

OLDHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

DESIGN AND THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Importance of Good Design

The contribution that high quality design can make to urban regeneration and sustainable development is very important and widely recognised.

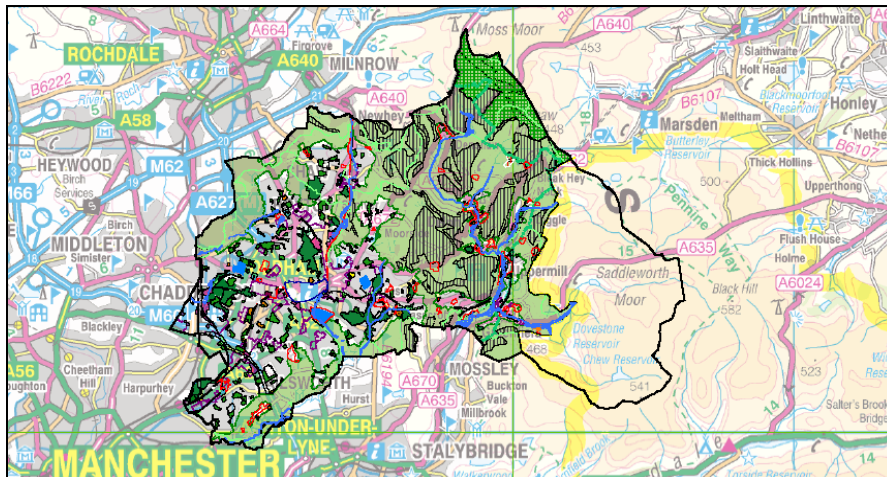
Good design brings economic, social and environmental benefits; adds to quality of life; attracts businesses and investment; and reinforces civic pride.

National Guidance states “Good design ensures attractive usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning.”¹ This is reflected in the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which states that good design is an essential and integral component of all development within the Borough.

Achieving better standards of design is the responsibility of all those involved in the development process, including architects, designers, public and private sector developers, house builders, engineers and council members and officers.

Good design is as much about the way buildings and environments function as with their appearance. The principles that need to be followed apply equally to urban and rural situations, and to built and natural elements, and need to be expressed in ways, which reflect the character of the area in which the development is taking place.

The Local Context



(Source: Oldham UDP; Oldham MBC)

The Borough covers approximately 55 square miles and is home to about 217,000 people. The eastern part of the Borough contains significant areas of open countryside (some of which are in within the Peak District National Park²) with a settlement pattern that is characterised by densely developed river valleys, typical of the South Pennines, and dispersed farmsteads and pockets of rural settlements.

¹ Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

² The Oldham Metropolitan Borough Unitary Development covers the whole of the Borough except those parts which fall within the Peak District National Park. The planning function of the Park is overseen by the Peak District National Park Authority.

Within these tight-knit settlements there is a distinctive character produced by the close knit pattern of mills and weaver's cottages that are a legacy of the settlements' origins based upon the textile industry of the early industrial revolution.



These settlements, which have a characteristic linear pattern, constrained by topography to the valley floor and the lower south facing slopes, all contribute to the uniqueness and local distinctiveness of the Borough.



To the west, the Borough has an urban character, reflecting its position close to Manchester City Centre. This too reflects the social and economic development of the settlements to the east of Manchester during the nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries. A series of independent towns (of which the town of Oldham itself was by far the largest) each with their own history, economy and character. Multi-storey mills, mill chimneys, and the associated redbrick houses, all contribute to this character.



Development has been also shaped by a landscape, which was not an obvious site for what would become the most important cotton spinning town in the world as well as a major centre for mechanical and electrical engineering and aircraft production. This combination of coal, production and technology is largely responsible for the form of the urban landscape of Oldham today.



Planning is about looking forward, building on the past but recognising that change is necessary if Oldham is to be successful in the future. This is perhaps best expressed in Oldham Beyond, which presents a vision and strategy for the renaissance of the Borough. It seeks to create:

“A confident place, at ease with itself and celebrating in its diverse communities and landscapes – from the tight knit terraced communities to the wild moors and valley villages to the east. A borough that is proud of its industrial past but which has reinvented its economy by making the most of the creativity and drive of its young people. The world will see the borough as a place transformed and people will be attracted to live and work in the borough by the quality of life that it offers and by its reputation for tolerance and diversity.”

The Way Forward

The Council's main aim is “*regenerating the Borough in a way that achieves greater Community Cohesion*”. The Community Strategy seeks to establish “*high quality living environments*” through “*maintaining and improving our buildings, streets, parks, open spaces, woodland, wider countryside and rivers through environmentally sensitive regeneration.*”



Good high quality design will be an important consideration in the delivery of these visions and aims.

This will be achieved in a number of ways. In planning terms, the key document is the UDP, adopted in July 2006, which provides a robust framework for achieving high standards and good quality design.

To support the implementation of these design-related policies, the Council has prepared an Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that contains further guidance on how to achieve high quality design.



It incorporates the Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide prepared in partnership with Oldham and Rochdale Councils and the Oldham and Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder. This expands on local planning policies and sets out design principles for all types of development throughout the two Boroughs. The principles identify how to achieve high design quality whilst taking into account and reflecting local character and distinctiveness so that they relate positively to the area.

It is supported by the Public Realm Design Guide, which provides a guide to creating good streets and spaces, and the Residential Design Guide provides a guide to the creation of successful and well-designed residential areas.

In adopting the Urban Design Guide the Council has recognised that the principles embedded within these documents can be applied throughout the whole of the Borough, whilst of course taking into account and responding to local character and distinctiveness.

Whilst not part of the SPD the Council has also produced and endorsed a guide to good practice on the design and planning process, which provides advice on how to consider design as integral part of the development process.

Building on the adoption of the Urban Design Guide the Council may produce additional design-related guidance from time to time as is considered appropriate and necessary. Any additional guidance produced would accord with the general principles set out within the Urban Design Guide, but may look to provide further guidance on specific issues, such as house extensions and canal side development, or may relate to particular areas such as the Saddleworth villages.