



**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Stockport Local Plan

Emerging draft for consultation under regulation 18 of  
the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)  
(England) Regulations 2012

July 2024

## Foreword

Stockport Council has big ambitions for our Borough and our people, and we always put residents at the heart of what we do. I am proud that Stockport is a place where we all work together to make good things happen.

We have a proven track record of making positive change. Our town centre is just one example, bucking trends and pioneering town centre living by breathing life into the heart of the town without overdeveloping it.

The Stockport Local Plan aims to build on this, taking this transformational regeneration of our town centre to the next level and bringing the same careful expansion across our whole borough, with our district centres sitting at the heart of the plan.

More importantly, this Local Plan is for Stockport. It is a guide to what will be built, where it will be built and how it will be built, allowing us to direct new development to areas we want to be developed. It also provides a guide to what Stockport expects from new development.

Our plan is about delivering the right homes in the right places whilst protecting our Green Belt. We will do this by continuing our brownfield-first approach, using previously developed land. We will build the vital new homes that are needed on land that has previously been developed rather than our valuable Green Belt, which we will continue to protect.

Our plan is about delivery of all types and tenures of housing making sure we build in-demand affordable homes. Our plan is not just about housing and sites for new development, it is much more. Our plan will make sure that housing and work developments have things in place like roads, schools and hospitals so our communities are well provided for. We're also working hard to take action to combat the climate emergency and our plan will make sure new developments are sustainable in construction and design and that they are designed to minimise damage to our air quality.

We believe this is the right plan for Stockport. We listened to your concerns about building on Green Belt, which is why we decided to leave the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. Stockport's plan allows us to continue our ambitious development and regeneration plans in a way that works for Stockport.

- Our plan places the climate and nature at the heart of everything we do
- Our plan is about supporting the economy and allowing businesses to grow.
- Our plan is about supporting wider work to address inequalities
- Our plan is about protecting the environment and the local spaces which are important to our communities
- Our plan seeks to ensure development is directed to the right places
- Our plan seeks to ensure that development is required to deliver the necessary infrastructure.

This is Stockport's plan, so please take a closer look at the policies that have been developed and have your say in what we are proposing to do. This draft plan has been informed by previous consultations with you and we will continue to shape this plan based on your feedback and input.

We anticipate that as a result of the General Election that there is likely to be further change to the planning system, but what we don't know is the detail of those changes and the timetable for implementation. We strongly believe that this is the right plan for Stockport and given that the new government has been clear in their manifesto that it will take "tough action" on those authorities who do not have a plan in place, we believe that it is important to share the plan now with our communities.

If you agree with this approach, please say so. This is our opportunity to ensure a brownfield-first approach, using previously developed sites, rather than concreting over our Green Belt.

The consultation process starts in September. We need to know what you like about the plan as well as the parts you are concerned about. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to learn more about the plan at our consultation events, through our website and our social media channels. I look forward to seeing everyone's responses.

*Councillor Mark Hunter - Leader of Stockport Council*

## How to respond to the consultation

### How to make your comments

We will accept written comments:

- via StoryMaps – <https://localplan.stockport.gov.uk/> - a new online consultation tool developed specifically for our Local Plan, designed to bring the plan to life and capture feedback. StoryMaps is the easiest way to make your comments. -
- by email ([local.plan@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:local.plan@stockport.gov.uk)); or
- by post addressed to:

The Planning Policy Team  
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council  
4th Floor Stopford House  
Piccadilly  
Stockport  
SK1 3XE

If you decide to correspond via email or post please follow the guidance below as closely as possible to make sure you provide us with the information we need and can have the best possible regard to what you are saying.

### Tell us about you

We need to know who you are and how we can contact you. Contact details are critical as it may be that you raise an issue that we need to talk to you about. Providing details will also allow us to keep you informed of future stages of the plan's preparation.

What we need to know about you:

- Title
- First Name
- Surname
- Company/Organisation/Client – if you are giving your comment on behalf of a client, group or organisation.
- Postal address
- Email address

Please note that if you are commenting on behalf of someone else then we will need their details as well.

### Give us your thoughts

The ideal comment format:

- Name and number of the chapter, policy or paragraph(s) that you are commenting on;

- To what level you agree with it:
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
- Tell us the reason for your choice – Are there any specific parts of the policies you think should be different or parts you particularly like? Why? What, if anything, should they say instead and why?

StoryMaps, our online consultation portal, guides comments to be made in this way.

#### Further information

Planning Aid England, part of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), is a charity which offers planning advice and support to individuals and communities. Their website contains helpful information on what a local plan is, how to get involved and how local plans are prepared and examined – see <https://www.planningaid.co.uk/hc/en-us/categories/200537272-Local-Plans>.

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# Stockport Local Plan

Emerging draft for consultation under regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

July 2024

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## Introduction - the right plan for Stockport, by Stockport

- (1) We have a once in a generation opportunity as we develop our Local Plan to make sure it is the right plan for Stockport, by Stockport.
- (2) A key purpose of the Local Plan is to support the delivery of the priorities set out in the One Stockport Borough Plan and the One Stockport: One Future plan<sup>1</sup> that are about the use of land. It is vital for ensuring that we get the right homes, infrastructure and facilities in the right places to enable the whole of Stockport to thrive and give us ways to protect the environment and places which make Stockport unique.
- (3) We are in a 'decisive decade' for climate change and ecology. The 2016 Paris agreement aims to limit the increase in global average temperatures to 1.5°C, by rapidly reducing the amount of greenhouse gases that are released into the atmosphere. The scientific consensus is that a failure to limit warming to 1.5°C will result in an increase in droughts, flooding, the loss of coastal lands and the decline of fresh water supplies – to name just a few impacts. Given the long lifetime of the built environment, it is important that we plan for and create communities that are robust and resilient in the face of climate change. Urban areas are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events. We are already seeing increased frequency of extreme weather events and climate change is expected to exacerbate this further. This plan will help us ensure that new developments are designed to cope with future rather than historical climates, and to support our existing communities and natural environment in adapting to the challenges posed by climate change.
- (4) We continue to face a growing cost of living crisis and the challenge of recovering from the impacts of the pandemic. Digital technology continues to change how people socialise, work and live.
- (5) This draft Local Plan recognises what is truly important to the communities of Stockport. It celebrates our connectivity, our vast and varied heritage, our people and our unique places. It identifies opportunities across the borough to ensure that current and future residents benefit from investment in infrastructure and community facilities. It will enable the successful delivery of thriving places with affordable, zero carbon housing and a dynamic economy. It celebrates our heritage, protects the environment and supports social and community infrastructure. It will help keep Stockport as a place where people wish to live, work and play. It is an all-age plan, with the health and well-being of our residents at its core.
- (6) Informed by a comprehensive, proportionate and up-to-date evidence base, the Local Plan is our response to the key challenges facing the borough over the next 15 years and beyond.
- (7) The plan addresses the key issues and identifies those places and sites where change and development can best be accommodated. It recognises that we also need to protect Stockport from the wrong types of development in the wrong places.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.onestockport.co.uk/one-future-plan/>

- (8) Once finalised, the plan will set out the approach and detailed policies for the whole of Stockport until 2041. It will be made up of a written statement of policies and a map showing where the different policies apply. In some areas the local community has chosen to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan which complements the Local Plan and reflects the unique character and needs of those areas.
- (9) This new Local Plan is consistent with, and will need to be read alongside:
- the most recent national planning policy set out in the government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
  - accompanying online national Planning Practice Guidance; and
  - strategic plans for minerals and waste prepared at a Greater Manchester level.
- (10) The plan has been informed by ongoing discussions with neighbouring areas. Cross-boundary cooperation with our neighbours, including our nine Greater Manchester local authority partners will continue as the plan progresses.
- (11) This draft of our Local Plan has been informed by a Sustainability Appraisal, Equality Impact Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment. These assessments and appraisals will be updated to reflect any changes made at each future stage of the plan’s preparation.
- (12) Developing a Local Plan is a collaborative and iterative process which is ultimately aiming to come to a balanced position that will deliver development in a sustainable way. We are required to follow the process set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012<sup>2</sup>. The stages in developing a Local Plan are set out below.
- (13) Each stage of the Local Plan will be open to comment and consultation with the public. All feedback will be used to shape and guide the plan as it progresses. All stakeholders are strongly encouraged to share their views on the draft Plan.
- (14) You can find out more information about how to give your views by visiting <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/showcase/stockport-local-plan>.

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/767/contents>

Figure 1 Where we are in the process of preparing the Stockport Local Plan.



## Our vision

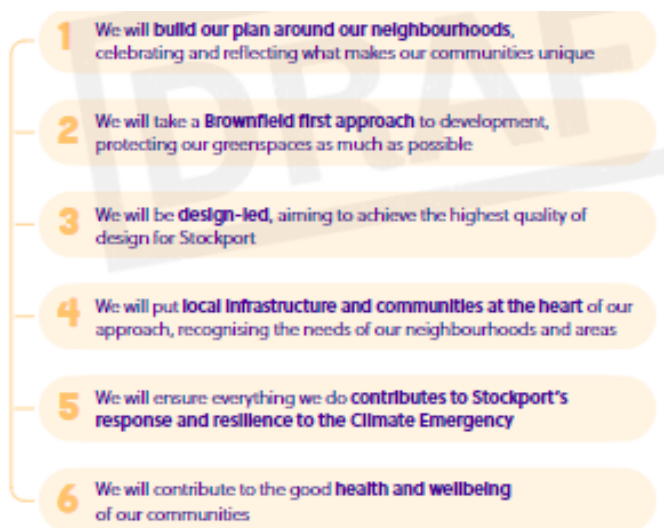
### One heart, one home, one future

- (15) The Local Plan is an important step forward in delivering the vision for Stockport set out in the borough plan and One Stockport: One Future<sup>3</sup>. It draws across all elements set out in the borough plan of One Heart, One Home and One Future, to ensure that Stockport has the right land, homes and infrastructure in the right places, for current and future generations.
- (16) **One heart.** At the heart of Stockport is its people and the communities in which they live.
1. A caring and growing Stockport: Stockport is a great place to grow up where children have the best start in life
  2. A healthy and happy Stockport: People live the best lives they can - happy, healthy and independently
  3. A strong and supportive Stockport: Confident and empowered communities working together to make a difference
- (17) **One home.** Stockport is a great place to live, where no one is left behind.
4. A fair and inclusive Stockport: A borough for everyone - diversity and inclusion is celebrated and everyone has equity of opportunity
  5. A flourishing and creative Stockport: Stockport is an exciting place to live, where people are active and celebrate the culture
  6. A climate-friendly Stockport: Stockport is a responsible and sustainable borough
- (18) **One future.** Growing, creating and delivering a thriving future for Stockport.
7. An enterprising and thriving Stockport: A thriving economy which works for everyone
  8. A skilled and confident Stockport: Everyone has the opportunities and skills to successfully achieve their ambitions
  9. A radically digital Stockport: A digitally inclusive and dynamic borough
- (19) Over the Summer of 2021 we tested a series of high level principles which reflect the borough plan's vision<sup>4</sup>. Following feedback from the public and key stakeholders these principles run through the plan and inform its approach to our places and neighbourhoods.

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.onestockport.co.uk/one-future-plan/>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/our-key-principles>



## Our places and neighbourhoods

- (20) 'Community' means different things to different people and Stockport is made of many vibrant and diverse communities. Each have different strengths and needs both now and in the future. Our new Local Plan will have these communities at its core, ensuring that the uniqueness of different areas and neighbourhoods is recognised and supported.
- (21) Communities can be based on places, common interests or beliefs, histories, or people's everyday routines. It is not straightforward, therefore, to talk about simple geographical locations in a way that truly represents what they mean to people. One person's school community might, for instance, be different to their next-door neighbour's social community, or a community of shared health-care needs, or that of the local dog walking group or junior sports team.
- (22) Our borough is, however, made up of a number of places, each of which provides a focal point for meeting the community needs of surrounding neighbourhoods. There is considerable overlap between the areas they each serve, with people looking to different places to meet different needs.
- (23) Our centres are important places for our communities and for future development. They are best located to deliver the homes and services communities need, building on the advantages they already provide. Focussing development in and close to existing town, district and other centres encourages much needed development to take place in the most sustainable manner and helps to ensure many of the council's wider objectives are met.
- (24) **Stockport Town Centre** will be a focus for new neighbourhoods and has its own section in the plan. However, **Brinnington** is close to the town centre and can benefit from the services and opportunities that it offers. There is an opportunity to build on the successes which have occurred in the area in recent years, with the development of new open market housing that has proven to be popular. The new developments in the centre have helped to deliver services and leisure facilities of benefit to those in the surrounding area.

- (25) Also close to the town centre, **Edgeley** is a local community with its own centre providing shops and other services. Stockport County Football Club plays at Edgeley Park at the heart of the area. It is characterised by late Victorian terraced residential properties. The centre has a number of empty shops and an opportunity exists to revisit its scale and role to help sustain suitable levels of commercial activity. There may be scope to repurpose elements to ensure the centre continues to make a positive contribution to the wider area. The redevelopment of Town Centre West also provides the potential to help support commercial activity in Edgeley. Given its proximity to the town centre, the area benefits from good access to highway and public transport links making it one of the more accessible places in the borough. The area also benefits from several formal parks. The area is well served by primary and secondary schools but has insufficient capacity for additional pupils. As redevelopment of the adjacent Town Centre West area progresses it will be important to ensure that there is suitable open space and social infrastructure provision for the growing population.
- (26) The area around Bird Hall Lane, **Cheadle Heath**, is home to many businesses. Redevelopment in this area is providing buildings and sites fit for modern employment purposes. **Adswold** is mainly a residential area with a mix of old council houses and, particularly in recent years, market housing built as parts of the area have been regenerated. The largely vacant area of employment land off Adswold Road and close to the waste recycling centre provides an opportunity for new housing. This has the potential to help support the viability of nearby local shops and services.
- (27) The A6 corridor heading south from the centre of Stockport has many commercial properties with housing of varying degrees of density in the areas behind. **Davenport**, just off the main A6, has a centre and a variety of housing types from terraces to larger, more suburban housing. Train stations at Davenport and **Woodsmoor** provide good links into Stockport and Manchester and outwards towards Buxton. **Hazel Grove** station is on the same line and is close to Hazel Grove centre which stretches more than half a mile along the A6. The centre contains several supermarkets but also a wide variety of local shops, bars, restaurants and other services. To either side of the A6 the housing is generally more suburban in character than in areas to the north. The main employment areas are found off Bramhall Moor Lane as well as at Stepping Hill Hospital, though parts of the employment site at MAN Diesel have been redeveloped for housing as the nature of employment at that site has changed.
- (28) In the east of the borough, the main residential area of **Marple** is surrounded by Green Belt which has a rural character and varied landscape. Its district centre is home to a wide variety of shops and services serving the wider area, along with the smaller centre at **Marple Bridge**. Development in this area has taken place over a variety of timeframes but there remains an important historic connection to Samuel Oldknow, which is an important part of the character of the area. The area is served by two train stations which link to Manchester but not Stockport. Access into the centre of Stockport is along the A626 which becomes congested at peak times. The area is well served by primary and secondary schools but has insufficient capacity for additional pupils. Marple and the wider area to Marple Bridge, Compstall and beyond are two areas of Stockport where local people have formed a forum to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for their area. This is also the case in

**High Lane**, a predominantly residential village on the A6 which has a centre of its own serving local needs.

- (29) Also to the east of the borough but with more of an urban feel to it is **Romiley**, where a district centre serves the local community. The area has a variety of housing types, from smaller terraced properties to large, detached housing. The rail station in the centre of Romiley is served by trains which link through **Woodley** and **Bredbury** into/out of Manchester, however local roads suffer from severe congestion at times. The main roads in the area link through to the M60 and to the largest employment area in the borough at Bredbury Industrial Estate. This houses a range of employment types, although there is significant emphasis on industrial and warehousing uses, with connection to the M60 provided by the nearby junction.
- (30) To the north and west of the River Tame, are local communities which make up **Reddish**, referred to separately as Reddish North and Reddish South. The area benefits from good access to local retail and leisure opportunities, particularly for some the informal outdoor recreation opportunities afforded by Reddish Vale Country Park and the Tame Valley. Reddish also has relatively good access to the wider opportunities afforded by Stockport town centre to the south and Manchester to the north-west. The area boasts some of the borough's more significant employment opportunities, particularly around Greg Street and along the line of the former Stockport Branch Canal which closed in the 1960s. The area has seen some significant new development in recent years, particularly the reuse of lower quality employment land or the conversion of heritage buildings for housing. Similar development opportunities are likely to continue in the future, with a need to carefully balance new housing with maintaining access to jobs and provision of community facilities. The area is well served by primary and secondary schools, with surplus places available to accommodate additional pupils. Reddish's communities are well connected to highway networks and Reddish North is served well by a rail connection into Manchester, with fairly high frequency bus connections into Stockport. However, the area still has issues of traffic congestion and suffers from poor air quality in places as a consequence. Transport proposals, including the future Metrolink use of the current under-utilised rail line through Reddish South, are being explored as potential solutions to these issues.
- (31) The **Heatons** area is made up of a collection of suburbanised townships also in the north of the borough, to the north of the River Mersey and M60. The A6 and mainline railway provide access to Stockport town centre to the south and Manchester to the north. People living in this area have good access to a range of local facilities such as the shops in Heaton Moor, Heaton Mersey and Heaton Chapel. It is also relatively easy to take advantage of the wider opportunities afforded by larger places nearby. The socio-economic make-up of the area is varied, with some parts being relatively affluent whilst others, particularly to the east of the A6, face greater challenges in terms of deprivation. The area is expected to continue to provide new development opportunities but it will be important to balance making good use of urban land with ensuring good access to social and community facilities and enhancing the area's environmental assets. The area is well served by primary and secondary schools, however there are currently limited places available to accommodate additional pupils. Traffic congestion is a significant issue in many parts of the Heatons. Measures to address this, particularly making cycling and walking realistic, desirable



options for shorter journeys, are key to ensuring that people can make the best use of the local services and opportunities that are on offer.

- (32) **Cheadle Hulme** is one of the best places in the borough for providing residents with options for meeting their everyday needs, from retail, services and leisure to employment opportunities. Cheadle Hulme station provides excellent rail connections to Stockport, Manchester and places on the wider rail network. Neighbourhoods in this part of the borough, however, suffer from congested highways and resulting air quality issues, with current proposals to make walking and cycling more viable and desirable options a key part of addressing this. People living in the area have fairly good access to outdoor space and recreational opportunities. Life expectancy is higher than the Stockport average. The area has seen some development in recent years, including reuse of previously developed land and the repurposing of existing buildings in the centre of Cheadle Hulme. Opportunities for further development will be limited, however, unless more dramatic changes can be brought forward in ways that work for local communities.
- (33) In the southern part of the borough a number of communities and neighbourhoods are centred around **Bramhall**, with residents able to access a range of local shops, services and leisure opportunities. The area is relatively well served by outdoor recreational opportunities and people living here might expect to live longer than the average for the borough. Whilst much of the area is built-up, it has a green and leafy feel, with many houses having large gardens and tree lined streets being fairly common. At the most southern part of the borough, within the Green Belt, lies the village of **Woodford** which is experiencing significant change as a result of the new development of over 900 new homes with supporting community facilities on the site of the former Woodford Aerodrome. Woodford was also the first place in the borough to successfully produce and adopt a Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst it has been eased by the recently opened A6 to Manchester Airport relief road (the A555), traffic congestion remains an issue for communities in some places around Bramhall. Proposals to make more sustainable ways of travelling a better option are currently being delivered.
- (34) The communities around **Cheadle** and **Gatley** are primarily residential and benefit from good access to retail, services and leisure opportunities. People living in the area have relatively easy access to outdoor recreational opportunities and have above average life expectancy. As a largely built-up area there are limited new development options but new homes provided in recent years have made good reuse of previously developed land. Whilst communities are well connected to highway networks there are considerable issues of traffic congestion which results in poor air quality in some places. Plans for a new rail station at Cheadle and cycling and walking network improvements as part of the Mayoral Challenge Fund Bee Network will both help to address this issue.
- (35) **Heald Green** is a well-established residential community in the south-west of the borough which is well served by retail, services and leisure opportunities. The area's residents can access a range of outdoor recreational opportunities and, like many of the more affluent parts of the borough, have above average life expectancy. Like much of Stockport there are only limited opportunities for new development on previously developed land, but new homes are planned for land around the Seashell Trust's campus to the east of the area. That development will help transform the campus into a modern, fit for purpose facility.

This will provide a creative, happy and secure environment for children and young people with complex needs and additional communication challenges. Communities in Heald Green benefit from good access to the main road network and a rail station for travel into Manchester city centre and elsewhere. The area's main roads, however, suffer from traffic congestion and poor air quality in places.

- (36) More detailed data and information on our places and neighbourhoods is set out in the Sustainability Appraisal which has informed preparation of the Local Plan.

## Our strategy

### Objectives

- (37) To play its part in delivering the vision set out in One Stockport: One Future it is important that the impact of the Local Plan can be measured. This will help us to implement the plan's policies, ensure the plan is deliverable and make sure the policies are achieving their desired outcomes as well as informing any future reviews of the plan. The following objectives set the One Stockport: One Future priorities in a planning context. This provides a starting point for the monitoring framework that will sit alongside the Local Plan.

	One Stockport-One Future - '5 Big Things'				
	Good Jobs and Homes	The Best Place to Grow Up	Best Health and Care	Thriving Neighbourhoods	Clean, Green Transport
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>To ensure a resilient and healthy borough which delivers zero carbon development by 2038, whilst adapting to the impacts of climate change and increasing biodiversity through sustainable development.</p>	X	X	X	X	X
<p>Objective 2</p> <p>To tackle inequalities across Stockport, particularly in relation to housing, employment, and health.</p>	X	X	X	X	X
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>To provide the social infrastructure required to address existing issues and support the delivery of new development and to meet the needs of existing and expanding communities. This will help develop mixed, strong and cohesive communities; ensuring access for all to education, health, community and cultural facilities.</p>	X	X	X	X	

	One Stockport-One Future - '5 Big Things'				
	Good Jobs and Homes	The Best Place to Grow Up	Best Health and Care	Thriving Neighbourhoods	Clean, Green Transport
<p>Objective 4</p> <p>To conserve and enhance our landscapes and natural environment, and improve the quality of and access to our open spaces.</p>		X		X	
<p>Objective 5</p> <p>To deliver high quality and locally distinctive design that responds to local character to create inclusive, well-connected and safe neighbourhoods. This will reflect the borough's historic and built environment, including our industrial heritage, and will protect and enhance quality and distinctiveness whilst accommodating change.</p>	X	X		X	
<p>Objective 6</p> <p>To provide a range of different types and tenures of quality new homes that meet aspirations and needs, reflecting an ageing population and a growth in the number of households.</p>	X	X	X	X	

	One Stockport-One Future - '5 Big Things'				
	Good Jobs and Homes	The Best Place to Grow Up	Best Health and Care	Thriving Neighbourhoods	Clean, Green Transport
<p>Objective 7</p> <p>To help create and accommodate employment whilst making Stockport a place of improving inclusive wealth<sup>5</sup> taking advantage of our town centre's economic and locational opportunities and ensuring all our centres perform their key role at the heart of our local communities and neighbourhoods.</p>	X	X		X	
<p>Objective 8</p> <p>To provide everyone in Stockport with access to schools and other appropriate educational facilities.</p>		X		X	
<p>Objective 9</p> <p>To provide the necessary transport infrastructure, whilst reducing the need to travel and improve connectivity, ensuring that sustainable modes become a realistic default option for journeys.</p>		X		X	X

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<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Environment Programme defines a country's inclusive wealth as "the social value (not dollar price) of all its capital assets, including natural capital, human capital and produced capital". See [www.unep.org/resources/inclusive-wealth-report-2018](http://www.unep.org/resources/inclusive-wealth-report-2018).

	One Stockport-One Future - '5 Big Things'				
	Good Jobs and Homes	The Best Place to Grow Up	Best Health and Care	Thriving Neighbourhoods	Clean, Green Transport
<p>Objective 10</p> <p>To ensure that Stockport has the utility infrastructure in place to support its future development and prosperity (including suitable digital infrastructure).</p>	X	X		X	X

## Strategic policies

- (38) The Local Plan's strategic policies set out the overall approach we will take to delivering and managing new development in the borough. This will support or contribute to achieving the Stockport Local Plan Objectives. In turn this will help meet the priorities and ambitions of One Stockport: One Future.

### Strategic policy 1: Spatial strategy

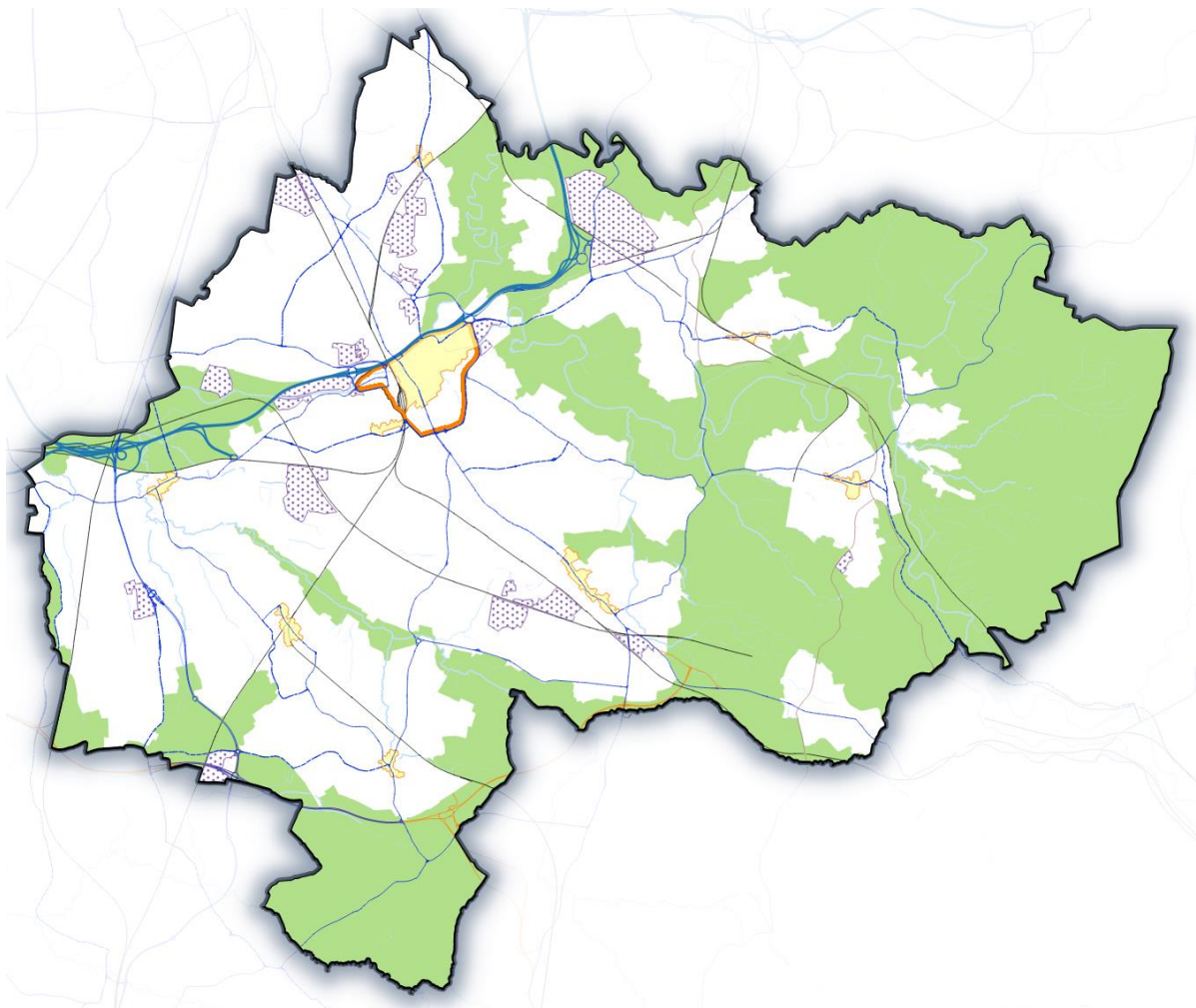
1. New development will be concentrated in the most sustainable locations and will make the most efficient use of land possible. There will be a focus on prioritising opportunities to use previously developed ("brownfield") land as far as possible in balance with meeting our development needs. Land which has not been developed previously ("greenfield") will be developed where it is necessary to make sure that essential development needs are met.
2. New development will be expected to facilitate equality and create age-friendly, healthy communities. It will provide all residents with the opportunity to benefit from the borough's enhanced economic prosperity.
3. Active and vibrant communities will be created and provided with the social and green infrastructure necessary to allow everyone to lead healthy and happy lives and play their part in the future of Stockport.
4. Development must play a significant role in addressing the crises faced by our natural environment. Opportunities for a net gain in biodiversity through new development will be taken.
5. Development will enable existing and new communities to adapt to and become more resilient to the effects of climate change. Opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will be taken to ensure the borough meets carbon neutrality targets by 2038.
6. The borough's environmental assets, including vital areas of urban open space serving local communities, will be protected and enhanced. Measures will be taken to safeguard against potentially harmful impacts of development.
7. The openness and permanence of the borough's Green Belt (as shown on the Policies Map) will be protected. Planning decisions within the Green Belt will be made in accordance with national planning policy.
8. High quality design will be achieved, in part through the use of design codes and guides, protecting the best elements of Stockport's character, identity and distinctiveness and ensuring that new developments integrate and contribute to their surroundings in a positive way. Stockport's unique culture, places and spaces should be preserved and enhanced, whilst embracing opportunities to innovate.
9. Our historic environment and heritage assets will be positively and proactively managed, reinforcing their contribution to local identity and distinctiveness. A strategy of heritage-led regeneration will be key to realising many of the borough's development opportunities. The council maintains a Local List of non-designated heritage assets and up-to-date Conservation Area character appraisals and management plans. The council will consider using Article 4 directions to restrict the

scope of permitted development rights wherever harm to the historic or wider built environment might arise.

10. A wide variety of homes will be provided for people who want to live in Stockport. It will also be recognised that homes play a central role in our resilience to climate change and in creating and shaping our neighbourhoods and communities of the future. A total of at least 15,761 new homes will be provided in the period up to 2041. The Local Plan strategic affordable housing target is 50%. Within the established built-up area at least 90% of new homes will be on previously developed ("brownfield") land.
11. Stockport Town Centre is the most significant key location for the future success of the borough. It is a sustainable location, close to transport links, jobs, shops and services. The town centre can deliver the infrastructure required to meet the demands of the new urban communities which will be created at an appropriate, optimised scale and density. The Town Centre West Mayoral Development Corporation area will lead the way in achievement of our aspirations for the town centre as a whole.
12. The more than 30 other centres across the borough also have a key role to play. The smallest of these (large local centres and other local centres) provide important services and facilities to the neighbourhoods that surround them. Larger district centres form key focal points for local communities and often have a far wider catchment for the services and opportunities they provide. Such provision of services also means our centres have a strategic role to play, at an appropriate, optimised scale and density, in helping meet housing needs.
13. The A6 corridor running from Hazel Grove District Centre in the south to the southern edge of Stockport Town Centre, and then from the northern edge of the town centre to the borough's northern boundary, provides a third key strategic locality. Residential development will be at a scale and density which is appropriate to the character of the area whilst making the most of the corridor's sustainable access opportunities.
14. Development of new retail and leisure floorspace will follow a town centres first approach by applying a sequential test to ensure sustainable patterns of development are achieved. An impact assessment will be required where proposals for retail or leisure outside of these locations could threaten their vitality and viability. Following this approach, in the period up to 2041:
  - a. new convenience retail floorspace capacity totalling up to 3,800 square metres (net) will be created; and
  - b. new comparison retail floorspace capacity totalling up to 5,800 square metres (net) will be created.
15. Development will create enhanced economic opportunities for new and existing residents. Development will also be used to help provide training and skills opportunities for all, enhancing our existing well-educated and skilled workforce. This will also support the growth and development of new employment sectors. Existing employment sites will be supported to enable more diverse opportunities, including through the provision of appropriate supporting infrastructure. This will ensure that existing and new businesses are enabled to start, grow and flourish.



16. Walking, wheeling<sup>6</sup>, cycling and public transport will be prioritised as the preferred modes of travel. This will make sure that core services and facilities are within easy reach of homes and workspaces, with sustainable travel encouraged to, from and beyond our centres. All centres will be welcoming and inclusive places to visit. Centres will offer opportunities for diversification and welcome a wider range of uses that increase dwell time, attract footfall and enable prosperity for people and businesses. Proposals to develop new or improve existing arts and cultural facilities will be supported as will the retention or provision of new markets.
17. Physical infrastructure will be delivered alongside development to ensure that our communities are connected, we are climate-friendly and our economy can thrive. This will include digital, renewable and low carbon energy, utilities, transport and social infrastructure. The council is committed to bringing Metrolink to the borough. There is an expectation that new development will contribute towards the provision of such infrastructure at a level commensurate with its scale and impact.



This key diagram illustrates the overall spatial strategy and will be further updated once a preferred approach has been agreed.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Wheeling' is the action of moving as a pedestrian using any kind of wheeled mobility aid, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, walking frames, prams or buggies.

## Strategic policy 2: A strategy for our centres

1. The council will work with others to plan for and manage transformational change to help Stockport Town Centre become a high quality, higher density, thriving, highly accessible and sustainable destination in which to live, work and spend time. The town centre's role and appeal will be expanded both sub-regionally at the heart of the Southern Growth Corridor within Greater Manchester and as a local community hub for all ages.
2. Residential development will be encouraged at an appropriate, optimised density in all of our centres, helping ensure their future vitality, whilst taking the needs of other uses into account. In particular, residential development above ground floor commercial and community uses will be encouraged. The town centre is a major sub-regional location for town centre living and has the potential to deliver up to 8,000 new homes up to 2041. It is anticipated that around 1,000 further new homes will be delivered in or in close proximity to our other centres in the same timeframe.
3. The council will pursue a positive strategy for the future of our town centre, district centres and local centres, seeking a wide range of uses that have flexibility to adapt. Our centres will be safe and welcoming for all users, and contribute to making an attractive place in which to spend time.
4. The council will work with key stakeholders including the Stockport Business Improvement District, community groups and neighbourhood planning forums to ensure that the borough's centres will have a vital role in delivering sustainable growth, acting as the focal point for their communities and providing the necessary supporting services whilst delivering new jobs and homes.
5. The borough's district centres will meet the majority of the everyday needs of Stockport's residents for shops, other main town centre uses and facilities.
6. The network of the borough's local centres will have an important role in providing local shops, leisure opportunities, food and drink uses, services and community facilities for the surrounding neighbourhoods. There will be an emphasis on maintaining a strong convenience goods retail function in each centre, providing sustainable top-up shopping facilities and minimising the need for residents to travel further, complemented by a range of other main town centre uses. This will be achieved through the careful management of changes of use within the centres.

## Strategic policy 3: Sustainable development in Stockport

1. When considering development proposals, the council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development in national policy. The council will work with applicants to secure development that improves the social, environmental and economic conditions in the area.
2. Unless material considerations indicate otherwise, planning applications will be approved without delay where:
  - a. they accord with the policies in this Local Plan; and

- b. they accord with policies in neighbourhood plans where relevant.
- 3. If there are no up-to-date policies relevant to the application then permission will be granted unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This will take into account whether:
  - a. the application of policies in the National Planning Policy Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
  - b. any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole.
- 4. Applicants are required to ensure that schemes are designed and constructed to achieve sustainable development and are resilient to the impacts of climate change. Subject to site specific circumstances, all development should:
  - a. create age-friendly, healthy communities;
  - b. make efficient use of land and address risks of flooding;
  - c. minimise carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and greenhouse gas emissions in line with our 2038 carbon neutrality target;
  - d. maximise biodiversity net gain, with a minimum gain of 20% expected through all developments; and
  - e. enhance economic prosperity for communities.

These requirements should be achieved by addressing all relevant policies in the plan and associated guidance to deliver quality development. Evidence should be demonstrated in the appropriate submission documentation as relevant policies require.
- 5. The council will work with applicants of all scales of development to ensure Stockport continues to be a place where people of all ages and backgrounds are happy to live and thrive.

## Strategic policy 4: Equality, impact and opportunity

- 1. It is expected that all development will contribute positively to:
  - a. enabling access for all groups of society with particular regard for older people and those with disabilities or reduced mobility;
  - b. not adversely discriminating against people, directly or indirectly, on account of their:
    - i. race;
    - ii. sex;
    - iii. disability;
    - iv. age;
    - v. sexual orientation;
    - vi. religion or belief;
    - vii. gender reassignment;
    - viii. pregnancy;
    - ix. maternity; or
    - x. status of marriage or civil partnership.

- c. providing opportunity for delivering inclusive wealth and addressing issues of economic hardship;
- d. addressing issues of health inequality and polarisation; and
- e. addressing the council's duties to:
  - i. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - ii. advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
  - iii. foster good relations between different groups.

## Development management policies

### Providing for our communities

- (39) Our local communities have been the lifeblood of Stockport as we have come through the Covid-19 crisis together. Active and vibrant communities and social infrastructure are a vital part of the future of Stockport in which everyone can lead healthy and happy lives.
- (40) The policies in this section of the plan will allow the council to manage development so that, in particular, it supports or contributes to achieving Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8.

### COM 1: Healthy and active across all ages

1. The council will work with its partners to integrate public health principles and planning. This will help reduce health inequalities and create an environment which supports healthy and active communities for all, across all ages. When determining planning applications the council will expect that:
  - a. health, education and other community facilities and services are located together or in close proximity to each other, including through the creation of community hubs;
  - b. development facilitates access to a range of high quality, well-maintained, robust and accessible open spaces, public realm, play, sports, leisure and cultural facilities;
  - c. access to green spaces and green infrastructure is increased to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing;
  - d. more active environments are created, increasing opportunities for more sustainable travel choices whilst benefiting physical and mental health and wellbeing;
  - e. commissioners of health care services and infrastructure are engaged in discussions regarding development proposals;
  - f. new health facilities are provided in accessible town and district centre locations;
  - g. opportunities be taken in support of initiatives which enable or improve access to healthy food, for example land for local food growing, allotments or community gardens;
  - h. energy efficient design and the location of development contributes to reducing fuel poverty and its associated impacts on health; and

- i. opportunities be taken in support of initiatives which seek to address poor health indicators and anti-social behaviour in the borough.

***Explanation:***

- (41) Chapter 8 of the NPPF (December 2023) sets out a range of considerations regarding the promotion of healthy and safe communities. This includes an expectation that, amongst other things, planning policies and decisions should take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community.
- (42) Stockport faces a number of health and social care issues including:
- an ageing population with increasingly complex care needs and at higher risk of isolation and loneliness. This is because more people live on their own without direct family support;
  - a population where birth rates have risen, especially in areas of deprivation. This has led to more children and young people living in low income households where health outcomes are poorer;
  - changes in the most common health issues experienced by the population, to those which are linked to lifestyles or are otherwise preventable;
  - a period of economic challenge that affects the incomes and entitlement to the most vulnerable people in Stockport;
  - fragmented services which are complicated to access, have duplications and are not as focussed on individual needs as they could be;
  - a system where too many people are admitted to hospital when they would be better and more appropriately cared for at home; and
  - increasing financial pressures with deficit forecasts for Stockport as demand growth continues if service delivery is not improved.
- (43) The One Stockport Health and Care Plan<sup>7</sup> sets out the ways in which we will develop the borough's health and social care system. The strategy is informed by our local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which comprehensively maps health and care needs in the borough and identifies trends in health and wellbeing.
- (44) The One Stockport Active Communities Strategy (2022-2030)<sup>8</sup> aims to support Stockport residents to become more active and to enjoy the health, social and environmental benefits of being more active. The strategy aims to create the conditions for people in Stockport to move more and build being physically active into their daily lives, ensuring Stockport is an even healthier and happier place to live, work and play.

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<sup>7</sup> See <https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=94681&Opt=3>

<sup>8</sup> See <https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/documents/s200935/Appendix%201%20-%20ACS.pdf>

## COM 2: Community and social infrastructure

1. The council will work with its partners to support the development of a comprehensive network of community and social infrastructure across the borough. This will promote social interaction, health and wellbeing across all age ranges. A flexible approach will be taken over the plan period, recognising the changing needs of society.
2. Development proposals for community and social infrastructure will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal:
  - a. is in an accessible location, served by a choice of sustainable travel options;
  - b. is designed to provide flexibility for different future uses; and
  - c. makes efficient use of the site.
3. Develop proposals for community and social infrastructure should be designed in such a way to maximise shared use of the facility, particularly for recreational and community uses.
4. New larger developments, and development contributing to a wider area of change such as within Stockport Town Centre, should robustly demonstrate that they can be adequately served by sufficient community and social infrastructure. Where shortfalls are identified developers will be required to make appropriate provision for new facilities. This could be on site or by making a suitable contribution towards off site new, improved and/or expanded community and social infrastructure.
5. Proposals that would result in the net loss of community facilities will only be permitted where:
  - a. Adequate alternative provision exists, or prior to commencement of development, adequate replacement provision can be made available in a suitably accessible location for the community it serves; or
  - b. The existing use is not financially or operationally viable, and evidence has been provided to confirm that the property has been marketed for a period of at least 12 months and no realistic interest has been shown for its retention.

### ***Explanation***

- (45) Paragraph 20 of the NPPF (December 2023) sets out that a range of different types of infrastructure should be planned for, including sufficient provision for community facilities. Community and social infrastructure play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive communities, it is therefore vital that they are protected where they fulfil this function either now or over the plan period. The council will work with communities to deliver their aspirations, ensuring that local facilities and services are retained where they are needed, or new or redeveloped facilities are provided where there is local need. The council's approach is to encourage new community uses to locate in the

borough's town, district and local centres as these places are best served by public transport, in particular the bus network which is more capable of serving local catchment needs.

- (46) In its consideration of applications for development that would place additional demand on services, the council will work with applicants to highlight at an early stage the potential needs for community facilities and services, drawing upon the evidence within the Infrastructure Plan and feedback from key providers of community and social facilities and services.
- (47) Paragraph 97 c) of the NPPF (December 2023) requires planning policies to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued community facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs. Community facilities can include community centres, places of worship, public houses, shops, open space, arts and cultural facilities, as well as other local services such as health and social care, libraries, schools and nurseries.
- (48) It is recognised that there are circumstances where loss of facilities and development for other uses may be appropriate, for example where existing community facilities are to be re-provided on an alternative site that is of an appropriate scale and quality, or where the facility is no longer required at that location. The council will require appropriate evidence in support of any planning application if the loss of a community facility is to be justified. This will be particularly important where the proposal would lead to a shortfall in provision for the specific use within the catchment population.
- (49) In considering proposals, the council will take into account the listing or nomination of 'Assets of Community Value'.

### COM 3: Educational facilities

1. The council will work with its partners to support the provision of a comprehensive network of educational facilities across the borough. A flexible approach will be taken over the plan period, recognising changing educational needs.
2. Development proposals for early years, primary, secondary, further, higher and SEND education facilities will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:
  - a. the education facilities are required to meet local demands;
  - b. drop offs and pick-ups can be safely provided;
  - c. they are in an accessible location, served by a choice of sustainable travel options;
  - d. they will not give rise to unacceptable adverse impacts on neighbouring and nearby properties;



- e. they meet statutory floorspace and premises requirements; and
- f. they are designed in such a way to provide space to meet flexible teaching and learning needs.

3. Proposals for new educational buildings, the extension of existing educational buildings, or the reuse of buildings for education purposes, should provide sufficient land to cater for the outdoor curriculum needs, in particular opportunities for sport and recreation.
4. Opportunities to make educational facilities available for community use should be sought wherever feasible to do so, particularly sports and recreation facilities.
5. The provision of natural spaces on educational land is encouraged to enable children to learn personal, social and technical skills.
6. Proposals for development that create a potential increase in demand for early years places and school places will be required to make appropriate provision for early years and educational facilities either on site, or by making a suitable contribution towards new, improved and/or expanded facilities elsewhere. Developer contributions will be sought for all school phases age 0-19 years, for special education and disability needs up to 25 years, and pupil referral units.
7. Where a new primary school is proposed, the council will require provision of facilities to be made for early years, where there is an identified local need.

### ***Explanation***

- (50) Stockport is committed to ensuring its residents have access to good local schools, colleges, and early years' settings which offer a rich and varied learning experience. The council believes all children have the right to enjoyable, inclusive and expansive education to enable every individual regardless of ability to achieve their full potential and to prepare for future life. Stockport will work in partnership with stakeholders, building on existing relationships, working with education providers to champion the needs of local children, young people and communities; recognising the important role education providers play as an anchor in those communities.
- (51) Paragraph 99 of the NPPF (December 2023) sets out that local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach in providing sufficient choice of school places to meet the needs of existing and new communities. This should include ensuring that development will widen choice in education. Authorities are expected to give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools. Our local policy builds upon the national policy to ensure that there is sufficient high-quality education provision available for every child and young person in the borough, from early years provision through to meeting post-16 educational needs. Doing this is considered an integral part of delivering sustainable development, and effective pupil place planning is a fundamental element of the local authority's role as strategic commissioner of good school places.

- (52) The majority of Stockport’s schools were built in the 50s, 60s and 70s, and although most have been refurbished during their lifetime, many of the schools are now requiring significant investment. Where feasible, the council will continue to focus its efforts on expanding or improving existing facilities that are in the urban area in accessible locations, as this makes the best use of land. The council will work closely with the Department for Education, the Education and Skills Funding Agency, the Regional Schools Commissioner and potential sponsors to deliver school places where they are needed.
- (53) Stockport has experienced a significant rise in the demand for school places in recent years, especially in primary schools. This pressure has been successfully managed through the expansion of existing schools. As the borough’s population grows, demand for school places is projected to increase, placing further pressure on facilities, particularly secondary and special education needs and disability (SEND). Where housing development results in increased demand, investment should be made into education provision to ensure that there are sufficient places to serve the borough’s pupils.
- (54) Applicants for residential development proposals will be expected to work in a positive and constructive way with Stockport Council, and other neighbouring local authorities where relevant, to identify the education needs arising from development and to ensure that appropriate provision is made towards new, improved and expanded facilities. Government guidance<sup>9</sup> on the use of planning obligations states that: “Government funding and delivery programmes do not replace the requirement for developer contributions in principle. Plan makers and local authorities for education should therefore agree the most appropriate developer funding mechanisms for education, assessing the extent to which developments should be required to mitigate their direct impacts.”
- (55) We will seek developer contributions from developments that yield pupils where there is insufficient capacity in local schools. Applications with less than 10 residential units will typically be exempt from providing developer contributions towards education. It will not apply to older age-restricted accommodation, student housing, care homes or nursing homes.
- (56) The Department for Education has published guidance<sup>10</sup> which sets out that evidence of pupil yields from housing developments should be based on up-to-date evidence from previous housing developments. The supplementary guidance titled ‘Estimating Pupil Yield from Housing Development’<sup>11</sup> acknowledges that there are multiple ways in which local authorities estimate pupil yield from housing.
- (57) In August 2023, the Department for Education published pupil yield data for all local authorities in England. Given that this is the most up to date evidence currently available,

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<sup>9</sup> See Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 23b-007-20190315 [www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations)

<sup>10</sup> See:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64d0f70d7a5708001314485f/Securing\\_Developer\\_Contributions\\_for\\_Education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64d0f70d7a5708001314485f/Securing_Developer_Contributions_for_Education.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> See:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64d0f71be5491a00134b5940/Estimating\\_Pupil\\_Yield\\_from\\_Housing\\_Development.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64d0f71be5491a00134b5940/Estimating_Pupil_Yield_from_Housing_Development.pdf)

this will be used to calculate the estimated number of pupils to arise from new housing development. However, pupil yields will be updated as this is refreshed. Furthermore, this will also be updated where more evidence is gathered locally.

(58) As such, education contributions will be calculated using the following formula:

Estimated pupil yield per school phase = Total number of property type[1] x pupil yield[2] (calculation is undertaken for each property type)

Estimated net pupil need = Estimated pupil yield per educational phase – forecast available places[3]

Total cost per educational phase = Estimated net pupil need per education phase x build costs[4]

Total contribution = sum of total costs per educational phases

[1] Property type takes into account the type (house or flat), size (bedroom number) and tenure.

[2] Pupil yield will be taken from DfE's pupil yield dashboard<sup>12</sup> or local evidence base which may replace or supersede it.

[3] Forecasts will be taken from the School Capacity Survey (SCAP) and local evidence.

[4] Mainstream build costs will be taken from DfE school places scorecard<sup>13</sup>. SEND build costs will be taken from the National Cost Benchmarking Study, uplifted with ONS inflation data or such update or other DfE recognised report as may replace or supersede it.

(59) Applications for Forest School sessions on the wider council estate are becoming very popular by nurseries and educational establishments. Although they are accepted as providing a unique opportunity for outdoor learning, they can place increased pressure on habitat and wildlife. It is therefore important that opportunities are taken to provide Forest School sessions within the educational establishments themselves.

(60) Where playing fields on educational land are facilities to be made available for community use, the council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) (2020) recommends that a community use agreement is drawn up. This should set out how it is intended to operate and is to be agreed prior to planning permission being granted, covering such matters as hours of availability, management arrangements and pricing policy. The community use agreement should help secure well-managed and safe community access to sports facilities on educational sites. Proposals for community use of sports facilities will need to ensure that amenity impacts are appropriately considered and addressed.

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<sup>12</sup> See: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-yield-from-housing-developments>

<sup>13</sup> See: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/local-authority-school-places-scorecards>

## COM 4: Protection of open space and recreation facilities

1. Development that would result in the loss of open space or sport and recreation facilities (indoor or outdoor) will only be permitted where one or more of the following apply:
  - a. it is ancillary to the function of the open space or facility and does not negatively affect the quantity, quality and ongoing use of provision
  - b. any replacement facility is of at least equal quantity and quality in a suitable location and in the same locality, and where this is proposed on site, will clearly outweigh the loss; or
  - c. it can be clearly demonstrated that the open space/facility is:
    - i. surplus to requirements; and
    - ii. not suitable or viable for any other form of provision for which there is an identified demand and would not create or worsen an existing deficiency.
2. Proposals will be considered favourably that can demonstrate an improvement to existing greenspace in the area in terms of the following:
  - a. visual amenity;
  - b. climate change adaptation benefits;
  - c. recreational benefits;
  - d. accessibility of the open space network; and
  - e. ecological improvements
3. The council will protect existing allotments and support other potential spaces that could be used for commercial food production or for community gardening.
4. Replacement provision should be provided directly by the developer and made available for use prior to the loss of the existing facility. Exceptionally, there may be circumstances where an off site contribution towards replacement provision would be appropriate and therefore considered acceptable.
5. This policy applies to all existing sites and facilities that have a recreation use or value, irrespective of whether they are owned or managed by the public, private or voluntary sectors.

### ***Explanation:***

- (61) Paragraph 102 of the NPPF (December 2023) sets out that having access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for

the health and well-being of communities. It also recognises the role of open space in delivering wider benefits for nature and supporting efforts to address climate change.

- (62) Stockport's green, blue and open spaces play an essential role in maintaining and improving quality of life; their contribution to developing locally distinctive and sustainable communities is vital to Stockport's success as being seen as such an attractive place to live. Ensuring a clean, pleasant and well-maintained environment is a top priority of the council.
- (63) Previous public consultation on the Local Plan (2017 Issues paper) highlighted the importance of open spaces to both residents of and visitors to Stockport. The 2017 Open Space Assessment identified that a high proportion of residents regularly visit open spaces in the borough such as parks more than once a week (52%) which is an indication of their popularity. Some of the open spaces in Stockport, such as Bruntwood Park and Etherow Country Park, are major tourist destinations and attract people from across Greater Manchester and beyond.
- (64) The Open Space Assessment found deficiencies in different types of open space across the borough, predominantly allotments and children's play areas. There is significant variation across Stockport, with shortfalls more pronounced in some areas than others. The accompanying standards paper to the Open Space Assessment contains an action plan, which highlights deficiencies in terms of access to open space across the borough. The action plan is also a valuable tool in assessing development proposals. The Playing Pitch Strategy has identified deficiencies in playing pitches across the borough, in particular for cricket and junior football, which could worsen over the Local Plan period.
- (65) Areas of open space are increasingly under pressure from development. Where an area of open space serves a valuable recreational or amenity function, the expectation will be to protect it from development. Therefore, sites included in the audit as part of the evidence from the Open Space Assessment and Playing Pitch Strategy are shown on the Policies Map. Some sites may not have been assessed as part of the studies as they are below the 0.2 hectare threshold applied or because of changing land uses. Therefore throughout the Local Plan period, there will be sites that function as open space but are not formally designated. If development comes forward on such sites, the following factors are of importance in determining the value of particular areas of open space and whether they should also be subject to this policy;
1. the offer of facilities for recreation
  2. visual or amenity value of the land
  3. the contribution made to linked areas of designated open space
  4. informal public access, and
  5. the contribution to urban form or general well-being of a community.
- (66) Decisions concerning loss or provision of open space will take account of the Stockport Green Infrastructure Network and policy aims regarding its connectivity and functionality. Green Infrastructure is defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023).

(67) Development on open space may be acceptable where replacement open space is provided. Replacement open space should:

- be of the same or better-quality than that which is proposed to be lost;
- be in the same catchment area as that which is proposed to be lost; and
- be no less accessible than that which is proposed to be lost.

## COM 5: Local Green Space

1. Sites designated as Local Green Space are identified on the Policies Map. These sites will be protected from any development that causes harm to their beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of wildlife.
2. Development on land designated as Local Green Space is considered as inappropriate unless it is for one of the exceptions listed for Green Belt in paragraph 154 of the NPPF (December 2023) or one of the other forms of development listed as not inappropriate in the Green Belt in paragraph 155.
3. Further sites may be designated by neighbourhood plans, in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF.

### ***Explanation***

(68) The designations reflect government guidance that Local Green Spaces are particularly important areas of land to local communities that should be protected against development.

(69) The sites, as designated, help to contribute towards the delivery and maintenance of sustainable development, by protecting that green land in the urban area which is most valuable to local communities. The NPPF (December 2023) section on open space, and recreation sets out That Local Green Space should be:

- a. in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b. demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- c. local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

(70) The NPPF sets out that policies for managing development in areas designated as Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts. As our approach to Green Belt is to apply relevant national policy set out in the NPPF, that policy will also be applied to areas of Local Green Space as relevant.

## COM 6: Sporting facilities

### 1. **Priorities for protection and enhancement**

A comprehensive range of indoor and outdoor sports facilities will be protected across the borough including but not limited to:

- a. Grass sports pitches for football, rugby, lacrosse and hockey and cricket;
- b. Artificial pitches for football, rugby, hockey and lacrosse;
- c. Tennis courts;
- d. Bowling greens;
- e. Athletics facilities;
- f. Golf courses;
- g. Sports halls;
- h. Swimming pools;
- i. Fitness centres and gyms; and
- j. Other specialist indoor facilities.

### 2. The following sites are multi-pitch sites of strategic significance for outdoor sports, and their enhancement will be supported:

- a. Brabyns Park;
- b. Bradshaw Hall Playing Fields;
- c. Davenport Playing Fields;
- d. Frederick Whittaker Scott Playing Fields;
- e. Gotherage Lane Playing Fields;
- f. Lavington Avenue Playing Fields;
- g. South Reddish Park;
- h. Torkington Park;
- i. William Scholes Playing Fields; and
- j. Woodford Recreation Ground.

3. Development that would result in the loss of an indoor or outdoor sport facility will be required to satisfy the requirements of COM 4: Protection of open space and recreation facilities
4. .
5. Proposals to locate an artificial sports surface on an existing playing field will be supported where there is evidence that it meets a strategic need and sporting benefits can be clearly demonstrated.

***Explanation:***

- (71) This policy reflects findings of the Playing Pitch Strategy 2020 (PPS)<sup>14</sup> which assessed sporting need and the supply for outdoor sports facilities. This work identifies potential sites for multi-pitch sites and advises that such sites are prioritised for the improvement of ancillary and changing facilities, particularly those that have a lot of play.
- (72) Stockport's open spaces and outdoor sports and recreational facilities are an important element of the borough's character, which help to encourage physical activity and assist in the mental wellbeing of residents. In order to respond to community needs, paragraph 97 of the NPPF (December 2023) requires the council to plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities including open spaces and sports venues, and to ensure they are able to develop and modernise. It will be important that these facilities are fit for purpose and incorporate flexibility to help support the needs of each sport and club in the borough over the plan period.
- (73) Our existing outdoor and built facilities are important assets serving local communities and, in many cases, the whole borough and adjacent boroughs. As such, any proposal affecting an indoor or outdoor sports facility must be informed by evidence in the council's most recently adopted Playing Pitch Strategy and Community Indoor Needs Assessment.
- (74) The council will seek to achieve the overall sporting needs as evidenced in the Playing Pitch Strategy and Community Indoor Needs Assessment and proposals that could result in the loss or adversely affect the quality of such facilities will be assessed against the findings and recommendations set out in the relevant evidence base. Where development is proposed that is likely to have a detrimental impact on the use of a playing field, the council will engage with Sport England at the earliest opportunity.
- (75) The GM Moving strategy 2021 highlights how we can build resilience to Covid-19 and reduce risk of long-term conditions such as cardiovascular disease through preventing inactivity. 'GM Moving is vital to supporting Covid-19 recovery and resilience and better health for all in the longer term'.
- (76) One of the priorities from the One Stockport Active Communities Strategy (2022-2030) is to 'review, develop and sustain the built natural environment to help facilitate physical

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<sup>14</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/open-space-sport-and-recreation](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/open-space-sport-and-recreation)



activity'. Having the right physical environment and policy are two of the main drivers for creating a Stockport that is more active.

- (77) With a green infrastructure network incorporating public rights of way, parks and gardens together with a comprehensive network of sports and recreational facilities, there is an opportunity to create more active environments. It is therefore important that Stockport's network of recreational facilities is protected and enhanced.

## COM 7: Health care facilities

1. Proposals for major development that create a potential increase in demand for primary health care provision will be required to make appropriate provision for new facilities either on site, or by making a suitable contribution towards the improvement or expansion of nearby facilities. This policy will be applied to residential development of all types, including but not limited to:

- a. residential dwellings;
- b. student accommodation; and
- c. age-exclusive accommodation.

2. Development proposals for health care facilities will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal:

- a. is in an accessible location, served by a choice of sustainable travel options, in line with transport policies;
- b. is designed in such a way that provides flexibility for the changing needs of healthcare provision; and
- c. supports the council's ambition to move to neighbourhood-based care provision.

3. Proposals that would result in the net loss of health care facilities will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that local health care needs can still be met.

### ***Explanation:***

- (78) Paragraph 100 of the NPPF (December 2023) refers to the requirement on local planning authorities to ensure faster delivery of public service infrastructure by working proactively and positively with promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to plan for required facilities and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.
- (79) Health and Wellbeing is at the forefront of Stockport's ten-year vision, and the One Stockport Health and Care Plan sets out the council's key priorities. One of these priorities is to move towards neighbourhood based care provision and increasing the provision of proactive community health services.

- (80) This document highlights that Stockport is one of the healthiest places to live in the North West. However, health outcomes vary significantly between affluent and deprived areas. Further to this, Stockport has the oldest age profile in Greater Manchester and the population continues to age. With an ageing population, it is vital that local healthcare facilities are easy to get to and it is easy to get seen by a health care practitioner, to ensure individuals maintain a healthy older age. Similarly, it is also important that areas of open space, public realm, cultural and recreational facilities are easy to get to and use, to ensure that individuals maintain an active older age.
- (81) Integrated Care Systems (ICS) are a partnership of health and care organisations that bring together the NHS, local authorities and third sector bodies to take on responsibility for the resources and health of an area. Primary care is based on a GP-led model, where GPs are central to the coordination and delivery of patient care and aspects of health improvement.
- (82) The quality of the primary care estate varies from purpose-built modern premises to former residential properties that have been converted; genuine equality of access for those with disabilities still remains poor in some practices. Stockport council will work with the Integrated Care Board and health care providers to ensure the capacity of health facilities in Stockport increases in line with the changing needs of our communities. Maximising the accessibility of facilities for residents is important, so district and local centres will normally be the most suitable locations for them.
- (83) Stepping Hill Hospital is located just off the A6, between Great Moor Local Centre and Hazel Grove District Centre, and is operated by Stockport NHS Foundation Trust. The Trust is an integrated provider of acute hospital and community services to the people of Stockport, as well serving the populations of East Cheshire and the High Peak in north Derbyshire. The location of the hospital makes access difficult for individuals from more deprived areas of the borough, and it is difficult to access by public transport which results in a reliance on private cars. The existing estate is deteriorating in condition, which is impacting on the quality of care. As such, the council are exploring options to deliver a new hospital, with a focus on services potentially being delivered in Stockport Town Centre. A new build hospital will give Stockport an opportunity to transform the borough's entire health and social care system, creating a financially-sustainable system that focuses on keeping the population healthy and reduces health inequalities.
- (84) Where proposals for major development may result in a shortfall in primary healthcare provision, this will trigger a review of nearby practice premises with a capacity assessment. A deficiency in healthcare provision will be demonstrated by, but not limited to, factors such as:
- The levels of utilisation of the premises;
  - The clinical / non-clinical split of the accommodation; and
  - The extent to which changes in patient needs are likely to result in additional workload for the practices.
- (85) Where relevant this will be done on a case-by-case basis to minimise adverse localised impacts of new housing on primary care services.

(86) Formula for developer contributions for health care provision:

Number of persons x capital cost per person

(87) The council will prepare additional guidance on when developer contributions will be sought, and the mechanisms for securing these, including through the use of Section 106 agreements.

## COM 8: Cemeteries and crematoria

1. Development proposals for cemeteries and crematoria will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal:

- a. will have no adverse impact on surface or groundwater;
- b. will have no adverse impact on the ecological value of the area;
- c. will not give rise to unacceptable adverse impacts on neighbouring and nearby uses; and
- d. will respect the visual appearance and character of the area.

2. Due to the constrained land supply within the borough, preference will be given to the expansion of existing facilities rather than the provision of new facilities. Where new facilities are proposed, information should be submitted to clearly demonstrate the need for the new site.

### ***Explanation:***

(88) Paragraph 8 b) of the NPPF (December 2023) establishes an objective to deliver sustainable communities "...with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being." Specific references to cemeteries or burial space can be found in paragraphs 154 and 155 of the NPPF (December 2023), in relation to the development and material changes of use of land within the Green Belt. The provision of burial space is considered to be a form of social infrastructure, and cemeteries are considered to be a form of Open Space, which helps to support well-being.

(89) Stockport Council provides cemetery facilities to people of all faiths and beliefs, with five cemetery sites located across the borough, and a crematorium located at Stockport Borough Cemetery on Buxton Road in Heaviley. Historically, burial was preferred but more recently the trend has been moving to cremation, with 90% of people in Stockport opting for this.

(90) Mill Lane Cemetery in Cheadle currently provides new burial space but will be taken up by approximately 2030, based on current burial rates burials must be managed in a way that limits groundwater pollution, and environmental guidance is provided by the government

on this matter. Work is currently being done to investigate options for expanding existing sites and making better use of remaining land to provide a longer-term supply of burial plots.

- (91) The Local Plan will facilitate the provision of an adequate supply of suitable land in appropriate locations for cemetery development and ancillary facilities; this will be through efficient use of land that is already identified as a cemetery, or the expansion of existing cemeteries. Expansion of existing cemeteries will be the preferred approach before alternative sites are considered for new cemetery development, this approach aims to ensure the best use of existing resources.

## Our environment

- (92) The local environment is one of Stockport's defining features and what makes it such a great place to live. Our communities tell us that protecting the local environment is important to them. The Local Plan provides the council with the means to protect and enhance the borough's best environmental assets, whilst also helping to safeguard against potentially harmful impacts of development. It also provides an opportunity to make sure our communities are resilient, making them well placed to cope with challenges such as our changing climate.
- (93) The policies in this section of the plan will allow the council to manage development so that, in particular, it supports or contributes to achieving Objectives 1, 4, and 5.

### Part 1: Natural environment

#### ENV 1: Protection and enhancement of the natural environment

1. The natural environment will be significantly enhanced and protected from loss or damage, including its role for carbon sequestration. Planning decisions will have regard to the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for nature conservation shown on the Policies Map. Decisions will be informed by the 'Statements of Environmental Opportunity' set out in the National Character Area Profiles<sup>15</sup> for:
  - NCA 51: Dark Peak;
  - NCA 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe;
  - NCA 55: Manchester Conurbation; and
  - NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain.
2. Development which would harm the effective functioning or connectivity of areas identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy or the ecological network as shown on the Policies Map will not be permitted. In exceptional circumstances, where it is demonstrated that development in network areas is unavoidable, alternative habitat should be provided to ensure that:
  - a. equivalent connectivity is maintained;

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<sup>15</sup> See [www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles#ncas-in-north-west-england](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles#ncas-in-north-west-england)

- b. quality and quantity of priority habitat<sup>16</sup> is increased;
- c. ecosystems are resilient and still able to cope with continuing environmental change and human pressures; and
- d. The mitigation hierarchy is followed.

3. Development should include measures at an appropriate scale to improve ecological network linkages and habitat value. Opportunities to improve connections between areas are of particular importance. This will involve retaining and enhancing existing landscape and natural features (e.g. trees, hedgerow, watercourses, water bodies, pollination species and priority habitats).

4. New development will be expected to enhance and help bridge the gaps with the existing Green Infrastructure network, in terms of its quantity, quality, accessibility and functionality. The council will meet increased demand for access to open space and opportunities for physical activity, by tackling deficiencies and under provision. Such measures will include:

- a. securing additional on site open space including provision for all ages. New open space should form an integral part of the layout of the development with arrangements for long-term maintenance agreed in advance of occupation;
- b. the incorporation of wider green infrastructure features including appropriate planting of trees, other soft landscaping, green roofs and walls and installation of habitat features for the benefit of biodiversity and climate resilience; and
- c. enhancing local food production through the provision of opportunities for growing food in new developments.

### ***Explanation***

(94) The natural environment encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally, meaning in this case not artificial. This environment encompasses the interaction of all living species, climate, weather and natural resources that affect human survival and economic activity. This policy aims to protect the components that make up the natural environment including land, species and habitats, freshwater environments, geology and soils and overall provide gains for the borough's biodiversity. There is widespread recognition of the importance of protecting and enhancing the natural environment and ensuring habitats and biodiversity are fully considered in planning decisions and opportunities to improve the network of habitats and green infrastructure are utilised. Green Infrastructure (GI) is defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF (December 2023).

(95) Local authorities have a key part to play in conserving biodiversity through developing local policies and strategies, determining planning applications and managing their estates. One

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<sup>16</sup> Listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

of the goals from the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) 25-year plan is to achieve 'Thriving Plants and Wildlife' and delivering 'environmental net gain' is embedded throughout. Wildlife networks and connectivity are vitally important in sustaining sites and addressing the impacts of climate change.

- (96) The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (the NERC Act) originally placed a specific duty on local authorities in exercising their functions, to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity (section 40). The Environment Act 2021 changed this position by amending the biodiversity duty to include the enhancement of biodiversity. The amended general biodiversity objective is therefore the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Furthermore, legal obligations are also placed on local authorities regarding implementation and reporting of fulfilling this revised duty.
- (97) Natural England uses National Character Area (NCA) profiles for defining unique combinations of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, culture and economic activity. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.
- (98) Paragraph 180 of the NPPF (2023) states that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing 'coherent ecological networks' that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- (99) The Environment Act 2021<sup>17</sup> brings in new requirements for when councils are making planning decisions in relation to nature and biodiversity including the following:
- a. Local Nature Recovery Strategies
  - b. Biodiversity Net Gain
  - c. Strengthened biodiversity duty on public authorities
  - d. Strategic protected site and species strategies
  - e. New tree felling consultation requirements
- (100) Biodiversity constitutes the living components of natural capital and feeds into the wider environmental benefits. There is a 69% decline in species globally as reported by WWF in the Living Planet Report 2022<sup>18</sup>. Consequently securing a resilient ecological network will not only help deliver the wider natural capital benefits for Stockport, but also help prevent further species decline.

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<sup>17</sup> See [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted).

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/WWF-Living-Planet-Report-2022.pdf>.

(101) The council has produced an ecological network map for the borough<sup>19</sup>. This builds on the Greater Manchester Green Infrastructure network to provide a more localised context and incorporates existing ecological assets, spaces that improve connectivity between ecological assets (linear corridors) and a number of small sites that can act as ‘stepping stones’ across which certain species can move. The ecological network will assist in the provision of ecosystem services that are essential for sustainable development, including water management, carbon capture and access to nature with associated recreational and health benefit. For clarity ecosystem services are defined as services provided by the natural environment that benefit people.

(102) The ecological network within Stockport is diverse. At a high level it is mainly made up of the following wildlife rich habitats:

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

(103) Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a statutory requirement of the 2021 Environment Act. Greater Manchester was one of five areas selected by the government to pilot the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)<sup>20</sup>. The pilot work was published in 2021 and work is underway to develop a formal LNRS for the whole of Greater Manchester, including Stockport. The LNRS will set out the priorities and opportunities to tackle the biodiversity emergency and enhance the natural environment, both for nature and for wider benefits to our environment, economy and society. Stockport’s ecological network will assist in the provision of nature conservation and ecosystem services that are essential for sustainable development at a more local scale. As such, the objectives of the GM LNRS and local ecological network will feed into the implementation of this policy.

(104) Urbanised areas with significant proportions of artificial surface cover can lock in heat far more than in more rural surroundings, this is sometimes known as the urban heat island effect, and the issue of urban overheating is now recognised in Approved Document Part O of building regulation standards. Green and blue infrastructure and natural green surface cover provide multiple benefits, including space for biodiversity, supporting wellbeing for people, as well as promoting climate resilience through slowing and storing rainwater during intense downpours and promoting cooling during extreme heat events. Artificial turf is a particular concern in relation to these factors and the council is not generally supportive of its use other than in formal sports and recreation facilities.

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<sup>19</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage).

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



## ENV 2: Enhancing biodiversity

1. Relevant development will be expected to make the most of a site's potential for biodiversity and go beyond the mandatory requirement where possible:
  - a. Development should aim to provide a minimum 20% measurable net gain of biodiversity, prioritising the delivery of net gain on site;
  - b. Any offsetting proposals will be considered on a case-by case basis, with priority given to units being delivered within Stockport;
  - c. Development should contribute to the ecological network and wider opportunity areas defined at a local and Greater Manchester level; and
  - d. Development will be refused if there is significant harm to biodiversity which cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated for, or as a last resort, compensated for.
2. Landscaping proposals must be made up of a mix of locally native species to match natural habitats. Where non-native species are proposed, their ecological value must be evidenced, and should comprise species beneficial to pollinators and/or be well-adapted to climate change.
3. Development within 250 metres of the borough's Ecological Network must include at least 60% locally native species within any landscaping proposals.
4. Measures to protect against the harm caused by invasive non-native species should be taken throughout the development process.
5. Development must include a proportionate number of bat roosting and bird nesting facilities relative to the size and scale of the development. This is considered to be:
  - a. at least one integrated bat roosting or bird nesting facility within each new dwelling or extension to an existing dwelling;
  - b. for multi-story buildings (such as flats), a minimum of two boxes per floor;
  - c. for large scale non-residential buildings (such as warehouses), a minimum of eight boxes should be provided per building; and
  - d. consideration should be given to colony nesting species such as swifts and sand martens, which require several boxes grouped together to ensure appropriate provision.

Where integrated facilities are not possible, alternative facilities should be provided elsewhere within the site. Where this cannot be achieved a financial contribution will be required to enable off-site habitat management/creation providing benefit to bats and birds, subject to viability

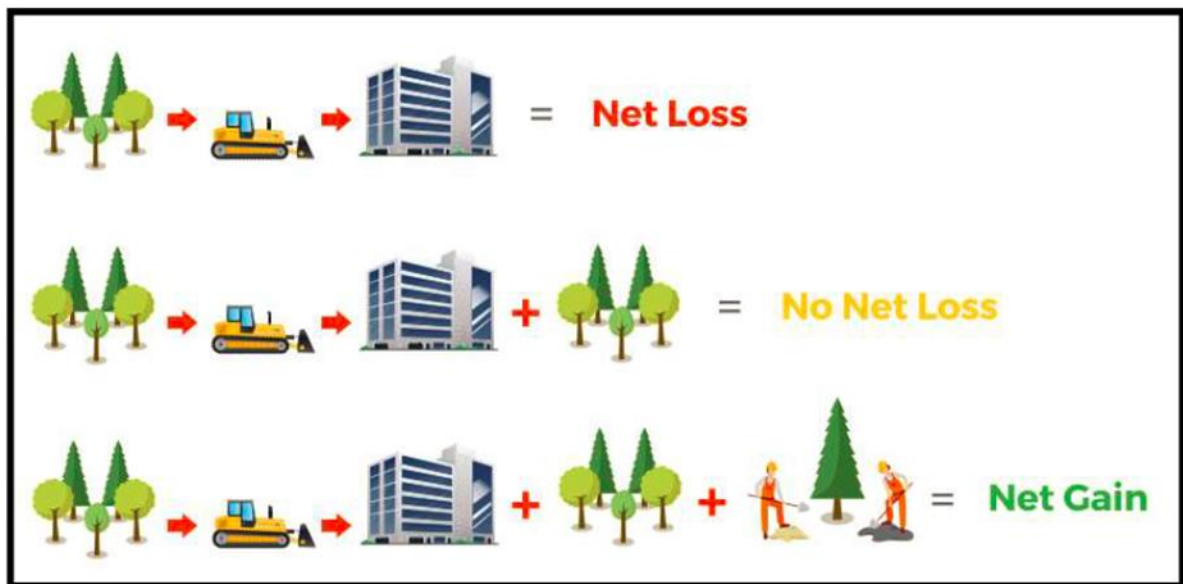
6. Development should be as permeable to wildlife as possible, increasing connectivity across and beyond the borough's ecological network. Features should be incorporated into the built fabric of buildings to support and enhance priority and local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species. Development must ensure habitat connectivity by providing gaps of at least 13 cm x 13 cm in every fence or under every gate to allow hedgehog and small animal passage.

**Explanation**

(105) The Environment Act 2021 includes a requirement for development to deliver a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain and to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030. 'Biodiversity net gain' is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before the development takes place.

[A viability assessment of the Local Plan will be undertaken before it is finalised. The 20% target will be updated to reflect its findings.]

Figure 1 - Biodiversity net gain (source GMCA Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance for Greater Manchester, February 2021)

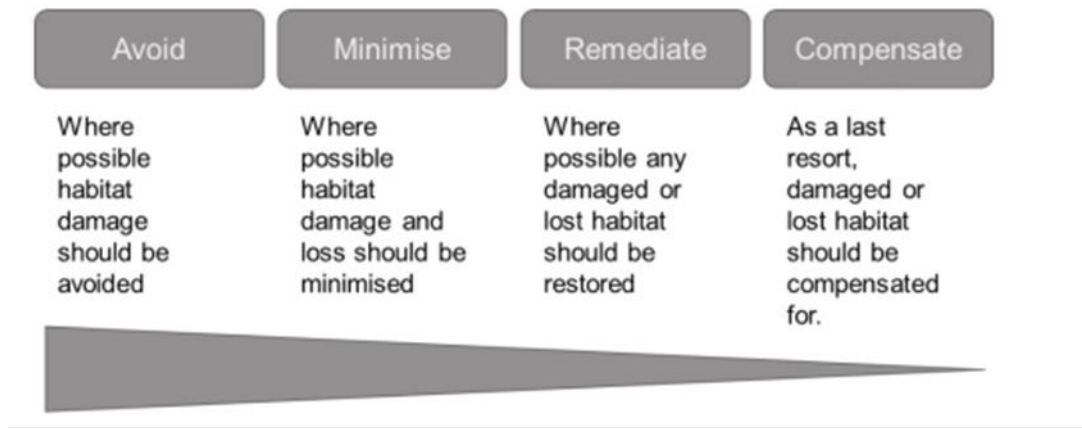


(106) Paragraph 180 of the NPPF (December 2023) requires planning policies to contribute to and enhance the natural environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

(107) Paragraph 185 of the NPPF (December 2023) states that plans should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

(108) Developers should use the latest DEFRA statutory metric<sup>23</sup> to show their development’s percentage biodiversity net gain. When delivering net gain the mitigation hierarchy set out under paragraph 186 of the NPPF (December 2023) should be followed. The mitigation hierarchy is also one of the overarching principles for achieving net gain as set out under the Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development. (CIEEM, CIRIA & IEMA, 2016).

Figure 2 - Biodiversity net gain mitigation hierarchy (source: DEFRA Metric 3 guidance)



(109) Measurable net gains should ideally be achieved on site. Where the required gains are to be achieved off site they should be provided as locally as possible, as encouraged by the DEFRA statutory metric (and Small Site Metric where applicable) and as required by the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy. Any required biodiversity offsetting should be delivered within Stockport unless it is clearly evidenced and justified why this is not possible or not appropriate. This will help ensure biodiversity units needed for offsetting stay within Stockport to accord with the wider approach of BNG delivery, which embeds a fundamental principle for a spatial hierarchy of habitat delivery, where there is a preference for onsite or local enhancements.

(110) An ecological appraisal must be submitted where there may protected or important species and habitat features, within or close to the site. The appraisal will need to demonstrate that the development will not result in any adverse impacts. The appraisal must involve consultation with the council and others, such as Natural England, where appropriate.

(111) Native species are encouraged because they are better adapted to the local weather and soil conditions and will have co-evolved with other species within the ecosystem. Invasive species can outcompete native species, disrupt ecosystems and cause local or global extinctions. Invasive species can include those that are not listed on Schedule 9, for example plants such as bamboo. The RHS Plants for Bugs project<sup>25</sup>, recommends a

<sup>23</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-metric-calculate-the-biodiversity-net-gain-of-a-project-or-development>

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/plants-for-bugs>.

dominance of native species and it is reasonable to assume that UK invertebrates are best adapted to UK plant species. Soft landscaping schemes should therefore include a wide range of native plant species that provide multiple benefits (nuts, fruit, nectar, pollen, larval host plants etc.) across the seasons, and any non-native/ornamental species used within the planting schedule be selected so as to enhance these resource benefits (e.g. to extend the flowering season).

- (112) Invasive plants and animals are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as species of special concern because of their invasiveness and ability to establish in several nations across Europe, including the UK. Invasive plants and animals can cause severe problems by out-competing native flora and fauna, degrading habitats and decimating population levels. This can be a particular problem along watercourses, which are a common feature in Stockport.
- (113) Enclosed gardens can prevent hedgehog movement. One of the main reasons why hedgehogs are declining in Britain is because our fences and walls are becoming more and more secure, reducing the amount of land available to them. Removing barriers, for example by making holes in garden fences and walls, will allow them to pass through. A 13 cm by 13 cm space is sufficient for any hedgehog to pass through<sup>27</sup>.

## ENV 3: Protected sites

### 1. **Development affecting sites of national importance**

Development proposals will not be permitted where there is likely to be a significant adverse effect, either alone or in combination, on the ecological value of sites of national importance. This applies to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) shown on the Policies Map. Regard should also be had to such sites outside of Stockport. Proposals may be considered acceptable in exceptional circumstances where the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impacts on the site and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of National Importance. In all instances measures should be taken to avoid any damaging effects.

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

### 3. **Development affecting sites of regional and local importance**

Development will not be permitted where there is likely to be an adverse effect on sites identified as being of regional or local importance for education, recreation, biodiversity and/or geodiversity. This applies to Local Nature Reserve (LNRs), Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) and 'Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites' (RIGS) shown on the Policies Map. Regard should also be had to such sites outside of Stockport. Exceptions will only be made if the benefits of

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<sup>27</sup> See [www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden)

the development clearly outweigh its likely impacts on the key ecological features of the site and the wider ecological network.

#### 4. **All protected sites**

Where an adverse effect is likely, applications should:

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

#### ***Explanation***

(114) Paragraph 181 of the NPPF (December 2023) sets out that ‘plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites’. Paragraph 180 states that ‘Planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting and enhancing [...] sites of biodiversity or geological value.’

(115) There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in Stockport. Compstall Nature Reserve is designated for its biological interest. Ludworth Intake is designated for its geological interest. Both SSSIs are shown on the Policies Map. Further details, including the reasons why they have been designated, are set out on Natural England's website<sup>28</sup>.

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

(117) Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)<sup>29</sup> are a statutory designation made by local authorities as sites with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. To qualify for LNR status, a site must be locally important for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment. They offer people opportunities to study and learn about nature or simply to enjoy it. Designation of a Local Nature Resources involves a commitment to positive management and therefore requires the allocation of resources. The council has declared fourteen LNRs; which are:

- a. Heaton Mersey Common;
- b. Mersey Vale Nature Park;
- c. Tangshutts;
- d. Crookiley Woods;

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<sup>28</sup> See <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>

<sup>29</sup> Designated under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

- e. Chadkirk;
- f. Wright's Wood;
- g. Woodbank Park;
- h. Abney Hall;
- i. Poise Brook;
- j. Gatley Carrs;
- k. Etherow Country park;
- l. Happy Valley;
- m. Reddish Vale; and
- n. Carr Wood.

(118) Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) is the name given to the most important non-statutory sites for nature conservation in Stockport. This provides a means of protecting sites that are of local interest and importance. SBIs have no legal protection but must be taken into consideration by the planning authority when determining planning applications affecting the site. Sites are selected using a number of attributes that include habitat type, diversity and rarity of the species present, and the site's naturalness. All SBIs and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) are designated on the Local Plan Policies Map and are subject to the policies within this plan to ensure they are protected and enhanced.

(119) The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) currently classifies SBIs that are identified following agreed selection guidelines<sup>30</sup>. These sites contribute greatly to the maintenance of the biodiversity of an area, along with sites of national importance.

(120) SBIs are graded into three categories:

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

(121) In Greater Manchester there is a register of Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) which are selected according to their value for education, scientific study, historic significance or aesthetic qualities. In Stockport there are four of these sites and they have the same level of protection as SBIs.

(122) In 2024 there are 66 SBIs in Stockport covering some 726.2 hectares.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See [www.tameside.gov.uk/ecologyunit/sbi/guidelines.pdf](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/ecologyunit/sbi/guidelines.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> See Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) for further detail: [www.tameside.gov.uk/EcologyUnit](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/EcologyUnit) GMEU operates a continuing SBI site selection and review process. This reports to each of the 10 Greater Manchester districts on an annual basis, though new designations may be made at any time.

Table 1 - Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs)

Site name	Features
One Oak Farm	Woodland; grassland
Fish Ponds at Davenport	Open water
Gatley Carrs	Woodland; ponds and small lodges
Woodland near Unity Mills	Ancient woodland
Crookilley Wood	Ancient woodland
Brinnington Clay Pits	Ponds
Otterpool Road and Little Woods	Ancient woodland
Mellor Moor Meadows	Grassland
Turncliffe Wood	Woodland
Apethorne House (South)	Ancient woodland
Barlow Wood	Woodland
Reservoir and Scrub at Heaton Mersey	Ponds and small lodges; habitat mosaic
Roman Lakes	Woodland; ponds and small lodges; birds
Woodland off Lakes Road	Woodland
Woodville Drive Wood	Woodland
Woodland at Spring Gardens Hotel	Ancient woodland
Parrs Wood	Woodland
Strines Wood	Ancient woodland
Woodland at Stirrup Benches	Woodland; grassland
Peeres Wood	Woodland; grassland
Pond at Burnage	Pond
Disused Railway Line in Mersey Valley	Grassland
Woodland off Ladybridge Road	Woodland

<b>Site name</b>	<b>Features</b>
Norbury Brook and Middlewood	Ancient woodland
Woodland near Glossop Road	Ancient woodland
Etherow Country Park and Roach Wood (South)	Ancient Woodland; Open water; Birds
Pole Bank (South)	Ancient woodland
Chudleigh Close Pond	Ponds and small lodges
Vernon Road Wood	Woodland
Pond and Meadow at Heald Green	Grassland; ponds
Ox Hey Pastures	Woodland; grassland
Poise Bridge Flushes	Grassland
Torkington Road Meadow	Grassland
Foggbrook	Woodland
Peak Forest Canal (South)	Canal
Ludworth Moor	Grassland; heathland and bog; birds
Marple Dale Wood	Woodland
Bruntwood Park	Grassland
Threaphurst Clough and Ochreley Brook	Woodland
Reddish Wood	Woodland; grassland
Reddish Vale Mill Ponds	Open water; birds
Disused Railway at Brinnington	Woodland
Reddish Vale	Woodland
Cobden Cross Heath	Heathland
Marple and Torkington Woods	Woodland
Lower Ridge	Woodland; grassland



Site name	Features
Abney Hall Park	Woodland; grassland; ponds and small lodges
Poise Brook and Goyt Valley	Ancient woodland
Woodland at Marple Bridge	Woodland
Bramhall and Carr Woods	Ancient woodland
Redbrow Wood	Ancient woodland; molluscs
Nab Top Wood	Ancient woodland
Woodbank Memorial Park	Woodland
Chadkirk Meadows	Grassland
Brown Low	Grassland
Benfield Clough	Ancient woodland
Botany Mill Wood	Woodland; grassland
Gigg Brook	Woodland; grassland
Ernocroft Wood	Ancient woodland; plantation woodland
Linnet Clough	Ancient woodland; old grassland; ponds and small lodges
Windybottom Wood	Woodland
Mersey Valley Nature Park	Grassland
Lady Brook	Ancient woodland: grassland; ponds
Kirk and River Woods	Ancient woodland; plantation woodland
Brabyns Wood	Ancient woodland
Knowle Wood	Ancient woodland

## ENV 4: Protected species

1. Where protected species are known or likely to be present at a site developers must comply with relevant statutory species protection provisions.

2. The first preference is to avoid disturbance, the second to provide suitable inter-connecting new habitats for these species within the development site. If this is not feasible, suitable alternative habitats must be provided.
3. Development that is likely to affect protected species or their habitat will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that:
  - a. there is no satisfactory alternative and that there is an overriding public interest meeting the Natural England licence requirements (where applicable); and
  - b. the proposed development includes appropriate measures to mitigate any impact on protected species to within an acceptable level. Mitigation measures that provide for the enhancement and management of habitat, or the provision of appropriate replacement habitat, must be maintained by the developer in perpetuity.

### ***Explanation***

- (123) The council is required by law to ensure that new development does not have an adverse impact on important areas of nature conservation. Many individual wildlife species receive statutory protection under a range of legislative provisions. There is also Natural England Standing Advice in relation to protected species<sup>32</sup>. A number of species of plants, birds and animals are specifically protected by European or national legislation due to their significance or vulnerability. The level of protection will vary according to the species and the particular legislation that protects it but, in general, will include protection from taking, killing or injuring or from the damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place. The aim of protected species legislation is to protect populations as a whole, not necessarily to provide individual protection for plants or animals in any given location.
- (124) For European protected species (i.e. those species protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019) further strict provisions apply and it is the responsibility of developers to ensure appropriate licences are in place. Surveys should be carried out to establish the presence, extent and density of these species and habitats in support of any planning application. Appropriate measures should be taken to safeguard these habitats and species before any development commences.
- (125) England's Biodiversity List<sup>33</sup> identifies species of flora, fauna and habitats considered to be of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Known as Priority Habitats and Species, some of these may be protected under other designations e.g. protected species legislation. The list of habitat types is extensive and not all are mapped.
- (126) The hierarchy of species protection is:

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<sup>32</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications>.

<sup>33</sup> Published under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

- a. European protected species (those species protected under the Habitats Regulations);
- b. Species protected by domestic legislation (e.g. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Protection of Badgers Act 1992);
- c. National priority species and habitats (commonly known as 'UK BAP priority habitats and species') published for England under the requirements of Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
- d. Habitats and species within the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

(127) The BAP aims to provide an over-arching document across all ten districts in Greater Manchester "To promote the conservation, protection and enhancement of biological diversity in Greater Manchester for current and future generations."

(128) The Greater Manchester audit identified those species and habitats that are of local conservation importance and require action in order to conserve and protect them. Those habitats and species selected for the GM BAP were included for the following reasons:

- They are priority habitat or species within the UK BAP and occur in the GM area.
- They are considered to be of conservation concern locally within GM.

## ENV 5: Trees, woodland and hedgerows

1. Development proposals must seek to avoid the loss of and minimise the risk of harm to existing trees, woodland, and/or hedgerows of visual or nature conservation value. This includes but is not limited to ancient woodland, and ancient and veteran trees. Where trees and/or woodland are to be lost as a part of development, this loss must be justified as a part of an Arboricultural Implications Assessment (AIA) submitted with the application.
2. Development proposals must not involve building within the canopy or root spread of trees, woodland or hedgerows which are to be retained, except where it is shown that the construction can be carried out in accordance with BS 5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction' (or any subsequent revisions), and an appropriate method statement is fully adhered to.
3. Where development proposals would affect or be affected by trees or established woodland on, or adjacent to, the development site, the council will expect planning applications to be accompanied by:
  - a. An arboricultural survey in accordance with BS 5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction' (or any subsequent revisions); and

b. A landscaping scheme which clearly shows adequate spacing between trees and buildings, taking into account the existing and future size of trees, both above and below ground.

4. Development proposals that lead to the loss or deterioration of protected trees, important hedgerows and aged trees will not normally be permitted. Works to protected trees will only be granted consent where these:

a. would not adversely affect the appearance of the tree and the contribution it makes to the visual amenity of the locality; or

b. would improve the health and/or amenity value of the tree.

5. The felling of protected trees will only be allowed where:

a. the tree is demonstrated to be in poor health and/or to have lost its intrinsic visual amenity value; or

b. the tree is causing demonstrable harm/damage to the structural integrity of a building or structure (evidenced by structural and arboricultural reports) and the harm cannot be remedied by other reasonable means.

6. Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons<sup>34</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

7. Compensatory planting will be required to outweigh any harm resulting from the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows, ensuring that the canopy is preserved and enhanced. Where this level of tree planting is not achievable on site it may be appropriate for a development to contribute to off site tree planting schemes. Planning permission will be subject to appropriate legal agreements to ensure the delivery of any agreed off site provision.

8. For new development and changes of use, a minimum of 1 net additional new tree should be planted per each additional bedroom created, or per 20 square metres gross internal area of other types of development. Hedgerows should be planted as linear habitat wherever possible. Where the development includes or creates streets, these should be tree-lined. Where the level of provision cannot be achieved on site, a financial contribution will be required to enable the equivalent amount of off-site planting, subject to viability.

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<sup>34</sup> For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat

## ***Explanation***

- (129) Paragraph 180 of the NPPF (December 2023) requires planning policies to recognise the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services including the economic and other benefits from trees and woodland. Paragraph 136 of the NPPF (December 2023) states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined.
- (130) Greater Manchester's Tree and Woodland Strategy 2019<sup>35</sup> sets out the critical importance of trees to the economy and people of Greater Manchester and makes the case for why we need to work urgently to protect and expand our urban trees. One of the overall aims of the strategy is to plant a million trees across Greater Manchester by 2024 and a further 2 million by 2050 to help Greater Manchester meet its CO<sub>2</sub> reduction commitment.
- (131) Trees make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the borough. Trees which are healthy and are of high amenity value can be protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Local planning authorities have a wider statutory duty when determining planning applications to include appropriate and adequate provision for the preservation and planting of trees. They also have a duty to consider the making of tree preservation orders for individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands<sup>36</sup>.
- (132) The council seeks to retain existing wildlife habitats comprising trees, shrubs, ponds and hedges wherever possible. Where trees are located on, or adjacent to a site, the policy requires a tree survey to accompany planning applications indicating the location, species, size and condition of trees. Any removal will need to be justified in the survey. Where removal can be justified appropriate replacement should take a natural capital approach and ensure the potential benefits lost from the trees are replaced such as habitat and amenity value. Greater Manchester's Trees and Woodland Strategy<sup>37</sup> steers the species type and location for new trees.
- (133) The council expects developers to take responsibility for the successful establishment of trees, woodlands, and hedgerows. Individual and small groups of trees must be subject to a maintenance regime lasting not less than 5 years, hedgerows for a period of not less than 10 years, and woodlands for a period of not less than 25 years. Any new planting should follow the guidance set out in the Greater Manchester Tree and Woodlands strategy (and any technical guidance that follows). The provision of new trees and woodland may contribute to the net gain in biodiversity required under policy ENV 2.
- (134) Ancient woodland is an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD and includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites. It is defined as an irreplaceable habitat and is a valuable natural asset, important for:
- wildlife (which include rare and threatened species<sup>38</sup>);

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<sup>35</sup> See [www.cityoftrees.org.uk/allourtrees](http://www.cityoftrees.org.uk/allourtrees)

<sup>36</sup> Sections 197 and 198 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

<sup>37</sup> See <https://www.cityoftrees.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/01/8082-all-our-trees-report-dr8-mw-1.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications>.

- soils;
- carbon capture and storage;
- contributing to the seed bank and genetic diversity;
- recreation, health and wellbeing; and
- cultural, historical and landscape value

(135) Proposals near to ancient woodlands should have a buffer zone of at least 15 metres from the boundary of the woodland to avoid root damage (known as the root protection area). Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, the proposal is likely to need a larger buffer zone. For example, the effect of air pollution from development that results in a significant increase in traffic. Further information on assessing development and ancient woodland can be found in Natural England and Forestry Commission 'standing advice'<sup>39</sup>.

(136) All ancient trees are veteran trees, but not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient. The age at which a tree becomes ancient or veteran will vary by species because each species ages at a different rate. A veteran tree may not be very old, but it will have significant decay features, such as branch death and hollowing. These features contribute to its exceptional biodiversity, cultural and heritage value.

## ENV 6: Landscape

1. Development must recognise the special qualities and key sensitivities of Stockport's Landscape Character Areas. All development must conserve and enhance the scenic and visual qualities of the landscape and/or townscape within which they are set. Significant and adverse landscape or visual impacts should be avoided, taking into account the cumulative effects of other existing or planned development.

Development should:

- be located and designed to respect scenic quality, maintain an area's sense of place and reinforce local distinctiveness;
- conserve and enhance the area's characteristics, key views and vistas along with valued attributes and existing site features such as woodland, hedgerows and river valleys;
- be located and designed to preserve relative tranquillity, where possible using opportunities to enhance areas in which tranquillity has been eroded;
- restore positive landscape characteristics and features that reinforce local landscape quality and distinctiveness, particularly within the river valleys;

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<sup>39</sup> See [www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions)

- e. where necessary be supported by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment;
- f. protect views out of and into the Peak District National Park and Cheshire Plain;
- g. avoid or mitigate for any residual adverse effects and take opportunities to secure landscape character and visual enhancements;
- h. not impede, and where possible, improve public access for all to the countryside, particularly within the river valleys and particularly for those using sustainable transport; and
- i. help to create a landscape which is capable of absorbing the pressures associated with urban recreation and climate change.

2. Regard must be had to the Stockport and Greater Manchester Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity studies (or any subsequent updates) and, where relevant, any neighbouring character assessments.
3. The relevant National Character Areas<sup>40</sup> will be considered in assessing applications for development with special attention given to their opportunity statements.

### ***Explanation***

(137) Paragraph 180 of the NPPF (December 2023) states that planning policies "...should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by [...] (a) protecting and enhancing valued landscape... [and] (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services..."

(138) National Planning Practice Guidance<sup>41</sup> advises that where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed.

(139) The European Landscape Convention (ELC)<sup>42</sup> definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded or outstanding: "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."

(140) Landscape character is the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape and how these are perceived. It reflects

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<sup>40</sup> See [www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles#ncas-in-north-west-england](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles#ncas-in-north-west-england)

<sup>41</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment> paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721  
Revision date: 21 07 2019

<sup>42</sup> See [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/236096/8413.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/236096/8413.pdf)

particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.

(141) The Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (LCSA) for Stockport<sup>43</sup> sets out a framework of 12 geographically unique Landscape Character Areas:

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

(142) The LCSA sets out details of the characteristics and qualities that contribute to the local distinctiveness of each area. In meeting the requirements of this policy, development proposals should be designed with regard to the relevant information for their location. Where development is proposed near to the boundary of a Landscape Character Area it may also be necessary to consider the relevant information for any adjoining area(s).

(143) At a regional level, a Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment was produced for Greater Manchester<sup>44</sup> (GM). This GM-wide study sits as a tier above the local-scale work and provides the overarching framework, with larger 'Landscape Character Types' (LCTs) representing the main types of landscape found across Greater Manchester.

(144) 'Perceptual and experiential qualities' is a criterion for assessing levels of landscape sensitivity. This considers qualities such as 'tranquillity' or sense of remoteness. Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil (due to freedom from human activity and disturbance and having a perceived naturalness or a traditional rural feel with few modern human influences) tend to increase levels of sensitivity to development compared to landscapes that contain signs of modern development.

## ENV 7: Soil quality

1. Development proposals should seek to safeguard and enhance soil quality. This will ensure the appropriate management of agricultural soils, maintenance and

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<sup>43</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage#:~:text=2008%20\(PDF%207.3Mb\)-,Stockport,-Landscape%20Character%20Assessment](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage#:~:text=2008%20(PDF%207.3Mb)-,Stockport,-Landscape%20Character%20Assessment)

<sup>44</sup> See [www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1727/greater-manchester-landscape-character-and-sensitivity-report.pdf](http://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1727/greater-manchester-landscape-character-and-sensitivity-report.pdf)



enhancement of biodiversity, and that appropriate value is applied to soils in urban areas for the ecosystem services that they provide. Particular regard will be had to ensuring protection of peat-based soils and protecting and enhancing 'best and most versatile' agricultural land.

### ***Explanation***

- (145) Paragraph 180 of the NPPF (December 2023) expects local planning authorities to take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. This is particularly important in plan making when decisions are made on which land should be allocated for development. The council recognises the benefits to food security that the industry brings and seeks to be flexible to the modern needs of the industry whilst addressing environmental impacts of the associated development. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. The Agricultural Land Classification provides a method for assessing the quality of farmland to enable informed choices to be made about its future use within the planning system.
- (146) Natural England provides further information on Agricultural Land Classification. The Agricultural Land Classification system classifies land into 5 grades, with Grade 3 subdivided into sub-grades 3a and 3b. Best and most versatile land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a. It is the land which is most flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs and which can best deliver food and non-food crops for future generations. Natural England has a statutory role in advising local planning authorities about land quality issues.
- (147) As part of the government's 'Safeguarding our Soils' strategy, Defra has published a Code of practice for the sustainable use of soils on construction sites<sup>45</sup>. This may be helpful in development design and setting planning conditions.
- (148) Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity helps to ensure that soils are healthy and fertile. This in turn means that agricultural protection is maintained, and harvests are reliable. Soil health is also important for protection of ecologically valuable habitats such as woodlands and species-rich grasslands. Healthy soils have diverse mycorrhizal fungi associations which help sequester carbon as well as playing an important role in maintaining plant diversity and productivity.

## Part 2: Environmental protection

### ENV 8: Environmental protection

1. Development proposals, as appropriate to their nature and scale, should be informed by an evaluation of the environmental risks arising both during construction and once development is complete. Appropriate measures must be identified and taken to minimise the risks of adverse impacts to air, land and water quality as well as in

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<sup>45</sup> See [www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-sustainable-use-of-soils-on-construction-sites](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-sustainable-use-of-soils-on-construction-sites)

relation to vibration, heat, dust, light and noise pollution. The proposed development of sensitive uses (such as residential) adjacent to existing sources of pollution (e.g. noise, odour, traffic etc.) must demonstrate through the submission of appropriate impact assessments that there would be no detrimental impact on future residential amenity.

2. Potentially polluting developments will not be permitted:

- a. where they are within, or in close proximity to, existing or proposed residential, educational, institutional, recreational or major retail developments;
- b. where they would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the viability of existing neighbouring businesses; or
- c. where the emissions from the development would have an unacceptable adverse impact on existing or planned development.

3. **Lighting** - New lighting schemes should be appropriate to the type of development and its location. Proposals for outdoor lighting should not have an unacceptable adverse impact by reason of light spillage or glare on neighbouring building/uses, the countryside, highway safety or biodiversity.

4. **Water Quality** - Development will not be permitted where it would have an adverse effect on the quality or quantity of groundwater resources or watercourses and waterbodies. Development should avoid any adverse impact on water quality, including during the construction phase, and wherever possible should seek to enhance both chemical and ecological water quality.

5. **Odour and Litter** - Development that results in the production of litter or unacceptable levels of odour will not be permitted.

6. **Noise and vibration** - Developments generating noise which is likely to create significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life and cannot be mitigated and controlled through the use of conditions or through pre-existing effective legislative regimes, will not be permitted. Development that will result in an unacceptable impact on the occupiers of dwellings or other environmentally sensitive properties in terms of vibration will also not be allowed.

### ***Explanation***

(149) Paragraph 191 of the NPPF (December 2023) states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development.

(150) Ensuring a clean, pleasant and well-maintained environment is a top priority of the council. Excessive levels of air, land, noise, energy, vibration, light and water pollution have the potential to have an adverse impact on environmental quality, ecology, health and

wellbeing. Building works can be hugely disruptive and cause nuisance in terms of vibration, air quality and noise. In addition traffic management, storage and litter can also be problematic.

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

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

(153) Where appropriate, a light impact assessment will be required as part of the application submission. Development involving floodlighting or other significant external lighting will only be permitted where the proposed lighting is the minimum necessary for its purpose and where appropriate measures to screen lighting installations from view will reduce any detrimental effect on:

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

(154) The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) 2017 Regulations (formerly known as the WFD)<sup>46</sup> and Water Environment Regulations (2003)<sup>47</sup> require improvements in the management of water quality and water resources through River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). Water pollution can also affect the supply of water for leisure, industrial and agricultural uses and have a harmful impact upon riverside habitats. The council will work with the Environment Agency to restrict development which may threaten the quality of either ground or surface water.

(155) Odour and fumes from commercial development can have an adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding residents. In particular the siting of flues needs to consider the impact on amenity and design. Best practice guidance should be followed.

(156) Persistent and intermittent noise from a range of sources including transport, mechanical plant, construction and congregations of people can undermine quality of life. The council will take into account noise considerations when assessing development proposals. In accordance with the Agent of Change principle as set out in paragraph 193 of the NPPF (December 2023) and Planning Practice Guidance, the council will also take account of existing noise-generating land uses in a sensitive manner when new development, particularly residential, is proposed nearby. Agent of Change places the responsibility for mitigating the impact of noise firmly on the design of the new development. This also

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<sup>46</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/407/contents/made>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/3242/contents/made>

applies to new noise generating development. Consistency with the Professional Practice Guidance PPG on Planning & Noise (May 2017)<sup>48</sup> as a reference source for understanding noise and identifying best practice will be an important material consideration. The council will require Noise Impact Assessments for developments likely to generate or be exposed to significant noise.

## ENV 9: Clean air

1. Development not in accordance with the provisions of the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan, Air Quality Action Plan or Low-emission Strategy will not be permitted.
2. Development must be designed or include appropriate mitigation measures to avoid significant adverse air quality impacts wherever:
  - a. it is located within or close to an Air Quality Management Area or Clean Air Zone; or
  - b. air quality modelling indicates that the proposals will result in harmful effects.
3. All major residential or other environmentally sensitive development must take measures to minimise the impacts of dust and emissions:
  - a. during construction (including from construction traffic); and
  - b. from users of the development once it is constructed (including traffic generated by the development and emissions from features such as on site heat and power plants).
4. Streets should be designed to avoid trapping air pollution at ground level, including through the appropriate location and scale of buildings and trees.

### ***Explanation***

(157) Clean air is a cross cutting theme that is addressed through different chapters of the Local Plan. In particular, our transport policies encourage sustainable modes and provision of electric vehicle charging points as well as requiring full consideration of vulnerable end users. There are also clear linkages with expanding the green infrastructure network throughout the borough.

(158) Air pollution is linked to a range of health conditions and contributes to early deaths. Without action it has been estimated that the health and social care costs of air pollution in England could reach £5.3 billion by 2035, primarily due to fine particulates (PM2.5). In Greater Manchester exposure to fine particulates at current levels is estimated to

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<sup>48</sup>See [www.ioa.org.uk/sites/default/files/14720%20ProPG%20Main%20Document.pdf](http://www.ioa.org.uk/sites/default/files/14720%20ProPG%20Main%20Document.pdf)

contribute to around 1,200 deaths per annum<sup>49</sup>. The youngest, elderly people and those with existing health conditions are most likely to be affected by exposure to air pollution. The exacerbation of respiratory conditions is particularly relevant in consideration of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- (159) Paragraph 192 of the NPPF (December 2023) states that planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas<sup>50</sup> and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas.
- (160) The government has directed Greater Manchester authorities to produce a Clean Air Plan to tackle roadside nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) exceedances. The government has identified that the A34 through Gatley and Cheadle is forecast to remain above the legal air quality limit of 40 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) per cubic metre annual mean, beyond 2021. Unlike more urban routes, the A34 has multiple functions, providing access to the M60 motorway but also onward north-south connections to Cheshire East and Manchester. In addition, there are also complex east-west local movements which cross the corridor.
- (161) The council will seek to ensure that proposals for all new development regardless of location will not have an unacceptable negative impact on air quality and will not further exacerbate air quality in Air Quality Management Areas. Similarly, proposals for new development should not put people's health at risk by increasing the potential for exposure to raised levels of pollutant. Planning applications will be assessed in accordance with the most recent development management guidance published jointly by the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) and Environmental Protection UK (EPUK), and the most recent IAQM Guidance on the Assessment of Dust from Demolition and Construction, or relevant successor guidance, including the requirement for developers to submit construction management plans as appropriate. Developments in locations of poor air quality should be designed to mitigate the impact of poor air quality to within acceptable limits, be in compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the Air Quality Management Area and Clean Air Zones. The procedure for screening and undertaking air quality assessment should also be in accordance with the latest guidance from the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) and any other Local technical notes on Air Quality.
- (162) Developers are also encouraged to consider how the design of public realm and planting schemes can benefit air quality in and around a development. Green screens are often helpful and work by using leaves to absorb gaseous pollutants and capture particulate matter on their surfaces. Oxygen is then released by the plants, improving local air quality. Screens also act as a barrier to wind flow, causing dispersal of road pollutants and reducing the levels to which passers-by are exposed.

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<sup>49</sup> Derived from Public Health Outcome Framework indicator 3.01 (2016 data) (on Fingertips) (2018), Public Health Outcomes Framework (see <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/public-health-outcomes-framework>)

<sup>50</sup> See [https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/details?aqma\\_ref=380](https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/details?aqma_ref=380)

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

## ENV 10: Groundwater protection

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

### ***Explanation***

(164) Within Stockport, there are two groundwater source protection zones (SPZs) as identified by the Environment Agency<sup>51</sup>. Groundwater source protection zones are split into classification of zones, 1, 2 and 3, with zone 1 being the most sensitive. Groundwater provides a third of the drinking water in England, and it is crucial that these sources are protected to ensure that water is completely safe to drink, if groundwater becomes polluted it can be very expensive and extremely difficult or impossible to clean.

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

## ENV 11: Land stability, contamination and storage of hazardous substances

1. Development involving the excavation of land or the extraction of materials from the ground will be permitted where it is demonstrated that the stability of surrounding land (and buildings or structures upon it) is not compromised and where relevant policies of the Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Development Plan Document are met.
2. Proposals on land which is known to be unstable or contaminated, or where there is a reasonable likelihood of instability or contamination, will only be permitted where a land contamination/stability report demonstrates that such issues can be overcome by appropriate remedial, preventive or precautionary measures.

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<sup>51</sup> See [www.gov.uk/guidance/groundwater-source-protection-zones-spzs](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/groundwater-source-protection-zones-spzs).

3. Those seeking to develop close to contaminated land will be required to demonstrate that contaminants will not cause any adverse effect on:

- a. the development itself;
- b. other adjacent areas; or
- c. controlled water and other water watercourses.

4. Development in close proximity to hazardous (notifiable) installations will not be supported where it would cause a significant hazard to the health of residents or occupiers and the environment.

### ***Explanation***

(166) Paragraph 180 of the NPPF (December 2023) states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

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

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

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

(169) Before development can start, planning conditions may require that appropriate remedial measures are agreed with the planning authority and carried out in line with current guidelines, having regard to relevant legislation (Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act and Contaminated Land Regulations 2012). The developer will be required to provide a report verifying that the works have been carried out as agreed. If monitoring is required, a monitoring schedule should be identified and agreed with the council and if necessary, the

Environment Agency at the time of planning permission. The council aims to improve the quality of water courses in the borough and to prevent any development which could lead to a deterioration in the quality of water. Plans for the remediation of contaminated land or development which could impact water quality will therefore be carefully assessed.

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

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

(172) Existing notifiable sites in Stockport are:

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

(173) Existing notifiable pipelines in Stockport are:

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

(174) In addition to these notifiable installations the following pipeline routes within the borough are subject to safeguarding:

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



## ENV 12: Safeguarding of Manchester Airport and air navigation facilities

1. Development which would adversely affect the operational integrity or safety of Manchester Airport will not be permitted.
2. The safeguarding zones for Manchester Airport cover significant areas of the borough. The main implications for types of development which will require consultation are:
  - a. Any proposal likely to attract birds, such as proposals involving significant tree planting, minerals extraction or quarrying, waste disposal or management, reservoirs or other significant areas of surface water, land restoration schemes, sewage works, nature reserves or bird sanctuaries in any part of the borough;
  - b. Applications connected with an aviation use in any part of the borough;
  - c. Buildings and structures over 15 metres in safeguarding area x;
  - d. Buildings and structures over 45 metres in safeguarding area y; and
  - e. Buildings and structures over 90 metres in safeguarding area z.

### ***Explanation***

(175) Safeguarding zones around airports and aerodromes are established by the Secretary of State for Transport and defined on safeguarding maps issued by the Civil Aviation Authority and the Secretary of State for Defence. They define certain types of development which, by reason of their height, attraction to birds or inclusion of or effect on aviation activity require prior consultation with the airport or aerodrome operator. Safeguarding zones around air navigation facilities are established by National Air Traffic Services Ltd (NATS) and defined on safeguarding maps issued by them. They define certain types of development which because of their height or effect on aviation activity require prior consultation with NATS. Government advice<sup>52</sup> in Department for Transport Circular 01/2003 sets out detailed guidance on how the safe and efficient operations can be secured. These areas are neither the responsibility nor the proposal of the council as local planning authority.

[A plan showing the safeguarding zones that apply across Stockport will be inserted here in the version of the local plan published prior to submission at the regulation 19 consultation stage]

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<sup>52</sup> See [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-aerodromes-technical-sites-and-military-explosives-storage-areas](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-aerodromes-technical-sites-and-military-explosives-storage-areas)

## ENV 13: Aircraft noise

1. The following criteria shall apply to development so as to avoid unacceptable levels of noise from aircraft using Manchester Airport:

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

## **Explanation**

- (176) Aircraft noise contours are used as a planning tool in the assessment of aviation noise impact. They are produced annually by Manchester Airport<sup>53</sup>. By controlling the type of land uses and the level of noise insulation in development within these areas, the council intends to limit the impact of aircraft noise on residents, workers and other building occupants in accordance with the guidance given by the government under National Planning Policy Guidance for Noise.
- (177) The government's overall policy on aviation noise is set out in the Aviation Policy Framework (2013) and states an objective to: 'limit and, where possible, reduce the number of people in the UK significantly affected by aircraft noise'. This is consistent with the government's Noise Policy, as set out in the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) 93 which aims to avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life<sup>54</sup>. The Aviation Policy Framework treats the 57dB LAeq 16 hour contour as the average level of daytime aircraft noise marking the approximate onset of significant community annoyance.
- (178) Whilst it is possible (given sufficient mitigation) to acoustically insulate the interior of buildings it is difficult to provide any mitigation against aircraft noise in gardens and other outdoor amenity space. To address the introduction of noise sensitive receptors within high aircraft noise contour areas, noise mitigation measures should be designed to achieve BS8233:2014 and World Health Organisation internal and external noise design criteria.
- (179) It is recommended that an Acoustic Design Statement be prepared in accordance with ProPG: Planning and Noise, New Residential Development (2017) to demonstrate good acoustic design with a focus on Element 2 – 'observing internal noise level guidelines.' If relying on closed windows to meet the internal noise levels, the application would need to demonstrate how an appropriate alternative method of ventilation will be achieved that does not compromise the facade thermal insulation, summertime internal temperatures or the resulting noise level. The council will consider the use of planning conditions or obligations to require the provision of appropriate mitigation measures in the new development.

### Part 3: Built environment

#### ENV 14: Design principles

1. All development should deliver places and buildings that are consistent with the ten characteristics described in the National Design Guide:
  - a. Context;

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<sup>53</sup> See [www.manchesterairport.co.uk/community/environmental-management/#:~:text=available%20here,-Noise%20contours,-In%20measuring%20noise](http://www.manchesterairport.co.uk/community/environmental-management/#:~:text=available%20here,-Noise%20contours,-In%20measuring%20noise)

<sup>54</sup> Aviation Policy Framework 2013. See [www.gov.uk/government/publications/aviation-policy-framework](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/aviation-policy-framework)

- b. Identity;
- c. Built form;
- d. Movement;
- e. Nature;
- f. Public spaces;
- g. Uses;
- h. Homes and buildings;
- i. Resources; and
- j. Lifespan

2. Development should also be consistent with the following principles:

- a. Socially inclusive: Ensuring places and spaces work for a diverse range of users and foster resilient mixed communities;
- b. Healthy and safe places: Designing places and spaces so that they improve public health outcomes and reduce health inequalities; and
- c. Deliverable: Considering viability and delivery throughout the design process to ensure that quality is not lost throughout the stages of development.

***Explanation***

(180) The NPPF places great importance on the design of places. Creating well-designed, beautiful and safe places is an important part of meeting the objectives of sustainable development. To support this, national government have published the National Design Guide<sup>59</sup> and the National Model Design Code<sup>60</sup>. The National Design Guide sets out the ten characteristics of good design. These ten characteristics work together to meet the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the NPPF.

(181) To meet the objectives set out in this plan, there are three additional characteristics which should be considered as part of the development process. The first is ensuring that places and spaces are socially inclusive. This means all individuals have equal access, opportunity and dignity in the use of the built environment. Places should also foster resilient and mixed communities, where diversity is encouraged, and people feel like they belong.

(182) The design of the built environment can also have a direct impact on health and well-being and feelings of safety and security. As such, the second additional characteristic relates to

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<sup>59</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

<sup>60</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>

creating healthy and safe places. Places and spaces should be designed with the aim of improving public health outcomes and reducing health inequalities. They should also create safe environments. This includes design measures that contribute to creating accessible environments, suicide prevention, reducing crime and fear of crime.

(183) It is also important to ensure that development is deliverable. This means that proposals should consider viability and delivery throughout the design process, to ensure that quality is not lost throughout the stages of development.

(184) New development should take a holistic approach to achieving design quality. This means that all design principles should be considered throughout the development process. The policy should be read in conjunction with other policies throughout the plan that also have significant design implications such as those considering:

- Climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation (policy CR 1);
- Energy, efficiency, resource use and embodied carbon targets (Policy CR 2);
- amenity (policy ENV 17);
- flood risk and surface water drainage (policies INF 3, 4, 5);
- sustainable streets (policy INF 8);
- access and servicing (policy INF 14); and
- Provision and enhancement of recreational facilities and green infrastructure in new residential development (policy HOM 8).

## ENV 15: Delivering design quality

1. To ensure that high-quality design is delivered through the development process, the following approach must be followed:

- a. Design and access statements should be proportionate to the size of the development and they must demonstrate how the design principles in Policy ENV16 have been considered;
- b. Where appropriate, planning applications must refer to locally adopted design codes, guidance or other relevant documents;
- c. Major residential planning applications must undertake an assessment of the development against the Building for a Healthy Life criteria or other equivalent methodology;
- d. Larger or more complex schemes will be expected to provide a site-wide urban design framework, masterplan and/or a site-specific design code. Where relevant, masterplans must secure consistency in layout and/or design with any adjacent potential development sites. The potential for infrastructure provision to be shared across sites should also be explored through masterplanning; and

e. Where appropriate, the local community and other stakeholders must have been engaged to a level that is proportionate to the size and sensitivity of the scheme.

2. Development proposals meeting one or more of the following criteria should be subject to at least one design review early in their preparation:

- a. Residential development of 50 or more dwellings;
- b. Is allocated for development by this plan;
- c. The scheme is to be brought forward in phases;
- d. It is a major development in a Conservation Area or in the Green Belt; or
- e. It is over 18 metres in height; or
- f. It is supported by a site-wide urban design framework, masterplan an/or design code.

### ***Explanation***

(185) NPPF Paragraph 137 sets out that design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of development proposals. Presenting design concepts and facilitating early discussions between applicants, the council and the local community is a crucial part of the process. This helps developers to better understand the needs of the local community and for any issues to be highlighted at an early stage.

(186) The council has prepared detailed design guidance which builds upon policies relating to design throughout this plan. There are also Conservation Area Appraisals<sup>63</sup> which provide guidance relative to each of the borough's Conservation Areas. Developments should also have regard to any other locally adopted design guidance or documents. Evidence of consideration with the design code or other related documents must be demonstrated as part of the application submission. Developments should also have regard to any other locally adopted design guidance or documents. Evidence of consideration with the design code or other related documents must be demonstrated as part of the application submission.

(187) The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LURA)<sup>64</sup> sets out a new requirement for authorities to produce a design code for their whole area (schedule 7, section 15F). The council is committed to producing a borough-wide design code. Once adopted, all relevant planning applications must refer to the design code and demonstrate this within the submission.

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<sup>63</sup> See: <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/find-conservation-and-heritage-assets>

<sup>64</sup> See: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/enacted>

[The council is at an early stage of developing an authority-wide design code. Public involvement and engagement are important parts of the process. For more information please visit [www.stockport.gov.uk/stockport-design-code](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/stockport-design-code)]

- (188) Building for a Healthy Life<sup>65</sup> is a toolkit to help improve the design of new and growing neighbourhoods and comprises 12 design considerations. It can be used to structure pre-application discussion and clearly explaining expectations for securing a green light against a consideration. A scheme that scores a minimum of 9 out of 12 'Greens', is the level at which a scheme would be eligible for a BHL Commendation; this will help guard against poor design responses in housing development.
- (189) Design and Access Statements should be proportionate to the size, complexity and sensitivity of the scheme. They should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the context of the area and how this has informed the design concept. The statement should clearly outline how relevant design policies, design codes and other planning documents have been considered through the development of the scheme. Finally, it should clearly outline how the scheme has evolved and final scheme was arrived at.
- (190) Paragraph 140 of the NPPF makes clear that local planning authorities should seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used). For larger or more sensitive schemes one tool to ensure this is through the development of masterplans and site-specific design code. A masterplan will typically include proposals for a site's: street network, landscape strategy, number of new homes and other uses, transportation, open space provision, community facilities, and the area types, uses, heights and densities. A site-specific design code aims to establish and tie down the critical design parameters for sites and projects. It helps to clearly set out the design expectations for the site and maintain consistency throughout the development process.
- (191) The NPPF outlines that local authorities should have regard to recommendations made by design review panels through the development process. They are most commonly used for larger or more complex schemes. There is a well-established independent Design Review Panel that operates throughout the northwest. The council and local developers have used this service to test and assess emerging design proposals. The findings from the Design Review Panel are used throughout the development management process to inform recommendations and decisions. They are also used by developers to shape their development proposals. It is important the design review takes place as early as possible in the design process to highlight any issues and suggestions.

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<sup>65</sup> See: <https://www.udg.org.uk/publications/othermanuals/building-healthy-life>

## ENV 16: Optimising density

1. New development should make the most effective use of land while also relating to and enhancing the existing context and character of the area. Applications will be expected to have regard to any local guidance or codes relating to the density of development.
2. Residential development is expected to achieve or exceed the following minimum densities:

Location (use highest density that applies when a site falls within more than one location)	Minimum net residential density (dwellings per hectare)		
	Within the location	Within 400 metres	Within 800 metres
Stockport Town Centre	120	70	50
District and Large Local Centres	70	50	35
Rail stations	N/A	120	70
Areas within GMAL 6 and above <sup>66</sup>	50	35	35
All other locations minimum net residential density of 35 dwellings per hectare			

3. Schemes for non-residential development are expected to consider an appropriate mix of uses across the site.
4. Applications should include an assessment of how the existing context and character of the area has informed the density of the built form on the site. This should be included within the design and access statement for relevant applications.
5. Lower density development may be acceptable where it is clearly justified by:
  - a. For residential-led development, local housing market issues, such as a demonstrable need for a particular type of housing that cannot be delivered at a higher density;

<sup>66</sup> GMAL is an abbreviation of Greater Manchester Accessibility Layer, which measures the accessibility of locations across Greater Manchester by walking and public transport. Areas are scored on a scale of 1-8, with 8 being the most accessible. GMAL scores are published online at [data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk).



- b. For non-residential development, where it would be technically infeasible, financially not viable or inappropriate to increase density or provide a mix of uses; or
- c. For all development, site-specific considerations, such as the design context and any potential impact on the wider landscape or townscape including heritage assets and green infrastructure.

6. To ensure that appropriate densities can be achieved at a wider scale, development should not prejudice the potential development of neighbouring land, nor be brought forward in a piecemeal manner having a detrimental impact on the comprehensive development or regeneration of a larger area.

### ***Explanation***

(192) The NPPF places great importance on making effective use of land, with a focus on re-using brownfield land. In Stockport, the Green Belt covers 46.5% of the total land area, making development opportunities outside of this area relatively constrained. Given this, increasing the average density of new developments in the most accessible locations is an important part of the overall strategy for Stockport. This strategy will reduce the amount of land that needs to be used for developments and thereby reduce the amount of green space required.

(193) While optimising density of new development is a priority for the council, it is important that this is balanced with an understanding of a site's context. The Stockport Character and Urban Density Study was undertaken to take a place-led approach to defining density and building height ranges in specific study areas across the borough. The Study highlights the importance of optimising land efficiency for residential development, while balancing this with the need to respond sensitively and innovatively to townscape character.

(194) The Character and Urban Density study focuses primarily on optimising density for residential development. However, the design principles set out within this evidence base can be applied to other types of uses.

(195) The density of the development should also be informed by other factors such as local need and viability. It is also recognised that for sensitive uses, it may not be appropriate to provide additional uses on the site.

(196) The following definitions and interpretation apply to this policy:

- Where more than one density applies to the same part of the site, the highest density should be used. Different densities may apply to different parts of a site.
- Distances should be measured from the boundary of the designated centre or GMAL area.

- All distances are measured in a straight line. The designated centres are outlined in policy CEN 2.

## ENV 17: Amenity considerations

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

### ***Explanation***

(197) Paragraph 135 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies should ensure that developments create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

(198) Section 1. a) of this policy requires new developments to be designed to ensure that there is sufficient privacy and do not result in an unreasonable level of overlooking between habitable rooms of adjacent residential properties, schools or onto private open spaces.

(199) In applying section 1. b) the council will expect careful consideration of the layout and massing of buildings in order to ensure they do not result in an increased sense of enclosure and loss of outlook. If dwellings overlook bin stores screening and landscaping should be used to limit the impact.

(200) In applying section 1. c) of the policy, the council will aim to minimise the impact of the loss of daylight and sunlight and unacceptable overshadowing caused by new development. The council will also seek to ensure that the design of new development optimises the levels of daylight and sunlight. Depending on the scale of the development, a Daylight and Sunlight Report may be required to assess the impacts, making use of the most recent version of the Building Research Establishment's (BRE) "Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A guide to good practice"<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> See: <https://images.reading.gov.uk/2022/11/ID95-Site-Layout-Planning-for-Daylight-and-Sunlight-A-Guide-to-Good-Practice-BRE-2022.pdf>

## ENV 18: Residential design

1. The design and build standards of new residential development should be high quality, inclusive, sustainable and contribute to the creation of successful and resilient communities. As part of this, the council will ensure that:
  - a. Properties include sufficient internal space for everyday activities and enable future flexibility and adaptability by complying with Nationally Described Space Standards as a minimum for all applicable schemes;
  - b. New homes (including houses in multiple occupation) should have direct, well-related, safe and convenient access to outdoor space. This should be provided as follows:
    - i. Firstly, as private space specific to the dwelling;
    - ii. Secondly, only if i. is not achievable, as communal space shared with other dwellings in the same development; and
    - iii. Finally, if neither i. nor ii. are achievable, as public open space.
  - c. Developments incorporate storage space for cycles, waste and recycling that is integrated within the overall design and allowing for convenient access.
2. To ensure that properties are accessible and adaptable, the council will require that:
  - a. All new build dwellings meet the standard in Building Regulations M4(2) Category 2 accessible and adaptable dwellings; and
  - b. 10% of new build dwellings on sites of 50 units or more meet the standard in Building Regulations M4(3) category 3 wheelchair adaptable standards.
3. In determining applications for new residential development on private garden land or residential extensions, the council will ensure that proposals:
  - a. complement the existing dwelling in terms of design, scale and materials and does not adversely affect the character of the street scene;
  - b. do not cause damage to the amenity of neighbouring properties by reason of overlooking, overshadowing, visual intrusion, or loss of privacy and does not unduly deprive the property to be extended of private garden / amenity space including parking areas; and
  - c. do not prejudice similar development by the occupants of neighbouring properties.

### ***Explanation***

(201) Residential development should provide sufficient space for everyday activities and enable flexibility and adaptability. This can be achieved by ensuring compliance with Nationally

Described Space Standards (NDSS)<sup>68</sup>. NDSS sets out internal space standards for new dwellings and is suitable for application across all tenures. NDSS also takes into account the spatial implications of providing improved accessibility and adaptability, particularly for older or less mobile people. All new build schemes will be expected to comply with this standard, and conversions should aim to meet this standard on as many homes as possible, taking into account the constraints of the existing building.

- (202) The adequate provision of outdoor amenity space is important in supporting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of residents. It provides a space to dry clothes, grow plants and vegetables, and can provide shade and limit urban heat-island effects. New development should comply with the standards set out in The Design of Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document, or any future alternative standards endorsed by the council.
- (203) The Design Council's report, '100 Year Life, the Role of Housing, Planning & Design' recommends that to make communities age-friendly and inclusive there should be a national mandatory requirement set for 90 per cent of new homes to be built to accessibility standards M4(2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings'. Stockport has both an ageing population and increasing levels of disability within the community. The most recent Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)<sup>69</sup> (2019) recommends that the M4(2) standard should be sought on all schemes where feasible, these homes will allow for adaptation as the needs of the residents change over time. Building Regulations Approved Document M44 sets out 3 levels of accessibility for: 'Visitable dwellings M4(1)', 'Accessible and adaptable dwellings M4(2)', and 'Wheelchair user dwellings M4(3)'.
- (204) The HNA also outlines that approximately 1,000 additional wheelchair accessible dwellings will be required over the plan period. Therefore, the policy sets a percentage requirement for this type of housing on larger sites. These homes will be required to meet the optional standard in Building Regulations Part M4(3) for wheelchair user housing (either wheelchair accessible or wheelchair adaptable). This policy will ensure that new homes are more accessible and adaptable to help meet people's needs as they change through their lifetime. These homes, whilst being suitable for everyone, will particularly benefit our ageing population, families with children, and anyone that may live with temporary or permanent disabilities or mobility impairments. Housing that is specifically for older people or other specialist accommodation will also be expected to have regard to policy HOM 7: Housing for older people and specialist accommodation.
- (205) There may be some sites where specific circumstances mean that it is not possible to meet the full requirements of M4(2) and M4(3) standards. For example, this may be where there are topography constraints, the site is within a flood zone, or step-free access to the dwelling cannot be achieved. Where these exceptional factors have been robustly demonstrated, the minimum number of units necessary will be exempted from the requirements.

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<sup>68</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>

<sup>69</sup> See: <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/housing-strategies-and-documents/housing-needs-assessment>

(206) Development on garden land has historically been a contributor to housing supply in Stockport and forms part of the small sites allowance which is part of the assessed future supply identified in HOM 1. However, it is important that where development for housing comes forward on garden land that the proposals do not cause harm to the local area or neighbouring properties whilst making more efficient use of land, as identified in paragraphs 71/72 and 124-128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023).

## ENV 19: Tall buildings

1. Taller buildings can be an effective way to optimise the density of development and help to address housing need. However, taller buildings should be appropriate to their location and respond sensitively and innovatively to townscape character.
2. In the Town Centre West area, there will be a presumption in favour of tall buildings where they accord with relevant policies, design codes, masterplans or guidance.
3. The Stockport Character and Urban Density Study provides a detailed analysis of the townscape character and existing residential densities in other areas of the borough. These areas include:
  - a. The Town Centre Living Area, east of the A6;
  - b. The District Centres as outline in Policy CEN 2 and 3;
  - c. Heald Green and Gatley Large Local Centres;
  - d. The A6 corridor running from Hazel Grove District Centre in the south to the southern edge of Stockport Town Centre; and
  - e. The A6 corridor running from the northern edge of the town centre to the borough's northern boundary.
4. Using the contextual analysis, the study recommends locations where taller buildings are acceptable in these areas. As such, developments in these areas should have regard to the design guidance set out within the study (or any guidance which may accompany or supersede it).
5. Taller buildings may be appropriate in other locations. Their height should be determined using a thorough understanding of the context and character of the wider area.
6. All applications for taller buildings should meet the following criteria:
  - a. Design choices should be underpinned by the context and character of the area and this should be demonstrated within the planning application;
  - b. Be of exemplary architectural design, sustainability and residential liveability;

- c. Have regard to Stockport’s topography, and not detrimentally impact on important views, landmarks and the skyline;
- d. Reinforce the spatial/place hierarchy of the borough, positively contributing to legibility, wayfinding and successful place-making;
- e. Respond successfully to their context, particularly where there is high townscape or landscape value, and respect heritage assets and their settings where this contributes to their significance;
- f. Provide active street frontages that interact with and contribute positively to the surroundings at street level;
- g. Avoid or mitigate against any detrimental impact on the local environment including microclimate, wind deflection, reflection, light pollution, privacy, daylight, sunlight and overshadowing (including of public spaces, especially open spaces and watercourses); and
- h. Be located within sustainable locations that are close to transport links, jobs, shops and services.

7. Proposals for the redevelopment or refurbishment of existing tall buildings and or upward extensions will be subject to the relevant requirements of this policy.

***Explanation***

(207) Tall buildings are defined as buildings that are significantly taller than their neighbours, or which have a significant impact on the skyline. This policy aims to ensure that they will not cause unacceptable harm to their surroundings, and instead are properly located, contributing to and enhancing the sense of place. What is considered a tall building will vary according to the prevailing character of the local area, based on a variety of evidence relating to the characterisation of the borough. Historic England are clear in their advice note on tall buildings<sup>70</sup>, that definitions of tall buildings should be based on evidence assessing the local context given that this is more likely to encourage appropriate developments. The borough is considered to be sensitive to the development of tall buildings, due to its topography, historic assets and proximity to Manchester Airport.

(208) Care is needed to ensure that a tall building’s visibility is assessed contextually to ensure that proposals that exceed the prevailing building height have a positive visual impact and do not appear incongruous within their surroundings. Historic England’s advice note on tall buildings identifies that one of the principal failings in the location and design of certain tall buildings has been a lack of understanding of the area around them, the context, and the impact they would have on heritage assets and the character of places: “the very things that make places distinctive and that people cherish” (Tall Buildings: Historic England Advice Note 4). Proposals should take into account all relevant guidance including Historic

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<sup>70</sup> See <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/tall-buildings-advice-note-4/heag037-tall-buildings-v2/>

England's tall buildings guidance relevant townscape and landscape appraisals and characterisations. This includes relevant Conservation Area appraisals<sup>71</sup> and Landscape Characterisation studies<sup>72</sup>.

- (209) To ensure liveability, consideration should be given to the provision and mix of sufficient private, shared and public spaces. Private spaces can include balconies, and alcoves that provide storage or space for a desk. Shared facilities for use by residents and guests could include for example children's play spaces, rooftop gardens, communal live-work areas, storage lockers and concierge facilities. High quality public-realm should promote connectivity for the new community to its surroundings, and green infrastructure will help respond to the challenges of the climate emergency.
- (210) Tall buildings have a greater impact on their environment than other building types, posing issues relating to microclimate such as wind deflection and overshadowing in particular. These can be especially harmful to residential environments and their associated amenity spaces, as well as public spaces where people dwell, and need to be avoided and mitigated through careful siting and design. Mitigation will be expected to be designed into the scheme and not applied as an afterthought, so assessment should be an ongoing process in developing any design.

## ENV 20: Public realm

1. The council will promote a high-quality network of public realm to foster social inclusivity and interaction. Development proposals shall contribute towards an enhanced public realm network by:
  - a. Responding to the heritage, local character and sense of place of an area through creating locally distinctive places. Through this, public realm should capitalise on opportunities to achieve high quality placemaking, particularly in areas adjacent to heritage assets, transport nodes, natural assets and other landmarks;
  - b. Developing spaces that attract all ages, including opportunities for play (including 'play on the way'), outdoor eating, performances or respite, throughout different times of the day;
  - c. Ensuring that movement through and around the space is accessible for all users through measures such as wayfinding, clearly delineating public and private space and reducing clutter;
  - d. Providing spaces that are responsive and resilient to different climate conditions including access to natural light, and shelter from wind, rain and sun.

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<sup>71</sup> See: <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/find-conservation-and-heritage-assets>

<sup>72</sup> See: <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage>

Schemes should also consider material types to mitigate the urban heat island effect;

- e. Ensuring that signage and advertisements that are within or viewable from the public realm are sensitively designed and located and do not cause an unacceptable level of harm to amenity or public safety;
- f. Introducing and enhancing green and blue infrastructure to the streetscape which makes a positive environmental and visual impact;
- g. Creating a balance between dwelling and movement, including an appropriate mix of seating and shelter;
- h. Including appropriate street lighting which avoids dark areas, but also minimises light pollution;
- i. Ensuring that new development makes a positive contribution to public spaces through its design, orientation, siting and use of materials. Buildings should front onto public realm to create active frontages and increase natural surveillance;
- j. Maintaining the public realm to a high standard and is built to last; and
- k. Maximising smart technologies and promoting digital inclusion.

### ***Explanation***

(211) Public realm is the space between buildings which is available for members of the public to use and enjoy. Public realm should not be treated as independent spaces, instead, it is made up of a network of streets, public open spaces, squares and pocket parks. Public realm should be spaces that work for everyone to increase their ability to foster social inclusivity and interaction. This means that spaces should be accessible and easy to navigate. They should also be spaces that attract a wide range of people by incorporating a range of activities and features including multi-generational play.

(212) As well as being spaces for people, public realm can be an important asset to facilitate green and blue infrastructure. The type and colour of material used in urban environments can have a significant impact on the urban heat island effect. As such, spaces should capitalise on their ability to provide biodiversity net gain, contribute towards mitigating the heat island effect and improve natural drainage.

(213) Public realm should be built to last. Ongoing maintenance should be a key consideration in the design of places and secured through the planning system where appropriate. Spaces should also be flexible to adapt to changing needs. They should have the ability to respond to new and emerging technologies.

(214) To ensure the usability of public realm, it should be safe. Spaces should use surrounding built form to their advantage to provide active frontages and increase natural surveillance.



Appropriate lighting is also an important feature in creating safe places. However, lighting should respect local wildlife and residential uses.

## ENV 21: Shop frontages

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

### ***Explanation***

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

## ENV 22: Development and the historic environment

1. Planning applications, where relevant, will be required to demonstrate how proposals reflect the important role of heritage assets and the historic environment in defining Stockport's character, identity and distinctiveness.
2. Relevant proposals will be expected to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

3. The council will have regard to the positive contribution that the conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic vitality, and to the potential for heritage-led regeneration.
4. The council will consider the potential impacts of proposed development on the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets in accordance with the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework and the statutory duties arising from the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended). Planning applications should include relevant details to inform the council's considerations in this regard, including a desk-based assessment (including field evaluation as necessary) wherever a heritage asset is of archaeological interest.
5. Development proposals, where relevant, will be expected to include measures to further interpretation and public understanding of the borough's archaeological assets and to ensure the recording of relevant details on the Historic Environment Record (HER).

### ***Explanation***

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

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

(217) Stockport's heritage assets include:

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

(218) Details of individual heritage assets in Stockport are available through the Stockport Historic Environment Database<sup>74</sup>.

(219) Wherever this policy requires applicants to submit relevant details to inform the council's decision-making assessment the following should be provided as appropriate. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the asset's importance having particular regard to NPPF (December 2023) paragraphs 205 to 214 and the following considerations:

- how it has taken into account relevant historic information available on the council's website and the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record (HER)<sup>75</sup>;
- the significance of any impacted heritage assets including, where relevant, their architectural and historic interest;
- the impact of the proposal (individually and cumulatively) on the significance of any impacted heritage assets and their setting(s);
- how the significance and/or setting of a heritage asset can be enhanced or better revealed;
- opportunities to mitigate or adapt to the impacts of climate change (and how such measures have been tailored to take account of the significance of the heritage asset); and
- the public benefits that might arise from the proposal.

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

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

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<sup>74</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/heritage-assets/stockport-historic-environment-database](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/heritage-assets/stockport-historic-environment-database)

<sup>75</sup> See: <https://gmaas.salford.ac.uk/historic-environment-record/>

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

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

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

(223) To help maintain the important role of heritage assets and the historic environment in defining Stockport's character, identity and distinctiveness the council may consider the use of Article 4 Directions to restrict the scope of permitted development rights either in relation to a particular area or site, or a particular type of development. Details of existing Article 4 Directions applying to areas of Stockport are available on the council's website<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/article-four-directions](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/article-four-directions).

## Our climate resilient Stockport

- (224) Climate change is defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as a change in the state of the climate that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Greenhouse gases directly contribute towards climate change. The Climate Change Act 2008 introduced a statutory target for the UK of reducing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gas emissions, by at least a 100% reduction from 1990 levels by 2050. Subsequently, the Government has set an interim target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035.
- (225) Stockport Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, and agreed that Stockport should become carbon neutral by 2038, in line with the commitments made in the 5-Year Environment Plan for Greater Manchester<sup>77</sup>. The Stockport Climate Action Now (CAN) Plan<sup>78</sup> has been developed to deliver this target and was approved in October 2020. The strategy sets out ways to ensure that Stockport achieves carbon neutrality by 2038, in order to support global efforts to prevent global warming going above 1.5°C.
- (226) Greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced by moving away from the use of fossil fuels; increasing energy efficiency standards for new development and making existing buildings more energy efficient; investing in clean electricity, hydrogen production and low carbon district heating; planting more trees and woodlands; and protecting soil-based carbon sequestration.
- (227) Climate change is arguably the greatest threat facing society, and responding to the challenges posed by this threat is a key theme considered throughout the Plan, rather than as a single policy. This is reflected through our strategic approach to development and by policies on the natural environment, biodiversity, clean air, design, flood risk, and sustainable modes of travel.
- (228) The policies in this section of the Local Plan specifically address climate resilience, mitigation, adaptation, sustainable design and construction, together with low and zero carbon approaches to development, renewable and low carbon energy generation, retrofit and the use of resources. The policies in this section will allow the council to manage development so that it supports or contributes to achieving all objectives, but particularly 1, 2 and 5.

### CR 1: Climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation

1. To support Stockport becoming carbon neutral by 2038 and to ensure Stockport is resilient to the impacts of the climate emergency, development must contribute positively to climate resilience and the transition to a low-carbon future.

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<sup>77</sup> See [www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/five-year-environment-plan/](http://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/five-year-environment-plan/)

<sup>78</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/our-climate-change-plan](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/our-climate-change-plan)

2. All development must be sustainable in design and construction, incorporating best practice in resource management and climate change mitigation and adaptation. To ensure this is delivered, major development should aim to use recognised standards to demonstrate their sustainability including:

- a. Passivhaus for residential development
- b. NABERS rating of 5.5 stars for non-residential development. Where NABERS is not applicable for that type of development, the BREEAM 'outstanding' rating should be achieved instead.
- c. The BREEAM Infrastructure assessment scheme (formerly 'CEEQUAL') should be used for infrastructure and public realm projects.

3. All proposals (excluding household applications) must demonstrate how they account for the climate emergency and associated risks. Applications must, where relevant, address:

- a. flooding, water management, and sustainable drainage;
- b. biodiversity net gain;
- c. green infrastructure;
- d. the urban heat island effect, and address the risks of overheating;
- e. efficient resource use;
- f. sustainable transport;
- g. on site low and zero carbon energy generation; and
- h. carbon emissions, and where possible, quantify the embodied and lifetime carbon emissions.

4. The requirements of this policy and policy CR 2 must be demonstrated by the provision of a 'climate action statement', the level of detail should be proportional to the scale of development proposed.

### ***Explanation***

(229) Paragraph 8 of the NPPF (December 2023) places mitigating and adapting to climate change as an overarching objective for the planning system, to ensure sustainable development. Climate change mitigation requires the minimisation of emissions of greenhouse gases to prevent the planet from warming to more extreme temperatures. Altering the design of existing places and buildings can help to adapt and protect communities from the impacts of climate change by, for example, offering both shading from extreme weather and management of rainwater runoff through appropriate landscaping and sustainable drainage.

(230) Developing buildings that are adapted to a changing climate and which have a significant impact on reducing carbon emissions requires consideration of a range of factors including: accessibility of a development's location;

- orientation and layout;
- density;
- mix of uses;
- detailed design;
- landscaping;
- materials; and
- capacity for electric vehicle charging.

Many of these factors will also be considered as part of our commitment to delivering a borough-wide design code.

(231) We will support developers to make the significant changes needed to shift to an inclusive wealth<sup>86</sup> approach to net zero carbon, where environmental and social costs are considered alongside project costs. Regard should be had to minimising the gap between the designed and as-built energy performance of new buildings. The council encourages use of recognised environmental and social design standards, including but not limited to: Building for a Healthy Life, Passivhaus, NABERS, and BREEAM assessments. By framing applications against recognised environmental and social design standards, developers can signal their commitment to delivering high quality sustainable development, as it is crucial that proposals deliver sustainable development and respond to the challenges of climate change.

(232) The Stockport Energy and Carbon Study 2020 and the Stockport Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) provide evidence on addressing the climate crisis and the need to commit to reducing carbon emissions from new development at the local level.

(233) The following pieces of evidence and legislation support our approach to achieving net zero carbon and carbon neutrality:

- Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis<sup>87</sup> [6th Assessment Report by IPCC]
- Paris Agreement 2015<sup>88</sup> to limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C

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<sup>86</sup>The United Nations Environment Programme defines a country's inclusive wealth as "the social value (not dollar price) of all its capital assets, including natural capital, human capital and produced capital". See [www.unep.org/resources/inclusive-wealth-report-2018](http://www.unep.org/resources/inclusive-wealth-report-2018).

<sup>87</sup> See [www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/](http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/)

<sup>88</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

- The Climate Change Committee: Sixth Carbon Budget 2020<sup>89</sup>
- Government net zero target by 2050 / 78% reduction over 1990 levels by 2035<sup>90</sup>

## CR 2: Energy efficiency, resource use and embodied carbon targets

1. The design and construction of development should minimise carbon emissions as far as possible in new buildings, infrastructure and public realm projects, and deliver appropriate energy improvements to existing buildings. All developments must follow the energy hierarchy:

- 1) Minimise energy demand;
- 2) Maximise energy efficiency;
- 3) Utilise renewable energy;
- 4) Utilise low carbon energy; and then
- 5) Utilise other energy sources.

2. To ensure that Stockport achieves carbon neutrality by 2038, development will:

- a. Be net zero carbon in operation from 2028, with an energy use intensity (EUI) target of 35 kilowatt hours / square metre /year for residential development and 55 kilowatt hours / square metre /year for offices; and
- b. Be carbon neutral for whole life-cycle, including embodied carbon, by 2038.

From 2028 any residual operational carbon emissions that cannot be fully mitigated on site should be offset through a financial contribution to carbon offset fund.

3. Development should minimise resource use by, where appropriate:

- a. orientating buildings to utilise passive solar design, safeguarding mature trees and incorporating vegetation, green roofs and tree planting to assist with heating and cooling and to minimise the urban heat island effect;
- b. promoting circular economy outcomes and aiming to be net-zero waste. From 2028, major developments shall demonstrate actions taken to reduce embodied carbon and maximise opportunities for re-use through the provision

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<sup>89</sup> See [www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/](http://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/)

<sup>90</sup> See [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2021/750/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2021/750/made)



of a circular economy statement, which can be included as part of the ‘climate action statement’; and

- c. retaining, re-using and adapting existing buildings, particularly where they make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, either individually or as part of a group, recognising the existing embodied carbon that the buildings represent.

From 2028, major development, infrastructure and public realm projects should calculate whole-lifecycle carbon emissions, including embodied carbon emissions, through a nationally recognised whole-lifecycle carbon methodology and should demonstrate actions taken to reduce lifecycle carbon emissions.

### ***Explanation***

- (234) Stockport has the fourth largest population of the ten Greater Manchester boroughs and is the sixth largest emitter in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. Buildings account for around 26% of UK carbon emissions<sup>91</sup>. Meeting our 2038 carbon neutrality target (which includes all greenhouse gas emissions) will require new development to achieve net zero carbon in advance of then. To help achieve carbon neutrality by 2038, a local target has been set where new development should be net zero carbon by 2028, as we should not be building homes and workplaces that will require retrofitting in the near future.
- (235) The council has established ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets in line with evidence and the ambitions set out in Stockport’s Climate Action Now Plan and achieving Greater Manchester’s net zero target by 2038. Emissions from buildings have been decreasing gradually over recent years largely due to increases in energy efficiency and decarbonisation of electricity production, however more needs to be done to enable us to meet our carbon reduction targets and stay within our carbon budget.
- (236) By following the energy hierarchy, new development will need to achieve net zero carbon through the maximisation of on site measures first. The climate action statement will need to clearly demonstrate compliance with the energy hierarchy, and that the development’s total energy use intensity (EUI) figure is being met through the equivalent on site energy generation. Use of battery storage is encouraged to meet needs throughout the day and to reduce reliance on grid energy. Where operational energy needs cannot be fully met on site, applicants should seek to secure additional off site renewable energy generation to offset the residual need. Where a development has demonstrated that the hierarchy has been followed and there are no reasonable alternatives to meet the minimum carbon reductions, then payment to offset the remaining emissions will be required. Such payments should be expected to fund carbon saving programmes within Stockport and Greater Manchester to help meet the 5 Year Environment Plan targets (such as energy efficiency retrofit and renewable energy installations). The council will look to ensure that this off site provision is secured through an appropriate legal agreement.

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<sup>91</sup> See [www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-technical-report](http://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-technical-report)

(237) Retrofitting is a significantly more expensive process than fitting energy-efficiency measures and low-carbon heating when a building is built, therefore buildings should be constructed to avoid the need for costly retrofit in the near future. A large portion of the carbon dioxide associated with any building is in the material extraction, production and transport. The manufacture of steel and concrete is very carbon intensive whereas the use of materials like sustainable timber locks away carbon in buildings. In order to reduce emissions associated with construction activities and the embodied carbon of materials used in new developments, the council will support and encourage the retention, re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings.

(238) The government has adopted the Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) target for the Sixth Carbon Budget, this will require a cut in carbon emissions of 78 per cent by 2035 (for all emissions, not just those from buildings). In late 2023, the government consulted on technical aspects of the Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard, however this consultation did not go as far as expected in terms of energy efficiency standards, therefore concerns are had about Stockport being able to meet its commitments to achieving carbon neutrality by 2038. Updated Building Regulations are expected to come into force in 2025. However, the CCC recommends that all new buildings should be zero-carbon by 2025 at the latest, so our policy has been drafted to reflect this advice. As the government has not yet published how it intends to achieve the overall carbon reduction target that it has adopted, ambitious targets are being sought at a local level to ensure we stay within our own local carbon budget.

### CR 3: Renewable and low carbon energy development

1. To ensure that Stockport achieves carbon neutrality by 2038, the provision of standalone or on site low and zero carbon energy generation and energy infrastructure must be substantially increased across Stockport. The council will work proactively with partners to identify potential locations for renewable and low carbon energy development, particularly heat networks and community-scale schemes. Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be supported, subject to meeting the requirements of this and other policies in this plan.
2. All developments must maximise opportunities for renewable energy generation from solar technology through site layout, building orientation and design, aiming for the equivalent of a minimum of 40% ground floorspace being covered by photovoltaics, unless there would be unacceptable impacts on amenity or safety, and subject to viability considerations.
3. Planning applications for standalone solar photo-voltaic (PV) installations must have regard to glint and glare from the panels and provide 20% BNG.
4. Wind energy development involving one or more turbines is potentially suitable in all parts of Stockport. Proposals will be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that:

- a. there would be no unacceptable impact on amenity or safety in terms of noise, shadow flicker, vibration, topple distance, air traffic safety, radar and telecommunications, or trees; and
- b. The proposal would not cause significant harm, either individually or cumulatively, to the quality and enjoyment of the landscape and related views.

5. Proposals for hydropower schemes must:

- a. Avoid any physical modifications to the river channel that could adversely affect wildlife;
- b. allow for the movement of multiple species and sizes of fish; and
- c. avoid any adverse reduction in water flows and levels.

**Explanation**

(239) The government's Net Zero Strategy<sup>93</sup> aims to tackle climate change whilst also effecting economic growth across the UK; for the planning system, it sets out the key aim to “Ensure the planning system can support the deployment of low carbon energy infrastructure.” The strategy recognises that by 2035 all our electricity will need to come from low carbon sources, and sets out that we will need increased investment in the grid network, electricity storage solutions and flexible grid management, to ensure decarbonisation without risking security of supply. Community initiatives are likely to play an increasingly important role in the uptake of renewable energy and should be encouraged as a way of providing positive local benefits to wider society. Paragraph 156 of the NPPF (December 2023) recognises that elements of many renewable energy projects located in the Green Belt will comprise inappropriate development and therefore very special circumstances will need to be demonstrated for projects to proceed.

(240) To reach carbon neutrality, Stockport will need to generate significantly more renewable electricity locally. Greater reliance on electricity will require investment in generation capacity and storage, and distribution network infrastructure upgrades. The following will all make important contributions to meeting our carbon budget: rooftops for deploying solar photo-voltaic (PV) and thermal panels, home and commercial battery energy storage, ground mounted solar PV, small-scale hydroelectric and wind turbines. The Stockport Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) has identified that there are substantial opportunities for solar PV across Stockport, and some limited opportunities for hydro. In addition, the Stockport Energy and Carbon Study 2020 identifies a number of principal opportunities for wind and hydro energy generation sites deliverable by community groups and/or commercial developers.

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<sup>93</sup> See

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1033990/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033990/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf)

- (241) The government’s Net Zero Strategy recognises (on page 174) that there are opportunities for land to be used for multiple purposes, to make sure land use for decarbonisation purposes is balanced with other demands, our approach to seeking biodiversity net gain on sites for solar development aligns with this strategy.
- (242) Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy developments should take particular account of the sensitivity of our landscapes, and Stockport’s Landscape Character Assessment 2018, together with the addendum report prepared in 2023, provides information on landscape sensitivity for solar PV developments and wind turbines.
- (243) The vast majority of Stockport is estimated to have a wind speed<sup>95</sup> exceeding 5 metres per second at a height of 25 metres, with some locations exceeding 6 metres per second, thus demonstrating technical suitability for a variety of scales of wind energy development. Given that the GPDO makes provisions for micro-scale wind energy to come forward under permitted development, it is suggested that the whole of the borough is considered as potentially suitable for wind energy development, and that applications are determined on a case-by-case basis reflecting local considerations and constraints.
- (244) The Greater Manchester Community Energy Action Plan<sup>96</sup> promises that at least 10% of the Greater Manchester Renewable Energy target will come from community energy. The council recognises the important role that community owned energy schemes play in reducing carbon emissions, increasing installed low/zero carbon and renewable energy capacity, as well as providing social and economic benefits to communities, therefore applications are encouraged from community groups, co-operatives and individuals. In addition, the council will consider the use of Local Development Orders to facilitate the delivery of renewable energy development.

#### CR 4: Heat networks

1. To help meet our carbon reduction targets, and to support the transition to net zero, the council will seek to provide an effective approach to heat decarbonisation by supporting the development of district heating network zones across Stockport, particularly within the town centre.
2. Proposals for new and retrofitted heat networks should be designed to enable future expansion into surrounding communities and commercial areas. Heat networks should use low carbon heat sources and must not use imported biomass or waste as fuel.
3. Different development types will have varying heat demands, and different opportunities for incorporating net zero carbon technologies on site. Recognising this, the council expects:

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<sup>95</sup> See the NOABL wind speed database See [www.rensmart.com/Information/NOABLModel](http://www.rensmart.com/Information/NOABLModel)

<sup>96</sup> See [www.gmc.org.uk/greater-manchester-community-energy-action-plan/](http://www.gmc.org.uk/greater-manchester-community-energy-action-plan/)

- a. All relevant developments should make use of available low/zero carbon and waste heat and must be designed to maximise the opportunities to accommodate a heat network solution, considering density, mix of use, layout and potential pipe laying. Applicants should make best efforts to install equipment that is capable of connection to a wider network at a later date and which could serve, or could be easily adapted to serve, that wider network if and when required.
- b. Developments of 50 or more dwellings, mixed-use or non-domestic developments of 5,000 square metres or more that utilise space and water heating, should install a heat network to serve the development or connect into an available or proposed heat network.
- c. Developments and energy proposals that generate significant surplus or waste heat should take all practicable measures to utilise that heat to meet local energy needs, including as part of an existing or proposed heat network.

4. Where applicants can demonstrate that achieving the requirements of this policy is technically infeasible or financially unviable, they must address other options for significantly reducing carbon emissions in line with our approach to development becoming net zero carbon by 2028 and carbon neutral by 2038. required.

### ***Explanation***

(245) Paragraph 160 of the NPPF (December 2023) explicitly highlights the role of local planning authorities in increasing the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat. Heat supplied through underground pipes from a centralised energy centre tends to be most suitable for denser urban areas, particularly where there are large numbers of dwellings which are either too expensive or impractical (e.g. due to space limitations) to make suitable for heat pumps.

(246) Government analysis<sup>97</sup> identifies heat/energy networks as a cost-effective solution to this issue within areas of high heat density, with modelling suggesting that heat networks could be an important part of the least-cost mix of technologies needed to achieve UK-wide decarbonisation targets by 2050. District heating could provide an effective heat decarbonisation solution compared to other options for domestic buildings.

(247) The Stockport Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) has identified the potential for a significant proportion of existing dwellings (24,700) across three zones in Stockport as being district heating system opportunity areas. In these zones, the density of existing homes means that new heat networks could be formed to serve high density domestic heat demands, alongside other electric options. The scale and location of proposed development within Stockport town centre means that there are particular opportunities to create and connect to district heating and cooling networks. As work is currently ongoing in developing a detailed approach to heat networks, the whole of the borough is being considered as an

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<sup>97</sup> See [The future of heating: a strategic framework for low carbon heat - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114242/the_future_of_heating_a_strategic_framework_for_low_carbon_heat.pdf) and [The future of heating: meeting the challenge - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114243/the_future_of_heating_meeting_the_challenge.pdf)

area of opportunity for the provision of this form of renewable/low carbon energy development.

- (248) Where investment or development is being undertaken in or adjacent to a civic or community building, consideration should be given to the potential role that the building can have in providing an anchor load within a decentralised energy network. In addition, the council will consider the use of Local Development Orders to facilitate the development and delivery of district heating networks.

## CR 5: Retrofit and re-use of buildings

1. The council will support well-designed proposals to retrofit existing domestic and non-domestic properties, to enable improvements to their energy performance, reduce their carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. The provision of wood burning stoves during retrofit will not normally be supported due to the impacts of small particle air pollution.
2. Proposals for retrofitting of buildings to reduce energy consumption should reflect the important role of heritage assets and the historic environment wherever relevant.
3. The council will encourage the re-use and renovation of buildings rather than demolition and rebuild, to reduce the use of new resources and their associated carbon emissions.
4. Planning applications for extensions to existing homes are required to demonstrate that they have considered making reasonable improvements to the energy performance of the existing dwelling.

### ***Explanation***

- (249) In Stockport, residential buildings account for 40% of the borough's greenhouse gas emissions<sup>98</sup>. The 5-Year Environment Plan for Greater Manchester<sup>99</sup> sets specific and ambitious targets for retrofitting the current building stock, recognising the importance of retrofitting for achieving reduction of carbon emissions: "Retrofitting of existing residential properties is the most significant issue in achieving our aims for carbon neutrality." The plan sets a target of deep retrofitting 61,000 homes per year in Greater Manchester, which would equate to 6,100 retrofits a year in Stockport as one of ten districts in the GM city region.

- (250) The vast majority of houses standing now will still be standing in 2038, necessitating extensive retrofitting with a mixture of energy-efficiency measures and low-carbon

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<sup>98</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics>

<sup>99</sup> See <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/five-year-environment-plan/>

technologies. Retrofitting is recognised to be one of the most important yet difficult aspects of emissions reduction to address. Deep retrofitting of buildings is expensive, intrusive and can have long payback periods. Measures such as loft and wall insulation are well known, and additional measures such as double or triple-glazed windows and draught exclusion are part of a fabric-first approach to retrofitting that aims to reduce the energy demand for a building. In order to retrofit buildings for a net-zero future, fossil fuel heating systems must be replaced by low and zero carbon alternatives such as air source heat pumps (ASHP) and solar PV, and external wall insulation may be required. The council will support homeowners through signposting retrofit programmes and schemes that could assist with a whole house retrofit. The council is also supportive in delivering carbon reduction improvements by identifying financial support initiatives both regionally and nationally, working in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).

- (251) There are a number of barriers to retrofitting buildings to help mitigate the effects of climate change and reduce carbon emissions, including financial issues, skills shortages and the need to seek planning permission or prior approvals. We will consider bringing forward a Local Development Order (LDO) which means that planning permission does not have to be individually granted for the installation, alteration or replacement of micro-renewable energy systems on appropriate industrial, warehouse, business, commercial or residential buildings within Stockport.
- (252) Planning applications for extensions to existing dwellings will be encouraged to undertake reasonable improvements to the energy performance of the existing dwelling to help meet out net zero carbon target. Applicants will be supplied with information and a checklist to help identify which measures are appropriate to their home.

## Our homes

(253) Our communities tell us that access to good-quality, appropriate, safe and affordable housing is important to both current and future generations in Stockport. We know we need to provide a wide variety of different homes for people who want to live in Stockport, whilst also recognising that homes play a central role in our resilience to climate change.

(254) The policies in this section of the plan will allow the council to manage development so that, in particular, it supports or contributes to achieving Objectives 2, 4 and 6.

### HOM 1: Delivering new homes

1. New homes will be delivered to achieve the housing target of 15,761 as set out in section 10 of Strategic Policy 1: Spatial strategy. Housing should be delivered on housing allocations set out in HOM 2, in Predominantly Residential Areas and the town, district and local centres as defined on the Policies Map.
2. New residential development will need to meet the requirements of creating sustainable communities. These are characterised by:
  - a. a wide choice of housing sizes, types and tenures, informed by the most recent assessment of housing needs, to cater for everyone in Stockport;
  - b. having good access to facilities such as education, shops, leisure, health services and employment opportunities;
  - c. convenient and suitable options to travel by foot, bicycle and public transport (with particular reference to policies INF 9 and INF 10);
  - d. the ability for remote working provided by fast digital connections;
  - e. high design quality, creating a sense of place;
  - f. measures to minimise the use of energy, water and non-renewable resources, including the use of green and blue infrastructure;
  - g. access to public open spaces which provide the opportunity for recreation and social activity;
  - h. a location outside flood zones 2 and 3a (unless effective mitigation measures can be demonstrated) and 3b, and the integration of suitable drainage systems; and
  - i. the requirements of policy BUS 6 on relevant residential development.



## ***Explanation***

- (255) Stockport remains one of the most desirable places to live in Greater Manchester. Its population is projected to increase significantly over the plan period. There is therefore a clear need to deliver new homes to keep up with rising demand. However, it is crucial that these new homes meet the needs of Stockport residents.
- (256) The Housing Needs Assessment (2019), provides the latest available evidence relating to current and future housing need across the borough. The assessment identifies that there is significant housing need, for all types of housing in Stockport. Therefore, it is important that planning policies enable the quality and mix of housing that needs to be delivered. Furthermore, the assessment recognises the need for housing that supports the growing older population in the borough as well as those with particular needs.
- (257) The available land for housing in Stockport is constrained by land designated as Green Belt outside the main urban area. As a result of this, the council has adopted a "Brownfield First" approach. This approach seeks to enable and optimise delivery on land that has been developed previously.
- (258) While new homes need to be delivered, it is important that they are of suitable quality. The homes we live in impact every aspect of our lives: our physical and mental health, how and where we travel, and how we do day-to-day tasks. It is vital, therefore, that new homes contribute to creating sustainable communities. This means they must genuinely reflect the needs of local people, protect and enhance the natural environment and support the local economy. In line with the council's "Brownfield First" approach, the majority of new housing will be delivered on previously developed land. The existing baseline supply is identified in the council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)<sup>100</sup>, around 90% of which is on brownfield land.
- (259) To take forward Stockport's ambitions and to reflect our ever changing housing market, work has been undertaken in partnership with key stakeholders to develop a refreshed Housing Plan<sup>101</sup>. The Housing Plan is the local housing strategy for Stockport and sets out our vision for housing in the area. It sets objectives, targets and policies on how the council intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role. It provides an overarching framework against which we will consider and formulate other policies on more specific housing issues. The Local Plan will provide delivery mechanisms for some of the Housing Plan's priorities and actions

## HOM 2: New residential communities

1. The following sites are allocated for residential development. The boundaries of these sites are shown on the Policies Map. They each have the potential to deliver a minimum of 50 dwellings and proposals for non-residential development on these

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<sup>100</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment-shlaa](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment-shlaa)

<sup>101</sup> <https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1015&MId=28457>

sites will be refused. Exceptions may be made where a mixed use scheme or ancillary uses are proposed, however the proposal should still provide at least the minimum expected dwellings identified.

Site Name	Minimum number of dwellings
Former Cheadle Brickworks	300
Land at Midland Road, Bramhall	206
Land off Adswood Road, Cheadle Hulme	108
Land behind Meadow Mill, Stockport	100
Metropolitan House, Cheadle Hulme	80
Land off Finney Lane, Heald Green Station	56
Blackford Road	60
Crosland Industrial Estate	60
Compstall Mills <sup>102</sup>	128
Broadstone Mill, Reddish <sup>103</sup>	90
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1188</b>

2. All allocated housing sites will be expected to deliver affordable housing as a minimum in accordance with policy HOM 5.
3. Each of these sites will be expected to make provision for the minimum number of custom / self-build plots required by policy HOM 12.
4. Applications for the development of sites allocated by the policy must detail how the requirements of all relevant Local Plan policies will be met.
5. This may be done following a comprehensive masterplanning or consultation exercise with the involvement of the local community. This could include establishing a clear phasing strategy as part of an integrated approach to infrastructure delivery that supports the scale of the whole development.

### ***Explanation***

(260) The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has identified a supply for housing over the plan period. A number of sites of significant size have been identified and the purpose of this policy is to protect those sites for housing use. Given the scale of the plan's housing target it is vital that the sites deliver at least the housing capacity identified. Allocating these sites helps to ensure that the right type of development is brought forward

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<sup>102</sup> New housing can be delivered at Compstall Mills without the need to change the boundaries of the Green Belt due to the extent of existing development at the site. The total of 128 units is in addition to the 32 dwellings already under construction at the site.

<sup>103</sup> Broadstone Mill is a mixed-use site with commercial activities, but residential development should take place above the lower floors.

in the right places and in an appropriate time-frame. It also allows specific benefits of developments to be realised and for impacts of development to be suitably mitigated.

### HOM 3: Protecting the future supply of housing

1. To support the delivery of new homes, the council will prioritise residential development on brownfield land within the borough, where appropriate. To achieve this:
  - a. outside of the centres and employment areas identified on the policies map, the council will require wholly residential development, or the inclusion of a significant element of residential development, in proposals for the reuse of buildings or brownfield land; and
  - b. within centres identified on the policies map, the council will require the incorporation of an element of residential development in proposals for the reuse of buildings or brownfield land.
2. Proposals that depart from the approach set out in this policy will need to demonstrate that it would be technically infeasible or financially not viable to deliver residential development on the site.
3. The council will not permit the reuse of buildings or brownfield land in current employment or community use unless the requirements of policies BUS 4 or COM 2 are met as appropriate.

#### ***Explanation***

(261) There is a clear requirement from government to significantly boost the supply of new homes. As part of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, Paragraph 11b of the NPPF (December 2023) sets out that policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses.

(262) The majority of the council's housing target will be provided on sites identified through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)<sup>104</sup>. However, we acknowledge that there are unallocated sites that have the potential to come forward for residential development in accordance with other Local Plan policies.

(263) We recognise that there is increasing pressure to release greenfield and Green Belt land. To alleviate this pressure, we have committed to building the majority of new homes on brownfield land as outlined in Strategic Policy 1: Spatial Strategy. It is expected that any unplanned land to come forward during the plan period is likely to be brownfield land. As such, it is important that these sites are prioritised for residential development.

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<sup>104</sup> See: [www.stockport.gov.uk/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment-shlaa](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment-shlaa)

(264) Paragraph 123 of the NPPF (December 2023) also notes the importance of making effective use of land. Historically, there have been sites suitable for residential development within Stockport which have been lost to other uses. Therefore, this policy seeks to ensure that housing is considered on those sites not allocated for another purpose.

(265) Furthermore, housing in Stockport has often been delivered on smaller sites. The evidence provided within the SHLAA<sup>105</sup> demonstrates that delivery on small sites is forecasted to continue through the plan period. Added together, these small, unallocated sites will help to deliver our housing target. Any sites coming forward in this way will need to comply with all relevant housing policies and other relevant policies of this plan.

(266) We recognise that a range of uses will be encouraged within the designated centres to support their role in the heart of their communities. This also supports the principles set out within the Stockport Town Centre and Centres policies. Therefore, this policy applies flexibility to developments in those areas. Residential development in the designated centres will be expected to comply with the requirements set out within the relevant Stockport Town Centre and Centres policies (including STC 1 and 5 and CEN 1 and 3).

(267) There may also be opportunities to include residential development on sites designated for other land uses through the Local Plan. In these instances, we will analyse the suitability of including residential development on a site by site basis. This level of flexibility ensures that the Local Plan is reflective of market changes.

## HOM 4: Housing mix

1. Residential development should provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes in order to create sufficient choice of housing stock. This will deliver housing to meet the varying needs of current and future residents.
2. In Stockport the priorities are for:
  - a. market homes (sale and rent): 3 bedroom properties are the highest priority, homes with 2 or 4 bedrooms are a medium priority.
  - b. affordable homes: 2 and 3 bedroom properties are the highest priority for homes at both Social Rent and Shared Ownership.
  - c. housing for older people: level access and age-friendly design. This is not restricted to a particular house type and innovative design is encouraged in delivering housing for older people.
3. The council will have regard to the following criteria in assessing the mix of housing schemes:

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<sup>105</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment-shlaa](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment-shlaa)

- a. Local Housing Need Assessment<sup>106</sup>;
- b. The ability of the site to accommodate a mix of housing - full consideration will need to be given to the site and its context;
- c. Density requirements as set in ENV 16; and
- d. Where the density falls below those set in ENV 16, the applicant will be expected to provide supporting information justifying the density proposed.

### ***Explanation***

- (268) It will be important that a range of housing is delivered to meet the needs of Stockport residents. Development will be expected to provide variety in terms of tenure, price, type and size. Residential development should cater for new forming households, first time buyers, families with children, disabled and older people.
- (269) The Council's latest Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) highlights that a mix of housing needs to be delivered. The HNA also states that development should have regard to the differing needs across the borough. There is a particular focus on ensuring that the housing and support needs of older people are met.
- (270) The overall mix outlined in the current HNA (2019) for market housing recommends an overall need for approximately 66% houses, 32% level access (flats, bungalows etc) and 2% other (e.g. specialist accommodation).
- (271) The overall mix outlined in the current HNA (2019) for affordable housing is approximately 55% houses and 45% level access.
- (272) It is important to recognise that there are significant differences between the needs of different areas of the borough. The HNA provides a detailed assessment of these needs and so developers should have regard to this evidence base. We will use this to inform negotiations between the Council and developers and to determine the appropriate mix of housing.
- (273) The needs of the borough may change over time. New developments should therefore have regard to the most up-to-date assessment of housing need.

## HOM 5: Affordable housing

1. To address the significant affordable housing need in Stockport, the overall strategic affordable housing target is 50% of total provision. To help meet this target all major housing development (10 or more homes) will be expected to deliver affordable housing on site.

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<sup>106</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/housing-strategies-and-documents/housing-needs-assessment](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/housing-strategies-and-documents/housing-needs-assessment)

2. Development proposals will be expected to deliver at least the following proportions of affordable housing and these should be reflected in the cost of land:

- a. 15% in the Town Centre Living Area and identified Neighbourhood Renewal Priority Areas;
- b. 25% in the inner urban areas of the borough such as the Edgeley, Cheadle Heath, Heaviley, Little Moor, Offerton, Bredbury and Reddish;
- c. 30% in areas with above average property prices such as Marple, Cheadle and Heald Green; and
- d. 40% in areas with the highest property prices, such as Bramhall / Cheadle Hulme (south) / Woodford.

3. Affordable housing will be sought on all council owned sites to be developed for housing, regardless of size. Outside the Town Centre Living Area, at least 40% of dwellings on council sites should be affordable. Within the Town Centre Living Area, at least 15% of dwellings should be affordable.

4. At least 50% of the dwellings should be affordable housing within any residential development on urban open space or unallocated sites in the Green Belt.

5. In the town centre and inner urban areas 25% should be delivered as social rent with the remainder delivered as shared ownership. In other areas the split of the remaining requirement after First Homes should be split 50/50 between shared ownership and social rent. Only where it can be shown that First Homes will deliver genuinely affordable housing should 25% of affordable housing should be delivered as First Homes.

6. The council may seek to negotiate with the developer to revise the mix of affordable dwellings (for instance to secure additional larger dwellings). Where such negotiations impact on the number of affordable dwellings secured, the level of developer subsidy should be unchanged.

7. In addition to general needs housing, development proposals for housing of a specialist nature, such as housing for the elderly including extra care, supported housing and age restricted housing, will be expected to deliver affordable housing in accordance with this policy in line with section 3 of policy HOM 7. Other specialist housing such that does not provide self-contained homes such as care, nursing and children's homes will not be expected to provide affordable housing for these units.

8. On larger housing schemes, details of affordable housing should be provided for each phase of the development, including the number and type of affordable dwellings to be provided. Affordable housing should be fully integrated within the proposed development.

9. In exceptional circumstances, a reduced level of on site provision and/or help to deliver off site housing, usually via a financial contribution, will be considered. The

onus will be on the developer to provide the relevant information to support 'exceptional circumstances.' Costs associated with assessing the viability of a proposal shall be borne by the applicant. Any additional costs to the council associated with assessing the supporting information shall be borne by the applicant. The affordable housing requirements are not an abnormal cost and should be factored into the land values of the site in question.

10. Where off site provision is to be made, the council expects that the financial cost to the scheme should exceed that of on site provision.

### ***Explanation***

- (274) The average house price in Stockport has consistently been the second highest in Greater Manchester. Median house prices have increased by 74% over the last 10 years and partly as a result of this, the most recently published ratio of median house prices to median incomes is 8.66<sup>107</sup>. The borough also has significantly high private rent prices when compared with social rents.
- (275) The Council's most recent Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) was published in 2019 and identifies a total of 11,265 existing households in housing need, which represents 9% of all households across Stockport. The assessment also found that there is a net annual affordable housing shortfall of 549 dwellings. This accounts for around 50% of the Local Housing Need. Delivering affordable housing is therefore a key strategic objective for this Plan.
- (276) It is also important to note that this need varies significantly across different areas within the borough. The HNA found that an average of 9% of households are in housing need across the borough. Brinnington has the highest proportion of households in need with almost one in five (19.2%), in need. The township of Bredbury, Lower Brinnington, Woodley (West) and the township of Town Centre and Hillgate also have notably higher proportions of households in need with 14.1% and 12.8% respectively.
- (277) House prices across the borough vary significantly. To deliver affordable housing that meets the needs of the local community, the proportion of affordable housing sought varies across the borough. It is intended that this will take account of need, property prices and local context. There will be a focus on providing higher proportions of affordable housing in areas with high property prices which increasing owner occupation in areas of predominantly social rented housing.
- (278) The HNA identifies 'townships' across Stockport in which affordable housing needs vary. The council will use the most recent version of the HNA to help determine the level and mix of affordable housing to be provided. Where areas are listed above, these broadly relate to those townships. Where a site lies in more than one area, e.g. in the Town Centre

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<sup>107</sup> See

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian> – Tables 5a and 5c

Living Area as defined by this plan and also in a different township area, the council will apply the lower of the requirements of HOM 5.

- (279) The council should set a good example by making the most of the opportunity to provide affordable housing on land it sells for housing. Therefore, specific requirements for affordable housing on council owned sites are set out in the policy. Specific requirements are also set out for urban open space and Green Belt sites. We recognise that there is the opportunity to take advantage of lower land value expectations to assist economic viability on these sites and therefore proposals should at least match the strategic target.
- (280) In terms of affordable housing mix, the current Housing Needs Assessment (2019) suggests that an overall affordable dwelling mix of 55% houses and 45% level access accommodation (including flats and bungalows) would meet the needs of the borough. While this is noted, the mix of affordable housing provided in development will be based upon the findings of the most up-to-date evidence.
- (281) We are aware that the number of households with specialist housing requirements is going to increase during the lifetime of the plan. Therefore, it is important that the provision of specialist and supported housing for older people, people with a disability and other vulnerable groups are also accounted for in the delivery of affordable housing.
- (282) In terms of affordable housing tenure, First Homes are the government's preferred discounted market tenure. However, the council has demonstrated previously that such housing does not provide for genuinely affordable housing in Stockport. As such, its provision on housing schemes should be supported by evidence which shows that the First Homes units would be genuinely affordable. Where they are provided, First Homes must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value. They must also be sold to a person or persons meeting the First Homes eligibility criteria.
- (283) Where social rented homes come forward, the council will have particular regard to those schemes which seek to deliver units that help to deliver 'GM Truly Affordable Net Zero (TANZ) Homes'. This supports a commitment by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to deliver 30,000 operational net zero carbon social rented homes across Greater Manchester by 2038 and supports the aims of other policies in this plan, particularly policies CR1-3.
- (284) The delivery of on site affordable housing contributions is crucial to meeting our identified need and the creation of mixed, sustainable communities. The provision of affordable housing off site cannot necessarily meet those needs in the same way. As such, the financial contribution of off site provision should exceed that of on site provision. This will only ever be accepted in 'exceptional circumstances'.

## HOM 6: Build to rent

1. The council will only support build to rent proposals where the following criteria are met:



- a. Demonstrate that whole development is under common ownership and management;
- b. Remain as build to rent under a covenant with a clawback mechanism in place should the covenant be broken;
- c. Offer longer tenancy agreements of 3 years or more, with tenants having the option to terminate at one month's notice, after the first six months, without a break fee being payable;
- d. Provide on site management, including a daily presence which should ensure prompt resolution of any issues or complaints that may arise;
- e. Provide liveable residential developments in accordance with all relevant local plan policies; and
- f. Provide a mix of of unit sizes and types informed by the findings of the most up-to-date housing needs assessment.

2. Schemes above the council's affordable housing size thresholds must provide the proportions set out in parts 3 and 4 of policy HOM 4. These dwellings will be:

- a. At a range of genuinely affordable rents that is reflective of incomes to meet affordable housing need in Stockport;
- b. Maintained as affordable private rent in perpetuity unless it is clearly impracticable to maintain the properties as this tenure;
- c. Designed to be tenure blind and distributed throughout the wider development; and
- d. Occupied by eligible tenants, having regard to local household income levels and local rent levels, housing need and links to the local area as agreed between the council and operator.

### ***Explanation***

(285) Build to rent schemes are purpose built dwellings for rent and are defined as such in the National Planning Policy Framework. Nationally, the build to rent sector has grown significantly over recent years. Stockport has received an increase in the number of planning applications for these types of developments.

(286) Build to rent schemes can be beneficial in accelerating the delivery of new homes as well as increasing the range of housing choice in the borough. It is acknowledged that build to rent schemes normally comprise apartments. Despite this, it is important that a mix of unit sizes are provided which reflect the council's most recent assessment of housing needs.

(287) Further to this, build to rent schemes will also be expected to provide appropriate levels of affordable housing. This affordable housing will be provided in the form of affordable rent,

with discounts calculated using local incomes. The council will prepare guidance providing more detail in respect of these matters.

## HOM 7: Housing for older people and specialist accommodation

1. Housing provision for older people and specialist accommodation will be supported where it is well-integrated into the wider neighbourhood.
2. Housing provision specifically targeted at older people, which forms part of the overall mix within new residential developments, will be strongly encouraged.
3. Developments for older people must meet the accessible and adaptable standards as set out in policy ENV 18.
4. In addition, the range of specialist accommodation, often targeted at older people will be supported where it:
  - a. is reflective of the findings outlined within the most up-to-date housing needs assessment;
  - b. delivers homes that meet the optional standard in Building Regulations Part M4(3) for wheelchair user housing;
  - c. is well-integrated with the wider neighbourhood;
  - d. offers easy access to community facilities, local services and public transport;
  - e. meets parking standards across a range of users;
  - f. is designed to reflect relevant best practice; and
  - g. provides a range of tenures.
5. The provision of affordable housing in line with policy HOM 5 will be required where the provision is for units that provide accommodation whereby occupants could reasonably support themselves.

### ***Explanation***

(288) The projections for Stockport indicate an increased ageing of the population over time. Consequently, a range of housing options will be required to meet the needs of older people. Homes should allow people to live independently and retain control over their accommodation and services. The requirements of the policy seek to deliver housing which will meet a range of needs for older people's residential accommodation.

(289) A key strategic objective for Greater Manchester is to increase the supply of homes that meet the needs and aspirations of all ages. Locally, Stockport are working towards

becoming an age-friendly borough and have developed an All Age Living prospectus<sup>108</sup>. When proposing housing for older people and age-friendly places we will expect developments to reflect the most relevant best practice. Current best practice includes the design principles such as those set out in the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) Report. For much of the housing that will be suited for older people there is no reason why this should separate from other forms of residential provision. Its inclusion within wider housing developments is an important part of creating sustainable mixed communities and for this reason the policy encourages such development.

(290) Specialist accommodation is not limited to that for older people, but it can include care homes, extra care housing and sheltered housing. Such schemes should be able to demonstrate need and how they are contributing to the delivery of council strategies and priorities. This may involve the remodelling of existing older persons' accommodation to meet changing needs. Affordable housing is required to meet the needs of those who are otherwise unable to afford open market homes. The affordable requirements of older people tend to be different to those who are seeking to purchase their first home. The council will prepare guidance setting out a preferred method of delivery.

### HOM 8: Provision and enhancement of recreational facilities and green infrastructure in new residential development

1. A high quality, well-connected and sustainable network of green infrastructure is required to support the delivery of residential development.
2. The requirements of policy ENV 1 regarding the green infrastructure network will be given particular weight.
3. Developers are required to demonstrate how a development will cater for the open space needs of the new residents. When incorporating green infrastructure into new development the following standards should be used as a basis for meeting the recommended standards of provision. The green infrastructure offer should be tailored to the housing types and number of units being delivered.

Typology	Quantity Standard (hectares per 1,000 population)	Accessibility Standard
Parks and gardens	1.01	9 minutes walk
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	1.80	9 minutes walk
Amenity green space	0.86	6 minutes walk

<sup>108</sup> See

<https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/documents/s154184/Enc.%201%20for%20All%20Age%20Living%20Prospectus%20Healthy%20Happy%20Homes.pdf>

Typology	Quantity Standard (hectares per 1,000 population)	Accessibility Standard
Allotments and community gardens	0.25	None <sup>109</sup>
Provision for children and young people	0.25	Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) - 5 minutes walk Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) – 15 minutes walk <sup>110, 111</sup>

4. Where on site provision is not feasible, a payment will be required for off site provision to assist in meeting these standards and according to a set formula. Developer contributions will be invited towards:

- a. seeking improvements to the quality of existing open spaces, from all developments that create an additional demand for open space; and
- b. improving access to existing open spaces, particularly in areas of public open space deficiency.

5. Supporting recreational facilities and green infrastructure for new residential development should accord with the following principles:

- a. Open spaces are accessible, safe and in secure locations for all members of the community to use;
- b. Maximise opportunities to be multi-functional and cater for a range of activities, lifestyles, ages and needs;
- c. Improve the quality, value and accessibility of existing publicly accessible open spaces across the borough; and
- d. Secure resilience to the impacts of climate change.

<sup>109</sup>No national guidance is set for accessibility of allotments and catchment areas can vary due to nature and usage; therefore provision is based on demand e.g. waiting lists.

<sup>110</sup> A Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) is primarily aimed at junior aged children that can play independently. It will typically have a minimum activity zone of 400 square metres and have at least 5 play opportunities. A Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) is aimed at children of all ages and include dynamic equipment for older children. It will typically have an activity zone of 800 square metres and at least 8 play opportunities.

<sup>111</sup> Note that contributions are no longer required towards the provision of smaller Local Areas of Play (LAPs). However, in accordance with the requirements of policies ENV 20 and STC 6, residential development should seek to enhance the public realm including through the creation of child-friendly environments that provide stimulating, welcoming and multi-generational opportunities for informal 'play on the way'.

6. In meeting the need and demand for sport, developer contributions will be required to enhance existing provision of playing pitches, indoor sports halls and accompanying ancillary facilities, based on the additional demand generated by new development and guided by evidence on whether on site provision is appropriate to meet demand.
7. The council will have regard to the findings of the latest playing pitch assessment and to Sport England's strategic planning tools to determine an appropriate amount and type of contribution towards off site provision; or on site provision, where appropriate to meet demand.
8. For on site provision, the developer will be expected to provide the new pitches and make provision for its management and maintenance.
9. Provision of new sport and recreation facilities will be supported where there is a need, having regard to the priorities identified in the most up-to-date evidence on playing pitches and built leisure facilities, subject to relevant Local Plan policies.

### ***Explanation***

(291) Paragraph 96 of the NPPF (December 2023) sets out that that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places and beautiful buildings. These places should enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs. Developments should provide safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

(292) The unequal impact of Covid-19 on physical activity rates reflected Covid's broader impact on people's lives as wider inequalities were exposed and exacerbated<sup>112</sup>. The Greater Manchester Strategy highlights that an active life can reduce anxiety, lift mood, reduce stress, promote clearer thinking and a greater sense of calm, increase self-esteem, and reduce the risk of depression. More generally, sport and recreation can be a major contributor to quality of life. Therefore, access to such opportunities is an important element of social inclusion<sup>113</sup>.

(293) New residential development will add to the current and future demands for recreational participation across the borough. As such, new provision or a contribution to increase capacity of existing sites may be required to accommodate this additional demand. Existing capacity may be increased by enhancing quality, accessibility and maintenance or by securing greater community access.

(294) The accessibility standard set out in the policy is based on the appropriate walking distances published by Fields In Trust (FIT) in its document Beyond the Six Acre Standard

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<sup>112</sup> Greater Manchester Moving in Action 2021-2031 – at <https://www.gmmoving.co.uk/about/our-strategy>

<sup>113</sup> Greater Manchester Combined Authority (October 2017) Our people our place: The Greater Manchester Strategy - see [www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/greater-manchester-strategy/](http://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/greater-manchester-strategy/)

(2015)<sup>114</sup>. These guidelines have been converted into an equivalent time period as set out in the policy.

(295) A key role of the Local Plan is to manage the competing demands from different uses on the land resources in Stockport. This includes the need for new housing, employment, facilities and infrastructure to be accommodated, whilst at the same time protecting the environment and green infrastructure. Essential to this will be ensuring land is used most efficiently and effectively. Development will therefore need to be undertaken at an appropriate density to meet development needs. As a result, it may be difficult in certain locations to accommodate new open space on site. A pragmatic approach should therefore be taken to ensure the quality and accessibility of the green infrastructure network can be maintained and enhanced, ensuring that people have access to excellent facilities, whilst making the most efficient use of land.

(296) The council will have regard to the findings of the latest playing pitch assessment and to Sport England's strategic planning tools to determine:

- a. an appropriate amount and type of contribution towards off site provision; or
- b. on site provision, where appropriate to meet demand. The developer will be expected to provide the new pitches and make provision for its management and maintenance.

(297) Provision of green infrastructure and recreational facilities will be supported having regard to the priorities identified in the most up-to-date evidence subject to relevant Local Plan policies. Where new provision of facilities is required, the developer will be expected to provide them and make provision for the management and maintenance.

(298) Where recreational needs are to be met on site, the council will expect this to be maintained through appropriately worded conditions or Section 106 agreements, to ensure the facility is managed to an appropriate standard. If it is judged that needs cannot be met on site, opportunities will be sought to provide enhancement of nearby existing open space, through developer contributions, also secured by legal agreement. The formulaic approach to calculate off site contributions will be based on the standards provided in the policy and population yield. The following formula will be used.

$$\text{Provision} = \text{No. of persons} \times \text{£x}$$

$$\text{Maintenance} = \text{No. of persons} \times 8.5(\text{square metres}) \times \text{£x}$$

(299) '£x' will vary over the lifetime of the plan and the council will prepare and additional guidance on the relevant costs at the time and the mechanisms for securing payments, including through the use of Section 106 agreements.

(300) The number of persons per dwelling will be established on the basis of:

- 1 bedroom dwelling = 2 persons

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<sup>114</sup> See [www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf)

- 2 bedroom dwelling = 3 persons
- 3 bedroom dwelling = 4 persons
- 4+ bedroom dwelling = 5 persons

(301) New homes provided exclusively to meet the needs of older people in line with the requirements of policy HOM 7 will not be expected to contribute to the provision of children's play space.

(302) Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) provided in line with the requirements of policy HOM 11 may be subject to occupancy restrictions imposed by a separate licensing regime. Where new houses in multiple occupation are created or an existing house in multiple occupation is extended contributions will be required based on the additional population generated, established as follows.

- Bedroom limited to single occupancy by licence = 1 person
- Bedroom not limited to single occupancy by licence = 2 persons

## HOM 9: Gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople

1. Proposals for accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople will be permitted where:

- a. the site is of the suitable size to accommodate pitches/plots of an appropriate scale;
- b. in the case of Travelling Showpeople, the site is able to provide appropriate levels of space for storage of vehicles and related equipment;
- c. there is safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from the public highway. In particular, sites for Travelling Showpeople should be well located, and have safe access to, the strategic road network;
- d. the site is accessible to shops, schools, health facilities and employment opportunities and is capable of being served by services such as mains water, power and sewerage; and
- e. there is no conflict with other relevant policies such as those relating to the protection of the Green Belt, other greenfield land and industrial land, and those concerned with development within areas at risk of flooding and on contaminated land.

### ***Explanation***

(303) The most recent evidence (Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment – GTAA 2018<sup>115</sup>) indicates that no permanent pitches for Gypsies and Travellers are required and that approximately 12 plots are required for Travelling Showpeople. To date no suitable sites have been found for permanent sites in the urban area. This policy sets out the criteria against which such proposals should be assessed.

## HOM 10: Children’s residential care and semi-independent supported living for young people

1. The development of children’s residential care homes and semi-independent supported living accommodation for young people will be permitted, provided that the proposal:

- a. Provides a demonstration of local need;
- b. Offers places first to children in Stockport, then in other Greater Manchester authority areas before being offered more widely;
- c. Is supported by a Statement of Purpose for the operation of the premises;
- d. Does not result in more than two of these types of dwellings adjoining;
- e. Does not result in a single dwelling having this type of dwelling on both sides;
- f. Will be compatible with the residential character of the locality;
- g. Respects residential amenities;
- h. Is close to community facilities; and
- i. Is in a location that is easily accessible by public transport.

### ***Explanation***

(304) The council has a special responsibility to ensure that children in care and young people in supported accommodation have the support and opportunities that should be available to all. Part of this is providing suitable accommodation for these housing needs.

(305) A children’s residential care home falls within Class C2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and provides full time care for the residents. Supported living is also an important resource for young people. It can provide housing for those transitioning from residential care who may still require support. Supported housing

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<sup>115</sup> See <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/supporting-documents/?folder=\06%20Places%20for%20Homes#fList>



for young people can also be for those who are at risk of homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, suffering from mental health or other potentially complex issues. There is also demand for housing for those with additional needs transitioning from the family or other housing.

(306) The GMCA Children’s Placement Sufficiency Strategy, reports that Stockport’s share of the total Greater Manchester residential care demand is only 7%, but nearly a quarter of Greater Manchester’s residential care supply is based here. This means that Stockport regularly host placements from other Greater Manchester areas. It is highly preferable for children in residential care to stay within their local area. This helps them to maintain connections to family, friends and other support services. Given this, it is important that applications for these types of accommodation provide a demonstration of local need.

(307) Further to this, such accommodation should be accessible and preferably close to local amenities. They should also be close to public transport facilities to reflect the increased intensity of activity which it may generate and, in particular circumstances, the specific requirements of the expected occupants. Siting must also respect the residential amenity of the wider area. It is essential that the location of these types of accommodation is carefully considered to avoid overconcentration of these premises which would effectively change the character of established residential areas.

## HOM 11: Houses in multiple occupation

1. The council will support the conversion of dwellings to houses in multiple occupation, provided that the proposal:
  - a. Does not result in more than two houses in multiple occupation adjoining;
  - b. Does not result in a single dwelling having a house in multiple occupation on both sides;
  - c. Does not create such a concentration of houses in multiple occupation in a particular area or intensity of occupation of the property concerned that the character of the area or community stability is adversely affected;
  - d. Includes parking within the curtilage at the rate of 0.5 space per letting. Where car parking is to be provided by hard paving of the area in front of the dwelling, no less than 40% of that area should be landscaped to the satisfaction of the Council; and
  - e. Complies with guidance set out in the council’s Houses in Multiple Occupation Recommended Standards.

### ***Explanation***

(308) A house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a property occupied by 3 or more unrelated people of 2 or more households. A household can be a single person or several members of

the same family. This includes bedsits, hostels, self-contained flats, and shared houses. A small HMO is a dwelling accommodating three to six unrelated persons. Conversions of existing dwellings (Use Class C3) to small HMOs (Use Class C4) is classed as permitted development and planning permission is currently not required. A large HMO is a dwelling with six or more people, and they fall within the Sui Generis Use Class. Changes for use from C3 to Sui Generis do require planning permission.

(309) This policy will only apply to schemes where planning permission is required or areas where permitted development rights have been withdrawn through an Article 4 Direction. Parts 1.a-c of this policy refers to all existing HMOs within the area, regardless of whether they have been delivered through the permitted development or planning permission route.

(310) The council acknowledges that HMOs are a valuable source of more affordable accommodation and can help to meet the housing need of local residents. However, policies are required to ensure a high standard of amenity for residents, neighbouring properties, and the area in general.

(311) While the concentration of houses in multiple occupation is acceptable up to a point it is possible the cumulative effect of concentration could negatively affect the residential area. Often those who reside in HMOs do so for a short period of time. This can lead to a high turnover of people who have limited interaction with the local community. This can negatively impact community stability and cohesion. The council will continue to monitor all HMOs and their impact. Should levels of small HMOs increase, particularly in terms of their concentration, then consideration will be given to the making of an Article 4 direction. This means development of HMOs that would usually be classed as 'Permitted Development' could not be carried out unless permission was first sought through a planning application. The planning application would then be assessed against the relevant policies in the development plan and any supporting guidance.

(312) The location of car parking through hard paving associated with this type of use can be unsightly. Good landscaping can reduce the damaging effects of this and enhance the appearance of the dwelling and, therefore, the residential area.

## HOM 12: Self-build and custom build homes

1. On sites of 50 or more dwellings, the council will seek the provision of a minimum of 5% of the plots to be made available as serviced plots suitable for self and/or custom build, and will be controlled by the following means:

- a. The provision must take account of local housing need informed by the findings of the most recent housing needs assessment;
- b. Development that would result in more than 5 self/custom build units on a single site will be expected to provide a Design Code as part of the planning application process;

- c. Where plots have been made available and marketed at a reasonable sale value to self/custom builders for a period of at least 12 months, and have not been sold, the plot can return to the developer to be developed; and
- d. Developments containing only apartments are not exempt from these requirements and provision of space for the creation of custom build apartments should be made at the same equivalent requirement.

2. The inclusion of self/custom build homes on smaller sites will also be supported where appropriate and will be expected to conform with the principles set out in this policy.

### ***Explanation***

(313) The council recognises that self and custom build housing can help to deliver more diverse housing in the borough. It can also contribute to meeting the need for additional housing. The policy encompasses a range of different types of housing delivery which all fit within the definition of self and custom build. Self-built projects refer to developments where individuals or associations purchase land and build their own house or houses on a serviced plot. Custom building is similar to self-build, but some aspects of the process will be facilitated by the developer. This policy also applies to community-led housing and co-housing. These housing types are driven by a group of people wishing to meet their own housing needs.

(314) The council is required to keep a self-build register. This is a list of people and groups who are interested in building their own homes in Stockport. This register has shown that there is demand for self-build plots within the local area. Given the established demand, this policy seeks to proactively increase the provision available through requiring the delivery of self-build plots on larger sites. The policy also recognises that smaller sites can be an effective way of meeting demand when they become available.

(315) A key attraction of self and custom build developments is the ability for people to create their own bespoke dwellings that will meet their specific needs. Despite this, applications for self-build developments should still be reflective of local housing need. Developments will also be expected to comply with all other relevant policies in this plan.

## **HOM 13: Protection of existing housing**

1. The council will protect land allocated for residential purposes and property already in residential use. The change of use of residential land or demolition of existing homes will not be permitted unless a robust justification can be made, taking into account the following factors:

- a. The restricted housing land supply in Stockport;
- b. Whether the change of use or redevelopment is for some form of community facility;

- c. Whether the development is small-scale and is a source of employment or service for the local residential community;
- d. In the case of existing specialist accommodation or readily adaptable properties, whether the same provision of equal quality can be delivered on the site;
- e. The extent to which the existing dwelling(s) suffer from adverse environmental conditions; and
- f. Whether the loss of dwellings would be justified to facilitate regeneration (including the achievement of mixed housing types) or the environmental improvement of an area.

- 2. Unless specifically approved to be operated as serviced apartments, short-term letting of any dwellings will not be permitted where this would result in them not being available for use as a primary residence. Conditions may be applied to approvals for residential schemes in order to prevent short-term letting of dwellings.

***Explanation***

- (316) Given the demand for housing in Stockport, safeguarding existing dwellings is particularly important. Retaining existing dwellings will keep properties available for local residents. We will also ensure that where redevelopment does occur, the new use is residential in nature. This will help to reduce the need to seek dwellings from other land sources, such as employment, open space, or Green Belt.
- (317) Existing specialist accommodation also plays an important role in meeting local need. Properties such as bungalows or level-access dwellings can also provide accessible living accommodation. Protecting this type of accommodation will help maintain an appropriate housing mix in the borough.
- (318) There are particular circumstances in which changes of use (or redevelopment of housing sites) will be acceptable. This is most likely to be where the change of use is sought for some form of community facility, especially small-scale uses such as a doctor's surgery. These uses can take pressure off existing facilities and be beneficial to local residents.
- (319) There are locations where dwellings suffer from serious adverse environmental conditions. This includes housing fronting, or near, parts of the strategic highway network which suffer from significant congestion, noise, and/or poor air quality for a considerable part of the day. Subject to other planning considerations, favourable consideration will be given to change of use to other uses less affected by such adverse environmental conditions. In addition, there may be cases where the loss of dwellings would be justified to enable the proper planning of an area. This could be, for example, redevelopment to support regeneration or proposals that enhance the openness of the Green Belt.
- (320) The continuous use of housing for short-term letting is a potential factor in the reduction of the supply of homes. This can lead to both the loss of long-term accommodation and an increase in housing prices. Furthermore, short-term lets can have a negative impact on the

amenities of local residents. As such, this policy seeks to protect residential properties from this type of use.

## HOM 14: Homes for agricultural workers in the Green Belt

1. Planning permission will only be granted for new permanent homes in the Green Belt to support agriculture and forestry, where the following criteria can be met:

a. There is clearly established functional need for the home that cannot be met through other means and which relates to a full-time worker directly employed by the business;

b. The unit and the agricultural or forestry activity concerned is well established and it can be demonstrated that the activity is profitable, is currently financially sound and is economically sustainable;

c. Evidence is provided to demonstrate that the need cannot be met through alternative accommodation options, including:

i. Within an existing home on the unit;

ii. Through re-using, extending or adapting an existing building on the unit;

iii. Other existing accommodation in the local area; and

iv. The conversion, extension or replacement of existing buildings in the surrounding locality.

d. The home is of a size commensurate with the established functional requirement and relates well to the existing setting.

2. Where it cannot be demonstrated that the activity is well-established it may be possible to justify a temporary dwelling for a period to be determined on a case-by-case basis, to allow it to establish its long-term profitability. In such cases, proposals will be granted subject to the other criteria set out in the policy. Applicants will also be required to demonstrate that there is a firm intention to develop the enterprise and that the activity has been planned on a sound financial basis.

3. The removal of agricultural occupancy restrictions will only be permitted where:

a. It is evidenced that the home is genuinely surplus to the current and foreseeable future needs of the unit concerned;

b. There is no evidence of a long-term need for the dwelling within the locality from people who would comply with the occupancy condition; and

c. Comprehensive evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the dwelling has been actively marketed as an agricultural holding for a period of at least 12

months, at a market price that reflects the occupancy condition and confirmation that no reasonable interest has been identified.

4. To ensure that new homes permitted through this policy remain available to meet the need outlined in the permission, conditions or legal agreements may be attached to any permission. These conditions will remove permitted development rights to control its occupancy for the purpose demonstrated through the planning application. Permitted development rights will also be removed to limit the size of the home and cause unnecessary harm to the Green Belt.

### ***Explanation***

- (321) There may be instances where new homes need to be provided in the Green Belt to meet the needs of agricultural workers. Despite this, it is also important that Green Belt principles are not undermined through unnecessary built development. Therefore, any proposal for agricultural dwellings will be required to meet the relevant criteria set out in this policy.
- (322) When determining these types of applications, a functional test will be required to assess whether there is an essential need for a worker to live on site. This should demonstrate that it is essential for workers to provide care at short notice or to deal with emergencies that could otherwise cause the loss or damage of crops or livestock. Further to this, new permanent homes will only be permitted to support well-established agricultural enterprises. To determine this, a financial test will be required to allow the council to assess the viability of the enterprise.
- (323) While it is recognised that a large proportion of the borough is in the Green Belt, most farming enterprises are reasonably accessible to the existing urban area. Given this, applicants will also need to demonstrate that there is a need for an on site presence, that could not be made by alternative accommodation in the local area.
- (324) The policy also allows consideration to be given to agricultural enterprises which are not yet well established. These may be new enterprises or where there is some uncertainty over the financial basis of the enterprise. In these instances, proposals will still be expected to provide evidence to meet both the financial and functional tests and the other criteria set out in the policy.
- (325) Occupancy restrictions will only be removed where applicants have demonstrated that there is no longer a demand for the property to be used in connection with the permitted need. If occupancy restrictions are removed, the dwelling will need to show how it is fully compliant with the remaining housing policies in this chapter.

## HOM 15: Residential infill development in the Green Belt

1. Limited infill development of no more than two dwellings within a village in the Green Belt will be permitted providing the applicant can demonstrate that the following criteria are met:

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

### ***Explanation***

- (326) Paragraph 154 of the NPPF (December 2023) identifies 'limited infill in a village' to be appropriate development in the Green Belt. The Local Plan has not defined village boundaries for this purpose. When applying this policy it will be necessary for applicants to demonstrate that their site meets the criteria in the policy with regards to being sited and designed to fit in with the streetscene and frontage within the village.
- (327) Applicants will need to demonstrate how their proposal is visually and functionally linked to community facilities such as you would expect to find within a village. Such facilities might include but not be limited to local shops, eating and drinking establishments, community centres or community sports and recreation facilities. A vital consideration will be that if key community facilities are located outside of the Green Belt then a site within the Green Belt is unlikely to be considered to be within the same village because the outer edge of the built area is, in essence, also the outer edge of the village.
- (328) In situations where all the criteria regarding infill development are satisfied there is unlikely to be any significant adverse impact on openness and the Green Belt purposes will be maintained. It is intended that this policy will provide clarity for both prospective applicants and the council.
- (329) Whenever planning permission is granted for development within the Green Belt the council will consider removing permitted development rights from the property. This will ensure that the impacts of future extensions or alterations to buildings in the Green Belt remain subject to consideration through the planning application process.

## Our town centre

- (330) Stockport Town Centre is key to the success of the borough. The council acknowledges the challenges of out-of-centre and online retailing and as a result of economic impacts arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently the role of the town centre needs to evolve into a place that is much more than just about shopping.
- (331) With the Mayoral Development Corporation at its heart our town centre has the potential to deliver significant levels of new housing in a sustainable way, close to transport links, jobs, shops and services. This area can deliver the infrastructure required to meet the demands of the new urban communities which will be created. The town centre will be a healthy and attractive place where people want to live, work and play. It will also be designed and built to meet the demands of our commitment to achieving net zero carbon by 2038.
- (332) The Local Plan proactively supports the role and function of the town centre. It seeks to build on its strengths as a retail, leisure and commercial destination whilst balancing these with a growing role as a place to live. Sufficient flexibility is also in place to ensure we can respond positively and effectively to changes in circumstances over the plan period.
- (333) The policies in this section of the plan will allow the council to manage development so that, in particular, it supports or contributes to achieving Objectives 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9.

### STC 1: Stockport Town Centre principles

1. Development will be encouraged which strengthens the town centre's vitality and viability, promotes a diversity of uses that are flexible in response to change and which contributes positively to maintaining and generating footfall and bringing about a vibrant sense of place. Significant weight will be given to proposals which:
  - a. provide new homes to help meet housing needs at densities appropriate to the town centre location;
  - b. generate growth in number and choice of jobs;
  - c. add to and complement the provision and attractiveness of the town centre office market and meet the growing demand for flexible workspace;
  - d. provide retail and leisure uses that support and enhance the vitality and viability of the centre;
  - e. broaden and enhance neighbourhood, social, health and community infrastructure for local residents in recognition of the town centre's increased population and of its role as a local service centre for surrounding communities;
  - f. provide a new hospital;



- g. bring about an expanded range of activities including cultural, creative and tourism uses which complement existing assets on offer;
- h. support public and private investment to regenerate the town centre;
- i. create an attractive mix of daytime and evening uses to help increase the use of the town throughout the week;
- j. accord with the town's pivotal role as the primary sustainable transport hub for South Manchester and improve linkages through the town centre and beyond from key places outside the borough, especially by walking, cycling and public transport; and
- k. contribute towards achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2038 through their design, construction and use whilst fulfilling other legislative requirements such as net biodiversity gain.

### ***Explanation***

- (334) The regeneration and evolution of Stockport Town Centre is a priority for the council and forms a key component of the vision set out in One Stockport: One Future and previously the Borough Plan where it is expected to lead the way nationally in redefining what town centres can be.
- (335) For clarification, when references are made to 'town centre' in this chapter this relates to the 'Stockport Town Centre' boundary as shown on the Policies Map.
- (336) Paragraph 90 of the NPPF (December 2023) requires planning policies to support the role that town centres play at the heart of their communities by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. The supporting Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that local planning authorities can 'take a leading role in promoting a positive vision for these areas'. Paragraph 90 f) of the NPPF (December 2023) recognises that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of town centres and encourages this on appropriate sites.
- (337) Stockport Town Centre sits within the Southern Growth Corridor, one of six growth locations identified by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority for their unique opportunities and assets and potential to provide a platform for levelling-up across the conurbation. In seeking to meet the Greater Manchester Strategy priority of a thriving and productive economy, two ambitions within the Southern Growth Corridor Economic Strategy are:
- to ensure employment sites are in the right locations to support economic growth; and
  - for the sub region's town centres to be quality places where people choose to live and work.
- (338) The Southern Growth Corridor stretches from Airport City to the west to Bredbury in the east. Stockport Town Centre, with its ongoing investment and regeneration, is at the heart

of the corridor. The town centre is recognised as being a 'growth pole' because of its expected delivery of high-quality housing, town centre employment growth, enhanced retail and culture offer and improved sustainable transport connectivity.

(339) Despite its growth potential, and like many town centres, Stockport has a retail-dominated environment and needs to adapt. In the face of a rapidly changing retail sector and a shift in travel patterns, which were already apparent at the beginning of the decade, the effects of the Covid19 pandemic and surge in demand for online shopping have accelerated the deterioration of the traditional high street leading to the closure of key units and an overall decline in footfall.

(340) The council has made several key interventions on its journey to effect change which commenced with the £1 billion 'Investing in Growth' programme and 'Stockport. Change Here' campaign paving the way for key projects to come forward and transforming perceptions of what can be achieved and the capacity to deliver. The completion of the early phases of Stockport Exchange has done much to improve first impressions of the town and it has become a highly popular business location. Redrock is a step change for the leisure and entertainment offer. An influx of independent businesses continue to take up space in the historic Underbanks now rejuvenated after £1.8 million of National Lottery Heritage funding has helped to bring vacant and derelict buildings back to life.

(341) There is tangible optimism about the future and 'Totally Stockport', the Business Improvement District (BID) for the town centre set up in 2017 with support from the council, has been pivotal in supporting this buzz of activity and maintaining the momentum with regular family events and initiatives to attract footfall and encourage future visits. The BID has successfully secured a second five-year term and its vision recognises:

- that the role of town centres is changing; and
- the need to provide a destination of choice and an enhanced visitor experience.

(342) Creation of the Town Centre West Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) has sparked confidence from public sector partners, funders, the development industry and others in Stockport as a credible investment destination. The MDC was established in 2019 by the Mayor of Greater Manchester with a clear mission to deliver a new urban neighbourhood of 3,500 new homes, employment floorspace and supporting social infrastructure. This will be achieved on previously developed land in a sustainable location over an anticipated timescale of 15 years. The corporation is the first in the country to focus on a town centre location. It has the delivery capability and long-term multi-partner institutional platform needed to tackle the issues faced by the town centre, including:

- increasing housing supply;
- tackling viability constraints;
- raising design quality;
- pioneering low carbon development;
- providing employment space; and
- bringing about infrastructure improvements.

- (343) Doing this will future-proof Stockport Town Centre as a place of choice to live, work, and visit.
- (344) It is proposed that the wider town centre will increasingly become a focus for high density urban living and the vibrant hub of the town's cultural life. The interventions to date and forthcoming projects are seeking to create the conditions whereby improved leisure, business, services, public realm, evening economy and accessibility will add footfall and vibrancy and ensure Stockport Town Centre becomes a desirable place to live.
- (345) Retail and leisure uses will still have an important part to play in the town centre, supporting the wider offer. Moving forward, the town centre needs to diversify to include a greater range of leisure and experience-focused main town centre uses, cafes and restaurants. There is an increasing contribution to be made to town centre vitality and viability by other uses including offices, community space, facilities and health care to support a growing town centre residential population. Vital steps in the evolution of Stockport as a place to live, work and spend leisure time include:
- the council's acquisition of the Merseyway Shopping Centre in 2016 to reverse its decline and help deliver a diverse retail and leisure environment for the wider town centre;
  - the redevelopment of the old bus station into a modern interchange with a new town centre park; and
  - the planned overhaul of Stockport Station Gateway.
- (346) Stockport NHS Foundation Trust submitted a bid in 2021 to the New Hospitals Programme to secure a share of the £3.7 million fund for a new hospital on the sites of the former Debenhams store and Heaton Lane car park. The aspiration is to relocate services from Stepping Hill Hospital and increase the provision of health care uses to serve the increasing population of the town centre.
- (347) The accessibility of Stockport Town Centre by a range of modes and its strategic position on the rail network only 2 hours from London is a major attribute for investors and is a key driver for its future role. The Town Centre Access Plan completed in 2020 improved access and eased congestion in and around the town centre, helping to increase efficiency and reliability and support the investments made to-date. The £73 million initiative was aided by funding from the Local Growth Fund and Greater Manchester Growth Deal and will further reinforce Stockport and its town centre as an important place to do business.

## STC 2: Town centre policy areas

1. In Town Centre West, the traditional service core of the town centre will expand west of the A6 and beyond Stockport Station and the West Coast Main Line. This will deliver an exciting new residential neighbourhood with complementary mixed-use development and supporting social infrastructure. It will offer affordable town centre living, employment opportunities and enhanced leisure facilities in an area rich in heritage. The following Town Centre Policy Areas in Town Centre West will see

ambitious changes whilst supporting the distinctive characteristics, communities and environmental assets of each area.

**A. Brinksway** – An exemplar residential community for zero carbon and energy efficient living along the riverside with medium density housing and flexible employment space to meet a range of occupiers in re-purposed and redeveloped buildings. Access to open space at Hollywood Park and the River Mersey will be enhanced to deliver new active travel links and opportunities for play and food growing. Connectivity and mobility hubs will be encouraged to lower emissions and help make the most of this highly sustainable location.

**B. Weirside** – New homes, flexible workspaces, arts and cultural uses and a new major leisure and culture destination will occupy revitalised former mills, addressing the riverside with high-quality green infrastructure and making the most of its unique and atmospheric location under the listed Stockport Viaduct. This Town Centre Policy Area will be a catalyst for the wider regeneration of Town Centre West, forming a major gateway between the Main Town Centre Use Area and Interchange and that of the other emerging Town Centre Policy Areas in Town Centre West, with potential for landmark buildings and pedestrian-focused environments.

**C. Station Quarter** – The redeveloped dual-aspect station will face a new commercial area to the west served by tram-train and enhanced pedestrian and cycle links between the town centre and Edgeley. A public plaza and green active travel route to Weirside will welcome visitors and take advantage of key views, complementing high-quality office accommodation and a variety of residential dwellings at higher densities and including affordable units. Multi-storey car parking and mobility hub facilities will also be provided to capitalise on the location's unrivalled connectivity.

**D. Exchange Quarter** – The primary business and commercial location for the borough with Grade A office space, hotel and ancillary retail, and a seamless connection via a linking bridge to the new bus interchange hub offering a major public park and a vastly enhanced visitor experience for all users with revitalised public realm, ease of access to the town centre and step-free access between travel modes. Residential uses will also be encouraged in this accessible and attractive location.

**E. Royal George Quarter** – An area that is home to Stockport College and several designated heritage assets, this Town Centre Policy Area will provide a quality residential offer with a range of densities and types of accommodation for all ages including intermediate care facilities. Public realm, landscaping and pedestrian and cycle routes will be of high quality to encourage ease of movement for all ages towards the station and the Main Town Centre Use Area.

2. Elsewhere in the wider town centre, new development must support and strengthen the distinctive role of the following Town Centre Policy Areas, raising their overall quality, offer and accessibility.

**F. Merseyway, Redrock and Princes Street** – The principal area for retail and other main town centre uses with repurposed and modernised units, an enhanced leisure and entertainment focus, public service core with library and welcome hub. Enhanced public realm, pocket parks and direct walking and cycling routes with active frontages will ensure ease of access to other areas of the town centre for all including families and older people.

**G. Knightsbridge** – A residential neighbourhood with build-to-rent accommodation, ancillary commercial space, a particular focus on optimising the efficient use of land and a substantial upgrade to the streetscene in this gateway location. Provision of new high quality public realm and landmark buildings will attract footfall and enable an anchor and transition for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between the Great Portwood Street area and facilities at Merseyway and the Market Place and Underbanks.

**H. Great Portwood Street** – This commercial area within walking distance of the east of the town centre includes a popular retail park at the Peel Centre and will predominantly offer large format non-food retail uses. Land to the north of the area offers potential for higher density residential development including taller buildings during the life of the plan subject to enhanced public transport provision and opportunities for active travel.

**I. The Market Place and Underbanks** – This historic heart of the town will continue to be strengthened as an independent shopping and evening economy destination for the borough, serving an alternative role to the wider town centre and aiding in increasing footfall and enhancing the quality and choice of facilities. It will continue to be the principal focal point for creative and cultural uses, small-scale offices, outdoor dining and markets; allowing meanwhile uses to thrive, supplemented with repurposed shop units that add to the mixed-use offer whilst protecting and enhancing the area's unique heritage value. A balanced mix of uses will be important in maintaining vitality and viability.

**J. South-East Quadrant** - This mixed-use renewal area on the edge of the town centre is of historic and archaeological significance and will offer a range of residential types and tenures within safe and easy walking and cycling distance of the Main Town Centre Use Area and transport interchanges together with a choice of industrial, office and workspace accommodation to meet requirements including small to medium enterprises. The need for environmental improvements, the impact on residential amenity and on employment uses, and the protection and enhancement of industrial heritage and key views will continue to be important factors in its evolution. There is also potential for higher density residential development including taller buildings towards the south adjacent the A6.

3. Subject to policy CEN 2 and policy CEN 4, development in the Town Centre Policy Areas will be supported for the following:

a. The main town centre uses considered appropriate; and

b. Mixed-use development for residential and main town centre uses and/or town centre neighbourhood facilities.

4. For development in Town Centre West, it should be demonstrated that:

a. It contributes positively to the vitality and viability of Stockport Town Centre and sustainable economic growth and job creation in the borough; and

b. Where a net loss of employment land or floorspace is proposed, the requirements of policy BUS 3 and policy BUS 4 are satisfied; and

5. Where no residential is proposed, the development will not undermine the town centre as a priority residential location.

6. Retail and other main town centre uses proposed in the Town Centre Policy Areas of Town Centre West shall be small-scale and ancillary to appropriate uses and will be required to satisfy the sequential test in policy CEN 4 and the threshold for local community shops in policy CEN 8 as appropriate.

7. In accordance with policy CEN 4, where retail and other main town centre uses are proposed, the council will consider whether there are any significant adverse impacts on emerging town centre development and investment by having regard to:

a. The fit with the positive strategy for the town centre under Strategic Policy 2; and

b. Whether there is conflict with the proposed Town Centre Policy Areas; and

c. Additional factors including the progress made towards securing the investment and the extent of impact on turnovers, operator demand and investor confidence.

### ***Explanation***

(348) Paragraphs 15 and 16 of the NPPF (December 2023) require plans to provide a positive vision for the future of each area and to be prepared in a way that is aspirational but deliverable. Drawing from and delivering the broad principles of policy STC 1, this policy identifies and manages areas for change and development across the town centre, setting out the specified mix of uses that will form distinctive places in their own right. These locations are referred to as our Town Centre Policy Areas and their boundaries are shown on the Policies Map.

(349) The town centre is growing and changing at a fast pace, and it is important to take a planned approach to promote areas with potential to increase densities and make efficient use of underused land, helping to set the expectations and ambitions of the council and to meet Paragraph 124 of the NPPF (December 2023).

(350) The ten Policy Areas have been split into two groups within the policy to reflect the distinct and emerging Town Centre West area which is coming forward under the Mayoral

Development Corporation. Each of the Policy Areas have unique qualities which contribute towards the diversity and vibrancy of the town centre and are largely based on historic clusters of related uses and existing physical boundaries.

- (351) The intention is to encourage these areas to develop a particular set of defined characteristics that are not focused around one use and therefore allow a recognised identity and environment to take shape for the expected uses to operate in. Decisions taken within the Policy Areas in line with this policy should therefore seek to ensure these prescribed characters and inherent qualities of the place are adhered to and protected as far as possible.
- (352) **Town Centre West**  
The Stockport Town Centre West Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) (July 2019) establishes a vision and strategy for how the Town Centre West area could be transformed from a predominantly industrial area into a sustainable residential neighbourhood with enhanced leisure offer and employment opportunities over a 15 to 20 year period. The SRF guides the types of uses which will be acceptable if sites become surplus to current requirements and the Mayoral Development Corporation has the necessary powers to lead its delivery alongside public sector partners who will work with landowners to support sites to be redeveloped and funding to be accessed where appropriate.
- (353) The vision of the SRF is for Town Centre West to be ‘Greater Manchester’s newest, greenest and coolest affordable urban neighbourhood’, offering a choice of homes and workspaces, a safe and walkable environment, excellent public transport accessibility and a new residential benchmark for both the borough and for the sub-region.
- (354) The five ‘neighbourhoods’ in the SRF of Brinksway, Weirside, Station Quarter, Stockport Exchange and Royal George Quarter were originally chosen to harness their existing features including public transport hubs and historic buildings and to provide a range of living, working and leisure environments, thereby naturally informing the Policy Areas for Town Centre West in the policy.
- (355) Any development proposals that would compromise the delivery of the SRF and the ability to maximise the development potential of the Policy Areas within it will not be supported.
- (356) **The wider town centre**  
The traditional core service area of the town centre, to the east of the A6 Wellington Road South, incorporates much of the town’s retail, leisure and commercial offer and is intrinsically linked to the plans for improved transport connections at Stockport Exchange, Station Gateway and Stockport Interchange.
- (357) Each of the five Policy Areas have a unique role to play in either attracting footfall into the town centre, to give the visitor a range of experiences beyond just shopping, or in providing places to live and work in close proximity to those opportunities. In particular, the public and private investment to revitalise the Merseyway precinct, the provision of high-quality leisure and hospitality uses at Redrock, and the influx of independents at the emerging alternative destination of the Market and Underbanks are all efforts to encourage visitors to spend more time in the town and make linked trips as necessary. These services will be

critically important in a town centre that is to support an increased residential population within walking distance.

(358) Two of the Policy Areas at Great Portwood Street Area and the South East Quadrant have zones which are identified by evidence in the Stockport Character and Urban Density Study as being capable of accommodating over 11 storeys. Any scheme will need to comply with the requirements of Policy ENV19.

(359) **Managing change**

The Town Centre West SRF clearly states that the area is not the location for large scale retail or leisure uses and that these should be directed towards the town centre, and instead the focus will be on local convenience, bars and restaurants where they can support and complement existing uses in the town centre.

(360) Proposals on land within the Main Town Centre Use Area boundary that is not within the Policy Areas will be subject to the overarching principles in policy STC 1 and the other policies within this chapter.

### STC 3: Key transformational projects

1. To deliver the vision for the town centre in Strategic policy 2 and the principles in policy STC 1, the council and partners will promote and proactively support comprehensive redevelopment and regeneration opportunities that will be the catalyst for the transition of the town centre. Current projects and strategic interventions will continue to advance, leading to the completion of the following:

- a. Merseyway for the repurposing of the centre's existing fabric to bring forward a mix of uses including leisure, offices, flexible community workspace, retail, library and town centre cultural and amenity hub, helping to create a destination that is inclusive to all with easy access to the rest of the town centre;
- b. The Interchange for the creation of a state-of-the-art transport interchange, high quality residential development, new landscaped podium park and improved access on foot and by cycle, both to the River Mersey and to Stockport Station;
- c. Weir Mill for the delivery of a vibrant mixed-use community and cultural destination alongside the Interchange hub, enabling the restoration of industrial heritage and the provision of high-quality riverside public spaces with easy access for users on foot into and out of the town centre;
- d. Initial key development sites in Town Centre West, including 'Stockport 8' for an 8 acre neighbourhood adjacent the Interchange and viaduct, offering new homes together with retail, leisure and office space;



- e. Stockport Exchange for the establishment of the town's new premier business location with exceptional transport connectivity and comprising high-specification office accommodation, hotel, residential, commercial business and services uses and car parking;
- f. Stockport Station for the improvement of the station area both as a southern gateway into the Greater Manchester city region and as a regionally significant transport hub by improving passenger facilities, increasing opportunities for commercial business and service uses, addressing severance and capacity issues, and unlocking development potential to the west;
- g. Royal George Village for the restructuring and repurposing of the Stockport College estate and buildings to provide high-rise apartments, offices, start-up space, flexible commercial space, high-quality public realm and landscaping; and
- h. St Thomas' Gardens for an all-age residential community and supporting ancillary community facilities and commercial space, with private rented units and apartments at the listed St. Thomas's Hospital together with a new intermediate/extra care facility for older people.

### ***Explanation***

- (361) The investment highlighted in this policy is central to delivering the vision of a multi-functional, vibrant Stockport town centre. Several fundamental projects are underway or are close to completion, helping to set a high standard for the quality of placemaking.
- (362) The aim is for interventions like these to collectively raise the profile of the town centre and provide the conditions that help improve the public service and entertainment offer and the visitor experience on arrival. Such changes will assist in supporting the town centre's ongoing transformation from a retail and service driven centre to a leisure-focussed attraction and a more desirable place to live.
- (363) Merseyway Shopping Centre is at the heart of the Council's vision for a reimagined town centre. It was purchased with a view to providing a modern, adaptable, high-quality retail and leisure offer for all users. Previously vacant or underused retail units within the centre are in the process of being remodelled and repurposed to provide a new public service core, relocated and expanded library, cultural hub, community facilities, leisure uses and workspaces. Alongside this the council is improving public spaces and accessibility for all users which will benefit the image of the precinct and allow better connections with other areas of the town centre.
- (364) The Town Centre West area is set to benefit from the first major steps in its transformation, gaining a new cultural attraction at Weir Mill and a £250 million, walkable neighbourhood alongside it, comprising up to 1,200 new homes and associated space for commercial use, local start-up businesses and community facilities known as 'Stockport 8'. Located within walking distance of town centre services and the new transport interchange and park, this prominent and sustainable location underneath the viaduct will set the standard for the high-quality development expected in the town centre moving forward.

(365) Stockport Exchange is the premier location for business in the borough sitting adjacent to the railway station and Stockport Interchange. The site is in a highly accessible location and within walking distance of the town centre. It provides a complementary offer to the wider town centre in accordance with Planning Practice Guidance. The project to-date has successfully delivered over 16,500 square metres of high-quality office space, almost 2,000 square metres of Class E uses, a 115-bedroom hotel, two multi-storey car parks and new public realm. Further phases are expected to deliver additional office space, residential and Class E uses.

## STC 4: A hub for culture and lifestyle

1. The council will positively encourage enhanced and additional cultural activities and experiences that promote social interaction and establish the town centre as a place in which to gather and spend extended leisure time, including:

- a. the modernisation and upkeep of facilities important to Stockport's visitor economy such as performance venues and museums;
- b. the diversification and improvement of the town's leisure offer to promote wellness and appeal to a wide range of users;
- c. new and enhanced markets, outdoor events and fairs;
- d. growing the evening economy, seeking an increase in the number and range of restaurants and the use of public realm for eating and drinking outside;
- e. enhanced interpretation of the town centre's varied and unique heritage;
- f. opportunities to provide hotels and conferencing facilities to meet demand; and
- g. the temporary use of vacant buildings and sites by creative, cultural and community organisations, particularly where they activate and revitalise the area and the public realm.

### ***Explanation***

(366) The wider town centre will increasingly become a focus for high density urban living and the hub of the town's cultural life. Already home to visitor attractions such as The Plaza, Stockport Hat Museum and Stockport Market, it is intended that the town centre will be a vibrant and colourful heart to Stockport and its surrounding communities.

(367) The council is working in partnership with Culture Stockport, a group made up of local artists, makers, cultural and community organisations, to prepare an emerging Cultural Strategy for the borough called 'The Place That Makes Itself'. Whilst the scope is wider than the town centre, the priorities include a commitment to working with the BID, the council and other partners to make sure that culture is used to animate local spaces, and the

improvement of physical and digital access to objects in the archives and museum collections. The strategy also seeks to promote engagement on the new library and learning hub planned as part of the 'Stockroom' project in Merseyway, enabled by £14.5 million from the Future High Streets Fund, which will be an inclusive 21<sup>st</sup> Century facility to celebrate the culture, creativity and diversity of Stockport.

(368) The award of £2.63 million of funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports in 2022 to deliver a creative campus in the town centre is a further boost to the cultural sector and a signal of intent as creative businesses continue to locate in the Market Place and Underbanks area. Supporting One Stockport Borough Plan's ambition of 'an inclusive and radical digital borough', the money will provide a three-year invigoration programme to transform the town's heritage-rich historic centre into a digital arts neighbourhood, bringing forward the conversion and re-use of empty properties to host digital creative businesses, public-facing inspirational spaces, training and engagement, building skills for the future and ensuring access to digital arts activities.

## STC 5: Town centre living

1. Housing will be encouraged in the Town Centre Living Area, as shown on the Policies Map, in balance with other suitable uses.
2. The council will support opportunities to develop a high-quality place to live and which capitalises on the potential for a compact urban neighbourhood in a highly accessible and sustainable location. Residential development in the town centre will be expected to make the most efficient use of land, subject to amenity, density and space standards in policies ENV 16, ENV 17 and ENV 18.
3. Some parts of the Town Centre Living Area have been identified as having the potential for development of new, higher density residential communities, including taller buildings which should be delivered in accordance with policy ENV 19.
4. The effective and efficient use of upper floors for residential uses within the Primary Shopping Area is supported where proposed as part of a mixed-use development and where compatible with adjacent uses. This will not be supported where it will undermine the economic role of the town centre and/or have an impact on its vitality and viability.
5. To facilitate the changing role of Stockport town centre, development of neighbourhood, community and social infrastructure to meet the needs of the increased population will be supported. Residential development may be expected to contribute towards the provision of such infrastructure. This is likely to include facilities falling broadly within Use Class E (Commercial, business and service), F1 (non-residential institutions) and F2 (local community uses) such as:

- a. local retail facilities;

- b. community facilities, including community halls, flexible community space, and space for religious or faith activities;
- c. healthcare;
- d. education; and
- e. leisure provision.

6. Other uses that would demonstrably meet the needs of the town centre's residential population, will also be supported.
7. The provision of accessible and high quality open space including amenity areas for residents will be sought subject to viability and the requirements of policy HOM 8.
8. In all cases, town centre neighbourhood facilities must support, and not undermine, the vitality and viability of the town centre. Where the provision of town centre neighbourhood facilities would result in a net loss of employment floorspace the requirements of policy BUS 3 must be met.

### ***Explanation***

(369) The town centre will become a sustainable and vibrant residential community in its own right and will become the principal location for housing in the borough. It has been identified as a sustainable location for residential development, owing to its location as a transport hub, proximity to facilities and services and its considerable potential to make effective use of vacant and underutilised previously developed land.

(370) Chapter 11 of the NPPF (December 2023) requires planning policies to promote the effective use of land in meeting an authority's needs for homes and other uses. Promoting and supporting the development of under-utilised land and buildings and suitable previously developed land is particularly encouraged. Making the most efficient use of land where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs by ensuring that developments make optimal use of the potential for each site is encouraged in paragraphs 128 and 129. The Local Plan therefore aims to optimise the capacity of the existing urban area to accommodate new development when identifying land to meet our housing needs.

(371) The town centre offers a remarkable opportunity to realise these ambitions in a location with excellent connectivity and on a scale surpassing other districts in Greater Manchester. The Mayoral Development Corporation is well placed to bring forward large-scale regeneration with the ability to bring together a wide range of development and land assembly statutory powers that can galvanise market interest and support engagement with the private sector.

(372) The Stockport Town Centre West Strategic Regeneration Framework has committed to Town Centre West being a 'nationally significant example of town centre living'. The Stockport Town Centre Living Development Framework supports this with a view to improving viability and using public sector powers to unlock land and development. Any

subsequent design guides, codes or other design related documents may also be of relevance.

- (373) Policy ENV19 sets our approach towards tall buildings and is informed by evidence in the Stockport Character and Urban Density Study which finds potential for 'gentle density' in three zones. In design terms, there is a presumption in favour of buildings over 11 storeys in these zones, although this is subject to the requirements of other policies in the Local Plan.
- (374) Expected population increases from both planned growth in the Local Plan and additional residential development coming forward through prior approval following the changes to the General Permitted Development Order, will place considerable pressure on our existing social infrastructure which in some cases are already at capacity or below standard. Investment in public transport connectivity at Stockport Interchange is also expected to increase visitor numbers.
- (375) The town centre has traditionally been a place of work and a shopping or leisure destination, although evidence in the Retail and Leisure Study Update 2022 and emerging trends suggest that the town centre should be more of a hub for our communities. The Economic Plan forecasts an ageing population, a large proportion of which will benefit from high quality older persons' accommodation at St Thomas' Gardens on the edge of the town centre, and the BID continue to develop an events programme that attracts young people and families into the centre. It will be important to ensure the new town centre environment offers opportunities for all, in line with policy COM 1.
- (376) The council's vision as part of the Future High Streets Fund to repurpose units in the Merseyway precinct to provide a public services hub, hybrid working opportunities and leisure activities is a crucial first step towards improving the functionality of the town centre although further supporting services will be needed to provide the quantity, quality and mix of uses required to support a high-quality place to live. It is important that there is flexibility employed towards such uses ensuring the appropriate provision of supporting local infrastructure and services needed to support both existing and new urban communities.
- (377) Residential development, particularly at the high levels expected in the town centre, will place demand on existing open spaces and there are few opportunities to create new public open space. Town centre living requires imaginative solutions and therefore such schemes must explore the potential for new and improved public realm, on site in the first instance, in order to provide attractive facilities for prospective residents of all ages.
- (378) The town centre remains an area of employment, and in many cases town centre neighbourhood facilities will perform an employment function. However, where proposed town centre neighbourhood facilities would not provide an employment function, and would result in a loss of employment floorspace, it will be necessary to demonstrate through an Economic Statement that the requirements of policy BUS 3 are met. Where town centre neighbourhood facilities are proposed, these should not undermine the operation of existing uses, and it will be necessary to demonstrate how the proposed use

supports, and does not undermine, town centre vitality and viability. Again, this should be set out through an Economic Statement.

(379) It is recognised that town centre living alongside cultural and evening economy uses can potentially give rise to residential amenity issues, particularly noise, and therefore proposals will be required to satisfy the requirements of relevant policies in the 'Our Environment' and 'Our Businesses and Centres' chapters where impacts are expected to arise.

## STC 6: Public realm and design in the town centre

1. All development proposals within the town centre, where appropriate, shall contribute towards an enhanced public realm network for all ages by:
  - a. creating inviting and safe places with high-quality streets, public spaces, incidental space and attractive routes that are safe to walk and cycle on;
  - b. reducing the severance caused by the A6, the M60 motorway, the West Coast Main Line and other transport infrastructure;
  - c. capitalising on opportunities to achieve high quality placemaking, particularly alongside the River Mersey; and
  - d. introducing environmental and biodiversity improvements to the character and appearance of the streetscape in prominent locations that raise the profile of the town centre.
2. To increase the connectivity and permeability of areas of the town centre and between neighbourhoods for all users, the council will encourage the following interventions, particularly adjacent to major concentrations of activity and at gateway locations:
  - a. Child-friendly environments that provide stimulating, welcoming and multi-generational opportunities for informal 'play on the way';
  - b. Access to toilets and provision of age-friendly public seating;
  - c. Surfaces and levels that have step-free access and avoid steep inclines where possible; and
  - d. Use and siting of public art and areas appropriate for street entertainment.
3. Opportunities to encourage and improve access across the town centre will be sought through the upgrading of public spaces and currently unappealing environments. Overcoming barriers to pedestrian and cycle movement created by the A6 corridor on Wellington Road South between the Town Hall and Central Library will be a priority. A high standard of design will be expected at this prominent

gateway. Particular attention will be given to the creation of landmark buildings and a contribution to the renewal and environmental improvement of the area.

4. The redevelopment of areas of underused land/buildings will be promoted where they are no longer contributing positively to the town centre's environment or commercial or cultural offer.
5. Developments must provide a financial contribution to allow off site improvements to public spaces to be made and maintained and to help serve the town centre's growing residential community. This will be secured through a planning obligation.

### ***Explanation***

- (380) Good quality public spaces and public realm will make Stockport town centre more attractive and set the standard for the quality of development that is required. They can benefit businesses and make homes in town centres more desirable.
- (381) It is expected that the town centre will have a public realm network that is an exemplar for generating a welcoming and safe place for all ages and abilities to live and as a place for visitors and workers to dwell. As such, the quality of the built environment, streets, squares and riverside areas will be vital to how future development is brought forward and ongoing success of the centre is achieved. It also affects the enjoyment of the town centre and can quickly establish the key function of a place, therefore promoting and encouraging more sustainable and active lifestyles.
- (382) Stockport Town Centre West Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) notes that much of the town centre is built to meet the needs of motorists. This must be balanced with the right to clean air and safe streets for the community. Removal of through traffic will allow for better and safer connections and the rejuvenation of places on the edge of the town centre, thereby improving access and enticing people in.
- (383) The River Mersey runs through the heart of the town centre but is covered over in many places. Even in relatively recent times development has turned its back on the river where it is open. The 2020 Stockport's Ecological Network report identifies the Town Centre Living Area as an opportunity area with high potential for ecological restoration. The new Stockport Interchange and public park and enhanced recreational corridors elsewhere in Town Centre West, including at Weir Mill, will provide the catalyst for an enhanced relationship with the riverfront and the provision of improved waterfront open spaces and walkways and cycle routes. This will create new environments for living and doing business in the heart of the town.
- (384) The council will support opportunities to upgrade riverside spaces and provide connections in the open parts of the Mersey corridor. Covered sections of the river are more challenging to bring forward although schemes to open them up for public access and enjoyment will be supported subject to viability considerations, the effect on town centre business and the visitor economy.
- (385) Key environmental improvements will include:

- designing-out of car dependency and reducing vehicle emissions;
- maximising renewable energy sources;
- the improved use of public realm and natural assets to enhance biodiversity and provide green space for the growing population; and
- the prioritisation of zero carbon construction by building to BREEAM, Passivhaus and/or NABERS standards in accordance with policy CR 1.

(386) The prominent locations where environmental improvements would be welcomed include but are not limited to:

- Stockport Station Gateway;
- Mersey Square;
- Merseyway;
- Great Underbank;
- A6 Wellington Road South; and
- Piccadilly area.

(387) There is a desire from town centre partners, including the BID, to make the town centre more welcoming for families. It is also recognised that changes in levels and the terrain of some parts of the town centre can make accessibility for the disabled and mobility-impaired challenging.

(388) The aspiration for high quality design in the Local Plan is set at policies ENV 14 and 15, although the status of the town centre as a significant growth location and the impacts this will have on the built and natural environment demands a tailored response to ensure we get the balance right. Applicants will be expected to undertake a design review where requested.

(389) The need for increased and enhanced 'golden infrastructure', relating to how our streets will be used in the future, is recognised by Stockport Town Centre West Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF). These new 'golden routes' should be relatively free from traffic, focused on pedestrian and cyclist movement and form a clear and coherent network of squares and linear spaces that link key areas of activity across the town centre.

## STC 7: Movement to and through the town centre

1. Development proposals in the town centre should be designed so that walking, wheeling, cycling and using public transport become realistic default options for those travelling to, from and within the area.
2. Development proposals in town centre gateway locations should be designed to enhance the sense of arrival.
3. Development may be expected to contribute towards the delivery of key town centre transport projects directly or through a financial contribution.



4. Development that would prevent delivery of key town centre transport projects will not be permitted.
5. Meeting the requirements of policy INF 7 is of particular importance within Stockport Town Centre and will be given significant weight in determining planning applications in this location. In particular, proposals will be expected to contribute towards shared mobility services and transport hubs, helping to ensure appropriate provision for parking and electric vehicle charging across the town centre.
6. Development proposals should incorporate measures to ensure adequate access for servicing and delivery vehicles, including cycles and cargo bikes, without compromising the town centre's role as a high quality, higher density, thriving, highly accessible and sustainable destination in which to live, work and spend time.

### ***Explanation***

(390) Paragraph 108 of the NPPF (December 2023) highlights that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and contribute to making high quality places. Furthermore, paragraph 109 notes that growth should be managed in support of this and other objectives by focusing significant development on locations which are or can be made sustainable.

(391) Stockport town centre is already highly accessible by road and rail, and has considerable potential for the reuse of previously developed land. However, if the town centre is to be a successful growth location then its existing infrastructure needs to be upgraded and 'future proofed' to support the anticipated needs of future residents, workers and visitors. Proposals should seek to ensure that transport networks and systems are robust and capable of responding to changing travel patterns and behaviours.

(392) The Central Stockport Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) Prospectus and Technical Report highlights several key issues relating to transport:

- High reliance on the highway network with high car ownership and ineffective use of land for existing car parking provision;
- Opportunities to further support the resilience of bus services by improving bus facilities along key corridors;
- The rail station is the 5<sup>th</sup> busiest in Greater Manchester however significant improvements are required to increase capacity, local connectivity and passenger facilities; and
- Benefits from multiple dedicated cycle routes including traffic free routes but the permeability and topography remains a barrier to walking and cycling.

(393) Transport is a key strand of the IDP programme and is expected to require the largest proportion of funding. Aligned to this is the £73 million Town Centre Access Plan which over two phases has encompassed key projects to improve access to key areas, corridors and sites around the town centre and sought to improve efficiency and reliability of the road network.

(394) Key town centre transport projects for Stockport are set out in the Greater Manchester Five Year Transport Delivery Plan and the Stockport District Local Implementation Plan appended to it<sup>117</sup>. These documents are programmed to be updated every five years.

(395) The Stockport Town Centre West Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) has identified that creating a stronger dual aspect to the Station Gateway will drive physical change in the area by unlocking west-east connectivity in a location that will also welcome the tram-train and benefit from improved journeys on foot or by cycle to the new Stockport Interchange. However this needs to be complemented by a range of other measures that improve the experience for all users at all gateway locations. Ease of movement will support our Climate Action Now ambitions whilst encouraging more people of varying abilities to live in, visit and enjoy the town centre will all lead to increased footfall that supports our local businesses.

(396) This policy should be applied, in particular, alongside the more general transport requirements set out in policies INF 7 to INF 16.

## STC 8: Main town centre uses and retail development

1. New retail development will be directed towards the Primary Shopping Area within Stockport town centre as shown on the Policies Map and in accordance with policies CEN 2 and CEN 4.
2. The following main town centre uses will be appropriate in the 'Main Town Centre Use Area' as shown on the Policies Map:
  - a. retail development, only where policies CEN 2 and CEN 4 are satisfied ;
  - b. leisure, entertainment and more intensive indoor sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls);
  - c. offices; and
  - d. arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

### ***Explanation***

(397) The Main Town Centre Use Area is the name given to the 'town centre boundary' as defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF (December 2023). Revisions to the boundary were identified by the Retail and Leisure Study Update 2022 to bring them in line with definitions in national policy. These boundaries will be kept under review as the town centre expands outwards and the character of areas change in line with the Town Centre West proposals.

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<sup>117</sup> See <https://tfgm.com/our-five-year-transport-delivery-plan>

(398) The scale of future comparison retail growth will be less than previously expected reflecting the impact of the recession, growth of internet shopping and changes in spending patterns. The future focus will need to be on diversifying the town centre's offer and providing new activities and uses which are attractive to a wider audience.

(399) Paragraph 90 of the NPPF (December 2023) requires the specific main town centre uses to be set out. The breadth of uses listed in this policy reflects the need to ensure the town centre has a more varied offer and can serve residents as well as visitors.

(400) The Primary Shopping Area is also underpinned by evidence in the Retail and Leisure Study Update 2022. It covers the locations in which the town centre's core retail offer is concentrated, around Merseyway, Princes Street, St. Petersgate, Warren Street and the Market Place.

## Supporting our businesses and centres

- (401) The borough is a prime location for new and existing business, benefiting from being well-located, well-connected and from having a well-educated and skilled workforce. Investment in regeneration, business and infrastructure transformation has led to a substantial increase in development activity, a renewed confidence and buoyant employment growth that has exceeded the national average in recent years.
- (402) We already have many fantastic businesses operating and growing here, with the borough being home to the specialisms of creative manufacturing, high tech manufacturing, wholesale, warehousing and logistics, amongst others. There are opportunities to deliver new jobs across Stockport, although the infrastructure needs to be in place to ensure businesses of all kinds can start, grow and prosper. The One Stockport Economic Plan highlights the need for our business and employment growth to be of high quality and for it to be in the right locations.
- (403) The green and digital sectors, along with other new sectors such as financial and professional services and life sciences are increasingly showing their presence in the borough and will require accessible and high-quality commercial premises, and so it is crucial that the conditions are right to allow for diversity and enable the local economy sufficient room to grow. This growth must also be fair and inclusive, helping to tackle our inequalities by giving all our communities a choice of job opportunities suitable for a range of skill levels.
- (404) Many local businesses flourish and provide services to local neighbourhoods from key localities in the borough's network of district and local centres, and it will be increasingly important to ensure these vital focal points of the community continue to offer a range of uses and facilities and are able to adapt as working and leisure patterns change.
- (405) The policies in this section of the plan will allow the council to manage development so that, in particular, it supports or contributes to achieving Objectives 2, 7 and 8.

### BUS 1: Economy and employment principles

1. The council recognise the important contribution that existing and new employment land and premises make to the local economy and will support economic growth within the borough by:
  - a. maintaining a strong and diverse supply of employment sites;
  - b. safeguarding identified Employment Areas from non-employment uses, whilst recognising that a mix of uses including locating employment uses alongside supporting residential uses in accessible locations may be appropriate subject to maintaining the integrity of the Employment Area;
  - c. supporting the intensification of employment uses on existing employment sites, including additional storeys where appropriate, which achieve an overall

- improved configuration of uses and do not impact on the operational capability of the employment site or adversely impact on neighbouring uses;
- d. enabling the continued employment use and improvement of other employment sites;
- e. encouraging the modernisation and enhancement of existing premises seeking to adapt in line with changing needs and requirements;
- f. supporting new employment provision including the growth and development of new employment sectors that attract skilled and well-paid employment to the borough;
- g. supporting measures to improve local skills and provide employment opportunities;
- h. promoting the re-use of existing buildings including our mills which have potential for regeneration and adaptation for primarily employment uses, and supporting residential and mixed uses; and
- i. considering proposals favourably that factor in environmental and social governance to their design including use of sustainable construction methods, ancillary facilities that improve health and wellness, and providing access to apprenticeships close to deprived areas.

***Explanation***

(406) Stockport aims to have a thriving and productive economy, making the most of its assets, town centres and strategic employment locations in line with the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy. Paragraph 86 of the NPPF (December 2023) requires a clear economic vision and strategy to be set that proactively encourages sustainable economic growth. Through supporting, increasing and enhancing economic growth the council will seek to reduce inequalities, promote diversity and improve prosperity, removing barriers to employment participation and improving access to employment opportunities.

(407) Since 2015, Stockport’s employment base has grown by 13% which is faster than the national and Greater Manchester averages. As such, the provision of more high-quality employment opportunities locally can help to retain wealth within the borough and enhance the vibrancy and vitality of our centres and their communities. However, the local economy lags behind Greater Manchester and the UK in terms of economic output, and the borough is also home to deep-rooted inequalities being the 8<sup>th</sup> most polarised borough in the country. It is therefore essential that future growth is shared equally and benefits all.

(408) The One Stockport Economic Plan forecasts that existing specialisms such as manufacturing are set to decline whilst Life Sciences, the Knowledge Economy, Creative and Low Carbon Economy are showing current growth and are the most important future growth sectors for the borough. In particular, the growth of the latter is pivotal in meeting the council’s Stockport Climate Action Now commitments. The restructuring and reorientation of the local economy is vital over the plan period. It is judged that the attraction of these

businesses to locate and cluster within Stockport can help to grow the local economy and provide more high-quality employment opportunities for the borough's residents. At the same time, the importance of the foundational economy, including sectors such as utilities, logistics and manufacturing, is key to Stockport, particularly for employment opportunities and business growth. The Employment Land Review finds that industrial and light industrial vacancy is declining and together with the limited supply and strong demand this indicates a buoyant economy generally. In particular, land supply for logistics across the UK is constrained and demand continues to be strong. The need for high-quality modern land and floorspace for logistics is therefore crucial.

(409) The borough is home to a number of mill buildings, and these have been generally found to fall within the poorer or moderately performing sites assessed. High levels of vacancy, unsuitable locations, a poor state of repair and other viability constraints such as a building's listing has stymied investment and so this type of accommodation is becoming less suitable for employment use, with some increasingly considered for residential conversion. The combination of residential and employment uses in mills has been proven to be successful and there are more opportunities for mixed use developments around the borough.

(410) The provision of additional storeys offers an opportunity to maximise floorspace where site size and land supply is constrained. This may be an effective solution to increase office floorspace although this will not be possible in all employment locations and may be dependent on the layout of buildings and access requirements.

(411) The Employment Land Review notes that the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) agenda is being embraced by the logistics sector in particular, and is focused around carbon reduction, the impact on the environment and wellness, with performance against these criteria having consequences for profitability and investment. Amongst other considerations, the Council will seek to ensure that commitments in the Climate Action Now Plan and the Economic Plan are being met.

## BUS 2: Key employment locations

1. New business premises and office developments will be permitted in or on the edge of our centres in accordance with the sequential test under policy CEN 4. The town centre will provide the primary location for new major Class E office development, in particular within the Exchange Quarter Town Centre Policy Area.
2. There will be a strong emphasis on protecting and enhancing the economic function of the Employment Areas as shown on the Policies Map, providing a wide choice of premises and ensuring that a broad range of businesses can locate in the borough.
3. Warehousing uses or uses which generate high levels of movement should be located in close proximity to the Primary Route Network and minimise impacts on residential areas.

## ***Explanation***

- (412) A key priority of the One Stockport Economic Plan is to ensure that high quality sites and premises for business and employment growth are in the right locations. The majority of Stockport's future growth is forecast to be within high value, knowledge intensive and office-based employment and with only 12% of current office space being Grade A or B this could impact Stockport's competitiveness as we emerge from the pandemic. The drive is to improve the quality of the borough's commercial offer, and the emergence of Stockport Exchange as the borough's high quality office destination is key and includes two of the borough's key employers in BASF plc and Music Magpie.
- (413) The policy is intended to support the growth of existing businesses as well as new sectors. The Economic Plan notes that 79% of the businesses based in the borough employ less than four people, and so the council will seek to ensure the conditions are in place to allow our smaller enterprises to adapt and flourish on their existing sites without being forced to move outside of the borough.
- (414) Located alongside an area of high deprivation, the Town Centre West MDC is recognised within the One Stockport Economic Plan as being crucial in delivering significant growth and regeneration investment where it is most needed, ensuring that local people are the primary beneficiaries of growth.
- (415) At its heart, the Exchange Quarter, one of the Town Centre Policy Areas in policy STC 2, will provide the necessary quality of commercial offer in a highly accessible location.
- (416) Following the completion of around 1,160 square metres of commercial office space at the Mailbox in 2020, the 8-phase Stockport Exchange is a crucial segment of the regeneration programme for the town, representing £145 million of public and private sector investment into the local economy and delivering approximately 4,475 FTE jobs across a range of skill levels. Offering ease of access to town centre facilities and a station on the west coast mainline, the site is unrivalled as a business location in Greater Manchester, providing large and flexible Grade A floorspace to attract a range of growth sectors in a South Manchester market that lacks these opportunities. In addition, it is expected that the competitive price point offered by the location should satisfy demand for office-based employers seeking an alternative to Manchester city centre.
- (417) Stockport's existing employment areas have a vital role to play in the borough's future economic success. The identified locations on the Policies Map are intended to secure the revival, modernisation and development of a diversity of industrial, commercial, warehousing/distributions, service and support activities. It will be important to ensure that their economic function is not unnecessarily lost because of pressure for sites to be redeveloped for other uses.
- (418) Enhancing the quality of our existing land and premises is important to help improve the borough's competitiveness, with our evidence finding that only 3% of industrial space is of high quality. Without intervention, the overall stock quality is likely to continue deteriorating following recent trends and will adversely impact the ability of the borough to attract and retain high-economic value businesses. The borough has a qualitative

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

### BUS 3: Employment Areas

1. The improvement and development of sites and premises for the following uses will be encouraged within the Employment Areas, as shown on the Policies Map:
  - a. Industry and warehousing (including logistics), and other employment-generating uses in the sui-generis class.
  - b. Offices of a scale that does not detract from the role of the town centre and other designated centres as the primary focus for office activity, with reference to sequential testing in policy CEN 4 and market appraisal.
2. The release of vacant land or premises within Employment Areas to alternative uses will be permitted where:
  - a. they would not have any significant impact on the extent to which the area can continue to function as an Employment Area and its continued maintenance and potential for enhancement, with consideration given to job creation, the availability of land for employment uses and the compatibility of the proposed use with use of adjacent land for employment purposes; and
  - b. one or both of the following two criteria are met:
    - i. The site or wider employment area is specifically identified as being appropriate for alternative uses in a plan or strategy that has been subject to public consultation and formally endorsed by the council; and
    - ii. The site and premises have been subject to a detailed market appraisal that clearly demonstrates that there is no current or likely future demand for employment.
3. Financial contributions will be sought from development that results in a net loss of employment floorspace. Contributions will be invested in:
  - a. improving employment space elsewhere in the borough; and/or
  - b. training and other initiatives that seek to promote employment and adult education in the borough.
4. The council will have regard to the requirement for flexibility where employment generating uses are proposed.



## ***Explanation***

- (419) Paragraph 86 of the NPPF (December 2023) notes that strategic sites should be identified for local and inward investment to meet anticipated needs over the plan period.
- (420) During the period covered by this Local Plan, it is anticipated that some existing sites and areas that are in existing employment use and those allocated as being suitable for employment development may be unable to retain and attract business uses due to constraints relating to their location and the quality of accommodation. The release of such sites for other uses may be considered appropriate, which could create an additional source of housing land.
- (421) National planning policy in the NPPF (December 2023) at Paragraph 86 also notes the need to be flexible to accommodate needs not anticipated. The Employment Land Review recommends that non-traditional employment uses that generate employment may make an important contribution to the local economy and therefore their merits should be taken into account to see if the benefits are capable of outweighing any harm to the Employment Area. Alternative uses that may be acceptable on their merits include complementary commercial and leisure uses that provide a service to local firms or people working in the area, such as indoor sports facilities, food and drink outlets of a modest scale, hotels and day nurseries.
- (422) It is important that the potential release of employment sites for alternative uses is carefully controlled to ensure that sites and areas which are identified in this Local Plan as key to delivering the economic growth of Stockport are not compromised. The council will consider proposals for loss of employment uses against the aims of Strategic Policy 1 to ensure that there would be no detrimental effects on our ability to meet development needs and deliver our climate action commitments.
- (423) Any market appraisal should take a long-term view of the economic prospects of the site/premises and include:
- an explanation as to why it is not possible to retain or replace any existing occupiers;
  - consideration of the potential to reuse, refurbish and redevelop the site to accommodate the full range of uses that would be appropriate within an existing Employment Area. A flexible approach should be adopted including both freehold and leasehold options;
  - an analysis of recorded and potential interest in the site/premises for a use appropriate within an existing Employment Area over a period of at least 12 months. This analysis should be informed by the findings of a comprehensive marketing exercise of the site and premises for sale and for rent at an appropriate price agreed in advance with the council and have regard to enquiries and deals relating to similar sites/premises in the local area; and
  - detailed consideration of the context of the economic health and future role of the wider Employment Area of which the site/premises forms a part and other Employment Areas in the local area.

## BUS 4: Non-designated employment areas

1. The council will permit development for employment use outside Employment Areas where proposals can demonstrate that they:
  - a. would be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport;
  - b. can provide appropriate vehicular access and parking provision in accordance with policies INF 14 and 15;
  - c. would not be detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring land uses;
  - d. would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the immediate surrounding area, and
  - e. would not conflict with other policies.
2. Proposals which would result in the loss of existing employment uses will only be considered acceptable where it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the site to be retained for employment purposes.

### ***Explanation***

- (424) Employment sites and units outside the designated employment areas are an important source of commercial development. This includes mills, industrial, warehousing and office uses. Such units can often provide space for small and medium sized enterprises and may be located in areas away from other employment uses but close to or well connected to residential areas. However other, higher-value uses can exert pressure on the land and lead to the loss of the employment use.
- (425) The policy seeks to protect sites which are still viable for employment uses in order to maintain the stock of employment land and sites across the borough. Applications that propose the loss of employment uses will be required to submit the same market appraisal statement and supporting information as set out in policy BUS 3.

## BUS 5: Affordable and flexible workspace

1. The council will promote economic diversity and support existing and new business development by seeking the following:
  - a. New employment provision should include a range of unit sizes and types such as affordable and flexible workspaces and working hubs that allow for more agile patterns of working. Uses should be appropriate for the location and in accordance with policy BUS 2;

- b. Managed workspaces should have a range of unit sizes that are flexible and suitable for subdivision and configuration for new uses and activities. This will allow for occupation by small or independent commercial enterprises, including alongside each other or in proximity to other related businesses where necessary; and
- c. Mixed use development in the Town and District Centres should consider the provision of flexible space within the scheme that can be used by individual workers, start-ups and as accelerator space.

### ***Explanation***

(426) Stockport's small to medium enterprises (SMEs) are very important to the borough's economy. 79% of the 11,900 businesses based in the borough employed less than four people in 2020. However, the evidence base underpinning the One Stockport Economic Plan finds that business survival rates and supporting the entrepreneurial start-up culture are areas for improvement.

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

## **BUS 6: Local employment and training**

1. The council will seek to increase and ensure access to a range of employment skills and opportunities across the borough.
2. For developments that exceed the £1 million design and build cost threshold, the council will seek to enter into an Employment and Skills Agreement via a planning obligation with the developer or applicant. This will include an Employment Skills Plan for local training and recruitment and measures to secure positive outcomes for both end user jobs and construction phase opportunities.

### ***Explanation***

(428) Key strategic priorities of the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy include giving all young people and adults a clear line of sight to opportunities for education, skills development and work in the city-region, and also ensuring all residents have the functional skills and attributes employers need including English, maths, digital and creative skills. . Furthermore, the One Stockport Economic Plan sets out to improve access to training and skills provision to enable residents to take advantage of new opportunities at all life stages under the 'Fair and Inclusive' theme.

- (429) It is acknowledged that the borough suffers from areas of relatively high unemployment and economic disadvantage. However those areas are either adjacent to existing Employment Areas or they are well served by public transport which would link them to such areas, including the town centre. Consequently, it is not the location of employment uses which is the main issue, and rather it is important that worklessness is addressed, ensuring that residents are sufficiently well skilled and trained and other barriers to employment are lifted in order to be able to take advantage of the jobs that exist and will be created.
- (430) Stockport's Social Value Charter 2023 includes a commitment to delivering a social value vision where the Council, businesses, third sector partners and voluntary groups work together for the benefit of the citizens, businesses and communities of the borough. To this end, the council will encourage partnership working between employers and local training providers to help develop the skills of the borough's work force and sections of the community that are disadvantaged in the labour market.
- (431) The Economic Plan prioritises a fair and inclusive economy, of which Employment and Skills Agreements are an important contributor to ensure economic prosperity is shared. The council will seek to enter into Employment and Skills Agreements via the use of a planning condition, and the Economy, Work and Skills Service will ensure their inclusion can be supported.
- (432) The national benchmarks and cost ratios from the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) will be used to agree outcomes relating to work placements, new employee entrants to the construction sector, curriculum projects with local schools and colleges and workforce training opportunities including apprenticeships. The design and build cost threshold of £1 million is used by CITB in their National Skills Academy for Construction benchmarks and is a widely recognised threshold used by the construction industry.
- (433) End user jobs and skills outcomes will be included for employment generating uses. These will be negotiated with either developers or end users depending on whether the end users are known at the time of the application. Applicants will be encouraged to consider and set out how Employment and Skills Agreements will engage with local skills providers to deliver on the outcomes and how opportunities will be targeted at the most economically disadvantaged groups including young people that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), care leavers, those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), veterans and people that are long-term unemployed. Links with schools and skills providers will be key priorities within the agreements.

## CEN 1: Development principles for vibrant centres

1. To support the aim of fostering vibrant centres that are the focal points of their communities, the council will seek to:
  - a. pursue a positive strategy for each centre, as set out in Strategic policy 2;

- b. follow a 'town centres first approach' under policy CEN 4 by applying a sequential test to ensure sustainable patterns of development are achieved and requiring an impact assessment where proposals for retail or leisure outside of these locations could threaten their vitality and viability;
- c. encourage walking and cycling as the preferred modes of travel in our centres, making sure core services and facilities are within easy reach of homes and workspaces;
- d. encourage mobility hubs with electric charging points and car sharing initiatives to support sustainable travel beyond centres;
- e. ensure all centres are safe, welcoming and inclusive places to visit, appealing to a wide range of users and age groups; and
- f. plan for the diversification of centres, welcoming a wider range of uses that increase dwell time, attract footfall and enable prosperity for people and for businesses; and
- g. give support in principle to the enhancement of arts and cultural facilities and the retention of and/or provision of new markets.

2. The council will ensure that proposals for development in centres:

- a. make provision for community infrastructure where this development would place demand on existing services, in line with relevant policies in the 'Providing for our communities' and 'Our infrastructure' chapters;
- b. accord with the quality design principles and considerations of policies ENV 14 and ENV 15;
- c. are designed to allow flexibility of units to adapt to potential changes in floorspace demands of retail and other uses;
- d. optimise residential density within the centre boundary;
- e. do not have an adverse impact on the amenity of nearby occupiers or uses, including existing and future residents in accordance with policy ENV 17;
- f. do not result in adverse impacts on traffic flow or road safety in accordance with policies INF 13 and INF 14;
- g. supports sustainable travel and active travel modes in accordance with policies INF 8, INF 9, and INF 10 in particular; and
- h. maintains appropriate parking provision in accordance with policy INF 15.

3. Development proposals and changes of use that constitute development will be carefully controlled to ensure they support, rather than detract from, successful

functioning of the centres and their ability to meet local needs. All such proposals will be required to:

- a. make a positive contribution to the vitality, viability and diversity of the centre;
- b. maintain a strong role for the centre in providing a varied range of convenience goods and meeting other day-to-day needs; and
- c. be of a scale and type of use appropriate to the size and function of the centre, or part of the centre concerned, as defined in policies CEN 2 and CEN 4.

4. The positive use of underused and vacant space on upper floors within centres for alternative uses including residential, employment or community provision will be strongly encouraged. Proposals will need to demonstrate that any potential for residential use has been fully explored. Community uses should be accessible for the mobility-impaired.

5. The use of vacant sites or buildings for occupation by meanwhile uses that will benefit a town centre's viability and vitality and not lead to a proliferation of such uses will be supported.

6. Where proposals result in the loss of Commercial, Business and Service uses (Class E) at the ground floor level of Primary Shopping Areas, the council will take the following into consideration:

- a. Significance of reduction of Class E facilities;
- b. The need to retain and avoid loss of active frontage at ground floor level;
- c. Whether alternative Class E facilities are accessible by walking, cycling or public transport to meet the needs of the area;
- d. Capability of the proposal in attracting visitors to the town centre;
- e. Contribution of the proposal to the council's regeneration aims; and
- f. Evidence that there is no viable demand for continued existing Class E use and that the property has been vacant for over 12 months and has been continuously marketed for 12 months, with the exception of meanwhile uses.

### ***Explanation***

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

(435) The pandemic has shown that Stockport's centres need to be able to respond rapidly to changes in trends for leisure, retail and other commercial uses to ensure they can survive and compete. The Retail and Leisure Study Update 2022 suggests that centres should

capitalise on their individuality and be able to diversify, becoming places to work, stay and live, not just to shop and eat or drink. It is important that our centres are complementary and do not compete with each other and so the emphasis will be on maximising what is unique about each place and its offer.

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

(437) The Economic Plan shows we have an ageing population in the suburban district centres, and the age group of 60 years or over are set to increase with implications for the function and role of centres as places to live, enjoy and provide supporting services.

(438) Art and cultural activities play an important role in providing a distinct identity to settlements and places alongside being important contributors to the local economy. Evidence in the Retail and Leisure Study 2019 finds there to be no requirement for additional arts and cultural facilities as demand is likely to be limited given that only 8% of trips to these facilities are retained in the borough and the borough's close proximity and easy access to Manchester city centre. As such, the recommendation is to keep visitor numbers at high levels by enhancing our existing provision.

(439) Many of the borough's centres include shopping precincts in private ownership and the council will seek to work positively with these stakeholders to achieve the principles set out in this policy, both in terms of the daily operation and the long-term management of these important community assets.

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

## CEN 2: Network and hierarchy of designated centres

1. The council will promote the vitality and viability of the borough's centres by managing, maintaining and enhancing a strong network of centres as part of the following hierarchy:

### **Town Centre**

Stockport

### **District Centres**

Bramhall, Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Edgeley, Hazel Grove, Marple, Reddish (Houldsworth Square), Romiley.

### **Large Local Centres**

Davenport, Gatley, Great Moor, Heald Green, Heaton Moor (Moor Top), Heaton Chapel, Heaton Moor (Shaw Road/Heaton Moor Road), Marple Bridge, Reddish (North).

### **Other Local Centres**

Adswold, Berrycroft Lane (Higher Bredbury), Brinnington, Cheadle Heath, Councillor Lane (Cheadle), Fir Road (Bramhall), Fiveways Parade (Macclesfield Road), Hall Street (Offerton), Heaton Mersey, High Lane, North Park Road (Bramhall), Offerton, Offerton Green, Smithy Green (Cheadle Hulme), Turves Road (Cheadle Hulme), Woodley.

2. Stockport is the principal town centre in the borough where the majority of new retail and main town centre use development is to be directed. The Primary Shopping Area will be the priority location for retailing. The Great Portwood Street area is the preferred location for retail warehousing in the town centre and will be considered as an 'edge of centre' location for retail as directed in national policy.
3. All retail and town centre proposals are to be in line with the role, function and scale that is appropriate to the size of the centre.
4. Primary shopping areas are those parts of a defined centre where retail development is concentrated and where commercial, business and service uses may also be present. It is important that the shopping, leisure, business and service function of these areas is maintained to support the overall vitality and viability of that centre.
5. The Main Town Centre Use Area boundary for Stockport town centre, the District Centre boundaries and the Primary Shopping Areas within each centre are shown on the Policies Map.

### ***Explanation***

- (441) Stockport's network of town and local centres play an important role in meeting the varied needs of people of all ages, through the provision of a range of shops, services, community, leisure and employment opportunities, and public transport options. The centres are an important contributor to local identity, acting as a focal point for surrounding communities.
- (442) Maintaining the vitality and viability of these centres will be an ongoing challenge as shopping patterns and service delivery models change, especially with the growth of online retailing. A thorough approach to the management of these centres will be required in order to ensure their long-term success, with a clear focus on sustaining and creating vibrant destinations where activity can continue into the evening, with the retention of a robust retail presence complemented by a varied mix of uses including a strong leisure and community offer.
- (443) National Planning Practice Guidance notes that there is uncertainty in forecasting long term retail trends and therefore the role, function and hierarchy of centres should be focused on a limited period and regularly reviewed.
- (444) Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF (December 2023) defines 'edge of centre' for retail purposes as being up to 300 metres from the Primary Shopping Area, subject to local circumstances such as barriers or topography. The Great Portwood Street Area is outside the Primary Shopping Area for the town centre and whilst the site is not wholly inside the 'edge of centre' threshold it is physically separated from the Primary Shopping Area by a major



thoroughfare and is recognised as a secondary location for retail in policy CEN 4. In particular, the Peel Centre contributes to the wider offer of the town centre and its position generates linked trips between this and the Primary Shopping Area which are important for vitality and viability. As such, applications for out-of-centre proposals under policy CEN 4 will take account of any significant adverse impacts on these linked trips.

### CEN 3: District Centres

1. All of the district centres have some potential for residential growth, either within or on the edge of the centre. Housing will be encouraged above active ground floor uses. The introduction of residential uses at ground floor level will be required to complement and not displace main town centre uses.
2. Opportunities to bring forward existing previously developed land within the district centres more effectively and positively in accessible locations will be prioritised, such as the consolidation of main town centre uses into community hubs and the redevelopment of surface car parks for mixed use residential and decked parking.
3. New health and fitness facilities will be supported where this addresses the lack of provision in accessible locations by non-car modes, particularly in Bramhall, Cheadle Hulme and Romiley.
4. The Council will manage the improvement each district centre with an emphasis on taking advantage of its unique character and requiring the delivery of a diverse mix of retail and service uses that support its vitality and viability. Development should accord with the roles and priorities for each centre which are as follows:

**Bramhall** will continue to accommodate an independent retail and service offer with a focus on evening food and drink uses and good quality public realm at its centre to support activity and events. In recognition of the constrained nature of the centre, opportunities will be sought to increase short stay on-street car parking and provide centrally located cycle parking provision.

**Cheadle** will continue to be an attractive destination, serving as a financial and business services hub, a place for evening food and drink, and a strong and varied convenience and comparison goods offer together with a good range of independents. Connectivity and placemaking will be the priorities, with the provision of a new rail station, and opportunities sought to improve movement and safety for pedestrians and cyclists between the high street and station, and the environmental quality of the high street.

**Cheadle Hulme** will continue to be a highly accessible centre with a rail station on the West Coast Main Line, and with an important role as a convenience shopping destination with large anchor foodstores and as an evening food and drink destination with supporting amateur theatre facilities. Opportunities will be sought to make more efficient use of land by concentrating community

facilities and key services within walking distance of the station, provide public realm improvements within the precinct and on Station Road and enhance the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

**Edgeley** will be further enhanced as an accessible centre with new connections including tram-train services and direct pedestrian and cycling routes to the town centre and transport interchanges. Whilst still playing a complementary role to the town centre, planned investment in the adjacent Town Centre West area will enable it to serve a new catchment and assist in diversifying its retail, leisure and service offer. Opportunities will be sought to unite the centre's active frontages on Castle Street and enhance public realm and environmental quality.

**Hazel Grove** will continue to have a strong and competitive convenience and comparison goods offer along with a variety of other retail, service and leisure uses with a focus on evening food and drink. Proposals that aim to reduce the severance caused by the A6 and encourage linked trips will be welcomed such as improving the environmental quality of existing green and public spaces, increasing tree planting and improving movement and safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

**Marple** will continue to provide a major service hub for the east of the borough in an attractive setting with a strong convenience goods offer, good independent retail offer and varied leisure and evening offer including an independent cinema and theatre. Proposals that enhance environmental quality, public realm and ease of movement for pedestrians and cyclists will be encouraged.

**Reddish (Houldsworth Square)** will continue to encompass a strong convenience, leisure and retail services offer and accessibility at Reddish South station will be substantially improved with additional Metrolink and tram-train services. Proposals that seek to address the under-provision of community facilities will be welcomed. Opportunities will be sought where possible to revitalise Houldsworth Square as the multifunctional focus supporting outdoor events, provide a mix of uses including flexible workspace and to improve movement and environmental quality for pedestrians and cyclists at key junctions.

**Romiley** will continue to be an accessible and attractive centre, providing a strong independent and retail services offer for surrounding communities alongside a good mix of retail and leisure uses and an arts and cultural venue. Proposals that expand the evening food and drink offer and improve the experience for pedestrians and cyclists on the B6104 and enable linked trips will be encouraged.

## **Explanation**

- (445) District centres tend to serve wide catchments, sometimes across local authority areas, and usually comprise groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket and a range of non-retail services such as banks and restaurants, together with local public facilities such as a library.
- (446) The Planning Practice Guidance states that there should be a vision for the future of each centre and that this can detail the most appropriate mix of uses to enhance overall vitality and viability. As such, the policy sets out the aspirational roles and priorities going forward and is not a reflection of the current status of the centres.
- (447) The Retail and Leisure Study Update 2022 recommends that centres should provide an offer that distinguishes them from other centres and out of centre retail and leisure destinations. The focus is therefore on making the most of a centre's individual strengths as a hub for their communities and to attract additional land uses beyond retail and leisure to help extend the 'dwell' time for those who visit. The study included recommendations for each centre and both this and the Institute of Place Management reports into Vital and Viable District Centres have informed the priorities set in the policy. The council have formed a partnership with IPM to draw on their expertise and extensive research, to review the performance of the district centres against key indicators and to produce action plans which will guide their future growth and change.

## **CEN 4: Development involving main town centre uses**

### **1. Sequential approach**

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

- a. Within the town centre and District Centres ('in centre'); then
- b. In locations on the edge of the town centre and District Centres, with a preference for accessible sites which are well connected to the centre ('edge of centre'); and then
- c. Out-of-centre locations, with a preference for accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre and/or District Centres.

2. The following table defines 'in centre' and 'edge of centre' for the town centre and District Centres listed in policy CEN 2. To support the successful functioning of some of these centres, a more detailed sequential approach is in operation for commercial, business and service (Class E) uses where the highest priority is stated first. In respect of offices, regard will be had to policy BUS 2 and policy STC 2.

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

3. The 'edge of centre' distance thresholds of 300 metres are shown on the Policies Map.

4. **Impact assessment**

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

- a. located outside the Primary Shopping Area of Stockport Town Centre, and:
    - i. where there is a floorspace in excess of 1,000 square metres gross; and
    - ii. with a search area of the borough of Stockport.
  - b. located outside the Primary Shopping Area of a District Centre, and:
    - i. where there is a floorspace in excess of 500 square metres gross; and
    - ii. where the catchment area of the proposal, agreed by the council, encompasses one or more district centres.
  - c. located outside either a Large Local Centre or Other Local Centre, and:
    - i. where there is a floorspace in excess of 300 square metres gross; and
    - ii. with a search area of within 800 metres of the Local Centre.
5. An impact assessment will be necessary for proposals that include leisure uses that are:
- a. located outside the Main Town Centre Use Area of Stockport Town Centre, and:
    - i. where there is a floorspace in excess of 1,000 square metres gross; and
    - ii. with a search area of the borough of Stockport.
  - b. located outside the centre boundary of a District Centre, and:
    - i. where there is a floorspace in excess of 500 square metres gross; and
    - ii. where the catchment area of the proposal, agreed by the council, encompasses one or more district centres.
  - c. located outside either a Large Local Centre or Other Local Centre, and:
    - i. where there is a floorspace in excess of 300 square metres gross; and
    - ii. with a search area of within 800 metres of the Local Centre.
6. When considering Impact Assessments, the council will have regard to whether development would have any likely adverse effects on the positive strategies for the centres in Strategic Policy 2. In addition, proposals that have a significant adverse impact on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in the town centre are unlikely to be supported.
7. These thresholds apply to new floorspace, changes of use that constitute development and variations of conditions to remove or amend restrictions on the operation of these uses.

## ***Explanation***

- (448) Locating retail, service and other community and leisure facilities within the designated centres is considered to be the most sustainable way of meeting the needs of our borough's residents. It helps to maximise the accessibility of facilities for more people and promotes linked trips, which in turn reduces the need to travel and can increase footfall and hence improve trading conditions within centres. Scattering facilities across a wider area would be likely to adversely affect the vitality and viability of the centres, leading to their gradual decline and reducing their ability to attract new retail floorspace and serve the needs of residents.
- (449) It is therefore essential that as much of the new retail floorspace and other main town centre uses as possible are located within our centres, in accordance with the sequential approach set out in the NPPF (December 2023) at Paragraph 91. The policy sets out local floorspace thresholds in line with evidence in the Retail and Leisure Study 2019. In accordance with national policy, any proposal that fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impacts evidenced by an impact assessment should be refused.
- (450) Retail together with commercial, business and service uses will be focused within the primary shopping areas of the centres so as to maximise their vibrancy. Any significant out-of-centre retail main town centre use floorspace in the borough beyond current commitments, other than where specifically referred to elsewhere in the Local Plan, is considered unnecessary and would be likely to reduce the success of some of our centres.
- (451) The Retail and Leisure Study Update 2022 reveals a declining trend in comparison goods expenditure for Stockport town centre and many of our district centres. This would appear to represent a threat to the centres in terms of loss of main town centre uses, and the effects of the pandemic with a clear shift towards online shopping is set to prolong this trend.
- (452) The distance thresholds used in the table are taken from the definitions for 'edge of centre' given in Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF (December 2023). The 300 metre buffers are shown on the Policies Map but decisions on whether a site falls within 'edge of centre' or outside of a centre will also take account of local circumstances including barriers to movement such as topography and major transport routes.

### **CEN 5: Hot food takeaways**

1. Proposals for Hot Food Takeaways (HFTs) will be refused in any of the following situations:
  - a. **Out of centre locations in close proximity to children and young people:** within 400 metres radius of entry points to primary and secondary schools and not within the boundary of a centre;

- b. **Locations with high levels of obesity:** where more than 10% of year 6 pupils in the ward are classified as obese;
- c. **Over proliferation:** where the number of approved HFTs within the ward equals or exceeds the UK national average per 1,000 population;
- d. **Clustering:** where it would result in the over-concentration of HFTs to the detriment of the character and function and vitality and viability of an area. There should be no more than two consecutive HFTs in any one length of frontage. Where HFTs already exist in any one length of frontage, a gap of at least two non HFT uses shall be required before a further HFT use will be permitted in the same length of frontage;
- e. **Residential amenity:** where they share a party wall with a residential property; and
- f. **Transport:** where there would be an adverse impact on highway safety.

2. Outside of those situations, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- a. **Hours of opening:** regard will be had to the likely impacts on residential amenity, impact on the evening economy, and the character and function of the immediate area. Within 400 metres of a primary or secondary school, HFT opening hours will be set that limit the opportunity for school pupils to access takeaway food as part of the school day.
- b. **Odour and noise:** provision of appropriate extraction systems to effectively disperse odours. These systems must:
  - i. Have minimal impact on visual amenity;
  - ii. Be acoustically attenuated; and
  - iii. Not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, for example by virtue of vibration or odour.
- c. **Disposal of commercial waste:** adequate on site waste storage and disposal of waste products.

**Explanation**

(453) National Planning Practice Guidance supports access to healthier food choices, including the need to limit the proliferation of particular uses where evidence demonstrates this is appropriate, and includes examples such as in areas with proximity to locations where children and young people congregate. Given that hot food takeaways require planning permission under the Sui Generis use class, one of the approaches in which planning can have the greatest impact on health, and in particular obesity levels, is the control of hot food takeaways.

- (454) Obesity is primarily caused by excessive intake of foods that are high in fats and sugars. Obesity in children is linked to obesity in adults. In Stockport, the prevalence of overweight or obesity in adults aged over 18 is 62.5% (Sport England Active Lives Survey 2022/23). People who are overweight or obese have a higher risk of getting type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. Excess weight can also affect self-esteem and mental health. The cost to the economy is estimated at £20 billion a year once factors such as lost productivity and sick days are taken into account.
- (455) Addressing childhood obesity is an important priority for the borough. Data for Stockport under the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) since the programme began in 2006/07 shows an overall increase in excess weight for both Reception and Year 6 children, with the 2021/22 school year being the second highest figure for Year 6 in a standard collection year outside the Covid-19 pandemic. In the 2022/23 school year the data shows excess weight in 20.9% of children in Reception, rising to 34.2% of children in Year 6.
- (456) While it is acknowledged that takeaways provide a convenience service to local communities, the council needs to balance this with concerns about levels of childhood obesity and increasing levels of health inequality as well as the need to preserve the retail-based role of town centres. Restricting hot food takeaways and their hours of operation, within walking distance of schools, is a positive measure to manage the health-related implications related to rising levels of childhood obesity and help promote healthier communities.
- (457) All hot food takeaways need to comply with environmental health and trading standards legislation. Food businesses are required by law to register with their local environmental health department 28 days before trading.

## CEN 6: Managing the impacts of main town centre uses

1. In addressing levels of health and socio-economic inequalities within the borough as well as to encourage diversity and preserve the retail core of Stockport's centres, the council will resist the proliferation and over-concentration of adult gaming centres, amusement arcades, betting shops, pawnbrokers, pay day loan shops and shisha bars and will only permit proposals for such Sui Generis uses that:
  - a. are separated from any existing Sui Generis unit in this group by at least two units which are not the above types of use listed in this policy;
  - b. are accompanied by Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) when requested by the council;
  - c. provide active frontages and have a positive visual impact on the streetscene; and
  - d. do not have a significant impact on local community and residential amenity in terms of noise, vibrations, odours, traffic disturbance and litter.



## ***Explanation***

- (458) Main town centre uses are defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF (December 2023).
- (459) Whilst this Local Plan encourages, directs and manages access to other commercial, business and service uses there is a need to manage the clustering of specific uses, particularly those listed, to ensure the clusters do not become destinations in their own right, for young people in particular, in areas of high footfall. It is acknowledged that clustered related uses can help town centres develop specialist or niche roles that can attract footfall and spend; however, over-concentration of uses such as adult gaming centres, amusement arcades, betting shops, hot food takeaways, pawnbrokers, payday loan shops, and shisha bars can have a detrimental impact on physical and mental wellbeing as well as on the vitality and viability of town centres.
- (460) The impact of such uses in terms of associations with unacceptable levels of noise, vibrations, odours, traffic disturbance, litter and anti-social behaviour is reflected in their classification as 'sui generis' in the planning Use Classes Order. The proliferation of such 'sui generis' uses can quickly change the character of a centre, and the Sui Generis use class means that any new use or change of use to such remain subject to planning permission, giving local authorities greater control.
- (461) As part of the Authorities Monitoring Report the council will monitor the numbers of listed uses within each town centre. In considering proposals for such uses the council will require an assessment of development impacts which should be proportionate to the proposal. The council may require the applicant to submit a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for those uses, particularly in geographical areas which exhibit poor economic and/or health indicators.

### CEN 7: Evening economy

1. The council will support proposals for evening economy uses that are safe, welcoming and inclusive for a range of users including families in the designated centres, where they accord with the following:
  - a. The scale and type of use reflects the role and function of the centre;
  - b. There is no significant negative impact on the amenity of adjoining or adjacent residential and non-residential uses having regard to the "Agent of Change" principle, such as noise disturbance, cooking smells, anti-social behaviour, or highway safety; and
  - c. There is no significant negative impact resulting from cumulative development in relation to the number, capacity and location of other evening economy uses in the area.
2. Development will be supported that preserves or enhances existing evening economy activities considered to be pivotal to the centre's continued vitality and viability,

creates new evening economy activities, or will reinforce the role and significance of the centre in an inclusive and accessible way. Proposals that undermine this function will not be supported.

### ***Explanation***

- (462) The evening economy refers to all economic activity taking place between the hours of 6pm and 6am and includes evening uses. Evening economy uses include restaurants, bars, cinemas, theatres and arts venues. Such uses can contribute positively to the vitality and vibrancy of centres, helping to diversify the economy and encouraging footfall throughout the day. Furthermore, the informal surveillance created for passers-by helps visitors and residents feel safer in the evening.
- (463) Policy CEN 1 encourages the creation of safe and welcoming and inclusive places to visit, and such conditions are more likely to attract residents and visitors to come to the borough in the evening. Public realm improvements will change the image and perception of our centres and welcoming public spaces will encourage people to spend more time at the destination.
- (464) Evidence from both the Retail and Leisure Study Update 2022 and the Institute of Place Management reports into Vital and Viable District Centres found that some of our district centres have a poor diversity of food and drink offer and limited opening hours. The council seeks to enhance the existing strengths of centres to create a thriving night-time economy with activities and venues that are fully inclusive and accessible. This includes reaching a balance between safeguarding amenity and maximising the creative potential from a growing leisure offer that enhances the range and quality of local food and drink, heritage, culture and arts on offer.
- (465) Diversification of night-time uses can add to the vitality and viability of centres and should promote inclusive access and safety. Where appropriate, planning conditions or legal agreements will be used to manage hours of operation, noise and fumes from machinery, storage and disposal of refuse, the areas used by customers and any other issues that may need to control the impact of night-time uses in order to protect amenity.
- (466) The ‘agent of change’ principle, under Paragraph 193 of the NPPF (December 2023), places the responsibility for mitigating impacts of development on the applicant, ensuring that new development does not unduly add to the costs and administrative burdens of existing businesses.

## CEN 8: Out of centre locations for retail

1. **Existing out-of-town retail parks** at the following locations are shown on the Policies Map and have an established retail warehouse function:
  - a. Brewery Street/Water Street at Portwood;
  - b. Stockport Road/Edgeley Road at Cheadle Heath;

- c. Wilmslow Road/A34 at Cheadle Hulme;
- d. Georges Road, Stockport;
- e. Manchester Road at Lancashire Hill;
- f. Stockport Road West, Bredbury; and
- g. Stanley Green Retail Park at Stanley Green.

2. Except where justified, planning permissions on these retail parks will be subject to conditions on size of units and type of goods.
3. Uses other than retail warehouses will be acceptable subject to conformity with other relevant policies.
4. These locations are not designated retail centres, and therefore any retail or leisure development will be required to satisfy the sequential and impact tests under policy CEN 4.
5. The following types of retail provision will be supported in principle, with preference for accessible sites which are well connected to centres:

- a. Bulky goods, non-food retail development within the locations identified in this policy; and
- b. Specialist shops (including car showrooms) and trade centre developments within Employment Areas subject to policy BUS 2 and policy BUS 3.

6. **Main town centre uses in out-of-centre locations**, particularly in retail parks, should remain complementary to defined centres. The impact of such development will be mitigated by imposing appropriate conditions including:

- a. On the use of land and premises;
- b. The scale of development;
- c. The sub-division of units; and
- d. The goods that can be sold from any retail outlet.

7. **Local community shops** outside centres that serve local or convenience needs and meet the criteria of Use Class F2, will be assessed according to the following considerations:

- a. effect on residential amenity;
- b. satisfactory resolution of pedestrian and vehicular access and road safety;
- c. the effect on the vitality and viability of nearby centres;

- d. the availability of sites within defined nearby centres; and
- e. the extent to which alternative facilities exist in the local area.

8. Conditions will normally imposed on any permission for local community shops to restrict goods sold in the interest of preventing the character of retailing changing from serving local or convenience needs.

9. Planning permission will only be granted for the change of use of local community shops to other uses when:

- a. There is an alternative facility within 1 km providing essential daily goods;
- b. The applicant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the council that the current or last use is no longer economically viable by providing evidence that the property has been actively marketed; and
- c. It is not within an area that is judged to have a lack of access to an affordable, healthy and sustainable source of food.

### ***Explanation***

(467) The borough has a large range of retail parks and, owing to their target market of customers travelling by car, are located close to the M60 motorway and major routes. Retail warehouses are defined as large stores specialising in the sales of household goods such as carpets, furniture and electrical goods, DIY and other ranges of goods. Main town centre uses are defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF (December 2023).

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

(469) As such, all proposals for main town centre uses beyond defined boundaries will need to comply with the sequential test approach as set out in the NPPF (December 2023) and at Policy CEN 4.

(470) It is recognised that alternative uses, other than retail warehouses, may come forward in the listed locations, and these proposals will be judged on their own merits and in line with relevant policies elsewhere in the Local Plan.

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

would result in their loss will therefore be required to satisfy the council that similar shops are within a 1 km radius walking distance in order to ensure that sufficient local convenience provision exists following the development.

(472) Access to essential food provision is particularly important in locations outside our designated centres. The council will refer to the Priority Places for Food Index<sup>118</sup> developed by the Consumer Data Research Centre at the University of Leeds which identifies neighbourhoods at most risk of food insecurity and where interventions to help people access affordable food will be most valuable. The index includes several domains and it is possible to find out if the level of need is influenced by a lack of retail provision, poor access to online supermarket deliveries or high levels of deprivation or need.

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

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(1) <sup>118</sup> [Priority Places for Food Index Version 2 | CDRC Data](#)

## Our infrastructure

(474) Physical infrastructure, including digital, utilities, water and transport infrastructure, is vital in ensuring our communities are connected, we are climate-friendly and our economy can thrive. The policies in this chapter are critical to supporting the development proposals and aspirations set out in the rest of the plan. Further infrastructure expectations are set out in other parts of the plan – in particular relating to social infrastructure (in Providing for our communities), green infrastructure (in Our environment) and requirements that relate to specific areas or sites (in Our town centre and relevant site allocation policies).

(475) The policies in this section of the plan will allow the council to manage development so that, in particular, it supports or contributes to achieving Objectives 1, 5, 9 and 10.

### INF 1: Infrastructure provision and developer contributions

1. Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals where they clearly demonstrate that infrastructure, facilities and services can be provided to support the needs that are expected to arise from the proposed development.
2. Financial and in-kind contributions will be sought for a range of infrastructure, including but not limited to:
  - a. education;
  - b. health;
  - c. community facilities;
  - d. open space, including equipped areas, areas for all-age activity, allotments, and multifunctional green space;
  - e. public realm;
  - f. sports, leisure, and indoor and outdoor recreation facilities;
  - g. habitat management, restoration, improvements and creation, to compensate for biodiversity and ecology impacts;
  - h. flood risk mitigation measures;
  - i. air quality mitigation measures;
  - j. affordable housing;
  - k. affordable workspace, employment and training;
  - l. transport; and

m. long term maintenance provision.

3. The council may also require relevant developments to make a financial contribution to support the monitoring and reporting of planning obligations. Monitoring fees will be proportionate and reasonable to the level of monitoring and reporting required.
4. The artificial sub-division or reduction of a site will not be accepted as a way to circumvent policy requirements set out throughout this plan. Where there is evidence that a site or a development has been split, or density reduced, to bring the proposal below any relevant size/dwelling threshold, the requirements of this policy will be applied as if to the complete, un-divided site/development.
5. Development proposals that are unable to meet the policy and infrastructure requirements set out in the Local Plan, must be supported by viability evidence. This evidence must demonstrate why the departure is necessary to make the scheme viable. It must also establish the wider planning benefits of the scheme that outweigh the deficit in contributions.
6. Where appropriate, if contributions are reduced below the requirements set out in policy, a clawback mechanism will be incorporated into a legal agreement. This will seek policy compliance on those contributions over the lifetime of the project, taking account of the final development viability.

### ***Explanation***

(476) Paragraph 20 of the NPPF (December 2023) sets out that a range of different types of infrastructure should be planned for. Priorities for infrastructure provision in different parts of the borough are likely to change over the lifetime of plan, reflecting changing circumstances. Planning conditions and obligations will be used to mitigate adverse impacts of development and to ensure timely and effective investment in infrastructure, facilities and services. Where it is not possible or practical to provide infrastructure on site, or where a development is required to contribute towards strategic infrastructure, a financial or in-kind contribution will be sought towards provision. The council will work with its partners, funding bodies, infrastructure providers and developers to secure external public funding and deliver appropriate infrastructure where required, in line with national legislation and policy. The phasing and delivery of infrastructure will be agreed on a case by case basis.

(477) It is recognised that there may be site specific circumstances which mean that the cumulative impact of the contributions required through policy would compromise development viability. In these instances, planning applications will need to be supported by a viability assessment which must be well-evidenced and robust. It should set out and justify the selected methodology and assumptions. The assessment will need to have regard to relevant national planning policy guidance and other relevant endorsed guidance. There is a public interest in the outcomes of decisions that are informed by viability assessments; as such they should be prepared on the basis that they will be made publicly available. Any sensitive information should be highlighted to the council and an appropriate way to release this information will be agreed.

(478) An economic viability assessment will be undertaken before the next stage of preparation of this Local Plan to assess the baseline viability of new developments in the borough, and the likely impacts of the policies upon the deliverability of the Local Plan. This economic viability evidence will be used to refine the approach to developer contributions, and the setting of any infrastructure charges or tariffs introduced by the council.

(479) The council will prepare additional guidance on when developer contributions and community use agreements will be sought, and the mechanisms for securing these, including through the use of Section 106 agreements.

## INF 2: Digital and telecommunications infrastructure

1. The council will support proposals which enhance communication networks, and which future-proof development to accommodate ultrafast broadband infrastructure, or any other emerging equivalent or higher specification communication technology, for all future users where the requirements of point 3 of this policy are satisfied.
2. Relevant major developments must be served by Full Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) technology, and include ducting capable of accommodating more than one digital infrastructure provider to enable future upgrades.
3. Proposals for telecommunications development will:
  - a. Minimise the impact of equipment on the visual amenity, character and appearance of the surrounding area;
  - b. Have special regard to conservation areas and heritage assets including their setting, where sensitive siting and design are of increased importance;
  - c. Minimise adverse impacts on nearby trees, woodland and hedgerows, both now and in the future;
  - d. Respect views in relation to existing landmarks and distant vistas, and consider the skyline and any roofscapes visible from streets and spaces;
  - e. Limit street clutter and not have a detrimental impact on movement or safety of footpath or highway users;
  - f. Not blight sites of future strategic developments e.g. by being located on future potential site access points; and
  - g. Be accompanied by detailed information which provides the technical justification for the proposed development, including the area of search, alternative sites assessments, details of any consultation undertaken, the proposed structure and measures to minimise its visual impact.



## ***Explanation***

- (480) As set out in the Radically Digital Stockport Strategy<sup>119</sup>, the council seeks to actively promote the development of advanced communications and digital infrastructure, which provides improved telecommunications coverage and supports more inclusive access and connectivity for all across Stockport.
- (481) Paragraph 20 of the NPPF (December 2023) sets out that a range of different types of infrastructure should be planned for, including sufficient provision of telecommunications infrastructure. Digital connectivity, which includes broadband and mobile phones, is increasingly considered to be the essential fourth “utility”. Stockport’s digital infrastructure must be able to support this growth, to make sure that everyone, wherever they live and however they connect, can make full use of digital services and benefit from participation in the digital economy, and not leave anyone behind or excluded. With increased on-line services and growth of home-based workers, the provision of FTTP to homes and businesses will become increasingly important to support more flexible working practices; as a consequence, it is expected that the pattern of commuter travel will change further.
- (482) The council will lead by example to deliver a ‘Smart town’ that is digitally connected for all, and will work with other public bodies and the telecommunications industry to maximise access to ultra-fast broadband, wireless hotspots and improved mobile signal reception across Stockport, particularly within the town centre. The council will work to assist communities and organisations to deliver investment plans and secure funding to address any digital connectivity infrastructure deficiencies or barriers. Developers and providers are encouraged to improve the level of connectivity in the borough to make Stockport a viable destination for commercial enterprises in the future. The council will generally be supportive of proposals that improve digital infrastructure and access to business services / managed workspaces in town centre locations that may come forward.
- (483) Mobile telecommunications providers (also known ‘electronic communications code operators’) have certain permitted development rights as set out in Part 16 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Telecommunications development therefore falls into three categories, those which:
- require planning permission;
  - require the prior approval of the council; and
  - are permitted development.
- (484) As more types of works become allowed under permitted development, it is important that these are undertaken in line with relevant notifications and codes of practice, to ensure high quality outcomes for the people of Stockport. The electronic communications code (“the code”) is set out in Schedule 2 to the Telecommunications Act 1984 as amended by Schedule 3 to the Communications Act 2003 (“the Act”). The code is designed to facilitate the installation and maintenance of electronic communications networks. There are three

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<sup>119</sup>See [www.digitalstockport.info/radically-digital-stockport/](http://www.digitalstockport.info/radically-digital-stockport/)

main resources that provide additional regulations, restrictions, and guidance for code operators, each of these should be adhered to within Stockport:

- The Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003<sup>120</sup>
- The “Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice”<sup>121</sup>
- The “Code of practice for wireless network development in England”<sup>122</sup>

(485) Applications for major developments submitted must demonstrate how they will contribute towards a radically digital Stockport<sup>123</sup>, providing optimal levels of digital connectivity available at the time as part of the scheme; this should be set out in a statement accompanying the proposal.

(486) Where a planning application is submitted for telecommunications development, the possibility of sharing facilities, such as masts, cabinet boxes and satellite dishes, and erecting antennae on existing buildings or other structures should be fully explored through information supporting the planning application at the time of validation. Planning applications should also be accompanied by a signed declaration that the equipment and installation has been designed to be in full compliance with the requirements of the radio frequency public exposure guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP).

### INF 3: Flood risk

1. Development will be expected to take an integrated catchment-based approach to protect the quantity and quality of water bodies and managing flood risk, by:
  - a. Returning rivers and all water courses to a more natural state, where practicable, in line with the North West River Basin Management Plan;
  - b. Working with natural processes and adopting a natural flood management approach to slow the speed of water drainage and intercept water pollutants;
  - c. Locating and designing development so as to minimise the impacts of current and future flood risk, including retrofitting or relocating existing developments, infrastructure and places to increase resilience to flooding ensuring they are safe for their lifetime;
  - d. Managing surface water runoff through sustainable drainage systems and as close to source as possible; and

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<sup>120</sup> See [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/2553/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/2553/made)

<sup>121</sup> See [www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-siting-and-pole-siting-code-of-practice-issue-2-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-siting-and-pole-siting-code-of-practice-issue-2-2016)

<sup>122</sup> See [www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-wireless-network-development-in-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-wireless-network-development-in-england)

<sup>123</sup> See [www.digitalstockport.info/](http://www.digitalstockport.info/)

- e. Adopting a phased approach to major development. Where parts of such sites are at risk from flooding, flood storage measures should be in place before the site is developed and a detailed surface water strategy to avoid piecemeal infrastructure provision should be provided.
2. Applicants should assess flood risk from their development proposals, using the most up to date Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and any other available evidence to minimise risks of flooding by steering development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding.
  3. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) should be provided for all proposed developments in Flood Zones 2 and 3. Additionally an FRA will be required for proposed developments in Flood Zone 1 that are:
    - a. over 0.5 hectares;
    - b. at risk from other sources of flooding (as identified in Environment Agency and/or SFRA maps); or
    - c. likely to increase the risks from flooding elsewhere.
  4. The council will permit development including change of use, where the applicant can demonstrate that satisfactory and sustainable measures will be implemented to overcome the impacts from flooding, where it would:
    - a. be at risk from flooding;
    - b. increase the risk of flooding elsewhere;
    - c. hinder future access to watercourses for maintenance purposes;
    - d. cause loss of the natural floodplain;
    - e. affect the integrity of existing flood defences; or
    - f. significantly increase surface water run-off.
  5. Residential and commercial development within areas at risk from flooding should include measures to ensure it is resilient in the event of flood events. Such measures are essential so as to reduce the likelihood that properties will be inundated by water in the event of a flood event.
  6. If the council is not satisfied, taking into account all relevant considerations, that a proposed development can be considered safe and resilient to flood risk then planning permission should be refused.

### ***Explanation***

(487) The Flood and Water Management Act (2010) assigns capabilities for managing local sources of flooding from surface water, groundwater and small (“ordinary”) watercourses

to Lead Local Flood Authorities. Stockport Council is its own Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and therefore covers the whole borough. Flood risk from main rivers such as the Mersey, Goyt and Tame are still under the management of the Environment Agency (EA).

(488) Stockport is situated in the middle and lower catchments of the Rivers Tame and Goyt, which converge into the upper catchment of the River Mersey at Stockport Town Centre. Areas to the south and west of the borough are within the Micker Brook catchment which joins the River Mersey at Cheadle. Stockport is at risk from a variety of sources of flooding which are known to interact with each other. The main sources of flood risk include surface water, groundwater and fluvial flooding, the effects of which are expected to increase as a result of climate change.

(489) Stockport is located within a complex hydrological network that extends into surrounding districts and beyond. This means that the district cannot be viewed in isolation, as rainfall and activities in one place can have significant impacts on the water environment in other locations.

(490) Climate change is expected to significantly increase peak river flows and surface water run-off as a result of more intense rain events, potentially placing many more properties at risk in the future unless flood defences, drainage and run-off management are improved. A coordinated catchment wide approach to all types of flood risk will be required to address these challenges and minimise potential harm to people and property, including actions outside of Stockport.

(491) Where required, a site-specific flood risk assessment should be carried out by (or on behalf of) a developer to assess all types of flood risk to and from a development site. This should be carried out at the earliest possible stage in any proposal and should establish:

- whether the proposed development is likely to be affected by current or future flooding from any source;
- whether it will increase flood risk elsewhere;
- whether the measures proposed to deal with these effects and risks are appropriate;
- the evidence to apply the sequential test in relation to flood risk management (as set out in the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance) and;
- whether the development will be safe and pass the exception test, if applicable (as set out in the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance).

(492) The threshold for undertaking a Flood Risk Assessment was recommended by the Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2019). This is a lower threshold than that more generally applied by footnote 59 of the NPPF (December 2023) because Stockport is identified as a critical drainage area.

## INF 4: Drainage

1. Development proposals must incorporate an integrated approach to the management of flood risk, surface water, groundwater and foul drainage.
2. Drainage strategies for development should strictly adhere to the sequential approach of the drainage hierarchy. Solutions at lower levels of the hierarchy should only be considered if higher level solutions are demonstrably not possible or suitable:

**1<sup>st</sup>:** Control at source – infiltration, re-use, green roofs, run-off to grass or verge, harvesting, water butts, and permeable layers.

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** On site treatment with other sustainable drainage system techniques – collection for infiltration and detention.

**3<sup>rd</sup>:** Local treatment with other sustainable drainage system techniques – collection away from site.

**4<sup>th</sup>:** Regional treatment with other sustainable drainage system techniques – collection in wetlands and balancing ponds.

**5<sup>th</sup>:** Discharge to watercourses – including streams, ditches or existing swales.

**6<sup>th</sup>:** Discharge to surface water sewers.

**7<sup>th</sup> (and finally):** Discharge to combined sewers.

3. Surface water should be managed as close to its source as possible. Wherever possible landscape features should be used to manage water and slow the flow.
4. Development on previously developed (brownfield) land must aim to ensure unattenuated run-off is reduced by 50%. Development on greenfield (not previously developed) sites will be required, as a minimum, to ensure that the rate of run-off is not increased.
5. Development proposals should not result in the loss of open watercourse, and culverts should be opened wherever possible. The culverting of existing open watercourses will not be permitted unless it is adequately demonstrated that there is an overriding need to do so.
6. Development should be in compliance with the current Stockport Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS)<sup>124</sup> and contribute positively toward delivering its aims and objectives.

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<sup>124</sup> See [www.stockport.gov.uk/stockport-local-flood-risk-management-strategy](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/stockport-local-flood-risk-management-strategy)

## ***Explanation***

- (493) Stockport is one of the highest flood risk regions in the North West of England from surface water and sewer flooding and as such the entirety of the borough has been assessed to be a Critical Drainage Area. Stockport lies in a relatively low-lying area in three main flat valleys that has many associated watercourses with flood risk. It is a heavily and densely populated area with a significant level of infrastructure. Watercourses have traditionally been culverted so that land can have an alternative use. This creep effect has continued to bury assets and restricted natural surface water run-off causing higher ground water problems.
- (494) National policy relating to flood risk is mainly set out in paragraphs 165 to 175 of the NPPF (December 2023). Paragraph 158 requires LPAs to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, taking full account of the long-term implications for flood risk and water supply etc. It also states that policies should support future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change.
- (495) Under the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) we became a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). We are responsible for managing local flood risk from surface water, ground water and ordinary watercourses in Stockport. One of the new duties placed upon us is to assist in the management of local flood risks. The LLFA is to 'develop, maintain, apply and monitor a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS)'. The LFRMS is intended to demonstrate our understanding and role in managing the flood risk within the borough of Stockport and its role in working with other key stakeholders and the local community.
- (496) In relation to new development it is up to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to determine whether the flood warning and evacuation plans, or equivalent procedures, are sufficient or not. Developments that include areas that are designed to flood (e.g. ground floor car parking and amenity areas) or have a residual risk associated with them, will need to provide appropriate flood warning and instructions so users and residents are safe in a flood. This will include both physical warning signs and written flood warning and evacuation plans. Those using the new development should be made aware of any evacuation plans.
- (497) A drainage assessment at the outset can determine:
1. If the site can be adequately developed
  2. Land-take required for the proposed drainage the impact of the development on the downstream catchment
  3. Scope for future development
  4. Sensitivity of the area
  5. Appropriate drainage to give the best possible environmental protection
- (498) A comprehensive guidance note on what is required in a drainage strategy can be provided by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).

## INF 5: Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)

1. The council requires applicants to submit details of a SuDS scheme with applications for:
  - a. all development as identified in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Schedule 3 (and any subsequent updates); and
  - b. minor development on land that is at risk of flooding or likely to increase the risk of flooding from elsewhere and cause cumulative impacts, including sewer flooding caused by high groundwater levels.
2. Proposals should provide a sufficient water management plan from the outset that demonstrate that a satisfactory SuDS layout with appropriate maintenance is possible, or compelling justification as to why SuDS should not be incorporated into a scheme, or permission will be refused.
3. Such systems shall provide optimum water runoff rates and volumes taking into account relevant local or national standards and the impact of the Water Framework Directive (or successive legislation/regulations) on flood risk issues, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that they are unfeasible.
4. SuDs should be designed to:
  - a. provide multifunctional benefits wherever possible, including for water quality, nature conservation and recreation;
  - b. avoid adverse impacts on water quality and any possibility of discharging hazardous substances to ground;
  - c. be delivered in a holistic and integrated manner, including on larger sites split into different phases; and
  - d. be managed and maintained appropriately to ensure their proper functioning over the lifetime of the development.

### ***Explanation***

(499) Through the implementation of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 SuDS are intended to be mandatory for most development throughout England and Wales – see paragraph 7 of Schedule 3.

(500) Paragraph 167 of the NPPF (December 2023) emphasises that plans should manage flood risk to people and property by safeguarding land from development that is required or likely to be required for current or future flood management. In terms of ‘making effective use of land’, paragraph 124 of the NPPF (December 2023) states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for ‘flood risk mitigation’.

- (501) In areas with a high percentage of impermeable surfaces the rain that might have soaked into the soil disappears rapidly into gullies and drains so that a short sharp downpour can cause serious flooding problems. Car parks, roads and roofs all serve to speed up the rate of rainfall run-off and increase the risk of flash flooding. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should therefore be designed to manage surface water drainage in and around properties and other developments so that it mimics natural (from undeveloped land) run off rates and thereby slows down or holds back water run-off.
- (502) Properly designed, in addition to helping to avoid flooding, SuDS can help to improve water quality and also improve local amenity, environmental quality and biodiversity, remove pollutants from surface water run-off and form part of green infrastructure networks. The best SuDS can offer a wide range of solutions, amenity and habitats that are perfect for water management. A well designed SuDS system will often incorporate rain gardens, green roofs, temporary wetlands and a range of other landscape features.
- (503) SuDS design quality will be expected to conform with the up to date standards encompassed in the relevant BRE, CIRIA standards, Stockport Council SuDS Design Guide (as updated) and Non Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems, to the satisfaction of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), where practical. All changes to scheme designs made during the planning process or during construction that affect drainage should be referred to the LLFA for comment.
- (504) Primarily the landowner is responsible to maintain all parts of SuDS in which they implement. This however, can be negotiated and passed on to; a maintenance company, the occupier(s) of the development, Stockport Council or potentially United Utilities. In any event appropriately worded conditions will be applied to a scheme for the management of surface water runoff. Management schemes must be submitted to the LPA and approved in writing which identifies appropriate site drainage and flood risk management measures, including SUDS, in order to manage surface water runoff as close to its source as possible in line with the policy's drainage hierarchy.

## INF 6: Fresh water and wastewater infrastructure

1. For sites comprising over 150 dwellings or over 1,000 square metres gross floorspace, or where the scheme is proposed to be brought forward in phases, applicants will be required to demonstrate that there will be adequate water supply and wastewater infrastructure in place to service the development, and any proposed future phases of development.

### ***Explanation***

- (505) Paragraph 158 of the NPPF (December 2023) indicates that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, including taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk and water supply. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts. The council will support proposals that are designed to improve the



resilience or capacity of water supply and wastewater treatment capacity provided that it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse environmental impacts, and any other adverse impacts (including those on amenity) are minimised and mitigated to an acceptable level. Development is encouraged to minimise water use as far as practicable, and reduce the pressure on the combined sewer network, by incorporating appropriate water efficiency and water recycling measures, including rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling. On large sites it is important to ensure that the foul and surface water drainage proposals are part of a wider, holistic strategy which coordinates the approach to drainage between phases, between developers, landowners and over a number of years of construction.

## INF 7: Integrated transport network

1. The delivery of an accessible, low carbon and well-connected transport network will be achieved by:
  - a. Requiring that development is in locations which are accessible by walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport;
  - b. Providing local services, employment opportunities, education, community, leisure, and cultural facilities in a way that is accessible to all by sustainable transport;
  - c. Making sustainable transport the most attractive mode to users by being accessible, fully integrated, resilient, flexible and reliable;
  - d. Promoting new development which supports the delivery of a future sustainable and integrated transport network and contributes to the council's strategic transport needs;
  - e. Ensuring that development and transport schemes are inclusive, considering the needs of all people;
  - f. Securing investment in new and improved transport infrastructure and related services;
  - g. Supporting the integration of zero emission vehicle technology and being responsive to new advancements as demand grows;
  - h. Facilitating the delivery of multi-modal mobility hubs that offer easy access to public and shared sustainable transport modes; and
  - i. Seeking contributions from development, where appropriate, to ensure the delivery of new and improved transport infrastructure, services and initiatives.

2. In achieving an integrated transport network, development will be required to consider the needs of the most vulnerable road users first, using the following road user hierarchy:

- A. Pedestrians and those using mobility aids
- B. Cyclists and scooters
- C. Public transport
- D. Goods traffic
- E. Other motor traffic

### ***Explanation***

(506) A good transport system is crucial for the social and economic vitality of Stockport. This will also make a significant contribution to our response and resilience to the climate emergency. We expect journeys to be made safely, healthily, efficiently and, with predictable journey times.

(507) The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040<sup>125</sup> sets an overarching vision for half of all daily trips in Greater Manchester to be made by public transport, cycling, and walking by 2040. The latest data from the TRADS database indicates that 60% of all trips that start in the borough are made by car or van, 9% by public transport, and 31% by active travel (with sustainable travel rates being 3% lower than the Greater Manchester average).

(508) High quality, sustainable and integrated transport is needed to reduce the dependency on private car use. This will also support and increase sustainable movement across the borough. Advances in technology are also offering new ways to consider transport. There has also been a growing increase in the use of electric vehicles along with other developing technology such as hydrogen. Further to this, the development of on-demand transport (e.g. car clubs, scooter and bicycle hire, smart technology/ apps, and automated vehicles) and personal mobility/micro-mobility vehicles (e.g. scooters and skateboards) are changing how people choose to move around.

(509) To harness the increasing range of sustainable modes of transport, the council will support the development of mobility hubs borough-wide and require their provision in larger developments. Mobility hubs can vary in size and function, however, their primary purpose is to allow for the co-location of shared and active travel modes. Hubs can provide access to a range of transport infrastructure for onward travel. This can include cycle parking or hire, public transport stops/stations, car club cars, and electric vehicle charging points. Where appropriate, hubs could also include storage, changing rooms, access to mobility scooter hire or charging, and delivery pickup lockers/counters.

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<sup>125</sup> <https://tfgm.com/2040-transport-strategy>

(510) The ways in which highways and parking facilities are designed and used will need to be adaptable. Accompanying facilities, such as electric vehicle charging infrastructure and other technology, will need to be incorporated. Different needs must also be addressed through new development. This should include those experiencing disability, older people, and families with young children.

(511) The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy outlines how significant investment in sustainable modes of transport will be essential. It is supported by the related Our Five Year Transport Delivery Plan<sup>126</sup> and the Stockport District Local Implementation Plans. These plans set out the immediate and longer-term programme for transport interventions needed to support sustainable growth.

(512) Central government funding and support from developers will be essential for the delivery of some of these transport interventions. It is anticipated that new developments will also help generate the demand for transport services that will make new investments viable.

(513) To strengthen and maintain the integrated transport network, it is essential that new infrastructure manages transport related impacts from construction phase through to operation. Where additional transport infrastructure, facilities, or services are required to ensure development is accessible and to mitigate the impact of a development, developers will be required to provide or fund these. Examples of infrastructure, services, and initiatives could include:

- Improvements to walking and cycling networks;
- Off site parking for cycles, scooters and/or disabled badge holders;
- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure;
- New and improved public transport infrastructure;
- Junction and other highway improvements;
- New or improved bus services;
- Demand responsive transport services;
- Car club vehicles;
- Park and ride schemes;
- Parking restrictions, residents parking zones or other appropriate schemes;
- Travel plan initiatives and monitoring; and
- Cycle hire facilities or other micro mobility solutions.

## INF 8: Sustainable streets

1. In order to maximise the sustainability of our streets, development and transport infrastructure schemes shall:

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<sup>126</sup> <https://tfgm.com/our-five-year-transport-delivery-plan>

- a. Create welcoming areas that offer shelter and shade and provide frequent opportunities for people to rest, linger, socialise and play;
- b. Develop spaces that promote sustainable modes of transport through giving more space to these modes and minimising barriers to their movement;
- c. Provide more economically vibrant spaces including supporting proposals for street cafes and similar facilities on the public highway where appropriate;
- d. Create more pleasant spaces and address biodiversity net gain requirements by embedding green infrastructure, including native tree planting where possible;
- e. Mitigate the impacts of air and noise pollution and carbon emissions from road transport;
- f. Mitigate the negative effects of climate change on the streetscape through SuDS and the use of planting that can cope with predicted weather patterns.
- g. Ensure that streets and road layouts are safe for all users and are designed to help people feel safe enough to choose walking, wheeling, cycling, or public transport;
- h. Where appropriate deliver lower speed schemes including 20 mph zones, limits, and quiet lanes to encourage walking, wheeling and cycling and improve road safety;
- i. Maximise the efficient movement of street users, prioritising sustainable transport users, while managing the movement of goods and services in a way that minimises disruption;
- j. Harness new mobility technologies that will contribute to the sustainability of streets and provide a better experience for users; and
- k. Ensure that streets include transport infrastructure, where appropriate, including bus stops and cycle parking.

### ***Explanation***

(514) Streets will be designed and managed to make a significant positive contribution to the surrounding area. They will also support high levels of walking, , wheeling and public transport use. Targeted improvements to the highway network will be supported through studies and scheme development. They will be expected to support the development of the borough and reduce congestion. They will also complement the aim of securing a significant increase in the proportion of journeys made by walking, cycling, and public transport.

(515) Central to this is enabling people to switch more of the short journeys – that are currently made by car – to walking, wheeling or cycling. We recognise that we need a people-centred approach to the decisions we make about how streets are designed and managed. This will

be essential for delivering a high quality of life, meeting our climate action objectives, and, supporting social inclusion.

(516) Streets for All<sup>127</sup> is Greater Manchester's integrated approach to making decisions about all streets in the city region. It seeks to balance the complex demands of everyone who uses, lives, and works alongside our streets. We want to ensure that developments create welcoming and attractive environments that encourage walking and cycling.

(517) Developments will also be required to provide safe access that is available for all types of vehicles that need to visit or service the site. To do this we will have regard to the Streets for All approach, the Manual for Streets (1 and 2), and any locally adopted design guidance.

## INF 9: Walking, wheeling and cycling

1. The council will require development proposals to help deliver a significantly higher proportion of journeys to be made by walking, wheeling and cycling. As part of this we will actively reject proposals which do not contribute to:
  - a. Ensuring that new developments are permeable with walking, wheeling and cycling as a primary means of local access and are fully integrated into the existing walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure, through the provision of suitable links and infrastructure improvements;
  - b. Creating safe, attractive and integrated walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure, connecting every neighbourhood and community using national and locally adopted design guidance;
  - c. Ensuring routes are as direct as reasonably possible, using desire lines where appropriate and are easily navigable, meet relevant safety standards, and are integrated with the street and public transport network;
  - d. Meeting all needs including, and not limited to: space for mobility scooters, prams and buggies, age-friendly seating (with backs / armrests to facilitate easy sitting, resting and rising), and infrastructure to support blind and partially sighted people;
  - e. Providing dedicated segregated space for people walking and wheeling/cycling, only allowing for a shared facility where it is not possible due to constraints of the site;
  - f. Ensuring that pedestrians and cyclists are given priority at junctions and crossings unless determined to not be appropriate;

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<sup>127</sup> <https://tfgm.com/strategy/streets-for-all>

- g. Delivering new and enhanced existing walking and cycling infrastructure in locations where significant growth in the number of short journeys is anticipated, and where public realm improvements are proposed;
- h. Providing walking and cycling infrastructure in conjunction with green and blue infrastructure, including parks, recreation grounds and waterways; and
- i. Provide parking for cycles and scooters at the start and end point of journeys and locations where people may want to stop.

2. Development and transport proposals shall:

- a. Prioritise pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists, with highways designed to encourage appropriate vehicle speeds;
- b. Create an environment in which people choose to walk, wheel and cycle by measures provided as part of the development or by means of commuted sum payment on a scale as set out by the council;
- c. Provide bicycle and scooter hire facilities, where appropriate;
- d. Provide travel plans for the development that encourage the use of walking and cycling, where appropriate; and
- e. Ensure an adequate amount of cycle, mobility scooter and scooter parking and associated facilities in line with the council's parking standards and at a level that is expected to meet demand, including:
  - i. Appropriate levels of long and short stay parking facilities for vehicles associated with active travel which should be fit for purpose, secure and well-located (where it is not physically possible to provide suitable cycle parking within developments, the council will work with the developer to identify an appropriate alternative location for the required provision);
  - ii. Ensuring that the design of cycle parking accords with local and national design standards, including Local Transport Note 1/20;
  - iii. Associated facilities (e.g. showers, changing and drying facilities, lockers and e-bike charging facilities) which should be fit for purpose, secure and well-located. Where appropriate, retrofit cycle parking, showers/ clothes drying and storage hubs in existing developments will be supported; and
  - iv. Providing all residential development with weatherproof and secured, dedicated cycle storage equivalent in number of spaces to the anticipated population of the development.

## ***Explanation***

- (518) There is great potential for increasing cycling, wheeling<sup>128</sup> and walking in the borough. This will be fundamental in achieving Stockport's and Greater Manchester city region's overall transport vision.
- (519) The Stockport Walking and Cycling Plan<sup>129</sup> and Stockport Active Communities Strategy<sup>130</sup>, outline the benefits of walking and cycling. This includes increasing physical exercise and improving health and wellbeing. Increased walking and cycling can also support social inclusion and independence.
- (520) If walking, wheeling and cycling are to become the natural choice for shorter journeys, then a dramatic improvement in the quality and extent of our walking and cycling infrastructure will be required.
- (521) Central to this will be the delivery of the Greater Manchester Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Proposal (Bee Network) including the Stockport Walking and Cycling Plan. This is a vision for Greater Manchester to become the first city-region in the UK to have a fully joined up walking and cycling network. Future strategies and plans will also be kept under review and considered where appropriate.
- (522) New and improved routes walking and cycling routes will be needed. These routes should address any existing barriers to walking and cycling. High-quality walking and cycling infrastructure will also be vital in increasing the use of public transport. Therefore routes will need to be integrated with the public transport network. Walking and cycling provision will need to meet the most up-to-date guidance to provide high-quality facilities for all.
- (523) Infrastructure must also account for adapted and non-standard cycles, such as tricycles, cargo bikes, and tandems. It will also be expected to be suitable for people using mobility aids and those with prams and pushchairs. Where appropriate, facilities must also provide infrastructure for micro-mobility vehicles, such as e-bikes and electric scooters.
- (524) The level of standard and non-standard cycle parking provided must be in line with the council's most recently adopted parking standards. Developers must demonstrate that the level of parking will be appropriate and meet expected demand. This should have regard to factors such as the site's accessibility and Travel Plan targets. The council may make specific requirements for area-based development, such as the Town Centre West.

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<sup>128</sup> 'Wheeling' is the action of moving as a pedestrian using any kind of wheeled mobility aid, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, walking frames, prams or buggies.

<sup>129</sup> See: <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/our-plan-for-walking-and-cycling-in-stockport-2019-2029>

<sup>130</sup> See: [Stockport Moving Together - Stockport Council](#)

## INF 10: Public transport

1. An increase in the use of public transport is vital in delivering a significant reduction in the carbon impact of travel. To support the delivery of an integrated public transport system, development proposals will be expected to:
  - a. Provide high quality, accessible, walking and cycling links for access from proposed developments to public transport services;
  - b. Procure or subsidise new or amended public transport services and/or demand responsive services, where there would otherwise be inadequate public transport access, for an agreed period of time after the development is occupied or until those services become self-sustaining;
  - c. Provide and/or improve bus routes and stops within or in the proximity of the development, where appropriate;
  - d. Be designed to support the effective operation of public transport to, from and within developments with access to good quality public transport service provision throughout the weekdays and at weekends i.e. an ambition for a 24-7 service provision;
  - e. Incorporate high quality public transport facilities from the start of design, to encourage public transport use including appropriate seating (including age-friendly seating), shelters, information and step free access;
  - f. Take into account the impact of proposals on existing public transport systems and include proposals to provide additional capacity to support increased future demand on those systems;
  - g. Support strategic public transport needs by providing or improving modal interchanges, such as park and ride facilities;
  - h. Provide improvements to the existing local highway infrastructure to accommodate and, where necessary, mitigate impacts of increased public transport provision;
  - i. Provide travel plans for the development which encourage the use of public transport supported by schemes to encourage this use;
  - j. Provide improved access to rapid transit routes including first/last mile solutions such as public bike or scooter hire and car club facilities; and
  - k. Provide additional and improved cycle parking and related facilities at public transport stations and interchanges.



## ***Explanation***

- (525) The Greater Manchester Combined Authority have set out an ambitious programme of investment to improve and extend the reach of public transport. This is set out in the conurbation-wide Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040<sup>131</sup> and the related Our Five-Year Delivery Plan<sup>132</sup>. This is supported by Stockport District Local Implementation Plans.
- (526) An increase in the use of public transport is vital in delivering a significant reduction in the carbon impact of travel. 1 in 5 households in Stockport do not own a car (Census data). Therefore public transport provides an essential service for many residents to access jobs, schools, and other community facilities.
- (527) One of the main factors supporting growth in public transport services and usage is population density. The more people that live in an area the greater the potential for more frequent, affordable, and accessible public transport. Therefore, this Plan encourages regeneration and development that have the potential to increase the attraction, availability, and viability of public transport.
- (528) In order to facilitate a shift to public transport, it is important that the needs of older, younger and less mobile people are considered. This should be for both designing public transport infrastructure as well as routes to these facilities.
- (529) It will be vital to deliver and sustain a comprehensive and integrated public transport network. This network should enable people to change between different services and make a much wider range of trips than just those to and from Manchester City Centre. The public transport network also plays a vital role in tackling congestion and providing access to work, leisure, and other destinations. Public transport services should also support new demand responsive technologies and applications where appropriate. These technologies allow for flexible transport which adapts to the demands of the user groups.
- (530) There is an on going programme of activity to secure Stockport as the Southern Gateway Hub for Greater Manchester. Through this, the council is committed to delivering Metrolink to the borough. This includes the 'Next Stop Stockport' programme to bring Metrolink to the town centre. It also includes modernising Stockport Railway Station to improve customer experience and increase capacity capabilities.
- (531) Greater Manchester will have a bus network which is delivered by a franchising model by 2025. Developers will be expected to take advantage of the potential timetable integration, trip interchange, and enhanced service patterns this will enable.
- (532) The complexity of the public transport network, coupled with the scale of investment needed and transition to bus franchising, means that it is not possible at this stage to identify all the interventions needed. Further work will be required throughout the plan period to identify and deliver new routes and services that function effectively as part of

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<sup>131</sup> See: <https://tfgm.com/2040-transport-strategy>

<sup>132</sup> See: <https://tfgm.com/our-five-year-transport-delivery-plan>

the overall network. The new routes and services will be influenced by development and, as they are delivered, they will influence new development in turn.

## INF 11: Freight and logistics

1. The council will support more efficient and sustainable movement of freight, including by:

- a. Enabling the provision of area and local consolidated distribution centres and encouraging shared facilities to allow for consolidated deliveries and dispatches;
- b. Promoting freight solutions that include zero and low-emission motor vehicles, cargo and e-cargo bikes as well as hubs, charging facilities and operations that support their use;
- c. Protecting and improving existing rail served sites and associated infrastructure and encouraging the delivery of new freight sites;
- d. Ensuring that new development makes appropriate provision for the movement and parking of freight vehicles (including charging facilities). This should include overnight parking and rest areas, with appropriate facilities, where there is likely to be demand and it is appropriate to the location; and
- e. Ensuring that new development makes appropriate provision for deliveries, including cargo bike deliveries and servicing vehicles in terms of road layout, road safety, traffic congestion and environmental impacts.

2. Proposals that include freight or logistics operations, or which are likely to generate increased freight/logistics traffic, will be required to:

- a. Provide sustainable logistics plans and utilise sustainable modes of transport where appropriate;
- b. Demonstrate that the site is close to the Strategic Road Network and/or rail freight opportunities, in the case of a proposal likely to cause significant freight movements; and
- c. Ensure that:
  - i. Any increased risk to walking, wheeling and/or cycling road users arising from freight traffic is mitigated by appropriate cycling/walking infrastructure and by council monitored travel plans (including cycle awareness training for drivers);
  - ii. Improvements are made to local walking and cycling infrastructure where appropriate;

- iii. They do not cause impact to residential amenity on approach routes to the proposed development; and
- iv. The layout of developments and facilities are provided within developments to cater for smaller scale deliveries (e.g. food and parcel deliveries).

### ***Explanation***

(533) Freight is essential for both our economy and productivity. It supports a broad range of sectors, including manufacturing, retail, and waste management. It is also an important sector in its own right. However, many logistics sites in the borough will be reliant on road-based freight, taking advantage of the strategic location within the national motorway network. This freight makes a large contribution to carbon emissions in the borough.

(534) Logistics is also becoming even more important to everyday life. There has been an increase in demand due to high levels of internet shopping and demands for same or next day deliveries. The growth in online retailing and 'just in time' approaches to manufacturing and other businesses is increasing the number of smaller scale deliveries. This is contributing to congestion and pollution, particularly in urban areas. The increase in fast food takeaways, restaurants, and other establishments that offer a delivery service is also adding to this pressure.

(535) Higher population and employment densities in locations such as the town centre will exacerbate these pressures. It will therefore be important to manage such deliveries in a way that minimises their adverse impacts. Solutions could include consolidated distribution centres and avoiding the need for repeat delivery attempts. The use of low- and zero-emission vehicles including electric vehicles, cargo bikes, and E-cargo bikes, will also be encouraged. Appropriate facilities also need to be provided to allow such deliveries to be made. This should include providing parking facilities for delivery vehicles and bikes (including cargo bikes) and the provision of storage lockers.

(536) We recognise that road haulage is likely to remain the predominant mode for the movement of freight. However, planning applications will be expected to show that more sustainable non road-based options have been fully considered. Where road traffic is unavoidable, the use of residential and minor roads will be strongly resisted. It will not be desirable to allow proposals that could exacerbate any existing transport impacts or create unacceptable new impacts.

(537) Where a high usage of bikes, cargo bikes and e-cargo bikes are likely to occur improvements to the wider cycling network may also be required to support this and mitigate conflict with other users of the cycling and walking facilities in the area.

## INF 12: Public rights of way and Strategic Recreation Routes

1. Where planning permission is required, new development and highway schemes will be required to maintain and improve on site or adjacent Public Rights of Way;

2. The council will safeguard and enhance the network of Strategic Recreation Routes shown on the Policies Map. Development which would conflict with the strategic recreation value of these routes will not be permitted.
3. Development will not be permitted where any route through it, whether definitive or established informal, will be lost, unless it is replaced by an alternative route. Alternative routes must be no less convenient (in terms of the destinations it serves, the distance that it covers and the quality of its surface), no less attractive (in terms of its outlook, the quality of its surface, maintenance, lighting and directness) and of equal or improved legal status.
4. New rights of way with appropriate connections to the existing public rights of way network should be provided within development sites on key desire lines and, where appropriate, through landscaped corridors and areas of open space. Routes should be safe, attractive and fit for purpose for both active travel and recreation.
5. Where existing routes are sub-standard, improvements should be carried out as part of development proposals.

### ***Explanation***

(538) The Stockport Rights of Way Improvement Plan<sup>133</sup> sets out the council's vision for the network. It is intended that the network will facilitate both recreational and utility travel for a range of users, including pedestrians, wheelers, cyclists and equestrians, both from within the borough and those passing through it. The council recognises the potential of its urban and rural rights of way for safer sustainable travel routes. The improvement and development of these routes are also seen as an important method of reducing congestion and pollution on Stockport's road network. A high quality network will also support the health and wellbeing of Stockport residents. The delivery of the network must consider the specific needs of the primary users of the route in its design.

(539) Wherever possible Rights of Way should remain on their original route. Where this is not possible the route may be diverted. The closure of routes will only be accepted where a robust justification is provided to show that a diversion is not feasible. Additionally, the council will seek to take advantage of other opportunities that may arise to make additions to the network. Such opportunities may arise, for example, as a result of developer proposals, through the use of management agreements, or in response to suggestions by local communities. In such cases, the potential for any development of the network to be multi-purpose will be considered. There will be a particular emphasis on links between urban residential areas and the countryside. There will be a particular focus in the river valleys, links between countryside attractions, and between recognised trails. This will include the following Strategic Recreation Routes:

- Trans-Pennine Trail
- Fred Perry Way
- Alan Newton Way

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<sup>133</sup> See <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/rights-of-way-improvement-plan>

- Goyt Way and Etherow/Goyt Valley Way/Midshires Way
- Ladybrook Valley Way
- Middlewood Way
- Macclesfield Canal and Peak Forest Canal towpaths (forming part of the Cheshire Ring)
- Cown Edge Way
- The Halls Route

(540) There are areas throughout the borough that have the potential for new recreation routes (such as disused railway lines). New routes will be expected to protect sensitive habitats. They should also ensure that the interests of existing residents and occupiers of land are not prejudiced by excessive numbers of visitors, trespass, or vandalism. New or improved routes will also be expected to provide wayfinding signage where appropriate.

(541) The fact that a route is not included on the definitive Public Rights of Way map does not mean that it is not a Public Right of Way. Where there is uncertainty, developers will be required to provide evidence that no Public Right of Way exists. Where such evidence cannot be provided then they will be required to dedicate a Public Right of Way that is no less convenient or attractive to users than the existing route.

## INF 13: The highway network

1. To ensure safe and efficient movement on the highway network, development will be expected to demonstrate that:
  - a. Connectivity to the existing highway network shall be safe and to an appropriate standard for the nature and level of traffic forecast to use it;
  - b. Where existing infrastructure is affected, replacement routes and infrastructure must be, at least, of equal status and comply with the council's design standards;
  - c. The impacts of development on the transport network, in terms of safety, capacity, delays and congestion are mitigated;
  - d. the safety of all road users, and particularly those who choose to walk or cycle and those who are older, disabled or have an impairment, would be ensured;
  - e. Access via Public Rights of Way or Quiet Lanes will not result in a significant increase in vehicle movements or a conflict between different users of these routes or lanes and, when permitted, ensuring that the impact is adequately mitigated;
  - f. Any impacts on Quiet or Residential Streets does not alter their characteristics as a suitable street for non-motorised users; and

g. Where appropriate, proportionate Demolition and Construction Management Plans are provided, agreed and adhered to.

2. All planning applications for development that will incorporate a new highway/s or include proposals to alter an existing highway (e.g. the construction of a new junction or servicing layby or amendment of an existing junction) must be accompanied by a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and Designer's Response to the Audit.

### ***Explanation***

- (542) To ensure the safety of all users of the network, it is paramount that new developments do not adversely affect highway safety. Development that will have an adverse impact on the safety and/or capacity of the highway network, will only be permitted if mitigation measures are provided to sufficiently address the issues in accordance with paragraphs 114-115 of the NPPF (December 2023).
- (543) Although the focus is on increasing walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, the council recognises that there is a need to accommodate other forms of transport. It is acknowledged that there will remain demand for private vehicle use associated with most new development, especially in suburban, edge of town and similar locations. This demand must be properly assessed as part of planning application submissions. This should include their impact in terms of road safety, capacity, delays and congestion. Impacts will be expected to be fully mitigated without detriment to sustainable modes.
- (544) Detailed guidance on safety and capacity issues is set out by the Department for Transport. Guidance at the local level is set out in the council's Transport and Highways in Residential Areas SPD or any alternative guidance which may replace this document in the future.
- (545) Where a proposal could result in an increase in vehicle movements on the local highway network or could have significant or specific transport implications, planning applications should be accompanied by a Transport Assessment/Transport Statement and Travel Plan. These should assess the transport requirements and the impact of a development. Their form will be dependent on the scale and nature of the development and its location. The form and content of the Assessment / Statement must be agreed with the council prior to its production and take into account local and national guidance. Where there is a need to actively encourage/manage sustainable travel for a development, for example, for a larger development, a Travel Plan should be produced and implemented. Travel plans should be prepared following the approach set out in the Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document or any future alternative guidance endorsed by the council.. Further to this, and where appropriate the council will require management plans to mitigate construction logistics and environmental impacts.
- (546) Where there are major development proposals close to the council's boundary, we will ensure that the cross border impacts are considered as part of the Transport Assessment. We will also liaise with the neighbouring transport authority and National Highways, as required.
- (547) For any new development, it is important to encourage sustainable travel options from day one of occupation before travel habits become established. Travel Plans can be origin-

based (Residential Travel Plans) or destination-based (Workplace / Business/ School Travel Plans).

(548) Flexible on-demand and shared services such as car clubs (including van provision where appropriate), cargo bike and cycle hire, Local Link, and taxis, will have an important role to play in filling the gaps in public transport routes and services. Therefore, it will be important to design new developments to accommodate such measures where appropriate.

## INF 14: Access and servicing

1. Development and transport infrastructure schemes must provide safe and suitable access for all users by:
  - a. Providing access road, access drives, streets, paths and internal layouts that are designed in accordance with local and national design standards and guidance;
  - b. Ensuring that site accesses and junctions can operate safely, have suitable facilities for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists and have adequate capacity for anticipated demand;
  - c. Ensuring that appropriate provision is made for deliveries, emergency services (including emergency vehicle access routes if required) and servicing developments (including requiring Servicing Management Plans for appropriate developments);
  - d. Integrating designated pick-up/drop-off points for taxis and other demand responsive transport services are provided, where appropriate, to meet the expected demand of developments and taking into account the potential increase in demand if car ownership falls; and
  - e. Managing the efficient and safe movement of vehicles by providing suitable turning and manoeuvring facilities, where appropriate.

### ***Explanation***

(549) To ensure the safety of all road users, it is essential that development in the borough can be suitably accessed. The internal layouts of a development should have a design which fits around the desired form of the overall layout and is not dominated by roads. They should also be safe and attractive for use by pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists.

(550) It is also important that development proposals consider the servicing needs of the new development and applicants will be expected to provide details relating to the routes and facilities for service vehicles. Growth in online retailing has increased the number of small-scale deliveries in the borough, by a range of modes, including cycling. It is important that developments are able to allow the efficient movement of these vehicles.

(551) In recent years, there has been significant growth of online taxi companies and car clubs, which provide an alternative to private car usage and public transport. Therefore, facilities for these modes of transport should also be fully considered within developments.

## INF 15: Vehicle parking and infrastructure

1. New developments shall provide an appropriate level of parking in line with the council's parking standards. Developments will be expected to:

- a. Accommodate a range of vehicle users, where appropriate, including: occupiers and staff, visitors, disabled badge holders, powered two wheelers, cycles, scooters, dropping off and picking up, buses and coaches, goods and service vehicles, and car club vehicles;
- b. Accord with local and national design standards and its provision is well integrated, safe, over-looked but unobtrusive, so it supports the street scene;
- c. Ensure that parking provision is flexible and can be adapted over time to reflect demand;
- d. Ensure that, where appropriate, variable message signs that display information of car parking availability are provided for public car parks, developments that have customer/visitor car parks or developments where customers/visitors will make use of public car parks;
- e. Physically or by means of legally enforceable waiting restrictions prevent the parking of vehicles on footways or cycle tracks;
- f. Require, where appropriate, provision to be made for occupiers or staff to have access to car club vehicles or pool cars/ cycles. Where possible, car club vehicles and pool cars should be zero emission vehicles;
- g. Where on-street parking is proposed or is likely to occur as a result of a development, developers will need to demonstrate that it would not adversely affect highway safety, access the capacity of the local highway network or local residential amenity; and
- h. Assess the implications of the loss of parking facilities that will result from development proposals (notably in terms of its impact on on-street and off-street parking).

2. To promote the use of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and other zero emissions vehicle facilities the council will:

- a. Require all development that has on site parking (and new and redeveloped fuel stations) to have electric vehicle charging points (including disabled access accessible charge points) which will meet expected demand and for



infrastructure (e.g. electricity sub-stations, ducting and cable routes) to be installed to allow additional charging points to be provided in the future as demand increases;

- b. Require developments without on site parking to fund the provision of public charging facilities to meet expected demand and/or fund the provision of car club vehicles; and
- c. Ensure that new developments are responsive to advancements in zero emissions vehicle technology and provide suitable and flexible infrastructure as demand grows.

### ***Explanation***

(552) The level of parking to be provided must be in line with the council's parking standards and developers must demonstrate that the level of parking will be appropriate. Developers must have regard to factors such as the site's accessibility, car ownership levels, the scale and type of the development, the availability of car club vehicles and the need to ensure spaces for charging electric vehicles. The council will set out new parking standards in separate guidance. This will include making sure there is adequate parking provision for disabled car drivers and passengers. Until such time as this is adopted, existing parking guidance will continue to apply to proposals. The council may make specific requirements for area-based development, such as Town Centre West.

(553) Developers will need to demonstrate that developments will not result in on-street vehicle parking taking place that could adversely affect highway safety, access, the capacity of the local highway network or local residential amenity. Advice on how to review on-street parking is currently contained in the council's guidance document Parking Surveys for New Development. This may be included in updated guidance or an alternative planning document in the future. Where development proposals will result in the need to manage car parking on streets in the vicinity of a development site, developers will be required to fund, via the payment of a commuted sum, parking restrictions, a Controlled Parking Zone or a Resident Parking Scheme (or other relevant schemes), including the associated Traffic Regulation Order. Future permit costs will be agreed for a number of years. Physical measures may also be required to prevent parking on footways on streets within and around development.

(554) For developments that have no on site parking, the council will work with stakeholders to identify potential alternatives. This could include: contribution to a multimodal hub with disabled parking provision, an appropriate council owned car park or on-street location for the required provision for disabled badge holders. This may require the conversion of standard parking spaces to parking spaces for disabled badge holders. In such cases, a commuted sum will be payable to secure provision and compensate for loss of parking income.

(555) The number of charging points to be provided and the technical requirements must be in line with the council's guidance 'Electric Vehicle Charging Guidance for Developers on the

Requirements for Electric Vehicle Charging for New Development' or any updated guidance or alternative planning document which may replace this in the future.

## INF 16: Safeguarding future transport infrastructure and routes

1. A transport plan is being developed for Stockport. This will identify key transport routes and schemes to support current and future development. The council will not permit development on land that would prevent delivery of those routes and schemes.
2. During the lifespan of this plan other schemes may be identified including Metrolink, tram-train and bus rapid transit. If other schemes are identified and have received approval by the council, the land required to ensure the delivery of these schemes will also be kept safeguarded.
3. Development resulting in the loss of existing sustainable transport infrastructure or harm to its operational integrity is not acceptable. In such circumstances provision of replacement infrastructure of equal or enhanced quality will be required.
4. Disused and underutilised fixed rail routes/alignments, canal and river towpaths will be protected to create opportunities for active travel schemes. Future use of such routes/alignments for public transport infrastructure will also be acceptable so long as any existing active travel use is protected in accordance with clause 3 of this policy.
5. Development must be designed to enable adjacent transport infrastructure to be upgraded, as required, to improve access, highway safety and mitigate the impact of the development.

### ***Explanation***

(556) The proposed levels of housing and employment growth across Stockport will result in an increasing number of trips being made by all transport modes to, from, and within the borough. In order to facilitate a significantly higher proportion of journeys to be made by sustainable modes of transport, new and existing sustainable transport infrastructure will be protected from future development. This includes infrastructure associated with walking, cycling, other physical modes of travel, micro-mobility and public transport. Disused rail alignments are also a valuable resource for the borough that can potentially be used to create new fixed track links (and/or pedestrian and cycle links). This infrastructure, along with other former transport corridors (e.g. former canals), can also become part of the walking and cycling network.

(557) It is also important that development does not inhibit the potential for existing transport infrastructure to be upgraded. This could, for example, include setting new development back from the site boundary to enable the widening and improvement of an existing

transport route, such as widening an existing narrow footway or providing segregated walking and cycling facilities

(558) The development of new transport infrastructure will require land. It is the role of the Local Plan to ensure that the land the council is likely to require to enhance our transport network is safeguarded and protected from development until suitable transport improvements can be delivered in an appropriate and timely manner.

(559) The Stockport District Local Implementation Plan sets out how the council will work towards our priorities including economic growth, improving the environment, and social inclusion by building on Stockport's planned and current transport projects, many of which are set out in the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy (GMTS) 2040 5-Year Delivery Plan (2021-2026) or future updates of this document.