

**DRAFT STOCKPORT LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

**Report of the Assistant Director Place Making and Planning**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that following the decision to undertake a consultation on the Regulation 18 version of the Stockport Local Plan (SLP), the government issued a consultation in relation to proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). As a result of those proposed changes, it was decided that the SLP consultation should be paused.
- 1.2 This report will outline the work that has taken place in relation to the SLP since that pause, provide the most up-to-date information in relation to publication of the revised NPPF publication and proposed next steps for the local plan.

**2. Where are we up to and what is needed?**

- 2.1 Perhaps the first thing to say is that it is intended that most of the plan as it was approved in the summer should remain unchanged. Although references to the NPPF will need to be updated to reflect paragraph number changes, etc., based on the proposed national changes the majority of Stockport's proposed policies should not require significant amendment. Clearly these reference updates cannot take place until a revised NPPF is published.
- 2.2 The key proposed NPPF changes relate to issues of addressing housing and employment need, with particular reference to the Green Belt. At this stage these are key elements about which there is uncertainty and therefore any work undertaken in advance of the publication of the revised NPPF is done so at risk. Nevertheless, to progress to our revised version of a Reg 18 plan as quickly as possible, officers have started to examine the further work required.

**Green Belt**

- 2.3 An update of the previous Green Belt assessment (2016) had been undertaken in 2024 to reflect changes affecting the Green Belt since that time. However, to ensure Stockport is in a strong position to proceed with a plan under the new framework a more detailed update and review of the Green Belt will need to be undertaken. Officers have already met with the previous consultants on this work to look at precisely what will be required of a Green Belt review and work has started on commissioning this vital piece of evidence.
- 2.4 This work will feed into a wider piece of work in relation to assessing the potential for any Green Belt sites and their capacity in relation to either housing or employment uses which officers propose address through the Development Plan Working Party in more detail at a later date.

## **Housing Supply**

- 2.5 An update of the council's plan supply position had already taken place in the form of a draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Further work on this was already planned in support of the planned Reg. 19 version of the plan. However, this will now be undertaken with further regard to the Stockport Character and Urban Density study ([SCUD 2024](#)) and revisiting of densities in key locations – primarily in relation to centres and important transport corridors around the borough. SCUD has already provided the council with a good understanding of the character of key locations (including the town centre and district centres) and the potential of different types of sites to accommodate an uplifted density of development, including (potentially) taller buildings. As well as aiding work on design matters it provides a good basis for updating the council's evidence on housing land supply capacity.
- 2.6 In addition, the council will revisit its own land holdings as well as assessing any new sites which may be identified through the wider 'Call for Sites' process that the council is required to conduct. This work is important in order that the council can show it has fully explored all possibilities to deliver housing in the urban area. The Call for Sites should commence before Christmas.
- 2.7 This work will continue throughout the local plan process as the council will need to ensure it has the most up-to-date and robust housing land supply position at the point the plan is submitted.

## **Employment**

- 2.8 The existing supply does not require revisiting or updating in the same way as housing supply. The employment market moves more slowly than the housing market and the Employment Land Review ([ELR 2022](#)) is considered to be up-to-date for current purposes.
- 2.9 However, the proposed change to the NPPF in relation to particular sectors, including logistics, means that the council will need to re-examine the potential for any Green Belt sites to deliver any employment land as part of that wider work identified above.

## **3. Next Steps**

- 3.1 Work will continue in relation to the Green Belt and housing land supply work identified above and, as noted, the call for sites work is proposed to take place soon.
- 3.2 There remains uncertainty about the final content of the NPPF. To be able to understand exactly what is required of the SLP and to help provide some detail in relation to that Green Belt and housing work, the council is therefore significantly dependent on the government publishing the updated version.
- 3.3 The council will also need to update its Local Development Scheme (LDS) in advance of undertaking a revised Reg 18 consultation with an intention to proceed to consultation on regulation 18 plan in the Spring / Summer of 2025.

To this end, officers have sought a discussion with colleagues at the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) who have advised that they think this would best conducted after the NPPF publication.

- 3.4 The most recent informal indication from the MHCLG is that the NPPF is likely to be published either just prior to Christmas or early in 2025. However, at this stage they are unable to say exactly when that will be and therefore officers intend to proceed 'at risk' with the work identified.
- 3.5 Officers will also be seeking a meeting with the council's KC in January in anticipation of the publication of the NPPF to ensure the council has a legally robust position in relation to the plan as it moves through the process.
- 3.6 It is proposed that a series of Development Plan Working Party meetings are scheduled to take place over the coming months as work continues.

#### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the report.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are none.

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