

SUSTAINABLE URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS NETWORK (SUNN)

LESSONS FROM ANCOATS URBAN VILLAGE AND NEW ISLINGTON MILLENNIUM VILLAGE, MANCHESTER





Source: Martin Stockley Associates



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Report of the Ancoats and New Islington Event
28th June 2011

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Photos courtesy of Urban Splash, Martin
Stockley Associates, Nick Dodd, Mike Vout,
Michael Carley & URBED



Ancoats Study Area
Source: *Martin Stockley Associates*



New Islington Framework Plan
Source: *Urban Splash*

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The main focus of the network's Manchester meeting was on environmental sustainability, balanced communities, and cutting edge public realm initiatives. This report summarises some inspirational talks and constructive workshop discussions. In terms of our 'walk about', SUNN team members were blessed with a fine day to see some impressive achievements. Photographs of the visit can be found on Basecamp, along with the main PowerPoint presentations.



SETTING THE SCENE

A factual briefing note on Ancoats had been provided by Mark Canning, Project Manager with the North West Development Agency, and a briefing paper and project sheets on New Islington from Great Places, who are the lead housing association and responsible for much of the new housing to date. Introductory presentations were given by John Hocking, Executive Director of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust on emerging challenges in the new political context, by Richard Hattan, Development Director of Urban Splash, who are lead developers in New Islington, and by Stephen O'Malley, Director at Martin Stockley Associations, who are the engineers responsible for the public realm in Ancoats.

John Hocking stressed how much has changed over the past few years. This means that radically different approaches must be considered if we are to build the housing that is needed. Among John's key points:

- There was a hiatus in the Planning system as the Localism Bill progresses through the legislative timetable. In many areas development has stalled and despite some good models, there are real problems in 'going to scale', that is building the kinds of numbers that are really needed to meet forecasts of housing demand.
- Rising rents are eroding the hopes of young people trying to save the deposits needed to buy a home. The national Housing benefit bill had risen to £22b and significant changes were being introduced to reduce this at a time when the

Government were introducing near market rents, which in York doubled the current rent for a three bedroom house, and increased dependency on Housing benefits.

- It is vital to find a way out of this 'maze', for example by making full use of publicly owned land with infrastructure in place.

Key issues still to be tackled include:

- Where is the finance coming from for first time buyers, and who is going to build affordable homes for them?
- How can we 'future proof' developments in terms of energy and transport without importing all the technology from abroad?



In the next presentation, Richard Hattan suggested that New Islington is a valuable model for other authorities faced with the problem of regenerating an inner city industrial area close to the heart of a major city, and creating an attractive place to live:

- *'The challenge was to change one of the worst areas in Manchester into one of the best'.*
- New Islington is developing the old Cardroom Estate on 33 acres of land owned by Manchester City Council, and only 102 of the original 200 homes were still lived in when the project started.
- The development team felt it was important to build on strengths, which were a sense of community and an attractive canal network.
- New Islington directly adjoins Ancoats, just the other side of the Rochdale Canal, which is a unique part of the world's industrial heritage. Linking the two communities is an important part of the brief.



An inspirational masterplan by Will Alsop provides the basis for comprehensive development:

- Work started in 2003 to create new canals and a water park, and approximately 100,000 tons of land has been decontaminated and reused onsite; the process took five years and a significant part of the public investment.
- The scheme is designed to be a real mix: *'It's all in the mix – uses, people, incomes, tenures'* to avoid the problems of 'us and them'.
- A significant feature has been the Sustainability Plan, which was implemented well before they became standard practice. It requires:
 - Minimum construction waste
 - Recyclable materials
 - Low embodied energy
 - Renewable energy and resources
- The most prominent building so far is 'Chips' a striking block of flats designed by Will Alsop and the first homes for public sale. 142 of the 150 apartments are occupied, plus a couple of the commercial units on the ground floor.
- The scheme went beyond Eco-homes Excellent, with an energy centre in the Chips Apartment block that can serve the wider site, giving residents the option of district heating.
- The first phase of social housing, Islington Square, completed in 2006 gave the 23 households the opportunity to select from a shortlist the architect for their homes. Much to the surprise of the developer they choose the wildcard FAT (Fashion Architecture Taste). FAT were the only ones who didn't give a standard formal presentation and instead sat down with the community and listened to what they wanted. This approach gained the trust of the residents and won the commission. Residents wanted traditional housing and by this they meant being able to park their car off the street and be able to see it from their living rooms. They wanted kitchens at the back of the house, not at the front as they had before, and they wanted private back gardens. Some participants raised concerns about the quality of the design and how well the properties would age.



- Initial projects are helping to change the area's image and win community support, for example through design competitions for housing to replace what was being demolished and festivals that have attracted thousands, both local residents and people from outside '*You can't make a proper place unless you're having fun*'.
- A 'one move strategy' was implemented for some of the existing Cardroom Estate residents (mainly elderly persons) who could not face more than one move.
- Twelve existing homes have been retained on Weybridge Road - after residents fought to keep their homes which had been earmarked for demolition. These formed Manchester's smallest stock transfer to an RSL.
- Site preparation has been completed and the bulk of houses have been knocked down. The project is now on the final phase of the re-housing process and will soon be completing public realm investments, including a new park and a marina.
- A site has been allocated for self-build units, with detailed planning permission, but this project is stalled due to economic circumstances. A block of 200 units by Taylor Wimpey is also on hold.



The lessons on 'what works' include:

- Effective partnership working between the landowner, master developer and other public agencies including the HCA, New East Manchester Ltd and Great Places.
- A masterplan that makes the most of existing and new canals, thus reflecting the area's history, with a new park acting as a buffer between the housing and an existing, unattractive retail park.
- Reuse and recycling of both buildings and materials.
- A design code which secures higher standards than would normally have been achieved.



Some things which did not work so well included:

- Some new technologies, such as private wire networks

- Complex household energy bills/service charges
- The financial case for water technologies, such as grey water recycling.

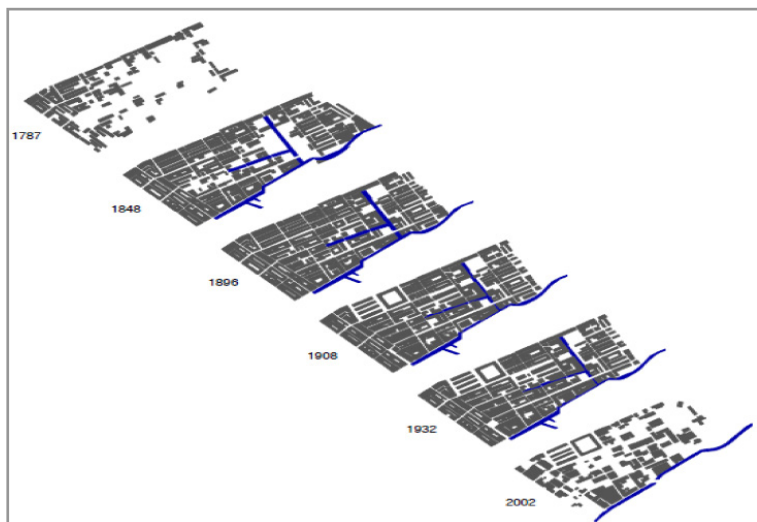
In conclusion Richard asked: ‘*So do we really want a mix, and if so, how do we get it?*’ One possible solution used by Great Places when they took over the Vibe in Salford, was to let the housing to economically active people with ambition to purchase in 3-5 years, and who could afford strong full-time management, rather than taking people with the maximum points on Council waiting lists.

New East Manchester

The regeneration of Ancoats and the old Cardroom Estate had been under consideration for decades. What made it possible was the provision of grant funding for site assembly, decontamination, environmental works and planning (in a similar way to the model used on the Continent in places like Amersfoort). A company dedicated to the regeneration of the two neighbourhoods was funded through the North West Development Agency, and drew in private developer and social housing partners. By using the RDA’s compulsory purchase powers, in 2002 197 different land ownerships were brought together, without the need for an approved plan. Some £66 million of public funds were invested, which should be repaid out of the £330 million of private investment that is following. Owners were then able to reacquire sites if they were in a position to go ahead with development. Developers today want ‘oven ready’ sites, and New East Manchester offers a model that could be applied much more widely to reduce the initial risks, and set higher standards of design.

In a third presentation, Stephen O’Malley explained how the Ancoats area had evolved over several hundred years, and how regeneration and adaptive reuse were being promoted through investment in the public realm:

- Ancoats occupies some 50 acres due north of Manchester Piccadilly Station, and only a short walk from the city centre.
- Development started in 1787 and was largely complete by 1848, taking advantage of the new Rochdale Canal to bring in supplies of cotton and coal to provide power. By the



Evolution of Ancoats village – slide taken from Stephen O’Malley’s presentation

1820s, Ancoats was a pioneer of steam-powered industry.

- In the 20th century, buildings decayed as industry closed down, and by 2002 most activity had gone, with empty sites and low value uses such as warehousing. Articles in the press argued for clearing the whole site and using it for car parking.
- As part of a comprehensive regeneration strategy, a public realm strategy drew on both an archaeological appraisal and an assessment of how to change the dysfunctional, over-complex one way system while respecting the historic character of Ancoats.
- The strategy divided the area into four types of street requiring different approaches aimed at changing road users behaviour rather than enforcing regulations; thus the pavements have only a 75mm upstand, and there are 'no priority junctions' without sight lines, completely going against the conventional wisdom of highway design.



- An artist formed a crucial part of the team, responsible for helping to link the past and the future.

Some £12 million out of a total grant of £65 million was invested in the public realm, which has transformed the appearance of the area. As a result developers are much more interested in Ancoats than previously. In part this is because they now have access to what has been described as 'oven ready' sites, that is sites ready to go in terms of basic infrastructure, sound building shells, and clear planning permission.



The briefing demonstrated a good return on the initial public investment as the scheme will provide overall:

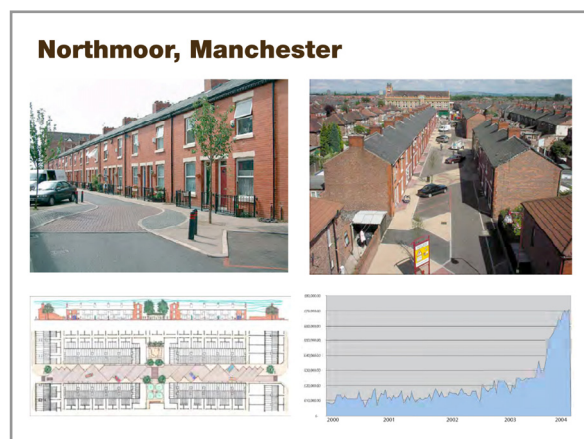
- 1,800 new residential units.
- 60,000 sq m of new commercial floor space equating to 1,900 new jobs (many more than were previously there).
- Some £330 million of private investment or five times the public investment.

- Investment has been carefully targeted, for example restoring roofs and using the best materials, such as setts so that they enhance development, while providing a degree of variety.

ECO-URBAN RENEWAL: BEYOND A TICK BOX APPROACH

Manchester has been the scene of many other innovative regeneration projects, such as in Hulme and Castlefield, as well as the city centre, and Nick Dodd, Sustainability Consultant at URBED, presented some lessons from projects around Europe to show what could be done.

- The main challenge for regeneration is how to attract families to live at higher densities, and the consequent benefits from economies of scale in transport, energy and the public realm.
- The Code for Sustainable Homes requires Code Level 4 by 2013, and level 6 by 2016, with energy accounting for 36% of the points in the assessment. This can only be achieved at a neighbourhood scale, for example through blocks of terraced houses that avoid unnecessary walls or glazing.
- Photovoltaics can be used like a power station, along with shared energy centres, which the Association of Manchester Authorities is investigating.
- New communities should not be seen in isolation, and initiatives like the Green Deal in Northmoor Manchester have transformed market values, as have projects in Goole East Riding of Yorkshire and Hebedygarde in Copenhagen.
- Day lighting is crucial to making streets liveable, for example through combining narrow streets with courtyards, and the Nottingham Design Guide provides an analysis of the views that development can open up.
- Green infrastructure is about more than biodiversity as street trees help to keep temperatures down in Summer, 'creating a natural edge'.



Countries like Sweden, which have been seeking to save energy for much longer, can provide useful lessons, and it is important to go beyond the Code for Sustainable Homes, which is a 'blunt tool' and take a wider approach that assesses the footprint of a scheme, and responds to the local context:

- In the Expo site of Bo01 in a former ship yard in Malmö, developers have been asked to choose from a menu of 'green options' which had led to an attractive patchwork of different habitats.
- However, many of the apartment blocks had failed to achieve the energy targets, due largely to thermal-bridging through balconies, which allow heat to flow out.
- A step change in environmental quality is needed to get people out of their cars, as in Copenhagen, where enough space is provided not only to cycle in safely to the centre, but also to store your bike.
- Waste also needs to be thought through, for example allowing for getting rid of both old sofas and organic waste, and recycling services are best provided at the end of streets not in an array of wheelie bins.
- Food can account for 25% of household emissions when all the costs are taken into account, so we may need to return to markets and local provision, which can also provide valuable meeting points.

STUDY TOUR FINDINGS

Ancoats Urban Village

1. Regeneration in Manchester is moving North and East from the main railway line, along the old canals.
2. Developments such as BDP's headquarter offices are both helping to change the area's image and are cutting running costs (and carbon emissions) through innovative design.
3. Ancoats is one of the oldest industrial areas in the UK, with a grid of multi-storey cotton mills and warehouses, and may become a World Heritage Site.
4. Much of the area had been cleared of activity, and was looking derelict and dangerous a decade ago.
5. The upgraded public realm makes it much easier and pleasant to walk round the area.
6. The restoration of the old Rochdale Canal, which runs across the Pennines, has injected new confidence and interest into the area.



7. Sites that are awaiting development have been mothballed and face lifted.
8. Considerable effort has gone into the area's promotion and marketing.
9. Imaginative uses of public art include 'peep holes' and the retention of material found on the site.
10. Uses such as 'apartment hotels' and business space are helping to restore life to the area.

New Islington Millennium Village

1. The main idea in the masterplan is making the most of water through new canal basins.
2. Key principles include 'nature into the city', 'views over water' and 'sustainable construction'.
3. Some of the existing housing blocks have been retained and upgraded at a cost of £30,000 per home.
4. New homes have been built to imaginative designs chosen by the community at a cost of around £175,000 per home but there was a question mark over how attractive the bespoke design would be to future residents.
5. Islington Square provided a strong marketing image that the area is changing for the better.
6. Guest Street the second stage of social housing, designed by DeMetz Forbes Knight is a contemporary interpretation of traditional terraced houses, inspired by visits to Amsterdam. The 14 houses are designed to receive an Eco-Homes Excellent Rating and feature sedum-planted roofing.
7. The unusual design of the Chips building (named so because it looks like three chunky chips stacked on top of each other) contrasts with more conventional forms of new housing provided by developers working on the other side of the canal.
8. Distinctive lighting columns have been used to give the area a special identity.
9. Local resistance to non residents parking in the centre of the street (which was thought to be unsafe) has led to spaces being blocked off.



10. The pavement surfaces have effectively calmed the traffic. However, they have not been properly maintained, and may be asphalted over.

WORKSHOP FINDINGS

1. Incorporating environmental sustainability into building and urban design

This workshop considered the most cost-effective ways to maximise energy efficiency, what has not worked so well, and how to plan more holistically for both embodied and operating energy consumption.

The easiest ways of saving energy identified in discussion are:

- Reusing existing buildings and recycling materials from demolition on site.
- Building well-insulated buildings, which include terraced housing and multi-storey blocks. For example, the Energy Saving Trust's guide to Sustainable Refurbishment recommends '*build tight and ventilate right*'.
- Bulk buying and bulk provision, such as district heating, can cut energy costs, for example through an energy centre and a district heating scheme, which requires ducts and pipes to be installed before development takes place.
- Systems should allow for several energy sources e.g. biomass with gas as backup.

However, problems can arise with district heating due to:

- The need for higher levels of up front investment, which may not be recovered if the building rate is not maintained and development has to be phased.
- Resistance of utilities to sharing ducts and also providing connections if they lose part of their market.
- Difficulties of convincing prospective owner occupiers or residents of the benefits of alternative forms of behaviour or life styles, for example, house purchasers expect homes to have individual central heating boilers.

In terms of promoting energy efficiency the following approaches may help:

- Using Sustainability Plans to achieve higher standards
- Changing VAT to encourage recycling of buildings - Urban Splash are leading a campaign on this.
- Setting up an independent body on-site to promote the personal economic benefits of different life style approaches, for example, giving up car ownership in favour of car clubs membership.

- Using local networking and social media to influence behaviour by focussing on the savings in running costs e.g. The TripAdvisor website shares customer experience of hotels
- Developing Energy Performance Certificates as a marketing device now that buildings have to be tested for air tightness (rather as car manufactures responded to higher fuel prices through diesel engines, or appliance manufacturers provide energy ratings at the point of sale).
- Using better (industry wide?) marketing to promote 'green homes' and 'green neighbourhoods' (perhaps through providing higher loans to value ratios at a lower interest rate via the proposed Green Infrastructure Bank.

New Islington's Sustainability Plan

New Islington, as Manchester's designated 'millennium village', has sought to test out higher environmental standards. A plan was commissioned by developers Urban Splash that set out targets along with proposals for monitoring and ideas on how the targets could be achieved, along with sources of information on each of these. The idea was that it should be used by English Partnerships in selling off sites. The plan covered:

- Primary energy consumption, through CHP, higher fabric insulation standards (U values), and better lighting and boiler standards
- Embodied energy, through the use of the BRE's Green Guide to Housing Specification
- Mains water consumption through the use of bore hall sources, draining rainwater into the canal
- Waste management through pre-sorted waste collection for recycling, with 'separation facilities' in every dwelling
- Defects through the use of modular construction and prefabrication where appropriate
- Dwelling size through a mix, with minimum sizes for small (2 bed homes) of 65m², and larger 2 beds 80m² with 3 bed homes of 100m²
- Day lighting through buildings arranged in fingers around the sun's path to minimise shadowing
- Noise proofing through better insulation
- Construction waste through crushing and recycling materials from demolition on site, and through prefabrication
- Site safety through attention at tendering
- Information Technology through access to the internet in all the main rooms

2. Achieving a balanced, mixed tenure community

This workshop began with discussion of the meaning of the terms 'mixed' and 'balanced' with reference to communities. They could be 'mixed' in terms of tenures, household incomes, sizes of property in terms of number of bedrooms and in terms of location, as in pepper-potted communities. There was agreement that the notion of mixing tenures arose first within the regeneration field to address the problems of

mono-tenure public housing estates, particularly where dysfunctional households had been concentrated on deprived estates. Here a mixing of tenures by providing opportunities for owner occupation had indeed helped the regeneration process, not least by enabling local residents in work to remain in their communities while also achieving aspirations for owner occupation. But it was also noted that there many 'unmixed' communities, such as wealthier neighbourhoods, which functioned perfectly well from the residents point of view. It was also noted, with reference to research in Glasgow, that mixing tenures did not necessarily lead to social mixing between households of different income levels.

Discussion of the concept of 'balanced' communities was more challenging but fruitful. Although at the outset what constituted a 'balanced community' *per se* was hard to define, there is ready understanding of the characteristics of 'unbalanced' communities: concentration of poverty, excessive crime or anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood stigma, depressed property values, social tensions, over-concentration of certain tenures - such as too many student lets or houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), excessive turnover or 'churn' of residents, poor estate or neighbourhood management, lack of social development activity and so on. The symptoms of 'unbalancedness' can range from too much crime to poor car parking arrangements, in short, any issue which detracts from the residents' quality of life.

Wherever such unbalanced characteristics reduce quality of life in neighbourhoods and on estates, a move back toward balance is required by intervention and beneficial management. So a balanced community is one where the necessary intervention and management mechanisms are in place to address symptoms of 'unbalancedness' as they arise. A balanced community is robust and resilient with sufficient stability for quality of life, at best for a range of households including young people, families with children and elderly people. Here the concepts of 'balanced' and 'mixed' come together to suggest that communities benefit from the social equivalent of biodiversity. But such mixed communities may require intervention and management to succeed. The initiative of the JRHT to bridge the gap between teenagers 'hanging out' and elderly residents in New Earswick was cited as a good example of active management. The point was also made that what should be designed for is 'lifetime neighbourhoods' but not necessarily lifetime homes which are often poorly designed in terms of the needs of most non-elderly residents. At the neighbourhood level, management can also be important to prevent some areas from 'going downhill quickly'. An example of the need to license HMOs in seaside towns was cited.

The characteristics of active, positive management were discussed. It was first noted that the requirement for active management existed at both the level of the street or block of flats, and at the level of the neighbourhood. Management was for two broad

purposes: to exert control over socially dysfunctional activities before they could destabilise the building or the neighbourhood, i.e. *social control*; and to promote quality of life at the household and neighbourhood level, through *social development*, as in the New Earswick example given above.

Many different examples of positive management arrangements were cited from within SUNN member neighbourhoods. Management functions could be carried out by a variety of organisations, for example, social landlords in the case of New Islington or New Earswick, a private sector management company working on behalf of residents as in Grand Union Village or a formal Parish Council as in Orchard Park. It was noted that higher density neighbourhoods were likely to be more sustainable in terms of supporting provision of public transport, schools, shops and other community facilities but such communities might also require more in the way of positive management.

Whatever the organisational arrangements, certain factors were cited as contributing to positive management. First, the management team needed to be on-site and familiar with, and to, residents, not at some arms-length location. Just one or two good people, with the community's interests at heart, could make a huge difference to local quality of life. On-site managers are very much like the community wardens introduced in a number of regeneration initiatives. On-site managers also need good 'people skills' and an understanding that all local residents, even teenagers and raucous students, are 'stakeholders' in the neighbourhood and may need to be drawn into management processes.

Second, management arrangements worked best when options were considered and then arrangements built-in at the design stage of new communities. This is often necessary to secure provision for future management and maintenance activities and resources for those within deeds and leases from the outset, and to put in place restrictive covenants which enable control of anti-social behaviour. Third, transitional arrangements need to be put in place during the period the first residents are moving in, not least because they may well be moving into a building site. The harmony of the neighbourhood in its early days, and the experiences of its first residents, may well influence subsequent sales. The challenges faced by Orchard Park in its early days were mentioned. Finally, if neighbourhood management is intended, initiatives need to fit in with local governance arrangements, for example, development of Parish Councils.

In the final stage of discussion, the question was posed about whether 'pepper-potting', that is, placement of social tenants mixed with owner-occupiers on estates was beneficial in terms of housing management and community well-being. There was no resolution of the question but advantages and disadvantages were noted on

both sides. On the one hand, pepper-potting could certainly reduce any stigma which might be attached to social tenants being concentrated in one or more buildings in a less attractive location on an estate. However it was noted that pepper-potting need not be necessary if design was 'tenure blind', meaning that the tenure was not obvious from an external view.

Pepper-potting was said to create 'logistical problems' in terms of management and maintenance, which might be more efficient if owner-occupiers and social tenants were in discrete buildings. But a risk was noted of concentrating households with some type of dysfunction, such as substance abuse, giving rise to both reinforcing anti-social behaviour and stigma.

3. Cutting-edge public realm and roadway initiatives in Ancoats and New Islington

In these two run-down regeneration areas, investment in the public realm was seen as an important step towards transforming public perceptions and confidence in the area as a positive place to live, work and invest.

In Ancoats, before the regeneration got underway, the road system was a convoluted one way system with an excess of signage. These one way streets encouraged 'rat running', particularly by van drivers who knew the area and would rip through the streets at up to 50 miles per hour. The project designers for Ancoats decided to take a very different perspective by recognising that the mainly grid road pattern for the neighbourhood was at the core of the neighbourhood's public realm and therefore needed to be retained and enhanced but in a way which contributed to visual urban quality, pedestrian and cyclist safety while serving roadway functions.

At the same time this once-stigmatised neighbourhood would be in intense competition with many nearby city-centre development sites for inward investment. A very high quality public realm, with the road system at its heart, was seen as key design tactic to establish the neighbourhood's attractiveness. Even though Ancoats' public realm investments were made at a time of optimism and more resources for regeneration, achieving the intended quality still required substantial advocacy on the part of the project team to avoid a 'watering down' of the quality of the public realm.

The public realm strategy for Ancoats' has three key components. First, a new public square was constructed at the heart of the community on the site of some run-down, dispensable sheds. Cutting Room Square is the first public square in Ancoats. The Square is marked by five giant concrete sentinels containing striking photos taken in abandoned cutting and pattern rooms in the nearby, historic Royal Mills. Eventually Cutting Room Square will be surrounded by buildings with retail and restaurant uses

at ground floor and residential above. It has been completed now for 3-4 years and participants commented on how well it is holding up.

Second, the design pays careful attention to the quality of the historic streetscape. At street level, to reduce visual clutter, signage was to be kept to a minimum. Diverse but historically-appropriate paving materials identify a hierarchy of road types and streetscape design encourages slower driving. Open access intersections mix pedestrians and car drivers in a way which fosters appropriate behaviour and slower speeds. Junction design is intended to inject a degree of uncertainty into the driver's mind about the intention of other road users so that they drive more carefully and slowly. In addition, posters have been put up in local delivery depots to educate van drivers towards more responsible behaviour.

Third, an arts programme was set up which served the development and made a point of linking new activities with the long history of an area which includes some of the first steam-powered mills in the world. This programme includes unusual 'sculptures' called 'The Peeps' which are viewed through a series of brass eye pieces built into the walls of Ancoats' historic mills. Each gives a glimpse into a space that has been walled up. There are no plaques or a set route, they are discovered as you explore the area. The peep holes are described as 'slippages through time'.

In terms of parking arrangements, a listed building in Ancoats is to be converted into a multi storey car park. Other parking is provided by a mix of on-street, ground floor and basement. Street parking arrangements will reduce some Ancoats' roadways down to a single carriageway which should also help manage speeds. But, as many buildings and sites remain undeveloped, there is little requirement for parking spaces as yet and the strategy will only take effect once more residents have moved in. With the benefit of hindsight, it would have been better to mark out on-road parking areas with planting and/or bollards, thus achieving the carriageway limitation from the outset. Trees planted in temporary, moveable pots might be a good way of testing if a parking scheme is going to achieve the outcome intended.

For neighbourhood management in Ancoats, a management company has been set up, funded by property owners. At the site level, there is recognition that the current economic downturn may substantially prolong the development process. To maintain the visual attractiveness of the area, highlighted by the high quality road surfaces, vacant sites awaiting inward investment have been tidied up. Green slate chips have been spread as groundcover and sites have been surrounded with smart, black railings. The railings protect the sites from unwanted access and dumping. It was considered that sites waiting to be bought forward could be used for pocket parks, but there are insufficient resources at present for either the capital investment and or

operating revenue even temporary parks would entail. In particular, limited public funds are to be put to best use by construction of a new bridge to link Ancoats to the new waterside park in New Islington.

The Ancoats public realm scheme has been very successful, although perhaps more tree planting could have helped soften some of the area's mainly hard surfaces without losing its 'gritty character'. But, as it turned out, the project designers found fibre optic networks made it difficult to find appropriate sites to plant trees. Consultations were held with the utility companies to see if a way could be found to reduce some of the space taken up by these - but the utility companies could see no benefit to cooperation unless they could make money out of the arrangement. Almost unbelievably, they expressed concern that if they shared 'trunking' with their competitors they might be 'subject to sabotage'. This reflects the disorganised, uncoordinated and inefficient arrangements for under-road services, compared say, with the Netherlands, where all services are in a single conduit and which are renewed simultaneously as required.

Turning to New Islington, public realm investment includes extensive new canal-side parkland and a new marina which will generate social and economic activity at the heart of the community. Also great deal of investment has gone into the public realm alongside one of the busiest roads through New Islington, which is also its 'high street', although there are few shops. The carriageways were narrowed and divided and parking was introduced in the centre median in an attempt to slow speeds by creating a busier, more uncertain environment. This approach had an immediate impact with speeds reduced by about ten miles per hour. Unfortunately the centre parking arrangements have been halted through action by the local council with the street design described as a 'lightening rod for dissent'. No accidents were recorded as a result of the scheme but 'the fear of accidents' seems to be enough to undermine this attempt at innovation. Although such arrangements are common in other cities, such as the famous Queen Street in Edinburgh, this scheme for New Islington was perhaps introduced too quickly and without sufficient consultation. There are plans to re-introduce it at a future date.

Turning to off-street parking provision, a very interesting study was made of the parking requirements of the 150 households living in the CHIPS block of flats where parking spaces are sold as an optional extra to home ownership. This survey found that 30% of residents can't drive at all and a further 30% don't own a car, so the residents are 60% car-less households. The building and its location seems to have attracted young professionals who mainly walk or cycle to work, or take public transport. Two points arise from this. First, it reinforces that provision for walking and cycling needs to be at the heart of transport planning for the inner city, not a 'bolt on' after road networks are in place. This may mean a fundamental rethink of traffic

engineering principles and practices. Second, good storage for bicycles is a must in new buildings compared with the current situation where facilities don't feel 'safe and secure' and are often in an unattractive shared space – often with the bins.

Following from this discussion, one participant suggested the benefits of a community cycle hire scheme in the park and even perhaps electric buggies for rent. The point was made that to get the most out of any innovations like these, they need to be part of a city wide vision and transport plan. The vision is needed at the very highest level and every decision needs to be made with the vision in mind. This reinforces a point often raised in SUNN discussions about the pressing need for a strategic approach to transport, land use and regeneration at a city wide level.

Another general conclusion concerns parking arrangements. All off-street parking spaces must be managed and designated; residents will accept this if it is in from the start. A car parking strategy must be embedded right from the start and well managed.

A final point touches on selection of road surface materials and maintenance. In Ancoats very durable cobbles have mainly been used in refurbishment in keeping with the historic nature of the area. The main disadvantage is that they provide a rough surface for cyclists and wheelchair users.

In New Islington a decision to use clay pavements (Dutch style paving) was made in conjunction with the Council's road maintenance department. Although attractive, clay pavers require regular maintenance and need to be inspected every quarter. Unfortunately a commuted sum for ten years of maintenance was been paid to Manchester City Council by the developers - but the pavements have only been attended to once in 6 years and there was no practical way for the developer to bring pressure on the Council to deliver the service even though it had been paid for. This opened a wider issue of who controls how commuted sums are used.

Participants were asked how we could achieve a quality public realm in an age of austerity. It would seem that the materials are the variable, the way the streets are arranged are more important in shaping the way people move around the site. It is possible to achieve something similar with cheaper material, such as, colour chipping asphalt. Make the best use of funding by focusing on key gateways and junctions and choosing key elements that carry through the site to keep the feeling of consistency throughout.

NEXT STEPS

We need to explore further where the money goes in development and how to produce a much more affordable and attractive set of products than are currently available to help not only restart the housing market, but also create local employment, and provide new outlets for making things in the UK.

APPENDIX A – LIST OF DELEGATES

Richard Armitage, Richard Armitage Transport Consultancy
Ian Bewick, Richard Armitage Transport Consultancy
Simon Byrd, Trinity Estates
Mark Canning, NWDA
Michael Carley, SUNN Team
Martin Chuter, Trinity Estates
Guy Currey, Newcastle City Council
Nick Dodd, URBED (Urbanism, Environment & Design)
Nicholas Falk, SUNN Team
Lyn Fenton, New East Manchester Ltd
Mike Galloway
Richard Hattan, Urban Splash Group
John Hocking, Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust
Nigel Ingram, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Lucy Inmonger, Great Places
Phil Joyce, Newcastle City Council
John Low, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Jim McMillan, Great Places
James Millington, BDP
Jo Mills, South Cambridgeshire District Council
Christian Nielsen, BDP
Stephen O'Malley, Martin Stockley Associates
NikPuttnam, Salford City Council
Richard Thorougood, Trinity Estates
Rachel Underwood, Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association
Mike Vout, Telford and Wrekin Borough Council
John Watts, Trinity Estates
Anne Wyatt, SUNN Team