

Oldham Council's Biodiversity Duty Report 2026



(Photo taken from Oldham GI Strategy by TEP: Landscape near Denshaw)

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1. About Oldham Council

1.1 Oldham Council is one of ten local authorities (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) that make up the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), alongside the Mayor.

1.2 The GMCA work with other local services, businesses, communities and other partners to improve the city-region.

1.3 The ten councils have worked together voluntarily for many years on issues that affect everyone in the region, like transport, regeneration, and attracting investment.

1.4 Oldham attends the GM Nature Recovery Group which consists of planning and greenspace officers who work together on work relating to nature recovery such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). These are covered later within this report.

1.5 Within Oldham Council, there are many departments, who each play a crucial role in making Oldham a great place to live and work. including:

- Planning;
- Waste;
- Highways;
- Registrars;
- Parks; and
- Libraries.

1.6 Oldham is a co-operative council and over the years has made great strides in improving the town for its 227,000+ residents. A co-operative Council brings together residents, staff, and partners who work alongside each other to ensure the borough is a place people are proud of and want to live and work in.

1.7 Our management board provides senior leadership to the Council and implements the policies agreed upon by elected councillors. They then work with their teams to deliver the very best services for our residents.

1.8 The Cabinet is responsible for strategic decisions and recommends proposals on how the budget of the Council will be spent and how our workforce can continue to support and improve outcomes across the Borough. The Cabinet is made up of a Leader, and up to nine councillors appointed by the Leader, including a Deputy Leader.

1.9 The Cabinet is responsible for strategic decisions and recommends proposals for approval by full Council on the budget, Council Tax levels and the Council's policy framework.

1.10 All public authorities including Oldham Council have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The biodiversity duty makes sure that biodiversity is embedded into every part of council life – the services we deliver, policies, decisions, plans, programmes and projects. For example:

- In planning, officers will work to ensure that Biodiversity is considered as part of any development proposals. Planning policies can influence how biodiversity is protected and enhanced, how developments can incorporate measures to enhance biodiversity and how land is protected and used;
- Corporate policies, objectives and priorities could reflect local nature priorities.
- Biodiversity can be enhanced in school grounds;
- In countryside services land can be surveyed, management plans prepared, and land actively managed to achieve the objectives for the site;
- Communications can play a role in using social media to educate and raise awareness of biodiversity; and
- Libraries can help promote material for nature recovery – such as sharing consultation documents leaflets on grants for nature.

2. Purpose of Report

2.1 This report sets out Oldham Council's Biodiversity Duty Report setting out how our policies and objectives are being implemented.

2.2 The Environment Act 2021 introduced a strengthened 'biodiversity duty' into the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which requires all public authorities in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

2.3 Oldham Council as a public authority, must:

- Consider what we can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on our consideration.
- Act to deliver our policies and achieve our objectives.

2.4 There was a need to complete our first consideration of what action Oldham Council intends to take for biodiversity no later than 1 January 2024 – this report can be viewed [here](#)¹.

2.5 Following this initial consideration, Oldham Council needed to agree our policies and objectives as soon as possible after – this report was approved on 24 March 2025 and can be viewed [here](#)².

2.6 There is now a requirement to publish a report on how these policies and objectives have been implemented to date. The first reporting period is between 1 January 2023 and no later than 1 January 2026 and the Biodiversity Duty Report must be published by 26 March 2026.

2.7 Future Biodiversity Duty Reports will need to be published at least every five years thereon.

2.8 The Biodiversity Duty Report must explain:

- a summary of the action you've taken to comply with the biodiversity duty;
- how you plan to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period;
and
- any other information you consider appropriate.

¹ The First Considerations Report can be viewed at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7821/complying_with_the_biodiversity_duty_first_considerations_report

² Our policies and objectives for Thriving Wildlife can be found at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8234/complying_with_the_biodiversity_duty_%E2%80%93_our_policies_and_objectives_for_thriving_wildlife_in_oldham

2.9 Reports from local planning authorities must also include the following biodiversity net gain (BNG) information:

- the actions you've carried out to meet BNG obligations;
- details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans you've approved; and
- how you plan to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.

2.10 Other information in government guidance on [Reporting your biodiversity duty actions](#)³ is optional.

³ Reporting your biodiversity duty actions guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-your-biodiversity-duty-actions>

3. The Importance of Biodiversity

3.1 Biodiversity refers to all the various kinds of living organisms within a given area, including plants, animals, fungi, and other living things.

3.2 All species are interconnected; they depend on one another. Forests provide homes for animals. Animals eat plants, which need healthy soil to grow. Fungi helps decompose organisms to fertilize the soil. Bees and other insects carry pollen from one plant to another, which enables the plants to reproduce. With less biodiversity, these connections weaken, and sometimes break, harming all the species in the ecosystem⁴.

3.3 Biodiversity has a strong role to play in our lives and offers many benefits as outlined in the [Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)⁵ (LNRS).

The benefits for people:

- A green and healthy environment to grow up, get on and grow old.
- More recreation and leisure opportunities.
- Improved air quality and less noise pollution.
- Improved physical health, including better heart health and healthy lifestyles.
- Improved mental health, including reduced stress and mental health conditions.
- More resilience and adaptation to climate change, including flooding, droughts and extreme heat.
- Less water pollution and safer opportunities for water-based recreation.
- Greater connection to our natural and historic environment.
- Stronger communities, proud of where they live and work.
- Healthier soils, ensuring long term sustainability of food supplies.
- Opportunities for more green jobs and careers

The benefits for businesses:

- A more attractive place to work, visit and do business, encouraging local economic growth.
- Increased resilience through reduced risk of, and better adaptation to, environmental hazards.
- A healthier, happier and more productive workforce.
- Higher land and property values.
- Increased green jobs and skills.
- More visitors and sustainable tourism opportunities.

⁴ National Geographic

⁵ The Greater Manchester LNRS is available 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/>.

- More productive land for food security and other resources that can be grown locally.

The ecological benefits:

- Protection of rare and threatened species and habitats.
- Repaired natural cycles and natural processes.
- A greater abundance and diversity of wildlife and healthier ecosystems, reversing biodiversity decline.
- Capture and sequestration of carbon, helping tackle climate change.
- More resilience to future changes in climate.
- Greater resilience of species to pests and diseases.

3.4 Quite often when we talk about biodiversity, we talk about it alongside Green Infrastructure (GI) more generally.

3.5 GI is a network of green spaces and water environments that sustains the ecosystems we need for a decent quality of life. We refer to both GI and biodiversity within this report.

3.6 The [Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham](#)⁶ report gave an outline of Oldham's biodiversity resource – our land designated for nature and notable species.

⁶ The Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham report is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8234/complying_with_the_biodiversity_duty_%E2%80%93_our_policies_and_objectives_for_thriving_wildlife_in_oldham

4. Threats to Biodiversity

4.1 Our GI is vital to the quality of life of our residents, workers and visitors. Looking after our GI is part of our goal to become a carbon neutral borough, and plan for climate change.

4.2 Investing in our GI will deliver multiple benefits including environmental enhancements, improved public health and a contribution to Oldham's economy.

4.3 Although GI is extensive, we need to manage it more effectively to better respond to the needs of people and nature and ensure it is resilient to the changing climate.

4.4 The [Greater Manchester State of Nature](#)⁷ report was compiled to highlight the urgent challenges faced by nature across the city-region, which was reflected in the declaration of a biodiversity emergency in GM in March 2022. The report covers trends in our wildlife, the use of land and pressures on nature, the wider benefits we receive from nature and people's access to nature and engagement with it.

4.5 Some of the headline findings from this report are:

- Echoing national trends, key species of birds and mammals in GM and the North West of England are declining. Individual bird species population show declines of up to 40% over the last 40 years and the abundance of once common mammals has dropped by between 20-40% since 1995.
- Our protected sites provide valuable refuges for nature but cover just 11% of GM and are highly fragmented rather than forming a connected network for nature. Although recovering at present they are not in as good as condition as they could be.
- 80% of our water bodies have been heavily modified by human activities. Currently none of our rivers are in good ecological condition and we are far from meeting national targets for 75% of our waterbodies to reach this status.
- Our tree canopy covers 16% of GM (in Oldham specifically, the tree canopy cover is 13.4% of the borough) and significant efforts are being made to increase the number of trees being planted across the city region. However, our existing woodlands could be much better managed for nature.

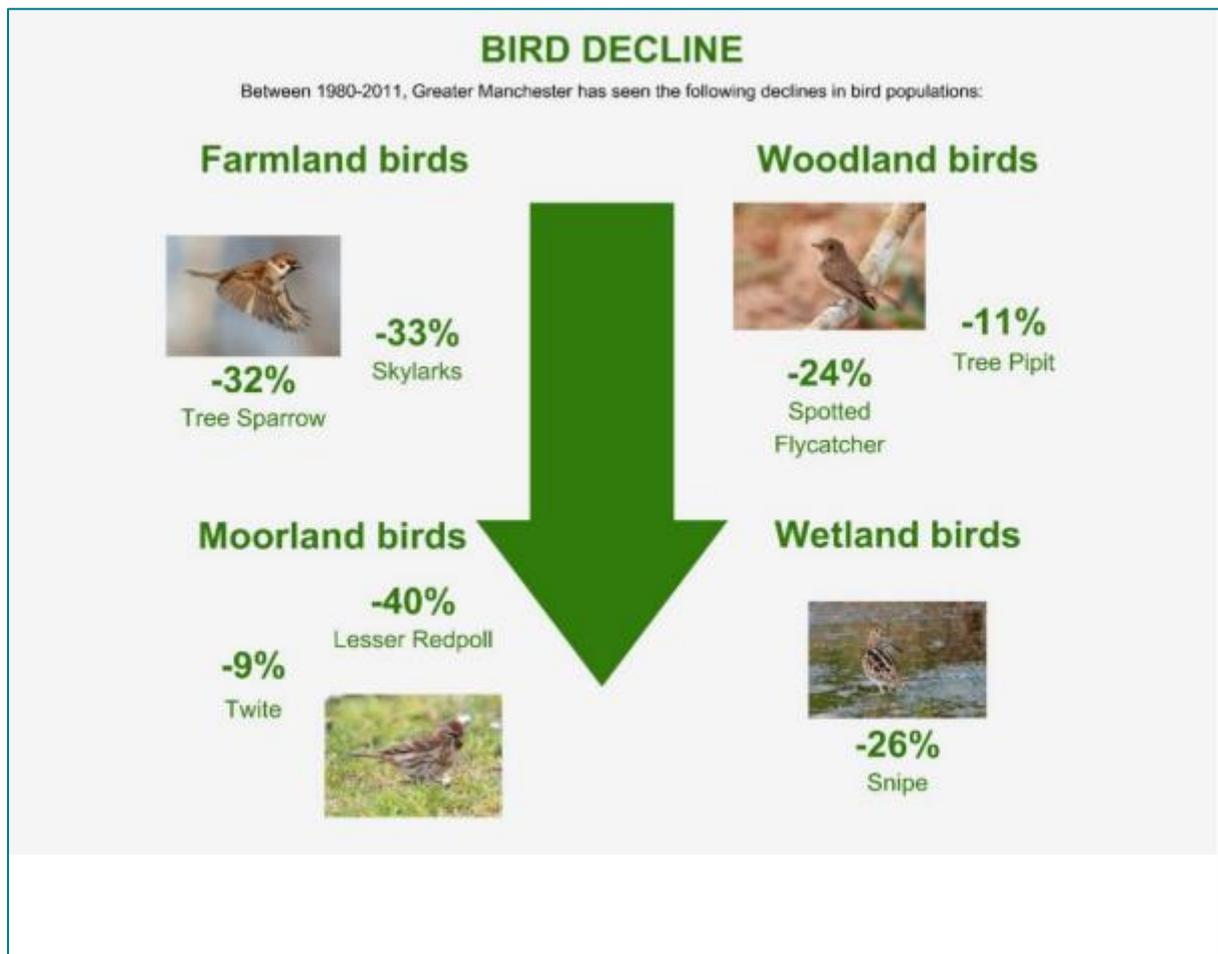
4.6 The report highlights trends for birds and mammals:

⁷ The State of Nature report is available at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/9526/gm-state-of-nature-report.pdf>

Our Birds

4.7 Bird populations are used to provide a good indication of the broad state of wildlife in the UK. Greater Manchester is home to many populations of birds. Mirroring national trends, we have seen some worrying declines in our bird populations.

Figure 1: Bird Decline (Greater Manchester State of Nature Report)



Our mammals

4.8 The population trends for mammals are relatively poorly known in Greater Manchester and we are reliant on data for the whole of the North West. 25-year trends for the North West show us that we are losing once common species.

Figure 2: Mammal Decline (Greater Manchester State of Nature Report)



Returning Species:

4.9 However, there are signs that nature can recover, and there is evidence that the following species have been returning, which can give hope for future efforts:

- Otters – sights in districts across Greater Manchester;
- Fish and Mayflies have returned to all sections of the River Medlock;
- Butterflies – Manchester Argus Butterfly (Large Heath Butterfly) has been reintroduced at Astley Moss;
- Birds – Nightjars returning around Chat Moss; and
- Bog plants – Sundew, Lesser Bladderwort, Bog Asphodel and White Beak Sedge all now thrive on lowland peatlands.

Pressures on Nature

4.10 Some of the pressures of biodiversity noted within the State of Nature report are:

- Pressures on land use - Land in GM is limited and is under increasing demand to meet a variety of needs. These needs include providing homes, commercial space, transport and utilities for the city-region; supporting energy generation, carbon sequestration (e.g., tree planting and peatland restoration) and climate adaptation (e.g., nature-based solutions); and food growing and recreation.
- Pressures on water and waterbodies - Water in GM is under pressure from a range of sources. Over 20% of the water in most GM rivers has been discharged from a Wastewater Treatment Works. For some rivers this is as high as 60 to 80%.
- Pathogens and diseases - As well as invasive plant species, microorganisms that cause disease pose a threat to wildlife and ecosystems. The most significant of these currently affecting GM and the rest of the UK is ash dieback. Other diseases, like avian influenza, may emerge to pose threats to wildlife (in that instance, to birds). And climate change is likely to increase risk of the introduction and spread of pathogens.

- Climate change - Climate change has already impacted biodiversity in GM as species shift northwards. As temperatures increase, climate zones will move northwards at 5km per year by 2050 – equivalent to moving from the south to north of Greater Manchester in 8 years, a process which took 800 years at the end of the last ice age. Risk assessments for species in England show that more species are expected to increase their ranges rather than decrease. However, upland habitat species in the north and east of the city-region are particularly vulnerable to climate change due to northwards and upwards range contraction. Given the importance of uplands to water management and carbon storage, this may have knock on impacts. These effects will be exacerbated further by the projected increase in hazardous fire weather conditions in summer, meaning greater risk of wildfires in the uplands and extension of the wildfire season into late summer and early autumn.

5. Our Policies, objectives and actions

Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham

5.1 Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham report identifies seven objectives, listed below, which have been developed through considering the aims of the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) which was draft at the time and the [Oldham Green Infrastructure Strategy](#)⁸.

5.2 To support thriving wildlife in Oldham we will:

1. Protect and restore core areas of wildlife;
2. Promote nature recovery networks in areas of lower biodiversity;
3. Optimise the Green Infrastructure functionality of existing open spaces to encourage wildlife;
4. Promote multi-functional Green Infrastructure in allocated and potential development sites;
5. Encourage habitat creation and enhancement in the Green Belt;
6. Raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity; and
7. Consider biodiversity in corporate plans and decisions.

5.3 The objectives are then supported by associated actions, the progress on which is discussed later in this report.

Other policies and objectives

5.4 Below is a summary of other policies and objectives relating to the biodiversity duty. Some of these overlap with the actions we have completed or progressed.

Places for Everyone

5.5 [Places for Everyone \(PfE\)](#)⁹ is a long-term plan of nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth. It has been published by the GMCA on behalf of the nine districts and came into effect on March 21, 2024.

5.6 The plan determines the kind of development that takes place in the boroughs, maximising the use of brownfield land and urban spaces while protecting Green Belt land from the risk of unplanned development. It also protects important environmental assets across the city region.

5.7 Key policies relating to biodiversity include:

⁸ Oldham's Green Infrastructure Strategy is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2183/oldham_green_infrastructure_strategy

⁹ Places for Everyone is available at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/strategic-planning/places-for-everyone/pfe-adoption/>

- **Policy JP-Strat13 Strategic Green Infrastructure** – identifies the green infrastructure assets (river valleys and waterways; lowland wetlands and mosslands; uplands and Trees and Woodlands) that will be protected and enhanced which the below policies provide more detail on.
- **Policy JP-G2 Green Infrastructure Network** – sets out that the protection, management and enhancement of green infrastructure will contribute to the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Development should contribute to improvements in Green Infrastructure and development which removes land from the Green Belt is required to deliver compensatory improvements to environmental quality and accessibility.
- **Policy JP-G3 River Valleys and Waterways** – sets out how rivers and waterways will be protected and improved through a number of priorities.
- **Policy JP-G4 Lowland Wetlands and Mosslands** - sets out how lowland wetlands and mosslands will be protected, enhanced and restored through a number of priorities.
- **Policy JP-G5 Uplands** – outlines that our uplands include significant areas of blanket bog priority habitat, Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), woodlands and habitats. The policy sets out what will be considered in making planning decisions and activities.
- **Policy JP-G6 Urban Green Space** – seeks to ensure there is an appropriate scale, type, quality and distribution of accessible urban green space.
- **Policy JP-G7 Trees and Woodland** – seeks to significantly increase tree cover, protect and enhance woodland and connect people to the trees and woodland around them.
- **Policy JP-G8 A New Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity** – sets out how a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought including through increasing the quantity, quality, extent and diversity of habitats; improving connections between habitats (including Nature Recovery Networks) and stepping stones; and developments achieving a net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%.

Development will be expected to:

a. Follow the mitigation hierarchy of:

- i. Avoiding significant harm to biodiversity, particularly where it is irreplaceable, through consideration of alternative sites with less harmful impacts, then*
- ii. Adequately mitigating any harm to biodiversity, then*
- iii. Adequately compensating for any remaining harm to biodiversity*

b. Avoid fragmenting or severing connectivity between habitats;

c. Achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%

d. Make appropriate provision for long-term management of habitats and geological features connected to the development.

- **Policy JP-G9 The Green Belt** – identifies the Green Belt and seeks to enhance the green infrastructure functions within it.

5.8 Other PfE policies also relate to biodiversity such as site allocation policies and transport policies.

5.9 PfE has its own monitoring framework to assess whether the plan is being achieved or whether over time policies need to be updated. In relation to biodiversity the following indicators are monitored:

- Gross area of new habitat created from the application of biodiversity net gain;
- Number, area and condition of sites of biological importance (SBI's);
- Number of trees planted annually; and
- Number of hectares of green infrastructure (metric will consider publicly accessible GI where information is available).

5.10 For information on the indicators please see Oldham's latest Monitoring Report:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201230/monitoring/263/oldhams_monitoring_report

Oldham Context

5.11 The [Oldham Plan 'Pride, Progress, Partnership' \(2024-2030\)](#)¹⁰, prepared by the Oldham Partnership, sets the direction for the borough including “Green and Growing” and seeks to lead the way on green projects across the country.

5.12 The Council’s [Corporate Plan ‘Ready for the Future’ 2024-27](#)¹¹ sets out the Council’s priorities and works in parallel with The Oldham Plan. One of the three missions is “Green and Growing” which seeks to drive economic growth in relation to green technologies.

5.13 In June 2019, Oldham Council declared its ambition to be the UK's first Green New Deal Council. It subsequently declared a Climate Emergency in September 2019.

5.14 The [Oldham Green New Deal Strategy](#) was adopted by Oldham Council in March 2020. The Strategy’s objective is to 'Future-proof the regeneration of the borough by establishing Oldham as an exemplar Green City on energy, carbon, water and green infrastructure'. Whilst this strategy has links to Green Infrastructure its focus is on carbon neutrality.

Oldham Local Plan Review

5.15 Oldham Council is also progressing work on a new Local Plan.

5.16 The Oldham Local Plan will guide development in the borough up to 2039. The main purposes of the Plan are to:

- Set out the policies through which the council will manage development coming forward and use to determine planning applications;
- Identify designations, such as those for the protection of the borough’s environmental and historical assets, our town centres, and employment areas; and
- Facilitate the development of supporting infrastructure, such as transport, education and utilities.

5.17 The Oldham Local Plan will replace the current Local Plan (called the Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD) and any saved planning policies from the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006, aside from those already replaced through Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE)

5.18 The Oldham Local Plan will sit alongside PfE, as part of a suite of documents that form the development plan for the borough.

¹⁰ The Oldham Plan is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201261/oldham_plan/3207/oldham_plan

¹¹ The Corporate Plan is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200146/strategies_plans_and_policies/2888/corporate_plan

5.19 The purpose and role of the Oldham Local Plan is to provide more detailed local level ‘development management’ policies that support the strategic policies in PfE to ensure that together they reflect, and support delivery of, our priorities.

5.20 The Publication Plan is available to view [here](#)¹². The Plan has been subject to a final consultation (Regulation 19) and will be submitted for independent examination later in 2026.

5.21 The Local Plan sets out policies to protect and enhance biodiversity. These policies include:

- **Policy OTC4 – Green Infrastructure within and around Oldham Town Centre** – outlines opportunities to protect, create and enhance multi-functional Green Infrastructure within and around Oldham Town Centre, informed by the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- **Policy CC3 – Sustainable Drainage – Foul and Surface Water** – sets out requirements on foul and surface water management which encourages drainage strategies to be integrated with the landscape strategy and the four pillars of sustainable drainage which includes biodiversity.
- **Policy OL4 Local Green Spaces** – designates Local Green Spaces which are locally significant, which can be due to wildlife.
- **Policy N1- Protecting Nature** – sets out the biodiversity hierarchy which will be safeguarded.
- **Policy N2 Restoring Nature** – sets out how development can have regard to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and seeks to steer off-site BNG close to the development site. It states:

Where relevant development has demonstrated, following application of the biodiversity gain hierarchy, all reasonable opportunities to achieve measurable Biodiversity Net Gain of at least 10% onsite have been exhausted, the following principles apply to the selection off-site areas:

- a. Proximity to loss – there is an expectation that off-site areas will be located as close as possible to the development site, incentivised by the biodiversity metric’s spatial risk multiplier, so that the area experiencing loss of biodiversity through the proposed development benefits from the compensation.*
- b. Best biodiversity value – offsite areas should be chosen in line with local priorities and actions for nature recovery, particularly those set out in the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy.*

¹² The Publication Plan is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201233/local_plan_review/3319/publication_plan

- **Policy N3 – Enhancing Green Infrastructure through development** – outlines how development can contribute towards green infrastructure using the Green Infrastructure Strategy and sets Urban Greening Factor targets.
- **Policy N4 Trees** – requires developments to show how trees have been retained and encourages contributing towards increasing the tree canopy cover, where possible. It sets out tree replacement requirements.

5.22 The Local Plan Review does not include site allocations. The plan does designate land however, such carrying forward existing Business Employment Areas.

5.23 The Council has, as part of its evidence base for the Local Plan, undertaken a review of land to determine whether it meets Local Green Space criteria, as set out in [National Planning Policy Framework](#)¹³ (NPPF), which has considered whether land is rich in wildlife. Rich in wildlife was described as including:

- Presence of SBIs
- Presence of Priority Habitats (dataset from Natural England)
- Likely presence of important populations of protected species

5.24 Oldham Council has also assessed an existing ‘Green Corridors and Links’ designations (a designation to support the movement of wildlife) to check whether the Green Corridors and Links are still justified and can be carried forward into the new Local Plan.

5.25 The Local Green Space Assessment and Green Corridors and Links review is discussed in more detail later in this report.

5.26 The Local Plan is supported by an Integrated Assessment (IA) which incorporates the requirements of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), alongside Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) and Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The role of a SA is to promote sustainable development through assessing the emerging Local Plan against economic, environmental and social objectives (including opportunities for net gain).

5.27 An IA has been undertaken and developed for each stage of the Local Plan review.

5.28 To assess the Local Plan a number of IA objectives are developed. In relation to biodiversity the main IA objectives are:

- IA1. To protect, conserve and enhance a high quality multifunctional green infrastructure network, including biodiversity, priority species, habitats and geodiversity to become more ecologically connected; and

¹³ NPPF is available at

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

- IA13. To ensure communities, infrastructure and biodiversity are resilient to the effects of climate change

5.29 The IA process can result in amendments to the Local Plan which helps secure net gains in social, environmental and economic objectives, including those on biodiversity.

5.30 For example, the IA has resulted in:

- Policy OTC2: Protecting and Enhancing Oldham Town Centre Conservation Area being amended from ‘appropriate greening’ to ‘appropriate multi-functional green infrastructure’ to ensure many benefits are delivered from greening at Draft Plan stage;
- OTC4: Green Infrastructure within and around Oldham Town Centre amended to refer to ‘multi-functional’ Green Infrastructure at Publication Plan stage; and
- Policy HE5 Canals was amended from referring to open space to green infrastructure at Draft Plan stage.

5.31 The IA also includes a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). A HRA has been prepared for each stage of the Local Plan to assess whether the Local Plan needs to be amended to avoid harm to European nature sites or needs to go forward for further, more detailed Assessment of impacts.

5.32 From the Screening process the following European sites have been screened in owing to proximity to Oldham or because there are pathways between Oldham and the designated sites:

- Manchester Mosses SAC (diffuse air pollution impacts),
- Rochdale Canal SAC (direct and indirect impacts),
- South Pennines Moors SAC/SPAs Parts 1 and 2 (direct and indirect impacts).

5.33 The Screening process identified the following sources as potentially likely to have a likely significant effect (LSE) on European designated Sites:

- direct habitat losses;
- increased habitat and species disturbance;
- increases in diffuse air pollution;
- increases in diffuse water pollution;
- increases in recreational pressures;
- disturbance to functionally linked land;
- visual and noise disturbance; and
- introduction of invasive plant species.

5.34 The appropriate assessment looks at the sources in more detail and identifies mitigation that is available:

- Holcroft Moss Planning Obligations Joint SPD;

- South Pennine Moors SAC/ SPA Joint SPD;
- Integrated Plan Policies N1, N2, N3, CC2, CC3 and LE3;
- Places for Everyone Policies including JP-G5 and JP-C8; and
- Project-level HRA for any development proposals which have the potential to cause foul and surface water discharges to water-sensitive designated sites.

5.35 Following consideration of the available mitigation it has been concluded that, providing the available mitigation is applied appropriately, the operation of the Publication Local Plan will not have any effects on the integrity of any European designated sites.

5.36 Therefore, the IA process has directly lead to protection and enhancement of biodiversity in relation to the preparation of the Local Plan.

Oldham's Green Infrastructure Strategy

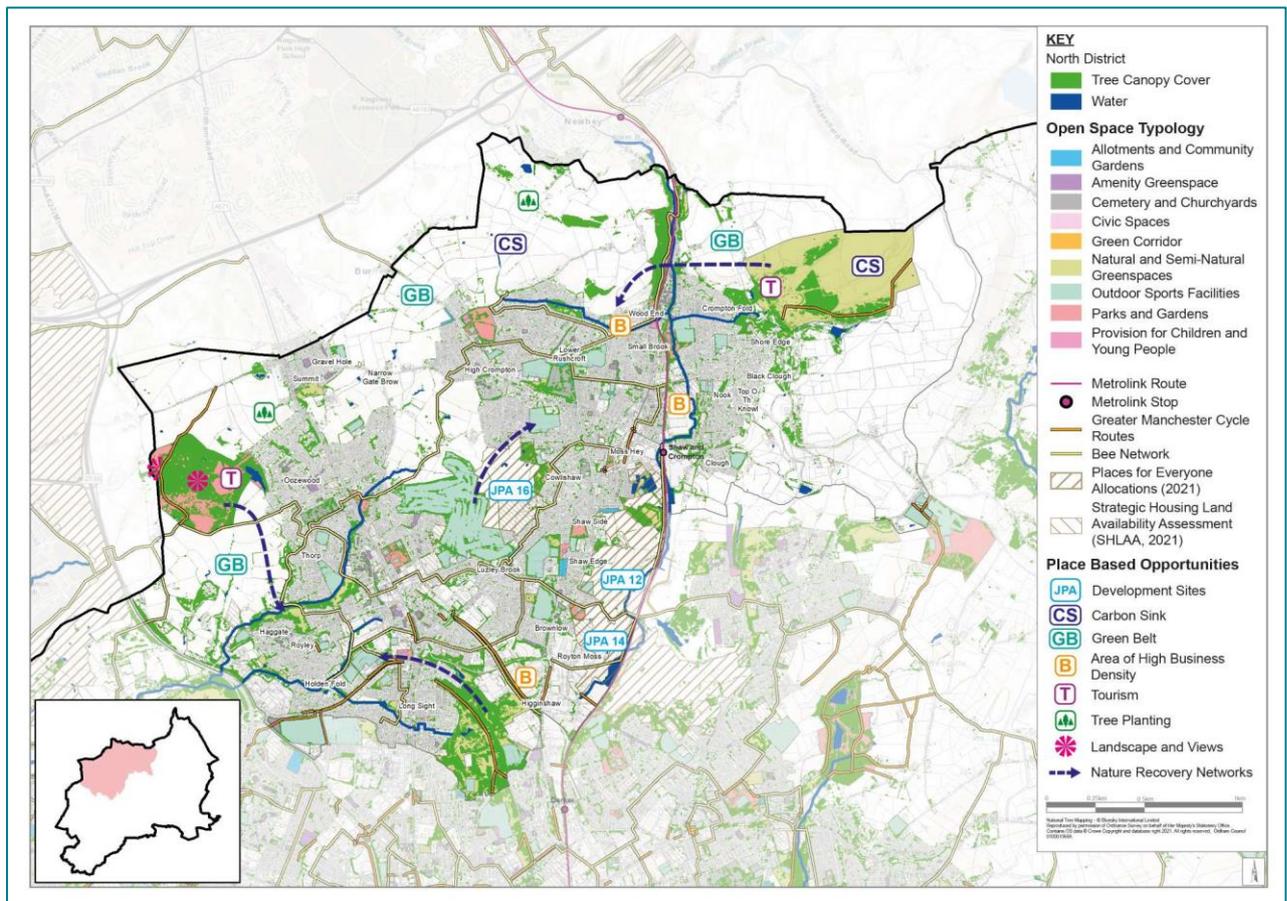
5.37 To support Local Plan evidence, [Oldham's Green Infrastructure Strategy](#)¹⁴ was commissioned and published in 2022. The Oldham GI Strategy sets out a vision that:

“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.”

5.38 ‘Thriving wildlife’ is one of the seven priority themes within the strategy. The strategy sets out opportunities for wildlife in each district across the borough. An example is provided below showing GI opportunities in North District.

¹⁴ The Green Infrastructure Strategy is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2183/oldham_green_infrastructure_strategy

Map 1: Green Infrastructure Opportunities in North District



Protected site strategies (PSS) and Species conservation strategies

5.39 Protected Site Strategies (PSS) involves bringing together a variety of relevant stakeholders to look beyond site boundaries at the wider environmental issues that may be impacting protected sites.

5.40 Species Conservation Strategies is a new mechanism to safeguard the future of particular species at greatest risk. The strategies will find better ways to comply with existing legal obligations to protect species at risk and to improve their conservation status. It builds on the success of the district level licensing approach for great crested newts.

5.41 Natural England is in the early stages of considering a South Pennines Protected Site Strategy. Oldham Council will consider the implications of this and any other PSS or species conservation strategies that are prepared.

6. Actions completed

6.1 Actions were identified in Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham report, and they broadly follow the same order as the report below.

6.2 Below is a summary of progress against actions that are either fully completed or are in progress either through Oldham Council working alone or working in partnership with other stakeholders.

Objective: To protect and restore areas of wildlife

Action: To increase the amount of land designated for nature:

6.3 The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) periodically surveys Sites of Biological Importance (SBI's) across Greater Manchester as part of a continuous process and notifies the Council when there are changes that need to be made to the designations.

6.4 There may be boundary or grade changes, new sites identified, or existing sites deleted.

6.5 Since January 2023, the following SBI changes have taken place in Oldham.

Table 1 Changes to Sites of Biological Importance in Oldham

Year (SBI notification received)	SBI amends
2023	None received
2024	Feb: Hull Brook net loss 0.6ha Ponds at Cowlshaw Farm gained 0.1ha Overall net loss 0.5ha October: Boardman's Edge – New SBI of 5.8ha Total: +5.3 ha (rounded up)
2025	Ladcastle Heath – New SBI of 4.9ha Armit Road Lodge net loss 0.3ha Medlock Headwater & Strinesdale net gain 0.4ha Moorgate Quarry net gain 0.1ha Total: +5.1ha

Table 2 Net changes in SBIs since 2023

Changes in SBI	Difference
Change in total SBI area for reporting years 2023-2025	+10.4 hectares
Change in total SBI area % for reporting years 2023-2025	+0.2%
Change in total number of SBIs	+ 2
Change in Total number of SBIs %	+5.2%

6.6 The information shows that there has been an increase in land designated for nature in Oldham.

6.7 Therefore, this action has been achieved for this Biodiversity Report.

6.8 There were no cost implications for this action.

Action: Bringing Local Wildlife Sites into active management for nature conservation and enhancement (LNRS has overall target of 50%)

6.9 This action has come from the Greater Manchester LNRS. It has been finalised to read: *“To bring 50% of sites designated for nature into active management for nature conservation by 2035.”*

6.10 This revised action / target is what we will report on in future.

6.11 In implementing this action GMCA, GMEU, Natural England and the ten Greater Manchester districts have agreed what the definition of active management means so that the action can be implemented consistently and effectively. The definition is set out below:

Annex: “Site in Active Management” definition

An appropriate management plan, action plan or conservation maintenance programme has been produced AND

- *There is a proactive, on-going, regular schedule of activities taking place (not just one-off, reactive work e.g. repair work after a flood)*
- *The proactive work is being undertaken in line with the management/action plan or equivalent and is:*
- *Recent i.e. work has taken place within the last 12 months (depending on purpose and goals of activity)*
- *Specifically related to habitat or species conservation/restoration (not just general maintenance for amenity/aesthetic purposes)*
- *Progress against the management plan or action plan is regularly monitored and subject to review (at a minimum every 5 years).*

Examples of active management for wildlife could include:

- *Removal or treatment of Invasive, Non-Native Species (INNS) such Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed, New Zealand Pygmy weed*
- *Activities undertaken to create, enhance or restore specific habitat types, such as:*
- *Hedgerows – e.g. hedge laying, coppicing, re-planting/filling gaps where necessary, routine trimming*
- *Woodland – planting new native species (where appropriate), coppicing, thinning/creating open areas, retaining dead wood on site*
- *Trees – new native tree planting (where appropriate), pollarding*
- *Grassland, meadows – planting native wildflowers (where appropriate), seasonal mowing/cutting, conservation grazing*
- *Ponds – creating new wildlife ponds (where appropriate), tree and scrub removal, sediment removal, managing surrounding vegetation*

Management Plan definition*

A Plan that has been produced for the purpose of managing land for nature conservation/habitat creation or restoration; goes beyond basic site maintenance or management for amenity/recreation. It would typically include sections outlining the purpose and aims of the management proposed for the site, a description of the site's location, ecological features such as broad habitat types and the current condition of the site. It should also include management goals (e.g. whether the site is being managed for a specific species or habitat), site-specific actions and an identified budget or funding source.

The Plan should have been produced or updated within the last 5 years, or an older Plan has been reviewed and still considered appropriate.

6.12 The next stage is implementing the agreed definition. GMCA has allocated each Greater Manchester district with a grant of up to £7500 to fund between two to four conservation maintenance programmes, Habitat Management Plans or appropriate equivalent plans during 2025-2026.

6.13 Sites within council ownership have been prioritised as the Council is able to have more control over implementing plans.

6.14 Oldham Council commissioned City of Trees to prepare two Habitat Management Plans for:

- Glodwick Lows Local Nature Reserve (within council ownership); and
- Crompton Fold Wood SBI (96% within council ownership).

6.15 Site visits were undertaken in September to October 2025, and the final Habitat Management Plans were completed at the end of January 2026.

6.16 Following this the Council needs to consider how the Habitat Management Plans can be implemented and resourced.

6.17 Therefore, this action is underway for this Biodiversity Report, with good progress made.

Action: Prepare, adopt and implement South Pennines SAC / SPA Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

6.18 The [South Pennine Moors SAC/SPA Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#)¹⁵ is applicable to three PFE Plan authorities - Oldham (not including the area covered by the Peak District National Park), Rochdale and Tameside and has been jointly by these three authorities.

6.19 The importance of the South Pennine Moors is reflected in a range of international, national and local habitat designations. It supports important breeding bird populations and is classified as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and two Special Protection Areas (SPA). The SPD relates to the:

- South Pennine Moors SAC;
- Peak District Moors SPA; and
- South Pennine Moors Phase 2 SPA.

6.20 Through the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) process in support of the PFE Plan new development within parts of these authorities was identified as having the potential to cause an adverse impact on the protected habitats and species on the South Pennine Moors areas listed above. To mitigate against this potential harm, PFE Plan Policy JP-G5: Uplands provides policy which will ensure that new development in these areas will not result in an adverse impact on the protected habitats and species.

6.21 The aim of this jointly produced SPD is to provide further guidance on how parts a and b of criterion 7 of PFE Policy JP-G5 will be implemented.

6.22 Policy JP-G5 parts 7a and 7b seek to ensure that new development does not have an adverse impact on protected habitats of the South Pennine Moors SAC, the Peak District Moors SPA and the South Pennine Moors Phase 2 SPA from urban edge effects (within 400m of the SAC and SPAs boundaries) or loss of and/or disturbance to functionally linked habitats (within 2.5km of the SAC and SPAs boundaries).

6.23 The aims of the SPD are to:

- Provide clear advice to developers as to what development may be considered an exception within the “Urban Edge Zone” (within 400m of the South Pennine Moors

¹⁵ The South Pennine Moors SPD is available at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/strategic-planning/places-for-everyone/joint-supplementary-planning-documents/south-pennine-moors-spd/adoption/>

SAC/SPAs) where development would not normally be acceptable, unless as an exception, the development and/or its use would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC or SPAs.

- Provide clear advice to developers as to the type and scope of habitat survey, which applications for development within 2.5km of the South Pennine Moors should be accompanied by. It also details that where such a habitat survey has identified the potential for functional linked habitats to the SPA, further evidence, including species surveys, will need to be provided, and avoidance or mitigation measures also provided.

6.24 Oldham Council worked with Tameside Council and Rochdale Council and GMCA, who co-ordinated the process to prepare, consult and finalise the SPD and its supporting documents in consultation with GMEU.

6.25 The SPD was adopted by the three Councils and came into effect on 8 May 2025.

6.26 The SPD is being used by development management when determining relevant planning applications and is being referenced within planning officer reports.

6.27 This action was funded (for Oldham's part) by the strategic planning budget for Local Plan work and has been achieved. Its implementation will continue, however.

Action: Prepare, adopt and implement Holcroft Moss Planning Obligations SPD

6.28 The [Holcroft Moss Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#)¹⁶ applies across the whole PfE Plan area and has, therefore, been prepared jointly by the nine PfE Plan authorities (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan).

6.29 Through the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) process in support of the PfE Plan (and also the recently adopted Warrington Local Plan), the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and in particular Holcroft Moss, has been identified as being at risk of harm from increased air pollution caused by the cumulative impact of traffic resulting from development in the Warrington Borough Council (WBC) area and the PfE Plan area. To mitigate against this harm, there is a need for the delivery of long-term ecological resilience works, involving hydrological restoration measures to benefit Holcroft Moss. As Holcroft Moss lies within the area of WBC, it will administer the implementation of the mitigation works on behalf of it and the nine PfE authorities.

6.30 The aim of this jointly produced SPD is to provide guidance on, and to facilitate, the timely provision of required mitigation at Holcroft Moss, within the Manchester Mosses SAC. It provides further guidance on how criterion 17 (in particular) of Policy JP-C8: Transport Requirements of New Development of the PfE Plan will be implemented. Criterion 17 seeks to ensure new development does not have an adverse impact on the protected habitats and species of Holcroft Moss, which lies in Warrington, within the Manchester Mosses SAC. The SPD is applicable to all nine PfE Plan local authority areas (excluding that part of Oldham within the Peak District National Park).

6.31 The SPD sets out the national and local planning policy context before setting out the approach to be taken in seeking developer contributions to mitigate adverse impact(s) on the protected habitats and species of Holcroft Moss.

6.32 The need for, and amount of, financial contributions will be identified at the planning application stage. As set out in Policy JP-C8 of the PfE Plan, where planning applications are required to be accompanied by a Transport Assessment, they will need to consider air quality impacts on Holcroft Moss, within the Manchester Mosses SAC. Any proposals that would result in increased traffic flows on the M62 past Holcroft Moss of more than 100 vehicles per day or 20 Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) per day must devise a scheme-specific range of measures to reduce reliance on cars, reduce trip generation, promote ultra-low emission vehicles, and provide a contribution towards restoration measures at Holcroft Moss.

¹⁶ The Holcroft Moss SPD is available at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/strategic-planning/places-for-everyone/joint-supplementary-planning-documents/holcroft-moss-planning-obligations-spd/adoption/>

6.33 Financial contributions will be negotiated at planning application stage and will be secured through a planning obligation. The planning obligation will specify the amount of the contribution and when it will be paid. The SPD sets out how to calculate the amount of contribution required in each case.

6.34 Working with Natural England and WBC, the nine PfE authorities have established the scope and estimated cost of the mitigation works. The proposed level of contributions is set out in the statement of estimated project costs and required contributions, which is available alongside the SPD. In consultation with WBC, the PfE authorities will keep the mitigation scheme costs, the housing and employment land supply and the level of contributions received under review in calculating the proportionate contribution required from a qualifying development.

6.35 The nine PfE authorities and WBC have agreed that the cost of the mitigation works will be apportioned between the two plans. The apportionment will be based on the potential impact on Holcroft Moss identified in the respective Plan's HRA. On this basis the PfE authorities will be responsible for 53% of the total costs and WBC will be responsible for 47% of the total costs.

6.36 The financial contribution(s) secured via this mechanism will enable the nine PfE Plan authorities, in conjunction with WBC, to fund mitigation works to address air quality impacts on Holcroft Moss from relevant development.

6.37 Each of the nine PfE Plan authorities will monitor progress of individual developments to which this SPD applies. WBC will monitor the implementation of the mitigation scheme, which will be funded by money secured by planning obligations in accordance with this SPD and transferred to WBC as necessary. Regular reporting will be provided by WBC to the nine PfE Plan authorities. The outcome of this monitoring will be included in authority monitoring report(s) as necessary.

6.38 This action was funded (for Oldham's part) by the strategic planning budget for Local Plan work and has been achieved. Its implementation will continue, however.

Action: Application of mitigation hierarchy in planning decisions and planning policy

6.39 This action is a day-to-day task that officers apply to all planning decisions, where relevant. It is therefore difficult to report on but ecology comments within planning officer reports should outline any impacts and if required mitigation / compensation.

6.40 Spatial constraints are included within GIS embedded into Uniform (development management's software for processing planning applications). This includes Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) core areas of biodiversity, nature designations, South Pennines SAC/SPA 400m and 2.5 km buffers (described above) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) impact zones.

6.41 The following two policies are proposed in the Oldham Local Plan – Publication Plan which relate to this action.

6.42 **Policy N1 Protecting Nature** outlines the hierarchy for designated sites which is to be safeguarded in line with national policy. The hierarchy proposed is:

1. Internationally designated sites including the Peak District Moors SPA; South Pennine Moors Phase 2 Special Protection Areas for Birds (SPAs) and South Pennine Moors Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and the Rochdale Canal SAC;
2. Nationally designated sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) at Dark Peak, South Pennine Moors, Ladcastle and Den Quarries, Lowside Brickworks, Rochdale Canal and Standedge Road Cutting;
3. Irreplaceable habitat including ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees and blanket bog;
4. Locally designated sites including Sites of Biological Importance (SBI's), Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (RIGS) and Local Nature Reserves;
5. Sites that are not designated for nature but contain substantive nature conservation value of local significance including priority habitats and species and other protected species, such as peat which is capable of restoration to support notable habitats, green corridors and recreational routes.

6.43 Development must avoid harm relevant to the hierarchy. An ecological assessment will be required as part of the planning application where a site contains, adjoins or may impact on a site which contains nature as described in the above hierarchy.

6.44 **Policy N2 Restoring Nature** sets out how development can help implement the LNRS (described later in this report). However, it also outlines that core areas of biodiversity will be safeguarded and development will avoid harm.

6.45 In preparing these policies formal consultation has taken place on the Draft Plan in 2024, and the Council has also since informally liaised with Natural England, GMEU and GMCA.

6.46 The revised Local Plan will need to be adopted after examination. The consideration of the biodiversity hierarchy will be a continuous process.

6.47 This action is covered by existing budgets for strategic planning and development management.

Action: Review of Green Corridors and Links designation as part of the Local Plan review to ensure the designation supports nature networks

6.48 Oldham Council has undertaken a review of [Green Corridors and Links](#)¹⁷, which is a designation for wildlife corridors. The Unitary Development Plan (2006), a previous local plan, paragraph 11.73 states:

6.49 Green Corridor and Links are a special feature of the Borough, thanks mainly to its river valleys, canals and features such as Oldham Edge, and are valuable both for wildlife and recreation. By linking together habitats they help to support a richer diversity of species than would exist in isolated natural areas and, because of their proximity to major residential areas, they allow local people a break from the pressures of urban living.

6.50 Paragraph 11.814 adds that ‘some are identified solely because they assist the movements of wildlife, for example the existing railway lines, while others assist the movement of both people and wildlife’.

6.51 Therefore, Green Corridor and Links served a wildlife role primarily and, in some cases, also a recreational role.

6.52 The [Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD](#)¹⁸ (the existing local plan, adopted in November 2011, in addition to PfE) carried these designations forward from the UDP.

6.53 The Green Corridors and Links review, which has been carried out to inform the Oldham Local Plan, seeks to assess whether the Green Corridor and Links are still justified.

6.54 The review has used the final [Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\)](#)¹⁹ to determine whether the Green Corridor and Links are still considered to be important for connecting areas of biodiversity.

6.55 The LNRS sets out a vision for nature recovery in Greater Manchester and priorities, targets and actions for different habitats and species. Actions that are not mapped are applicable for consideration across the borough wherever they are relevant.

6.56 Maps of a Greater Manchester Nature Network have been developed and are made up of:

¹⁷ The Green Corridors and Links Review is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2486/green_corridors_and_links_review

¹⁸ The Core Strategy is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201229/current_local_planning_policy/978/joint_core_strategy_and_development_management_policies_development_plan_documents_dpds

¹⁹ The GM LNRS is available at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/our-plan-for-nature-recovery/>

- Core local nature sites - existing valuable areas for nature which include our nature designations; and
- Opportunity Areas - opportunity areas where action should be focused across the city-region.

6.57 Oldham Council has not determined that the full Greater Manchester LNRS mapped areas are a ‘Green Corridor and Link’ as this would make the whole of the nature network a development constraint which it was not intended to be. Instead, the review considers whether the existing Green Corridor and Link designations are still justified, informed by whether they fall within the nature network.

6.58 Oldham’s Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies place-based opportunities including Nature Recovery Networks. As part of the Green Corridor and Links review, regard has been had to the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

6.59 The Council has also prepared a [Local Green Space Assessment](#)²⁰ which in some places overlaps with Green Corridor and Links.

6.60 The Green Corridor and Links review has noted where land is being proposed as a Local Green Space due to its wildlife significance informed by the Local Green Space Assessment.

6.61 Boundary amendments have been proposed to reflect the LNRS nature network better either by removing land where there does not appear to be evidence that land would help join up the nature network or by adding land in to reflect areas of the nature network adjoining the existing Green Corridor and Link.

6.62 In some cases, the Green Corridor and Link designation has been amended to reflect changes in land use such as development, including a new linear park, that has taken place at Foxdenton.

6.63 Below is a summary of the proposed changes which are covered in more detail within the assessment.

Table 3: Summary of review of Green Corridors and Links designation

Green Corridor and Link	Designation being taken forward	Boundary changes
Alexandra Park	Yes	No
Ashton Road / Simkin Way	No	N/A
Cemetery rear of Hibbert Crescent, Failsworth	No	N/A
Cemetery / Cricket Ground south of Duchess Street	No	N/A

²⁰ The Local Green Space Assessment is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7043/local_green_space_assessment

Chadderton Cemetery	Yes	No
Chew Valley Road to Halls Way, Greenfield	Yes	No
Clayton Playing Fields, Broadway	No	N/A
Egerton Street to Shaw Road (Oldham Edge)	Yes	Yes
Foxdenton Hall Park	Yes	Yes
High Crompton Park, Rushcroft Road	No	No
Hill End Road to Gatehead Croft, Delph	Yes	No
Lees New Road to Greenacres Road (1)	Yes	Yes
Lees New Road to Greenacres Road (2)	Yes	No
Lees New Road to Greenacres Road (3)	No	N/A
Long Clough Broadway, Royton	No	N/A
Lydgate Tunnel / Rear Oaklands Park, Grasscroft (1)	Yes	Yes
Lydgate Tunnel / Rear of Oaklands Park, Grasscroft (2)	Yes	Yes
Manchester Road Greenfield to Ryefields Drive, Uppermill	Yes	Yes
Mill Lane / Thorp Road, Royton	Yes	Yes
Northdowns / Rochdale Road, High Crompton	No	N/A
Oaklands Road	Yes	Yes
Railway – Morton Street, Hardman Lane, Failsworth	Yes	Yes
Rear of Broadbent Road / Whetstone Hill Lane (up to here)	No	N/A
Rear of Somerset Road, Failsworth	No	N/A
River Tame from Delph New Road to Mow Halls Lane	Yes	No
Rear of Elk Mill	Yes	Yes
Spurn Lane, Diggle	Yes	No

Stock Lane	No	N/A
Stonebreaks Road, Coopper Street	Yes	Yes
Sholver Lane	Yes	Yes
Wall Hill Road, Dobcross	Yes	No
Wall Hill Road / Hudsteads, Dobcross	No	N/A
Wrigley Head, Failsworth	No	N/A
Wrigley Head, Failsworth (1)	Yes	Yes

6.64 Although this exercise will involve the de-designation of some wildlife corridors having up to date evidence means the Council can justify the safeguarding of Green Corridors and Links where they have an important role to play in nature recovery. In addition, in many cases, where land is not being continued as a Green Corridor and Link it will continue to be protected as open space, where applicable and in one case a Site of Biological Importance.

6.65 This action has been achieved and had no cost implications to the Council.

Action: Designate Local Green Spaces, including where they are important for wildlife

6.66 A [Local Green Space Assessment](#)²¹ has been published as part of the evidence supporting the Local Plan Review.

6.67 There are 19 existing designated Other Protected Open Land (OPOL) sites allocated in the Core Strategy.

6.68 There is no reference to OPOL in NPPF, however it does set out an approach for Local Green Space (LGS) designation, which the Council considers is similar in its function and purpose as OPOL. LGS is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance. A LGS can only be designated through a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan. To align with NPPF it is proposed that all OPOL sites are de-designated (deleted) and designated as LGS where it has met the NPPF and its supporting guidance.

6.69 NPPF states the designation should only be used:

- Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves.
- Where the green space is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife.
- Where the green space concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

6.70 The following LGS are proposed to be designated by the Publication Plan:

- LGS 1 Royley Clough
- LGS 2 Ferney Field Road
- LGS 3 Foxdenton Hall Park
- LGS 4 Crossley Bridge Playing Field
- LGS 5 Moston Brook and Hole Bottom Clough
- LGS 6 Simkin Way
- LGS 7 Oldham Edge
- LGS 8 Land at Greenacres
- LGS 9 Thornley Brook
- LGS 10 Stonebreaks
- LGS 11 Dacres Hall

²¹ The Local Green Space Assessment is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7043/local_green_space_assessment

- LGS 12 Wall Hill
- LGS 13 Ryefields Drive
- LGS 14 Stoneswood
- LGS 15 Ainley Wood
- LGS 16 Land at Summershades Lane
- LGS 17 Rear of Elk Mill / Cotswold Drive
- LGS 18 Sholver (Land between Pearly Bank and Longfellow Crescent)

6.71 LGS 18 is a new LGS which was suggested by the local community in Sholver.

6.72 The LGS assessment was covered by strategic planning budget and upon adoption as part of the Local Plan Review the action will be complete.

Objective: To promote nature recovery networks in areas of lower biodiversity and optimise the GI functionality of existing open spaces to encourage wildlife.

Actions: To support preparation of the LNRS; and to have regard to the LNRS in planning decisions and land management.

6.73 The Environment Act 2021 introduced the requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to cover the whole of England, to set out where and how efforts should be focused locally to contribute to halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity.

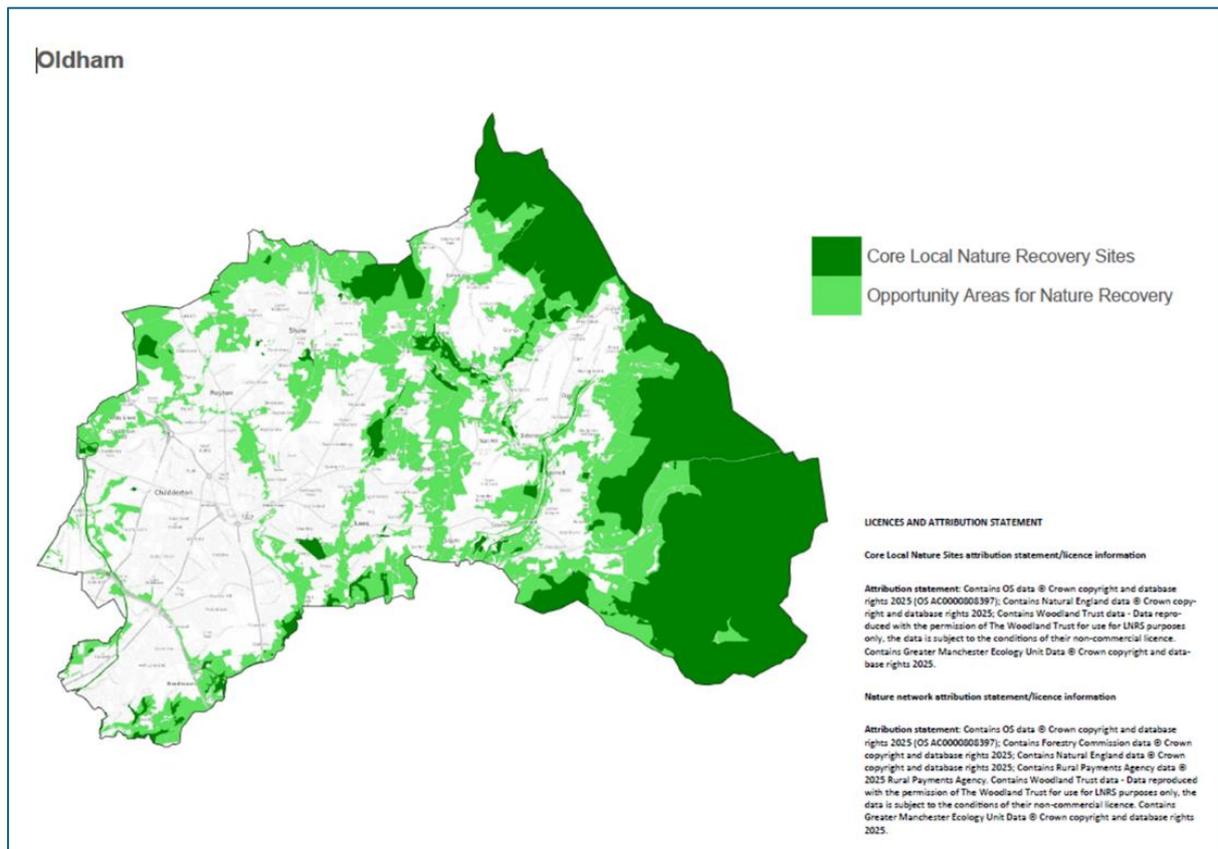
6.74 The [Greater Manchester LNRS](#)²² is an opportunity to set out a long-term vision for a greener city region, where nature is returning, and more people have better access to greenspace.

6.75 The strategy covers the following:

- A shared vision for nature recovery in Greater Manchester
- Shared priorities and targets for nature recovery
- Actions we can all work towards to help deliver them
- Maps of a Greater Manchester Nature Network made up of:
 - Core local nature sites - existing valuable areas for nature
 - Nature Recovery Opportunity Areas - opportunity areas where action should be focused across the city-region

²² The GM LNRS can be found at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/our-plan-for-nature-recovery/>

Map 2: Oldham's Nature Network



6.76 Across the borough of Oldham the LNRS sets out opportunities for:

- Woodlands, Trees, Scrub and Hedgerow;
- Grasslands, Farmland and Lowland Heath;
- River, Canal and Waterbodies;
- Lowland, Wetland and Mossland; and
- Upland Moorland.

6.77 The map of core local nature sites (areas of particular importance for biodiversity) sets out Greater Manchester's existing wildlife sites, including those designated and protected at an international, national and local level, as well as irreplaceable habitats. What to include in this map is prescribed by Defra through statutory guidance and termed "areas of particular importance for biodiversity."

6.78 The nature recovery opportunity area map (areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity) sets out how our core local nature sites can be joined up to create a Nature Network. These are areas where actions to enhance, restore or create different types of habitats (i.e. woodlands, grasslands, moorlands, waterbodies and wetlands) would expand and better connect our core local nature sites (our "areas which could become of particular importance for biodiversity").

6.79 What to include in the nature recovery opportunity area map is not prescribed in legislation or statutory guidance: GMCA has taken the following approach, building on previous work by the GMEU and local authorities, comprising three stages:

1. Ecological mapping – used connectivity modelling to map a nature network of how best to join up core local nature sites.
2. Refinement with local views and knowledge – local authorities and other stakeholders inputted to refine the map based on local knowledge.
3. Mapping measures on the nature network map – based on suitable land cover type and any constraints on the site.

6.80 This results in a final map, setting out the priority areas within which to focus action to create a joined-up Nature Network across Greater Manchester. They are spaces that are often used and managed in a range of different ways and for different purposes (e.g. for food production or recreation). These areas are not designated or protected, nor are they barriers to development. Development within these opportunity areas (or where it could have an impact on these areas) should seek to support and deliver on the priorities set out for these areas and help to work towards the wider ambitions of the Nature Network alongside other ambitions.

6.81 The Nature Network does not preclude action elsewhere across the city-region – the strategy sets out the reasons, priorities and actions to support nature and access to it across the city-region.

6.82 In terms of how we have worked and interacted together GMCA has engaged with stakeholders from across the city-region to develop the Greater Manchester plan for nature, supported by the GMEU, Natural England, the ten GM local authorities (Oldham and the other 9 GM LAs were ‘supporting authorities’), the Peak District National Park, and a steering group of partners, including:

- Canals and Rivers Trust
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- City of Trees
- Forestry Commission
- Groundwork Greater Manchester
- Irwell Catchment Partnership
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust
- National Farmers Union
- National Trust
- NHS Greater Manchester
- Royal Horticultural Society
- Southway Housing
- Environment Agency

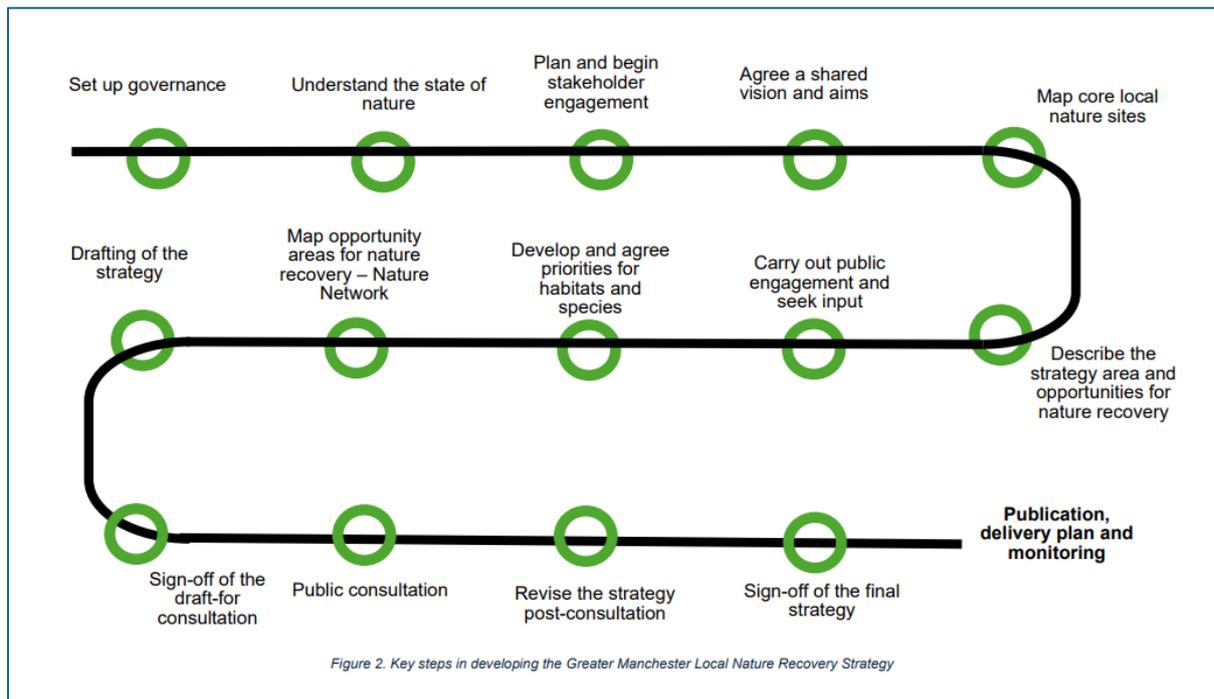
- Transport for Greater Manchester
- United Utilities
- University of Manchester
- Upper Mersey Catchment Partnership

8.83 GMCA:

- setup a local authority officer group, with representatives of all 10 local authorities. This group met regularly and were updated and consulted on key points of the strategy as it progressed. In Oldham there was one main point of contact with further officers across the Council consulted internally to input with different service perspectives;
- held six individual habitat workshops where the local authorities and other partner organisations on our Steering Group could provide feedback on key habitat priorities being developed for the strategy;
- conducted a survey allowing members of the Officer group and Steering Group to provide further feedback on the draft priorities and actions; and
- conducted a series of workshops focused on the opportunity maps, where members of the Officer Group were invited to contribute. Oldham Council officers have suggested additions (such as proposed Local Green Spaces, countryside sites and Northern Roots). Only one deletion has been requested to the core map to reflect a Site of Biological Importance (SBI) that was deleted in 2018 at Royton Moss. Officers have also reviewed and fed back comments on the LNRS strategy, which GMCA considered.

8.84 The image below shows the process map that GMCA followed and within this there were deadlines for feeding back at each stage and officer workshops providing opportunity for each district to engage and feedback on our plan for nature recovery and to contribute local priorities.

Figure 3: LNRS Process Map



8.85 Oldham Council agreed that they are content for the LNRS to be published at Cabinet meeting on 16 June 2025. Each GM district also went through their own decision-making process to confirm the same. GMCA launched publication of the GM LNRS on 5 September 2025.

8.86 The action to support preparation of the LNRS has been completed. There were no cost implications to Oldham Council.

8.87 In terms of having regard to the LNRS in planning decisions and land management the maps from the LNRS have been embedded into uniform, development management’s systems for processing planning applications, so that regard can be had to the LNRS.

8.88 The LNRS is also to be viewed as being of ‘strategic significance’ in the BNG metric. A [guidance note](#)²³ has been prepared by GMCA outlining this.

8.89 A LNRS training workshop was held for local authority officers during February 2026.

8.90 Strategic Planning have been noting opportunities to enhance nature using the LNRS as part of pre-application / planning application / masterplan comments.

²³ The BNG Strategic Significance and the LNRS guidance note is available at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/biodiversity-net-gain/biodiversity-net-gain-in-greater-manchester/>

8.91 Many of the actions within the LNRS are covered by this report e.g. increase the amount of land designated for nature.

8.92 The management plans for Oldham Council countryside sites will help implement the LNRS. The council is aligning management of land within Oldham with the LNRS.

8.93 The action to have regard to the LNRS is underway and is continuous. Implementing the LNRS will be done through a variety of funding streams. However, having regard to the LNRS in planning decisions has no cost implications.

Action: To expand our tree canopy cover from 13.4% to 15% within a generation and support the LNRS tree canopy cover within the LNRS for GM.

8.94 Oldham Council will work towards this objective and also contribute to the GM LNRS target of expanding the GM tree canopy cover from 15% to 17% of the city region by 2035.

8.95 The GM baseline for tree canopy cover as stated in the LNRS is 15%. The GM LNRS states this will be monitored annually. As the LNRS was only published in September 2025 there is no update on this baseline yet.

8.96 In 1990 Oldham's overall tree cover was around 5%, and with major tree planting and woodland creation projects throughout the 1990's and early 2000's This figure increased to 11.9% by 2017 when it was measured and surveyed again using the i-trees model. Since 2017 between 300 and 1000 standard trees have been planted each year as well as between 2 and 4 hectares of new woodland created annually.

8.97 The Oldham Green Infrastructure Strategy provided an updated position on Oldham's tree canopy as at 2022 which was 13.4%. An initial target of 15% has been set but a longer-term target would move towards 20%. Although in some parts of the borough such as the elevated areas of Saddleworth and Shaw the same levels of tree canopy cover will be difficult to achieve due to the presence of peatland habitat which should take priority. Large areas of tree planting may not be suitable within these areas.

8.98 Alongside Oldham Council's partners and groups the Council has since 2022 partnered with the conveyancing team at Pearsons' solicitors on the Future Roots project, where the Council supplies a new tree for every house in Oldham upon which the conveyancing is completed. Any trees that are not required by the new homeowners are pooled together and planted out on Oldham's public open space to create new copses and woodland. On average there are approximately 20 to 30 trees a month supplied for homeowner's new gardens and a further 30 to 40 trees each quarter to be planted out on Oldham's public open space.

Action: Explore and support offsite BNG / Habitat Banks within Oldham

8.99 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory on 12 February 2024 for major developments and 2 April 2024 for minor developments. Most developments are expected to achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%. Where possible, this net gain should be provided within a development site, but there will be situations where this is not possible, and so a developer will need to look at options for off-site which may involve purchasing BNG credits for off-site delivery of appropriate habitat improvements.

8.100 Considering the desire to retain BNG within Oldham, the Council commissioned Greater Manchester Environment Fund (GMEF) to prepare Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMPs) for the following eight countryside sites within Oldham Council ownership:

1. Bank Top;
2. Calf Lane;
3. Constantine Street;
4. Crompton Moor;
5. Daisy Nook;
6. Friezland;
7. Oldham Edge; and
8. Tandle Hills.

8.101 The work carried out by GMEF consisted of:

- Baseline Habitat Surveys - UK Habitat Classification (UKHAB) surveys to establish habitat type and condition;
- Baseline Unit Assessment - Metric 4 baseline unit assessment pre-intervention;
- Development of the Management Plan – this involved meeting with the council’s wider countryside team to discuss and agree target habitat via BNG agreements;
- Unit Uplift Assessment - Completion of metric 4 post intervention; and
- Costed Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

8.102 The HMMPs show the planned activities for each site.

8.103 These were completed in summer 2024 and were funded by a BNG grant.

8.104 As part of exploring how Oldham Council can use its own land for BNG, Oldham Council has been engaging with GMCA on an Off-Site Responsible Body Service.

8.105 GMCA are proposing to establish an Off-Site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Responsible Body Service for the Greater Manchester local authorities. The service is designed to help the GM local authorities meet the Environment Act 2021 requirement

for a 10% biodiversity uplift in new developments, particularly when this cannot be achieved on-site.

8.106 The new Responsible Body status will enable GMCA to enter Conservation Covenants with all GM local authorities, facilitating the registration of habitat banks and the sale of BNG units locally, raising revenue for the local authority. The service will operate on a cost-neutral basis, funded through administrative fees and a subscription model.

8.107 The Responsible Body Service has been designed in conjunction with GMEU, with support from the 10 Greater Manchester local authorities.

8.108 There are three main aspects to the service – validation, verification and auditing – which require different activities to be carried out. These activities require different expertise – including legal and ecological input – under the oversight of GMCA as the Responsible Body.

8.109 The management of the Responsible Body Service will be included in GMCA's Environment Directorate, with a dedicated GMCA Project Manager post (part time) to be in place to meet demand, particularly the validation and verification stages. GMCA will commission GMEU to deliver key aspects of the service over the required 30-year duration of the Conversation Covenant.

8.110 More information on the service is available [here](#)²⁴.

8.111 Once the Responsible Body service has been fully established, and potential sites have been assessed in detail, Oldham Council will be able to register land on Natural England's biodiversity gain site register. The Council will then be able to sell biodiversity units for off-site BNG schemes. Not only will this contribute to wider nature recovery objectives in establishing new and enhanced habitats, it will also support a local habitat bank market. This will help to encourage any new habitat required through development taking place in Oldham's planning boundary to be replaced within the borough.

8.112 This work is still ongoing and there would be some cost implications. A separate report for approval would be sought.

²⁴ Further details of the Responsible Body Service is available at <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s41394/10A%20Off-Site%20BNG%20Responsible%20Body%20Service%20-%20Final.pdf>

Action: Explore and support offsite BNG / Habitat Banks within Oldham

Entering into legal agreements with landowners to secure land for BNG

8.113 In addition to the work on off-site BNG on Council owned land to create Habitat Banks (explained above), GMCA has published [off site BNG guidance](#)²⁵ to help assist landowners who want to legally secure and register a site as a habitat bank. Securing a Section 106 with a local authority is one of the ways for third parties to legally secure their sites for off-site BNG.

8.114 This would allow landowners then to enhance the biodiversity value of the land for a fee which a developer(s) would pay for to meet their BNG requirements or to meet the landowner's own BNG requirements from a development site elsewhere.

8.115 The guidance sets out the process for verifying and auditing habitat banks that come forward for S106 agreements in Greater Manchester, detailing the roles the Local Planning Authority and GMEU (or in-house ecologists) will play to ensure successful delivery of offsite BNG. Its purpose is to provide consistent guidance to be used in the absence of any district specific guidance which may be available.

8.116 The Council would be able to charge for this service.

8.117 The Council has not yet signed any Section 106 with a third party to legally secure the landowners site for off-site BNG but would positively enter discussions as opportunities arise.

Supporting other Habitats Banks within Oldham

8.118 In addition to the above, other habitat banks may be established within Oldham that have used the service of a Responsible Body elsewhere to legally secure the land.

8.119 The Council will have minimal involvement in the establishment of habitat banks in this case but will be required to register the habitat banks with Land Charges, as was the case with the below two habitat banks.

Shaw Habitat Bank:

- National Character Area (NCA): Southern Pennines
- Biodiversity gain sites register number: BGS-130325001

8.120 Biodiversity Units available to buy:

- Very high distinctiveness habitats: Lowland meadows
- High distinctiveness habitats: Ponds (priority habitat)
- Medium distinctiveness habitats: Rural trees and Other neutral grassland

²⁵ The council has provided a link to the off-site BNG guidance available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200399/applying_for_planning_permission/3300/biodiversity_net_gain

8.121 The Habitat Bank sits beside the Crompton Moor Site of Biological Importance (SBI) – providing a valuable opportunity to connect habitats across the area.

Newhey Habitat Bank:

8.122 This habitat Bank mostly falls within Rochdale, with a smaller proportion in Oldham.

- National Character Area (NCA): Southern Pennines
- Biodiversity gain sites register number: BGS-130325001

8.123 Biodiversity Units available to buy:

- Very high distinctiveness habitats: Lowland meadows and Fens (upland and lowland)
- High distinctiveness habitats: Ponds (priority habitat):
- Medium distinctiveness habitats: Rural trees; Mixed scrub; Upland acid grassland; and Other neutral grassland

8.124 The Newhey Habitat Bank is just beside the Crompton Moor Site of Biological Importance (SBI), a designated site that will benefit from connectivity to our Habitat Bank.

Action: Implement the GI Strategy and open space audit through Local Plan review Policies

8.125 The Local Plan review is underway and consultation on the [Publication Local Plan](#)²⁶ took place between 4 February 2026 and 20 March 2026.

8.126 Within the Plan, Policy N3 ‘Enhancing Green Infrastructure through development’ has embedded the Green Infrastructure Strategy into a policy. The policy requires new development to make an appropriate contribution to addressing local needs and opportunities for Green Infrastructure provision.

8.127 The policy sets out criteria for development to consider. Larger developments of 20 homes or more or non-residential development of 1,000 square metres or more is required to consider further criteria.

8.128 Major developments should also use the national Urban Greening Factor calculator to demonstrate that the scores set out in the policy have been met.

8.129 Householder and change of use applications are not required to meet the policy criteria but are expected to incorporate practical measures to support biodiversity such as incorporation of swift bricks.

8.130 Policy N4 Trees also links to the Green Infrastructure Strategy and encourages developments to contribute to increasing the borough’s tree canopy cover.

8.131 The Green Infrastructure Strategy has also been incorporated into Policy OTC4 – Green Infrastructure within and around Oldham Town Centre, making reference to the creation of active travel routes across the town centre, linking it to Northern Roots and Oldham Edge, and PfE JPA12 Beal Valley and JPA14 Broadbent Moss and beyond; and the use of greenspaces as stepping stones to promote nature recovery networks linking Alexandra Park, Glodwick Lows Local Nature Reserve and Oldham Edge.

8.132 The updated open space audit has been incorporated into Policy CO1 The Protection of Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision and Policy CO2 New and Improved Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision.

8.133 Therefore, much of the work related to this action has been completed. However, the Local Plan is subject to independent examination before it can be adopted. This action is therefore ongoing.

8.134 The action is funded through existing strategic planning budget.

²⁶ The Oldham Publication Plan is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201233/local_plan_review/3319/publication_plan

Actions:

Production of a Local Cycling, Walking & Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and opportunities to enhance biodiversity; and

Progression of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) schemes and opportunities to boost biodiversity e.g. through rain gardens²⁷.

8.135 Work on the LCWIP continues, with biodiversity enhancement opportunities being incorporated as the plan develops.

8.136 Delivery of the CRSTS programme is ongoing. Biodiversity improvements such as the inclusion of rain gardens are consistently considered as part of scheme development.

²⁷ an area of natural greenery or foliage which helps soak up excess rain water to help prevent flooding

Objective: To promote multi-functional Green Infrastructure in allocated and potential development sites

Action: Implement PfE allocation and thematic policies relating to biodiversity

8.137 PfE was adopted and came into effect on March 21, 2024. The policies and objectives section of this report outlines some of the thematic policies within PfE. Within PfE there are also site allocation policies with detailed site-specific criteria that must be considered.

8.138 Officers consider which Local Plan policies apply when determining a planning application.

8.139 Sometimes a policy will be considered because it links to a 'constraint' associated with the site. For example, our constraints will identify when a site boundary is within 2.5km of the South Pennines SAC / SPA. In this case the officer knows that PfE Policy JP-G5 Uplands would apply as well as its supporting South Pennine Moors SAC / SPA Supplementary Planning Document.

8.140 This action is therefore continuous and there are no cost implications as PfE has been adopted.

Action: Liaise on production of masterplan / design codes for strategic allocations in PfE and seek to enhance GI.

8.141 PfE policies in relation to JP Allocation 10: Beal Valley; JP Allocation 12: Broadbent Moss; JP Allocation 13 Chew Brook Vale (Robert Fletchers); JP Allocation 14: Cowlshaw; and JP Allocation 15: Land South of Coal Pit Lane (Ashton Road) requires that development is in accordance with a comprehensive masterplan and design code as agreed by the local planning authority.

8.142 Oldham Council has been liaising with landowners on the production of masterplans and design codes where work is underway on each of the sites. Where this has taken place, the Council has provided informal and / or formal comments on these considering the site-specific criteria for the site as well as any other relevant policies.

8.143 A website showing the draft masterplan, including provision for GI, for Broadbent Moss and Beal Valley is available at <https://bvbm-masterplan.co.uk/>. This is subject to change.

8.144 In addition, the masterplan for Beal Valley and Broadbent Moss is now being prepared as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which means that Oldham Council will lead on taking the SPD through the relevant stages.

8.145 Details of the SPD is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201229/current_local_planning_policy/256/supplementary_planning_documents.

Action: Establish wetland catchment area at Broadbent Moss / Beal Valley

8.146 PfE Policies for JP Allocation 10: Beal Valley and JP Allocation 12: Broadbent Moss require development to include provision for a wetland catchment area to provide net gains for flood storage, integrating it with the wider multi-functional green infrastructure network and incorporating sustainable drainage systems.

8.147 The draft masterplan indicates where two wetland catchment areas / flood storage areas will be located linked to the green infrastructure network. This will help provide new wetland habitats. Existing habitats will be incorporated in the development including the woodlands, grasslands, scrub, watercourses and wetlands to form the structure of the ecological network.

8.148 Details of the wetland catchment are available in the SPD being prepared (see above).

Action: Encourage multi-functional GI in other development sites through the Local Plan review policies and consideration of mapped measures in the LNRS

8.149 The Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan is not allocating sites for development. However, as part of discussing and determining development proposals regard will be had to the PfE policies and the Local Plan policies when adopted to encourage multi-functional Green Infrastructure.

8.150 In addition to Local Plan policies N3 and N4 outlined above and PfE policies outlined in the policies and objectives section the Local Plan review also encourages multi-functional Green Infrastructure and consideration of mapped measures in the LNRS through Policy N2 Restoring Nature. This requires development to have regard to the LNRS and seek to support and deliver on the priorities and actions for nature recovery.

8.151 Development on land within an opportunity area should seek to:

1. Protect and enhance existing habitats; and
2. Restore and create habitats in a way that significantly improves connectivity within the development site and beyond.

Action: Support neighbourhood planning groups in preparing policies to enhance biodiversity in neighbourhood plans.

8.152 Through the Localism Act 2011, Parish Councils or neighbourhood forums were given powers to develop a shared vision and planning policies through a Neighbourhood Plan.

8.153 A Neighbourhood Plan is a plan prepared by a community guiding future development and growth. The plan may contain a vision, planning policies, or allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development. Neighbourhood Plans should address the use and development of land and relate to social, economic and environmental issues with the aim of promoting sustainable development.

8.154 Oldham Council has a statutory duty to give advice or assistance on neighbourhood planning.

8.155 Currently there are two neighbourhood planning areas designated in Oldham borough – [Saddleworth](#)²⁸ and [Chadderton](#)²⁹.

8.156 The New Chadderton Partnership has been designated as a neighbourhood forum with the purpose of preparing a neighbourhood plan. They are at the initial stages of plan making.

8.157 Saddleworth Parish Council have now formally submitted the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan to Oldham Council and the Peak District National Park Authority.

8.158 Oldham Council has informally and formally provided comments on draft versions on the Neighbourhood Plan as it has progressed. This includes providing comments on policies that seek to protect and enhance biodiversity.

8.159 The Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan includes the following policies relating directly to biodiversity:

- Policy 1: Green Infrastructure
- Policy 2: Biodiversity
- Policy 3: Protected Species
- Policy 4: Local Green Space

²⁸ Details of the designation of Saddleworth Neighbourhood area is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201235/neighbourhood_planning/2936/saddleworth_neighbourhood_plan

²⁹ Details of the designation of Chadderton Neighbourhood area are available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201235/neighbourhood_planning/2937/chadderton_neighbourhood_plan

8.160 Oldham Council has also provided comment on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) prepared by GMEU and have screened the Neighbourhood Plan against the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) regulations.

8.161 Oldham Council has also advised on the Local Green Space Assessment to support the four proposed Local Green Spaces at Diggle Fields, Dawson's Field (Scouthead), Playing Fields at Ashfield, Springhead and Church Fields, Dobcross. These include land within Oldham Council's ownership, and their wildlife significance has been considered.

8.162 The Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a formal consultation in during 2026 (Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations).

8.163 It will then be submitted to an independent examiner before a referendum can be held and the plan made (adopted). Once made, the plan will be used to assess development proposals within the Parish Council area.

8.164 This action is therefore in progress. There will be some cost implications to this action, however this is being dealt with under a separate Cabinet report (RBO-04-25).

Objective: To encourage habitat creation and enhancement in the Green Belt

Action: Implement Green Belt policy in PfE (JP-G9 The Green Belt) on enhancing the remaining Green Belt in relation to habitat restoration.

8.165 As part of working with developers on the PfE Allocations enhancing the remaining Green Belt will be discussed as part of the pre-application / masterplan stage and at planning application stage. The Council would expect this to be addressed within the masterplan and planning application documents.

8.166 As masterplans are published and planning applications submitted detail on this will become available.

8.167 This action is ongoing and has no cost implications to the council.

Objective: To raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity

Action: Volunteering opportunities related to biodiversity

8.168 This action was not listed in the Policies and Objectives report, however Oldham Council allows staff up to three days per year to take time away from their normal duties to volunteer. There are a range of volunteer opportunities however current opportunities include working with Groundwork Oldham. Staff could currently:

- Help protect nature in the Medlock Valley - The Medlock Valley Partnership are working in Manchester, Oldham and Tameside to preserve and restore vital habitats in the River Medlock Valley to halt species decline. The partnership is working improve grassland, woodland and wetland habitats; and
- Help green Oldham's Town Centre – Groundwork Oldham are working with the Council to install nature-based solutions such as rain gardens and an abundance of native plants.

Action: Keep a log of work undertaken by Environmental Services, Partners and Volunteer Groups and celebrate successes through Communications

8.169 A 'Biodiversity Tracker' (see appendix 1) has been created and shared across Oldham Environment Team where specific projects and ad hoc actions are added that contribute to improving biodiversity and contributing to the LNRS. This is a working document that will continue to develop and is not exhaustive as many minor actions can contribute to enhancing biodiversity.

8.170 In many places across the Council's countryside estate, we have adopted a non-intervention or a re-wilding approach which we are monitoring.

8.171 A summary of some of the achievements captured in this tracker since 2023 are highlighted below:

- Six Leaky Dams³⁰ installed at Crompton Moor and four more planned;
- Peatland restoration at Crompton Moor;
- Over six hectares of Woodland creation at Crompton Moor, Holts Valley, Glodwick Lows and Bishops Park;
- Woodland improvement work at Donnelly's Hollow;
- New and restored habitats created at Leesbrook Park;
- Restored habitats at Crime Lake, Bardsley Canal and Sammy's Basin;
- A new park (Tommyfield Park) and green infrastructure in Oldham Town Centre underway;
- Invasive weed control across the borough;
- Sowing of wild flowers across the borough;
- 1509 trees planted; and
- Remove Rhododendron and self-seeded birch in heather at Moorgate Quarry.

8.172 At Lees Brook Nature Park, work is underway to naturalise the riverbank using monies from the Species Survival Grant. This is an ongoing project resulting from the Medlock Valley Nature Partnership group which is a cross border and multi-agency project.

³⁰ Leaky Dams are a natural, permeable barrier to slow water flow and mitigate downstream flooding

Figure 4: Outputs from the Medlock Valley Restoration Programme (Groundwork Greater Manchester)

OLDHAM

1 weir removed	48 events
2130m footpaths improved	664 attendees
5014 trees planted	205 young people
2.15ha INNS controlled	1363 volunteer hours contributed



GROUNDWORK GREATER MANCHESTER

8.173 Appendix 2 includes a presentation on the Medlock Valley Restoration project by Groundwork Greater Manchester.

Action: Identify, advise and assist community / voluntary groups

Action: Include the public /interest groups in projects such as town centre linear park, Northern roots and leaky dams

8.174 Below is a list of the partners that Oldham Council works with to create and restore biodiversity. Working with such partners and voluntary groups the Council will advise and assist where possible. Many of these groups will involve the public where volunteering is sought.

Organisations and Third Sector Partners

City of trees

Woodland creation, natural flood management (NFM), moorland/peatland restoration, species recovery and monitoring, academic projects, fundraising, engagement and education.

Groundwork

Species survival, woodland management, habitat creation, infrastructure work, fundraising, engagement and education.

Natural England

High level feasibility work, group working, oversight and fundraising.

Canals and Rivers Trust

Group working, project collaboration, Infrastructure work and water quality.

Environment Agency

Group working, collaboration, water quality, in channel works and fundraising.

United Utilities

NFM, water quality, group working, collaboration and fundraising

Pearsons Solicitors

Tree planting (future roots)

Garfield Weston

Fundraising

Life for a Life

Tree planting, woodland and grassland management.

Northern Roots

Group working, collaboration, education and training, woodland and grassland management, NFM and water quality.

Moors for the Future

Moorland and peatland restoration, group working, collaboration and engagement.

Trust for Conservation Volunteers

Community engagement, small infrastructure projects, group working and collaboration.

Probation Service

Environmental projects and small-scale infrastructure projects.

Volunteers and Friends' Groups

Oldham Countryside Volunteer Ranger Service

Small scale infrastructure projects

Friends of Crompton Moor

Small scale infrastructure projects, fundraising, species reporting and monitoring, peatland/moorland restoration, woodland creation, dry stone walling, NFM, habitat management, biodiversity improvements and collaboration.

Friezland User Group

Small infrastructure projects and collaboration.

Hunt Lane and District Residents Association

Collaboration

Friends of Royton Linear Park

Biodiversity improvements, tree planting and small infrastructure projects.

Friends of Tandle Hills

Collaboration

Medlock Valley Fishing Club

NFM, water quality and collaboration.

Action: Consider staff training courses to consider how biodiversity can be enhanced in all our roles

8.175 Oldham Council has obtained a free course 'Biodiversity for Council's' from the Local Government Association and embedded this into 'Me Learning', Oldham Council's internal training software.

8.176 The course looks at:

- what biodiversity is and why it is important to councils and local communities;
- the current biodiversity crisis and how this links to climate change and sustainable development;
- International agreements and legislation which shape action on biodiversity;
- the roles of councillors and council officers in conserving and protecting biodiversity; and
- how councils can have a positive impact on biodiversity, including case studies.

8.177 This action has therefore been completed. However, consideration could be given to how this course is promoted to increase take up, such as targeting specific teams.

Objective: To consider biodiversity in corporate plans and decisions

Action: Consider biodiversity implications in decision making reports and through the Oldham Impact Assessment Tool

8.178 Liaison has taken place with Oldham Council's Strategy and Performance team and text highlighting the Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham has been added to the Impact Assessment Tool homepage and linked to the aims of Our Future Oldham in terms of a clean and green environment.

8.179 Therefore, progress has been made. The Council could work towards getting consideration of enhancing biodiversity fully embedded within the tool.

8.180 There are no cost implications to this action.

Other actions:

Review and monitoring of key biodiversity data

Monitoring of biodiversity in Local Plan Monitoring Reports

8.181 Oldham's [Monitoring Report](#)³¹ is part of the Local Plan.

8.182 The report monitors:

- The progress of documents identified for production as part of the Local Plan
- The implementation of the borough's planning policies

8.183 Policies are monitored to find out whether:

- They are achieving their objectives and delivering sustainable development
- They have unintended consequences
- The assumptions and objectives behind policies are still relevant
- The targets are being achieved.

8.184 The monitoring report includes local indicators including:

- Change in areas of biodiversity importance; and
- Improved local biodiversity

8.185 The monitoring report is available on the council's [website](#)³² and is published annually.

8.186 Last year's Monitoring Report (2023-2024) shows that an update to the borough's Sites of Biological Importance was received in October 2024 and was approved in December 2025 which included a new SBI at Boardman's Edge (Grade B), resulting in a net gain of 5.8 ha.

8.187 It also reported that 100% of local sites (41) are under positive conservation management. Positive management includes wetland creation and management, leaking dams, woodland creation and management, pollinators, non-intervention and invasive weed control. Habitat piles, standing and fallen deadwood. Wildlife reporting, tackling ASB, species protection and monitoring.

8.188 When the revised Local Plan is adopted, the indicators that will be used to monitor the Local Plan and biodiversity include:

- Single data list 160-00 Proportion of local sites where positive conservation management is being or has been implemented

³¹ The Monitoring Reports are available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201230/monitoring/263/oldhams_monitoring_report

³² The monitoring report can be found at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201230/monitoring/263/oldhams_monitoring_report

- Change in areas of biodiversity designations (i.e. SBI updates)
- Percentage of sites designated for nature in active management for nature conservation
- Percentage of tree canopy cover

Positive biodiversity outcomes achieved through planning decisions (in addition to BNG)

8.189 The following table details Section 106 obligations related to biodiversity excluding mandatory BNG since 1 January 2023. Please note these have been summarised for the purposes of this report.

Table 4 Section 106 obligations relating to biodiversity

Planning application Number	Section 106 obligation
349943	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay a commuted sum of £55,050 towards off site biodiversity improvements within Greater Manchester. This is not related to mandatory BNG.
349943	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay a commuted sum of £3,900 towards the provision of trees within the Borough of Oldham.
352791	Open Space Contribution of £4,269.79 towards the improvement of existing public open space in the vicinity of the Site, specifically improvements to Berriesfield Park.
349826	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay a commuted sum of £365,736.80 towards the enhancement of the existing open space provision in Diggle at: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ward Lane Play Area - New play area to replace old/existing tree works path improvement works and fencing; b) Diggle Fields - New adventure play/trim trail to replace old/existing new outdoor gym tree work path improvement works drainage improvement works fencing renewal of story trail and new additional timber seating; c) Diggle Pond - Pond clearance improvement works and path and landscape improvement works; and d) Sunfield Avenue Play Area - New play area to replace old existing; 2. Pay a commuted sum of £55,000 towards the improvement of habitats for the Long Eared owl and both woodland and water habitats within the local area.
346447	The Planning Obligation requires Replacement Trees Commuted Sum for the replacement of trees on the site in accordance with to the following formula: Trees to be Replaced x 3 x £300 = Replacement Trees

	Where the Council confirms that a deficiency exists in open space the Owner shall calculate the amount of the Open Space Commuted Sum for the provision of off site open space
346950	The Planning Obligation requires the landowners to pay the Council a commuted sum of £5400 for the planting and maintenance of 18 replacement trees on Council owned land immediately to the north of site.
350748	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. pay a commuted sum of £8,000 (indexed) to the Council to be used for the purposes of biodiversity mitigation (biodiversity net gain) 2. pay a commuted sum of £38,700 (indexed) to the Council to be used to plant new trees within the Council's local authority area.
348321	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay a commuted sum of £1200 towards the provision of trees on land at Abbey Hills Road and Holts Lane.
351514	The Planning Obligation requires the adjoining landowner to submit and implement the Linear Park Scheme Phase 2 relating to the development of the. The adjoining landowner is not obliged to spend more than £132,000 on the construction of the Linear Park Scheme Phase 2.
347782	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay a commuted sum of £3825 towards the provision of trees within the Borough of Oldham.
347783	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay a commuted sum of £18,675 towards the provision of trees within the Borough of Oldham.
350525	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay £10,800 to the Council towards the provision of trees on land within the vicinity of the site in the Borough of Oldham.
351515	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay a commuted sum of £12,900 for the provision of 43 trees to be planted off site within the Borough of Oldham.
350819	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay a commuted sum of £61,220.04 as a contribution towards the reinstatement and improvement of public open space at George Square Oldham.
351228	£7,486 towards amenity greenspace enhancement, enhancement of provision for children and young persons and outdoor sports facilities within the vicinity of the land.
352533	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay the Council a commuted sum of £2,400 towards the provision of trees within the Borough of Oldham
346949	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay a commuted sum of £1500 towards the provision of trees within the Borough of Oldham.
349938	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay a commuted sum of £800 towards the provision of 2 replacement trees within the vicinity of the site on the completion of the Planning Obligation.

353295	The Planning Obligation requires the landowner to pay £2,400 towards the provision of 6 replacement trees within the vicinity of the Site.
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8.190 In addition, often proposals will involve on site creation or enhancement of habitats and nature-based solutions. Oldham Council ensure that developments put in additional ecological enhancements wherever possible, in line with GMEU advice. This may sometimes be secured through a planning condition.

9. Biodiversity Net Gain information

9.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to include information on Biodiversity Net Gain.

Monitored biodiversity gains and the results of this monitoring

9.2 Oldham Council has secured the services of GMEU to provide consultation responses on all planning applications and development plan documents which could involve ecological considerations and BNG. This involves:

- providing pre-application advice on ecology and BNG matters;
- reviewing and making recommendations on BNG metrics and other BNG-related documents, such as draft biodiversity gain plans and draft Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMPs) submitted as part of planning applications;
- Making recommendations and negotiating with developers on the best outcomes for BNG, such as identifying the most suitable locations and forms of habitat provision;
- Reviewing post-permission BNG documents, including final metrics, gain plans and HMMPs and making recommendations on the appropriateness of final proposed BNG schemes and discharges of BNG-related conditions.

9.3 Oldham Council has also arranged for GMEU to undertake post-permission BNG monitoring (or “auditing”) of relevant schemes, such as those involving “significant” on-site BNG. This service involves tracking on-going habitat creation/enhancement on relevant sites, requiring regular monitoring reports from habitat managers, site visits, reviewing and making recommendations on submitted reports, providing advice on any necessary mitigation, supporting enforcement action (if necessary), keeping a register of all habitat banks (and unit allocations) in Greater Manchester and providing BNG data.

Quantitative data

9.4 Table 5 below shows the number of planning applications validated and granted permission (including subject to legal agreement) between 12 February 2024 to 4 December 2025 and that required BNG and where an exemption to the BNG condition applied.

Table 5: Planning applications requiring BNG or exempt from BNG

Planning applications	Number
Total number of planning permissions granted permission that require biodiversity net gain in the reporting period	39
Total number of planning permissions granted in the reporting period where an exemption to the biodiversity net gain condition	993

9.5 The reasons for exemption to the BNG condition are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 reasons for exemption to BNG condition

Reason for exemption to BNG condition	Number
Householders	701
S73 applications	23
De Minimis	228
Temporary non-major exemption	41

9.6 The Defra BNG Reporting spreadsheet has been completed as much as practicable by GMEU and this is shown below and in Appendix 3. A summary is shown in Tables 7 to 9 below.

Table 7: Quantitative BNG data: general data Feb 2024-1 January 2026

Consented applications requiring net gains	Number	Proportion
Number of biodiversity gain plans approved	6	n/a
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved securing BNG through on-site units only	4	67%
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through off-site units only	0	0%
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through statutory credits only	0	0%
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	2	33%
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site units and statutory credits	0	0%
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0	0%
Number of approved biodiversity gain plans that impact on irreplaceable habitat	0	0%

Table 8: Location and number of approved offsite biodiversity units (figures rounded up)

Location of off-site biodiversity units	Total	Proportion
Number of off-site biodiversity units located inside LPA boundary or NCA of impact site.	0.2	4%
Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but in neighbouring LPA or NCA	0	0%
Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside of LPA or NCA of impact site and neighbouring LPA or NCA	5.1	96%

Table 9: Quantitative BNG data: overall expected gains and losses across all biodiversity gain plans approved Feb 2024-1 January 2026 (figures rounded up)

Overall expected gains and losses	Area Habitats	Hedge-rows	Water-courses	Total
Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	39.9	8.7	1.7	50.3
Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	14.2	1.0	0.2	15.4
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	21.3	3.0	0.2	24.5
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	0.5	0.4	0.1	1.0
Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	1.6	0	0	1.6
Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	5.3	0	0	5.3
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	3.7	0	0	3.7
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	2.4	0	0	2.4
Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0	0	0	0
Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	21.3	3.0	0.2	24.6
Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	0.5	0.3	0.1	1.0

How Oldham Council plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.

9.7 It is expected that for the next reporting period a significantly higher number of Biodiversity Gain Plans will have been approved, and there will be more data on trends in biodiversity outcomes as a result of development. This will enable Oldham Council to identify gains or losses in specific habitats and more data on where offsite gains are being achieved.

9.8 Auditing and the enforcement of the statutory condition, where necessary, is going to be essential to enable the local planning authority to carry out its statutory duty in relation to biodiversity net gain.

9.9 Oldham Council will continue working to explore the opportunity to secure habitat banks within the local authority area and assist third parties to secure their land as habitats banks, where requested.

10.Future actions

10.1 Many of the identified actions will continue over the next five years, when the next mandatory Biodiversity Report is due to be published.

10.2 The list below includes both actions that have not yet progressed and actions that have progressed but will continue.

- To increase the amount of land designated for nature
- Bringing Local Wildlife Sites into active management for nature conservation and enhancement (LNRS has overall target of 50%)
- Implement South Pennines SAC / SPA Supplementary Planning Document SPD
- Application of mitigation hierarchy in planning decisions and planning policy
- Designation of Local Green Space and Green corridors as part of Local Plan review
- To have regard to the LNRS in planning decisions and land management.
- Baseline review / Management Plans for countryside sites that are not designated / other Green Infrastructure assets in council ownership.
- To expand tree canopy cover
- Explore and support offsite BNG / Habitat Banks within Oldham
- Preparation of an Oldham Design Code which integrates biodiversity
- Implement PfE and Local Plan policies relating to biodiversity
- Liaise on production of masterplan / design codes for strategic allocations in PfE and seek to enhance GI.
- Establish wetland catchment area at Broadbent Moss / Beal Valley
- Encourage multi-functional GI in development sites
- Support neighbourhood planning groups in preparing policies to enhance biodiversity in neighbourhood plans
- Implement Green Belt policy in PfE (JP-G9 The Green Belt) on enhancing the remaining Green Belt in relation to habitat restoration
- Explore and support offsite BNG / Habitat Banks within Oldham, which may include Green Belt land.
- To develop an Oldham Mapping tool to make information about designations and wildlife more accessible and digital.
- Encourage residents to provide more wildlife friendly gardens
- Volunteering opportunities related to biodiversity
- Keep a log of work undertaken by countryside officers and celebrate successes through Communications
- Raise awareness of funds such as the Greater Manchester Green Space Fund
- Identify, advise and assist community / voluntary groups
- Include the public /interest groups in nature recovery projects

- Raise awareness of Biodiversity for council's course
- Consider inclusion of biodiversity duty when preparing and updating other internal plans and policies (such as the Corporate Plan).
- Consider biodiversity implications in decision making reports and through the Oldham Impact Assessment Tool.
- Consider biodiversity implications as part of impact assessment when considering disposal of land.
- Continue implementing mandatory BNG in relation to determining planning applications
- Commence preparation of Spatial Development Strategy and seeking to enhance biodiversity (new)

11. Our Top Achievements

11.1 During the reporting period (1 January 2023 – 1 January 2026) some of our top achievements are highlighted below.

Figure 5: Top achievements for Biodiversity

Oldham's Top Achievements for Biodiversity

1. 10.4 hectares of Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) have been gained since 2023;
2. Habitat Management Plans for Glodwick Lows Local Nature Reserve and Crompton Fold Wood SBI have been completed;
3. The South Pennine Moors SAC/SPA SPD was adopted with effect from 8 May 2025;
4. Holcroft Moss Planning Obligations SPD was adopted with effect from 8 May 2025;
5. Local Green Space designations are proposed in the Local Plan;
6. The Greater Manchester LNRS which has since been published;
7. 1509 trees have been planted;
8. Over six hectares of Woodland created;
9. New and restored habitats created;
10. Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans have been prepared for eight Council countryside sites to support the sites' possible function as habitat banks;
11. Revised planning policies benefitting biodiversity have been prepared for the Publication Local Plan;
12. Officer support has been given to Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan and its policies to enhance biodiversity;
13. Volunteering opportunities are available related to nature recovery;
14. 'Biodiversity for Council's' training embedded into the Council's internal training platform; and
15. Enhanced biodiversity secured through planning obligations and conditions.

12. Conclusion and Next Steps

12.1 This report fulfils the requirements in 'Reporting your Biodiversity Duty' and shows the great progress that Oldham Council has made to the enhanced Biodiversity Duty.

12.2 Many actions have been completed or are in good progress.

12.3 Between now and the next Biodiversity Duty Report the Council will continue to progress actions identified in this report and its statutory BNG duties.