

# Oldham

# Local Plan

**Draft Local Plan: Our Centres (including  
Oldham Town Centre) Topic Paper**

**December 2023**



**Oldham**  
Council

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## 1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1. This is the Our Centres Topic Paper and is one of ten topic papers produced to inform the consultation on the Oldham Local Plan: Draft Plan.
- 1.2. All of the papers can be found on the Oldham Council website.
- 1.3. The topic papers set out how the preferred option for each policy under the relevant Draft Local Plan 'Chapter' has been developed. As such, the topic papers support and complement the Draft Plan consultation document as they provide a detailed explanation of the basis for each preferred policy approach. The policies are presented in a consistent format in each paper with sufficient information to provide a comprehensive appreciation of the background to, and development of, the preferred option.
- 1.4. The topic papers set out the national, regional and local planning context and then for each policy, or group of policies where relevant, the topic paper details how comments received to the Issues and Options consultation and relevant evidence have helped to shape the proposed policy approach. Including how this has also been informed by the findings of the Integrated Assessment. There are also details of further work that may be required to inform the next stage of the plan-making process – the Regulation 19 Publication Plan.
- 1.5. The preparation of a Local Plan must be informed by consultation and engagement as well as statutory processes, such as Integrated assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment, and address the requirements of national planning policy. These important elements of plan-making have, therefore, informed development of the Draft Local Plan and helped to shape the proposed policy approach. These supporting documents are available to view on the Oldham Council website.

## 2. Context

- 2.1 This section sets out the key national planning policies that relate to our centres and which have informed the policy approach taken. It also looks at the regional context – in the main this is the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, however there may be other policies and programmes of relevance, and local policies and programmes, in particular how the policy or policies will help to Create a Better Place.

## National

### **National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, December 2023)**

2.2 [National Planning Policy Framework](#)<sup>1</sup> (NPPF) in paragraph 90 of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. It goes on to say, in summary, that planning policies should:

- define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability;
- define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations;
- retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;
- allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead;
- where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre; and
- recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.

2.3 NPPF also outlines, in paragraphs 91 – 95, how sequential tests and the impact assessments should be applied.

2.4 This Topic Paper also covers Oldham Town Centre and related to this issues that affect the town centre such as the historic environment and green infrastructure. For national planning policy on these subject matters please see the Historic Environment Topic Paper and Natural Environment Topic Paper.

### **Planning Practice Guidance Town Centres and Retail, September 2020**

2.5 This [planning practice guidance](#)<sup>2</sup> (PPG) states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) can take a leading role in promoting a positive vision for these areas, bringing together stakeholders and supporting sustainable economic and employment growth. It says LPAs need to consider structural changes in the economy, in particular changes in shopping and leisure patterns and formats, the impact these are likely to have on individual town centres, and how the planning tools available to them can support necessary adaptation and change.

2.6 It goes on to say that a town centre strategy should be based on evidence of the

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<sup>1</sup> This document can be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65829e99fc07f3000d8d4529/NPPF\\_December\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65829e99fc07f3000d8d4529/NPPF_December_2023.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> This guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres>

current state of town centres and opportunities that exist to accommodate a range of suitable development and support their vitality and viability. It also lists indicators that should be used in determining the health of town centres.

- 2.7 In plan-making, the sequential approach requires a thorough assessment of the suitability, viability and availability of locations for main town centre uses. It requires clearly explained reasoning if more central opportunities to locate main town centre uses are rejected.
- 2.8 The PPG has a checklist which sets out the matters that should be considered when taking a sequential approach to plan-making. It says use of the sequential test should recognise that certain main town centre uses have particular market and locational requirements which mean that they may only be accommodated in specific locations. Robust justification will need to be provided where this is the case, and land ownership does not provide such a justification. It does go on to say that as promoting new development on town centre locations can be more expensive and complicated than building elsewhere, local planning authorities need to be realistic and flexible in applying the test.
- 2.9 This Topic Paper also covers Oldham Town Centre and related to this issues that affect the town centre such as the historic environment and green infrastructure. For national planning guidance on these subject matters please see the Historic Environment Topic Paper and Natural Environment Topic Paper.

### **Future High Streets Fund**

- 2.10 The Government's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government launched the competitive [Future High Streets](#)<sup>3</sup> Fund in December 2018 to support plans to make England's high streets and town centres fit for purpose. In May 2021 it was announced that Oldham had successfully bid for £10.7 million to boost the ongoing regeneration of Oldham Town Centre.
- 2.11 The Future High Streets Fund award will support a number of exciting projects which are all set to transform Oldham for residents, visitors and workers and support our recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. They include Accessible Oldham – a scheme to make travel easier, safer and more enjoyable around the town centre, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. A new public realm space will be created on Henshaw Street incorporating trees, seating, cycle parking and street art. There will also be better connectivity between Oldham bus station and Oldham Town Centre as the lower end of Lord Street and High Street will be pedestrianised.
- 2.12 The Future High Streets Fund will also bring to life Oldham Council's plans to launch a food hall in the Old Town Hall's Egyptian Room featuring six casual dining-style food and drink concessions and a central dining space. Catering for around 200 people, it will offer both indoor and outdoor seating including a large covered al-fresco dining area on Parliament Square.
- 2.13 And finally, funding will be allocated for the creation of a new business hub for digital start-ups in the town centre - boosting opportunities for entrepreneurs,

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<sup>3</sup> More information on Future High Streets Fund can be found here:  
[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201088/regeneration/2739/future\\_high\\_streets\\_fund](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201088/regeneration/2739/future_high_streets_fund)

creating jobs and paving the way for a future-focussed Oldham.

## **Towns Fund**

- 2.14 Oldham has been awarded a Town Deal worth £24.4 million from the [Towns Fund](#)<sup>4</sup>, which is a £3.6 billion Government fund to boost local economies, create jobs and help towns build back better from the pandemic.
- 2.15 Oldham was selected to submit a bid along with 100 other towns which have a proud industrial and economic heritage but have not always benefited from economic growth in the same way as more prosperous areas.
- 2.16 As a lead local authority for the Towns Fund, Oldham Council has established the Oldham Town Deal Board to progress the application for funding. The Oldham Town Deal Board is a sub-board of the Oldham Leadership Board, with an independent chairperson and members from the local community and the public and private sector.
- 2.17 Four ambitious projects have been earmarked to receive a proportion of funding:
- Northern Roots: delivering key infrastructure and facilities such as a visitor centre for what will become the UK's largest urban farm and eco-park
  - Making Space for Live Performance: transforming vacant heritage buildings in Oldham's Cultural Quarter into a sustainable, modern venue for performing arts
  - Relocating Tommyfield Market: converting vacant retail units in Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre into a contemporary, permanent home for Oldham's market traders
  - Flexible workspace: converting vacant retail units in Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre into flexible, Grade A quality offices for the private sector
- 2.18 The projects were included in the bid based on their potential to drive sustainable economic growth, deliver excellent value for money and align with local and regional ambitions as expressed in strategic documents, including the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy (2019) and Oldham Town Centre Vision (2019).
- 2.19 All funding allocated to Oldham will need to be contractually committed by March 2026.

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<sup>4</sup> More information on Towns Fund can be found here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/towns-fund>

## Regional

### Places for Everyone (PfE) Joint Development Plan Document (DPD) (GMCA, Composite Version, September 2023)

- 2.20 The [Places for Everyone \(PfE\) Joint Development Plan Document \(DPD\)](#)<sup>5</sup>, is a strategic plan that will, upon adoption, cover nine of the ten Greater Manchester districts - Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. The Plan:
- Provides the strategic framework for the Oldham Local Plan;
  - Sets out specific requirements to be taken forward through the Oldham Local Plan in relation to housing, offices, and industry and warehousing, and identifies the main areas where this will be focused;
  - Identifies the important environmental assets which will be protected and enhanced;
  - Allocates sites for employment and housing outside of the urban area – in Oldham this is JPA2 Stakehill, JPA12 Beal Valley, JPA13 Bottom Field Farm, JPA14 Broadbent Moss, JPA15 Chew Brook Vale, JPA16 Cowlshaw, JPA17 Land south of Coal Pit Lane’ and JPA18 South of Rosary Road;
  - Supports the delivery of key infrastructure, such as transport and utilities; and
  - Defines a new Green Belt boundary for the borough.
- 2.21 Upon adoption PfE will form part of the development plan for Oldham. PfE will set the strategic policies and direction for the borough. Oldham’s Local Plan will interpret these at a more detailed local level to reflect our priorities and support delivery of the council’s regeneration ambitions and Creating a Better Place.
- 2.22 When considering development proposals and what needs to be taken account of in the determination of planning applications regard must therefore be had to both PfE and Oldham’s Local Plan.
- 2.23 The most relevant PfE policies relating to centres are:
- **Policy JP-Strat12 ‘Main Town Centres’** states that the role of the main town centres as local economic drivers will continue to be developed and that they will provide the primary focus for office, retail, leisure and cultural activity for their surrounding areas. The policy goes on to say that opportunities will be taken to significantly increase resident populations within the main town centres. The policy concludes by saying that development will be managed to ensure the local distinctiveness of each town centre is retained and enhanced.
  - **Policy JP-H4 ‘Density of New Housing’** later reaffirms the intention to increase population in the centres by stating that within designated town centres the minimum net residential density should be 120dph, sites within 400m 70dph and sites within 800m 50dph.

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<sup>5</sup> This document can be found at: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/modifications/modifications-documentation-2023/>

- **Policy GM-P3 ‘Cultural Facilities’** states that Greater Manchester will proactively develop and support cultural businesses and attractions in our cities and towns through a range of measure.
- **Policy JP-P4 ‘New Retail and Leisure Uses in Town Centres’** sets out the retail hierarchy of Greater Manchester, including Oldham Town Centre listed as a ‘main town centre’. The accompanying text in paragraph 9.18 outlines the challenges facing our town centres with the growth of online retailing forecast to continue rising.

2.24 This Topic Paper also covers Oldham Town Centre and related to this issues that affect the town centre such as the historic environment and green infrastructure. For PfE policies on these subject matters please see the Historic Environment Topic Paper and Natural Environment Topic Paper.

### **Marketing Manchester (on-going)**

2.25 [Marketing Manchester](#)<sup>6</sup> is the agency charged with promoting Greater Manchester nationally and internationally as a place to visit, invest, meet and study. The strategy dovetails with the Greater Manchester Strategy and the Greater Manchester Internationalisation Strategy which has a vision for Manchester to be a Top 20 global city by 2035. Marketing Manchester. The priorities of Marketing Manchester are to:

1. Promote Greater Manchester on a national and international stage:
  - a. to leisure visitors, providing them with inspiration and information to visit
  - b. by identifying, bidding, securing and supporting, business conferences and events
2. Influence investors in our key sectors to set up and grow their businesses in our city-region.
3. Strive to be an exemplar Destination Management Organisation.

2.26 Marketing Manchester does the following:

- Supports the inward investment promotional agency, MIDAS on frontier sector marketing, and Greater Manchester’s Business Board on the city-region’s economic vision.
- Promotes Greater Manchester’s visitor economy to both domestic and international audiences and markets.
- Has supported Greater Manchester’s place promotion, capital investment, and real estate ambitions for over 20 years, helping to facilitate important discussions about infrastructure, housing, innovation, equality, and sustainability.
- Promotes Greater Manchester as a leading city in which to hold major conference, convention, or sport events.
- Promotes Greater Manchester’s frontier sectors, including digital, innovation and green, to national and international investors.

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<sup>6</sup> Information on Marketing Manchester can be found online at <https://marketingmanchester.com/>



## Local

### **The Oldham Plan 'Our Future Oldham – A Shared Vision for 2030 (Oldham Council, 2022**

- 2.27 The Oldham Plan 'Our Future Oldham – A Shared Vision for 2030'<sup>7</sup>, prepared by the Oldham Partnership, sets the direction for the borough. With a focus on 'resident first', the Plan seeks to ensure that residents are at the heart of decision-making.
- 2.28 Consultation carried out to inform preparation of The Oldham Plan found that residents want services close to home and tailored to meet the specific needs of their community. The contributions emphasise a desire for Oldham to be a clean, green and safe place where public transport allows access to opportunities, activities for young people and communities and where people felt part of the city region.
- 2.29 The main aim of the Oldham Partnership, through the Plan, is to 'uplift every resident', so that we all have:
- A well-rounded, enriching, life-long education
  - The opportunity to get a decent job that pays well and offers security and flexibility
  - Quick, cheap and easy transport to every part of the city region
  - A home that is affordable, well-maintained and appropriate
  - Timely access to vital services to keep people healthy and safe
  - A clean, green and healthy environment
  - Diverse opportunities to get together, with regular activities to boost physical and mental health and community spirit
  - A local area that meets people's needs and makes them proud

### **Oldham Council Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027 (Oldham Council, 2022)**

2.30 The [Oldham Council Corporate Plan 2022-27](#)<sup>8</sup> sets out the council's priorities, with specific actions for 2022-25. It works in parallel with The Oldham Plan and sets out what its priorities mean for Oldham such as:

- Healthy, safe and well supported residents
- A great start and skills for life
- Better jobs and dynamic businesses
- Quality homes for everyone
- A clean and green future

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<sup>7</sup> This document can be found at: [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7589/the\\_oldham\\_plan\\_-\\_our\\_future\\_oldham](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7589/the_oldham_plan_-_our_future_oldham)

<sup>8</sup> This document can be found at: [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7405/oldham\\_corporate\\_plan\\_2022-27](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7405/oldham_corporate_plan_2022-27)

- 2.31 Delivering against these priorities means that the council can help residents and make Oldham the best place it can be.
- 2.32 In relation to 'Better jobs and dynamic businesses' the Plan sets out a number of actions. The key one for this topic paper is:
- Deliver on our plans for a renewed purpose for Oldham Town Centre as a creative place with a vibrant night-time and cultural economy, more jobs and homes including:
    - Redevelopment of the Spindles to include a new market, retail space, office and events space
    - A new performance and theatre space for Oldham
    - A new Town Centre Park
    - A new community purpose for the Old Library

### **Creating a Better Place**

- 2.33 The Local Plan represents the spatial expression of The Oldham Plan and the council's Corporate Plan. Their aspirations and priorities are the golden thread that runs through the Plan, along with supporting and facilitating the delivery of the council's ambitious Creating a Better Place agenda which is embedded into the planning framework provided through the policies as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Flow diagram illustrating how the council's Creating a Better Place agenda has been embedded into the planning framework



- 2.34 Through delivering Oldham Council’s bold vision for Oldham Town Centre and the wider borough and the ambitions of Creating a Better Place by 2030 Oldham will be a place where business and enterprise can thrive and where people will want to live, visit, relax and work.
- 2.35 Building on its industrial heritage, civic pride and location as a gateway into the countryside, Oldham will have a sustainable future in a unique urban setting. Oldham will be a stronger economic contributor to Greater Manchester, providing a place where every resident is enabled to contribute to and benefit from the continued growth of the city region.
- 2.36 Underneath the overarching theme of Creating a Better Place there sits several key issues that policies within the Local Plan seek to address such as the creation of healthy communities and tackling the climate emergency.
- 2.37 The policies set out within the Local Plan also provide a robust framework for ensuring that all development proposals mitigate the impact of climate change, make their contribution to meeting nationally binding targets to reduce greenhouse emissions and increase resilience. The policies regarding Oldham Town Centre have been directly informed by Creating a Better Place.

Oldham’s Green Infrastructure Strategy (Oldham Council, 2022)

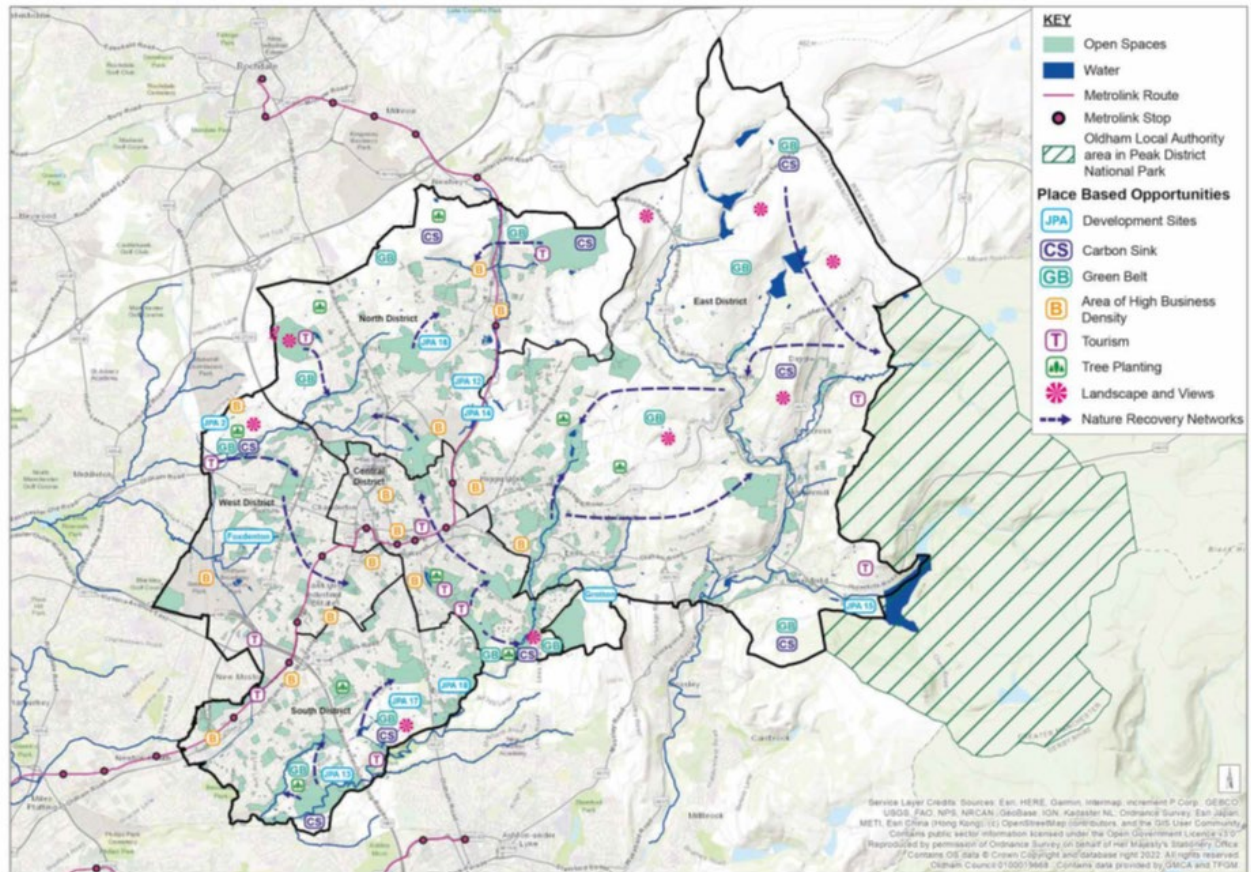
- 2.38 The [Oldham Green Infrastructure Strategy](#)<sup>9</sup> (and open space audit) was completed in 2022.
- 2.39 Our Vision for Oldham’s Green Infrastructure (GI) is that by 2037 the borough will be a carbon neutral exemplar with a GI network which brings multiple benefits to people, wildlife and neighbourhoods.
- 2.40 The Strategy has identified seven priority themes to do this which are introduced below. Figure 2 presents place based opportunities which are linked to the seven priority themes:
1. **Thriving Wildlife** - Our scattered core biodiversity areas can be joined up by increasing tree canopy cover, establishing meadows and wetlands or managing open spaces with biodiversity as an objective. Key corridors and ‘stepping stones’ could be enhanced along our main river valleys; the Medlock, the Beal and the Tame. New developments will help fund biodiversity net gain and in the countryside areas, habitats can be created and enhanced by landowners.
  2. **Carbon Neutral Oldham** - Oldham Council aims to be carbon neutral by 2025; and it is hoped the borough will be carbon neutral by 2030. GI will contribute to these targets. Wetlands, woodlands and semi-natural grasslands are effective at storing and sequestering carbon. We recommend the protection of peat habitats in the uplands and encouraging sustainable agricultural land uses elsewhere. The Bee Network map highlights active travel routes which reduce the need for local car journeys.
  3. **Healthy and Active Communities** - The borough has many types of open space including allotments, amenity space, parks and gardens and play space. Over 50% are already ‘good’ quality or better. The GI Strategy and Oldham’s Open Space Assessment set a target that all open spaces are brought up to at least ‘good’ quality.
  4. **Green Access for All** - Many houses in Oldham’s central wards have no private garden. Nearly a third of Oldham’s population are classed by the NHS as “inactive” i.e. doing less than 30 minutes of activity per week. The GI Strategy highlights potential active travel routes to the borough’s open spaces and recommends a ‘whole system approach’ to increase participation in physical activity.
  5. **Distinctive Landscapes** - Oldham has a unique landscape being at the edge of the Pennine range. The valley systems, variation in landform and many long-range views contribute to our quality of life and attract visitors. GMCA has an ambition to plant one million trees by 2024, of which 100,000 trees could be planted in Oldham. Our GI Strategy also recommends that most of the borough’s wards should have at least 20% tree canopy cover (except on precious peat habitats).
  6. **Slowing the Flow and Water Quality** - Four of Greater Manchester’s rivers find their source in Oldham: the Beal, Tame, Medlock and Irk. They are all prone to flooding, particularly downstream in neighbouring local authorities. SuDS and natural flood management can mitigate some of flood risks.

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<sup>9</sup> The Green Infrastructure Strategy can be found at: [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2183/oldham\\_green\\_infrastructure\\_strategy](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2183/oldham_green_infrastructure_strategy)

**7. Sustainable Growth and Green Jobs** - “Green New Deal” is Oldham’s strategy for carbon neutrality and development of the green technology sector (GTS). Oldham’s GI can help deliver green jobs through inbound tourism, keeping the borough’s reputation for being at the forefront of cutting-edge environmental technologies, and ensuring workers and residents are ‘carbon literate’ and actively engaged in delivering environmental change.

**Figure 2: Key Diagram showing place-based opportunities for Green**



## 3. Consultation Feedback

### Regulation 18 Notification Consultation

- 3.1 To begin preparation of the Local Plan the council carried out a Regulation 18 Notification between July and August 2017.
- 3.2 As part of the Regulation 18 Notification consultation we asked what the local community and stakeholders thought:
  - a) the Local Plan should contain and what the key planning issues are for Oldham; and
  - b) what, in broad terms, should be the main aims of the Local Plan.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The main messages that came out of the Regulation 18 Notification consultation regarding our centres were:
  - Must define hierarchy of centres and define extent of centres and primary shopping areas.
  - The retail study needs updating.
  - There is a need to ensure appropriate provision of retail.
  - There is a need for shops - independent and national.
  - New retail should not leave existing buildings derelict.
  - The impact on traffic should be a defining factor.
  - Should invest in smaller local centres and introduce new retail areas to support neighbourhoods where there is no retail provision.
  - Should support mixed use developments.
  - There is a need for high quality amenities.
  - There is a need to provide parking and improve local transport to encourage residents to shop local.
  - There are too many fast-food shops.
  - There is a need to introduce Article 4 directions.

### Regulation 18 Issues and Options Consultation

- 3.5 The Oldham Local Plan: Issues and Options consultation in 2021 identified the economy as one of the key themes for the new Local Plan to address.
- 3.6 The consultation identified the following key issues:
  - There are ambitious plans for Oldham Town Centre, the Local Plan will need to support and help facilitate these plans.
  - The traditional role of town centres (the high street and retail sector) is expected to decline, with the rise of e-commerce, there is a need to diversify to promote vitality and vibrancy.
  - There is a lack of high-quality office space within Oldham Town Centre.

- There is a need to accommodate a level of residential development in the centres, with an appropriate density applied.
- The evening offer in Oldham Town Centre needs to continue to grow on the back of the cinema development.
- COVID-19 had a huge impact on high streets, with a number of national multiple retailers restructuring or entering administration, in addition to this many pubs and restaurants were also affected.

3.7 As part of the consultation, we asked you:

- Do you agree with the current retail hierarchy set out in the current Local Plan which has been judged as appropriate by the Retail and Leisure consultants?
- Do you agree with the boundaries of Oldham Town Centre and the borough's other centres as set out in the Retail and Leisure Study?
- Do you agree with the reduced local impact floorspace threshold of 1,500sqm for Oldham Town Centre and 300sqm for the other centres?
- Housing development will be promoted in Oldham Town Centre and the borough's other centres, do you have any views on the level, density and type of housing that would be suited to the centres?
- Do you agree that Oldham Town Centre should have its own policy in the Local Plan to reflect the plans and visions for it in more detail?
- Do you agree with the approach to have a tightly drawn primary shopping frontage to focus retail development in a smaller area and allow a wider range of centre uses to locate elsewhere in the Town Centre?
- Should the Local Plan attempt to 'zone' areas of the Town Centre, each zone would have a focus towards a specific type of development?
- Do you agree that the council should seek to identify further development opportunities on the edges of Oldham Town Centre for high-density mixed-use developments?
- Should more areas of open space be created within Oldham Town Centre?
- What amenities and services would you like to see within Oldham Town Centre to promote and encourage people to live there?
- Do you think that office sites within Oldham Town Centre should be protected for office use?

3.8 We have reviewed the responses you gave us, and you will find the issues raised in relation to design summarised in this topic paper below.

## 4. Our Centres, Oldham Town Centre and the Draft Local Plan

- 4.1 Key policy areas have been identified that are addressed in this topic paper. For each of these, further detail is provided on how comments received to the Issues and Options consultation and relevant evidence have helped to shape the proposed policy approach and how this has also been informed by the findings of the Integrated Assessment. There are also details of further work that may be required to inform the next stage of the plan-making process – the Regulation 19 Publication Plan.

## 5. Policy C1 Our Centres, Policy C2 Local Services and Facilities, Policy C3 Retail and Leisure Impact Assessments and Sequential Tests and Policy C4 Changes of Use and Redevelopment within the Borough's Centres

### Feedback from Issues and Options consultation

- 5.1 The consultation responses at Issues and Options stage in relation to our centres was support for the distinction between the different centres in the borough, some suggestions that the existing retail hierarchy should be replaced as it does not reflect the retail distribution of the area and the suggestion that the type of housing that would be suitable for centres would be single person households and older people.

### Issues to be addressed

- 5.2 There is the need to support the regeneration of Oldham Town Centre and create other thriving centres.

### Evidence Base

#### Oldham Retail and Leisure Study (Santec, 2020)

- 5.3 A [Retail and Leisure Study](#)<sup>10</sup> was completed in September 2020 by Santec. The report provided an assessment of retail and leisure needs in Oldham and has helped to inform new retail and town centres policies. The key elements of the work were:
- To update the findings of the 2009 Retail and Leisure Study, having full regard to national planning guidance. This included:
    - Reviewing the existing retail and leisure offer in the borough;
    - Undertaking a retail capacity assessment and health checks of Oldham Town Centre and the borough's seven other centres;
    - Defining a hierarchy and a network of centres; and
    - Reviewing and amending as appropriate the boundaries of the town centres

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<sup>10</sup> This document can be found here:

[file:///home/atog/clare.davison/Downloads/Oldham\\_RLS\\_Final\\_Report\\_28\\_09\\_20%20\(16\).pdf](file:///home/atog/clare.davison/Downloads/Oldham_RLS_Final_Report_28_09_20%20(16).pdf)



and the extent of their primary shopping areas and other areas.

- To assess Oldham Town Centre and the borough's other centres and to provide recommendations regarding how to ensure their long-term sustainability and future vitality and viability, having regard to:
  - Ways to attract and retain residents and visitors to the town centres, including any unique selling points the centres may have;
  - The impact of online shopping and click and collect on town centres;
  - The role of and potential for increased residential development within town centres; and
  - Any other current trends or forecasts that may affect the future of town centres.
- To provide advice on future town centre planning policy in the borough.

5.4 In relation to the health checks for each of the centres, a summary of the conclusions are set out below. All the findings are based on the time frame the checks were completed and it is acknowledged that some of the retailers and businesses listed may no longer be trading.

#### Oldham Town Centre

5.5 The health of Oldham Town Centre is mixed. In terms of positives, the town centre contains many national multiple retailers, including Boots, Debenhams, H&M, Next and Primark and there is strong representation across the various retail categories<sup>11</sup>. The proportion of food and drink units is similar to the national average and there are 19 cafés and 10 restaurants within the town centre. The town centre is easily accessible by car and tram and there is good parking provision within Oldham Town Centre.

5.6 However, the health of the town centre has deteriorated since the 2009 Retail and Leisure Study. The proportion of vacant units in the town centre is almost double the current national average. The number of vacant units has increased by 39 units since 2009, which points to a lack of demand for floorspace within Oldham Town Centre. The town centre environment could be improved, particularly around the Spindles Shopping Centre and Tommyfield Market.

5.7 Whilst the town centre has managed to hold onto some national multiple retailers during the restructuring of the retail industry, it is evident there is too much retail floorspace in the town centre. To prevent further decline in the health of the town centre, interventions will be required, such as those that can be achieved via initiatives such as the Future High Streets Fund, to enable parts of the town centre to move away from retail.

#### Shaw District Centre

5.8 Overall, Shaw District Centre is not performing well and has declined in health since the 2009 Study. The proportion of vacant units has increased significantly and is well above the national average. The physical environment has experienced

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<sup>11</sup> Since the Retail and Leisure Study 2020 was written Debenhams has closed down and H&M has closed to enable redevelopment of the Spindles Shopping Centre to take place.

a gradual decline and no longer offers an attractive environment to shop in.

- 5.9 Notwithstanding the overall conclusion outlined above, the proportion of convenience goods and comparison goods retailers is similar to what would be expected for a centre of this size. The retail rents typically commanded by units within Shaw are above other similar-sized centres. Furthermore, Shaw is easily accessible by car, bus and tram.

#### Royton District Centre

- 5.10 The physical environment could be improved through the renovation of Market Square, however Royton District Centre is relatively healthy and performing well. The centre is anchored by two medium-sized foodstores. The vacancy rate is low and has remained below the national average since the 2009 Study. The centre has a good representation of retailers, a reasonable level of evening economy uses and a thriving market.
- 5.11 Commercial retail rents are comparable to other district centres in Oldham Borough and the centre is easily accessible by car.

#### Uppermill District Centre

- 5.12 Uppermill is performing very well and is a healthy centre. The centre is almost fully occupied, with there being just two vacant units present. Uppermill is attractive with a relatively high proportion of comparison goods retailers. The centre is covered by a conservation area and contains a high number of independent retailers. Uppermill also has a reasonable evening economy and a low crime rate.

#### Lees District Centre

- 5.13 Lees is also currently performing well. There are only five vacant units within the centre, and it is easily accessible by car whilst pedestrian footfall was high when surveyed. Lees is an attractive centre with low reported crimes. There are no national multiple retailers within the centre, and parking provision is limited, but that is not unusual for this size of centre.

#### Hill Stores District Centre

- 5.14 Hill Stores is reasonably healthy and is performing as expected for a small district centre. The centre is dominated by a Tesco Extra superstore, which draws trade from residents across a wide area. Hill Stores is accessible by car and tram and crime rates in and around the centre are low.
- 5.15 Hill Stores would be vulnerable if Tesco was to leave the centre. The centre has a high number of takeaways, which draws visitors to the centre but does not necessarily lead to linked trips to retail facilities with other businesses in Hill Stores. The physical environment could be improved by providing more pedestrian crossing points along the A62.

#### Chadderton District Centre

- 5.16 Chadderton is a small centre anchored by Asda, which is centred around Chadderton Precinct and is reasonably healthy. There are just three vacant units within the centre and Chadderton contains a high proportion of national multiple operators relative to its size. Parking is plentiful in the centre.

## Failsworth District Centre

- 5.17 Failsworth is the smallest district centre within Oldham Borough and contains just eight units. The centre is anchored by Tesco Extra and contains a high proportion of national multiple operators. There are no vacant units within the centre. The centre is reasonably attractive and is easily accessible by car and tram. Failsworth is performing well and is a healthy centre.
- 5.18 The report concluded several further findings. Some of the key conclusions were:
- There is no 'need' for additional convenience retail provision over the life of the new Local Plan and therefore the Local Plan does not need to plan for any.
  - There will be a small need over the plan period for comparison retail floorspace (2,381sqm) and it recommended this is focused in Oldham Town Centre.
  - The existing retail hierarchy is still appropriate. That is:
    - Oldham Town Centre;
    - The centres of Chadderton, Failsworth, Hill Stores, Lees, Royton, Shaw and Uppermill; and
    - Local shopping parades.
  - The recommendation of a reduced local impact floorspace threshold for assessing retail and leisure applications outside the borough's centres as opposed to the NPPF minimum of 2,500sqm was made of 1,500sqm for Oldham Town Centre and 300sqm for the other centres.
  - Town Centre boundary amend was proposed for Lees Centre to incorporate the Co-op foodstore (now an Aldi foodstore).

## Proposed Policy Approach and Reasons

### Policy C1 – Our Centres

- 5.19 This policy aims to promote and enhance the vitality and viability of the borough's centres, to their long-term success. It also sets out the borough's retail hierarchy of:
1. Oldham Town Centre; and
  2. The borough's other centres of Chadderton, Failsworth, Hill Stores, Lees, Royton, Shaw and Uppermill.
- 5.20 It states that Oldham Town Centre will meet the majority of the everyday needs for our residents and that the enhancement of each of the borough's other centres will take advantage of the unique character of each centre. In addition, the reasoned justification explains that boundary amendments are proposed to two of our centres. One in Lees to ensure the foodstore is included within the boundary as recommended in the Retail and Leisure Study and another to Oldham Town Centre to better reflect the Creating a Better Place framework.

## **Policy C2 – Local Services and Facilities**

- 5.21 This policy aims to protect local services and facilities that can help meet the day-to-day needs of our residents. Such services help reduce the need to travel, provide a focus for community interaction and help to distinguish one area from another. They provide an essential service for less mobile residents and residents in more rural areas.
- 5.22 The policy states that where there are 4 units adjacent to each other in use for either commercial, business or service use (Use Class E), the council will only permit a change of use from Class E to another use where at least 75% of the units will still remain in Use Class E. As planning permission is not required to change between uses within the same use class it is considered appropriate to include all the uses within Class Use E in this policy. Uses permitted within Use Class E are:
- E(a) Display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food
  - E(b) Sale of food and drink for consumption (mostly) on the premises
  - E(c) Provision of:
    - E(c)(i) Financial services,
    - E(c)(ii) Professional services (other than health or medical services), or
    - E(c)(iii) Other appropriate services in a commercial, business or service locality
  - E(d) Indoor sport, recreation or fitness (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms or use as a swimming pool or skating rink,)
  - E(e) Provision of medical or health services (except the use of premises attached to the residence of the consultant or practitioner)
  - E(f) Creche, day nursery or day centre (not including a residential use)
  - E(g) Uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity:
    - E(g)(i) Offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions,
    - E(g)(ii) Research and development of products or processes
    - E(g)(iii) Industrial processes
- 5.23 The policy also states that where appropriate, and within existing built-up areas, local shops and services that fall within Use Class E with a gross floorspace of 300 square metres or less will be permitted outside Oldham Town Centre and the borough's other centres. The 300 square metres threshold is consistent with Policy C3 Retail and Leisure Impact Assessments and Sequential Tests which is based on the recommendations from the Retail and Leisure Study.

## **Policy C3 Retail and Leisure Impact Assessments and Sequential Tests**

- 5.24 This policy aims to ensure that larger scale retail and leisure facilities are located within the borough's centres and sets out our approach to Retail and Leisure Impact Assessments and Sequential Tests. The policy is based on national planning policy with the sequential approach set out in NPPF embedded in the policy. In line with paragraph 94 of NPPF a locally set threshold for impact assessments has been set

based on the findings of the Retail and Leisure Study. The study considered the scale of Oldham Town Centre and its relatively high turnover, but also its health, high vacancy rate and potential vulnerability to market changes. Taking all that into account the study recommended that the impact threshold for Oldham Town Centre should be set at 1,500 sqm gross. It then went on to conclude that the borough's other centres are considered much more vulnerable to impacts from edge-of-centre and out-of-centre retail proposals and therefore a threshold of 300 sqm gross was considered appropriate for those.

#### **Policy C4 Changes of use and redevelopment within the borough's centres**

- 5.25 Successful centres are underpinned by a strong retail function both in terms of convenience and comparison goods, and this role should be protected and retained. This is important in meeting the day-to-day needs of residents. Centres must also have an appropriate mix of leisure, community, cultural and service provision, whilst
- 5.26 This policy is focussed on ensuring that our centres retain a strong retail function whilst being complemented by a broad range of other services and facilities, including leisure and community uses and requires changes of use and redevelopments within our centres support, rather than detract from, the successful functioning of the centres and their ability to meet local needs.
- 5.27 In responding to the changes within the retail sector, the Use Classes Order was amended in 2020 and now allows much greater flexibility with the introduction of a new Use Class E (Commercial, Business and Service) as set out above in relation to Policy C2. Changes of use between the different uses within Class E, which includes typical high street uses, can take place without the need for planning permission.
- 5.28 Given this greater degree of flexibility, and in order to protect the vitality and viability of our centres the policy states that proposals for Suis Generis uses (including hot food takeaways, payday loan shops and gambling uses) will only be supported in certain circumstances, such as where there is not an over concentration of those uses and were they would not be harmful to the overall shopping function of the centre. Issues associated with some Sui Generis uses can include, in relation to hot food takeaways, a detrimental impact on residential amenity, environmental quality, and the health of the local population, and in relation to pay day loan shops and gambling uses social, economic and health impacts. A proliferation of hot food takeaways and gambling uses are not considered compatible with the positive outcomes sought through our plans for the regeneration of our centres.
- 5.29 The policy also states that the provision of homes will generally be supported in our centres where it is demonstrated the residential use will not be detrimental to the vitality and viability of the centre, including through the conversion of under-utilised upper floors of commercial buildings into residential properties. The council will not support proposals for the development of new homes that would occupy ground floor uses within our centres unless the proposed development would comply with four exceptions listed in the policy and by the applicant demonstrating that there is no realistic prospect of securing an active retail or commercial use in the unit.

## Integrated Assessment

- 5.30 Policies C1, C2, C3 and C4 scored positively or neutral. No enhancements to the policy were required as a result of the IA process. The policies have all been screened out in the HRA.

## 6. Policy OTC1 - Oldham Town Centre

### Feedback from Issues and Options consultation

- 6.1 Feedback from the Issues and Options was as follows:
- There was support for Oldham Town Centre to have its own bespoke policy. Comments were made stating people do not visit the town centre in the evenings due to it being unsafe.
  - There was also a comment stating that there is a need to ensure that high quality walking and cycling routes into the town centre are provided and any severance issues are resolved.

### Issues to be addressed

- 6.2 There is the need to support the regeneration of Oldham Town Centre.

### Evidence Base

#### **Oldham Retail and Leisure Study (Santec, 2020)**

- 6.3 As mentioned previously a Retail and Leisure Study was completed in September 2020 by Santec. The report provided an assessment of retail and leisure needs in Oldham will help to inform new retail and town centres policies.
- 6.4 Details regarding the Oldham Town Centre health check can be found in above.
- 6.5 Specifically in relation to Oldham Town Centre the key recommendations from the Retail and Leisure Study were:
- Oldham Town Centre should seek to strengthen its food and beverage potential to help improve the evening economy.
  - Investment in cultural and entertainment should be encouraged to diversify the town centre offer and also improve the evening economy.
  - There is a lack of competition in Oldham Town Centre in relation to foodstores, the town centre could benefit from more convenience stores, potentially as part of a residential-led mixed-use development.
  - Further development opportunities should be identified on the edge of Oldham Town Centre to accommodate higher density mixed use development.
  - Oldham Town Centre should have a tightly drawn primary shopping frontage to focus retail development and reduce vacancy rates elsewhere in the town centre.

#### **Creating a Better Place (on-going)**

- 6.6 The policy has been further informed by the council's ambitious plan to transform Oldham through the Creating a Better Place programme. As discussed earlier this

Topic Paper, through delivering Oldham Council's bold vision for Oldham Town Centre and the wider borough and the ambitions of Creating a Better Place by 2030 Oldham will be a place where business and enterprise can thrive and where people will want to live, visit, relax and work. It will unlock investment worth £285 million and create more than 2,000 new homes in Oldham Town Centre, 1,000 new jobs and 100 apprenticeship opportunities.

6.7 For Oldham Town Centre the key aspects of the Creating a Better Place programme<sup>12</sup> are:

- The development of around 2,000 homes in partnership with Muse. Homes of all types and sizes will be delivered across the town centre on several key development opportunities, including the site of Oldham Civic Centre, the former leisure centre site and Magistrate's Court site.
- The introduction of a brand new 5.7 acre park – Jubilee Park, which will create a new space in which to exercise, play, dwell and socialise and which will become an integral part of our approach to Green Infrastructure across the town centre.

Figure 3 – An illustration of Jubilee Park in Oldham Town Centre



- Redefining the retail core. The way we shop has changed. Out of town retail parks, online shopping and the pandemic has accelerated the changing face of high streets across the UK. Many well-known retailers have unfortunately closed for good and Oldham is not alone in seeing an increasing number of empty units. Despite this though retail is, and will continue to be, a really important function of

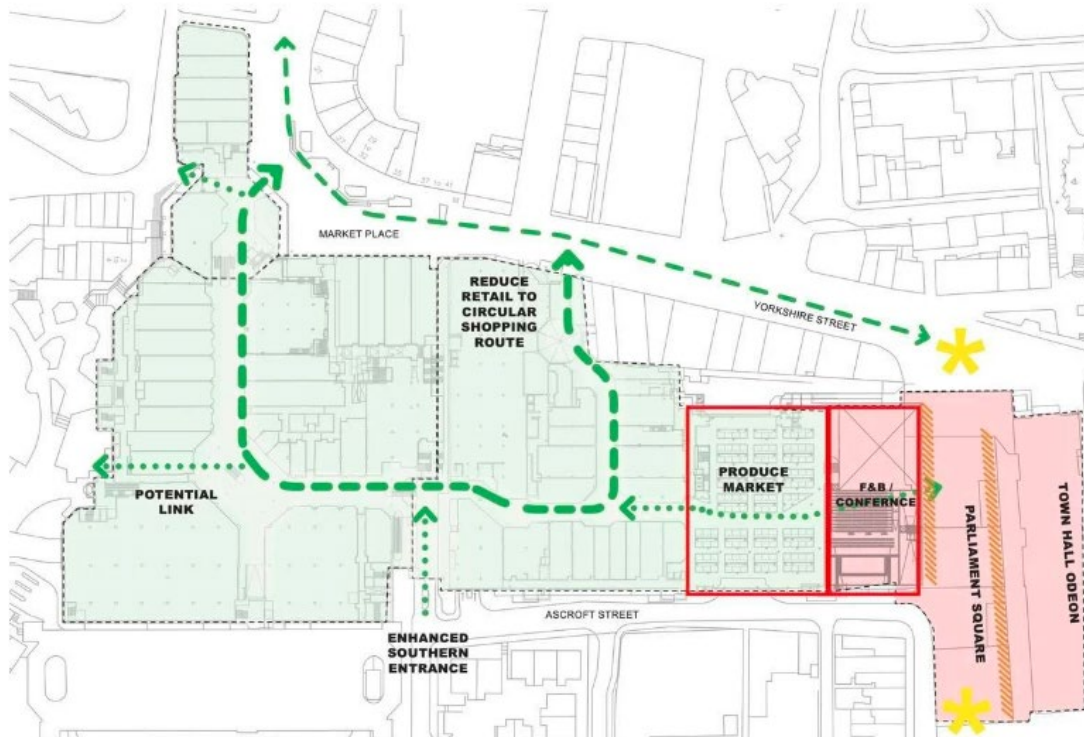
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<sup>12</sup> Further information on the Creating a Better Place proposals for Oldham Town Centre can be found online at [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201248/creating\\_a\\_better\\_place](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201248/creating_a_better_place)

Oldham Town Centre. The proposals therefore proposed to condense the retail area to the ground floor of Spindle Shopping Centre through to Town Square and linking into the New Tommyfield Market. This will create a better shopping experience, with shops in one main area instead of scattered throughout the centre. It will connect the high street, malls and market through a retail 'loop' and enable to upper floor of Spindles to be repurposed for office space.

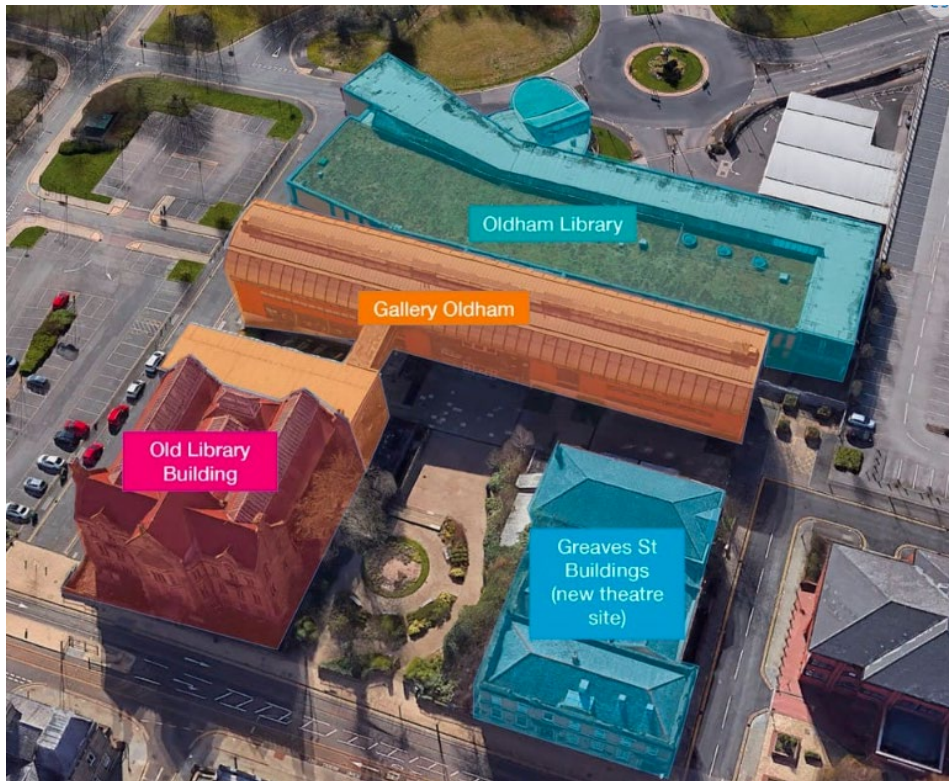


Figure 4 – An illustration of the reconfigures retail 'loop'



- The redevelopment of Spindles Shopping Centre, changing it from solely retail focused to a place for all the community to use. Providing better shops, new space for work and an improved leisure and entertainment offer for people of all ages.
- The creation of a new market within Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre. The new market would stretch from Town Square, through the former TJ Hughes unit and extend into Parliament Square. It will be a crucial part of our new shopping, leisure and entertainment complex. Traders will also benefit from a more visible presence, increased footfall, access to the adjacent car parks and nearby public transport stops.
- A new events space, linking directly to Parliament Square and the new Tommyfield Market and which will boost the cultural, leisure, entertainment and events offer within Oldham.
- The creation of a Cultural Quarter that seeks to preserve the heritage of the Old Library, the Local Studies and Archives Building and Oldham Theatres Workshop. Along with Gallery Oldham and the current Library space, these key assets will play a major role in delivering our cultural quarter. This will include the development of a new, fit-for-purpose performance space in the town centre that meets modern requirements and provides additional, flexible, creative arts and performance spaces.

Figure 5: The key buildings making up the Cultural Quarter



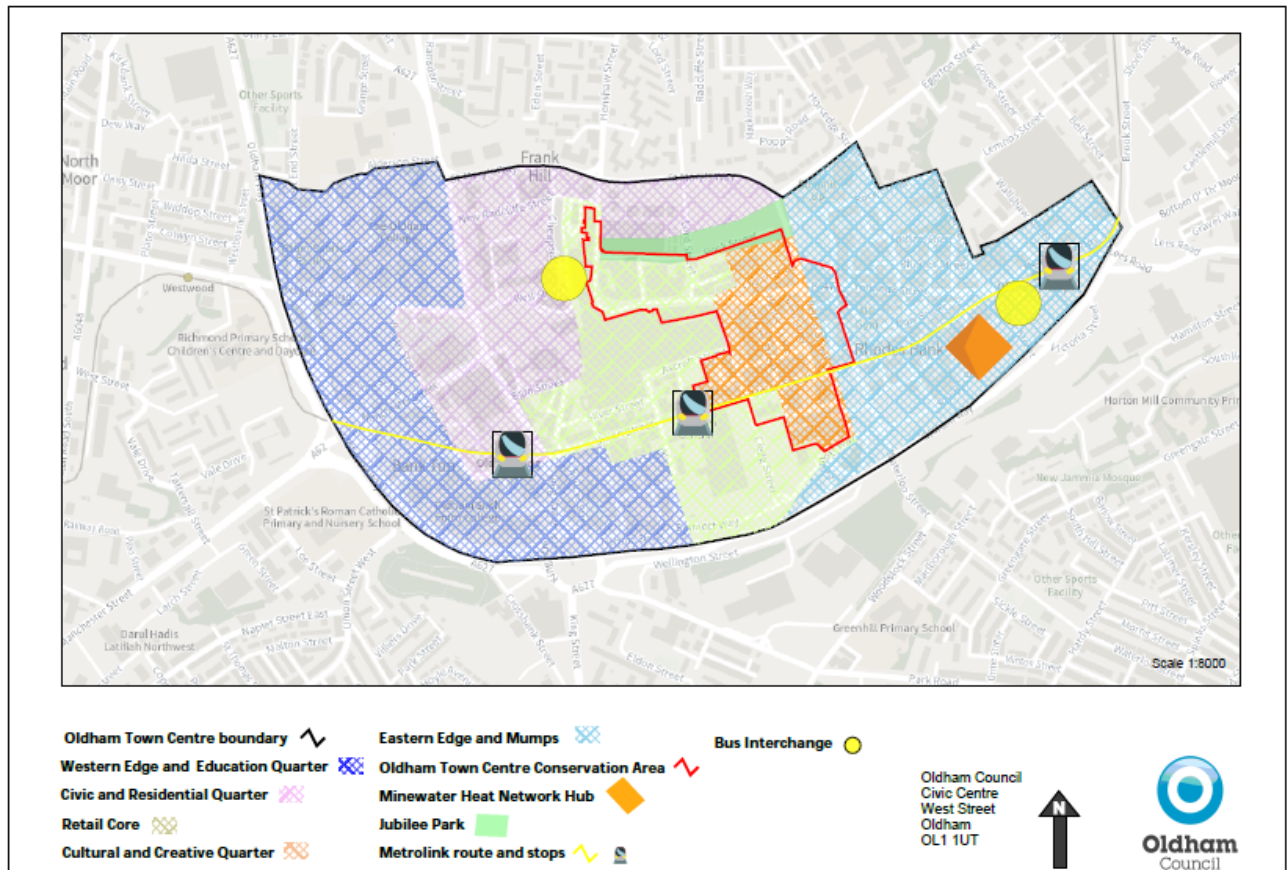
- Transforming the streets around Oldham Town Centres by improving roads, footpaths and public areas through the Accessible Oldham scheme. The includes a variety of initiatives such as:
  - Fountain Street: improvements to footpaths and roads. Re-locating the taxi rank to the nearby car park which will also be upgraded, and new disabled parking bays installed.
  - West Street/Cheapside: Developing a cycle route and improved pedestrian link to and from Oldham Leisure Centre on Rochdale Road and Oldham King Street Metrolink stop. Re-routing buses away from West Street to create a traffic-free zone.
  - Market Place and Curzon Street: improvements to support the creation of cycle routes in and around the town centre.
  - Lord Street/High Street: Pedestrianisation of the lower end of Lord Street and High Street and public open space improvements.
  - A new access into the Southlink development site at the Oldham Way/Prince Street junction.
  - Improved access around Tommyfield Market Hall into the High Street including replacing bollards with a new entry/exit system for vehicle

6.8 The policies within the Oldham Town Centre chapter and the Draft Local Plan seek to support and facilitate delivery of the Creating a Better Place proposals set out above.

## Proposed Policy Approach and Reasons

6.9 Policy OTC1 states that to deliver our vision, proposals for the continued enhancement, redevelopment and regeneration of Oldham Town Centre will be supported where they align with the broad principles of the Creating a Better Place strategic framework. It goes on to explain how certain areas in the Town Centre will be the focus for certain types of development. The key diagram in Figure 6 below is included to show these areas spatially.

Figure 6 Oldham Town Centre Key Diagram



6.10 The policy also includes a set of principles that will be expected as part of any proposals in Oldham Town Centre. These principles seek to ensure that all development has regard to key design principles in support of the vision for a high-quality town. High-quality, sustainable design is a central component in producing a distinctive, attractive Oldham Town Centre that reflects its local character and links successfully with its surroundings, provides appropriate transport links, supports local neighbourhoods and communities and makes the best use of natural resources.

6.11 The reasoned justification concludes by stating that a great deal of work is underway regarding the town centre and our partnership with Muse as the council's development partner will allow us to draw on the highest levels of knowledge and expertise to ensure that its regeneration comes forward in a co-ordinated and sustainable way. One of the first steps will be the creation of a masterplan and development framework for the town centre. The outcomes of the masterplanning carried out by Muse and the council will help shape and refine the Oldham Town

Centre policies and others as appropriate, as we move forward in the preparation of the Local Plan.

### Integrated Assessment

- 6.12 Policy OTC1 scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores. There were 3 neutral scored and 23 positive or significantly positive. No mitigation or enhancement measures were identified. The policy was not screened in by the HRA.

## 7. Policy OTC2 – Protecting and Enhancing Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area

### Feedback from Issues and Options consultation

- 7.1 In the Issues and Options document, we asked whether the revised boundary of Oldham Town Centre conservation area as shown in the Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should be reflected on the policies map.
- 7.2 Historic England agreed that the conservation area should be extended, along with Saddleworth Parish Council, Oldham and Saddleworth Green Party and other individuals. Save Royton's Green Belt Community Group considered that the boundary should not be extended.
- 7.3 Other relevant comments were:
- restrictions in relation to conservation areas need to be respected
  - localised heritage policies are supported
  - support enhancement of conservation areas

### Issues to be addressed

- 7.4 The Built Environment topic paper published at Issues and Options stage noted that there is a need to implement the Oldham Town Centre CAAMP SPD. This will include reflecting the proposed changes to the conservation area boundaries on the Local Plan proposals map and embedding relevant policies from the management plan into the Local Plan.
- 7.5 The Scoping Report has since been updated (Update 2) and identifies the issues to be addressed include:
- protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment, including their wider settings and to preserve and conserve archaeological heritage.

## Evidence Base

- 7.6 The [Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan \(CAAMP\) Supplementary Planning Document](#)<sup>13</sup> was adopted in August 2019 for Oldham Town Centre.
- 7.7 The CAAMP has been prepared to support existing plan policy on the historic environment, inform the Local Plan review and support regeneration plans for Oldham Town Centre. The CAAMP was seen as a high priority as Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area is identified on Historic England's "At Risk" register. An up-to-date CAAMP was required in order to re-assess the designated area and evaluate and record its special interest.
- 7.8 The appraisal proposes four extensions to the existing Oldham Town Centre conservation area boundary as shown in Map 1. The extensions have been designated under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and will be treated as a material planning consideration until formally adopted through the Local Plan review process.

**Map 1: Extensions to Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area**



- 7.9 The CAAMP SPD also identifies the following buildings that could be added to a local list, should we wish to establish one.
- Hilton Arcade;

<sup>13</sup> The CAAMP SPD can be found at:  
[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1599/oldham\\_town\\_centre\\_conservation\\_area\\_appraisal\\_and\\_management\\_plan\\_caamp\\_supplementary\\_planning\\_document\\_spd](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1599/oldham_town_centre_conservation_area_appraisal_and_management_plan_caamp_supplementary_planning_document_spd)

- Greaves Arms;
- 3 Greaves Street;
- Victoria House, Greaves Street;
- The Old Bill, Greaves Street
- 31 Queen Street; and
- The Old Museum (Former Friends Meeting House and Former Museum), Greaves Street

7.10 The Management Plan followed on from the appraisal of the conservation area. It sets out policies and recommendations around enhancement. The Management Plan aims to:

- Secure the viable use of vacant heritage assets to prevent their decay and dereliction and ensure their long-term preservation and contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- Reverse the cumulative negative impact that the poor upkeep and maintenance of buildings and inappropriate alterations have on the appearance of buildings and the character of the conservation area;
- Uplift the human experience of the conservation area at ground floor level and the perceived quality of the urban environment in order to bring about major enhancement to its character and appearance;
- Ensure the significance of the conservation area is preserved and that any future development enhances its positive characteristics
- Ensure that only applications for development which reflect careful consideration of the character and appearance of the conservation area are approved, and to encourage the redevelopment of cleared vacant sites within the conservation area and its setting;
- Protect the established and valued views of the surrounding area which contribute to the historic context and setting of Oldham Town Centre conservation area, as well as local views within the conservation area;
- Ensure interventions in the public realm are considered carefully in the context of good surviving examples of street furniture, surface coverings and public art/ sculptures / monuments to preserve and enhance its essential character and to encourage the introduction of appropriate greening and landscaping;
- Improve wayfinding into and around the conservation area, between key transport links and better define the conservation area;
- Give the conservation area a clear identity, engage the public and celebrate the heritage of Oldham whilst incentivising the care and conservation of its buildings and character and appearance overall;
- Create a place that people find welcoming and which contributes to their sense of identity, local pride and well-being;
- Ensure that the conservation area is correctly managed and the tools available to Oldham Council are used to effectively enforce the conservation area status; and

- Make best use of the powers available to Oldham Council to secure the enhancement of the conservation area and its removal from the 'At Risk' register.

### Proposed Policy Approach and Reasons

- 7.11 Policy OTC2 states proposals affecting the setting and character of the conservation area must take into consideration the Oldham Town Centre CAAMP SPD. Development proposals are required to contribute towards the aim of removing the conservation area from Historic England's heritage at risk register.
- 7.12 The supporting text explains that the policies map will show the amended boundary for the Oldham Town Centre conservation area.
- 7.13 The policy then lists nine criteria which development should meet where applicable. These have been informed by the above policy recommendations and therefore evidenced by the Oldham Centre CAAMP SPD, alongside the proposed extensions to the conservation area boundary. The policy approach reflects national planning policy section 16, including paragraphs 196 and 197 and provides a positive strategy for the historic environment to assist in achieving sustainable development that will enhance the condition of Oldham Town Centre conservation area over the plan period.

### Integrated Assessment

- 7.14 Policy OTC2 scored positively or neutral. The policy was enhanced as the policy wording was amended from 'appropriate greening' to 'appropriate multi-functional green infrastructure' to ensure many benefits are delivered from greening against IA objectives 1 on green infrastructure, IA2 on open space and IA9 on flood risk. The policy was not screened in by the HRA.

## 8. Policy OTC3 – Creating a Better Public Realm for Oldham Town Centre

### Feedback from Issues and Options Consultation

- 8.1 In the Issues and Options consultation there wasn't a specific question asked about creating a better public realm within Oldham Town Centre but from the green infrastructure questions and the design questions asked generally there is a desire to see enhanced green infrastructure and public realm within Oldham and its Town Centre.
- 8.2 There was support for separate policy dealing with Oldham Town Centre and a number of the comments noted that it was important that the town centre was healthy, walkable and liveable place in the future.

### Issues to be addressed

- 8.3 The Built Environment topic paper published at Issues and Options stage noted that there is a need to implement the Oldham Town Centre CAAMP SPD. One of the recommendations from the CAAMP was to improve the quality of the public realm in order to aid wayfinding/connectivity and help improve the sense of identity for the town centre

## Evidence Base

- 8.4 The [Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan \(CAAMP\) Supplementary Planning Document](#)<sup>14</sup> was adopted in August 2019 for Oldham Town Centre. The Management Plan followed on from the appraisal of the conservation area. It sets out policies and recommendations around enhancement. The Management Plan recommends the Council:
- Create opportunities to create fully shared surfaces and remove unnecessary bollards and gates.
  - Control the build-up of street clutter, including the use of public telephone boxes for advertising and interventions by statutory undertakers.
  - Support the creation of a public realm strategy to ensure that routes into and across the conservation area made central to future development proposals and regeneration initiatives.
  - Ensure opportunities to enhance the usability of existing green spaces in the conservation area are sought, including the management of anti-social behaviour.

## Proposed Policy Approach and Reasons

- 8.5 The Policy OTC3 in the draft Oldham Local Plan outlines a strategic approach to shaping the public realm in Oldham Town Centre through major new developments. The policy focuses on the principles of enhancing the town centre's identity, creating a spatial hierarchy, introducing green elements, and ensuring the use of durable materials. Additionally, it addresses the financial aspect by stipulating contributions for public realm improvements associated with major developments.
- 8.6 To preserve and enhance the unique identity of Oldham Town Centre, the policy emphasises creating a simple and uncluttered environment. This approach allows the character of existing buildings to shine through, fostering a sense of continuity and cultural richness.
- 8.7 Establishing a spatial hierarchy of routes contributes to an easily navigable town centre. A consistent palette of materials ensures a coherent visual identity, promoting a harmonious and well-integrated urban fabric. This approach enhances the overall aesthetics and functionality of the town centre.
- 8.8 The incorporation of trees and landscaping serves multiple purposes. It not only adds to the visual appeal of the town centre but also contributes to environmental sustainability. Green elements provide shade, promote biodiversity, and contribute to a cooler and more pleasant urban environment.
- 8.9 The choice of robust and durable materials is driven by the goal of promoting cost-effective and sustainable maintenance. This approach ensures that the public realm remains of high quality in the long term, reducing the need for frequent repairs or replacements.

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<sup>14</sup> The CAAMP SPD can be found at:  
[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1599/oldham\\_town\\_centre\\_conservation\\_area\\_appraisal\\_and\\_management\\_plan\\_caamp\\_supplementary\\_planning\\_document\\_spd](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1599/oldham_town_centre_conservation_area_appraisal_and_management_plan_caamp_supplementary_planning_document_spd)



- 8.10 Requiring financial contributions from major developments for public realm improvements ensures that the burden of enhancing the town centre is shared appropriately. This approach aligns with the principle that major developments, which may impact the public realm significantly, should contribute to its improvement.
- 8.11 The overall approach is underpinned by a commitment to sustainability. The use of durable materials, incorporation of green elements, and financial contributions for improvements all contribute to the long-term quality and resilience of the public realm.
- 8.12 In summary, Policy OTC3 reflects a comprehensive strategy for creating a better public realm in Oldham Town Centre. The approach is guided by principles that aim to enhance the town center's identity, improve accessibility, introduce green elements, and ensure sustainable, long-term quality. The requirement for financial contributions from major developments aligns with the idea that growth and development should actively contribute to the enhancement of the public realm for the benefit of the entire community.

### Integrated Assessment

- 8.13 Policy OTC3 scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores. There were 16 neutral scored and 10 positive or significantly positive. No mitigation or enhancement measures were identified. The policy was not screened in by the HRA.

## 9. Policy OTC4 – Green Infrastructure within and around Oldham Town Centre

### Feedback from Issues and Options consultation

- 9.1 In the Issues and Options consultation there wasn't a specific question asked about green infrastructure within Oldham Town Centre but from the green infrastructure questions asked generally there is a desire to see enhanced green infrastructure – comments included:
- Need to make clear the role that Green Infrastructure can provide in providing active travel routes including through connecting up the built environment to employment and local facilities and services; and
  - Support for protecting and enhancing biodiversity across the borough including within the urban area.

### Issues to be addressed

- 9.2 The natural environment topic paper published at Issues and Options stage identified the need to:
- prepare a Green Infrastructure Strategy which uses Green Infrastructure as an intervention to tackle wider issues such as mitigating flood risk; and
  - embed Green Infrastructure in new development.
- 9.3 The Scoping Report has since been updated (Update 2) and identifies the issues to be addressed include:

- protect and enhance biodiversity, geodiversity and ecological networks and a multi-functional green infrastructure network; and
- adapt and be resilient to climate change.

9.4 The scoping report also identified issues in relation to health, water, air etc which links to this policy.

## Evidence Base

9.3 The council has published a Green Infrastructure Strategy as detailed earlier in the Topic Paper, which included an updated open space audit.

9.4 The Green Infrastructure Strategy identified seven priority themes:

- 1) thriving wildlife for Oldham;
- 2) carbon neutral Oldham;
- 3) healthy and active communities;
- 4) green access for all;
- 5) distinctive landscapes;
- 6) slowing the flow and a quality water environment; and
- 7) sustainable growth and green jobs.

9.5 Green Infrastructure assets can each serve one or more functions. Development should aim to incorporate Green Infrastructure assets that are multi-functional by supporting as many of the above themes as possible.

9.6 The [Green Infrastructure Strategy](#)<sup>15</sup> provides an up-to-date assessment of current

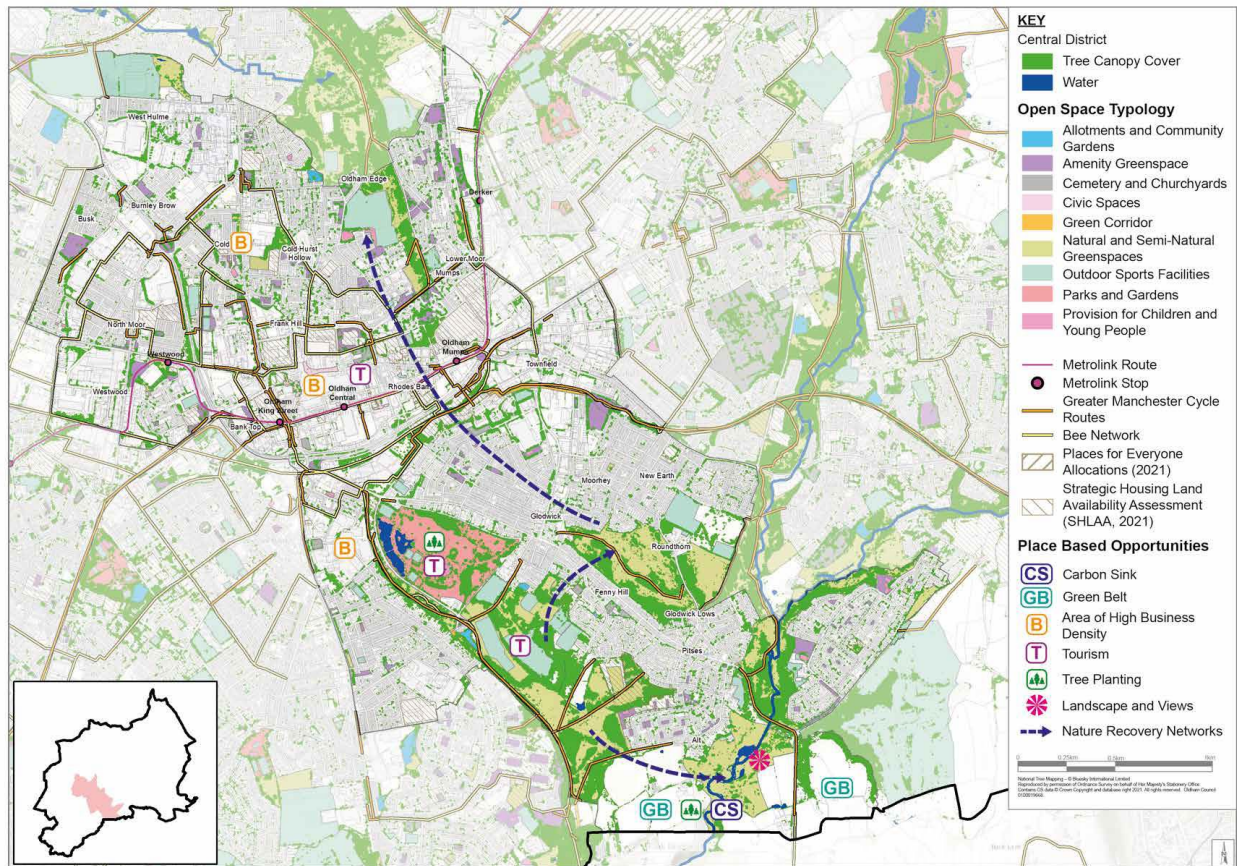
9.7 Green Infrastructure provision and opportunities using existing data sets. The spatial data sets produced within the Green Infrastructure Strategy, highlight opportunity areas aligned to local need and can be used to guide development decisions.

9.8 For the central district which includes Oldham Town Centre pages 116 to 119 of the Green Infrastructure Strategy detail the Green Infrastructure place-based opportunities including Map 2 which illustrates the place-based opportunities.

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<sup>15</sup> The Strategy can be found at:  
[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2183/oldham\\_green\\_infrastructure\\_strategy](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2183/oldham_green_infrastructure_strategy)

Map 2: Place Based Opportunities for Central District



- 9.9 The council has embedded some of the data sets from the Green Infrastructure Strategy onto an [interactive map](#)<sup>16</sup> on the council’s website. The webmap will be updated overtime with more GI data.
- 9.10 The Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out a step-by-step guide as to how to implement the strategy when considering a development proposal.

### Proposed Policy Approach and Reasons

- 9.11 Policy OTC4 states proposals will be supported that protect, create and enhance Green Infrastructure within and around Oldham Town Centre. The policy then sets out six criteria that could be supported within development proposals within Oldham Town Centre, such as the integration of multi-functional green infrastructure in development sites, including areas of high business density, incorporating green walls and roofs, trees, encouraging wildlife and creating interest and shade; and the promotion of high-quality active travel routes, in a green infrastructure setting, linking homes to schools, workplaces and transport hubs through improved cycle routes and the Bee Network

<sup>16</sup> This map can be found at: [https://maps.oldham.gov.uk/webmap/?initialDialog=layersDialog&mapName=Green Infrastructure](https://maps.oldham.gov.uk/webmap/?initialDialog=layersDialog&mapName=Green%20Infrastructure)

including from Coldhurst to Oldham Town Centre and the National Cycle Network Route 601.

- 9.12 This policy has been informed by the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the place-based opportunities for central district, incorporating relevant opportunities. The approach seeks to ensure that green infrastructure needs are taken into account in achieving sustainable development.

### Integrated Assessment

- 9.13 Policy OTC4 scored positively or neutral. Not mitigation or enhancements to the policy were required as a result of the IA. The policy was not screened in by the HRA.

## 10. Policy OTC5 - Creating better vehicular parking and drop off facilities in Oldham Town Centre

### Feedback from Issues and Options consultation

- 10.1 Although no specific question was asked in relation to car parking in Oldham Town Centre, the question was asked in the Transport section as to whether maximum parking standards should be developed and there was broad support for their introduction, where public transport accessibility was at its highest.
- 10.2 Given the transport options available in Oldham Town Centre, it is considered that the response to the question is relevant to the development of Policy OTC5

### Issues to be addressed

- 10.3 The Built Environment topic paper published at Issues and Options stage noted that there is a need to implement the Oldham Town Centre CAAMP SPD. One of the recommendations from the CAAMP was to reduce the dominance of the car in the Town Centre and ensure that car parking does not detract from the setting of historic assets and the streetscene. As per policy OTC3 there was also support to improve the quality of the public realm in order to aid wayfinding/connectivity and help improve the sense of identity for the town centre.

### Evidence Base

- 10.4 The [Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan \(CAAMP\) Supplementary Planning Document](#)<sup>17</sup> was adopted in August 2019 for Oldham Town Centre. The Management Plan followed on from the appraisal of the conservation area. It sets out policies and recommendations around enhancement. The Management Plan recommends the Council:

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<sup>17</sup> The CAAMP SPD can be found at:  
[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1599/oldham\\_town\\_centre\\_conservation\\_area\\_appraisal\\_and\\_management\\_plan\\_caamp\\_supplementary\\_planning\\_document\\_spd](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1599/oldham_town_centre_conservation_area_appraisal_and_management_plan_caamp_supplementary_planning_document_spd)

- Create opportunities to create fully shared surfaces and remove unnecessary bollards and gates.
- Ensure that the change of use of buildings should include careful consideration of the consequent changes to, among others, delivery access, parking, and external services, such as condensing units. Changes that have a detrimental impact on the conservation area will not be permitted.
- Ensure that new buildings must be fully accessible and provide an active frontage where they address the streetscene to ensure that 'dead' frontages are not created which would impact detrimentally on the conservation area.
- Ensure that parking spaces which have eroded the definition of original plots and caused harm to the setting of the buildings and character of the conservation area should be removed; proposals for future parking in these locations will not be acceptable.

### Proposed Policy Approach and Reasons

- 10.5 The Policy OTC5 in the draft Oldham Local Plan outlines a strategic approach to managing vehicular parking and drop-off facilities in Oldham Town Centre. The policy emphasises efficiency, reduction of surface parking, appropriate use of land, and the promotion of short to medium stay parking. It also introduces criteria for evaluating proposals that seek to provide a net increase in off-street public car parking spaces not identified in the Parking Strategy.
- 10.6 Encouraging development proposals for car parking that replace, consolidate, or improve existing provision supports efficiency and optimisation of parking resources. This ensures that parking facilities are modernised and align with the evolving needs of the town centre. Managing town centre car parks in favour of short-stay parking is designed to cater to the needs of shoppers, visitors, and those engaging in short-duration activities. This approach supports the vibrancy of the retail and leisure areas.
- 10.7 Restricting long-stay car parking in the town centre and supporting it outside the centre where need is demonstrated ensures that parking spaces within the town centre are prioritised for short-term use, encouraging turnover and accessibility. Introducing criteria for a net increase in parking spaces not identified in the Parking Strategy ensures that any additional provision meets specific principles, promoting efficiency, high quality, and alignment with sustainable transport options.
- 10.8 Encouraging the efficient use of land and a significant reduction in surface parking aligns with urban design principles, promoting a more compact and pedestrian-friendly town centre. It aims to enhance the overall aesthetic and functionality of the area. Prohibiting the expansion or intensification of parking on sites identified for alternative uses as part of a regeneration initiative ensures that land allocated for such purposes is not diverted back to parking, supporting the broader goals of urban renewal and diversification.
- 10.9 Establishing clear criteria for new off-street car parking spaces ensures that any additions are well-planned, high-quality, and aligned with the town centre's objectives.

It emphasises the importance of accessibility, security, sustainability, and user-friendliness. Including provision for sustainable refuelling infrastructure, such as electric vehicle charging points, aligns with environmental goals and encourages the use of sustainable transport options within the town centre.

### Integrated Assessment

- 10.10 Policy OTC5 scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores. There were 17 neutral scored and 9 positive or significantly positive. There were no mitigation or enhancement measures identified. The policy was not screened in by the HRA.

## 11. Further Work and Next Steps

- 11.1 Following consultation on the Draft Local Plan, the council would review all representations received and consider whether any further changes should be made to the Our Centres and Oldham Town Centre policies.
- 11.2 Between the Draft Plan stage and Publication Plan stage further work may needed. In particular, the outcomes of the masterplanning carried out by Muse and the council will help shape and refine the Oldham Town Centre policies and others as appropriate, as we move forward in the preparation of the Local Plan.