

**Oldham**

**Local**

**Plan**

**Local Plan Review: Issues and  
Options Natural Environment  
Topic Paper**

**July 2021**



**Oldham**  
Council

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This Natural Environment 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 and infrastructure etc);
  - Open Land and Natural Environment (incorporating Green Belt, Other Protected Open Land, landscape, nature conservation designations and wider Green Infrastructure);
  - Built Environment (incorporating design, heritage);
  - Transport;
  - Climate Change, Energy and Flood Risk; and
  - Site Allocations.
- 1.3** The principal aim of the Topic Paper is to set out current key policies, plans and strategies relating to 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** The Topic Papers all have linkages with each other. For example, the Climate Change Paper addresses many elements of Green Infrastructure.
- 1.5** 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.

## 2 KEY POLICIES, PLANS AND STRATEGIES

### National Planning Policy and Guidance

#### National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2019)

- 2.1** Paragraph 170 recognises that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils, geological conservation interests and soils (in a manner consistent with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
  - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services - including economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
  - maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
  - minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
  - preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, considering relevant information; and
  - remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 2.2** Paragraph 171 states that plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmentally or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework, take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks or habitats and Green Infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
- 2.3** Paragraph 172 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks.
- 2.4** Paragraph 174 sets out that to enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- a. identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping-stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
  - b. promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.



- 2.5** Paragraph 175 sets out the approach that should be taken when determining planning applications had having regard to biodiversity and habitats. This includes irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees.

### **Planning Practice Guidance (MHCLG):**

#### **Natural Environment - Green Infrastructure (July 2019)**

- 2.6** Planning Guidance explains that Green Infrastructure can embrace a range of species and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can include playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and 'blue infrastructure' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies.
- 2.7** It goes on to explain that Green Infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services.
- 2.8** In terms of planning goals Green Infrastructure can help in:
- building a strong, competitive economy;
  - achieving well-designed places;
  - promoting healthy and safe communities;
  - mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change; and
  - conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 2.9** It states that a strategic approach should be taken to Green Infrastructure through identifying the location of existing and proposed Green Infrastructure networks and set out appropriate policies for their protection and enhancement. To inform these and their implementation it is suggested that Green Infrastructure frameworks or strategies be prepared at a district-wide scale to help.
- 2.10** In terms of planning decisions it explains that Green Infrastructure opportunities and requirements need to be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals, as an integral part of development and infrastructure provision, and taking into account existing natural assets and the most suitable locations and types of new provision. Planning conditions or the CIL may all be potential mechanisms for securing and funding Green Infrastructure. Furthermore, local community engagement can assist with management and tailoring provision to local needs.

#### **Biodiversity, geodiversity and ecosystems**

- 2.11** The guidance explains that Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 20016 places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. A key purpose of this duty is to embed consideration of biodiversity as an integral part of policy and decision making throughout the public sector, which should be seeking to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the commitments made by government in its 25 Year Environment Plan.

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- 2.12** Development plans and planning decisions have the potential to affect biodiversity or geodiversity outside as well as inside relevant designated areas.
  - 2.13** Planning authorities can work collaboratively with other partners, including Local Nature Partnerships, to develop and deliver a strategic approach to protecting and improving the natural environment based on local priorities and evidence. Equally, they need to consider the opportunities that individual development proposals may provide to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
  - 2.14** Local ecological networks can make a significant contribution to developing the Nature Recovery Network. Local ecological networks can be identified and mapped as a part of the plan-making process, with policies identifying appropriate levels of protection and opportunities to create, restore or enhance habitats or improve connectivity.
  - 2.15** Locally designated 'Local Wildlife Sites' and 'Local Geological Sites' are areas of substantive nature conservation value and make an important contribution to ecological networks and nature's recovery. They can also provide wider benefits including public access (where agreed), climate mitigation and helping to tackle air pollution.
  - 2.16** National planning policy expects plans to identify and map these sites, and to include policies that not only secure their protection from harm or loss but also help to enhance them and their connection to wider ecological networks.
  - 2.17** Local Planning Authorities can take a lead in establishing and maintaining partnerships and systems to identify, manage, enhance and safeguard local sites.
  - 2.18** Planning authorities need to consider the potential impacts of development on protected and priority species, and the scope to avoid or mitigate any impacts when considering site allocations or planning applications.

### **Net gain**

- 2.19** The guidance explains that net gain describes an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. Net gain is an umbrella term for both biodiversity net gain and wider environmental net gain.
- 2.20** Plans can be used to set out a suitable approach to both biodiversity and wider environmental net gain, how it will be achieved, and which areas present the best opportunities to deliver gains. Such areas could include those identified in: natural capital plans; local biodiversity opportunity or ecological network maps; local Green Infrastructure strategies; strategic flood risk assessments; water cycle studies; air quality management plans; river basin management plans; and strategic protected species licensing areas. Consideration may also be given to local sites including where communities could benefit from improved access to nature.
- 2.21** Biodiversity net gain delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Biodiversity net gain can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures.
- 2.22** The guidance makes clear that biodiversity net gain complements and works with the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy set out in NPPF paragraph 175a. It does not override the protection for designated sites, protected or priority species and irreplaceable or

priority habitats set out in the NPPF. Local Planning Authorities need to ensure that habitat improvement will be a genuine additional benefit, and go further than measures already required to implement a compensation strategy.

## **Landscape**

- 2.23** The NPPF is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes.
- 2.24** Section 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 require that 'in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land' in National Parks relevant authorities 'shall have regard' to their purposes for which these areas are designated.
- 2.25** This duty is particularly important to the delivery of the statutory purposes of protected areas. It applies to all Local Planning Authorities, not just National Park authorities, and is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside National Parks, but which might have an impact on their setting or protection.

## **Open space, sports and recreation facilities (March 2014)**

- 2.26** The guidance explains that open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space. Open space, includes all open space of public value from sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to Green Infrastructure, as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development.
- 2.27** It states that Local Planning Authorities should assess the need for open space and opportunities for new provision in their area, considering the criteria for Local Green Spaces and Sport England guidance.
- 2.28** More detail on Local Green Spaces can be found in the Open Land Topic Paper.

## **Healthy and Safe Communities (November 2019)**

- 2.29** Planning Practice Guidance states that design and use of the built and natural environments including Green Infrastructure are major determinants of health and wellbeing. As such, planning and health need to be considered together in two ways: in creating environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles, and in terms of identifying and securing the facilities needed for primary, secondary and tertiary care, and the wider health and care system.

## **A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (DEFRA, 2018)**

- 2.30** The plan sets out government action to help deliver cleaner air and water, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. The goals of the plan are to achieve:
- Cleaner air;
  - Clean and plentiful water;

- Thriving plants and wildlife;
- A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought;
- Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently; and
- Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

**2.31** In addition, it aims to manage pressures on the environment by:

- Mitigating and adapting to climate change;
- Minimising waste;
- Managing exposure to chemicals; and
- Enhancing biosecurity.

**2.32** The key policies in the plan are:

- Using and managing land sustainability;
- Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes;
- Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing;
- Increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste;
- Securing clean, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans; and
- Protecting and improving the global environment.

**2.33** Pioneer Projects have been created by DEFRA to inform the development and implementation of the 25 Year Plan (YEP). The Pioneer Projects, which started in 2016 have been exploring policies that feature prominently within the plan. Each Pioneer is located in a different part of England, which each offer a range of environmental challenges, and is led by DEFRA and local partner organisations. The Pioneers, one of which is being piloted in Greater Manchester will contribute to the plan, by applying a natural capital approach to decision making; developing innovative funding opportunities; demonstrating integrated approaches to planning and delivery; and build an understanding of best practise.

**2.34** An important policy within the 25 year plan is the concept of ‘environmental net gain’. This policy promises to explore strengthening existing requirements to deliver biodiversity net gain and consult on making biodiversity net gain, and any exemptions, mandatory; update tools that support net gain; and in the future, expand net gain approaches to include wider natural capital benefits.

**2.35** There is no distinct definition of environmental net gain, instead the plan encourages strategic, flexible and locally tailored approaches that recognise the relationship between the quality of the environment and development.

**2.36** Measurable net gains implies the greater use of biodiversity metrics and this was set out within the Spring Statement in 2019. Within the Statement the Government announced it would mandate net gains for biodiversity in the Environment Bill.

### **Environment Bill, DEFRA**

**2.37** The Environment Bill was reintroduced to parliament on 30 January 2020. The Bill sets out how we plan to protect and improve the natural environment in the UK.

**2.38** The Bill builds on the 25 Year Environment Plan to protect the environment. The Bill legally obliges policy makers to have due regard to the environmental principles. The principles are:

1. environmental protection should be integrated into policy-making principle;
2. the preventative action to avert environmental damage principle;
3. the precautionary principle;
4. environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source principle; and
5. the polluter pays principle.

**2.39** A new statutory cycle of target setting, monitoring, planning and reporting will help deliver significant, long term environmental improvement and ensure government can be held to account for its actions. The Bill will set new legally binding targets in four priority areas of the natural environment: air quality; waste and resource efficiency; water and nature and will be overseen by a new public body - the Office for Environmental Protection.

**2.40** The Environment Bill introduces a mandatory requirement for biodiversity net gain in the planning system, to ensure that new developments enhance biodiversity and create new green spaces for local communities to enjoy. Integrating biodiversity net gain into the planning system will provide a step change in how planning and development is delivered.

**2.41** The Environment Bill will mean local areas will need a Local Nature Recovery Strategy to bring a broad range of groups together to deliver priorities for nature recovery at a local and national level, driving the delivery of a National Nature Recovery Network.

### **Clean Growth Strategy (HM Government, 2017)**

**2.42** The Clean Growth Strategy has identified areas where we need to see the greatest progress to meet the 5<sup>th</sup> carbon budget set in July 2016, which requires a 57% reduction in emissions over 2028-32 across the UK compared to a 1990 baseline. This is working towards the Climate Change Act requirement to reduce UK emissions by at least 80% by 2050.

**2.43** The strategy identified 'enhancing the benefits and value of our natural resources' as one area that will contribute to reducing UK emissions. This will make a 15% contribution to the 57% reduction required as part of the 5th carbon budget.

**2.44** These actions include to:

- Design a new system for future agricultural support to focus on delivering better environmental outcomes, including addressing climate change more directly;
- Establish a new network of forests in England including new woodland on farmland, and fund larger-scale woodland and forest creation, in support of the commitment to plant 11 million trees, and increase the amount of UK timber used in construction;
- Work towards our ambition for zero avoidable waste by 2050, maximising the value we extract from our resources, and minimising the negative environmental and carbon impacts associated with their extraction, use and disposal;

- Publish a new Resources and Waste Strategy to make the UK a world leader in terms of competitiveness, resource productivity and resource efficiency; and
- Support peatland through a £10 million capital grant scheme for peat restoration.

### **The National Forest Strategy (2014-2024)**

**2.45** The vision is that by 2024, The National Forest will be a transformed landscape across 200 square miles of the heart of England. The strategy seeks to ‘Protect, Improve, Expand’ the national forest, making the most of the asset created and securing the forest’s future through:

- sensitive achievement of the landscape change, with increased targeting to get the greatest benefits;
- making the most of forest sites;
- increasing engagement, enjoyment and well-being by the widest range of people;
- effective partnerships taking the forest to the next stage;
- bringing in new income and investment;
- the national exemplar role, research and being a centre of excellence; and
- securing a sustainable lead body into the future based on a balanced funding model and the reputation of the National Forest Company.

### **Planning for Ancient Woodland (Woodland Trust, 2019)**

**2.46** This document covers a comprehensive range of issues relating to ancient woodland, veteran trees and planning.

**2.47** Ancient woodland is defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)”.

**2.48** Ancient woodland is irreplaceable. It is our richest wildlife habitat, having developed over centuries, and contains a high proportion of rare and threatened species, many of which are dependent on the particular conditions that this habitat affords. For this reason, ancient woods are reservoirs of biodiversity, and because the resource is limited and highly fragmented, they and their associated wildlife are particularly vulnerable to development-induced changes.

**2.49** The guidance contains three principles to guide site selection and the design of development:

1. Avoid harm - can the proposed development go elsewhere?
2. Establish unequivocal evidence of needs and benefits.
3. Provide biodiversity net gain.

**2.50** The guidance sets out a recommended policy approach.

### **The National Adaptation Programme (DEFRA, 2018)**

**2.51** The second National Adaptation Programme (NAP) sets out the government's response to the second Climate Change Risk Assessment, showing the actions the government is taking to address the risks and opportunities posed by a changing climate. It forms part of the 5 yearly cycle of requirements set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 to drive a dynamic and adaptive approach to building our resilience to climate change.



**2.52** The NAP explains the range of climate risks which affect our natural environment. The NAP builds on the work ongoing to transition to a low carbon economy, including the incorporation of Natural Capital approaches.

**2.53** Key actions of the NAP relating to the natural environment include:

- introducing a new Environmental Land Management scheme which will deliver environmental outcomes;
- implement a Nature Recovery Network, linking habitat restoration and creation to improved access, flood protection and water quality;
- incentivise good soil management practises that enhance soils ability to deliver environmental benefits;
- build ecological resilience on land, in our rivers and lakes and at sea;
- protect soils and natural carbon stores; and
- deliver more, better quality and well-maintained local Green Infrastructure.

### **Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (DCMS, 2015)**

**2.54** The Strategy aims to ensure that everyone can benefit from sport and increase not only participation but harness the multi-dimensional and far-reaching benefits of sport to change people's lives for the better. This strategy builds on the evidence base of 'Everybody active, every day', the national physical activity framework for England produced by Public Health England in 2014.

**2.55** Local government's role is to ensure that the multiple benefits of sport can be achieved for communities by investing in green spaces and routes as venues for sport and healthy activity.

### **Sport England Active Design – Planning for health and wellbeing through sport and physical activity (Sport England, 2015)**

**2.56** Active Design aims to encourage and promote sport and physical activity through the design and layout of our built environment to support a step change towards healthier and more active lifestyles. It is supported by Public Health England and is part of collaborative action to promote the principles set out in Public Health England's 'Everybody Active, Every Day' strategy, to create active environments that make physical activity the easiest and most practical option in everyday life.

**2.57** The creation of healthy places requires the collaborative input of many different partners, including planning, design, transport and health. This document intends to unify these partners by promoting the right conditions and environments for individuals and communities to lead active and healthy lifestyles. Three Key Active Design objectives from previous strategies, of Accessibility, Amenity and Awareness, underpin Active Design Principles:

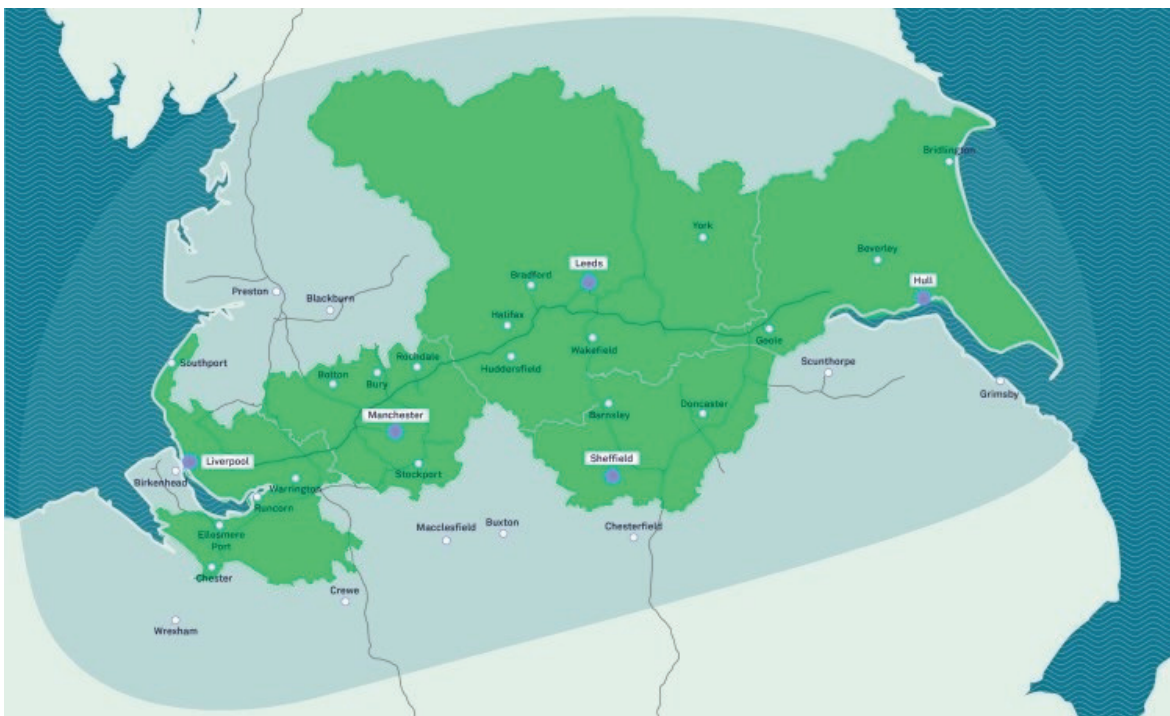
- Improving Accessibility – providing easy, safe and convenient access to a choice of opportunities for participating in sport and physical activity and active travel for the whole community;

- Enhancing Amenity – promoting environmental quality in the design and layout of new sports and recreational facilities, their links and relationship to other buildings and the wider public realm; and
- Increasing Awareness – raising the prominence and legibility of sports and recreational facilities and opportunities for physical activity through the design and layout of development.

### A New Northern Forest Project (from 2018)

**2.58** The New Northern Forest Project aims to create a new Forest for the nation, across 200 sqm. It is a combined project run by The Woodland Trust and The Community Forest Trust (including Mersey Forest, White Rose Forest, City of Trees and HEYwoods). The aim of the project is to plant over 50 million trees over a 25 year period, stretching from Liverpool across to Hull with the M62 as its spine. The project brings together a set of shared ambitions and ideas on the role that trees and woodland can provide in enhancing the environment and improving the lives of communities in and around the towns and cities of Northern England.

#### Northern Forest



(Image: The Woodland Trust)

**2.59** The justification for the project is that the area has 7.6% woodland cover (below the UK average of 13% and EU average of 44%), a population of 13 million people, which is expected to rise by 9% over the next 20 years alongside 650,000 new houses built and £75 billion investment in housing and transport over the next 25 years.

**2.60** A Northern Forest will deliver up to £2.2 billion GVA; provide economic benefits through the production of biomass and timber; bring new skills and employment opportunities; improve health in multiple ways, such as the major impact of street trees on childhood asthma and respiratory disease; reduce flood risk for over 190,000 households; tackle climate change by locking up an estimated 8 million tonnes of carbon; improve water



quality; provide opportunities for recreation, tourism and leisure; create attractive places to live, work and invest; and deliver wider economic benefits worth up to £2.3 billion through improved access to new woodlands increasing physical activity.

## Regional Context

### Places for Everyone

- 2.61** 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.
- 2.62** In relation to the natural environment, the key aspects Places for Everyone will cover which affect Oldham are:
- Enhancing the special landscapes, green infrastructure, biodiversity and geodiversity;
  - Access to the natural environment and green spaces; and
  - Promoting the role of green space in climate resilience and reducing flood risk.
- 2.63** For the purposes of this topic paper information on draft policies is as proposed in the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) Publication Plan Draft for Approval October 2020.
- 2.64** **Policy GM-G 1** 'Valuing Important Landscapes' states that development should reflect and respond to the special qualities and sensitivities of the key landscape characteristics of its location. It states that opportunities to improve the intactness and condition of the landscape should be taken, especially in conjunction with seeking a net enhancement of biodiversity / geodiversity resources. A Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment has been prepared to support the implementation of this strategic policy and guide on future development and landscape management / enhancement.
- 2.65** **Policy GM-G 2** 'Green Infrastructure Network' sets out that a strategic approach will be taken to the protection, management and enhancement of Greater Manchester's Green Infrastructure network to protect and enhance the ecosystem services which Green Infrastructure provides. This will contribute to the development of a Nature Recovery Network for Greater Manchester. The policy identifies areas as having particular potential for delivering improvements to the Greater Manchester green infrastructure network. This includes the South Pennine Moors and Moston Brook Corridor.
- 2.66** **Policy GM-G 3** 'River Valleys and Waterways' sets out the strategic policy for protecting and improving river valleys and waterways as central components of Greater Manchester's Green Infrastructure network.

**2.67 Policy GM-G 5 'Uplands'** recognises that the uplands contain important components of the green infrastructure network, including significant areas of blanket bog priority habitat, Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), woodland and habitats vulnerable to climate change.

**2.68 Policy GM-G 6 'Urban Green Space'** seeks to ensure that there is an appropriate scale, type, quality and distribution of urban green space across Greater Manchester that can support a high quality of life and other important Green Infrastructure functions.

**2.69 Policy GM-G 7 'Trees and Woodland'** states that Greater Manchester authorities will work to deliver the aims and objectives of the Greater Manchester Tree and Woodland Strategy, aiming to significantly increase tree cover, protect and enhance woodland, and connect people to the trees and woodland around them.

**2.70 Policy GM-G 8 'Standards for a Greener Greater Manchester'** states that Greater Manchester will develop standards in relation to Access to natural green space and a Greater Manchester "Green Factor". More detailed standards regarding specific habitats, designations, quality or functions of green space may be set out in district Local Plans in relation to ANGst.

**2.71 Policy GM-G 9 'A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity'** sets out that across the plan as a whole, a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought including by:

- increasing the quality, quantity, extent and diversity of habitats, particularly priority habitats;
- improving connections between habitats to protect and enhance the provision of corridors, ecological networks and stepping stones that enable the movement of species, especially as the climate changes;
- enhancing the management of existing habitats;
- protecting sites designated for their nature conservation and/ or geological importance, with the highest level of protection given to international and then national designations;
- facilitating greater access to nature, particularly in urban areas;
- supporting the development and implementation of the Greater Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area; and
- safeguarding, restoring and sustainably managing Greater Manchester's most valuable soil resources.

**2.72** It goes on to setting out criteria which development must adhere to, including following the mitigation hierarchy of avoiding harm to biodiversity.

### **The Greater Manchester Strategy 'Our People Our Place' (GMCA)**

**2.73** The strategy has an ambition to make Greater Manchester one of Europe's leading green cities. It provides an important context to the work below. Part of the vision is to be a place at the forefront of action on climate change with clean air and a flourishing natural environment. Greater Manchester is working to reduce carbon emissions and pollution to air, land and water. We want to create an outstanding natural environment, fit for future generations – places which our people can enjoy and where businesses want to invest.

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## **Greater Manchester's Springboard to a Green City Region (GMCA)**

- 2.74** The springboard report follows on from the Green Summit. The vision is to transport Greater Manchester into a world leading greener, cleaner, climate resilient city region, improving the health and quality of life for millions of people and protecting our green spaces.
- 2.75** In terms of the natural environment as well as recognising the multiple roles that green space plays there is the ambition to increase the ability of Greater Manchester's Green Infrastructure to take up and store the maximum amount of CO2 possible.
- 2.76** Actions include:
- Increase the rate of carbon emission reductions and sequestration between 2030 and 2045 and provide a stable rate of sequestration after 2045.
  - Achieving net green gain (i.e. more green space, green roofs, Green Infrastructure and trees in Greater Manchester) in new developments.
  - Protecting, improving and maintaining existing green space and green assets including peat and soils.

## **Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group**

- 2.77** The Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group is one of 48 Local Nature Partnerships around England. The establishment of Local Nature Partnerships came about as a result of commitments made by Government in the Natural Environment White Paper 2011.
- 2.78** The Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group acts as an ambassador for the natural environment and consists of representatives from the public, private and third sectors. The Group provides advice to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority on strategic natural environment issues including delivery of the Climate Change and Low Emission Implementation Plan.
- 2.79** Through the work of the Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group and its partners a significant amount of evidence has already been produced and used to inform strategic policies on our natural environment. This helps us understand the opportunities as well as challenges for the protection and enhancement of our natural assets.
- 2.80** Some of the evidence is summarised in the following section as well as on '[Nature Greater Manchester](#)' <sup>(1)</sup> which includes ways to get involved to protect and enhance Greater Manchester's natural environment and information on the best places to explore nature within Greater Manchester.

## **Natural Capital Investment Plan (GMCA, 2019)**

- 2.81** The need to establish and implement a Natural Capital Investment Plan to mobilise existing and new sources of funding was a priority outcome from the Greater Manchester Mayor's Green Summit in March 2018.

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1 <https://naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/>

**2.82** The investment plan looks at the roles for different types of potential investors within the wider picture of the social, economic and governance structure of the city region, and of (local and national) environmental policies and regulations. The plan has three key components:

1. A pipeline of potential project types which need investment;
2. Finance models to facilitate private sector investment and the role of public sector; and
3. Recommendations to put the plan into practice over the next 5 years.

**2.83** The plan is designed to deliver the vision of “A Greater Manchester where investments in natural capital enhance the long-term social, environmental, and economic health and wellbeing of its people and businesses.”

**2.84** The vision defines ‘Investment in natural capital’ as “Funding that is intended to provide a return to the investor while also resulting in a positive impact on natural capital.”

**2.85** The baseline review identified the following key priorities and opportunities which the investment plan can help achieve, several of which are linked:

- a. Improved health outcomes, for both physical and mental health benefits of exposure and access to the natural environment, addressing health inequalities;
- b. Improving place, making the Greater Manchester region a more attractive place to live and work, which, in turn, will play an important role in attracting inward investment, skills and tourism. This also supports an uplift in property values;
- c. Building resilience, principally addressing climate change and flood risks;
- d. Supporting the local economy, through regeneration towards (b), and improvement in capacity to supply environmental goods and services;
- e. Conserving and enhancing habitat and wildlife, valued for its own sake and to increase the resilience (c) and quality of ecosystem services supporting other priorities (a) (i). Funded via targeted investors, potentially for biodiversity net gain from development;
- f. Sustainable travel (e.g. walking and cycle routes where natural capital is enhanced) which can contribute to (a) and (b);
- g. Water quality and flood management (surface water and fluvial), which is linked to (c) and (e), and mental health in (a);
- h. Climate regulation including carbon storage and sequestration which support mitigation, and urban cooling and building sheltering, which support (c), and i) Air quality improvements, including through (f) and with links to (a).

**2.86** The plan identifies investment projects that could be delivered in the immediate, short and medium term.

### **Greater Manchester 5-Year Environment Plan (GMCA, 2019)**

**2.87** This environment plan is a key part of the Greater Manchester Strategy and brings together, a set of bold plans for achieving that for our current and future generations, setting out what we all need to do to tackle those challenges and capitalise on the opportunities and benefits that will come from taking action.

- 2.88** It focuses on addressing the major environmental challenges that threaten the future health and prosperity of the city-region, including mitigating climate change, air quality, production and consumption of resources, natural environment, and resilience and adaptation to the impacts of climate change.
- 2.89** It states that in tackling environmental challenges, we must harness the potential for delivering economic, social and environmental benefits together for the city-region, including the need to create vibrant and sustainable places; the need to increase productivity and the need to improve the health and quality of life of residents.
- 2.90** The plan sets out the following priorities for the next 5 years in relation to the natural environment:
1. Managing our land sustainably, including planting 1 million trees by 2024;
  2. Managing our water and its environment sustainably;
  3. Achieving a net gain in biodiversity for new development;
  4. Increasing investment into our natural environment; and
  5. Increasing engagement with our natural environment.

### **The Urban Pioneer Strategic Plan - Greater Manchester (January 2018)**

- 2.91** The Urban Pioneer is one of four DEFRA Pioneer Projects designed to support and inform the approach in the Government's 25 YEP. The aspiration for the 25 YEP is that within a generation (25 years), our country will be the healthiest and most beautiful place to live, work and bring up a family.
- 2.92** The Pioneers are action learning pilots of the 25 YEP applied to the individual Pioneer areas.
- 2.93** The Greater Manchester Urban Pioneer Project notes that the area is home to some 2.7 million people with a GVA of £56 billion, representing the largest functional economic area outside London. However, it also has a wide and varied range of wildlife and natural habitats such as wooded valleys, moorlands, reed beds, mature woodland, scrubland, grassland, high moorland, mossland, agricultural land, lakes, wetlands, river valleys, urban parks and suburban gardens. This diverse landscape provides a wealth of services to the citizens of Greater Manchester and plants and animals of national importance can be found here. Greater Manchester's 'natural capital' is integral to creating quality places where people choose to live and work, and are critical to health and wellbeing.
- 2.94** The Urban Pioneer will explore the links between environment, society and economy, focussing on improving the natural environment through improved decision making to support the health, wellbeing and prosperity of Greater Manchester's residents. It will seek opportunities presented through planning and development as part of Greater Manchester's growth plans. It will bring together a number of projects and organisations working together to improve the natural environment, so that they can learn from and complement each other, in order to tackle the challenging environmental issues impacting on the health and wellbeing of people, and supporting Greater Manchester as a place of choice to live and do business.
- 2.95** In Greater Manchester the Urban Pioneer has the following objectives:
- Develop the evidence base - led by the Environment Agency;

- Demonstrate a place based approach to delivery that improves policy and decision making - led by Natural England;
- Create a Natural Capital Investment Plan for Greater Manchester - led by GMCA;
- Develop a demonstrator project that shows the benefit of a Natural Capital Approach on project funding - led by United Utilities; and
- Develop and test a communications and engagement model that brings together sectors, organisations and the public - led by Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

### **Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANGSt), Natural England**

**2.96** The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard sets out a standard for promoting the unique and important benefits of access to green spaces for a wide range of benefits including, physical and mental health and wellbeing, community cohesion, active travel and biodiversity. It aims to encourage the increased use and access to green spaces as part of every day life through the strategic planning of green spaces as part of new developments and review of existing spaces.

**2.97** The standard recommends that everyone should have:

- an accessible natural greenspace of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home;
- at least one accessible 20 hectare natural greenspace within two kilometres of home;
- at least one accessible 100 hectare natural greenspace within five kilometres of home; and
- at least one accessible 500 hectare natural greenspace within ten kilometres of home.

**2.98** The production of an accessible greenspace map of Greater Manchester has been prepared applying Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) and overlaying indices of deprivation and measures of greenspace quality to inform priorities for greenspace creation, improvement and investment. The standard and map has informed the development strategy of the GMSF (now Places for Everyone) and provides a basis for the future management and enhancement of Greater Manchester's Green Infrastructure network and contributes to a positive strategy for the future of Greater Manchester's Green Belt.

### **All our Trees - Greater Manchester's Tree and Woodland Strategy (GMCA by City of Trees, 2020)**

**2.99** Trees and woodlands are part of the fabric of Greater Manchester and provide a huge array of benefits addressing pressing issues like poor air quality, flooding and extreme weather events.

**2.100** Yet they are under threat – not only from urban expansion but climate change, which represents the most significant danger to the long-term health of global ecosystems as well as our way of life.

**2.101** However, trees and woodlands could be one of the best solutions to our climate emergency – multifunctional, living tools that help make our urban areas more resilient to the challenges of a rapidly changing environment.



**2.102** Therefore we need a strategy to get the most from our trees - now and in the future. The strategy has been written to provide an overarching framework of strategic objectives and principles that can be reflected in Local Plans and tree policies according to local conditions and priorities.

**2.103** The aim is to plant at least 3 million trees within 25 years - 1 million by 2024 and a further 2 million by 2050 using the opportunity mapping to plant strategically where there is the greatest need.

### **South Pennines Regional Park**

**2.104** Pennine Prospects are working to achieve a regional park, which Oldham falls within. The purposes are:

- To positively promote and demonstrate sustainable economic, social and environmental investment at a landscape scale.
- To positively promote the sustainable use of the natural, built and cultural resources of the South Pennines Regional Park.
- To champion an inclusive and equal opportunities approach across the park so as to improve the quality of life, well-being and health of all people, communities and biodiversity for now and future generations.
- To work with others to implement innovative approaches to sustainable land management, spatial planning, cultural and economic development.
- To invest in young people's potential to become the next generation of environmental advocates.

**2.105** The ambitions for the South Pennines are to champion:

1. The importance of our uplands to deliver clean water, carbon capture, flood mitigation and rich habitats;
2. Investment in our local economies to create inclusive growth and local distinctiveness; and
3. Increase access for all to the benefits of our great open spaces.

## **Local Context**

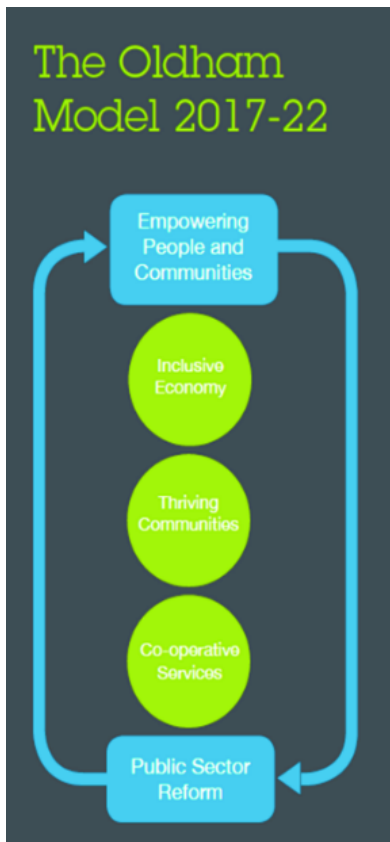
### **The Oldham Plan, 2017-2022**

**2.106** The Oldham ambition is to be a productive and cooperative place with healthy, aspirational and sustainable communities.

**2.107** The delivery model is based around three shifts to deliver this ambition:

1. Inclusive Economy
2. Co-operative Services
3. Thriving Communities

## The Oldham Model 2017-22



**2.108** Under the Thriving Communities the vision is for people and communities to have the power to be healthy, happy and able to make positive choices. Enhancing the Natural Environment can contribute towards this vision.

### The Corporate Plan (Oldham Council)

**2.109** 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)

**2.110** 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.

**2.111** 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.



**2.112** 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 Cooperatively with each other.

**2.113** Key objectives include to stimulate a green recovery that reduces the boroughs carbon footprint and protects greenspace for residents to enjoy. It also seeks to promote health and wellbeing.

#### **Creating a Better Place (Oldham Council, 2020)**

**2.114** 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.

**2.115** 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.

**2.116** As part of this the council is bringing forward plans to develop one of the largest urban farms and eco centres in the UK as part of the Northern Roots project which runs from Alexandra Park to Daisy Nook country park. This will include the potential redevelopment of Alexandra Park depot to be replaced by an environmental centre.

#### **Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD 'Joint DPD' (Oldham Council, November 2011)**

**2.117** The current Local Plan for Oldham was adopted in November 2011. The vision of the plan includes:

"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".

"A confident place with safe neighbourhoods and clean, green spaces for all to enjoy. A university town with good education, learning and training to improve the skills and choices of our citizens. An address of choice - a healthy and active place with suitable housing for all - with services of choice".

**2.118 Policy 6 'Green Infrastructure'** sets out that the council will identify, protect, conserve and enhance this multi-functional Green Infrastructure network in the borough and maximise the benefits associated with Green Infrastructure, such as health and climate change adaptation.

**2.119 Policy 21 'Protecting Natural Environmental Assets'** sets out the policy for protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity and biodiversity; maintaining, linking or extending green corridors; conserving the landscape character; and protecting and enhancing the water environment.

**2.120 Policy 23 'Open Spaces and Sports'** sets out the policies for protecting, promoting and enhancing existing open space and seeks to secure new and improved well-designed open spaces where appropriate. The policy sets out current standards of provision, with further information on surplus and deficiencies identified in the Open

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Space Interim Position Paper. The Paper is supported by an Open Space Study (2010) which sets out where appropriate, quality, quantity and accessibility standards for ten types of open space in the borough.

**2.121** It states that where it is considered appropriate the council will seek to secure new and/ or improved well-designed open spaces through developer contributions, that are in line with national regulations. The paper states that the tests for planning obligations are that they must: be necessary to make proposed development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

**2.122** Calculations for maintenance costs in regard to financial contributions and a requirement for a minimum of 12 years maintenance, is also set out.

#### **Oldham Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan, 2015-2025 (Oldham Council, 2015)**

**2.123** The strategy provides a framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities between 2015 and 2025. Its purpose in terms of planning, is to be an evidence base to shape Local Planning Policy, guide planning decisions on development proposals affecting playing fields and when appropriate, direct open space contributions to where resources are limited. The strategy covers football, cricket, rugby and hockey pitches and tennis courts, bowling greens and athletics tracks.

**2.124** The Strategy's aims are to protect existing supply where it is needed, enhance outdoor sports facilities through improving quality and maintenance, and provide new outdoor sports facilities where there is demand.

**2.125** It states that future local planning policy should seek to protect facilities and the scope to legally safeguard long term use of strategically important sites to the community. It reinforces NPPF and Sport England's policy on playing fields/ pitches, including provision for replacing lost provision and creating new.

## 3 EVIDENCE BASE

### State of Nature Report (State of Nature Partnership, 2019)

**3.1** The report, produced by over 70 partner organisations working in the natural environment, collates the latest available data on the UK's biodiversity, with a focus on trends in species as the key evidence of how nature is faring. In addition to assessing the state of nature, the report reviews the pressures acting upon nature and the conservation response being made to counter these pressures, to give an overall view of the UK's nature in 2019.

**3.2** The main findings are as follows:

- There has been a 13% decline in average species' abundance since 1970;
- A 5% decline in average species' distribution since 1970, and is 2% lower than in 2005;
- 41% of species have decreased in abundance, with most species showing strong or moderate decreases in abundance than increases since 1970;
- Our wildlife is undergoing rapid change, with 53% of species showing strong change in abundance in the long term; and
- 15% of species are threatened with extinction from Great Britain.

**3.3** The report states that the pressures that have caused the net loss of biodiversity over recent decades continue to have a negative effect. These pressures include:

- Agricultural productivity, linked to the intensification of land management and the decline in farmland nature, is still increasing, although with government funding some farmers have adopted wildlife-friendly farming;
- Average UK temperatures have increased by nearly 1 degree since the 1980s with widespread impact on nature evident already;
- Legislation has driven marked reductions in emissions of some harmful pollutants, although negative impacts remain; and
- Thousands of hectares of farmland, woodland and wetland are built on every year to meet the needs of our increasingly urbanised population, although woodland cover has increased, new wetland habitat has been created and heathlands and moors restored.

**3.4** In addition, climate change remains one of the greatest long-term threats to nature globally.

### Greater Manchester Nature Recovery Plan

**3.5** Greater Manchester has been chosen as a pilot area to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in advance of all areas on England being covered by LNRS. Greater Manchester's LNRS is called the Nature Recovery Plan. It will provide an ecological description of the area and potential opportunities for improvement as well as a statement of biodiversity priorities.

## **Greater Manchester Natural Environment Topic Paper (GMCA, January 2019)**

**3.6** To help explain the GMSF (now Places for Everyone), a series of topic papers have been prepared. This topic paper is about the natural environment, which includes: Green Infrastructure, including the strategic habitat types across Greater Manchester; landscape character; accessible natural greenspace; biodiversity and geodiversity conservation, soil resources; river valleys; flood risk and water management; and canals. It summarises the policy context and evidence that has been used to prepare the GMSF, most of which is within this Oldham Natural Environment Topic Paper.

## **Natural Course - Greater Manchester Project (since 2015)**

**3.7** The Natural Course is part of the Urban Pioneer project. The Natural Course project is aimed at integrated water management through accelerating delivery towards the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and improved flood risk management. Natural Course is an EU funded LIFE Integrated Project, that will run for 10 years (subject to funding) to improve and protect the water quality of the North West, with an early focus on the Irwell Management Catchment, as Greater Manchester's main catchment area. The project involves United Utilities, the Environment Agency, the GMCA, Rivers Trust and Natural England, as well as other local initiatives and groups.

**3.8** The aims of the Natural Course Project are to:

- Test and inform best practise in achieving UK and EU legislation in water quality;
- Use the North West River Basin as a flagship project and share best practise with the UK and Europe;
- Make better use of resources, share ownership of complex issues, reduce barriers and maximise outcomes, through a collaborative approach of organisations from public, private and third sector.

**3.9** The Irwell Catchment Area is home to 34 water bodies and incorporates the Irwell, Croal, Roach, Medlock, Irk and their tributaries. This densely populated urban catchment will be a key focus area for the fifth phase of the project.

**3.10** Currently, the Irwell Catchment bears little resemblance to its natural state and is classed as 'Heavily Modified' and has poor, or moderate ecological status and leaves a significant number of properties at risk of flooding. As part of Natural Course, organisations will work together to deliver integrated water management solutions, tackling issues such as diffuse pollution from urban and rural sources and flood risk management.

**3.11** As part of the Natural Course Project, four pilots were selected within the Irwell Catchment to apply the Natural Capital approach. The study of these areas built on the work previously delivered through the Irwell Management Catchment Natural Capital Account and Ecosystem Services Opportunity Mapping Tool. Some of the learning outcomes to date are that the natural capital approach appears to be best suited to the earlier stages of project development and is very helpful in shaping project aims and development an understanding of the evidence base. The approach also fosters effective communication and collaboration with stakeholders. Furthermore the tools were useful in identifying often overlooked well functioning ecosystem assets and providing a useful baseline for future assessments.

- 3.12** Natural Course with Greater Manchester Ecology Unit has prepared a report on 'Wince Brook - Identification of opportunities for ecological improvement' (Natural Course, April 2019). Wince Brook is a tributary of the River Irk in the North West Basin District. Most of the catchment is between Middleton and Oldham. The widespread industrialisation and lack of environmental regulation led to the river being straightened, re-sectioned, constrained and polluted, leading to a loss of riverline habitat and species.
- 3.13** Partners in the Irk Catchment are seeking to reverse some of these impacts and restore habitats through identifying issues and opportunities to feed into a catchment strategy. A summary of measures for prioritisation have been identified. The key options are measures are:
- Improving the water quality entering the Irk from Wince Brook;
  - Preventing the spread of Invasive Species between water bodies; and
  - Reducing fine sediment input from Wince Brook to the Irk.

### **City of Trees (since 2015)**

- 3.14** City of Trees is the northern part of the Northern Forest. City of Trees aims to restore underused, unloved woodland and planting a tree for every man, woman and child that lives in the Greater Manchester City Region, within a generation.
- 3.15** Since 2008 and for the first time in history, more than 50% of the world's population lives in urban areas, and this percentage is expected to increase to 70% by 2050. This means that trees and woods now play an ever-more important role in our cities and towns.
- 3.16** It outlines the benefits of trees as including:
- Climate change - Trees and woods can help to improve the quality of our air, cool our warming planet, reduce the risk of flooding as well as function as an excellent store of carbon.
  - Education and employment - Trees and woods provide an important introduction to the natural world for our children as well as help to create jobs and opportunities.
  - In our towns and cities - Trees planted in urban areas in towns and cities can help to reduce noise pollution, give us shelter, as well as encouraging exercise.
  - Health and wellbeing - Trees and woods help us to breathe easier, significantly improve our health and well-being as well as bring communities and people together.
  - The natural world - Trees and woods provide important habitats for wildlife, and are essential to our natural environment.
  - The economy - Trees deliver a whole range of benefits, which make them an essential part of the future of any town or city. As well as a myriad of other things, trees and woods provide tangible uplift to the economy, and can be seen as a monetary asset.

### **Ecosystem Services (ESS) Opportunity Mapping Tool**

- 3.17** Greater Manchester Ecosystem Opportunity Mapping has been prepared for GMCA. The study looked has identified for individual land parcels, the opportunities that changes in land management could bring in terms of improved ecosystem services

(ESS). Opportunity arises on land which, given its physical, social, economic, geographical and cultural characteristics, offers potential to intervene and improve ESS functioning and thus uplift natural capital value. Opportunity arises where there is a combination of feasibility and need.

**3.18** ESS are made up of several 'attributes' which analyse different aspects of each service. For example, the water quality service is made up of an assessment of attributes including: land connectivity, hydrological connectivity, slope, soil characteristics, land use and consented discharge locations. Across all services and attributes the higher the score the higher the potential for improving the natural capital and ESS value of the parcel.

**3.19** The ESS identified within the mapping includes:

- water quality;
- flood risk mitigation;
- amenity;
- leisure and recreation;
- biodiversity and ecological networks;
- air quality;
- timber; and
- carbon sequestration.

**3.20** The mapping suggests potential improvement works for each ESS.

### **The Natural Environment - Priority Green and Blue Infrastructure (GMCA, 2018)**

**3.21** This Report describes an approach to identify and map the Priority Green Infrastructure (GI) of Greater Manchester.

**3.22** Component elements of GI can include parks, private gardens, agricultural fields, hedges, trees, woodland, green roofs, green walls, rivers, canals and ponds. The term covers all land containing these features, regardless of its ownership, condition or size.

**3.23** The term GI reflects the fact that green spaces can perform a wide range of functions and services, often simultaneously, and therefore can act as 'infrastructure'. One GI site could be providing several functions at once, providing us with multiple benefits, or a site could deliver a single important service.

**3.24** Ecosystem Services can be defined as "the benefits people obtain from ecosystems". Ecosystem Services are the services that Green Infrastructure provides to people. For example, woodlands have the capacity to slow the flow of water and in riparian locations particularly they can stabilise river beds and banks and so potentially reduce flooding downstream.

**3.25** The study identifies that the most important Ecosystem Services for the people of Greater Manchester includes (relevant to this paper):

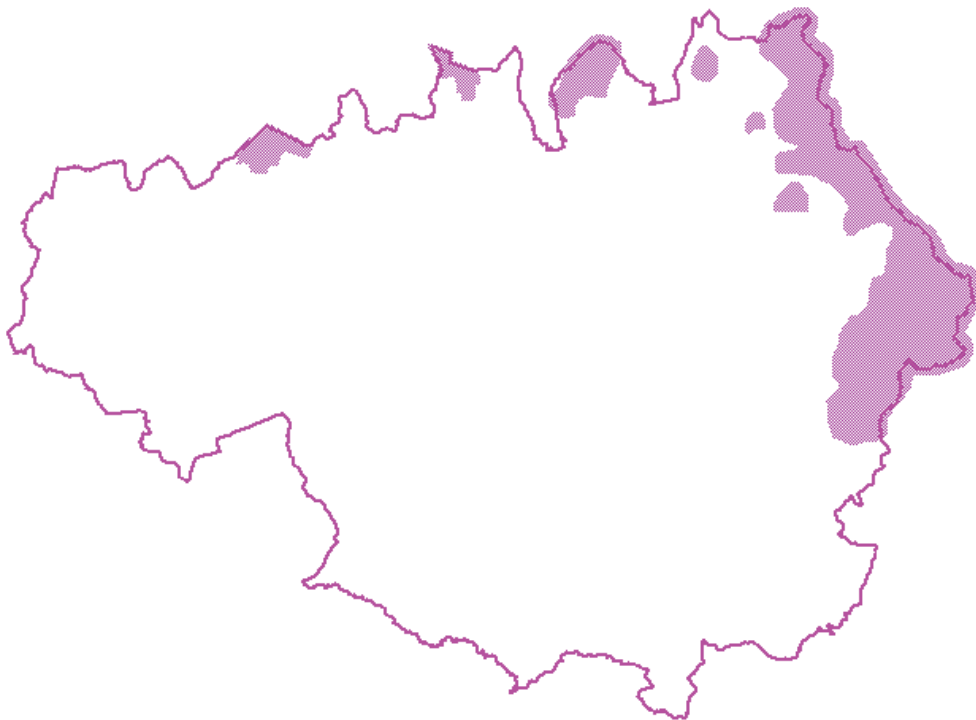
- Surface water and fluvial flood management
- Carbon storage and sequestration
- Water quality management

**3.26** The study has identified broad locations of the most important Strategic Green Infrastructure. All the Green Infrastructure delivering valuable ecosystem services in a particular area can together be defined as the 'Natural Capital' of the area.

### **Uplands**

**3.27** The uplands can be found to the north and east of Oldham. The area contains internationally important mosaics of moorland habitats that support rare birds such as merlin, short-eared owl and twite; large areas of the Uplands have been specially designated for their important wildlife value. There are strong links to upland areas within adjacent administrative boundaries, forming a wider Ecological Network.

### **Uplands**



**3.28** Priority Ecosystem Services provided by the Uplands:

- Carbon Storage and sequestration
- Water Storage
- Water Quality Management
- Recreation

**3.29** Opportunities for Enhancement:

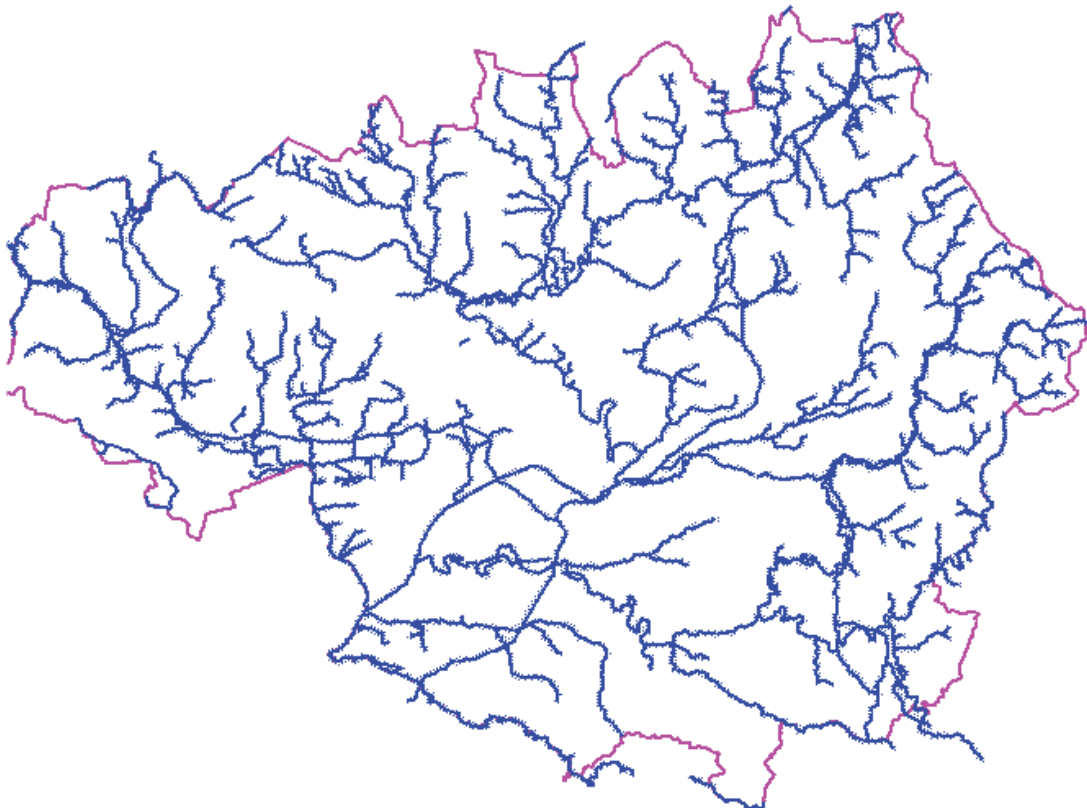
- Restoration of Peat Bogs (blanket bog)
- Improvement of upland meadows for wildlife
- Improvement of public access and promote enjoyment of the landscape



## River Valleys and Canals

- 3.30** River Valleys and Canals form very important corridors of semi-natural habitats and natural greenspace throughout Greater Manchester – with open grassland, woodland and wetland all being closely linked to the water courses – linking urban centres with open countryside. Canals that weave through the centre of the conurbation not only offer opportunities for access and recreation, but also form a network of important wetland habitats in their own right. For example, sections of the Rochdale Canal have been designated as being of international importance for nature conservation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- 3.31** Rivers flow from the Pennine Moors to the east and north, and the Peak District to the south-east, across the Conurbation and towards the lower-lying areas of the south and west. Important River Valleys include those of the Mersey, Irwell, Roch, Tame and Bollin.
- 3.32** The Manchester Ship Canal, the Bridgewater Canal, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, and the Rochdale Canal are all connected, linking the Manchester Conurbation with surrounding areas.

### River Valleys and Canals



- 3.33** Priority Ecosystem Services provided by River Valleys and Canals:
- Surface Water and Fluvial Flood Management
  - Water Quality Management



- Public Recreation and Green Travel Routes
- Wildlife and Habitat Conservation

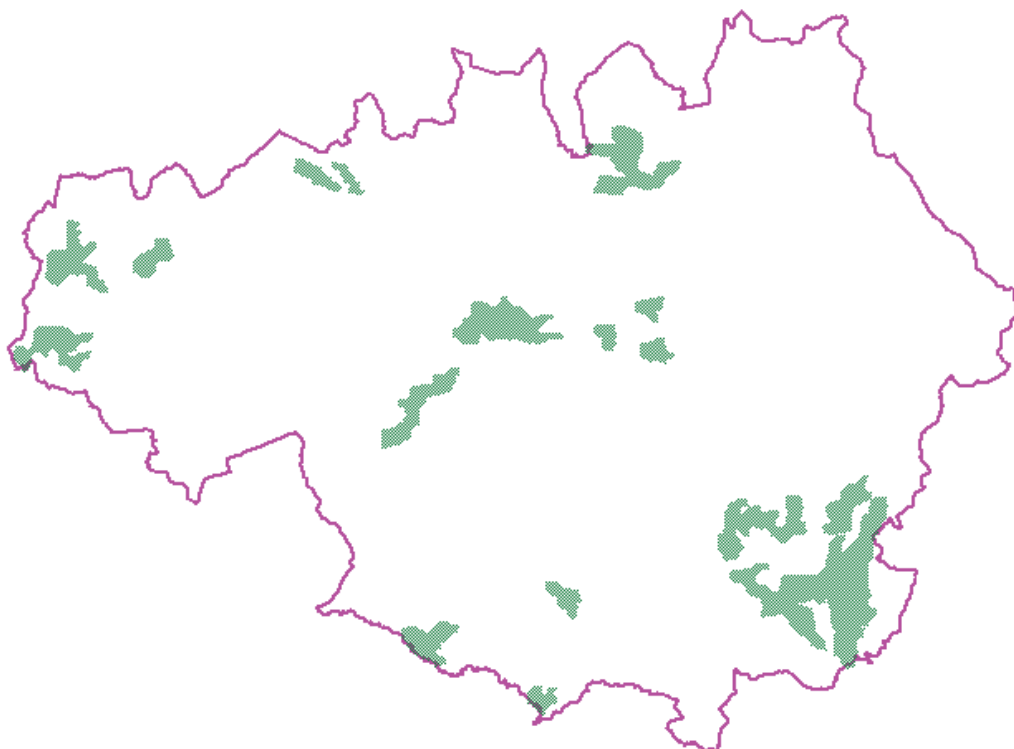
### 3.34 Opportunities for Enhancement:

- Improving water quality
- Re-naturalising rivers and waterways
- Improving public access to waterways
- Improving opportunities for sustainable travel along waterways

## Woodlands and Trees

**3.35** Greater Manchester's woodlands vary in character, from upland oak woods to wet woodland and from ancient broadleaved woodland to plantation and young woodland. Woodland provides a valuable wildlife resource, and many important woodlands have been designated for their nature conservation interest.

### Woodlands and Trees



### 3.36 Priority Ecosystem Services provided by Woodlands :

- Recreation
- Carbon storage and sequestration
- Flood mitigation

### 3.37 Opportunities for enhancement:

- New Tree Planting

- Positive Woodland Management
- Management of Recreational Pressures

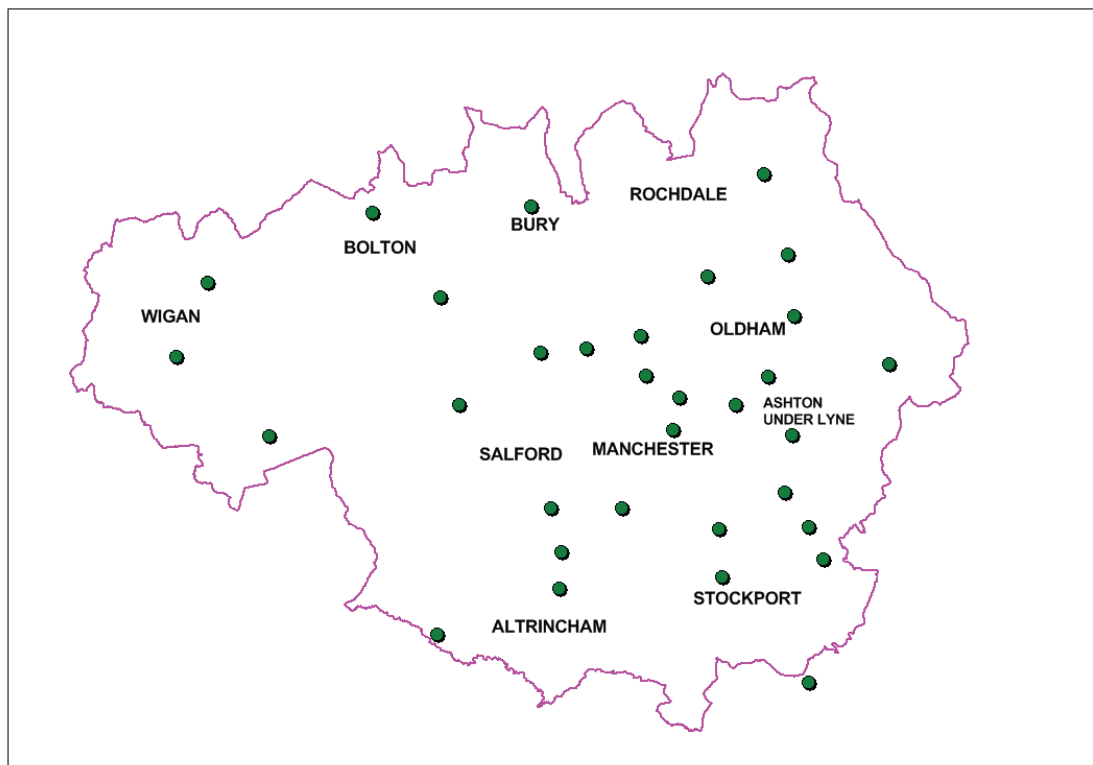
### Major Parks and Greenspaces

**3.38** Publicly accessible parks and open greenspaces provide people with the opportunity to be physically active, facilitate social interaction, reduce stress and enhance a sense of well-being and provide opportunities for people to experience biodiversity first-hand.

**3.39** Greater Manchester has a wide range of ‘strategic’ green spaces that are readily accessible to all, with widely differing characters. All are of high value for use by people for active and passive recreation, but they also perform a wide range of other ecosystem services such as flood risk management and provision of wildlife habitats. In Oldham the following major parks and gardens have been identified:

- Crompton Moor;
- Daisy Nook (includes Tameside);
- Dove Stone Reservoir;
- Moston Brook (includes Manchester);
- Strinesdale; and
- Tandle Hill.

### Major Parks and Greenspaces



**3.40** Priority Ecosystem Services provided by Major Parks and Greenspace (most important in bold):

- **Public Recreation and Green Travel Routes**

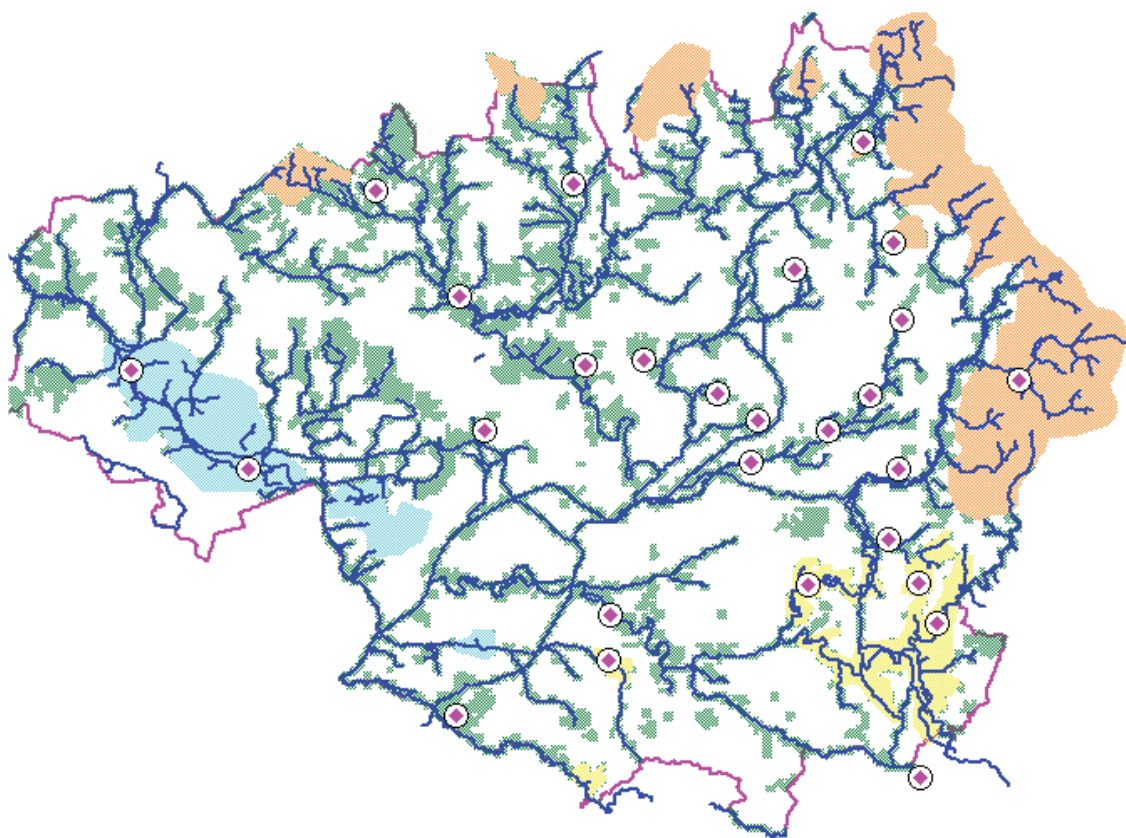
- Surface Water and Fluvial Flood Management
- Water Quality Management
- Wildlife and Habitat Conservation

**3.41** Opportunities for enhancement:

- Investment in improving Access for All
- Investment in Management

**3.42** The paper identifies the developing overall Ecological Network for Greater Manchester:

**Ecological Network for Greater Manchester**



**3.43** The paper identifies summary Opportunity Sites and Areas. In Oldham this includes:

- South Pennine Moors;
- Dove Stones and surrounds; and
- Brook Corridor.

**3.44** The study has identified how targets could be developed for each broad habitat type/ Green Infrastructure theme.

## **Guidance for Greater Manchester - Embedding Green Infrastructure Principles (GMCA, October 2019)**

- 3.45** This document is written in the format of guidance to Greater Manchester's Local Authorities (LAs). It is part of a commission undertaken by WSP for GMCA to provide guidance on the implementation of Natural England's national principles for Green Infrastructure standards across the Greater Manchester area.
- 3.46** GMSF (now Places for Everyone) Policy GM-G 8 outlines the intention to develop 'Standards for a Greener Greater Manchester'. This is based upon the 'Principles for Good Green Infrastructure' set out in the National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards developed by Natural England, and aims to facilitate delivery of a range of critical ecosystem service benefits. These principles are described as follows:
- Engagement and multifunctionality - Partnership working to co-plan and deliver good multifunctional GI as essential infrastructure that is integrated with environmental, social, health and environment policy as part of place making.
  - Governed, managed, monitored, maintained and funded for the long term involving stakeholders and local communities to meet local needs.
  - Strategically planned to function and connect as a living network at local and landscape scale.
  - Well-designed from the outset, responding to and enhancing local character and sense of place.
  - Delivers multiple benefits for people and nature through a joined-up approach that is underpinned by quality, condition and location of GI assets.
  - Meets peoples' needs (for ecosystem services) and addresses inequalities in provision of GI.
  - Delivers essential services integral to health and wellbeing.
  - Delivers biodiversity net gain and wider environmental net gains and forms an important component of nature recovery networks.
  - Makes places more resilient to climate change, flooding and helps meet zero carbon targets.
  - Drives regeneration and creates value.
- 3.47** The purpose of this guidance is to set out the options for implementation of the National Principles for Green Infrastructure Standards within the spatial planning and development management functions across the city region. This guidance is therefore an explanation of how to practically embed Green Infrastructure principles within Local Plans and site allocations. The guidance will also provide a means to coordinate the development and implementation of the Greater Manchester approach to Green Infrastructure.
- 3.48** It is recommended that each Greater Manchester Local Planning Authority develops an overarching Green Infrastructure Framework specific to their area, setting out the overarching principles, along with local aspirations to show these should be delivered.
- 3.49** Local Planning Authorities can utilise Greater Manchester Green Infrastructure evidence base. The guidance sets out which tools are available for different types of community environmental issues and Green Infrastructure interventions.

## Green Infrastructure Policy Context (GMCA, October 2019)

- 3.50** The report sets out the justification for how Green Infrastructure has been addressed in the GMSF (now Places for Everyone). The section on “Greening our towns and cities” sets out an aim to “draw up a national framework of green infrastructure standards,” and a project to be led by Natural England to “review and update” standards. The actions include “supporting Local Authorities to assess green infrastructure provision against the new standards” and “working with MHCLG to see how commitments on GI can be incorporated into national planning guidance and policy.
- 3.51** The use of defined standards can help to ensure that there is sufficient quantity and quality of green infrastructure, and that it is provided and maintained in the best locations, to meet the needs of residents and to deliver the overall green infrastructure network described in policy GM-G 2 of the January 2019 Draft GMSF. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is working with Natural England to test the application of the draft National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards in Greater Manchester.
- 3.52** Natural England are leading the development of the National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards – a commitment within the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan. ‘Standards’ are not just a set of numeric targets. Instead, they are based on qualitative ‘principles’ which seek to guide policy makers and developers towards achieving the best possible social and environmental outcomes for their areas and sites – by whichever means is most appropriate in the local context.
- 3.53** The standards embed the ten principles outlined in the ‘Embedding Green Infrastructure Principles’ above.
- 3.54** In the absence of appropriate local data, the community environmental issues map should be used to identify areas that would benefit most from new or enhanced green infrastructure provision. The issues are focused on the needs of the local population and relate only to those which have the potential to be addressed through provision of high quality green infrastructure.
- 3.55** Once areas with community environmental issues have been identified (i.e. relating to a particular benefit, in a particular location), this should be viewed alongside a baseline map of existing green infrastructure. If green infrastructure is already present within or close to the area(s) with community environmental issues, then enhancement, expansion, or linking of existing green infrastructure may be required. When enhancing areas of green infrastructure, the ecosystem services that can be provided should be identified using the ecosystem service opportunity map.
- 3.56** Alternatively, if there is a lack of green infrastructure in the area, then creation of new site(s) – if feasible – should be considered.
- 3.57** The way in which existing built areas have developed over time means that it will not be realistically possible to have the same quantity of green space provision in all parts of Greater Manchester, though adoption of Green Factor approaches (see below) offers the opportunity to integrate other forms of green infrastructure, such as street trees and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), into the existing urban fabric.

**3.58** It is therefore recommended that Greater Manchester’s authorities set locally applicable standards (either qualitative or quantitative) that support the delivery of the national principles, building on standards and policies they may already have in place.

**3.59** Greater Manchester’s authorities are encouraged to consider use of the following – either individually or in combination:

- Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) – this seeks to maximise the overall proportion of people across Greater Manchester who have access to natural green space. Published by Natural England, ANGSt is a helpful starting point for informing green infrastructure policy and site allocations, as its focus on ensuring good accessibility to different sizes of green space for all residents make it an appropriate approach at a sub-regional level. ANGSt analysis has been carried out across Greater Manchester for individual Districts and Lower Super Output Areas – this data should be used in the first instance (once made available on Mapping GM). More detailed standards regarding specific habitats, designations, quality or functions of green space may be set out in district Local Plans, taking account of local circumstances and opportunities.
- Greater Manchester ‘Green Factor’ – once developed by the Combined Authority, this will set out a minimum level of on-site green infrastructure that new developments should seek to provide, so as to meet their occupants’ needs, increase ecosystem service delivery, and contribute to the extent and interconnectedness of the wider network. The Green Factor will provide a baseline expectation based on the proportion of the site that is covered by different types of green infrastructure features (each with their own ‘factor’ or ‘score’). The Green Factor will be based on a set of regional factors, but tailored to local circumstances.
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – this is an approach that aims to leave biodiversity in a better state at the end of the development than at the beginning by avoiding, minimising and compensating for impacts. The approach uses a metric, developed by Defra, to value biodiversity before and after the development. The BNG metric requires data collected from a site visit for a habitat classification survey and an additional condition assessment survey to determine the habitat’s type and condition. An updated version of the tool is currently in development. Within Greater Manchester, specific guidance has been produced to support developments to deliver BNG.
- Health Economic Assessment Tools (HEAT) for walking and cycling – this tool is designed to enable users to conduct economic assessments of the health impacts of walking or cycling. Developed by the World Health Organisation, HEAT estimates the value of reduced mortality that results from specified amounts of walking or cycling, and can provide evaluation of new or existing projects, including benefit-cost ratio calculations. The user is required to input data relating to the volumes of travel (i.e. duration, distance, frequency, trips), purpose of travel (i.e. transport or recreation) and population size. Alternative tools which encourage health and wellbeing outcomes may also be used.

#### **GMCA Biodiversity Net Gain - Guidance for Greater Manchester (GMCA, February 2021)**

**3.60** The guidance provides recommendations for Biodiversity Net Gain assessments for Greater Manchester. Guidance is required to enable developers and potential offset providers to run biodiversity assessments in a consistent way across Greater



Manchester. The document also enables the consistent verification of biodiversity assessments by Local Planning Authorities and the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU).

**3.61** It recommends that:

- For **minor developments** when an outline or a full planning application is submitted this will require a description of how the development has taken into account and delivered against each of the 10 Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles;
- All new **major developments** (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010) and any development with a Habitat of Principal Importance within the development boundary (as defined in the NERC Act 2016 and identified by Natural England and the GMEU) will need to deliver a net gain for biodiversity. This will include new areas of phased major developments.

**3.62** Householder applications are not required to run this assessment.

**3.63** The guidance set out what information should be submitted as part of outline and full planning applications, following construction and during the management of habitats.

**3.64** The Biodiversity Net Gain process starts by assessment of the biodiversity baseline; the habitats and species present before the development. This is followed by avoiding, mitigating and as a last resort compensating for any impacts on biodiversity. Opportunities to restore, recreate and enhance biodiversity are designed into the development. The biodiversity that will be present after the development is then assessed. A metric is used to enable comparison of the biodiversity pre and post-development.

**3.65** The Good Practice Principles are:

**Principle 1:** Apply the mitigation hierarchy - Aiming for Biodiversity Net Gain does not mean the mitigation hierarchy can be side-stepped. Local Plan policies should specify adherence to the mitigation hierarchy. Developers, decision makers and statutory consultees will need to seek early engagement on schemes to ensure that the mitigation hierarchy is fully considered from the outset and applications for new development will need to demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy has been fully considered with a step-wise approach.

**Principle 2:** Avoid losing biodiversity that cannot be offset by gains elsewhere - Impacts on irreplaceable biodiversity cannot be offset to achieve No Net Loss or Net Gain, and should be excluded from any biodiversity metric calculations.

**Principle 3:** Be inclusive and equitable - Engage stakeholders early, and involve them in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the approach to Biodiversity Net Gain. Achieve net gain in partnership with stakeholders where possible, and share the benefits fairly among stakeholders.

**Principle 4:** Address risk - Mitigate difficulty, uncertainty and other risks to achieving net gain.

**Principle 5:** Make a measurable net gain contribution.

**Principle 6:** Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity - All Habitats of Principle Importance (or Priority Habitats) should be replaced like for like.

**Principles 7:** Be additional - Within Greater Manchester any work to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain must be in addition to existing conservation activities.

**Principle 8:** Create a net gain legacy.

**Principle 9:** Optimise sustainability - Within Greater Manchester any habitat enhancement or creation should be designed so that the ecosystem services provided by the area are optimised and where possible meet local needs.

**Principle 10:** Be transparent - Communicate all Biodiversity Net Gain activities in a transparent and timely manner, sharing the learning with all stakeholders.

This guidance is due to be updated.

### **Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (GMCA, August 2018)**

The GMCA commissioned LUC to complete a landscape character and sensitivity assessment across Greater Manchester. The assessment:

- Provides an evidence base for the landscape character / sensitivity of Greater Manchester which takes account of changes in land use, pressures for change including characterisation of the landscape, identification of sensitive and non-sensitive areas.
- Bridges the Natural England National Character Area profiles, North West Regional Character Framework and character assessments undertaken by individual districts.
- Considers cross boundary matters, in particular views from the Peak District National Park and Natural Improvement Areas and identifies anomalies and discontinuities as well as potential enhancements and improvements.
- Provides guidance and advice to help shape the scope of more detailed area specific assessments where required.

**3.66** The Assessment identifies ten different landscape character types:

- Broad Urban Fringe Valleys;
- Historic Parks and Wooded Estate Farmland;
- Incised Urban Fringe Valleys (within Oldham);
- Mosslands and Lowland Farmland;
- Open Moorland and Enclosed Upland Fringes (Dark Peak) (within Oldham);
- Open moorlands and Enclosed Uplands Fringes (West / South Pennines) (within Oldham);
- Pennine Foothills (Dark Peak) (in Oldham);
- Pennine Foothills (West/South Pennines) (within Oldham);
- Reclaimed Land / Wetlands; and
- Urban Fringe Farmland (within Oldham).

**3.67** For each landscape character type the assessment considers the:

- Key characteristics of the landscape.



- Intactness and condition of the landscape.
- Sensitivity of the landscape to change.
- Guidance for opportunities for future development and landscape management/enhancement.

### **The IGNITION Project Greater Manchester**

**3.68** IGNITION is a ground-breaking project that aims to develop innovative financing solutions for investment in Greater Manchester’s natural environment. This project, backed by €4.5 million from the EU’s Urban Innovation Actions initiative, brings together 12 partners from local government, universities, NGOs and business. The aim is to develop the first model of its kind that enables major investment in large-scale environmental projects which can increase climate resilience. By 2038 this will enable an increase in Greater Manchester’s urban green infrastructure coverage by 10% from a 2018 baseline.

### **Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plans (2009)**

**3.69** The overall aim of the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP) is “To promote the conservation, protection and enhancement of biological diversity in Greater Manchester for current and future generations”.

**3.70** The Plan has identified species and habitats that require action to conserve and protect them. ‘BAP’ habitats of relevance in Oldham include:

- Arable farmland
- Broadleaved and Mixed woodland
- Moorland and Fell
- Mossland (Blanket Bog)
- Marshy Grassland
- Reedbed
- Rivers and Streams
- Species-rich Neutral Grassland

**3.71** ‘BAP’ species of relevance in Oldham include:

- Brown hare
- Farmland birds
- White-clawed crayfish
- Lapwing
- Reed Bunting
- Skylark
- Song Thrush
- Twite

**3.72** Whilst the targets within the BAPs are out of date, the principles behind them are still valid; the habitats and species identified are important.

## **A Sustainable Food Vision for Greater Manchester (The Kindling Trust, 2017)**

**3.73** This Vision aims to create a Greater Manchester where Sustainable Food is at the heart of policy and action to create: jobs and training opportunities; good health and well-being; green neighbourhoods; diverse high streets; and strong local economies.

**3.74** Under 'Building Sustainable Food Knowledge, Skills, Resources & Projects' the strategy has the desired outcome to clear pathways and processes in place for people to access land for food growing. To achieve this the following actions are identified:

- Incorporate community food growing spaces in Local Plans and develop guidance to determine how community food growing is supported;
- Create more allotments;
- Social landlords develop schemes to share land & gardens for food growing activities;
- Support Incredible Edible groups;
- Councils offer under-utilised public land for permanent food growing projects;
- Support the establishment and running of community gardens in all communities;
- Create an online land register of potential community asset transfer sites with potential for food growing; and
- Planning policy to ensure all new homes are built with good-quality growing spaces as standard.

## **Moors for the Future Partnership (since 2003)**

**3.75** The Moors for the Future Partnership is dedicated to preserving 8000 years of our Moorland history. Since 2003, Moors for the Future have been working to reverse more than 200 years of damage that left large areas of these uplands bare of vegetation.

**3.76** The purpose of the Moors is to act as "beautiful boggy landscapes with an array of hidden benefits", such as:

- enhancing habitats - Upland blanket bogs contain very low levels of nutrients and are vital habitats for special plants, birds and insects, many of which can only live or breed in these special habitats. The ecological value that is provided by healthy blanket bogs is difficult to replace once lost. Halting the deterioration of remaining blanket bogs is of the highest priority.
- improving water quality - Re-vegetating damaged areas will help to reduce erosion and slow the rate and amount of water flowing downhill.
- reducing the risk of wildfire - by encouraging healthy, well-managed moorlands.
- tackling climate change - aim to re-vegetate the areas of damaged bog to halt the erosion of peat from the moors; reduce the loss of carbon; increase the amount of carbon absorption and turn the damaged carbon sources back into carbon sinks.
- space to breathe and play - Moorlands play an important role in our health and well-being.
- reducing the risk of flooding - By conserving blanket bogs in the uplands, we can reduce the chance and impact of floods in the valleys below.

## **My Back Yard, Manchester Metropolitan University**

- 3.77** Green spaces are essential to the healthy functioning of our cities. Providing us with many benefits, they help to cool the air, improve air and water quality, absorb water, support wildlife, and provide a setting for recreational activities. Domestic gardens also have a vital role to play, making up a significant portion of the land area in cities, they can be important patches of green space that provide connectivity between larger green spaces such as parks and recreation grounds.
- 3.78** While individually, a domestic garden may appear insignificant, collectively domestic gardens contribute a large proportion of greenspace within the urban matrix, which becomes especially important at the city scale. In spite of this, the quantity and quality of green infrastructure provision by domestic gardens is not well-evidenced. This has implications for the future resilience of an urban environment and the health and well-being of its citizens. Current data over-estimates the amount of vegetation within private gardens, which leads to subsequent inaccuracies in environmental model outputs (e.g. surface water runoff in an extreme rainfall event), and in the identification and prioritisation of areas of GI need, inhibiting effective action on-the-ground. Furthermore, the general public are often unaware of the environmental value of their own private garden and how they can improve it.
- 3.79** The My Back Yard project developed a new understanding of the benefits that gardens provide to residents in Manchester. The research sought to provide evidence on the amount of green space in gardens, how it is spatially distributed across the city, and how this affects the associated benefits that green space provides. An Action Plan was then co-developed with partner organisations, with the aim to increase green space and enhance wildlife in gardens across Manchester.
- 3.80** Whilst the project focussed on the Manchester City Council area as a case study, diminishing green space in gardens is a pertinent issue within all urban areas, and the event provides transferable messages and learning that is relevant beyond Manchester.
- 3.81** The findings of the My Back Yard project demonstrate that gardens are not completely green infrastructure (green and blue space), as the Manchester Green and Blue Strategy assumed. This affects the total estimate of green and blue space cover across Manchester, which is now estimated at 49% (compared to 58% as previously assumed). Less green space in domestic gardens means that the potential benefits they provide to people (ecosystem services) are reduced.
- 3.82** Actions for improving green space and wildlife in gardens: 1. Promote actions that increase green space and wildlife in gardens 2. Undertake on the ground garden related projects 3. Engage in garden related policy development 4. Undertake research on gardens 5. Provide training and practical skills relating to gardens 6. Promote the value of garden
- 3.83** An Action Plan was produced to encourage a cultural change in the way that people appreciate the benefits of their gardens. The Action Plan suggests that local policy on domestic gardens should take into account the new level of green infrastructure estimated in wards. Actions for improving green space and wildlife in gardens are also set out, which may be transferrable to Oldham including :
- Promote actions that increase green space and wildlife in gardens;
  - Undertake on the ground garden related projects;

- Engage in garden related policy development;
- Undertake research on gardens;
- Provide training and practical skills relating to gardens; and
- Promote the value of garden

### **MEMO Manchester's Environment Map: Online**

**3.84** The MEMO project will work with stakeholders and citizens to develop a digital tool that shares knowledge by mapping the location of current GI projects, characterising the benefits they provide and identifying areas for innovation, improvement and interventions.

The tool will aim to better communicate the benefits provided by GI, assist urban environmental planning and incentivise new GI projects. The aim is to develop an online mapping platform to share information on the location, benefits and public values of GI projects in Greater Manchester, to facilitate strategic planning.

**3.85** This will be delivered through four objectives:

- inform stakeholders about existing GI projects, the characteristics/benefits provided by successful schemes and identify gaps in GI provision;
- create a platform for the exchange of information between stakeholders and citizens about GI projects;
- increase understanding about the perceptions and opinions of Greater Manchester citizens of GI provision within the city-region;
- develop a rich dataset of GI projects and public perceptions that can be shared with other environmental stakeholders.

### **Front Garden Research - Greening Grey Britain, RHS**

**3.86** An RHS research project in collaboration with the University of Sheffield has found that green front gardens reduce both psychological and physiological stress.

**3.87** The four-year project introduced plants to 42 previously bare front gardens. Resident's cortisol (the hormone associated with stress) levels were measured before and after the plants were added, the research team were able to see if the greenery had any impact on stress levels.

**3.88** Before the experiment, only 24% of residents had healthy cortisol patterns. Over the course of the year following the plantings, this increased to 53% of residents having healthy cortisol patterns.

**3.89** Perceived stress levels decreased by 6% after the introduction of the plants. Over half (52%) of the residents said their front garden helped them be happier, 40% said it helped them be more relaxed and over one in four (26%) said it helped them be closer to nature.

**3.90** The research emphasises the need to incorporate plants into front gardens and domestic spaces, showing that even a very small patch of nature has benefits for health and wellbeing. The researcher's noted that this "will require a change in the way we strategise, design, plan and build our living spaces. This data supplements other studies where it is known garden plants help mitigate flooding, encourage biodiversity, reduce

air pollution, as well as improve our health and wellbeing. We must reverse the trend to pave over our front gardens entirely, as it is possible to combine attractive, beneficial plantings with car parking space."

## Local Evidence Base

**3.91** The following information provides a baseline of biodiversity, landscape and some of the components making up the GI network within Oldham.

### European designations:

**3.92** Oldham has one Special Protection Area (SPA) for rare and vulnerable birds (South Pennine Moors). This is split between part of the Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1), which is 45,300.54 hectares (ha) and part of the South Pennine Moors (Phase 2), which is 20,944.46 ha.

**3.93** The South Pennine Moors is also a Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), which covers 65,024.32ha.

**3.94** The Rochdale Canal crosses through the borough and is designated as a SAC (24.86 ha).

### National designations:

**3.95** Oldham has five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the borough:

- Rochdale Canal (26.37ha). Site is 100% unfavourable - recovering (2010)
- South Pennine Moors (20,944.5 ha). Site is 1.16% favourable and 94.68% unfavourable recovering and 4.16% unfavourable
- Standedge Tunnel (3.6ha). Site is 100% favourable condition (2010)
- Ladcastle and Den Quarries (2.7 ha). Site is 100% favourable condition (2011)
- Lowside Brickworks (1.4 ha). Site is 100% favourable condition (2012)

**3.96** The extent of four SSSIs has increased and one SSSI has stayed the same since they were designated.

**3.97** There is a need to protect nature designation favourable status and improve those in unfavourable condition.

### Local designations:

**3.98** Oldham has 38 SBIs including one which falls within the Peak District National Park. The number and extent of SBIs has gradually increased since 1984 from 18 SBIs.

**3.99** The SBIs total 3,455 hectares (ha). Of this there are:

- 10 SBIs Grade A, measuring 3,288.8 ha.
- 14 SBIs Grade B, measuring 122.6 ha.
- 14 SBIs Grade C, measuring 43.0 ha

**3.100** One of the SBIs has a small area of ancient woodland within it.

**3.101** Oldham has one Local Nature Reserve (LNR) (Glodwick Lows) (17 ha), which contains Lowside Brickworks SSSI.



**3.102** Oldham also has a Regionally Important Geodiversity Site (RIGS) at Glodwick Brickpit. Glodwick Brickpit is a disused quarry (1.4h) that has been landscaped. It falls within the Glodwick Lows LNR and Lowside Brickworks SSSI.

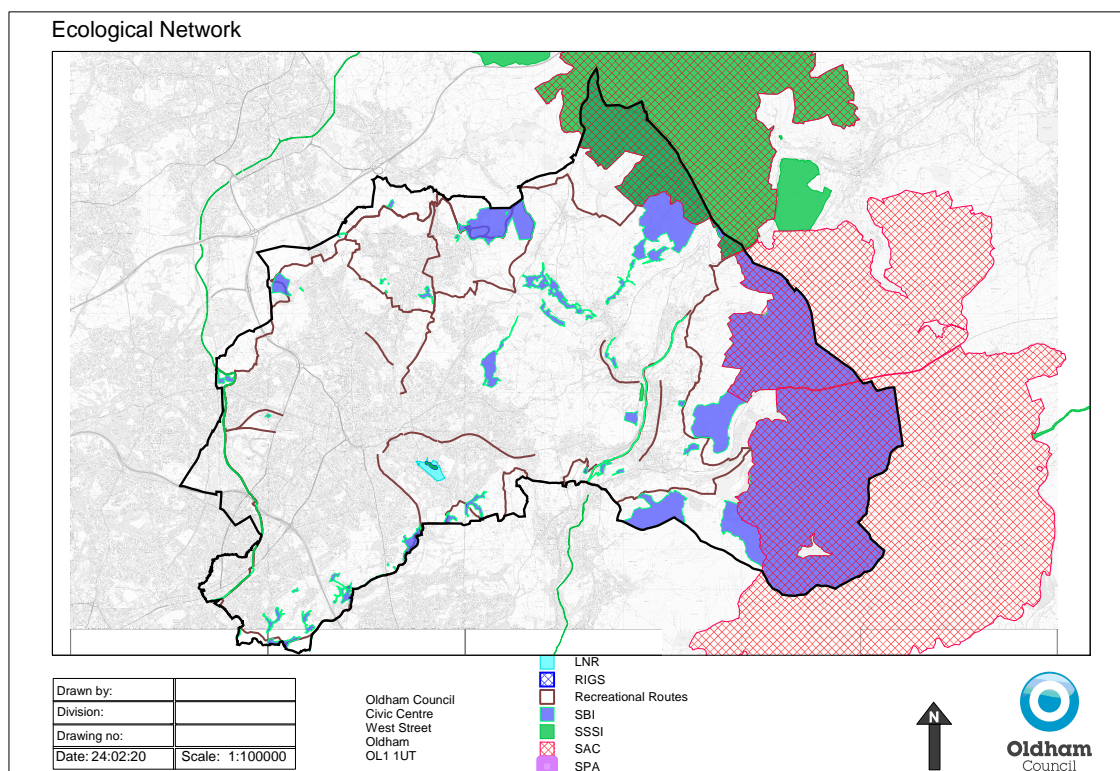
**3.103** 100% of local sites (41) are under positive conservation management. These consist of several SBIs, Glodwick Lows LNR and the rest are local countryside sites.

**3.104** There are 13 strategic recreational routes in Oldham equating to 116,164 metres.

**3.105** The borough also has priority habitats and other protected species.

**3.106** The map below shows this ecological network. Please note open space, green belt and other protected open land are covered in other topic papers.

### Ecological Network in Oldham



**3.107** There is the continued need to protect and enhance nature designations, including their condition, biodiversity, ecological networks and geodiversity.

### Parks, Countryside and Canals:

**3.108** The Oldham Council website provides information and an interactive map showing Oldham's parks, countryside and canals. A summary of this is shown in Appendix 1.

### Ecology of watercourses:

**3.109** The majority of waterbodies in the borough are failing their Water Framework Directive statutory ecological objectives as highlighted in North West River Basin Management Plan (NOW RBMP) (2015).



**3.110** The NW RBMP requires the restoration and enhancement of water bodies. Future development and environmental policy will play a key role ensuring such assets are fully integrated into future riparian development proposals. The Environment Agency recommends that high quality and multifunctional Green Infrastructure be seen as an integral element of all new development.

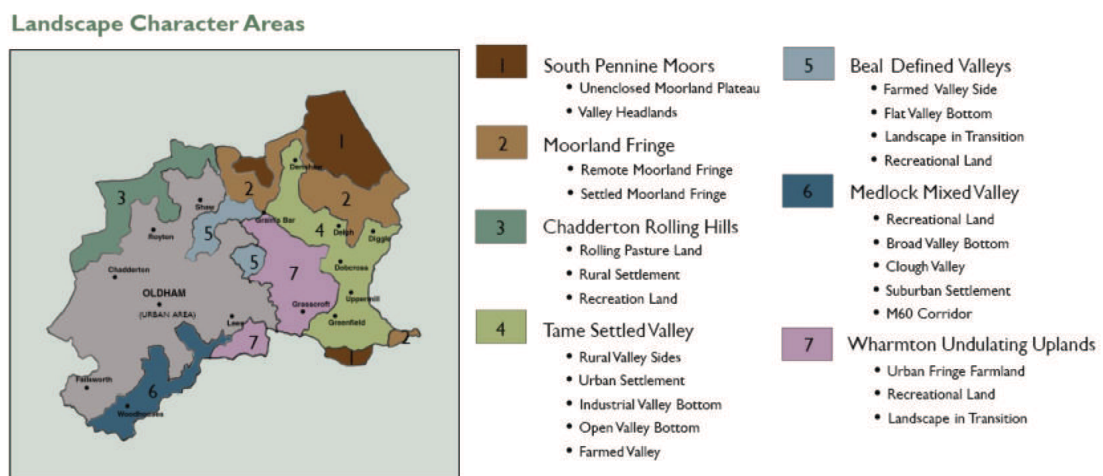
**Landscape Character:**

**3.111** The following National Character Areas falls within Oldham:

- No. 36 Southern Pennines;
- No. 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe; and
- No. 55 Manchester Conurbation

**3.112** A Landscape Character Assessment <sup>(1)</sup> (LCA) was undertaken for Oldham in 2009. This identifies Landscape Character Areas and types.

**Landscape Character Areas in Oldham**



**3.113** There is a need to ensure that development respects landscape character and has regard to the Greater Manchester and Oldham Landscape Character Assessments.

**Soils:**

**3.114** The Natural England Agricultural Land Classification shows that Oldham has poor (Grade 4) and very poor (Grade 5) agricultural land.

**Valuing Oldham’s Urban Forest (2017)**

**3.115** This report provides some baseline figures showing that in Oldham there are 466,800 trees of 59 different species. The most common species are Cypress, Sycamore, Maple, Alder, Ash, Larch and Spruce. This equates to 11.8% tree cover and 16.9% canopy cover.

1 [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1213/oldham\\_local\\_landscape\\_character\\_study](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1213/oldham_local_landscape_character_study)

- 3.116** The trees are responsible for removing a total of 64.84 tonnes of pollution removal per annum, equating to a value of £1,026,650.00. The trees provide carbon storage equating to 66,507 tonnes and carbon sequestration of 3,168.00 tonnes per year with an associated value of £4,250,000 and £202,250 respectively.
- 3.117** The trees have resulted in 202,681 cubic metres of avoided run off with a value of £307,300.
- 3.118** The amenity value is estimated at £1,789,754,700 and the total annual benefits is £1,536, 200.00.
- 3.119** However, Oldham's tree density is 33 trees per hectare (ha), compared to a UK national for towns and cities of 58 trees per ha.
- 3.120** The report outlines some of the ecosystem benefits that the urban trees provide, such as a reduction of urban heat island effect through shading and evaporative cooling, the improvement of local air and water quality by absorbing and filtering pollutants and additional health benefits such as reducing stress levels and improving recovery time from illness.
- 3.121** It also recognises that trees store carbon, offsetting carbon emissions and also help to alleviate flash flooding. It highlights that property value can be enhanced by being located in tree lined streets or neighbourhoods. An increase in tree cover and greenery has also been shown to reduce crime and encourage greater consumer spending. Trees and woodland also provide a valuable habitat for wildlife, including bats and bees.
- 3.122** The results demonstrate how Oldham's tree resource is providing valuable benefits to all of its residents and visitors. The filtration of Sulphur Dioxide is equivalent to the emissions of 41,000 cars every year.
- 3.123** The report seeks to improve and maintain the urban forest, through targeted planting, maintaining, and diversifying.

### **Open Space Study (2006, 2010)**

- 3.124** The study involved a local needs assessment and audit of open space, sport and recreation facilities across the borough of Oldham, in accordance with the requirements of Planning Practise Guidance 17 (2002). As outlined by the PPG17 Companion Guide the process for open space assessments are as follows:
- Step 1 - Identifying Local Needs;
  - Step 2 - Auditing Local Provision;
  - Step 3 - Setting Provision Standards;
  - Step 4 - Applying Provision Standards; and
  - Step 5 - Drafting Policies, recommendations and strategic priorities.
- 3.125** The objectives of the study as set out within the PPG17 Companion Guide were:
- to provide a comprehensive audit of existing provision of all types of open space, sporting and recreational facilities in terms of quantity, quality, accessibility and wider value to the community;

- identify local needs and aspirations through a series of consultations, strategic reviews at a national, regional and local level and review of existing provision standards; and
  - recommend standards of provision (quantity, quality and accessibility) in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002).
- 3.126** The study included an audit of all accessible open spaces of the following typologies within the borough of Oldham:
- parks and gardens;
  - natural and semi-natural urban green spaces;
  - green corridors;
  - outdoor sports;
  - amenity green space;
  - provision for children and teenagers;
  - allotments and community gardens;
  - cemeteries and churchyards; and
  - civic spaces.
- 3.127** The audit provided a robust baseline of data that was then used to produce the recommended local standards of provision to identify surpluses and deficiencies, draw up strategic options and prepare policies to be incorporated into the LDF.
- 3.128** The Open Space Study was split into two documents. The first set out the methodology and results for Steps 1 and 2. Step 1 was the identification of local needs, which involved consultation with residents, local organisations and national and regional agencies, such as Sustrans and English Heritage.
- 3.129** Step 2 was an audit of local provision which was carried out using a variety of sources such as, existing GIS information, Mastermap data, aerial photography, UDP map, existing documents and strategies, local knowledge and site visits. Following this audit, site assessments were undertaken at each identified site and were classified by typology.
- 3.130** An update to the Study was undertaken between August 2007 and January 2008 to expand the representation of open space, sport and recreation facilities across the borough. The results of this were displayed in the 'Open Space Study Steps One and Two: Update (January 2008).
- 3.131** The second document followed on from Steps 1, 2 and the Update, setting out the results for Steps 3, 4 and 5 of the study. Step 3 involved using the evidence gathered from the previous stages, identifying provision standards for accessibility, quality and quantity of the nine open space typologies. The principle that people require local access to public open green space of any typology helped to inform a local accessibility standard for local open green space. Quality scores for each typology were given and assessed against a scale of very poor, poor, average, good and very good. Quantity was measured in hectares per 1,000 population at a Lower Super Output Area level.
- 3.132** Step 4 applied the set provision standards identified in Step 3, to the borough's open space provision and identified where there were open space needs. Key issues were identified based on the deficiencies in quality, quantity and accessibility that emerged

from the study and recommendations made for future provision. Policy 23 'Open Spaces and Sports' of the Joint DPD was informed by the findings of steps one to four of the study and forms step five of study.

### **Northern Roots, Oldham Council (since 2019)**

**3.133** Oldham Council is planning a 65 hectare multi-disciplinary Green Infrastructure project called Northern Roots (NR). The proposed NR site is located in an area known as Snipe Clough, which extends from Alexandra Park southwards to the border with Ashton-under-Lyne and is predominately Local Authority owned.

**3.134** The aim for the project is for NR to be a 'productive eco-park, looking to benefit and inspire residents and communities of Oldham, whilst becoming an asset for Greater Manchester and a site of national importance'. Green living and sustainability will be at the heart of the project and it will serve as a live demonstration centre for sustainable technology and practise. The project underpins other significant developments across the borough, including the regeneration of Oldham's town centre and re-provision of the Alexandra Park Depot with a new facility - the Environmental Excellence Centre, adjacent to and providing an anchor for the NR site. Benefits of the scheme are wide ranging and integrated including:

- Improved links to the town centre and beyond;
- Increased opportunities for recreation, leisure and health and wellbeing;
- Local food production and distribution;
- Education and skills training opportunities;
- A catalyst for new investment in the local economy;
- Improved land management knowledge and experience opportunities; and
- Increased sustainability and biodiversity.

## 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:
- the Local Plan should contain and what the key planning issues are for Oldham; and
  - 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 that came from the consultation are set out below.

### Thematic comments

- 4.5** The main messages that came out of the initial consultation regarding Oldham's natural environment were:
- The protection, conservation and enhancement of Oldham's natural assets, including landscape, should be a key issue.
  - Would expect biodiversity and geodiversity, ancient woodlands, soils, priority habitats, ecological networks, protected species to be covered under the heading of the natural environment.
  - The plan should highlight the good points about Oldham, its green spaces.
  - There was an emphasis on the use of brownfield land first.
  - The benefits of Green Infrastructure were referenced many times from its green lung function, climate change mitigation, improved air and noise quality, flood resilience, wildlife habitats, food production, recreational opportunities, health and well-being, including tackling obesity and mental health, tranquillity and contribution to our cultural heritage.
  - Gardens are rich in wildlife because of their proximity to open fields and trees. In the past the council has tried to maintain the spaces between communities. Once developed there is no opportunity to recover biodiversity and the unique nature of these areas which gives communities a sense of identity and belonging which contributes to health and happiness.
  - Oldham is 3% below national average for open land and countryside.
  - The plan should contain a commitment to maintaining current green spaces for the benefit and well-being of Oldham residents. Any plan must take account of people's needs now and in the future.
  - An integrated and strategic approach to the provision and management of land for development while protecting and enhancing the countryside and green spaces that are loved in Oldham is needed. Improve the parks in the borough and consider ways to join them up by "green pathways/ routes" and link these to other centres/ transport nodes by walking routes etc.
  - Natural capital must be planned into new development.
  - There are major environmental improvements needed to enhance the functioning and ecological quality of the majority of Oldham's river corridors, both in water

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quality and hydromorphological (river modification) terms that have either been canalised or culverted watercourses, or have been heavily encroached by poor development leaving limited or no natural greenspace buffers, weirs that impede ecological connectivity and inhibit natural hydromorphological processes, and modified river channels with limited or no safe access to the river edge, as well as invasive non-native species.

- Where existing poor quality green or blue infrastructure assets are identified Community Infrastructure Levy resources should be allocated to improve these failing waterbodies and Green Infrastructure assets functionality.

### **Spatial comments**

- South Pennine Moors should be protected from development.
- Dove Stone is a key gateway to the Peak Park.
- There is a need to protect the distinctive character of Saddleworth's landscape.
- The canal network has ecological value.



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## 5 FUTURE EVIDENCE REQUIRED

- 5.1** The above evidence gives a good baseline of Oldham's current position and some of the issues that need to be addressed. However there is further evidence required:
- There is a need to establish or an evidence / an implementation plan for how biodiversity net gain will be implemented;
  - There is a need to establish how we will deliver new and enhanced Green Infrastructure standards in Oldham, including embedding GI into the built environment;
  - There is a need for a Green Infrastructure Strategy to be completed; and
  - There is a need to explore potential existing and future opportunities for food growing within the borough to enhance and add to through the Local Plan.

### **Green Infrastructure Strategy**

- 5.2** The NPPF states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure.
- 5.3** Recognising the importance of GI in creating sustainable development and in providing many multi-functional benefits to the wider community, a Green Infrastructure Strategy will be produced to inform the Local Plan Review. The Strategy will:
- identify the borough's GI network;
  - set out the findings and standards derived from an updated Open Space Audit;
  - collate evidence on the wider GI Network within Oldham; and
  - provide context and evidence to inform policies within the new Local Plan.
- 5.4** An Open Space Audit will be carried out in 2021 and a steering group has been set up to guide on the preparation and implementation of the strategy going forward.

## 6 KEY ISSUES

6.1 The key issues and opportunities arising out of the policy context, evidence and Regulation 18 consultation, are set out below:

- There is the need to protect and enhance nature designations, biodiversity, ecological networks and geodiversity.
- There is a need to reflect priorities and opportunities in the Nature Recovery Plan (LNRS).
- There is a need to move away from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains for nature and contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.
- There is a need for a Green Infrastructure strategy which uses Green Infrastructure as an intervention to tackle wider issues such as mitigating flood risk.
- There is the need to embed Green Infrastructure in new development.
- There is a need to restore and enhance river and canal corridors, particularly within the Irwell Catchment, to improve water quality and enhance biodiversity, re-naturalise rivers and waterways, improve public access to waterways and opportunities for sustainable travel along waterways.
- There is a need to protect ancient woodland, increase tree cover through new tree planting, promote positive Woodland Management and management of recreational pressures.
- There is a need to increase the area of peat spoils, including blanket bog in the uplands to sequester carbon, store water, achieve biodiversity net gain and improve public access and enjoyment of the countryside.
- There is a need to embed guidance from the Landscape Character Assessment into the Local Plan to inform how future development should be managed.
- There is a need to ensure planning policies support the enhancement of open space under threat from increasing development pressures and decreasing maintenance budgets for open space provision.
- There is a need to ensure that communities feel comfortable and empowered to use and value their open spaces by improving the quality of open spaces, for example by correcting dense tree planting, improving isolated accesses and improving facilities;
- There is a need to identify space for communities to grow food and to consider whether new housing developments could incorporate good-quality growing spaces; and
- There is a need to encourage and manage recreation, improve public access to Green Infrastructure for all and invest in the management of the Green Infrastructure network.

## 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 the natural environment. These will be refined as further evidence and the Local Plan is progressed:

**7.2** PO5 Ensuring Oldham is the greenest borough by:

- designating Local Green Spaces and giving them strong policy protection against development;
- protecting, enhancing and promoting the positive use of the Green Belt;
- protecting, enhancing and improving access to the strategic elements of the Green Infrastructure network including supporting projects such as City of Trees and Northern Roots;
- embedding Green Infrastructure within and between Oldham's built environment through the use of sustainable drainage, green linkages, green walls, green roofs, soft landscaping and trees;
- re-naturalising and restoring river corridors, canals and waterways where development opportunities arise, to improve the water quality, biodiversity, and to encourage sustainable travel;
- achieving a meaningful net gain in Oldham's biodiversity, including the species identified in Biodiversity Actions Plans, Priority habitats and other protected species;
- providing new or improved open space, sport and recreation facilities to promote health and well being and support new homes, particularly in areas of recognised need; and
- protecting and enhancing Oldham's characteristic landscape features and ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to ensure that these features are retained.

PO7 Improving life-chances and the health and well-being of our residents and local communities by:

- facilitating new health and well-being facilities and encouraging local and accessible health and well-being services;
- encouraging the creation of community food gardens in new and existing communities; and
- creating healthier and more vibrant neighbourhoods (including a mix of uses and green spaces) that are walkable and well-connected to existing communities, where infrastructure and services exist or are planned.

## 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 still 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.
- 8.4** The IA Scoping Report identified the following issues to be addressed in the Local Plan in relation to the natural environment:
- There is the continued need to protect and enhance nature designations, including their condition, biodiversity, ecological networks and geodiversity;
  - There is the need to protect and enhance Green Infrastructure, including open space provision. The accessibility of open space also needs to be monitored; and
  - There is a need to ensure that development respects landscape character and has regard to the National Character Areas objectives and any local Landscape Character Assessments.
- 8.5** The IA proposed an Integrated Assessment approach and scoring system to the assessment of the emerging Local Plan.
- 8.6** Consultation on the Integrated Assessment Scoping Report took place between 10 July and 21 August 2017.
- 8.7** 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 the continued need to protect and enhance biodiversity, geodiversity and ecological networks, achieve net gain and have regard to Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
  - There is the need to protect and enhance green infrastructure, including open space provision. The accessibility of open space also needs to be monitored.
  - There is a need to ensure that development respects landscape and townscape, local distinctiveness and sense of place, ensuring that development makes a positive contribution to ensure that these features are retained and taking into consideration the guidance within Landscape Character Assessments.
- 8.8** The Integrated assessment has appraised the vision, plan objectives and spatial options.

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- 8.9** Plan Objective 5, which addresses the natural environment, scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores. No mitigation / enhancements were identified.
  - 8.10** Plan Objective 7 , which addresses health and well-being, scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores. It scored a uncertain as it was screened in by the HRA and must be subject to further screening as the Local Plan is developed.
  - 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 adverse 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

9.1 Evidence sources are listed below, some of these are still at early stages and some consist of projects.

- National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2019) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>
- Planning Practice Guidance (MHCLG, 2019) <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
- A Green Future: Our 25 year plan to improve the Environment (DEFRA, 2018) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>
- Environment Bill <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2593>
- Clean Growth Strategy (HM Government, 2017) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>
- The National Forest Strategy 2014-2024 <https://www.nfs.gov.uk/documents/national-forest-strategy-2014-2024> Strategy 2014 2024 Web Version.pdf
- Planning for Ancient Woodland (Woodland Trust, 2019) <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/3731/planners-manual-for-ancient-woodland.pdf>
- The National Adaptation Programme (DEFRA, 2018) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/climate-change-second-national-adaptation-programme-2018-to-2023>
- Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (DCMS, 2015) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation>
- Sport England Active Design - Planning for health and wellbeing through sport and physical activity (Sport England, 2019) <https://www.sportengland.gov.uk/active-design/publications/active-design-2019-2020>
- A New Northern Forest Project <https://thenorthernforest.org.uk/>
- Greater Manchester's Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment - Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMCA, Draft for Approval, 2020) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/>
- The Greater Manchester Strategy 'Our People Our Place' (GMCA) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/ourpeopleourplace>
- Greater Manchester's Springboard to a Green City Region (GMCA) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1317/springboard-report.pdf>
- Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group <https://naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/our-work/greater-manchester-natural-capital-group/>
- Natural Capital Investment Plan (GMCA, 2019) <https://naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/project/greater-manchester-natural-capital-investment-plan/>
- Greater Manchester 5-year Environment Plan (GMCA, 2019) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/five-year-environment-plan/>
- The Urban Pioneer Strategic Plan - Greater Manchester (January 2018) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1291/urban-pioneer-strategic-plan-jan-2018.pdf>
- Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANGSt), Natural England <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/65021>
- A Greater Manchester Natural Capital Investment Plan (January 2019) <https://naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/efc-GMNCIP-Summary-A4-16pp-V3-LoRes2.pdf>
- All our Trees - Greater Manchester's Tree and Woodland Strategy (GMCA by City of Trees, 2020) <https://www.cityoftrees.org.uk/allourtrees>
- South Pennines Regional Park <https://www.southpennines.co.uk/about/>



- The Oldham Plan 2017-2022 <https://committees.oldham.gov.uk/documents/s83732/Oldham%20Plan%202017-22.pdf>
- Covid Recovery Strategy (Oldham Council)
- Creating a Better Place (Oldham Council, 2020) <https://www.oldham.gov.uk/news/1798306-million-investment-strategy-set-to-be-approved-by-oldham-council>
- Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD 'Joint DPD' (November 2011) <https://www.oldham.gov.uk/cbr/bas6/145development-plan-document-joint-core-strategy-and-development-management-policies>
- Oldham Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2025 <https://committees.oldham.gov.uk/documents/s77700/Appendix%202.pdf>
- State of Nature Report (State of Nature Partnership, 2019) <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/state-nature-report/state-nature-report-2019>
- Greater Manchester Nature Recovery Plan (GMCA, 2021) <https://naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/project/nature-recovery-plan/>
- Greater Manchester Natural Environment Topic Paper (GMCA, January 2019) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Natural Course - Greater Manchester Project (since 2015) <https://naturalcourse.co.uk/>
- City of Trees (since 2015) <https://www.cityoftrees.org.uk/>
- Ecosystem Services (ESS) Opportunity Mapping Tool [https://mappinggm.org.uk/gmodn/?ys=v\\_top\\_ecosystem\\_services\\_2019#os\\_maps\\_light/14/53.5715/-24335](https://mappinggm.org.uk/gmodn/?ys=v_top_ecosystem_services_2019#os_maps_light/14/53.5715/-24335)
- The Natural Environment - Priority Green and Blue Infrastructure (GMCA, 2018) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1728/the-natural-environment-priority-b-gj-2018.pdf>
- Guidance for Greater Manchester - Embedding Green Infrastructure Principals (GMCA, October 2019) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Green Infrastructure Policy Context (GMCA, October 2019) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Greater Manchester Net Gain - Proposed Guidance for Greater Manchester (GMCA, 2019) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (GMCA, August 2018) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- The IGNITION Project Greater Manchester <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/ignition/>
- Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plans (2009) [https://www.gmwildlife.org.uk/projects/gm\\_bap/](https://www.gmwildlife.org.uk/projects/gm_bap/)
- A Sustainable Food Vision for Greater Manchester (The Kindling Trust, 2017) [https://feedinggm.org.uk/sites/feedinggm.org.uk/files/Sustainable\\_Food\\_Vision\\_For\\_GM\\_V0.pdf](https://feedinggm.org.uk/sites/feedinggm.org.uk/files/Sustainable_Food_Vision_For_GM_V0.pdf)
- Moors for the Future Partnership (since 2003) <https://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/>
- My Back Yard, Manchester Metropolitan University <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/environmentsresearch/urbanenvironmentsresearch/groups/research-projects/my-back-yard.php>
- MEMO Manchester's Environment Map: Online <https://www.ppgis.manchester.ac.uk/memo/>
- Front Garden Research - Greening Grey Britain, RHS <https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/greening-great-britain>
- Oldham Nature designations <https://mappinggm.org.uk/>

- Oldham Landscape Character Assessment (2009) [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1213/oldham\\_local\\_landscape\\_character\\_study](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1213/oldham_local_landscape_character_study)
- Natural England Agricultural Land Classification <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5716376596512768>
- Valuing Oldham's Urban Forest [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1213/oldham\\_local\\_landscape\\_character\\_study](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1213/oldham_local_landscape_character_study)
- Open Space Study 2006 and 2010 [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1213/oldham\\_local\\_landscape\\_character\\_study](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1213/oldham_local_landscape_character_study)
- Northern Roots (since 2019) <https://northern-roots.uk/>

## 10 APPENDIX 1: OLDHAM'S PARKS, COUNTRYSIDE AND CANALS

### Oldham's Parks, Countryside and Canals

Park, Countryside, Canal	Description
Alexandra Park	A Grade Two Registered Park and Garden. The park includes clough woodland and woodland walks.
Bishop Park	A monument at Bishop Park marks the highest point in Oldham, at 1233 feet above sea level. The monument commemorates a local family who gave the land at Bishop Park to the Borough of Oldham. From this point you can see four counties - Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire and Derbyshire, and even as far as Wales on a clear day.
Brownhill	The nature garden is accessible for all. The garden is planted with a range of cottage garden plants which are beneficial for wildlife especially pollinators. The garden includes woodland and a hazel coppice area along with a wildflower meadow and pond with dipping platform. There are numerous wildlife habitats within the garden to encourage the wildlife. The garden provides an excellent educational resource, with a gazebo and bird hide that doubles as an outdoor classroom for visiting school and community groups.
Bullcote Park	A recreational area in Royton including playground and bowling green.
Chadderton Hall Park	Includes a play area, bowling green, woodland/ river walk.
Churchill Playing Fields	An area of open space between the villages of Greenfield and Uppermill. Used for a range of sporting activities and community events, it is the largest recreational area in Saddleworth and Lees, covering approximately 7.8 hectares of land.
Coalshaw Green Park	Includes bowling greens, gardens and playing fields.
Copster Park	A recreation area in Medlock Vale, including grassy areas.
Crompton Moor	Rises above the town of Shaw, and is a unique and popular recreation site in Oldham. There is grassland, woodland, dry heath, wet bog and heather, and an impressive waterfall which flows into Pingot Quarry. Crompton Moor has also been designated a SBI.
Daisy Nook Country Park	40 hectares of varied landscape in the heart of the Medlock Valley. There are waterways, a lake, a canal, woodlands and wildflower meadows. The park is a great habitat for wildlife and bird-spotting.
Dogford Park	A recreational area in Royton.

Park, Countryside, Canal	Description
Dove Stone Reservoir	With its breathtaking vistas, the Dove Stone area of Saddleworth offers visitors the chance to explore part of the Peak District National Park. There is an extensive network of footpaths and considerable moorland area with open access. Dove Stone Reservoir is the best place in Oldham to see plantation woodlands, which contain a mixture of conifer trees.
Dunwood Park	Offers the opportunity to discover and enjoy its wooded hillside with views across the Beal Valley towards Crompton Moor, Shaw, Oldham and Rochdale.
Fitton Park	Was opened in 1922, as a memorial to Councillor James Fitton, for 28 years a member of the former Chadderton Urban District Council. It includes a bowling green.
Foxdenton Park	Includes 2 bowling greens, woodland walk, sensory garden and duck pond.
Friezland	Has wooded areas and routes that link to the surrounding countryside, including a public horse riding arena with a direct link to the Pennine Bridleway (National Trail website).
Glodwick Lows	A Local Nature Reserve that is a disused quarry on a steep hillside near Glodwick.
High Crompton Park	Includes a bowling green, ornamental gardens and recreation areas
Higher Memorial Park	A recreation area in Failsworth including bowling and natural play area.
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	The Huddersfield Narrow Canal runs through the scenic villages of Saddleworth, connecting the towns of Ashton-under-Lyne and Huddersfield. At its centre lies the unique Standedge Tunnel - the longest, highest and deepest canal tunnel in the country.
Lees Park	Has views over Hartshead Pike, and includes a football area.
Leesbrook Nature Park	Is in the heart of the Medlock Valley and is a haven for wildlife. The park follows the River Medlock valley and has different sites (including Constantine Street, Bank Top, Breeze Hill and Holts). Each site has its own character - from wooded valleys to meadows with views of the Pennines. It's a great place for walking, cycling and horse riding.
Limeside Park	Is a recreation area in Limeside and includes a football area and bowling green.
Lower Memorial Park	Is a recreation area in Failsworth and includes 2 bowling greens.

Park, Countryside, Canal	Description
Moston Brook Green Corridor	Is a green corridor which links Failsworth and Moston. It's a haven for wildlife and a green oasis in the city. The Brook has four large areas of green space. The Moston Brook Project, supported by Manchester City and Oldham Councils is working with local communities to transform the Brook into a clean, green space for people to enjoy nature on their doorstep.
Open access land	There are some areas of Oldham where you can enjoy the land without having to stay on footpaths. Most of these open access areas are moorland and common land within the hills of the South Pennines.
Princess Park	A recreation area in Chadderton.
Rochdale Canal	The canal runs for 33 miles from Manchester, through the boroughs of Oldham and Rochdale, to Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire.
Royton Park	Opened in 1911 on the day of George V's coronation. It includes a bowling green, football area, courts and ornamental gardens.
South Pennines	Covers the countryside of Oldham, Burnley, Pendle, Rochdale and Rossendale on the west of the Pennines, and Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Craven to the east.
Stoneleigh Park	Includes bowling green , pitches, senses garden, ornamental garden.
St Chad's - King George V Playing Fields	Are situated in the centre of the tourist village of Uppermill in Saddleworth. Although only a small park it is steeped in history, housing the site of the former 17th Century abbey. The park proves to be very popular as it also links up with the linear walks along the River Tame and the Huddersfield Canal. It hosts ornamental gardens and a field which stages a number of events throughout the summer.
St George's Square	A recreation area in Chadderton with a bowling green.
Strinesdale	Has reservoirs, woodlands and meadows surrounded by farmland. There is a wide range of habitats for local wildlife.
Tandle Hill Country Park	Oldham's oldest country park. It has 48 hectares of parkland with mature beech, mixed woodland and grassland. There are views across the Manchester Plain and the Pennine Hills. Oldham Edge, in the Tandle Hill area, is a large area of moorland and grassland, containing mixed woodland plantations. Visible from many parts of Oldham it overlooks Higginshaw village to the east, Royton to the north and Oldham centre to the west and south. Tandle Hill is a designated Site of Biological Importance for its fungi and bird populations.

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Park, Countryside, Canal	Description
Waterhead Park	Opened 1926 and includes gardens and bowling greens.