A9. River Mersey

9.1. Overview

The River Mersey begins near to the centre of Stockport Town Centre at the confluence of the River Tame and River Goyt. Downstream there is the confluence of Hempshaw Brook under Merseyway and Micker Brook and Chorlton Brook at Cheadle Wood. The River Mersey catchment is significant in that it captures the majority of water within Stockport, parts of Derbyshire and East Cheshire and the River Mersey receives all flows from Tameside and Oldham. The River Mersey has large areas of functioning floodplains downstream of Stockport at Heaton Mersey and Cheadle Wood and there are extensive floodplains further downstream around Disbury and Northenden.

Areas in the vicinity of the River Mersey from Stockport Town centre at Portwood to Heaton Mersey are at both surface water and fluvial flood risk. The Environment Agency has built a flood storage reservoir at East Disbury to be able to store water during significant rainfall events that is designed to protect properties across Didsbury. The flood storage reservoir was opened during the 1st January 2025 event in accordance with established procedures when levels on the River Mersey indicated a risk to Didsbury.

The flood map from rivers and sea shows the River Mersey area to be at high risk of flooding from the River Mersey at Cheadle Wood and Heapriding Business Park, Ford Street (Area 1 and 2 respectively on Figure A9.1) and partially at high risk of surface water flooding (Figure A9.2).

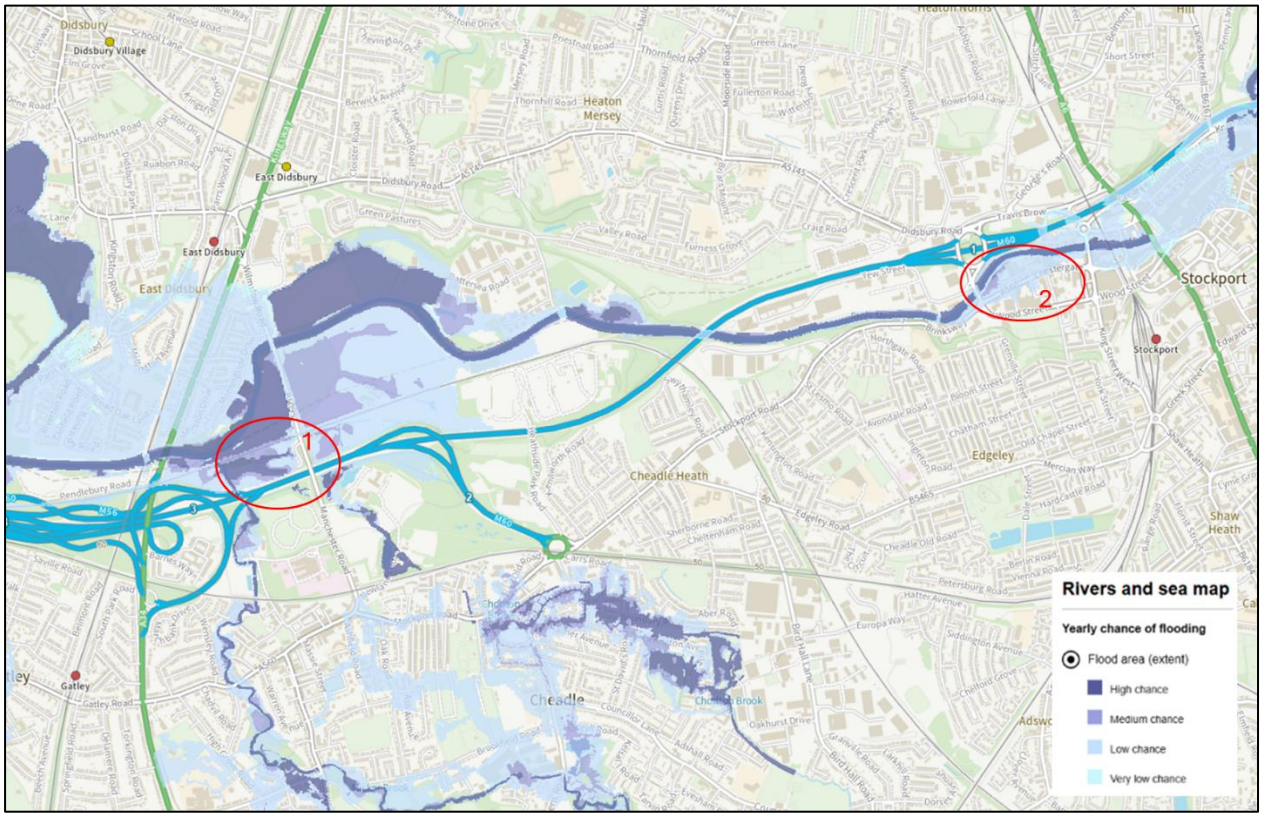

Figure A9.1. River Mersey Fluvial Flood Risk maps. Image Source: Environment Agency.

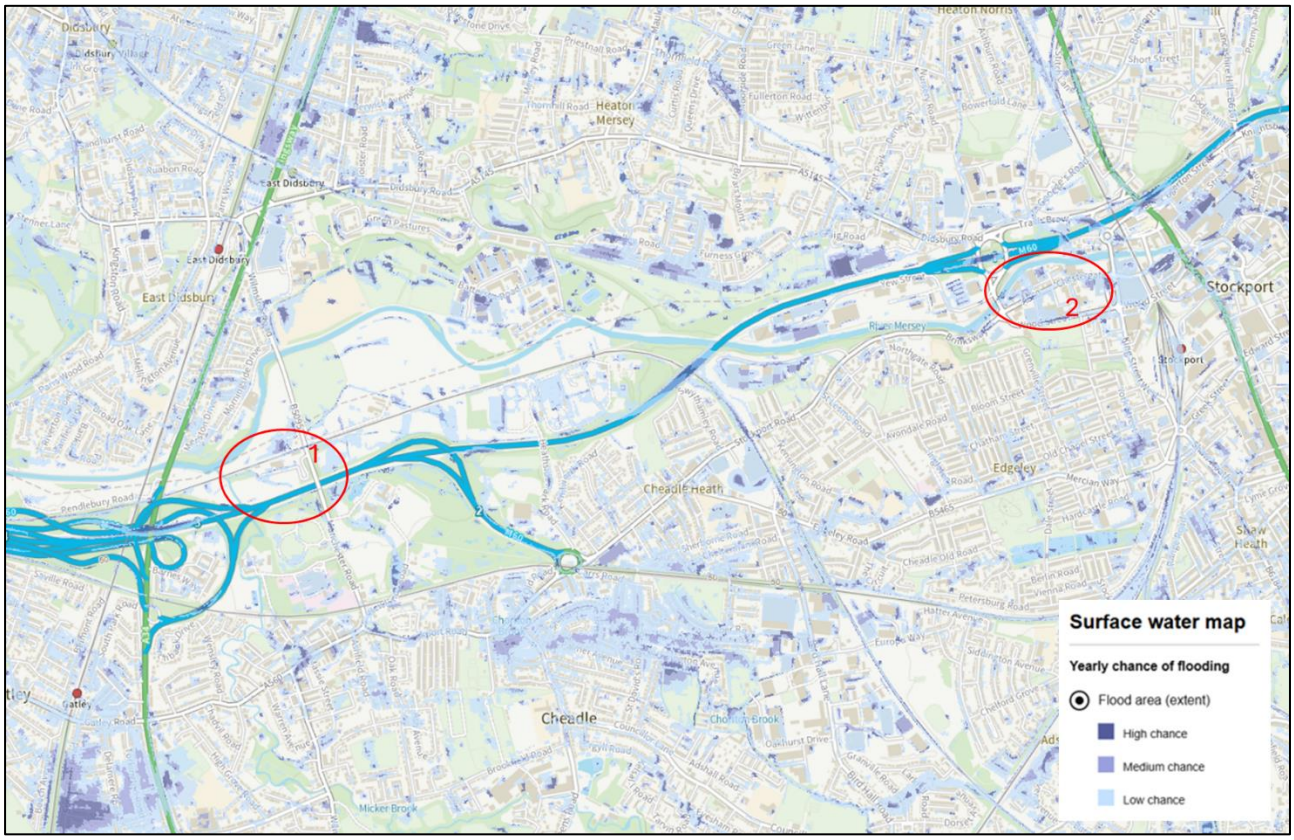

Figure A9.2. River Mersey Surface Water Flood Risk maps. Image Source: Environment Agency.

9.2. Flooding Analysis

The main parts of Stockport town centre avoided flooding directly from the River Mersey. The floodplains acted as desired to allow the river to overtop its banks in areas that did not have major infrastructure effects, i.e. fields and playing fields. The unprecedented levels of the river was due to continued intense rainfall over the entire wider catchment and Brinksway gauge recorded the highest ever river level on the River Mersey at Stockport. All drainage systems (combined, surface water and highway) across the catchment were affected due to the elevated levels in the River Mersey preventing drainage through outfalls. The main contribution to the River Mersey flows at Cheadle Wood and the Heapriding Business Park, Ford Street would have been from the River Tame where severe impact was experience in Reddish Vale and Meadow Mill and Micker Brook that also experienced flooding at Bramhall Green and Cheadle.

Surface water issues were being experienced in the early hours of 1st January 2025 when the river was affecting the discharge of drainage and elevated river levels on the River Mersey.

Flooding at Cheadle Wood was a combination of out of bank flow from the River Mersey and Chorlton Brook and the backing up of flow from the ordinary watercourse unable to discharge into Chorlton Brook due to the elevated water levels. The indicative flood flow routes at Cheadle Wood are provided in Figure A9.3.

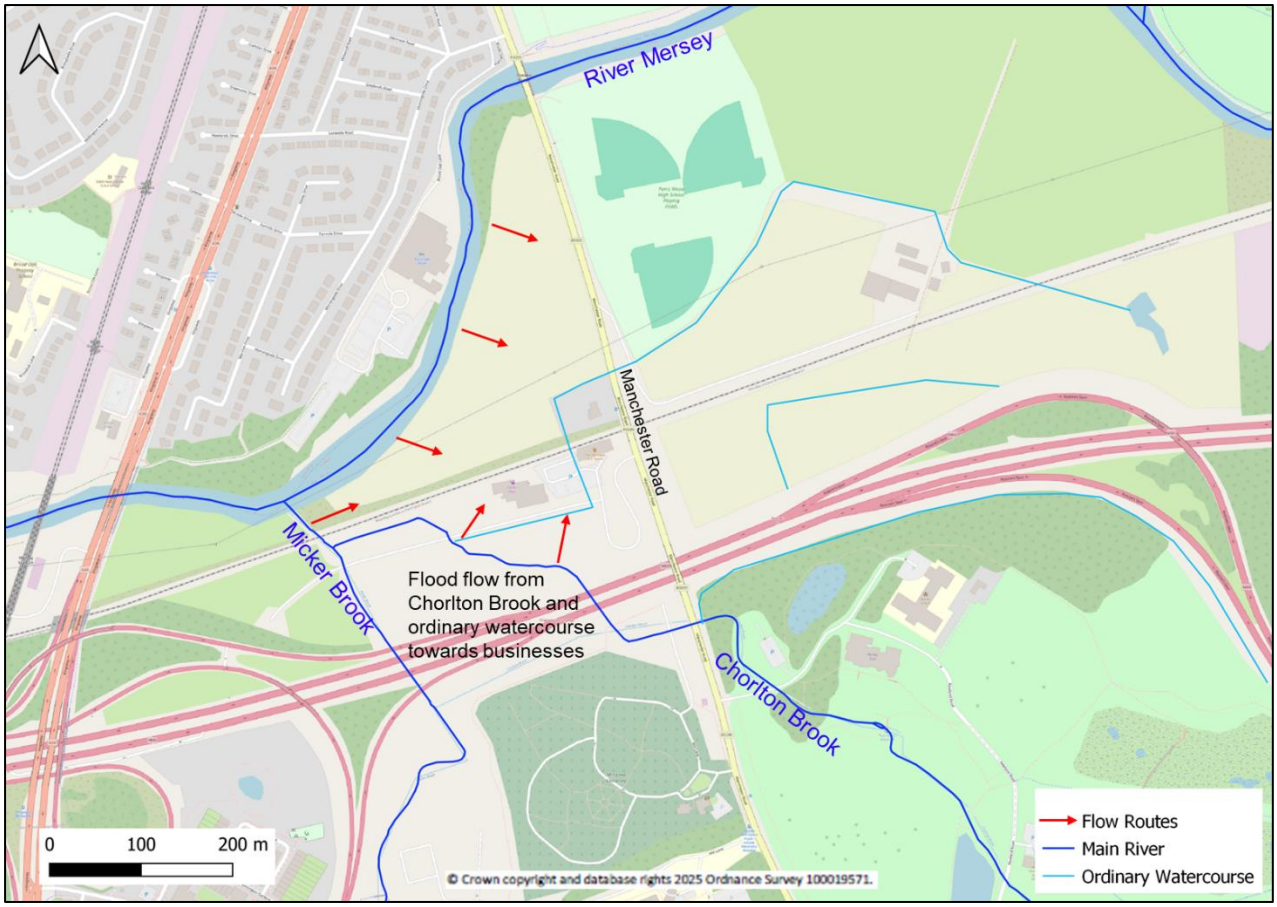

Figure A9.3. Cheadle Wood Site overview Image with indicative flood flow routes.

Flooding at Heapriding Business Park, Ford Street was out of bank flow from the River Mersey and surface water drainage unable to discharge into the River Mersey due to the elevated water levels. The indicative flood flow routes at Heapriding Business Park, Ford Street are provided in Figure A9.4.

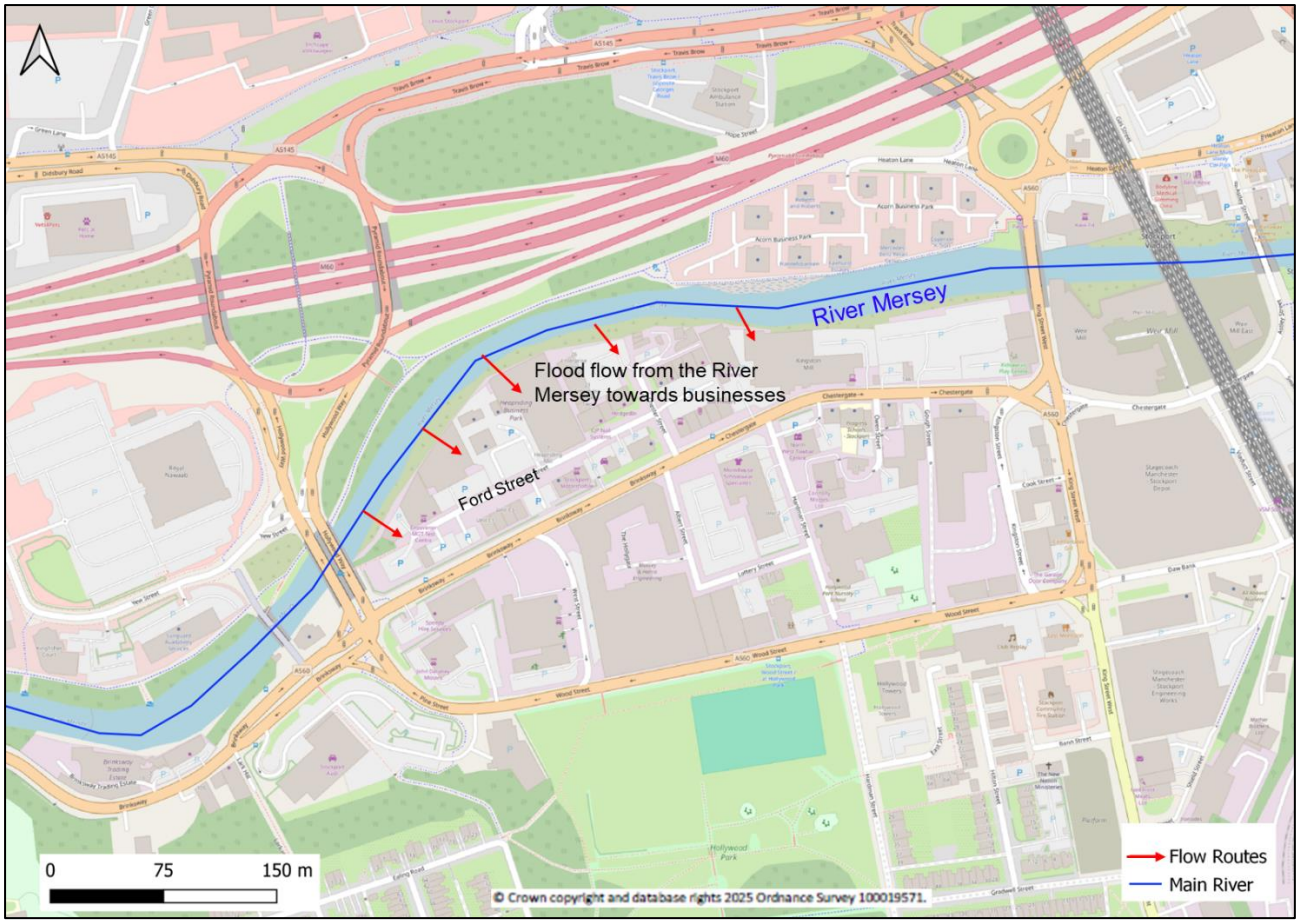

Figure A9.4. Heapriding Business Park, Ford Street Site overview Image with indicative flood flow routes.

9.3. Flooding Impacts

The Heapriding Business Park at Ford Street was affected by fluvial flooding directly from the River Mersey. Rivers levels were high and the river overtopped its banks. Many industrial units were flooded but direct reports are limited. On-line videos show that the floodplains around Cheadle Wood and Heaton Mersey were inundated and farm properties and a garden centre were known to have flooded around Cheadle Wood. The river levels around Cheadle Wood and East Didsbury were high enough to flood Manchester Road on the Stockport border. Playing fields and farmland in the floodplains were flooded.

There is significant evidence along the River Mersey to demonstrate the high flows and highest river levels with debris collected on gantries and higher embankments. Areas around the banks of the River Mersey received significant erosion.

Properties flooded within River Mersey hotspot areas are summarised in Table A9.1.

Table A9.1. Flood Impact Summary

Number of properties evacuated	Number of properties flooded	Number of domestic properties flooded	Number of commercial premises flooded	Comment
0	10+	0	10+	As reported to Stockport Council prior to publishing

Table A9.2. provides a brief summary of the flood event, impact and response in River Mersey area.

Table A9.2. River Mersey Flooding Summary

Date	• 1st January 2025
Affected Roads	• Ford Street, Manchester Road
Description	• Out of bank flow of River Mersey and Chorlton Brook, surcharge of drainage systems due to elevated water levels at river outfalls.
Flood Alert / Warning Issued	• A Flood Alert for the Middle River Mersey catchment was issued at 17:06 on the 31st December 2024. • A Flood Warning for the River Mersey at Cheadle Wood was issued at 23.23 on the 31st December 2024. • A Flood Warning for the Rivers Goyt and Mersey at Stockport was issued at 06.27 on the 1st January 2025.
Flooding Impacts and Observations	• Property damage • Watercourse damage (structures and banks) • Highway flooded affecting access
Summary of Flooding Incident Response	• Business owners do what they can to protect their own properties

9.4. Existing Measures in the Catchment

There are a number of projects on Micker Brook and Poise Brook in the tributaries of the River Mersey which aid in the reduction in flow peaks and slowing the flow contributing to the River Mersey which are described in the separate Hotspot report for Offerton Green. There are no specific measures within the River Mersey for Cheadle Wood or Heapriding Business Park, Ford Street.

There is a river basin system at Fletcher Moss Park in Didsbury and just outside Stockport on the Mersey that is designed to help relieve East Didsbury, where homes were evacuated in 2022, but did not flood. The basin was opened at 9:30 in the morning by the Environment Agency in response to the high river levels. This would not affect the flooding on the River Mersey at Cheadle Wood or at Heapriding Business Park, Ford Street.

Gullies in the areas referred to will be cleaned in line with the gulley cleansing operational plan with a risk-based approach.

9.5. Recommended Actions

The following actions are recommended for the River Mersey flooding hotspot area:

Action ID	Recommended Action	RMA Lead	Stakeholders	Timescale	Constraint
RM1	Identify potential options for improvements to the ordinary watercourse culvert inlet and trash screen confluent with Chorlton Brook, including potential storage to manage back water flow from elevated downstream water levels in Chorlton Brook at its confluence with the River Mersey.	Stockport Council, as LLFA	Local businesses, Private landowners. Environment Agency	3 years	Available budget to undertake investigations and any potential opportunity for works identified. Engagement and approval required from private landowners for any attenuation measures on their land.
RM2	Support affected businesses to explore property protection measures and development of emergency flood plans.	Stockport Council, as LLFA	Local residents, Environment Agency	Ongoing	Available funding to support affected residents.