



# **60 KING STREET KNUTSFORD**

## **AUDIENCE CONSULTATION REPORT**

**JUNE 2022**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

60 King Street is a Grade II\* listed building on the High Street in Knutsford, Cheshire East, built by the Victorian Industrialist Richard Harding Watt and now owned by Knutsford Town Council. Completed in 1907 Watt originally purchased the site primarily for a post office but also for a coffee house. He was concerned the local inns and public houses were being patronised to the excess, and wanted to provide the town with a non-profit making coffee and culture venue, and created a beautiful, 'eclectic Italianate' building in the heart of the historic market town.

The property was occupied for 46 years by La Belle Epoque - a highly rated restaurant and bar with bed and breakfast accommodation. However, these former tenants left the property in June 2019 following a five-year dispute with the town council, following which the council were left in a position where they had to write off a debt of more than £67,000, owed by its former tenant.

The venue has now been vacant since 2019 and is in need of investment, repair - and repurposing. The restoration of 60 King Street would be a game-changing project for Knutsford, reigniting it as a point of civic pride and developing its commercial viability, essential for town centre place-making.

## 2. BACKGROUND - PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH & APPROACH

There are always time and other practical limitations on consultation so it is vital that efforts are targeted at the right people in the most appropriate way, using the right channels and at the right time. Tricolor uses a 10 Step Consultation Planning process, outlined within this document, and this process provides the 'method of travel' for understanding audience and community need, leading up to a successful NLHF funding application.

There are many individuals or groups who have an interest in or who could be engaged by the activities and outcomes of the 60 King Street Knutsford project. Collectively the individuals and groups who have influence over the project's development are the stakeholders and those who will be participants are audiences. Some individuals or groups may be considered to be both.

Delivering a successful heritage and community development project requires a clear understanding of the issues and interests of project stakeholders and the audiences. This is achieved firstly through the development of a consultation strategy that breaks down barriers to their participation, and that then encourages them to play an active role in the development and delivery of as much of the project as possible.





## 2.1 AUDIENCES

Tricolor has identified the following target audiences as being a key part of their ambition for the future:

- Young people (under 29)
- Hyper-local and disengaged communities
- Heritage / architectural heritage audiences
- Tourists
- Deprived local communities
- People with disabilities
  - Young carers
  - Dementia (Friendship Cafe)
  - Physical Disability
- LGBTQi+ community
- BAME community
- Older isolated people

## 2.2 STRATEGIC BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT DEMOGRAPHICS OF KNUTSFORD

Knutsford has a very balanced male to female population, with a predominantly wealthy, white demographic. Data surrounding education and the economy rate are higher than the national average and residents there have predominantly higher educational qualifications than the national average suggesting that the residents of Knutsford are better educated than the average England citizen. Employment scores are 92%, higher than the rest of England, with only 2.1% of people on Jobseekers Allowance, 1.8% are on Incapacity Benefits (IB or ESA) and 10% on Any Benefit (includes in work benefits).

The following data shows a snapshot of where Knutsford sits in comparison to the rest of England:

- Overall: Better than 98% of areas in England
- Income Deprivation: Better than 98% of areas in England
- Education: Better than 99% of areas in England
- Health: Better than 93% of areas in England
- Crime: Better than 97% of areas in England
- Barriers to Services: Better than 57% of areas in England
- Living Environment: Better than 80% of areas in England

However, an interesting need forms around the Shaw Heath and Longridge overspill estates; postwar council estates built for Manchester overspill. This can be predicted to be a result of the overwhelming prosperity of Knutsford as a whole in comparison to such a contrastingly deprived area, forming a hub where people can come together and feel a sense of belonging. This need could possibly be incorporated into the centre of Knutsford, bringing communities together within this heritage building.

The community of Knutsford and the council recognise that community engagement plays a pivotal role in the needs of Knutsford, with its Communication and Community Engagement Policy stating that “facilitating communication and where possible supporting external organisations in disseminating information to the community” plays a key role. This project has the opportunity to adhere to such guidelines being located so centrally within the town and its community.



With the 60 King Street gardens in mind, the Knutsford Nature Action Plan has a few mission statements that may influence the development of their green spaces. As a part of the mission to increase wildlife friendly planting, there are still plans to Improve biodiversity and connect green corridors, this could be a nice way to develop the garden plans at the property.

Potential cultural events can be woven into the themes of this project. These include the annual Knutsford Royal May Day festival, The RHS Flower show at Tatton Park and the Elizabeth Gaskell memorial. The Knutsford Heritage Centre is also searching for somewhere with more space and could therefore be a possible vendor.

Data shows that Knutsford is home to a large demographic of culturally influenced inhabitants, known as Commuterland Culture Buffs.

However, there are no real theatre or performance spaces (apart from within local schools) but a presence of companies such as the Knutsford Amateur Drama Society, Rokit Performing Arts, and Performing Arts School and Agency. The only venue of note in the area is the Curzon Cinema Knutsford where they stream live music, theatre and film viewings.

## 2.3 LOCAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

### **Organisational**

Organisational challenges appear in the governance and management of the 60 King Street property currently. There's a need for the running and decision-making of the property to appear unbiased and acquire and inspire community ownership. A current challenge for Knutsford Town Council is a need for the property to not take up too much management time, also noting that the council are not specialised in property management issues.

- **Actions to overcome** - Setup an alternative CIC/ council run charitable trust, as advised by the AHF.
- Improved governance, or leasing to an expert operator.

### **Cultural**

The building currently does not meet the council's mission.

- **Action to overcome** - Ensure alignment between chosen option and values if the council is still connected to the building.

### **Physical**

The property requires significant overall maintenance and investment to restore the building to good working condition. The facilities in the building's kitchens in particular are unused and therefore degrading. Adding to this the outside spaces are in need of maintenance.

- **Actions to overcome** - Discuss which maintenance is needed for which development option and if other funding could be secured (e.g. through a lease arrangement or special project).
- Find a way to start using these spaces that serves the local market as a potential meanwhile use income generating strategy.

- Landscaping and maintenance could potentially bring the outdoor areas into play to generate income whilst the strategy for the building is developed.

### **Intellectual**

The Belle Epoque was previously considered a high-end venue.

- **Action to overcome** - Positioning of the new proposition will need to be developed with this in mind: possibly to capitalise on this perception, or to pivot and make it more inclusive.

### **Financial**

60 King Street is currently a liability rather than asset, and large costs of necessary investment are required to return it to a good condition.

- **Actions to overcome** - Find options with a higher potential return, likely funding from grant givers and long term income for building from tenants and partners.
- Discuss maintenance needed for options and confirm sources of funding.

## **2.4 LOCAL AUTHORITY POLICIES**

Knutsford's Communication and Community Engagement Policy published in July 2020<sup>1</sup> is overseen by the Environment and General Purposes Committee and sets out the management strategies on communications, consultations and general community engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> The Knutsford Communication and Community Engagement Policy, July 2020:  
<https://www.knutsfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Communications-Policy.pdf>

These are the key points from the report that were considered as part of this consultation:

The council considers that the Knutsford community comprises all residents of the parish, all users of town council services, all those who work or own businesses within Knutsford, all young people who go to school in Knutsford and all voluntary organisations, clubs and societies operating within the town.

The council recognises that it has a role to play in facilitating communication across the community and where possible will support external organisations in disseminating information to the community.

Social media messages will be non-political, uncontroversial and used to promote and highlight the Town.

The council aims to use social media to support two-way communication with the community but recognises that it is not always appropriate to respond to every message/comment, publicly or otherwise. For complex issues, users should be referred to traditional forms of communication e.g. email or telephone.

Consultations will use specific, non-leading questions. The council may ask open questions (e.g. where do you think swings should be sited?), but not open-ended questions (e.g. what do you think should be done?)

## **3. CONSULTATION - INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS**





Internal consultation with the Council was done via a survey, focusing on the participants' current engagement with the town, what's missing from the town centre and what they would like to see 60 King Street develop into. Seven people took part in the survey, four of whom lived in Knutsford and three did not, however, they commented saying they were still invested in Knutsford and how the area develops. As well as regularly engaging with Knutsford due to working there.

When asked for their **opinion of the building in its vacant state**, unlike the visitor survey, no one felt positive. There was an equal divide of Neutral and Poor (as one person skipped this question), with one adding a comment saying; 'A bit of both - the architecture does contribute to the town centre, it is a well known and noticeable landmark which adds to the character of the town. However poor that it is vacant as it is noticeable however I know this is not by fault of the council but purely circumstantial'.

The majority of respondents said they **regularly receive feedback on the building**. These comments were both positive and negative; positive about the project, the architecture and the potential of 60 King Street having community use. Negative comments revolved around its vacant state and the current condition not being preserved properly.

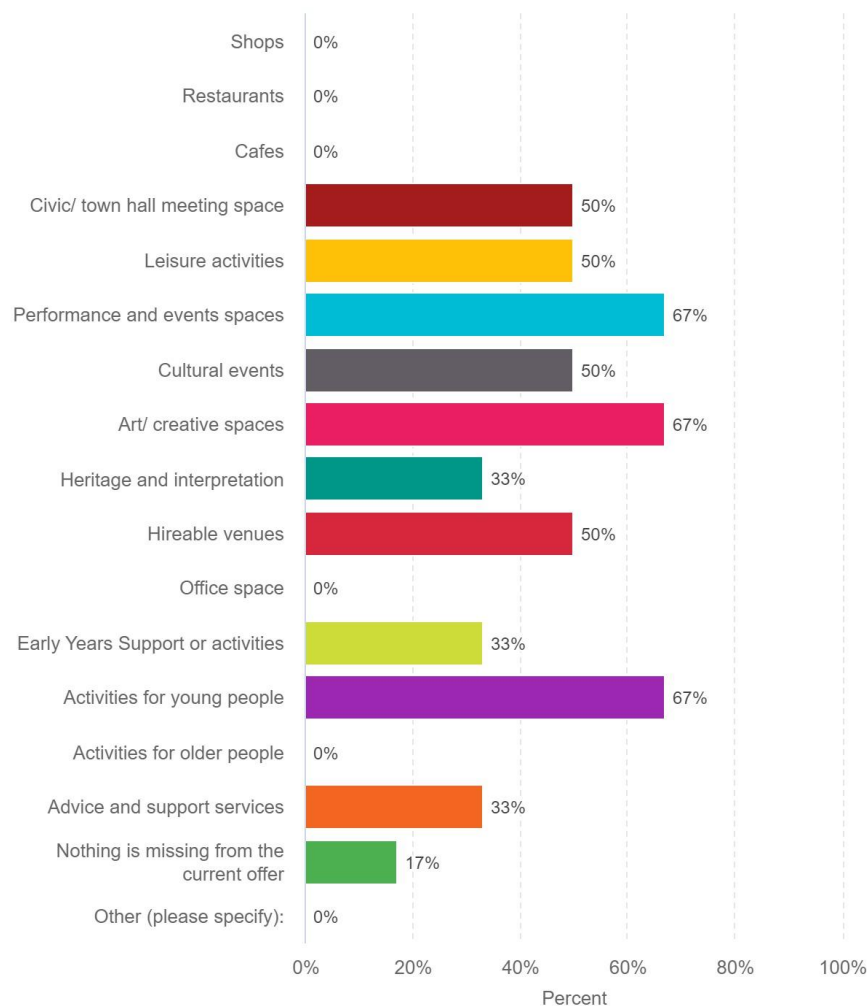
Participants were asked what they felt was currently missing from the town centre and were allowed to select multiple answers. The three most popular answers, of equal measure, were; Performance and Event Spaces, Art/ Creative Spaces, and Activities for Young People.

Each of these answers were reflected in the wider consultation by different sectors, notably, activities for young people being the most mentioned out of the three.





What, if anything, do you currently feel is missing from the town centre offer?



As you can see, Shops, Cafes, Restaurants, Office Space and Activities for Older People each received zero votes. This was partially reflected in the wider consultation, as many said that a catering offer was not in demand, and we received a lack of response from local businesses which suggests a lack of demand for office space.

When asked what ideas spoke to them the most in regards to the **future use of the building**, the three most popular answers were **Accommodation (holiday rentals), Musical Events, and Performance Spaces**. Most answers revolved around boosting the cultural offer of Knutsford. Other popular answers were as follows;

- Art gallery and exhibitions
- On screen and live performance space
- Access to information / Citizens Advice
- Art studios/ creative spaces
- Conferencing and events space
- Rentable spaces for community hire and use
- Wedding Venue

When asked if they felt the **Council currently had the capacity** to manage 60 King Street, 3 participants skipped the question, and others predominantly either said No or Not Sure (dependent on use). Comments left said at the moment, the staffing structure would not support this, however, this could change. Suggestions were that a facility manager be hired to work alongside the council as well as it being a profitable location for businesses, so therefore they could manage their own space.



When asked if anything would **stop them attending future events/ activities at 60 King Street and if they have any concerns**, 3 skipped this question. The comments left revolved around ensuring the new offer is long term and vibrant, and parking and accessibility. There was a concern of the detrimental effects of the new vicinity becoming not-in-use, should the future idea fail. Parking and access was a concern raised throughout the consultation.

When asked how **supportive they were of 60 King Street being re-used/ re-imagined** (5 being very supportive and 1 being not supportive), the majority of respondents selected 5 or 4. One respondent selected 2, but did not leave a comment. The response as a whole was positive.

## **4. CONSULTATION FINDINGS - AUDIENCES**

### **4.1 GENERAL PUBLIC SURVEY & PAPER**

#### ***About the Respondents***

Most of the respondents live in or close to Knutsford, were female with around a third male. 91% of respondents stated they were White British, 95% were able-bodied and most were aged between 31-70. They did not tend to be members of a local heritage organisation, although nearly all are aware of them.

#### ***Key Learnings***

The general survey received a high level of response from Knutsford residents, many of whom took time to write quite lengthy comments indicating their hopes and aspirations for the future of 60 King Street. Clearly there is a strength of feeling that intervention is well overdue

and that the project outcome has the potential to very positively impact the town centre and its wider community. The main points from the general survey may be summarised as follows:

There is warm affection and strong attachment to the building among Knutsford residents, many of whom remember it being used and enjoyed in its former iteration. It is a significant and central architectural landmark in the town, seen by many as iconic.

There is strong support for the renovation and repurposing of the building, which is perceived by many as having the potential to catalyse greater change and improvement for the town.

Civic pride abounds and there is an enthusiastic desire for a thriving, well-functioning town centre which both benefits and serves its residents, and enhances it as a destination for visitors and tourists.

There is a clear aspiration for an outcome of a very high standard, which respects, preserves and emphasises the unique architecture of the building and reflects the values and intentions of its architect.

Although the heritage of the building must be treated with respect and sensitivity, many respondents felt that it should not be the main focus of the building's future purpose. There was a groundswell of opinion that the building should serve the whole community and be accessible to all.



Survey respondents indicated a clear appetite for a cultural/creative use for the building, reflecting an obvious desire to remedy the existing lack of performance and creative space in the town.

Many saw the benefits of a hybrid use and recognised the need for a robust income stream to balance other potential uses for the building.

A thread of desire for something extraordinary and rather wonderful ran through the responses. A number of respondents communicated that they didn't want something mediocre, dull, or 'what we already do':

*"It should be something different"*

*"It needs to contribute to the liveliness of the town"*

*"Aim higher"*

As well as the public survey, a resident submitted a paper based on conversations with the manager of the Heritage Centre, lead of Knutsford Hosts and the former volunteer lead for heritage for the Neighbourhood Plan. His Paper suggests future complementary mixed uses for the building. Each of the proposed mixed uses has its own credibility, seizing opportunity and responding proactively to need. The uses also have the potential of working well together at 60 King Street. They comprise:

- A co-located Knutsford Tourism and Heritage Centre;
- Community uses, as a venue for specific events (such as for part of Knutsford's Music Festival, the exhibition of art and a hopefully reinstated Knutsford Literary Festival, and similar functions, live performances and crafts events), for a meeting

place for local clubs and societies, for traditional and modern dancing and possibly for a satellite office for KTC;

- And specific more income-generating uses (such as a wedding and wedding reception venue, and a coffee shop).

His second paper focused on the future proposed mixed uses of 60 King Street including a co-located Knutsford Tourism and Heritage Centre. Knutsford currently has no Tourism Centre – and the existing Knutsford Heritage Centre (KHC) can be assessed as not fit for purpose, reasons for this include:

- Its poor location and lack of visibility.
- Limited access.
- Limited size of its premises, restricting what is owned and displayed and limiting event capacity.
- Limited diversity.
- Limited funding and funding streams.

## 4.2 STUDENTS

### ***About the Respondents***

This digital survey was completed by a total of sixty-six (66) respondents from in and around Knutsford. All respondents were asked to identify their age range. The results are as follows:

- 76.9% of respondents (50 persons) were under the age of 16
- 13.8% of respondents (9 persons) were between the ages of 16 to 17
- 9.2% of respondents (6 persons) were between the ages of 18 to 21



Almost two-thirds of the respondents identified as female, in keeping with research trends which show that women have a higher response rate for surveys, when compared to men. The majority of respondents (90.7%) identified as white and only one person indicated that they have a disability.

## **KEY LEARNINGS**

### ***Young people's opinions about Knutsford***

- **Safe Spaces**
  - According to the survey, **the majority of young people (57%) believe that the town provides safe spaces.** When asked, “Do you feel your community has good enough safe spaces in Knutsford?” of those who responded, 57.1% (4 persons) said yes and 42.9% (three persons) said no. \*Please note that a large number of respondents skipped (59 persons), skipped this question.
- **Access to Activities, Events & Shops**
  - The survey also showed that the majority of young people (88.9%) felt that Knutsford provided them with good access to activities, events and shopping. \*Please note that a large number of respondents skipped (57 persons), skipped this question.

### ***Young People Behavioural Patterns***

- **Event Attendance**
  - The survey showed that the town needs to find ways to engage its youth more as the majority of young people either engage in events ‘less than once a year’ ( 27.3%),

once every six months (19.7%) or once a year (15.2%). Additionally, almost a quarter of the youth (24.2%) never engage in any town activities.

- **Community Engagement**

- The survey showed that the vast majority of young people (88.3%) are not members of any local heritage organisation.

### ***The Needs of the Community***

The data showed that young people believed that “Art/creative events and spaces” are what the town needs most.

### ***Perceptions of 60 King Street***

- **Awareness of 60 King Street**
  - The data showed that the majority of the town’s young people (63.1%) have heard about 60 King Street.
- **Access to 60 King Street**
  - The data showed that most young people (77.8%) were previously able to access 60 King Street. However, \*please note that 57 people skipped this question.
  - The survey showed that the Belle Epoque was not frequented by young people, as only 18.2% of respondents (12 persons) had visited it. The remaining 81.8% (54 persons) said they had never visited.

### ***Mapping the Way Forward***

- **Taking stock: What is missing in Knutsford**
  - The survey showed that the young people of Knutsford felt that what the town lacked most were ‘art/creative spaces’ (41.5%), ‘activities for young people’ (41.5%)



'performance and event spaces' (38.5%) and 'leisure activities' (33.8%).

- **Event Attendance**

- The survey asked the young people, "What kind of event would you attend in Knutsford?" It found that live music (62.1%), theatre productions (44.8%); live performances (29.3%) and video/electronic arts and crafts events (29.3%) were the most popular. As such, these events should be the areas in which the council should invest if they wish to increase youth engagement within Knutsford.

- **Repurposing of 60 King Street**

- The survey asked the young people of Knutsford "What might you like to see the building being used for?" The results show that they envision the building being repurposed most as a space for 'musical events' (50%); 'performance spaces' (36.4%); 'Art studios/creative spaces' (34.8%); 'on screen and live performance space' (33.3%); and a technology hub (30.3%).

- **Skills Audit**

- The survey also asked the young people to identify the skills and education needs that they would like to be provided from within 60 King Street. The two most popular needs they highlighted were 'Art classes' and 'Language classes'.

### ***Exploring Potential Offerings***

The data showed that young people are MOST LIKELY to engage with 60 King Street as:

- Musical event space - 63.5% of responses
- Onscreen and live performance space - 60.9% of responses
- Performance space - 49.2% of responses
- Technology hub (with access to 3D printers, etc.)- 42.9% of responses
- Art studios/creative spaces -39.1% of responses
- Creative 'maker' spaces and classes - 35.4% of responses

### ***Deterrents of Engagement***

The research shows that there are a few key issues which may stop young people from engaging with 60 King Street. When asked "What would stop you attending any future events or activities at 60 King Street; do you have any concerns about the future of the building?", they raised the following issues:

- Prohibitive Costs: Multiple persons noted that they would not patronise the space "if it was expensive".
- Issues with Access: One individual noted that they would not participate in events if they were "difficult to access"
- A disregard for heritage: One young person spoke about the value of protecting the building, noting that they would not patronise the space "If the historic exterior of the building was destroyed and remade"
- An inundation of cafes: Two individuals mentioned that they would not be interested in the building becoming a cafe space, as one explained "we have way too many cafes in Knutsford so i wouldn't go if there was another one"
- The target audience: One young person explained that they would not patronise if it did not cater to their age group , writing "If it weren't for the older kids because barely anything

- is in Knutsford for them”
- Creation of a space that is not needed or wanted: Some of the young people spoke about what they felt the building should not be used for, with one saying they would not like the venue to be used for rough sports and another writing, “office spaces would be boring and a community space is better”.

## 4.3 TEACHERS

### *About the Interviewees*

Despite reaching out to 10 schools with a teacher’s survey and enquiry about a 1-2-1 interview - including standard curriculum, SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), and performing arts - the response was limited due to the time-period in which the consultation was taking place being the run up to half term, exam period and sports day. However, we were able to gather 1-2-1 interviews with three school teachers in total. The interviewees taught at the following schools:

- Fuchsia School of Dance
  - Dance classes in Ballet, Modern, Jazz, Tap, Street, Repertoire & Conditioning from the age of 2 – 18 years. They have been in Knutsford for 9 years and have taught hundreds of students in that time.
- SMB Dance
  - Based in Knutsford, Mobberley & Poynton, SMB Dance offers a wide range of classes for 2 years to adults.
- Adelaide Heath Academy
  - All the students at Adelaide Heath Academy have an EHCP, primarily SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental

Health), some exhibit very challenging behaviour and mainstream schooling is not always the most appropriate setting. The school is located in Longridge.

Due to the specific nature of the three schools, we asked the interviewees a range of questions spread across our three focus areas of Knutsford in general, education and business.

### *Provision for Dance & Performing Art Schools*

It was clear from the two dance schools that there is no demand for space to either teach or perform. One mentioning that despite the benefits of 60 King Street would have to her sector if it were to turn into a performing arts space, it would in fact then be competition for them as they both own their own spaces. After some extra market research with other performing art schools, it seems many do in fact have their own space already, and therefore this seems to have a low demand. It was mentioned that there are lots of places to rent as dance studios already, with Knutsford Leisure being a go-to.

As for spaces to perform to audiences, both dance schools were very happy to continue with the spaces they were performing in already, such as schools, halls and The Grange Theatre. However, the SMB Dance interviewee did state they would still be interested in 60 King Street should it become a performing space, but reaffirmed again that they were happy as things were regarding their schooling facilities and performing provision. These comments were also reflected in an interview with Knutsford Little Theatre, which is in section 4.6 Charities & Services.





### **EHCP Schooling**

When asked whether there is enough provision relating to the service they provide and their pupils, the response was that there were not enough GPs and not enough schools. Due to the nature of the school, classes are small and so are the groups which travel on trips. Trips and activities vary from more active bookings such as laser tag, however they also go to museums and have been to the heritage centre. They would be interested in learning activities relating to heritage, whilst they do not have a huge budget, they do have their own minibus providing travel from their Longridge location.

Something which was suggested was working space for their pupils. A proportion of the pupils learn from home. The interviewee stated, however, that some pupils would benefit from learning space outside the home as they have siblings and a lack of a quiet learning space within their home. It was suggested that small spaces for singular pupils and their tutors to learn in a quiet environment would be beneficial.

### **Extra Comments**

Two of the interviewees were Mums living in the local area, and said that the provision of activities for young children and parents and babies/ toddlers is strong. However, there is a lack of activities for teenagers, this is something which was mentioned by other interviewees also. A specific suggestion was an art class for young teenagers.

## **4.4 VISITORS**

This part of the consultation was done via a survey which asked participants if they had visited Knutsford before, what they felt was

missing from the town centre, why they were visiting and what their favourite part was. Only one person took part in the survey and completed all the questions. We had asked local accommodation providers to help distribute the survey, as well as it being shared via the Council website and social media pages, but struggled to receive coverage. It may be easier to target this group further in the future as part of promoting special events in the town.

A summary of the response is as follows:

- They were a regular visitor, from Northwich.
- The respondent said both Art/ Creative Spaces and Galleries and Exhibitions were missing from the town centre, both centering around creativity and art.
  - Examples of what was not selected were Performance and Event Spaces, Leisure Activities and Cafes etc.
- They were visiting to go shopping and eat out.
- Their favourite part of their visit was the shops. Given the option to select multiple answers, they did not select the gastronomic offer, the cultural offer or the local architecture.



## 4.5 LOCAL BUSINESSES & TOURISM

Local businesses were consulted via both a survey and 1-2-1 consultation interviews. We made contact with over 22 local businesses, however were only able to conduct two interviews and received three responses to the survey. This lack of response suggests there is little demand for office and retail space. As well as local businesses, we consulted with Marketing Cheshire, Cheshire's Destination Management Organisation (DMO). Both forms of consultation have been analysed below.

### Survey

The survey firstly wanted to understand the businesses postcode location, they're knowledge about 60 King Street and it's heritage, then moving on to whether there was any opportunity for their business to either rent or use the space in a different way. Key points are as follows:

- Two participants were from Hospitality (HOSP1 and HOSP2) and one was from Arts and Crafts (A&C), all of which were located within the WA16 postal code (one specified they were in Knutsford).
- One of the HOSP2 and the A&C said they were aware of 60 King Street and its heritage. The other HOSP1 selected 'No' but left a comment saying 'Always looking in the window but do not know of its heritage', illustrating how people are drawn to its eye-catching structure.
- Also, HOSP1 and A&C said they felt Positive about the building in its vacant state, agreeing 'the architecture contributes to the town centre'. HOSP2, however, selected 'Poor - it is vacant and detracts from the environment in the town centre'.

- When asked if they felt supported by KTC, HOSP2 then selected Somewhat, whereas the other two selected Yes.
- When asked if they would rent office, event or retail space at 60 King Street, both HOSP participants said no, whereas A&C stated yes, leaving a comment saying 'Artisan Market'.
- Out of the two HOSP participants, HOSP1 was the only to select one of the five answers, which was 'The opportunity to develop relationships with other local businesses and suppliers'. However, A&C selected two; Access to different shoppers/ target markets and Location.
- When asked to rate their communication with the KTC, HOSP1 and A&C both selected Positive (reflecting the answers stating if they felt supported by KTC). HOSP2 remained Neutral.

The results, though limited, illustrated a majority vote in support of the building and the relationship with KCC. However, negative feelings towards 60 King Street's vacant state, which were also included in a response on a community facebook page, were still made apparent. As well as receiving the two hospitality survey responses, the lack of response in total and high amount of cafes/ restaurants provision stated by interviewees from other sectors illustrates that hospitality is something already well catered for in Knutsford. The Arts and Crafts participant's suggestion of using the space as an artisan market, due to its central location and the opportunity to access different shoppers, suggests a lack of provision and also aligns with other responses from interviewees in other sections.

### Interviews





The two interviews which took place covered needs, provision and opportunities, covering tourism, strategy, young people and creative projects. The interviewees were as follows:

- **Marketing Cheshire**
  - Marketing Cheshire is responsible for building an effective tourism and place marketing strategy, promoting the sub-region nationally and internationally to business and leisure visitors, and investors. It is a collaboration with Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership.
- **We Are Filament**
  - Their mission is to produce projects with & for children in areas of socio-economic need, and/or rural isolation, to enable more children to access life-changing creative experiences. They are a community interest company (CIC).

### **Marketing Cheshire: Tourism**

When asked what were the biggest challenges for the Knutsford area with regards to creating a tourism offer, they stated that it is a funny market as there is an upmarket feel about it but they feel like Knutsford suffers from that, as it feels like it is in limbo. The main things they said Knutsford would benefit from revolve around food and drink. They said they feel the town is transitioning, and there is a gap in the market for a 'decent food and drink offer', which is where they are trying to position Cheshire as a destination as a whole. As well as this, a boutique hotel, ideally mainstream and quirky, would meet a demand for 4 star plus hotels in Cheshire.

### **Local Context**

A boutique hotel / food and drink destination / events space would boost tourism. Arts is more Northwich area with music festivals, Knutsford isn't known for that but that's not to say there isn't space for that. Tatton estate has more family events and days out, like the RHS Flower Show.

### **Partnership**

Cheshire Marketing promotes events rather than holds them, and they have been trying to position Cheshire as a place for conferences and events such as scientific events and life sciences conferences. 60 King Street could be added to their "Meet in Cheshire" package, advertising locations as event, meeting and conference spaces

[\(https://cheshireandwarrington.com/what-we-do/marketing-cheshire/meet-in-chester-and-cheshire/\)](https://cheshireandwarrington.com/what-we-do/marketing-cheshire/meet-in-chester-and-cheshire/).

They themselves have been looking for meeting spaces which are able to be socially distanced. Adding to this they are happy to remain in the consultation and would like to help position their offer within the 60 King Street project.

### **We Are Filament: Creative Projects & Children**

Filament Projects is a female-led Community Interest Company producing projects with and for children. Since 2017 they have worked in partnership with schools, local authorities and cultural organisations such as the National Trust to develop projects, performances and installations that invite children to discover their own agency and creativity. Their main need is affordable **ad hoc meeting spaces**, as they



believe there are only high end, corporate facing spaces in Knutsford and other affordable spaces, such as village halls, are always booked up.

They suggested that some spaces offer a pay what you can model, as mentioned elsewhere in the consultation, where the Council suggests a benchmark price however the occupant pays what they can based on this figure. They would be interested in meeting space as well as rehearsal space, which would require access to a self-catering kitchen. The company leader lives in Knutsford, so they believe parking would not be an issue, however, it would be useful to have a space to offload equipment from a vehicle and a space to lock this away overnight. A day-offer for renting would also be something of interest, as this would be required for their rehearsal time.

#### Hot Desking

Filament have become work-space free, to be more environmentally friendly and to not have a permanent space for no reason as much of their work takes place in schools, whilst their meetings and rehearsals are in external spaces. They wondered if there would be an appetite for hot desking, as this would interest them on an occasional basis. This would be useful for them to access admin facilities. Hot desking has not received a high response of demand within the consultation however.

#### Art Club

They are hoping to develop an art club, which would take shape in 6 weekly blocks of 2 hour workshops, aimed at 5-11 year olds. They want to do this as they have seen the pandemic has accelerated the needs of children, their socialisation and wellbeing. The groups would have around 10 children, and be led by Filament. They think holding this art

club in a building with rich heritage, amongst Knutsford's art trails, would add to the experience.

## 4.6 CHARITIES & SERVICES

We engaged with a variety of charities and organisations providing community and specialised services to a range of elderly people, parents, adults, teenagers and children. In total, ten interviews took place, highlighting both practical needs, such as meeting rooms and pricing, as well as a current lack of provision focusing on youth engagement and tackling mental health and wellbeing issues within the area. The interviewed organisations and charities were as follows:

- **ChAPS Autism Service**
  - Providing Adult Socialisation Groups and Adult Daytime Supervision to people with Autism, as well as Parent Support Meetings. Their provision covers Cheshire, and they currently hold their Parent Support Meetings in Knutsford.
- **Royce Court Elderly Living**
  - A retirement living community of 40 studio flats in Knutsford. The Royce Court Residents Association have previously offered wellbeing sessions under their Meet The Neighbours Project. This project included physical sporting activities, outdoor community arts, large garden games, chair-based exercise.
- **Fallen Angels Dance Theatre**



- Offering recovery groups for people who have suffered with addiction in Chester and Liverpool, using the medium of dance to aid recovery.
- **GirlGuiding Knutsford**
  - With 200 girls & adult volunteers who belong to Rainbows, Brownies & Guide units in Knutsford, Mobberley and Goostrey.
- **Just Drop-in Youth**
  - Working to provide free and friendly services to children and young people, offering support and focusing on mental health and wellbeing. They operate in Macclesfield and the surrounding areas.
- **Kids Allowed Day Care**
  - Award winning childcare & holiday clubs delivered by an established, passionate team from simply purpose built premises with outdoor play, located in Shaw Heath.
- **The Welcome**
  - Community centre for the Shaw Heath and Longridge communities, offering support groups, activities, school lunches and luncheons for people aged 60+.
- **Knutsford Heritage Centre**
  - Knutsford Heritage Centre is an independent charity which aims to protect and promote the rich and diverse heritage of the town for the benefit of residents and visitors. It is run entirely by volunteers. They offer walks, tours, a shop and an archives and exhibition space.
- **Shaw Heath Social Club**

- A long-established social club for it's local communities, hosting events, with a licensed bar and catering offer.
- **Knutsford Little Theatre**
  - Theatre venue, based on a membership governing model, offering productions and theatre hire with a licensed bar.
- **Knutsford & District Lions**
  - We raise funds locally and donate and provide support for the local community, who organise fundraising events and donation schemes focusing on fuel poverty, isolation and other community activities.

### ***Mental Health & Wellbeing***

It was highlighted by the Just Drop-In Youth charity that there is a lack of provision offering services to children and young people struggling with mental health and a lack of wellbeing within the area, despite having proportionately the same amount of demand for this as other areas in which they operate. The interviewee stated there was possibly an assumption that these kinds of issues did not occur as much within the Knutsford area than in Macclesfield, for instance.

They reported that there has been a massive increase of young people struggling with mental health, and that there are issues with child protection and specifically social risks in Knutsford. They stated that if they could offer 10 times the amount of support they are now, they would still be at full capacity. As well as supporting young people and children, the demand for supporting parents has also increased.



The main areas of support offered by Just Drop-In take the form of counselling, parenting training programmes, and support groups and activities. People who live in Knutsford do come to their services delivered in Macclesfield, but travel is a barrier as the bus services are poor. They stated that they have been trying to find a suitable venue in Knutsford for 2 years but have been unsuccessful. They would not require a whole new branch, just spaces to rent on an ad hoc basis. The impact of the pandemic and the rise of the cost of living on parents' mental health was also addressed by the Kids Allowed Day Care centre located in Shaw Heath.

Mental health for young people was also spoken about by the manager of Knutsford Little Theatre on a personal basis, as a Knutsford resident. He said his 14-year-old daughter has struggled and that the provision of support is 'terrible everywhere, due to funding'. He relayed how his daughter's mental health benefited from attending a jewellery making workshop at The [Fisherton Mill Gallery](#) in Salisbury, and he believes this is a gap in the market for this in Knutsford. This gallery combines studio space, workshops, exhibition space and retail.

When speaking to the manager of Royce Court Elderly Living, a lack of wellbeing activities for his elderly residents was central to his feedback. He stated that although they are a community for people aged 55+, many of his residents are between the ages of 70 and 90, and several have suffered with their mental health due to the effects of the pandemic and isolation. Some of these residents have received counselling and one is currently receiving a befriending service over the phone. He suggested that the garden at 60 King Street could be a great resource for wellbeing activities, for instance a sensory garden, adding

that due to the age of his residents, safe accessibility is key for engagement.

### **Children & Young People**

Whilst mental health and wellbeing for young people was a key topic in this section of consultation, youth provision in general was mentioned throughout by various sectors. This was central to our interview with The Welcome, the community centre located in Longridge, who thought more activity based youth engagement, in an innovative way, could be a great option for 60 King Street. Suggestions were a recording studio, cookery classes as well as dance classes, MMA boxing and other sports activities taking place in the larger main area. They also stated that a youth service could be held a couple nights a week, giving young people a safe space to socialise.

This suggestion of sport activities for young people was also mentioned by the ex-chairman and secretary of the Shaw Heath Social Club, who has recently retired from the role after being a very active member. He said that teenagers within the area have nothing to do. He observed groups of young people congregating on the street as being the main offer of socialising and activity for them. He stated that there is nowhere to simply play football, not pitch or other sporting facilities, and that many young people can't afford to travel to their local Youth Football Club at Egerton.

As previously mentioned, the manager of Knutsford Little Theatre personally found that the provisions of activities for his teenage child were limited, and the benefits of a creative workshop were evidenced with his own daughter.



### **Shaw Heath & Longridge Communities**

The ex-chairman of Shaw Heath Social Club said a significant barrier for young people travelling from the Shaw Heath and Longridge areas to the town centre was the lack of buses. He has been living in the area for his whole life and mentioned when he was younger buses were far more regular and he visited the town centre regularly. This is also having an effect on safety, as parents do not want their children travelling then walking to their Shaw Heath and Longridge homes in the dark, especially during the winter months. This being said, the lack of public transport would of course be a barrier to all age groups.

When speaking to Shaw Heath's branch of Kids Allowed Day Care, the interviewee said she herself rarely goes into Knutsford town centre in her free time and feels this is shared by some of her colleagues and the parents she interacts with. She stated that this was due to the provision of shops, restaurants and other offers being too expensive. She said that due to the pandemic and mainly the rise in the cost of living, even people who were not struggling financially before, are now. She added that even if these prices were reduced, the people living in Shaw Heath, Longridge and other more 'working class' surrounding areas would still need to feel 'invited' as the perception of Knutsford Town Centre being 'upper class' creates a social barrier. She said despite having a 'strong connection' with Knutsford, she's observed a collective feeling that it has become 'too pretentious'. This led her to saying that she feels there is a lot of poverty in Knutsford but it seems to be 'covered up'.

### **Facilities & Activities**

#### **Ad Hoc Rooms to Rent**

A lack of ad hoc room renting spaces for meetings, workshops and groups was heavily mentioned by ChAPS, Knutsford GirlGuiding and Just Drop-In Youth, as well as interviewees in other sections, and will be a key part of the suggested activities. All interviewees said finding a location to rent rooms was incredibly tricky and that the main go-to space is Knutsford Methodist Church, however, it is in such demand that there is a waiting list.

As previously mentioned Just Drop-In are eager to offer their support services in Knutsford, but cannot find a location. ChAPS and GirlGuiding had similar feedback. ChAPS operate in different locations around Cheshire, with the kind of services offered based on the popularity of the service within that specific area. They have been running a Parent Support meeting in Knutsford for 7 years and it has consistently been well attended. However, they have resorted to having these meetings in pubs which they feel is unsuitable, this is the same circumstance for the GirlGuiding weekly meeting for the district organisers which takes place in Knutsford.

ChAPS now have their Parent Support meeting at a pub on the motorway entering into Knutsford, but would prefer a town centre location as it is more accessible. However, a barrier in finding a town centre location, as well as the lack of provision, has been the lack of parking, something the manager really wants to somehow be tackled.

It was also mentioned that due to the high demand the prices of ad hoc renting has in some cases, going up to £50 an hour which is unaffordable for these organisations. GirlGuiding said they normally



would pay around £20 to £25 per hour. A suggestion of a subsidy rate for charities was made, where a rate is suggested by the Council to benchmark, but then charities pay what they can afford. She continued to say that due to the increase in home working and companies becoming remote, she believes there will be an increase in businesses needing to rent ad hoc rooms for presentations and workshops. By having the right digital equipment, she suggests this as a good way to offer both the subsidy rate for charities, whilst still receiving a fixed rate from businesses. However, it's worth flagging again the lack of response from local businesses and that this may indicate a lack of demand.

The Welcome stated that in terms of them using the space, the building could be used to hold fundraising events/presentations and running projects such as cookery classes and youth projects etc.

### Youth Provision

There is a clear demand for activities and services that target older children and teenagers, offering socialisation, skills development, boosting mental health and wellbeing. This could take form in both more specified services such as 1-2-1 counselling as well as more social and creative workshop activities.

### Catering

For charities and services, the most popular option were self catering services, where facilities are available to make and serve hot drinks, with a self catering kitchen available too. It was mentioned that there are already a high number of coffee shops and cafes already in Knutsford. The Welcome suggested a kitchen which could

accommodate 15 people with numerous ovens, hobs etc for cookery classes as well as being used to cater for commercial events.

When speaking to Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, the interviewee mainly provided tips when engaging with vulnerable people, as they did not feel they understood enough about the Knutsford communities specifically. They did suggest that having a cafe or place for people to chill out and gather was a useful thing. With reference to the above comments, this suggestion of a place to be social could mean a kitchen with an area with sofas and other elements which would cater to this. This was in reflection of her time working with groups of vulnerable people who knew each other.

For ChAPS, the Parent Support Meetings always partner with a meal out, which is something she said was an important part of the experience and why pubs had previously been options. However, she said that due to the town centre location, the group could use the ad hoc meeting space and then easily walk to a restaurant/ pub/ cafe for the meal.

### Suggestions for Small Spaces

- Youth Counselling
- Craft workshops and studio space
- Small group meeting space
- Self catering kitchen for groups renting other rooms

### Suggestions for Larger Spaces

- Workshop, training and meeting space for charities and businesses

- Activity and sport space for young people
- Large kitchen to accommodate cookery classes and then catering for events

### **Key Points**

2 people stated that it was either not realised or not publicly seen that there is a lot of poverty and mental health issues for young people in Knutsford.

When asked on how to best contact and engage with young people with mental health issues, Just Drop In made the following points:

- It's important to segment it, what works well with older people may not work well with young people. Look at each key group and think about how best to engage them, with young people we always provide pizza.
- We have an advisory board of young people in Knutsford. We always give them food, bus or taxi reimbursements.
- We have an annual Have Your Say Day and anyone who comes gets a gift voucher, as a reimbursement for leaning on expertise. We have an offer tailored to what each group may need.
- Use groups that already exist as gatekeepers.
- Some young people have already wanted to set up a group, as there is nothing for people aged 18-25.

3 Interviewees mentioned how the cost of living is affecting people's accessibility to services, retail/ catering and activities and mental health.

## **4.7 COMMUNITY GROUPS**

We interviewed six community groups, which covered heritage, volunteering, Ukrainian refugees, socialisation for the elderly, parenting and fundraising activities. A key theme again was the lack of meeting space in Knutsford as well as a general lack of a community centre type space, despite the high amount of community groups, spirit and enthusiasm.

This section also highlighted a want for heritage, art and craft related activities, for both the general public and older children and teenagers. There was a higher focus on having a cafe in this section, for retail as well as social purposes, but with the president that it would have to have an interesting and innovative spin in order to make it something which didn't fall to the background behind the other current cafe offers in Knutsford. The community groups were consulted with were as follows:

- **Knutsford Hosts**
  - Knutsford Hosts is the town-wide community volunteering scheme, consisting of a team of trained community volunteers as a resource for creating community events.
- **Knutsford Mums**
  - Consisting of a website and communal facebook page run by a Mother of two toddlers in Knutsford. They advertise any events or activities happening for children and parents in Knutsford as well as support.
- **Knutsford Homes for Ukraine**
  - The community group set up to organise homes for Ukrainian refugees. They host auctions, organise and



furnish homes for the refugees and do other general fundraising events.

- **Canute Lunch Club**

- A volunteer-run Lunch Club provides lunch and companionship twice a week for Knutsford and District elderly Residents at Toft Cricket Club.

- **The Gaskell Society**

- A Society formed to celebrate, promote and record the work of Elizabeth Gaskell, an English novelist. With members worldwide, the Society's spiritual home is in Knutsford.

### Community Resource

A key part of this consultation was there being a lack of a central point of community space, despite the high amount of community groups and sense of community spirit. Knutsford Hosts said using the iconic building as a focal point for the community, ensuring it is opened up to 'ordinary people' would be key. They reflected on how uses of the building as a high end restaurant and wedding venue meant access was limited, and this was something they wanted to see change.

Going onwards from this term 'focal point', Knutsford Homes for Ukraine would like to provide the Ukrainian families a place where they know they could go, a *community-owned* space. Again, something mentioned by several interviewees was the lack of ad hoc meeting rooms available to rent, again mentioning the main resource currently being the Methodist Church which has a waiting list. Larger rooms were the preferred option for meeting space. The Gaskell Society echoed this, saying that the town centre is really missing meeting

rooms. The Gaskell Society said 'with the right price they would be interested in renting a room, ensuring they are suitable for hybrid provision, meaning some attendants would be in-person and others online for the same meeting. A hybrid setup would require reliable wifi and space for the equipment.

They are currently meeting at Brook Street Chapel, paying £30, however parking is an issue. This was something flagged by a number of interviewees throughout various sections, with an understanding that Knutsford is a historic town and this may not be a fixable issue. This was said to be an issue for people with disabilities, where a car/ minibus is the key mode of transport. The Canute Lunch Club mentioned that Knutsford and District U3A (with 700+ members), a self-help organisation for people no longer in full time employment, hold lots of classes, and another space in the town where people could attend classes would be helpful.

### Heritage & Cultural Offer

Particularly from The Gaskell Society and Knutsford Hosts, a lack of cultural and heritage offer in Knutsford was a topic at the forefront of the interview. The two main cultural offers mentioned were the Heritage Centre and the Brook Street Chapel, but that there was a gap for a larger offer due to the many historical figures associated with Knutsford and that Knutsford has not capitalised on its heritage. It was said that Elizabeth Gaskell is a big pull for tourism, as people want to learn about her and see her grave, as well as Richard Harding Watt.

The Gaskell Society have had exhibitions at Brook Street, the library and the heritage centre, and it was suggested that the heritage offer







from 60 King Street could be conjoined with these other locations. There was a sense from them of not wanting a new offer to displease or compete too much with other current offers, with the tower being a unique stand-out part. They said they would definitely be interested in an exhibition space at 60 King Street but would not want it to 'encroach' on the offer at Brook Street. It was mentioned by both the Society and Knutsford Hosts that the current offers have a limited time open to the public and lack of presence and connection in the town.

Knutsford Hosts, who have organised heritage related activities such as the Heritage Open Day and have done their own survey research on residents feelings in Knutsford regarding their heritage and cultural offer, say there's a feel of untapped potential and activities not maximising their ability to engage and educate people.

Knutsford Host's example of this was the Knutsford Literature Festival; they feel something bigger and with more impact could have come out of this such as an adult literacy programme. They continued saying that they believe an artist in residence scheme would be a great idea. They also said due to Knutsford history of great musicians and writers, this can be expanded into a writer and musician in residence on a rolling basis as well, as a programme coexisting with the ad hoc meeting spaces and a commercial offer and something to benefit the economy. This would require an exhibition space, and could be expanded into a youth community art group, ensuring that these programmes always return to their link to Knutsford's heritage and historical figures.

They stated that Knutsford is 'starved of cultural experiences or an opportunity to engage people', which comes with a people not having

enough knowledge of the history of the town they live in. It was said that there is no tourist information point, and volunteers from Knutsford Hosts could run this, along with it providing work experience opportunities for young people.

Ensuring the heritage of the building is conserved was paramount, whilst always refurbishing it to be able to provide the right digital equipment for meetings for both small and large groups, was highlighted.

### Older Children & Teenagers

When speaking to Knutsford Mums, they stated that there was a very strong offer for parents and babies, toddlers and young children, however, there was a notable gap in provision for children aged 8+, especially teenagers. This was based on both experience networking with other mothers within the area and by acknowledging a gap when advertising all the activities for children and young people on their website.

They said they said this lack of provision engaging this age group results in consequences such as young teens gathering in the park, damaging fences, equipment and impacting their safety. Therefore, parents do not want to take their younger children there as much, and they followed by saying the young teens cannot necessarily be blamed for this with 'nowhere to go'.

Suggestions as to how 60 King Street could support/ engage older children and teenagers:

- Youth Clubs with activities aimed at older kids.
- Cafe aimed at this age group
  - Knutsford has a high number of great cafes, but they're all aimed at older people and babies. They suggested somewhere 'cooler'.
- Workshops on jobs and volunteering opportunities
  - The library offers volunteering opportunities but it's felt that no one knows about this. Ensuring these talks and workshops can help young people bulk up their CVs, as the job market is becoming more competitive.
- Teach life skills & wellbeing
  - Trying to combat the effects of the pandemic, both practically, mentally and socially, for young people. It's important to have a safe space for kids who are suffering as a result.

#### Mentioned Comparator: *Altrincham*

A number of respondents used **Altrincham Market Hall** as an example case study for 60 King Street. The listed building was converted into an indoor artisan market with a covered market and a food hall with eight catering companies supplying food to eat in or takeaway. Interviewees stated that after wondering what to turn the building into, the architect decided to convert the whole building into the indoor market layout.



Interviewees stated how the charging model for Council was to instead take a percentage of the catering companies sell, rather than a standard charge of rent for the space, ensuring that both the Council and the tenants are making money. They stated that this transformation has been hugely successful.



This was suggested as an option which would ensure a commercial income, whilst giving opportunities for local businesses. However, on



top of this it was said that there is already a large number of cafes within Knutsford already. When asked how this indoor artisan market could provide opportunities for young people, to learn cooking skills for example, the interviewee replied saying from a business perspective this could impact the longevity of revenue and possibly could be something done once a month.

It was pointed out that every first Sunday of the month, when **Knutsford Maker's Market** takes place, the town is incredibly busy, and this may be an opportunity to take the market indoors and have it running on a regular basis. This market has an array of art, craft, food, drink, coffee, music and street food.

Knutsford Mums suggested Altrincham's Little World for Scholars as a case study from a commercial point of view and as something not currently in Knutsford Town Centre. This is a space to learn and play aimed at young children, set up with activities and miniature sets based on professions (such as a kids-sized fire engine or supermarket). Income is generated by tickets to enter, children's birthday parties and a shop selling children's toys and activities. However, this was a suggestion related to income and it was acknowledged that the age group of young children is already catered for in Knutsford, and possibly this could be copied in a way that would engage older children and teenagers.

#### Commercial Offer

A number of ideas for commercial income have previously been mentioned, such as an artist in residence gallery space, indoor market, and ad hoc rooms for meetings and classes. As well as this, Knutsford

Hosts were keen for the return of the Kings Coffee House. They stated that the garden could be used to grow foods which could be served in the catering offer, such as strawberries for jams etc. However, again it's worth flagging that other interviewees said the provision of cafes is already in good supply and therefore there is a lack of demand, unless with an innovative spin.

With a number of clubs and classes being aimed at older children, teens and elderly people normally taking place on weekdays and after school, it was said by interviewees that the larger rooms could still be used to perform wedding ceremonies. They believed that less people are getting married in churches, and therefore this could be an income stream which would cover the weekend with regards to the use of private rooms.

#### Barriers

Both the Canute Lunch Club and the Gaskell Society said parking is a significant barrier to accessing the town centre. Whilst affecting anyone with a car or travelling via mini bus, this was also said to reduce access to people with disabilities as they require this form of transport.

## 4.8 CONSULTATION - LIVE CONSULTATION EVENTS

### 4.8.1 60 KING STREET EVENT

On Saturday 23rd April a public consultation event took place onsite at 60 King Street. Visitors received an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour followed by a face-to-face discussion to contribute ideas that will help develop a future use for the building.



During the course of the day, six tours of the building (of approx. 40 mins) were delivered by Town Clerk Adam Keppel-Green. Visitors were then offered refreshments and split into smaller working groups with members of the Tricolor team-leading consultation discussions (of approx. 20 mins). 76 visitors shared their perspectives and reflections.

To help frame discussions visitors were asked to consider three questions; a 'starter', 'main course', and 'dessert':

- *What does the town not need? / What is the town missing?*
- *What would you like the building to be used for?*
- *What surprised/interested/concerned you about your visit today?*

### ***The Existing High Street Offer***

- Participants were keen that there was no need for additional café or restaurant facilities on the High Street, but that refreshments should/could be part of the wider 60 King Street offer (some thought this could be facilitated by partnerships with existing local businesses).
- A lack of places to stay if you are visiting the area.
- The lack of a cultural performance centre and community rooms for hire was identified by all groups.
- Many felt the town was missing a heritage destination or 'hub' and that there were issues with the existing Heritage Centre.
- The lack of parking (particularly for coaches) and the planned pedestrianisation of the High Street were a concern for many.

- The lack of amenities for young people was stressed as a factor that could alienate new audiences and make them feel local places and spaces were 'not for them'.

### ***Potential Building Use***

All groups believed that the building lent itself naturally to multiple uses, although access and visitor flow would need to be carefully considered. Common management suggestions included the establishment of a charitable trust with a supportive volunteer core.

Mixed uses suggested by participants included a balance of the following:

- Council offices
- Performing Arts venue (particularly music)
- Room hire
- Residential lets
- Air B&B
- Coffee house
- Heritage hub
- Exhibition venue
- Artist/makers/craft studios
- Retail offer (local produce, local crafts)
- Learning for all, evening classes, skills classes, heritage skills
- Reading, relaxation and refreshments
- Start-up businesses offices
- Film location
- Makers' market
- Community garden
- Heritage learning space for schools

- Tower tours
- Boutique hotel

### ***Building Perceptions***

- The outside space is a unique USP.
- The amount of space available exceeded expectations.
- The state of the building, after a relatively short period of vacancy, is a concern to many.

### ***Case Studies and Contacts***

- Reference the existing Neighbourhood Plan
- Principal Hotel in Manchester is a good case study in a heritage restoration with contemporary use
- Manchester Craft Centre
- Ned Hugh Buxton Jazz Festival
- Buxton Old Swimming Baths

## **4.8.2 THE WELCOME EVENT**

KTC held an event at The Welcome, which attracted three attendees. None were residents of the Longridge/Shaw Heath area. The comments raised were as follows;

### ***The building could be used for***

- displays from Knutsford Heritage Centre
- manned tourist information centre
- Town Council offices
- Community kitchen

### ***The town doesn't need***

- Coffee shops – but if it was the kings coffee house an exception could be made
- Restaurants

### ***The Town does need***

- Village Hall type space
- Dance space
- Community kitchen
- One stop shop for services
- something like the Wilmslow Guild
- Community cooking area

### ***Other comments***

- Suggested linking with the history of sugarcraft (housekeeper at Arley Hall, invited the modern wedding cake)
- Highlighted the merchandising potential of the Kinds Coffee House

## **5. BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT**

### ***Barriers to Access***

A key theme throughout this consultation with regards to concerns about access revolve around a lack of parking in the town centre. This was acknowledged by some as a difficult problem to resolve in a historic town, however, for people who specially require a mini bus or a car, this has been flagged as an issue. This was mentioned by a variety of consultees from different audiences and sectors.





For those living in Longridge and Shaw Heath, it was flagged that the lack of buses going into the town centre is a barrier to engagement. This was flagged as a safety issue for older children and young people who may not be travelling with a guardian. It was mentioned that this is something that has worsened over time, and specifically affects the travel of teenagers and young people who do not have as much to do on the estates.

### **Cultural Barriers**

This was mainly flagged by those who worked or lived in Shaw Heath and/ or via the Student Survey. It was flagged that for people living in more 'working class' areas on the peripheries of the town, they firstly feel they could not afford to have a day out in Knutsford, and secondly they do not feel *invited*. The Student Survey had poor engagement with certain questions, with over 50 respondents skipping several, however, a question which had a good number of responses showed that 82% of the students had never visited 60 King Street. This refers back to a comment from Knutsford Hosts, saying that the previous uses of the building being an upmarket restaurant and wedding venue meant it was not open to 'ordinary people' on a regular basis. This suggests that, although the building is well known, the previous limit to access may have created a cultural barrier, and this is something the new development must improve, especially for students as this age group have a lack of provision.

### **Economic Barriers**

It was mentioned by a number of charities that the rise in the cost of living means more people are struggling. Ensuring that the people who

need support are aware that they can have some form of economic support or reduced price was suggested as a way to support their engagement. Suggestions of what form this could take were bus tokens or vouchers, however, it was also acknowledged that 60 King Street will need commercial income and that there could be a way to support people with less economic flexibility whilst also generating an income.

A demand for ad hoc meeting space is a key headline in this consultation, and some of the organisations said a recent rise in price from some locations has made them not want to rent. Certain charities and organisations recommended different models which would mean charities could pay what they have, whereas other corporate organisations could pay a fixed price.

### **Barriers to Engagement with Heritage**

Knutsford is rich with heritage and a history of interesting historical figures, however, Knutsford Hosts and the Gaskell Society said there is a lack of a cultural and heritage offer. Knutsford Hosts said many people are not aware of the history of the town they live in. This being said, heritage is not a headline theme in what the majority of consultees want the future 60 King Street to focus on. The Student Survey showed a lack of interest in heritage and more of an interest in cultural activities. There is much appreciation for the historic architectural structure of the building, however, a lack of knowledge from some audiences of the history of the building and Knutsford. This highlights that ensuring there is more awareness of this heritage is useful, but also making sure the multi-use of the building offers a range of activities



which spread over cultural engagement etc. too is key and will speak to a range of audiences.

## **6. EMERGING IDEAS AND THEMES**

### ***Ad Hoc Meeting Rooms***

This is a MAJOR HEADLINE from this consultation as well as something which would generate an income stream. This was mentioned by a number of charities, community groups and services, with suggestions of different charging models for different types of organisations, to make it more economically friendly. Having a meeting space will also fall within the wider strategy for Cheshire currently in place by Marketing Cheshire.

### ***A Community Space***

This was also a MAJOR HEADLINE, as there seems to be a lack of a 'focal point' for the Knutsford community to use. Many consultees are in favour of this, and this does partly go against the advice given by Marketing Cheshire, who suggested, amongst other things, for it to fill a demand for 4 star plus hotels in Cheshire.

It was also suggested in the Live Consultation session that the corridor / courtyard space between King Street and the rear of the building could be opened up and used as public realm space - creating space for exhibitions, light installations, and a pop up street food offer to increase the building's connection with the High Street and footfall.

### ***Cultural & Heritage Activities***

As well as offering space for services to rent rooms, either for meetings or to offer 1-2-1/ group support, there is a keen interest in Knutsford boosting its cultural offer. Cultural activities and programmes which have ties with the heritage of Knutsford, such as an artist in residence and writer in residence, was suggested as a way to join heritage with the present in a way which develops skills and boosts engagement. There is a want for more creative spaces, to both hold events and act as a workshop/ studio space; which the upper rooms in the building would be perfectly suited to.

A lack of a cultural performance centre was highlighted by community groups, live consultation, internal consultation and the student survey, however, the performing arts schools said they were currently happy with the spaces they perform at, but would be interested should another performance space become available. An event for cultural activities will also fall within Marketing Cheshire's "Meet in Cheshire" package.

### ***Young People & Wellbeing***

It was highlighted both by adult consultees and the student survey that children above the age of 8 and especially teenagers, have a lack of provision of activities and events. It was also highlighted that young people's mental health has been severely impacted by the pandemic and the demand for wellbeing activities is high. Ensuring part of the offer meets the needs of these young people, will automatically offer an engagement activity which will boost wellbeing, such as a craft workshop, musical event or youth club. Activities or services more streamlined towards wellbeing such as counselling, are also in demand in the Knutsford area and fall back into the category of ad hoc meeting space.





### **Catering**

Whilst Marketing Cheshire are wanting to put Cheshire on the map as a location for exceptional food and beverage, the live consultation, student survey and a number of consultees said there is no need for a cafe or restaurant. Suggestions which were pro-cafe, focused on a cafe targeted at younger people and then also something which used produce from the garden etc. However, it seems the wide-spread dismissal of a need for this may override this, and therefore mean it would not end up providing a robust income stream.

It was suggested that a case study for best practise be the Altrincham Indoor Market, which consist of predominantly a food hall with different suppliers. Whilst it was suggested that 60 King Street could be a permanent home for the Knutsford Maker's Market, the market themselves did not respond to any consultation, suggesting a lack of interest. Catering facilities are however something which was said to be required for ad hoc meeting space, something in high demand. This would mean access to a self-catered kitchen as well as hot beverage facilities which could be placed in meeting rooms to accommodate larger groups. It was also suggested that a larger kitchen space could be used to teach cookery classes to younger people and also provide catering for events, such as community group fundraising.

## **6.1 SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

The ideas below are suggested as elements of what the space could include as a multi-use space.

### ***Ad Hoc Meeting Space***

Rooms which can be rented by community groups, companies and charities and services. There is a need for both large meeting rooms which can accommodate around 25 people as well as smaller rooms which could be rented for 1-2-1 support for young people or a learning space. Some spaces would require good electronic equipment to present, with good wifi access.

### ***Small Office Space***

Although some people said there is no demand, there is demand for small office space/ studio space. Commercial Real Estate Agent William Sillito has been spoken with and has indicated this demand.

### ***Community Cultural Centre***

A space which would offer cultural activities, some of which tie into the heritage of the town. This provides creative space which could host exhibitions as well as provide workshops aimed at all ages, but with a specific target audience of teenagers and young people. The suggestion of an artisan market from the Arts and Crafts business respondee, suggests how this creative space could generate an income and have a retail offer, whilst offering cultural activities and filling a demand for more creative and artistic presence in the town.

This could coincide with being a place which celebrates the heritage and cultural lineage of the town, and stands as a tourist information point. Knutsford Hosts said this could be run by volunteers as well as provide work experience for young people.

### ***A Performance & Events Space***





This would speak to the younger generation, whilst also filling a demand seen in the general survey, internal survey, student survey, Marketing Cheshire and a number of consultees. The Performing Arts Schools did not have much interest in finding another place to perform, but this of course does not limit the programme of performance, and this co-aligns with the live consultation resulting in a demand for live music performance space. This kind of space could be tied into the current festivals and events already taking place in Knutsford, and can help maximise their potential by delivering related workshops and programmes in other parts of the space, as said by some consultees - to take things to the next level.

### ***Wedding Ceremony***

For the larger rooms with more aesthetic details, simple wedding or civil ceremonies could take place within the centre on weekend days. Some consultees have been keen to reinstall the wedding offer, due to the beauty of the 60 King Street building.

### ***Youth Clubs & Activities***

Recurring Youth Clubs and activities aimed at teenagers and younger people, offering the opportunity to develop skills, boost wellbeing, offer guidance and insight for them at this stage of life.

It is recommended that the next step for the project is to use the evidence base from this consultation, considered with Council priorities, to shortlist ideas for a detailed options appraisal process. It is important that dialogue and engagement with the community is maintained as a process of co creation, and that members of the public receive feedback from the consultation process.

## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1 GENERAL PUBLIC SURVEY FULL REPORT

261 fully completed and 54 partially completed surveys were returned. This analysis represents the fully completed surveys only.

#### About the respondents

Most of the respondents live in or close to Knutsford, are female and White British, able-bodied and aged between 31-70. They do not tend to be members of a local heritage organisation, although nearly all are aware of them.

- 95% of respondents live in the WA16 postcode area; 5% live in neighbouring or nearby Warrington, Crewe, Manchester and Stockport postcode areas. One respondent was from overseas.
- All respondents were over 18. The majority (81%) of respondents were between 31 and 70.
  - 3% were 18-25
  - 5% were 26-30
  - 21% were 31-40
  - 23% were 41-50
  - 21% were 51-60
  - 16% were 61-70
  - 8% were over 71
  - 3% preferred not to say.

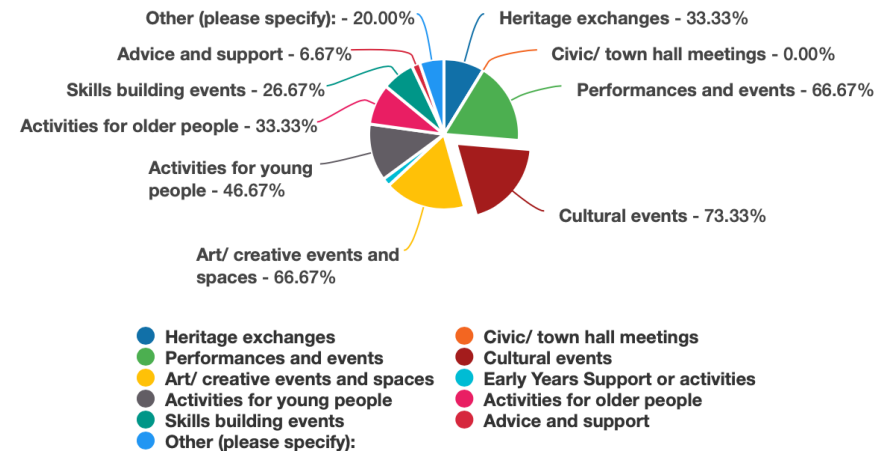
- 64% of respondents were female; 33% were male. Two respondents identified as non-binary; five selected 'other' or 'would rather not say'. There were no transgender respondents. Five respondents (2%) identified as LGBTQIA+.
- Of those respondents who identified as LGBTQIA+, only two answered the questions directed towards them. Half felt there were enough safe spaces in Knutsford; half did not. The respondents selected parades, cultural events and art/creative events and spaces as initiatives which would make them feel more supported in Knutsford.
- 14 people (5%) indicated that they considered themselves to have a disability, with four specifying physical/mobility issues and three with mental health issues.
- Of these, 93% were able to access the building when it was open and 7% were not. Two respondents commented that since their visit, their disability had worsened and would now prevent them from accessing the building.
- 67% of those indicating a disability felt they had appropriate access to activities, events and shops in Knutsford, while 33% felt they did not.
- Reasons for this were given as the condition of the roads and pavements, problems with road closures for events, the topography of the town, a lack of effective and sustainable town planning decisions, and a lack of willingness on the part of individual businesses.
- 8 people commented that their access needs could be improved in the town centre by:



Fixing, maintaining and widening paths and pavements  
 Pedestrianisation  
 Shared surface scheme to afford safe pedestrian priority  
 Imposition of planning conditions specifying access for disabled people

- 91% of respondents were White British (231); 5% White Other (12); 3% preferred not to say (7). One person self-described as Mixed White and Black, one Latinx/Hispanic, and one English.
- Of those people who did not respond 'White British' or 'Prefer not to say' 93% said they did feel welcome to attend activities, events and shops, while one person did not.
- Initiatives which these respondents felt would make their community feel more supported were predominantly Cultural Events, Performances/Events, Art/Creative Events and Spaces.

### What kind of initiative do you think would make your community feel more supported in Knutsford?



- 24% of all respondents indicated that they were members of a local heritage organisation; 76% were not members. Of those who were not members, three were unaware of the existence of any local heritage organisation. Ten people mentioned awareness of Knutsford Heritage Centre and four mentioned supporting or volunteering there.

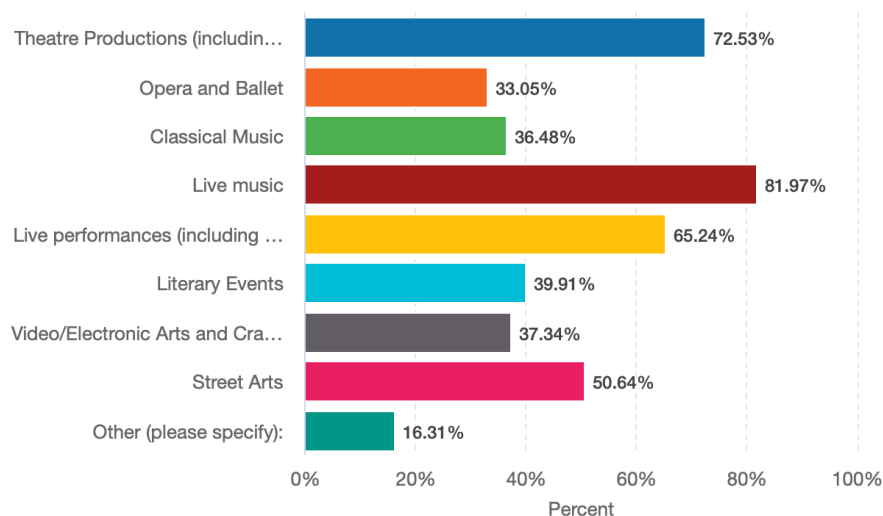
### Understanding People's Experience of Knutsford

Respondents were asked about their perceptions and experience of Knutsford, in order to build a picture of the sort of events and activities that people enjoyed, how often they engaged with cultural and heritage sites and events, and what if anything was felt to be missing from the town centre offer.

## Events and Activities

When asked about the kind of event they would attend in the town, respondents showed a preference for live music, theatre and performance.

### What kind of event would you attend in Knutsford?



38 people (16%) made their own suggestions:

- Food and drink events including street food, markets, beer festival, wine tasting, outdoor dining
- Events for families and children including seasonal activities and trails
- Art exhibitions and galleries
- Festivals, jazz, live comedy, film, live pub music
- Sports and races
- Horticultural/flower shows
- Art/antique/craft fairs

- Pop-up businesses
- Health and wellness events

## Frequency of Visits to Culture and Heritage

The majority (around 60%) of respondents visit cultural and heritage sites/events in or around Knutsford monthly or once every six months. 23% visited once a year or less than once a year, 10% visited weekly, and 5% said they never visited.

## Knutsford Town Centre

Respondents were asked to indicate what they thought was missing from the town centre offer.

Strongest support was for:

- Performance and event space (50%)
- Art/creative spaces (47%)
- Activities for young people (41%)
- Cultural events (39%)

Least popular were cafes, restaurants and office space.

51 people (20%) left suggestions:

- Informal indoor day/evening eating/drinking space similar to Altrincham Market, which was mentioned as a suggested model by three respondents.
- Community centre/meeting/activity space with community cafe and cooperative-style shop.
- Boutique/high end hotel.

- Affordable/more diverse shopping, independent traders, banks, lower cost retail spaces, indoor market.
- Tourist Information Centre.
- Nightclub.
- Shared/co-working space.
- Educational/creative classes.
- High quality cafe similar to Betty's of Harrogate.
- Hybrid family friendly cafe/shop/gallery/maker space (Shrewsbury Museum and STOP Café and Chester Story House were mentioned as models).
- Improved public space, including flowers and street greening, better parking, more seating, a skatepark and exercise equipment on the Moor, improved disability access.

*"There's little cultural offerings for such a lovely town. No event space - things are always crammed into other buildings"*

### The Building at 60 King Street

People were asked what they thought about the building at 60 King Street, what their previous experience of it had been, and how they would like to see the building used in the future. We wanted to understand what people's perceptions of it were, what part it played in the life of the town, and how it might be reimaged.

- 98% of respondents were aware of the building at 60 King Street; 2% (five people) were not.
- 74% of respondents had visited the building when it was The Belle Epoque; 25% had not.
- 52% felt the previous offering of the building was positive; 25% were neutral; 10% felt it was poor. Of the remaining respondents, 7 people had moved to the area after it had

closed. Five people commented that in their opinion it deteriorated after it became a wedding venue.

### Thoughts on the Vacant Building

52% thought the building in its vacant state is poor and detracts from the environment in the town centre; 26% had a positive opinion and felt the architecture contributes to the town centre; 7% felt neutral about it. 14% of respondents (38 people) selected 'other' and left a comment. Of these, 11 people felt strongly that the vacant state of the building is poor or very poor. In addition, 26 respondents commented that they felt both positively and negatively about it, because it is a beautiful building but a tragedy that it is vacant and unused.

*"It's the jewel in the crown of a beautiful town centre and that will never change, but it's so sad to see it empty"*

*"Something needs to be done, we can't allow this magnificent building to decay"*

*"I love the building and it does contribute to Knutsford but it needs to be occupied, loved and vibrant"*

### Future Use of the Building

Respondents were asked to select from a list of things that they might like to see the building used for. The most popular choices were:

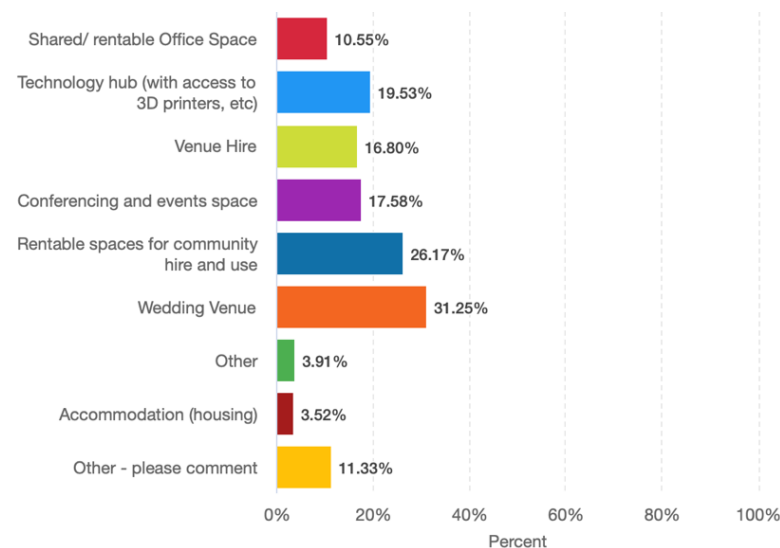
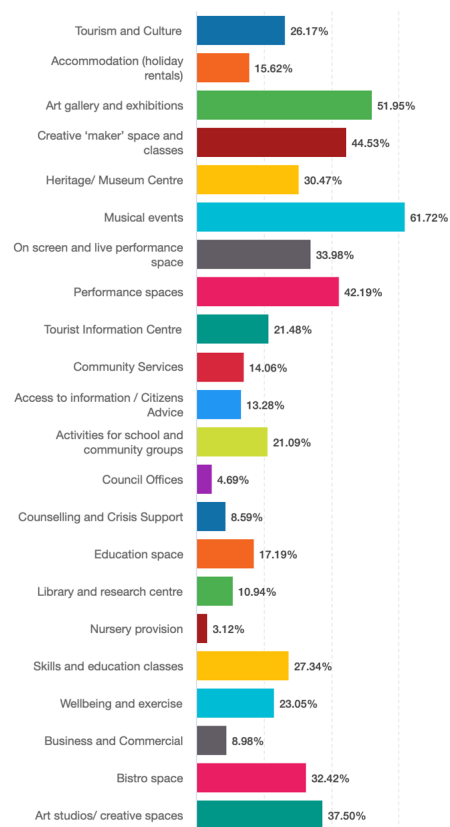
Musical events 62%  
 Art Gallery and exhibitions 52%  
 Creative maker space and classes 45%  
 Performance spaces 42%  
 Art studios/creative spaces 37.5





On screen and live performance space 34%  
Bistro 32%  
Wedding venue 32%  
Heritage/museum centre 30%

What might you like to see the building being used for? (tick all that apply) - these are IDEAS ONLY based on our initial research, and we would really like to hear any other ideas that you might have for the space.



65 people (25%) left comments with suggestions for use. These largely reflected the ticked choices. Many people wanted to see a hybrid, mixed use space, and recognised the need to balance commercial and community benefit. A large number of responses favoured a creative, cultural use for the building.

The most popular suggestions which cropped up several times were:

An informal food and beverage offer with a mix of artisan/local food outlets, space for performance, outlets for artists and makers, and space for event hire. Altrincham Market Hall was suggested as a model by several respondents.

*"I would like to see a mix of users... making use of the beautiful building interior to the full"*



A community space with a cafe and a range of provision for families, children, babies and teenagers, to include meeting spaces for groups, learning sessions, maker space, wellbeing, exercise, and mental health support. Several also wanted to see provision of a community hub with food bank, cooperative shop/food share and services for homeless people.

*"The building ought to be accessible and attractive to all income levels"*

*"Creativity is at the heart of wellbeing...it would be an exciting and vibrant hub in the centre of the town in an incredible building"*

A co-working hub with shared workspace and offices, meeting rooms, event and exhibition spaces and space for community use, focused around an excellent food and beverage provision, ideally local and independent. Suggested models for this were made, including Ducie Street Warehouse, SEASAW, Beehive Lofts and Huckletree.

Events venue for music, comedy, literary festivals and dancing. In partnership with a high quality F&B provider.

A community creative art hub with gallery, performance and studio space, workshops, room hire, and a cafe. Manchester Craft and Design Centre and Camden Arts Centre were suggested as models.

*"I think the space would be incredible as an art hub... it would bring so much diversity and interest to the town"*

A heritage attraction with a museum or possibly an extension or change of location for the existing heritage centre, focused on the Gaskell family and Richard Harding Watt. Several suggested opening the tower as a visitor attraction, with the possible addition of a camera obscura.

Not all were in favour of community use. A number of respondents thought the building should be sold, with the market being allowed to dictate best use. The argument was made that the council had allowed the building to deteriorate and that private ownership would be the best option to preserve it for the future. The council could then invest the proceeds in the provision and extension of existing services. Relocation of council and civic services to King Street was also proposed.

Several different commercial uses were proposed:

- A high-quality, 'destination' restaurant offering fine dining aiming to attract a Michelin chef was suggested by a number of respondents, and the idea of a restaurant-with-rooms or a boutique hotel was also suggested.
- A number of people liked the idea of a high-quality 'heritage' tearooms, returning to the original idea of RH Watt's 'King's Coffee House' and reading rooms, perhaps including an educational focus. Suggested models for this included the Charles Rennie Mackintosh Willow Tea Rooms in Glasgow, Betty's of Harrogate, gallery cafes in Oxford, and the Storyhouse in Chester.
- An indoor market with independent traders, similar to Affleck's Palace in Manchester
- A nightclub
- A wedding venue and 'hub' with wedding themed shops and a cafe.



## Common Threads

The need to respect the significance and architectural integrity of the building and retain its beauty and elegance was strongly felt.

*"I believe any future use must be befitting of the building and its incredible architecture"*

It was noted several times that whatever use was decided, it should be of a very high standard and reflect the strongly felt pride in the town, with the ability to attract visitors and tourists as well as offering something for local people.

*"Making it a cultural building would be great, it could really put Knutsford on the map and be a great pull for visitors"*

It was felt that the outside space and roof garden should be included in the plans, and the importance of an environmentally friendly green space for wellbeing was emphasised. Outdoor seating was felt to be lacking in the town centre.

Several noted that parking was difficult, which could prove problematic for weddings. Discount parking in nearby car parks was put forward as an idea.

A number of respondents felt strongly that there should be 'no more cafes', although it was felt that a F&B offer would be appropriate in a mixed or hybrid use of the building.

## Indication of Potential Engagement

Respondents were then shown the same list of suggested uses and asked to indicate how likely they would be to attend these same offerings within the town centre. Most popular were:

- Musical Events (41% 'very likely' to attend)
- Art Gallery and Exhibitions (40%)
- On Screen and Live Performance Space (33%)
- Performance Spaces (31%)
- Bistro (29%)
- Art Studios/Creative Space (23%)

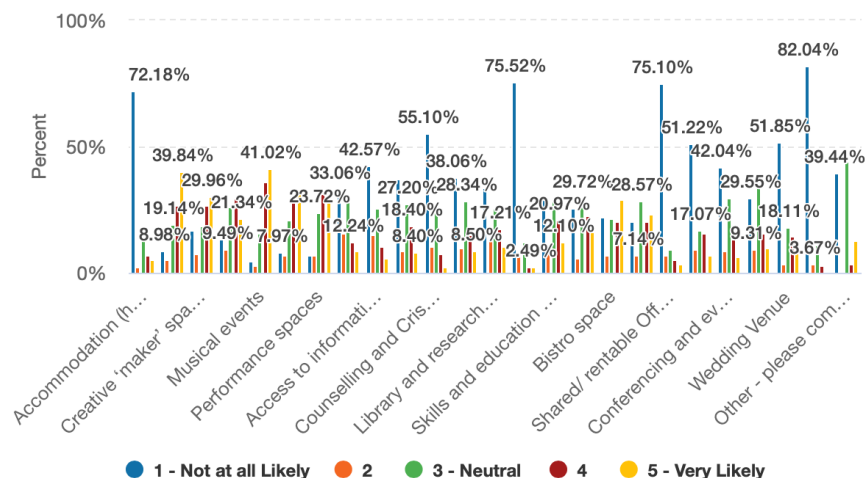
Least popular were:

- Accommodation – Housing (<1% 'very likely' to attend)
- Nursery Provision (2%)
- Shared/Rentable Office Space (3%)
- Holiday Rental Accommodation (5%)





How likely would you be to attend the same offerings within the Town Centre - with 1 being not likely at all, and 5 being very likely?



## Skills and Education

Respondents who had identified skills and education as something they might like to be provided at 60 King Street were asked to indicate what the skills needs might be. Around a quarter of respondents answered this question, offering a wide range of suggestions as summarised below. Several offered suggestions for models of best practice. Wilmslow Guild was mentioned by six respondents, as well as the WEA and the Welcome Café at Longridge.

mental-health art-club wine-tasting  
interior-design weaving painting fashion meditation  
astronomy sewing gardening upholstery gaskell  
environment craft core job-skills knitting  
literature metalwork book-club art-history parenting  
wellbeing bridge languages first-aid cv-writing  
life-coaching lifeskills talks woodwork repair-shop  
jewellery cookery efl chess art pottery  
science guided-tours local-history skills  
mindfulness yoga joinery florist sign-language  
ironmongery engineering genealogy architecture  
healing

## Problems and Concerns

We asked people to tell us what would stop them attending future events or activities at 60 King Street, and whether they had any concerns about the future of the building. 44% of respondents left comments on this question.

The most often reported reason for non-attendance was prohibitive cost or expense of activities or hire. In addition, people mentioned:

- Activities not being relevant or of interest
- Replication of facilities already available
- Hours of opening - needs to be open outside working hours
- Would not visit if it was a chain or purely commercial
- If it was all aimed at families
- If there was no disabled access
- If the future of the building was compromised



Concerns for the future of the building can be grouped into six main areas: public access, cost issues, the heritage of the building, the vacant state of the building, disabled access, and a cry of 'no more restaurants'.

16.5% of respondents expressed the view that the building should have public access, that it should be a community resource that served the residents of the town, reasonably priced, and with something for all age groups, especially young people.

*"It shouldn't just be given a private use. It should be more accessible to the public"*

*"It should be the hub of the Knutsford community"*

*"I would be disappointed if young people were sidelined as they are the lifeblood of any future in a community"*

14% of respondents did not want to see another restaurant, bar or cafe, unless it was complementing or supporting another purpose such as a venue or community resource. The idea of a chain, or exclusive retail, was also unpopular.

*"I can't stress enough how important this buildings future use should be to Knutsford's DNA - and preferably if sustainable as a more open and communal asset for the whole town"*

13% expressed concerns about the likely cost of refurbishing, maintaining, and running the building. It was observed that identifying a successful, sustainable business model would be challenging, and that without it, the building's future would be under constant threat, creating further anxiety. One or two felt selling the building would be the best option.

10% were concerned at the length of time the building has been left empty, and wanted to see timely intervention to prevent further deterioration and rising restoration costs.

*"I would like to see such an iconic building restored and being used by the people of Knutsford"*

10% expressed the importance of respecting the significance of the building's architectural heritage and its cultural importance to the town. The project should aim for a high level of restoration inside and out, retaining its character and individuality, and future use should be something where its historic beauty can be appreciated.

*"I would like to see a use that supported and enhanced the history and architecture of the building"*

*"Knutsford is on the heritage trail with a National Trust property right here and coach parties arriving all the time. Much more needs to be made of Knutsford's architectural heritage"*

7% mentioned the need for disabled access to the whole of the building, as well as the need for accessible parking spaces.

Parking and traffic issues in general were also mentioned by five respondents.

Three people commented that the building should not return to a wedding venue.

Three people were concerned about over-bureaucratic processes and poor past management of the building.

## Future Participation and Support



Respondents were asked how supportive of the building being reimagined/reused they were, on a scale of 1 (not at all supportive) to 5 (very supportive). The average response was 4.4, showing a high level of support.

Respondents were asked if they would like to take an active role in the future of the building.

- 63% might attend events and activities
- 30% might volunteer
- 16% might help manage the building as part of a trust
- 11% might occupy or rent shared spaces
- 23% would do none of these
- 6% selected 'other' and expressed interest in involvement in one way or another.

85 people (one third of respondents) expressed an interest in being part of an online focus group and left email addresses.

## 7.2 GENERAL PUBLIC SURVEY FULL REPORT

### Project brief

This report explores the data gathered from a digital survey focusing on the repurposing of 60 King Street, a Grade II listed building located in Knutsford, Cheshire East. Built in 1907, the building most recently housed a top tier restaurant and bar, which also offered bed and breakfast accommodation. The building has since been vacant as of June 2019 and the Knutsford Town Council would like to invest in repairing the building, in the hopes of developing it into both a space that can meet the needs of the community and a self-sustaining enterprise that will prove commercially viable. This survey is part of a

larger public consultation which also involves gathering the opinions of the local community through live events and 1-2-1 phone calls. The insights drawn from the survey, phone interviews and public events will be synthesised into a cohesive report which will be used to support the town council's drive to restore 60 King Street to a place of civic pride.

### II. About the respondents

This digital survey was completed by a total of sixty-six (66) respondents from in and around Knutsford. Their demographic data is presented below:

#### Age Range

All respondents were asked to identify their age range. The results are as follows:

- 76.9% of respondents (50 persons) were under the age of 16
- 13.8% of respondents (9 persons) were between the ages of 16 to 17
- 9.2% of respondents (6 persons) were between the ages of 18 to 21

\*Please note that one individual skipped this question

As evidenced above, all respondents were aged between 16 and 21, thus ensuring that the data gathered in this survey reflects the voices of the youth within and around Knutsford.

### Gender and Identity



All respondents were asked to discuss their gender and identity. The results are as follows:

- 63.6% of respondents (42 persons) identified as female
- 25.8% (17 persons) identified as male
- 1.5% (1 person) identified as transgender
- 1.5% (1 person) identified as non-binary
- 3% (2 persons) preferred not to select an option
- 3% (2 persons) selected the option 'other'
- 12.1% (8 persons) indicated that they are members of the LGBTQIA+ community

As seen above, almost two-thirds of the respondents identified as female, in keeping with research trends which show that women have a higher response rate for surveys, when compared to men.

## Ethnicity

All respondents were asked to identify the ethnic group to which they belonged. The results are as follows:

- 89.1% of respondents (57 persons) identified as White British
- 1.6% (1 person) identified as White Other
- 1.6% (1 person) identified as Asian British
- 1.6% (1 person) identified as Asian Other
- 4.7% (3 persons) preferred not to say
- 3.1% (2 persons) selected the option 'other', one of which entered the response 'why'

\*Please note, 3.1% (2 persons) skipped this question

The majority of respondents (90.7%) identified as white, which is reflective of the population of Cheshire East, which is estimated to be 96.7% white (Cheshire East Council, 2019)<sup>[1]</sup>

## Disabilities

Only one person (1.7% of respondents) indicated that they have a disability. As such, the survey sample may not be representative of the unique needs that persons with disabilities may have where place making is concerned.

## Key Findings

### 1. Young people's opinions about Knutsford

#### ➤ Safe spaces

According to the survey, the majority of young people (57%) believe that the town provides safe spaces. When asked, "Do you feel your community has good enough safe spaces in Knutsford?", of those who responded, 57.1% (4 persons) said yes and 42.9% (three persons) said no. One person also noted that "there are some unsafe areas which no one goes to", which of course can be expected in any residential area. \*Please note, that a large number of respondents skipped (59 persons), skipped this question.

## ➤ Access to activities, events and shops

The survey also showed that the majority of young people (88.9%) felt that Knutsford provided them with good access to activities, events and shopping. When asked, “Do you have appropriate access to activities, events and shops in Knutsford?”, of those that responded, 88.9% (8 persons) said yes and 11.1% (1 person) said no. One person also highlighted the need for ‘more affordable shops’ within the town.

\*Please note, that a large number of respondents skipped (57 persons), skipped this question.

The survey also asked “How can your access needs be improved in the town centre?” One individual highlighted the need for more artistic events, specifically dance events. Another respondent suggested reintroducing the town circular bus, highlighting the fact that transport links may need to be improved to facilitate better access. Please note, that the majority of respondents (64 persons), skipped this question.

The young people were also asked if “Do you feel you are welcome to attend activities, events and shops in Knutsford?” and 100% of those who responded (4 persons) said yes!

## 2. Young people’s behavioural patterns

### ➤ Event Attendance

The survey showed that the town needs to find ways to engage its youth more as the majority of young people either engaged in events

‘less than once a year’ ( 27.3%), once every six months (19.7%) or once a year (15.2%). Additionally, almost a quarter of the youth (24.2%) never engage in any town activities. When asked, “How often do you typically visit cultural and heritage sites/ events in or around Knutsford?”, the results were:

- 27.3% of respondents (18 persons) selected ‘Less than once a year’
- 15.2% of respondents (10 persons) selected ‘Once a year’
- 19.7% of respondents (13 persons) selected ‘Once every six months’
- 12.1% of respondents (8 persons) selected ‘Monthly’
- 24.2% of respondents (16 persons) selected ‘Never’
- 6.1% of respondents (4persons) selected ‘other’. Their responses included: ‘every couple of weeks’ and ‘whenever there is something on that I like’.
- No respondents selected ‘weekly’

## ➤ Community Engagement

The survey showed that the vast majority of young people (88.3%) are not members of any local heritage organisation. When asked “Are you a member of any local heritage organisation? If not, are you aware of their existence?”, only 10% of those who responded (6 persons) said yes, while 88.3% (53 persons) said no. \*Please note that six (6) persons skipped this question.



### 3. The needs of the community

The data showed that young people believed that “Art/creative events and spaces” are what the town needs most. When asked “What kind of initiatives do you think would make your community feel more supported in Knutsford?”, of those who responded:

- 62.5% (5 persons) selected Art/creative events and spaces
- 12.5% (1 person) selected cultural events
- 12.5% (1 person) selected parade
- 37.5% (3 persons) selected ‘other’, with suggestions including dances & better gyms
- No one selected: ‘civic/town hall meetings’ and ‘performances and events’.

\*Please note that six (58) persons skipped this question.

### 4. Perceptions of 60 King Street

#### ➤ Awareness of 60 King Street

The data showed that the majority of the town’s young people (63.1%) have heard about 60 King Street. When asked “Are you aware of the building at 60 King Street?”, of those who responded:

- 63.1% (41 persons) said yes
- 33.8% (22 persons) said no
- 3.1% (2 persons) selected ‘other’, with one noting, “I’ve heard of it but don’t know where it is”. \*Please note that one (1) person skipped this question

#### ➤ Access to 60 King Street in the past

The data showed that most young people (77.8%) were previously able to access 60 King Street. When asked “Were you able to access 60 King Street when the building was open?”, of those who responded:

- 77.8% (7 persons) said yes
- 22.2% (2 persons) said no

\*Please note that 57 persons skipped this question

#### ➤ Patronage of 60 King Street in The Belle Epoque era

The survey showed that the Belle Epoque was not frequented by young people, as only 18.2% of respondents (12 persons) had visited it. The remaining 81.8% (54 persons) said they had never visited.

#### ➤ Opinions of 60 King street in The Belle Epoque era

The survey showed that two-thirds of the young people held neutral opinions about 60 King Street when it was operating as the Belle Epoque. When asked “What was your opinion of the offering of the building previously, as a restaurant and accommodation?”:

- 66.7% of respondents (44 persons) selected ‘neutral’
- 22.7% of respondents (15 persons) selected ‘positive’
- 4.5% of respondents (3 persons) selected ‘poor’



- 6.1% of respondents (4 persons) selected 'other' with their responses indicating that they were unfamiliar with the space, or didn't have a firm opinion to share.

#### ➤ Opinions of 60 King Street in its current vacant state

The survey showed that most young people held either a neutral opinion (50% of respondents) or positive view (40.9% of respondents) of 60 King Street. When asked "What is your opinion of the building in its vacant state?":

- 50% of respondents (33 persons) selected 'Neutral- I do not notice it'
- 40.9% of respondents (27 persons) selected 'Positive - the architecture contributes to the town centre'
- 7.6% of respondents (5 persons) selected 'Poor- it is vacant and detracts from the environment in the town centre'

### 5. Mapping the way forward

#### ➤ Taking stock: What is missing in Knutsford?

The survey showed that the young people of Knutsford felt that what the town lacked most were 'art/creative spaces' (41.5%), 'activities for young people' (41.5%) 'performance and event spaces' (38.5%) and 'leisure activities' (33.8%). When asked to identify "What, if anything,

do you currently feel is missing from the town centre offer?", the results were:

- 41.5% of responses (27 persons) - 'Activities for young people'
- 41.5% of responses (27 persons) - 'Art/ creative spaces'
- 38.5% of responses (25 persons) - 'Performance and events spaces'
- 33.8% of responses (22 persons) - 'Leisure activities'
- 21.5% of responses(14 persons) - 'Shops'
- 12.3% of responses(8 persons) - 'Activities for older people'
- 10.8% of responses (7 persons) - 'Advice and support services'
- 6.2% of responses (4 persons) - 'Cultural events'
- 6.2% of responses (4 persons) - 'Civic/ town hall meeting space'
- 4.6% of responses (3 persons) - 'Restaurants'
- 4.6% of responses (3 persons) - 'Cafes'
- 4.6% of responses (3 persons) - 'Heritage and interpretation'
- 4.6% of responses (3 persons) - 'Hireable venues'
- 4.6% of responses (3 persons) - 'Early Years Support or activities'
- 3.1% of responses (2 persons) - 'Nothing is missing from the current offer'







- No respondents selected 'Office space'
- Additionally, twelve (12) persons selected 'Other' and their suggestions included:
  - a dance studio (three requests)
  - a dance/performing arts company
  - more takeaways
  - a Starbucks coffee shop
  - an arcade
  - art galleries
  - sporting facilities (e.g. gyms and climbing centres)
  - clothing shops for teenagers (e.g. H&M, new look)
  - LGBT safe spaces

#### ➤ Event attendance

The survey asked the young people, "What kind of event would you attend in Knutsford?" It found that live music (62.1%), theatre productions (44.8%); live performances (29.3%) and video/electronic arts and crafts events (29.3%) were the most popular. As such, these events should be the areas in which the council should invest if they wish to increase youth engagement within Knutsford. The full results are included below:

- 62.1% of responses (36 persons) - Live music
- 44.8% of responses (26 persons) - Theatre productions (including plays & musicals)

- 29.3% of responses (17 persons) - Live performances (including pantomime)
- 29.3% of responses (17 persons) - Video/electronic arts and Crafts events
- 27.6% of responses (16 persons) - Street arts
- 15.5% of responses (9 persons) - Literary events
- 10.3% of responses (6 persons) - Opera and ballet
- 10.3% of responses (6 persons) - Classical music
- 15.5% of responses (9 persons) selected 'Other'. Their suggestions included: school musicals, fairs, fitness events, dance studios, raves, dancing events and an all year round arcade. \*Please note that 8 persons skipped this question.

#### ➤ Repurposing 60 King Street

The survey asked the young people of Knutsford "What might you like to see the building being used for?" The results show that they envision the building being repurposed most as a space for 'musical events' (50%); 'performance spaces' (36.4%); 'Art studios/creative spaces' (34.8%); 'on screen and live performance space' (33.3%); and a technology hub (30.3%).

The full results are presented below:

- 50% of respondents (33 persons) selected 'Musical Events'
- 36.4% of respondents (24 persons) selected 'Performance Spaces'



- 34.8% of respondents (23 persons) selected 'Art studios/creative spaces'
- 33.3% of respondents (22 persons) selected 'On screen and live performance space'
- 30.3% of respondents (20 persons) selected 'Technology hub (access to 3D printers)'
- 28.8% of respondents (19 persons) selected 'Creative 'maker' space and classes'
- 25.8% of respondents (17 persons) selected 'Art gallery and exhibitions'
- 19.7% of respondents (13 persons) selected 'Activities for schools & community groups'
- 18.2% of respondents (12 persons) selected 'Library and Research Centre'
- 16.7% of respondents (11 persons) selected 'Counselling and Crisis support'
- 16.7% of respondents (11 persons) selected 'Education Space'
- 16.7% of respondents (11 persons) selected 'Skills and education classes'
- 13.6% of respondents (9 persons) selected 'Wellbeing and Exercise'
- 12.1% of respondents (8 persons) selected 'Rentable spaces for community hire/ use'
- 12.1% of respondents (8 persons) selected 'Wedding venue'

The least popular choices were:

- 10.6% of respondents (7 persons) selected 'Heritage/Museum Centre'
- 10.6% of respondents (7 persons) selected 'Community Services'
- 7.6% of respondents (5 persons) selected 'Bistro space'
- 7.6% of respondents (5 persons) selected 'Tourism and Culture'
- 7.6% of respondents (5 persons) selected 'Accommodation ( holiday rentals)'
- 7.6% of respondents (5 persons) selected 'Venue hire'
- 6.1% of respondents (4 persons) selected 'Conferencing and events space'
- 6.1% of respondents (4 persons) selected 'Access to information/Citizens Advice'
- 4.5% of respondents (3 persons) selected 'Business and Commercial'
- 4.5% of respondents (3 persons) selected 'Tourist Information Centre'
- 3.0% of respondents (2 persons) selected 'Council Offices'
- 3.0% of respondents (2 persons) selected 'Accommodation (housing)'
- 1.5% of respondents (1 person) selected 'Shared rentable office space'
- 1.5% of respondents (1 person) selected 'Nursery provision'

- 15.1% of respondents (10 persons) selected 'Other' (N.B. their answers were not included in the excel sheet)

Additionally, when asked to use a sliding scale to map "how supportive are you of the building being developed - 1 is not at all, 5 is very supportive", the average was 3.32, with a standard deviation of 1.53.

#### ➤ Exploring potential offerings

The survey also presented the respondents with an opportunity to share which offering they would be most likely to attend. They were asked "How likely would you be to attend the same offerings within the Town Centre - with 1 being not likely at all, and 5 being very likely?".

The data showed that young people are MOST LIKELY to engage with 60 King Street as:

- Musical event space - 63.5% of responses
- Onscreen and live performance space - 60.9% of responses
- Performance space - 49.2% of responses
- Technology hub (with access to 3D printers, etc.)- 42.9% of responses
- Art studios/creative spaces - 39.1% of responses
- Creative 'maker' spaces and classes - 35.4% of responses

The data showed that young people are LEAST LIKELY to engage with 60 King Street as:

- Accommodation (housing) - 87.1%
- Shared/rentable housing space - 88.3%
- Tourist information centre - 82.8%
- Nursery provision - 82.8%<sup>53</sup>
- Access to information / Citizens Advice - 80%
- Conferencing and events space - 75.8%
- Accommodation (holiday rentals)- 73.9%

#### ➤ Skills Audit

The survey also asked the young people to identify the skills and education needs that they would like to be provided from within 60 King Street. The two most popular needs they highlighted were 'Art classes' and 'Language classes'.

Apart from the above, they also wanted:

- A performing arts club
- A nice quiet space for revision and learning
- Self-defence classes
- crafts classes
- First aid training
- mental health and wellbeing sessions
- music lessons
- A Gym
- A Dance studio
- A Gaming space

\*Please note that fifty-four (54) persons skipped this question.



### ➤ Future plans to engage with 60 King Street

The survey showed that approximately 73% of the young people are keen to attend events and activities at the building and 40% are interested in volunteering. When asked, “Might you like to take an active part in the future of the building” and told to select from a list of choices. The results were as follows:

- 72.7% of responses (32 persons) - ‘Attending events and activities’
- 40.9% of responses (18 persons) - Volunteering’
- 9.1% of responses (4 persons) - ‘Helping manage the building as part of a Trust’
- 4.5% of responses (2 persons) - ‘Occupying/renting shared space that may be made available’
- 4.5% of responses (2 persons) selected ‘Other’, with one suggesting ‘jobs for teens’

\*Please note that twenty-two (22) persons skipped this question.

### ➤ Deterrents from patronisation

The research shows that there are a few key issues which may stop young people from engaging with 60 King Street. When asked “What would stop you attending any future events or activities at 60 King Street; do you have any concerns about the future of the building?”, they raised the following issues:

- a. Prohibitive Costs: Multiple persons noted that they would not patronise the space “if it was expensive”.
- b. Issues with Access: One individual noted that they would not participate in events if they were “difficult to access”
- c. A disregard for heritage: One young person spoke about the value of protecting the building, noting that they would not patronise the space “If the historic exterior of the building was destroyed and remade”
- d. An inundation of cafes: Two individuals mentioned that they would not be interested in the building becoming a cafe space, as one explained “we have way too many cafe’s in Knutsford so i wouldn’t go if there was another one”
- e. The target audience: One young person explained that they would not patronise if it did not cater to their age group , writing “If it weren't for the older kids because barely anything is in Knutsford for them”
- f. Creation of a space that is not needed or wanted: Some of the young people spoke about what they felt the building should not be used for, with one



saying they would not like the venue to be used for rough sports and another writing, “office spaces would be boring and a community space is better”.

The respondents also noted, that once the space appealed to them and reflected their interests, they would patronise it. As one young person explained “If I’m interested in an activity then I think I would attend it, it’s central to the town so easy to get to, if the events are of my interest I’ll attend.” Another also spoke of their interest in arts and culture saying, “At my age, if a shop was contributed to anything crafty or arty, I would definitely stop to take a look.” \*Please note that fifty-one (51) persons skipped this question.

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[1] Ethnicity Cheshire East Summary available at:  
<https://opendata-cheshireeast.opendata.arcgis.com/documents/d30a2d71fce34484b756942936bdee1e/explore>

