

Oldham Safe & Active Schools

PROJECT SUMMARY



Oldham Council

ARUP



moreacher

A zebra crossing

Lot's of lights at Night.

More benches

Speed bumps on the road at the top!

School

Biking

More trees

Lollipop lady
Wait
Go!
turn around

more signs

Hall

Field

Park

Ramp for wheel cheer

1 I would like more shelter bus stops with more benches

2 More greenery and cycling paths and pedestrian paths

bus stop
bench

Not much cars

People happy
Greenery

3 Lighter lights

Light

I can see

A crossing for schools and bikes

The project

Arup was commissioned by Oldham Council to undertake an assessment of active travel around all schools in Oldham and develop a strategy for improving opportunities for pupils in Oldham to travel to school by walking, wheeling or cycling.

The assessment has been undertaken in support of the Oldham Transport Strategy (approved in January 2023).

The project sought to:

- Create a framework to analyse the active travel environment around schools in an efficient way
- Create and analyse a survey of parents and residents around the schools in Oldham to understand how they travel and any barriers to more walking, wheeling and cycling
- Undertake audits and workshops of 'typical' schools to inform a strategy for change
- Provide recommendations to make active travel to schools safer, easier and more attractive

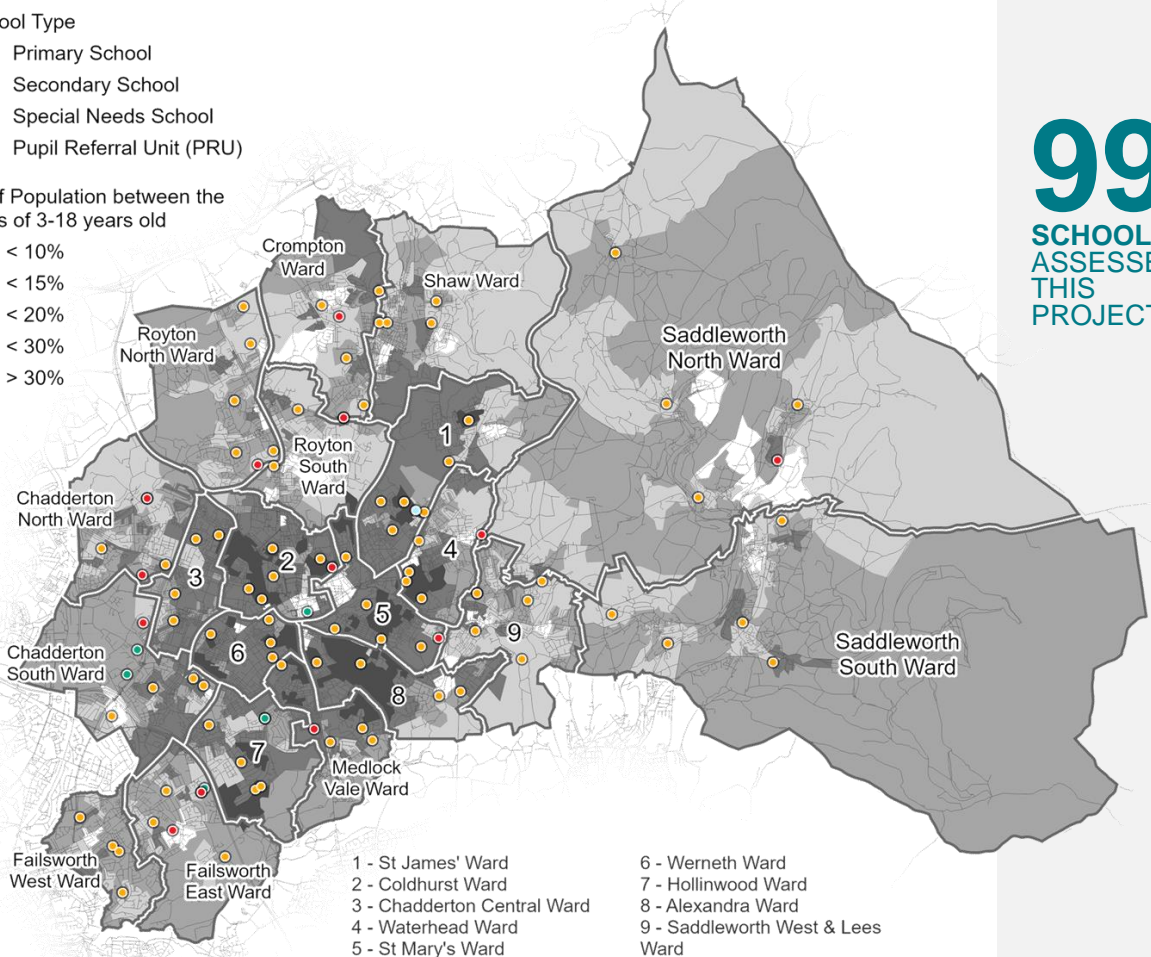
Oldham has a diverse geography with some wards being densely populated, urban and well-connected to the Greater Manchester public transport network including Metrolink. Other wards are made up of less dense, village settlements. This is reflected in the distribution of schools – with schools concentrated towards Oldham Town Centre, where population density is higher, and a larger proportion of this population is within school age.

School Type

- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Special Needs School
- Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

% of Population between the ages of 3-18 years old

- < 10%
- < 15%
- < 20%
- < 30%
- > 30%



- 1 - St James' Ward
- 2 - Coldhurst Ward
- 3 - Chadderton Central Ward
- 4 - Waterhead Ward
- 5 - St Mary's Ward
- 6 - Werneth Ward
- 7 - Hollinwood Ward
- 8 - Alexandra Ward
- 9 - Saddleworth West & Lees Ward

7
YEARS LEFT
TO REACH
NET ZERO
CARBON

20
THE NUMBER
OF WARDS IN
OLDHAM

30%
OF TRIPS
UNDER 1KM
MADE BY CAR
IN GM

99
SCHOOLS
ASSESSED IN
THIS
PROJECT

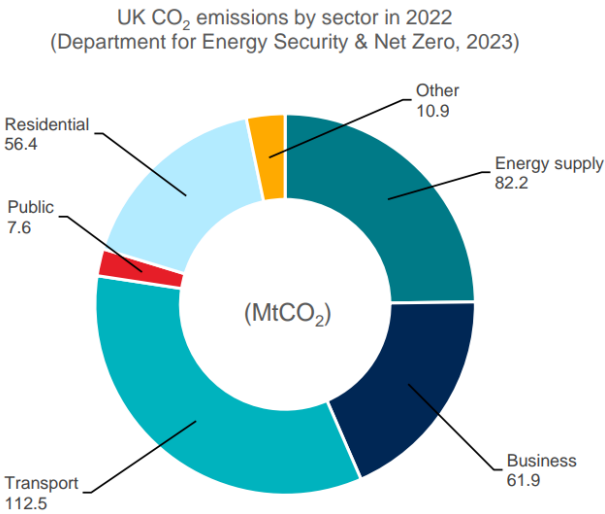
Why we need to act

Nationwide decline in active school journeys

Just half of primary school children walk to school in the UK today, despite most families living within two miles of their closest primary school. This is compared with 70% in the 1970s. The majority of pupils across the country go to school by car, making up 1 in 4 cars during morning rush hour. This has negative impacts for both the climate, and health & wellbeing.

The climate emergency

Climate change is now a critical emergency and is the primary reason why we need to act now to reduce car use. At the same time, we need to ensure the environment is biodiverse and resilient to more extreme events (e.g. flooding and heatwaves). This involves incorporating green infrastructure into where we live and work and trying to reduce the use of new materials in designs. Oldham is targeting carbon neutrality by 2030 as part of the Green New Deal Strategy. Achieving carbon neutrality will require extensive emissions reductions across all sectors, including transport.



Poor health outcomes for pupils and local communities

In Oldham, 42% of year 6 aged children are either overweight, or obese (England average of 38%). This trend continues into adulthood with 72% of adults in Oldham now classified as overweight or obese (England average of 64%). It is not just the physical health of Oldham residents that falls below the national average, there are also higher rates of depression

reported in Oldham.

Greater Manchester has significant air quality issues including Oldham where the air pollution levels were found to be 1.7 to 2 times higher than World Health Organization guidelines.

Rising collision rates

Over 1,700 people under the age of 25 have died on England's roads between 2012 and 2016. The largest numbers of child pedestrian injuries occur between 8am to 9am and 3pm to 7pm – coinciding with pick-up and drop-off times at school and after-school clubs. In these hours there are approximately 16 deaths or serious injuries to children aged 16 and under every week.

The National Police Chiefs Council have said that the enforcement of the Fatal 4 is a priority to reduce the numbers of people killed and seriously injured. The Fatal 4 are drink & drug driving, non-wearing of seatbelts, inappropriate speeds, and driving whilst distracted (e.g. use of a mobile device).

The opportunity for family-wide benefits

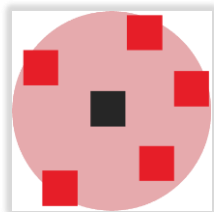
Active travel is not only better for our children compared to being driven to school, it can also be quality time spent together and can help to boost a child's concentration, imagination and creativity before the school day begins.

According to the National Travel Survey, 96% of primary school pupils are accompanied to school by an adult, and 57% of secondary school pupils. With so many parents accompanying their children to and from school, there is an excellent opportunity to improve both parents', and wider social health.



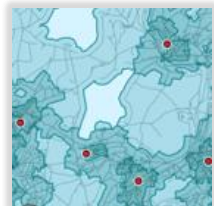
The approach

This page summarises the 7-step process used to identify and prioritise opportunities to improve safe and active travel to schools in Oldham. A typology-based approach was used to classify schools based on their similarities in terms of the influences of the urban realm on the safety and wider quality of existing routes to school. This enabled an assessment and prioritisation of interventions.



SCHOOL TYPOLOGIES

Schools were classified into typologies to enable an efficient approach to assessment and engagement and to help understand common themes. Each school was classified by urban/suburb/village, and then additional classifications were assigned as appropriate to reflect other key characteristics of schools relating to surrounding land-uses, pupil catchments and travel patterns.



SCHOOL ISOCHRONES

Walking and cycling isochrones were developed for all schools in Oldham. According to the National Transport Survey (NTS), the average length of an education trip is 4.2km, and distances up to 5km are generally considered feasible by active modes. Isochrones 500m to 5km were therefore used to assess routes to schools.



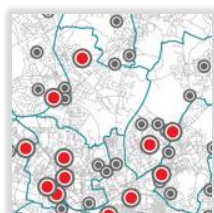
uMove ISOCHRONES

uMove (Arup's tool for estimating walking quality) helped to derive a baseline accessibility score for each school's 'active' catchment up to 5km. This helped to decide which schools to prioritise for more detailed investigation within the study.



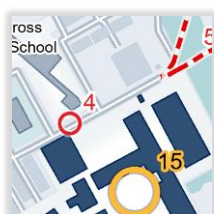
SOLUTION TYPES

A toolkit of potential interventions that can be implemented to improve the conditions for walking, wheeling, and cycling around schools was developed. The range of solutions were classified as contributing towards safety, access, or amenity. The full range can be viewed on page 5.



FOCUS SCHOOLS

Focus schools were selected for more detailed study and engagement (with a balance of wards, sizes, typologies, primary and secondary schools selected).



FOCUS SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS

For each focus school, a desktop audit was undertaken. This was followed by a detailed assessment of likely pupil routes to school based on where people live, as well as the inputs from parents and pupils from the survey. Additional insights from pupils were gathered from in-school workshops at selected schools. Plans were then developed to improve active travel around all of the focus schools.



ACTION PLANS

Based on the focus school audits and delivery plans, prioritised actions plans were created for each school typology. These can be used to apply the principles developed through the assessment of the focus schools to support the improvement of active travel around all schools across the borough.

Engagement

Parent, pupil and resident survey

An online survey was undertaken between June and August 2023. The survey was advertised to parents at schools across Oldham before summer 2023 school holidays. The survey was also shared by Oldham Council and Arup via social media.

Parents and local residents were asked:



How they are connected with the school (e.g. parent, pupil, local resident)



How they usually travel to school



To rate characteristics of their journey that support walking wheeling and cycling



To map any barriers to active travel to school

Overall, there were **252 respondents**. Whilst these participants represent a diverse mix of Oldham's population, some themes relating to the respondents have been identified:

- Highest engagement was from parents of primary school aged children;
- The majority of respondents were female (83%);
- Approximately 24% of respondents identified as having a long-term health condition which impacts their ability to walk, wheel or cycle.

Common responses

The four key factors that would help survey respondents choose active travel mode more to travel to schools were:

- improved crossing points;
- reduced pavement parking;
- dedicated routes; and
- lower traffic volumes.

There was a marked difference in 'why respondents use their current travel mode to get to school' by age. Among school aged children and older age groups, enjoyment was

the largest factor, whereas for the age groups between 25-54, more pragmatic reasons were more prevalent such as speed, reliability and stress. The environmental impact and health & fitness factors of their chosen mode also featured more strongly within these age groups.

School workshops

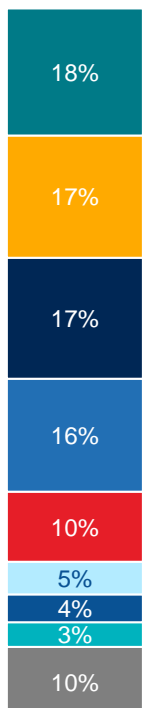
School workshops were held at four of the focus schools: Oasis Academy Leesbrook, Blue Coat CofE Primary School, The Saddleworth School and Christ Church CofE Primary School.

Although pupils and staff reported many location-specific challenges, there were also many common concerns and thoughts:

- The majority of pupils enjoy active travel to school, and cited spending time with friends as a highlight;
- Many secondary school pupils who now travel by car/public transport said they preferred their journey to primary school, which they predominately walked;
- Dangerous crossings, or a lack of crossings on the immediate roads around schools was the most common concern along with drivers speeding, particularly on fast rural roads around village schools;
- Many complained about poor quality bus stops (waiting areas, lack of real-time information);
- In village schools, overgrown bushes on paths was stated to be a barrier for pupils.

Survey results: What would enable more active travel?

- Improved Crossing Points: 109
- Less Pavement Parking: 105
- Dedicated Routes: 104
- Quieter Roads: 97
- Slower Traffic: 60
- Local Activities: 28
- Placemaking: 24
- Cycle Scooter Parking: 21
- Other: 60



Solutions for safe and active schools

SAFETY 

ACCESS 

AMENITY 

Toolkit of measures

A range of evidence-based interventions to support a safer, more accessible and pleasant environment for walking, wheeling, and cycling to school have been identified. The interventions required varies by school typology and individual school, but the below are broadly the ingredients for a safe and active school community.



20mph Zones



Crossings



School Streets



Traffic reduction



Pedestrian design



Education & training



Seating



Parking policy



Wayfinding



Clutter removal



Entry points



Inclusive design



Cycle parking



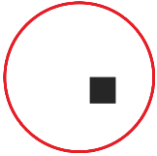
Pocket parks



Green Infrastructure

Key findings

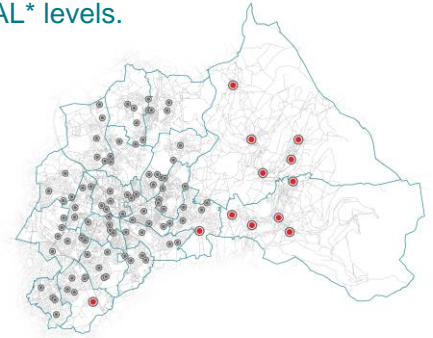
All schools were classified according to the following typologies. This was done to ensure engagement and site visits encompassed the full spectrum of schools and recommendations could be made that would be applicable to the others in the typology. Each school was marked as either Village, Suburb or Urban, with many also having a secondary typology.



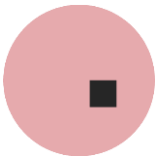
VILLAGE SCHOOLS: Schools in more semi-urban areas/commuter villages, lower population densities and lower GMAL* levels.

Priorities include

- **Pedestrian design** (as there are often limited and more constrained options for LTN 1/20 cycle infrastructure)
- **Traffic-free routes** (e.g. upgrading existing Public Rights of Way)
- **20mph Zones** (to mediate the higher speed roads in rural areas near schools)
- **Park-and-Strides** (due to the longer distances often experienced between home and school)



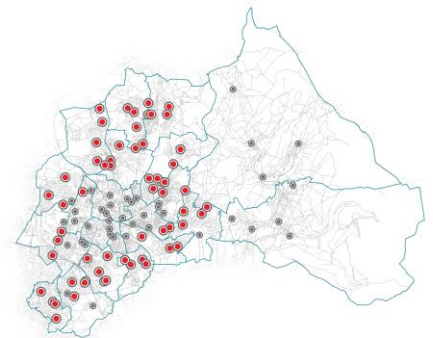
Case study schools:
Christ Church CofE Primary School
The Saddleworth School



SUBURB SCHOOLS: Schools beyond central Oldham intermediate population densities and GMAL levels

Priorities include:

- **Traffic reduction** (traffic levels are often relatively high despite the relatively good public transport/GMAL levels)
- **Junction improvements** (suburban school routes often require pupils to tackle challenging junctions on busy roads)
- **Parking policy** (in some cases there is a high degree of pavement parking, despite a higher prevalence of driveways and garages compared with urban settings)



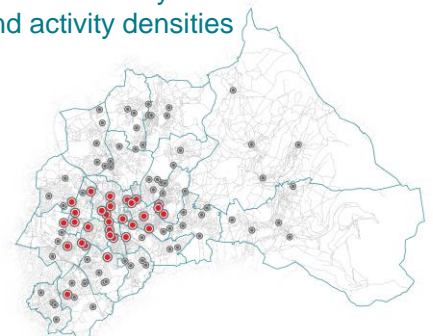
Case study schools:
Littlemoor Primary School
Co-op Academy Failsworth
Buckstones Primary School



URBAN SCHOOLS: Schools within central Oldham. These may have higher GMAL levels and higher population and activity densities

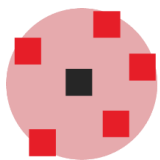
Priorities include:

- **Traffic reduction** (traffic volumes are high in some urban areas despite short distances between points of interest and proximity to public transport)
- **Crossings** (crossings at desire lines are required to ensure points of interest can be reached safely, and trip-chaining on school journeys can occur)
- **20mph Zones** (ensuring there are alternatives to arterial roads with 30mph+ speed limits).



Case study schools:
Richmond Academy
Northmoor Academy

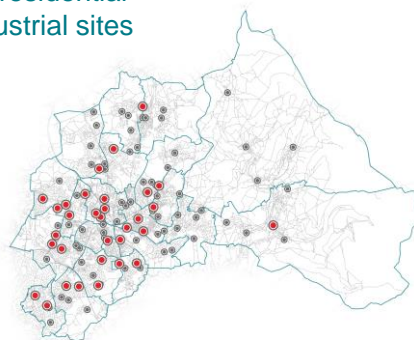
***Greater Manchester Accessibility Level (GMAL)** is a measure of the accessibility to the public transport taking into account walk access time and service availability.



COLLABORATIVE SCHOOLS: Schools with non-residential neighbours including hospitals, business, and industrial sites

Priorities include

- **Junction improvements** (often close to motorway/primary road junctions with many cars, vans, buses HGVs and/or ambulances serving the 'collaborative' attractor)
- **Wayfinding** (concentration of nearby trip attractors increases the likelihood of trip-chaining if well signposted)
- **Traffic reduction**



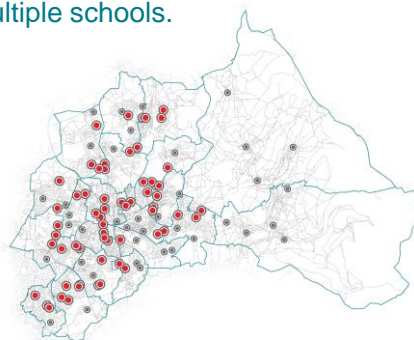
Case study school:
St Hilda's C of E Primary School



CLUSTER SCHOOLS: Schools in close proximity to each other, where any changes are likely to impact/benefit multiple schools.

Priorities include:

- **School zones rather than a single School Street** (as a School Street could shift traffic/anti-social parking from outside one school to another)
- **20mph Zones** which will benefit several schools.
- **Safe routes** (these will benefit multiple schools, maximising the impact and value of the investment)



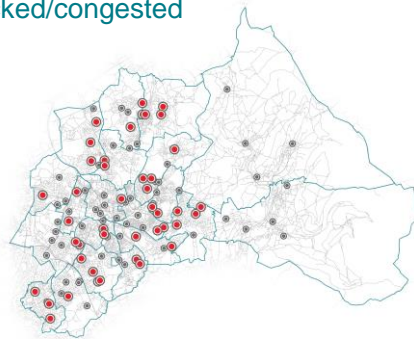
Case study school:
Oasis Academy Leesbrook



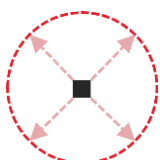
NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOLS: Schools away from major roads within residential areas that are less heavily trafficked/congested

Priorities include:

- **Junction improvements** (despite the routes using residential roads, dangerous junctions can put pupils and parents off walking and cycling)
- **Parking policy** (in some cases there is a high degree of pavement parking even on streets with garages and/or driveways)



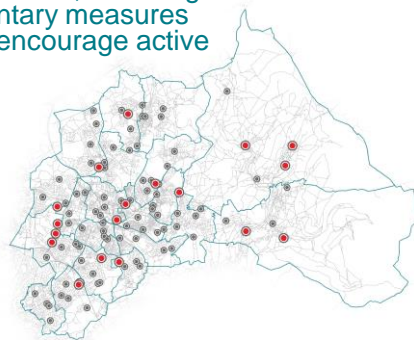
Case study schools:
Springhead Infant And Nursery School
Thomas CofE Primary School



DISTANCE SCHOOLS: Schools with wider catchments, including some faith schools, which may require complementary measures such as 'park-and-stride' and multi-modal trips to encourage active travel.

Priorities include:

- **Safe, marked, 20mph routes from public transport stops**
- **Park and stride** (to integrate some level of physical activity when there is no suitable public transport option)

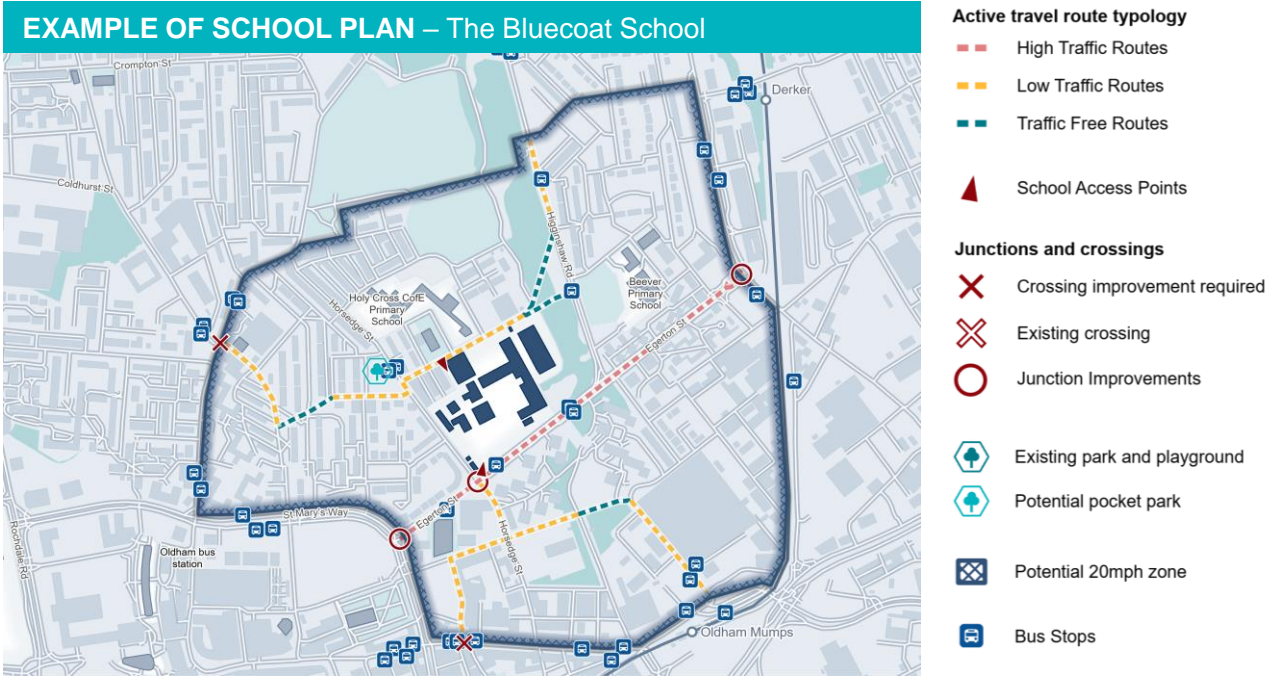


Case study school:
The Blue Coat School

Next steps and recommendations

Oldham Council will now use this report and evidence base to support a programme of improvements across schools in Oldham. This will require cross-departmental collaboration to pool budgets and resources related to placemaking, high-quality active travel infrastructure, highways safety improvements, and School Streets.

For all of the focus/case study schools, audits have been shared with Oldham Council which show a plan for targeted improvements.



The typology-based approach means the priority interventions can be explored for schools beyond those selected as focus schools according to the prioritisation framework.

PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

	Urban	Suburb	Village	Neighbourhood	Collaborative	Distance	Cluster
Priority for all schools							
Priority for many schools							
Complementary							
Routes and junctions							
Crossings							
20mph Zones							
School Streets							
Traffic reduction							
Pedestrian design							
Education & training							
Seating							
Parking policy							
Cycle parking							
Inclusive design							
Wayfinding							
Clutter removal							
Entry points							
Green infrastructure							
Pocket parks / parklets							
Park and Stride							



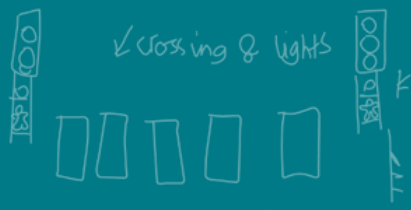
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A zebra crossing



Speed bumps on the road at the top



Lollypop lady turn around



Ramp for wheel chair



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2. more greenery and cycling paths and pedestrian paths



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A crossing for schools and bikes

more trees



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