

# Stockport Local Plan

## Issues Paper



**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

[www.stockport.gov.uk](http://www.stockport.gov.uk)



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# 1 Foreword

## 1 Foreword

**1.1** We are planning for Stockport's future through to the year 2035. To enable us to deliver the best possible plan for the area we need and want your views about how to do that. This will be your Local Plan for Stockport and it will set the rules for development and land uses which will have an impact on the way we live and work in the future.

**1.2** Our Local Plan will need to have regard to the emerging work on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) and the proposal for housing and employment numbers, the allocations and strategic priorities it sets across the whole of Greater Manchester. The draft GMSF document sets targets for 19,300 new dwellings to be delivered across Stockport up to the year 2035, 140,000 square metres of new office space and up to 90,000 square metres of new industrial and warehousing space, together with targets for other boroughs. We will update the work we are doing at the local level and have regard to what is happening across the wider GMSF process, as it progresses, whilst continuing to feed the evidence we gather in Stockport into the GMSF.

**1.3** In developing the Local Plan we all need to think about the ways in which we live our lives now and into the future. We will look at where we live and work, where we go to school, the way we play, how we access important public services and how we move about to get to all of those.

**1.4** We want your view on every aspect of life in the borough and we have broken this document down into the sections that focus on the following:

- Jobs and the role of town and district centres;
- Health, culture and communities;
- Where we live and the type of homes we live in;
- Our green places and spaces; and
- Transport and infrastructure

**1.5** A number of challenges and opportunities face the borough now and in the years to come and this is your chance to start influencing how we address these. We know that people are concerned about the delivery of housing, both in terms of the numbers and where they are built, and how we deal with the fact that despite being a well-connected borough, our roads are often very congested. It is not just about houses, jobs and transport though, people rely on a variety of services, whether that is health, education, other community facilities, shops, open space and so on. Therefore the Local Plan needs support to deliver the right services in the right place for the right people.

**1.6** The Local Plan will look at these issues, alongside many others, but we would like to know what other issues we may have missed in this document and which you think the Local Plan should address. The Local Plan is a plan for the future, we therefore need to be sure that we are considering all the issues you think will affect you. All residents will have views on this, from young people who still be in education to those who are now retired. We would like to hear from people across all the different parts of the population in Stockport, so that we get the best range of views possible.

**1.7** We know that Stockport is a diverse place in terms of the character of the area. It has a town centre we are working to improve, it is well connected to Manchester City Centre, has a wide variety suburban areas, many with their own centres, and large areas of countryside within its borders. As well as looking at Stockport as a whole we want to be able to understand what it is

about your local area of Stockport that is important to you. We want to know what you would like to keep, what needs to improve in your area, how you would define the character of your local area, and what services you would like to remain or improve access to. These are the sorts of things which are important to how we live but they vary from place to place and it is important your Local Plan reflects that.

## 2 Introduction

## 2 Introduction

### What is the Stockport Local Plan?

**2.1** Once it is in use, the Stockport Local Plan will be the key planning document for the Borough of Stockport. It is a strategic document that will set out the planning policies and land-use allocations that will be used when the council is making decisions on planning applications. This is important because it is how the council can help shape the borough. The new Local Plan and Proposals Map will replace the existing Core Strategy and Unitary Development Plan Review.

**2.2** Delivering sustainable development that addresses various inequalities facing the people of Stockport is a key aim of the Local Plan, the plan should therefore provide policies and allocations which support a range of services and address a variety of issues. For example, to help improve public health, planning can look at where people live, how they travel, which services they have access to, how easy it is to have an active lifestyle, and the quality of the environment they live in. Making sure the allocations and the policies support all of these is important in improving people's quality of life.

**2.3** The preparation of the Stockport Local Plan presents an opportunity to set a long-term vision for the future of the Borough and to align planning policy with other strategic priorities, in order to:

- Provide a vision and framework for future development.
- Underpin an approach to inclusive development.
- Ensure we have land needed to accommodate the homes, jobs, new infrastructure and local facilities we need from now until 2035.

**2.4** The Council is keen to support a transparent public debate to inform the preparation of sound, deliverable plans to meet Stockport's needs and aspirations towards 2035. We understand that the issues in one area of Stockport may not be the same as in others, so we want to hear from you about the place you live – what works, what does not, what you need, and what you want to protect. That is why it is important for the public to get involved at the earliest possible stage to help shape how the Local Plan develops.

### What is the aim of this Issues Paper?

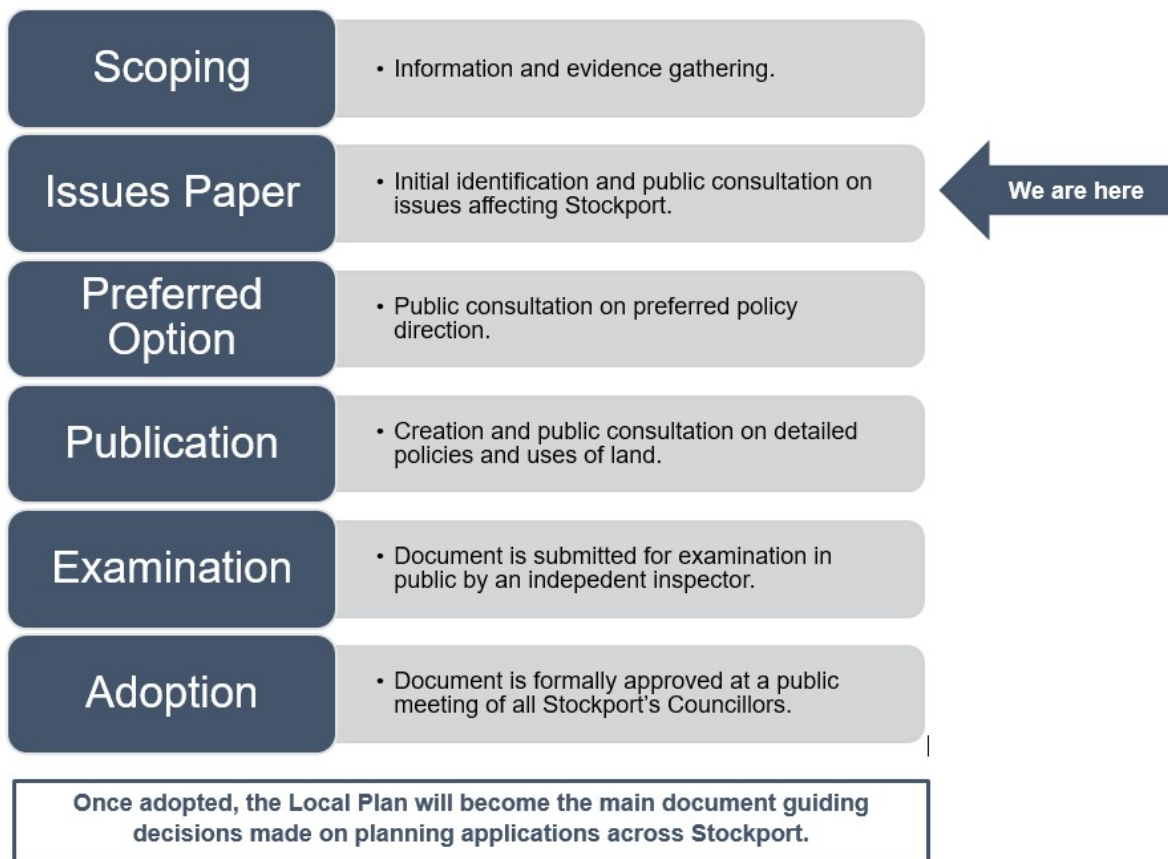
**2.5** The Issues Paper is the first stage of the process of developing a new Local Plan for Stockport, and the diagram below shows the other stages of work. Once it has gone through the stages of work and is finalised, the Stockport Local Plan will address a wide range of topics with the overall aim of delivering sustainable development for Stockport.

**2.6** This Issues Paper is a chance to have your say on the things that affect Stockport and what affect the areas where you live, work and play. During this public process, we also want to identify what is important to local neighbourhoods across the borough. The Council wants everyone to contribute, and that doesn't just mean the Council, but businesses and developers who have a stake in Stockport and, most importantly, the people who live and work in Stockport.

**2.7** This document does not set out to tell anybody what the Council thinks it should be doing, or what all the issues are for the people and businesses in the borough. It does not aim to identify all the environmental issues or transport issues that we know are important in contributing to a sustainable future for the area. It does not give you two or three options and ask you to pick one

of them. Instead, this document sets out the broad background to where we are at the moment across a range of topics; what national planning policy says, what might be coming out of work at the Greater Manchester level and some background as to what the current position is in Stockport. We then provide some questions so that you can let us know what you think about each of the issues.

Figure 1 Local Plan Key Stages



**2.8** We know that planning documents can be difficult to understand, so we have tried to minimise technical language and present all of this in a way that members of the public can understand.

We want people to be able to tell us right from the start of the process, what it is they would and would not like to see in their area and what they would like the Council to do in encouraging and restricting different types of development.

**2.9** However, we are aware that there remain some words that require some explanation but which are also required in order to address or explain some of the issues the Local Plan will need to cover. As such, overleaf we have provided a 'Jargon Buster' in order to help explain some of the terms used in the Issues Paper.

## 2 Introduction

### Jargon Buster

**Biodiversity** The biological diversity of living things in an area.

**Brownfield (or previously developed) land** Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure.

**Conservation area** Designated areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

**Contaminated land** Land that has been polluted or harmed in some way making it unfit for safe development or usage unless cleaned.

**Core Strategy** A planning document which sets out key principles and policies regarding the development and use of land in a local planning authority's area.

**Ecosystem** A community of animals, plants and micro-organisms, together with the habitat where they live.

**Employment Land** Land that is used for distribution, manufacturing, storage and offices.

**Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF)** Currently in draft form, this plan will manage the supply of land for jobs and new homes across the whole of Greater Manchester up to 2035.

**Green Belt** Green Belt is not a green space or nature designation. The purpose of the Green Belt is to prevent un-planned urban sprawl around certain cities and large built-up areas. Not all "green" land is Green Belt.

**Greenfield land** Land that has not been occupied by a permanent structure or any associated surface infrastructure, and can be in urban or rural areas. This should not be confused with Green Belt.

**Green Infrastructure (GI)** A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** A 65 page document that sets out the Government's planning policies in England for planning for housing, shops, offices and good design.

**Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** Planning documents prepared by the Council to provide additional information to help with the interpretation and implementation of policies set out within the Core Strategy and Unitary Development Plan.

**Sustainable Development** Development that meets current social and economic needs whilst protecting resources and the environment for future generations.

**Town Centre Access Plan (TCAP)** A set of projects to improve vehicle and pedestrian access in and around Stockport Town Centre.

**Unitary Development Plan (UDP)** A plan for a local authority which sets out the policies affecting the determination of planning applications. This predates the Core Strategy (see above) and In Stockport's case is referred to as the 'UDP Review'.



## What is Stockport like now?

**2.10** Located between the Peak District, the Cheshire Plain and Manchester, Stockport is one of the most attractive places to live in Greater Manchester.

**2.11** The local housing market is strong with the average house price being £203,903 in April 2017, which is well above the North West average of £152,765, but below the UK average of £220,094. The success of Stockport's residential areas presents challenges to local families, particularly in terms of increasing housing costs. The last decade saw lower population growth in Stockport than in any other Greater Manchester district with a resulting decline in working-age population. Providing housing that working age residents can afford in order to remain in the borough is one of the key challenges Stockport faces.

**2.12** In mid-2016, the population of Stockport was estimated to be 290,557, representing 10.4% of the 2.7 million people living within Greater Manchester. Twenty percent of that population are over 65 years of age. The diversity of the borough means that Stockport is home to a range of vibrant local communities with their own unique identities and sense of civic pride. The strength of Stockport's District and Local Centres ensures that the borough has a broad appeal.

**2.13** As of April 2016, the borough contains 127,510 dwellings, of which 86% are privately owned or rented. In Stockport we are aiming to connect more of our residents to economic opportunities and ensure that all of our residents can contribute to, and benefit from, the growth and success we achieve. This means investing in the infrastructure of our borough, both physically and socially, to provide the right buildings and spaces in the right location in order to provide joined-up services for our communities. The council will focus on support for and regeneration of the local economy, including a significant programme of investment in the Town Centre.

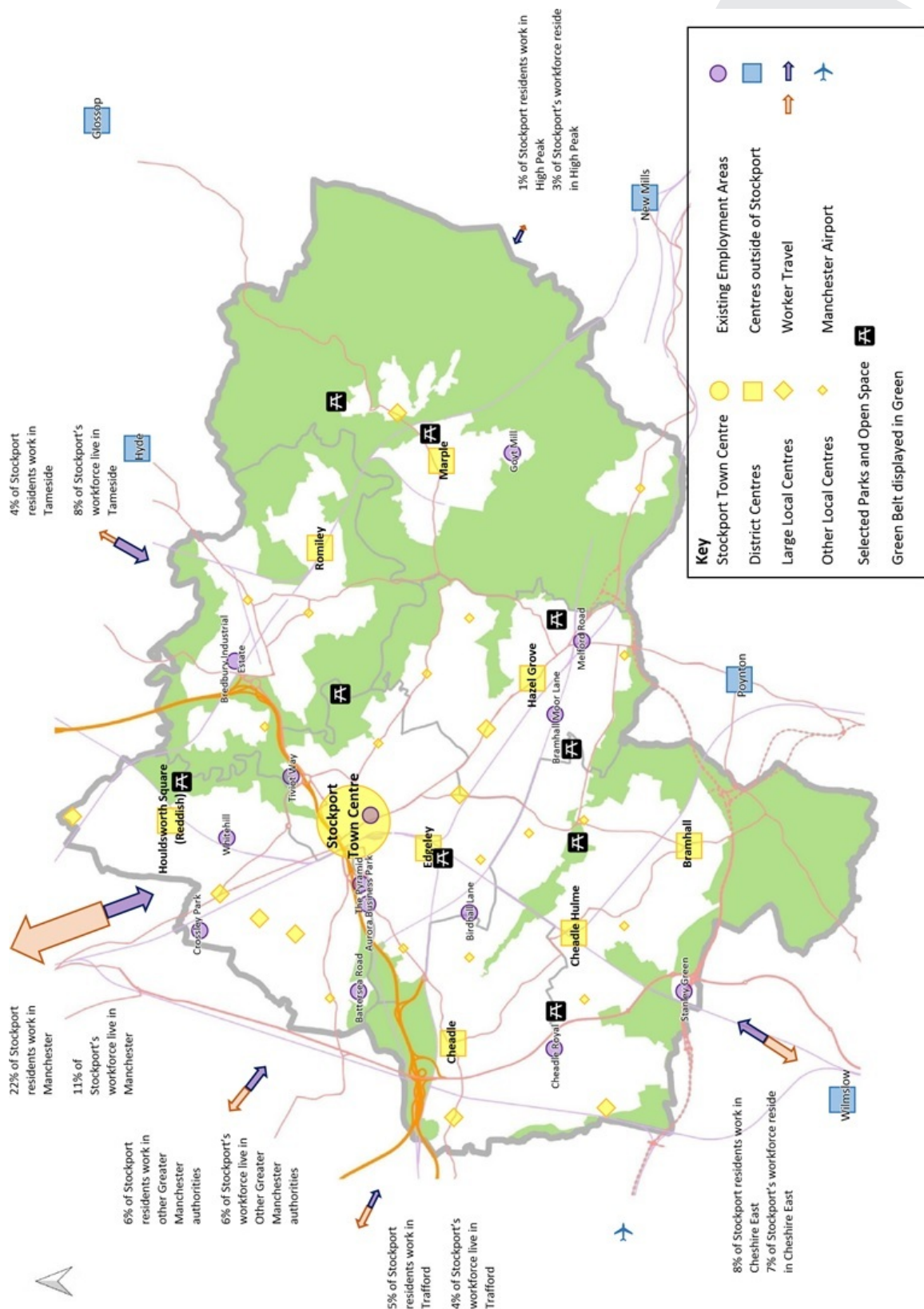
**2.14** People in Stockport are well served by leisure and recreation opportunities, with significant open countryside in the east and south of the borough, and river valleys extending into the urban areas. The proximity to the Peak District provides residents with beautiful scenery, nearby access to informal recreation, walking, and cycling opportunities.

**2.15** 'Stockport Together' is the name for a group of local organisations that is working together to develop plans for the local hospital, GPs, community, social and mental health services to provide improved health and social care for local people. The approach being taken by Stockport Together is aimed at addressing the longstanding funding, demographic and demand issues at a national level. Health inequalities remain similar, in the same areas, in the same wards as they were 40 years ago.

**2.16** 'Stockport Family' brings together those who work with children, young people and families to make it easier for Stockport families to get the right support at the right time. The council has a responsibility for providing enough school places to meet the needs of children in Stockport. Capital building funds for nursery, primary and secondary schools in line with local national priorities and principles to improve the quality of the learning environment to support Stockport's children and young people.

**2.17** Preparing the Local Plan will allow the council to work positively with other organisations for the future benefit of communities and businesses across Stockport.

## Stockport Portrait



## What does this document cover?

**2.19** This document sets out the broad issues which will need to be addressed through policies and land allocations in the Stockport Local Plan.

**2.20** Communities across the borough rely on a wide variety of services and facilities which are provided by a range of organisations and serve an even wider range of people. There are a variety of pressures on these organisations, including basic financial issues, finding the right land and buildings to use, and making sure people can access their services. The provision of their services is not always fully profitable, so maintaining and improving their facilities so they are fit for use can be difficult. We want to explore ways to help make sure that communities can continue to access these important services and facilities.

**2.21** Housing covers a wide range of topics from the overall delivery of housing, to the provision of affordable housing and to specialist housing sectors for a variety of different groups. In delivering new housing the Council needs to consider the other needs of those who will be living in them and of those who already live in Stockport, including the provision of open space. Whilst the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework is still a work in progress, with precise numbers still to be determined, we know that the overall figure is likely to be much greater than that what we are currently planning for under our existing plan. We also know that the more housing we can deliver on brownfield land in the existing urban area, the less we will need to deliver of Green Belt or greenfield sites.

**2.22** 'Green Infrastructure' covers a wide variety of land uses and serves a variety of roles. We are looking at the role of the Green Belt, agricultural land and open space to understand the role and benefits this land has in helping to deliver sustainable development. Those benefits include impacts on health, the ability to grow food, being able to address flood risk, and the promotion and support for economic development. There are always pressures on green land, so balancing the need to protect and enhance those areas against making sure we have sufficient land for development is vital to deliver a sustainable plan for Stockport.

**2.23** 'Transport and Infrastructure' covers a wide variety of uses, including provision of our day-to-day utilities, telecommunication and information technology networks, and transport provision. The delivery of such networks is often in the hands of other agencies, but there are ways new development can help that delivery. Transport is a critical issue in terms of delivering development across the borough, through new roads, provision of public transport and the creation routes for people to walk and cycle. The provision of different types of transport networks is a key element of the Local Plan supporting local economic, housing, social and environmental aspirations. Transport networks provide connectivity and accessibility for people between their homes, their employment and the services they require. We would like to explore ways in which we can best deliver transport to the right places to achieve that aim.

**2.24** In terms of economic development the evidence tells us that whilst we have sufficient office space, we require a better quality office space to meet Stockport's need and potential. We also need to address the issue of insufficient land and space for other employment uses. However, it is not just about providing and protecting land, we need to ensure that the people of Stockport can access the jobs that are being created. How we make sure we have the right land in the right places, protecting that land from other pressures and ensuring that we have sustainable economic base for the borough is a key element to delivering a successful plan.

## 2 Introduction

**2.25** Part of a successful economy lies in how the centres of commercial activity operate. This includes not just the town centre, but also the many district and local centres which exist in Stockport. As shopping patterns change, we need to understand if those centres are still necessary for retail purposes or whether other uses are preferable. How we can make those centres work by balancing retail needs alongside other economic needs and housing is something we need to consider carefully.

**2.26** Stockport Town Centre will continue to be a key focus for development due to the existing uses and transport networks. £1 billion has been invested into a range of ambitious projects to enhance the physical infrastructure of Stockport, and to help make sure that the town continues to grow. These projects include:

- Local transport networks improved, making it easier to get in and around Stockport, bringing jobs and opportunities closer.
- New housing developments being built, ensuring that homes are available which meet the needs and aspirations of all residents.
- Developments taking place to ensure that Stockport can continue to build its position as a key business location.

**2.27** However, there are a range of options to be looked at in terms of how we do that. We would like your views on how you would like to see the Council seek to address the issues which affect the town centre and which will help to make the borough a better place to live.

**2.28** Underpinning all that is a built heritage which defines and makes the town and its communities distinctive. Maintaining and encouraging positive re-use whilst improving those important historic buildings and structures is critical, if we are to retain and promote the important identity of Stockport. It is vital to achieve a balance between delivering new development whilst protecting what is already good about the area.

**2.29** Good design will help achieve a balance between new and existing development. Although the visual element of design is important, design which takes account of energy and low carbon issues and contributes to sustainable development is also important. We would like to explore the best way of doing that through Local Plan policies.

### How do I get involved?

**2.30** The Council is committed to having an open and transparent discussion with Stockport residents, business and third sector organisations. There will be a number of opportunities for you to have your say about the development of the Stockport Local Plan which we encourage you to get involved in.

- Respond online to this consultation.
- Take part in the public meetings in September.

**2.31** If you would like to be kept up to date with the local plan process please [sign up to our e-mail alerts](#) and visit [www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/stockport-local-plan](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/stockport-local-plan) .



### 3 Jobs and the Roles of Town and District Centres

Stockport is fortunate to have a mix of businesses across growing sectors of the economy, and residents who can both create and support growth. Our plan is to create the conditions for, and harness the benefits of, a thriving local economy, while seeking to maintain the essential character of the borough.

The protection and delivery of jobs in Stockport is important if the borough is to develop as a sustainable area. More jobs for Stockport residents means fewer and shorter journeys to work. We need to establish whether we can deliver the range of jobs the people of Stockport need within the borough, or whether we should be allowing jobs to be located elsewhere and focus on becoming a dormitory town for the wider economic area. One way to help encourage a diverse and vibrant local economy is to ensure that entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises have the space to develop and thrive. We also need to ensure that Stockport residents of all work ages, including those of post retirement age, have the right skills and options to access those jobs.

#### Jobs

##### Current context

**3.1** Alongside sustainable environmental and social considerations, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is underpinned by a commitment to sustainable economic growth. Amongst other things the local authority needs to have: a clear vision and strategy; set criteria and identify sites to meet needs; support existing business and encourage new businesses into the area; and identify key areas for regeneration.

**3.2** The NPPF requires a 'town centres' first approach to office, retail and indoor leisure proposals. The council already has policies to offer some protection for office and retail uses in town centre, district and local centres, which help with the overall health of those centres.

**3.3** The NPPF supports the transition to a low carbon future and the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas. The Local Plan offers an opportunity to look at how a low carbon economy can be supported across the borough.

**3.4** The draft GMSF sets out that over the period 2015-2035, up to 90,000 square metres of new industrial and warehousing floor space will be provided in Bredbury, at the Bredbury Park Extension. The focus for office space over this period will be in Stockport town centre, with up to 140,000 square metres located there.

##### Planning for the future

**3.5** The main issues relating to employment land are that the council should:

- ensure sufficient employment land of the right quality is provided in the right locations;
- provide appropriate policies to ensure that areas identified for employment purposes mean that appropriate economic development can take place and that other competing uses do not develop at the expense of the wider local economy; and
- ensure that those policies also provide flexibility to ensure that jobs are provided for within the borough, whilst allowing surplus employment land to be redeveloped for appropriate uses.

### 3 Jobs and the Roles of Town and District Centres

**3.6** The current land use allocations and policies seek to protect allocated employment land and, where appropriate, employment sites outside those allocations. For employment sites outside allocations this is achieved primarily by putting the onus on developers to demonstrate that future employment uses are not viable.

**3.7** There are employment areas in a variety of locations adjacent to the town centre and in the M60 Gateway area and beyond. These areas function in a variety of ways, with some having a greater prevalence of industrial uses, whilst others have a greater proportion of office uses.

**3.8** The main areas of deprivation within the borough are also located close to the town centre and other centres for employment, so it is important to ensure that people have the right skills to be able to take advantage of the jobs on offer, as well as being able to travel to those jobs.

**3.9** Stockport lags behind the rest of Greater Manchester in terms of the growth of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). This sector of businesses provides a large amount of employment growth and Stockport is not currently fulfilling its potential. Therefore it is important that SMEs in Stockport are encouraged to grow and develop within the borough to create more employment for the future. The Local Plan needs to acknowledge the opportunities offered by Social Enterprises and their specific needs, when considering land for employment and retail uses.

**3.10** Falling worker productivity has become a barrier to economic growth, internationally, nationally, regionally and locally. The Stockport Local Economic Strategy 2012-17 notes that there are low levels of educational attainment and skills in deprived neighbourhoods within Stockport. In order to attract employers to the borough and for people to access higher skilled jobs, the skills gap will need to be addressed, potentially through adult training facilities.

Figure 2 Travel to work patterns



**3.11** Stockport is a net exporter of labour and the borough needs to be ambitious about growing its local economy by promoting local jobs for local people (see the figure below). Local information

suggests that there is a shortage of marketable units in the borough over 15,000 square feet which is a barrier to existing firms wishing to expand and new firms wanting to relocate to Stockport.

**Source: Nomisweb (2011 Census Data)**

**3.12** Mills have historically been an important provider of employment floorspace, although they often have heritage issues which need addressing. They are not referred to in national guidance but existing local policy permits the refurbishment of mills for employment purposes. Some mills may provide an opportunity for live/work units and for small and medium enterprises.

**3.13** The council's Employment Land Review makes reference to the high vacancy rates in mills and the difficulty of retaining many mills in the longer term without large scale investment and significant changes to improve the format of the space. Many mills are located in difficult to access locations but represent potential employment floorspace which could be lost were they not to be protected.

## Centres

**3.14** Stockport has a large numbers of centres of various sizes that perform different functions, from the town centre to the various district centres and to local shopping areas. Having access to the shops and services that all these centres contain is an important part of how we live our lives in Stockport. With changing demands on those centres, we need to consider their future and what they need to do to deliver what people need.

### Stockport Town Centre

#### Current context

**3.15** The NPPF requires the council to set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period, to retain and enhance existing markets and ensure that markets remain attractive and competitive. We also need to set policies for the consideration of 'out-of-centre' proposals for main town centre uses.

**3.16** In order to allocate a range of suitable sites to meet in full the scale and type of retail and main town centre uses needed in town centres, we need to adopt a 'sequential approach' including undertaking an assessment of the need to expand the town centre. This will mean defining the boundary of the town centre and frontages within it. We will also need to ensure we define the primary shopping area.

**3.17** Policies need to be set that make clear which uses will be permitted within the town centre, within the primary shopping areas and within the defined frontages.

**3.18** The NPPF also says that a positive vision or strategy for town centres should be set out in the local plan.

#### Planning for the future

**3.19** The council and its partners are already undertaking and facilitating a range of projects and initiatives that contribute to inclusive growth through the council's Investing in Growth programme. The council's ambition is reflected in a range of key initiatives which are now at various stages of delivery. These are:

### 3 Jobs and the Roles of Town and District Centres

- Stockport Exchange Phase 2 – new Grade A office and 115 room hotel in an iconic commercial development;
- Redrock - a flagship cinema and food & beverage offer;
- TCAP Phase 1 & 2 – c£70m transport works to improve access to the town centre;
- Merseyway Acquisition – major commitment to safeguard and improve the future retail offer;
- Market & Underbanks - commitment to safeguard and awarded nearly £2m from Heritage Lottery Funding; and
- Business Improvement District – business-led scheme to improve the customer experience, market the town centre and make it easier to do business.

**3.20** This is the start of the changes that need to be made to the town centre and further work needs to be done. The Council's 'Investing in Growth' programme seeks to:

- Reconfigure and refurbish the Merseyway Shopping Centre and enable it to be better connected to Redrock and the rest of the town centre;
- Improve the town centre's office portfolio through developments such as Stockport Exchange;
- Improve the town centre's family leisure and food and drink offer through developments such as Redrock;
- Increase the number of residents in the town centre through developments such as Covent Garden Village; and
- Further enhance the range of independent, niche retailers and creative businesses that have clustered around the Market Place and Underbanks areas.

**3.21** The town centre has a central shopping area defined, which we will need to review with a number of areas around that, including several mixed use areas which allow for a variety of uses. The existing policies protect certain frontages primarily for retail use and other frontages for a variety of other uses.

**3.22** A retail study for Stockport, undertaken in 2014, has identified a number of issues with regard to retail in the town centre, including a need to redevelop and refurbish Merseyway Shopping Centre to retain and attract the optimum number and type of retailers. This will help to attract more people, more often, including those with higher disposable income and thus enhance the town centre's vitality and viability. Further work is required to assess the capacity of the existing central shopping area to accommodate the expected growth in retail spending in the town centre.

**3.23** The way the town centre operates is not just down to one or two main uses, in order to function most effectively for people and businesses, a wide variety of factors need to be taken into account. The delivery of housing in the town centre will help to increase the number of people wanting and using its services. Similarly the development of leisure uses, such as at Redrock, will bring people into the town centre where they are likely to visit shops and other outlets. The development of an evening economy will be a draw for those living in the centre and will encourage those working in the town centre to visit. To support all of the activity and development the transport infrastructure needs to be in place, an example being the work undertaken to deliver the Town Centre Access Package.

**3.24** The environment of the town centre itself will be important to its success, so the design of the spaces that are created, including the provision of amenity and green space, will play a vital role in the development of a sustainable and successful town centre.



**3.25** There are currently seven mixed use areas across the town centre covered by existing policy and these are in need of review, with developments having taken place, and with masterplans in place for the College, the A6, the Railway Station and Bus Station. An opportunity exists to review the current position and future plans for the wider town centre area, revisiting the boundaries which are in the current plan and the policies which are attached to them. This includes the boundaries and policies concerning the Great Portwood Street Area, which adjoins the central shopping area.

**3.26** The 'M60 Gateway' stretches from the Portwood roundabout to land alongside Didsbury Road. In a similar way to the town centre mixed use areas, their allocations and policies allow for a variety of uses, but these tend to be related directly to employment uses, such as offices, warehousing and car showrooms, rather than residential, retail or leisure uses. Through the local plan we need to consider these gateway areas and assess whether the current policies and allocations are the right ones to encourage the most suitable development in that area along the M60.

## Other Centres

### Current context

**3.27** The NPPF requires local authorities to set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. This includes defining the primary shopping area of the district centres and local centres, together with defining the primary and secondary frontages in those centres. The boundary of the district centres and local centres needs to be defined, along with the setting out of policies making clear which uses will be permitted within Stockport's district centres and local centres and their frontages.

**3.28** Existing policies in the Core Strategy set out the network and hierarchy of centres and contain policies alongside saved policies of the UDP Review to support the viability and vitality of the borough's centres. Whilst the borough's district centres and local centres do not have a defined primary shopping area existing local policies safeguard a high proportion of shop use at street level in the key frontages.

### Planning for the future

**3.29** The changes that are happening in the retail sector, along with other changes affecting how planning decisions can be made in respect of the loss of shops, are having an impact on the proportion of retail that it is realistic and appropriate to safeguard in the shopping frontages. Stockport has 8 district centres, and the most recent retail study for the borough found them in variable states as set out below:

- Very Healthy: Bramhall; Marple
- Healthy: Cheadle; Cheadle Hulme; Romiley
- Experiencing Some Difficulties: Hazel Grove
- Experiencing Substantial Difficulties: Edgeley; Houldsworth Square (Reddish)

**3.30** In addition, out of Stockport's 25 Local Centres, 11 are experiencing difficulties. Consequently there may be a need to allow for more flexibility in terms of protecting frontages purely for retail use and allowing alternative uses that could also add to the long-term future of the

### 3 Jobs and the Roles of Town and District Centres

centres in those locations, to help the centres survive taking into account the effects on centres of out-of-centre food-stores.

#### Large Scale Retail Outside Centres

##### Current context

**3.31** The NPPF advises local authorities to set policies for the consideration of proposals for main town centre uses which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres. It also sets certain tests for local authorities to use when assessing the likely effect of such developments.

**3.32** There are four areas identified in existing local policy as large-scale 'out-of-centre' retail areas. There are at Brewery Street/Water Street at Portwood; Wilmslow Road/A34 at Cheadle Hulme; Stockport Road/Edgeley Road at Cheadle Heath; and Manchester Road at Lancashire Hill. In addition, there are large retail sites that are not allocated but appear likely to continue in that role at Earl Road at Stanley Green and Stockport Road, Bredbury.

##### Planning for the future

**3.33** The 2014 retail study advised that the council should resist further large retail developments, where that development could have a damaging effect on retail centres in Stockport, increase traffic congestion and can be difficult to access for those without cars.

**3.34** Over time, retail developments have grown in areas such as the Stanley Green and Bredbury areas, but which are not identified and other changes may have occurred elsewhere in the borough. We need to consider whether we should seek to identify such sites as allocations, or whether we should develop a policy against which all large-scale retail areas can be assessed.

#### Tourism

##### Current context

**3.35** Tourism is extremely diverse and covers all activities of visitors. Local planning authorities (LPAs), where appropriate, should articulate a vision for tourism in the Local Plan, including identifying optimal locations for tourism. When planning for tourism, LPAs should:

- consider the specific needs of the tourist industry, including particular locational or operational requirements;
- engage with representatives of the tourism industry;
- examine the broader social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism;
- analyse the opportunities for tourism to support local services, vibrancy and enhance the built environment; and
- have regard to non-planning guidance produced by other government departments.

**3.36** The NPPF has a 'town centre first' approach to cultural and leisure uses.

**3.37** The Core Strategy sets out the current approach to visitor accommodation and other tourism development. It seeks to focus hotel development in the town centre to meet identified need and to contribute to town centre vitality and viability. Hotel development that also provides conference or exhibition facilities is encouraged. Small scale visitor accommodation in Marple and Romiley District Centre is encouraged.

### Planning for the future

**3.38** Policies also exist which seek to direct tourism and leisure facilities into the town centre. We are already starting to see the impacts of that with the development of 'Redrock' taking place at the moment. Although a cluster of cultural attractions exists in the town centre, such as the Market, the Air Raid Shelters, Staircase House, many are dispersed across a wider area such as Bramall Hall and the Avro Heritage Museum.

**3.39** Further work is required to develop evidence as to the current level of hotel, tourism and cultural facilities to help understand where the focus for such development should be in Stockport.

### Farm Diversification

#### Current context

**3.40** The NPPF indicates that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas by supporting sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in the rural area, promoting diversification and supporting rural tourism and leisure.

#### Planning for the future

**3.41** Nearly 9% of the borough's population reside in areas defined as 'rural' according to government designations. Maintenance of a healthy farming economy is an essential aspect of protecting the character and appearance of the countryside. It is therefore important that rural jobs are included as part of wider consideration of employment and commuting patterns across the borough.

#### Question 1

What type of town centre do you want to see in Stockport?

#### Question 2

What mix of shops and services would you like to see in your district and local centres?

#### Question 3

What types of jobs should there be in Stockport, where should they be and what should happen to the existing areas where people work?

#### Question 4

Do you have any other comments about jobs, shops and services in Stockport?

## 4 Health, Culture and Communities

### 4 Health, Culture and Communities

**Community facilities, including indoor and outdoor sports facilities; schools; health care; libraries; children's day-care nurseries; children's centres; children and family centres; community buildings and other education facilities, are important to the way in which we live. How we develop, promote and protect our 'social infrastructure' is therefore important to communities across Stockport.**

**Stockport has an important built heritage which it has sought to protect and enhance. As pressure comes to redevelop or to change the way buildings are used, we will need to make sure that our historic buildings and environments are managed positively for the future. New buildings provide the opportunity to minimise their long-term impacts on the environment, and should also be well designed in terms of their appearance.**

### Community Needs

#### Current context

**4.1** A core planning principle of the NPPF is to take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

**4.2** As a local authority we need to:

- plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities and sports venues to enhance the sustainability of communities;
- safeguard valued facilities and services, ensuring they are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and
- ensure an integrated approach in considering the location of housing, economic uses and community uses relative to each other.

**4.3** The NPPF attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available and sets out criteria for safeguarding sports and recreational buildings.

#### Planning for the future

**4.4** Current policy aims to ensure that schools are close to the communities that use them for ease of access. Larger community development is encouraged in Stockport Town Centre and the district centres, with 'edge of centre' sites as a fall back, followed by other sites that are easily accessed by a range of transport means. Any other sites where community development could be located are usually required to be positioned alongside other services.

**4.5** Current policy also attempts to protect community uses where they already exist. This way, local centres are likely to remain well-used and provide the full range of services that a community might need as well as supporting the health of the town, district and local centres. Where such centres are underutilised, the plan should consider whether and how their futures should be secured.

**4.6** Public health is a key issue to consider, and the land-use planning system should consider this matter as a central issue, through both sound planning in terms of the areas where people

live and how they travel and in terms of helping to make sure that the right health facilities can be provided to support existing and new development.

**4.7** We already know that there is significant pressure on our schools in different parts of the borough, in terms of the number of places available. We also need to ensure that we are meeting the varying needs of pupils. Therefore provision of sufficient school places in buildings of the right quality and in the right areas of the borough are also vital to meet the existing and future need.

**4.8** There are issues affecting a wide range of community uses in the future. For example, how will libraries best function and meet the needs of their local areas in the future? How can the Council and NHS in Stockport deliver the best care across a range of services? Where can nursery spaces be provided? How can community buildings be best located and used to provide a wide range of facilities whilst still meeting the needs of the community?

**4.9** The modernisation of existing buildings is an issue which is related to these questions. It may not be financially viable for the Council to safeguard the existing buildings used for a variety of community uses, but instead it may be possible to deliver the same types and level of services at fewer locations.

**4.10** If sites are allocated for community hubs/indoor sports facilities/new schools, then such sites would need to be relatively large-scale, which raises the matter of where such sites are to be found.

## Playing Pitches and Educational Playing Fields

### Current context

**4.11** Playing fields provide the space which is required for the playing of team sports and have a key role to play in promoting health and well-being as well as community life. Sport contributes to a wide range of planning issues including regeneration, health, crime reduction and quality of life.

**4.12** The NPPF recognises the role of sport and recreation as a fundamental part of sustainable development, and expects local authorities to plan positively for these needs and demands accordingly. The protection and provision of opportunities to participate in sport is seen as fundamental to the health and well-being of communities.

### Planning for the future

**4.13** The Local Plan needs to consider the use of existing sports pitches, which is often restricted by the quality of the playing surface, inadequate changing provision, restricted parking and limited hours of use. The introduction of improvements such as floodlighting and all-weather surfaces can extend their use but may have detrimental impacts on local residents, for example light spillage from floodlights, and increased traffic. It is therefore important that the advantages to be gained from their more intensive use are balanced against the impact on local residents. In addition, in the context of healthy planning, the ability to access such facilities encourages people to lead more active lifestyles.

**4.14** A significant proportion of playing pitch provision is found on educational land, which is designated as Local Open Space and is therefore given protection by existing policies. As noted elsewhere in this document our educational facilities are struggling to meet current demand and



## 4 Health, Culture and Communities

the pressure for school places will rise with more development in the borough. Existing educational sites may therefore need to be redesigned, whilst taking account of outdoor curriculum needs.

**4.15** The protection of open space currently offered by existing policy can limit the ability of schools to fulfill their requirement to meet the educational needs of the borough. Balanced against that is the fact playing fields associated with education sites play a fundamental part of the curriculum and the well-being of the children. Playing fields on education sites also offer benefits to the wider community in terms of meeting recreation needs and contributing to the wider Green Infrastructure network.

### Food Growing, Allotments and Community Gardens

**4.16** The inclusion of food growing areas in new developments extends beyond the conventional provision of gardens and allotments. For example, it might include the creative use of roofs, walls and balconies where external space is limited. It might also include landscaping with edible plants rather than ornamental trees and shrubs.

**4.17** Allotments and community gardens are an extremely popular form of recreation. Within Stockport there are 32 sites administered by the Council. However, the majority of these plots are occupied and there is an increasing waiting list. New provision, either through the splitting of existing plots or the identification of new sites, is required if Stockport is to meet the national standard. It is important to provide such facilities as they encourages a healthy lifestyle and social interaction and can be an important part of the eco-system. National guidance advises planners to support people in making healthy choices, including promoting access to healthier food.

### Agricultural Land

#### Current context

**4.18** The NPPF sets out that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

**4.19** The Government has also re-affirmed the importance of protecting our soils and the services they provide in the Natural Environment White Paper and The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature', including the protection of BMV agricultural land.

#### Planning for the future

**4.20** Virtually all BMV agricultural land in Stockport is currently within the Green Belt where policy limits the types of development possible on agricultural land. However if the designation was to change on agricultural land, the number of cases where agricultural land quality will be the deciding factor in determining development proposals will increase.

## Heritage

### Current context

**4.21** The NPPF requires the conservation of heritage assets so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life for this and future generations. Local plans should develop policies to conserve, enhance and enjoy the historic environment as a strategic priority.

**4.22** The NPPF states the Local Plan should provide a positive strategy setting out: the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

**4.23** The Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework also recognises the important contribution heritage assets make to local identity and requires that new development takes this into account.

### Planning for the future

**4.24** Existing local policies seek to protect and enhance the historic environment, including conservation areas, listed and locally listed buildings, and historic parks and gardens.

**4.25** There are nearly 40 conservation areas in Stockport and each has a Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan that is reviewed and updated on a 5 yearly basis. However, national policy can potentially leave locally listed buildings and buildings of heritage interest, such as churches and community buildings, more at risk from eventual demolition than statutorily listed buildings.

**4.26** Stockport has six scheduled monuments and two registered parks and gardens and these are subject to the statutory provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as well as local policy. Stockport also has a number of listed buildings and locally listed buildings.

**4.27** Linking policy in the Local Plan to 'heritage at risk' surveys would assist the council in taking action to protect those 'at risk' heritage assets and for them to be reviewed on a regular basis.

**4.28** Mills are an example of the important heritage assets Stockport has across the borough. They were built as employment sites and their potential future uses are covered in Section 3 of this document.

## Landscape

### Current context

**4.29** Landscape has been defined by the European Landscape Convention (ELC) as “An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” An overview of Landscape can be found in the figure below.

**4.30** Our landscapes are extremely important to us and they are part of our cultural heritage. With sympathetic planning and design they offer an opportunity to provide a more harmonious link

## 4 Health, Culture and Communities

between people and the natural world, for the benefit of both. Sensitive, informed, and integrated approaches should help us all to conserve, enhance, restore and regenerate landscapes that are attractive, diverse and publicly valued, showing that environmental, social and economic benefits can go hand in hand.

**4.31** The NPPF states that local plans should take account of landscape and also sets out that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and 'enhancing valued landscapes', geological conservation interests and soils 'recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem service'. It goes on to say that local authorities should set criteria-based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting landscape areas will be judged.

### Planning for the future

**4.32** Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is an accepted and recognised method for understanding the landscape. The landscape character approach considers that all landscapes are valued. The values people place on their landscape will vary and will reflect the benefits they receive from the landscape or features within it.

**4.33** There are currently 13 Landscape Character Areas in Stockport and a review of the existing landscape character evidence and a comprehensive assessment of the borough's landscape character, sensitivity and capacity is being undertaken in conformity with national guidance. Development that takes place within the borough can change its landscape character, either by way of a single development or the impact of several developments.

Figure 3 Components of a 'Landscape'



### Question 5

What facilities do think are most important to have in your local area to help support a good quality of life?



**Question 6**

How and where do you think those important uses and facilities should be provided?

**Question 7**

How can the Local Plan balance the need to ensure land is available for development with the need to create places where people want to live?

**Question 8**

Do you have any other comments about the various types of community facilities in Stockport?

## 5 Where We Live and the Types of Homes We Live In

### 5 Where We Live and the Types of Homes We Live In

The provision of new homes is vital to the future of Stockport as a place that people are able to afford to live and want to work in. Where we deliver those houses, the type of housing that is provided, and the associated open space and other green infrastructure provided, is as important as the number of homes that are delivered. Such provision, alongside other services and land uses, is vital to delivering sustainable development across the borough.

#### Housing

##### Current context

**5.1** As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, all local authorities need to identify a local housing target and to plan for its delivery over the plan period.

**5.2** The emerging work on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) will set the overall housing figure for Stockport, and will provide large-scale housing allocations where necessary. At this stage, Stockport's requirement is 19,300 additional new dwellings between 2015 and 2035, although it is subject to change. This works out at 965 dwellings per year. Our current Core Strategy housing target is around 480 dwellings per year and national guidance means that we need to find a way to deliver that revised figure.

**5.3** To deliver the homes identified in our housing target, we want to optimise the amount of housing we deliver on brownfield land; this approach reflects government's guidance and the recent Housing White Paper. It is something we have been able to do successfully for many years, due to policies which have restricted development on greenfield land.

##### Planning for the future

**5.4** Our housing target is still being developed and we are working hard to identify more brownfield sites and look at ways to make best use of that land in terms of the number of homes it can deliver. However, the need to deliver housing in the future is likely to put pressure on land which has not previously been needed for that purpose. Therefore we need to think about which land that should be, Green Belt land or the open spaces that serve the populations already living in our built-up areas. We consider Green Belt and existing Open Space in another section, but if such release is required, then we will need to assess which land to use, looking at a number of factors relating to health, environmental constraints, other benefits of Open Space and the purposes of Green Belt.

**5.5** Providing new homes also needs to consider the delivery of the right types of housing in the right locations, and the different sizes and types of housing that meet the various needs of people who want to live in Stockport. The delivery of housing via higher density development can help to deliver those numbers and limit the loss of green space, but this has to be balanced against delivering neighbourhoods and environments in which people are able to live healthy lives.

**5.6** The right type of housing also includes the provision of affordable housing. Stockport already has an affordable housing policy which has helped deliver around a third of all residential development as affordable dwellings since 2011. The government is likely to change the definition of what an 'affordable' dwelling actually is, so we will need to think about how to adapt our approach

## Where We Live and the Types of Homes We Live In 5

to make sure that the genuine needs of people are met. This means we need to find a way to deliver the right number of affordable houses, that are also the right type.

**5.7** Recent changes to national legislation mean that the council now needs to help find ways to deliver plots for those who wish to self-build their own home, something the government has identified as an important element of delivering housing. We have a self-build register to which people can add their details and this will help us work out how much demand there is for this type of housing. We will then need to work out how we best deliver land to try and meet that demand.

**5.8** Stockport has an ageing population and that means that there is a need for suitable homes to support people who need varying levels of specialist provision, whether that is adapted homes or residential or extra-care housing. The provision of suitable market housing for those who wish to move to smaller properties to suit their needs would have the benefit of freeing up larger properties for families who need them.

**5.9** The government has set national standards for housing space and national guidance says we should consider whether there is need for standards to be applied in our area, including the impact of applying standards in terms of the viability of schemes. Through our existing policies we currently require homes to meet the 'Decent Homes Standard' and seek to achieve 'lifetime homes standard' in new housing. As home working continues to increase, the need to assess whether there are any impacts from that which we should address. Elsewhere in this document we consider the importance of design, and this is relevant to housing in terms of quality standards both from a visual and environmental perspective.

**5.10** There is an identified need for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and the council should make provision for that need through the identification of land for sites, including the application of fair, realistic and inclusive policies. We currently have no allocations for such sites, but do have a criteria-based policy to deal with sites if they come forward for development. Established formal sites result in better overall management of the need which exists.

**5.11** In addition to the delivery of all these different types of housing, it is important that we deliver the different things that make people want to live in an area. The Stockport Local Plan will look at a lot of different issues in that regard but one of the items which can be directly related to the development of housing is open space.

### Open space provision for new homes

#### Current context

**5.12** The NPPF emphasises that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

**5.13** The recent Open Space study has made a recommendation that the wider benefits of open space sites and features regardless of size should be recognised as a key design principle for any new development.

## 5 Where We Live and the Types of Homes We Live In

### Planning for the future

Area of open space within residential development



**5.14** Whilst levels of open space in the built-up area vary across the borough, overall Stockport does not have enough publicly accessible open space and some of what it does have could be of a better quality to encourage its use. Future need for open space will arise from the population increases from potential housing growth areas and developments. There is a policy in the Stockport Development Plan which requires developers to provide open space in new developments. This policy currently has a focus on children's play space and recreation, with wider typologies of open space such as

allotments and amenity space, being given less attention. Advice for these different typologies is provided in a number of guidance documents including the Sustainable Design and Construction, Recreational Open Space Provision and Commuted sums and Design of Residential Development Supplementary Planning Documents; thereby leading to confusion.

#### Question 9

Where should new housing and places to live be located?

#### Question 10

What should be the balance of new housing types, sizes, development design and density?

#### Question 11

If you have struggled to find a home in Stockport, what have the problems been and how do you think the planning process can help with these issues in the future?

#### Question 12

Do you have any other comments about housing provision in Stockport?

## 6 Our Green Space and Places

The borough's 'green infrastructure' covers a wide range of green spaces and land. There are important open spaces in the urban area, with land offering a variety of benefits to people and to wildlife. In addition, a significant proportion of the borough is covered by Green Belt which contains land performing different functions.

We need to think about how we balance pressures for new development against protecting and enhancing these important assets, to help provide the wide range of environmental, economic and quality of life benefits green infrastructure and the Green Belt bring to local communities.

### Green Spaces

#### Current context

**6.1** Natural England defines green infrastructure (GI) as 'a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality of life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types.'

**6.2** The provision of GI in and around urban areas is now widely recognised as contributing towards creating places where people want to live and work. Its concept is embodied in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) and the GMSF and is an essential component of good planning for urban and rural areas. GI is particularly important in addressing climate change, through the need for sustainable drainage, in tackling urban heat island impacts and in the provision of sustainable transport routes. GI is also a key element of maintaining and enhancing 'Natural Capital'. Natural Capital refers to the stock of natural resources and the economic value they represent in the goods and services they provide.

Table 1 Benefits of Green Infrastructure

Benefits of Green Infrastructure		
Prosperity	People	Places
Economic Growth and Investment	Health and Wellbeing	Biodiversity
Land and Property Values	Recreation and Leisure	Flood Alleviation and Management
Labour Productivity	Quality of Place	Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation
Tourism	Food Growing	Improved public realm
Products of the Land	Educational Resource	Improved air quality



## 6 Our Green Space and Places

**6.3** The NPPF requires that local plans should do a number of things in relation to green infrastructure including:

- Setting out a strategic approach which plans positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure;
- Planning for biodiversity at a landscape scale, across local authority boundaries;
- Identifying and mapping components of the local ecological networks;
- Promoting the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identifying suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan; and
- Contributing to and enhancing the natural and local environment by recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services (the wide variety of ecosystems that exist).

**6.4** Work across Greater Manchester has identified the broad habitats of River Valleys and Canals, Woodlands and Trees and Major Parks and Green Spaces as having the highest value in terms of Stockport's ecosystem. River Valleys have long been recognised as having particular importance in the area.

### River Valleys and Canals

**6.5** These provide benefits by way of: Surface Water and Fluvial Flood Management; Water Quality Management; Public Recreation and Green Travel Routes, and Wildlife and Habitat Conservation. Consequently, various ways in which we could look to enhance them include: improving water quality; re-naturalising rivers and waterways; and improving public access to waterways, including improving opportunities for sustainable travel along them.

### Woodlands and Trees

**6.6** The Greater Manchester Tree Audit (2011) indicates that Stockport has the most tree cover across Greater Manchester with close to 25 per cent cover, including some ancient woodland.

**6.7** Woodlands and trees provide benefits through recreation, carbon storage and capture and flood mitigation. We could, therefore, look at new tree planting, positive woodland management, including clough woodland as promoted in the GMSF, and management of recreational pressures as a way to support this.

## Major Parks and Green Space

**6.8** These contribute to the ecosystem service through: the provision of public recreation and Green Travel routes; surface water and fluvial flood management; water quality management and wildlife; and habitat conservation. In order to improve them, opportunities potentially exist through investment in improving access to those spaces and in their management.

**6.9** The recent Open Space Assessment identified the popularity of parks, finding that that a high proportion of respondents visit parks more than once a week (52%). The majority of parks are assessed as being of high value, with the important social inclusion and health benefits, ecological value and sense of place these sites offer being fully acknowledged.

**6.10** The contribution of Green Infrastructure to flood risk management is referred to in the Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage part of this chapter.

## Planning for the future

**6.11** Current local policy sets out how the Council is working with developers and partners to protect, develop and enhance an integrated network of GI, but currently policy does not provide specific details.

**6.12** Stockport has Supplementary Planning documents relating to: Sustainable Design and Construction; Recreational Open Space Provision and Commuted Sums and Design of Residential Development, which collectively provide advice on how to include GI within development proposals.

**6.13** Stockport has a well-established and robust system of sites designated for their nature conservation value. These sites include:

- Nationally protected sites (Sites of Special Scientific interest and National Nature Reserves);
- Local Wildlife Sites, including Sites of Biological Importance and Local Nature Reserves;
- Green Chains, for retaining the wildlife and recreational value of linked greenspace.

**6.14** In addition, five River Valleys in Stockport are identified as Landscape Character Areas.

**6.15** Work was undertaken on a 'Stockport Town Centre Urban GI Enhancement Strategy', which has made key recommendations, including: increased tree planting; more creative management of water and the inclusion of vegetation in building design. In addition, it suggests

Bruntwood Park



## 6 Our Green Space and Places

producing planning guidelines to enable the future approval of planning applications that will enhance and increase Green Infrastructure.

**6.16** Some of the key issues in this regard are:

- Many remaining species-rich and important natural habitats are small and fragmented;
- Opportunities for contributing to and enhancing the GI network are currently being missed;
- There are significant deficiencies in terms of access to the GI network across the borough.

### Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage

#### Current context

**6.17** Stockport has suffered the effects of flooding in recent times, with significant effects on people's homes, businesses and on the transport network. Green Infrastructure can serve to manage flood risk by way of natural approaches such as sustainable urban drainage methods. Such approaches could include, for example, green roofs and walls and attenuation ponds.

**6.18** The NPPF has as one of its core planning principles support for the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and recognising that some open land can perform many functions, including flood risk mitigation.

**6.19** The NPPF requires local authorities to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, taking full account of flood risk and to take account of climate change over the longer term, again including factors such as flood risk. It notes the key role Planning plays in providing resilience to the impacts of climate change. Local Authorities should develop policies to manage flood risk, taking account of advice from the Environment Agency.

**6.20** The NPPF also sets out tests which aims to steer new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding or to allow development which provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk (the Sequential Test and the Exceptions Test). It also requires the safeguarding of land from development that is required for current and future flood management.

**6.21** Flood Zone information is provided by the Environment Agency and is subject to quarterly changes.

**6.22** The NPPF requires the planning system to remediate and mitigate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land. There may be sensitive uses e.g. housing and schools next to potential sources of pollution.

**6.23** The Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework provides a number of proposed policies on a wide range of flood risk and water quality issues, including sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), managing and reducing flood risk, and enhancing the resilience of areas at risk of flooding.

#### Planning for the future

**6.24** Current local policy indicates that all development will be expected to comply with the approach set out in the NPPF and its accompanying Technical Guidance. Reference is made to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Stockport (SFRA) as providing the necessary evidence to back up the Sequential and Exceptions tests set out in the NPPF. In addition current policy sets requirements for SuDS within Critical Drainage Areas (CDAs), when these areas are identified.



**6.25** The land to be safeguarded from development that is required for current and future flood management is also identified in the SFRA for Stockport. This land is located at Marple Dale; Brabyn Park; Marple Green Belt areas and Houldsworth Golf Course. This land therefore forms a vital component of the GI network within Stockport.

## Local Open Space

### Current context

**6.26** Open space, sport and recreation facilities are key elements of Green Infrastructure and appropriate provision of such assets makes a fundamental contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Areas of open space which are valued by residents provide an important community function and can make a significant contribution to the aesthetic quality of an area. Safeguarding open space is vital in ensuring that there is sufficient quantity to meet the needs of local people.

**6.27** The NPPF presumes against the loss of these areas to built development unless:

- An assessment has been undertaken which shows the open space is surplus to requirements; or
- The loss resulting from the proposed development will be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- The development is for an alternative sports and recreation provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

**6.28** The NPPF states that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities and that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.

Friends of Chadkirk Tia Chi



### Planning for the future

**6.29** An Open Space Assessment has recently been undertaken for the borough which assessed the quality and value of all sites and reviewed their accessibility. Open space within the Assessment is defined as *'Land set out for the purpose of public recreation'*.

**6.30** The Assessment has not made an assessment of playing pitches within the borough and this will be assessed through a Playing Pitch Strategy, in compliance with Sport England guidance.

**6.31** The Assessment has shown that there are noticeable deficiencies in terms of the quantity and access to open spaces across the borough.

**6.32** Attendees at events held on Stockport's greenspace sites number in excess of 100,000 per year. The events range from carnivals to duck races, with activities that appeal to all age

## 6 Our Green Space and Places

ranges. These events offer opportunities to meet and socialise with other members of the community that one might not otherwise engage with.

### Issue

**6.33** Pressure from development is likely to prove a challenge in the delivery and protection of Stockport's open spaces. These challenges include ensuring a connection between different green spaces and also preserving existing open space standards within the borough. There is an increasing challenge to secure a positive and sustainable future for Stockport's open spaces, with reducing resources available for maintenance. There is also a challenge of balancing the demand for open space with meeting housing demand. New approaches to provision and management must be considered, to enable the council to better respond to current and future challenges around health, climate change, demographics and housing numbers.

### Nature Conservation

#### Current context

**6.34** The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) imposes a duty on local authorities to conserve biodiversity. The NPPF sets out detailed guidance on the role of planning in protecting and enhancing the natural environment by, amongst other things: 'promoting criteria based policies in Local Plans against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged, plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries and promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations'.

Chadkirk Country Estate & Local Nature Reserve



#### 6.35

Nationally, there has been a decline in biodiversity, particularly as development has contributed to the loss and fragmentation of habitats along with changing agricultural practices and recreational disturbance. To continue to perform these vital services they need to retain their complexity, diversity and resilience. Maintaining biodiversity also provides access to nature which is important for the health and well-being of Stockport's population. Further evidence on the current state of the natural environment is provided in the Sustainability Appraisal baseline.

#### Planning for the future

**6.36** Stockport contains two nationally protected Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), 14 Local Nature Reserves, 66 Sites of Biological Importance and one Geological Conservation site. The current proposals map contains Green Chains which serve as a wildlife and recreation value.

**6.37** A large majority of the river valleys within Stockport are also currently designated as Landscape Character Areas. The aquatic ecosystem and biodiversity value of the river valleys are, however, not fully acknowledged through the planning system.

**6.38** The overall aim of the Greater Manchester Local Biodiversity Action Plan (GMBAP) is to promote conservation, protection and enhancement of biological diversity in Greater Manchester for current and future generations. GMBAP has identified that Stockport has a greater extent of lowland broad-leaved woodland, than other Greater Manchester district, with notable networks along river corridors in Stockport, such as at Etherow Country Park.

### Issue

**6.39** Stockport has seen a decline in biodiversity, resulting from development, climate change and invasive species and recreation.

## Green Belt

### Current context

**6.40** Around 13% of the land area in England is designated as Green Belt. The Green Belt serves the following purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

**6.41** The NPPF attaches great importance to the Green Belt, with its fundamental aim being to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. New Green Belt boundaries should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions, and this should be done through the preparation or review of the Development Plan. Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

**6.42** Due to the scale of development currently forecast across Greater Manchester over the next two decades, some changes to the Green Belt may be necessary and councils across GM are working together to minimise the impact of future development on the Green Belt. In particular, the five allocations proposed in Stockport as part of the first draft of the GMSF are currently undergoing further review and consideration, in light of the consultation responses received.

**6.43** The draft GMSF policy for Green Belt emphasises the five purposes of the Green Belt, as set out above, and promotes the enhancement of green infrastructure functions in the Green Belt.

### Planning for the future

**6.44** The Greater Manchester Green Belt was originally designated in full in 1984 and Stockport has seen some very minor amendments to the boundary since it was designated. Green Belt land now covers 46.5 % of the total land area of Stockport, mainly located in the eastern and southern parts of the borough.

## 6 Our Green Space and Places

**6.45** The Green Belt maintains built-up areas at their current limits, but this means that additional development has to be fitted into the existing settlements. This may affect the character and quality of existing urban areas, particularly as there is deficit in open space across the borough. One option could be to undertake controlled release of Green Belt and it is important to acknowledge that not all Green Belt is publicly accessible and of recreational value.

**6.46** The Green Belt includes existing buildings and land which has previously been developed (often referred to as 'brownfield land'). Within the Green Belt there are sites where significant development already exists and boundaries have been drawn around the sites identified as Major Existing Developed Sites (MEDS) within the current proposals map. However, the MEDs concept has now been superseded by the NPPF, which allows limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites that would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

### Question 13

What types of open space should we provide for the growing population and how should we make use of the existing spaces ?

### Question 14

How can the council encourage the redevelopment of brownfield land, rather than green spaces, to help provide enough housing and jobs?

### Question 15

If the current supply of land within the urban area is not sufficient to meet need, what land should be used for new homes and places to work? If you don't think that Green Belt should be used, what alternative would you suggest and why?

### Question 16

Do you have any other comments about various types of green space and the Green Belt in Stockport?



## 7 Transport and Infrastructure

The ability to travel between where we live, work, study and spend our leisure time is an important factor in the quality of lives and health. We know Stockport has long-standing and ongoing problems of congestion, and areas of poor air quality, particularly along major routes. Therefore we need to improve the efficiency and capacity of transportation networks and find ways to get more people using sustainable modes of transport, such as public transport, walking and cycling.

Communities need to be supported by a range of 'infrastructure'. In particular physical infrastructure is needed to support built development by providing fresh water, sewers, sustainable drainage, communication technologies, gas, electricity and opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy.

We need to encourage high quality, sustainable design in new developments, to improve resilience to climate change, and to support opportunities for low carbon energy.

### Transport

#### Current context

**7.1** The National Planning Policy Framework recognises that transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development and contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives, and recommends that the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel. However it is recognised that different areas will need an appropriate mix of policies and modes to support that area, whilst encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion.

**7.2** National Planning Policy recommends that local plans should support a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport. The need for transport policies to consider the impacts of wider transport systems is also highlighted and discussion with neighbouring authorities is recommended.

**7.3** The council works closely on transport issues with the other local authorities in Greater Manchester as well as Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and has strong links with nearby authorities including Cheshire East, Derbyshire, the Peak District Park and High Peak.

**7.4** There are currently two transport strategies that will guide future transport priorities across Stockport, these are known as:

- The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040, and
- The South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy (SEMMMS).

**7.5** The Transport Strategy 2040 does not include details of transport schemes or investment priorities, but provides a vision of what a successful transport system might look like in 2040, to support Greater Manchester's wider economic, social and environmental ambitions. The ambition is to deliver a transport system for Greater Manchester which makes it easier for residents, businesses and visitors to travel to a wide range of different destinations, and for sustainable transport to be a viable and an attractive alternative to the car.

## 7 Transport and Infrastructure

**7.6** The South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy (SEMMMS) is a 20-year strategy to deal with transport issues across Stockport, parts of Manchester, Tameside, Cheshire East, and Derbyshire, and was approved by central Government in 2001. The multi-modal plan includes developing integrated transport corridors and bus priority measures, improvements to rail stations and services, proposals for Metrolink and tram-train lines and services, improvements to town, district and local centres, pedestrian and cycle facilities, new roads, and a 'smarter choices' programme to help people to choose to reduce their car use.

**7.7** An updated strategy is being prepared to cover the period up to 2040, and is known as the SEMMMS Refresh. The SEMMMS Refresh is important for the future of Stockport's transport network. It will build upon recently developed corridor plans for the A6 and A34, Greater Manchester Key Route Network plans and Stockport's Rail Plan, which includes a masterplan for developing Stockport Station. The refresh will review the progress with the existing SEMMM Strategy and consider the existing and future transport requirements and issues in the area. The refresh will consider what transport interventions and schemes would be required to meet existing transport demands and support future development.

**7.8** The initial review has also identified a number of issues that will need to be addressed to enable the transportation networks to support the delivery of the local plan and its economic, housing, social and environmental aspirations. It identifies that transportation demands are changing for instance:

- Lifestyle choices are altering previous movement patterns with home working increasing in popularity, and shopping via the internet increasing home delivery services.
- Electric vehicles, car clubs, "uber type" services, cycle loan schemes and autonomous vehicles are all new opportunities that may influence how people choose to travel in the future.

**7.9** The emerging SEMMMS Refresh has identified that packages of measures will be required to meet future transportation needs. These measures may include:

- Metrolink/tram train routes to Marple, Stockport town centre, the airport and Hazel Grove.
- Segregated bus routes and bus priority schemes.
- Improved rail services and new/ improved rail stations.
- New roads e.g. A6 to M60 Relief Road.
- New and improved walking and cycling routes and facilities on and off the highway.
- Improved public realm in the district and local centres.
- Creation of connected neighbourhoods that encourage the use of more sustainable forms of transport.
- The provision of transportation infrastructure needs to be supported by the introduction of smarter choices to encourage the use of sustainable transport.

**7.10** The SEMMMS Refresh draft strategy will be available for consultation this summer.

**7.11** Stockport Town Centre is a key focus for a number of proposed transport improvement schemes including the completion of the Town Centre Access Plan which improves access to and around the Town Centre by all modes, a new transport interchange, substantial improvements to Stockport Rail Station, new tram train/metrolink routes and a masterplan to improve the A6 Corridor through the Town Centre.

## Planning for the future

**7.12** Stockport is well connected compared with many towns due to the presence of:

- The M60 motorway running through the town centre;
- A railway station on the west coast mainline providing fast train services to London as well local commuter stopping services;
- One of the longest roads in England (A6) running directly through the town centre; and
- The Trans Pennine Trail, a 215 mile long route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders linking the Irish Sea to the North Sea, passing through Stockport's centre.

**7.13** Despite being well-connected, the area suffers from congestion on the roads, with some of this being caused by people travelling through Stockport to get to work or leisure opportunities in other areas. Increasing car ownership and people travelling greater distances to work are expected to continue, and this may lead to worsen congestion. Making sure that we have an effective and sustainable transport system for moving around and getting to and from Stockport is therefore essential for the quality of life of our residents and the town's future development and prosperity.

**7.14** Transport infrastructure and accessibility is a key issue for Stockport's Local Plan as capacity issues can affect the amount and location of new development. Although the SEMMMS Refresh is the key transport strategy for Stockport, we would like to know whether there are any other transport issues that need to be considered by this refresh process, or directly within the Local Plan.

## Infrastructure

### Current context

**7.15** One the of core planning principles of the NPPF involves proactively supporting and driving sustainable economic development to deliver homes, businesses, and infrastructure and thriving places. Furthermore it notes that Local Plans should plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area to meet the objectives, principles and policies of this Framework.

**7.16** The NPPF sets out that we should work with other authorities and providers to assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure and its ability to meet forecast demands.

**7.17** The Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) requires a co-ordinated and integrated approach to infrastructure planning and delivery to be undertaken. The approach of the draft GMSF includes working directly with infrastructure providers to enable development to be completed, with further information to be set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. It also requires that development must make provision for, and be phased with supporting infrastructure.

**7.18** There is currently no Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in Stockport, so infrastructure provision is delivered by negotiated contributions to support new developments. The system is under review by Central Government with an update expected in the Autumn White Paper, with a further decision on CIL to be made by the Council after that.

## 7 Transport and Infrastructure

### Planning for the future

**7.19** Infrastructure planning work previously undertaken in Stockport has identified a deficit across various types of infrastructure, of the types highlighted in the opening section to this chapter. Since that work was carried out, the draft GMSF has proposed additional development sites to be allocated for development in Stockport, which will need to be supported by further infrastructure. Some types of infrastructure will need to be provided by utilities companies, other types may need to be delivered or funded as part of individual developments. Viability is recognised as an issue for bringing forward development in a sustainable way.

**7.20** An infrastructure delivery plan will be prepared in conjunction with the emerging Local Plan. The infrastructure delivery plan will identify what is needed, when it is needed, the likely cost, delivery partners and sources of funding where known. This will identify the different types of infrastructure that are needed to make sure the Local Plan is deliverable.

### Sustainable Design

#### Current context

**7.21** The NPPF identifies that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is part of good planning and consequently should contribute positively to making places better for people.

**7.22** High quality and inclusive design is important in all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. The use of environmental design standards can help to achieve this.

**7.23** Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
- optimise the potential of sites to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;
- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
- address minimising the environmental impact of buildings including taking opportunities to enhance the natural environment; and
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

**7.24** In doing so there is no 'one size fits all' approach to design and local distinctiveness should be promoted.

**7.25** The design of homes can be measured and delivered using a range of national or international assessment standards. The Home Quality Mark provides information on overall expected costs, health and well-being benefits, and the environmental footprint associated with



living in the home. Passivhaus focuses on the thermal insulation of properties. There are other wider ranging schemes for assessing the sustainability of design such as BREEAM and CEEQUAL.

### Planning for the future

**7.26** There are a large number of policies in the existing development plan dealing with a variety of design matters ranging from shopfronts and advertisements on shops, to extensions and residential development, through to carbon reduction, green infrastructure, open space, and sustainable drainage.

**7.27** Good quality design of buildings and spaces can have an impact on the health of people living in those environments. At present there is no explicit reference to that in our current policies.

**7.28** The Local Plan provides an opportunity to bring together and strengthen the various design policies into a coherent form. The Local Plan needs to develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics.

## Energy and Low Carbon Opportunities

### Current context

**7.29** The NPPF states that the planning system has a crucial role in securing radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, providing resilience to the impacts of climate change and supporting the delivery of low carbon energy and supporting infrastructure. The council needs to build on earlier work that it has done to identify opportunities where development could draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.

**7.30** The Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework sets out that Greater Manchester should see a 60% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions compared to 1990 levels by 2035, and lists a number of measures to help achieve this including supporting the delivery of low carbon energy schemes for all development.

**7.31** The Stockport Climate Change and Energy Evidence Study 2009 identified a number of renewable technologies which were relevant to Stockport and the potential locations for these, which are identified in the Energy Opportunities Plan in the Core Strategy.

### Planning for the future

**7.32** The national commitment to deliver zero carbon new homes by 2016 has been abolished which means the planning system could have an important role in supporting de-carbonisation at a local level. Deployment of small scale renewable generation in Greater Manchester is below the national average and planning policy could support increased uptake within districts. The Greater Manchester Spatial Energy Plan 2016 established that up to 9% of GM's electricity could, technically, be generated locally using renewable sources.

**7.33** Stockport Council currently identifies energy opportunities in the development plan using the Energy Opportunities Plan which identifies the opportunities for low carbon technologies including high energy/heat users. However there is a need to update the evidence to support the

## 7 Transport and Infrastructure

preparation of future Local Plan policies and include for additional green infrastructure technologies such as green roofs to cool buildings.

**7.34** Stockport Council's existing policy, increases energy efficiency in existing housing where an extension is being made to the property. The majority of housing in Stockport is predominantly pre-1980s and of a relatively low energy efficiency rating, resulting in Stockport's domestic carbon dioxide emissions being the third highest in Greater Manchester after Manchester and Wigan.

**7.35** The cost of heating older housing stock in Stockport can lead to fuel poverty, so to create more socially inclusive and sustainable communities, it is important to break the link between high levels of deprivation and carbon dioxide emissions. Whilst improvements are required in the level of energy efficiency in new housing, it is also important to seek to improve the existing stock, where the opportunity arises.

**7.36** To meet international, national and local carbon reduction targets, there needs to be a significant reduction in the use of gas as fuel. Therefore it is expected that buildings will have to change almost entirely to different sources of energy for heat and hot water, with replacement by electricity forming a key aspect of this change.

### Question 17

The SEMMMS Refresh will be looking at all aspects of transport provision in the area. What are the key issues for transport in Stockport and what do you think should be done to improve things across all types of transport use?

### Question 18

We believe that new developments should contribute towards extra infrastructure to make sure they are safe and sustainable. What are the priorities for your community?

### Question 19

How and where should low carbon and renewable energy development be provided in Stockport?

### Question 20

Do you have any other comments about transport and other types of infrastructure in Stockport?

## 8 What Happens Next?

**8.1** This document is just the start of the process. The Council will develop the plan by considering both the views of all those who respond to the consultation on this document and all the available evidence relating to the issues the Local Plan will cover. Ultimately the Council will adopt a Local Plan which sets out the land allocations and planning policies which will help shape development in each of the areas of the borough.

**8.2** Whatever is contained in the final plan we want to try to develop the document from the local level upwards, so that the characteristics and needs of communities across Stockport are reflected as well as possible by the allocations and policies in the Local Plan, whether that is an urban or a more rural area, whether it is an area that has a shortfall of appropriate services and infrastructure or one that is already well served by those things. That is why we think it is important that local people get involved as early as possible and why we will undertake consultation that aims to get to as many sections of society in Stockport as possible.

**8.3** In terms of the overall process the Council will need to work through more versions of the Plan over the next two years, including setting out the options it would prefer to take in terms of those allocations and policies and the reasons why it thinks those are the best options. We will consult again on that before producing a draft version of the Plan which we would like to submit to the Planning Inspectorate, so you will have further chances to put forward your thoughts and ideas.

**8.4** When the Planning Inspectorate has the submitted plan there will then be what is called an 'Examination in Public'. At that stage an independent inspector will look at the plan and the submissions that have been made both in support and against the document. When the Inspector has heard all the various arguments they will then make recommendations as to whether or not the plan is suitable for the Council to adopt and any changes which should be made.

**8.5** Alongside this consultation the Council is asking people to submit details of sites they would like to be used or preserved for a particular use. This is not just for people to identify housing or employment sites, it is for any use you think we should be looking to protect or use for another purpose, for example there may be an area of land you think should be used for allotments. So if there are any sites that you think should be developed, protected or changed to a different use, please use the the relevant form to let us know. This is available at [www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/stockport-local-plan](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/stockport-local-plan)

### Question 21

Do you have any other comments about the Stockport Local Plan?

## How Do I Comment?

**8.6** MORE DETAIL TO BE ADDED BEFORE PUBLICATION WHEN FULL CONSULTATION DETAILS ARE KNOWN

Contact for further information

## 8 What Happens Next?

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