

**SUPPORTING OUR BUSINESSES AND CENTRES****Report of the Strategic Head of Place Making and Planning****1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Meetings of the Development Plan Working Party are being scheduled to take place each month up until April 2022. Each meeting will be introduced to different sections of the emerging draft Stockport Local Plan.
- 1.2 This report details what is currently the sixth topic-based policy chapter of the draft plan, titled "Supporting Our Businesses and Centres."
- 1.3 The borough is a prime location for new and existing business, benefiting from being well-located, well-connected and from having a well-educated and skilled workforce. Investment in regeneration, business and infrastructure transformation has led to a substantial increase in development activity, a renewed confidence and buoyant employment growth that has exceeded the national average in recent years.
- 1.4 There are opportunities to deliver new jobs across Stockport, although the infrastructure needs to be in place to ensure businesses of all kinds can start, grow and prosper. The ambition is for Stockport to play a leading role in delivering the economic vision of Greater Manchester. It is crucial that the conditions are right to allow for diversity and enable the local economy sufficient room to grow. This growth must also be inclusive, helping to tackle our inequalities by giving all our communities a choice of job opportunities suitable for a range of skill levels.
- 1.5 Many local businesses flourish and provide services to local neighbourhoods from key localities in the borough's network of district and local centres, and it will be increasingly important to ensure these vital focal points of the community continue to offer a range of uses and facilities and are able to adapt as working and leisure patterns change.
- 1.6 The 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, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9 (see report titled 'Strategic Policies' considered at the Development Plan Working Party meeting on 18th January 2022).

**2. OUTLINE OF "SUPPORTING OUR BUSINESSES AND CENTRES "**

- 2.1 The policies in this chapter are intended to:
  - i. Set the principles for ensuring that existing areas of employment continue to support economic growth, including the intensification of employment uses where appropriate and supporting the growth and development of new and emerging sectors
  - ii. Identify the best locations for different kinds of business to develop, putting in place policies and allocations to protect and enhance their contribution to the economy.

- iii. Make clear the circumstances in which loss of employment land and uses may be considered acceptable, allowing some flexibility for change.
- iv. Encourage the development of affordable and flexible workspaces to serve a range of needs and to recognise the move towards more agile patterns of working.
- v. Give all our communities the range of skills required to access new and emerging employment and training opportunities.
- vi. Set the principles for making sure that development in our centres allows some flexibility so that they can adapt to changing behaviours and trends but still maintain their important economic and community role.
- vii. Identify and manage a network and hierarchy of centres to which retail development will be directed, and other areas preferred for commercial uses.
- viii. Set a positive strategy for our district and local centres to manage their growth and adaptation to help offer a mix of uses and including their expected roles and priorities for the future.
- ix. Require developments that include main town centre uses to follow a preferred order of priority.
- x. Require retail and leisure uses that are proposed outside a centre to ensure they do not give rise to adverse impacts that could cause harm to that and other centres.
- xi. Manage the main town centre uses in centres to avoid clustering of hot food takeaways and other specified uses that if not checked could worsen health and socio-economic inequalities across the borough.
- xii. Support for evening economy uses within centres that are suitable for a range of users, helping to preserve and enhance existing evening economy activities and ensuring this does not have a negative impact on other Plan objectives.
- xiii. Set out our approach for the out of centre retail locations that will be supported and the parameters under which development will be acceptable.

2.2 A copy of the working draft chapter "Supporting Our Businesses and Centres" is set out as Appendix 1 to this report.

### **3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

3.1 Members will recall that the Council meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021 considered a report providing an update on the Stockport Local Plan<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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

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;
- 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:

- "Build our plan around our neighbourhoods, celebrating and reflecting what makes our communities unique";
- "Take a Brownfield first approach to development, protecting our greenspaces as much as possible";
- "Put local infrastructure and communities at the heart of our approach, recognising the needs of our neighbourhood and areas";
- "Take a Brownfield first approach to development, protecting our greenspaces as much as possible"; and
- "Contribute to the good health and wellbeing of our communities".

## **4. EVIDENCE**

4.1 The policies in the Supporting Our Businesses and Centres chapter have been informed by monitoring of existing Core Strategy policies, the Employment Land Review 2018 and the Stockport Borough Wide Retail and Leisure Study 2019.

4.2 The ELR 2018 was produced by CBRE to assess current and future demand for employment land and to consider whether existing supply and allocated sites are sufficient to meet projected demand and forecasted requirements. The study included a quantitative assessment and this found that the total supply of employment land within the borough at that time was 64.7 hectares,

encompassing 22.4 hectares for office use and 42.3 hectares for industrial and warehousing uses. However, the study notes that 2.55 hectares of employment land were lost to other uses during 2016/17

- 4.3 A qualitative assessment of 69 sites was also undertaken in the ELR and this found that the amount of high-quality employment sites within the borough is limited, with a large number sitting within the 'moderate' category. The poorer scoring sites tend to display fundamental issues relating to 2 more of the following criteria:
- Quality of stock;
  - Access and connectivity;
  - Conflicts with surrounding uses;
  - Infrastructure;
  - Amenity.
- 4.4 The ELR 2018 made the key observation that, whilst the borough did not face a significant quantitative deficiency in employment land at that time, it is faced with a significant qualitative deficiency, particularly in strategic terms in relation to providing employment space that adequately meets the type of occupiers that the borough would like to attract and retain. The study concluded with recommendations on the sites that should be retained, allocation of future employment sites, the approach to be taken to release and advice on specific issues including the future of mill buildings.
- 4.5 Our Authority's Monitoring Reports following the report's publication have continued to record further losses in employment land to other uses and these reports can be found at <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/documents/authoritys-monitoring-report-documents>. This trend along with increased pressure for industrial and logistics uses both before and accelerated during the pandemic has led the Council to commission CBRE to undertake a revised study in 2022. This update will inform, amongst other matters, policy Business 2: Key Locations in terms of whether or not it is necessary to allocate land currently in the Green Belt to meet future employment land development needs.
- 4.6 The Retail and Leisure Study 2019 provides an objective assessment of retail and leisure development needs, an understanding of retail and leisure provision and potential strategic responses and recommendations. In particular, the study explores retail and commercial leisure need over a fifteen period from 2019 to 2034 and provides an up-to-date review of the performance of Stockport town centre and the eight district centres.
- 4.7 The study makes a number of recommendations including the identified need for comparison and convenience goods, the suggested hierarchy of centres, local impact threshold, centre and shopping area boundaries, and advice on the future retail and commercial strategy for each centre. In respect of the latter, the key finding is that the strategy needs to be able to support the continued development and changes in the 'high street' if they are to successfully compete, the key purpose of it being to build on a centre's existing functionality, be a focus for their communities, attract a mix of land uses beyond retail and leisure and extend the time spent by visitors and residents enjoying the centres.

- 4.8 The ELR 2018 is located at <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/live-iag-static-assets/pdf/LDF/Evidence/Employment+Land+Review+April+2018.pdf>. The Retail and Leisure Study was completed in 2019 but has not been formally signed off, principally due to the need for an update in response to fundamental changes within the retail sector accelerated by the pandemic including the effects of the rise in online shopping, and to take account of the impact of the Government's recent changes to the Use Classes Order. The Council are currently in the process of commissioning appropriate retail planning specialists to undertake the update.
- 4.9 Other evidence base documents that have been relied upon include:
- Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy 2019 (see <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/economy/greater-manchesters-local-industrial-strategy/>)
  - Stockport Economic Plan (in preparation)
  - Stockport Joint Scrutiny Review into Vital and Viable District Centres: Institute for Place Management – Phase 1 Report (see <https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=168756>)

## **5. DISCUSSION**

- 5.1 Members are invited to comment and provide feedback on the draft Supporting Our Businesses and Centres 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](http://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](mailto:richard.wood@stockport.gov.uk)

## APPENDIX 1 – working draft "Supporting Our Businesses and Centres" Local Plan chapter

### 6. Supporting Our Businesses and Centres

The borough is a prime location for new and existing business, benefiting from being well-located, well-connected and from having a well-educated and skilled workforce. Investment in regeneration, business and infrastructure transformation has led to a substantial increase in development activity, a renewed confidence and buoyant employment growth that has exceeded the national average in recent years.

We already have many fantastic businesses operating and growing here, with the borough being home to the specialisms of creative manufacturing, high tech manufacturing, wholesale, warehousing and logistics, amongst others. There are opportunities to deliver new jobs across Stockport, although the infrastructure needs to be in place to ensure businesses of all kinds can start, grow and prosper. The Economic Plan highlights the need for our commercial floorspace offer to be improved and for it to be in the right locations to support growth, and hybrid working models are likely to become more popular with employers.

The ambition is for Stockport to play a leading role in delivering the economic vision of Greater Manchester, particularly in the Green and Digital sectors. The latter along with other new sectors such as financial and professional services and life sciences are increasingly showing their presence in the borough and will require accessible and high-quality commercial premises, and so it is crucial that the conditions are right to allow for diversity and enable the local economy sufficient room to grow. This growth must also be inclusive, helping to tackle our inequalities by giving all our communities a choice of job opportunities suitable for a range of skill levels.

Many local businesses flourish and provide services to local neighbourhoods from key localities in the borough's network of district and local centres, and it will be increasingly important to ensure these vital focal points of the community continue to offer a range of uses and facilities and are able to adapt as working and leisure patterns change.

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, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9.

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### Business 1: Economy and Employment Principles

1. The Council recognise the important contribution that existing and new employment land and premises make to the local economy and will support economic growth within the borough by:
  - a) maintaining a strong and diverse supply of employment sites;
  - b) safeguarding identified Employment Areas from non-employment uses, whilst recognising that a mix of uses including locating employment uses alongside supporting residential uses in accessible locations may be appropriate subject to maintaining the integrity of the Employment Area;
  - c) supporting the intensification of employment uses on existing employment sites, including additional storeys where appropriate, which achieve an overall improved configuration of uses and do not impact on the operational capability of the employment site or adversely impact on neighbouring uses;
  - d) enabling the continued employment use and improvement of other employment sites;

- e) encouraging the modernisation and enhancement of existing premises seeking to adapt in line with changing needs and requirements;
- f) supporting new employment provision including the growth and development of new employment sectors that attract skilled and well-paid employment to the borough;
- g) supporting measures to improve local skills and provide employment opportunities;
- h) promoting the re-use of existing buildings including our mills which have potential for regeneration and adaptation for primarily employment uses, and supporting residential and mixed uses; and
- i) considering proposals favourably that factor in environmental and social governance to their design including use of sustainable construction methods, ancillary facilities that improve health and wellness, and providing access to apprenticeships close to deprived areas.

### ***Explanation***

Stockport aims to have a thriving and productive economy, making the most of its assets, town centres and strategic employment locations in line with the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy. Paragraph 82 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires a clear economic vision and strategy to be set that proactively encourages sustainable economic growth. Through supporting, increasing and enhancing economic growth the Council will seek to reduce inequalities, promote diversity and improve prosperity, removing barriers to employment participation and improving access to employment opportunities.

Stockport's employment base has grown by 13% which is faster than the national and Greater Manchester averages. As such, the provision of more high-quality employment opportunities locally can help to retain wealth within the borough and enhance the vibrancy and vitality of our centres and their communities. However, Stockport is also home to deep-rooted inequalities and is the 8<sup>th</sup> most polarised borough in the country, and so it is essential that future growth is shared equally and benefits all.

The Economic Plan forecasts that existing specialisms such as manufacturing are set to decline whilst Life Sciences, the Knowledge Economy, Creative and Low Carbon Economy are showing current growth and are the most important future growth sectors for the borough. In particular, the growth of the latter is pivotal in meeting the Council's Stockport Climate Action Now commitments. The restructuring and reorientation of the local economy is vital over the plan period. It is judged that the attraction of these businesses to locate and cluster within Stockport can help the grow the local economy and provide more high-quality employment opportunities for the borough's residents.

The borough is home to a number of mill buildings and these have generally found to be of poor quality in the Council's Employment Land Review. High levels of vacancy and a poor state of repair has stymied investment and so this type of accommodation is becoming less suitable for employment use. The combination of residential and employment uses in mills has been proven to be successful and there are more opportunities for mixed use developments around the borough.

The provision of additional stories may be an effective solution to increase office floorspace although this will not be possible in all employment locations and may be dependent on the layout of buildings and access requirements.

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## Business 2: Key Locations

1. New business premises and office developments will be permitted in or on the edge of our centres in accordance with the sequential test under Policy Centres 5. The Town Centre will provide the primary location for new major Class E office development, and in particular the Exchange Quarter (Town Centre Character Area D).
2. There will be a strong emphasis on protecting and enhancing the economic function of the Employment Areas, providing a wide choice of premises and ensuring that a broad range of businesses can locate in the borough.
3. Warehousing uses or uses which generate high levels of movement should be located in close proximity to the Primary Route Network and minimise impacts on residential areas.
4. The following sites are allocated for employment uses. The boundaries of these sites are shown on the Policies Map. They collectively have the potential to deliver over [X] sqm of industrial and warehousing floorspace. Allocating these sites helps to ensure that the appropriate type of development is brought forward in an acceptable time-frame, that any specific opportunities brought about by development can be realised and that any impacts of development might be suitably mitigated.

Site	Expected floorspace (sqm)	Delivery anticipated
[X]	XX,XXX	20XX-20XX
[X]	XX,XXX	20XX – 20XX
[etc..]		

5. Development of each of these sites is required to be preceded by a comprehensive masterplanning exercise approved by the Local Planning Authority, which establishes a clear phasing strategy as part of an integrated approach to infrastructure delivery that supports the scale of the whole development. The required masterplanning exercise should detail how the requirements of all relevant Local Plan policies will be met and could take the form of an outline planning application. Alternatively the Council may prepare a Supplementary Planning Document for a specific site if it is considered to be advantageous in bringing about sustainable development in a timely manner.
6. Alongside or incorporated into the required masterplanning exercise development proposals will be required to be accompanied by
  - a) A proportion of training and employment opportunities at all stages of the development for local people, including a Training and Employment Management Plan to be approved by the local authority;
  - b) A transport assessment, assessing the transport impact of the development and proposing improvements to local transport infrastructure to mitigate against it;
  - c) Details of measures to facilitate safe access to and within the site, including enhancements to public transport, direct and high-quality pedestrian and cycle routes in the area (including improvements to existing footpaths or other routes within the site where relevant, connecting to the local area and wider networks) along with details of suitable access for emergency, service and private vehicles;
  - d) Details of measures to promote sustainable travel including production of a Travel Plan and appointment of a Travel Coordinator to develop, implement and monitor the Travel Plan;
  - e) Details of on-site measures that will exceed the 10% minimum net gain in biodiversity required by policy Environment 2;
  - f) Details of measures to be incorporated into the development that will ensure it meets zero carbon standards as required by policies in the Zero Carbon Stockport chapter;



- g) Details of how the development will realise a quality new place, having regard to the quality and suitability of design (in a local context), creating a visually attractive development which establishes a strong sense of place by means of architecture, layout, landscaping and materials, in accordance with the requirements of policies Environment 17 and Environment 18;
- h) An assessment describing the significance of any heritage assets affected within or in proximity to the site, including any contribution made by their setting, and details of how the development will respond positively to that significance, in accordance with the requirements of Environment 22
- i) Details of suitable and appropriate drainage measures, to be delivered through sustainable drainage systems, in accordance with the requirements of policy X;
- j) Details of contributions to be made to the provision of education, health and other social/community infrastructure, in accordance with the requirements of policy X;
- k) Construction management plans? - covering concerns over impacts during construction, including transport/traffic impacts; and
- l) Details setting out how other relevant requirements of the Local Plan will be met.

### ***Explanation***

The majority of Stockport's future growth is forecast by the Economic Plan to be within high value, knowledge intensive and office-based employment and with only 12% of current office space being Grade A or B this could impact Stockport's competitiveness as we emerge from the pandemic. The priority is to improve the quality of the borough's commercial offer, and the emergence of Stockport Exchange as the borough's high quality office destination is key and includes two of the Borough's key employers in BASF plc and musicMagpie.

This policy is intended to support the growth of existing businesses as well as new sectors. The Economic Plan notes that 79% of the businesses based in the borough employ less than 4 people, and so the Council will seek to ensure the conditions are in place to allow our smaller enterprises to adapt and flourish on their existing sites without being forced to move outside of the borough.

Stockport Exchange and wider MDC will be crucial in providing the necessary quality of commercial offer in right locations. What will this site offer, highly popular location with a number of lettings secured, promoting flexibility to attract a range of growth sectors and to satisfy demand for 'satellite' premises for office-based employers seeking an alternative to Manchester city centre. Limited high quality office space in town centre

### ***Employment Areas***

The borough has a qualitative deficiency of employment land and so it is critical that the existing high-quality Employment Areas that are in strategic locations are retained and upgraded where possible.

#### ***Site X - [Name of allocation]***

[Insert detailed description of the allocations location and setting etc., including details of why it is being allocated, access considerations, the nature and form of the landscape and the relation of the site with adjacent land-uses]

#### ***Site X - [Name of allocation]***

[Insert detailed description of the allocations location and setting etc., including details of why it is being allocated, access considerations, the nature and form of the landscape and the relation of the site with adjacent land-uses]

[etc.]

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## Business 3: Employment Areas

1. The improvement and development of sites and premises for the following will be encouraged within the Employment Areas, as defined on the Policies Map:
  - a) Industry and warehousing, and other employment-generating uses in the sui-generis class.
  - b) Offices of a scale that does not detract from the role of the Town Centre and other designated centres as the primary focus for office activity, with reference to sequential testing in Policy Centres 5 and market appraisal.
2. The release of vacant land or premises within Employment Areas to uses other than those set out above will be considered where:
  - a) they would not have any significant impact on the activities of the employment uses remaining in the Employment Area or the potential to reuse vacant sites and buildings for employment uses; and
  - b) one or both of the following two criteria are met:
    - i. The site or wider employment area is specifically identified as being appropriate for other uses in a plan or strategy that has been subject to public consultation and formally endorsed by the Council;
    - ii. The site and premises have been subject to a detailed market appraisal that clearly demonstrates that there is no current or likely future demand for employment.
3. The Council will have regard to the requirement for flexibility where employment generating uses are proposed.
4. Where it has been demonstrated that an alternative use is acceptable, all opportunities must be explored to incorporate an element of employment floorspace as part of the new development.

### ***Explanation***

The National Planning Policy Framework notes at Paragraph 82 that strategic sites should be identified for local and inward investment to meet anticipated needs over the plan period.

The identified strategic locations for employment development are intended to secure the revival, modernisation and development of a diversity of industrial, commercial, warehousing/distributions, service and support activities. Existing employment areas will continue to play a vital role in supporting the economic growth of the borough, although there is significant pressure to redevelop existing land and premises within designated sites to non-employment uses.

During the period covered by this Local Plan, it is anticipated that some existing sites and areas that are in existing employment use and those allocated as being suitable for employment development may be unable to retain and attract business uses due to constraints relating to their location and the quality of accommodation. The release of such sites for other uses may be considered appropriate, which could create an additional source of housing land.

It is important that the potential release of employment sites for other uses is carefully controlled to ensure that sites and areas which are identified in this Local Plan as key to delivering the economic growth of Stockport are not compromised. The Council will consider proposals for loss of employment uses against the aims of Strategic Policy 1 to ensure that there would be no detrimental effects on our ability to meet development needs and deliver our climate action commitments.

Any market appraisal should take a long-term view of the economic prospects of the site/premises and include:

- An explanation as to why it is not possible to retain or replace any existing occupiers;
  - Consideration of the potential to reuse, refurbish and redevelop the site to accommodate the full range of uses that would be appropriate within an existing Employment Area. A flexible approach should be adopted including both freehold and leasehold options;
  - An analysis of recorded and potential interest in the site/premises for a use appropriate within an existing Employment Area over a period of at least 12 months. This analysis should be informed by the findings of a comprehensive marketing exercise of the site and premises for sale and for rent at an appropriate price agreed in advance with the Council and have regard to enquiries and deals relating to similar sites/premises in the local area; and
  - Detailed consideration of the context of the economic health and future role of the wider Employment Area of which the site/premises forms a part and other Employment Areas in the local area.
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## Business 4: Non-designated Employment Areas

1. The Council will permit development for employment use outside Employment Areas where proposals can demonstrate that they:
  - a) Would be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport
  - b) Can provide appropriate vehicular access
  - c) Would not be detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring land uses;
  - d) Would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the immediate surrounding area, and
  - e) Would not conflict with other policies.
2. Proposals which would result in the loss of existing employment uses will only be considered acceptable where it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the site to be retained for employment purposes.

### **Explanation**

Employment sites and units outside the designated employment areas are an important source of commercial development. This includes mills, industrial, warehousing and office uses. Such units can often provide space for small and medium sized enterprises and may be located in areas away from other employment uses but close to or well connected to residential areas. However other, higher-value uses can exert pressure on the land and precipitate the loss of the employment use.

The policy seeks to protect sites which are still viable for employment uses in order to maintain the stock of employment land and sites across the borough. Applications that propose the loss of employment uses will be required to submit the same market appraisal statement and supporting information as set out in Policy Business 3.

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## Business 5: Affordable and Flexible Workspace

1. The Council will promote economic diversity and support existing and new business development by seeking the following:

- a) New employment space in designated Employment Areas and mixed-use development in the Town Centre and District Centres should provide affordable workspace. This should equate to a minimum of 10% of gross new employment floorspace, or equivalent contribution for off-site provision of affordable workspace;
- b) New employment provision should include a range of unit sizes and types such as affordable and flexible workspaces and working hubs that allow for more agile patterns of working. Uses should be appropriate for the location and in accordance with Policy Business 2;
- c) Managed workspaces should have a range of unit sizes that are flexible and suitable for subdivision and configuration for new uses and activities. This will allow for occupation by small or independent commercial enterprises, including alongside each other or in proximity to other related businesses where necessary.
- d) Mixed use development in the Town and District Centres should consider the provision of flexible space within the scheme that can be used by individual workers, start-ups and as accelerator space.

### ***Explanation***

Stockport's small to medium enterprises (SMEs) are very important to the borough's economy. 79% of the 11,900 businesses based in the borough employed less than 4 people in 2020. However, the Economic Plan finds that business survival rates are poor and that there is a little evidence of a strong entrepreneurial start-up culture in the borough despite this reliance.

Support for this sector will be integral to the borough's long-term economic prosperity, particularly given that many have faced recent challenges and have had to remain resilient during the pandemic. Working patterns are set to fluctuate and demand is likely to increase for spaces that are between home and the office and offer a variety of formats to meet needs. As such, affordable workspace and flexible terms for occupancy will be crucial in ensuring the borough continues to be well placed to attract SMEs to start up and/or grow a business.

Affordable workspace is workspace that is provided at rents maintained below the market rate for that space for a specific social, cultural or economic development purpose. Affordable workspace and/or any offset contributions is likely to be secured through a Section 106 legal agreement with the Council.

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## **Business 6: Local Employment and Training**

1. The Council will seek to increase and ensure access to a range of employment skills and opportunities across the borough.
2. Financial contributions will be sought from development that results in a net loss of employment floorspace under Policy Business 3 to invest towards improving employment space elsewhere in the borough and/or towards training and other initiatives that seek to promote employment and adult education in the borough and seek to increase the range and number of local employment opportunities.
3. For employment generating developments or other developments that exceed the £1 million design and build cost threshold, the Council will seek to enter into an Employment and Skills Agreement via a planning obligation with the developer or applicant that includes the following:
  - a) an Employment and Skills Plan for training and recruitment; and
  - b) measures to secure positive outcomes for both end user jobs and construction opportunities.

### ***Explanation***

Key strategic priorities of the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy include giving all young people and adults a clear line of sight to opportunities for education, skills development and work in the city-region, and also ensuring all residents have the functional skills and attributes employers need including English, Maths, digital and creative skills. The One Stockport Borough Plan commits to developing a new skills and employment programme to ensure the right training, opportunities and qualifications are available locally.

It is acknowledged that the borough suffers from areas of high deprivation and unemployment. However those areas are either adjacent to existing Employment Areas or they are well served by public transport which would link them to such areas, including the Town Centre. Consequently it is not the location of employment uses which is the main issue, and rather it is important that worklessness is addressed, ensuring that residents are sufficiently well skilled and trained in order to be able to take advantage of the jobs that exist and will be created.

The Council will encourage partnership working between employers and local training providers to help develop the skills of the borough's work force and sections of the community that are disadvantaged in the labour market.

The Council will seek to enter into Employment and Skills Agreements with the intention of maximising the impact in tackling economic inequalities and will use the national benchmarks from the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to agree outcomes relating to work placements, new employee entrants to the construction sector, curriculum projects with local schools and colleges and workforce training opportunities including apprenticeships. The design and build cost threshold of £1 million is used by CITB in their National Skills Academy for Construction benchmarks and is widely recognised threshold used by the construction industry. Further detailed advice will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Applicants will be encouraged to consider and set out how Employment and Skills Agreements will engage with local skills provided to deliver on the outcomes and how opportunities will be targeted at the most economically disadvantaged groups including young people that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), care leavers, those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and people that are long-term unemployed. Links with schools and skills providers will be key priorities within the agreements.

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## **Centres 1: Development Principles for Vibrant Centres**

1. The Council will work with key stakeholders including the Stockport Business Improvement District, community groups and neighbourhood planning forums to ensure that the borough's centres set out in Policy Centres 2 will have a vital role in delivering sustainable growth, acting as the focal point for their communities and providing the necessary supporting services whilst delivering new jobs and homes.
2. To achieve this, the Council will seek to:
  - a) Pursue a positive strategy for each town and district centre, as set out in Policy Town Centre 1, Policy Centres 3 and Policy Centres 4.
  - b) Follow a 'town centres first approach' under Policy Centres 5 by applying a sequential test to ensure sustainable patterns of development are achieved and requiring an impact assessment where proposals for retail or leisure outside of these locations could threaten their vitality and viability.

- c) Establish Stockport Town Centre as a major sub-regional location for town centre living in an accessible location, including the new transformational Town Centre West neighbourhood.
  - d) Encourage walking and cycling as the preferred modes of travel in our centres, making sure core services and facilities are within easy reach of homes and workspaces.
  - e) Encourage mobility hubs with electric charging points and car sharing initiatives to support sustainable travel beyond centres.
  - f) Ensure all centres are safe, welcoming and inclusive places to visit, appealing to a wide range of users and age groups.
  - g) Plan for the diversification of centres, welcoming a wider range of uses that increase dwell time, attract footfall and enable prosperity for people and for businesses.
  - h) Give support in principle to the enhancement of arts and cultural facilities and the retention of and/or provision of new markets.
3. The Council will ensure that proposals for development in centres:
- a) Makes provision for community infrastructure where this development would place demand on existing services, in line with [policies in the Providing for Our Communities and Our Infrastructure chapters]
  - b) Accords with the quality design principles and considerations of policies Environment 17 and Environment 18.
  - c) Is designed to allow flexibility of units to adapt to potential changes in floorspace demands of retail and other uses.
  - d) Optimises residential density within the centre boundary.
  - e) Does not have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of nearby occupiers or uses, including existing and future residents in accordance with policy Environment 10.
  - f) Does not result in a significant adverse impact on traffic flow or road safety in accordance with policies Infrastructure 14 and Infrastructure 15.
  - g) Supports sustainable travel and active travel modes in accordance with policies Infrastructure 10, Infrastructure 11 and Infrastructure 12 in particular.
  - h) Maintains appropriate parking provision in accordance with policy Infrastructure 16.
4. Development proposals and changes of use that constitute development will be carefully controlled to ensure they support, rather than detract from, successful functioning of the centres and their ability to meet local needs. All such proposals will be required to:
- a) Make a positive contribution to the vitality, viability and diversity of the centre.
  - b) Maintain a strong role for the centre in providing a varied range of convenience goods and meeting other day-to-day needs; and
  - c) Be of a scale and type of use appropriate to the size and function of the centre, or part of the centre concerned, as defined in policies Centres 2 and Centres 5.
5. The positive use of underused and vacant space on upper floors within centres for alternative uses including residential, employment or community provision will be strongly encouraged. Proposals will need to demonstrate that any potential for residential use has been fully explored. Community uses should be accessible for all.
6. The use of vacant sites or buildings for occupation by meanwhile uses that will benefit a town centre's viability and vitality and not lead to a proliferation of such uses will be supported.
7. Where proposals result in the loss of Commercial, Business and Service uses (Class E) at the ground floor level of Primary Shopping Areas, the Council will take the following into consideration:
- a) Significance of reduction of Class E facilities.
  - b) The need to retain and avoid loss of active frontage at ground floor level.
  - c) Whether alternative Class E facilities are accessible by walking, cycling or public transport to meet the needs of the area.

- d) Capability of the proposal in attracting visitors to the town centre.
- e) Contribution of the proposal to the Council's regeneration aims and the positive strategy policies of each centre set out in **Town Centre 1, Centres 3 and Centres 4.**
- f) Evidence that there is no viable demand for continued existing Class E use and that the property has been vacant for over 12 months and has been continuously marketed for 12 months, with the exception of meanwhile uses in accordance with **clause 6** of above.

### ***Explanation***

Our centres now function as much more than a retail destination, providing a large range of services, facilities, employment and experiences for residents in an accessible location. The Council wishes to ensure that this expanding role is encouraged, allowing a greater diversity of uses and therefore reducing the need to travel.

The pandemic has shown that Stockport's centres need to be able to respond rapidly to changes in trends for leisure, retail and other commercial uses to ensure they can survive and compete. The Retail and Leisure Study suggests that centres should be experiential destinations that are resilient to change and are able to diversify.

Increasing the number of people living within and around the centres will help to generate the footfall necessary to support a good range of shops and services but it will be important that residential uses do not displace the essential retail, leisure, service, employment and community functions of the designated centres.

The Economic Plan shows we have an ageing population concentrated towards the north of the borough, and the age group of 60 years or over are set to increase with implications for the function and role of centres as places to live, enjoy and provide supporting services.

Art and cultural activities play an important role in providing a distinct identity to settlements and places alongside being important contributors to the local economy. Evidence in the Retail and Leisure Study finds there to be no requirement for additional arts and cultural facilities as demand is likely to be limited given that only 8% of trips to these facilities are retained in the borough and the borough's close proximity and easy access to Manchester city centre. As such, the recommendation is to keep visitor numbers at high levels by enhancing our existing provision.

Well-managed pop ups and meanwhile uses can minimise vacancies and add to vibrancy, challenge online shopping experience whilst helping small businesses.

## **Centres 2: Network and Hierarchy of Designated Centres**

1. The Council will promote the vitality and viability of the borough's centres by managing, maintaining and enhancing a strong network of centres as part of the following hierarchy:
  - a) **Town Centre**  
Stockport
  - b) **District Centres**  
Bramhall, Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Edgeley, Hazel Grove, Marple, Reddish (Houldsworth Square), Romiley.
  - c) **Large Local Centres**  
Davenport, Gatley, Great Moor, Heald Green, Heaton Moor (Moor Top), Heaton Chapel, Heaton Moor (Shaw Road/Heaton Moor Road), Marple Bridge, Reddish (North).
  - d) **Other Local Centres**  
Adswold, Berrycroft Lane (Higher Bredbury), Brinnington, Cheadle Heath, Councillor Lane



- (Cheadle), Fir Road (Bramhall), Fiveways Parade (Macclesfield Road), Hall Street (Offerton), Heaton Mersey, High Lane, North Park Road (Bramhall), Offerton, Offerton Green, Smithy Green (Cheadle Hulme), Turves Road (Cheadle Hulme), Woodley.
2. Stockport is the principal town centre in the Borough where the majority of new retail and main town centre use development is to be directed. The Primary Shopping Area will be the priority location for retailing. The Great Portwood Street area will be considered as an 'edge of centre' location for retail as directed in national policy.
  3. All retail and town centre proposals are to be in line with the role, function and scale that is appropriate to the size of the centre, as set out in Policy Centres 3 and Policy Centres 4.
  4. Primary shopping areas are those parts of a defined centre where retail development is concentrated and where commercial, business and service uses may also be present. It is important that the shopping, leisure, business and service function of these areas is maintained to support the overall vitality and viability of that centre.
  5. The Main Town Centre Use Area boundary for Stockport town centre, the District Centre boundaries and the Primary Shopping Areas within each centre are defined on the Policies Map.

### ***Explanation***

Stockport's network of town and local centres play an important role in meeting the varied needs of people of all ages, through the provision of a range of shops, services, community, leisure and employment opportunities, and public transport options. The centres are an important contributor to local identity, acting as a focal point for surrounding communities.

Maintaining the vitality and viability of these centres will be an ongoing challenge as shopping patterns and service delivery models change, especially with the growth of online retailing. A thorough approach to the management of these centres will be required in order to ensure their long-term success, with a clear focus on sustaining and creating vibrant destinations where activity can continue into the evening, with the retention of a robust retail presence complemented by a varied mix of uses including a strong leisure and community offer.

National Planning Practice Guidance notes that there is uncertainty in forecasting long term retail trends and therefore the role, function and hierarchy of centres should be focused on a limited period and regularly reviewed.

The glossary of terms in the National Planning Policy Framework defines 'edge of centre' for retail purposes as being up to 300 metres from the Primary Shopping Area, subject to local circumstances such as barriers or topography. The Great Portwood Street Area is outside the Primary Shopping Area for the town centre and whilst the site is not wholly inside the threshold it is physically separated from the Primary Shopping Area by a major thoroughfare and is recognised as a secondary location for retail in policy Centres 5.

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## **Centres 3: District Centres**

1. The borough's district centres will meet the majority of the everyday needs of Stockport's residents for shops, other main town centre uses and facilities. A coordinated approach will be taken to the improvement of each town centre, with an emphasis on taking advantage of the unique character of the centre and delivering a diverse mix of retail and service uses that support its vitality and viability.
2. All of the district centres have some potential for residential growth, either within or on the edge of the centre. Housing will be encouraged above active ground floor uses. The

introduction of residential uses at ground floor level will be required to complement and not displace main town centre uses.

3. Opportunities to bring forward existing previously-developed land more effectively and positively in accessible locations will be prioritised, such as the consolidation of main town centre uses into community hubs and the redevelopment of surface car parks for mixed use residential and decked parking.
4. New health and fitness facilities will be supported where this addresses the lack of provision in accessible locations by non-car modes, particularly in Bramhall, Cheadle Hulme and Romiley.
5. The roles and priorities for each centre are as follows:
  - a) **Bramhall** will continue to accommodate an independent retail and service offer with a focus on evening food and drink uses and good quality public realm at its centre to support activity and events. In recognition of the constrained nature of the centre, opportunities will be sought to increase short stay on-street car parking and provide centrally located cycle parking provision. Proposals that increase the range of basic comparison goods retailers and provide an opportunity to attract a large convenience foodstore will be welcomed.
  - b) **Cheadle** will continue to be an attractive destination, serving as a financial and business services hub, a place for evening food and drink, and a strong and varied convenience and comparison goods offer together with a good range of independents. Connectivity and placemaking will be the priorities, with the provision of a new rail station, and opportunities sought to improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists in the east and south of the centre. Proposals with potential to deliver a new large foodstore will be welcomed.
  - c) **Cheadle Hulme** will continue to be a highly accessible centre with a rail station on the West Coast Main Line, and with an important role as a convenience shopping destination with large anchor foodstores and as an evening food and drink destination with supporting amateur theatre facilities. Opportunities will be sought to make more efficient use of land by concentrating community facilities and key services within walking distance of the station and improve the public realm and environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
  - d) **Edgeley** will be further enhanced as an accessible centre with new connections including tram-train services and direct pedestrian and cycling routes to the town centre and transport interchanges. Whilst still playing a complementary role to the town centre, planned investment in the adjacent Town Centre West area will enable it to serve a new catchment and assist in diversifying its retail and service offer. Opportunities will be sought to consolidate the centre's active frontages on Castle Street and enhance public realm and environmental quality.
  - e) **Hazel Grove** will continue to have a strong and competitive convenience and comparison goods offer along with a variety of other retail, service and leisure uses with a focus on evening food and drink. Proposals that aim to reduce the severance caused by the A6 and encourage linked trips will be welcomed such as improving the environmental quality of existing green and public spaces, increasing tree planting and improving movement and safety for pedestrians and cyclists.
  - f) **Marple** will continue to provide a major service hub for the east of the borough in an attractive setting with a strong convenience goods offer, good independent retail offer and varied leisure and evening offer including an independent cinema. Proposals that enhance environmental quality, public realm and ease of movement for pedestrians and cyclists will be encouraged. Opportunities will be sought for the delivery of large-scale retail units for additional comparison goods retailers to help further complement existing provision.

- g) **Reddish (Houldsworth Square)** will continue to encompass a strong convenience, leisure and retail services offer and accessibility at Reddish South station will be substantially improved with additional Metrolink and tram-train services. Proposals that seek to address the under-provision of community facilities will be welcomed. Opportunities will be sought where possible to revitalise Houldsworth Square as the multifunctional focus supporting outdoor events, and to improve movement and environmental quality for pedestrians and cyclists at key junctions.
- h) **Romiley** will continue to be an accessible and attractive centre, providing a strong independent and retail services offer for surrounding communities alongside a good mix of retail and leisure uses and an arts and cultural venue. Proposals that expand the evening food and drink offer and improve the experience for pedestrians and cyclists on the B6104 and enable linked trips will be encouraged.

### ***Explanation***

District centres tend to serve wide catchments, sometimes across local authority areas, and usually comprise groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket and a range of non-retail services such as banks and restaurants, together with local public facilities such as a library.

The Planning Practice Guidance states that there should be a vision for the future of each centre and that this can detail the most appropriate mix of uses to enhance overall vitality and viability.

The Retail and Leisure Study recommends that centres should provide an offer that distinguishes them from competing centres and out of centre retail and leisure destinations. The focus is therefore on making the most of a centre's individual strengths as a hub for their communities and to attract additional land uses beyond retail and leisure to help extend the 'dwell' time for those who visit. The study included recommendations for each centre and both this and the Institute of Place Management Phase 1 report into Vital and Viable District Centres have informed the priorities set in the policy.

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## **Centres 4: Large Local Centres and Other Local Centres**

1. The network of the borough's local centres will have an important role in providing local shops, leisure opportunities, food and drink uses, services and community facilities for the surrounding neighbourhoods.
2. There will be an emphasis on maintaining a strong convenience goods retail function in each centre, providing sustainable top-up shopping facilities and minimising the need for residents to travel further, complemented by a range of other main town centre uses. This will be achieved through the careful management of changes of use within the centres.
3. Residential uses above ground floor level will be encouraged. Housing at ground floor level will be required to complement and not displace existing main town centre uses, in accordance with policy Centres 1.

### ***Explanation***

National planning policy encourages healthy, inclusive and safe places that promote social interaction and one of the main action areas for this is the provision of strong neighbourhood centres. The Planning Practice Guidance states that there should be a vision for the future of each centre and that this can detail the most appropriate mix of uses to enhance overall vitality and viability.

The Large Local Centres and Local Centres listed at policy Centres 2 generally serve a localised catchment often most accessible by walking and cycling and playing a vital role in meeting the everyday needs within local parades and small clusters of shops.

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## Centres 5: Development Involving Main Town Centre Uses

### 1. Sequential approach

Main town centre uses proposed as part of proposals for new floorspace, extensions to existing floorspace, changes of use and applications seeking a variation to conditions shall be located in accordance with the following sequential approach:

- a) Within the Town Centre and District Centres ('in centre');
  - b) In locations on the edge of the Town Centre and District Centres ('edge of centre');
  - c) Accessible sites which are well connected to the Town Centre and District Centres;
  - d) Other locations accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.
2. Other less preferable locations will only be supported where the sequential approach has found there to be no available and suitable sites, taking into account the need for flexibility in regard to scale and format.
  3. The table below defines 'in centre' and 'edge of centre' for the Town Centre and District Centres listed in policy Centres 2. To support the successful functioning of some of these centres, a more detailed sequential approach is in operation for commercial, business and service (Class E) uses where the highest priority is stated first. In respect of offices, regard will be had to policies Business 2 and Town Centre 2.
  4. The 'edge of centre' distance thresholds of 300 metres are shown in Appendix [X]. [TO BE PREPARED]

Centre type	Sequential approach by use and type of centre in order of priority	
	Class E uses	Other main town centre uses
Town Centre	<p><i>In centre</i></p> <p>a) Within the Primary Shopping Area</p> <p><i>Edge of centre</i></p> <p>b) Within the Great Portwood Street Area</p> <p>c) Elsewhere within the Main Town Centre Use Area, within 300 metres of the Primary Shopping Area.</p> <p>d) Outside of the Main Town Centre Use Area, but within 300 metres of the Primary Shopping Area.</p>	<p><i>In centre</i></p> <p>a) Within the Main Town Centre Use Area</p> <p><i>Edge of centre</i></p> <p>b) Within 300 metres of the Main Town Centre Use Area</p>
District Centre	<p><i>In centre</i></p> <p>a) Within the Primary Shopping Area</p> <p><i>Edge of centre</i></p> <p>b) Elsewhere within the centre boundary</p> <p>c) Outside the centre boundary, but within 300 metres of the Primary Shopping Area</p>	<p><i>In centre</i></p> <p>a) Within the centre boundary</p> <p><i>Edge of centre</i></p> <p>b) Within 300 metres of the centre boundary</p>

## 5. **Impact Assessment**

Proposals for retail and leisure uses outside of a defined town or district centre boundary may have a significant impact on the vitality and viability of a centre depending on the size, role and function of the centre concerned. As such an Impact Assessment will be necessary for proposals that include retail and/or leisure uses that are:

- a) Located outside the Primary Shopping Area of Stockport Town Centre, and:
    - i. Where there is a floorspace in excess of 1,000 square metres gross; and
    - ii. With a search area of the borough of Stockport.
  - b) Located outside the Primary Shopping Area of a District Centre, and:
    - i. Where there is a floorspace in excess of 500 square metres gross; and
    - ii. Where the catchment area of the proposal, agreed by the Council, encompasses one or more district centres.
  - c) Located outside either a Large Local Centre or Other Local Centre, and:
    - i. Where there is a floorspace in excess of 300 square metres gross; and
    - ii. With a search area of within 800 metres of the Local Centre.
6. When considering Impact Assessments, the Council will have regard to whether development would have any likely adverse effects on the positive strategies for the town centre in the policy Town Centre 1 and for the district and local centres in the policies Centres 3 and Centres 4. In addition, proposals that have a detrimental impact on existing, committed and planned investment in the town centre are unlikely to be supported.
7. The above thresholds apply to new floorspace, changes of use that constitute development and variations of conditions to remove or amend restrictions on the operation of these uses.

### ***Explanation***

Locating retail, service and other community and leisure facilities within the designated centres is considered to be the most sustainable way of meeting the needs of our borough's residents. It helps to maximise the accessibility of facilities for more people and promotes linked trips, which in turn reduces the need to travel and can increase footfall and hence improve trading conditions within centres. Scattering facilities across a wider area would be likely to adversely affect the vitality and viability of the centres, leading to their gradual decline and reducing their ability to attract new retail floorspace to the city and serve the needs of residents.

It is therefore essential that as much of the new retail floorspace and other main town centre uses as possible new retail floorspace and as many other facilities as possible are located within our centres, in accordance with the sequential approach set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Retail together with commercial, business and service uses will be focused within the primary shopping areas of the centres so as to maximise their vibrancy. Any significant out-of-centre retail main town centre use floorspace in Salford beyond current commitments, other than where specifically referred to elsewhere in the Local Plan, is considered unnecessary and would be likely to reduce the success of some of the city's centres.

The Retail and Leisure Study reveals a declining trend in convenience and comparison goods expenditure for Stockport town centre and many of our district centres. This would appear to represent a threat to the centres in terms of loss of main town centre uses and the effects of the pandemic with a clear shift towards online shopping is set to prolong this trend.

The distance thresholds used in the table are taken from glossary definitions for 'edge of centre' in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The 300m buffers are included in an appendix and are shown for illustrative purposes only. Decisions on whether a site falls within 'edge of centre' or

outside of a centre will take account of local circumstances including barriers to movement such as topography and major transport routes.

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## Centres 6: Managing Clustering of Main Town Centre Uses

1. In addressing levels of childhood obesity and health inequality within the borough as well as to encourage diversity and preserve the retail core of our centres, the Council will resist the proliferation and over-concentration of hot food takeaways, only permitting proposals that:
  - a) Are separated from any existing hot food takeaway unit or a group of units in such a use, where this group is of at least two units which are neither a hot food takeaway use nor a Sui Generis use as specified in 2. below;
  - b) Have an acceptable impact on highway safety;
  - c) Do not have an undue impact on residential amenity in terms of noise, vibrations, odours, traffic disturbance and litter;
  - d) Provide effective extraction of odours and cooking smells;
  - e) Provide adequate on-site waste storage and disposal of waste products;
  - f) Co-operate with the Council's healthy catering requirements.
2. In addressing levels of health and socio-economic inequalities within the borough as well as to encourage diversity and preserve the retail core of Stockport's centres, the Council will resist the proliferation and over-concentration of adult gaming centres, amusement arcades, betting shops, pawnbrokers, pay day loan shops and shisha bars and will only permit proposals for such Sui Generis uses that:
  - a) Are separated from any existing Sui Generis unit in this group by at least two units which are neither units listed in 2. nor hot food takeaway uses;
  - b) Are accompanied by Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) when requested by the Council;
  - c) Provide active frontages and have a positive visual impact on the streetscene;
  - d) Do not have a significant impact on local community and residential amenity in terms of noise, vibrations, odours, traffic disturbance and litter.

### **Explanation**

National planning policy guidance supports access to healthier food choices, including the need to limit the proliferation of particular uses in areas with proximity to locations where children and young people congregate.

Whilst this Local Plan encourages, directs and manages access to other commercial, business and service uses there is a need to manage the clustering of specific uses. It is acknowledged that clustered related uses can help town centres develop specialist or niche roles that can attract footfall and spend; however, over-concentration of uses such as adult gaming centres, amusement arcades, betting shops, hot food takeaways, pawnbrokers, payday loan shops, and shisha bars can have a detrimental impact on physical and mental wellbeing as well as on the vitality and viability of town centres.

The impact of such uses in terms of associations with unacceptable levels of noise, vibrations, odours, traffic disturbance, litter and anti-social behaviour is reflected in their classification as 'sui generis' in the Planning Use Classes Order. The proliferation of such 'sui generis' uses can quickly change the character of a centre, and the Sui Generis use class means that any new use or change of use to such remain subject to planning permission, giving local authorities greater control.

While it is acknowledged that takeaways provide a convenience service to local communities which has proved popular at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council needs to balance this with

concerns about levels of childhood obesity and increasing levels of health inequality as well as the need to preserve the retail-based role of town centres.. [Latest data on obesity from Public Health required]. An SPD will be prepared with further guidance on Hot Food Takeaways.

The policy seeks to ensure that the listed uses do not form clusters and are not near to schools and other facilities that young people are more likely to attend such as youth centres/scouts/community centres. As part of the Authorities Monitoring Report the Council will monitor the numbers of listed uses within each town centre. In considering proposals for such uses the Council will require an assessment of development impacts which should be proportionate to the proposal. The Council may require the applicant to submit a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for those uses, particularly in geographical areas which exhibit poor economic and/or health indicators.

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## Centres 7: Evening Economy

1. The Council will support proposals for evening economy uses that are safe, welcoming and inclusive for a range of users including families in the designated centres, where they accord with the following:
  - a) The scale and type of use reflects the role and function of the centre;
  - b) There is no conflict with policy Centres 6 on the clustering of main town centre uses;
  - c) There is no significant negative impact on the amenity of adjoining or adjacent residential and non-residential uses having regard to the Agent of Change principle, such as noise disturbance, cooking smells, anti-social behaviour, or highway safety;
  - d) There is no significant negative impact resulting from cumulative development in relation to the number, capacity and location of other evening economy uses in the area;
  - e) There is no significant detrimental impact on the historic distinctiveness of Stockport's centres under policy Environment 22;
  - f) Development will be supported that preserves or enhances existing evening economy activities considered to be pivotal to the centre's continued vitality and viability, creates new ones, or will reinforce the role and significance of the centre in an inclusive and accessible way. Proposals that undermine this function will not be supported.

### ***Explanation***

The evening economy refers to all economic activity taking place between the hours of 6pm and 6am and includes evening uses. Evening economy uses include restaurants, bars, cinemas, theatres and arts venues. Such uses can contribute positively to the vitality and vibrancy of town centres by providing informal surveillance for passers-by helping visitors to feel safer in the evening.

Policy Centres 1 encourages the creation of safe and welcoming and inclusive places to visit, and such conditions are more likely to attract residents and visitors to come to the borough in the evening. Public realm improvements will change the image and perception of our centres and welcoming public spaces will encourage people to spend more time at the destination.

The Retail and Leisure Study 2019 has found that, despite there being evidence that the national multiple food and drink market is becoming saturated, the food and drink sector is particularly underrepresented in Stockport town centre, and as such, recommends that the number and range of restaurants is increased. Many independent food and drink outlets have since opened in the Market Place and Underbanks area following significant investment in the public realm. Evidence from both the Retail and Leisure Study and the Institute of Place Management Phase 1 report into Vital and Viable District Centres found that some of our district centres have a poor diversity of food and drink offer and limited opening hours including Edgeley, Reddish and Romiley.



The Council seeks to enhance the existing strengths of centres to create a thriving night time economy with activities and venues that are fully inclusive and accessible. This includes reaching a balance between safeguarding amenity and maximising the creative potential from a growing leisure offer that enhances the range and quality of local food and drink, heritage, culture and arts on offer.

Diversification of night-time uses can add to the vitality and viability of town centres and should promote inclusive access and safety. Where appropriate, planning conditions or legal agreements will be used to manage hours of operation, noise and fumes from machinery, storage and disposal of refuse, the areas used by customers and any other issues that may need to control the impact of night-time uses in order to protect amenity. The introduction of the 'agent of change' principle will ensure that new development does not unduly add to the costs and administrative burdens of existing businesses.

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## Centres 8: Out of Centre Locations for Retail

1. **Existing out-of-town retail parks** at the following locations are designated on the Policies Map and have an established retail warehouse function and should remain the focus for any out-of-centre retail proposals:
  - a) Brewery Street/Water Street at Portwood
  - b) Stockport Road/Edgeley Road at Cheadle Heath
  - c) Wilmslow Road/A34 at Cheadle Hulme
  - d) Georges Road, Stockport
  - e) Manchester Road at Lancashire Hill
  - f) Stockport Road West, Bredbury
  - g) Stanley Green Retail Park at Stanley Green
2. Except where justified, planning permissions on these retail parks will be subject to conditions on size of units and type of goods.
3. Uses other than retail warehouses will be allowed where the role, character and function of the retail park will not be adversely affected.
4. These locations are not designated retail centres, and therefore any retail or leisure development will be required to satisfy the sequential and impact tests under policy Centres 5.
5. The following types of retail provision will be supported in principle, with preference for accessible sites which are well connected to centres:
  - a) Bulky goods, non-food retail development within the above locations;
  - b) Specialist shops (including car showrooms) and trade centre developments within Employment Areas subject to policies Business 2 and Business 3.
6. **Main town centre uses in out-of-centre locations**, particularly in retail parks, should remain complementary to defined centres. The impact of such development will be mitigated by imposing appropriate conditions including:
  - a) On the use of land and premises;
  - b) The scale of development;
  - c) The sub-division of units; and
  - d) The goods that can be sold from any retail outlet.
7. **Local community shops** outside centres of no more than 280 square metres, that serve local or convenience needs and meet the criteria of Use Class F2, will be assessed according to the following considerations:
  - a) effect on residential amenity;
  - b) satisfactory resolution of pedestrian and vehicular access and road safety;

- c) the effect on the vitality and viability of nearby centres;
  - d) the availability of sites within defined nearby centres; and
  - e) the extent to which alternative facilities exist in the local area.
8. Conditions will normally imposed on any permission for local community shops to restrict goods sold in the interest of preventing the character of retailing changing from serving local or convenience needs.
9. Proposals that involve the loss of local community shops will be required to provide a robust justification that similar shops are within a 1km walking distance.

### ***Explanation***

The borough has a large range of retail parks and, owing to their target market of customers travelling by car, are located close to the M60 motorway and major routes. Retail warehouses are defined as large stores specialising in the sales of household goods such as carpets, furniture and electrical goods, DIY and other ranges of goods.

Planning permission for retail warehousing will be subject to conditions to control the character of the development, the size of individual units and the range and type of goods sold, such as limiting to bulky goods only. This action will be taken to avoid the introduction of a wider range of comparison goods to be sold which, given the out-of-centre location, may negatively affect the vitality of defined centres in policy Centres 2 and undermine national planning policies on town centres and retail.

As such, all proposals for main town centre uses beyond defined boundaries will need to comply with the sequential test approach as set out in the NPPF and in policy Centres 5.

Local shops perform an important role in meeting the day-to-day needs of communities and are a vital part of creating sustainable communities, reducing the need for people to travel. Small community shops of no more than 280 square metres are afforded greater importance in the 2020 Use Classes Order as the retail market changes, with Use Class F2 providing increased protection for such facilities that predominantly sell essential goods including food and when they are more than 1km from a similar shop. Proposals that would result in their loss will therefore be required to satisfy the Council that similar shops are within a 1km radius walking distance.

Conditions may be attached to planning permissions to restrict the range of goods to be sold, making sure that the shops continue to serve local day-to-day needs, rather than attracting customers from some distance away.