

ITEM 4

Application Reference	DC/081773
Location:	Land At Stockport Exchange Railway Road Stockport
PROPOSAL:	Reserved matters approval (access, layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping) for the erection of a 6 storey office building (Class E), including retail and commercial uses at ground level (Class E and Sui Generis Drinking Establishments and Hot Food Takeaways), associated landscaping and works, pursuant to hybrid application reference DC/063213.
Type Of Application:	Reserved Matters
Registration Date:	08.07.2021
Expiry Date:	07.10.2021
Case Officer:	Jeni Regan
Applicant:	Muse Developments Ltd
Agent:	Savills

DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS

Under the Council's adopted Scheme of Delegation, this application is required to be determined by the Council's Planning & Highways Regulations Committee by virtue of the floorspace associated with the proposal.

This application is presented to seek the views of the Central Area Committee in order that these can be brought to the attention of the Planning & Highways Regulations Committee.

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

This reserved matters application relates to Phase 4 of the Stockport Exchange Master Plan site, for the erection of a six storey office building (Use Class E) including ground floor commercial uses (Class E and Sui Generis Drinking Establishments and Hot Food Takeaways), associated landscaping and other public realm works.

The application seeks approval for the appearance, landscaping, layout, scale and access relating to the development, full details of which are set out in the plans accompanying this report.

This reserved matters application is submitted pursuant to the latest hybrid (part full, part outline) permission (DC063213), which approved the re-development of the former Grand Central complex.

Members are aware that the development of the entire regeneration site is being delivered on a phased basis with phases 1, 2 and 3 already having been delivered through the construction of a multi storey car park and the completed hotel and office buildings.

The proposal remains a key component of the Council's Town Centre regeneration strategy linking Stockport Rail Station with the remainder of the Town Centre and is anticipated to secure significant direct investment to the local economy.

The outline permission granted first under DC/054978 and subsequently amended under DC/063213 established the principle of a mixed use re-development of the remainder of the key regeneration site site, including the current Phase 4. As part of the outline approval(s) a maximum quantum of development for 44,900 sq.m of office space (B1) and 2,600 sq.m of flexible commercial floorspace (previous use classes A1, A2, A3, A4 & A5) is controlled by appropriate conditions.

The parameters plans submitted as part of the outline approvals set out the maximum height that was proposed and considered acceptable for various phases. The height of the building within Phase 4 is controlled by condition.

Parking for future phases (4-8) of the Master Plan site, including Phase 4 that forms the current application, has already been accepted in the form of a 400 space decked car park to be provided on the site of an existing surface car park on the southern edge of Railway Road. In total the overall Master Plan site (phases 2-8) when re-developed will be served by 1400 spaces, with 1000 spaces provided by the previously completed multi storey car park.

The current application is accompanied by a number of supporting documents which are listed below:-

- Landscape scheme
- Design and Access Statement
- Planning Statement
- Transport Assessment and Travel Plan
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Ground Conditions Report
- Air Quality Assessment
- Energy Statement
- BREEAM Pre-Assessment
- Climate Change Assessment
- Sustainability Checklist
- Utilities Statement
- Ecological Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Statement
- Lighting Statement
- Crime Impact Statement

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) SCREENING

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations specify that for multi-stage consents, EIA screening is only required where the development is likely to have significant environmental effects which were not anticipated when the initial planning permission was granted.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) also states that the likely significant effects of a project on the environment should be identified and assessed at the time of the procedure relating to the principal decision.

The environmental impacts associated with the development were assessed as part of the previous hybrid planning application(s). A series of Parameter Plans formed the basis of the assessment that was undertaken. Appropriate conditions were attached to the hybrid consent(s) controlling the implementation of the development in accordance with the approved plans and subject to floorspace and building height limits.

Having reviewed each of the environmental aspects that was previously assessed in respect of the original hybrid planning application, it is considered that there has been no material change in circumstances since the grant of planning permission which would necessitate a fresh assessment being undertaken or a reappraisal of one or more of the environmental impacts. On this basis, it is concluded that the current proposal would not warrant the undertaking of an EIA.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site comprises an area of hardstanding forming part of the wider Stockport Exchange masterplan site, which in its entirety covers approximately 4.5 hectares. The site, which is currently in use as a temporary surface car park, lies directly to the north-east of the recently completed office/retail development block, which formed Phase 3 of the Stockport Exchange development. The Grand Central leisure complex is situated immediately to the east, with Railway Road, surface level car parking and the Millennium House offices to the north, with residential properties beyond positioned at a higher level along Thomson Street

POLICY BACKGROUND

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (“PCPA 2004”) requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan includes-

- Policies set out in the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review adopted 31st May 2006 which have been saved by direction under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; &
- Policies set out in the Stockport Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted 17th March 2011.

The site lies within the Stockport Town Centre Mixed Use Area as defined on the Proposals Map of the adopted Local Development Framework (UDP Proposals Map DPD). The wider Master Plan site falls within both TCG3.2 'Cultural Leisure and Heritage Quarter' and TCG3.3 'Stockport Station'.

Listed buildings including the Grade II* Town Hall and Grade II Millennium House exist further afield to the east and south east, either side of Wellington Road, within the adjacent Town Hall Conservation Area.

The following policies of the adopted Local Development Framework are relevant to the consideration of this proposal:-

Saved Policies of the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review

TCG1 - TOWN CENTRE/M60 GATEWAY

TCG1.2 - TOWN CENTRE/M60 GATEWAY TRANSPORT HUB
TCG1.3 - PARKING IN THE TOWN CENTRE
TCG1.4 - SUSTAINABLE ACCESS IN THE TOWN CENTRE
TCG1.5 - IMPACT ON THE M60 MOTORWAY
TCG3.2 - CULTURAL, LEISURE AND HERITAGE QUARTER
TCG3.3 - STOCKPORT STATION
HC1.3 - SPECIAL CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS
EP1.7 - DEVELOPMENT AND FLOOD RISK
E1.2 - LOCATION OF NEW BUSINESS PREMISES AND OFFICES

Stockport Core Strategy DPD

CS1 - OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE
SD1- CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
SD3 - DELIVERING THE ENERGY OPPORTUNITIES PLANS - NEW DEVELOPMENT
SD6 - ADAPTING TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE
CS5 - ACCESS TO SERVICES
CS6 - SAFEGUARDING AND STRENGTHENING THE SERVICE CENTRE HIERARCHY
AS-1 - THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF STOCKPORTS SERVICE CENTRES
AS-3 - MAIN TOWN CENTRE USES, HOT FOOD TAKEAWAYS AND PRISON DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE EXISTING CENTRES
AS-4 - VISITOR ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
CS7 - ACCOMMODATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AED1 - EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOWN CENTRE AND M60 GATEWAY
AED-5 - EDUCATION, SKILLS AND TRAINING PROVISION
AED-6 - EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE PROTECTED EMPLOYMENT AREAS
CS8 SAFEGUARDING AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT
SIE-1 QUALITY PLACES
SIE-3 PROTECTING, SAFEGUARDING AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT
CS9 TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT
CS10 AN EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT NETWORK
T-1 TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT
T-2 PARKING AND DEVELOPMENT
T-3 SAFETY AND CAPACITY ON THE HIGHWAY NETWORK
CS11 - STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE
TC1 - STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance does not form part of the Statutory Development Plan; nevertheless it does provide non-statutory Council approved guidance that is a material consideration when determining planning applications. Relevant Council Publications comprise:-

Local Employment and Training Benefits SPD
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD
Sustainable Transport SPD

National Planning Policy Framework

The revised NPPF, issued by DCLG on the 19th February 2019 has been subsequently revised on 20th July 2021 and sets out the Government's planning policies and how they are expected to be applied.

In respect of decision-taking, the revised NPPF constitutes a 'material consideration'.

Para.1 "The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied".

Para.2 "Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise".

Para.7 "The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development".

Para.8 "Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a) an economic objective
- b) a social objective
- c) an environmental objective"

Para.11 "Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole".

Para.12 “.....Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed”.

Para.38 “Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way..... Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”.

Para.47 “Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing”.

Para.126 The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

Para.134 Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to: a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

Para 194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Para 195. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by

development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Para 197. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Para 199. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Para 200. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of: a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Para 201. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply: a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

Para 202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Para 203. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets. Applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Para 204. Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.

Para 205. Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

Para 206. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Planning Practice Guidance

The Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place (launched in March 2014) and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

Stockport Climate Action Now (Stockport CAN)

The Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and agreed the ambition to become carbon neutral by 2038.

As well as large-scale improvements in health and wellbeing around the world, bold climate action can deliver economic benefits in terms of new jobs, economic savings and market opportunities.

Subsequently, in December 2020 the Council adopted the Stockport CAN Climate Change Strategy, it sets out the initial actions that Stockport Council will take to make a difference on climate change over the next five years as it begins the journey to net-zero 2038. This document is read alongside current planning policies and is being used to inform work in developing a new local plan.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

The site and its immediate surroundings have an extensive planning history, the following are particularly pertinent to the current proposal:-

J44233 - Outline planning permission granted in 1989 for leisure development (restaurant, shops, cinema, bowling alley, nightclub and amusement arcade)

J46841 - Approval of reserved matters granted December 1989 for construction of road infrastructure (access) drainage, construction of car park and station parking area.

J74168 - Approval of reserved matters (Phase 1) to include cinema, bowling alley, nightclub, health club, theme bar public house/restaurant 11 shops, parking and ancillary works. Granted December 1989.

J47508 - Modification to outline permission J44233 for leisure complex to cover 1st and 2nd floor offices, restaurant, shop and revised car park.

DC003932 - Erection of station concourse building, new platform and internal works to existing underbridge. Prior Approval granted September 2001.

DC018144 - Outline planning permission granted in April 2005 for car park improvements, a security fence & pay station shelter.

DC020081 - Planning permission granted August 2005 for security fence to the perimeter including access gates plus security hut and pay station shelter.

DC024698 - Screening opinion submitted for redevelopment of existing leisure and retail development. Decision- not EIA development November 2006.

DC026012 - Temporary 3 year planning permission granted in July 2007 for formation of displaced car parking on land off King Street West.

DC027049 - Variation of condition 7 of consent DC020081 to allow for retention of security hut for further two years. Granted August 2007.

DC028156 – Re-modelling of existing tenpin bowling alley, provision of replacement food & drink premises (use classes A3-A5) and additional offices above (use classes B1 and/or D1) including partial demolition and rebuilding of premises. Granted 17/01/08.

DC025432 - Full planning permission granted for demolition of existing buildings and erection of three storey cafe/shops at ground floor with office space above and associated car parking at 80 - 82 Wellington Road South to east of site. Granted 15/03/07.

DC027303 Outline planning permission for mixed use redevelopment of Grand Central Complex for Hotel, Residential, Food and Drink, Ancillary Retail, Offices, Non Residential Institutions & Multi Storey Car Park and associated highway works together with re-modelling of the Bowling Alley, Cinema and Swimming Pool. This application was considered by Planning and Highways Committee in February 2008 where it was resolved that planning permission should be granted subject to a Section 106 agreement. The agreement was not completed and the application was deemed not proceeded with.

DC048549 Construction of a multi storey car park. Granted 14/12/11

DC048552 Consent for the Demolition of former Heaven and Hell Nightclub, Tenpin Bowling Alley and Brannigans to form temporary Car Park. Granted 14/12/11.

DC049892 Minor material amendment to DC048552 to allow revised parking layout. Granted 22/08/12.

DC050228 Minor material amendment to DC048549 to allow a reduced footprint and increased height of the multi storey car park, together with revised surface car park and access arrangements. Granted 16/10/12.

DC/054978 - Hybrid application seeking:

(1) full planning permission for the construction of an office building (Use Class B1) with ground floor commercial units (Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 or B1), a hotel (Use Class C1), landscaping, areas of public realm and associated engineering and infrastructure works;

(2) outline planning permission, with all matters reserved, for the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of office development (Use Class B1) with

ground floor commercial units (Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 or B1), a decked car park, landscaping, areas of public realm and associated engineering and infrastructure works. Application Granted 17/07/14

DC/058003 - Variation of conditions 1 & 12 of planning permission DC054978 to allow for revised location of office building, reconfiguration of southern loop, amendments to parking layout, public realm and service roads and associated highway works (Minor Material Amendment). Granted 22/05/15.

DC/063213 - Variation of condition 2 of DC058003 to allow for amendments to the approved hotel, office building and public realm works (Minor Material Amendment). Granted 13/12/16.

DC/067841 - Demolition of existing cinema (Prior Notification). Prior Approval Approved 09/03/18.

DC/068127 - Reserved matters application seeking approval for access, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping, for the erection of a six storey office building (Use Class B1) including ground floor commercial uses (Use Class B1, A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5) and associated landscaping and works, following the grant of outline permission under DC/063213. Approved 09/03/18.

DC/069604 - Development of a temporary surface car park with access off Railway Road. Approved 08/08/18.

DC/070421 - Variation of Conditions 1 and 17 of the Reserved Matters Permission DC/068127, to allow a, change in the materiality of the roof mounted plant screen from photovoltaic panels to anthracite grey louvres and to vary the landscaping around the building. Approved 17/10/19

DC/080334 – Non Material Amendment to DC/063213 to allow for the approved parameter plan to refer to a 5 storey car park + plant, whilst maintaining an overall approved height of 86m AOD. Approved 28/05/21.

DC/081772 - Reserved matters approval (access, layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping) for the erection of a multi storey car park pursuant to hybrid application reference DC/063213. Currently un-determined.

NEIGHBOUR'S VIEWS

A total of 23 surrounding properties have been directly notified of the application by letter. In addition the application has been advertised via site notices (6) and a press notice as a Major Development, affecting the setting of a Listed Building and a Conservation Area. The consultation period expired on 25/08/21. No responses have been received.

CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Highway Engineer - This phase represents the fourth phase of the Stockport Exchange development. This application relates to the commercial floorspace element of this phase and a separate reserved matters application for the multi-storey car park element which also forms part of Phase 4 and to be located on the surface car park known as CP1A is being considered at the same time. The car park will serve occupants of both the existing and future elements of Stockport Exchange, including those who will occupy the Phase 4 building.

The application site sits in the middle zone of the Stockport Exchange development and is currently in use as a temporary surface car park. Outline permission for this phase of built space has been granted and this reserved matters application seeks

approval for the layout, scale, appearance, access and landscaping for a 6 storey building (Use Class E) including some ground floor Sui Generis Drinking Establishments and Hot Food Takeaways.

This phase 4 of the overall Stockport Exchange (SE) development will provide a gross internal developed space of 7,629 sq.m which respects and accords with the maximum amount of floorspace that can be developed across the overall site when having regard to the approved parameters plan.

The general principles of the overall development of the Stockport Exchange site have been agreed under the outline permission so this application focuses on matters of detail in terms of pedestrian and cycle accessibility and facilities, building servicing requirements and public realm.

The site is clearly accessible and appropriate for this form of development within the Town Centre location, this has been established and agreed within the principles of development of the overall Stockport Exchange and the outline permission in existence.

I have when considering earlier phases of development expressed some concern with the overall level of car parking that would be available to serve Stockport Exchange and have been of the opinion that this could give rise to high numbers of vehicles being parked on nearby residential streets, with consequent issues and concerns. Notwithstanding this I appreciate and respect that in previous decisions the Local Planning Authority has accepted that reduced parking provision for the overall site and long stay demands in particular is appropriate and as such I cannot justify any further expressions of reservation or concern.

Phase 4 development occupants and in particular office based and long stay parking demands would have access to a proportion of the permits for parking within the multi-storey car park that is being considered under the accompanying application. There is also within the wider area a few offers of public car parking including at the Stockport Exchange NCP.

With respect to the ground floor Sui Generis uses which comprise drinking and takeaway operators I am satisfied that such are complimentary and appropriate in a Town Centre location. The nature of these businesses is generally reliant on shorter stay parking demands, trading would ordinarily peak during evening periods which coincides with the period when overall Town Centre parking is more readily available. Also a reasonable proportion of trips are likely to be linked to another trip to Stockport Exchange or associated with a movement via the train station. This leads me to conclude that I can see no reason to express any reservation or concern with the likely parking demand of the Sui Generis uses or the consequent impact of parking associated with these uses on the nearby highway network.

In terms of traffic generation and the consequent and necessary highway mitigation work, earlier phases of the overall development have delivered improvement to the Railway road junction with the A6. It was accepted within the outline permission that there would be a requirement for appropriate mitigation at the Railway Road/Wellington Road South signalised junction with capacity improvement and upgraded non-motorised user's facilities being required. The trigger for this work was agreed and accepted for a latter phase of the masterplan build-out and will be reviewed further and considered in detail as part of any future phase applications. I do not therefore consider that I can reason or justify that the overall phase 4 development would have a material impact on the surrounding highway network.

I am aware that the Council has proposals as part of the Mayor's Challenge Fund Walking and Cycling improvements, for an improved pedestrian and cycle route between Edgeley and the Town Centre. The scheme includes a shared use pedestrian cycle route next to the NCP car park with a parallel zebra crossing for pedestrians and cyclists towards Sainsbury's, a two-way cycle track and a footway along the southern side of Railway Road to the A6 junction; widening of Railway Road to provide an extended two lane approach to the A6 signals, new servicing facilities for future development at Stockport Exchange; complete re-modelling of the Railway Road/A6 junction with segregated cycle crossings, full pedestrian facilities and improved traffic operation.

This phase 4 of development respects and compliments the MCF proposals and notably should the scheme be delivered it will incorporate and deliver the appropriate and necessary mitigation that is related to future phases of Stockport Exchange.

In terms of servicing of this phase of the development it is reasonable to accept given experiences from the other completed phases within Stockport Exchange that the typical servicing demands for the building would never be likely to require the use of vehicles any larger than rigid articulated types. There is a layby on the northern side of Railway Road and relatively close to the south eastern corner of the building which is adequate length for two rigid vehicles of length up to circa 11m to stand. Whilst this would give rise to potential conflicting demands should new and existing businesses require use of the lay-by at the same time I consider it would be unlikely to be as frequent as would cause an unacceptable impact on highway operation and safety. Servicing demands for office type uses are generally low intensity and don't require prolonged duration of stay for delivery vehicles. Whilst for Sui Generis uses the demands could be higher and more frequent, again these are unlikely to be excessive in terms of duration. The building's refuse and recycling store is accessed from the south eastern corner of the building so any receptacle drag distance to and from the layby would be minimal. In conclusion I am accepting that the development can be serviced from the existing highway infrastructure although it would be prudent to require that a service management plan is submitted for approval, to provide control over the operators and their demands within this specific phase. This is a matter capable of conditional control.

The building would have level pedestrian access from the surrounding highway and public realm infrastructure, I have no concerns in this respect. In terms of cycle parking secure cycling facilities will be provided within the building at ground floor level with capacity for 38 cycles in a hub. The cycle hub will also house lockers and have direct access to separate male and female shower facilities. I note and welcome that additional storage for 38 cycles is proposed within the multi-storey car park, which will benefit this phase of development. Visitors to the site who travel by cycle will be able to utilise the communal cycle parking facilities that are provided in and around the overall Stockport Exchange development.

A key element of the scheme is to deliver enhanced Public Realm space. It is expected that this will replicate the areas and materials provided for earlier phases of the overall site and include for footway treatment to Railway road fronting the site. This is a matter for conditional control. There is a risk that future construction traffic could damage the existing realm areas and in particular the site frontage to Railway Road and it will be prudent for a pre-commencement survey to be undertaken. Any damage caused must be repaired prior to first occupation of any part of the development and this is a matter for conditional control. A site clearance and

construction management plan will also be required prior to any works commencing, this again is a matter for conditional control.

Finally an interim travel plan accompanies the application. This is welcomed although the detail of a final document is a matter for conditional control, with the travel plan and all updates needing to be produced using the online TfGM Travel Plan Toolkit and in accordance with current national and local best practice guidance.

In conclusion the proposed commercial development is clearly considered acceptable in a Town Centre location. I am satisfied that the necessary highway mitigation works will be covered by either future phases within Stockport Exchange or potentially as part of a Council MCF project. This phase of commercial development is reliant on the delivery of the multi storey car park which although I note that structure does not specifically form part of this application I have to reasonably presume such will be granted reserved matters consent and thereafter implemented. That being the case I see no reason to express concern with this commercial floorspace proposal.

Environment Team (Air) – No objection.

Arboriculture Officer - The only concern is the limited hard landscaped tree planting on the southern side of the site as they are proposing three new trees in the office boundary but the red edge extends into the highway and so it would be good to see the three moved into the highway footway and increased in number to at least 5.

Environment Team (Contaminated Land) – I have reviewed the Curtins Phase 1 Report dated 29-6-21, the report states that a Phase 2 site investigation should be undertaken for soil and gas. As such I would have no objection to the proposed development however I would recommend the following conditions;

CTM1, CTM2, CTM3, LFG1 & LFG3

Conservation Officer - No response received therefore no objection.

Lead Local Flood Authority (Drainage) – Further elaboration is requested in respect of infiltration testing and provision of a more detailed assessment of options up the drainage hierarchy, as per our most up to date developer guidance. We acknowledge the inclusion of rain gardens and permeable paving here though, which we do welcome.

Updated consultee response awaited to additional details provided.

Nature Development Officer –

Nature Conservation Designations

The site has no nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise.

Legally Protected Species

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey has been carried out and submitted with the application (TEP, Ecological Assessment, 2021). The survey was carried out by a suitably experienced ecologist in April 2021. Habitats on site were mapped and the potential for protected species to be present and impacted by the proposals was

assessed. The site is dominated by hard standing, with small areas of introduced shrub and amenity grassland and scattered trees.

Many trees have the potential to support roosting bats. All species of bats and their roosts are protected under UK (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)) and European legislation (The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019). No potential bat roosting features were identified within the trees on site and they were assessed as offering negligible roosting potential. The site is considered to offer limited opportunities for foraging and commuting bats owing to its urban location and likely light-disturbance.

The trees offer suitable habitat for nesting birds. All breeding birds and their nests are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Some species receive additional protection through inclusion of Schedule 1 of the Act.

No evidence of, or significant potential for, any other protected species was recorded during the survey.

Invasive Species

No non-native invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended) were observed during the survey.

Recommendations:

No evidence of or significant potential for roosting bats was observed and there is considered to be a low risk to roosting bats as a result of the proposals. Bats can sometimes roost in seemingly unlikely places however and so as a precautionary measure it is advised that an informative is attached to any planning consent granted to state that the granting of planning permission does not negate the need to abide by the legislation in place to protect biodiversity. In the unlikely event that roosting bats (or any other protected species) are discovered on site during works, works must stop and a suitably experienced ecologist be contacted for advice.

The site has potential to support nesting birds. The following condition should therefore be attached to any planning consent: No tree clearance works should take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of trees for active birds' nests immediately before (no more than 48 hours before) vegetation clearance works commence and provided written confirmation that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site.

All retained trees should be adequately protected from potential impacts in accordance with British Standards and following advice from the council's Arboriculture Officer.

Any proposed lighting should be sensitively designed so as to minimise impacts on wildlife associated with light disturbance (following the principles outlined in Bat Conservation Trust guidance: <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting>).

Biodiversity enhancements are expected as part of developments in line with local (paragraph 3.345 of the LDF) and national planning policy (NPPF). The landscape masterplan submitted with the application shows tree planting and creation of swales and rain gardens. Landscape planting should comprise wildlife-friendly species (preferably locally native) as outlined in section 5.8 of the ecological assessment

report (TEP, 2021). The application refers to a roof terrace with sedum and wild flower planting around the periphery. It is disappointing to see that artificial grass is proposed for much of the roof terrace, especially given the Climate Action Now campaign within the borough in response to the Climate Emergency declared by SMBC in 2019. Artificial grass offers no biodiversity value and is not something that I would support within the development and so it is advised that it is replaced with a more suitable alternative (such as sedum/grasses/other low level planting such as thyme). Opportunities for biodiversity enhancements should be maximised within the scheme (to 'embrace nature-based solutions where possible' in accordance with the Climate Change Statement that has been submitted with the application. Provision of a living green wall on the proposed building would also therefore be greatly encouraged (and this would also link in well with the green wall proposed on the multi-storey car park opposite). The ecology report also recommends that bird boxes will be provided on retained trees as well as bug hotels. Provision of bird boxes within the building (such as swift bricks) would also be very much welcomed. The proposed number, type and location of bird boxes and bug hotels should be submitted to the LPA for review.

The DEFRA Biodiversity Metric can be used to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to be delivered as part of the proposed scheme. Although current local and national planning policy does not set a figure for BNG, the forthcoming Environment Bill will set this at a minimum of 10% and so this target would be encouraged. Where it is not possible to secure adequate BNG on site (this should be maximised where possible), off-site BNG will need to be explored

Ecological conditions can change over time. In the event that works have not commenced within two years of the 2021 survey (i.e. by April 2023) then update survey work may be required to ensure the ecological impact assessment remains valid. This can be secured via condition.

Planning Policy (Energy) – Stockport's Sustainability Checklist score for the proposed design of the office development is 48 plus 30 gold scores resulting in an overall Gold score for the development subject to all items committed to being achieved. This is only the fourth such score in the history of the Checklist's use. The proposed BREEAM Excellent design score will be contributing to this alongside energy efficient design, the proposed use of an Air Source Heat Pump system for heating and cooling, together with the provision of 38 cycle parking spaces alongside showers with clothes drying and storage capacity. Whilst no green roof is proposed, there is an accessible terrace proposed with planting.

Stockport Core Strategy carbon reduction targets for non-residential development were superseded by the uplift in current Building Regulations; but for the record carbon reduction will be met through energy efficient building design and services. These will include improved U-values over Building Regulations Part L2A, 2013 minimum requirements; improved air permeability; high efficiency heat pumps; low energy LED lighting with controls and daylight dimming; heat recovery on ventilation plant where applicable and passive solar shading.

Initial design stage calculations show that the measures proposed above could contribute to reducing the CO2 emissions approximately 26.83% below the Target Emission Rate (TER) set under current Building Regulations Approved Document Part L. All figures are to be verified during the detailed design stage.

In terms of renewable and low carbon energy the following information was provided in the energy statement:

An air source heat pump system is proposed to provide heating and cooling to the building. This technology would not be suitable for connection to a district heating system. Preliminary calculations have indicated that air source heat pumps could help contribute to a BER of 12 kg CO₂/m² /year for the building. The cost is estimated at between £300,000 - £350,000. The system is considered financially viable as it provides a cost effective solution to provide low carbon heating and cooling to the building.

For solar photovoltaics the roof area is approximately 1,000m² which will incorporate a plant enclosure and roof terrace. The carbon savings estimated from a PV array could equate to approx. 5,000 kgCO₂ per annum. The estimated cost is £70,000 – £100,000 and this technology is not considered viable due to current budget constraints

Based on the above assessment, the technically feasible technologies for this project are solar photovoltaics and air source heat pumps. In terms of project viability, air source heat pumps have the capacity to contribute to reducing the carbon emissions of the site without impacting on the likelihood of the development going forward in terms of project costs.

It should be noted for information that the top level of the BREEAM standard is Outstanding which would deliver a minimum 40% reduction in carbon emissions.

It would be useful to establish if any space on the roof could be retrofitted for solar at a later date (similar to 1 Stockport Exchange) but also what the cost of retrofitting solar is likely to be as this can further inform project finance going forward. The use of solar could provide renewable electricity for an air source heat pump, however the Climate Change Statement cites the decarbonisation of the National Grid as a factor in the decision on use of solar.

Planning Policy – No response received therefore no objection.

Environment Team (Noise) - No response received therefore no objection.

Town Centre West Team - No response received therefore no objection.

Street Lighting Engineer - No response received therefore no objection.

Town Centre Regeneration Team - No response received therefore no objection.

Director of Public Health - Stockport Sustainability Checklist – the submission of the Sustainability Checklist is welcome and the Gold Score is only the fourth such score on the checklist in its history of operation. The main score of 48 points and the gold score of 30 reflects a project that is embedding sustainability through design. This will ensure a truly sustainable development that delivers social, environmental and economic benefits to the area. Use of BREEAM Excellent on this building with associated carbon reduction and sustainable transport infrastructure, native planting ensuring biodiversity net gain and the provision of an accessible garden roof terrace ensures that the development is, indeed, a sustainable development that delivers healthy outcomes.

Active Travel: the promotion of active travel and public transport is key to maintaining physical and mental health through fostering activity, social interaction and engagement, managing healthy weight, reducing emissions from vehicles and enabling social interaction. The site's proximity to the rail station and other public transport choices will facilitate reduction of emissions and traffic congestion. The site also ensures links to the wider pedestrian and cycling (Bee Network) networks. The planned cycle parking of 38 spaces is welcome and is critical to supporting the shift to active, low carbon travel options. The clear commitment to this level of cycle parking and further ancillary requirements such as showers and clothes drying / storage in the design plans is welcomed, as it is critical in enabling active travel choices and increasing physical activity. Achieving healthy weight reduces risks of other lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, coronary heart disease and stroke. Reducing risks of such diseases also reduces pressures on current and future public sector health budgets (Stockport's JSNA). The proposed car park adjacent to the scheme will address the need for electric vehicle charging car parking spaces. It is useful to have this need addressed in light of the GM Zero Carbon target for 2038 and as the UK moves to an electrified vehicle approach by 2030. Whilst there is evidence of the impact of traffic emissions on human health and electric vehicle charging is welcomed in air quality terms, it is one level in a hierarchy of sustainable transport choices where prioritising sustainable transport options of walking, cycling and public transport are vital to increasing activity and considerably reducing carbon emissions.

Ageing Well: Stockport Council has adopted an Ageing Well Strategy which takes account of the World Health Organisation guidance on appropriate place making for older people. The WHO design considerations are critical to ensuring that the needs of the growing ageing population of Stockport are addressed where practicable through new development. In particular any public amenity seating being provided as a result of the development should be considered for some units being provided with back and arm rests in order to enable older and less mobile visitors to sit, rest and rise more easily thereby enabling them to make use of seating to help them navigate the wider neighbourhood.

Green Infrastructure (GI): the scheme is in an urbanised location and it should be noted that GI offers multifaceted health benefits ranging from addressing flood risk to tackling stress and its exacerbating effect on health through provision of views of greenery and wildlife. Appropriate delivery of green infrastructure is very welcome in public health terms and will help to manage urban temperatures and extreme rainfall events in the area, reducing stress and thereby maintaining immunity. The consideration of a rain garden and native planting around the site will not only contribute to reducing flood risk and managing air quality but also enable biodiversity net gain in an area of the Borough that has a deficit of natural capital, further enhancing access for and to nature on the development. Enabling people to get next to nature is important in terms of lifting the human spirit, which also assists with reducing the health impacts of stress, including on people with long term physical and/or mental health conditions. The summertime comfort and well-being of the urban population has become increasingly compromised. The urban environment stores and traps heat. The majority of heat-related fatalities during the summer of 2003 were in urban areas and were predominantly more vulnerable members of society (Designing urban spaces and buildings to improve sustainability and quality of life in a warmer world). GI is a critical tool on new development for adapting to the climate crisis where extreme summer temperature events are likely to occur more frequently.

Mental Health: developments of certain types (such as higher buildings) trigger the need to assess the design for suicide prevention purposes. Stockport Council's Public Health Team can discuss appropriate assessment and government guidance is available that outlines potential options for minimising any risk of self-harm. Alongside the ethical imperatives to prevent suicide, it is of note that for each life lost to suicide, the estimated total cost to society is around £1.67 million. In terms of this specific application, the proposed building could provide opportunities for self-harm, although the proposed layout ensures the site is reasonably well overlooked which can deter such actions during busy periods. However the proposed roof garden should be considered in terms of suicide prevention. It is critical that areas of concern must be accessible to emergency services attempting to access a vulnerable individual including recovering them safely where required.

Manchester Airport - The Safeguarding Authority for Manchester Airport has assessed this proposal and its potential to conflict aerodrome Safeguarding criteria. We have no objection subject to the following Conditions:

External lighting - Notwithstanding the provision of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order), all exterior lighting shall be capped at the horizontal with no upward light spill.

Reason - In the interests of flight safety and to prevent distraction and confusion to pilots using Manchester Airport in accordance with Policy SIE-5 "Aviation Facilities, Telecommunications and other Broadcast Infrastructure" of the Stockport Core Strategy DPD, EP 1.9 "Safeguarding of Aerodromes and Air Navigation Facilities" of the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review and the Town & Country Planning (Safeguarded Aerodromes, Technical Sites and Military Explosive Storage Areas) Direction 2002.

No solar photovoltaics to be installed without first providing an aviation perspective Glint & Glare assessment showing that there is no predicted glare that is harmful to pilots.

Reason: Flight safety - to prevent ocular hazard and distraction to pilots using MAN.

Informative:

The applicant's attention is drawn to the new procedures for crane and tall equipment notifications.

It is important that any conditions or advice in this response are applied to a planning approval. Where a Planning Authority proposes to grant permission against the advice of Manchester Airport, or not attach conditions which Manchester Airport has advised, it shall notify Manchester Airport, and the Civil Aviation Authority as specified in the Town & Country Planning (Safeguarded Aerodromes, Technical Sites and Military Explosive Storage Areas) Direction 2002.

Historic England - No response received therefore no objection.

Environment Agency - no objection in principle to the proposed application, and no comments to make at this time on the reserve matters application for access, layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping pursuant to the hybrid application reference DC/063213

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service – Having checked our records I am satisfied that the proposed development does not threaten any known or suspected archaeological heritage.

On this basis there is no reason to seek to impose any archaeological requirements upon the applicant.

Network Rail - No response received therefore no objection.

Transport for Greater Manchester – This application relates to the reserved matters approval for appearance, landscaping, layout and scale. As such it is considered that the traffic and highway matters would have been agreed as part of the Outline Approval. Therefore, no comments are provided in this regard.

In terms of other comments, Officers within TfGM have reviewed the accompanying Transport Statement (TS) and have responded as follows:

I. Internal Access Arrangements

The TS confirms that no on-site car parking provision is proposed and as such no vehicle access into the site is required.

II. Servicing Arrangements

The proposed development would be served from the existing layby located along the northern side of Railway Road. The layby is approximately 25m in length, and is situated directly adjacent to the proposed development site.

TfGM would refer to the Local Highway Authority to determine whether the proposed servicing arrangements are acceptable.

III. Traffic Regulation Orders

TfGM would suggest that a review is undertaken of the Traffic Regulation Orders in the vicinity of the development, with a view to introducing additional parking restrictions if necessary, as well as ensuring adequate parking restrictions remain in place, and are refreshed accordingly. This will help to discourage pavement parking associated with the development and therefore assist in improving the quality of the surrounding public realm.

IV. Construction Phase

A robust Construction Traffic Management Plan should be employed as part of the development.

V. Bee Network

From an appraisal of the Bee Network Map, there is an opportunity for this development to connect into the proposed Bee Network. The Bee Network will be the largest joined-up system of walking and cycling routes in the UK and has been developed with all 10 Greater Manchester local authorities. More information on this is available on <https://www.tfgm.com>.

VI. Public Transport

TfGM would suggest that a review of the bus stops surrounding the site is undertaken with a view to upgrading / improving any bus stops (as necessary) in the immediate vicinity of the site. Should this review determine any improvements, TfGM would refer the applicant to TfGM Shelter's team to discuss this further via shelters@tfgm.com.

VII. Active Travel

To maximise the benefits of the site's location, it should be ensured that the pedestrian and cycling environment, within and around the site, is designed to be as safe, attractive and convenient as possible, including natural surveillance where possible. This should provide sufficient links to the surrounding pedestrian and cycle networks.

To establish travel patterns at the beginning of occupation and encourage modal shift to sustainable modes of travel, it is important to ensure the facilities are in place to support sustainability. Therefore, improvements to the pedestrian environment are required to help encourage the uptake of active travel modes by future employees and customers, as follows:

Recommendations:

- Any redundant vehicle access points which served the former site should be reinstated as continuous footway to adoptable standards.
- Footway resurfacing and renewal should be undertaken as appropriate.
- Continuous 2 metre wide footways should be provided throughout and surrounding the development.

VIII. Cycle Parking

It is also important to ensure that adequate infrastructure and facilities are provided to encourage staff and customers to travel by sustainable modes. The TS refers to the provision of 36 cycle spaces within a cycle store accessible from the south-eastern building façade from Railway Road.

Cycle parking should be provided in accordance with Stockport Council's standards and where possible spaces in excess of the minimum provided. Additionally, there should be onsite lockers, showers and changing room facilities provided for staff.

IX. Travel Plan

It is noted that an Interim Travel Plan for the Office use has been submitted alongside the application.

To encourage sustainable travel choices, it is important that the development is accompanied by a robust Full Staff Travel Plan with effective measures for bringing about modal shift, i.e. the use of incentives, provision of onsite and offsite infrastructure, along with a clear monitoring regime with agreed targets.

A Travel Plan should include:

- A Travel Plan budget and resources for the implementation and day to day management of travel plan measures;
- Appropriate management structures;
- Detailed time frames for the delivery;
- Handover arrangements for the travel plan or its components, when the developer's responsibility ceases; and
- Targets and monitoring arrangements.

Ideally a Full Travel Plan should include tailored measures to overcome specific barriers or take advantage of opportunities presented by the site in order to encourage future staff to use sustainable modes of travel for appropriate journeys.

The offer of personalised journey planning for staff or employers is a further measure that could be included in a full Travel Plan for the site. The marketing and communication strategy should communicate the Travel Plan objectives and benefits to potential future business or commercial occupiers of the development, prior to them occupying the development. This should ensure potential business and commercial organisations are able to make informed choices and are more likely to commit to and adopt the Travel Plan.

Furthermore, through the Travel Plan, incentives should be offered to encourage staff to use public transport through measures such as concessionary bus fares, discounted cycles, journey planning etc.

Should Stockport Council be minded to approve this application it is suggested that the further development, implementation and monitoring of a full Staff Travel Plan be attached as a condition of any planning consent.

Design for Security - Having looked at the plans we would support the application subject to the layout issues within Section 3.3 being addressed and recommend that the physical security measures within Section 4 of the Crime Impact Statement are conditioned.

ANALYSIS

In 2012 the Council and the developer (Muse) completed a development agreement paving the way for a partnership regeneration of this key town centre site and Town Centre West MDC, which is hoped will attract up to £145 million of inward investment into the local economy and potentially secure approximately 4465 jobs (full time equivalent).

A hybrid application which sought both outline and full planning permission for the re-development of the former Grand Central complex was granted in 2014 under DC/054978. Subsequently revised proposals were granted in 2015 and 2016, the most recent being under DC/063213.

The outline element of these hybrid permissions established that the land use of the current application site, for mixed use office and commercial premises was acceptable. Furthermore as part of the approval(s) a maximum quantum of development of 44,900 sq.m of office space and 2,600 sq.m of flexible commercial floorspace for the wider Master Plan site, was accepted and is controlled by appropriate conditions.

A parameters plans submitted as part of the previous outline approvals set out the maximum height proposed for various phases within the Master Plan site. This

matter is controlled by condition on the hybrid approvals. In this particular location the previous approvals allows for buildings of up to seven storeys plus roof top plant, with a maximum AOD of 104.400m. The proposed building delivers six storeys plus roof top plant and an AOD of circa 96.55m at the top of the plant screen to the roof and is therefore well within the approved masterplan parameters.

In considering the current reserved matters application it is acknowledged that the principle of the proposal has already been established via the previous hybrid permission(s). Furthermore it is accepted that the floorspace associated with the current application would be in compliance with relevant conditions contained within the outline permission(s).

The following matters require consideration as part of the assessment of this application:-

Appearance, Layout & Scale

As referenced earlier in this report the scale of the proposed development adheres to the parameters set by previous permissions which limit the height of the Phase 4 building.

In considering the proposal the potential impact of the scale of the development on views into/out of the Town Centre and on landmark buildings has been carefully balanced against the on-going substantial regenerative benefits of the proposals.

The design of the proposed building takes inspiration from its current and future context with particular emphasis given to its position at a central point in the masterplan, reference as a wayfinder and as a focal point as part of the gateway to the town centre for the significant number of commuters using Stockport railway station. The proposed external materials relate directly to previously approved and completed phases of the wider development site and include elements of stone rainscreen cladding, dark grey brickwork and aluminium rainscreen and louvres. All these elements ensure that a degree of unity continues to flow throughout the overall Master Plan scheme.

As with previous phases, the proposed office building does not have a secondary elevation. All building elevations are treated with equal importance with full pedestrian access available to all sides.

The northern gable facing the public realm is substantially open and glazed, reflecting previous phases. In contrast the southern gable expresses variety, albeit with a rhythm and interest to the façade. The elevations are complete at roof level with PV panels to the recessed external plant screen.

The form of the proposed building is broken down and articulated into a grid pattern at column locations, with horizontal banding every second floor setting up a regular framework. This design approach utilises elements from the earlier phases of office development that have been completed.

Overall, Officers consider that the proposed building will deliver a high-quality piece of architecture to the site, continuing to deliver the ethos of seeking high quality designed buildings set within attractive public realm as per the completed phase 2 and 3 developments. The appearance of the current proposal is not designed to be a pure copy of the phases of development already completed. It will be a distinctive and clearly recognisable form of development, which will however continue to be

complementary to its existing neighbours, whilst continuing to ensure that the high the benchmark for design continues for the future phases.

Policy SIE-1 states development that is designed and landscaped to the highest contemporary standard, paying high regard to the built and/or natural environment, within which it is sited, will be given positive consideration. In addition policy SIE-1 sets out that the provision, maintenance and enhancement (where suitable) of satisfactory levels of access, privacy and amenity for future, existing and neighbouring users and residents should be taken into account.

A comprehensive scheme of public realm works is included as part of current application. This continues to build on the themes / materials already accepted and established as part of the Phase 2 and 3 developments already completed.

Secondary pedestrian walkways are proposed to the side of the building, which will connect to the main pedestrian boulevard. These will comprise high quality surface materials and will be tree lined avenues, as well as including low level soft landscaping.

In general the public realm works are supported by the Council's Arboricultural Officer, subject to appropriate conditions. Whilst specific matters relating to the location and extent of tree planting have been raised, the applicants' agent has highlighted that the number of trees proposed is determined by the available space along the proposed façade while maintaining maintenance access to the building. Officers note that this follows part of a continuation of an approach to tree planting approved as part of earlier phases and which forms part of strategy for trees in the wider masterplan.

Whilst there are minor level changes occurring across the site, the public realm proposals ensure a fully accessible scheme.

A Crime Impact Statement has been submitted as part of the application and GMP Design for Security raise no objections, as such the proposal will seek to provide a safe and secure environment where crime and the fear of crime are minimised.

Overall the details provide for a high quality sustainable form of development which accords with the provisions of policies SIE-1 and SIE-3.

In assessing the potential impact of the proposed development on the amenity of surrounding properties, particularly the nearest residential properties along Thomson Street, the Council's Environmental Health Officers have been consulted on the application in respect of matters relating to noise, air quality and lighting. In the absence of any objections the proposed impacts are considered to be acceptable, subject to appropriate conditions.

With regard to the potential impact on amenity resulting from the scale and layout of the proposal, it is acknowledged that the parameters plans approved as part of the previous hybrid (full / outline) applications previously set out the mass of buildings that was considered to be acceptable in terms of amongst other things safeguarding wider amenity. The current proposal complies with the height restrictions placed on the previous outline permissions.

It is noted that the proposed building is located more centrally within the site, set significantly away from the rear boundaries with Thomson Street. The proposed building would also be set at a significantly lower level and separated by an existing

surface car park and Railway Road and would be of a similar scale to the completed phase 2 and 3 developments (hotel and mixed use office buildings) Wider views from the south would, in part, be screened by the existing multi storey car park.

To conclude the current proposal is considered to be acceptable in respect of Policy SIE-1 as well as the overarching aims of the Core Strategy DPD, which seek to ensure that the design of new development is high quality and appropriate for the context of a particular location, having particular regard to the safeguarding of amenity.

Sustainability & Energy

Delivering sustainable development is the primary aim of NPPF. Sustainability and energy efficiency is also key theme of the adopted Core Strategy which seeks to ensure that new development is designed in way to reduce Co2 emissions and minimise climate change including incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). Core strategy policies SD-1, SD-3 and SD-6 all therefore apply and the development must be assessed against their requirements.

The application has been supported by a Sustainability Checklist and Energy Statement which considers the opportunities for the development to deliver the desired energy savings and Co2 reduction for the proposed scheme. In this respect the proposed building has been designed to target BREEAM rating of 'Excellent'. In addition the application is accompanied by a specific Climate Change Assessment, which considers the proposal in respect of the Councils CAN strategy.

The comments of the Council's Policy Officer (Energy) and Director of Health are contained within the Consultees section of this report. The responses are acknowledged and it is noted that they are supportive the approach taken towards the sustainable principles of the development and specific measures proposed.

Overall the proposal is considered acceptable in respect of relevant energy and climate change Core Strategy Policies and the Councils wider CAN strategy.

Highways & Access

The Council's Highways Engineer has provided a detailed response on the application, which has been included within the Consultee section of this report and to which Councillors are directed.

The comments are supportive of the on-going regeneration of the wider Master Plan site, which has already been accepted as being in a highly accessible location, with the proposed end uses considered to be acceptable in a Town Centre location.

It is not proposed to reiterate these comments in full within this analysis, noting that overall levels of traffic generation, parking provision and any associated highway / transport improvements have already been accepted by the Council for the wider Master Plan site, as part of the previous permissions granted for the wider site and are therefore not required to be re-assessed. Furthermore level access is provided to all parts of the site and all areas of the building in accordance with Part M of the building regulations.

Members will be aware that the site is in a highly accessible location, being at the focal point of a major transport hub with Stockport Rail station and a large number of high frequency bus routes existing in close proximity to the site. In this respect the

site is acknowledged as offering excellent opportunity for travel to the site by modes of travel other than the private car.

Committee will be mindful of the significant, on-going, regenerative benefits of the proposal, together with the support offered by the Council's Highway Engineer in terms of highway and pedestrian layout and parking / servicing arrangements.

Flood Risk & Drainage

The application site is identified on the Environment Agency's Flood Map as being within Flood Zone 1 which means there is a low probability of flooding. The NPPF, Core Strategy Policies SIE-3 and Saved UDP Review Policy EP1.7 deal with flood risk and seek to ensure that developments are not at risk of flooding and will not increase the risk of flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Assessment were submitted with the previous hybrid approvals and have also been updated accordingly and included with the current application. No objections have been received in principle to the proposal from the Environment Agency. Whilst an updated response is awaited from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), they have similarly raised no initial objection to the principle of the latest proposal. On this basis there are no reasons to resist the proposal from a flood risk / drainage perspective and the proposal is considered to comply with all relevant planning policy.

Heritage

The principle of the impact of the re-development of the wider Master Plan site on wider heritage assets, was previously considered and accepted as part of the earlier hybrid approvals granted in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and the subsequent Phase 3 approval.

In respect of archaeological interest Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) continue to support the current application.

Turning to other heritage matters, the site can be seen in the context of the adjacent Town Hall Conservation Area, together with surrounding listed buildings including the Grade II* Town Hall and further afield the Grade II* Stockport Viaduct, together with other statutorily listed and locally listed buildings including the Hatworks, the former Infirmary and the former Nurses' home. In this respect and having regard to the previous hybrid approvals, no objections have been received from the Council's Conservation Officer or Historic England.

In considering the proposal the potential impact of the development on heritage assets, including landmark buildings, needs to be balanced against the on-going substantial regenerative benefits of the proposal and the potential to continue to significantly enhance a key gateway site. Subsequently the proposed development is considered to comply with Policies SIE -1, SIE-3 and HC1.3, and the NPPF.

Contaminated Land

Policy SIE-3 also seeks to protect development from matters relating to contaminated land. The submitted Contaminated Land Report supports the application to assess the risk of potential contamination at the site and impact on the proposed development. The Council's Environmental Health (Contaminated Land) officers have been consulted on this application and raised no objection subject to appropriate conditions. On this basis the proposal is considered to comply with Policy SIE-3.

Ecological Interests

As per the previous approvals, the current application has been accompanied by an Ecological Assessment. In this respect the Council's Nature Development Officer has considered the proposal, with reference being made to consideration of the use of artificial grass to the outdoor roof terrace and the inclusion of a living green wall.

In this respect the applicants' agent has investigated the matters further and has advised that the design of public realm as well as roof garden, takes into consideration various aspect of the scheme including the current character, future use and ecological value of proposed soft and hard materials. Due to the predicted pedestrian traffic on roof garden, commercial aspect, intention of creating flexible space suitable for day to day use, group activities, etc. the scheme proposes artificial grass which it is considered will maintain its high quality appearance and durability. Given the expected use of this area, it is not considered that surface planting would be appropriate in this location. However the space will include planting (wild flowers, perennials) which will enhance biodiversity.

In respect of the provision of a living green wall, the most suitable location would have been to the southern façade opposite the car park. However, it is not possible to provide a green wall in this location due to the internal layout dictating that back of house/plant spaces with direct access to the exterior and louvered screens for ventilation are located here and therefore the addition of a green wall was not appropriate. The architectural language of the building follows the principles of the previous phases of office developments with substantially glazed facades to the north facing Exchange Square meaning it was deemed inappropriate to add solid, green, walls in this location.

Having regard to the above and the general support expressed by the Council's Nature Development Officer, it is recommended that the proposal be approved, subject to appropriate conditions.

Noise & Air Quality

A Noise Impact Assessment and Ventilation / Utilities Statements have been submitted in support of the current application.

In terms of noise the main considerations are in providing an acceptable level of attenuation within the building, as well as assessing associated impacts from plant equipment and end users.

With regard to air quality, this was previously considered and found to be acceptable as part of the previous consents for the wider Master Plan site.

In respect of both noise and air quality, the Council's Environmental Health officers has been consulted on the application. No objections have been received to the proposal in this respect.

On this basis the proposal is considered to comply with the requirements of Core Strategy policy SIE-3 which seeks to protect, safeguard and enhance the environment in respect of range of matters including air quality and noise.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, the scheme as proposed would continue to build on the significant regenerative benefits that have recently taken place at this prominent gateway site. The re-development of the wider Master Plan site has been a key regeneration objective of the Councils for many years and this latest proposal would be the next step in further delivering a high quality mixed use development.

The proposal will continue to offer significant potential for attracting inward investment and job creation into this part of Stockport, helping it to capitalise on its potential within the sub-regional economy.

The site is in a highly accessible location with good transport links and the proposal has potential to deliver an energy efficient development.

Whilst issues have been identified within this planning report, it is felt that these are after careful consideration, on balance, outweighed by the substantial regenerative benefits of the re-development of this site and that the proposal reflects the key principles of the NPPF in helping to deliver sustainable development that will assist in the delivery of economic recovery.

Members are therefore advised to recommend that the Planning & Highways Regulations Committee grant planning permission for the development proposed.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant.