

# Planning Statement

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**Proposed Retirement Apartments and  
Semi-Detached Housing**

**Site of Focus School, Heaton Mersey  
SK4 2AA**

**Anwyl Partnerships**

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**JULY 2022**



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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies an application by Anwyl Partnerships for 72 affordable retirement dwellings and 10 semi-detached houses on the vacant site of the Focus School, Heaton Mersey.
- 1.2 After describing the proposals, it will refer to the site and surroundings as existing and the site's planning history. It will then summarise national and local planning policies and evidence of specialist and general housing needs of relevance to the proposals. The subsequent analysis will set out the case in favour of approval, identifying how the proposals constitute 'sustainable development' in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

### Submitted Plans and Documents

- 1.3 The application is accompanied by the following plans:
  - Site Location Plan
  - Existing Site Plan
  - Proposed Site Plan
  - Proposed Site Plan Illustration
  - Site Comparison Plan (comparison to previously approved scheme)
  - Proposed Site Sections
  - Proposed Street Scenes
  - Apartment Floor Plans
  - Apartment Elevations
  - House Type Floor Plans
  - House Type Elevations
  - Proposed Drainage Layout (Appendix D of Drainage Strategy)
- 1.4 The following supporting documents are submitted
  - Affordable Housing Statement
  - Air Quality Screening Assessment
  - Arboricultural Implications Assessment

- Arboricultural Method Statement
- Crime Impact Statement
- Design & Access Statement
- Drainage Strategy
- Energy Statement (Section 10 of the Design and Access Statement)
- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey & Daytime Bat Survey (Economical Impact Assessment)
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Geoenvironmental Appraisal (Ground Conditions Study)
- Landscape Strategy
- Noise Assessment
- Planning Statement with S106 Heads of Terms
- Retirement Housing Needs Assessment
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Sustainability Checklist (Section 10 of the Design and Access Statement)
- Transport Statement
- Travel Plan

## Anwyl Partnerships

- 1.5 The applicant Anwyl Partnerships was established in 1930 and has grown to become one of the leading contractors and house developers in North Wales and the North West of England. They specialise in the affordable/social housing sector, catering for a wide demographic ranging from general family homes to apartment buildings and retirement schemes. Anwyl intend to construct the family housing for open market sale and the retirement apartments for a local registered affordable housing provider, who will subsequently own and manage the building.
- 1.6 Other current or recent retirement schemes by Anwyl in the North West include:
- Barncroft Extra Care Scheme, Wirral: 21 apartments for over 55s incorporating a dementia-friendly design with landscaped gardens, delivered in partnership with Magenta Living.

- Harpers Green Retirement Living, Padgate, Warrington: a four-storey extra care development for over 55s with a mix of one and two-bed flats for affordable rent and shared ownership, in partnership with Torus.
- Rock Ferry Extra Care & Affordable Housing Development, Wirral: 84 new homes and 102 extra care apartments with conversion of listed building, in partnership with Torus.

## 2 The Proposals

- 2.1 The application description is '**Residential development consisting of A) 10 semi-detached houses and B) 72 retirement apartments for independent living with ancillary support services and communal facilities together with associated landscaping, amenity space and car parking**'.

### Retirement Apartments

- 2.2 The retirement element is for a 100% affordable scheme of Older Persons Shared Ownership (OPSO) tenure, and will cater for those above the age of 55 who require specialist retirement accommodation. It will be constructed by Anwyl Partnerships on behalf of a local housing association and consist of:
- 37 x 1-bed apartments
  - 35 x 2-bed apartments
- 2.3 In addition to the apartments, it will include a reception and residents' lounge. Ancillary facilities include an office, laundry, buggy store, plant room and refuse store. It is anticipated that the development will have a warden, with residents having access to a 24-hour staffed management system and the option of care should they need it.
- 2.4 The building is predominantly 3-storey, rising to 4-storey within 2 sections as the development responds to the site's topography. This is best illustrated in the submitted Axonometric Visualisations included with the elevation plans. The dimensions of the building are specified by the Design & Access Statement: The main mass of the building is approximately 84m long x 18m wide in predominately 3-storey accommodation with 2 short blocks rising to 4-storeys at each end. These taller sections are set perpendicular to the main block to reduce the overall massing. The height of the 3-storey element is 9.8m. The maximum height of the building (to the topmost parapet) is 13.5m.
- 2.5 The building is to be finished in buff facing brick, with a darker shade to the upper storeys and eastern 4-storey block so that the contrast will break up the block. Windows and external doors including Juliet balconies will be powder coated in bronze, facias and eaves boards will be dark grey UPVC and rainwater goods black UPVC. The canopies over the two main entrances will be powder coated
- 2.6 The area between the building and the main car park will be a landscaped garden for residents including seating areas and there is an additional seating area in the east garden. The facility will also feature a roof garden in the central section with long range views, and the remaining 3-storey sections will also have green roofs. In addition, residents to the north side will have access to

external courtyard areas in ‘pockets’ and the 2-bed apartments will have Juliet balconies. The wooded areas to the west will be retained and enhanced for use a public open space, informal play and as a wetland habitat.

- 2.7 There will be two parking areas with 9 spaces in a visitor car park at the top of the site and 27 spaces in the main car park to the south, of which 6 will be disabled bays. The residents’ car park will be surfaced in a permeable material.
- 2.8 New planting is proposed to provide a landscape buffer between the car park and neighbouring housing in Tennyson Close and existing tree planting to the east and west boundaries will be reinforced. The woodland to the south-west will be managed and enhanced to secure biodiversity net gain, and this will be accessible via a footpath.

### **Semi-Detached Housing**

- 2.9 The 10 semi-detached houses will front Didsbury Road and will be split level properties of 2-storeys to the frontage and 3-storeys at the rear, with additional use of the attic roof space with front and rear dormers to provide accommodation over 4 storeys. They will have pedestrian access from Didsbury Road with an additional entrance from the rear parking spaces. Each house will have a rear garden and 2 parking spaces, along with a side garden adjacent to Didsbury Road arising from the gaps left to relieve the built frontage. The 4-bed properties will be for open market sale.
- 2.10 The external walls will be of red facing brick with detailing adjacent to first floor windows on the front elevation to provide interest whilst the lower storey on the southern elevation will utilise contrasting dark grey/blue brick. The roof tiles will be dark grey, and windows, rear dormers and external doors of dark grey powder coated aluminium composite. Fascia and eaves boards will also be of dark grey and rainwater goods in black UPVC. Rear balconies will have glass balustrading.
- 2.11 There will be a brick wall to the site frontage, incorporating pedestrian gates.

### **Access**

- 2.12 Access will be provided by means of a priority controlled ‘T’ junction with Didsbury Road at the north-west corner. This will have a 5.5m wide carriageway with a 2m footway to either side, 6m corner radii and 2.4m x 40m visibility splays. The new internal road will initially serve the rear parking spaces for the semi-detached houses and the visitor spaces for the apartments before continuing along the eastern boundary to serve the main apartment car park. Residents arriving on foot or mobility scooters will have convenient access from the main site entrance to the upper reception and both this and the principal rear access have level access, with internal lifts available.

- 2.13 In addition, there will be a pedestrian access at the south-west of the site, connecting to an existing footpath which links Didsbury Road/Masefield Drive/Tennyson Close.
- 2.14 The substantial change in levels within the site mean that there will be a retaining wall to the north of the apartment building. The retaining wall is expected to be constructed from stone to form the mass, with timber crib lock structures which will mature to form a green wall.

## Section 106 Heads of Terms

- 2.15 It is anticipated that Anwyl Partnerships will enter into a Section 106 legal agreement and/or planning conditions to:
- Require 100% affordable housing of 'OPSO' tenure for retirement apartments
  - Require that at least one of the occupants of each apartment is aged at least 55 at the moving in date.
  - Establish any allocation criteria which are agreed by the housing association operator and the Council's housing team.
  - Make a financial contribution of £60,000 to compensate for the loss of the playing pitch, to be spent on specified improvements at either Reddish Vale Technology College or Fred Whittaker Scott Playing Fields.
  - Make a financial contribution to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain in the event that this cannot be achieved within the application site.

## Pre-application Engagement

- 2.16 The present scheme follows on from a previous application for an alternative development prior to the involvement of Anwyl Partnerships. The previous development proposals have stalled and it is now imperative for Anwyl to progress with an alternative scheme.
- 2.17 Previous pre-application consultation and the planning application process have identified planning considerations of importance to local residents, the Council and its consultees, allowing Anwyl to be fully aware of these in formulating their proposals.
- 2.18 Anwyl has undertaken a further comprehensive consultation exercise during March-April 2022, including a website, local distribution of an information leaflet, advertisement in the Manchester Evening News and correspondence with local Councillors. The feedback received during this process has been reviewed and analysed, the results of which are detailed in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

### 3 Site and Surroundings

- 3.1 The 1.36 Ha site has been vacant since July 2019, having been occupied by the Focus School which has relocated.
- 3.2 The school premises consist of 7 buildings across the north of the site which also includes a car park and playgrounds. The buildings are of poor quality, including a series of unattractive brick and portacabin type structures and currently make a negative contribution to the character of the locality as well as creating a security issue.
- 3.3 The existing school buildings make a negative contribution to the character of the area. Although the unbroken and dominating front boundary wall partially conceals these, it also detracts from the Didsbury Road street scene in itself. Whilst schools are found within predominantly residential areas, the form and appearance of the buildings including flat-roofed white portacabins is incongruous and the premises appear run down.





- 3.4 The south of the site is occupied by a playing field. There are a number of mature trees to the western and eastern boundaries, with an area of protected woodland to the south of Masefield Drive. A footpath through Masefield Drive connects Didsbury Road with Tennyson Road to the south.
- 3.5 There is a substantial brick boundary wall at the Didsbury Road frontage which obstructs views into the site, and the land falls away steeply immediately to the rear. There is an overall drop of some 15 metres to Tennyson Road, where housing backs on to the south of the site.



- 3.6 In addition, the site falls from west to east along the Didsbury Road frontage.



- 3.7 The site is located within a suburban area of Stockport. Surrounding residential properties are of various styles and ages, although generally constructed of red brick with pitched red or grey tiled roofs. The mixture includes semi-detached housing on the opposite side of Didsbury Road to the site, substantial 2/3 storey villas followed by 3-storey apartment buildings to the east, and modern suburban housing to the west and south.



- 3.8 There are two vehicular access points from Didsbury Road, with an in/out system operational at present. There are existing cycle routes to both sides of Didsbury Road.
- 3.9 Didsbury Road (A5145) links central Stockport with Didsbury and is well served by bus services, with stops to the north and south of the site. There are train and Metrolink stations between 1.8 and 2.4 km away at Heaton Chapel, East Didsbury and Stockport town centre.
- 3.10 There is a large local shopping centre at Heaton Moor Top 0.5 km from the site, including convenience retail and a range of other services and facilities. There is a Co-op store within a 5-minute walk to the east along Didsbury Road, whilst larger food stores are available in East Didsbury and Stockport.
- 3.11 Other facilities within the local area include Heaton Mersey Medical Practice St Winifred's RC School, Mersey Vale Primary School, The Heatons Pre-School and Nursery. The sustainability of the location with access to services and facilities by non-car means of transport is described in further detail in the accompanying Transport Statement (ref.: 1767/1/B).
- 3.12 There are no identified heritage assets within the site or sufficiently close to be affected by the development proposals.
- 3.13 The site is within Flood Zone 1 and so is at low risk of flooding as defined by the Environment Agency. A Flood Risk Assessment accompanies the planning application due to the site size, which concludes that the development will be adequately flood resistant and resilient.
- 3.14 Additional information about the site and surroundings is contained within the Design & Access Statement.

## 4 Planning History

- 4.1 The Council has resolved to grant full permission for "***Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to provide 34 dwellings, associated landscaping, amended access, car parking and public open space area***" (Ref DC/075939).
- 4.2 Characteristics of the scheme include the following:
- 10 x semi-detached houses to Didsbury Road frontage, split level with upper floor visible from Didsbury Road and 3-storey at rear
  - 16 x 2.5/3 storey semi-detached dwellings within main body of site
  - Terrace of 8 dwellings at right angles to southern boundary
  - Varying shades of red brick as main material with incorporation of feature metal cladding. Grey roof tiles, window frames and timber doors
  - Access road doubled back within site to adapt to topography
  - Use of existing western access point with eastern access closed
  - Western portion of woodland providing wetland habitat and informal play and public open space adjacent to housing at east
- 4.3 The following conclusions from the Committee report led to the recommendation for approval and are of potential relevance to the present application:
- The loss of the community facility (ie. the school) has been justified through demonstrating exceptional circumstances and as such this aspect of the development is compliant with UDP Review policy CTF1.1.
  - The applicant has sought to justify the loss of the LOS and sports pitch through the limited value of the existing LOS, the provision of public open space on site and the enhancement of sporting provision within the Heatons and Reddish area through a monetary contribution. The proposal is therefore considered to be compliant to policies UOS1.3, CTF1.4 and L1.1 of the UDP Review and para 97 of the NPPF.
  - The fact that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land means that elements of Core Strategy policies CS4 and H2 are considered to be out of date. As such the tilted balance in favour of the residential redevelopment of the site as set out in para 11 of the NPPF is engaged.

- The application site predominantly comprises a brownfield site in an accessible area and the redevelopment of the site for residential purposes is also in accordance with para 118 of the NPPF which places substantial weight upon the use of brownfield land within settlements for homes and supporting opportunities to remediate derelict land.
- In the absence of objections from relevant consultees and subject to conditional control, the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to the issues of traffic generation, parking and highway safety; impact on trees; impact on protected species and ecology; flood risk and drainage; land contamination; and energy efficiency.
- Notwithstanding the site allocation portion of the application site as Local Open Space and the fact that approval of the development would constitute a departure from the development plan, the proposal is considered to represent sustainable development.

## 5 Council Planning Policy and Evidence Base

### National Planning Policy

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021

- 5.1 Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means:
- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
  - where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
    - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
    - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
- 5.2 Paragraph 8 sets out the three objective of sustainability which the planning system should pursue, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways: economic, social and environmental. The social objective includes "*to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations*". The environmental objective includes "*making effective use of land*".
- 5.3 Paragraph 60 states that "*To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.*"
- 5.4 Paragraph 62 requires that "*the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people...).*"
- 5.5 Paragraph 69 notes how "*Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly.*" Local planning authorities should "*support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.*"

- 5.6 With reference to maintaining housing supply and delivery, paragraph 74 advises that "***Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old.***" The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land, or 20% where there has been significant under-delivery over the previous three years.
- 5.7 Paragraph 82 identifies inadequate housing as a potential barrier to investment.
- 5.8 Paragraph 99 states that playing fields should not be built on unless:
- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings, or land to be surplus to requirements; or
  - b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
  - c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
- 5.9 Paragraphs 110 to 112 provide criteria for ensuring that development proposals promote safe and suitable access for all road users and promote sustainable transport modes. Permission should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 5.10 Paragraph 120 expects planning decisions to
- encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation...
  - give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs
  - promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively
- 5.11 Paragraph 121 advises that "***Local planning authorities, and other plan-making bodies, should take a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs...***"

5.12 According to paragraph 123, “***Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs.***”

5.13 Under the subheading ‘Achieving appropriate densities’, paragraph 124 states that:

***“Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:***

- a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;***
- b) local market conditions and viability;***
- c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;***
- d) the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and***
- e) the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.”***

5.14 Paragraph 125 goes on to say that “***Where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.***”

5.15 Section 12 deals with Achieving Well-Designed Places and paragraph 130 sets out design criteria for planning decisions so that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

5.16 ‘Older People’ are defined in the Glossary of NPPF as ***“People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.”***

#### **Planning Practice Guidance**

5.17 In explaining the importance of planning for the housing needs of older people, Planning Practice Guidance states the following (ID: 63-001-20190626):

***“The need to provide housing for older people is critical. People are living longer lives and the proportion of older people in the population is increasing. In mid-2016 there were 1.6 million people aged 85 and over; by mid-2041 this is projected to double to 3.2 million. Offering older people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently for longer, feel more connected to their communities and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems. Therefore, an understanding of how the ageing population affects housing needs is something to be considered from the early stages of plan-making through to decision-taking.”***

5.18 Planning Practice Guidance defines different types of specialist housing for older people (ID: 63-010-20190626). These include:

- Age-restricted general market housing: This type of housing is generally for people aged 55 and over and the active elderly. It may include some shared amenities such as communal gardens, but does not include support or care services.
- Retirement living or sheltered housing: This usually consists of purpose-built flats or bungalows with limited communal facilities such as a lounge, laundry room and guest room. It does not generally provide care services, but provides some support to enable residents to live independently. This can include 24-hour on-site assistance (alarm) and a warden or house manager.

- Extra care housing or housing-with-care: This usually consists of purpose-built or adapted flats or bungalows with a medium to high level of care available if required, through an onsite care agency registered through the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Residents are able to live independently with 24-hour access to support services and staff, and meals are also available. There are often extensive communal areas, such as space to socialise or a wellbeing centre. In some cases, these developments are known as retirement communities or villages - the intention is for residents to benefit from varying levels of care as time progresses.
- Residential care homes and nursing homes: These have individual rooms within a residential building and provide a high level of care meeting all activities of daily living. They do not usually include support services for independent living. This type of housing can also include dementia care homes.

5.19 Other extracts of relevance include the following:

- “Plans need to provide for specialist housing for older people where a need exists. Innovative and diverse housing models will need to be considered where appropriate.”
- “Plan-makers will need to consider the size, location and quality of dwellings needed in the future for older people in order to allow them to live independently and safely in their own home for as long as possible, or to move to more suitable accommodation if they so wish.”  
(both ID: 63-012-20190626)
- “Decision makers should consider the location and viability of a development when assessing planning applications for specialist housing for older people. Local planning authorities can encourage the development of more affordable models and make use of products like shared ownership. Where there is an identified unmet need for specialist housing, local authorities should take a positive approach to schemes that propose to address this need.” ID: 63-016-20190626
- “Plan-making authorities will need to count housing provided for older people against their housing requirement. For residential institutions, to establish the amount of accommodation released in the housing market, authorities should base calculations on the average number of adults living in households, using the published Census data.” (ID: 63-016a-20190626)

## Local Policy

5.20 The statutory development plan, so far as is relevant to the application, comprises the saved policies of the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review ('UDP'; May 2006) and the Core Strategy Development Plan Document ('CS'; March 2011).

5.21 The Council's interactive proposals map confirms that the developed area of the school falls within a defined Predominantly Residential Area and that the playing field is defined as Local Open Space.

### **Stockport UDP Review (2006)**

5.22 The following saved UDP policies are of potential relevance:

- EP1.7 Development and Flood Risk
- UOS1.3 Protection of Local Open Space
- LT1.1 Land for Active Recreation
- LT1.2 Children's Play
- CTF1.1 Development of Community Services and Facilities - Development which would result in the loss of existing community services and facilities will only be permitted where adequate replacement is provided or special justification can be shown.
- CTF1.4 Redundant Community Land - Where proposals for the re-use or redevelopment of redundant community facilities are made on sites which include open land, and where there is a local deficiency of recreational open space, the proposals should make a contribution to reducing that deficiency.
- MW1.5 Control of Waste from Development

### **Core Strategy (2011)**

5.23 Policies of relevance include the following:

- CS1: Overarching Principles: Sustainable Development
- SD-1: Creating Sustainable Communities
- CS2: Housing Provision - A wide choice of high quality homes will be provided to meet the requirements of existing and future Stockport households. The focus will be on providing new housing through the effective and efficient use of land within accessible urban areas, and making the best use of existing housing.
- CS3: Mix of Housing – seeks a mix of housing, in terms of tenure, price, type and size to meet the requirements of new forming households, first time buyers, families with children, disabled people and older people. New development should contribute to the creation of more mixed, balanced communities by providing affordable housing in areas with high property prices. The overall strategic affordable housing target is 50% of total provision, and one way this will be achieved is with the assistance of affordable housing developers delivering up to 100%

affordable housing. Over the plan period the aim is to achieve a 50:50 split between the provision of new houses and new flats. The majority of new flats of all tenures should have two bedrooms. Support will be given to the provision of specialist and supported housing for older people and people with a disability.

- CS4: Distribution of Housing – amongst other criteria “***The focus is on making effective use of land within accessible urban areas. The priority for development is therefore previously developed land within urban areas.***”. Otherwise, the policy contemplates “***the use of accessible urban open space where it can be demonstrated that there is adequate provision of open space in the local area or the loss would be adequately replaced***”, as a third stage in the sequential approach.
- H1: Design of Residential Development
- H2: Housing Phasing - defines re-use of vacant previously developed land as a regeneration benefit
- H3: Affordable Housing – The Heatons (excluding Heaton Norris) are referred to as having house prices above the Stockport average, where a site size threshold of 5 dwellings applies for seeking affordable housing and 30% provision will be sought. On any urban open space site released for housing, 50% affordable provision will be sought.
- CS8: Safeguarding and Improving the Environment
- SIE1: Quality Places
- SIE2: Provision of Recreation and Amenity Open Space in New Developments
- SIE3: Protecting, Safeguarding and Enhancing the Environment
- CS9: Transport and Development
- CS10: An Effective and Sustainable Transport Network
- T1: Transport and Development
- T2: Parking in Developments
- T3: Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network

### **Supplementary Guidance**

5.24 The following guidance is of potential relevance:

- Provision of Affordable Housing SPG8

- Design of Residential Development SPD9
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD11
- Sustainable Transport SPD12
- Transport and Highways in Residential Areas SPD13

## Evidence Base

### Stockport Housing Strategy 2016-2021

5.25 The findings of this documents are summarised within the Housing Need Assessment which accompanies this application and are referred to in the Analysis below.

### Stockport Housing Land Supply Position Statement 2021

5.26 The Housing Land Supply Position Statement 2021 identifies a 3.2 year supply of housing land in Stockport, compared with the 5 year supply required by NPPF.

### Greater Manchester Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2020 Update)

5.27 Again, this is referred to in the accompanying Housing Need Assessment and the Analysis below.

### Stockport Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2020

5.28 The site is identified under reference SKH20002 with an expectation of 40 dwellings to be delivered between 2025/6 and 2029/30. The assessment notes that sloping land may affect capacity, that there may be a need to mitigate loss of open space, and that a TPO is present.

5.29 The document identifies the deliverable supply for the 5 year period from 2020/21 to 2024/25, which it puts at 3,425 dwellings. This differs from the 3,375 used in the Housing Land Position Statement.

### Stockport Brownfield Land Register 2020

5.30 The site is included under reference SKB0094.

### Other Specialist Reports

5.31 A number of reports containing evidence about the need for retirement accommodation, its characteristics and associated benefits are referred to in the submitted Housing Need Assessment. These include:

- Government response to the Second Report of Session 2017-19 of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into Housing for Older People (September 2018; CM9692)
- Series of HAPPI reports (Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation)

- Housing in Later Life - planning ahead for specialist housing for older people toolkit - 2012
- *Rightsizing - Reframing the housing offer for older people* - PHASE research consultancy at the Manchester School of Architecture 2018
- What we want - Future-proofing retirement housing in England – Dr Brian Beach for ILC and others 2021

## 6 Analysis

### Principle

- 6.1 The starting point in determining the application is the Development Plan, which consists of saved policies of the UDP Review and the Core Strategy.
- 6.2 Paragraph 11 of NPPF requires that permission be granted if the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, unless any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as whole. Footnote 8 clarifies that this applies to applications involving the provision of housing where the authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, as is the case in Stockport. On this basis, Core Strategy policies CS2 Housing Provision, CS4 Distribution of Housing and H2 Housing Phasing are out of date.
- 6.3 In looking at the principle of the development, it is appropriate to provide an overview of the scale and nature of housing need, with particular regard to specialist retirement accommodation. It is also appropriate to consider, despite the undoubted benefits of reusing previously developed land, the loss of the school as a community facility and of the open space in the form of a sports pitch.

### General Housing Need

- 6.4 According to the Council's latest Housing Land Position Statement (2021), it currently has a 3.2 year supply of housing land. Furthermore, Stockport has taken the decision to withdraw from the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. There is therefore no prospect that the 5 year housing supply required by national policy can be reached until an alternative Stockport Local Plan progresses, for which there is no firm timetable in place.
- 6.5 In accordance with paragraph 11d of NPPF, the lack of a 5 year supply means that permission should be granted unless i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in the Framework taken as a whole. These criteria are again referred to in the Conclusion to this Statement.
- 6.6 Furthermore, in a review of case law, the judgement in Tewkesbury Borough Council v Secretary of State for Housing Communities And Local Government [2021] EWHC 2782 (Admin) (18 October 2021) summarised the position on how the scale of the shortfall should be regarded: "***in addition to the question of whether or not the tilted balance in paragraph 11 of the Framework is engaged by virtue of the inability of the local planning authority to demonstrate a five year housing land***

***supply, consideration should be given to the question of the extent of any shortfall, even in terms of a broad magnitude, so as to enable the decision-maker to understand the weight which can properly be given to that shortfall as a material consideration...".*** As the shortfall in Stockport is severe, great weight must be attached to this in the planning balance.

- 6.7 The provision of 82 dwellings will make an important contribution to reducing the shortfall in housing, and substantially greater than the 34 which would have been secured by the previous scheme. In considering how the proposal addresses general housing need, significant weight should in addition be given to the following two considerations:
- Stockport already has the greater proportion of population aged 55 or more of any Greater Manchester district and the majority of projected household growth is generated by older residents. Therefore, providing retirement housing is directly tackling the primary component of general housing need.
  - The benefits for the general housing market of specialist retirement provision.
- 6.8 Older people may have equity in homes bought many years ago to accommodate families, but which are now poorly suited to their present needs. For the wider housing market, scope for 'rightsizing' by the elderly can free up homes suitable for families, when around 60% of older households have multiple bedrooms yet no dependent children. Whilst many currently wish to remain in their own home, this in part reflects an aversion to traditional models of provision and the current lack of desirable alternatives.
- 6.9 Evidence suggests that owners who are downsizing, and a significant proportion of renters, wish to occupy 2-bed properties. This would free up the housing market with a cascade effect from increased numbers of transactions and assist first time buyers to get on the property ladder. However, the starting point is that not enough specialist provision is being provided to even maintain the existing proportion of specialist accommodation as the population ages.

### **Specialist Housing Need**

- 6.10 Planning Practice Guidance quoted earlier in this document states that the need to provide housing for older people is critical. This subject is addressed in detail in our Retirement Housing Need Assessment, the key findings of which are summarised here with reference to both quantity and quality.
- 6.11 However, at first it is appropriate to consider what is meant by 'retirement housing'. Whilst terms used are not always wholly consistent, the basic models are set out in Planning Practice Guidance. In this case, the proposal fits within the 'Retirement living or sheltered housing' category, which has

some communal facilities and provides support for residents to live independently rather than full care services.

- 6.12 The nature of what is meant by contemporary retirement accommodation is summarised in the 2021 report *What We Want - Future-proofing retirement housing in England*:

***"Retirement communities are more than just a collection of houses inhabited by retirees – they represent organisations that provide housing, care, hospitality, and wellbeing services in the context of an ageing population. They combine high-quality housing options with tailored support services. Residents of retirement communities rent or own their own property, offering privacy and independence, while the community setting provides reassurance of 24-hour on-site staff, communal facilities, and optional care and support as needed."*** (p10)

- 6.13 With regard to **quantity of provision**, the Government expects Councils to significantly boost the supply of homes through not only ensuring a sufficient amount and variety of land, but through meeting the needs of groups with specific housing requirements.

- 6.14 The evidence for Stockport within the Greater Manchester context shows that the shortfall in retirement provision is acute and that there is no realistic prospect that this will be adequately addressed in the short term. Stockport has the greatest proportion of population aged 55 or more of any Greater Manchester district, along with the greatest proportions aged over 65 and over 75. The percentage over 65 is already more than double that for England as a whole and its population aged 65+ years is expected to increase by 33% by 2037. Stockport also has the highest number of properties owned by those aged over 65 in Greater Manchester and the majority of these are under-occupied, with 2 or more spare bedrooms. Local symptoms of a failing housing market, such as under-occupancy and declining affordability, demonstrate the implications of inadequate retirement accommodation being available.

- 6.15 Most of the future housing stock already exists, consisting of 128,910 dwellings in Stockport, and has not been designed to meet the needs of elderly residents. With the majority of newly occurring need arising from the elderly, it follows that a high proportion of newly constructed dwellings must be appropriate for their needs.

- 6.16 Maintaining the existing level of provision for the elderly is only a minimum benchmark for how much new housing is required. Just to maintain the existing proportions of specialist C2 and C3 properties for the elderly, over 2,400 properties for the elderly without care in Stockport are required by 2035. However, the aspirations of those retiring today suggest that the proportion of self-contained dwellings (whether regarded as use class C2 or C3 within the specific scheme) should be higher, due to a shift in demand away from traditional care home accommodation.

- 6.17 The current Development Plan for Stockport does not fully address the needs of people approaching or already at retirement age, with no figures for the number of specialist units required and no sites allocated. Although a small number of individual schemes on windfall sites continue to come forward, there is no immediate prospect of the shortfall in Stockport being addressed on anything like the scale required, particularly given limited progress in replacing the outdated Core Strategy.
- 6.18 As most older people wish to remain within their community when considering retirement housing options, it is appropriate to focus on the area of Stockport in which the site is located.
- 6.19 The proposed shared ownership tenure is appropriate to the needs of the Township containing the application site, within the context of Stockport. The high level of owner occupation by older households in Stockport indicate a relatively high need for shared ownership in comparison to social or affordable rent. This is particularly the case within Gatley, Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme North Township, which has the highest proportion of over 65s occupying a 3 or 4-bed house of any township in Stockport, the highest percentage of older people who could afford a shared ownership property, and a relatively high need for level access 2-bed affordable dwellings. The development contains a balanced proportion of 1 and 2-bed units in recognition of this.
- 6.20 With reference to **quality of provision**, the Government's response to the Select Committee inquiry into Housing for Older People acknowledges not only the scale of need, but how aspirations around housing and lifestyle have changed dramatically for older people. The original 2009 HAPPI report identified ten overarching features that underpin 'age-ready' housing:
- Generous internal space standards
  - Plenty of natural light in the home and in circulation spaces
  - Balconies and outdoor space, avoiding internal corridors and single-aspect flats
  - Adaptability and 'care aware' design which is ready for emerging telecare and tele-healthcare technologies
  - Circulation spaces that encourage interaction and avoids an "institutional feel"
  - Shared facilities and community 'hubs' where these are lacking in the neighbourhood
  - Plants, trees, and the natural environment
  - High levels of energy efficiency, with good ventilation to avoid overheating
  - Extra storage for belongings and bicycles
  - Shared external areas such as 'home zones' that give priority to pedestrians

- 6.21 There are a series of significant benefits linked to appropriate provision of specialist retirement housing in general and to this particular scheme, which has been designed having regard to the HAPPI principles.
- 6.22 Acknowledged benefits of adequate provision include improving the quality of life of residents and reducing pressure on health and social services. Specialist retirement schemes can reduce isolation by creating a community of people who wish to maintain their independence for as long as possible, whilst receiving varying degrees of care and support within their own apartment so that the pressure on care homes is reduced. Such schemes can also enable couples to stay together outside of a care home where only one individual requires support. In addition to reducing the requirement for visits to doctors or stays in hospital, the burden on the NHS and Adult Social Services is reduced due to occupants self-funding a proportion of their care, in contrast to those in residential institutions.
- 6.23 As well as declaring that the need to provide housing for older people is “critical”, Planning Practice Guidance advises that, where there is an identified unmet need for specialist housing, local authorities should take a positive approach to schemes that propose to address this need

### **General Affordable Housing Need**

- 6.24 The *Stockport Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) 2019* commissioned by the Council offers the following conclusions on affordability, as referred to in our Retirement Housing Needs Assessment:
- Based on the 25% income for renting and 3.5x income plus equity/savings for buying, the gross annual shortfall of affordable housing is 1,815. Once annual supply through sales, lettings and pipeline supply is considered, the net shortfall is 549 each year.
  - The analysis raises serious concerns over the relative affordability of accommodation across most tenures within the borough, and particularly for the key workers and wage earners considered. Arguably, the ability of households to enter the general market without very substantial deposits is restricted.
- 6.25 With regard to affordable housing, in the Seashell Trust appeal the Council’s witness advised that *“The demand for affordable housing in the borough has far outstripped supply. Currently there are circa 200 units per year delivered compared to a need of 931 per annum. Delivery has been extremely poor in recent times, such that there is a significant and accumulated need for affordable housing.”*
- 6.26 The site is located within an area with a minimum affordable housing requirement of 30% on the basis that it falls within ‘The Heatons’ which, excluding Heaton Norris, is described as ‘hot’ in terms of having ‘above average’ property prices. In the recent alternative scheme at the site, the use of

Vacant Building Credit would have led to the provision of just 13 affordable dwellings. This compares with the 72 affordable apartments which will be achieved by the current application, which should be given substantial weight in the favour of the present application.

### **Beneficial Use of Previously Developed Land**

- 6.27 Paragraph 120c of NPPF states that planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and paragraph 120d requires decision to promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings.
- 6.28 Notwithstanding that Core Strategy policies CS2, CS4 and CS8 are partially out of date, they are in general terms consistent with this approach. Policy CS2 aspires to achieve 80% of housing on previously developed land in the absence of a 5 year supply. Policy CS4, amongst other goals, states that "*The priority for development is...previously developed land within urban areas*". Policy CS8 says that "*Development proposals which seek to make environmental improvements and enhancements will be given positive consideration, especially where they bring derelict, vacant or contaminated previously developed land back into safe, active use.*"
- 6.29 Furthermore, the provision of 82 dwellings within a 1.36 hectare site will achieve optimal use of the potential of the site in an area with an existing shortage of land, thus satisfying paragraph 123 of the Framework.

### **Loss of Community Facility (School)**

- 6.30 Policy CTF1.1 of the UDP advises that the loss of community facilities will only be accepted where adequate replacement provision or special justification can be shown. The Focus School was an independent school with a catchment area across the North West rather than local to the community or Stockport, and has relocated to outside of the local authority area after the premises were found to be unsuitable and not viable to repair. The poor quality of the premises is immediately apparent from the photographs contained earlier in this document. For these reasons, the Council has previously accepted that special justification has been demonstrated for its loss and that this would be outweighed by the benefits of residential development.
- 6.31 The justification for the school's loss is unchanged, whilst the benefits in terms of overall housing supply, specialist provision and affordable housing provision will be substantially greater.

### **Loss of Playing Field (Local Open Space)**

- 6.32 The disused playing field, which is also defined as Local Open Space, occupies 0.61 Ha of the 1.36 Ha site. There are two local policies of direct relevance to its future. Policy CTF1.4 states that where proposals for the redevelopment of redundant community facilities are made on sites which include

open land, and where there is a local deficiency of recreational open space, the proposals should make a contribution to reducing that deficiency. Policy UOS1.3 designates the specific site as Local Open Space, to which the criteria in paragraph 99 of NPPF apply. As Stockport has a shortage of open space against its minimum standard of 2.4 Ha, per 1,000 of population, it is not surplus and the policy expects that its loss should be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.

6.33 The previous input of Sport England as a statutory consultee is relevant to assessment of these issues. In response to the last application, they advised of their policy to oppose granting planning permission which would lead to the loss of a playing field and noted an undersupply of playing field provision in the area. It was agreed by a process of negotiation that a compensatory payment of £60,000 could be made to mitigate this, to be allocated to particular projects as listed in the Formal Sports Priority List within the Heatons and Reddish Area:

- Contribution to 3G Artificial Grass Pitch at Reddish vale Technology College
- Pitch improvements at Fred Whittaker Scott Playing Fields

6.34 The existing playing pitch is at the rear of the site and not publicly accessible or visible. It also has little ecological value. It provided some benefit to school pupils, although sub-standard due to the sloping pitch. The Council has accepted in its Committee Report for the previous proposal that "*the value of the Local Open Space is somewhat limited.*"

6.35 On the basis of the agreed contributions for off-site provision, Sports England confirmed that it would have no objection and the Council accepted that the development would be compliant with policies CTF1.4 and UOS1.3 of the UDP and paragraph 97 of NPPF (now paragraph 99 in 2021 version). As the site remains vacant and Anwyl Partnerships accept the payment to compensate for the loss of open space, this issue has been resolved and does not provide an obstacle to the granting of planning permission.

## 7 Development Management Considerations

- 7.1 The following site-specific matters have been identified as relevant to the determination of the application:

### Design, Layout and Density

- 7.2 As discussed within the Site and Surroundings, the context of the site is predominantly residential but the existing premises present a discordant element due to the appearance and form of the buildings together with the dominating wall within the street scene.
- 7.3 Whilst the proposed residential use is clearly appropriate, the topography means that this is not a straightforward site to develop and that any scheme must both respond to this in terms of design and layout, and be viable to implement. In this regard, it should also be noted that the previous proposals did not achieve the development density which the Council would normally expect on previously developed land within the urban area achieving only 34 dwellings across 1.36 hectares.
- 7.4 The semi-detached houses fronting Didsbury Road will conform to the dominant linear pattern of residential development and strengthen the urban grain. The existing properties consist of a variety of types and sizes, including inter-war semi-detached housing opposite and substantial 2/3 storey villas immediately to the east. The Council has already approved 10 semi-detached houses with the previous scheme, which adopted a similar footprint with gaps between each set of semi-detached dwellings.
- 7.5 Whilst the retirement apartment building will have a larger footprint than existing buildings in the vicinity, it will be set back within the site so that it does not have a prominent appearance within the street scene. The building has been sited to achieve or exceed the Council's required interface distances to housing on Tennyson Close and Masefield Drive, taking into account both the proposed height of the building and topography, which also ensures that the physical impact of the building will not be overbearing for neighbouring residents. It should be noted that the Council's Committee Report referred to instances of spacing standards not being achieved, which were determined to be outweighed by the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 7.6 The main body of the apartment building is 3-storey, with 4-storey elements. The building will be set behind a retaining wall to the north side, adjacent to which will be stairwells and secondary windows to ensure the residential amenity of future occupiers.
- 7.7 The main residents' car park will be to the south of the site. The restriction of the apartments to retirement occupancy means a much-reduced parking requirement, so that provision will not dominate the site, and reduced traffic generation especially at peak times. This ensures that a higher

number of units can be achieved, resulting in a viable development that makes effective use of the site and a greater contribution to housing delivery.

- 7.8 The Design & Access Statement identifies constraints and opportunities at the site and discusses how these have influenced the design as it has evolved through a number of iterations.

### **Open Space**

- 7.9 The previous applicant offered to improve 0.23 Ha. of open space to the west of the site, to include woodland with wetland habitat and informal play. Whilst welcoming the improvement, the Council determined that this would not represent additional open space as it has previously been provided as open space for the Briars Mount development.
- 7.10 Under Policy SIE2, Sheltered Housing or Special Needs Housing for Elderly People will not be expected to contribute to the provision of recreation and play space.
- 7.11 The retirement apartments will benefit from on-site communal open space to meet the needs of residents.
- 7.12 Having regard to the Council's 'Open Space Provision and Commuted Payments' SPD, it is assumed that the Council will request financial contributions for children's play in conjunction with the family housing. The Council has previously identified a preference to improve the Local Equipped Area for Play at Craig Road and the Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play at Crescent Park, in preference to LAPS at Briars Mount which are not within the catchment of the whole site and have limited scope for improvement.
- 7.13 In addition, it is anticipated that the Council will again seek contributions for formal sports for the needs of future residents of development, in addition to the compensation to address the loss.

### **Highways and Accessibility**

- 7.14 The Council has previously accepted that the site could accommodate 34 family houses which would have generated significantly less traffic than the lawful school use and not materially affect the operation of the highway. It determined that it was important to "*...give full consideration to the former use of the site as a school.*"
- 7.15 The priority junction arrangement was also accepted, and other highways matters were agreed with the Council. These included:
- Agreement that the site is within close proximity to a range of services and amenities that residents could enjoy.

- Agreement that pedestrian and cycle facilities in the locality give potential for walking and cycling to be chosen modes of transport.
- Agreement that the site is in an accessible location, where residents would not likely be dependent on car travel and public transport.
- Requirement that the detailed design of highway retaining structures should be approved prior to commencement of work on site. A similar condition is expected for these proposals.
- That each of the semi-detached dwellings should have an electric vehicle charging point.
- Acceptance that a cycle link could not be achieved south west of the site due to changes in levels but a footpath incorporating steps was supported.
- That the movements of retirement apartment resident will not be at peak hours.

7.16 Having regard to the continued position of housing under-supply within the Borough and the operation of Core Strategy policies CS4 and H2, the Council does not require its former accessibility criteria to be met. Notwithstanding this, the site is in a sustainable location for residential development.

7.17 A Transport Statement (TS) accompanies the planning application. This details the design of the 'T' junction, the arrangements of which are comparable to the previously approved proposals. Further swept path analysis shows that these arrangements can accommodate movements of vehicles up to the size of a refuse vehicle.

7.18 The highways position regarding accessibility, the lack of reliance on private car ownership is as agreed with the previous scheme, and this remains the case for the subject development.

7.19 The TS concludes that the traffic generated by the proposed development will not have a detrimental impact on the operational performance of the local highway network, and that there are no transport/highways reasons for refusal.

### **Parking**

7.20 The proposed parking provision for the demi-detached dwellings is 2 spaces per dwelling, with the potential for a 3rd parking space along the driveway. Secure cycle stores will be provided at each dwelling.

7.21 The proposed parking for the retirement apartments is 27 spaces, 6 of which will be disabled spaces, and an additional 9 visitor spaces to the entrance.

7.22 Retirement apartments for older people do not fit into a specific category in the Council's parking standards, however the proposals closely match the definition of 'Sheltered Housing'. In addition, it

is typical that after first occupation, the average age of residents progressively increases and so car ownership and usage declines.

7.23 As such, parking provision should be assessed against the C3 sheltered housing requirements, which are 1 space per 3 dwellings, requiring a minimum of 24 spaces.

7.24 The level of proposed parking provision therefore meets the parking standards as detailed in Appendix 9 of the Stockport UDP review.

7.25 A Travel Plan is also submitted with the application, and this details measures to encourage adoption of sustainable forms of travel that reduce the reliance or need for car ownership. This includes a car share scheme which will be promoted by a Travel Plan Coordinator via resident induction packs, notice boards, the marketing suite, social media and at residents' meetings.

### **Ecology and Trees**

7.26 Although the Council accepted previous survey findings of negligible bat roosting potential from buildings and trees, we have provided an updated Phase 1 Habitat Survey and daytime bat survey. The report concludes:

- The site offers limited ecological value, consisting of broad-leaved woodland, continuous scrub and ephemeral vegetation. Introduced shrub bed, broad-leaved woodland and tall ruderal vegetation are the most ecologically valuable habitats.
- The majority of the site is bare ground and amenity grassland, offering little cover for wildlife and limited source of nectar and pollen for invertebrates.
- Due to the proposed retention and enhancement of the broad-leaved woodland and small-scale nature of the proposals, specific habitat mitigation measures are not considered necessary.
- There are no ponds on or within 250m of the site, thus limiting the potential for Great Crested Newts on site and need for further survey work.
- No evidence of bats were found during the daytime surveys, and the potential for roosting bats within the buildings is negligible due to their construction materials, poor thermal capacity and lack of access points.
- Four badger sett entrances and signs of recent activity at two of the setts were recorded on site within the woodland and grassland areas.
- The site contains suitable nesting habitats within the shrub, hedgerows, trees and woodland.

7.27 On site ecological mitigation measures recommended include:

- Closing of badger setts within 20m of the development, under a Natural England licence before commencement of works.
- Ensuring no works to potential nesting habitats between bird nesting season.
- Undertaking detailed badger sett surveys.
- Undertaking a nesting bird survey should works to scattered scrub take place within the bird nesting season.
- Eradication of non-native plant species.
- Stopping of works and ecologist contacted should evidence of bat activity be found.
- Undertaking additional bat surveys should buildings not be demolished within 2 years of the date of the daytime survey (22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021).
- Use of soft landscaping, bird and bat boxes and native tree planting to enhance on site biodiversity.

7.28 The previous scheme involved tree loss, and was accepted subject to provision of a constraints plan, root protection plan, alternative construction methods if required within root protection zones and an improved landscaping scheme. The Council sought tree planting to Didsbury Road, although it was confirmed that these would need to be within the site boundary so as not to impair visibility.

### **Noise**

7.29 A Noise Impact Assessment is submitted with this planning application. It concludes that the dominant noise source is the road traffic on Didsbury Road. The proposed site design incorporating suggested noise mitigation measures would avoid noise sources giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life.

7.30 These mitigation measures include:

- Ensuring all boundary fencing along the edge of the site is at least 1.8m in height, installed without gaps and with a surface mass of at least 12kg/m<sup>2</sup>.
- Recommended façade glazing and ventilation systems to all dwellings to allow windows to be closed when required and still achieve necessary ventilation requirements (note that the majority of façades on the apartment block will achieve noise guideline levels with their windows open, however it is in any case recommended to install features of noise mitigation to all properties).

- Implementation of measures to mitigate noise during the construction period, including restricted hours, well maintained equipment, use of noise emission warning alarms, use of noise screening and positioning of cabins to act as noise barriers.

7.31 For the previous scheme, the Council accepted that good residential amenity for future occupants can be achieved through upgraded glazing in windows directly or obliquely facing Didsbury Road.

### **Air Quality**

- 7.32 The proposed development does not lie within an existing Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and is not otherwise in a location known to be of concern for air quality. Background air pollution for the site is well below objectives. Vehicles travelling to and from a development of this scale will not have a significant impact and dust arising from demolition and construction will not be significant with appropriate mitigation in place.
- 7.33 An Air Quality Screening Assessment is submitted with this planning application. This recommends site-specific mitigation to minimise the potential for nuisance dust and fine particulate matter to be generated, including:

- Soft stripping of building internals before complete demolition.
- Water suppression during demolition using handheld sprays.
- Revegetation of earthworks and exposed soil stockpiles to stabilise surfaces.
- Protecting materials against wind and dampening these materials. Storing in bunded areas and avoiding drying out.
- Delivery of cement and other fine powder materials in enclosed tankers.
- Implementation of wheel washing for construction vehicles leaving the site.
- Methods to minimise dust generation, such as slow vehicle speeds, minimising activity during winds and using water-assisted dusters.

7.34 The Council has previously accepted residential redevelopment subject to dust mitigation measures during demolition and construction to protect the amenity of existing residents.

### **Ground Conditions**

- 7.35 The Geoenvironmental Appraisal submitted with this application confirms that some regrading will be required to achieve the desired development levels. All concrete slabs and service ducts will require breaking out prior to redevelopment, with local breaking out of relic foundations where these would conflict with new foundations.

- 7.36 The ground itself consists of made ground in the central and northern site areas to a depth of 3.4m. Natural strata comprises a succession of glaciofluvial sand with variable proportions of gravel, silt and clay.
- 7.37 Given the nature of the site levels and ground conditions, strip or trench fill foundations are recommended, with some pile foundations appropriate for certain plots. Final foundation designs will be informed by further geotechnical data and survey work.
- 7.38 The Council previously observed that site investigations to consider soil and gas would be required.

### **Flood Risk and Drainage**

- 7.39 A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy undertaken by Hydrock are submitted with the application.
- 7.40 The FRA confirms that the site is in a Flood Zone 1 at low risk of flooding as defined by the Environment Agency. The closest main watercourse is the River Mersey located some 600m south of the site. The site is also at low risk of fluvial flooding, negligible risk of tidal flooding, and at a very low risk of surface water flooding. It is concluded that surface water can be managed by the local drainage network.
- 7.41 The risk of groundwater flooding is driven by geological and topographical factors and is therefore unlikely to be impacted by the effects of climate change. The risk remains low due to the site being underlain by a principal sandstone aquifer with significant intergranular flow, which facilitates rainwater flow into the ground and minimises the risk of groundwater emergence.
- 7.42 The FRA concludes that the development will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and suggests the following mitigation measures:
- Ensuring finished floor levels are a minimum 300mm to address residual risk of surface water flooding.
  - Implementing safe egress via Didsbury Road.
- 7.43 The drainage strategy follows the hierarchy for the preferred discharge of surface water as set out in NPPG. Based on current understanding of the geotechnical conditions and water logging on site, drainage into the ground via infiltration is considered inappropriate. The nearest watercourse is also some 700m away and is separated by 3<sup>rd</sup> party land, and so discharge into an existing watercourse is not possible.

7.44 The report therefore recommends a drainage system that discharges into separate surface water and foul drainage networks located under the central access road and external areas. This will eventually discharge to the United Utilities public sewers located within Tennyson Close to the south. To achieve a minimum 50% betterment on the existing brownfield run off rates, below ground attenuation will be provided.

## 8 Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 8.1 In accordance with paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the application should be decided in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. In summarising the benefits of the development, it is appropriate to have regard to the three objectives to be pursued in achieving sustainable development as defined by paragraph 8: **economic, social and environmental**.

### Economic

- 8.2 There will be economic benefits from direct employment in the construction phase, along with multiplier effects within the supply chain and local economy, associated with the project value of some £10 million.
- 8.3 Longer term employment will be provided through the supervision and management of the completed development, and the spending power of future residents will subsequently help to sustain local shops and services.
- 8.4 Freeing up under-occupied family housing ('rightsizing') will have a cascade effect and bring additional residents to the area, reinforcing these effects. The resultant availability of under-occupied homes to those of working age and their families will attract employees to the area and support local shops and services.

### Social

- 8.5 The development will provide 82 dwellings in a local authority which has a 3.2 year housing land supply. It will provide 72 affordable homes for which the Council has confirmed that demand has far outstripped supply, with extremely poor delivery.
- 8.6 The development will help to satisfy the acute shortfall of retirement accommodation in Stockport, which has the highest proportion of residents aged over 55 in Greater Manchester. The Borough also has a need for at least 2,400 properties for the elderly without care.
- 8.7 The development will also improve the quality of life of residents, reducing isolation and pressure on health and social services through preventative means.

### Environmental

- 8.8 The proposal will make beneficial use of derelict, previously developed land, contributing to housing supply without using greenfield land on the edge of settlements. In doing so, it will make optimal use of the site in an area with an existing shortage of land for meeting identified needs.
- 8.9 It will significantly improve the safety and quality of the physical environment, benefitting existing residents as well as future occupiers.

- 8.10 The development will limit dependence on the use of the private car by providing a genuine choice of alternative means of transport, including walking and cycling.
- 8.11 The submitted technical reports have confirmed that there are no environmental, heritage or technical consequences of the development which cannot be mitigated. As part of recommended ecological mitigation measures and proposed landscaping strategy, the development will provide an opportunity to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 8.12 The proposal exceeds requirements for thermal insulation under Building Regulations to reduce energy demand and carbon emissions.

## Conclusion

- 8.13 The previous application was not submitted by a residential developer and the scheme proposed was not commercially viable to implement. In the absence of a viable scheme, the site will fail to make efficient use of redundant brownfield land to contribute to Stockport's housing land supply in a sustainable location.
- 8.14 In consideration of this application, it is pertinent to have regard to the approach of the Secretary of State in the Seashell Trust appeal. He confirmed the consequence of Stockport not having a five year supply of housing land, meaning that planning permission should be granted under paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework unless: (i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
- 8.15 Whilst the Seashell Trust clarifies the significance of relevant issues and the correct policy approach, the planning balance in each case will be different. The present application should be determined with consideration to the following:
  - Very substantial weight should be attached to the contribution to specialist housing needs for the elderly. The previous scheme provided no such contribution.
  - Very substantial weight should be attached to the contribution to meeting general market and affordable housing needs. As demonstrated in *Tewkesbury Borough Council v Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government [2021] EWHC 2782 (Admin)* (18 October 2021), the severe shortfall of housing in Stockport should be attributed great weight in the planning balance.
  - There are no alternative sites which have been or could be identified to meet these needs without an up-to-date adopted Development Plan.

- Significant weight should be attached to the benefits of making optimal use of a vacant brownfield site adjacent to existing housing.
- Additional weight should be attached to the economic benefits of development.

- 8.16 The proposed development will make a significant contribution to meeting the need for specialist housing which the current development plan fails to make provision for, whilst the emerging plan is some time off and will continue to be constrained by Stockport's Green Belt. In addition, it will directly make a valuable contribution to general housing supply and indirectly assist this through freeing up family housing.
- 8.17 In conclusion, there is an overriding case for granting planning permission to secure this important contribution to specialist retirement housing provision, and Anwyl Partnerships look forward to working with the Council, consultees and the community to achieve a successful outcome.



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