

Oldham

Local

Plan

**Local Plan Review: Issues and
Options Economy and
Employment Topic Paper**

July 2021



Oldham
Council

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This Economy and Employment Topic Paper is one of a series that has been prepared as part of the process of evidence gathering to support the review and preparation of Oldham's Local Plan.
- 1.2** The full range of Topic Papers deal with the following:
- Housing
 - Economy and Employment
 - Our Centres (incorporating retail)
 - Communities (incorporating community facilities, health and well-being, education, open space, sport and recreation provision and infrastructure etc).
 - Open Land (incorporating Green Belt and Other Protected Open Land)
 - Natural Environment (incorporating landscape, nature conservation designations and wider Green Infrastructure)
 - Built Environment (incorporating design, heritage)
 - Transport
 - Climate Change, Energy and Flood Risk
- 1.3** The principal aim of the Topic Paper is to set out current key policies, plans and strategies relating this topic area that will form the basis for the development of the Local Plan. The Topic Papers will present a profile of the Borough and highlight key issues and opportunities that the Local Plan should seek to address. Helping to shape and influence the direction and focus of the Local Plan's planning policies, designation and site allocations.
- 1.4** It is intended that the Topic Papers will be 'living' documents that can be updated as we progress through the preparation of the Local Plan, carry out further consultation and complete additional evidence.
- 1.5** Oldham covers an area of approximately 142 sq km and is home to 235,623 ⁽¹⁾ people, making it the seventh most populous borough in Greater Manchester. It is nine miles from Manchester city centre and 19 miles from Manchester Airport. There have been some significant changes to the composition of Oldham's economy, with a continued reduction in manufacturing employment over the last decade and growth in the health, business and professional services, logistics and education sectors as well as in creative industries and science and Research and Development (R & D). Manufacturing still remains one of the largest sectors in the economy, employing around 14% of the workforce.
- 1.6** Oldham is an area of great opportunity and significant need. The borough benefits from a diverse and vibrant community, a young, growing and entrepreneurial population, an improving educational offer and access to an extensive labour pool within the wider Greater Manchester area. However, the economy of Oldham reflects a number of longstanding issues, with relatively weak private sector growth and a dominance of low skill and low wage industries.

1 Office of National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates, May 2018

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- 1.7** There has been significant financial investment in recent years in transport, housing, education, health care and in the town centre, demonstrating the council's commitment to transforming the borough and realising its full potential as an integral part of the wider city region. There is a need now for continued targeted intervention to ensure that Oldham is able to contribute positively to the growth of the region and play a key role in achieving Greater Manchester's growth and reform ambitions. There are a range of documents at a national, a sub-regional and an Oldham level that can provide guidance and advice on how Oldham might achieve this.

2 KEY POLICIES, PLANS AND STRATEGIES

National Context

National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019)

- 2.1** National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says in paragraph 80 that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. It goes on to say that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 2.2** Paragraph 81 lists that planning policies should:
- set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;
 - set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;
 - seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and
 - be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.
- 2.3** NPPF (paragraph 83), also outlines how planning policies and decisions can support a prosperous rural economy.
- 2.4** Under Chapter 10, 'Supporting high quality communications', paragraph 112 states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. It goes on to say that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. In addition policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments.

Planning Practice Guidance Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019)

- 2.5** This guidance states that the assessment of land availability is an important step in the preparation of the Local Plan. The NPPF identifies the advantages of carrying out land assessments for housing and economic development as part of the same exercise, in order that sites may be allocated for the use which is most appropriate. The assessment should identify and assess sites with potential for development (including availability and achievability).
- 2.6** This approach ensures that all land is assessed together as part of plan preparation to identify which sites or broad locations are the most suitable and deliverable for a particular use. The guidance includes methodology for carrying out the assessment

of sites, including a suggested size threshold, information on how to identify sites, what types of data to look at, what to include in a site survey and what characteristics to record during the survey.

2.7 The guidance says that at the end of the assessment the core outputs should be:

- a list of all sites considered, cross-referenced to their locations on maps;
- an assessment of each, in terms of its suitability, availability and achievability (including whether it is viable) to determine whether a site is realistically expected to be developed and when;
- more detailed information for sites which are considered realistic candidates for development, where others have been discounted for clearly evidenced and justified reasons;
- the type and quantity of development that could be delivered on site, including a reasonable estimate of build out rates, setting out how any barriers to delivery could be overcome and when;
- an indicative trajectory of anticipated development and consideration of risk.

2.8 There is no formal requirement for an annual update of employment (including retail, office, manufacturing) site allocations, they should be regularly reviewed.

Planning Practice Guidance Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019)

2.9 The Planning Practice Guidance outlines what evidence may be needed as part of Local Plan evidence base. To plan for businesses it says plan-making authorities need to assess:

- the best fit functional economic market area
- the existing stock of land for employment uses within the area;
- the recent pattern of employment land supply and loss – for example based on extant planning permissions and planning applications (or losses to permitted development);
- evidence of market demand (including the locational and premises requirements of particular types of business) – sourced from local data and market intelligence, such as recent surveys of business needs, discussions with developers and property agents and engagement with business and economic forums;
- wider market signals relating to economic growth, diversification and innovation; and
- any evidence of market failure – such as physical or ownership constraints that prevent the employment site being used effectively.

2.10 It goes on to say that policy making authorities will need to develop an idea of future needs based on a range of data which is current and robust, such as:

- sectoral and employment forecasts and projections which take account of likely changes in skills needed (labour demand)

- demographically derived assessments of current and future local labour supply (labour supply techniques)
- analysis based on the past take-up of employment land and property and/or future property market requirements
- consultation with relevant organisations, studies of business trends, an understanding of innovative and changing business models, particularly those which make use of online platforms to respond to consumer demand and monitoring of business, economic and employment statistics.

2.11 It goes on to explain how market demand be analysed, employment land requirement be derived, and the need for logistics can be assessed.

Digital Connectivity Portal (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2018)

2.12 This portal was launched in 2018 to provide guidance for local authorities and network providers on improving connectivity in local areas. The government wants to deliver nationwide gigabit broadband as soon as possible. The aim is also for the UK to be a world leader in 5G, with the majority of the population covered by a 5G signal by 2027. The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (2018) outlined a package of measures to create the right market and policy conditions to deliver world-class connectivity for citizens and businesses.

2.13 These measures include removing barriers to deployment of fibre and mobile networks, making it easier for network providers to access government buildings and public investment in fibre for rural areas.

2.14 Local authorities and property developers have a vital role to play in ensuring that all parts of the UK can enjoy the many social and economic benefits of the next generation of digital connectivity. Network providers, in turn, must work collaboratively with local authorities and property developers.

2.15 The portal includes links to various pieces of guidance on:

- encouraging closer cooperation between network providers and local authorities and property developers for the deployment of digital infrastructure; and
- offering guidance on effective policies and processes to facilitate deployment of broadband and mobile networks.

Industrial Strategy – Building a Britain fit for the Future (HM Government, 2017)

2.16 The strategy is looking at Britain’s future potential, for areas of the economy which are either a current success, and with more support could be strengthened further, or areas of the economy where currently the opportunity is small but has huge competitive potential.

2.17 The key areas under review are as follow:

- Build on the UK’s strengths and extend excellence into the future.

- Close the gaps between the UK's most productive companies, industries, places and people.
- Make the UK one of the most competitive places in the world to start and grow a business.

2.18 The strategy is based on 'five foundations': ideas, people, infrastructure, business environment and places. Under the 'ideas' foundation it sets out four 'Grand Challenges' which are:

- Putting the UK at the forefront of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data revolution (the 4th Industrial Revolution)
- Maximising the advantages for UK industry from the global shift to clean growth (This links in with governments 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment'.)
- Being a world leader in shaping the future of mobility
- Harnessing the power of innovation to help meet the needs of an ageing society

2.19 The government will be investing in strategic innovation challenges through an Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund which will help deliver the Grand Challenges and support sector productivity including through Sector Deals. The Sector Deals that have been announced so far are in life sciences, construction, artificial intelligence and the automotive sector. There are advanced discussions for deals in creative industries and Industrial digitalisation. Manchester is mentioned under the life sciences deal with regard to molecular testing solutions and the company (QIAGEN). It will be important for Oldham to try and tap into all these future key sectors where possible in the future.

Regional Context

Places for Everyone

2.20 Places for Everyone: A Joint Development Plan Document of Nine Greater Manchester Districts is being jointly prepared, following Stockport's decision to withdraw in late 2020. The nine local Greater Manchester districts agreed that to address strategic matters such as housing need and economic growth as well as issues such as flood risk and strategic infrastructure, it would be best to work on a joint development plan - Places for Everyone. Once Places for Everyone is adopted, all nine Local Plans will be required to be in general conformity with it. As the proposed Places for Everyone evolves, strategic policies can be reflected in draft Local Plans.

2.21 In relation to Economy and Employment, the key aspects Places for Everyone will cover which affect Oldham are:

- A review of the Green Belt boundary;
- The designation of strategic sites;
- Employment need up to 2037

- 2.22** For the purposes of this topic paper information on draft policies is as proposed in the GMSF Publication Plan Draft for Approval October 2020.
- 2.23 Policy GM-Strat 6** states a significant increase in the competitiveness of the northern areas will be sought. There will be a strong focus on prioritising the re-use of brownfield land through urban regeneration, enhancing the role of the town centres, complemented by the selective release of Green Belt and safeguarded land in key locations that can help to boost economic opportunities and diversify housing provision.
- 2.24 Policy GM-Strat 7** proposes as part of the spatial strategy two major sites, which in Oldham (joint with Rochdale) includes Stakehill. 'High Crompton Broad Location' is also identified but will remain in the Green Belt until such time through a review of the GMSF or future review of the Local Plan can demonstrate that it is fully justified.
- 2.25 Policy GM Allocation 2 Stakehill** - states that the site will deliver around 155,000 of high quality, adaptable, employment floorspace within a 'green' employment park setting, it goes on to say that this will take advantage of its accessible location and proximity to Junction 20 of the M62, and complementing the other opportunities within the M62 North East corridor. the supporting text goes on to say that, 'Stakehill provides a significant opportunity for both Oldham and Rochdale to contribute to the future economic growth of Greater Manchester, capitalising on its proximity and connectivity to the motorway and rail network. It has the potential to provide a significant contribution to the sub-regional requirement for employment floorspace within key growth sectors and attract additional investment and economic activity to the area. The scheme will also generate a range of benefits for the local and wider economy'.
- 2.26** Chapter 6, 'A Prosperous Greater Manchester' includes a number of policies concerned with supporting economic growth in Greater Manchester. **Policy GM-P 1** 'Supporting Long-Term Economic Growth' states that a thriving, inclusive and productive economy will be sought in all parts of Greater Manchester. It states the emphasis will be on:
- Maintaining a very high level of economic diversity across Greater Manchester;
 - Facilitating the development of high value clusters in prime sectors;
 - Making the most of major assets of the sub-region;
 - Grasping the economic opportunities from the global transition to a low carbon economy;
 - Providing the high-quality, sustainable living environments that will help to attract and retain skilled workers;
 - Supporting local job growth, by seeking agreement with employers and developers, including housebuilders, to enter into local labour and training agreements through planning obligations and other mechanisms where appropriate; and
 - Maximising the potential of the key growth locations whilst also securing investment that raises the competitiveness of the northern parts of Greater Manchester to deliver inclusive growth across the sub-region by ensuring that employment growth opportunities are well connected and accessible to all residents.

2.27 Policy GM-P 2 'Employment Sites and Premises' states that a 'diverse range of employment sites and accessible premises, both new and second-hand, will be made available across Greater Manchester in terms of location, scale, type and cost. This will offer opportunities for all kinds and sizes of businesses, including start-ups, firms seeking to expand, and large-scale inward investment which will help to tackle inequalities'. It also states that, existing employment areas that are important to maintaining a strong and diverse supply of sites and premises throughout Greater Manchester will be protected from redevelopment to other uses, and nurtured to ensure they remain competitive and their accessibility improved where necessary. It states that this will include local employment areas as well as strategic locations.

2.28 Policies GM-P 3 'Office Development' and **GM-P 4** 'Industry and Warehousing Development' outline the amount of office, industry and warehousing floorspace that will be provided in Greater Manchester over the period 2018-2037.

2.29 The GMSF also highlights the importance of high quality digital infrastructure and how they can open up a range of opportunities. It states that any truly global city will need to have widespread, affordable, reliable, secure and future-proofed digital infrastructure that provides a competitive edge for businesses and supports high-levels of social inclusion. This will be essential if Greater Manchester is to capitalise on new innovations, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things and connected and autonomous vehicles. **Policy GM-N 2** 'Digital Connectivity' outlines the range of measures Greater Manchester will support in order to help facilitate the provision of affordable, high quality digital infrastructure. This includes:

- Enabling the roll-out of latest generation mobile technology and full fibre to the premise connectivity;
- Requiring all new development to have full fibre to premises connections, unless technically infeasible, and to incorporate multiple-ducting compliant with telecoms standards; and
- Facilitating the provision of free, secure, high speed public wi-fi connections.

Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership and the UK Government, 2019)

2.30 Greater Manchester's Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) is underpinned by a shared understanding of the place and its people and is designed to enable the city-region to go further and faster towards its ambitions than ever before, while meeting key national objectives. It states that key to the success of the LIS will be strengthening the city-region's foundations of productivity and ensuring that growth benefits all people and places. The Industrial Strategy is centred around two key aspects:

2.31 1. Five foundations of productivity

- Ideas
- People
- Infrastructure

- Business Environment
- Places

2.32 2. Four Grand Challenges

- Health Innovation
- Advanced Materials and Manufacturing
- Digital, Creative and Media
- Clean Growth

2.33 Oldham's largest sector is Health and Social Care (14.2% jobs), with Manufacturing being the 3rd largest sector (11.5%) which has potential to support the first two Grand Challenges. The growth in construction sector, linked to the new Oldham College Construction School will support the Clean Growth Grand Challenge.

2.34 The Greater Manchester LIS is a long-term plan which will aim to develop increased productivity and wealth creation across Greater Manchester. The strategy states that:

2.35 "By 2040, Greater Manchester will aim to have secured:

- increased productivity and pay across sectors, particularly where they are currently behind national averages, driven by businesses which are well led and managed, innovative and trading and investing globally;
- a greater number of high-quality manufacturing opportunities in strategic sites across the city-region, giving a more productive manufacturing base close to transport links and population centres;
- a fully integrated and digitalised health and care system, creating and adopting the latest in preventative and assistive health technology, and
- helping people stay in the labour market and stay productive for longer.

Marketing Manchester (on-going)

2.36 Marketing Manchester is the agency charged with promoting Greater Manchester nationally and internationally as a place to visit, invest, meet and study. The strategy dovetails with the Greater Manchester Strategy and the Greater Manchester Internationalisation Strategy which has a vision for Manchester to be a Top 20 global city by 2035. Marketing Manchester. The priorities of Marketing Manchester are to:

1. Promote Greater Manchester on a national and international stage:
 - to leisure visitors, providing them with inspiration and information to visit
 - by identifying, bidding, securing and supporting, business conferences and events

2. Influence investors in our key sectors to set up and grow their businesses in our city-region.
3. Strive to be an exemplar Destination Management Organisation.

2.37 Marketing Manchester in July 2020 launched a new consumer campaign called 'Find Your Space' to help recover the tourism, hospitality and leisure industries and rebuild confidence in Greater Manchester as a place to visit, live, work and study following COVID-19. The first wave of the campaign will focus on 'hyper local' audiences, encouraging Greater Manchester residents to get out into their local villages, towns, cities and countryside. As COVID-19 restrictions ease and when it is safe to do so, the campaign will evolve to target regional audiences in neighbouring counties such as Cheshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire, before eventually becoming a wholly inclusive domestic tourism campaign later in the year, encouraging staycations from around the UK.

2.38 Two sub-brands of the Find Your Space campaign – Space to Meet and Space to Learn – will also launch in autumn 2020, encouraging confidence and safety within Greater Manchester's important business meetings and conference industry and the ability for students to live, study and have a full student experience at Greater Manchester's five universities.

Engines of Prosperity: new uses for old mills North West, Historic England, (Historic England, 2017)

2.39 Textile mills are fundamental to the history and culture of much of the North West. They can once again be powerhouses for growth in the 21st century. Evidence demonstrates their capacity to accommodate new and exciting uses, attracting investment in area-wide regeneration, creating jobs and accommodating the homes and businesses of the future. This report looks at examples of best practice in repurposing vacant and underused textile and mill buildings across the North West.

2.40 There is evidence that mill redevelopment projects need assistance to overcome market failures created by high abnormal costs and restrictions in the developer / funder sector.

2.41 There are 1082 mills in Lancashire (540) and Greater Manchester (542). Many are vacant and underused and therefore at risk of being lost. The Housing White Paper highlights the need to build more than 275,000 homes per year and repurposed mills can play an important role in delivering this target and help minimise the release of Green Belt land. Also creating additional commercial floorspace is at the heart of the Strategic Economic Plans for Greater Manchester and Lancashire and the 1,996,597sqm of vacant mill floorspace provides an excellent opportunity to meet this need.

2.42 If standard office floorspace densities were applied to the net vacant mill floorspace there is the potential to generate 133,000 new net additional jobs (equivalent to £6bn of GVA per annum) or 25,000 new homes.

2.43 Two mills in Oldham were looked at as having potential for repurposing. One was Brownhill Bridge Mill in Dobcross and the other is Hartford Works in Werneth. The report presents a description of site, ownership and intentions of the owner, structural condition, opportunities and constraints, and delivery strategy.

2.44 The report summarises the ingredients for successful mill reuse.

2.45 In relation to planning:

- There needs to be a recognition of the viability challenges facing owners;
- There needs to be an application of Conservation Principles to identify relative heritage values within sites;
- A flexible approach to adaption by all stakeholders needs to be applied;
- There needs to be a proactive strategy to identify the historic mills that are at risk and develop reuse schemes;
- There is a need to promote Heritage Investment Strategies and Mill Action Plans at a Local Authority (LA) level; and
- There needs to be guidance and support for mill owners.

2.46 In relation to funding:

- There needs to be an establishment of mill investment programmes, coordinated at Combined Authority level. This would draw resources from Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Funding / Local Growth Fund, Historic England, European Structural Fund and Investment Fund and Homes and Communities Agency (HCA);
- LA intervention through acquisition of assets, prudential borrowing, joint venture partnerships and direct funding and delivery;
- Maximisation of opportunities for HCA Homes Building Fund to be secured for mill re-purposing projects; and
- Tax increment financing to address financial deficits on priority assets.

2.47 In relation to a collaborative approach:

- There should be a creation of high quality spaces to stimulate wider regeneration;
- There needs to be recognition of long term investment potential of historic mills; and
- There needs to be an identification of long term opportunities in areas that align with regeneration strategies.

2.48 The next steps are to:

- Identify priority mills with repurpose potential at either LA or combined authority level;

- Produce investment strategies for the selected mills with all stakeholders; and
- Begin partnership working with owners, LA, Historic England, LEPs and HCA to secure delivery.

Local Context

The Corporate Plan (Oldham Council, 2017)

2.49 Oldham's current Corporate Plan expired in December 2020. Work to refresh Oldham's Corporate Plan was due to be completed by summer 2020, however, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that this was no longer viable. Instead, we are in the process of developing our Covid-19 Recovery Strategy which will act as an interim Corporate Plan until at least 2022.

Covid-19 Recovery Strategy (Oldham Council, on-going)

2.50 As a Co-operative Council, Oldham is committed to tackling the impact of COVID-19, protecting our most vulnerable residents and communities. The steps we are taking to tackle the pandemic and the subsequent recovery planning, aim to support people, especially those groups who are often most impacted.

2.51 Building on the learning so far and the anticipated events to come, we are developing a comprehensive Recovery Strategy, which will help shape our approach and vision for Oldham over the next eighteen months. We do this whilst we continue to respond to an ongoing critical incident where we are focused each day on saving the lives of Oldham's residents.

2.52 Our objectives and approach to our Recovery Strategy are rooted in the Oldham Model, ensuring as we adapt to a changing world that we build Thriving Communities, an Inclusive Economy and work Co-operatively with each other. Our key objectives are:

1. **Driving equality:** Oldham has a rich history of people from different backgrounds and cultures living and working together. However, we know that there are groups of people that are marginalised, who are more likely to face inequality and discrimination than others. As we recover from the impact of COVID-19 it is critical that we tackle inequality and discrimination head on. We will continue to identify and mitigate the equality impacts caused by the pandemic, informing our recovery planning through lived experience.
2. **Investing in quality housing:** Poor-quality housing has a profound impact on health. The condition of homes, insecure tenure, and wider neighbourhood characteristics all have a considerable effect on health and wellbeing. Groups in the population who are more likely to live in poor housing are often the same groups who are vulnerable to COVID-19 and other health conditions. To tackle this, we will improve housing quality, both in and outside of the home, while bringing forward significant investment in new and affordable homes.
3. **Championing a green recovery:** In Oldham, we want to respond to the impacts of coronavirus in a bold and ambitious way. We want to use this as an opportunity to stimulate a green recovery that accelerates our ambitions around reducing the boroughs carbon footprint and protecting our greenspace for residents to enjoy.
4. **Creating and protecting jobs and supporting businesses:** Many businesses, especially across hospitality and retail, have been impacted by the COVID-19

pandemic, with repeated forced closures due to national and local lockdowns. We will continue to create good jobs for our residents, while supporting local businesses to restart and recover from the effects of the pandemic.

5. **Prioritising education and skills:** The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on education and skills, with many young people needing support to 'catch up' in learning after several months of lockdown. We will work with schools and colleges to support children and young people to catch up and succeed in learning. We will also prioritise training for adults who have been made redundant, helping them retrain and secure employment.
6. **Promoting health and wellbeing and supporting the most vulnerable:** We will continue to promote and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, contain the spread of COVID-19 locally and target action to protect our most vulnerable residents and communities.

2.53 Each of these focus areas will form a key plank of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan, with individual actions and performance metrics attached to each priority area. The Plan will reflect the difficult and challenging times ahead and the opportunities that are arising as we recover from the pandemic as Team Oldham. The Plan will also set out how we can embrace the 'new normal' to build a stronger local economy, increase community resilience and public participation, support our local health system, and support our most vulnerable residents.

Creating a Better Place (Oldham Council, 2020)

- 2.54** Creating a Better Place focuses on building more homes for our residents, creating new jobs through town centre regeneration, and ensuring Oldham is a great place to visit with lots of family friendly and accessible places to go.
- 2.55** This approach has the potential to deliver around 2,500 new homes in the town centre designed for a range of different budgets and needs, 1,000 new jobs and 100 new opportunities for apprenticeships, and is in alignment with council priorities to be the Greenest Borough.
- 2.56** The report notes that quality of place is paramount to thriving communities. Quality design and attention to public realm are critical to Oldham's success as a place where people feel they belong, an exciting place where people can live, work and spend time. Oldham hopes to create a better place by building quality homes, opportunities to grow local business and create jobs, by ensuring Oldham is the greenest borough and by embedding sustainability.

Northern Roots (Northern Roots and Oldham Council, on-going)

- 2.57** Since 2018 Northern Roots and Oldham Council have been working with experts from the University of Salford, Planet.ie, Social Business International and E3M to take the Northern Roots project from initial concept to pilot phase to take 160 acres of green space and transform it into the UK's largest urban farm and eco-park.
- 2.58** Work to date includes soil testing and biodiversity surveys on the site, community consultations, and a detailed project master plan. Key to this is the development of a business model that will support the creation of jobs, business and enterprise opportunities for local communities, whilst ensuring long term financial sustainability for the Northern Roots project.

2.59 Over the next five to ten years Northern Roots will create a visitor centre, microbrewery, and teaching and workshop space, alongside community growing, market gardening, forestry, sport and leisure activities such as walking, mountain biking and camping, outdoor education, and a vibrant arts and culture programme.

Oldham Green New Deal Strategy (Oldham Council, 2020)

2.60 In July 2019 the council committed to becoming carbon neutral as an organisation by 2025, and to becoming the UK's first "Green New Deal Council", setting a target of 2030 for carbon neutrality for the borough as a whole. A new "Oldham Green New Deal Strategy" will be brought forward in spring 2021, and will include a wide-ranging programme of delivery focusing on tackling climate change and other environmental challenges whilst building the green business sector across Oldham and reducing energy bills for the public and private sectors and households. Themes will include deploying technology to create a local energy market, new business models for renewable energy and green infrastructure on new developments and regeneration schemes, social prescribing with green schemes to improve health and wellbeing for residents whilst cutting public sector costs, and transforming the reputation of the borough and boosting tourism.

2.61 The strategy is currently being prepared. The vision is to "Make Oldham a greener, smarter , more enterprising place".

2.62 The objectives include:

- Make Oldham a leading local authority area for environmental quality and play a leading role in meeting the Greater Manchester Mayor's Green City Region objectives.
- Deliver a sustainable economy, tackling fuel poverty and generating training and employment opportunities in the growing green business sector.
- Maintain a high quality local environment which delivers health and well being for residents, including food and recreation, reducing costs for public services.
- Generate inbound tourism for the borough by building on Oldham's reputation for being a green, attractive and forward thinking sustainable borough.
- Keep Oldham at the forefront of development and deployment of cutting edge environmental technologies, and ensure that the benefits are kept locally.
- Future-proof the regeneration of the borough by establishing Oldham as an exemplar Green City on energy, carbon, water and green infrastructure.

2.63 It will be important to ensure that the the vision, objectives and policies we formulate as part Local Plan link with the council's ambitions regarding the building of the green business sector. This will include supporting companies who are looking for opportunities to develop sustainable, environmentally-friendly materials; decarbonize energy; tap digital innovation for doing more with less; and extend the life cycle of goods within a "zero waste to landfill" framework.

The Oldham Plan 2017 - 2022

2.64 The Oldham Plan is a collective action statement for Oldham developed and agreed by the Oldham Partnership. It sets out how we can all best serve the place we love and help its people, districts and businesses thrive. The Plan's ambition is *'To be a productive and cooperative place with healthy, aspirational and sustainable communities'*.

2.65 The model to deliver this ambition is based around three fundamental shifts:

1. **Inclusive Economy:** Our vision is for Oldham to become Greater Manchester's Inclusive Economy capital by making significant progress in living standards, wages and skills for everyone.
2. **Co-operative Services:** Our vision is to collaborate, integrate and innovate to improve outcomes for residents and create the most effective and seamless services in Greater Manchester.
3. **Thriving Communities:** Our vision is for people and communities to have the power to be healthy, happy and able to make positive choices and both offer and access insightful and responsive support when required.

The Oldham Model 2017-22



2.66 In relation to an Inclusive Economy the Oldham Plan goes on to say, “*Our vision is for Oldham to become Greater Manchester’s Inclusive Economy capital by making significant progress in living standards, wages and skills for everyone. We want everyone in Oldham to have the opportunities they deserve to improve their own lives and to do this we need to build a new economic model that is fairer and more co-operative.*” The Plan acknowledges that the Greater Manchester model of growth doesn’t work well enough for Oldham and that we are yet to reach our potential.

Business Growth and Investment Review (Oldham Council, 2017)

2.67 Amion were commissioned in September 2016 to undertake a business and investment review that would set out a shared approach to business engagement to maximize business, development, growth and investment in Oldham. It looks at how the council can optimize business engagement and provide a competitive business support offer to maximize business growth and investment that will help the council:

- Maximise Business Rates income.
- Support the successful implementation of the local and Greater Manchester SIF's by creating additional demand for commercial property.
- Support the successful implementation of Oldham's Work and Skills Strategy by creating a supply of new jobs and work related opportunities.
- Create conditions to support the councils co-operative approach to inclusive growth.
- Close the gap between the economic performance of Oldham and the Greater Manchester average.
- Raise the profile of the borough by putting Oldham on the map as a place to invest and do business.

2.68 The review was carried out in-line with the local and Greater Manchester policy context and within the context of the Oldham SIF. The Business Growth and Investment Review will deliver the business theme of the SIF and will focus on an approach that targets the 6 key sectors and growth businesses for maximum economic impact.

2.69 The priority actions are to:

- Identify the additional resources required;
- Establish / populate a new business database and profile existing companies;
- Develop a new website for Business and Investment in Oldham which expands upon the 'Invest in Oldham' website;
- Develop internal council procedures for enquiry handling; and
- Agree mechanisms for sharing data and monitoring businesses being assisted by external delivery agencies.

2.70 Strategic Planning will engage and work with the Strategic Investment Team to share data and ensure that future potential land allocations are informed by the demand enquiries and the database information gathered in order to support the successful implementation of the SIF, along with other factors.

Work and Skills Strategy 2016 - 2020 (Oldham Council, 2016)

2.71 Oldham faces major challenges in employment and skills. We have a historic under-performance with skills and a predominantly low wage economy.

2.72 At the same time, however, Oldham has equally formidable strengths – a young, growing and entrepreneurial population, a diversity of talent and provision in the local skills system, and a thriving and engaged business sector.

2.73 In response to these issues the Work and Skills Strategy aspires to achieve four strategic goals:

- Create jobs;
- Social regeneration and in-work progression;
- Improve the colleges; and
- Support a thriving private sector.

2.74 The strategy complements the new regeneration framework for Oldham and is a component of the SIF.

Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD ‘Joint DPD’ (November, 2011)

2.75 The current Local Plan in Oldham was adopted in November 2011. The Vision includes:

2.76 *“Oldham will be a borough transformed by economic diversification, growth and prosperity, regeneration, sustainable development and community cohesion that respects our local natural, built and historic environments”.*

2.77 *“Oldham will promote a low carbon economy that benefits from the new and emerging industries to offer jobs for local people, so reducing worklessness and deprivation levels. We will provide employment land for our businesses locally that is suitable for the 21st century, whilst at the same time recognising the role Manchester City Centre and our neighbouring district’s key sites play in the borough’s economy. We support our rural economy and recognise its particular characteristics and challenges including the need for employment sites, appropriate land management and farm diversification”.*

2.78 The Employment Land Review (March 2010) that informed the preparation of the Joint DPD concluded that up to 2026 the borough would require 82ha of employment land. The Joint DPD did not allocate this land as it was intended to form part of the Site Allocations DPD so this information will all have to be reviewed and updated as part of the Local Plan Review.

2.79 The Joint DPD saved some policies from the previous Local Plan (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Unitary Development Plan Adopted July 2006). Two of these were employment land allocation policies:

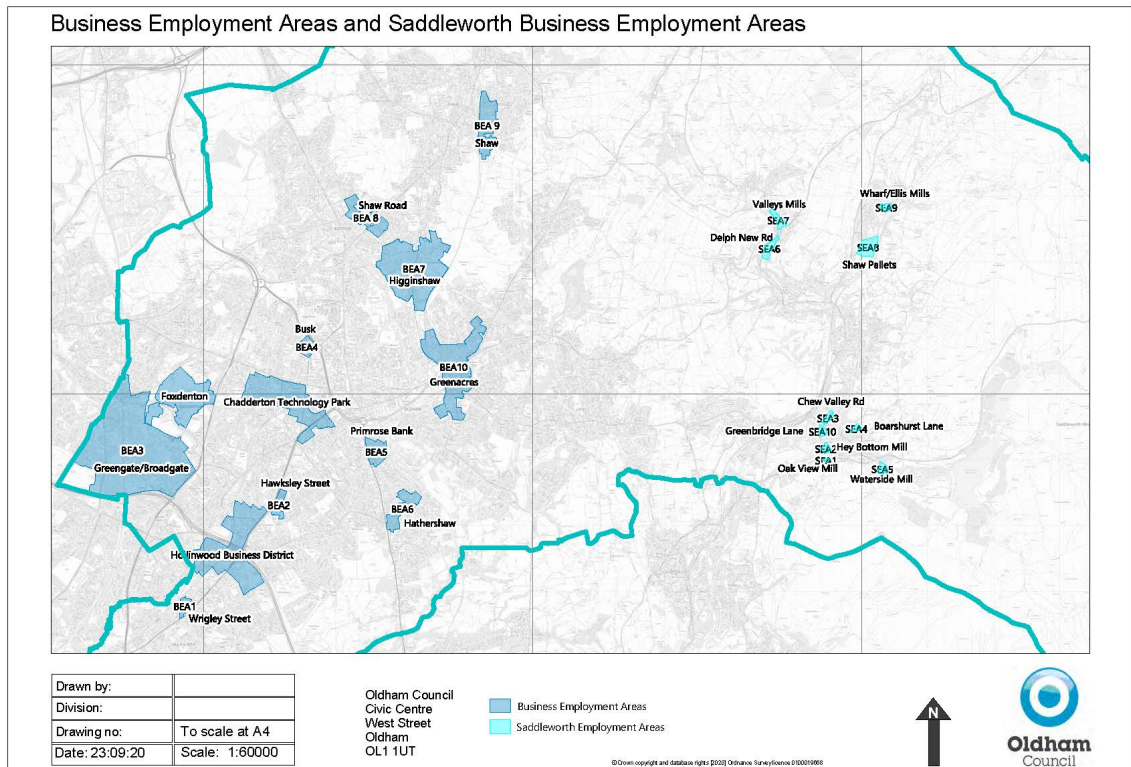
- B1.1. Business and Industrial Allocations; and
- B1.2 Business and Office Allocations.

2.80 In total these allocations came to 74.6 hectares, however as to be expected, a number of these allocations have now been developed. As at 1 April 2017 there were 42.79 hectares remaining, however this figure includes sites that have either partly or mostly been developed. A review of these allocations will need to be carried out to determine if there are still development opportunities available and whether the uses are still appropriate within these allocations.

2.81 Policy 13 of the Joint DPD ‘Employment Areas’ sets out the Business and Employment Areas (BEAs) and Saddleworth Employment Areas (SEAs), which (with the exception of Foxdenton) are the boroughs established employment areas. They cater for a wide

range of businesses – from traditional industry and warehousing to waste management facilities and restaurants and are distributed throughout the borough. The full list of uses permitted can be found in Policy 14 ‘Supporting Oldham’s Economy’ along with details as to how the Joint DPD protects the BEAs and SEAs and how any exceptions to the uses permitted may be acceptable in certain circumstances.

2.82 The map below shows the BEAs, SEAs and Business Allocations in the borough.



2.83 As part of the Local Plan Review the BEAs and SEAs will also be reviewed to see how fit for purpose they are.

3 EVIDENCE BASE

Note on Employment Land Needs for Greater Manchester (Nicol Economics, 2020)

3.1 The paper was prepared by Nicol Economics for the GMCA to provide:

1. A refresh of the different methods and summary of the key data that could be used to assess future demand for employment land
2. A review of the range employment land requirements using latest available data including updated economic forecasts.
3. Implications of the analysis.

3.2 The approach in the paper was to consider all sources of information and attempt to triangulate across the methods and produce a reasonable range of employment space requirement from which an average from different methods is used. Essentially, there are three broad methods (with some variants) that can be used and often a “blended” approach is used that combines or triangulates between methods. The methods are:

1. Use of past employment land take-up or completions by Use Class as the basis for forecasting future need. This was the primary method used for the GMSF (now Places for Everyone) to date. This method essentially assumes that given that the Greater Manchester economy has, on average, needed a certain level of new employment land/floorspace in the past that this need is likely to continue into the future.
 - The main advantages of this method is that it based on real and measurable evidence of actual take of employment land and that, crucially, it takes account of all types of factors that drive the need for employment land (new demand and demand that is replacement demand for space which is too old etc).
 - The main disadvantage is that it assumes the past (for whatever period used) is good guide to the future. It cannot take into account the aspirations for growth and development of the Greater Manchester economy if this is not reflected in past performance.
2. Use of forecasts of economic drivers that lead to demand for employment floorspace. The normal proxy that is used is employment. In doing so, it is assumed that the past and current relationship between jobs and the demand for employment floorspace will continue broadly unchanged into the future. There have also been instances of the use of GVA change instead as a proxy for demand (in the case of the manufacturing sector).
 - The main advantage of these methods is that they take into account the best estimates of the likely (or hoped for) direction of the economy - which may be quite different than that which has occurred historically. It is also possible to model a range of growth scenarios to see the implications for demand for employment floorspace.
 - The two main disadvantages of this method are: (1) there is inevitably a degree of uncertainty about any forecast 10 to 20 years in the future which is compounded by the sensitivity of this method to which sectors employment

change is expected to occur; and (2) this method only forecasts net need for employment space and cannot forecast any replacement demand so a separate assessment of future replacement demand is needed. This method also relies on the assumptions that the current and historic relationship between employment (or GVA) and floorspace for a sector will continue into the future.

3. Use of forecasts of labour supply. This method works back from an assumed level of growth in an area's workforce to assess what additional employment land would be needed to meet this growth. It is conceptually different from the use of employment change forecasts only where there are significant differences between the resident labour force and jobs in an area (due to commuting patterns).
 - The main potential advantage of this method is that it should ensure consistency between planning for housing and labour force and planning for employment land/floorspace.
 - The main disadvantage is that there are many steps working back from any change in the labour force to employment land needs (assumptions about the sectors that people will be employed in etc).

3.3 The final result of the assessment, blending the range of methods above, showed that for Greater Manchester the range of figures for offices being 2.1 to 2.5 million sqm for the 17 year Plan period (compared to the 2.46 million sqm in the January 2019 Topic paper for the then 19 year Plan period). For I&W space the assessment produces a range of 3.7 to 4.1 million sqm of space needed.

Strategic Investment Framework (SIF) and SIF Refresh and Sector Requirements Review (Amion, 2016 and 2019)

3.4 The Strategic Investment Framework (SIF) was produced in 2016 by Amion and set out the council's economic and investment ambitions, vision and objectives and priorities. The 2016 SIF highlighted that the challenge for Oldham is to ensure that jobs growth in the borough and wider city region translate into accessible opportunities for local residents. This involves improving the pathways to work and career advancement in order to support people into decent, secure and well-paid jobs, with a focus on tackling the barriers to both gaining employment and progression to higher wage occupations.

3.5 It went on to add that Oldham must seek to attract additional private sector investment. The challenge is to build on the areas where the borough does have a comprehensive advantage, such as high technology business sectors related to advanced manufacturing, while also diversifying its economic base in order to achieve a balanced local economy. The SIF also aimed to enable and support more people to start up their own businesses and for these businesses to succeed. The business programme set out an action to prepare sector specific growth plans for the sectors Oldham seeks to grow. The sectors that were identified as being key in 2016 were Manufacturing / high-tech industries, Logistics, Construction and property, Health and social care, Retail, leisure and hospitality and Professional and business support services.

3.6 As part of the Local Plan Review the need for a partial update of the SIF, in relation to the key sectors included, was identified. In addition to this refresh, a piece of work looking at the spatial requirements of those key sectors was also required.

Task One 'SIF Sector Refresh'

- 3.7** This task sought to update the work undertaken as part of the 2016 SIF in relation to Oldham's 'Priority Sectors' by identifying key sector opportunities for growth and any distinctive strengths. It was to take on board any changes to the local economy as well as reflecting any relevant changes to national policies. The approach taken involved:
- 3.8** A review of national and Greater Manchester's focus and priorities;
- Looking at the scale and trends in Oldham's economic performance;
 - Assessing the key drivers underpinning performance deficit;
 - Comparing sector performance; and
 - Looking at opportunities for growth based on Oldham's distinctive strengths.
- 3.9** Task one confirmed the key sectors for Oldham as listed below for the following reasons:
- Construction – significant contribution to employment and GVA; large future growth potential
 - Health and social care - significant contribution to employment and GVA; large future growth potential; existing competitive advantage
 - Digital industries – significant contribution to GVA; high value added; large future growth potential
 - Business and professional services - significant contribution to employment and GVA; large future growth potential
 - Manufacturing sub-sectors (textiles, machinery and motor vehicles, computers and electronic goods etc) – existing competitive advantage; high value added
 - Logistics (warehousing and support) - significant contribution to employment and GVA; existing competitive advantage

Task Two 'Sector Requirements'

- 3.10** This task involved an analysis of the six priority sector requirements in relation to the existing sites and business premises within Oldham's designated Business and Employment Areas (BEAs) and Saddleworth Employment Areas (SEAs) to determine if the sites are attractive to those sectors.
- 3.11** The review of these sites was undertaken in two parts, with the first involving an initial 'sift' in order to determine which sites are suitable for Oldham's priority sectors. The analysis considered a range of site characteristics in order to determine their suitability, including the age, size, condition, and current use. Following the initial sift, a second more detailed analysis of these sites relevant to the key sectors was undertaken.
- 3.12** The initial sift selected 15 sites that met the initial requirements of at least one sector. The remaining seven sites that were subject to non-qualification through the initial sift were considered inadequate when analysing their current strategic market performance, and also potential performance levels with regard to the selected sifting criteria. The seven sites that were not considered to be applicable to any of the key sectors were:
- BEA 1 Wrigley Street;
 - BEA 2 Hawksley Street;
 - SEA 1 Oak View Mills;
 - SEA 2 Hey Bottom Mill;

- SEA 3 Chew Valley Road;
- SEA 4 Boarshurst Lane; and
- SEA 9 Warth and Ellis Mills.

3.13 The second stage of the assessment involved a more detailed review the remaining 15 sites in order to provide a holistic review of the existing property stock. The focus of this review was on the existing stock and how those sites meet the requirements of the key sectors. The review involved both a desk-based audit and physical on site external inspection of the site to identify the positive attributes together with potential more negative or limiting factors.

3.14 Each site was scored against the sectors. The top three sites for each sector were:

Top three scoring sites by sector

Top scoring sites by sector			
	Priority Site 1	Priority Site 2	Priority Site 3
Construction	Higginshaw	Primrose Bank	Hathershaw
Health and Social Care	Busk	Hollinwood	Greengate / Broadgate
Digital Industries	Hollinwood	Greengate / Broadgate	Foxdenton
Business and Professional Services	Hollinwood	Greengate / Broadgate	Foxdenton
Manufacturing	Higginshaw	Shaw Road	Hathershaw
Logistics	Hollinwood	Shaw	Greengate / Broadgate

3.15 As highlighted in the table above a number of sites have been identified as one of the top scoring locations for a range of sectors. In particular, this includes:

- Hollinwood Business District– an established strategic employment area benefiting from good access to the motorway network and currently accommodating a range of industrial and office uses, which is being actively promoted for further development; and
- Greengate/Broadgate – an established mixed employment area with direct access to the M60. The area is extensively developed, with limited availability of vacant land at the western edge of the site.

3.16 In addition to these sites, Foxdenton has been identified as a potentially suitable and attractive location for digital, business and professional service activities, which would be sympathetic to the residential-led development of the wider site. Sites at Higginshaw and Hathershaw have been identified as suitable for construction and manufacturing activities, these sites are long established and fulfil an important local function, providing affordable and flexible accommodation with high levels of occupancy.

3.17 The report concludes that Oldham is currently not considered to be performing on a competitive basis in any of the key sectors in comparison with the overall Greater Manchester area. Oldham is not considered to currently provide a competitive volume of modern premises to achieve similar output levels as the City Centre, South Manchester and the Quays. In order to compete with these locations further new build stock is required in the borough. It states that land availability and potential development sites for the key sectors should be incorporated into the planning procedures. They should be regarded as a priority for enabling a focus on the key sectors and achieving sustainable growth within the sectors through the planning process. The report goes on to say, 'Whilst it is understood that challenges exist for meeting housing provision, it is important that key employment allocations are preserved'. Despite these existing opportunities, the assessment identified that overall there is a shortfall in the availability of suitable developments sites for our key growth sectors.

The following actions were also recommended for consideration:

- Seek to promote and safeguard employment sites within the SEA and BEAs locations suitable for the key sectors.
- Enhance the designation of specific sites in relation to individual key sectors where appropriate.
- Maximise available employment land. There is currently a limited supply of vacant development land, and the provision of designated development land should be protected
- Seek to:
 - Increase the supply of modern office accommodation within sites offering good transport links.
 - Increase the supply of modern facilities in order to accommodate health and social care occupiers. There is currently a short fall in modern premises available.
 - Increase the supply of premises to facilitate digital companies on a large scale. Expansion of the digital sector sites should be strategically focused within areas which offer greater connectivity to the wider region, access to skilled employment and further education.
 - Support the delivery of larger modern manufacturing and construction accommodation. The existing accommodation highlights a high volume of small business manufacturing occupiers with a much lower volume of large manufacturing occupiers.
 - The executive summary concludes by saying, 'Achieving sustained growth within the key sectors is considered to be heavily reliant on the delivery of new developments on a large scale. The council should continue to evaluate whether appropriate strategic sites are available and allocated in the ongoing preparation of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework'.

Local Economic Assessment (Oldham Council, 2019)

3.18 Oldham's 2019 Local Economic Assessment (LEA) is in three sections, 'Business Enterprise and Competitiveness', 'Labour Market and Skills' and 'Transport and Business Connectivity'. The LEA outlines a number of important economic facts. In relation to employment:

- Employment rate in Oldham is 66.7% (lowest in Greater Manchester) and lower than the national average of 75.2%.
- The Claimant Count Unemployment rate in Oldham stands at 4.6%, the highest rate across Greater Manchester and significantly higher than the national average (2.7%). This picture is skewed by Universal Credit Full-Service, as a result levels of unemployment have increased in Oldham over the last 12 months (9.5%). Other local authorities in the Greater Manchester areas are feeling the earlier spikes of Universal Credit which Oldham felt, such as Manchester, which has seen their unemployment levels increase by 34.6% over the past year. It is safe to assume that Universal Credit is the primary cause of the 20% rise in the Claimant Count Unemployment rate at the national level. Oldham remains in a challenging position in terms of unemployment, but there has been a positive trend with a narrowing of the gap to national rates.
- Wages for residents (£476 a week) and those working in Oldham (£481 a week) are below the Greater Manchester (£522 and £499 a week) and significantly below the England averages (£575 and £575). However, over the last five years resident and workplace wages have increased and the increases have been more pronounced in Oldham than across Greater Manchester and England.
- Median household income in Oldham in 2016 was £25,000, lower than Greater Manchester (£27,198) and Great Britain (£29,869).

3.19 In relation to businesses:

- There are 7,295 businesses in Oldham, employing 90,000 people. This is an increase of 1,000 business and 9,000 jobs since 2015.
- Business start-up levels are increasing (43 per 10,000), but still below Greater Manchester (80 per 10,000) and England (57 per 10,000).
- GVA per head (calculated by dividing the total GVA figure by the total resident population) across Greater Manchester in 2018 was £36,569. However there is a large disparity within Greater Manchester. Oldham's GVA per head was £28,727 and Trafford's was £57,243. The UK average was £42,082.

3.20 In relation to sectors:

- Manufacturing has historically been Oldham's economic strength, especially textiles and mechanical engineering. However since 2009, Oldham's manufacturing sector has lost around 1,900 jobs. There has been a loss of 240 jobs in the manufacturing sector alone from 2015 to 2017.
- The 'advanced manufacturing' sector often contains more skilled, more productive and as a result, better paid jobs. However, this sector has also seen large job losses (-12.7% from 2015-2017), which is a concern as growth in this industry is vital as the economy continues to restructure.
- Retail is another sector where there have been significant job losses.

- The largest sector in Oldham is health and social care employing more than 12,000 people. This sector has started to decline over the past few years (-21.4% from 2015-2017) with jobs being mainly created in hospital activities and within residential care, both of which are predominantly funded by the public sector.
- The business services sector has been the other main contributor to job growth in Oldham but it has deflated over the past few years.

3.21 In relation to skills and education:

- Within Greater Manchester Oldham has the third lowest percentage of pupils leaving school with 5 GCSE's (grades 9 to 5) including English and Maths. It is also below the national average.
- 13.1% of Oldham's working age population have no qualifications, compared to 6.3% in Greater Manchester and 6.9% in England. This is a major issue for Oldham and tackling this gap must be a prime objective to enhance the economic prosperity to the area and enable Oldham to compete with other Local Authorities in attracting new businesses to the area.

Oldham Town Centre Office Market Review (Cushman and Wakefield, 2018)

3.22 The Office Town Centre Market Review sought to provide an assessment to determine the office demand potential, if any, for new office development within Oldham Town Centre in the context of the proposed 2017 Masterplan and the borough's strategic and economic aspirations. The analysis indicated the following key messages and implications for the future potential office space in Oldham Town Centre:

- Shift to major urban centres - Political and economic uncertainty, increasingly globalised businesses and shifting socio-economic trends has driven an office occupier demand shift to large town and city centre locations offering strategic accessibility, opportunities to cluster and supporting amenities for staff. As a result, there is now limited appeal for secondary town centre locations such as Oldham. However, the on-going regeneration of Oldham will serve to enhance its attractiveness as an office location to more local occupiers compared to that of the Oldham's more outlying office locations such as Hollinwood.
- Quality of space – Office occupiers are increasingly considering the welfare and working environment of their staff alongside the need to present a professional market perception and ensure operational cost efficiencies. This is particularly the case for higher value office occupiers within target growth sectors such as Professional and Business Support Services. The current supply of office space within Oldham is generally low grade second hand quality stock which is constraining achievable rental levels. The provision of some new better quality office provision would diversify the local offer within the Town Centre.
- Local market appeal - As a secondary town centre location lacking the strategic road and rail accessibility or scale and profile of demographic catchment for office employment, any demand for new office space within Oldham will be largely focused on either public sector organisations or smaller occupiers with strong local connections. This can be evidenced by the type of occupiers currently operating within the Town Centre and the average size of unit taken up in the

Town Centre/across the borough over recent years (3,000 square foot/280 square metres).

- Delivery challenge - Speculative office development is only occurring in major city centres with robust rental levels and constrained supply of high grade space, but even then often requires support from the public sector or innovative funding models. As such, delivery of new space will only occur where a significant pre-let is secured. Such occupiers are limited as most businesses will only consider waiting for a scheme to be built if they have a bespoke property or locational requirement and tend to be drawn to sites offering significant incentives, such as the competing Enterprise Zones.
- Unviable development - In light of the delivery challenges identified and the more local market appeal of Oldham as an office location, at circa £10 per square foot current rental levels will be insufficient to support the cost of viable development. Even with an uplift in values associated with the provision of a new higher quality offer, this will be insufficient to reach the £20-22 per square foot required to make office development viable.
- Pace of take-up – If new office space could be delivered within Oldham Town Centre, for example with support of the public sector, historic rates indicate that the pace of take up could be relatively slow. This represents a risk to a commercial developer owing to the cost associated with voids and empty rates. Any long term voids could also serve to blight the perception of the wider location.

3.23 The report recommended that the following be considered in terms of any future new office space provision within the Town Centre:

- Quality of space – must strike a balance between meeting the current gap in the Town Centre market for higher quality accommodation, whilst recognising that rental levels must conform with what local occupiers are willing and/or able to pay in this location.
- Appropriate scale – to appeal to local occupiers, office suites should be flexible where possible but most likely to be demanded within the 2,000 to 5,000 square foot range. As flexible working becomes increasingly popular, options for shared workspace could also be considered and may support local entrepreneurship.
- Spatial positioning – adjacent to the new Civic Hub would help to create the feel of an ‘office quarter’, enhancing market perceptions of the Town Centre as an office location and generating a more significant footfall which could support the wider amenity offer for staff demanded of modern office occupiers.
- Enhancing value for money – given the likely requirement for public sector investment to deliver new office floorspace, options to enhance value for money should be considered. This could include good quality refurbishment over new build or the inclusion of some commercial office space within the proposed Civic Hub. Should such space prove popular to the market and demand be forthcoming, the potential to then provide new build space could be investigated.
- Market testing – the marketing of an ‘office plot’ as a commercial Design and Build opportunity but with the potential for alternative use should demand not be forthcoming could ensure that any such latent occupier demand is tested before the public sector is required to intervene.
- Phasing – given the small scale of the local office market, it will be vital to ensure that any new space is released to the market in phases so as not to flood the market with supply and restrict rental levels. A sensible approach would be to release and let a small volume of space, for example within the Civic Hub or

refurbished Tower before releasing new build space. Another challenge of new build is likely to be that a single building will need to be of a scale that minimises the viability gap but could represent a significant total volume within the local market.

- Delivery – should target developers with interesting or innovative models of delivery, a track record of working with local authorities, or local developers with a passion and commitment to the Town.
- Marketing – effective marketing of both the strategic aspirations of for the Town Centre and the specific property opportunities should be effectively marketed to ensure both the profile of Oldham is raised within the market and to provide confidence of the council's commitment its future potential. All 'good news stories', including new lettings should also be reported where possible to continue positive momentum.

Greater Manchester's Historic Textile Mills, Borough of Oldham: Buildings at Risk Register (GMAAS, 2016)

3.24 In March 2016 the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) was commissioned by Historic England to undertake a review of stock of historic textile mills that were identified in the Greater Manchester Textile Mills Survey in the 1980s. It was urgently needed in response to nearly three decades of change and erosion to the mills and the industrial historic environment. The review aimed to provide an understanding of the loss rates and provide an up-to-date audit of the number of surviving mills, noting location, condition and completeness.

3.25 The study was completed in May 2016 and identified 104 extant textile mills. The headline results of the survey in relation to the economy and employment land are:

- 66 mills have been demolished in Oldham since the 1980s survey, a loss rate of 38.8%.
- The total floorspace of historic mills in Oldham is approximately 1,010,059sqm, although 27,903sqm is in use for residential purposes.
- Of that floorspace, some 186,471sqm appears to be vacant or underused equating to 18.97% of the total industrial/commercial floorspace in mills across Oldham.

3.26 From this work it is clear to see that there is a huge amount of space available within the mills and that they could provide us with a unique (albeit challenging) solution to some of our employment land shortcomings. If available, suitable mills are marketed, packaged and supported correctly that could provide key sites for the start-up for some of our key sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing and Retail. Further work is needed to explore the potential Oldham's mills can offer the future economy, if they are still suitable for modern employment needs and to address some of the constraints that are impacting upon their viability.

Oldham Mills Strategy (On-going)

3.27 A Mills Strategy is underway to set out which undesignated (unlisted) mills are the highest priority in terms of their historic significance with opportunity to be retained and put to a sustainable use and which mills are of lower priority and may offer potential for alternative redevelopment.

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- 3.28** A separate report feeding into this is a landscape overview providing an overall analysis of the contribution existing mills make to the landscape character of Oldham using a high, medium, low classification. The landscape overview identified 36 'high' landscape value mills, 21 medium landscape value mills and 19 low landscape value mills.
- 3.29** Whilst high value mills are important in defining Oldham's landscape character, of greater significance is the grouping or clusters they form in the landscape. Seven mill clusters have been identified that would benefit from conservation to illustrate Oldham's past and protect the most significant feature of Oldham's landscape character.
- 3.30** The mills will be categorised as high, medium and low priority based upon the assessment of their landscape and heritage value, alongside housing and employment potential considerations, in order to inform the formulation of a positive strategy to support the long term sustainability of the textile mill stock across Oldham.
- 3.31** The mills assessed as having high landscape value and heritage / townscape value are placed within the high priority category with a clear presumption against their loss or demolition. The mills identified as being of medium priority will remain important to retain and re-use, however, there will be a higher degree of flexibility in their alteration / conversion. It is likely that mills within this category will be less sensitive to alteration than those in the high category and therefore more significant interventions may be deemed acceptable, subject to being weighed in the planning balance.
- 3.32** Those mills which are assessed as having comparatively low landscape value and heritage significance will be placed within the low priority category. It is anticipated that there will be greater flexibility in how these mills could be reused or converted and such mills may also have potential for redevelopment. These sites feature mills which have very little architectural presence, where they have been altered significantly so that their heritage value is decreased and where the mills may be causing harm to the social and environmental value of the local community.
- 3.33** The emerging Mills Strategy will set out a number of other key actions and recommendations to implement the strategy, which the council will consider.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1** To begin preparation of the Local Plan the council carried out a 'Regulation 18' notification between July and August 2017.
- 4.2** To inform this work we asked what the local community and stakeholders thought:
- a. the Local Plan should contain and what the key planning issues are for Oldham; and
 - b. what, in broad terms, should be the main aims of the Local Plan.
- 4.3** In addition we published our Integrated Assessment Scoping Report and invited the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England to comment on the scope of the Local Plan. This was also available for the local community and stakeholders to view and comment on if they wished.
- 4.4** The main comments regarding the economy that came from the consultation are set out below.

Thematic comments

- 4.5** Comments received included that the Local Plan should:
- Should consider the ability of new housing development to strengthen the economy.
 - Should Place suitable emphasis on the need to provide social, physical and green infrastructure to support economic growth.
 - Bring forward existing and redundant employment sites that are not in the most suitable locations for housing and to help existing businesses relocate to more modern and accessible locations.
 - Consider the role which the historic environment can play in building a strong, competitive economy and a prosperous rural economy.
 - Provide opportunities for building the software and digital economy.
 - Provide varied job opportunities to reduce the need to travel elsewhere to realise their potential.
 - Rethink the industrial strategy as building more warehouses is short term thinking and does not address Oldham's long term economic prospects. Within a generation warehouse jobs will not exist, they will all be automated. Consider the jobs that will no longer exist in the borough in 20 years' time and what work will replace them and what the travel to work implications be.
 - Create opportunities for the local economy and increase employment but not to the detriment of the local area. Need to grow and culture the skills of the wider area and at the same time manage the general infrastructure and accessibility requirements.

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- Continue to fight for its share of new business and jobs. Links to higher education and Universities is essential. New large warehousing for product delivery to customers & residents same day will become increasingly common but may not yield large employment opportunities.
 - Support small businesses, providing parking and improving local transport so that residents can shop locally providing development opportunities for the high tech industries of the future and link these to other centres/ transport nodes by walking routes etc
 - Support electromagnetic inductive roads – In 2040 the ban on petrol cars will come into force, Oldham could be innovative in this regard and explore fitting electrical field generators beneath the roads as they are naturally resurfaced. This would offer a huge economic advantage; and
 - Ensure that new housing and businesses premises provide electric vehicle charging points.

5 FUTURE EVIDENCE REQUIRED

- 5.1** As mentioned previously Planning Practice Guidance states that we will need to produce a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, to identify sites with potential for development, and a Housing and Economic Needs Assessment, to identify the future quantity of land or floorspace required for economic development (providing a breakdown of that analysis in terms of quality and location, and to provide an indication of gaps in current land supply).
- 5.2** The SIF Refresh and Sector Requirements work recommended we maximise the available employment land and increase modern accommodation in certain key sectors. Paragraph 5.18 states that, 'Moving forward, we would consider that it would be advisable to review land availability within the selected sites and, where possible, prioritise developments that will specifically increase the range and quality of premises available for the six key sectors.' Paragraph 5.22 goes on to say, 'We consider a further review will enable a more specified site analysis of the property within each site and a more in-depth assessment of the individual properties. A further review will identify individual strategic sites and properties that are currently available to be brought forward for new developments schemes. The identification of prime sites/ properties will facilitate a further sector suitability assessment and bring forward the prime stock within the sites that are most specifically suited to each sector.' In order to meet national guidance and to follow up on the recommendations made here, an Employment Land Review / Assessment of employment land and need will be needed to inform the Local Plan.
- 5.3** In addition, a review of the existing saved UDP Business and Industry, Business and Office and Mixed Use allocations will need to be carried out in the form of an Employment Land Review to determine if there are still development opportunities available and whether the uses are still appropriate within these allocations. The BEAs and SEAs will also need to be reviewed to see how fit for purpose they are and if their continued designation is still appropriate.

6 KEY ISSUES

6.1 The key issues for Oldham's economy and employment are:

- Oldham has failed to benefit fully from growth at a Greater Manchester level.
- There is a need to plan for future employment needs in order to be a key economic contributor to Greater Manchester, to provide a place where business and enterprise can thrive and where people will want to live, visit and work.
- Oldham has a higher percentage of working age population that have no qualifications than Greater Manchester and nationally and Oldham's employment rate is the third lowest in Greater Manchester.
- There is 186,471sqm of mill floorspace vacant or underused in Oldham equating to 18.97% of the total industrial/commercial floorspace. This needs to be put to better use.
- There is significant pressure on Oldham's existing employment areas to be released for the development of other uses (including housing).
- Oldham's key potential growth sectors are: Construction; Health and Social Care; Digital Industries (including creative industries); Business and Professional Services; Manufacturing sub sectors; and Logistics. Sites are needed to accommodate the start-up, growth and expansion of these sectors.
- There is a need to ensure that the digital infrastructure in the borough, such as electronic communications, is modern and fit for purpose to assist Oldham in achieving economic growth.

7 PLAN OBJECTIVES

- 7.1** The following draft plan objectives are proposed as a result of the initial issues that have been identified in relation to this open land paper. These will be refined as further evidence and the Local Plan is progressed, taking into consideration feedback received.
- 7.2** PO3 Providing opportunities to grow local businesses and create jobs by:
- providing sites suitable and attractive for existing and new businesses to locate to and expand on;
 - encouraging and facilitating the development of the borough's key economic sectors;
 - supporting the expansion of digital infrastructure to assist economic growth and social well-being;
 - supporting leisure and tourism activity in the right places, motivating local residents and visitors to spend leisure time and money in the borough;
 - supporting the expansion of green technologies to achieve the carbon neutrality targets, and at the same time grow the local 'green economy';
 - maximising the opportunities of our key Strategic Sites, our Town Centres, our employment allocations and our Business and Employment Areas (BEAs) and Saddleworth Employment Areas (SEAs); and
 - ensuring access to employment and leisure opportunities for all, including connectivity to an integrated transport system.

8 INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** The Local Plan will be supported by an Integrated Assessment (IA). The IA will include the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be a standalone document; however its findings will be integrated into the IA.
- 8.2** The role of an IA is to promote sustainable development through assessing the emerging Local Plan against economic, environmental and social objectives. It is a way of ensuring that the preferred approach in the Plan is the most appropriate when assessed against any reasonable alternatives. It also allows for any potential adverse effects to be identified and mitigated and for improvements to environmental, social and economic conditions to be made.
- 8.3** The Scoping Report is the first stage of the IA process (Stage A). It identifies the scope and level of detail to be included in the IA report. The IA identified the following issues to be addressed in the Local Plan in relation to the economy:
- There is a need to ensure a sustainable and sufficient supply of employment land that takes into account growing and projected employment sectors.
 - There is a need to reduce unemployment and deprivation and promote economic growth.
 - There is a need to improve the economic prosperity of the borough and reduce unemployment. There is a need to ensure that there is sufficient employment land allocated. There is a need to ensure that people can access employment opportunities through good public connectivity to help reduce unemployment and improve income for essential goods such as heating and healthy foods and disposable income for sports and recreational activities.
 - There is a need to reduce deprivation and disparity in Oldham.
- 8.4** The IA proposed an Integrated Assessment approach and scoring system to the assessment of the emerging Local Plan.
- 8.5** Consultation on the Integrated Assessment Scoping Report took place between 10 July and 21 August 2017.
- 8.6** “The IA Scoping Report has been updated (Update 1) to support the Issues and Options consultation. The issues in relation to this topic paper have been updated to read:
- There is a need to reduce unemployment and deprivation and promote economic growth, taking into account the growth sectors.
 - There is a need to reduce deprivation.
 - There is a need to improve the economic prosperity of the borough and reduce unemployment through providing sufficient employment land and transport connectivity to employment opportunities to improve income for essential goods such as heating and healthy foods and disposable income for sports and recreational activities.
 - There is a need to ensure that employment sites are strategically well placed in terms of the highway network. However, development sites whether for employment or housing or other uses should be within close proximity to public transport services (rail, Metrolink and bus routes) and key services to encourage

public transport and active travel over car based journeys and to enable people to be well connected to services and employment in a sustainable manner. Travel Plans should also continue to be encouraged.

- 8.7** The Integrated Assessment has appraised the vision, plan objectives and spatial options.
- 8.8** Plan Objective 3, which addresses providing opportunities to grow local businesses and create jobs scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores. The plan objective scored a uncertain as it has been screened in by the HRA and must be subject to further screening as the Local Plan is developed. The plan objective was enhanced by making reference to supporting the expansion of green technologies and connectivity to an integrated transport system.
- 8.9** Spatial Options were also subject to the IA. In relation to this topic area, the options in relation to employment sites were:
- A 'To focus more on the connectivity to our existing employment sites and neighbouring districts key employment sites'; or
 - B 'A combination of providing some new employment land and improving connectivity to existing and neighbouring districts key employments sites.
- 8.10** The IA of the employment allocation options showed that at this stage there are more uncertainties with Option B and that if taken forward it would need further assessment and mitigation may be required. The spatial options were enhanced by making reference to sustainable connectivity.
- 8.11** The IA will help to develop and refine the options of the Local Plan as work progresses and assess the effects of the Local Plan proposals and consider ways of mitigating adverse⁵ effects and maximising beneficial effects. An IA report will be published alongside each Draft Local Plan published for consultation before the final Publication stage.

9 EVIDENCE SOURCES

- National Planning Policy Framework (February, 2019) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2>
- Planning Practice Guidance Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (March, 2014, updated July, 2019) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment>
- Planning Practice Guidance Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (March, 2015, updated July, 2019) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>
- Industrial Strategy – Building a Britain fit for the Future (November, 2017) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future>
- Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy (June, 2019) [Greater Manchester's Local Industrial Strategy - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)
- Greater Manchester's Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment: - Greater Manchester Spatial Framework Publication Plan (GMCA, Draft for Approval, 2020) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/>
- Deep Dives (October, 2016)
- Engines of Prosperity: new uses for old mills North West [Engines of Prosperity: new uses for old mills | Historic England](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/engines-of-prosperity-new-uses-for-old-mills-north-west/)
- Creating a Better Place Vision (January, 2020) [£306 million investment strategy set to be approved by Oldham Council | Oldham Council](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200632/profile_of_oldham/1588/research_and_statistics_about_oldham)
- Oldham's 2019 Local Economic Assessment (LEA) is in three sections, 'Business Enterprise and Competitiveness', 'Labour Market' and 'Transport and Business Connectivity'. https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200632/profile_of_oldham/1588/research_and_statistics_about_oldham
- Strategic Investment Fund https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/4481/strategic_investment_framework
- Work and Skills Strategy https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/4207/oldham_work_and_skills_strategy_2016_-_2020
- Business Growth and Investment Review
- Greater Manchester's Historic Textile Mills, Borough of Oldham: Buildings at Risk Register September 2016
- Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (November, 2011) [Development Plan Document - Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies | Oldham Council](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1170/employment_land_review)
- Employment Land Review (March, 2010) https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1170/employment_land_review
- Oldham MBC Unitary Development Plan (July, 2006) https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1245/unitary_development_plan_written_statement
- The Oldham Plan 2017-2022 (Oldham Council, 2017) https://committees.oldham.gov.uk/documents/s83732/Oldham_Plan_2017-22.pdf