

Oldham Local Plan

Publication Plan: Our Centres Topic Paper

January 2026



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1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1. This is the Our Centres Topic Paper and is one of 13 topic papers produced to inform the consultation on the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan.
- 1.2. All Topic Papers can be found online at [Oldham Council's website¹](#).
- 1.3. The main purpose of the Topic Paper is to set out:
 - the current key policies, plans and strategies relating to centres that have informed the Local Plan;
 - the main issues, challenges and opportunities relating to centres that we face in Oldham, underpinned by proportionate and relevant evidence;
 - how policies within the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan have been shaped, having regard to:
 - the key issues, challenges and opportunities facing the borough in relation to centres;
 - responses received as part of the Oldham Local Plan: Draft Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate discussions;
 - the outcomes of the Integrated Assessment, including any requirements of the Habitat Regulations Assessment; and
 - how, with these policies, the Plan sets out an appropriate strategy that is based on proportionate evidence.
- 1.4. The Setting the Scene Topic Paper sets out the context for the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan, its purpose and how it relates to the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document.
- 1.5. The Topic Papers therefore support and complement the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan, demonstrating how policy choices have been informed, providing transparency around decision-making, and assisting those viewing the plan and the examining Inspector in understanding the rationale behind the Plan's content.

¹ These documents can be found at: https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201233/local_plan_review

2. Relevant Policies, Plans and Strategies

2.1. This section sets out the main policies, plans and strategies that relate to centres and which have informed the policy approach taken.

National Context

National Planning Policy Framework

2.2 [National Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#)² (NPPF, December 2024, as amended in February 2025) 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, reintroduce 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 goes on to outline 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

National Planning Policy Guidance Town Centres and Retail

2.5 This [planning practice guidance](#)³ (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

² This document can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf

³ This document can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres>

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 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.

Pride in Place Strategy

- 2.10 The [Pride in Place Strategy](#)⁴ sets out to revitalise communities and create a greater sense of place and empowerment for local people/ neighborhoods across the country.
- 2.11 The Strategy will:
 - Put power in the hands of communities to shape the future of their area.
 - Help create thriving places.
 - Embed clearer policies on managing town centre uses in England.
 - Implement reforms to the compulsory purchase process and land compensation rules for high street regeneration.
 - Empower local authorities to block the development of new hot food takeaways and fast-food outlets.

⁴ This document can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pride-in-place-strategy>

Greater Manchester Context

Greater Manchester Strategy

2.12 [The Greater Manchester Strategy⁵](#) published in July 2025 sets out a vision for the next decade is to see a thriving city region where everyone can live a good life. The strategy contains seven workstreams which, together, will fix the foundations in life, make Greater Manchester a greener and more equal city region, help grow our economy and make sure everyone can live well.

2.13 Workstream six is, 'A great place to do business', and within this workstream the strategy discusses how creativity will be at the heart of our vibrant and distinctive town and city centres and develop opportunities for Greater Manchester's creative people and businesses to share stories and products with the world. It discusses how the night-time economy will be invested in and how our visitor economy will continue to provide inspiration and a sense of belonging for residents, visitors, and businesses.

Places for Everyone (PfE)

2.14 [Place for Everyone⁶](#) (PfE) Joint Development Plan Document (DPD), is a strategic plan that covers nine of the ten Greater Manchester districts - Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. The Plan took effect and became part of the statutory development plan for each of the nine PfE authorities on 21 March 2024.

2.15 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' outlines minimum densities new housing development should achieve. In relation to the centres it states that within designated town centres the minimum net residential density should be 120dph, sites within 400m of designated town centres the minimum net residential density should be 70dph and sites within 800m of designated town centres the minimum net residential density should be 50dph.

Policy JP-P3: Cultural Facilities states that through PfE 'we will proactively develop and support cultural businesses and attractions in our cities and towns through a range of measures, where appropriate'. The list of measures includes supporting new cultural venues in town centres, stimulating vibrancy and vitality and promoting diversity in town centres and considering the identification of 'Creative Improvement

⁵ This document can be found at: <https://togetherwearegm.co.uk/media/k1kftjiv/greater-manchester-strategy-2025-35-screen-reader.pdf>

⁶ This document can be found at: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/strategic-planning/places-for-everyone/pfe-adoption/>

Districts' where there is evidence it will enhance the local economy and provide facilities and workspace for the creative industries.

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 9.23 outlines the challenges facing our town centres with the growth of online retailing forecast to continue rising.

2.16 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.

Local Context

2.17 A summary of the Oldham Partnership's Oldham Plan and the council's Corporate Plan and how the Local Plan will help to deliver their missions and priorities is provided in the Setting the Scene Topic Paper. The sections below mainly focus on those parts of the plans relevant to the centres theme.

The Oldham Plan

2.18 [The Oldham Plan 2024-2030, Pride, Progress and Partnership](#)⁷ sets out three clear missions to achieve by 2030 to deliver real improvements to the lives of Oldham people, Great Place to Live Healthier, Happier Lives and Green and Growing.

2.19 Green and Growing and Great Place to live are the most relevant missions for this topic paper.

2.20 Green and Growing is about making Oldham a place where economic growth benefits all residents, creating opportunities for businesses to succeed while ensuring our community and environment thrive. One of the objectives relevant to this topic paper is for our town centres and high streets to be lively places where people want to visit and shop.

2.21 Great Place to Live is focussed on providing more affordable, quality homes, improving public spaces, and creating a strong local economy with vibrant communities that get on well. One of the objectives relevant to this topic paper is around ensuring everyone will the chance to enjoy great arts and culture in Oldham.

Oldham Council Corporate Plan

2.22 [Oldham Council's Corporate Plan \(2024-2027\), Ready for the Future](#)⁸, builds on the Oldham Plan and is focused on the same three goals – Healthier, Happier Lives, Great Place to Live and Green and Growing. The aim is that by fostering innovation, investing in people, and supporting our communities, we'll ensure Oldham remains a place where everyone can thrive. With strong leadership, commitment to our values, and ongoing improvement, we're ready to adapt to the changes in local government.

⁷ This document can be found at:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201261/oldham_plan/3207/oldham_plan

⁸ This document can be found at:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200146/strategies_plans_and_policies/2888/corporate_plan

2.23 There are four main focus areas that guide this plan and will help to achieve the goals:

- Efficiency and value for money
- Capacity building
- Digital
- Prevention and early help

2.24 Relevant to this centres topic paper, the Plan sets out that, by 2027:

- We will deliver a new neighbourhood of 2,000 homes at the heart of Oldham town centre;
- A new events space, and new market is to be created as part of the Spindles redevelopment;
- The re-opened Oldham Coliseum at Fairbottom Street theatre will be an anchor for the arts, creating a new, more sustainable model for culture and theatre in Oldham;
- We will invest in our green spaces by completing our new town centre park; and
- There will be a revitalised and vibrant night-time economy that caters for residents and visitors alike.

Building a Better Oldham

2.25 [Building a Better Oldham](#)⁹ is the Council's ambitious transformation programme for the borough. 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.

2.26 The vision of the programme is to create a town centre with character, with thousands of new homes and an emphasis on sustainability, community and quality – an inclusive and welcoming place to live and spend time in. A town centre that acknowledges Oldham's industrial heritage while looking towards a bright, modern future. With homes built in a safer and healthier environment and where we prioritise local jobs and learning opportunities for Oldham residents.

2.27 The key proposals set out in the [Oldham Town Centre Development Framework](#)¹⁰ 2024 are:

- The introduction of up to 2,000 new homes located within safe, inclusive and attractive neighbourhoods.
- The redevelopment of Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre to redefine the retail core.
- The Green Shoots Business and Innovation Centre, and Minewater District Heat Network Energy Centre, which form part of the Council's Greener Oldham commitment.
- The re-use and refurbishment of several prominent heritage assets, specifically the Prudential Building, the Old Library and Gallery, and the Lyceum Building.

⁹ More information can be found here:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201248/building_a_better_oldham

¹⁰ This document can be found at: <https://oldhamtownliving.co.uk/vision/>

- Enhancing accessibility, connectivity and movement, providing sustainable infrastructure connections through the Accessible Oldham programme.
- The enhancement of the town centre's Green Infrastructure with the creation of Tommyfield Park and Snipe Gardens.
- Upgrading the night-time and creative economy, to make the town centre a destination of choice.

Oldham Retail and Leisure Study (Santec, 2020)

2.24 A Retail and Leisure Study¹¹ was completed in September 2020 by Santec. The report provided an assessment of retail and leisure needs in Oldham. 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 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.

2.25 The conclusions and findings of the Retail and Leisure Study are discussed in Sections 3 and 4.

¹¹ This document can be found at:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1157/retail_and_leisure_study

Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) (Oldham Council, 2019)

- 2.26 The Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan¹² (CAAMP) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in August 2019.
- 2.27 The appraisal and management plan was a high priority due to the conservation area being "at risk". The SPD proposed four extensions to the conservation area, which have been designated under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and are reflected on the policies map. A plan showing these extensions can be found in Appendix 3 of the Publication Plan.
- 2.28 The Management Plan sets out policies and recommendations around enhancement, regeneration and community engagement.

Oldham Cultural Strategy 2022 – 2030 (2022, Oldham Council)

- 2.29 The Oldham Cultural Strategy¹³ aims to boost creativity and culture within Oldham to ensure that arts, culture and heritage are at the forefront of the long-term vision for the borough.
- 2.30 The strategy also sets out key aims to do this which focus on accessibility, inclusivity, affordability, collaboration, and sustainability.

Oldham's Green Infrastructure Strategy (2022, TEP)

- 2.31 To support Local Plan evidence, Oldham's Green Infrastructure Strategy¹⁴ was commissioned and published in 2022. The Oldham Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out a vision that:

"By 2037, Oldham will be a carbon neutral exemplar with a resilient, multifunctional Green Infrastructure network which brings multiple benefits to the natural and built environment and provides a solid foundation for the Council's response to climate change. Oldham will be a greener and healthier place to live, work and visit."
- 2.32 The strategy sets out seven priorities themes:

- Thriving Wildlife
- Carbon Neutral Oldham
- Healthy and Active Communities
- Green Access for All
- Distinctive Landscapes
- Slowing the Flow and Water Quality
- Sustainable Growth and Green Jobs

¹² This document 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

¹³ This document can be found at:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/100009/leisure_and_culture/2817/oldham_cultural_strategy_2022_-2030

¹⁴ This document can be found at:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2183/oldham_green_infrastructure_strategy

- 2.33 The strategy sets out opportunities for wildlife in each district across the borough informed by an analysis of need.
- 2.34 How this strategy has been considered as part of the centres policies is set out in Section 3.

3. Issues, challenges and opportunities relating to Our Centres

3.1 This section summarises the main issues, challenges and opportunities relating to Centres that we face in Oldham, underpinned by proportionate and relevant evidence.

Regeneration of Oldham Town Centre

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

3.2 As set out in Section 2, a Retail and Leisure Study was completed in September 2020 by Santec. The report provided an assessment of retail and leisure needs in Oldham and has helped to inform the new retail and town centres policies. A health check for Oldham Town Centre was carried out and 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

3.3 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 categories¹⁵. 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.

3.4 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.

3.5 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.

3.6 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 is 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

¹⁵ 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.

- 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.

Support the borough's other centres to thrive

There is the need to support our other centres to help them thrive.

3.7 As set out in Section 2, a Retail and Leisure Study was completed in September 2020 by Santec. The report provided an assessment of retail and leisure needs in Oldham and has helped to inform the new retail and town centres policies. Health checks for each of the centres were carried out and 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.

Shaw District Centre

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

3.9 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

3.10 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.

3.11 Commercial retail rents are comparable to other district centres in Oldham Borough and the centre is easily accessible by car.

Uppermill District Centre

3.12 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

3.13 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

3.14 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.

3.15 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

3.9 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

3.15 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.

Remove Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area from the Heritage at risk register

There is a need to implement the Oldham Town Centre CAAMP SPD.

3.16 The [Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan](#) (CAAMP) Supplementary Planning Document was adopted in August 2019 for Oldham Town Centre.

3.17 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.

3.18 The appraisal proposes four extensions to the existing Oldham Town Centre conservation area boundary as shown in Figure 1. The extensions have been designated under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and are treated as a material planning consideration until formally adopted through the Local Plan review process. The amended Oldham Town Centre conservation area boundary will be shown on the policies map.

Figure 1: Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Boundary and Proposed Extensions



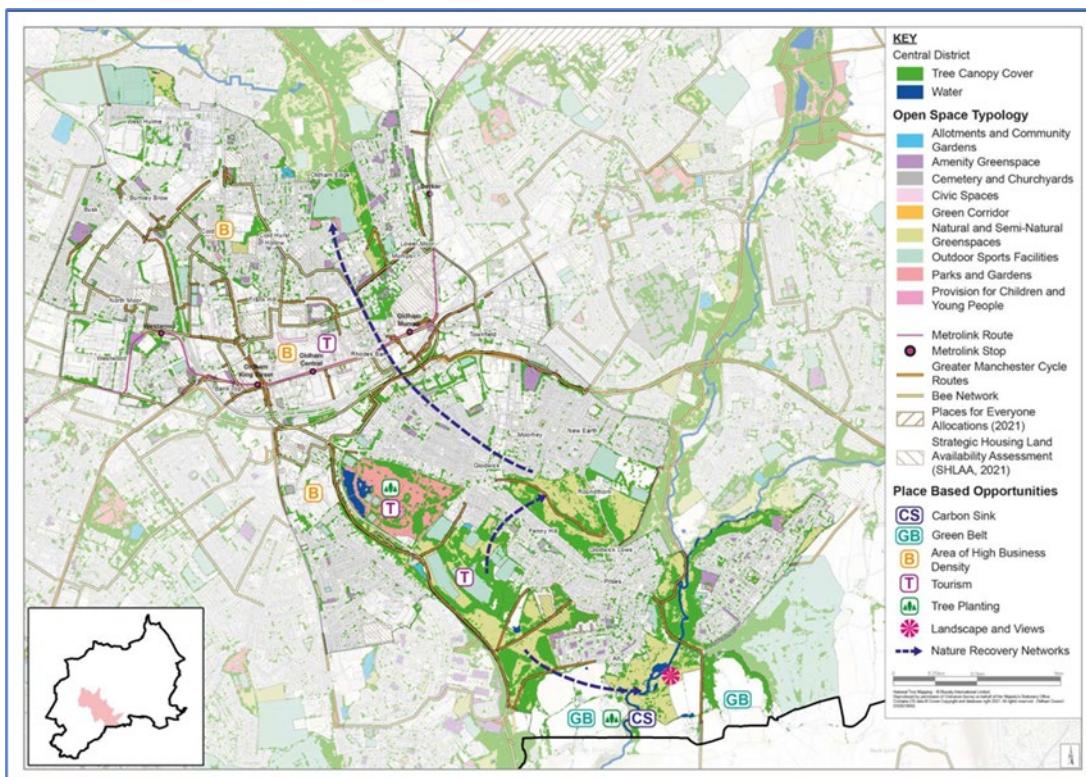
3.19 The Management Plan followed on from the appraisal of the conservation area. It sets out policies and recommendations around enhancement, regeneration and community engagement of the conservation area.

Creating Green Infrastructure within Oldham Town Centre

3.20 The Oldham Green Infrastructure Strategy (2022) identifies that Oldham Town Centre has virtually no open space and or other types of green infrastructure which is typically limited to mown grass and ornamental trees. The Oldham Way is also a major section of road infrastructure that creates severance in terms of movement from the town centre to the south and west.

3.21 The Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies place-based opportunities for the various districts across the plan area. The Central District Green Infrastructure Opportunity Map is shown below.

Figure 2: Green Infrastructure Opportunity Map for Central District



3.22 The Oldham Town Centre Development Framework identifies enhancing the town centre's green infrastructure and its connections to the surrounding area, as a key priority and opportunity. The framework sets out a series of strategic objectives for the town centre, many with implications for green infrastructure, and which include:

- Supporting bespoke Town Centre Green Infrastructure principles which align with Oldham's Green Infrastructure Strategy;
- Connecting Oldham Edge in the North with Northern Roots / Alexandra Park in the South through a series of 'stepping stones';
- Providing sustainable drainage solutions, including through multi-functional green infrastructure, as part of new development.

3.23 The [Local Nature Recovery Strategy¹⁶](#) (LNRS) (September 2025) identifies a nature network including opportunity areas which include parts of Oldham Town Centre. Mapped actions identified include:

- Woodland - Bigger and better-connected woodlands, trees and scrub, integrated with patchworks of other habitats;

¹⁶ This document can be found at: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/our-plan-for-nature-recovery/what-does-our-plan-for-nature-cover/>

- Woodland - Enhance existing woodlands, scrub, and hedgerows through positive management, diversify them and increase their resilience to pests, disease and climate change;
- Upland - Encourage the restoration and regeneration of existing upland woodlands and clough woodlands; and
- Upland - Create transitional habitats or corridors to increase linkage between our uplands and lowland habitats, where conditions allow.

3.24 Outside of the mapped actions the LNRS also identifies actions for urban green spaces and buildings acknowledging that outside the nature network areas are equally as important for pursuing nature recovery.

4. Our Centres and the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan

- 4.1. This section of the Topic Paper looks at each of the policies contained in the Our Centres and Oldham Town Centre chapters of the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan.
- 4.2. For each policy the Topic Paper shows how policies within the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan have been shaped to provide an appropriate strategy for the borough that is based on proportionate evidence and having regard to:
 - The key issues, challenges and opportunities facing the borough in relation to centres;
 - Responses received as part of the Oldham Local Plan: Draft Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate discussions; and
 - The outcomes of the Integrated Assessment, including any requirements of the Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Policy C1: Our Centres

Summary of evidence

- 4.3. The Retail and Leisure Study (2020) set out in section 9.5 that an appropriate retail hierarchy for Oldham was:
 - Oldham Town Centre;
 - The centres of Chadderton, Failsworth, Hill Stores, Lees, Royton, Shaw and Uppermill; and
 - Local shopping parades.
- 4.4. It went on to say that whilst our other centres vary in terms of their size and the issues that they face, they all individually perform a range of functions that distinguish them from other, smaller centres within the borough. In relation to the other centres the Retail and Leisure Study also stated that the borough's other centres should continue to provide day-to-day retail and service facilities to its residents, whilst supporting independent operators through a difficult period in the retail sector.
- 4.5. The Retail and Leisure Study also concluded that 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 was recommended that this is focused in Oldham Town Centre.
- 4.6. The boundaries of Oldham Town Centre and the borough's other centres were reviewed with an amendment to Lees proposed to incorporate the foodstore.

Draft Local Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate

- 4.7. At Draft Plan stage some amendments were requested and more general comments made in relation to Policy C1. These are summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of comments received and the Council's response to Policy C1 Our Centres

Respondent	Summary of Comment	Council Response
Historic England	Support this policy	N/A
Sally Hulse	Support the policy. Need to ensure our centres do not turn into boarded up/ take away heavy areas, we need a mix of businesses for residents and visitors, must try to encourage a mixture of new business and community uses.	No amendment made. The Publication Local Plan provides a positive approach to the growth and management of our centres measures have been included for maintaining the vitality and viability of our centres.
Savills on behalf of Brookhouse	Request that the council amend the existing Oldham Town Centre boundary to extend it south to include Alexandra Retail Park.	It is considered that Alexandra Retail Park performs more of an 'edge-of centre' function. The boundary for Oldham Town Centre has instead been amended to reflect the Building a Better Oldham programme which is a positive strategy for Oldham Town Centre. This does not include Alexandra Retail Park. No amendment made.
Savills on behalf of Brookhouse	No further comments from those submitted at Issues and Options stage in relation to the centre of Failsworth	N/A
National Highways	This policy is in line with DfT Circular 01/2022 as it enables individual centres to become self-sufficient and rely less on longer distance travel for general purposes.	N/A
Savills on behalf of Asda	Asda in Shaw should form part of Shaw Centre given the importance it was given in the Retail and Leisure Study.	The boundary of the centre of Shaw has been assessed and amended to incorporate Asda. in the Publication Local Plan.
Oldham Liberal Democrats Group	District Centres are falling into disrepair, and they need to be revitalised, alongside Oldham Town Centre with the provision of community services in mind. Family hubs should be made available in all districts.	No amendment made. The Publication Local Plan provides a positive approach to the growth and management of our centres measures have been included for maintaining the vitality and viability of our centres.
TfGM	Support this policy.	N/A

- 4.8. A detailed summary of the responses received can be found at 'Schedule of Comments and the Council's Response' document.
- 4.9. The policy was not identified as a strategic issue at any Duty to Co-operate meetings or discussions although comments submitted were discussed at meetings

with Historic England on July 1st, 2025, and National Highways and TfGM on 9th July 2025.

Policy Approach

- 4.10. As the evidence and policy context has shown we need to support the role that our centres play at the heart of local communities and we need to take a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Policy C1, Our Centres, focuses on the important role that Oldham's centres play in meeting the varied needs of people of all ages, through the provision of a range of shops, services, community, leisure and employment opportunities, and public transport options. It explains that a key aim of the Local Plan is to promote and enhance the vitality and viability of the borough's centres, to ensure their long-term success and it does this by setting out a clear centres hierarchy for the borough.
- 4.11. The Reasoned Justification reiterates the important role Oldham's centres play in meeting the varied needs of people of all ages, through the provision of a range of shops, services, community, leisure and employment opportunities, and public transport options and links back to some of the findings of the Retail and Leisure Study.
- 4.12. Policy C1 has been amended since Draft Local Plan Stage to include Local Shopping Parades in the hierarchy to better reflect the recommendations of the Retail and Leisure Study and in acknowledgement of how they contribute towards vibrant communities by providing convenient facilities near people's homes, reducing the need to travel and providing a valuable service for less mobile members of the community.
- 4.13. The Local Shopping Parades were identified through site visits, officer knowledge and a desktop analysis of the borough. They are generally units of local services and facilities that are grouped four or more together in a row, though there are some exceptions where it was felt the cluster was still providing a grouping of convenient units. Appendix 5 of the Publication Plan contains plans of the Local Shopping Parades.

Integrated Assessment

- 4.14. Policy C1 scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores in the Integrated Assessment. Some effects were cross boundary, but the majority were local. No mitigation or enhancements to the policy were required as a result of the IA.
- 4.15. In terms of the HRA the policy has been screened out, there is no likely significant effect on any European Site anticipated from the operation of this Policy.

Policy C2: Protecting the vitality of our centres

Summary of evidence

- 4.16. One of the purposes of the Retail and Leisure Study was 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.
- 4.17. The study concluded that the NPPF minimum threshold of 2,500 sqm gross was inappropriate as a blanket threshold across Oldham and that retail development smaller than 2,500 sqm gross could have a significant adverse impact, on centres within the borough. Therefore, to protect the vitality of our centres a reduced threshold was recommended.
- 4.18. 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 of that into account the study recommended, in section 9.7, 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.

Draft Local Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate

- 4.19. At Draft Plan stage the policy was referred to as 'Policy C3 Retail and Leisure Impact Assessments and Sequential Tests'. The policy received some support in regard to how it will reduce the need to travel by car from TfGM.
- 4.20. There was one objection to the thresholds proposed stating that there is not enough evidence to include thresholds lower than the nationally set thresholds and that they would serve as a barrier to the delivery of physical retail development that is appropriate within the Oldham area. However, it was considered that the Retail and Leisure Study provides the evidence needed to justify the thresholds within the policy and that the thresholds set will protect the vitality and viability of our centres.
- 4.21. The policy was not identified as a strategic issue at any Duty to Co-operate meetings or discussions, although comments submitted by TfGM were discussed at a meeting with them on 9th July 2025.
- 4.22. A detailed summary of the responses received can be found at 'Schedule of Comments and the Council's Response' document.

Policy Approach

- 4.23. As set out in the evidence it is considered that a reduced local impact floorspace threshold for assessing retail and leisure applications outside the borough's centres be taken in Oldham to protect the vitality of our centres.
- 4.24. Policy C2 sets this approach out this approach to impact assessments and goes on to explain that the sequential approach should be carried out in line with NPPF. The Reasoned Justification explains the relevant recommendations from the Retail and Leisure Study and clarifies some details around impact testing.

- 4.25. Policy C2, Protecting the vitality of our centres, focuses on ensuring that our centres remain the heart of our communities, and it does that by ensuring that centres uses (as defined in NPPF) are located within our centres, unless they are of a small scale.
- 4.26. Since Draft Local Plan consultation, the only change of note was that the name and number of the policy has changed.

Integrated Assessment

- 4.27. Policy C2 scored many neutrals in the Integrated Assessment due to the specific and technical nature of the policy. In addition, there were also a mixture of positives and significantly positive scores. Some effects were cross boundary, but the majority were local. No mitigation or enhancements to the policy were required as a result of the IA.
- 4.28. In terms of the HRA the policy has been screened out, there is no likely significant effect on any European Site anticipated from the operation of this Policy.

Policy C3: Changes of use and redevelopment within the borough's centres

Summary of evidence

- 4.29. NPPF states that planning policies should help centres grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters. This policy aims to help implement this by ensuring that our centres have a strong retail function, complemented by a broad range of other services and facilities as well as new homes.
- 4.30. The Use Classes Order was amended in 2020 and now allows much greater flexibility with the introduction of a new use class, Class E (Commercial, Business and Service). 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. This gives a greater degree of flexibility; however, some uses could potentially undermine the role and function of our centres and therefore proposals for the change of use and redevelopment within our centres should be managed.

Draft Local Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate

- 4.31. At Draft Plan stage the policy was referred to as Policy C4. The policy received comments from TfGM and National Highways in relation to how it will reduce the need to travel by car and reduce the number of trips on the Strategic Road Network.
- 4.32. The policy was not identified as a strategic issue at any Duty to Co-operate meetings or discussions although comments submitted were discussed at a meeting with TfGM and National Highways on 9th July 2025.
- 4.33. A detailed summary of the responses received can be found at 'Schedule of Comments and the Council's Response' document.

Policy Approach

- 4.34. As the evidence and policy context has shown, 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.
- 4.35. Policy C3 Changes of use and redevelopment within the borough's centres, is focussed on the need to retain a strong retail function in our centres complemented by a broad range of other services and facilities, including leisure, community uses and new homes.
- 4.36. The policy will encourage uses that support rather than detract from the successful functioning of the centres and their ability to meet local needs. The policy goes on to say that within our centres, proposals for uses that do not fall within NPPF's definition of main town centre uses, such as hot food takeaways, payday loan shops and gambling uses will only be supported if certain criteria is met. The policy also supports the provision of homes in our centres, though for ground floor residential development there are criteria that the applicant is required to demonstrate in order for it to be permitted.

4.37. Since the Draft Local Plan consultation, some minor changes were made including to the number of the policy. It has changed from Policy C4 to Policy C3. In addition, a cross reference was added in relation to Policy LE1 for clarity. There were also some amendments to the terminology used such as the removal of the word *suis generis* as it was not considered to be plain English.

Integrated Assessment

4.38. Policy C3 scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores in the Integrated Assessment. Some effects were cross boundary, but the majority were local. No mitigation or enhancements to the policy were required as a result of the IA.

4.39. In terms of the HRA the policy has been screened out, there is no likely significant effect on any European Site anticipated from the operation of this Policy.

Policy C4: Local Services and Facilities

Summary of evidence

- 4.40. NPPF states that planning policies should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
- 4.41. Local services and facilities represent convenient facilities that 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.

Draft Local Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate

- 4.42. At Draft Plan stage the policy was referred to as Policy C2. The policy received support from TfGM in relation to how it will reduce the need to travel by car and support from two other individuals.
- 4.43. The policy was not identified as a strategic issue at any Duty to Co-operate meetings or discussions, although comments submitted by TfGM were discussed at a meeting with them on 9th July 2025.
- 4.44. A detailed summary of the responses received can be found at 'Schedule of Comments and the Council's Response' document.

Policy Approach

- 4.45. Local services and facilities represent convenient facilities that 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.
- 4.46. Policy C4 Local services and facilities, is focused on facilitating the need for local shops and services, acknowledging that they contribute towards vibrant communities by providing convenient facilities near people's homes, reducing the need to travel and providing a valuable service for less mobile members of the community.
- 4.47. The main change in relation to this policy from the Draft Local Plan consultation is that the policy now identifies the Local Shopping Parades that we are seeking to protect the vitality and viability of on the Policies Map. In preparing the Publication Plan, for clarity Local Shopping Parades were identified; this was through site visits, officer knowledge and a desktop analysis of the borough. The parades are generally units of local services and facilities that are grouped four or more together in a row, though there are some exceptions where it was felt the cluster was still providing a grouping of convenient units. Appendix 5 of the Publication Plan contains plans of the Local Shopping Parades.
- 4.48. The Reasoned Justification sets out some examples of local services and facilities and discusses the Use Classes Order and how the 2020 amendment now allows for

greater flexibility but that notwithstanding this, the Council's preference for our Local Shopping Parades is that they are occupied as local retail and services.

- 4.49. Other minor changes were made, including to the number of the policy. It has changed from Policy C2 to Policy C4.

Integrated Assessment

- 4.50. Policy C4 scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores in the Integrated Assessment. Some effects were cross boundary, but the majority were local. No mitigation or enhancements to the policy was required because of the IA.
- 4.51. In terms of the HRA the policy has been screened out, there is no likely significant effect on any European Site anticipated from the operation of this Policy.

Policy OTC1: Oldham Town Centre

Summary of evidence

- 4.52. 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. Oldham's Building a Better Oldham¹⁷ programme provides that positive approach and Oldham Town Centre is at the heart of the programme with the development of the Oldham Town Centre Development Framework¹⁸.
- 4.53. The framework seeks to support and facilitate delivery of the ambitious regeneration programme. The creation of opportunities for residential living across the town centre is a key part of the Building a Better Oldham and ensuring the efficient use of land across the borough so as to minimise the use of greenfield land.
- 4.54. Through reflecting the framework the town centre has been divided into several quarters, that will act as the focus for certain types of development – whether that be residential, culture and leisure, education, commercial or its core retail function. Whilst ensuring that each quarter comes forward in a sustainable, accessible and connected way through the integration of complementary uses, the creation of a green infrastructure network and public realm.
- 4.55. The key proposals for Oldham Town Centre are:
 - The introduction of up to 2,000 new homes located within safe, inclusive and attractive neighbourhoods.
 - The redevelopment of Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre to redefine the retail core.
 - The Green Shoots Business and Innovation Centre, and Minewater District Heat Network Energy Centre, which form part of the Council's Greener Oldham commitment.
 - The re-use and refurbishment of several prominent heritage assets, specifically the Prudential Building, the Old Library and Gallery, and the Lyceum Building.
 - Enhancing accessibility, connectivity and movement, providing sustainable infrastructure connections through the Accessible Oldham programme.
 - The enhancement of the town centre's Green Infrastructure with the creation of Tommyfield Park and Snipe Gardens.
 - Upgrading the night-time and creative economy, to make the town centre a destination of choice.

¹⁷ More information on the programme can be found here:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201248/building_a_better_oldham

¹⁸ This document can be found at: <https://oldhamtownliving.co.uk/vision/>

Draft Local Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate

- 4.56. At Draft Plan stage some amendments were requested, some site-specific questions asked and general support given in relation to Policy OTC1.
- 4.57. The site-specific questions were in relation to the future of Oldham Coliseum, the Civic Centre and the Queen Elizabeth Hall. In relation to comments made about the Oldham Coliseum, since Draft Plan stage it is worth noting that Oldham Coliseum is currently undergoing renovation and is due to re-open in 2026. In relation to comments made regarding the cultural importance of the Civic Centre and The Queen Elizabeth Hall, any development proposals affecting heritage assets will be considered in accordance with national planning and the adopted Local Plan.
- 4.58. More detailed comments and requests for amendments are summarised in table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of comments received and the Council's response to Policy OTC1 Oldham Town Centre

Respondent	Summary of Comment	Council Response
Historic England	Support the policy but requested some amendments in relation to including text around listed buildings and a question regarding the evidence base on 'important views'.	Support noted and paragraph 11.10 (what was 12.10) has been amended to reference listed buildings in the final sentence. Paragraph 11.14 (what was 12.14) has been amended to reference the Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document.
Lancashire Wildlife Trust	Support and welcomed the inclusion of principle 3 to create a greener, cooler and biodiverse town centre.	N/A
CBRE on behalf of Muse Places Ltd - Oldham Town Centre	Support the policy and added that the creation of a Town Centre Development Framework is acknowledged in the supporting policy text to Policy OTC1, which is welcomed by Muse.	N/A
National Highways	This policy is in line with DfT Circular 01/2022 as integration of sustainable infrastructure connections around key public transport hubs may reduce car use, which will not only benefit the environment but also reduce the number of vehicles looking to utilise the SRN.	N/A

- 4.59. A detailed summary of the responses received can be found in the 'Schedule of Comments and the Council's Response' document.

4.60. The policy was not identified as a strategic issue at any Duty to Co-operate meetings or discussions although comments submitted were discussed at meetings with Historic England on 1st July 2025 and National Highways and TfGM on 9th July 2025.

Policy Approach

4.61. The Building a Better Oldham programme has provided a lot of the context for Policy OTC1. The focus of Policy OTC1 is on delivering the vision for the continued enhancement, redevelopment and regeneration of Oldham Town Centre.

4.62. The policy is split into sections that reflect the distinctive character areas from the Oldham Town Centre Development Framework and it sets out several principles that are expected to form part of any development proposals for Oldham Town Centre.

4.63. The Reasoned Justification provides further information on Building a Better Oldham and how it will transform the town centre.

4.64. The changes from Draft Plan to Publication Plan have largely been around updating the wording to reflect the most up to date version of the framework. This includes adding in references to new projects in the town centre such as Green Shoots incubator space and deleting references to parts of the project that have been delivered such as The Egyptian Rooms. The Oldham Town Centre Key Diagram has also been moved from within the policy wording and the image (Figure OTC1) changed to relate to an illustration from the framework.

4.65. In addition, other amends have included removing some elements of the policy and instead embedding them in one of the more thematic Oldham Town Centre policies. Such as, the previous criterion around the creation of green infrastructure in the policy, which is now covered by OTC4 on Green Infrastructure within and around Oldham Town Centre. There was also a criterion concerned with high-speed digital connections that on reflection is already covered by Policy IN1 Digital Infrastructure and Telecommunications.

Integrated Assessment

4.66. Policy OTC1 scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores in the Integrated Assessment.

4.67. Some effects were cross boundary, due to the fact Oldham Town Centre attracts people from outside of the borough, but the majority were local. No mitigation or enhancements to the policy were required as a result of the IA.

4.68. In terms of the HRA the policy has been screened out, there is no likely significant effect on any European Site anticipated from the operation of this Policy.

Policy OTC2: Protecting and Enhancing Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area

Summary of evidence

- 4.69. The [Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#)¹⁹ was prepared to address the issues facing the at-risk conservation area and sets out a positive approach to enable the conservation area to be enhanced and its eventual removal from the at-risk register.
- 4.70. The appraisal outlined that detracting features, such as vacancy levels and buildings being in poor condition which threaten the conservation area. The most significant detracting feature is retail frontages, where the poor-quality contemporary shopfronts dominate handsome buildings. Roller shutters were also deemed to be creating a deadening frontage and adding to the perception of crime and antisocial behaviour. The lack of wayfinding, need for a stronger identity and the appearance / re-use of vacant sites are also key issues to be addressed.
- 4.71. The Management Plan includes policies to address the issues set out above, providing opportunities to enhance, and uplift the human experience of, the conservation area. Through addressing these issues, the conservation area, and Oldham Town Centre, will become a place that people find welcoming, and which contributes to sense of identity, local pride and well-being.
- 4.72. The policy approach within the SPD has been embedded into the Local Plan, including Policy OTC2, where appropriate.
- 4.73. The appraisal proposed four extensions to the existing Oldham Town Centre conservation area boundary. The extensions have been designated under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and will be adopted as part of the Local Plan and are shown on the Policies Map.
- 4.74. Appendix 3 of the Publication Plan shows the extensions.

Draft Local Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate

- 4.31 The policy was supported at Draft Plan stage by Historic England, for clarity a footnote was added to criterion 6, clarifying that the views mentioned had been defined in the CAAMP and the Oldham Town Centre Development Framework.
- 4.32 A further two comments were received in relation to the future of the Coliseum, one requesting it be added within the conservation area boundary and one objecting to proposals at the time for the closure of the Coliseum. In relation to the former comment, the new boundary is based on the recommendations of the CAAMP, which was subject to its own consultation as an SPD, and the latter comment was not a matter for the Local Plan.
- 4.33 A detailed summary of the responses received can be found in the 'Schedule of Comments and the Council's Response' document.

¹⁹ This document can be found at:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201229/current_local_planning_policy/256/supplementary_planning_documents

4.34 The policy was not identified as a strategic issue at any Duty to Co-operate meetings or discussions although comments submitted were discussed at a meeting with Historic England on 1st July 2025.

Policy Approach

4.35 The policy is very much focused on the aim of removing the Oldham Town Centre conservation area from Historic England's heritage at-risk register. It states that any proposals affecting the setting and character of the conservation area should take into consideration the Oldham Town Centre CAAMP. It sets out ten criteria that proposals should consider.

4.36 The policy Reasoned Justification explains more about the background and contents of the CAAMP. It lists the established views and vistas into and out of the conservation area, that make an important contribution to the historic context and setting of Oldham Town Centre. They are:

- the Church of St Mary and St Peter and along Church Lane,
- views through Parliament square;
- looking west up Yorkshire Street towards Parliament Square;
- along Greaves Street;
- views along Albion Street, Retiro Street, Union Street; and
- from Gallery Oldham).

4.37 The policy also formally adopts four extensions to the previously adopted conservation area. These extensions have already been designated under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

4.38 Since Draft Plan stage the policy has only been amended to include the footnotes mentioned above. Other amendments were presentational.

Integrated Assessment

4.39 The Integrated Assessment of Policy OTC2 resulted in a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores. No amendments were made to the policy as a result of the IA at Publication Plan Stage.

4.40 In terms of the HRA the policy has been screened out. There is no likely significant effect on any European Site anticipated from the operation of this policy.

Policy OTC3: Creating a Better Public Realm for Oldham Town Centre

Summary of evidence

- 4.41 The Oldham Town Centre Development Framework identifies enhancing the public realm as a key opportunity - developing a high-quality and distinctive public realm that is cohesive and contributes to a sense of place.
- 4.42 A Landscape and Public Realm Strategy has been prepared alongside the Framework, which:
 - seeks to create accessible and balanced landscaped streets;
 - secures public realm enhancements along key routes through and into the town centre, maximising opportunities for softening of the streetscape;
 - identifies key junctions for public realm enhancement and improved gateways into Oldham Town Centre; and
 - responds positively to long-range landscape outlooks towards Oldham's surroundings.
- 4.43 The Framework also identifies several opportunities for the public realm as part of an Access and Movement Strategy, including the creation of better public realm and wayfinding between transport hubs, the retail core and key developments. This links to the [Accessible Oldham](#)²⁰ programme, which is a scheme which is transforming streets around Oldham, by improving roads, footpaths and public areas.

Draft Local Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate

- 4.44 At Draft Plan some general support was given in relation to Policy OTC3 from Historic England, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Muse.
- 4.45 United Utilities requested that a criterion be added in relation to improvements to surface water management. As a result of this comment the policy was amended to add a new criterion requiring that new areas of public realm should explore the delivery of sustainable drainage solutions.
- 4.46 Finally, two comments were received in relation to the historic environment which were not considered relevant to this policy.
- 4.47 A detailed summary of the responses received can be found in the 'Schedule of Comments and the Council's Response' document.
- 4.48 The policy was not identified as a strategic issue at any Duty to Co-operate meetings or discussions although comments submitted were discussed at a meeting with Historic England on 1st July 2025, and United Utilities on 9th July 2025.

²⁰ More information can be found at:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201248/building_a_better_oldham/3000/getting_around

Policy Approach

- 4.49 The Building a Better Oldham programme has provided a lot of the context for Policy OTC3 as the published Landscape and Public Realm Strategy identified several opportunities for the public realm.
- 4.50 The focus of Policy OTC3 is ensuring that major development in Oldham Town Centre makes a positive contribution to the public realm. The policy sets out several principles in which the public realm in Oldham Town Centre will be developed and enhanced.
- 4.51 In addition to the principles, the policy also outlines that for major development a financial contribution towards public realm improvements may be required where appropriate.
- 4.52 The policy Reasoned Justification explains that the principles established in this policy, will have a significant impact on the quality of the public realm in the town centre as it continues to re-imagine itself as a place for people to live, work and socialise in. The principles will also help create a people friendly town centre that encourages a diverse street culture.
- 4.53 Policy OTC3 has been restructured for Publication Stage, as mentioned above a criterion on sustainable drainage solutions was added at the request of United Utilities. In addition to this amendment, principles concerned with safety and lighting, public art, opportunities for play and leisure and landscapes, views and vistas were added.

Integrated Assessment

- 4.54 The policy scored a mixture of positives and neutrals, with no negatives in the Integrated Assessment. No mitigation or enhancements were required to the policy as a result of the IA process.
- 4.55 In terms of the HRA the policy has been screened out, there is no likely significant effect on any European Site anticipated from the operation of this policy.

Policy OTC4: Green Infrastructure within and around Oldham Town Centre

Summary of evidence

- 4.56 The Oldham Green Infrastructure Strategy²¹ identified that Oldham Town Centre has virtually no open space and or other types of green infrastructure which is typically limited to mown grass and ornamental trees.
- 4.57 The Oldham Town Centre Development Framework²² identifies enhancing the town centre's green infrastructure and its connections to the surrounding area, as a key priority and opportunity.
- 4.58 The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy²³ (LNRS) identifies a nature network including opportunity areas which include parts of Oldham Town Centre.

Draft Local Plan consultation and Duty to Co-operate

- 4.59 At Draft Plan stage some general supports were made in relation to Policy OTC4 from Natural England, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Muse National Highways and some individuals.
- 4.60 United Utilities supported the policy and requested that a criterion be added in relation to sustainable drainage systems. As a result of this comment criterion 6 was amended in the policy to add text in relation to sustainable drainage solutions.
- 4.61 TfGM requested reference to the Bee Network be removed as they did not consider it appropriate for policy wording. This amendment was made.
- 4.62 A detailed summary of the responses received can be found in the 'Schedule of Comments and the Council's Response' document.
- 4.63 The policy was not identified as a strategic issue at any Duty to Co-operate meetings or discussions although comments submitted were discussed at meetings with Historic England on 1st July 2025, United Utilities on 9th July 2025 and National Highways and TfGM on 9th July 2025.

Policy Approach

- 4.64 Policy OTC4 supports proposals that will protect, create and enhance multi-functional Green Infrastructure within and around Oldham Town Centre.
- 4.65 The policy mentions some specific proposals, such as Tommyfield Park and linkages to Northern Roots, Oldham Edge, Beal Valley, Broadbent Moss, Alexandra

²¹ This document can be found at:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2183/oldham_green_infrastructure_strategy

²² This document can be found at: <https://oldhamtownliving.co.uk/vision/>

²³ This document can be found at: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/our-plan-for-nature-recovery/what-does-our-plan-for-nature-cover/>

Park and Glodwick Lows Local Nature Reserve. In addition, it supports proposals that will have regard to nature network within the LNRS, the incorporation of biodiversity enhancements and the use of nature-based solutions and sustainable drainage systems to manage surface water flood risk.

- 4.66 The Reasoned Justification provides details on the Green Infrastructure Strategy, Oldham Town Centre Development Framework and the LNRS.
- 4.67 Since Draft Plan stage in addition to the amendments listed above, the policy was updated to reflect latest plans such as amending Jubilee Park to Tommyfield Park.
- 4.68 In addition, it was noted during the Integrated Assessment of the Draft Plan that the policy did not explicitly refer to 'multi-functional' Green Infrastructure and therefore the first sentence of the policy was amended to enhance it to refer to 'multi-functional'.
- 4.69 Most of the other changes were presentational.

Integrated Assessment

- 4.70 The Integrated Assessment of Policy OTC4 resulted in a mixture of positive, significantly positive and neutral scores.
- 4.71 It was noted during the IA that the policy did not explicitly refer to 'multi-functional' Green Infrastructure and therefore the first sentence of the policy was amended to enhance it to refer to 'multi-functional'. This is reflected in IA1, IA9 and IA13. This amendment did not affect scoring.
- 4.72 In terms of the HRA the policy has been screened out, there is no likely significant effect on any European Site anticipated from the operation of this policy.

Monitoring

- 4.73 Policies C1 to C4 and OTC1 to OTC4 will be monitored by the Local Plan monitoring framework in line with Local Plan Policy M1. The Local Plan indicators that will be used to monitor these policies are:
 - Number of planning applications granted in Oldham Town Centre and the borough's other centres, for main town centre uses
 - Number of homes completed within the borough's centres
 - Number of day visits and staying visits to Oldham borough
 - Number of S106 Planning Obligations for new or enhanced open space provision in Oldham Town Centre
 - Number of listed buildings in Oldham Town Centre
 - Number of buildings in the Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area lost through new development.
- 4.74 Policy M1 of the Local Plan sets out that where monitoring identifies underperformance or unintended outcomes:
 - Further guidance on the relevant policy matter may be produced.
 - Policy revisions and an early review of the Local Plan may be triggered.

- Engagement with stakeholders may be undertaken to address delivery barriers.

4.75 As these policies have been informed by PfE policies JP-Strat12, JP-P4 and JP-J1 and, the PfE monitoring framework will also help to monitor this chapter. The following PfE monitoring indicator will help to monitor these policies²⁴:

- GVA in and within 800m of the main town centres.
- Number of residential units (net) delivered in main town centres.
- Gross area of new habitat created from the application of biodiversity net gain.
- Number of trees planted annually (metric to be determined with respect to tree planting programmes and on-site delivery as a result of planning decisions where available).

4.76 In relation to OTC4 there are also PfE indicators that are used to monitor the Nature chapters of the plan that will also be relevant to development within Oldham Town Centre. They are 'Gross area of new habitat created from the application of biodiversity net gain', 'Number of trees planted annually (metric to be determined with respect to tree planting programmes and on-site delivery as a result of planning decisions where available)' and 'Percentage of tree canopy cover'.

4.77 The monitoring framework is therefore considered to be appropriate to ensure the deliverability of policies C1 to C4 and OTC1 to OTC4.

²⁴ As PfE is a Joint Plan of Bury, Bolton, Oldham, Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan, the PfE indicators apply plan-wide (including all districts).

5 Conclusion

Providing an appropriate strategy

5.1 Policies C1 to C4 and OTC1 to OTC4 of the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan provide the policy framework for ensuring that we support the role that our centres play at the heart of local communities, the policies take a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.

5.2 In terms of the test of soundness listed at paragraph 36 of NPPF it is considered that these have been met as follows:

- a) **Positively prepared:** the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan supports delivery of PfE which provides the strategic direction and context for the borough including the upper levels of the hierarchy of centres for Greater Manchester. The Local Plan sets out, in line with PfE Policy JP-P4, the boundaries and details of other centres at a lower level of the hierarchy and provides a positive approach to the growth and management of our centres, in line with NPPF. These centre policies have been positively prepared as they are aligned with national planning policy and are based on a clear understanding of local needs. They have been shaped through engagement with stakeholders, businesses and residents and provide a positive and appropriate strategy for our centres.
- b) **Justified:** the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan supports delivery of PfE which provides the strategic direction and context for the borough including the upper levels of the hierarchy of centres for Greater Manchester. The Local Plan sets out, in line with PfE Policy JP-P4, the boundaries and details of other centres at a lower level of the hierarchy and provides a positive approach to the growth and management of our centres, in line with NPPF. These centre policies are justified as they are based on a robust and proportionate evidence base, including the Oldham Retail and Leisure Study, The Oldham Town Centre Development Framework, The Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and the Oldham Green Infrastructure Strategy. To not follow the recommendations of the conclusions of the various pieces of evidence base could lead to our centres not adapting and a decline in footfall in our centres.
- c) **Effective:** the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan supports delivery of PfE which provides the strategic direction and context for PfE plan area's economy. The plan period of up to 2039 reflects that of PfE and continued effective joint working arrangements with PfE districts on cross-boundary strategic matters will support delivery of the joint and local plans. Deliverability of the Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan is also evidenced by the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Statement of Common Ground. Policies C1 to C4 and OTC1 to OTC4 are considered effective because they provide a clear and deliverable framework for implementation. Specific measures have been included for maintaining the vitality and viability of our centres, such as a reduced threshold for impact assessments. The policies are flexible enough to ensure that our centres can respond to market trends.

- d) **Consistent with national policy:** policies C1 to C4 and OTC1 to OTC4 support delivery of sustainable development in accordance with relevant national policy, in particular the policies aim to promote the vitality and viability of our centres as the heart of our communities. In applying a reduced threshold for impact assessments, the policies are prioritising a centres first approach for main town centre uses. The policies allow for a suitable mix of uses, ensure the unique character of each centre is enhanced, set out a positive strategy for the Oldham Town Centre conservation area and promote the creation and enhancement of multi-functional Green Infrastructure.
- 5.3 Furthermore, policies C1 to C4 and OTC1 to OTC4 are considered an appropriate strategy for Oldham as they contribute towards delivering the Local Plan's vision and plan objectives, and the Oldham Plan missions. The policies will support the Local Plan vision of ensuring that Oldham Town Centre will be a place that thrives, supporting its local communities and attracting visitors. They will also support the borough's other centres of Chadderton, Failsworth, Hill Stores, Lees, Shaw, Royton and Uppermill, to continue to provide a vital role in meeting the needs of the borough's communities, connecting our residents to local services and facilities in a way that fosters a sense of community and local identity.
- 5.4 The policies will also support Plan Objective 4 of supporting the regeneration of Oldham Town Centre and creating thriving centres.
- 5.5 The policies C1 to C4 and OTC1 to OTC4 will also support The Oldham Plan's mission of 'Green and Growing' which has an objective focussed on making our town centres and high streets lively places where people want to visit and shop.