

## ITEM

<b>Application Reference</b>	<b>DC/090411</b>
<b>Location:</b>	Kenwood Point Kenwood Road Stockport Reddish SK5 6PH
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Demolition and redevelopment of the existing industrial/warehouse and associated service yard, and the erection of a 25,900sqm data centre alongside associated parking, servicing, access and other associated works.
<b>Type Of Application:</b>	Full Application
<b>Registration Date:</b>	27.11.2023
<b>Expiry Date:</b>	Extension of Time agreed
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Jeni Regan
<b>Applicant:</b>	KD 5 Limited
<b>Agent:</b>	JLL

## DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS

Planning and Highways Regulation Committee – Development of in excess of 5,000 square metres of floorspace. Application referred to Heatons and Reddish Area Committee for comment and recommendation only.

## DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Planning permission is sought for the redevelopment of this existing industrial site to provide a Data Centre on the site with associated parking, servicing access and other associated works. The redevelopment proposals include the demolition of the existing industrial unit measuring 160,098 sqft (14,873 sqm) and the clearance of the wider site. Following this site clearance, permission is then sought for the erection of a 3 storey data centre building (25,900sqm).

As outlined within the application submission, data centres are “*warehouse-type properties housing IT and telecoms infrastructure, in the form of racks of computer servers. The purpose of a data centre is to store, manage and process IT data, which is connected by superfast fibre optic broadband networks to businesses and institutions 17 locally, nationally and internationally. A key purpose of a data centre is to facilitate ‘cloud computing’, the concept whereby data is stored and processed within a facility owned by a third-party, in this case Kao Data. Cloud computing has seen significant growth over the past decade, driven by cloud-based services and global consumer platforms (Google, Microsoft, and many others) which rely on this technology.*”

The data centre building would be located to the north-east of the site and would house the data processing function and ancillary uses. This would include technical spaces, offices, plant rooms, ancillary/support, external plant gantries. The main entrance into the building is shown as being located to the south of the building and

sits adjacent to the loading bay. This front central area of the building is where the offices are located and comprise the main glazed section of the building.

Immediately to the front of the building would be the on site back up facility including a number of generators. As the application advises, resilience is a key requirement for data centres and as such they need to have the ability to generate their own power in the extremely unlikely event of a network failure. A generator compound is therefore, required for these low risk events. The stand-by generators would be located behind a 5m high acoustic screen that would run along the south-east elevation of the compound.

In terms of parking and circulation, the proposals include the provision of 90 car parking spaces. These would be located within a number of different parking areas around the site. The main car parking area to the front of the building would include 50 no. spaces including 2 no. accessible spaces and 4 no. motorcycle spaces. 2 no. additional EV enabled, accessible spaces are located within the secure fence line, adjacent to the main entrance.

Two additional staff car parks will be located to the north and west of the data centre. These car parks will have 14no. and 26no. car parking spaces respectively.

It is proposed that of the 90 spaces, 12 will be fitted with active EVCPs, including four Blue Badge Holder parking spaces. Cycle parking for 16no. spaces are located adjacent to the car park.

The main vehicular access into the site would be via the existing access from Kenwood Road, which would be used for entry and exit by all users. A vehicle emergency (only) access would also be proposed be a vehicle emergency (only) from the corner of Carna Road and Lyndhurst Road. A one-way vehicle circulation road would encircle the data centre building for full access to the site and the parking.

In addition to the main building and the generator compound, other built elements would include a single storey security lodge located adjacent to the campus access point off Kenwood Road, and a High Voltage (HV) electricity Substation, to handle the voltage conversion from the national grid for distribution and use on-site, is located to the south of the site, adjacent to the main car park. The proposed interim electrical substation is located further east within the site.

Finally, a comprehensive landscaping scheme and proposed new boundary treatments are proposed for around the site. This landscaping would be incorporated across the campus for the purpose of SUDs, biodiversity, on-site amenities and screening.

## **SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

The application site is an existing industrial site in North Reddish. It measures approx. 4.06 hectares and is comprised of a detached, double height warehouse building with a floorspace of 14,873 sqm, which was originally constructed in the 1970's. The building incorporates the warehousing and ancillary office and canteen accommodation. The building is then surrounded by existing hardstanding with some trees along the site boundaries. The site is now vacant and in a dilapidated condition.

Vehicular access to the site is via an existing access road to the west between other existing industrial sites. The access road is directly off Kenwood Road, which then leads into Station Road to the south. The site is separated in the north west corner by the Thirlmere Aqueduct (three statutory water pipes on a gantry) and accessed by a road passing under it. This triangular piece of land is stepped down slightly lower than the rest of the site and currently provides space for overflow parking.

The site is bounded to the north by an existing railway line. A cemetery and residential properties are present on the other side of the railway line to the north. The site is bounded to the east and south by residential properties (Cravenwood Road, Lyndhurst Road and Carna Road). The remaining southern and western boundary is abutted by neighbouring industrial uses.

The application site is allocated within a Policy Guidance Area for Station Road, North Reddish as defined on the UDP Proposal Map. The site is not located within a Conservation Area, nor are there any designated or non-designated heritage assets within the application site or nearby area.

## **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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

### **Saved policies of the SUDP Review**

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/current-planning-policies>

- PG1.2 Station Road, North Reddish’ Policy Guidance Area
- E1.1 Location of New Industrial Development
- E1.2 Location of New Business Premises and Offices
- EP1.7 Development and Flood Risk

### **LDF Core Strategy/Development Management policies**

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/current-planning-policies>

- CS1 : Overarching Principles: Sustainable Development – Addressing Inequalities and Climate Changes
- SD-1 : Creating Sustainable Communities
- SD-3 : Delivering the Energy Opportunities Plan – New Development
- SD-6 : Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change
- CS7 Accommodating Economic Development
- AED-3 Employment Development in Employment Areas
- AED-6 Employment Sites Outside Protected Employment Areas
- CS8: Safeguarding and Improving the Environment

- SIE-1: Quality Places
- SIE-3: Protecting, Safeguarding and Enhancing the Environment
- CS9 : Transport and Development
- CS10 : An Effective and Sustainable Transport Network
- T-1 : Transport and Development
- T-2: Parking in Developments
- T-3: 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.

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/current-planning-policies>

- Sustainable Transport
- Sustainable Design and Construction

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

A Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on the 19th December 2023 replaced the previous NPPF (originally issued 2012 & revised July 2018, February 2019, July 2021 and September 2023). 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”.

The relevant paragraphs in this case are as follows:

Introduction - Paras 1, 2

Chapter 2: Achieving Sustainable Development – Paras 7, 8, 11

Chapter 4: Decision-Making – Paras 38, 47

Chapter 6: Building a Strong, Competitive Economy – Paras 85, 87

Chapter 9: Promoting Sustainable Transport – Paras 114, 115, 116, 117

Chapter 11: Making Effective Use of Land – Paras 123, 124

Chapter 12: Achieving Well-Designed and Beautiful Places – Paras 131, 135, 136, 137, 139

Chapter 14: Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change – Paras 157-164, 175

Para.225 “*existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should*

*be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)”.*

## **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.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

Reference: J/1251, Type: XHS, Address: Station Road, Reddish., Decision: REF, Decision Date: 18-NOV-75, Proposal: Erection of new building for production of steel containers together with circulation roads.

Reference: J/7795, Type: XHS, Address: Station Road, Reddish, Stockport., Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 12-JAN-77, Proposal: 150,000 sq. ft. building for manufacture of containers.

Reference: J/8444, Type: XHS, Address: Station Road, Reddish, Stockport., Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 05-APR-77, Proposal: Erection of Industrial Building, Offices and toilets.

Reference: J/8445, Type: XHS, Address: Station Road, Reddish, Stockport., Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 05-APR-77, Proposal: Proposed screen fence.

Reference: J/10299, Type: XHS, Address: S C C Ltd, Kenwood Road, North Reddish, Stockport, SK5 6PH, Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 08-DEC-77, Proposal: Erection of electricity sub-station.

Reference: J/11882, Type: XHS, Address: Station Rd, Reddish, Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 20-JUN-78, Proposal: External floodlighting on No 4 tripole towers and on building 55ft mounting height.

Reference: J/37220, Type: XHS, Address: Station Road, Reddish, Stockport., Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 18-SEP-86, Proposal: Building to be used as paint store.

Reference: J/61890, Type: FUL, Address: Thomas Storey (Engineers) Ltd Station Road, Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 09-MAY-95, Proposal: Construction of chimney stacks upon existing roof

Reference: J/62623, Type: FUL, Address: Thomas Storey (Engineers) Ltd Station Road, Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 25-JUL-95, Proposal: Increase in height of stacks for No. 2 works

Reference: J/66541, Type: FUL, Address: Kenwood Road Off Station Road, Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 10-MAR-97, Proposal: New palisade fence 2.4m high x 90m long, sub-dividing the existing works into two separate works

Reference: DC/002067, Type: FUL, Address: S.C.C. Ltd., Kenwood Road, Off Station Road, Reddish, Stockport., Decision: FDO, Decision Date: 14-JUN-07, Proposal: Retrospective application for erection of tower crane (37.3m high, 71.7m diameter).

Reference: DC/026395, Type: FUL, Address: S C C Ltd, Kenwood Road, North Reddish, Stockport, SK5 6PH, , Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 18-JUN-07, Proposal: Single storey extension

Reference: DC/066402, Type: FUL, Address: Avery Industrial Estate, Kenwood Road, North Reddish, Stockport, SK5 6PH, , Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 05-SEP-17, Proposal: The location of a mobile concrete batching plant to provide on-site concrete production facilities for the pre-case concrete business location at SCC Design Build at Kenwood Road, Reddish, Stockport, SK5 6PH.

Reference: DC/069942, Type: VC, Address: S C C Ltd , Kenwood Road, North Reddish, Stockport, SK5 6PH, Decision: REF, Decision Date: 03-APR-19, Proposal: Variation of condition 3 to planning approval DC/066402 to vary the hours of operation of the plant to between 07.00 hours to 20.00 hrs on Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 07.30 hrs and 13.00 hrs on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank Holidays

Reference: DC/073364, Type: FUL, Address: SCC Design Build Ltd, Kenwood Road, North Reddish, Stockport, SK5 6PH, , Decision: GTD, Decision Date: 03-JUL-19, Proposal: Erection of a Gantry Crane over an existing assembly area.

Reference: DC/088924, Type: SCR, Address: Kenwood Point, Kenwood Road, Stockport, SK5 6PH, Decision: EAN, Decision Date: 28-JUN-23, Proposal: Demolition and redevelopment of the existing industrial/warehouse and associated service yards and the erection of an approx. 26,873sqm data centre alongside associated parking and servicing access

Reference: DC/090552, Type: P11B, Address: Kenwood Point, Kenwood Road, North Reddish, Stockport, SK5 6PH, Decision: PARA, Decision Date: 17-JAN-24, Proposal: Prior Approval for Demolition: The structure comprises of a detached, high-bay industrial facility with steel frame and steel cladding to the exterior. It measures 10.5m to the underside of the haunch.

## **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Submitted with this application is a Statement of Community Involvement, which details the public consultation that was carried out by the applicant ahead of submitting a full application for the proposed development. This exercise is an important element of the planning process and the determination of this application.

Early public engagement is not only encouraged by this Planning Authority but also by the Government noting that para 40 of the NPPF advises that LPA's should "*encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees before submitting their applications.*" Stockport Council formally adopted its current Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in 2015. This sets out that, where the council deems a proposal to have the potential to significantly impact the local community, the developer will be urged to actively involve the local community. This process not only serves as a means to raise public awareness but also facilitates the incorporation of local residents' perspectives when formulating

the development proposal specifics.

This report advises that the consultation included the following:

- In advance of launching the public consultation, Kao Data wrote to local stakeholders on Monday 11 September to make them aware of the proposal and planned consultation and to offer a briefing with the project team.
- On Friday 6 October 2023, a consultation newsletter and freepost reply card was posted 1st class to 2,000 households and businesses close to the site. This included details of the consultation website with an online feedback form, and also a freephone information line number and a feedback email address. This letter invited people to book in a 30-minute virtual appointment with the project team on Thursday 19 October.
- A detailed press release (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023) was issued to several local media publications including, Manchester Evening News, Stockport Independent, Reddish Community Forum, Place North West and Marketing Stockport.
- The consultation website and online feedback form was live from Monday 9 October until Monday 23 October.

The two-page A4 newsletter contained the following information:

- An overview of the proposals
- Illustrative CGI of the development concept
- Details of the project website and virtual consultation
- Explanation of what a data centre is
- Overview of Kao Data
- Benefits of the proposed development
- Email and freephone contact details

In terms of feedback, the following responses were received:

- Two 30 minute online meetings were held with neighbouring businesses, Grange Products and Elmax Engineering.
- Total of 27 responses in total (online, email and freephone and reply card responses)

This equates to a response rate of approximately 1.3%. Of the 27 responses, 11 (40.7%) strongly supported the proposals, 2 (7.4%) were in support, 6 (22.2%) were neutral, 2 (7.4%) opposed the development and 6 (22.2%) strongly opposed. Other key figures in answer to the questions posed in the feedback form were as follows:

- 57% of respondents agreeing that the redevelopment of the existing industrial into a modern data centre would be a good use of the site.
- 57% of respondents indicated that sustainability and energy efficiency was important to them and had impacted the way they view the proposals.
- 50% of respondents recognised the benefits that Kao Data's proposals will bring to Stockport, including job creation, salary generation and local investment.

As part of online feedback form, free text questions were included that allowed the respondents to write longer answers and provide detailed thoughts on the proposals. The key themes and frequency of which they appeared were as follows;

- 11 - Apprehensions regarding the proposals leading to increased noise pollution
- 8 - Worries regarding the proposals' potential to adversely affect local traffic conditions
- 7 - Concerns about the site contributing to elevated emissions
- 6 - Is the employment opportunity only of a temporary nature?
- 4 - Pleased to hear about job opportunities 5 Investment in Stockport and Reddish is welcome

The Statement of Community Involvement concludes that the applicant has taken note of all comments received from stakeholders and residents during the consultation process. Although there have been no fundamental changes to the design proposal, further information and clarification has been provided with the planning application which provides clarification on a number of issues raised by stakeholders and neighbours in relation to matters of traffic, accessibility, noise, sustainability and economic/employment.

### **NEIGHBOUR'S VIEWS**

The owners/occupiers of 87 surrounding properties and businesses were notified in writing of the application and the application was advertised by way of display of notices on site and in the press. Representations have been received from 3 addresses, 1 in objection to the proposals, 1 in support and 1 states a neutral stance. The comments provided are summarised below :-

#### **Neutral**

- I wish to be kept informed of any changes and progression of this proposal.
- The design must adhere to the local landscape, not obtrusive or cheaply constructed.
- Concerned about restricted parking due to site vehicle use, passing traffic in front of my property, congestion on Station Road (already a narrow passing point) Concerned about increased drainage and water run off.
- I would like to see enforced an operational time slot in which goods vehicles/site traffic can use the roads (Station Road in particular). Ideally between the hours of 10am-4pm.
- Increased traffic means more pollution and traffic noise (this is my main concern) Concerned about the safe removal of hazardous materials from site during and after completion.

#### **Support**

We are business owners and residents in Reddish and we think this is a massive improvement opportunity bringing lots of jobs to the area and improves a wasted old brownfield site. Please approve.

#### **Objection**

- It is believed that the proposed application will have adverse effects on the health and wellbeing of the residents due to increased traffic, noise, pollution, and safety issues.

- **Traffic:** The proposed data centre will generate a significant amount of traffic, both during the construction and operation phases. The Transport Statement submitted by the applicant estimates that the data centre will generate 585 vehicle trips per day, including 37 HGV trips. This will add to the existing traffic congestion and delays on Kenwood Road, Station Road, and other surrounding roads.
- **Pollution:** The proposed data centre will consume a large amount of energy, which will result in increased emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. The Energy Statement and BREEAM Summary submitted by the applicant claims that the data centre will achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent', but does not provide any breakdown of calculations to support this claim. The statement also does not address the potential impact of the data centre on the local air quality, which is already poor due to the existing industrial activities in the area.
- **Safety:** The proposed data centre will pose a safety risk to the children who currently cycle and walk to and from school along Kenwood Road and Station Road. There are already several near misses on Station Road because of the speeding cars to and from the industrial estate. Unless the local authority implements traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps, zebra crossings, and cycle lanes, we do not feel that our children will be able to walk or cycle to and from school safely. The proposed data centre will also increase the risk of fire, explosion, and cyberattack, which could have devastating consequences for the nearby residents and businesses.
- We urge the council to reject this planning application and protect the health and wellbeing of the residents and the environment. We request that the council considers alternative sites for the data centre that are more suitable and less harmful.

## **CONSULTEE RESPONSES**

All consultation responses can be viewed in full on the online application file via the Council's public website.

However, for the purposes of this report, these are summarised below:

### **Planning Policy (Employment)**

The quantitative assessment finds Station Road, Reddish to be of 'poor quality', scoring 19 out of 39, with key issues being the quality of existing units, inadequate highways infrastructure and poor access. The ELR recommends that some degree of policy flexibility to enable non-traditional uses in employment areas is appropriate in cases where it is shown that the benefits to the local economy are capable of outweighing the harm.

The Borough Plan includes an ambition to become a digitally inclusive and radical borough by ensuring digital literacy and leading digital connectivity.

The site is allocated as a Policy Guidance Area under Saved Unitary Development Plan Policy PG1.2 'Station Road, North Reddish'. The policy notes that business would be an appropriate use and states that further industrial development will only be acceptable if it can be segregated from the nearby housing and alternative access provided.

Core Strategy DM Policy AED-6 protects employment land outside Employment Areas. The proposal will replace one employment generating use with another such

use, despite it being in another use class. As such, there is no 'loss' of employment and so the criteria listed in Policy AED-6 do not need to be satisfied.

## Employment and Skills

Overall for an Economy, Work and Skills perspective, very supportive of the application in terms of the economic opportunity and high quality, high skilled, and well paid new jobs this will create for both the Centre and during construction.

The planning application by KAO for a new Data Centre in Reddish provides the potential for a major economic boost and opportunity for Stockport, and the wider Greater Manchester City Region. The regeneration of the site in Reddish, that currently comprises low quality industrial premises, will provide both economic and physical regeneration to the area. Most importantly for the local community, the development provides excellent employment and skills opportunities for local people, including from Stockport's priority groups of unemployed people and those most economically disadvantaged in the labour market. This is both in terms of well paid, high quality end user jobs at the Data Centre, and other high skilled jobs during the construction phase. There will also be benefits for local suppliers and other businesses local to the area, such as those in the retail and hospitality sectors.

The Economic Statement accompanying the Planning Application identifies a total of around 80 FTE jobs on the site following occupancy (40 FTE's with KAO Data and a further 40 with Customers based in the Data Centre). Any Planning Application to Stockport Council leading to in excess of 20 FTE new end user jobs, requires an Employment and Skills Agreement between the Developer and Stockport Council, and should cover both end user jobs and construction phase jobs. This is set out in the *Local Employment and Training Benefits Supplementary Planning Document (2012)* that supports Policy AED-5 in the Stockport Unitary Development Plan.

KAO Data should set out how it will commit to working with Stockport Council and local partners, on targeting employment and skills opportunities for the local community in Stockport, in particular those individuals most disadvantaged in the labour market as highlighted later in this briefing note. In particular, the Council encourages engagement with locally Stockport based partners such as Trafford & Stockport College Group (already commenced), Aquinas College and Pure Innovations, as well as mainstream employment support providers and local schools.

KAO should work with the Council's Economy, Work & Skills Service and local partners to set out some key outcomes and actions such as:

- Short courses of Pre-Employment Training (with a training provider), including work experiences and guaranteed interviews
- Apprenticeships
- School Curriculum and Careers Engagement
- Becoming a Supporter of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter

Use of local resources such as *Match My Project* to help offer support to local VCSE organisations.

The Economic Statement identifies that eventually that there will be around 700-1,000 people per year on site working on the construction of the Data Centre, totalling a Design & Build cost to KAO Data of £350m, and a further £50m for Customers fit out in the Centre.

In terms of construction, the Employment & Skills Agreement is crucially about both meeting the strategic recruitment and training needs of the construction sector through growing the skilled labour market locally, as well as maximising opportunities in construction for those people not currently active in the labour market.

Commitment to agree to both these outcomes set out, and to develop an Employment & Skills Method Statement & Plan (in consultation with the Council) to deliver on these outcomes, including targeting the priority groups identified, is required as a Planning Condition, and the Council's Economy, Work and Skills Service will advise the Case Planning Officer when the requirements have been met to discharge the relevant Planning Condition.

## **Highways**

After reviewing the submitted drawings and documents, including a Transport Statement, Workplace Travel Plan, Design and Access Statement and Construction Method Statements, there are no objections to the proposals subject to the inclusion of certain conditions.

I raise no objection to this application for the construction of a data centre at land on Kenwood Road. I consider the site is suitable for such a use from an accessibility perspective and note that the proposed data centre will generate fewer vehicle movements than the site if it was brought back into B2 use. I consider the proposed access and servicing arrangements, as well as the proposed parking facilities, acceptable, although I do consider the number of parking spaces could be reduced. Whilst a Travel Plan has been submitted, I do consider this acceptable in its present form and consider more EV charging points should be provided than that currently proposed. These issues, as well as other matters of detail, however, can be dealt with by condition.

Conditions include the submission of a final Construction Method Statement, full details of the Carna Road / Lyndhurst Road access, all new gates / barriers to be no closer to the highway than the existing gates, details of the vehicular, pedestrian routes and car parking areas, the provision of EVC spaces, the provision of cycle parking and associated facilities, the submission of a fully detailed Travel Plan and the submission of drawing/s illustrating a scheme to provide uncontrolled pedestrian crossings.

## **Environmental Health**

The proposal has been assessed in relation to impact upon the environmental quality of life to existing sensitive receptors, in proximity to the proposed development. An acoustic report has been submitted in support of the application. This service accepts the outcome of the BS 4142 assessment. The conclusions of the report are accepted; however this relies on the installed equipment (and any future replacement equipment) meeting the noise limits used for the assessment.

The noise mitigation scheme, shall be:

- Implemented in full prior to the first use of the plant/equipment.
- Maintained for the purpose originally intended throughout the use of the development.

An external lighting/ illumination assessment has also been submitted in support of the application. The assessment shows that the ILP pre-curfew and post-curfew Zone E3 criteria will not be exceeded at any residential receptor locations as a result

of lighting from the proposed development, with a maximum predicted model illuminance of 0.70 lux at R5a. Therefore, the proposed development is not predicted to result in any significant adverse impacts with respect to local sensitive residential receptors. This service accepts the outcome of the 'external illumination-spillage assessment'.

Conditions in relation to compliance with the submitted noise assessment and lighting assessment, compliance with the construction method statement, and the submission of a construction environmental management plan. Informatives in relation to construction hours and a piling foundation method statement are requested.

### **Contaminated Land**

The submitted RSK Phase II Site Investigation Report and the RSK Phase IIIa Remediation Strategy, both dated November 2023 have been reviewed. From a human health perspective, it is recommended that conditions in relation to the submission of a Remediation Strategy with remedial options confirmed and include gas vapour ingress information, along with the submission of validation of remedial options and gas and vapour measures.

### **Arboriculture**

There is no Conservation area protection within this site or affected by this development nor are there are no legally protected trees within this site or affected by this development. The proposed construction including associated infrastructure of the site predominantly sits within the informal grounds and hard standing areas of the site, but may have a small impact on the low value trees neighbouring the site. The main concern for the development is the potential accidental damage during the construction stages of the site, deliveries and storage of materials and the ever-increasing urban aspect of the site and surrounding areas. The development will need to supply protective fencing and advisory notices to prevent any damage, accidental spillage or compaction on the trees and their root systems.

Although a detailed landscaping scheme has been submitted, it needs to include stock size with a minimum of extra heavy standard. Whilst some of the proposed species are acceptable, recommendations are made to improve these.

Overall, no objections subject to the inclusion of tree retention and protection conditions along with additional information relating to species.

### **Nature Development**

The site itself has no nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise as listed in Stockport's current Local Plan. The railway line immediately to the northeast of the application site is designated as Green Chain. It is important that any future application does not impact on the functionality of the Green Chain as a wildlife corridor.

The site has 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.

Several ecological reports have been submitted with this application to date; a Preliminary Ecological Assessment, a Bat Survey Report and a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment report. It is considered that sufficient ecological information is available to inform determination of the application. Conditions or informatives are requested in relation to badger protection measures, the use of sensitive lighting, the control of invasive species, nesting birds, and the submission of detailed biodiversity enhancement measures.

## **LLFA (Drainage)**

The initial response requested the submission of infiltration testing, a requirement for nature based SuDS to be included in the scheme (permeable paving and landscape features) and for further information relating to existing and proposed run off regimes.

Additional information was subsequently provided in relation to infiltration, permeable paving, landscape swales and rainwater harvesting, CCTV surveys of existing drainage and a proposed drainage strategy shown on plan for the proposed run off regime.

It was also noted that there is an existing watercourse along the northern boundary of the site and it was requested that this was investigated as a potential drainage source. Evidence was provided that it was not practical to connect into the watercourse, due to insufficient depth, and unknown capacity and it being outside the application site and potentially being within someone else's land title which could make it difficult to investigate. It is recognised that there is quite an effort towards providing sustainable drainage with the incorporation of swales and rainwater harvesting for toilet flushing. In addition, the impermeable footprint is now 3.027Ha which is reduced by approx. 25% from the original site area (4.006Ha).

The runoff from this site has not been going to the watercourse presumably for decades or perhaps longer. Therefore, to put 3Ha of runoff into it now may be an issue and the potential flood risk would require investigation. The connection of the public SW sewer to the combined is a significant distance downstream.

With reference to these points, it is considered that on this occasion, the proposals are acceptable in principle.

## **Healthy Planning**

The public health department is not opposed to the principle of this development. However, comments are made in relation to the under use of the triangle area to the north west of the site, the number of parking spaces being excessive, the provision of cycle parking being acceptable to promote active travel, the use of planting to reduce the heat island effect, the pursuit of microgeneration renewable energy sources, and the protection of neighbouring amenity from noise and air pollution, particularly in relation to the generators.

## **TfGM**

No objections to the proposals but comments are made in relation to accident data, trip generation, internal access arrangements, a review of local TRO's, site accessibility and travel planning.

## **Network Rail**

With reference to the protection of the railway, Network Rail has no objection in principle to the proposal, but requirements which must be met are outlined, as the proposal includes works within 10m of the railway boundary and an interface with the railway boundary. This is to ensure that the works on site, and as a permanent arrangement, do not impact upon the safe operation and integrity of the existing operational railway and for the avoidance of doubt of both the council and the developer who may not be aware of the potential for outside party proposals to impact upon the railway.

Requested conditions include the submission of a risk assessment and method statement, details of fencing, scaffolding, vehicle protection measures, groundworks, vibrations and piling close to the site boundary, and drainage being directed away from the railway.

## **United Utilities**

A large diameter trunk main crosses the site. It must not be built over, or our access to the pipeline compromised in any way. We require an access strip as detailed in our 'Standard Conditions for Works Adjacent to Pipelines'. The applicant must comply with this document to ensure pipelines are adequately protected both during and after the construction period.

An initial holding objection was received and a request for a detailed site layout plan which overlays the proven location of the water main in relation to any proposed development (including walls, fencing, parking etc.). This was subsequently provided by the applicant along with the asset protection application submitted by the applicant directly to UU.

UU have responded to state that more time is required to discuss the issues with the applicant and their engineers. However, it is confirmed that although it remains their preference for these matters to be addressed prior to determination, UU have recommended for 2 pre-commencement conditions to be added in relation to asset protection and the submission of a foul and surface water drainage scheme. A condition is also requested in relation to the submission of a sustainable drainage management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development.

## **GMAAS**

The application site does not contain any designated heritage assets and does not lie within a conservation area, although there are two sites of archaeological interest entered onto the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record that are relevant. The first is the route of the Nico Ditch (HER 1404.1.2). However, the section of the Nico Ditch on the application area boundary does merit any further investigation. The second site of relevance is a former brickworks that was operated by John and James Harrison from 1897 to 1919 (HER 14186.1.0). The archaeological interest in the brickworks will lie in the processing buildings and kilns, which were situated immediately to the west of the application area and will not be impacted by the proposed development.

GMAAS are satisfied that the proposed development will not have any impact on archaeological remains and no further consideration of archaeological matters are warranted in this instance.

## **GMP Design for Security**

A Crime Impact Statement was completed and submitted alongside the other documents for the project. After reviewing the drawing provided, we would like to emphasize the recommendations within Section and 3.3 of the CIS are followed.

## **Environment Agency**

The initial response to the application was to object to this development because the information submitted with the application did not demonstrate that the risk of pollution to controlled waters is acceptable/can be appropriately managed. The application's Phase 1 desk study, Phase 2 site investigation and controlled waters DQRA reports do not demonstrate that the risks of pollution have been understood or provide adequate mitigation for these risks. This planning application had therefore failed to meet the requirements of paragraphs 180 and 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Following the receipt of this objection, the applicant and consultants met with the Environment Agency to discuss the concerns raised. Following this meeting and the agreements made, the Environment Agency has now withdrawn their holding objections subject to the inclusion of a number of conditions as follows:

- Submission of a Remediation Strategy;
- Submission of Validation report;
- Submission of a monitoring and maintenance plan in respect of the contamination; No drainage systems for the infiltration of surface water to the ground are permitted; and
- Piling/ investigation boreholes/ground source heating and cooling systems using penetrative methods shall not be carried out other than with the written consent of the local planning authority.

## **Manchester City Council**

No response received.

## **ANALYSIS**

### Policy Principle

The proposal is for the demolition of an existing warehouse and erection of a data centre campus with three storey building comprising data storage function, technical spaces, offices and ancillary uses together with a car park, visitor reception centre, standby generators and electricity substation.

The National Planning Policy Framework at Paragraph 85 notes that planning decisions should place significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Paragraph 86 requires planning policies to be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances. With regard to making effective use of land, Paragraph 123 states that planning policies and decisions

should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings.

The site is allocated as a Policy Guidance Area under Saved Unitary Development Plan Policy PG1.2 'Station Road, North Reddish'. The policy notes that business would be an appropriate use and states that further industrial development will only be acceptable if it can be segregated from the nearby housing and alternative access provided. The explanation to the policy states that the continued presence of industrial activity in this area is supported providing that employment uses remain operational. Should firms relocate or cease operation, the Council would like to see the area redeveloped for uses more suitable for the available access and sympathetic to the neighbouring residential area.

Core Strategy Development Management Policy AED-6 'Employment Sites Outside Protected Employment Areas' notes that proposals for the change of use or redevelopment of employment sites outside designated employment areas which result in loss will not normally be permitted unless it can be demonstrated the site no longer viable for employment, it will not adversely affect the operations of neighbouring premises, the loss would not lead to significantly longer journey to work patterns and the development does not conflict with other policies.

The One Stockport Borough Plan includes an ambition to become a digitally inclusive and radical borough by ensuring digital literacy and leading digital connectivity. The One Stockport Economic Plan was launched in 2022 and finds that digital connectivity in the borough is good with 99% of its premises having access to superfast broadband. As such, Pillar 4 of the Economic Plan, 'Accessible and Connected', aims to ensure that digital infrastructure supports employment and inclusive economic growth.

The 2022 Employment Land Review (ELR) includes a qualitative assessment of existing employment sites and Station Road, Reddish was found to be of 'poor quality', scoring 19 out of 39, with key issues being the quality of existing units, inadequate highways infrastructure and poor access. The ELR finds that such sites could be considered for alternative uses. The conclusions of the ELR with regard to existing employment sites highlight that these have a relatively large proportion of non-traditional employment uses that, whilst generating employment, do not specifically fall within a B or E use class. It is noted that these uses can make an important contribution to the economy although can lead to an ad-hoc and unplanned character, reducing both the level of employment land that can be used for traditional employment purposes and the market attractiveness of these sites. As such, the ELR recommends that some degree of policy flexibility to enable non-traditional uses in employment areas is appropriate in cases where it is shown that the benefits to the local economy are capable of outweighing the harm. Whilst the proposal is for only part of the wider site, the switch from intensive industrial activity and the intended secondary access should improve the site's overall offer.

The proposal would involve the change of use of employment land in a Policy Guidance Area from B2 use to Sui Generis. Data centres are not a traditional employment use of B1, B2 or B8, and so fall under the Sui Generis class. However, it is judged that the proposed use is a suitable fit for the site in principle, given that the PGA includes business as a preferred use and as Saved UDP Policy PG1.2 indicates that alternative uses to B2 would be more suitable

given the poor access and neighbouring uses. National planning policy highlights the requirement for flexibility to respond to needs not anticipated, and evidence both in the Economic Plan and in the submission underlines the importance of the digital sector and data storage to the Borough moving forward.

Core Strategy DM Policy AED-6 protects employment land outside Employment Areas. The proposal will replace one employment generating use with another such use, despite it being in another use class. As such, there is no 'loss' of employment and so the criteria listed in Policy AED-6 do not need to be satisfied.

It is noted from the statement that the site will provide direct employment through 20 full time jobs within the first year and 40 or more full time jobs once operational, together with approximately the same number of indirect jobs. An Economic Statement was submitted to accompany the application which highlights that the site is currently vacant, and that the building is in a poor/dilapidated state. On this basis, this confirms that the existing jobs on the site is considered to be zero. As such, the net change in jobs is exactly the gross job gain identified in the submission.

The above points help to set out a rounded case for the proposal, addressing fully the requirements of Saved UDP Policy PG1.2 and Core Strategy DM Policy AED-6. Saved UDP Policy E3.1 is not considered to be relevant to the application as the proposal is not for B2 or B8 use. Therefore, it is considered that the principle of the development on this site is acceptable and compliant with Local and National Planning Policies.

#### Design, Siting and Impact on Visual Amenity

Whilst the scale, size, footprint and height of the proposed new buildings and generators are appreciated, consideration must be had of the fact that the application site comprises an existing industrial site, located within an allocated Policy Guidance Area, with industrial buildings of varying age, design, scale, height and materials evident in the immediate area.

Policy SIE-1 'Quality Places' outlines that development that is designed and landscaped to the highest contemporary standard, paying high regard to the built and/or natural environment within which it is sited, will be given positive consideration.

As outlined above, the site is located within a predominantly industrial context, with a range of building types and designs. The building to be removed is in a poor state of repair and the building or the surrounding site does not contribute positively to the appearance or character of the area. The site is bounded on two sides by residential properties and these are predominantly characterised by brick construction, however it is not deemed necessary for this new building to follow this context.

As outlined within the submission, the data centre building has been designed as three inter-connected blocks; the Eastern Block, Central Block and Western Block, with accommodation over 3 storeys. The central block would be the front entrance into the building and would accommodate the offices, welfare and servicing facilities. The eastern and western blocks would house mechanical and electrical plant at ground floor level, with data processing provided at 1st and 2nd floor levels. The IT equipment within the data space at 1st and 2nd floor levels

will be cooled by air-cooling plant that will be located on the adjacent external plant gantries.

The elevations of the proposed new building, show a high quality design for a functional building. An effort has been made to screen the more unsightly elements to the rear of the building or behind well designed screens, to ensure that the site has a high quality appearance. The proposed façade design incorporates horizontally laid louvre screens to the external plant gantries. The gantry facades will provide screening to the cooling units that will sit on them whilst also providing aesthetic interest and acoustic screening to the local residential properties.

The front elevation of the central block would have a combination of a metal rainscreen cladding system and curtain walling. This would provide further articulation to the building and offer clear legibility to the functions of the spaces that sit beyond. The main materials for the building would be different forms of metal cladding in white, anthracite grey, goosewing grey and light grey. Colour has been added to the curtain walling to the front elevation and the circulation cores on each end of the building to provide further interest to an industrial style building, including fins of dark green, light green and yellow.

Other built forms include the security lodge, the substation and the site generator compound. The security lodge is a small detached building located close to the main site entrance on the access road from Kenwood Road. The lodge would be clad in a grey coloured rainscreen panel system with glazing on the north and west elevations. The western elevation of the lodge includes the 'Kao Data' signage incorporated within the cladding design. The substation compound would include two external transformers and a raised single storey switch-house building. The switch-house would be clad in a metal cladding system with a colour scheme to match the other buildings on the site. Finally, the proposed back-up generators would be housed within acoustically lined containers, which would be metal clad for durability and accommodate cooling plant. There are then flues to the rear of the generators which have to be a certain height to allow the limited emissions to be emitted up at the correct height. The colour scheme would match that proposed across the other buildings on the campus; grey for the enclosure and to add interest and articulation, coloured air-inlet louvres in-line with Kao Data's branding.

The main building has been sited on a similar footprint area of the site as the existing building, which is welcomed. The security lodge, substation compound and generator compound are all located away from the site boundaries shared with residential properties to lessen the impact of these features. It is acknowledged that the new building is marginally taller than the existing building being demolished, however it is not considered that this is out of place or incongruous in this industrial context. However, the new building has been pulled further away from the site boundary with the apartments on Cravenwood Road, to create a better separation distance from these residential properties.

The development proposals are then complimented by large areas of soft landscaping and tree planting to provide further screening to the views from the railway line and from the adjoining residential properties. This will also soften a site that is currently dominated by hardscape and significantly improve the biodiversity levels at the site.

In view of the above factors, whilst the scale, size, footprint and height of the proposed new buildings are noted, in view of the character of the site and surrounding area, it is considered that they could be successfully accommodated on the site without causing undue harm to the visual amenity of the area. On this basis, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Strategy DPD policy SIE-1.

### Impact on Residential Amenity

Policy SIE-1 'Quality Places' outlines that development that is designed and landscaped to the highest contemporary standard, paying high regard to the built and/or natural environment within which it is sited, will be given positive consideration. Specific account should be had to the provision, maintenance and enhancement (where suitable) of satisfactory levels of access, privacy and amenity for future, existing and neighbouring users and residents.

Whilst the application site is adjoined to the South and West by existing employment uses, to the North by a railway line and a cemetery beyond, there are residential properties to the East on Cravenwood Road and to the South on Lyndhurst Road and Carna Road. The residential properties within this area are the nearest noise sensitive uses to the site and it is acknowledged that a reasonable balance needs to be struck between the requirements of local businesses and safeguarding of the amenity of residents who live close to the site.

As outlined above, it is acknowledged that the replacement building would be taller than the existing building being demolished. However, the replacement structure would be located further away from the site boundaries than the existing, creating a much greater level of separation. The proposed landscape plan shows that there would be a wide exclusion zone along the eastern boundary to be planted with species rich meadow grass and the new internal circulation road is also located between the new building and the site boundary. Also, due to the orientation of the site to the existing properties, this should not result in a significant increase in overshadowing over the existing situation. There are no windows proposed in the elevations of the building closest to the existing residential properties, with the main offices being on the front elevation of the building which face towards existing commercial businesses. The main habitable rooms within the apartment buildings closest to the site to the east are located on the front and rear elevations and so do not directly face the application site.

Therefore, it is not considered that the proposals would have a significant detrimental impact on the existing levels of amenity currently enjoyed by these residents from an overbearing, overshadowing or loss of privacy perspective.

The objections raised to the proposal, on the grounds of impact on residential amenity by reason of noise and disturbance are appreciated. However, material weight must be given to the land use allocation of the site within a Policy Guidance Area and the former use of the site as a B2 heavy industrial concrete works. Whilst the concerns raised by local residents are noted, it must be accepted that there will be a degree of noise and disturbance arising from industrial premises operating in proximity to their properties. Consideration must also be had of the fact that the area comprises a number of long established industrial uses, with a mix of industrial uses evident that adjoin the boundary with the residential properties. In addition, the application site and many of the other surrounding industrial uses are uncontrolled in planning terms with regard to their

hours of operation, some of which can lawfully operate for 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

The proposal has been assessed in relation to impact upon the environmental quality of life to existing sensitive receptors, in proximity to the proposed development. A Noise Assessment has been submitted in support of the application, which has been reviewed in detail by the Council's Environmental Health officer. The proposal may itself generate noise from activities, plant or equipment or general noise and relating to hours of use. The Data Centre external plant noise emissions would include continuous noise from the main substation, IEC coolers, chillers, dry air coolers and transformers that would operate continuously over a 24-hour period. In terms of infrequent noise emissions, this would be from the 20 standby generators, which only power back up if the mains utility power fails.

The environmental noise survey was completed between the 23rd February 2023 to the 27th February 2023 at the southeast boundary after the former precast concrete design and manufacturing operations had vacated the site. The predominant local noise sources were identified as road traffic and occasional rail movements. The measured ambient and background noise levels are lower than the previous industrial use of the site, previously occupied by SCC.

As outlined within the application submission, the intention of the current design is to mitigate noise levels as much as practically possible to ensure that the noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive premises is kept to a minimum. The current proposed plant, to be installed within an external gantry. The ground and 1st level of the gantry will have acoustic louvres to provide ventilation, the 2nd level of the gantry will have a blanked 150mm louvre. The sides of the gantries will be solid. Additionally, attenuators are proposed on the outlet of the IEC coolers. The chillers noise output will reduce at night-time due to lower ambient temperatures, and accordingly a reduction of 4dB(A) compared to the daytime operation is expected. The proposed standby generators are proposed to have a localised solid screen, minimum height equal to the height of the generator body. The generator screen location has been provided along the eastern boundary of the generator compound to cover the noise direction from the existing residential properties. A maximum of twenty standby generators will only need to operate in the event of an emergency, therefore the predicted noise levels is a worst-case scenario with twenty generators operating at any one time.

Given the height of the proposed plant in relation to residential bedroom windows on the nearest noise sensitive premises, there would be no acoustic benefit to improve or increase any existing boundary fences at the rear property line of the neighbouring properties. Equally, the nearest noise sensitive receptors, along Lyndhurst Road and Cravenwood Road, are relatively new builds with double glazed PVC windows which are in a good condition. To improve the glazing, but assess with windows open, would not improve the predicted internal ambient noise levels at these residents. With everything considered, mitigation measures have been proposed at the source in the form of acoustic louvres, solid screens, and attenuators to ensure noise levels emitted from the Data centre are suitably controlled so that the noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive premises is kept to a minimum.

The outcome of the BS4142 assessment is that predicted noise levels of the proposed plant will meet existing daytime and night-time background noise levels, which is an indication of low impact. The predicted noise levels have been

assessed to worst-case, based on the methodology of BS4142 and meet British Standards and WHO guidelines. The conclusions of the report are accepted, however this relies on the installed equipment (and any future replacement equipment) meeting the noise limits used for the assessment. Therefore, the proposals are considered to be acceptable subject to the noise mitigation scheme being implemented in full prior to the first use of the plant/equipment and maintained for the purpose originally intended throughout the use of the development.

On this basis, a condition is required in relation to the development operating in accordance with the LCP, Acoustic Consultancy Report dated 21 November 2023 and that at any time when measured at the boundary of the nearest noise sensitive receptor, the rating level from all fixed plant and machinery associated with the development (when operating simultaneously), shall be in accordance with the methodology of BS 4142:2014+A1:2019, 'Methods for Rating and Assessing Industrial and Commercial Sound'.

In terms of the standby generators, it must be noted that they will be regulated by the Environment Agency and will be subject to a testing regime. In addition, noise and vibration will be regulated by the EA under EPR permitting scheme and the operator will be required to implement an approved noise and vibration management plan. The NPPF at paragraph 194 states that the focus of planning policies and decisions should be on whether proposed development is an acceptable use of land, rather than the control of processes or emissions (where these are subject to separate pollution control regimes). Planning decisions should assume that these regimes will operate effectively. Equally, where a planning decision has been made on a particular development, the planning issues should not be revisited through the permitting regimes operated by pollution control authorities.

In terms of light pollution, an external lighting/ illumination assessment has been submitted in support of the application. The scheme has been assessed on the basis of the Institute of Lighting Professionals, Guidance Note 01/21, The Reduction of Obtrusive Light. This area is an E3 Environmental Zone: Suburban Surrounding, a Medium district brightness lighting environment. In this case, all the identified residential receptors are considered to be within ILP Environmental Zone E3. The assessment shows that the ILP pre-curfew and post-curfew Zone E3 criteria will not be exceeded at any residential receptor locations as a result of lighting from the proposed development, with a maximum predicted model illuminance of 0.70 lux at R5a. Therefore, the proposed development is not predicted to result in any significant adverse impacts with respect to local sensitive residential receptors. This is subject to a condition stating that the external lighting scheme shall be installed and thereafter operated and maintained throughout the use of the development in accordance with the external lighting/ illumination assessment.

In addition to the above conditions, informatives have also been requested in relation to the compliance with permitted construction hours and should piling be required as part of the construction phase, an informative is provided to inform the process.

In view of the above, subject to the imposition of conditions to require implementation of the proposed mitigation measures prior to the proposed development being brought into use, in the absence of objections from the Environment Team, it is considered that the proposed development could be

accommodated on the site without causing undue harm to the amenity of the surrounding residential properties by reason of noise and disturbance. On this basis, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Strategy DPD policies SIE-1 and SIE-3.

### Access, Traffic Generation, Parking and Highway Safety

A Transport Statement has been submitted in support of the application. A summary of the comments received to the application from the Council Highway Engineer and from Transport for Greater Manchester, are contained within the Consultee Responses section above.

The Transport Statement (TS) submitted in support of the application outlines that the development would result in a significant reduction in vehicle movements (48 fewer vehicle movements during the AM peak, 30 fewer vehicle movements during the PM peak and 478 fewer vehicle movements each day) than the previous use. It therefore concludes that the proposal *“will have a major positive impact on the local highway network and on local residents of Station Road in terms of the volume of traffic passing their residences”*.

It is agreed that the proposed development should generate fewer vehicle movements and therefore have a lesser impact on the local highway network than if the site was to be brought back into B2 use. Although the exact number of vehicle movements generated by the precast concrete manufacturer are not known and therefore may have been lower than average for a B2 use, it can be concluded that the proposed data centre would have a lesser impact on the local highway network than if the site was to be brought back into B2 use. Therefore, the level of traffic generation from the proposed use is considered to be acceptable in this case.

The data centre is proposed to be accessed via the site's existing access on Kenwood Road and a secondary access is proposed to be constructed at the junction of Carna Road and Lyndhurst Road for pedestrian / cycle access and vehicular access in the event of emergency. Vehicle swept-path tracking diagrams are included in the TS which demonstrate that fire appliances would be able to turn into the emergency access and negotiate the site access roads. These arrangements are considered to be acceptable and the proposal to provide a secondary access for pedestrians and cyclists on Carna Road is welcomed, as that will reduce the walking distance to public transport and other facilities. Conditions are requested in relation to the final design of the 2 access points in relation to pedestrian / cycle access and the existing footways. A condition is also requested to restrict vehicular use of the Carna Road access to shall only be used by vehicles in the event of an emergency, including times when the main site access is blocked, so that the proposal does not result in an increase in vehicle movements on residential streets.

In respect of parking, the Highway Engineer considers that the proposed level of car parking provided should be adequate to meet the demands of the site. Parking is proposed to be provided for 90 car parking spaces, including 4 spaces for disabled badge holders in three parking areas, 4 motorcycles and 16 cycles in a secure cycle shelter (12 for staff and 4 for visitors). 12 of the car parking spaces proposed, including the 4 disabled spaces, will have EV charging points provided and ducting will be provided to all other spaces.

The TS outlines that the number of spaces proposed is based on the estimate number of staff and visitors that will be employed at the data centre and so as to avoid parking overspilling onto nearby streets. It also outlines that the number of EV charging points complies with the Council's guidance (assuming an opening year of 2026), the number of cycle spaces is based on assumption that 5% of staff will cycle and expected demand by visitors and additional cycle spaces will be provided in the future, if required. The number of spaces for motorcycles, it outlines, is based on estimated demand.

Based on the number of full time staff expected to be at the site (47), it is considered that the proposed level of parking will meet demand and the proposal to monitor and provide additional cycle parking, if required, is welcomed, which could be delivered through the Travel Plan. Whilst it is in line with policy to ensure that a level of parking is provided to meet demand so as to avoid on-street parking which has a detrimental impact on the local highway network, an initial recommendation was made by the Highway officer and Healthy Planning, that the overall number of car parking spaces proposed is likely to more than meet demand. Therefore, it was recommended that there is scope for reducing the number of spaces provided, mainly the 26 overflow spaces within the north western triangle parcel of land.

In response to this point, the applicant has confirmed that the 26 parking spaces proposed within the area known as 'the triangle' will be provided to ensure that during events such as new customers moving in, there is sufficient overspill parking available to avoid any impact on the surrounding roads. This area will be gated, so everyday use will not be encouraged and can be surfaced using grasscrete / permeable paving or similar, subject to further discussion at the detailed design stage. This would reduce the impacts of the area having a permanent tarmac finish that may only be used infrequently.

As there is not a specific parking standard for data centres, an over-provision of parking would not be contrary to Policy T-2 and associated maximum parking standards, however it is recommended that car use is monitored as part of the Travel Plan so as to ensure that any over-provision of parking does not result in increased car use. The recommendation to monitor the use of car parking as part of the Travel plan is welcomed by the applicant and it is confirmed that an appropriately worded condition is accepted.

With respect to EV provision, whilst the TS notes that the number of EV charging points provided will be in line with the Council's guidance (assuming an opening year of 2026), it would appear an error has been made in calculating the number of spaces required. 15 EV charging points (equating to 17% of spaces) are required assuming a 2026 opening year. The requirement to provide EV charging points in line with Council guidance, however, can be secured by condition. The applicant has confirmed that 15 EV charging points will be provided, and full details of such will be provided through the discharge of condition process if approval is granted.

In relation to servicing, a service area is proposed to be provided to the front of the building, which will be accessed via the site's internal access road. Vehicle swept-path tracking diagrams are included in the TS, which demonstrate that articulated HGVs will be able to turn into and out of the site access, negotiate the site access roads and manoeuvre into and out of the service area. A bin storage area is also proposed to be provided within the site. As such, it is considered that the site will be able to be serviced in a safe and practical manner.

In terms of accessibility, the Highway Engineer considers that the site is suitable for such a use from an accessibility perspective, noting that it is reasonably accessible for an industrial site. It is within reasonable walking distance of much of Reddish and Gorton and is within reasonable cycling distance of most of the Heaton, Levenshulme, Longsight, Openshaw and parts of Denton. The site is approx. a 600m walk from bus stops (served by 2 bus services, including a frequent service which operates early and late services) and Reddish North Railway station and a similar distance to various shops and amenities. There are a number of cycle routes in the area, including the Fallowfield Loop (NCN Route 60). It is noted however, that some footways in the area are uneven and there are not uncontrolled pedestrian crossings at all junctions. On this basis, it is recommended that any approval granted is subject to a condition which requires the provision of an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing at a number of locations.

In relation to construction, the construction of all developments has the potential to impact on the local highway network, nearby businesses and dwellings. The TS provides details on construction, outlining how the development is proposed to be constructed including details on construction period, access, parking, vehicle routing and traffic management. It also outlines that a Construction Method Statement (CMS) has been prepared and submitted in support of the application and that a detailed Traffic Management Plan (TMP) will be developed by the contractor prior to the commencement of development. After reviewing the submitted information, it can be concluded that it should be possible for the development to be constructed in a safe and practical manner, without adversely affecting the local highway network, as well as local residents and businesses. Full details on how the development will be constructed will, however, need to be agreed prior to commencement of development and as such, it is recommended that an appropriately worded condition is included in any approval decision.

In conclusion, there are no highway related objections to this application for the construction of a data centre at land on Kenwood Road. This is subject to conditions relating to the submission of a Construction Management Strategy, full access designs in relation to pedestrian and cycling improvements, access gates opening inwards to the site, electric vehicle charging, cycle parking and facilities, the submission of a travel plan and the provision of uncontrolled pedestrian crossings at a number of locations around the site.

In view of the above, in the absence of objections from the Highway Engineer and subject to conditional control, the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to the issues of access, traffic generation, parking and highway safety. As such, the proposal complies with Core Strategy DPD policies SD-6, SIE-1, CS9, CS10, T-1, T-2 and T-3 and the Sustainable Transport SPD.

#### Impact on Trees and Landscaping

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been submitted in support of the application and the comments received to the application from the Council Arboricultural Officer are contained within the Consultee Responses section above.

The Arboricultural Officer acknowledges that there are no existing trees on the application site, however there are trees close to the site boundary. These trees are not afforded protection, by way of a Tree Preservation Order or Conservation Area status. As such, consideration must be had of the fact that existing trees

around the site could be worked to or removed without the requirement for consent.

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) states that the existing trees identified for retention on the appended Tree Protection Plan will continue to be managed in accordance with BS 5837:2012. Critically this requires the implementation of physical protection measures to safeguard the retained trees, including robust protection in the form of a barrier to BS 5837:2012 (Appendix EDP 2), during the construction phases. The only fencing required, due to boundary fencing and other already present site features, is located on the northeastern boundary. Given the hard standing already on site, the fencing should be constructed of a “low impact” design of heras fencing on rubber feet. The protection of the existing trees can be secured by a suitably worded condition.

The only vegetation removal required as part of the development is an area of hedgerow close to the western boundary. This is categorised within the AIA as a Category C and poor quality. The Arboricultural Officer considers that this offers poor amenity value and could easily be replaced. The application has been accompanied by a detailed Landscape Site Masterplan, 3 planting strategy plans, a proposed hard and soft landscape plan and detailed planting specifications and management details. As outlined within the Design and Access Statement, the main focus of the landscape scheme is to create a suitable setting for the development, provide biodiversity net gain opportunities, and green infrastructure connectivity. Opportunities to enhance the spaces and landscape by introducing soft landscaping elements including ornamental planting, hedges, and trees around the site have been explored while retaining the opportunities for natural regeneration in parts of the site where access is limited. The landscape masterplan shows the planting of 37 new trees around the site, along with ornamental shrub planting, large shrub planting, amenity grass areas, species rich meadow grass, native shrub planting, wetland grass to the base of swales and some raised planter beds.

The proposed landscaping scheme has been assessed and although some alternative species have been suggested in certain cases and the provision of additional information in relation to stock sizes has been requested, it has been confirmed that the wider scheme is considered to be acceptable for this development. The proposed provide a significant improvement over the existing position from a visual and setting perspective. The ecology / biodiversity improvements associated with this planting are covered in the section below. The provision of the requested information can be secured by way of an appropriately worded condition.

In view of the above, in the absence of objections from the Arboricultural Officer and subject to conditional control, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on trees, in accordance with Core Strategy DPD policies SIE-1 and SIE-3.

#### Impact on Protected Species and Ecology

The site itself has no nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise as listed in Stockport’s current Local Plan. The railway line immediately to the northeast of the application site is designated as Green Chain. It is important that any future application does not impact on the functionality of the Green Chain as a wildlife corridor. The site has 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.

Several ecological reports have been submitted to accompany the application including a Preliminary Ecological Assessment, a Bat Survey Report and a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment report, all completed by RSK ADAS Ltd in November 2023.

It is considered that sufficient ecological information is available to inform determination of the application. No evidence of roosting bats was recorded. As a precautionary measure an informative should be attached to any planning consent granted so that the applicant is aware that roosting bats can sometimes be found in unexpected places. To protect badgers which may pass through the site and prevent potential disturbance to badgers and other small mammals during works, a condition is recommended to ensure that any works which involve the creation of trenches or with pipes shall be undertaken following measures to protect badgers from being trapped in open excavations and/or pipework. In relation to nesting birds, it has been confirmed that the trees along the northeast boundary of the site will be retained. A condition is requested that confirms that no vegetation clearance or demolition works should take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation/buildings for active birds' nests immediately before.

In relation to Biodiversity Net Gain, developments are expected to achieve measurable net gains and enhancements for biodiversity in line with local (paragraph 3.345 of the LDF) and national planning policy (NPPF). The DEFRA Biodiversity Metric can be used to demonstrate delivery of the biodiversity net gain (BNG). Although current local and national planning policy does not set a figure for BNG, the Environment Act 2021 sets this at a minimum of 10% and so this target would be expected. A BNG assessment has been undertaken for the site and the baseline biodiversity score is low as semi natural habitats on site are very limited. The site has very little baseline biodiversity value; 0.2 habitat units and 0 hedgerow units. The landscaping plans indicate the retention of areas of regenerating vegetated ground and scrub, creation of grassland, mixed scrub, other neutral grassland, introduced shrub, and urban trees. The predicted increase following landscape plans is a net gain of 2.16 habitat units (1079%). In relation to hedgerow, this improves from 0 habitat units with post development 0.3 habitat units. Hedgerow is proposed as 320m of ornamental, non-native hedgerow. Subsequently the net gain is high (>1000%).

In addition, additional mitigation measures are noted within the PEA and these measures would also be expected to comply with local and national planning policy:

- Bat and/or bird boxes should be integrated within/mounted on buildings (see for example Habibat and Schwegler boxes) or, as described in the PEA, along the railway line woodland.
- Native tree planting and landscape planting should be maximised throughout the site.
- Any landscaping should include planting beneficial to wildlife: a mix of species (ideally locally native) carefully chosen to ensure a nectar/berry resource throughout the seasons.

- Native species hedgerows should be planted at site boundaries where possible.
- Gaps in the fence line for mammals to enter and exit the site are recommended within the PEA. Gaps should be strategically located to maintain connectivity along the railway embankment and in the northern section where the wildlife area / SuDS balancing pond is proposed. Gaps should be a minimum of 130mm x 130mm to maintain access for wildlife, such as hedgehogs.

These measures would be particularly welcomed given the designation of the site as an opportunity area within the LNRS for Greater Manchester and also given the proximity of designated Green Chain.

Further conditions are recommended in relation to sensitive lighting and the appropriate treatment of invasive species on the site.

In view of the above, in the absence of objections from the Nature Development Officer and subject to conditional control, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on protected species, biodiversity and the ecological interests of the site, in accordance with saved UPD policy NE3.1 and Core Strategy DPD policy SIE-3.

### Energy Efficiency

The UK has set into law a target to bring all its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. In March 2019, Stockport Council declared a climate emergency, and agreed that Stockport should become carbon neutral by 2038, in advance of the UK 2050 target. The Stockport CAN strategy was developed to underpin this agreement and was approved by full council in October 2020. The strategy sets out to ensure that Stockport achieves carbon neutrality by 2038, in order to support global efforts to prevent global warming going above 1.5°C. The Environmental Law Foundation has suggested that climate emergency declarations should be regarded as material considerations in the determination of planning matters.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF places mitigating/adapting to climate change as an overarching objective for the planning system, to ensure sustainable development.

Objective 1 of the Core Strategy relates to climate change, this is supported by a number of policies that seek to deliver this primary objective.

- Policy CS1 states that: *“The Council will seek to ensure that all development meets an appropriate recognised sustainable design and construction standard where viable to do so, in order to address both the causes and consequences of climate change. In particular, all development will be required to demonstrate how it will contribute towards reducing the Borough’s carbon footprint by achieving carbon management standards.”*
- Policy SD-6 states that: *“Development should be designed in such a way as to avoid, mitigate or reduce the impacts of climate change.”*
- Paragraph 3.68 of Policy SD-6 states that: *“Development, particularly within the urban area of the Borough, that takes into account the urban heat island effect and incorporates measures to reduce this phenomenon will be given positive consideration.”*

- In addition, Policy SD-6 suggests the use of BREEAM for non-residential developments.

The application is accompanied by an Energy Statement and BREEAM Summary completed by NDY dated November 2023. This statement outlines that the proposed energy strategy for the scheme has been developed as an all-electric solution, without any gas or other fossil fuels supplied to site, to benefit the development from the low carbon intensity of the grid-supplied electricity. The proposed development is designed with energy efficiency as a key driver to minimise the impact on the environment. The energy strategy will meet and exceed the targets set by Building Regulations by incorporating a combination of energy efficiency measures and low/zero carbon technologies.

The strategy outlines the passive, active and renewable measures proposed and outlines that the proposed development will be assessed under the BREEAM data centres 2010 Scheme, which is the latest BREEAM scheme applicable to data centres. The project is targeting a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' in line with the client requirements and the planning expectations. The BREEAM pre-assessment has identified that the proposed development is likely to score over the minimum 70% required to achieve an 'Excellent' rating. The development would be PV-ready and the necessary structure will be provided for PVs to be potentially installed on the roof of the building. The development will also use 100% renewable hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel to for the standby use operation wherever feasible. Other measures proposed include high-efficiency mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, energy efficient light fittings and controls throughout, highly efficient variable refrigerant flow (VRF) systems to serve the office areas, an indirect evaporative cooling system to support most of the Technology Suites (TS) at the two wings of the building, Air source heat pumps to provide hot water to the office areas and the associated facilities, energy meters and sub-meters to monitor, record and report the operational energy consumption of the various end-uses for each land-use of the development, and comprehensive energy and power monitoring system (EPMS/ BMS) to monitor all installed systems. It is confirmed that all new fixed and controlled services will be specified to meet and exceed the minimum standards set in the new Part L document.

On this basis, the submitted energy strategy for the development is considered to be acceptable in this case and is compliant with the requirements of local Core Strategy DPD policies and the NPPF.

### Flood Risk and Drainage

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1, which is deemed to have the lowest risk of flooding. The site has no / low risk of flooding from surface water and there are no recorded historical flood events relevant to the development within the vicinity. Notwithstanding this, a Flood Risk Assessment and a Drainage Strategy Report have been submitted in support of the application. The comments received to the application from the Council Drainage Engineer/Lead Local Flood Authority are summarised within the Consultee Responses section above.

The initial consultation response received from the LLFA requested the submission of additional information to accompany the application. This included details of infiltration testing, a requirement for nature based SuDS to be included

in the scheme (permeable paving and landscape features) and for further information relating to existing and proposed run off regimes.

Additional information was subsequently provided by the applicant's consultant. The site is underlain by up to 8m of contaminated fill, as outlined within the submitted Site Investigation report and the Drainage Strategy report. Therefore, on this basis, no infiltration testing has been undertaken as it is not possible to discharge into this material. The proposed development uses permeable paving in all the car parks, and swales have been included in the green spaces, as well as rainwater harvesting. Green walls and roofs have been discounted by Kao Data due to the increased risk of leaks and the sensitive nature of the equipment. It was also confirmed that a CCTV survey of the existing drainage system, as well as a complete plan for the new drainage scheme is provided within the submitted Drainage Strategy report.

It was also noted by the LLFA that there is an existing watercourse along the northern boundary of the site and it was requested that this was investigated as a potential drainage source. It was discovered that the watercourse in question was Nico Ditch, which is in fact a historical artifact (non designated heritage asset) and harm could have been caused by draining into this ditch. Evidence was also subsequently provided by the applicant's consultant that proves it is not practical to connect into the watercourse for a number of reasons. There is a 1.3m high bank along the northern boundary of the site, which the watercourse will be the other side of. If a 1:1 side slope from the top of this bank to the feature shown is assumed, this would put the base level of this watercourse at approximately 69.1mAOD. At the other end of this large open space, the ground level beneath the aqueduct is 69.9mAOD. To convey the amount of surface water generated by the site, at least a 450Ø pipe would be required to pass under this section, allowing for a sensible minimum cover of 900mm (for a lightly trafficked area), this would put the invert level of this pipe at 68.5mAOD (when pipe thickness of 50mm is allowed for). This is significantly below the potential water course level. Crossing the area of land at an average gradient of 1:200 (over 74.6m), would give an invert level of the surface water network at the connection point of 68.12, so almost 1 meter below the theoretical bottom of the water course. It is also unlikely that such a perfectly straight line and level would be possible, potentially pushing the invert even deeper. This makes it likely that a surface water pump would be required to control the outfall from the entire development, which is the least preferred method for disposal of surface water, due to the inherent flood risk caused by failure of the pump, which based on local topography, would cause surface water to flood to the north and down into the railway cutting. Therefore, due to insufficient depth, and unknown capacity this option has to be discounted. Also, the watercourse is located outside the application site and potentially is within someone else's land title, which would make it difficult to investigate.

It is recognised that an effort has been made by the proposals towards providing sustainable drainage with the incorporation of swales and rainwater harvesting for toilet flushing. In addition, the impermeable footprint is now 3.027Ha which is reduced by approx. 25% from the original site area (4.006Ha). The runoff from this site has not been going to the watercourse presumably for decades or perhaps longer. Therefore, to put 3Ha of runoff into it now may be an issue and the potential flood risk would require investigation. The connection of the public SW sewer to the combined is a significant distance downstream.

With reference to all of the above points, it is considered that on this occasion, the drainage strategy proposals are acceptable in principle.

In view of the above, the imposition of the conditions recommended by United Utilities and the Drainage Engineer/Lead Local Flood Authority, would ensure that the development would be drained in a sustainable and appropriate manner without the risk of flooding elsewhere, in accordance with saved UDP policy EP1.7 and Core Strategy DPD policies SD-6 and SIE-3.

### Land Contamination

The site history includes the following potentially contaminative land uses on site; Large clay pit, infilled pre 1972 with unknown materials, and Industrial warehouse constructed ~1972 with above ground fuel storage tanks shown from 1986.

Therefore, on this basis, the application has been accompanied by a Phase I Desk Study, a Phase II Site Investigation report and a Phase IIIa Remediation Strategy, along with a Controlled Waters Detailed Qualitative Risk Assessment and a Drainage Strategy Report, all dated November 2024. These reports have been reviewed by both the Council's Contaminated Land officer and the Environment Agency due to the potential for pollution to controlled waters.

It is confirmed that whilst there is a remediation strategy that has been submitted in support of this application, there are numerous options discussed for remediation. Therefore, the chosen option will need to be confirmed before the development (if approved) commences and the remediation strategy updated and resubmitted for consideration. Furthermore, whilst a gas investigation has also been undertaken, there is the potential for gas vapour ingress where the light non-aqueous phase liquid plume is situated. Therefore, depending on the remedial option chosen, this will also need to be confirmed and the remediation strategy updated following further consultation with the Environment Agency.

An objection to the application was initially received from the Environment Agency due to additional information being required in relation to the potential pollution of a nearby watercourse. However, following detailed discussions between the EA and the applicant's consultants (RSK) the concerns were addressed and subject to the inclusion of specifically worded conditions, the Environment Agency have now removed their objection.

Therefore, from a controlled waters and human health perspectives, conditions are requested in relation to the submission of a Remediation Strategy with remedial options confirmed and include gas vapour ingress information, along with the submission of validation of remedial options and gas and vapour measures and a monitoring and maintenance plan in respect of the contamination. Conditions have also been requested to state that no drainage systems for the infiltration of surface water to the ground are permitted, and that piling/ investigation boreholes/ground source heating and cooling systems using penetrative methods shall not be carried out other than with the written consent of the local planning authority.

Subject to compliance with the above recommended phased conditions, it is considered that any potential land contamination issues at the site could be effectively mitigated, in accordance with Core Strategy DPD policy SIE-3.

### Safety and Security

The application has been submitted with an accompanying Crime Impact Statement, completed by Greater Manchester Police (Design for Security). The report concludes that the development is supported by GMP and confirms that the scheme has been very well designed, will further increase activity, natural surveillance and incorporate crime prevention measures and interest to this area of North Reddish. The development has been assessed against the principles of 'Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and GMP are happy to support the proposals. Positive aspects of the proposals include the orientation of the building and uses within the development, promoting activity and natural surveillance and the provision of secure car and cycle parking.

In view of the above considerations and the positive comments received by Greater Manchester Police, the proposed development is not considered at risk from a safety and security perspective, in accordance with Core Strategy DPD policy SIE-1.

### **SUMMARY**

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF establishes three dimensions to sustainable development – economic, social and environmental and Paragraph 8 of the NPPF indicates that these should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

The application site is located within the Station Road Policy Guidance Area under Saved Unitary Development Plan Policy PG1.2 'Station Road, North Reddish'. The policy notes that business would be an appropriate use and states that further industrial development will only be acceptable if it can be segregated from the nearby housing and alternative access provided. The proposed use as a Data centre is not a traditional employment use of B1, B2 or B8, and so fall under the Sui Generis class. However, it is judged that the proposed use is a suitable fit for the site in principle, given that the PGA includes business as a preferred use and as Saved UDP Policy PG1.2 indicates that alternative uses to B2 would be more suitable given the poor access and neighbouring uses. National planning policy highlights the requirement for flexibility to respond to needs not anticipated and evidence both in the Economic Plan and the application underlines the importance of the digital sector and data storage to the Borough moving forward.

The size and scale of the proposed development which is necessary to accommodate the data centre, is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on the visual and residential amenity of the area, in view of the former industrial character of the site and its surroundings.

Whilst the neighbour representations received to the application on the grounds of impact on residential amenity are noted and appreciated, consideration must be had of the allocation of the site within a Policy Guidance Area, the established use of the site for B2 Industrial and the industrial uses in the surrounding area, and the fact that the proposed use as a Data Centre would have a much reduced overall impact than the former concrete works at the site. The submitted Noise Assessment demonstrates that, subject to the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, the proposed development would not unduly impact on the residential amenity of surrounding properties, by reason of noise and disturbance, that would justify the refusal of the application.

On the basis of the submitted scheme, in the absence of objections from the Council Highway Engineer and subject to conditional control, the proposal is

considered acceptable with regard to the issues of access, traffic generation, parking and impact on highway safety.

In the absence of objections from other relevant consultees and subject to the imposition of suitably worded planning conditions, the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to the issues of impact on trees; impact on protected species and ecology; flood risk and drainage; land contamination; energy efficiency; and safety and security.

In view of the above, the proposal is considered to comply with relevant saved UDP and Core Strategy DPD policies and SPD guidance. In considering the planning merits of the proposal against the requirements of the NPPF, the proposal is considered to represent sustainable development. On this basis, notwithstanding the objections raised to the proposal, in accordance with the requirements of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application is recommended for approval.

Members will note that due to the proposed floorspace of the development, the application is referred to Heaton and Reddish Area Committee for comment and recommendation only, subject to the application being presented to the Planning & Highways Regulation Committee.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Grant subject to conditions

## **HEATONS AND REDDISH AREA COMMITTEE 04.03.2024**

The Planning Officer introduced the application and highlighted the pertinent issues of the proposal.

There were no questions asked of the planning officer at this stage.

No members of the public spoke to Committee against the application.

The applicant then addressed Committee raising the following points:

- Explained what a data centre is;
- Critical to the digital world that we live in today, without them our phones and computers won't work;
- Really are important for our digital economy and where the UK is reliant upon our digital future;
- The facilities provided will help the UK compete globally with regards to AI ambitions;
- The data centre building itself involves a £350 million pound investment;
- Once completed, the customers would come in and house their own computer equipment / servers, which consume a high level of energy and require a lot of cooling so there is a lot of infrastructure required in the building;
- Long 2 year process of finding the site in Greater Manchester and the site in Reddish is suitable for the data centre site;
- In the last 10 years in the UK, most of the data centres are in the south east of the country in and around London, due to demand. In other European countries, they have 2 main locations for data centres rather than just one;

- Therefore, for the UK to be competitive, it is important to have a secondary location and have identified Greater Manchester as suitable for this due to the wealth of opportunity, people who work here and to harness the technical skills available.

Members had the following questions for the agent of the application:

- Note that the application is for 90 car parking spaces and 16 bicycle spaces. Lots of traffic problems on Station Road. Very sustainable location close to public transport links and cycle routes. Can more effort be made to promote active travel through the provision of shower and changing facilities? And why so many car parking spaces for 40+ members of staff?

The applicant confirmed that as standard, the data centres provide showering facilities for people coming to the site by cycle. Apologies were made if this is not clear from the plans but these will be provided within the building, along with prayer rooms and other facilities for workers and visitors. The number of parking spaces is subject to further review and to begin with is to meet peak demand and to ensure there is enough capacity for when new businesses are moving into the site and equipment being delivered / cater for this initial set up.

- What are the backup generators powered by and why do the proposals not include solar panels?

The applicant confirmed that all power used by the development would be certified renewable by the National Grid, which is a contractual commitment that Kao make with their customers. The generators are used as a back up only and are not operated continually. They are not diesel run generators, all their generators have been converted to run on hydrotreated vegetable oil, which is an alternative source. Its sourced from restaurants and takeaways, treated and then delivered to the site.

In terms of solar panels, the structure of the proposed roof has been designed to support solar panels (load bearing) that can support a full array of panels across the roof. They are currently going through the business case and viability assessments of solar panels in the round and these investigations are ongoing. The business is hopeful that it will be possible to deliver a full array across the whole roof rather than commit to just a small area at this stage prior to the final investigations being completed.

They are actively supporting across all their data centres for people to visit the site using electric cars through the provision of EV charging points.

- Data centres create a lot of heat – what are the plans for managing that heat? Are there proposals to recycle this heat or does the suite need lots of water for cooling?

The cooling solution will not involve the use of lots of water and take this away from the local community or from local reservoirs. At their other sites, they are able to provide a heat off taker to the boundary of the site. However, this is dependent on what is outside the boundary with regards to where it can go. It is understood with this site that there are investigations into the creation of a district heating network within the area and if that is the case in the future, then they will plug into this and provide the heat generated by the servers into that environment rather than wasting it.

- The site is 24/7 and in terms of security staff and maintenance staff, what are the proposed impacts anticipated through light and noise on local residents?

The applicant confirmed that the site is 24/7 365 days a year and the site is manned by both security personnel and operational personnel during that time. However, they run a very low key environment, so the data centre would be dark during the night. There would be lights around the main entrances and access road into the site from Kenwood Road, but everything else around it would be dark. They have a security fencing system that is motion sensed and has a trembler wire and if anything hits this (not animals / birds it must be bigger), the security cameras will zoom to that location and the lights will come on in that location only. So from a local neighbourhood perspective, there will be far less intrusion on the local residents than that experienced from the previous use.

At their other sites where they are located close to residential properties, Kao have set up neighbourhood committees where they explain what they do, and residents are quite grateful in the end as it improves the security to their properties. So it is policed but not intrusive.

- Concerns about the potential impacts of construction for such a large development on a road that already experiences significant traffic conflicts between HGV's and residents. What reassurances can the applicant give that the impacts from construction will be as minimal as possible and the timescales for construction will be as contained as possible?

The applicant confirmed that they have submitted a provision Construction Management Plan with the application, which has been discussed, albeit that a final contractor has not been appointed yet. The applicant has spoken to many of the commercial businesses in this area and understand the issues currently experienced, and so they fully intend to manage the construction period very carefully with the community and understand that there would be a condition attached to any permission to that effect.

- What plans are there for taking on apprentices at entry level all the way up to post grad level and how many will come from the local Heaton and Reddish area?

The applicant has already started engaging with Stockport Technology College and they now understand what Kao do they are considering adjusting their curriculum to support the opportunities that will be created in the data centre. This is an ongoing process and will follow processes used in other sites such as Slough, where they not only offered apprenticeships but visited the colleges to complete regular sessions with the students. This results in the right skills being gained for the data centre operations that will be for the next 15-25 years on this site. These skills do not appear everywhere as its an emerging environment / sector. Therefore, its important that Kao invest in the local community and local education.

In terms of debate, the following matters were raised by Members:

- Any employment opportunities are always hugely welcomed in Reddish;
- Very much welcome this application;
- Redevelopment of a former brownfield site that has been vacant for the last couple of years;
- Benefits that this will bring for not just Reddish but the whole Borough;
- Most if not all the concerns are addressed within the report;

- Hopefully residents will be reassured by the recommendations made within the report and that the development won't impact on the amenity;
- Appreciate that there will be some disturbance during construction but hopefully this will be managed and the usual working hours agreed and conditions applied;
- Happy to support the recommendation to Grant;
- Have been encouraged by the debate, however still left with some reservations about this development;
- Residents are still aggrieved at issues experienced with local businesses in particular speeding traffic (some large vehicles) and noise and they have had to put up with a lot;
- It is acknowledged that this won't be so bad, but there will be some noise 24/7 and there will be additional vehicles even after the construction period so there are concerns for the residents;
- The report seems to suggest that because residents experience issues of noise and pollution already that they should be expected to accept more;
- Disagree with this and isn't it time that this development was put somewhere else and life was made easier for the residents;
- On this basis, struggling to support this application.

Following the debate, as there were differing opinions on the application by Members, Committee voted on whether they wished to make a recommendation to Planning & Highways Committee or not. The vote was 8 to recommend Grant and 3 against.

Therefore, the application is referred to Planning & Highways Committee with a recommendation of Grant from Heatons and Reddish Area Committee.