

Application Reference:	DC/085968
Location:	1 Alpine Road Portwood Stockport SK1 2NL
PROPOSAL:	Erection of a terrace of 3No. two storey, two bedroom, three person dwellings and 1No. single storey, two bedroom, four person CAT3 dwelling with associated parking and hard/soft landscaping.
Type Of Application:	Full Application
Registration Date:	20.07.2022
Expiry Date:	
Case Officer:	Daniel Hewitt
Applicant:	Stockport Homes Group
Agent:	Dash Architecture

DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS

Due to the number of objections received the application must be considered by the Central Area Committee.

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The site is located off Alpine Road at the corner of New Bridge Lane and St Marys Way in Portwood. The application is for erection of a terrace of three, two storey, two bedroom, terraced houses and one single storey, two bedroom bungalow with associated parking and hard/soft landscaping.

The proposed bungalow would be accessed from Mountain Street where additional car parking space would be provided for nine cars including two disabled bays. The three terraced houses would be accessed from Alpine Road itself. The existing cobbled rear alleyway (ownership unknown but it is presumed to be shared) would be retained and provide access for servicing/bins etc. via a path from the terraced houses rear gardens.

Mature trees would be lost to development but replacement planting is proposed to ensure a significant landscape buffer remains between existing and proposed housing on Alpine Road. An access easement for maintenance of the St Mary's Way retaining wall has also been accommodated.

The proposed development is best understood by referring to the submitted plans.

The following documents were submitted in support of the application:

- Noise Assessment
- Arboricultural Report
- Ecology Report

- Air Quality Assessment
- Preliminary Risk Assessment
- Resident Consultation – Designer’s Response
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site is located off Alpine Road at the corner of New Bridge Lane and St Marys Way in Portwood to the side and rear of numbers 1-11 Alpine Road. The site is currently owned by the Council (Highways) and was redeveloped and landscaped as part of the Town Centre Access Plan. It currently acts as a green buffer between St Mary’s Way and existing housing. In order to accommodate the development existing trees and greenspace would be lost to development.

Alpine Road itself is accessed off New Bridge Lane and contains predominantly two storey terraced dwellings. Parking for these dwellings is on-street only. Vernon Park Primary School is located at its southern end. A newer building is located at its northern end containing 4 flats facing the proposed two storey dwellings however this building is access from Carlton Crescent to the west with little direct interaction with Alpine Road itself.

POLICY BACKGROUND

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

The Development Plan includes-

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

Saved policies of the SUDP Review

- TCG3.7 - New Bridge Lane
- TCG1 – Town Centre / M60 Gateway
- TCG1.2 – Town Centre/M60 Gateway Transport Hub
- TCG1.4 – Sustainable access in the Town Centre/M60 Gateway
- EP1.10 – Aircraft Noise
- MW1.5 – Control of waste from development

LDF Core Strategy/Development Management policies

- SD1 – Creating sustainable communities
- SD3 – Delivering the energy opportunities plans – new development
- SD6 – Adapting to the impacts of climate change
- SIE1 - Quality places
- SIE2 - Provision of recreation and amenity open space in new development
- SIE3 – Protecting, safeguarding and enhancing the environment
- CS2 - Housing provision

- CS3 - Mix of housing
- CS4 - Distribution of housing
- H1 - Design of residential development
- H2 - Housing phasing
- H3 - Affordable housing
- CS9 - Transport and development
- CS10 - An effective and sustainable transport network
- T1 - Transport and development
- T2 - Parking in developments
- T3 - Safety and capacity on the highway network

Supplementary Planning Guidance

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

- Open Space Provision and Commuted Payments Supplementary Planning Document (2019)
- The Design of Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document
- Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document
- Town Centre Housing Supplementary Planning Document
- Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

National Planning Policy Framework

A Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in July 2021 replaced the previous versions of the NPPF. The NPPF has not altered the fundamental legal requirement under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations (such as the NPPF) indicate otherwise.

The NPPF representing the governments up-to-date planning policy which should be taken into account in dealing with applications focuses on achieving a lasting housing reform, facilitating the delivery of a greater number of homes, ensuring that we get planning for the right homes built in the right places of the right quality at the same time as protecting our environment. If decision takers choose not to follow the NPPF, then clear and convincing reasons for doing so are needed.

N.B. In respect of decision-taking the revised NPPF constitutes a “material consideration”.

Planning Practice Guidance

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

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None relevant.

NEIGHBOUR'S VIEWS

Neighbour notification letters were sent to 38 neighbouring addresses. Further letters were then sent following revisions to the scheme.

In total 9 written objections to the application have been received from local residents and are summarised as follows:

- On street car parking shortages are an issue in this high density area particularly during pick up and drop off times at the nearby Vernon Park Primary School with a general shortage of spaces.
- Noise from building work would be disruptive.
- Concerns about loss of greenspace and the impact on wildlife/protected species/pollinators.
- Other areas should be found for new housing.
- Disappointment that the application is being pursued despite the weight of local opposition.
- It will generate increased traffic movements.
- Other people will park in the proposed car parking spaces.
- Existing planting and acoustic fencing on St Mary's Way block light to their property and the proposed development will make it worse.
- Noise control will be needed due to road and air traffic noise.
- The development is a backward step in addressing climate change.
- Concerns about traffic regulation orders and resident's parking schemes the Council are promoting.
- The Council are notifying residents of the development when they are on holiday and won't have chance to respond.
- Existing trees help block out traffic noise from St Mary's Way and it is proposed to fell some of them.
- Extra car parking provision should be provided.
- The two mature trees behind numbers 13 and 15 should not be removed as they are beautiful to look at and attract birds.
- Care should be taken to ensure boundary fencing does not damage trees.
- Delays in receiving neighbour notification letters limited residents chance to respond and deadlines should be extended.
- The existing rear alleyway is maintained by existing houses
- Removal of trees will create noise and air pollution and create drainage problems and be harmful to existing and future residents.
- The Council should build bungalows to entice old people to move to the area and vacate larger family housing.
- The rear alleyway is maintained and owned by existing residents and you should not be used as an access.
- I cannot think of a worse place to build houses than this.
- Loss of habitat supporting wildlife and wildflowers.
- No plans to relocate the wildlife in the area.
- Bird box provision is inadequate mitigation for the loss of trees and who will maintain them? You cannot rely on future residents to do this.
- Destroying this habitat with houses that aren't needed in an already strained area is wrong and the application should be refused.

Despite objecting, some positive comments were received summarised as follows:

- The new plans are better than the old ones and the proposed bollards on the passageway is welcomed.

CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Health and Safety Executive

Do not advise against - consulted due to site being within consultation distance of a major hazard site/pipeline

SMBC Highway Engineer

Impact on the highway network

Four dwellings in such a location would be expected to generate approx. 2 vehicle movements during both the AM and PM peak hours. This should not have a material impact on the local highway network and therefore I would consider the proposal acceptable from this perspective.

Accessibility

The site is within an existing residential area, is within reasonable walking distance of Stockport Town Centre, a primary school and various retail stores, is on a bus route and is close to a number of cycle routes. As such, I consider the site suitable for residential use. I do note, however, that there is not an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing (dropped kerbs with tactile crossing) towards the southern end of Alpine Road, nor at the junction of Mountain Street with Alpine Road, which compromises access from / to the south. I also consider the existing setts to the side and rear of 1-11 Alpine Road may need to be re-laid so as to ensure level access is provided to the dwellings. As such, I would recommend that any approval granted is subject to conditions requiring the setts to be re-laid, as required, and for the provision of two uncontrolled pedestrian crossings.

Parking

The scheme includes proposals to construct a parking area to the rear of 1-11 Alpine Road, which will be able to accommodate 6 cars. In addition, Mountain Street is proposed to be amended so as to create 3 additional parking spaces, as well as a turning area. As such, a total of 9 car parking spaces will be provided. This level of parking will meet the parking demand of the development (I would estimate demand will be around 6 spaces), as well as cater for some of the existing parking demand of nearby dwellings. I would consider this acceptable.

Two of parking spaces will be suitable for disabled persons. This is in line with the adopted standards and I would consider appropriate for the type of development.

A cycle store / shed will be provided for each of the dwellings. Subject to detail, I would consider this acceptable.

Two communal EV charging points will be provided for the proposed dwellings which satisfies current policy requirements.

Access / site layout

Plots 1-3 will front Alpine Road and Plot 4 will be located to the rear of 1-7 Alpine Road. Parking for all 4 dwellings will be located to the rear of 1-11 Alpine Road, which will be accessed via Mountain Street. As part of the scheme, Mountain Street will be

amended, which will include the provision of a turning area, and the submitted drawings show the existing alleys to the side and rear of 1-11 Alpine Road being retained, with setts relayed, as required.

The amended layout for Mountain Street is such that large service vehicles will be unable to turn at the end of the street. Sufficient room for smaller vehicles (cars, delivery vans etc.) will be available and this will be an improvement over the existing situation as there is currently no turning area. In addition, Plots 1-3 would be serviced from Alpine Road and Plot 4 will not a significant distance from Alpine Road to enable occupiers of that dwelling to wheel their bins out to Alpine Road, thus negating the need for refuse vehicles to use Mountain Street. I also note that it should be possible to comply with Building Regulation B5 without the need for a turning head for fire appliances being provided on Mountain Street. As such I would have no objection in principle to the amended layout.

The applicant has submitted a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) together with a Designer's Response that has enabled the Highways Engineer to revise his response to the application.

The RSA highlighted two issues, namely:

- The possible conflict between an existing telegraph pole on Alpine Road and the proposed maintenance access
- Lack of tactile paving at the junction of Mountain Street and Alpine Road (this issue was also raised by myself)

It therefore recommends the telegraph pole is relocated and tactile paving is provided at the junction.

In response to the RSA, the Designer's Response accepts the recommendations of the audit. The applicant has submitted a revised site layout drawing (drawing 177-A-1200 Rev P8) which shows the telegraph pole being relocated and the tactile paving provided. The drawing also shows amendments to the turning area on Mountain Street as requested in the Highway Engineer's previous response.

To ensure that cars parked on Mountain Street do not affect access or the ability for vehicles to turn in the new turning area, I would recommend that parking restrictions are provided on Mountain Street and around it's junction with Alpine Road. This will require a Traffic Regulation Order and therefore I would recommend that any approval granted is subject to the applicant entering into a Section 106 Agreement to fund the cost of this (£7500 at current prices).

Due to the width and lack of visibility afforded at its junction with Alpine Road, I would consider it unsafe if the alley to the side of 1 Alpine Road was used to access the parking area. Plans have been amended to show bollards to prevent this. This can be secured by condition.

Highway retaining wall & landscaping

St. Mary's Way and its junction with New Bridge Lane was widened and improved in 2016 as part of the Council's Town Centre Access Package (TCAP). As part of these works St. Mary's Way and New Bridge Lane were widened into the site, a new retaining wall was constructed along the site's boundary with these roads and new landscaping was planted and acoustic fencing erected. The retaining wall that was built is shown on the submitted plans, as well as a maintenance corridor adjacent to

the wall. This comprises of a permanent 1m path abutting the wall for regular inspections and a wider 3m easement for vehicular access, which would be used if repairs were required. The submitted plan also shows 2.1m removal fencing adjacent to the 1m path (but within the wider easement).

These proposals have been reviewed by the Council's Structure's Team. They have confirmed that the proposals are considered generally acceptable and approx. in line with the advice that they provided at pre-app stage. They have also not raised any concern regarding the impact of the construction of the dwellings on the retaining wall. They have, however, outlined that no structures should be constructed in the 3m easement. The scheme currently shows the shed / cycle store for Plot 1 within this easement and therefore this should be relocated so it is clear of the easement. The site layout plan therefore also needs to be amended to address this issue.

The scheme will result in the loss of existing landscaping (trees and bushes), some of which, I understand was planted as mitigation for the highway improvement scheme (along with acoustic fencing which has been erected to the south of the site). Removal of this landscaping could potentially increase the level of traffic noise / localised air pollution for occupiers of dwellings on Alpine Road and result in the loss of an area of landscaping and animal habitat. I will, however, leave it to colleagues in Environmental Health and Ecology to comment on this and confirm whether the proposed mitigation is sufficient. I assume there may be need for acoustic fencing to be installed in lieu of the landscaping. Alternatively, a green wall may prove a more appropriate option as it could mitigate noise and provide a "green" alternative to the existing trees and bushes.

Conclusion

No objection, in principle to this application, noting that the site is reasonably accessible, the proposal should not have a material impact on the local highway network from the perspective of vehicle movements and an appropriate level of parking is proposed to be provided. Following receipt of a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and Designer's Response a revised plan has been submitted which address residual concerns such that they now consider the revised layout to be acceptable from a safety perspective.

The Council's Highway Engineer is now happy to support the development subject to conditions and the payment of a commuted sum of £7500 to fund the provision of parking restrictions on Mountain Street and around it's junction with Alpine Road.

Recommended conditions relate to:

- Construction Management Plan
- Detailed engineering drawings
- Inward opening gates
- EV charging point details for each dwelling
- Shed/cycle storage details
- Detailed of an uncontrolled crossing at the southern end of Alpine Road.

SMBC Environmental Health - Contaminated Land

Following a review of the submitted Preliminary Risk Assessment, they agree with the recommendation of the assessment that intrusive investigation is required. Conditions to ensure a satisfactory outcome in respect of contaminated land and ground gas are recommended accordingly.

SMBC Environmental Health - Air Quality

No objection. Consultants were commissioned by Stockport Homes Limited to undertake an Air Quality Assessment in support of the proposed development. The proposed development is considered suitable for the proposed end-use without the implementation of protective mitigation techniques.

SMBC Environmental Health – Noise

The submitted noise assessment concludes that noise mitigation measures are required to provide satisfactory living conditions including:

- Acoustic double glazing to rooms on all elevations exposed to road traffic & Air traffic noise.
- Zone A - System 3 continuous running extract ventilation supplemented with additional purge ventilation fan (to meet 4 A/C changes per hour) in each habitable room on south facing façade or System 4 MVHR balanced whole apartment ventilation - $D_{n,e,w}$ (open) ≥ 50 dB via acoustic wall vent or no trickle vents (depending on vent system) • Zone B - System 3 mechanical extract ventilation acoustically rated trickle vents opening windows for purge ventilation is deemed to be generally acceptable - $D_{n,e,w}$ (open) ≥ 33 dB
- Recommended 1.8m (min) height boundary treatment fence should be incorporated along the boundary of the landscaped area, i.e. the top of the retaining wall bounding the footway of St Marys Way / New Bridge Lane.

No objection providing the mitigation measures are secured by planning conditions.

SMBC Arboriculture

No trees on the site benefit from legal protection and 7 mature trees are proposed for removal.

A full tree survey has been supplied as part of the planning application to show the condition and amenity levels of the existing neighbouring trees and where applicable which trees will have a potential impact on the proposed development, which is accepted as a true representation however bad it shows the tree loss. The site layout plan has not fully considered the need for tree planting throughout the site to increase the amenity levels of the site with replanting of semi- mature trees or fruit trees. Specific consideration needs to be given to the potential benefit urban tree planting throughout the site to enhance the biodiversity, the amenity and the SUDs capacity through hard landscaped tree pits in the proposed car park areas and review the lost screening from the tree loss for the replacement planting.

A detailed landscaping scheme will also need to be considered/drawn up as part of any planning application submitted which clearly shows enhancements of the site and surrounding environment to improve the local biodiversity and amenity of the area. It is however unsure on how they intend to replacement all the proposed tree loss on or off site as the area is mostly being taken up with new structures and hard landscaped areas so the planting area is limited. It is known the current tree stock was planted to screen the widened highway scheme and so the screening is key issue that needs considering when designing the replacement and enhancement on or off site.

The main works and design will have a negative impact on the trees on site.

In its current format it could only be considered favourably with further consideration to the removal and replacement tree planting throughout the site and the proposals to replace and enhance the site and surrounding environment as the current planting was already dedicated to these sites from the previous Highway improvement project.

It would require additional consideration for the loss but could be improved and considered more favourably with the submission of full details as requested above justifying any impact on trees within proximity of the site and some consideration given to the existing trees in or around the scheme that includes a greater number of new trees to improve the amenity and aesthetics of the site for users and local community for screening of any new development from any public open space/highway and making sure a percentage of these are native large species and fruit trees at every opportunity.

The following conditions are recommended:

- Tree protection conditions
- Detailed landscaping scheme and compensatory planting details

SMBC Nature Development

The site has no nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise as listed in Stockport's current Local Plan. It has however been identified as an opportunity area within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) pilot study for Greater Manchester. This is not necessarily a barrier to development and does not confer protection or prevention of land uses but shows that such areas have been prioritised for restoring and linking up habitats.

Habitats and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

An ecological constraints survey has been submitted with the application (Greenspace Consultancy, 2020). The survey identified the habitats present on site and assessed their potential to support protected species. The survey was undertaken by a suitably experienced surveyor in May 2020. Given the length of time since the ecology survey was undertaken and that ecological conditions can change over time, I undertook an update walkover site visit in November 2022.

The site predominantly comprises an area of grassland, scrub and woodland. Much of the habitat on site was originally created to help offset impacts associated with the recent improvements along St Marys Way. The proposals would result in the loss of this newly planted tree stock and wildflower grassland, and would also appear to result in the loss of the laurel hedgerow, which currently acts as a buffer between the site and the road.

A further ecological survey including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment was carried out in April 2023 using the DEFRA Metric 4.0 to assess baseline conditions and inform the impact assessment (Green Space Consultancy SMBC, 2023)

The Metric calculations currently show a loss of 0.9 Habitat Units (-89.42%) primarily due to loss of scrub and woodland habitats. Since the overall BNG for habitat units is currently a loss, a habitat offsetting strategy is required to ensure delivery of measurable overall BNG. A suitable strategy is outlined within the submitted BNG Assessment report and involves payment of a commuted sum to

the LPA to deliver appropriate habitat enhancements off-site (detailed further below).

Legally Protected Species

No potential bat roosting features were observed within the trees on site and they are assessed as offering negligible potential to support roosting bats.

Trees and vegetation have the potential to support nesting birds. The nests of all wild birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

Badgers and their setts are legally protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. No evidence of badger activity was recorded on site during the 2020 survey and also the 2022 walkover site visit and the 2023 biodiversity net gain assessment survey. Reasonable Avoidance Measures are recommended during construction works to prevent harm to any badgers which may pass through the site (further detail below).

Invasive Species

The 2020 ecology report identified the presence of Cotoneaster sp. on site (growing under the cherry laurel). Many species of cotoneaster are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow these invasive species in the wild.

Recommendations

Biodiversity enhancements are expected as part of developments in line with local (paragraph 3.345 of the LDF) and national planning policy (NPPF). The DEFRA Metric calculation show there is currently a deficit in habitat units once BNG is added. This would need to be addressed via delivery of off-site BNG to ensure the development achieves measurable BNG overall. It is advised that a minimum 10% BNG is sought as this is stated within the Environment Act 2021 which has received Royal Assent. A minimum of 10% BNG is also required in accordance with the GMCA BNG Guidelines for Greater Manchester (February 2021).

A suitable offsetting strategy is outlined within the BNG Assessment report: SMBC can accept £15,000 per biodiversity unit for offsetting plus an appropriate management and monitoring fee (in the region of 10%) along with adjustments for inflation. This is an interim figure based on advice from the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) following pilot studies carried out within Greater Manchester and work undertaken by DEFRA.

To achieve 10% gain in biodiversity units, this would result in an offsetting payment in the region of:

[habitat units lost + 10% of baseline habitat units = 1.001 units required]

0.9 habitat units + (1.01 x 0.1) x £15000 = £15,015

Plus management and monitoring fee (10%) = **£16,516.50***

*Please note that the final figure will need to include adjustments for inflation and is also subject to change following any future amendments to the landscape plans.

This commuted sum can be secured via a legal agreement to cover the habitat enhancement, maintenance and monitoring costs at the receptor/off-setting site. A suitable site for delivery of BNG offsetting for this application has been identified

at SJ907908 off New Bridge Lane and New Zealand Road. The committed sum would contribute towards the management and enhancement of woodland, therefore satisfying the trading rules of the metric ('habitats should be like for like or better') and also the spatial hierarchy (the proposed offsetting site is located near the development site being located within the same ward). Alternatively the applicant may wish to pursue other potential options in order to deliver BNG - such as using a Habitat Broker, but the mechanism to deliver BNG will need to be agreed prior to determination of the application to provide assurances that measurable net gains for biodiversity will be secured in accordance with the NPPF.

Assuming the offsetting strategy presented within the BNG Assessment Report is agreed, the following condition can be attached to any planning consent granted:

Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, including any earthworks, a Biodiversity Net Gain Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The management plan shall detail how the proposals within the submitted (Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report (GreenSpace Consultancy SMBC, April 2023) and the (Biodiversity DEFRA Metric April 2023) shall be implemented. The management plan shall include:

- Detailed habitat creation proposals, for each habitat proposed on and off the site;
- Detailed habitat management and enhancement proposals for retained and improved habitats;
- Maintenance measures during the establishment periods;
- Maintenance measures beyond establishment until target condition acquired;
- Management and maintenance beyond target condition up to 30 years;
- Monitoring and review procedures with the Local Planning Authority
- Potential contingencies should a proposed habitat and/or target condition be concluded to be unachievable; and
- Details of the organisations responsible for implementing, managing and monitoring the works.

The development shall thereafter be undertaken and maintained in accordance with the approved management plan

All retained trees should be adequately protected from potential adverse impacts in accordance with British Standards and following advice from the Council's Arboriculture Officer. Mitigation for proposed tree loss will be required via new tree planting. Indicative landscape proposals submitted with the application indicate that new trees are proposed on site – it is advised that proposed tree cover is increased where possible on site and the Council's Arboriculture Officer will be able to provide further guidance on this. The buffer habitat along the boundary of the site should be retained as far as possible and preferably enhanced. Tree planting should be maximised within the site and any landscape planting should comprise wildlife-friendly (preferably locally native species) and be selected to provide a nectar/berry resource across the seasons.

Onsite enhancement measures should be detailed on a Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancements Plan and submitted to the LPA for review, and would be expected to include:

- Native tree and/or fruit tree planting
- Provision of mixed species native hedgerows at site boundaries where possible

- A minimum of one bat and/or bird box to be provided within/mounted on each new dwelling – details of the proposed number, location and type to be submitted to the LPA (detailed on the landscape plan). Boxes should be integrated (ideally) or be made from woodstone/woodcrete for greater longevity.
- Provision of native hedgerows to demark plot boundaries (rather than the currently proposed close-board wooden fencing).
- Any close-board boundary fencing to incorporate gaps (250m x 250mm) to maintain habitat connectivity for wildlife (e.g. hedgehogs and badger)

These measures would help ensure the development accords with the NPPF and would be particularly welcomed given the designation of the site as an opportunity area within the LNRS for Greater Manchester.

The trees on site have been assessed as offering negligible bat roosting potential and so the proposed works are considered to be of very low risk to roosting bats. Bats can be highly cryptic in their roosting behaviour however and can sometimes roost in seemingly unlikely places. As a precautionary measure it is recommended that an informative is attached to any planning consent granted so that the applicant is aware of the (very low) potential for roosting bats to be present. It should also state that the granting of planning permission does not negate the need to abide by the legislation in place to protect biodiversity. If at any time during works, evidence of roosting bats (or any other protected species) is discovered on site, works must cease and a suitably experienced ecologist contacted for advice.

Precautionary conditions should be imposed in respect of nesting birds and badgers.

An invasive non-native species protocol detailing the containment, control and removal of Cotoneaster on site should be secured by condition.

An external lighting condition should be imposed to avoid impacts on bats.

A further condition should be imposed requiring an ecological resurvey should development not commence by April 2024 given the potential for change over time.

SMBC Drainage Engineer

The Sustainable Drainage Strategy submitted for this application falls short of providing a detailed sustainable drainage strategy for the site.

- We require a Drainage Strategy for the site.
- Our records indicate that infiltration may be viable. Please provide results of infiltration investigations.
- Surface water should be at greenfield rates or 5l/s.
- Investigate the use of permeable paving or landscaping features such as green roofs, tree pits and rain water harvesting.
- Establish if a connection to a watercourse is viable.
- Establish if a connection to a surface water sewer is viable.

United Utilities

Recommend that a sustainable drainage condition is attached to any planning permission.

ANALYSIS

Principle of proposed use and housing need

UDP policy TCG3.7 – ‘New Bridge Lane’ expressly permits residential use in the area and the proposed new dwellings are considered compatible with existing neighbouring dwellings.

Core Strategy Policy CS4 states that up to 50% of the overall housing provision in the plan period should be within the Central Housing Area and Town Centre and that up to 2000 dwellings should be provided in the TCG2 and TCG3 policy areas. Policies CS2 and CS3 also make clear that a balanced mix of new housing will be focused in accessible urban areas such as the Town Centre. Policy CS4 emphasises the clear benefits of this strategy as follows:

"New housing development will boost the Town Centre economy, making it a vibrant place to be during the day and in the evening. It will improve the built environment by regenerating vacant and under-used sites in and around the centre, and provide homes in a location readily accessible to jobs and services within Stockport and Manchester City Centre."

It should also be acknowledged that Stockport currently suffers from a significant housing undersupply, particularly affordable housing and given the site's sustainable location the 'tilted balance' or strong presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in NPPF is engaged.

It should also be noted that the proposed bungalow has been designed to enhanced accessibility standards to meet the needs of wheelchair users and there is a clear and identified need for this form of accommodation.

The application site is located within consultation distance of a major gas storage site / pipeline. The Health and Safety Executive have been duly consulted and raise no objection to the proposed development.

The proposed new homes are therefore acceptable in principle.

Access

The application site is located at the edge of the town centre and is considered a sustainable and suitable location for housing development.

Despite the objections received from local residents, the proposed level of parking provision is considered to meet the needs of the development and will also meet some existing local demand for on-street parking. Disabled and electric vehicle charging parking provision is in accordance with adopted minimum standards.

An adequate easement will be provided along the St Mary's Way / New Bridge Lane retaining wall to allow for inspection and maintenance.

The Council's Highway Engineer has reviewed the proposals in detail and concluded that the proposal is considered acceptable subject to:

- conditions;
- a legal agreement to secure commuted sums to deliver a necessary Traffic Regulation Order at the Alpine Road/Mountain Street junction; and

- the submission of a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and Designer's Response together with any consequential minor, detailed design amendments.

Despite the objections from local residents, it is considered that subject to the resolution of these outstanding matters, the proposals would be in accordance with the development plan and NPPF in access and highway safety terms.

Design quality

Despite the loss of some existing trees and greenspace, the development would respect the site's existing context. The design of the three houses on Alpine Road are a good quality, modern take on the existing terraced housing that respect the scale, mass and building line of adjacent houses and are stepped to reflect the changes in ground level. The materials palette is a combination of red brick, slate coloured roof tiles and complementary black or grey windows, doors and rainwater goods. Each terraced house would have a modern storm-porch canopy and a window opening and feature brickwork are included on the gable elevations.

The reduced height of the bungalow to the rear and retention of some existing trees ensures that the amenity of existing residents is protected and a planted buffer between dwellings and St Mary's Way is retained. The bungalow design follows a similar materials palette to the houses and has been designed to enhanced accessibility standards for wheelchair users (Part M - Category 3 standards) and features a larger covered porch.

The submitted site plan includes an indicative landscaping scheme that incorporates compensatory tree and shrub planting across the site to soften the visual impact of the development and help compensate for trees and shrubs lost to development. Each dwelling would benefit from front boundary walls and railings to delineate private space whilst timber fencing proposed to enclose rear garden areas.

A condition requiring the submission and approval of a detailed landscaping scheme is considered necessary but the layout as proposed is considered a good starting point for further design development.

Overall and subject to the imposition of conditions, the proposals are considered to be good quality design.

Residential amenity

The proposed development is not considered to unduly affect the amenity of existing residents.

The position, scale and mass of the three terraced houses essentially mirrors the existing street pattern ensuring no adverse impacts will arise. Although the proposed bungalow will affect the outlook of residents of 1-11 Alpine Road, the low lying nature of the proposed bungalow and the circa 8.5 metre gap between its blank gable and existing houses is a comfortable relationship in amenity terms. The blank gable ensures no overlooking would arise whilst the impact on daylight and sunlight is considered negligible given its scale relative to the far taller existing mature trees it would replace. It is however considered necessary to remove permitted development rights for the bungalow to ensure this remains the case over time. This would be achieved by way of a planning condition.

In terms of the amenity of future residents all properties would benefit from private gardens and receive adequate levels of privacy, daylight and sunlight.

The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with relevant planning policy requirements in amenity terms.

Impact on trees and ecology

The applicant has submitted ecological and arboricultural reports in support of their application.

Their arboricultural report highlights that the existing trees on the site are split into two types – the trees that existed before the recent TCAP highway alterations and those which were planted since. All of the recently planted trees have a tree retention category 'C' (low quality and value) due to their relative youth and trunk diameter. The other older trees are a mixture of self-seeded Ash and Sycamore with some Bird Cherry that are of a reasonable condition/quality but not outstanding – five of these trees are of a moderate quality (category B1) that would be lost to development within the footprint of the new houses fronting Alpine Road. Similarly, the larger mature trees to the rear of Nos 1-11 Alpine Road would be lost to development. Trees to the rear of 13-15 Alpine Road referenced in the public comments would remain.

Overall, the report concludes that the necessary loss of trees would have a minimal environmental impact which could be offset by compensatory planting on-site and elsewhere within the area. On that basis and subject to necessary conditions and planning obligations, no conflict with relevant tree protection policies would arise.

The submitted ecological report has been scrutinised by the Council's Nature Development Officer whose detailed comments are provided above. The applicant has agreed to fund off-site biodiversity enhancements to ensure an overall 10% biodiversity net gain on Council owned land off New Bridge Lane and New Zealand Road within Brinnington and Central Ward. This would be secured by way of a legal agreement (see below). A series of other recommendations are made that can be adequately addressed by way of planning conditions. Conditions are recommended accordingly and therefore no conflict with relevant policies arise.

Air Quality

The eastern part of the application site lies in an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) designated for exceedances of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) arising from road traffic along St Mary's Way. The applicant has therefore submitted an Air Quality Assessment which found that the proposed development is considered suitable for the proposed end-use without the implementation of protective mitigation techniques. This has been scrutinised by the Council's EHO who agrees with its findings. No further action is therefore required.

Noise

The application site is exposed to elevated noise levels from passing road and air traffic. The applicant therefore submitted a noise assessment in support of their application that found that noise mitigation measures are required to provide satisfactory living conditions, including:

- acoustic double glazing to rooms on all elevations exposed to road traffic & air traffic noise;
- a continuous running mechanical extract ventilation system supplemented with an additional purge ventilation fan in each habitable room is required for the proposed bungalow except its west facing elevation;
- on all elevations mechanical extract ventilation and acoustically rated trickle vents are specified - opening windows for purge ventilation is deemed to be generally acceptable
- Recommended 1.8m (min) height boundary acoustic fencing should be incorporated along the boundary of the landscaped area, i.e. the top of the retaining wall bounding the footway of St Marys Way / New Bridge Lane.

This has been scrutinised by the Council's EHO who agrees with its findings. It is considered necessary to impose a condition to secure a satisfactory outcome that is sufficiently flexible to allow for revisions to the landscaping scheme as the proposed positioning of a solid boundary fence along the retaining wall is a not a desirable outcome from a design/townscape perspective without planting to soften its visual impact. Similarly, the position of the bungalow has changed slightly during the application process to reduce the impact on existing trees and vegetation and so final mitigation details will need to be revisited and formally approved. Subject to the imposition of such a condition the development would comply with policy SIE-3 and national policy.

Contaminated Land

A Preliminary Risk Assessment has been submitted in support of the application and recommends that further intrusive investigations are undertaken prior to development commencing to better understand the risks (if any) to human health and the environment are properly managed. The Council's Contaminated Land officer agrees with these conclusions and so the imposition of conditions requiring further investigation and mitigation/remediation where necessary are recommended accordingly.

Sustainable Design and Drainage

The application is supported by a Sustainable Drainage Strategy document that outlines the sustainable drainage solution for the site. The document suggests the use of an engineered design solution to reduce surface water run-off and connections into the foul sewer in Alpine Road but falls short of a detailed sustainable drainage scheme. It would therefore be necessary to impose a condition requiring the submission and written approval of a detailed sustainable drainage scheme prior to development above ground level.

Recent changes to the Building Regulations that would apply to this development require levels of carbon reduction that surpass the requirements of Core Strategy SD3 and therefore no further action is considered necessary in this case.

Planning obligations

The number of new homes proposed falls below the threshold for affordable housing provision as set out in policy Core Strategy policy H-3 and so it is not necessary to secure affordable housing as part of any planning permission. However, given the applicant is Stockport Homes and the land is owned by the Council, members can be satisfied affordable homes would be delivered should planning permission be granted.

As there is no scope to provide children's play and formal recreation facilities on the application site, policy SIE-2 and the Open Space Provision and Commuted Payments Supplementary Planning Document require a commuted sum to be paid to the Council for off-site provision and maintenance to meet the needs of future residents. For this development, this equates to a financial contribution of £10,786.50 plus a £750 monitoring and reporting fee. This would be secured by way of a Section 111 legal agreement given the Council owns the land.

There is also a requirement to pay a further commuted sum of £16,516.50 to fund off-site biodiversity net gain mitigation as detailed above.

Finally, a commuted sum of £7500 to fund a Traffic Regulation Order to introduce parking restrictions on Mountain Street at its junction with Alpine Road is considered necessary to ensure access to the proposed parking and turning areas.

Overall, this currently equates to a total of £35,553 but note this could be subject to minor variations when detailed landscaping proposals are finalised and the biodiversity net gain metric is updated to reflect any changes.

The applicant has agreed these obligations in writing.

Other matters

Noise and general disturbance generated by construction activity can be adequately managed through the imposition of a planning condition requiring the submission, approval and implementation of a construction management plan to prevent adverse impacts.

Comments received in respect of the adequacy and reasonableness of neighbour notification process have been addressed during the application process with further time given to residents to respond when requested. All notification processes were undertaken in accordance with statutory requirements and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

During the course of the application, amendments were made to enlarge the green buffer between existing and proposed housing and St Mary's Way ensuring a greater amount of trees and vegetation will be retained.

Bollards are proposed on the existing alleyway to prevent vehicular access which were welcomed in one response.

Overall conclusion

Despite the receipt of public objections to the development, it is considered that the proposed development will deliver much needed affordable housing in the Town Centre including a bungalow with enhanced accessibility standards for wheelchair user(s). Any adverse impacts of the development have been adequately mitigated and are not considered to outweigh the clear public benefits of the proposals, not least the provision of additional affordable housing in a period of significant undersupply. The development is considered to be in accordance with the statutory development plan and NPPF and approval is recommended accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant subject to:

- the imposition of necessary planning conditions; and
- the completion of a Section 111 legal agreement to secure the following heads of terms:
 - a financial contribution of £10,786.50 plus a £750 monitoring and reporting fee for the provision and maintenance of children's play and formal recreation facilities;
 - a biodiversity net gain commuted sum to achieve 10% gain in biodiversity units off-site resulting in an offsetting payment currently in the region of £16,516.50 (note: precise figure to be confirmed once a detailed landscaping scheme has been finalised as changes to on-site planting etc. could change the results in the metric); and
 - a commuted sum of £7500 to fund the provision of parking restrictions on Mountain Street and around it's junction with Alpine Road.

UPDATE FROM CENTRAL AREA COMMITTEE 22 JUNE 2023

The planning officer introduced the application.

A local resident then spoke against the application on parking grounds whilst making clear he is a supporter of social housing. He stated that if the scheme was revised residents would support it noting the main objection is the impact the scheme will have on availability of on-street car parking given the current lack of off-street parking and proximity of Vernon Park Primary School. He stated that currently there are around 8 parking spaces on Mountain Street which would be reduced to 3 public spaces. He stated that previous proposals for a resident parking permit scheme promised a school highway safety measures that seem to be missing from the proposal. He stated that local residents generally did not object to the bungalow but did raise concerns that the three terraced houses did not have any parking associated with them. He stated that a better solution would be to replace the houses with a bungalow with parking provision protect the living standards of existing residents.

The planning officer stated that whilst he understood the objector's position and local parking challenges the proposed 9 parking spaces for 4 new dwellings was generous.

Cllr Carrigan then stated that whilst supportive of affordable housing she also understood local residents' concerns about parking problems and proposed that the Planning and Highways Committee visit the site before a decision is made so the implications are fully understood. This was unanimously agreed by the committee.