

STOCKPORT LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Report of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The One Stockport Borough Plan was developed during a unique and pivotal period in history, as we enter the 'decisive decade' for climate change, continue to face a global pandemic and are experiencing fundamental shifts in how digital technologies affect how people socialise, work and live – much of which has been supercharged over the past year.
- 1.2. The coming together of everyone in Stockport to identify the common vision and outcomes as set out in the One Stockport Borough Plan, has helped set out a new way ahead which recognises the clear message from our communities that we need to be radical, brave and ambitious.
- 1.3. Stockport's withdrawal from the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and the coming together of all our partners and communities to respond to the covid-19 crisis and to agree a set of shared priorities through the One Stockport Borough Plan, has provided a once in a generation opportunity for Stockport to take a refreshed approach to how we plan for the future of Stockport. We have a new opportunity to develop our own Local Plan which is the right plan for Stockport, by Stockport.
- 1.4. Fully aligning to the vision articulated in the One Stockport Borough Plan, the new Local Plan will act as the land use plan needed to deliver this vision for Stockport. It will play a vital role in ensuring that we have the right homes, the right infrastructure, and the right facilities to enable the whole of Stockport to thrive, whilst enshrining the mechanisms needed to protect the environment and places which make Stockport unique, and ensure Stockport plays its part in responding to the climate emergency.
- 1.5. This paper provides members, for consideration and endorsement, a proposed way ahead for the new Stockport Local Plan.

2. DEVELOPING THE RIGHT PLAN FOR STOCKPORT

- 2.1. The scale of the opportunity is significant, but it is not without equally significant challenge. We need to make sure that our plan is cognisant of and able to clearly influence and promote the needs of Stockport alongside the work continuing elsewhere in Greater Manchester. We have already seen through the development of neighbourhood plans in a number of our communities that there is a genuine desire to help shape the places where we live and work. We want to build on this approach in Stockport through the production of this plan.
- 2.2. Between August and October 2020 the Government consulted on a document setting out the potential future for planning in England. That paper set out fundamental changes to the planning system, including proposing significant changes to how local plans will be prepared in the future. There is no clear indication of when new legislation and regulations might come into force, nor what those would contain. It is, therefore, essential that the Council continues to work to prepare a plan but that we take a flexible approach that futureproofs against any legislative changes. The Government has been clear that this is the approach that Local Planning Authorities are expected to take.

- 2.3. Having an adopted Local Plan in place strengthens the Council's position in terms of being able to deliver new homes, new jobs and infrastructure in the right places, and to plan for this development in a coordinated way, whilst also protecting what we value most in Stockport in terms of our environment, and community and heritage assets.
- 2.4. Failing to get the right plan in place for Stockport has significant risks to both the Council and the communities it serves. Without a plan in place, the Council would be under significant pressure to allow the development of greenfield sites in sub-optimal locations and the potential situation of 'Planning by Appeal'; there would be a lack of coordination of Section 106 monies and a risk of receiving no Section 106 monies at appeal; the delivery of new homes in the 'right locations' for Stockport would be severely compromised; a coordinated approach to delivering the new infrastructure Stockport needs would be more challenging to achieve; and a lack of certainty for both the public and private sectors could undermine investor confidence.
- 2.5. In this context, building on the extensive work undertaken to develop the Local Plan prior to the departure from the GMSF, as well as the shared evidence base compiled jointly by the 10 GM Authorities, will ensure that the Council is in the best possible position to deliver the right plan for Stockport as soon as possible. A further detailed review of the existing evidence base has been undertaken to understand which evidence is still relevant and applicable, so as to avoid unnecessary duplication of work and activity.
- 2.6. A review has been undertaken of the GMSF process to understand how the Council could have been more effective and what we can now do differently in developing our plan for Stockport. In addition, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has already been engaged to provide additional 'critical friend' support to the Council and has provided a number of facilitated workshops relating to key topics. A reserves request has also been submitted and approved with the Council investing to enable additional resource to be brought in to strengthen the team working on the Local Plan.

3. A ONE STOCKPORT PLAN

- 3.1. Whilst any Local Plan has to conform to wider planning legislation and requirements, and align to regional and national strategy and policy, there is a clear opportunity for the One Stockport Local Plan to more closely reflect the community aspirations and vision of everyone in Stockport.
- 3.2. Fully supporting the vision set out in the Borough Plan of One Heart, One Home, One Future the new Local Plan will take a refreshed approach which recognises what is truly important to the communities of Stockport. It will celebrate our connectivity, our vast and varied heritage, our people and our unique places. It will identify opportunities for achieving sustainable growth across the Borough, and investment in infrastructure and community facilities for all residents, current and future.
- 3.3. The plan will, by setting out a clear strategy and robust policies, enable the successful delivery of thriving places, bring about energy efficient affordable housing, enable a dynamic economy, celebrate our heritage, protect and enhance the environment and support social and community infrastructure – thereby maintaining Stockport as a place where people wish to live, work, stay and visit. It will be an all-age plan, with the health and well-being of our residents at its core.

- 3.4. Informed by a comprehensive, proportionate and up-to-date evidence base, the Plan will respond to the key challenges facing the Borough over the next 15 years. It will address the key issues and identify those places and sites where change and development can best be accommodated, whilst recognising that the Borough must also be protected from inappropriate types of development in the wrong areas.
- 3.5. Once finalised, the plan (comprising of a written statement and a policies map) will set out the approach and detailed policies for the whole Borough for the period up to 2038. As a strategic plan for Stockport, it will be complemented by neighbourhood plans where these have been developed by communities across the Borough and which reflect the local character and needs of those areas. The Plan will sit alongside the adopted Greater Manchester Joint Minerals and Joint Waste development plan documents.
- 3.6. The new Local Plan will be consistent with, and will need to be read alongside, the most recent national planning policy set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and accompanying online Planning Practice Guidance.



- 3.7. Taking the One Stockport Borough Plan as its starting point, the attached summary document (Appendix A) sets out the emerging principles and the proposed direction of travel for the Local Plan, including the work and issues that collectively need to be considered in the coming months. The summary document sets out the emerging principles based on the top down strategic framework within which the Local Plan will sit. This will be tested with our communities over the coming weeks and months to ensure that everyone in Stockport is able to shape and input to those principles and how they translate into planning policies.

4. CALCULATING OUR HOUSING NEED

- 4.1. The summary document sets out the principles we will follow in developing planning policies for a range of different topic areas, including how we protect and enhance our local environment, how we provide the necessary social infrastructure for our communities, and how we ensure our businesses are able to flourish and grow. The summary document also sets out the number of new homes we are required to deliver

in the borough, and the principles we will use to decide where is best for these new homes to go.

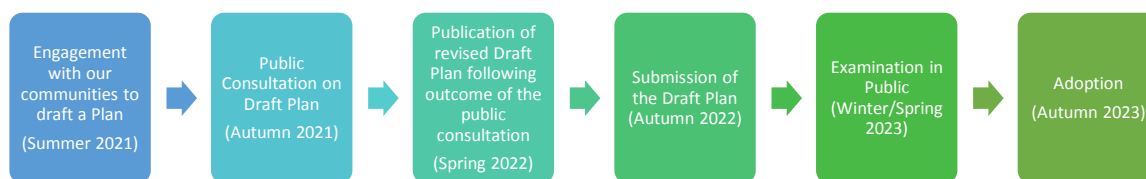
- 4.2. The Borough has a local housing need of 18,581 from 2021 to 2038 based on the national methodology and is the current working number we are using. It is important to stress that the exact number of new homes we need to build is still a work in progress and there is more work to do to identify where these new homes will go. Proposals will be ready to share with communities and stakeholders in the Autumn.
- 4.3. The summary document sets out a sequential approach to identifying and allocating land for new housing, focusing firstly on our Town and District centres and their immediate surroundings, then on other brownfield land, before looking at greenfield sites in the urban area and the Green Belt.
- 4.4. To support this approach, a number of specific areas of work are currently underway:
 - Housing methodology – review underway of Local Plans developed by other local authorities since the introduction of the standard housing methodology, to see if any other authorities have been successful in taking an alternative approach.
 - Brownfield First – expert advice has been commissioned to help draft a policy which ensures that the key focus for development during the plan period is the development of brownfield land and to ensure we protect as much of our greenspace as possible.
 - Stalled sites – review underway of all development sites in the Borough which are deemed to be ‘stalled’. This will include a review of potential solutions and opportunities for intervention to unlock delivery.
- 4.5. Further work is being undertaken to support this ‘brownfield first’ approach to housing delivery. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which identifies potential housing sites to be delivered over the plan, is currently being updated. This will re-examine all existing sites, including those within the Town Centre Living Area, for suitability and potential for increasing density on site. It will also take into account potential new sites that have been put forward through the most recent brownfield call for sites.
- 4.6. In addition, work is also being undertaken to identify the potential for residential development in and around district and large local centres and at rail stations, where appropriate. The outcome of this work will also be fed into the SHLAA to provide an updated housing supply position for the borough.
- 4.7. That work is already underway but will need to be completed by the end of the summer to provide the evidence to support a policy which will seek to ensure that the majority of housing delivery continues to be on brownfield land. However, it must be stressed that given the considerable shortfall of 7,484 between the most recent supply position (11,097 dwellings) and the need identified in para 4. 2 (working number of 18,581 dwellings), there is very little prospect of that gap being filled by potential additional units identified through this work.

5. EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES TO HELP DEVELOP THE RIGHT PLAN

- 5.1. In developing the Borough Plan and through the collective response to the covid-19 pandemic in Stockport, relationships between the Council and partner organisations, including businesses and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, are stronger than ever.
- 5.2. In order for the Local Plan to truly be the right plan for Stockport, everyone needs to be able to contribute to the plan as it develops and have their say. Extensive engagement will be undertaken with all Members, involving briefings and workshops and as well as more detailed oversight by the Development Plan working party on key topic areas.
- 5.3. Over the last 12 months we have held extensive conversations with our communities to understand their vision and aspirations for Stockport. The Local Plan will seek to build on this genuine engagement and ensure that everyone in Stockport is able to help develop the draft plan. This provides us with a real opportunity to continue to build up the neighbourhood-led approach which members asked for as the Borough Plan was developed, and to enable our residents and businesses to contribute to a tangible step in achieving the vision set out in the Borough Plan.
- 5.4. There will be challenging compromises to make and different agendas to recognise and balance. A period of intensive engagement with our communities, using many of the existing relationships and forums which have developed over the last 12 months, will take place as a draft preferred plan is prepared over the next 4 months. This will enable everyone in Stockport to contribute prior to a statutory period of public consultation in the Autumn. It is this period which will allow members and the communities they serve to actively participate in shaping the plan. This marks a step change to our previous approaches and will seek to provide for the continuation of engagement during the plan preparation process which is no longer solely about engagement at the formal stages when we consult on the plan.
- 5.5. A key element of work is the development of the public engagement plan. This will see the Council use as broad a range of outlets and forums as possible so as to reach the widest possible range of views across the borough. This may include engagement with existing forums and stakeholder groups such as the Economic Alliance, VCSE Forum, Youth Participation Forum, Older Person's Forum and Disability Access Forum, but will also use more informal mechanisms through the existing relationships and engagements the Council has with communities across Stockport on a day to day basis. It will also involve ongoing engagement with key stakeholders in Stockport including local MPs and public sector partners, and the borough's four Neighbourhood Forums who have already produced, or are in the process of producing, a Neighbourhood Plan for their area.

6. TIMESCALES AND NEXT STEPS

- 6.1. As set out in the Local Development Scheme (<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/stockport-local-development-scheme>), the Council will seek to have an adopted plan in place by Autumn 2023. In order to achieve this, the following steps will be undertaken:



6.2. In order to meet the above timescales, the Council will need to be agile and respond quickly to changes and developments in national legislation and planning guidance.

6.3. The following workstreams are currently underway to produce a draft plan for examination:

Workstream	Anticipated Outcome
Ensuring our Plan is informed by our communities	
Stakeholder engagement	A broad map of key stakeholders, businesses and community groups with genuine and regular engagement planned across the period of producing the plan, including formal public consultation periods of the draft and submission versions of the plan.
Local area input	Direct feedback from our communities on the proposed principles of the plan in relation to the key topic areas
Places for Everyone/ Duty to Cooperate	A programme of cooperation and engagement with all of our neighbouring authorities, including in relation to the emerging GM Places for Everyone plan.
Ensuring we have the right plan for Stockport	
Wider Strategic Framework	Coordination between the draft plan and wider strategies and policies, including the Stockport Economic Plan, One Stockport Borough Plan and GM 2040 Transport Strategy.
Policy drafting	Draft policies for the key topic areas which reflect the input from our local communities and the top-down strategic framework within which the plan must sit.
Policies map	A draft map showing proposed allocations and designations arising from draft policies
Assessment and appraisal	Assessment and appraisal of the draft plan, including Equalities Impact Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment, and Habitats Regulations Assessment.
Evidence base	A detailed but proportionate suite of evidence to support our draft policies.
Ensuring we have a plan ready for examination in 2023	
Programming and critical path	A clear programme for achieving an adopted plan by Autumn 2023 which coordinates all workstreams
Governance and sign-off	A programme of governance decision points to enable us to submit a plan for examination in 2023

6.4. The cross-party Development Plan Working Party, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Regeneration, has already been long established in its role advising the Executive on the preparation and approval of the Local Development Framework, of which the Local Plan is part. As such, it is proposed that this Working Party continue to

take the lead in progressing the various workstreams required to produce a Draft Plan for submission in Autumn 2022.

- 6.5. Following Full Council, this paper, along with the summary of Full Council's recommendations and feedback, will be considered by Cabinet at the next meeting on the 21st September.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1. Members are recommended to:

- Endorse the refreshed approach to developing a Local Plan for Stockport, including the principles set out in Appendix A.
- Endorse and support the approach to engaging with communities across Stockport during the Summer to assist in developing a draft Plan.
- Endorse that the Development Plan Working Party continue to take the lead in progressing the workstreams required to produce a Draft Plan for submission in Autumn 2022.