

Our Environment

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report details what is currently the second topic-based policy chapter of the draft Local plan, titled "Our Environment."
- 1.2 Stockport's environment is one of its defining features and what makes Stockport such a great place to live. Our communities, through the consultation and engagement undertaken in relation to the One Stockport Borough Plan and on the Local Plan principles, tell us that protecting the local environment is important to them. The Local Plan provides the Council with the means to protect and enhance the borough's best environmental assets, whilst also helping to safeguard against potentially harmful impacts of development. It also provides an opportunity to make sure our communities are resilient, making them well placed to cope with challenges such as our changing climate.
- 1.3 These extensive list of policies in this chapter will allow the Council to manage development so that it supports or contributes, in particular, to achieving Stockport Local Plan objectives 1, 5, 6 and 7 (see report titled 'Strategic Policies' considered at the Development Plan Working Party meeting on 18th January 2022).

2. OUTLINE OF "OUR ENVIRONMENT"

- 2.1 The policies in this chapter are split into three parts, on 1) the natural environment, 2) environment protection and 3) the built environment. The policies are intended to:

Part 1: Natural Environment

- i. realise significant enhancement and protection from loss or damage of the natural environment across and beyond a network of blue and green infrastructure;
- ii. optimise the borough's ecosystem services by securing net gains in biodiversity at a minimum of 10%;
- iii. give weight to protected sites designated for ecological interest and ensure compliance with protected species legislation;
- iv. ensure the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic quality;
- v. protect the Green Belt, maintaining its openness, mitigating any harm arising from development and, if land is removed from the Green Belt to enable development, requiring that development to make compensatory environmental improvements to the retained Green Belt nearby;
- vi. seek to safeguard and enhance soil quality, for the benefit of agriculture and ecosystems;

Part 2: Environment Protection

- vii. contribute to the move towards a circular economy through planning for the sustainable management of waste;
- viii. ensure that new development contributes to clean air and reduce the impacts of pollution on people and the environment;
- ix. ensure that new development contributes to a safe, clean and well-maintained environment, protecting it for existing and future residents;
- x. protect, and where possible improve the amenity of surrounding existing and future residents;
- xi. ensure development remediates and mitigates contaminated and unstable land;

- xii. safeguard the integrity of Manchester Airport's Public Safety Zone;
- xiii. safeguard the operational integrity and safety of Manchester Airport;
- xiv. safeguard against the noise impacts of Manchester Airport;

Part 3: Built Environment

- xv. require development to be well-designed and well-built, in line with nationally described characteristics of good design;
- xvi. require development to make a positive contribution to local townscape and streetscape;
- xvii. require masterplanning for larger major developments;
- xviii. ensure that new homes have suitable separation distances, and provide sufficient internal space for everyday activities and enable future flexibility and adaptability for an ageing population;
- xix. ensure that developments use land in an efficient way, building homes at higher densities wherever it can be accommodated without detriment to surrounding areas;
- xx. set a high standard of design quality, ensuring development contributes positively to place making, climate change mitigation/adaptation, quality of life, health/wellbeing and social cohesion;
- xxi. ensure that proposals for tall buildings make a positive contribution to the skyline, townscape and streetscape of Stockport;
- xxii. positively and proactively manage, preserve and enhance the borough's heritage assets and their settings;
- xxiii. ensure that new shop frontages are of a high quality design and accessible to all users; and
- xxiv. inform the scale and scope of extensions to properties.

- 2.2 A copy of the working draft chapter "Our Environment" is set out as Appendix 1 to this report.

3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 3.1 Members will recall that the Council meeting on 15th July 2021 considered a report providing an update on the Stockport Local Plan¹. That meeting resolved, amongst other things:

1. That the refreshed approach to developing a Local Plan for Stockport, including the principles set out in an appendix to the report be endorsed; and
2. That the approach set out in the report to engaging with communities across Stockport during the Summer to assist in developing a draft Plan be endorsed and supported.

- 3.2 The Local Plan key principles engagement phase, undertaken between July and September 2021 with some continued stakeholder feedback up until the present time, has resulted in engagement and information sharing with over 2,000 residents through presentations, meetings, briefings, workshops, sharing information and an online survey.

- 3.3 This early engagement phase has contributed to our aims by:

- Increasing the understanding of our communities about the Local Plan, why we're doing it, and what it is trying to achieve;
- Creating opportunities for our communities to input to the Local Plan and provide their views on our key principles through an online survey and through group meetings;

¹ See <https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=93437&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI66943>

- Increasing knowledge amongst our communities about future formal public consultation periods and how they will be able to submit their views. The engagement period has resulted in groups, forums and boards expressing that they want to be kept informed and asking for the Local Plan team to revisit them during the consultation phase;
- Encouraging a broad range of stakeholders and communities with different experiences to input into the engagement period. This has included reaching into underrepresented communities through the Stockport Homes Roadshow, Planning Aid England workshops, and dissemination of information by key networks such as the Cross Sector Forum and
- Ensuring that all engagement activities are accessible for all and are relevant and proportionate to different groups.

3.4 Most stakeholders are supportive of the 6 key principles set out (see <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/our-key-principles>) including that, through the Local Plan, the Council will:

- "take a Brownfield first approach to development, protecting our greenspaces as much as possible";
- "be design-led, aiming to achieve the highest quality of design for Stockport"; and
- "contribute to the good health and wellbeing of our communities".

4. EVIDENCE AND INFLUENCES

- 4.1 Draft policies in the "Our Environment" chapter have been informed by monitoring of existing Core Strategy policies and a wide range of different evidence studies, data-sources and related plans/strategies.
- 4.2 In particular, the Environment Act 2021 brings in new requirements for when councils are making planning decisions in relation to nature and biodiversity including the following:
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain; and
 - Strengthened biodiversity duty on public authorities.
- 4.3 An ecological network has been mapped for the Borough. This builds on the Greater Manchester Green Infrastructure network to provide a more localised context and incorporates existing ecological assets, spaces that improve the functional connectivity between ecological assets and a number of small sites that can act as 'stepping stones' across which certain species can move.
- 4.4 A detailed ecological study for the Borough has been produced which includes an assessment of habitat types and identify areas of habitat that have the potential for enhancement and net gains in biodiversity.
- 4.5 Greater Manchester's Tree and Woodland Strategy 'All our trees' 2019 sets out the critical importance of trees to the economy and people of Greater Manchester and makes the case for why we need to work urgently to protect and expand our urban trees. One of the overall aims of the strategy is to plant 3 million trees across Greater Manchester by 2024 and a further 2 million by 2050 to help Greater Manchester meet its CO2 reduction commitment.
- 4.6 A Landscape Character and Sensitivity assessment has been prepared for the borough, based on a framework of 12 geographically unique Landscape Character

Areas. This provides a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of the landscape character and sensitivity of the borough.

- 4.7 Ultimately the strands of evidence base will highlight the interventions required for enhancing the natural environment in the borough, such as securing a resilient ecological network, increasing tree coverage, protecting key landscapes and securing more green walls and roofs.
- 4.8 Data from Public Health England highlights how air pollution is linked to a range of very serious health conditions and contributes to early deaths. In Greater Manchester alone, exposure to fine particulates at current levels is estimated to contribute to around 1,200 deaths per annum.
- 4.9 Stockport has been working collaboratively with the other Greater Manchester Authorities to produce a Clean Air Plan, that will bring about compliance with the legal limit for NO₂ in the shortest possible time. The Clean Air Plan was approved June 2021 and proposes a Clean Air Zone for Greater Manchester. An Air Quality Action Plan for Greater Manchester has also been developed to improve air quality and is updated each year.
- 4.10 Other elements, especially in relation to the built environment and environmental protection, are informed by requirements and information arising from other statutory regimes, such as those relating to the operational integrity of Manchester Airport and those relating to heritage assets.
- 4.11 Key sources of information include:

Part 1: Natural Environment

- Stockport Ecological Network studies – see www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage#:~:text=Ecological%20Network%20Studies%202020
- Greater Manchester Local Nature Recover Strategy – see <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s15769/ITEM%2010%20Annex%20B%20Local%20Nature%20Recovery%20Strategy.pdf>
- Greater Manchester's Tree and Woodland Strategy 'All our trees' 2019 – see www.cityoftrees.org.uk/alloutrees
- Natural England published National Character Areas in relation to characteristics of broad landscape areas – see <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130>.
- Greater Manchester-wide Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment – see www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1727/greater-manchester-landscape-character-and-sensitivity-report.pdf
- More detailed Stockport-specific Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment – see [www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage#:~:text=2008%20\(PDF%207.3Mb\)-,Stockport%20Landscape%20Character%20Assessment%202018,-This%20document%20provides](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage#:~:text=2008%20(PDF%207.3Mb)-,Stockport%20Landscape%20Character%20Assessment%202018,-This%20document%20provides)
- Greater Manchester Green Belt assessment studies – see <https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/supporting-documents/?folder=%5C07%20Greener%20Places#:~:text=Greater%20Manchester%20Green>
- Additional Stockport-specific work is currently being initiated to update and supplement the previously undertaken Greater Manchester Green Belt assessment in the context of changes on the ground in Stockport (for example, the now complete construction of the A555 and continuing development at

Woodford Aerodrome) and to take account of recent caselaw and evolving methodological best practice.

Part 2 – Environmental Protection

- Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan and associated documents – see <https://cleanairgm.com/technical-documents/>
- Greater Manchester Air Quality Action plan - <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1272/air-quality-action-plan-2016-21.pdf>
- Greater Manchester Low Emission strategy – see <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1276/low-emission-strategy-dec-2016.pdf>
- Government guidance on groundwater source protection zones – see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/groundwater-source-protection-zones-spzs>

Part 3 – Built Environment

- National Design Guide - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>
- National Model Design Code - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>
- Places Matter design reviews - <https://www.architecture.com/working-with-an-architect/places-matter>
- Work is being progressed on a town centre specific design guide to inform future residential development schemes. This is intended to be adopted as a supplementary planning document and, subject to member approval as appropriate, will be ready to be published for public consultation in the summer of this year.
- Officers are scoping whether there would be benefit in commissioning a tall buildings study. This would take into account local factors such as topography, heritage assets, height restrictions arising from proximity to Manchester Airport and our approach to town centre living.
- Conservation area appraisals - <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/about-conservation-areas>
- Greater Manchester Historic Landscape Characterisation - https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/gmanchester_hlc_2012/
- Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record / Stockport Historic Environment Database <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/heritage-assets/stockport-historic-environment-database>

5. DISCUSSION

- 5.1 Member are invited to comment and provide feedback on the draft Our Environment policies.
- 5.2 It is important to note that the draft policies in Appendix 1 are set out purely to enable transparent member deliberation and discussion. No comment is sought at this stage from the public or other interested parties; the time for that will come at the next formal stage of consultation as per the schedule established in the Local Development Scheme (see www.stockport.gov.uk/stockport-local-development-scheme).

BACKGROUND PAPERS

See links to documents given within report and associated footnotes.

Anyone requiring further information should contact Richard Wood on 07800617505 or by email to richard.wood@stockport.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1 – working draft "Our Environment" Local Plan chapter

2. Our Environment

Stockport's environment is one of its defining features and what makes Stockport such a great place to live. Our communities tell us that protecting the local environment is important to them. The Local Plan provides the Council with the means to protect and enhance the borough's best environmental assets, whilst also helping to safeguard against potentially harmful impacts of development. It also provides an opportunity to make sure our communities are resilient, making them well placed to cope with challenges such as our changing climate.

The policies below will allow the Council to manage development so that, in particular, it supports or contributes to achieving Stockport Local Plan Objectives 1, 5, 6 and 7.

Part 1: Natural Environment

Environment 1: Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment

1. The Natural Environment will be significantly enhanced and protected from loss or damage according to the hierarchy of designations of international, national and local importance, and in line with the 'Statements of Environmental Opportunity' set out in the National Character Area Profiles for:
 - NCA 51: Dark Peak
 - NCA 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe
 - NCA 55: Manchester Conurbation; and
 - NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain.
2. Development which would detract from the effective functioning or connectivity of the ecological network defined on the Policies Map will not be permitted. In exceptional circumstances, where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that development in the network is unavoidable, an alternative habitat should be provided to ensure that:
 - a) equivalent connectivity is maintained
 - b) quality and quantity of priority habitat is increased; and
 - c) the resilience of the ecosystems is sustained given continuing environmental change and human pressures.
3. Measures to improve linkages and habitat value of the ecological network should be sought, particularly the structural connectivity of stepping stones. This will involve retaining and enhancing existing landscape and natural features (e.g. trees, hedgerow, watercourses, water bodies, pollination species and priority habitats).

Explanation

Local authorities have a key part to play in conserving biodiversity through developing local policies and strategies, determining planning applications and managing their estates. They have a duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) to conserve biodiversity in exercising their functions. One of the goals from the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) 25-year plan is to achieve 'Thriving Plants and Wildlife' and delivering 'environmental net gain' is embedded throughout. Wildlife networks and connectivity are vitally important in sustaining sites and addressing the impacts of climate change.

Natural England uses National Character Area (NCA) profiles for defining unique combinations of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, culture and economic activity. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing 'coherent ecological networks' that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

The Environment Act 2021² brings in new requirements for when councils are making planning decisions in relation to nature and biodiversity including the following:

- a. Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- b. Biodiversity Net Gain
- c. Strengthened biodiversity duty on public authorities
- d. Strategic protected site and species strategies
- e. New tree felling consultation requirements

Biodiversity constitutes the living components of natural capital and feeds into the wider environmental benefits. There is a 68% decline in species globally as reported by WWF in the Living Report 2020³. Consequently securing a resilient ecological network will not only help deliver the wider natural capital benefits for Stockport, but also help prevent further species decline.

The Council has produced an ecological network map for the Borough⁴. This builds on the Greater Manchester Green Infrastructure network to provide a more localised context and incorporates existing ecological assets, spaces that improve the functional connectivity between ecological assets (linear corridors) and a number of small sites that can act as 'stepping stones' across which certain species can move. The ecological network will assist in the provision of nature conservation and ecosystem services that are essential for sustainable development, including water management, carbon capture and access to nature with associated recreational and health benefit.

The ecological network within Stockport is diverse; at a broad level the network can be split into the following wildlife rich habitats;

- Upland Fringe
- Woodland
- River Valleys
- Ponds, and
- Parks and major recreational spaces

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a statutory requirement of the 2021 Environment Act. Greater Manchester is one of five areas selected by the Government to pilot the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy⁵. The LNRS sets out the priorities and opportunities within Greater

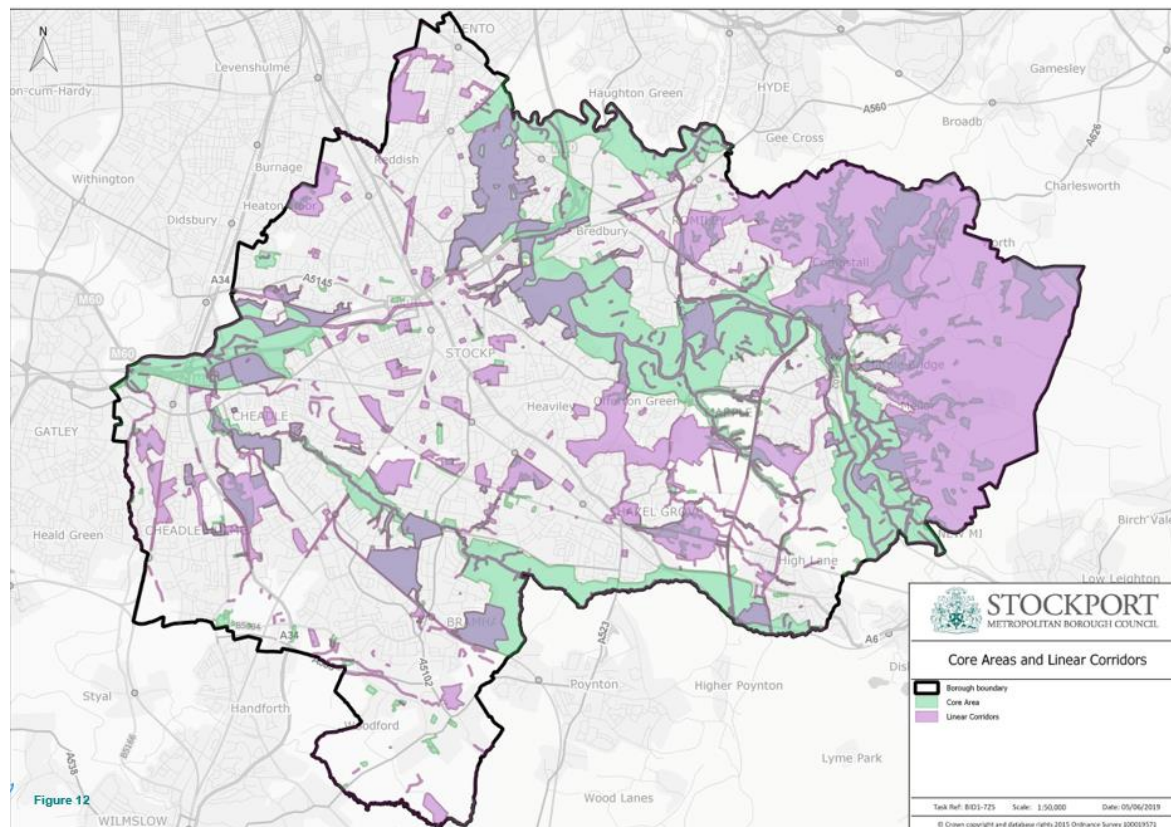
² See www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted.

³ See <https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-gb/reversing-nature-loss>.

⁴ See www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage.

⁵ See <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s15769/ITEM%2010%20Annex%20B%20Local%20Nature%20Recovery%20Strategy.pdf>.

Figure x – Stockport's Ecological Network



1. All development will be required to provide a measurable net gain for biodiversity of a minimum of 10%, whilst contributing to the ecological network and the wider opportunity areas as defined at a local and Greater Manchester level. In all cases development will be expected to optimise a site's potential for biodiversity and surpass the 10 % where possible.
2. Landscaping proposals must comprise a mix of locally native species to mimic natural habitats. Where non-native species are used their wildlife value must be well-documented. Development sites within 250m of an Ecological Corridor must comprise a minimum of 50% locally native species within any landscaping proposals.
3. Development proposals must provide ecological enhancement by including provision of integrated bat roosting or bird nesting facilities within each new building (at a rate of one per unit). Where this is not possible, bat roosting/bird nesting facilities will need to be provided elsewhere within the site boundary. Where this cannot be achieved on site, an agreed

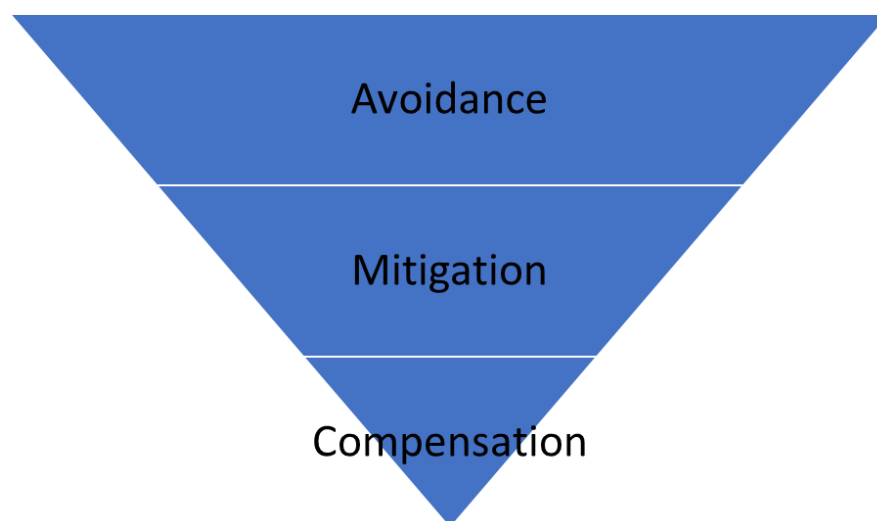
financial value to enable off site habitat management/creation to benefit bats and birds will be required.

4. Areas for development should be as permeable to wildlife as possible, increasing connectivity across and beyond the green and blue corridor network and should incorporate features into the built fabric that support and enhance priority and local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species. Development proposals must maintain habitat connectivity by ensuring gaps of minimum 13cm x 13cm are provided in every fence or under every gate to allow hedgehog and small animal passage.
5. Biosecurity – measures to prevent non-native species should be taken throughout the development process following DEFRA's biosecurity practice.

Explanation

The Environment Act 2021 includes a requirement for all future schemes including the development of land to deliver a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain and to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030. For clarity 'biodiversity net gain' is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before the development takes place. Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (2021) requires planning policies to contribute to and enhance the natural environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. The latest DEFRA metric should be utilised by the developer when illustrating a development's percentage biodiversity net gain. The mitigation hierarchy set out under paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (2021), should be adhered when applying net gain.

Figure x - Biodiversity harm mitigation hierarchy



The preference will be for net gains to be created on-site and, where provided off-site, the benefits for nature should be provided locally as possible. Offsetting locally will also be incentivised by the Defra metric. The metric incentivises habitat delivery on or close to the development site through a 'Spatial Risk Multiplier', which reduces the biodiversity value of habitats delivered further away from the development.

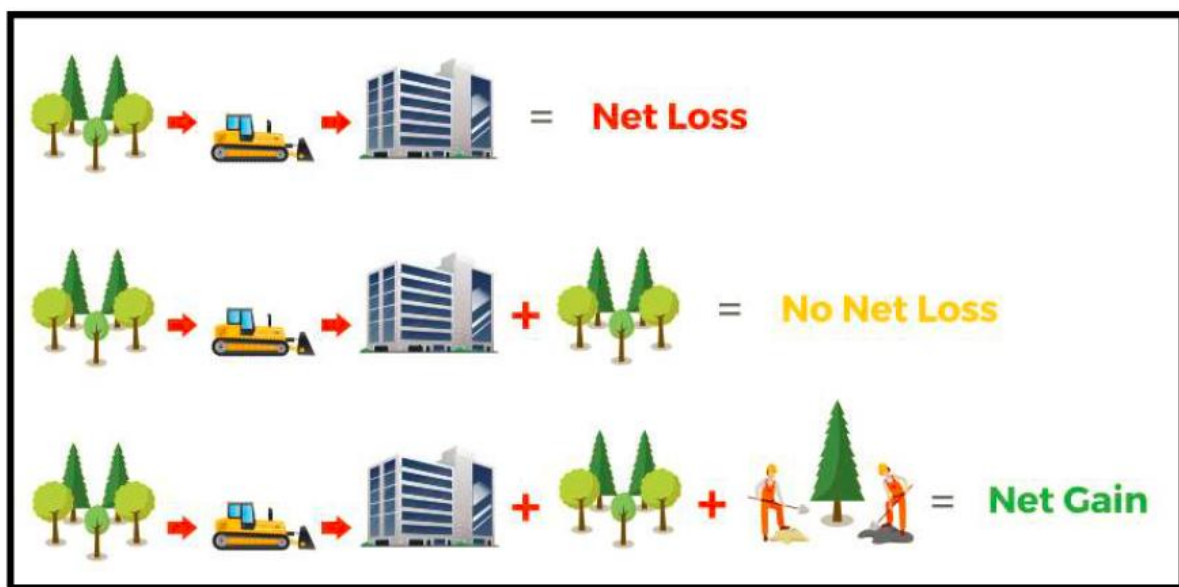
Paragraph 179 of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (2021) states that plans should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

A biodiversity appraisal must be submitted where there are protected or important species and habitat features, within the site or close to it. The appraisal will need to demonstrate that the development will not result in any adverse impacts. The appraisal must involve consultation with the Council and, others such as Natural England where considered to be appropriate.

Native species are encouraged because they are better adapted to the local weather and soil conditions and will have co-evolved with other species within the ecosystem. The 2020 Living report⁶ states that 'invasive species can outcompete native species, disrupt ecosystems and cause local or global extinctions'.

Enclosed gardens can prevent hedgehog movement. One of the main reasons why hedgehogs are declining in Britain is because our fences and walls are becoming more and more secure, reducing the amount of land available to them. Removing the barriers for example, by making holes in garden fences and walls will allow them to pass through. 13cm by 13cm is sufficient for any hedgehog to pass through this will be too small for nearly all pets⁷.

Figure x [source GMCA Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance for Greater Manchester Feb 2021]



Environment 3: Protected Sites

1. Development affecting Sites of National Importance

Development proposals will not be permitted where there is likely to be a significant adverse effect, either alone or in combination, on the ecological value for which the sites are designated as a Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserve (NNR) or Local Nature Reserve LNR. In exceptional circumstances, development proposals may be considered acceptable where the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impacts on the site and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of National importance. In all instances measures should be taken to avoid any damaging effects.

2. Development in or likely to affect SSSIs will be subject to special scrutiny in accordance with national policy and legislation to safeguard such sites.

⁶ See <https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-gb/about-the-living-planet-report>.

⁷ See www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden.

3. **Development affecting Sites of Local Importance**

Development will not be permitted where there is likely to be an adverse effect on sites identified as being of regional or local importance for biodiversity and/or geodiversity, unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impacts that the development is likely to have on the key ecological features of the site and the wider ecological network.

4. Where an adverse effect is likely, applications should:

- a) be accompanied by a detailed ecological assessment;
- b) incorporate measures to reduce and/or mitigate disturbance of sensitive wildlife habitats throughout the lifetime of the development; and
- c) seek opportunities to provide biodiversity and geodiversity gains through the restoration, improvement or creation of habitats and/or ecological networks.

Explanation

Paragraph 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (2021) sets out that plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites. Planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value'

There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in Stockport. Compstall Nature Reserve is designated for its biological interest. Ludworth Intake is designated for its geological interest. Both SSSIs' notified features can be found via Natural England⁸.

Damage to SSSIs may also result from impacts outside their boundaries. Natural England set out Impact Risk Zones around each SSSI which reflect the sensitivities of the features for which they are protected. Impact Risk Zones also indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)⁹ are a statutory designation made by local authorities as sites with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. To qualify for LNR status, a site must be locally important for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment. They offer people opportunities to study and learn about nature or simply to enjoy it. Designation of a Local Nature Resources involves a commitment to positive management and therefore requires the allocation of resources. The Council has declared fourteen LNRs; which are:

- a. Heaton Mersey Common;
- b. Mersey Vale Nature Park;
- c. Tangshutts;
- d. Crookiley Woods;
- e. Chadkirk;
- f. Wright's Wood;
- g. Woodbank Park;
- h. Abney Hall;
- i. Poise Brook;
- j. Gatley Cars;
- k. Etherow Country park;
- l. Happy Valley;
- m. Reddish Vale; and
- n. Carrs Wood.

⁸ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>

⁹ Designated under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) is the name given to the most important non-statutory sites for nature conservation in Stockport. This provides a means of protecting sites that are of local interest and importance. SBIs have no legal protection but must be taken into consideration by the planning authority when determining planning applications affecting the site. Sites are selected using a number of attributes that include habitat type, diversity and rarity of the species present, and the site's naturalness.

The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) currently classifies SBIs that are identified on a Greater Manchester basis¹⁰. These sites contribute greatly to the maintenance of the biodiversity of an area, along with national sites (SSSIs).

SBIs are graded into three categories:

- A. of regional or county importance;
- B. of District importance, and
- C. of importance within the identified geographical locality.

In 2021 there were 66 SBIs in Stockport covering some 726.2 hectares, see Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) for further detail. GMEU operates a continuing SBI site selection and review process. This reports to each of the 10 Greater Manchester districts on an annual basis, though new designations may be made at any time.

Environment 4: Protected Species

1. Where sites are known or likely to house protected species, developers must comply with any statutory species' protection provisions affecting the site concerned.
2. The first preference is to avoid disturbance, the second to provide suitable inter-connecting new habitats for these species within the development site. If this is not feasible, suitable alternative habitats should be provided.
3. Development that is likely to affect protected species or their habitat will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - a) there is no satisfactory alternative and that there is an overriding public interest meeting the Natural England licence requirements; and
 - b) the proposed development would not have an unacceptable impact on the protected species by reason of appropriate mitigation measures that would form part of the development. Mitigation measures that provide for the enhancement and management of habitat, or the development of appropriate habitat, must be maintained by the developer in perpetuity.

Explanation

As the population grows, additional pressure is placed on sensitive habitats, which has the potential to cause an adverse effect on the protected species that live there. The Council is required by law to ensure that new development does not have an adverse impact on important areas of nature conservation. Many individual wildlife species receive statutory protection under a range of legislative provisions. A number of species of plants, birds and animals are specifically protected by European or national legislation due to their significance or vulnerability. The level of protection will vary according to the species and the particular legislation that protects it, but in general will entail protection from taking, killing or injuring or from the damage or destruction of a breeding site or

¹⁰ [Review of Sites of Biological Importance Guidelines \(tameside.gov.uk\)](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/review-of-sites-of-biological-importance-guidelines)

resting place. The aim of protected species legislation is to protect the populations of the species, not necessarily to protect them or their habitats in situ.

For European protected species (i.e. those species protected under the Habitats Regulations) further strict provisions apply and it is the developers' responsibility to ensure appropriate licences are in place. Surveys should be carried out to establish the presence, extent and density of these species and habitats in support of any planning application and appropriate measures should be taken to safeguard these habitats and species before any development commences.

England's Biodiversity List ¹¹ lists species of flora and fauna and habitats considered to be of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Known as Priority Habitats and Species, some of these may be protected under other designations e.g. SSSIs or protected species legislation. The list of habitat types is extensive and not all are mapped. In Stockport, the main specially-protected species that are likely to be encountered are:

- i. Brown Long eared bat;
- ii. Noctule Bat;
- iii. House Sparrow;
- iv. Starling;
- v. Kingfisher;
- vi. Common;
- vii. Great crested newt (GCN);
- viii. Badger; and
- ix. Brown trout.

The hierarchy of species protection is provided below:

- a. European protected species (those species protected under the Habitats Regulations);
 - b. Species protected by domestic legislation (e.g. Protection of Badgers Act 1992);
 - c. National priority species and habitats (commonly known as 'UK BAP priority habitats and species') published for England under the requirements of Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
 - d. Habitats and species within the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
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Environment 5: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

1. Development proposals must seek to avoid the loss of, and minimise the risk of harm to, existing trees, woodland, and/or hedgerows of visual or nature conservation value, including but not limited to ancient woodland, and ancient and veteran trees. Where trees and/or woodland are to be lost as a part of development this loss must be justified as a part of an Arboricultural Implications Assessment (AIA) submitted with the application.
2. Development proposals must not involve building within the canopy or root spread of trees, woodland or hedgerows which are to be retained, except where it can be proven that the construction can be carried out in accordance with the most up-to date British Standard 5837 and an appropriate method statement is fully adhered to.
3. Development proposals that lead to the loss or deterioration of protected trees, important hedgerows, aged or veteran trees or areas of mature and ancient woodland will not normally be permitted. Works to protected trees will only be granted consent where these:

¹¹ Published under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

- a) would not adversely affect the appearance of the tree and the contribution it makes to the visual amenity of the locality; or
 - b) would improve the health and/or amenity value of the tree.
4. The felling of protected trees will only be allowed where:
- a) the tree is demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction to be in poor health and/or to have lost its intrinsic visual amenity value; or
 - b) the tree is causing demonstrable harm/damage to the structural integrity of a building or structure, (evidenced by a structural and arboricultural report and the harm cannot be remedied by other reasonable means.
5. To ensure that the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the harm resulting from the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows, compensatory planting must take place to ensure the canopy is preserved and enhanced. Where this level of tree planting is not achievable on site, it may be appropriate to contribute to Council tree planting in the Borough through a Section 106 Agreement.
6. **Trees and hedgerow within new development**
Development proposals must provide environmental and amenity enhancement by including the planting of new areas of trees, woodland and hedgerows as a part of new development proposals. For residential development, a new tree should be planted for each additional bedroom created, or 1 tree per 20 metre square footprint of commercial developments. Where this cannot be achieved on site, an agreed financial value to enable off site planting of an agreed percentage will be required.

Explanation

Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (2021) requires planning policies to recognise the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services including the economic and other benefits from trees and woodland. Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined.

Greater Manchester's Tree and Woodland Strategy 2019¹² sets out the critical importance of trees to the economy and people of Greater Manchester and makes the case for why we need to work urgently to protect and expand our urban trees. One of the overall aims of the strategy is to plant 3 million trees across Greater Manchester by 2024 and a further 2 million by 2050 to help Greater Manchester meet its CO₂ reduction commitment.

Trees make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Borough. Trees which are healthy and are of high amenity value can be protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Local planning authorities have a wider statutory duty when determining planning applications to include appropriate and adequate provision for the preservation and planting of trees. They also have a duty to consider the making of tree preservation orders for individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands¹³.

The Council will seek to retain existing wildlife habitats comprising trees, shrubs, ponds and hedges wherever possible. Where trees are located on, or adjacent to, a site the Council will require a tree survey to accompany planning applications indicating the location, species, size and condition of trees. Trees should be retained wherever possible and any removal will need to be justified in the survey. Where removal of trees and other habitat can be justified appropriate replacement should take a natural capital approach and ensure the potential benefits lost from the trees are replaced

¹² <https://www.cityoftrees.org.uk/allourtrees>

¹³ Sections 197 and 198 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

such as habitat and amenity value. The Greater Manchester Trees and Woodland strategy steers the species type and location for new trees.

Where development proposals would affect or be affected by trees or established woodland on, or adjacent to, the development site, the Council will expect planning applications to be accompanied by:

- a. An arboricultural survey in accordance with BS: 5837 (2012) 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction' and any subsequent revisions.
- b. A landscaping scheme which clearly shows adequate spacing between trees and buildings, taking into account the existing and future size of trees, both above and below ground.

The Council expects developers to take responsibility for the successful establishment of trees, woodlands, and hedgerows. Individual and small groups of trees must be subject to a maintenance regime lasting not less than 5 years, hedgerows for a period of not less than 10 years, and woodlands for a period of not less than 25 years. Any new planting should follow the guidance set out in the Greater Manchester Tree and Woodlands strategy (and any technical guidance that follows).

Environment 6: Valuing Landscape

1. The special qualities and key sensitivities of Stockport's Landscape Character Areas should be recognised. All development must conserve and enhance landscape and townscape and scenic and visual quality avoiding significant and adverse landscape or visual impacts, taking into account any cumulative effects alongside any existing, planned or committed development. Development proposals should:
 - a) be located and designed to respect scenic quality and maintain an area's distinctive sense of place and reinforce local distinctiveness;
 - b) conserve and enhance the characteristics and key views and vistas along with valued attributes and existing site features such as woodland, hedgerows and River Valleys;
 - c) be located and designed to prevent erosion of relative tranquillity and intrinsically dark landscapes and where possible use opportunities to enhance areas in which tranquillity has been eroded;
 - d) restore positive landscape characteristics and features that reinforce local landscape quality and distinctiveness, particular the river valleys;
 - e) where necessary be supported by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment;
 - f) protect views out of and into the Peak District National Park and Cheshire Plain;
 - g) avoid or mitigate for any residual adverse effects and take opportunities to secure landscape character and visual enhancements;
 - h) not impede, and where possible, improve public access for all to the countryside, particular the river valleys;
 - i) development should help to create a landscape which is capable of absorbing the pressures associated with urban recreation and climate change; and
 - j) improve access to the countryside including the river valleys, for all people and using sustainable travel modes.
2. Regard must be had to the Stockport and Greater Manchester LCA and Landscape Sensitivity study (or any subsequent updates) and where relevant any neighbouring Character Assessments. The relevant National Character Areas should be considered in assessing

applications for development and special attention should be given to their opportunity statements.

Explanation

Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states that planning policies "...should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by" ... "(a) protecting and enhancing 'valued landscape'."

National Planning guidance advises that where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed.

The European Landscape Convention (ELC)¹⁴ definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded or outstanding: "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."

An integrated Landscape Character and Sensitivity assessment has been prepared for Stockport, based on a framework of geographically unique Landscape Character Areas.

The updated Landscape Character Assessment for Stockport therefore comprises the following 12 Landscape Character Areas:

- A. Woodford;
- B. Heald Green Fringe;
- C. Ladybrook Valley;
- D. River Mersey;
- E. Tame Valley and Brinnington East;
- F. Etherow Parklands;
- G. Goyt Valley;
- H. Offerton - Poise Brook;
- I. Hazel Grove- High Lane;
- J. Marple Bridge;
- K. Mellor Moor; and
- L. Ludworth Moor

Environment 7: Green Belt Development

1. The Council will seek to protect the Green Belt and maintain its openness and permanence. The boundaries of the Green Belt are defined on the Policies Map. Within the Green Belt, planning permission will not be granted for development unless it is in accordance with national planning policy.
2. Where development is proposed on land which was formally protected from development by designation as Green Belt, the Council will expect development to contribute to compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land.
3. Limited infill development of no more than two dwellings within a village in the Green Belt will be permitted providing the applicant can demonstrate that the following criteria are met:

¹⁴ See

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/236096/8413.pdf

- a) The proposal is for the filling of a small gap within an existing, clearly continuous and largely built-up frontage;
- b) The development would not exceed the height of existing buildings along the frontage as a whole and would complement the character, setting and siting of properties within the streetscene;
- c) The site lies within the frontage, with buildings on either side, and its development is on the frontage line; and
- d) The site is visually and functionally linked to facilities which make up the village.

Explanation

Stockport's Green Belt forms part of the Greater Manchester Green Belt that was originally designated in 1984. Through continued positive management the Council will seek improvements to the overall quality of and accessibility to existing areas of Green Belt. However, the scale of development that needs to be accommodated within Stockport over the plan period to 2037 means that some changes to the existing Green Belt boundaries within Stockport are necessary.

The Green Belt study for Greater Manchester has assessed the potential to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt in the vicinity of the proposed allocations, some of these interventions are not limited to but include the following:

- a. new or enhanced green infrastructure;
- b. woodland planting;
- c. landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal);
- d. improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital;
- e. new or enhanced walking and cycle routes; and
- f. improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 paragraph 149 identifies 'limited infill in a village' to be appropriate development in the Green Belt. The Local plan has not defined village boundaries for this purpose. When applying this policy consideration will be given to the position on the ground. It will be necessary for applicants to demonstrate that their site meets the criteria in the policy with regards to being sited and designed so as to fit in with the streetscene and frontage within the village. Applicants will need to demonstrate how their proposal is visually and functionally linked to a number of key community facilities such as you would expect to find within a village. Such facilities might include but not be limited to local shops, eating and drinking establishments, community centres or community sports and recreation facilities.

For clarity, the infilling element of this policy applies to villages that are washed over by Green Belt. It does not apply to residential infilling on previously developed sites redeveloped for housing in the Green Belt since 1990 nor does it apply to villages or settlements outside of the Green Belt. A key consideration will be that if key community facilities are located outside of the Green Belt then a site within the Green Belt is unlikely to be considered to be within the same village; the outer edge of the built area is, in essence, also the outer edge of the village.

In situations where all the above criteria regarding infill development are satisfied there is unlikely to be any significant adverse impact on openness and the Green Belt purposes will be maintained. It is intended that this policy will provide clarity for both prospective applicants and the Council.

Whenever planning permission is granted for development within the Green Belt the Council will consider removing permitted development rights from the property. This will ensure that the impacts of future extensions or alterations to buildings in the Green Belt remain subject to consideration through the planning application process

Environment 8: Protection of Agricultural land

1. Development proposals should seek to safeguard and enhance soil quality. This will ensure both the appropriate management of agricultural soils and that appropriate value is applied to soils in urban areas for the ecosystem services that they provide. Particular regard will be had to ensuring protection of peat-based soils and safeguarding 'best and most versatile' agricultural land.

Explanation

Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (2021) expects local planning authorities to take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. This is particularly important in plan making when decisions are made on which land should be allocated for development. The Council recognises the benefits to food security that the industry brings and seeks to be flexible to the modern needs of the industry whilst addressing environmental impacts of the associated development. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. The Agricultural Land Classification provides a method for assessing the quality of farmland to enable informed choices to be made about its future use within the planning system.

Natural England provides further information on Agricultural Land Classification. The Agricultural Land Classification system classifies land into 5 grades, with Grade 3 subdivided into sub-grades 3a and 3b. Best and most versatile land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a. It is the land which is most flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs and which can best deliver food and non-food crops for future generations. Natural England has a statutory role in advising local planning authorities about land quality issues.

As part of the Government's 'Safeguarding our Soils' strategy, Defra has published a Code of practice for the sustainable use of soils on construction sites¹⁵. This may be helpful in development design and setting planning conditions.

Part 2: Environmental Protection

Environment 9: Environmental Protection

1. Development proposals, as appropriate to their nature and scale, should be informed by an evaluation of the environmental risks arising both during construction and once development is complete. Appropriate measures must be identified and taken to minimise the risks of adverse impacts to air, land and water quality as well as in relation to vibration, heat, dust, light and noise pollution. The proposed development of sensitive uses (such as residential) adjacent to existing sources of pollution (e.g. noise, odour, traffic etc.) must demonstrate through the submission of appropriate impact assessments that there would be no detrimental impact on future residential amenity.
2. Potentially **polluting developments** will not be permitted:

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-sustainable-use-of-soils-on-construction-sites>

- a) where they are within, or in close proximity to, existing or proposed residential, educational, institutional, recreational or major retail developments;
 - b) where they would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the viability of existing neighbouring businesses; or
 - c) where the emissions from the development would have an unacceptable adverse impact on existing or planned development.
3. **Lighting** - New lighting schemes should be appropriate to the type of development and its location. Proposals for outdoor lighting should not have an unacceptable adverse impact by reason of light spillage or glare on neighbouring building/uses, the countryside, highway safety or biodiversity.
 4. **Water Quality** - Development will not be permitted where it would have an adverse effect on the quality or quantity of groundwater resources or watercourses and water body. Development should avoid any adverse impact on water quality, including during the construction phase, and wherever possible should seek to enhance water quality, both chemical and ecological.
 5. **Odour and Litter** Development that results in the production of litter or unacceptable levels of odour will not be permitted.
 6. **Noise and vibration** - Developments generating noise which is likely to create significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life and cannot be mitigated and controlled through the use of conditions or through pre-existing effective legislative regimes, will not be permitted. Development that will result in an unacceptable impact on the occupiers of dwellings or other environmentally sensitive properties in terms of vibration will also not be allowed.

Explanation

Paragraph 185 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development.

Ensuring a clean, pleasant and well-maintained environment is a top priority of the Council. Excessive levels of air, land, noise, energy, vibration, light and water pollution have the potential to have an adverse impact on environmental quality, ecology, health and wellbeing. Building works can be hugely disruptive and cause nuisance in terms of vibration, air quality and noise. In addition traffic management, storage and waste can also be problematic.

The majority of Stockport's planned housing growth will take place in areas that already suffer from air and noise pollution, particular along major through fares and within Stockport town centre. It is therefore essential to ensure that, wherever possible all forms of pollution are considered, controlled and mitigated against as part of the development process.

All developments will be expected to demonstrate compliance with the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

Where appropriate, a light impact assessment will be required as part of the application submission. Development involving floodlighting or other significant external lighting will only be permitted where the proposed lighting is the minimum necessary for its purpose and where appropriate landscaping measures to screen lighting installations from view cannot ameliorate any detrimental effect on:

1. residential amenities or the users of commercial or other premises;

2. areas of nature conservation interest;
3. the night-time environment of the countryside;
4. the visibility of the night sky; or
5. users of nearby highways or flightpaths through dazzling or distraction.

The purpose of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), which was transposed into English Law by the Water Environment Regulations (2003), is to deliver improvements across Europe in the management of water quality and water resources through the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). Water pollution can also affect the supply of water for leisure, industrial and agricultural uses and have a harmful impact upon riverside habitats. The Council will work with the Environment Agency to restrict development which may threaten the quality of either ground or surface water.

Odour and fumes from commercial development can have an adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding residents. In particular the siting of flues needs to consider the impact on amenity and design. Best practice guidance should be followed; the current best practice guidance is DEFRA Guidance on the Control of Odour and Noise from Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems (2005).

Persistent and intermittent noise from a range of sources including transport, mechanical plant, construction and congregations of people can undermine quality of life. The Council will take into account noise considerations when assessing development proposals. In accordance with the Agent of Change principle as set out in Planning Practice Guidance the Council will also take account of existing noise-generating use in a sensitive manner when new development, particularly residential, is proposed nearby. Agent of Change places the responsibility for mitigating the impact of noise firmly on the design of the new development. This also applies to new noise generating development. Consistency with the Professional Practice Guidance PPG on Planning & Noise (May 2017)¹⁶ as a reference source for understanding noise and identifying best practice will be an important material consideration. The Council will require Noise Impact Assessments for developments likely to generate or be exposed to significant noise, in accordance with Professional Practice Guidance PPG on Planning & Noise (May 2017).

Environment 10: Amenity Considerations

1. Development will be required to protect, and where possible improve, the amenity of surrounding existing and future residents. Development proposals should:
 - a) not result in the loss of privacy or an unacceptable increase in the sense of enclosure for new and existing residential properties;
 - b) not result in an unacceptable loss of outlook;
 - c) ensure adequate levels of daylight and sunlight; and
 - d) ensure compatibility with neighbouring land uses

Explanation

The amenities which all existing and future occupants of neighbouring land and buildings may reasonably expect to enjoy must not be unduly harmed by, or as a result of, new development.

The first part of this policy requires new developments to be designed to ensure that there is sufficient privacy and do not result in an unreasonable level of overlooking between habitable rooms of adjacent residential properties, schools or onto private open spaces.

For the purposes of this policy, “outlook” is defined as the visual amenity enjoyed by occupants when looking out of their windows or from their garden. In applying part (b), the Council will expect careful

¹⁶ <https://www.ioa.org.uk/sites/default/files/14720%20ProPG%20Main%20Document.pdf>

consideration of the layout and massing of buildings in order to ensure they do not result in an increased sense of enclosure and loss of outlook. If dwellings overlook bin stores screening and landscaping should be used to limit the impact.

In applying part c) of the policy, the Council will aim to minimise the impact of the loss of daylight and sunlight and unacceptable overshadowing caused by new development. The Council will also seek to ensure that the design of new development optimises the levels of daylight and sunlight. The Council will expect the impact of all development to be assessed following the methodology set out in the most recent version of Building Research Establishment's (BRE) "Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A guide to good practice". Depending on the scale of the development, a Daylight and Sunlight Report may also be required to fully assess the impacts.

Environment 11: Clean Air

1. New development located within or adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area / Clean Air Zone must ensure that users are not significantly adversely affected by the air quality within that AQMA/ Clean Air Zone and include mitigation measures where appropriate, taking into account the cumulative impacts from point source pollution.
2. Development should not contradict the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan, Air Quality Action plan, Low Emission strategy and not cause harm to air quality, cumulatively or individually.
3. Where air quality modelling indicates harm would be caused, this shall be fully addressed through appropriate mitigation. Where adequate mitigation is not provided and/or is not practical, planning permission will be refused.
4. All major residential or other environmentally sensitive development will be expected to take measures to minimise and mitigate the local impact of dust and emissions from construction and traffic generated by the development, as well as emissions created by the use of the development itself, including from Combined Heat and Power and biomass plants.
5. Streets should be designed to avoid trapping air pollution at ground level, including through the appropriate location and scale of buildings and trees.

Explanation

Clean Air is a cross cutting theme that is addressed through different chapters of the Local Plan; in particular the transport section in terms of encouraging sustainable modes and encouraging electric vehicle charging points through to effectively dealing with vulnerable end users i.e schools etc. There are also clear linkages with the expanding the Green Infrastructure network throughout the borough.

Air pollution is linked to a range of very serious health conditions and contributes to early deaths. Without action, it has been estimated that the health and social care costs of air pollution in England could reach £5.3 billion by 2035, primarily due to fine particulates (PM2.5). In Greater Manchester alone, exposure to fine particulates at current levels is estimated to contribute to around 1,200 deaths per annum¹⁷. The youngest, elderly people and those with existing health conditions are most likely to be affected by exposure to air pollution. The exacerbation of respiratory conditions is particularly relevant in consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Paragraph 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states that planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national

¹⁷ Derived from Public Health Outcome Framework indicator 3.01 (2016 data) (on Fingertips) (2018), Public Health Outcomes Framework (see <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/public-health-outcomes-framework>)

objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of **Air Quality Management Areas** and **Clean Air Zones**, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas.

The Government has directed Greater Manchester authorities to produce a Clean Air Plan to tackle roadside nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) exceedances. The Government has identified that the A34 through Gatley and Cheadle is forecast to remain above the legal air quality limit of 40 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide per cubic metre annual mean, beyond 2021. Unlike more urban routes, the A34 has multiple functions, providing access to the M60 motorway but also onward north-south connections to Cheshire East and Manchester. In addition, there are also complex east-west local movements which cross the corridor.

Stockport has been working collaboratively with the other Greater Manchester Authorities to produce a Clean Air Plan, that will bring about compliance with the legal limit for NO₂ in the shortest possible time. The Clean Air Plan was approved June 2021 and proposes a Clean Air Zone for Greater Manchester. The Clean Air Zone includes the geographical area of Stockport minus the M60 and the A6 Manchester Airport Relief Road. The Clean Air Zone will improve air quality by encouraging some vehicle owners to upgrade to cleaner vehicles – or pay a daily charge. It is not the same as a Congestion Charge Zone, where all or most vehicles are charged to drive. The Clean Air Zone was subject to public consultation in the autumn of 2020 and will be implemented May 2022. The Clean Air plan also proposes a number of measures across Greater Manchester to address this problem in as short a time as possible.

The Council will seek to ensure that proposals for all new development regardless of location will not have an unacceptable negative impact on air quality and will not further exacerbate air quality in Air Quality Management Areas. Similarly, proposals for new development should not put people's health at risk by increasing the potential for exposure to raised levels of pollutant. Planning applications will be assessed in accordance with the most recent development management guidance published jointly by the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) and Environmental Protection UK (EPUK), and the most recent IAQM Guidance on the Assessment of Dust from Demolition and Construction, or relevant successor guidance, including the requirement for developers to submit construction management plans as appropriate. Developments in locations of poor air quality should be designed to mitigate the impact of poor air quality to within acceptable limits, be in compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the Air Quality Management Area and Clean Air Zones. The procedure for screening and undertaking air quality assessment should also be in accordance with the latest guidance from the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) and any other Local technical notes on Air Quality.

One of the ways that the council can minimise the impact of new development on air quality is to ensure new development aims for zero carbon emissions.

Developers are also encouraged to consider how the design of public realm and planting schemes can benefit air quality in and around a development. Green screens have been seen to be particularly helpful and work by using leaves to absorb gaseous pollutants and capture particulate matter on their surfaces. Oxygen is then released by the plants, improving local air quality. Screens also act as a barrier to wind flow, causing dispersal of road pollutants and reducing the levels to which passers-by are exposed.

Dust pollution can often be a particular problem during the construction phase of the development. The Council will use conditions to secure Construction Management Plans where necessary and dust pollution should be fully considered along measures to control the impact on highways (e.g. wheel washing).

Environment 12: Groundwater Protection

1. Applications for development that are located within groundwater source protection zones (SPZs) will be expected to demonstrate that the development, and any construction activities associated with the development, will not result in a reduction in the quality or quantity of groundwater resources.

Explanation

Within Stockport, there are two groundwater source protection zones (SPZs) as identified by the Environment Agency¹⁸. Groundwater source protection zones are split into classification of zones, 1, 2 and 3, with zone 1 being the most sensitive. Groundwater provides a third of the drinking water in England, and it is crucial that these sources are protected to ensure that water is completely safe to drink, if groundwater becomes polluted it can be very expensive and extremely difficult or impossible to clean.

Whilst development in source protection zones is not precluded, the [Council](#) will seek to ensure that any new development is in line with the Environment Agency's guidance and delivers high-specification drainage solutions. It is recognised that the costs of these solutions may contribute towards development costs, but these should be factored into any development appraisal when valuing land prior to purchase for development.

Environment 13: Land Stability, Contamination and Storage of Hazardous Substances

1. Development involving the excavation of land or the extraction of materials from the ground will be permitted where it is demonstrated that the stability of surrounding land (and buildings or structures upon it) is not compromised and where relevant policies of the Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Development Plan Document are met.
2. Proposals on land which is known to be unstable or contaminated, or where there is a reasonable likelihood of instability or contamination, will only be permitted where a land contamination / stability report demonstrates that such issues can be overcome by appropriate remedial, preventive or precautionary measures.
3. Those seeking to develop in close proximity to contaminated land will also be required to demonstrate that the development will not be adversely affected by contaminants and there will be no impact to controlled water and other water watercourses.
4. Development will not be supported which involves the storage or use of hazardous substances that would result in restrictions on development being imposed by the Health and Safety Executive on land outside the application site.
5. Development in close proximity to hazardous (notifiable) installation will not be supported where it would cause a significant hazard to the health of residents or occupiers and the environment.

Explanation

Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

¹⁸ See www.gov.uk/guidance/groundwater-source-protection-zones-spzs.

The Stockport Local Plan emphasises a brownfield first approach to development. Many brownfield sites have issues with contamination. A policy is therefore required to ensure this is dealt with appropriately and development is brought forward in a safe and sustainable way. Any development of polluted land will be required to undertake remedial work to the satisfaction of the council. Full details of the proposed de-contamination will be required as part of any planning application before it is considered. Contaminated land raises risks for pollution of controlled water, groundwater and Source Protection Zones (SPZs) and should therefore be remediated in line with recommended standards.

Where a land contamination / stability report is required as part of a planning submission. The following information is required:

- The nature and extent of the potential contamination (soil and ground gas) and land instability/ potential instability
- On land which is known to be contaminated and or unstable or where there is a reasonable likelihood of contamination / instability, the results of a thorough investigation and assessment of the ground should be undertaken and submitted to ensure the development will be suitable for its intended end use and that any actual or potential contamination / instability can be overcome by remedial, preventative or precautionary measures
- Evidence that the surrounding land (and buildings or structures upon it) and off-site receptors will not be compromised.

Before development can start, planning conditions may require that appropriate remedial measures are agreed with the planning authority and carried out in line with current guidelines, having regard to relevant legislation (Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act and Contaminated Land Regulations 2012). The developer will be required to provide a report verifying that the works have been carried out as agreed. If monitoring is required, a monitoring schedule should be identified and agreed with the Council and if necessary, the Environment Agency at the time of planning permission. The Council aims to improve the quality of water courses in the Borough and to prevent any development which could lead to a deterioration in the quality of water. Plans for the remediation of contaminated land or development which could impact water quality will therefore be carefully assessed.

Certain sites and pipelines are designated as notifiable installations by virtue of the quantities of hazardous substance present. The siting of such installations will be subject to planning controls aimed at keeping these separated from housing and other land uses with which such installations might be incompatible from the safety viewpoint. The presence of hazardous substances above specified quantities requires consent under the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990 and associated Regulations. Pipelines are subject to the Pipelines Act 1962 and associated Regulations.

The Borough already contains a number of installations handling notifiable substances, including pipelines. Whilst they are subject to stringent controls under existing health and safety legislation, it is considered prudent to control the kinds of development permitted in the vicinity of these installations. For this reason the Council has been advised by the Health and Safety Executive that they should be consulted upon any planning applications within a given specific distance of each of these installations.

Existing notifiable sites in Stockport are:

- i. Gas Holders, Mersey Street, Portwood (British Gas Transco) – consultation distance 60m; and
- ii. Bramhall Oil Terminal (Conoco, Poynton) – consultation distance 250m.

Existing notifiable pipelines in Stockport are:

- iii. 18 inch Partington/Stockport (gas) – consultation distance 16m;
- iv. 18 inch Stockport/Denton (gas) – consultation distance 16m;
- v. 8 inch Stockport/New Mills (gas) – consultation distance 47m; and
- vi. 24 inch Stretford/Kingsway/Denton (gas) – consultation distance 16m.

In addition to the above notifiable installations the following pipeline routes within the Borough are subject to safeguarding:

- vii. High pressure Government oil pipelines serving Bramhall Oil Terminal - new development should not interfere with these pipelines. Access for maintenance must be afforded at all times without any obstruction and no works whatsoever including landscaping, tipping, or lowering or raising of ground levels shall take place within a distance of 10 feet on either side of a pipeline without the prior consent of the Secretary of State; and
 - viii. Goyt-Audenshaw Water Pipeline.
-

Environment 14: Manchester Airport Public Safety Zone

1. Within the Public Safety Zone shown on the Policies Map, development (including replacements) or changes of use will not be permitted, except in the limited circumstances set out in the general presumption in paragraphs 11 and 12 of DfT Circular 01/2010 ‘Control of Development in Airport Public Safety Zones’.

Explanation

The Public Safety Zone (PSZ) for Manchester Airport has been defined by the Government and is based on the 1 in 100,000 individual risk contour. Guidance is set out in DfT Circular 01/2010 “Control of Development in Airport Public Safety Zones”. This includes a description of the risk assessment appraisal on which the zone is based. Within Stockport Borough the PSZ affects land within a tapering extended triangle from Daisy Bank Lane north west of Heald Green Station to the northern part of Bruntwood Park. Circular 01/2010 states that the basic policy objective governing the restriction on development near civil airports is that there should be no increase in the number of people living, working or congregating in public safety zones and that, over time, the number should be reduced as circumstances allow. There is therefore a general presumption against new or replacement development, or changes of use of existing buildings. Exceptions may only be made in the case of minor developments or change of use which are unlikely to increase the numbers of people living, working or congregating in the PSZ. Reference should be made to paragraphs 11 and 12 of Circular 1/2010 for guidance on the nature of these exceptions.

Environment 15: Safeguarding of Aerodromes and Air Navigation Facilities

1. Development which would adversely affect the operational integrity or safety of Manchester Airport will not be permitted.
2. The safeguarding zones for Manchester Airport cover significant areas of the Borough and are illustrated on the policies map. The main implications for types of development which will require consultation are:
 - a) Any proposal likely to attract birds, such as proposals involving significant tree planting, minerals extraction or quarrying, waste disposal or management, reservoirs or other

- significant areas of surface water, land restoration schemes, sewage works, nature reserves or bird sanctuaries in any part of the Borough;
- b) Applications connected with an aviation use in any part of the Borough;
- c) Buildings and structures over 15 metres (49.2 feet) in safeguarding area x;
- d) Buildings and structures over 45 metres (147.6 feet) in safeguarding area y; and
- e) Buildings and structures over 90 metres (295.3 feet) in safeguarding area z

Explanation

Safeguarding zones around airports and aerodromes are established by the Secretary of State for Transport and defined on safeguarding maps issued by the Civil Aviation Authority and the Secretary of State for Defence. They define certain types of development which, by reason of their height, attraction to birds or inclusion of or effect on aviation activity require prior consultation with the airport or aerodrome operator. Safeguarding zones around air navigation facilities are established by National Air Traffic Services Ltd (NATS) and defined on safeguarding maps issued by them. They define certain types of development which because of their height or effect on aviation activity require prior consultation with NATS. Government advice in Department for Transport Circular 01/2010 sets out detailed guidance on how the safe and efficient operations can be secured. These areas are neither the responsibility nor the proposal of the Council as local planning authority.

Environment 16: Aircraft Noise

1. The following criteria shall apply to development so as to avoid unacceptable levels of noise from aircraft using Manchester Airport:
 - a) in areas where day-time (7am - 11pm) noise levels are in excess of 72 Leq or night-time (11pm - 7am) levels are in excess of 66 Leq, planning permission will be refused for new dwellings and conversions to residential accommodation will only be permitted provided that the proposal incorporates noise attenuation measures that would result in a night-time noise level within the building (with windows closed) of less than 35 dB(A) Leq;
 - b) in areas where day-time noise levels are between 66 and 72 Leq or night-time levels are between 60 and 66 Leq or where individual noise events of aircraft regularly exceed 82dBLA Max (S time weighting) several times in any one hour during the night, planning permission will not be granted for new dwellings unless material considerations indicate otherwise (in such cases conditions will be imposed to ensure a commensurate level of protection against noise within the dwelling). Conversions to residential accommodation will be permitted but the requirement for protection against noise within the dwelling will be the same as that for any new dwellings;
 - c) in areas subject to day-time noise levels between 57 and 66 Leq or night-time levels between 48 and 60 Leq, planning permission for new dwellings will be granted subject to conditions (where appropriate) to ensure an adequate level of protection against noise in dwellings;
 - d) private gardens, sitting out areas and balconies that are intended to be used for relaxation that form an intrinsic part of the overall scheme are designed to achieve the lowest practicable noise level and will not exceed 55dB LAeq,16hour across a reasonable proportion of them and;
 - e) planning permission for other noise sensitive development under the flight path to Manchester Airport, such as offices, hospitals and schools will only be granted where it has been demonstrated that the proposed development would not be subject to unacceptable levels of aircraft noise. This will be assessed having regard to the aircraft noise contours, the nature of the use or uses, the time of day or night when noise

sensitive elements of the use operate and the standards of proposed noise insulation within buildings. Account will also be taken of the extent, if any, to which the proposed development is required to replace existing facilities which serve the existing local community and the availability of alternative sites.

Explanation

Aircraft noise contours are used as a planning tool in the assessment of aviation noise impact. They are produced annually by Manchester airport. By controlling the type of land uses and the level of noise insulation in development within these areas, the Council intends to limit the impact of aircraft noise on residents, workers and other building occupants in accordance with the guidance given by the Government under National Planning Policy Guidance for Noise.

Under normal circumstances, the application of this policy would be based on the latest available summer-time noise contours published annually by Manchester Airport. This is to make the policy reactive to changes in aircraft noise over time, due to factors such as growth in air transport movements and potential reductions in noise from individual aircraft due to technological improvements. However, the coronavirus situation since March 2020 has radically reduced the number of air transport movements into and out of Manchester Airport and it may be several years before movements return to pre-coronavirus levels again. Under these circumstances it is necessary to adopt the 2019 noise contours instead, which are the latest ones available prior to the advent of coronavirus, to prevent decisions being made based on atypically low aircraft noise levels. The policy allows the noise contours for a future year to be used when the number of air transport movements return to, or exceed, that recorded in 2019. The council will liaise with Manchester Airport to monitor this and will publicise through the Local Plan pages on its website and in the Authority Monitoring Report when this position is reached.

The government's overall policy on aviation noise is set out in the Aviation Policy Framework (2013) and states an objective to: 'limit and, where possible, reduce the number of people in the UK significantly affected by aircraft noise'. This is consistent with the Government's Noise Policy, as set out in the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) 93 which aims to avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life¹⁹. The Aviation Policy Framework treats the 57dB LAeq 16 hour contour as the average level of daytime aircraft noise marking the approximate onset of significant community annoyance.

Whilst it is possible (given sufficient mitigation) to acoustically insulate the interior of buildings it is difficult to provide any mitigation against aircraft noise in gardens and other outdoor amenity space. To address the introduction of noise sensitive receptors within high aircraft noise contour areas, noise mitigation measures should be designed to achieve BS8233:2014 and World Health Organisation internal and external noise design criteria.

It is recommended that an Acoustic Design Statement be prepared in accordance with ProPG: Planning and Noise, New Residential Development (2017) to demonstrate good acoustic design with a focus on Element 2 – 'observing internal noise level guidelines'. If relying on closed windows to meet the internal noise levels, the application would need to demonstrate how an appropriate alternative method of ventilation will be achieved that does not compromise the facade thermal insulation, summertime internal temperatures or the resulting noise level. The Council will consider the use of planning conditions or obligations to require the provision of appropriate mitigation measures in the new development.

¹⁹ Aviation Policy Framework 2013

Environment 17: Design Principles

1. All development should be well-designed and well-built, delivering places and buildings that are consistent with the ten characteristics described in the National Design Guide:
 - a) Context;
 - b) Identity;
 - c) Built form;
 - d) Movement;
 - e) Nature;
 - f) Public spaces;
 - g) Uses;
 - h) Homes and Buildings;
 - i) Resources; and
 - j) Lifespan.
2. Development will be a positive addition to the surroundings, being integrated within the townscape and landscape. Where there is not a well-developed local character, development shall contribute to the creation of a distinctive, integrated and coherent place. Developments that raise significant design issues should undergo a local design review.
3. The following considerations will be taken into account when assessing development proposals:
 - a) Layout;
 - b) Form;
 - c) Appearance;
 - d) Landscape;
 - e) Materials; and
 - f) Detailing
4. Landscaping schemes should be considered alongside the provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and the ecological network to maximise collective benefits, seek to retain and integrate existing natural features that contribute to local character, and provide an agreed plan for ongoing maintenance.
5. To ensure the delivery of high-quality design, the masterplanning of sites should be used for schemes comprising over 150 dwellings or over 1,000sqm gross floorspace, or where the scheme is proposed to be brought forward in phases.
6. Development shall maintain suitable separation distances between the windows of habitable rooms in dwellings and the windows and walls of other properties.
7. Development should not prejudice the potential development of neighbouring land, nor be brought forward in a piecemeal manner having a detrimental impact on the comprehensive development or regeneration of a larger area.
8. Development proposals should make effective use of land. Residential development should be brought forward in line with the minimum density standards set out in **table X**, having regard to the sensitivity of the surrounding context and existing scale and form.

Table x – Minimum Net Residential Density Requirements

Location (use highest density that applies when a site falls within more than one location)	Minimum net residential density (dwellings per hectare)		
	Within the location	Within 400m	Within 800m
Stockport town centre	120	70	50
Other designated centres	70	50	35
Rails stations in large designated centres	N/A	120	70
Areas within GMAL 6 and above	50	35	35
All other locations minimum net residential density of 35 dwellings per hectare			
Where a site falls within more than one location the highest applicable minimum net residential density should be applied.			
GMAL is an abbreviation of Greater Manchester Accessibility Layer, which measures the accessibility of locations across Greater Manchester by walking and public transport. Areas are scored on a scale of 1-8, with 8 being the most accessible. GMAL scores are published online at data.gov.uk .			

Explanation

This section focuses on overarching design principles for the Borough of Stockport, and should be read in conjunction with other policies throughout the plan that also have significant design implications such as those considering:

- sustainable design and construction (policy Zero Carbon 1);
- amenity (policy Environment 10)
- flood risk and surface water drainage (policies Infrastructure 3, 4, 5)
- sustainable streets (policy Infrastructure [TBC])
- access and servicing (policy Infrastructure 15)
- public realm (policy Town Centre 4); and
- the provision of recreational facilities and green infrastructure (policy Homes 1).

Detailed design guidance can also be found within the Council's suite of supplementary planning documents, which builds upon policies relating to design throughout this plan. There are also Conservation Area Appraisals which provide guidance relative to each of the Borough's Conservation Areas.

High quality design extends beyond aesthetics and is as much about how a place functions and how people experience it. Paragraphs 126 and 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to planning, and good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The Council seeks to conserve the character and distinctiveness of the Borough and in so doing ensure that new developments are of high-quality design that respond positively to local character and history whilst also being sustainable, preserving neighbourhood amenity and being accessible for all. When determining planning applications, the Council has a vital role to play in promoting and securing the highest standards of architectural and townscape design, whilst not discouraging appropriate innovation and change.

The recent report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission²⁰ identifies that we should be measuring quality and outcomes as well as quantity. The National Design Guide²¹ sets out ten characteristics that reflect the Government's priorities in relation to design, these should be used to inform the design of development proposals, and will be used as part of the assessment of planning applications. The National Model Design Code²² sets the baseline standard of quality and practice that will be expected to take into account when developing local design codes and guides, and policies to promote successful design. Design codes are proactive site-specific design tools which aim to establish and tie down the critical design parameters for sites, and will be developed for schemes of significance across the Borough.

Increasing the average density of new housing developments in the most accessible locations is an important part of the overall strategy for Stockport and is critical for ensuring efficient use of land. It will also reduce the amount of land that needs to be used for development thereby assisting the protecting of important local open space across the Borough and limiting the need for Green Belt release. At a gross density of 50 dwellings per hectare, 5,000 dwellings can be within a 10-minute walk of public services, schools and viable public transport. Such a design can incorporate green infrastructure for recreation, children's play, biodiversity, rainwater management, planting and trees to mitigate the effects of rising temperatures.

Environment 18: Delivering Design Quality for All

1. Development must be sustainable in design and construction, incorporating best practice in resource management and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Development should aim to deliver high ratings under standards such as Passivhaus, Home Quality Mark, BREEAM and CEEQUAL.
2. Development should minimise resource use by:
 - a) Orientating buildings to utilise passive solar design, safeguarding mature trees and incorporating vegetation and tree planting to assist with heating and cooling;
 - b) Re-using and adapt existing buildings, particularly where they make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, either individually or as part of a group; and
 - c) Promote circular economy outcomes and aim to be net-zero waste.
3. To ensure safe, accessible and inclusive places, development proposals should:
 - a) Allow for natural surveillance of public spaces, whilst ensuring design that minimises opportunities for self-harm;
 - b) Minimise opportunities for crime, anti-social behaviour or terrorism;
 - c) Encourage high levels of activity with active frontages, locating principal frontages and main entrances on the most important public space or highway, whilst providing visual interest on other prominent frontages;
 - d) Clearly delineate private, shared and public spaces;
 - e) Incorporate storage space for cycles, waste and recycling that is integrated within the overall design, and allowing for convenient access; and
4. To ensure liveability, residential developments must:

²⁰ See www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-with-beauty-report-of-the-building-better-building-beautiful-commission.

²¹ See www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide.

²² See www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code.

- a) Provide sufficient internal space for everyday activities and to enable future flexibility and adaptability by complying with Nationally Described Space Standards for all schemes;
- b) Be accessible and adaptable, with all dwellings being built in accordance requirement M4(2): accessible and adaptable dwellings of Building Regulations 2010 for England (as amended, or any subsequent accessible and adaptable standards) except where this is not possible due to site-specific factors;
- f) Be designed having regard to 'Building for a Healthy Life' design toolkit, and secure a minimum of 9 'Greens' on major developments; and
- g) Support the ageing population, their social connections and wellbeing in later life, through the integration of measures such as those set out in the Age Friendly Checklist, so residents remain physically and socially active and independent for as long as possible.

Explanation

The design of development is a key way to respond to the multiple challenges posed by a changing climate. Adopting assessment frameworks is a resource-efficient way of delivering better quality and higher standards of development and is supported by the Energy Study. The BRE's Home Quality Mark, BREEAM for buildings, CEEQUAL for public realm/infrastructure, BREEAM for communities, and the Passivhaus Trust's Passivhaus assessment frameworks are designed to drive standards through benchmarking and credible recognition supported by formal verification. Passivhaus buildings achieve a 75% reduction in space heating requirements compared to standard practice for UK new build. The Passivhaus standard therefore gives a robust method to help the industry achieve the 80% carbon reductions that are set as a legislative target for the UK Government. Passivhaus also applies to retrofit projects, achieving similar savings in space heating requirements.

Some of the responses to tackling climate change such as using resources efficiently, improving energy efficiency and increasing the provision of green infrastructure, will have benefits for residents and communities by reducing: the risk of overheating, the risk of flooding and energy consumption/bills. A statement should be submitted alongside the application demonstrating how the principles of the circular economy will be adhered to for proposals where the development includes more than 150 dwellings; or more than 1 hectare of land is to be developed for non-residential purposes.

The built environment has a role to play in social cohesion through providing safe places where people can interact. One of the key design related issues in creating safer places is ensuring measures are designed in from the outset to reduce the likelihood of crime. Physical security features often have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity and will only generally be considered appropriate where they respect the character of the area.

Residential development intended should provide sufficient space for everyday activities and to enable flexibility and adaptability. This can be achieved by ensuring compliance with Nationally Described Space Standard²³ (NDSS). NDSS sets out internal space standards for new dwellings and is suitable for application across all tenures. NDSS also takes into account the spatial implications of providing improved accessibility and adaptability, particularly for older or less mobile people.

The Design Council's report, '100 Year Life, the Role of Housing, Planning & Design' recommends that to make communities age-friendly and inclusive there should be a national mandatory requirement set for 90 per cent of new homes to be built to accessibility standards M4(2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings'. Building Regulations Approved Document M²⁴ sets out 3 levels of accessibility for: 'Visable dwellings M4(1)', 'Accessible and adaptable dwellings M4(2)', and

²³ See www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard.

²⁴ See www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m.

‘Wheelchair user dwellings M4(3)’. Given Stockport’s ageing population it is appropriate that the M4(2) standard should be sought on all schemes where feasible.

Building for a Healthy Life is a design code to help improve the design of new and growing neighbourhoods and comprises 12 design considerations. It can be used to structure pre-application discussion and clearly explaining expectations for securing a green light against a consideration. A scheme that scores a minimum of 9 out of 12 ‘Greens’, is the level at which a scheme would be eligible for a BHL Commendation; this will help guard against poor design responses in housing development.

The Council’s age friendly checklist is based on the results of the WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities project consultation in 33 cities in 22 countries, it is a tool for a town’s self-assessment and a map for charting progress.

Environment 19: Tall Buildings

1. Proposals for tall buildings will be supported where they make a positive contribution to the skyline, townscape and streetscape of Stockport. Development proposals for tall buildings should:
 - a) Be of exemplary architectural design and residential liveability;
 - b) Have regard to Stockport’s topography, and not detrimentally impact on important views, landmarks and the skyline;
 - c) Reinforce the spatial/place hierarchy of the Borough, positively contributing to legibility, wayfinding and successful place-making;
 - d) Respond successfully to their context, particularly where there is high townscape or landscape value, and respect heritage assets and their settings where this contributes to their significance;
 - e) Have a well resolved base and top, and provide active street frontages that interact with and contribute positively to the surroundings at street level.
 - f) Avoid or mitigate against any detrimental impact on the local environment including microclimate, wind deflection, reflection, light pollution, privacy, daylight, sunlight and overshadowing (including of public spaces, especially open spaces and watercourses).
2. Proposals for the redevelopment or refurbishment of existing tall buildings and or upward extensions will be subject to the relevant requirements of this policy.

Explanation

This policy aims to ensure that tall buildings will not cause unacceptable harm to their surroundings, and instead are properly located, contributing to and enhancing the sense of place. The Borough is considered to be sensitive to the development of tall buildings, due to its topography, historic assets and proximity to Manchester Airport. Tall buildings are defined as buildings that are significantly taller than their neighbours, or which have a significant impact on the skyline. The Borough is considered to be sensitive to the development of tall buildings, due to its topography, historic assets and proximity to Manchester Airport.

What is considered a tall building will vary according to the prevailing character of the local area, based on a variety of evidence relating to the characterisation of the Borough. Historic England are clear in their advice, that definitions of tall buildings should be based on evidence assessing the local context given that this is more likely to encourage appropriate developments, and this approach is generally supported by the National Planning Policy Framework.

Tall buildings have a greater impact on their environment than other building types, posing issues relating to microclimate such wind deflection and overshadowing in particular. These can be especially harmful to residential environments and their associated amenity spaces, as well as public spaces where people dwell, and need to be avoided and mitigated through careful siting and design. Mitigation will be expected to be designed into the scheme and not applied as an afterthought, so assessment should be an ongoing process in developing any design. Historic England's advice note on tall buildings identifies that one of the principal failings in the location and design of certain tall buildings has been a lack of understanding of the area around them, the context, and the impact they would have on heritage assets and the character of places: "the very things that make places distinctive and that people cherish" (Tall Buildings: Historic England Advice Note 4, draft update 2020²⁵).

What is considered a tall building will vary according to the prevailing character of the local area, based on a variety of evidence relating to the characterisation of the Borough. Historic England are clear in their advice, that definitions of tall buildings should be based on evidence assessing the local context given that this is more likely to encourage appropriate developments, and this approach is generally supported by the National Planning Policy Framework. Care is needed to ensure that a tall building's visibility is assessed contextually to ensure that proposals that exceed the prevailing building height have a positive visual impact and do not appear incongruous within their surroundings. Proposals should take into account all relevant guidance including Historic England's tall buildings guidance relevant townscape and landscape appraisals and characterisations including Conservation Area appraisals and Landscape Characterisation studies.

Environment 20: Shop Frontages

1. Proposals for new frontages or alterations to existing frontages will be permitted provided that the proposal:
 - a) is of a high-quality design and sympathetic in scale, proportion and appearance to the host property and contributes positively to the character of the wider street scene, and conservation areas and heritage assets;
 - b) respects existing building lines and position in relation to the curtilage;
 - c) protects and/ or reinstates original and/or traditional features including shop fronts. Where shop frontages are the subject of a change of use, any traditional/ original shop front shall be retained;
 - d) avoids the creation of inactive frontages, placing servicing away from street frontages (for example at the rear of buildings);
 - e) is designed to be accessible to all users; and
 - f) demonstrates that any roller shutters are essential to address a persistent problem of crime or vandalism affecting the property that there are no satisfactory and reasonable alternative options; externally mounted shutters or solid roller shutters are avoided.

Explanation

Shopfronts can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of retail/ centre frontages, particularly given that it is the ground floor public frontage that pedestrians most closely interact with. Due regard therefore needs to be given to the design and appearance of the frontage and its relationship to the host property, and any associated signage.

²⁵ See <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/tall-buildings-advice-consultation>.

Environment 21: Alterations and extensions to existing buildings

1. Alterations and extensions to existing buildings should:
 - a) respect the scale, design, details and materials of the existing building, and respect the positive aspects of the established streetscene;
 - b) be sympathetic in their design to the character and appearance of the host property and any group of buildings it sits within; and
 - c) not prejudice similar extensions by the occupants of neighbouring properties.
2. In some circumstances the use of innovative design may be more appropriate than replicating the existing vernacular.

Explanation

Extensions are a popular means for owners to increase their internal floor space without moving home or premises. This should not be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the host property or wider streetscene, or compromise the amenity of future or neighbouring occupiers. Where this policy is used for determining applications for householder extensions, this policy should be read in conjunction with the policy on Housing Retrofit (Policy Zero Carbon 5). Further information on extensions and alterations to dwellings can be found in the Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings Supplementary Planning Document²⁶.

Environment 22: Heritage Assets and the Historic Environment

1. Planning applications, where relevant, will be required to demonstrate how proposals reflect the important role of heritage assets and the historic environment in defining Stockport's character, identity and distinctiveness.
2. Relevant proposals will be expected to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.
3. The Council will have regard to the positive contribution that the conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic vitality, and to the potential for heritage-led regeneration.
4. The Council will consider the potential impacts of proposed development on the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets in accordance with the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework. Planning applications should include relevant details to inform the Council's considerations in this regard, including a desk-based assessment (including field evaluation as necessary) wherever a heritage asset is of archaeological interest.
5. Development proposals, where relevant, will be expected to include measures to further interpretation and public understanding of the Borough's archaeological assets and to ensure the recording of relevant details on the Historic Environment Record (HER).

Explanation

Our Stockport of today is the legacy of diverse traditional building styles, materials and settlement patterns resulting from the Borough's varied geology and topography. Key features include:

²⁶ See www.stockport.gov.uk/supplementary-planning-documents-and-guidance.

- dispersed small medieval hamlets, scattered farms, cottages and halls that, even where washed over by later suburban development, remain readily identifiable within district and local centres;
- strong local identities and character, particularly associated with the historic centres, recognisable through surviving historic buildings, street patterns and place names;
- historic parklands and estates, including Bruntwood and Torkington, Chadkirk, Vernon, Woodbank, Cheadle Royal and Bramhall;
- settlement distribution, form, townscape and early industrial development shaped and informed by river valleys and transport routes (including roads, canals and railways);
- associated transport Infrastructure, such as Stockport Viaduct and the Peak Forest and Macclesfield Canals;
- industrial heritage related in particular to the development of silk, cotton and hatting industries and associated urban development from the late 18th century onwards including Houldsworth, Compstall and Mellor Mill;
- early (19th century onwards) development related to railway commuter suburbs such as Heaton Moor, Davenport, Cheadle Hulme, and Bramhall: and
- the enduring presence of a large rural area with a strong urban/rural edge, with the legacy of field enclosure from the 18th century onwards that remains evident.

Stockport's heritage assets include:

- around 400 statutory Listed Buildings designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, of which 7 are Grade 1 listed and 24 are Grade 2*;
- more than 450 non-designated buildings of local architectural or historic interest, also known as "Locally Listed Buildings";
- 37 Conservation Areas designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- 6 Scheduled Monuments designated under Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979; and
- 2 Registered Parks and Gardens designated under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953.

Details of individual heritage assets in Stockport are available through the Stockport Heritage Environment Database²⁷.

Wherever this policy requires applicants to submit relevant details to inform the councils decision-making, assessment of the following should be provided as appropriate:

- the significance of any impacted heritage assets including, where relevant, their architectural and historic interest;
- the impact of the proposal (individually and cumulatively) on the significance of any impacted heritage assets and their setting(s);
- how the significance and/or setting of a heritage asset can be better revealed;
- opportunities to mitigate or adapt to the impacts of climate change (and how such measures have been tailored to take account of the significance of the heritage asset);
- the public benefits that might arise from the proposal; and
- how it has taken into account relevant information contained with the Stockport Heritage Environment Database (SHED) and the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record (HER).

²⁷ See www.stockport.gov.uk/heritage-assets/stockport-historic-environment-database

Wherever proposed development will impact upon a heritage asset, planning applications should clearly illustrate how they have had regard to:

- layout, scale, form, materials and architectural features and detailing;
- the immediate context in terms of its character and appearance, including – but not limited to – the established urban grain, the scale and form of buildings and their relationships to streets and spaces including their grouping, plot boundaries and frontage widths, building typologies, the materials and detailing of both buildings and (public and private) spaces including greening such as trees; and
- the wider setting including views and vistas both from and of the asset.

Wherever proposed development will impact upon a heritage asset of archaeological interest, planning applications should include:

- information identifying the likely location, extent and nature of archaeological remains;
- an assessment of the significance of the remains; and
- consideration of how the remains would be affected by the proposed development.

Where granted, planning permission for proposals which impact upon heritage assets may be subject to conditions detailing the scope and nature of further heritage and/or archaeological assessment or investigations to be undertaken prior to the commencement of development. Conditions may also be imposed relating to the analysis, recording and dissemination of information arising from such assessment or investigation and to the deposition of the excavated remains with an appropriate museum. Investigation reports will always be required to be deposited with the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record. important role of heritage assets and the historic environment in defining Stockport's character, identity and distinctiveness.

To help maintain the important role of heritage assets and the historic environment in defining Stockport's character, identity and distinctiveness the Council may consider the use of Article 4 Directions to restrict the scope of permitted development rights either in relation to a particular area or site, or a particular type of development. Details of existing Article 4 Directions applying to areas of Stockport are available on the Council's website²⁸.

²⁸ See <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/article-four-directions>.