



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Stockport Local Plan

Climate and Nature Topic Paper

September 2026



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1. Introduction

- 1) This is the 'Climate and Nature Topic Paper' and is one of a number of topic papers that have been written to support Stockport's Local Plan.
- 2) All topic papers can be found online at Stockport Council's website.
- 3) The main purpose of this document is to set out the current legislation, policies, strategies and plans that have informed the Local Plan in relation to Climate and Nature.
- 4) Stockport Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and has committed to be operationally net zero by 2030, and to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving carbon neutrality across the borough by 2038, in line with the Greater Manchester 5-Year Environment Plan. The Council's Climate and Nature (CAN) Strategy¹ sets out the actions required to achieve this ambition and support the objectives of the 2016 Paris Agreement to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C.
- 5) These local commitments align with the national legislative framework. The Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, supported by an interim target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035. In addition, the Planning Act 2008 amended the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to place a legal duty on local planning authorities to ensure that development plan policies, taken as a whole, contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- 6) The vision set out in the CAN strategy is as follows:

"Stockport will be a climate and nature-friendly place to live, work, play and invest. Every child will grow up in a healthy environment with good jobs, homes, and services. There will be clean, green transport and accessible parks and areas for nature."

Stockport will be ready for whatever changes and opportunities will come in the future, and will be prepared for the impacts of extreme weather events. People across Stockport will collaborate and contribute to climate and nature actions."

- 7) It aims to make Stockport a sustainable place to live, work, play and invest. It forms an important driver for local planning policy development, and sets out a number of key objectives which the planning system can help to deliver against, an extract of which is shown below:

¹ See <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/can-strategy-2025-to-2030>

“Climate and Nature Adaptation and Resilience

Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Achieve operational net zero emissions for Stockport Council by 2030 and carbon neutrality for the entire borough by 2038.

Enhance Biodiversity: Implement nature-based solutions to improve biodiversity and resilience against extreme weather events.

Community Involvement and Collaboration

Engage Residents and Businesses: Foster community participation in climate actions and promote sustainable practices.

Youth Engagement: Involve young people through initiatives like the Youth Climate Assembly.

Sustainable Development

Green Infrastructure: Develop low carbon buildings, renewable energy projects, and sustainable transport systems.

Nature Recovery: Increase green spaces and implement projects to support local wildlife and plant life.”

- 8) A number of Stockport-wide commitments are made in the CAN Strategy, the ones of most relevance to the Local Plan are set out below.

Low Carbon Buildings

- We will ensure that future homes and buildings are well-designed, enabling a carbon neutral borough and resilience to a changing climate.
- We will work with key partners to support innovation in construction methods and materials to bring about transformational reductions in embodied carbon.

Renewable Energy

- We are working with our partners to maximise opportunities for renewable energy generation. We will partner with developers to initiate innovative funding approaches to enable net positive developments.
- We will expand our work with communities to explore, develop and increase community energy projects within the borough.
- We will expand green jobs, skills and supply chains to meet demand for renewable energy by 2030 by working with partners and stakeholders; building on the Mayoral Development Corporation construction hub development.

Nature Based Solutions

- We will work with partners, communities and stakeholders to develop and install nature-based solutions to reduce the risk and impact of flooding and the risk of the urban heat island effect.

- We will maximise opportunities to embed nature-based solutions into town centre regeneration, including how to increase and enhance green spaces.
 - This will provide more flora that promote increased groundwater absorption to manage water effectively.
 - We will encourage the use of nature-based solutions on new developments to help Stockport become more resilient to extreme weather events.
- 9) These commitments are repeated in other parts of this topic paper to make it clear how the Local Plan policies will aid in the delivery of these commitments.
- 10) The CAN Strategy 2025-2030 is a bold and ambitious plan that seeks to address the pressing challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. By working together, Stockport aims to build a resilient, sustainable, and thriving community for current and future generations.
- 11) Reflecting these commitments, the emerging Stockport Local Plan recognises that this is a decisive decade for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. Therefore, the local plans aim is to help 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.”
- 12) The Local Plan has a key role in supporting the delivery of the CAN Strategy and helping us to meet our target of being carbon neutral by 2038.

2. Part A: energy efficiency, net zero and district heating

- 13) The UK's national commitment is set through the Climate Change Act 2008, which was updated in 2019. It legislates that the UK must be net zero carbon by 2050 and sets a system of carbon budgets to ensure that the UK does not emit more than its allowance in the next 27 years.
- 14) This legal requirement is underpinned by the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) report 'Net Zero: The UK's Contribution to Stopping Global Warming'. Net Zero is not only about a destination: a very significant and fast decarbonisation pathway is needed.
- 15) The Climate Change Committee's Seventh Carbon Budget (Feb 2025) sets a Balanced Pathway to Net Zero and highlights that residential buildings are the second highest greenhouse gas emitting sector.
- 16) The Energy Act 2023 provides the powers for government to implement heat network zoning in England, with emerging 'The Heat Network Zones (England) Regulations' likely to come into force in 2026.
- 17) A national zoning model (NZM) is being developed to support and inform heat network zoning policy by identifying potential heat network zones across England. These are areas where heat networks are expected to be the lowest cost, low carbon heating solution to buildings. Any development of new buildings within designated heat network zones will be subject to provisions set out in the emerging 'The Heat Network Zones (England) Regulations'.

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 18) **This topic paper has been prepared with regard to the 2024 version of the NPPF, in accordance with Annex A of the August 2026 NPPF.**
- 19) All development plans must be prepared within the context of the Government's planning policies, these are primarily set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024². The NPPF establishes sustainable development as a core principle of the planning system, and paragraph 8 (c) identifies that as part of

² See <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20250225172715/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

the environmental objective, the planning system should mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving towards a low carbon future.

- 20) The NPPF sets out at Paragraph 11 that plan-making is required to promote sustainable development through environmental improvement, climate change mitigation, and adaptation to the impacts of a changing climate.

- 21) The NPPF sets out in Paragraph 20 (d) that strategic policies should make sufficient provision for the:

“conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.”

- 22) The NPPF sets out at Chapter 14, Paragraph 161

“Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change”, sets out the Government’s detailed approach to ensuring the planning system supports the transition to Net Zero 2050. It requires plans to take full account of climate-related risks such as overheating, water scarcity and flood risk by introducing measures to reduce vulnerability and improve resilience through limiting greenhouse gases, supporting renewable and low carbon energy, reusing existing resources and converting existing buildings”.

- 23) The NPPF sets out at Paragraph 162 that plans are required to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, in line with the objectives of the Climate Change Act 2008.

- 24) The NPPF sets out at Paragraph 164 (b) that new development should be planned for in ways which help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and that any local requirements for the sustainability of buildings should reflect the Government’s policy for national technical standards.

- 25) The NPPF sets out at Paragraph 165 for plans to prepare a positive strategy which support the increased use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy. The plans should aim to maximise opportunities for this development by identifying suitable locations and supporting the necessary infrastructure needed to deliver these technologies, whilst ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately. Opportunities for decentralised energy networks and co-location of heat suppliers and users are also encouraged.

2.2 Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance for Climate Change

- 26) The Climate Change section of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) outlines how the planning system should support the transition to a low-carbon future, strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change, and promote sustainable patterns of development. It provides guidance on integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation into plan-making and decision-taking, ensuring that Local Plans reflect national policy objectives while responding to local circumstances and environmental priorities.
- 27) PPG paragraph 001, Reference ID: 6-001-20140306 identifies addressing climate change as a core principle of land use planning, which should underpin plan-making in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. It highlights the statutory duty for local authorities to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, consistent with the objectives of the Climate Change Act 2008, and to work collaboratively to deliver these strategic priorities.
- 28) PPG paragraph 002, Reference ID: 6-002-20140306 highlights that Section 19(1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires local plans to have
- “policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority’s area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change”*
- 29) PPG paragraph 003, Reference ID: 6-003-20140612 provides the following examples of mitigation/adaption approaches to Local Plans:

Mitigation:

- *Reducing the need to travel and providing for sustainable transport*
- *Providing opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy technologies*
- *Providing opportunities for decentralised energy and heating*
- *Promoting low carbon design approaches to reduce energy consumption in buildings, such as passive solar design.*

Adaptation:

- *Considering future climate risks when allocating development sites to ensure risks are understood over the development’s lifetime*
- *Considering the impact of and promoting design responses to flood risk and coastal change for the lifetime of the development*
- *Considering availability of water and water infrastructure for the lifetime of the development and design responses to promote water efficiency and protect water quality*

- *Promoting adaptation approaches in design policies for developments and the public realm*

- 30) PPG paragraph 004, Reference ID: 6-004-20140612 highlights planning authorities should integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures through solutions that deliver multiple benefits, whilst avoiding maladaptation.
- 31) PPG paragraph 007, Reference ID: 6-007-20140306 states that local planning authorities should identify appropriate mitigation measures in plan-making through robust evaluation of future emissions. Particular attention should be given to sustainable transport solutions and can be tested through a sustainability appraisal.
- 32) PPG paragraph 009, Reference ID: 6-009-20150327 advises that where local authorities set local requirements for a building's sustainability, this should be done in line with the government's zero carbon buildings policy.

Planning Practice Guidance for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

- 33) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy supports the implementation of national planning policy by providing guidance on the planning considerations for renewable and low carbon energy development. It advises local planning authorities on preparing policies that encourage the deployment of renewable and low carbon technologies while balancing environmental, social, and economic considerations. The guidance supports the preparation of Local Plans by ensuring that policies identify suitable opportunities for renewable energy development, contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and help deliver local and national net zero objectives.
- 34) PPG paragraph 001, Reference ID: 5-001-20140306 identifies that the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure as important changes for national energy security, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and economic growth.
- 35) PPG paragraph 003, Reference ID: 5-003-20140306 recognises the importance of green energy for local communities but emphasises that environmental protection must not be overridden. Local plans should consider what local potential there is for green energy generation.
- 36) PPG paragraph 004, Reference ID: 5-004-20140306 makes clear that

“local planning authorities may wish to establish policies which give positive weight to renewable and low carbon energy initiatives which have clear evidence of local community involvement and leadership”.
- 37) PPG paragraph 005, Reference ID: 5-005-20150618 gives guidance on how local planning authorities can identify areas for new renewable and low carbon energy development, highlighting that the requirements of technology and the cumulative impacts and environmental impacts should all be considered.

- 38) PPG paragraph 009, Reference ID: 5-009-20140306 outlines how the planning system can identify opportunities for decentralised energy, including district heating networks, through the location and design of development and the generation and recovery of waste heat.

2.3 The National Design Guide

- 39) The National Design Guide³ details the characteristics of well-designed places and explains what good design means in practice. It forms part of planning practice guidance to help local authorities, communities, and developers create high-quality new buildings and sustainable neighbourhoods. The National Design Guide, and the National Model Design Code and Guidance Notes for Design Codes illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government's collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.
- 40) The National Design Code provides guidance on the design of new development and supports the implementation of national planning policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. It establishes a framework for creating well-designed, sustainable and locally distinctive places, while promoting climate change mitigation and adaptation through resource efficiency, energy-efficient buildings, resilient places and the careful use of materials. The Code informs the preparation of Local Plans by encouraging local planning authorities to develop design policies that support the transition to net zero, follow the energy hierarchy, reduce whole-life carbon emissions, and ensure new development is resilient to the current and future impacts of climate change, while reflecting the character, identity and aspirations of the local area.
- 41) The National Design Code Paragraph 36 identifies ten characteristics of well-designed places, which together work positively to address environmental issues affecting climate.
- 42) At paragraph 67 the guide sets out that the built form of well-designed places should support resource efficiency and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- 43) Paragraph 135 well-designed places and buildings should conserve natural resources, including land, water, energy and materials. Development should be energy efficient, minimise carbon emissions, reduce greenhouse gases and embodied carbon and be resilient to climate-related risks such as rising temperature and increased flood risk.

³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

- 44) Paragraph 136 emphasises that compact neighbourhoods with a mix of uses and facilities can reduce energy demand, flood risk, support natural ecosystems and increase carbon sequestration.
- 45) With regards to the energy hierarchy, paragraph 138 sets out that development should follow the energy hierarchy by reducing energy demand through passive design, maximising energy efficiency, and prioritising renewable and low-carbon energy sources. The role of heat pumps, heat recovery and on-site renewable energy generation is emphasised.
- 46) Paragraph 141 states a whole-life carbon approach is supported, promoting the reduction of embodied carbon and waste through the principles of the circular economy, including the reuse and recycling of materials.
- 47) Furthermore, relating to energy efficiency, paragraph 142 states that “Good developments minimise the cost of running buildings and are easy and affordable for occupants to use and manage.”
- 48) With regards to materials and construction techniques, paragraph 143 of highlights that the selection of materials and construction can influence the energy efficiency and embodied carbon of a new building.

2.4 The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Heat Network Zones

- 49) The Government has published a study: ‘Heat network zone opportunity report: Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)’ . The report identifies heat networks as a major opportunity to help Greater Manchester meet its 2038 carbon neutrality target, with 80 potential heat network zones identified across the city region and an estimated annual heat demand of 4,650 GWh. Ten of these are classified as strategic zones, including Stockport, with the initial opportunities across Greater Manchester estimated to save around 300 ktCO₂e per year.
- 50) For Stockport, the report highlights the Town Centre as a strategic heat network opportunity centred on major heat users such as Stepping Hill Hospital, Merseyway Shopping Centre, Stockport College and council buildings. The proposed Stockport Town Centre Initial Zone Opportunity could connect around 100 GWh/year of heat demand, drawing on low-carbon heat sources including sewer heat, the River Mersey and potentially waste heat.
- 51) The report also emphasises that Stockport's significant regeneration pipeline and Mayoral Development Corporation mean the town's future heat demand is likely to be greater than the figures presented in the report.

2.5 Local evidence

Climate and Nature (CAN) Strategy 2025

- 52) The vision set out in the CAN strategy is as follows:

“Stockport will be a climate and nature-friendly place to live, work, play and invest. Every child will grow up in a healthy environment with good jobs, homes, and services. There will be clean, green transport and accessible parks and areas for nature.

Stockport will be ready for whatever changes and opportunities will come in the future, and will be prepared for the impacts of extreme weather events. People across Stockport will collaborate and contribute to climate and nature actions.”

- 53) The policy approach in the Local Plan has been informed by the CAN Strategy, for this section of the topic paper, the following commitments are of particular relevance:

Low Carbon Buildings

- We will ensure that future homes and buildings are well-designed, enabling a carbon neutral borough and resilience to a changing climate.
- We will work with key partners to support innovation in construction methods and materials to bring about transformational reductions in embodied carbon.

Renewable Energy

- We are working with our partners to maximise opportunities for renewable energy generation. We will partner with developers to initiate innovative funding approaches to enable net positive developments.
- We will expand our work with communities to explore, develop and increase community energy projects within the borough.
- We will expand green jobs, skills and supply chains to meet demand for renewable energy by 2030 by working with partners and stakeholders; building on the Mayoral Development Corporation construction hub development.

- 54) Policies in Local Plan will therefore help to deliver against these commitments.

- 55) Building upon the strategic policies, in particular Strategic Policy 3, a suite of policies been drafted to holistically respond to the challenges posed by the climate emergency. The ‘Climate Resilient’ policies focus on the need to significantly reduce carbon emissions (‘mitigation’) and adapt to a changing climate with associated more frequent occurrences of extreme weather events including heat waves, droughts, storms, and floods. A summary of these policies is included below.

56) It is important to note that many of the issues associated with the climate emergency are also considered in other parts of the plan, in particular policies relating to:

- The Natural Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Built Environment – in particular design of new development
- Flooding
- Drainage
- Sustainable Transport

Net Zero Carbon Policy Study 2026

57) The purpose of this evidence is to provide the technical and viability evidence to support new planning policies in the Local Plan requiring lower operational energy use, design-led embodied carbon reductions, and the greater provision of on-site renewable energy generation. It supports Stockport's commitment to achieve borough-wide carbon neutrality by 2038 and is contextualised against our legal requirements set out in the Climate Change Act 2008, the Planning and Energy Act 2008, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and the NPPF.

58) This project is comprised of two interrelated studies, and a high summary report. Collectively they explore how policy can lead to new buildings being designed and built to reduce energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (often known as 'carbon') together with supporting the borough's long-term climate goals in line with the declaration of a climate emergency. The work is focussed on new build development rather than conversions, due to the complexity of high-performance retrofit; conversions will need to comply with the legal minimum imposed by building regulations.

59) One report dives into the detail of carbon associated with the energy used for the typical day to day running of new buildings, known as the 'operational energy'. It suggests policy approaches that seek to minimise energy use and consequently carbon emissions. It recommends absolute performance metrics instead of the minimum imposed by building regulations, with policies focussed on 'space heating demand' (SHD) and 'energy use intensity' (EUI). Meeting these metrics, taking into account local weather conditions and insulation needed for buildings, is costed and fed into the whole plan viability appraisal. Consideration is given to the role of district heat networks in providing low carbon heat, and policy requirements to help support this for new build schemes.

60) The other main report provides evidence on the carbon emissions associated with the energy used to create new buildings, including the use of materials, construction and transport. In doing so, the evidence responds to a policy gap: building regulations do not currently regulate 'embodied carbon', so local planning policy is required to act. As an emerging area of work, policy approaches are suggested for inclusion within the Local Plan that focus on a design-led approach to minimise these emissions, and expressed as kilograms of carbon

dioxide (equivalent) per square metre of new floorspace. As with the companion study, information is provided on the technical and cost evidence base to reduce embodied carbon in new development. Concepts are introduced on how building design can be assessed through the planning application process, in line with emerging best practice across the country.

- 61) An overview is provided of other authorities where recently adopted local policies have been approved and used successfully for a number of years. The suggested policy approach for Stockport aligns with these examples from elsewhere.
- 62) The work concludes by providing advice on implementation of both the operational energy policies and embodied carbon policies, and show casing real life examples of successful low carbon buildings.
- 63) The findings of this study have been used to refine the Local Plan policies since consultation took place on the regulation 18 draft Local Plan in autumn 2025.

Stockport Local Area Energy Plan 2022

- 64) The Stockport Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) aims to define the extent of the transformation needed across Stockport and provide a robust evidence base and plan to help engage businesses and citizens in accelerating towards GM's carbon neutrality goal of 2038. It outlines the specific local technical and financial roadmap needed to transition Stockport's energy system to net-zero carbon emissions by Greater Manchester's target of 2038.

Energy and Carbon Study 2020

- 65) The study integrates existing work, local and national plans. It builds on these to provide an evidence base and planning policy recommendations to support potential pathways to carbon neutrality in Stockport by 2038.
- 66) To help the development of the Local Plan, this study provides an update on existing work in the Stockport and Greater Manchester area. It reflects the changing policy landscape and our increased level of ambition relating to design standards for:
 - new development, including Passivhaus
 - low carbon heating technologies, including district heating
 - community renewable energy schemes
 - electric vehicles
 - energy storage

- 67) Please note: many of the policy recommendations in the Energy and Carbon Study 2020 have been superseded by the more recently prepared Net Zero Carbon Policy Study 2026, however the study remains a valid part of the evidence base.

A district heat network for Stockport

- 68) Decarbonising heat is one of the most significant challenges in achieving net zero carbon emissions. Heating existing buildings accounts for a substantial proportion of local carbon emissions and, while improvements in building fabric and energy efficiency can reduce demand, achieving deep reductions in emissions will also require a transition away from fossil fuel heating systems. Heat networks have the potential to play an important role in this transition, particularly in areas of higher heat demand density such as town centres and mixed-use regeneration areas.
- 69) The UK is legally committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Heat networks currently account for approximately 3% of the nation's heat supply, but government projections suggest they could meet up to 20% of heat demand by 2050. Supporting this transition, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) has set an ambition to decarbonise the heating sector by up to 36% by 2038, alongside its wider goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2038.
- 70) Stockport was identified by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) as an area ready to deliver heat network plans at pace and scale. Stockport Council, the Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and other key partners are working together to shift to low-carbon energy across the borough under the Advanced Zoning Programme (AZP). 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.
- 71) The adopted Core Strategy supports district heating through Policy SD-4, which encourages developments to connect to existing networks, be designed for future connection, or provide site-wide heat networks capable of future expansion. This approach was supported by evidence identifying areas with the greatest potential for decentralised energy infrastructure. The policy was supported by the 'Energy Opportunities Plan' in the Core Strategy which identified areas where decentralised energy and district heating infrastructure could be most successfully developed.
- 72) Stockport has explored opportunities for district heating and heat networks for over a decade. While no network has yet been delivered, substantial regeneration activity in and around the town centre led by the Mayoral Development Corporation, emerging national initiatives and advances in low carbon heating technologies have strengthened the case for a renewed policy approach.

- 73) Evidence developed around 2010-2011 examined the feasibility of district heating systems, heat demand distribution, potential anchor loads and opportunities for decentralised energy generation across Stockport. These studies identified a number of locations where heat networks could be technically viable and provided an important foundation for the policy approach set out in the Core Strategy.
- 74) The subsequent Energy and Carbon Evidence Study (2020) examined borough-wide energy demand, future energy consumption trends, renewable energy opportunities and the implications of electrification. The study identified areas of concentrated heat demand that may be suitable for district heating and recognised the challenges associated with future electricity grid capacity. It also highlighted the role of public buildings and other significant heat users as potential anchor loads for future networks.
- 75) However, the 2020 evidence was primarily focused on energy demand and infrastructure considerations. It did not fully consider the implications of emerging net zero development standards, the relationship between heat networks and highly energy-efficient buildings, or the viability impacts associated with delivering net zero carbon development.
- 76) More recent work in the DESNZ study identifies the potential for a strategic low carbon heat network centred on Stockport Town Centre. The network could initially serve major public sector buildings, residential developments, education facilities, healthcare uses and regeneration sites, with scope for future expansion. Current feasibility work indicates that low carbon heat could be supplied from sewer-source heat recovery, supported by additional plant for resilience and peak demand. The network is intended to achieve a delivered heat carbon intensity below 100gCO₂e/kWh.
- 77) In 2026, the Council commissioned a new 'Net Zero Carbon Policy Study', comprised of two pieces of work considering operational energy and embodied carbon to support Local Plan policy development. These studies focus on the design and performance of new development and assessed the practical and cost implications of achieving net zero carbon standards. Importantly, the operational energy study considers the interaction between building energy use intensity (EUI) targets and connection to low carbon heat networks. It concludes that buildings connected to district heat networks require a modest additional EUI allowance to account for the way heat network energy consumption is measured, including distribution losses. Without such an allowance, developments connecting to heat networks could be disadvantaged relative to buildings served by individual low carbon heating technologies.

Greater Manchester Strategy

- 78) The Greater Manchester Strategy⁴ (2025) sets out a collective vision for the next decade, to be a “thriving city region where everyone can live a good life.” The strategy has seven workstreams that will be delivered in a way that “ensures a greener, more equal future for all”, and a continued commitment reach carbon neutrality by 2038.

Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan

- 79) The Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan⁵ creates a framework to progress towards our long-term environmental vision and ensure everyone in Greater Manchester has a healthy, low carbon, nature-rich environment in which to live-well, prosper and grow. The vision is that Greater Manchester will be a nature-rich and carbon neutral city region where all citizens have access to affordable renewable energy, warm climate resilient homes, high quality blue and green spaces, healthy and locally produced food, and a reliable, integrated, inclusive, sustainable and affordable transport system, where avoidable waste is significantly reduced.

2.6 Our policy approach to net zero development

- 80) There is substantial national legislation, policy and guidance that supports the policy direction proposed for Stockport, of particular note being The Climate Change Act, PPG and the National Design Guide.
- 81) In line with the findings of the Net Zero Carbon Policy Study, a number of policies in the Local Plan have been updated to reflect the findings of that study, and also the wider findings of the ‘Whole Plan Viability Assessment.’
- 82) **Policy CR 1 ‘Climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation’** retains a focus on promoting sustainable design and construction, however it has been reviewed to remove references to sustainable standards such as PassivHaus, NABERS and BREEAM, and instead these have been including in the supporting text.
- 83) **Policy CR 2 ‘Energy efficiency, resources and carbon’** has been amended with the refinement of approach relating to operational energy and embodied carbon for the borough of Stockport. As a result of this new evidence and viability

⁴ See <https://togetherwearegm.co.uk/our-vision/greater-manchester-strategy/>

⁵ See <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/five-year-environment-plan/>

considerations, the main changes to the policy since regulation 18 can be summarised as:

- There is a requirement to use a nationally recognised predictive energy model to demonstrate space heating demand and energy use intensity, such as Passive House Planning Package (PHPP) for residential and PHPP or TM54 for non-residential.
 - A stepped approach over time (up to and after 1 January 2030) has been introduced for metrics relating to space heating demand and energy use intensity. This stepped approach allows for upskilling in the local construction industry and to respond to the current challenges regarding viability.
 - Upfront targets for embodied carbon have been introduced for residential buildings and use class E
 - The requirement to contribute into a carbon offset fund has been removed.
- 84) **Policy CR 3 ‘Renewable Energy Development’** has been refined, with the requirement for solar panels on new buildings instead set out in policy CR 2.
- 85) **Policy CR 4 ‘Heat Networks and Cooling’** is explained in more detail in the section below.
- 86) **Policy CR 5 ‘Retrofit and re-use of buildings’** remains similar to the regulation 18 document but has been updated to have a greater focus on the consideration of heritage assets to reflect stakeholder comments/feedback.

2.7 Our policy approach to heat networks

- 87) The Local Plan seeks to establish a framework that supports the delivery of heat networks where they represent an effective means of reducing carbon emissions. The evidence indicates that heat networks are most likely to be feasible within areas of concentrated heat demand, particularly in and around Stockport Town Centre. Recognising the findings of the 2026 operational energy evidence, the policy also allows a limited increase in Energy Use Intensity targets for developments connecting to qualifying low carbon heat networks. This ensures that connection to strategic low carbon heat infrastructure is not unintentionally discouraged by operational energy performance standards.
- 88) The proposed policy requires major development within identified heat network areas to connect to existing or planned networks unless it can be demonstrated that doing so would be technically infeasible or financially unviable.
- 89) The policy requires new and retrofitted heat networks to:
- use low carbon heat sources;
 - achieve a delivered heat carbon intensity below 100gCO₂e/kWh;

- be designed to allow future expansion;
- maximise opportunities to use surplus or waste heat; and
- comply with relevant technical assurance standards.

90) Heat networks are expected to form an important part of Stockport's wider heat decarbonisation strategy. The proposed policy builds on over a decade of evidence and policy development and provides a framework to support the delivery of low carbon heat infrastructure, particularly within areas of high heat demand and significant growth.

91) It is important to note that emerging legislation for heat networks may supersede the role of planning and may mandate certain types of developments needing to connect to the heat network. Whilst this legislation is evolving, the Local Plan policy will remain the principal mechanism for supporting heat decarbonisation across the town centre.

3. Part B: green infrastructure, ecology and nature recovery

3.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

92) This topic paper has been prepared with regard to the 2024 version of the NPPF, in accordance with Annex A of the August 2026 NPPF.

93) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises green infrastructure as an essential component of sustainable development. It supports the protection, enhancement and strategic provision of green infrastructure to promote healthy communities, improve biodiversity and environmental quality, support climate change mitigation and adaptation, manage flood risk, enhance urban environments, and deliver wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

94) The NPPF sets out at paragraph 20 the following:

“Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places and make sufficient provision for:

d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.”

95) The NPPF sets out at paragraph 96 that planning policies should support healthy lives and reduce health inequalities, including through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure.

96) The NPPF sets out at paragraph 125 the following:

“Planning policies and decisions should:

a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains.”

97) The NPPF sets out at paragraph 135 that:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: ...

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space)”

98) The NPPF sets out at paragraph 136 the following:

“Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible."

- 99) The NPPF states at paragraph 162 that plans should support both climate change mitigation and adaptation, taking account of issues such as flood risk, water resources, biodiversity, landscape impacts and increasing temperatures. It also requires policies to promote the long-term resilience of communities and infrastructure to the effects of climate change.

- 100) The NPPF sets out at paragraph 164(a) the following:

"New development should be planned for in ways that:

a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through incorporating green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems."

- 101) The NPPF sets out at paragraph 187(e) that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including by preventing pollution and helping to improve environmental conditions such as air and water quality.

- 102) The NPPF sets out at paragraph 188 the following:

"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."

- 103) The NPPF sets out at paragraph 199 that planning policies and decisions should support compliance with air quality objectives and identify opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts, including through the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure. These opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage to support a strategic approach.

3.2 Planning Practice Guidance

- 104) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for the Natural Environment and the PPG for Healthy and Safe Communities provide supporting guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework and highlight the role of green infrastructure in

promoting healthy lifestyles, enhancing wellbeing, supporting biodiversity, addressing climate change and flood risk, and delivering wider environmental, social and economic benefits. It also encourages the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure through evidence-based planning policies and strategies.

Planning Practice Guidance for Natural Environment

105) PPG paragraph 005, Reference ID: 8-005-20190721 states that green infrastructure provides benefits at a range of scales. At the community level, this includes enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk.

106) PPG paragraph 006, Reference ID: 8-006-20190721 states that:

“Green infrastructure can help in:

Building a strong, competitive economy

Green infrastructure can drive economic growth and regeneration, helping to create high quality environments which are attractive to businesses and investors.

Achieving well-designed places

The built environment can be enhanced by features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces. More broadly, green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty.

Promoting healthy and safe communities

Green infrastructure can improve the wellbeing of a neighbourhood with opportunities for recreation, exercise, social interaction, experiencing and caring for nature, community food-growing and gardening, all of which can bring mental and physical health benefits. Outdoor Recreation Value (ORVal) is a useful online tool that can be used to quantify the recreational values provided by greenspace. Green infrastructure can help to reduce health inequalities in areas of socio-economic deprivation and meet the needs of families and an ageing population. It can also help to reduce air pollution and noise.

Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change

Green infrastructure can contribute to carbon storage, cooling and shading, opportunities for species migration to more suitable habitats and the protection of water quality and other natural resources. It can also be an integral part of multifunctional sustainable drainage and natural flood risk management.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

High-quality networks of multifunctional green infrastructure contribute a range of benefits, including ecological connectivity, facilitating biodiversity net gain and nature recovery networks and opportunities for communities to undertake conservation work.”

107) PPG paragraph 007, Reference ID: 8-007-20190721 states that:

“Strategic policies can identify the location of existing and proposed green infrastructure networks and set out appropriate policies for their protection and enhancement. To inform these, and support their implementation, green infrastructure frameworks or strategies prepared at a district-wide scale (or wider) can be a useful tool. These need to be evidence-based and include assessments of the quality of current green infrastructure and any gaps in provision. Existing national and local strategies – for example on tree and woodland provision – can inform the approach to green infrastructure; and standards such as the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard can be applied when assessing provision.”

Planning Practice Guidance for Healthy and Safe Communities

108) PPG paragraph 001, Reference ID:53-001-20190722 states that the design of built environments, including green infrastructure, contributes to healthier communities by supporting and encouraging healthy lifestyles.

3.3 The National Design Guide

109) The National Design Guide⁶ details the characteristics of well-designed places and explains what good design means in practice. It forms part of planning practice guidance to help local authorities, communities, and developers create high-quality new buildings and sustainable neighbourhoods. The National Design Guide, and the National Model Design Code and Guidance Notes for Design Codes illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government’s collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.

110) The National Design Guide sets out at paragraph 77 that a well-designed movement network should incorporate green infrastructure, including street trees, to soften the impact of parking areas, improve air quality and support biodiversity.

111) Paragraph 90 sets out that nature is a critical component of well-designed places and contributes to quality of life. It highlights the importance of integrating natural

⁶ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

features into development, public open spaces, trees, planting and water features.

- 112) The National Design Guide states at paragraph 91 that well-designed places should integrate existing and new natural features into multifunctional networks that support biodiversity, water management, climate change mitigation and resilience. It also emphasises the need to prioritise nature and enable diverse ecosystems to flourish.
- 113) Paragraph 92 emphasises the role of creating a network of high quality, green open spaces, which should be designed taking into account:
- *“the wider and local context, including existing landscape and ecology;*
 - *access;*
 - *how spaces are connected;*
 - *the balance between public and private open spaces – see Public spaces;*
 - *their potential to contribute to a strategic green infrastructure system, and to water management – see below;*
 - *their ability to support a range of activities and provide amenity value; and*
 - *how they are to be managed and maintained.”*
- 114) Paragraph 98 sets out that well-designed developments should deliver biodiversity net gains through site-specific enhancements and the protection and enhancement of valuable habitats. It notes that green corridors can play an important role in extending and strengthening ecological networks.

3.4 The Lawton Report

- 115) ‘The Lawton Review’, officially titled ‘Making Space for Nature: A review of England’s Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network’, was submitted to the government on September 16, 2010. This report had immediate impact on national policy, leading to the publication of the 25-Year Environment Plan in 2018: ‘A Green Future: Our 25-Year Plan to Improve the Environment’ sets out what the government will do to improve the environment, the Biodiversity 2020 strategy, and the enactment of the Environment Act 2021 which introduced mandatory biodiversity net gain and the requirement to prepare Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).
- 116) Importantly, the report established the principles of creating “more, bigger, better, and joined-up” spaces for nature, which are often referred to as the ‘Lawton Principles’.

3.5 The Green Infrastructure Framework (2023)

- 117) Natural England launched the Green Infrastructure Framework⁷ in 2023. The framework aims to improve the quality, quantity, and accessibility of green infrastructure (GI). The framework places an emphasis on increasing the extent and connectivity of green spaces to support and increase wildlife populations, promote resilience against the impacts of climate change, and ensure cities are habitable for future generations. It is comprised of five parts, each designed to support and encourage different elements of green infrastructure.
- 118) The first part of the framework is Green Infrastructure Principles⁸. These principles provide the baseline for how to develop and deliver GI.
- 119) The second part of the framework is the Green Infrastructure Standards⁹. This document provides guidance on the national standards for GI quantity and quality, ensuring that GI is integrated into urban and rural environments. The five Headline Green Infrastructure Standards are:
- Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard - Local authorities should work with stakeholders and the local community to assess and plan GI provision that conforms with the 15 GI principles (adapting where appropriate).
 - Accessible Greenspace Standard - Ensure everyone has good access to high-quality green space (at least 3 hectares per 1,000 people)
 - Urban Nature Recovery Standard - Increase the proportion of GI designed for natural recovery.
 - Urban Greening Factor Standard - A planning tool to increase the level of greening in urban environments and ensure there is no net loss of green cover (Urban Greening Factor is an alternative term for Green Space Factor).
 - Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard - Increase urban tree canopy cover based.
- 120) The third part of the framework is the Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide. The document provides practical, evidence-based guidance on how to design and create good quality, multifunctional GI. The design guide outlines how to apply the Green Infrastructure Principles and Standards to support the creation of a multifunctional, connected green network. Furthermore, it outlines how requirements such as Biodiversity Net Gain and tools such as the Urban Greening Factor can benefit the design of quality GI.
- 121) The fourth part of the framework are Green Infrastructure Maps. The maps outline environmental and socio-economic data to support the GI standards. They can be

⁷ See <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/>

⁸ See

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Principles/GIPrinciples.aspx>

⁹ See <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/GIStandards.aspx>

used to identify areas where there is a deficiency in green infrastructure provision and highlight areas where intervention is most needed.

- 122) The fifth part of the framework is the Green Infrastructure Process Journey. This document provides information on how to apply the Green Infrastructure Framework and develop GI-informed policy, strategy, delivery, and management. The document's aim is to integrate green infrastructure into new developments and improve the management of existing GI, referring to the Natural England Green Infrastructure Principles, Standards, Design Guide, and Mapping Database.

Natural England's Urban Greening Factor

- 123) As introduced above, Natural England's Urban Greening Factor Standard¹⁰ sets a target score for the proportion of green infrastructure in an area. It can be introduced through planning policies and can be applied to an entire local planning area or to specific locations. The Urban Greening Factor score provides a simple means to measure and compare green infrastructure design proposals and demonstrate whether a scheme achieves the target score set by planning policy.
- 124) The score is calculated using a set of weighted green infrastructure surface cover types that include natural and semi-natural vegetation, street trees, hedgerows, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls. The area of each surface cover type is multiplied by a weighting, and the sum of these figures is divided by the total area, using the Excel spreadsheet provided by Natural England.
- 125) The Urban Greening Factor can be used alongside Biodiversity Net Gain. Where the baseline biodiversity is low, the Urban Greening Factor can ensure development still promotes more nature-rich environments that increase the functionality, sustainability, and climate resilience, particularly in dense urban areas.
- 126) Natural England has set the following Urban Greening Factor Standards:

Area-wide standard: Urban greening is at least 40% average green cover in urban residential neighbourhoods where they do not already meet that standard. There is no net loss of green cover in urban neighbourhoods.

Major development standard: Major development meets National Urban Greening Factors of at least 0.3 for commercial development, 0.4 for residential development, (and, where appropriate, 0.5 for residential greenfield development).

¹⁰ See

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/UrbanGreeningFactorStandard.aspx>

Natural England's Green Infrastructure Mapping

- 127) Natural England's Green Infrastructure Mapping Database¹¹ provides an England-wide spatial evidence base to help local authorities, planners, and communities identify where green and blue spaces are lacking. Its primary purpose is to target investment toward low-income or deprived neighbourhoods with poor access to nature
- 128) The Green Infrastructure mapping tool can be used to overlay different data sets, for exempling two sets of data to illustrate access to greenspace within 200 metres of where people live related to the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

3.6 Local evidence

Climate and Nature (CAN) Strategy 2025

- 129) The policy approach in the Local Plan has been informed by the CAN Strategy, for this section of the topic paper, the following commitments are of particular relevance:

Nature Based Solutions

- We will work with partners, communities and stakeholders to develop and install nature-based solutions to reduce the risk and impact of flooding and the risk of the urban heat island effect.
 - We will maximise opportunities to embed nature-based solutions into town centre regeneration, including how to increase and enhance green spaces.
 - This will provide more flora that promote increased groundwater absorption to manage water effectively.
 - We will encourage the use of nature-based solutions on new developments to help Stockport become more resilient to extreme weather events.
- 130) Policies in Local Plan will therefore help to deliver against these commitments.
- 131) Building upon Strategic Policy 3, a suite of policies been drafted for the Local Plan to holistically respond to the challenges posed by the biodiversity emergency. The 'Natural Environment' policies focus on the need to protect and enhance nature, with consideration of statutory designations, urban greening, ecological networks, the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy, landscape and soils. A

¹¹ See <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Map.aspx>

summary of how key policies relate to their associated evidence, in particular for to green infrastructure, ecology and nature recovery, is included below.

Stockport's Ecological Network

- 132) To support the emerging Local Plan and develop a strategic approach to borough-wide green infrastructure, a study was undertaken in-house to establish a coherent ecological network and establish linkages and opportunities for enhancement. The study describes how a coherent, evidence-based ecological network has been established for the borough.
- 133) As part of the methodology, a review of the 2006 Adopted UDP Green Chain designation was undertaken, and interrelationships between adjoining authorities' ecological corridors were considered. Ecological assets were identified including designated sites and notable habitats, GM priority habitats and species, and open space data. Green Chain designations which fell outside of these ecological assets layer were individually considered in terms of ecological functionality in line with the Lawton principles of resources being “bigger, better, more and joined up”.
- 134) Identified ecological assets were subdivided to ‘Core’, ‘Linear Corridors’, ‘Stepping Stones’ and ‘Opportunity Areas’ using spatial analysis led by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) This data was used as the starting point to define a more localised network, which was led by the Council’s Ecologist. The data was further refined to give realistic boundaries, providing a more local and contextual result.
- 135) The opportunity areas are at a strategic level and provide a marker for the more detailed Ecological Study for the Borough, prepared by Land Use Consulting (LUC) to investigate further in terms of their opportunities to enhance biodiversity.
- 136) The Stockport town centre living area has been identified as an ‘area of search’ owing to this area being identified for large scale residential development and the results of the ecological network highlight it to be fragmented from the network. The area’s close proximity to the River Valleys and the presence of the River Mersey provides a perfect opportunity for its connection to the network to be more established and creation of biodiversity assets to be realised through its redevelopment.
- 137) Buffers have been applied to the River Valleys owing to their important role within the Ecological Network and their species rich habitat. The River Mersey has been plotted with a 10m buffer in order to help reform the connectivity across the town centre.
- 138) The purpose of the opportunity areas are to enhance connectivity, resilience and the functioning of the ecological network. The ecological corridor and opportunity

areas can be considered to form a coherent ecological network for Stockport and fulfil the requirements of the NPPF with regards to biodiversity.

- 139) Functional connectivity of the ecological network refers to the ability of different species to move through the landscape, whilst taking into consideration their dispersal capabilities, behaviours and habitat requirements. This is considered alongside the characteristics of different habitats and the degree to which different habitat parcels are linked. Opportunities to increase connectivity across the ecological network by linking up habitats and thus facilitate dispersal of species and increase habitat resilience contributes towards strengthening the borough's wider green infrastructure network, natural capital and provides gains to the natural environment as a whole.

Stockport Urban Greening Factor Case Studies

- 140) A high-level retrospective review has been done on local planning applications that have been granted consent, to understand how the proposed introduction of a local UGF might impact the design and landscaping of future development.
- 141) 9 developments within Stockport were evaluated to understand how the Urban Greening Factor might be used in the borough. These planning applications received consent over the period May 2023 to May 2024, and each of them is a major planning application, reflecting the threshold proposed within the Local Plan policy. The case studies focus on developments in the urban areas, and town centre, due to the potentially constrained nature of these sites, issues with contamination and potential issues with viability. No residential schemes for greenfield sites have been assessed, due to the anticipated high levels of existing green infrastructure on site, and the ability to retain or enhance those features as part of proposed developments.
- 142) In line with the standard established by Natural England, different scores are provided for different surface cover types, with scores assigned between 0 and 1. The different weighting of surface cover types encourages the use of high-quality greening, rather than large areas of low-quality features.
- 143) To calculate an overall score for a scheme, the various surface cover types are measured and multiplied by their factor score and then totalled. This total is then divided by the site area to calculate the overall UGF score.
- 144) For example, Semi-natural vegetation and wetlands retained on site (including existing / mature trees) has the maximum factor of 1.0, whereas green roofs score between 0.8-0.3, and open aggregate and granular paving scores 0.02. Sealed paving (including concrete and asphalt scores 0.0).

145) To calculate habitat types and areas, landscape plans were imported into our geographical information system (GIS) and georeferenced. The habitats were plotted for each type, areas calculated and then converted using the UGF tool.

146) The sites were assessed using Natural England's UGF scoring and surface cover definitions, with judgement made regarding proposed landscaping features. This benchmarking exercise indicates that schemes that have been granted planning permission are achieving UGF scores in the range of 0.13 to 0.53.

- Residential schemes on brownfield sites have a typical score of 0.34.
- Non-residential schemes have a typical score of 0.36.

Planning reference: DC/076341

Location: St Ann's Hospice, Heald Green

Development description: New hospice facility and up to 40 dwellings

Indicative UGF score: 0.45

Commentary: Exceeds both the proposed residential (0.4) and non-residential (0.3) UGF targets.

Planning reference: DC/079227

Location: Former Springmount Mill, Edgeley

Development description: 202 apartments with landscaping and amenity space

Indicative UGF score: 0.24

Commentary: Below the proposed residential UGF target of 0.4.

Planning reference: DC/085887

Location: Former Woodford Aerodrome, Woodford

Development description: Mixed-use local centre comprising commercial floorspace and 6 apartments

Indicative UGF score: 0.26

Commentary: Below the proposed residential and non-residential UGF targets.

Planning reference: DC/085997

Location: Focus School, Heaton Mersey

Development description: 10 houses and 72 retirement apartments

Indicative UGF score: 0.53

Commentary: Significantly exceeds the proposed residential UGF target of 0.4.

Planning reference: DC/086026

Location: Orrishmere Primary School, Cheadle Hulme

Development description: SEN secondary school with associated landscaping

Indicative UGF score: 0.44

Commentary: Exceeds the proposed non-residential UGF target of 0.3.

Planning reference: DC/088401

Location: Corner of Chestergate & King Street West, Stockport

Development description: Residential redevelopment

Indicative UGF score: 0.13

Commentary: Substantially below the proposed residential UGF target of 0.4, town centre location.

Planning reference: DC/089009

Location: Trinity Methodist Church, Davenport

Development description: Retirement living housing development

Indicative UGF score: 0.53

Commentary: Significantly exceeds the proposed residential UGF target of 0.4.

Planning reference: DC090411

Location: Kenwood Point, Reddish

Development description: Data centre development

Indicative UGF score: 0.27

Commentary: Marginally below the proposed non-residential UGF target of 0.3.

Planning reference: DC094653

Location: Victoria House and Fletcher Street Car Park, Stockport

Development description: 245 residential dwellings

Indicative UGF score: 0.29

Commentary: Below the proposed residential UGF target of 0.4, town centre location.

- 147) The assessment demonstrates that a range of major developments within Stockport have achieved UGF scores both above and below the proposed policy thresholds. Schemes achieving the highest scores generally incorporate substantial areas of soft landscaping, retained vegetation, tree planting, and other high-scoring surface cover types. In contrast, developments within constrained urban locations or sites with extensive building footprints and hard surfacing tend to achieve lower scores.
- 148) Overall, the case studies suggest that the proposed policy targets of **0.4 for residential development** and **0.3 for non-residential development** are achievable in many circumstances, particularly where opportunities exist to retain existing vegetation and integrate a diverse range of green infrastructure measures.

- 149) Higher-scoring schemes typically make use of features such as retained vegetation, mature or standard trees in connected tree pits, semi-natural planting, wetlands, open water features, and intensive green roofs. The benchmarking exercise therefore provides evidence that the proposed policy requirements are generally deliverable, whilst recognising that constrained urban sites may face greater challenges in achieving higher UGF scores. Furthermore, whilst no residential greenfield schemes were included within the sample, the findings indicate that if a UGF score of 0.4 can be achieved on a number of brownfield and urban sites, it is likely to be achievable on many greenfield developments where there may be greater opportunities to retain and incorporate existing green infrastructure.

Stockport Open Space Assessment 2026

- 150) Stockport's 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.
- 151) The Open Space Assessment outlines the condition, distribution and overall quality of open space provision in Stockport. In conjunction with the Playing Pitch Strategy and other robust information, the assessment will inform decisions about the need to protect, enhance or increase open space provision through planning decisions.
- 152) Our network of formal and informal open spaces form an important feature of the green infrastructure and ecological network across the borough.

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 153) The 10 authorities across Greater Manchester declared a biodiversity emergency in March 2022.
- 154) The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a statutory document that sets out a shared vision for nature recovery in Greater Manchester, with shared priorities, targets and actions for different habitats and species we can all work towards to help deliver them.
- 155) A Nature Network map has been created for the LNRS that is made up of:
- Core local nature sites - existing valuable areas for nature which include our nature designations; and

- Nature Recovery Opportunity Areas - opportunity areas where action should be focused across the city-region.

- 156) There are some actions that are not mapped, but are applicable across the borough where they are relevant, for example, 'urban actions' are not mapped but are relate to any urban location and all habitat themes can be checked for relevance with regards to unmapped actions that can inform site layout and design.
- 157) The statutory Biodiversity Net Gain metric must take account of the LNRS.
- 158) The Greater Manchester State of Nature report was prepared to communicate the challenges faced by nature across the city-region. The report covers trends in wildlife, the use of land and pressures on nature, the wider benefits we receive from nature and people's access to nature and engagement with it. This report is an important piece of evidence used to inform the preparation of the LNRS.

Greater Manchester Natural Capital Investment Plan

- 159) The Greater Manchester Natural Capital Investment Plan¹² is an innovative plan that will help us encourage investment in our natural environment to secure financial and social returns. The plan has been developed as a result of the Mayor's 2019 Green Summit. The investment plan looks at how the Combined Authority and other stakeholders can work more efficiently in terms of funding and policy/governance effort to: improve health outcomes; improve place; build resilience; support the local economy; conserve and enhance habitats and wildlife; contribute to sustainable travel; improve water quality and flood management; regulate the climate; and improve air quality.

3.7 Our policy approach to Stockport's Ecological Network

- 160) We produced an ecological network for the borough which incorporates existing ecological assets ('core areas'), spaces that improve connectivity between ecological assets ('linear corridors'); these key elements of the ecological network are shown on our policies map. A number of small sites that can act as 'stepping stones' across which certain species can move are held as contextual data, which can be updated on a regular basis, but do not form part of the policies map.

¹² See <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/natural-capital/>

Importantly, the identification of a local ecological network for Stockport helps to support the delivery of the ‘Lawton Principles’ for nature.

- 161) Key elements of Stockport’s Ecological Network are shown on the policies map and are described in policy **ENV 1: Protection of the natural environment**.
- 162) Stockport’s Ecological Network does not replace the statutory role of the LNRS and Nature Network across GM, instead it offers a detailed policy approach for the geographical areas of the borough that have been identified as being of ecological importance locally.

3.8 Our policy approach to Urban Greening

- 163) Policy **ENV 2: Enhancing nature**, is the main policy that sets out our expectations regarding the provision of on-site green infrastructure.
- 164) In Stockport we have opted to incorporate Natural England’s major development standard for urban greening into our emerging Local Plan policy, as it is a clear way for applicants to demonstrate that they are providing sufficient green infrastructure as part of their development proposal. In developing our policy approach, we have opted to make it clear that this applies to larger new build developments, rather than where a proposal is a conversion or change of use. This policy approach takes into account sites that may be constrained by the presence of existing buildings and have limited scope to incorporate green infrastructure levels that complies with the standard.
- 165) Minor planning applications are expected to demonstrate an increase in onsite green infrastructure provision, but this can be done without meeting the standard.
- 166) The case studies detailed elsewhere in this topic paper suggest that the proposed policy targets of **0.4 for residential development** and **0.3 for non-residential development** are achievable in many circumstances, particularly where opportunities exist to retain existing vegetation and integrate a diverse range of green infrastructure measures.
- 167) Using a clear, standardised, national methodology, provides clarity for developers on the expectations regarding the provision of green infrastructure and landscaping. In doing so this not only ensures high-quality place making is delivered, but also delivers against numerous climate and nature related aims.

3.9 Our policy approach to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 168) Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a spatial strategy for nature recovery and sets out a long-term vision for a greener, more biodiverse Greater Manchester. With a reach beyond just the planning process, the LNRS seeks coordinated action from developers, landowners, public bodies and communities to restore habitats and improve biodiversity across Greater Manchester.
- 169) The LNRS is supported by a map, referred to as the Greater Manchester 'Nature Network'. This map consists of 'core' local nature sites, which form the foundation of the network, and nature recovery 'opportunity areas', where habitat creation, restoration and enhancement can improve ecological connectivity. The requirement to protect core local nature sites; enhance their integrity, and improve connectivity in opportunity areas directly reflects the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Lawton Principle of creating habitats that are "bigger, better and more joined-up".
- 170) For implementation of statutory Biodiversity Net Gain, the areas identified in the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy as 'mapped actions in the LNRS Nature Network' are to be categorised as 'formally identified' in local strategy for the purposes of scoring 'strategic significance'.
- 171) Policy **ENV 3: Nature Recovery** is the main policy that supports the enhancement of connectivity of networks for nature as set out in the LNRS. Our policy seeks to support the delivery of the priorities, targets and actions for nature recovery as set out in the LNRS and the accompanying nature network map.
- 172) It is important to note that the Nature Network is not shown on our policies map, but is instead host and updated at a GM level.

4. Part C: flood risk, drainage, and water resources

- 173) This section provides an overview on the topic of ‘blue infrastructure’ focusing on issues including flood risk, drainage, and water resources.
- 174) As required under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is one of the supporting documents to the Local Plan. The main purpose of an SFRA is to provide a strategic overview of flood risk from all sources. This enables effective risk-based planning through the Local Plan including application of the Sequential Test and, where necessary, the Exception Test (as required by planning practice guidance), as well as the determination of subsequent planning applications. The evidence contained within our SFRAs also informs other flood risk management activities and functions by Stockport Council, our partners and stakeholders.
- 175) The most recent National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2) data published by the Environment Agency relating to flood zones 1, 2 and 3 was incorporated into our sites selection methodology which has been used to comprehensively review sites against a number of considerations, including flood risk, before being considered for allocation within the regulation 18 draft Local Plan. This has enabled us to make data informed decisions relating to the risk of flooding on a site-by-site basis. More detail on the site selection process and methodology can be found in the “Development Strategy, Spatial Distribution and Exceptional Circumstances” topic paper.
- 176) The Council commissioned a new Borough wide SFRA Level 1 in early 2026 which has played a key role in refinement of site selection and policy development for the Regulation 19 Local Plan, ensuring that a risk-based approach to flood risk in line with national policy has been applied.
- 177) The SFRAs have informed both the strategic selection of sites and the approach to their potential development, supporting the application of the Sequential Test and ensuring that flood risk considerations are embedded within plan-making.
- 178) The iterative use of SFRA evidence has enabled the Council to refine site options over time. Initial filtering of sites has been supported by strategic flood mapping, while more detailed assessment has informed site-specific conclusions, including the need for FRAs, mitigation or further testing. This approach demonstrates that flood risk has actively influenced which sites are considered suitable for allocation.
- 179) In addition to shaping site selection, SFRA evidence has directly informed policy development, including requirements for sustainable drainage, surface water management and climate resilience. This ensures that the Local Plan not only directs development to appropriate locations but also establishes clear

expectations for managing flood risk within those sites. Together, this demonstrates a clear and transparent relationship between flood risk evidence, integrated appraisal, site allocations and policy choices.

- 180) In relation to the use of water in a sustainable manner, there are key pieces of legislation that mandate this. Section 93A of the Water Industry Act 1991 places a duty on every water undertaker to promote the efficient use of water by its customers. The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) 2017 Regulations (formerly known as the WFD) require improvements in the management of water quality and water resources through River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). It was established to transform water management by placing aquatic ecology at the heart of management decisions.

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework

- 181) **This topic paper has been prepared with regard to the 2024 version of the NPPF, in accordance with Annex A of the August 2026 NPPF.**
- 182) The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans can provide for housing and other development in a sustainable manner. Paragraph 162 states that:

“Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future health and resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.”

4.2 National Framework for Water Resources 2025

- 183) The National Framework for Water Resources¹³ considers water for growth, nature and a resilient future, and explores England's long term water needs, setting out the scale of action needed to ensure resilient supplies and an improved water environment.

¹³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-framework-for-water-resources-2025-water-for-growth-nature-and-a-resilient-future>

184) The modelling of scenarios of population growth, climate change and environmental sustainability reductions demonstrate that without action, there could be a public water supply deficit of up to 5,000 Ml/d by 2055. It identifies various contributing factors namely:

- Environmental sustainability: ‘Reductions in abstraction licences are needed in some catchments to accommodate legal environmental requirements’;
- An increased population: An increase of 8 million people by 2055;
- Improved resilience to drought: ‘By 2040, or earlier, water companies are planning to be resilient to a drought which has a 0.2% chance of occurring in any year’.
- Climate change: ‘The impacts of climate change are already starting to be felt and is likely to have an increasingly bigger impact. There is an urgent need to deliver actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change to protect the environment, improve the resilience of water supplies and to safeguard the economy from future periods of prolonged dry weather and drought.’

185) Appendix B confirms a policy demand target of 110 l/p/d for all households in England by 2050.

4.3 Planning Practice Guidance

Flood risk and coastal change

186) Regarding guidance relating to flood risk, and undertaking strategic flood risk assessments, the PPG includes detailed guidance on how to undertake these. This has been summarised in the recently published strategic flood risk assessment level 1 (SFRA1) for Stockport, and includes a detailed overview of requirements, therefore please read the SFRA1 for more information. Alternatively, please view the guidance online for ‘flood risk and coastal change’¹⁴, or ‘how to prepare a strategic flood risk assessment’¹⁵

Water Efficiency Standards

187) Regarding water efficiency standards¹⁶ in new development, paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 56-014-20150327 sets out the standard that should be applied to new homes, as follows:

¹⁴ See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change>

¹⁵ See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-prepare-a-strategic-flood-risk-assessment>

¹⁶ See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-optional-technical-standards#water-efficiency-standards>

“All new homes already have to meet the mandatory national standard set out in the Building Regulations (of 125 litres/person/day). Where there is a clear local need, local planning authorities can set out Local Plan policies requiring new dwellings to meet the tighter Building Regulations optional requirement of 110 litres/person/day.”

4.4 Regional Evidence

Water Resource Management Plan 2024

- 188) In the North West, the supply of water is split into 4 resource zones. Stockport is served by United Utilities Water (UW) for public water supply and falls within the ‘Strategic Resource Zone’. The Strategic Resource Zone (SRZ) covers the majority of the North West. It serves around 7 million people. Water to the SRZ is supplied from a large system of river sources and reservoirs linked by aqueducts, plus several groundwater sources. The evidence to support the tighter standard for water efficiency in Stockport is not constrained to simply considering the local needs of Stockport but rather the water needs of the SRZ in its entirety.
- 189) UW has published a Water Resource Management Plan 2024 (WRMP24) for the period 2025-2050. This sets out the baseline supply-demand balance for water resources, i.e., the difference between the water demanded and the water that can be supplied within the SRZ. It shows that without the drought supply and demand measures included in the drought plan, there is a potential deficit in the SRZ, of 52.6 Ml/d in 2025/26 and without new interventions this rises to 314 Ml/d by 2049/50.
- 190) Figure 22 of WRMP24 confirms that without any interventions, the SRZ faces a deficit such that available supplies are insufficient to meet demand plus target headroom from 2025 onwards. It is a deficit that covers the future development plan period for Stockport and increases over time.
- 191) It is relevant to note that these figures were calculated in advance of the latest housing figures for the North West which further increase the North West’s annual housing requirement. It is also material to note that the per capita consumption assumed for new properties for the WRMP24 planning period is roughly 110 l/p/d.

Water Resources West

- 192) Stockport is covered by the ‘Water Resources West’ area, and a report known as ‘The Water Resources West (WRW): Water Efficiency in New Homes v2.0’ has

been prepared to help manage water resources across the area. The report¹⁷ recognises that the WRW region faces the second highest pressures on water resources in England, largely due to population growth. At the same time, the abstraction licences of water companies are being reduced. Page 5 states:

‘A consequence of the population and housing growth in our region has meant that water companies have been asked to accommodate the new growth, yet at the same time their abstraction licenses are being reduced. Therefore, it is vital that water companies support and are supported in initiatives to help get 110 l/p/d in planning policies across local authorities in the region, to help meet their requirement to supply their customers. The water companies in Water Resources West are Dwr Cymru Welsh Water, Severn Trent, South Staffs and United Utilities.

‘In preparing your local plan you should consult with your local water supply company on specific local issues which may influence your decision on whether the 110 l/p/d should be applied, even if the area is not classed as being under ‘significant water stress’.

- 193) Together with Stockport’s housing targets which have increased significantly when compare to the Core Strategy, the report for Water Resources West forms a key piece of evidence to justify requiring the water efficiency standards set out in the Local Plan.

North West River Basin Management Plan 2022

- 194) The North West River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2022 update is a statutory plan prepared by the Environment Agency under the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive)(England and Wales) Regulations 2017. It sets out a strategic framework for protecting and improving the water environment across the North West River Basin District. This includes Greater Manchester and water bodies within Stockport Borough.

- 195) The purpose and role of a river basin management plan is set out in Ministerial Guidance, first issued by DEFRA in 2014:

“An RBMP should be a strategic plan which gives everyone concerned with the river basin district a measure of certainty about the future of water management in that district. It will include objectives for each water body and a summary of the programmes of measures necessary to reach those objectives.”

¹⁷ See [Water Efficiency in New Homes](#)

- 196) The RBMP identifies a high percentage of water bodies in the North West as not achieving good ecological status for surface water, with only around 21% reaching “Good” or “High” levels of classification.
- 197) The North West RBMP identifies population growth and climate change as increasing pressures on the water environment. Projected population growth will stimulate demand for water and hotter, drier summers will likely result in increased demand and competition for water resources across areas including the public water supply. agriculture and industry, development, recreation, wildlife and environment.
- 198) Change to the natural flow and water levels is also identified as a current challenge for the North West River Basin. Where water levels and flows are reduced by extraction there is inherent damage caused to water bodies due to the resulting reduction in habitats for wildlife. Measures to improve natural flow and water levels can improve the resilience of habitats and enhance the qualitative status of the water body. Section 4.2.5 of the Habitats Regulation Assessment of the RBMP identifies water demand management as a measure proposed to manage the flow and level of water.
- 199) Whilst the North West RBMP does not prescribe water efficiency standards for new development, its objectives to protect water resources, prevent deterioration of water bodies, improve the resilience of the water environment, and to ensure all parts of society benefit from clean, safe and plentiful water provide support for measures that promote efficient use of water.

Upper Mersey Catchment Plan 2023

- 200) The Upper Mersey Catchment Plan, Catchment Area Based Approach, sets out a vision in the Catchment Plan to deliver a healthy water environment, which is rich in wildlife and a real community asset that is resilient to climate change, supports economic growth, and health and wellbeing. The objectives of the partnership are to:
- create cleaner and healthier water bodies;
 - protect and enhance Nature Recovery and the natural aspects of our catchment; and
 - develop a catchment which is more resilient to the effects of climate change.

4.5 Local Evidence

Climate and Nature (CAN) Strategy 2025

201) The policy approach in the Local Plan has been informed by the CAN Strategy, for this section of the topic paper, the following commitments are of particular relevance:

Nature Based Solutions

- We will work with partners, communities and stakeholders to develop and install nature-based solutions to reduce the risk and impact of flooding and the risk of the urban heat island effect.
- We will maximise opportunities to embed nature-based solutions into town centre regeneration, including how to increase and enhance green spaces.
- This will provide more flora that promote increased groundwater absorption to manage water effectively.
- We will encourage the use of nature-based solutions on new developments to help Stockport become more resilient to extreme weather events.

202) Policies in Local Plan will therefore help to deliver against these commitments.

Stockport Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2026)

203) An updated Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA1) for Stockport Borough has been carried out in 2026 to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date evidence base to support preparation of the emerging Local Plan. The SFRA1 incorporates the latest Environment Agency datasets, including updated flood modelling, National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2) outputs and the Flood Map for Planning, ensuring that decisions are informed by the most current understanding of flood risk.

204) The SFRA1 provides a strategic assessment of flood risk from all sources, including fluvial, surface water, groundwater, sewer and residual risks associated with infrastructure failure. It confirms that flood risk in Stockport is influenced by a combination of these sources, with surface water and sewer flooding representing a significant and spatially widespread constraint across the borough. In response, the SFRA1 confirms the identification of the entire borough as a Critical Drainage Area (CDA), requiring a consistent and integrated approach to the management of surface water within development proposals.

205) The SFRA1 forms a key part of the evidence base and supports the application of the Sequential Test and, where necessary, the Exception Test in accordance with national policy. It provides guidance on the suitability of land for development, with the overarching objective of directing new development to areas at lowest

risk of flooding and ensuring that development is safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

- 206) The SFRA1 incorporates updated climate change allowances and demonstrates that flood risk from both rivers and surface water is expected to increase across the borough over the plan period. While much of the increase in fluvial flood risk is predicted to remain within river corridors and along areas of associated green space, there is some potential for encroachment into urban areas along key watercourses. Surface water flood risk is also expected to intensify as a result of more frequent and intense rainfall events.
- 207) In relation to the development strategy, the SFRA1 provides evidence to support the conclusion that the majority of regulation 18 proposed site allocations can be accommodated in areas at lower risk of flooding.

Fluvial Flood Risk

- 208) The updated SFRA1 found that there are six regulation 18 proposed site allocations which are partially located in fluvial Flood Zones 2 or 3 (FZ2/3) in the present day, however most of these sites have less than two percent of the site area within FZ2/3. Careful planning of development sites will be necessary to ensure that all proposed development within the site boundary can be located in areas of lowest flood risk.
- 209) There are no further proposed sites drawn into Flood Zones 2 or 3 by the addition of climate change allowances.
- 210) The SFRA identifies two regulation 18 proposed site allocations that are at higher risk of fluvial flooding and recommends further work to support the application of the Sequential and Exception Tests. These sites are:
- Brookfield Business Park (site reference HOM 2.2), which is at risk of fluvial flooding from Micker Brook with 56% of the site being affected by FZ2 and 14% being affected by FZ3.
 - Compstall Mills (site reference HOM 2.12), which is at risk of fluvial flooding from the River Etherow, with 40% of the site being affected by FZ3.
- 211) The proposed allocation at Brookfield Business Park is no longer available (for reasons other than floodrisk). Its proposed allocation has not been carried forward into the version of the Local Plan published under Regulation 19.
- 212) Compstall Mills is an existing brownfield site with around 40 per cent of the proposed allocation site in Flood Zone 3 associated with the River Etherow.
- 213) The site has been developed since the mid-19th century with mill buildings and Compstall Mill is locally listed by Stockport Council . An FRA was prepared in support of a previously approved planning application on this site (now lapsed). At the time, this demonstrated that the flood risk from all sources was low and the risk to development and off-site parties was also low. It is acknowledged that this

was now some time ago and, as such, the site has been treated cautiously and with a site-specific policy requirement (HOM 2.12iii)) on flood risk.

- 214) The SFRA Level 1 has treated this site conservatively due to data limitations at Compstall Mills. At the time of writing, the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning with climate change is unavailable for this location, due to issues with merging national and local hydraulic outputs. A cautious approach has therefore been taken with the area identified as Flood Zone 3 treated as Flood Zone 3b, functional floodplain. This position will be reviewed when the updated Flood Map for Planning is published, currently anticipated in September 2026. Should the site remain in Flood Zone 3, the Sequential Test and the Exception Test should be applied. The site will therefore be treated as requiring further investigation.
- 215) Compstall Mills will proceed to the regulation 19 Local Plan as a site allocation, with the requirement for a new site-specific flood risk assessment and analysis of surface water flood risk to inform a suitable surface water drainage strategy, should a new planning application come forward.

Pluvial Flood Risk

- 216) The Local Plan requires a flood risk assessment for proposed developments in Flood Zone 1 that are over 0.5 hectares, due to the risk of surface water flooding across Stockport. There are 31 proposed development sites which are located in Flood Zone 1 which are greater than one hectare. For the majority of these proposed development sites, it is considered that development could be accommodated, taking a sequential approach to the layout to avoid the areas of these sites which are shown to be at risk of flooding from surface water. However, the following proposed site allocations are associated with larger areas of surface water flood risk:

- Former Cheadle Brickworks,
- Former Offerton High School site
- Jenny Lane site in Woodford
- Chester Road site in Woodford
- Compstall Mills

- 217) The SFRA1 makes recommendations about how development can be accommodated on these sites through the use of surface water drainage strategies, and other mitigation measures.

Stockport Town Centre

- 218) Stockport Town Centre is the most significant location for the borough's regeneration activities, with 8,000 new homes proposed in the town centre residential living area. Parts of the town centre are affected by fluvial, surface water and sewer flood risk. This reflects its location and relationship to river corridors, channelised watercourses, dense urban form and existing drainage constraints. The Town Centre Level 2 SFRA (2024) provides more detailed

evidence on flooding and mitigation and will be used alongside site-specific FRAs, strategic drainage and blue-green infrastructure interventions to ensure that Town Centre development is safe, resilient and does not increase flood risk elsewhere. The Regulation 19 Local Plan clearly recognises Stockport Town Centre as a flood-sensitive location within the Mersey catchment. Local Plan policy INF3: Flood risk, specifically states applicants should refer to the Environment Agency's Standing Advice on flood resilience, with the narrative text emphasizing this is particularly the case for development within the Town Centre. The council is intending to commission further work to address flood risk in the town centre in more granular detail, including updating the Level 2 SFRA.

Study recommendations and next steps

- 219) The SFRA Level 1 also identifies opportunities to reduce and manage flood risk through strategic planning, including the delivery of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), upstream storage, and the use of multifunctional blue-green infrastructure in line with the Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management Plan. Development proposals will be expected to incorporate such measures and demonstrate how they contribute to wider flood risk reduction and climate resilience.
- 220) The Level 1 SFRA is a key supporting document for the Local Plan and will continue to be used, alongside other evidence, to ensure that a risk-based approach is embedded in the spatial strategy and site selection process. The SFRA will remain a live document and will be updated as new data and guidance become available, including any future requirement for additional Level 2 SFRA work where more detailed assessment is necessary.
- 221) Following on from the recommendations of the Level 1 SFRA (2026) report, it is our intention to update this work through an Addendum which will consider new sites and site changes between the Regulation 18 and 19 stages and to utilise the most up to date Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning, September 2026. It is also our intention to do an updated Level 2 SFRA (SFRA2). A summary of the current SFRA2 is provided below, but this will be updated once a new study is available.
- 222) A number of other key pieces of work consider water management and flood risk across Stockport are summarised below.

Stockport Town Centre Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)

- 223) In 2010, a Level 2 SFRA was undertaken covering the study area of Stockport Town Centre. The SFRA identified that parts of Stockport Town Centre are at risk from various sources of flooding, specifically fluvial and surface water. However, the flood risk information used to inform the assessment is now around fifteen years old and potentially outdated. Therefore, a critical review has been undertaken of the existing flood risk evidence relating to Stockport Town Centre and a revised

Level 2 SFRA has been produced. The main purpose of this SFRA2 is to provide a strategic overview of flood risk within the Town Centre boundary to enable effective risk-based strategic planning for the future.

- 224) This SFRA provides a detailed understanding of strategic flood risk frequencies and likely mechanisms for all identified Moderate to High risk sources of flooding identified in Detailed Assessment Areas within Stockport Town Centre. This assessment supports application of the Sequential and Exception Test to developments at High risk of flooding. New mechanisms of High flood risk have been identified in the Town Centre Area including surface water flooding and sewer flooding. Much of the Town Centre area is at risk of flooding by reservoir although this is considered Low. A new interactive flood map has been provided to summarise assessment of flood risk and this is supported by new flood risk hazard and flood depth mapping. Groundwater flood risk assessment supported by new Conceptual Site Models supports and directs future assessment of groundwater flood risk which at present is considered low to moderate. An approach to partnership working, strategic and site flood risk measures and site flood risk assessment has identified potential future projects for strategic flood storage and opportunities for improving management of surface water flood risk and sewer flooding.

Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Management Framework (2019)

- 225) The purpose of the Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Management Framework is to provide a spatial framework for flood risk management across Greater Manchester, highlighting the key strategic flood risks including cross-boundary issues within and outside the City Region and recommending key priorities for intervention taking account of previous, existing and planned interventions delivered or to be delivered by risk management authorities.
- 226) The overall aim of the framework is to: “Manage current and future flood risk to enable the sustainable development of Greater Manchester by adopting a catchment-based approach and working with natural processes where possible.”
- 227) The Framework is high level and focused on the management of those flood risk issues that are of importance to the Manchester City Region, as a whole, and that have the potential to contribute to or affect its economic, social and environmental sustainability. Subsequently it highlights flood risk issues that cross local authority and City Region boundaries. As a result, there may be local flood risk management issues that, whilst important to local economies and communities, are not highlighted within the framework as they are better addressed at the local authority level via the local planning authority or lead local flood authority (LLFA). The document is intended to be an overarching strategic framework for the policies and activities developed and implemented by local authorities rather than duplicating or replacing them.

Greater Manchester Level 2 ‘Hybrid’ Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2020)

- 228) The GM Level 1 SFRA recommended that more detailed strategic flood risk assessment work was required to support the GMSF. Consequently, this was undertaken in the Greater Manchester Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (GM Level 2 SFRA), completed in October 2020. The level 1 SFRA helped identify high risk sites to be assessed through the level 2 SFRA, and the GMCA Strategic Flood Risk Management Framework (2019). The Framework helped provide a broad spatial framework for flood risk management across Greater Manchester, highlighting the key strategic flood risks and recommending key priorities for intervention.
- 229) The more detailed work comprised of:
- Exception test site reports - an assessment of whether GM housing land supply sites and PfE allocations would pass the part (b) of the exception test, which had been flagged from the GM Level 1 SFRA.
 - New flood risk modelling - ‘broadscale’ flood modelling was completed on some PfE allocations to fill modelling gaps, which enabled flood risk to be more accurately assessed on the site.
 - Flood risk reviews – considers the new modelling on some PfE allocations to provides a summary of the flood risks for the sites.
 - Opportunity areas for flood storage - identifies potential areas across GM that could be considered, pending more detailed investigation, for further flood storage, including natural flood management techniques.
- 230) To support the application of Part B of the Exception Test, the Level 2 SFRA reviewed the 57 sites across GM (52 land supply and 5 allocations) that were identified from the Level 1 SFRA as requiring further appraisal. In addition, 6 strategic allocations were also scoped for further broadscale fluvial modelling to cover existing gaps in the baseline information.
- 231) The GM SFRA reviewed 2 sites in the Stockport land supply, and proposed allocations at ‘former Woodford Aerodrome’ and ‘High Lane’ which continue to be the locations for proposed allocations in the Stockport Local Plan 2026, albeit with different boundaries and different development capacities.
- 232) The former Woodford Aerodrome site considered through the GM SFRA2 already benefits from planning permission and is close to completing the delivery of 920 homes. In addition, there is an outline planning consent for ‘Woodford Garden Village extension’ that allows for additional homes to be constructed on part of the site that was largely left as open land by the earlier permission (see planning reference DC/094533). Flood risk was considered through the determination of this planning application.

- 233) For the proposed allocation at High Lane (as was in 2019) the SFRA2 provides a flood risk summary, extracts of which are shown below:

“Judging by the level of fluvial and surface water risk to the site, allocation would be possible providing High Lane Brook and its risk can be incorporated into site layout. This includes for the 8 metre buffer that the EA request along Main River for access and maintenance purposes. The land here is additionally included in riparian tree planting areas from the WwNP dataset.

“Approximately 98% of the site is within Flood Zone 1 where residential development should be allocated.

“The EA recommends opening up parts of the High Lane Brook culvert, only retaining the section underneath the site access route, to help to reduce flood risk and to help meet WFD objectives. Enhancement of High Lane Brook should also look to increase Biodiversity Net Gain.

“There is a culvert inspection report available from the EA which should be assessed at the FRA stage along with blockage scenario modelling.

“Development should also avoid the localised pools of surface water risk during the 1% AEP event. As these are primarily located close the development site boundaries, this should be achievable.

“A full drainage strategy will be required, to ensure there is no increase in surface water flood risk elsewhere as a result of new development. This will require surface water modelling based on the proposed layout and investigation into appropriate SuDS techniques. As the site is currently greenfield, infiltration SuDS should be possible, subject to ground investigation and contamination testing.”

Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management Plan

- 234) The Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) for Greater Manchester is a collaborative strategy developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), United Utilities, and the Environment Agency to manage the region's water resources holistically. It aims to maximise multifunctional blue-green infrastructure, restore natural function and water landscapes, protecting and valuing biodiversity and the water environment. The IWMP recognises that rainwater should be managed as a resource to be valued for the benefit of people and the environment through retaining it within the environment as close as possible to where it lands. Policies throughout the Local Plan, especially in the natural environment and climate resilient chapters, as well as our specific flood risk and drainage policies align with the aims of the IWMP and help to deliver against them through the planning process.

Integrated Drainage Strategy for Stockport Town Centre

235) Building upon the work established through the IWMP, the emerging Stockport Integrated Drainage Strategy (IDS) will outline a coordinated, place-based approach to managing surface water and flood risk in the town centre through measures like watercourse creation, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and nature-based solutions. It requires new developments to manage runoff using a hierarchical SuDS approach, prioritising on-site infiltration and storage before discharge to watercourses or sewers, to reduce flood risk, improve water quality, and enhance biodiversity. The IDS will guide future development, investment, and public realm improvements in the town centre, serving as a key reference for planners, developers, and the town centre Mayoral Development Corporation MDC, with ongoing input from the lead local flood authority (LLFA) and partners.

4.6 Our policy approach to flood risk

236) **Policy INF 3: Flood Risk** has been updated and strengthened, with more detailed requirements for flood risk assessment, climate change allowances and demonstrating that development will be safe for its lifetime, resilient to flooding, and will not increase flood risk elsewhere. Where development is proposed in Flood Zone 1, an FRA will now be required where the site has been identified as at risk from other sources of flooding (as identified by the Environment Agency and/or in the SFRA or in updated information provided by a flood risk management agency).

237) Site specific policy clauses that respond to the findings of the SFRA Level 1 (2026) include HOM 2.12 Compstall Mills, clause iii), which extensively outlines the flood risk requirements for the site. These include application and satisfaction of the Sequential and Exception Tests, a site-specific FRA demonstrating; wider sustainability benefits outweighing flood risk, safety over the lifetime of the development, climate change has been taken into account, flood risk elsewhere will not be increased. Additionally, the layout should be carefully considered with the most vulnerable uses located outside FZ3 where practicable and incorporating appropriate flood mitigation, resilient design, and safe access and egress. HOM 2.2 Cow Lane (rear of Sainsbury's, Hazel Grove) includes clause iii), a site-specific requirement to take the risk of flooding into account, particularly those parts of the site identified as being in Flood Zones 2 and 3. This approach supports a sequential layout of the development site, so that development can be directed away from the most vulnerable parts of the site.

4.7 Our policy approach to drainage

238) **Policy INF 4: Drainage** has been amended to incorporate many elements of the former policy INF 5: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) into INF 4. The

amended policy provides more detail relating to the drainage hierarchy, replaces the former runoff reduction targets with an approach based on the National Standards for SuDS 2025 and introduces requirements relating to maintenance. The policy has a strong focus on the sustainable management of rainwater, recognises the important role of landscaping features, and seeks to protect water quality. Overall, the updated policy provides a more comprehensive and integrated approach to drainage and sustainable water management.

4.8 Our policy approach to water efficiency

- 239) The Planning Practice Guidance for Housing Optional Technical Standards confirms that all new homes must meet the mandatory Building Regulations water efficiency standard of 125 litres per person per day. It further advises that, where there is a clear local need supported by evidence, local planning authorities may require new dwellings to meet the tighter optional standard of 110 litres per person per day through Local Plan policy. The guidance identifies Water Resource Management Plans as a primary source of evidence for justifying the adoption of this higher standard.
- 240) Our Local Plan policy '**CR 2: Energy efficiency, resources and carbon**' sets out that "water resources should be carefully managed to reduce water stress and scarcity and to improve resilience to climate change". It sets a water consumption target that goes beyond the legal minimum set through Building Regulations Requirement G2 of 125l per person per day, and lowers this requirement to the optional target of 110 litres per person per day, for residential development. Non-residential development must incorporate water efficiency measures so that predicted per capita consumption does not exceed the levels set out in the applicable BREEAM 'Excellent' standard.
- 241) This approach to water efficiency reflects the evidence for the WRW area, information regarding need and supply as detailed in the Water Resource Management Plan, has been encouraged by United Utilities Water (UW), and responds to the need to manage water resources in a sustainable manner within the Upper Mersey catchment.
- 242) Using a clear, standardised, national target, provides clarity for developers on the expectations regarding the expectations regarding water efficiency. In doing so this not only ensures deliverer against numerous climate and nature related aims.
- 243) In addition, a number of policies make reference to the Water Framework Directive, to ensure compliance with requirements.

5. Conclusion

- 244) The Local Plan seeks to ensure that new development reduces operational and embodied carbon, supports renewable and low-carbon energy, strengthens ecological networks, delivers high-quality green infrastructure, manages water sustainably and is resilient to current and future climate risks.
- 245) There are dozens of policies in the Stockport Local Plan that relate to wider considerations of sustainable development, climate resilience, environmental protection and design quality, however only a select number have been included within this topic paper. Those explored in detail within this document have been subject to detailed comments from stakeholders during public consultation, or have been subject to updates as a result of new evidence being prepared. It is important that each of the policies covered in this document are not read in isolation, and instead are considered collectively as part of the Local Plan.
- 246) This topic paper has pulled together and summarised evidence and legislation from a variety of national, regional and local sources. In doing so, an overview has been given of how policies have been developed. The policies are underpinned by proportionate and locally relevant evidence, including the Net Zero Carbon Policy Study, Stockport's Ecological Network, Urban Greening Factor case studies, Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and regional water-resource evidence. This evidence has informed both the overall policy direction and the detailed standards and requirements applied to development.
- 247) Together, these policies provide an integrated response to climate change, biodiversity loss, flood risk and pressure on natural resources. Measures such as urban greening, nature-based solutions and sustainable drainage deliver multiple benefits, including supporting nature recovery, improving water quality, reducing overheating and flooding, and creating healthier places. Collectively, the policies will help the Local Plan deliver Stockport's carbon-neutrality ambitions while ensuring growth protects and enhances the environment and strengthens resilience for current and future communities.

Appendix: CAN-related policies

An extract list of Local Plan policies has been included below – each of these policies will help support the delivery of the CAN Strategy, through reducing carbon emissions, supporting/enhancing green and blue infrastructure, or supporting other climate and nature and environmental/sustainability objectives such as biodiversity net gain, soil health, and sustainable modes of transport. 38 policies are noted below, out of a total of 90 policies in the Local Plan.

Strategic Policies

Strategic policy 1: Spatial strategy

Strategic policy 2: A strategy for our centres

Strategic policy 3: Sustainable development in Stockport

Providing for our communities

COM 1: Healthy and active across all ages

COM 4: Protection of open space and recreation facilities

COM 5: Local Green Space

COM 6: Sporting facilities

Our environment

ENV 1: Protection of the natural environment

ENV 2: Enhancing nature

ENV 3: Nature Recovery

ENV 4: Trees, woodland and hedgerows

ENV 5: Landscape

ENV 6: Soils

ENV 7: Environmental protection

ENV 8: Clean air

ENV 9: Groundwater protection

ENV 10: Land stability, contamination and storage of hazardous substances

ENV 13a: Local context and character

ENV 13b: Inclusive places

ENV 13c: Delivering design quality

ENV 15: Residential design

ENV 17: Public realm

Our climate resilient Stockport

CR 1: Climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation

CR 2: Energy efficiency, resources and carbon

CR 3: Renewable and low carbon energy development

CR 4: Heat networks and cooling

CR 5: Retrofit and re-use of buildings

Our town centre

STC 5: Public realm and design in the town centre

Our infrastructure

INF 1: Infrastructure provision and developer contributions

INF 2: Digital and telecommunications infrastructure

INF 3: Flood risk

INF 4: Drainage

INF 6: Fresh water and wastewater infrastructure

INF 7: Integrated transport network

INF 8: Sustainable streets

INF 9: Walking, wheeling and cycling

INF 10: Public transport

INF 17: Metrolink