

APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT ON THE LOCAL PLAN

Report of the Strategic Head of Place Making and Planning

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As set out in the paper to the meeting of Council on the 15th July 2021, the development of a Local Plan for Stockport presents an opportunity to build on the positive engagement undertaken with communities across the borough over the last 18 months, and ensure that the neighbourhood-led approach which members endorsed in developing the One Stockport Borough Plan is able to be continued throughout the development of the Local Plan.
- 1.2 Whilst any Local Plan has to conform to wider planning legislation and requirements, and align to regional and national strategy and policy, there is a clear opportunity for the Local Plan to more closely reflect the community aspirations and vision of everyone in Stockport. This marks a step change to our previous approaches and will seek to provide for the continuation of engagement during the plan preparation process which is no longer solely about engagement at the formal stages when we consult on the plan.
- 1.3 As discussed previously with members, the aims for engagement on the Plan are to:
 - Increase the understanding of our communities about the Local Plan, why we are doing it, and what it is trying to achieve.
 - Increase opportunities for our communities to input to the Local Plan and provide their views as we draft our policies
 - Increase knowledge amongst our communities about formal public consultation periods and how they can submit their views.
 - Encourage a broad range of stakeholders and communities with different experiences to input into the engagement and consultation
 - Ensure that all engagement activities are accessible for all and are relevant and proportionate to different groups
- 1.4 Following a discussion at the January Working Party meeting, this paper seeks to set out the existing engagement which has been undertaken to help develop the draft plan to date, and the proposed approach to further engagement going forward.
- 1.5 The approach to stakeholder and community engagement set out in this paper should be read alongside previous updates to members on Duty to Cooperate and how the Council will engage with neighbouring authorities and statutory consultees under the Duty to Cooperate requirements.

2. ENGAGEMENT UNDERTAKEN TO DATE

2.1 At Council on the 15th July 2021, members endorsed a series of high-level principles to guide the development of the draft Plan. These principles were:

- We will **build our plan around our neighbourhoods**, celebrating and reflecting what makes our communities unique
- We will take a **Brownfield first approach** to development, protecting our greenspaces as much as possible
- We will be **design-led**, aiming to achieve the highest quality of design for Stockport
- We will put **local infrastructure and communities at the heart** of our approach, recognising the needs of our neighbourhoods and areas
- We will ensure everything we do **contributes to Stockport's response and resilience to the Climate Emergency**
- We will contribute to the good **health and wellbeing** of our communities

2.2 Over the course of Summer and Autumn 2021, engagement was undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders and groups to test these principles and understand which were seen as most important by people across Stockport. Officers attended meetings of all area committees to share the proposed approach to the engagement and seek local recommendations and suggestions of further groups who could be involved.

2.3 Following this feedback, engagement was undertaken via a number of methods, including:

- Presentations to stakeholder groups (such as the Economic Alliance, Age Friendly Board, Housing Partnership Strategy Group, and MPs).
- Presentations to thematic groups and forums (such as the Youth Engagement Group, Disability Access Forum, and Older Person's Forum).
- Presentations to neighbourhood groups including through Neighbourhood Forums and attendance at the Stockport Homes Roadshows at Mottram Hill, Lancashire Hill and Brinnington.
- A range of online engagement activities including an online survey, updated webpages, social media posts, and informational videos.

2.4 A full list of the groups involved to date can be found in Appendix 1.

2.5 In addition, the Council also worked with volunteers from Planning Aid England (PAE) to arrange a series of workshops with community groups and representatives in communities which have typically been less involved in spatial planning matters in the past. In total three online workshops, facilitated by PAE volunteers were held in September with representatives from communities in central Stockport, Tame Valley, and Victoria.

2.6 Across the online survey and engagement sessions, the majority of respondents indicated that they agreed with the key principles and that a Brownfield first approach is the most important of the six. In total there were

265 responses to the survey. When asked which was the most important of the key principles 40.38% felt that a 'Brownfield first approach' was most important. This was followed by both 'local infrastructure and communities' (20.8%) and 'Climate Emergency' (18.9%). 'Good health and wellbeing' scored relatively low with 8.7% stating this as the most important, and only a very small number (1.89% of respondents) felt that 'a design-led approach' was the most important.

2.7 Through the engagement sessions and survey a number of key themes were also raised, including:

- The accessibility of new homes and the need to ensure that housing is built to last and well connected to surrounding areas
- The affordability of housing and the challenges this currently presented in many areas of the borough
- Concern around the potential impacts of new development on infrastructure, particularly relating to transport and congestion impacts

2.8 Alongside these activities, the Council was also successful in gaining funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) PropTech Engagement Fund. The funding is being utilised to enhance the Council's online mapping tool to help bring the Local Plan to life when it goes out to formal public consultation, allowing people to explore and comment on specific aspects of the plan more easily.

2.9 It is hoped that this interactive, more visual approach will appeal to a wide audience and increase engagement, especially with younger people and those that may have experienced barriers in engaging with consultations in the past.

2.10 Work is currently underway to develop the mapping tool and this will be tested with a series of representative groups prior to the pilot project's completion by the end of March 2022. Following its completion, the Council will be sharing its findings and experiences with DLUHC to help inform government's understanding of how best to support councils to adopt digital planning tools across the country.

3. APPROACH TO FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Engaging with communities on the development of the Stockport Local Plan is ongoing and will continue throughout the process. The following activities are planned for the coming months in the run up to the proposed formal consultation on a draft plan in late Summer/ early Autumn of this year:

- Completion of the PropTech pilot and testing to see if the resulting tool can be used more extensively as part of the planned consultation
- Further updates to groups and forums to replay the feedback received on the high level principles

- Further updates on progress in Council and partner newsletters and communications
- In depth workshops with key stakeholder groups in relation to specific policy areas
- A series of explainer videos and webinars to bring specific themes and policy areas to life
- Exploration of the potential provision of lesson plans/ activity packs for schools and colleges to enable all key stages to learn about the Local Plan
- Exploration of the potential use of print articles in community magazines and publications to extend reach and awareness to those who are unable to access materials online

3.2 Work is underway to develop a proposed plan for the upcoming consultation and this will be shared with members shortly.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Members are invited to comment and provide feedback on the engagement undertaken to date and the proposed approach going forward.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.

Anyone requiring further information should contact Amy Beasley by emailing amy.beasley@stockport.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1 – Groups and Forums engaged with

- Marketing Stockport Members
- Cross Sector Forum
- Disability Access Forum
- Safer Stockport Partnership board
- Economic Alliance
- Age Friendly board
- MDC Board
- Stockport Housing Partnership strategy group
- Stockport Family Partnership Board
- Home Care providers forum
- Head Green Ratepayers association
- Totally Stockport (BID)
- Headteachers Consortium
- College Leaders
- Active Communities Board
- Care Homes Forum
- Local Access Forum
- Youth Engagement Group – Youth Council, SAYS, Autism Ambassadors, Children in Care Council
- Public Rights of Way Forum
- Cycling and Walking forum
- Greenspace forum
- PACTS (parents and carers)
- Inter-faith group
- Care Leavers forum
- Race Equality Partnership
- Stockport Pride/Forward
- Stockport Proud Trust Youth Group
- Veterans
- Neighbourhood forums
- Health and Wellbeing Board