit the Centre.

If we hope to have a vibrant town centre and attract new businesses to Stockport, we need to focus our efforts on creating a strong town centre offer with lots of different things to do. Stockroom can be part of that.

A strong Merseyway combines with the fantastic leisure and dining opportunities at Redrock and in the historic Market & Underbanks area to create a more diverse range of uses and attractions that will entice people back into town and off the internet!

9. Why have you called it Stockroom?

'Stockroom' is just a working title for the project, (we had to call it something!). We want to talk with the people of Stockport about what should be inside Stockroom. Once everyone has a clearer idea of what Stockroom will include, we will be in a better position to name the building.

This could involve consulting with people to decide the actual name of Stockroom in early 2022 when the plans for Stockroom have progressed further.

10. Who are you talking with about this?

We want to raise awareness of Stockroom and encourage a broad range of responses from community groups and people of all ages.

Throughout this engagement we will be speaking with a whole range of community groups.

From disability groups, to children and young people's groups, from faith groups to special interest and user groups

And assuming covid restrictions allow, members of the Council's Project Team will be at events and locations through the town centre to talk with people about Stockroom.

You can find out more information at www.stockroomstockport.uk.engagementhq.com

Stockroom
