

Employment Topic Paper

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The council is required by the government to have up-to-date planning policies which help create the conditions to support businesses, economic growth and productivity. In doing so, those policies should recognise and address the specific needs of different sectors of the economy¹.
- 1.2. Stockport is home to around 295,000 people, 13,500 businesses, and 144,000 jobs². It has a number of successful town and neighbourhood centres and employment areas. These have, in part, helped the borough to attract, support and enable strong economic growth and investment in recent years. Stockport has a good basis for further growth but those opportunities also come with challenges.
- 1.3. Stockport is the ninth most polarised borough in England, with deprived areas having lower than average education, health and employment outcomes, leading to significant inequalities which damage the life opportunities of our residents. Stockport's Anti-Poverty Objectives³ set out its approach to addressing economic inequality. Stockport has an estimated 49,000 people living in poverty based on national figures, around 17% of the population. Work is an important route out of poverty, but this needs to be good work with fair terms and conditions and sufficient flexibility to support, for example, carers and people with a disability who need reasonable adjustments. We want to create opportunities for all residents to reach their full potential in work,
- 1.4. Whilst Stockport generally has a well-skilled workforce, this varies across the borough, and there are opportunities to improve these skills through new development in order to ensure that the highest number of people possible benefit from that new development. More jobs within the borough that are accessible to people living here would also help to reduce the number of people travelling out of the borough to find work.
- 1.5. The council recognises, however, that not everyone has the necessary skills and qualifications to access the jobs which will be delivered. Amongst the council's own ambitions are the aims to improve schools and access to jobs for a variety of people in the borough.⁴ In addition, the council has included within its emerging draft Local Plan a policy which seeks to ensure that when relevant developments occur, employment and skills training forms part of that proposal – see proposed policy BUS 6.
- 1.6. The council's One Stockport Economic Plan⁵ sets out the vision for economic development in Stockport, including how the priorities of the One Stockport Borough Plan will be achieved. This informs the Local Plan by identifying the key economic priorities for the borough. Critical to the success of Stockport will be to ensure that appropriate economic development can take place which ensures that the maximum number of people benefit in order to help address some of the inequalities which exist in the borough.

¹ NPPF paragraphs 85-87

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a11af7e8f5ec000f1f8c46/NPPF_December_2023.pdf

² <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/economic-information/economic-information-overview>

³ [Stockport Council Anti-Poverty Objectives 2024-27](#)

⁴ <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/our-4-big-ambitions/education-work-and-skills>

⁵ [Economic Plan - One Stockport](#)

- 1.7. In addition, the council has updated its Employment Land Review (ELR)⁶, which is a key part of the evidence to quantify and identify employment needs.⁷ That document assesses forecast employment growth in Stockport and examines the amount and quality of existing and future supply of buildings and land for employment use.
- 1.8. Taken together, those documents and the supporting evidence indicate that Stockport is reasonably well placed to deal with certain types of employment uses, such as offices. However, it is less well placed to ensure that suitable land is available for other uses, including logistics.
- 1.9. In order to ensure that Stockport can continue to maintain and strengthen its local economy, a range of employment uses will need to be provided for. The provision of employment space is important in supporting a growth in both the number and range of jobs to be provided in Stockport. This helps to strengthen the economy and provides work for local people, which is important as Stockport aims for a fairer and more inclusive borough.
- 1.10. The following information sets out some of the background guidance and evidence and then offers some alternative ways in which the shortfall in suitable land could be met.

2. National Policy

- 2.1. The government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides, amongst other things, the basis for how all councils should develop their plans and identifies what the key purposes of local plans are, in the context of delivering sustainable development.
- 2.2. Paragraph 11(a) of the NPPF states that:

“plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects”
- 2.3. Paragraph 11(b) of the NPPF clarifies that our plan should contain strategic policies which provide, as a minimum, for our objectively assessed needs unless:

*“i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or
ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”*
- 2.4. 11(b)i. of the NPPF is subject to footnote 7 which confirms that:

“The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 187) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 72); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.”

⁶ <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy>

⁷ The government requires that strategic policies should look ahead for 15 years from the date of their adoption (NPPF paragraph 22). In Stockport's case it is intended that the plan will be adopted by 2026.

2.5. Paragraph 85 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out the purpose of employment policies:

“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.”

2.6. The Framework then provides further detail on how policies should aim to achieve that purpose in paragraph 86:

“Planning policies should:

a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;

b) set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;

c) seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and

d) be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.”

2.7. Paragraph 87 identifies the need to ensure that the different needs of businesses are met through local plans:

“Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.”

2.8. The government has also produced ‘Planning Practice Guidance’ in respect of assessing economic need⁸. Amongst other things, this sets out the requirement to assess the need for land or floorspace for economic development, including both the quantitative or qualitative need for all foreseeable types of economic activity over the plan period. In addition, it advises that authorities should have regard to the likely availability and achievability of employment-led development, the role, capacity and function of town centres and locations of deprivation which may benefit from planned remedial action.

2.9. The Employment Land Review has been produced with that and the further relevant guidance in mind.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

3. One Stockport Economic Plan

- 3.1. The One Stockport Economic Plan has been produced in partnership with key stakeholders from across the borough as a long-term response to opportunities and challenges which exist in Stockport in order to enable those who live, work, and do business in Stockport to thrive. The main opportunities and challenges are set out below:
- 3.2. Stockport is strategically located within one of the most important, exciting and dynamic city regions in the country. People and businesses benefit from Stockport's proximity to Manchester and the airport, as well as economic links to Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire.
- 3.3. The borough has experienced rapid and sustained economic growth over the past decade. This has made Stockport a major regional economic driver in its own right. Since 2015, Stockport's employment base has grown by 13%, which is greater than the England and Greater Manchester averages.
- 3.4. Stockport is home to a range of nationally and internationally significant companies such as Music Magpie, BASF, Adidas and McVities as well as a number of specialisms across many critical foundational sectors such as utilities, logistics and manufacturing.
- 3.5. Stockport makes a distinctive contribution to the Greater Manchester (GM) Economy in terms of its high-quality skills base, its innovative businesses and its thriving Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector.
- 3.6. The One Stockport Economic Plan aligns closely with the Local Industrial Strategy and the ten priorities of the Greater Manchester Strategy. There is a significant opportunity for Stockport to build on its existing strengths in business, finance and professional services, health innovation, life sciences, medical technology and digital sectors.
- 3.7. Despite the overall position in terms of elements of the economy, Stockport remains one of the most polarised boroughs in the country and Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis have widened existing inequalities. This has had a disproportionate impact on the borough's most disadvantaged residents. The One Stockport Economic Plan identifies the need to ensure that, as a borough, maximum social, economic and environmental benefit is secured, but also that these benefits are shared across the borough. Greater levels of unemployment are identified in Brinnington and Central ward and other wards surrounding the town centre⁹. The creation of additional jobs close within or close to these areas that match the skills of out-of-work residents, can provide an effective route out of poverty.
- 3.8. Work can only be a route out of poverty if employers offer fair terms and conditions and sufficient flexibility to support, for example, carers and people with a disability who need reasonable adjustments. The National Minimum Wage is insufficient to prevent poverty. 67% of children in poverty live in families with least one working adult¹⁰. We want to create opportunities for all residents to reach their full potential in work, by promoting the Good Employment Charter¹¹ and Real Living Wage¹² to businesses and employers in Stockport, including developers.

⁹ [Economic activity status - Census Maps, ONS](#)

¹⁰ [Households Below Average Income: an analysis of the UK income distribution: FYE 1995 to FYE 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹¹ [Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter \(gmgoodemploymentcharter.co.uk\)](#)

¹² [Living Wage Foundation \(livingwage.org.uk\)](#)

- 3.9. Diversifying Stockport's economy is a vital part of ensuring it has the ability to deal with future changes in circumstances. Currently, factors in the borough, such as poor survival rates of some businesses and an inability to respond to changes, risk undermining Stockport's recent growth. There is little evidence of an entrepreneurial start-up culture, and existing employment specialisms are also forecast to decline. This means that economic diversification is a necessity.
- 3.10. The council has declared a climate emergency and the 'greening' of the borough represents an economic opportunity. The development of skills to support the 'green economy' is a key priority.
- 3.11. The overall vision of the One Stockport Economic Plan is to build a more inclusive, resilient and greener economy by design. This is based on four key elements:
- Fair and Inclusive: Supporting a fairer economy where local people are the primary beneficiaries of regeneration and growth.
 - Enterprising and Productive: Capturing a bigger share of high value knowledge sector jobs while supporting a resilient foundational economy.
 - Climate Friendly and Resilient: Tackling the climate emergency, growing the green economy, and enabling Stockport to 'build back better' and recover from the pandemic.
 - Accessible and Connected: Ensuring multi-modal transport infrastructure and digital infrastructure supports employment and inclusive economic growth.

4. Employment Land Review (ELR)

- 4.1. The ELR has been undertaken to assess the existing employment space and land in the borough and to assess future needs. Overall, it has found that there is not a need for a large amount of new employment land in relative terms. More specifically, in terms of office space, future requirements of around 18 hectares should be able to be met within the existing urban area, particularly in the town centre, which will be a key focus for office development, and within Employment Areas. The new Local Plan will respond to this with policies which seek to protect existing employment land and to promote appropriate uses in the main centres of the borough.
- 4.2. However, there is a lack of suitable land for certain employment sectors, particularly in logistics and distribution. The type of businesses in this sector that are driving demand require fit-for-purpose modern and accessible space. The ELR found that the sector would not consider it suitable to locate in existing stock, where many sites are judged to include stock that is ill-equipped for and be situated in areas that are not attractive to the modern occupier. Whilst some redevelopment of existing employment spaces may occur this will take time to realise, with periods of vacancy prior to the planning and construction process.
- 4.3. The ELR concludes that to adequately provide for B2/8 (General Industrial / Warehousing and Logistics) requirements over the plan period, the Local Plan should find around 29.2 hectares in appropriate locations.
- 4.4. Repeated requests for sites, through various 'call for sites' exercises, and the outcomes on annual monitoring of possible employment land show that there are no suitable sites within the urban area for the future scale and needs of B2/B8 uses. Therefore, in order to

meet some or all of the identified need for logistics and distribution, land that is currently in the Green Belt will need to be considered.

4.5. The ELR identifies a number of requirements for logistics sites, and these can be found in that document's recommendations. In order for regional and national logistics operators to be successful there are a number of key locational requirements. These include:

- A nationally strategic location – regional and national distribution requires a strategic location in a national context which is:
 - Within 4-5 hours' drive of key population centres in the north and south to provide efficient access to markets, retailers, and consumers;
 - Accessible to key deep-sea ports, sea freight, and key freight hubs; and
 - Directly connected to the national strategic road network.
- A locally strategic location – major logistics centres, in addition to being located in a strategic location nationally, must within its locality be located with:
 - Direct access to the Strategic Road Network, with ready preference being for land directly adjacent to motorway junctions; and
 - Ready access to a local pool of labour, including training and education providers who can deliver the skills and employees required to meet the modern needs of logistics operators – ranging from entry level to highly skilled jobs.
- Suitable site/physical characteristics – the site itself must be appropriate and suitable to accommodate the scale and type of development to meet occupier needs. This includes:
 - A site of sufficient size and scale to deliver large scale modern logistics to Grade A standard – usually of a size and scale that can deliver buildings in excess of 250,000sqft (c.23,225sqm) in size and up to 1,000,000sqft (c.92,900sqm) in a single building;
 - Sites that are deliverable and viable – in essence not affected by significant constraints (contamination etc.); and
 - Ready and immediate access to the strategic highways network with capacity to handle the development on local roads/junctions. Prime sites will be located adjacent to motorway junctions.

5. Green Belt

5.1. To justify changing the boundaries of the Green Belt so as to enable development it would be necessary to demonstrate the existence of exceptional circumstances. Paragraph 146 of the NPPF states:

“Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of its strategic policies, which will take into account the preceding paragraph, and whether the strategy:

a) makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;

b) optimises the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in

minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and

c) has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground.”

- 5.2. A Green Belt Assessment¹³ has been undertaken for the borough and this has helped to inform the sites identified below, alongside an assessment of other benefits and harm which the respective sites might include. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF states:

“When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. Strategic policy-making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.”

- 5.3. Therefore, the Green Belt sites identified have also been chosen due to their location, in particular where they are located on the edge of the existing urban area, to make best use of access to existing facilities, infrastructure and transport, and to offer benefits for existing communities through their development.
- 5.4. In a scenario in which a local planning authority concluded that, on balance, removing land from the Green Belt was necessary, ‘exceptional circumstances’ would need to be demonstrated.¹⁴ To do this in a way that meet the tests of soundness NPPF paragraph 35 stipulates that plans must be justified by providing an appropriate strategy, taking into account reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence. In addition to the scale of development, a council would need to consider the impact and benefits of different locations.
- 5.5. Developing a plan which is justified also means that a council needs to ensure that, amongst other things, the proposed scale of housing and employment development are compatible. The council will need to show that the housing development enabled by the plan is adequate to facilitate any growth in population required to meet the borough’s economic aspirations; similarly, the economic aspirations should not be so constrained as to result in there being a surplus in housing provision. It is therefore important that this paper is considered alongside the Housing Topic Paper.
- 5.6. In looking at reasonable alternative approaches that include making changes to the boundaries of the Green Belt, the council has used a site selection methodology which seeks to address matters in a sequential manner. This is briefly set out below.

¹³ Available at <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage>

¹⁴ Paragraphs 144 and 145 of the NPPF:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a11af7e8f5ec000f1f8c46/NPPF_December_2023.pdf

6. Site selection methodology

Background to site selection

- 6.1. Between 2014 and late 2020, Stockport worked with the other GM authorities on a joint plan called the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF). Whilst the joint plan looked to redistribute part of Stockport's development needs to other districts we were still left with a significant need that could only be met by building on Green Belt land. In December 2020 the council decided to not proceed with the joint plan because it considered that alternative approaches causing less harm needed to be more fully explored from a Stockport-specific perspective.
- 6.2. Despite Stockport's withdrawal from the strategic plan making process, we continue to work with GM as a whole on strategic cross-boundary issues. Under the requirements of the Duty to Co-operate (DtC) process we have asked neighbouring and other relevant authorities whether they are able to meet any of our employment need, in order to help relieve pressure on land in Stockport. To date, no authority has identified capacity to do so. However, DtC meetings will continue as the plan progresses and the council will monitor this position with those other authorities during that time.
- 6.3. The council's starting point is all sites which have been submitted to the council via numerous 'call for sites' exercises, sites proposed by landowners/developers at other times, sites on which relevant planning applications may have been made in the past and any sites in the council's ownership. These sites have then been through a filtering process to include the following:
- Brownfield sites;
 - Sites promoted with a willing landowner or those in the ownership of the council; and
 - Sites without constraints that cannot reasonably be mitigated, e.g. SSSI, flood zone 3b.
- 6.4. The second stage of selection was intended to help identify sites which contribute to the overall strategic objective of delivering sustainable development that is well located to existing communities and which delivers benefits for new and existing residents. This identified sites with the potential to contribute towards future employment land supply with access to the M60, A34 and A555. Without very good access to those roads land is not suitable for that use and therefore sites which do not, or could not, readily have this access have been ruled out. In addition, logistics use generally requires large buildings, which means that small sites are also not suitable for this purpose.
- 6.5. In relation to potential sites identified at that stage, further work was undertaken to understand the infrastructure that would need to be delivered to support development of these potential sites and whether they would be likely to be able to deliver or contribute towards the provision of supporting infrastructure.
- 6.6. The third, more detailed stage looked at other factors that could affect development of a site. These might be expected to result in the site being deemed undevelopable, might significantly impact the scale of development possible or might require significant mitigation measures. These were:
- Performance against purposes of Green Belt (as identified for relevant parcels of land in the council's Green Belt assessment)¹⁵

¹⁵ Available at <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/environment-and-heritage>

- Compatibility with existing neighbouring uses
- Potential community benefits
- Heritage impacts
- Ecological impacts
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)
- Existing air quality
- Area of minerals search
- Landscape and visual impacts
- Transport impacts/improvements

Sites in the Green Belt considered as part of potential reasonable alternative approaches:

- 6.7. As well as identifying land to meet Stockport's employment needs, the council also has to weigh up a number of other factors as part of delivering a sustainable plan. For example, matters such as flood zones and impact on Green Belt or the natural environment will make some sites more suitable than others. This further limits the amount of employment land which can be delivered. All sites listed have been through a process of site selection.
- 6.8. There are very few potential sites which meet the criteria and which are likely to come forward for development. In the approaches set out below, two variations of a potential site were examined at Bredbury. The larger site reflects a similar scale development refused on appeal in 2021¹⁶ with a smaller site considered which would be likely to have a less harmful impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.9. The proposal at Bredbury was regarded by the inspector as having 'very significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt, and also to three of the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt, arising from the scale, nature and extent of the proposed development' (paragraph 38 of decision notice).
- 6.10. However, the potential benefits that might arise from the development of these sites, including their potential contribution towards meeting future employment needs, must be balanced against the potential harm that their development would likely cause. The council has concluded that in overall terms the negative impacts of developing these sites outweigh the benefits that might accrue from doing so. However, in terms of the Green Belt sites included in the first alternative approach and second alternative approach below, these are considered to either be the least harmful in Green Belt terms or offer the potential for sufficient benefits or mitigation.
- 6.11. Each of the sites in the Approaches has a site size. An assumption has been made as to the amount of floorspace that could be built for logistics/distribution use and a range of how many jobs could be created at the site as a result. These assumptions are based on the government's density guide¹⁷. This information is listed below for ease of reference and, where relevant, to prevent repeating the same information for each approach.
- 6.12. Almost all of the identified need could be met with the larger of the two options for Bredbury (Bredbury (b)). However, there are other potentially suitable sites which could be used in combination. Those options might be able to meet the need in full or they might be used to meet less than our need when balancing the benefits of job creation against the impact on Green Belt and taking into account other factors.

¹⁶ Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/W/21/3279967

¹⁷

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378203/employ-den.pdf

7. The three potential approaches to employment need

7.1. Proposed approach

What does it involve and what does it mean for employment supply?

- 7.1.1. The proposed approach seeks to deliver all of the employment land within the urban area, either on existing allocated employment areas or in the town and district centres. These are the best located areas for employment development with benefits of conglomeration with existing employers and ready access to the potential workforce as well as many of these being in the more accessible locations in the borough.
- 7.1.2. Most of the employment need identified in the ELR will be able to be met in this way. The key shortfall will be in the delivery of land to support logistics and warehousing development at the scale identified in the ELR. This is due to the lack of suitable sites in the urban area. There are currently no sites of a significant size which would be appropriate for large floorspace units of the type required by this employment sector and which are well located with ready access to the major road network.

Transport

- 7.1.3. The different approaches which the council has looked at, and other variations on those approaches, have all been subject to in-depth transport modelling to give an understanding of their likely transport impacts. Full details of this work are provided in the transport note which has looked at combined housing and employment scenarios¹⁸. Where differences exist in terms of the impacts from each of the three approaches, they are only marginal in terms of CO₂ emissions, journey times and average speeds. In terms of the modelling work there is no strong reason why one approach should be preferred over another.
- 7.1.4. However, in some of the key findings, carbon dioxide equivalent emissions¹⁹ from roads are predicted to fall by 47.3% up to 2041 compared to base year conditions. The fall in CO₂ emissions from road travel is mainly due to the transition to electric vehicles, and the fact that more accessible development would be focused on town and district centres. However, compared to base year conditions, this approach is predicted to result in an increase of 21% in the total distance travelled on all roads across the borough in the evening peak with a corresponding increase of 35% in travel time, while average speeds are predicted to reduce by circa 3mph (from 22mph to 19mph). In relation to the other approaches, this has the least negative impacts on transport and travel across the borough.

What are the other main issues for this approach?

- 7.1.5. There will be significant harm caused by the development of any of the sites in the Green Belt which might meet the locational and size requirements for logistics and warehousing uses. Given that the number of jobs which might be created would be limited relative to the amount of land which would be required, the benefits of those potential sites are not considered to outweigh the harm which would be caused to the Green Belt as a consequence of their development. Under this approach the focus will be on supporting growth in sectors that require premises and facilities that can be accommodated in the

¹⁸ Available at <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/evidence-planning-policy/transport-and-infrastructure>

¹⁹ "Carbon dioxide equivalent" or "CO₂e" is a term for describing different greenhouse gases in a common unit. For any quantity and type of greenhouse gas, CO₂e signifies the amount of CO₂ which would have the equivalent global warming impact.

urban area without the need for releasing greenbelt, such as digital and finance and professional services.

- 7.1.6. Subsequently, it is not proposed to release any land from the Green Belt for employment purposes.

7.2. First alternative approach

What does it involve and what does it mean for employment supply?

- 7.2.1. This approach involves the use of employment land within the urban area, either on existing allocated employment areas or in the town and district centres, as with the 'Proposed Approach'. It also requires the release of land from the Green Belt for the use of sites of around 8 hectares at Heathside Park Road and a site at Bredbury of around 10 hectares – around two-thirds of the identified logistics and warehousing need.
- 7.2.2. Heathside Park Road is next to junction 2 of the M60 and part of the site is already used for offices. If the existing offices were to be retained, there would be around 15,500m² of space available for industrial or logistics uses. If all of the site were to be used then around 32,000m² of floorspace would be available.
- 7.2.3. The site at Bredbury is located next to Ashton Road, close to junction 27 of the M60 and would extend the existing large employment area.
- 7.2.4. In terms of floorspace, these two sites combined could provide a total of up to around 72,000m² of space for industrial or logistics space. In total, at 18.1 hectares this approach would meet just under two-thirds of the identified additional employment land requirement for logistics use during the plan period.

Site	Approximate Area (hectares)	Possible floorspace (m ²)
Heathside Park Road	8	32,000
Bredbury (a)	10.1	40,000
Total	18.1	72,000

What are the other main issues for this approach?

- 7.2.5. Both sites are well located in relation to existing residential areas, providing both ready access for potential employees and also meaning that travelling to the sites is likely to be minimised. The fact that the employment land requirements will be met in these locations will help Stockport to fulfil its economic potential in line with the One Stockport Economic Plan, whilst also providing the best chance for that development to benefit the highest number of people.
- 7.2.6. Heathside Park Road would provide an employment area suitable for logistics next to the urban area in a relatively well populated residential area, providing good access to the jobs to be created.
- 7.2.7. Although the site is located very close to junction 2 of the M60, this junction has restricted access (no entry anti-clockwise and no exit clockwise) and this constraint would need careful consideration.
- 7.2.8. Local transport issues, including suitable access along Heathside Park Road and at the junction with Stockport Road, would need to be addressed.

- 7.2.9. However, the site is located near to the proposed new train station at Cheadle and there is the potential to improve cycle and walking links to the station via recent improvements at Abney Park and Roscoes Roundabout.
- 7.2.10. The assessment of the Green Belt²⁰ indicates that the impact of development in this location would be significantly less than that of other potentially suitable sites, i.e. those sites which have good access to the motorway network and which could provide sufficient land to suit the purposes of industrial and warehouse uses.
- 7.2.11. There are a number of potential environmental impacts which would need to be considered including:
- Potential impact on River Mersey Landscape Character Area, which is assessed as having low to medium sensitivity to commercial development.
 - Any Great Crested Newts on site to be addressed in line with guidance.
 - Consider and address impact on nearby Abney Hall Nature reserve and Site of Biological Importance (SBI).
- 7.2.12. However, there are potential opportunities including improving grassland to link in with the Site of Biological Interest at Abney Hall, utilising plant species to reduce localised air pollution and enhancing hedgerow coverage. The site already forms part of the core ecological network due to location within the Mersey River Valley.
- 7.2.13. The site at Bredbury would have a reduced impact on the Green Belt and landscape character of the area compared to the larger version of the same site in the 'second alternative' approach below. The site is approximately a third of the land area of the proposal which was dismissed on appeal. In addition, it would also be significantly further away from properties at Castle Hill Residential Park. However, delivering a smaller site of 10 hectares would also reduce the number of jobs to be delivered in an area very well placed to deliver significant benefits for the residents of the surrounding area. It would also reduce the scale of transport improvements which could be expected from the development.

7.3. Second alternative approach

What does it involve and what does it mean for employment supply?

- 7.3.1. This approach involves the use of employment land within the urban area, either on existing allocated employment areas or in the town and district centres, as with the 'Proposed Approach'. It also requires the release of land from the Green Belt for the use of around 8 hectares at Heathside Park Road and around 29 hectares at Bredbury.
- 7.3.2. Heathside Park Road is next to junction 2 of the M60 and is about 8 hectares in size. Part of the site is already used for offices. If the existing offices were to be retained, there would be around 15,500m² of space available for industrial or logistics uses. If all of the site were to be used then around 32,000 m² of floorspace would be available.
- 7.3.3. The site at Bredbury is located next to Ashton Road, close to junction 27 of the M60 and would extend the existing large employment area.
- 7.3.4. In terms of floorspace, these two sites combined could provide a total of up to around 122,000m² of space for industrial or logistics space. At 36.7 hectares this approach would exceed the minimum identified additional employment land requirement for logistics use

²⁰ [Add link to GB Assessment here](#)

during the plan period. However, this would ensure that there is flexibility for any under-delivery on either of these sites. It also creates flexibility in the event of demand exceeding forecast growth and, importantly, provides choice for the market.

Site	Approximate Area (hectares)	Possible floorspace (m ²)
Heathside Park Road	8	32,000
Bredbury (b)	28.7	90,000
Total	36.7	122,000

What are the other main issues and opportunities for this approach?

- 7.3.5. Both sites are well located in relation to existing residential areas, providing both ready access for potential employees and also meaning that travelling to the sites is likely to be minimised. The fact that the employment land requirements will be met in these locations will help Stockport to fulfil its economic potential in line with the One Stockport Economic Plan, whilst also providing the best chance for that development to benefit the highest number of people.
- 7.3.6. Heathside Park Road would provide an employment area suitable for logistics next to the urban area in a relatively well populated residential area, providing good access to the jobs to be created. This site would support the development of a green economy in Stockport for new businesses and jobs in sustainability and carbon reduction technologies.
- 7.3.7. Junction 2 of the M60 has restricted access (no entry anti-clockwise and no exit clockwise) and this constraint would need careful consideration. However, the road connectivity from the site to junction 1 is convenient and appropriate for logistics vehicles.
- 7.3.8. Local transport issues, including suitable access along Heathside Park Road and at the junction with Stockport Road, would need to be addressed.
- 7.3.9. However, the site is located near to the proposed new train station at Cheadle and there is the potential to improve cycle and walking links to the station via recent improvements at Abney Park and Roscoes Roundabout.
- 7.3.10. The assessment of the Green Belt²¹ indicates that the impact of development in this location would be significantly less than that of other potentially suitable sites, i.e. those sites which have good access to the motorway network, and which could provide sufficient land to suit the purposes of industrial and warehouse uses.
- 7.3.11. There are a number of potential environmental impacts which would need to be considered including:
- Potential impact on River Mersey Landscape Character Area, which is assessed as having low to medium sensitivity to commercial development.
 - Any Great Crested Newts on site to be addressed in line with guidance.
 - Consider and address impact on nearby Abney Hall Nature reserve and SBI.
- 7.3.12. However, there are potential opportunities including improving grassland to link in with the Site of Biological Interest at Abney Hall, utilising plant species to reduce localised air

²¹ [Add link to GB Assessment here](#)

pollution and enhancing hedgerow coverage. The site already forms part of the core ecological network due to location within the Mersey River Valley.

- 7.3.13. A site of similar size and location as Bredbury (b) was the subject of a recent planning appeal in 2021²² which was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate because the inspector did not find that 'very special circumstances' existed for allowing the site to be developed at that stage and in the way proposed. As noted earlier in this document, the council will need to show that 'exceptional circumstances' exist for any sites to be removed from the Green Belt through the plan. However, in relation to the planning application, the inspector concluded that there would be significant local harm to the character and appearance of the area. He also concluded that there were benefits in terms of the jobs to be created and that highway and transport improvements could address the impacts in that regard. He further noted the lack of other available sites for delivering development of this scale in Stockport and the surrounding area. All these matters will also need to be carefully addressed in the consideration of any potential employment allocation at the site.
- 7.3.14. In transport and highway terms, the application and appeal established that whilst issues would be created by the additional traffic, this could be suitably mitigated. In addition, various improvements could be delivered to improve existing and provide new footpaths and cycle routes. New and improved bus stops in the area could also ensure that the site is better served by public transport.
- 7.3.15. As well as those potential future benefits, the site is already well located in relation to existing residential areas in both Stockport and Tameside, some of which are identified as suffering from significant deprivation. Jobs created here would be readily accessible to people living in the local area, providing the opportunity to address some of the issues identified in this regard in both the One Stockport Economic Plan and the ELR. In addition, there are significant advantages to be gained from locating many similar employment uses together. In this case the Bredbury site benefits from being next to the largest existing employment area in Stockport.
- 7.3.16. There are also a number of opportunities and challenges in relation to environmental factors including:
- Opportunities to improve grassland.
 - Utilising plant species to reduce particulates.
 - Strengthening the hedgerow network.

²² Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/W/21/3279967

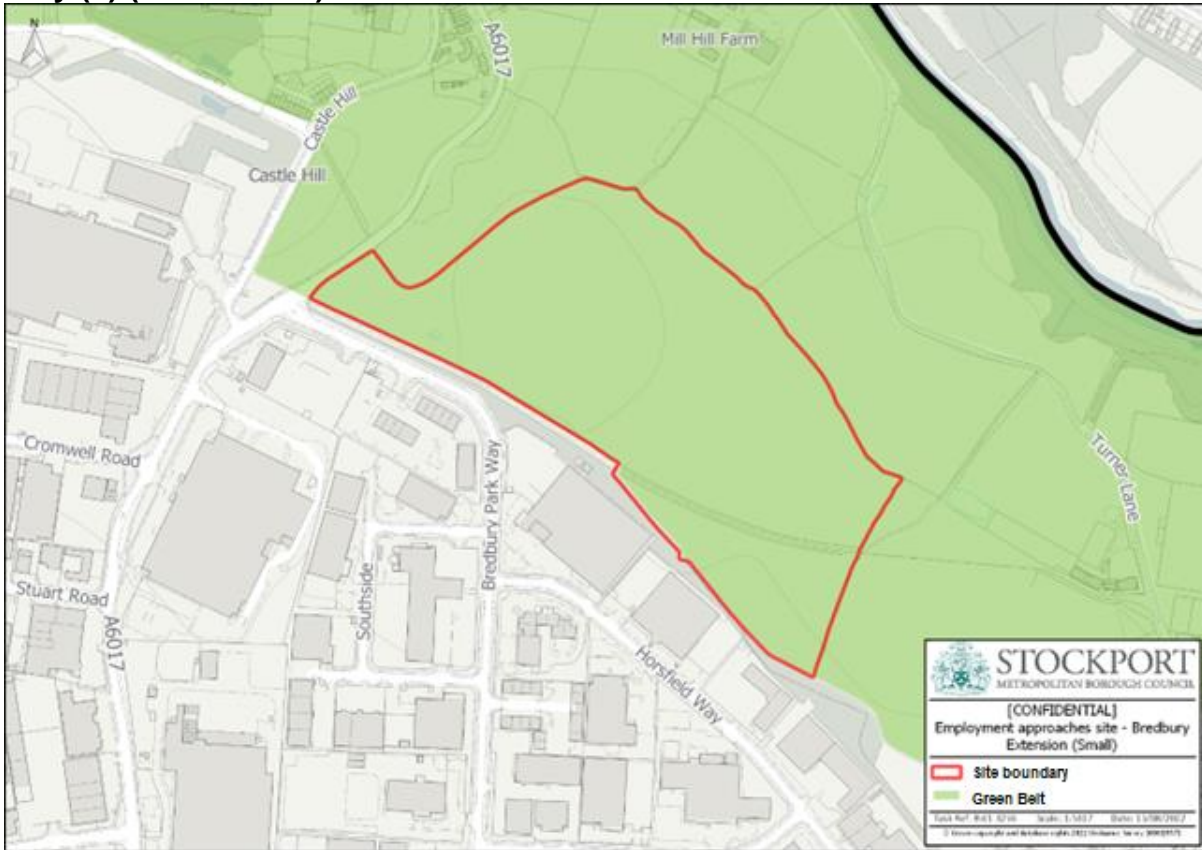
8. Supporting information

8.1. Site Plans

Heathside Park Road



Bredbury (a) (smaller site)



Bredbury (b) (larger site)

