

Oldham

Local

Plan

Local Plan Review: Issues and Options Open Land Topic Paper

July 2021



Oldham
Council

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This Open Land Topic Paper is one of a series that has been prepared as part of the process of evidence gathering to support the review and preparation of Oldham's Local Plan.
- 1.2** The full range of Topic Papers deal with the following:
- Housing
 - Economy and Employment
 - Our Centres (incorporating retail)
 - Communities (incorporating community facilities, health and well-being, education, open space, sport and recreation provision and infrastructure etc).
 - Open Land (incorporating Green Belt, Other Protected Open Land and Land Reserved for Future Development)
 - Natural Environment (incorporating landscape, nature conservation designations and wider Green Infrastructure)
 - Built Environment (incorporating design, heritage)
 - Transport
 - Climate Change, Energy and Flood Risk
- 1.3** The principal aim of the Topic Paper is to set out current key policies, plans and strategies relating to this topic area that will form the basis for the development of the Local Plan. The Topic Papers will present a profile of the borough and highlight key issues and opportunities that the Local Plan should seek to address. Helping to shape and influence the direction and focus of the Local Plan's planning policies, designations and site allocations.
- 1.4** The Topic Papers all have linkages with each other. In particular, the Open Land and Natural Environment Topic Papers have a lot of linkages.
- 1.5** It is intended that the Topic Papers will be 'living' documents that can be updated as we progress through the preparation of the Local Plan, carry out further consultation and complete additional evidence.

2 KEY POLICIES, PLANS AND STRATEGIES

National Context

National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, February 2019)

Green Belt:

- 2.1** National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places great importance on the Green Belt. Paragraph 133 reinforces that the aim of Green Belt is to keep land permanently open to prevent urban sprawl. Paragraph 134 sets out the five purposes of Green Belt to:
- check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 2.2** Paragraph 136 explains that once Green Belt boundaries are established, the boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.
- 2.3** Paragraph 137 states before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of its strategic policies, which will take into account whether the strategy:
- makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
 - optimises the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and
 - has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground.
- 2.4** Paragraph 138 states that when reviewing Green Belt boundaries the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. Strategic policy making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development,

plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.

2.5 Paragraph 139 sets out that when defining boundaries, Local Planning Authorities should:

- ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
- not include land which is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- where necessary, identify in their plans areas of ‘safeguarded land’ between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;
- make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development;
- satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

2.6 Paragraphs 143 - 147 set out the policy approach to development within the Green Belt. Inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Other Protected Open Land

2.7 The current adopted Local Plan identifies Other Protected Open Land (OPOL) which, while not serving the purposes of the Green Belt, is locally important because it helps preserve the distinctiveness of an area. They were originally established for reasons such as providing attractive settings and other benefits, such as informal recreation and habitats for biodiversity, therefore helping to provide sustainable communities and help mitigate climate change.

2.8 Local Plans must be in conformity with and support NPPF. As part of reviewing the evidence for Places for Everyone (was Greater Manchester Spatial Framework - GMSF) and the Local Plan it is considered that the policy on OPOL should be assessed against NPPF to bring it in line with national policy.

2.9 NPPF does not make any reference to OPOL, it does however refer to ‘Local Green Space’ (LGS), which has a similar but broader purpose to OPOL. Therefore the policy for LGS is set out below and a Local Green Space Assessment has been prepared which has assessing existing OPOL designations (in addition a new site has been

considered in Sholver) against the LGS criteria set out in NPPF and subsequently those sites that meet the criteria are proposed to be designated as LGS in the Local Plan review.

2.10 Paragraph 99 explains that the designation of land as LGS through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as LGS should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. LGS should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

2.11 Paragraph 100 states LGS designation should only be used where the green space is:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- 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; and
- local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

2.12 Paragraph 101 states that policies for managing development within a LGS should be consistent with those for Green Belt.

Planning Practice Guidance (MHCLG)

Green Belt (July, 2019)

2.13 Planning Practice Guidance has provided updated advice on factors that can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt. These include, but are not limited to:

- openness;
- duration of the development;
- and the degree of activity likely to be generated.

2.14 It also sets out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset by compensatory improvements. Improvements may be informed by supporting evidence of landscape, biodiversity or recreational needs and opportunities including those set out in local strategies, and could for instance include:

- new or enhanced Green Infrastructure;
- woodland planting;
- landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal);
- improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital;
- new or enhanced walking and cycle routes; and
- improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field provision.

2.15 The guidance advises that to ensure the improvements are secure consideration should be given to:

- land ownership, in relation to both land that is proposed to be released for development and that which may be most suitable for compensatory improvements for which contributions may be sought;
- the scope of works that would be needed to implement the identified improvements, such as new public rights of way, land remediation, natural capital enhancement or habitat creation and enhancement, and their implications for deliverability; and
- the appropriate use of conditions, section 106 obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy to secure the improvements where possible. Section 106 agreements could be used to secure long-term maintenance of sites.

Local Green Space (March, 2014)

- 2.16** Planning Practice Guidance expands upon designating LGS. It explains that Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.
- 2.17** Designating LGS will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the LGS designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making.
- 2.18** The guidance explains that if land is already protected by a designation (e.g. Conservation Area or a nature designation), then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as a LGS.
- 2.19** Whether to designate land is a matter for local discretion. For example, green areas could include land where sports pavilions, boating lakes or structures such as war memorials are located, allotments, or urban spaces that provide a tranquil oasis.

Regional Context

Places for Everyone (PfE)

- 2.20** Places for Everyone: A Joint Development Plan Document of Nine Greater Manchester Districts is being jointly prepared, following Stockport's decision to withdraw in late 2020. The nine local Greater Manchester districts agreed that to address strategic matters such as housing need and economic growth as well as issues such as flood risk and strategic infrastructure, it would be best to work on a joint development plan - Places for Everyone. Once Places for Everyone is adopted, all nine Local Plans will be required to be in general conformity with it. As the proposed Places for Everyone evolves, strategic policies can be reflected in draft Local Plans.
- 2.21** In relation to open land, the key aspects Places for Everyone will cover which affect Oldham are:
- A review of Green Belt boundary; and
 - The designation of strategic sites.
- 2.22** For the purposes of this topic paper information on draft policies is as proposed in the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) Publication Plan Draft for Approval October 2020.

2.23 Policy GM-Strat 6 states a significant increase in the competitiveness of the northern areas will be sought. There will be a strong focus on prioritising the re-use of brownfield land through urban regeneration, enhancing the role of the town centres, complemented by the selective release of Green Belt and safeguarded land in key locations that can help to boost economic opportunities and diversify housing provision.

2.24 Policy GM Strat 7 proposes as part of the spatial strategy two major sites, which in Oldham (joint with Rochdale) includes Stakehill. 'High Crompton Broad Location' is also identified but will remain in the Green Belt until such time, through a review of the GMSF (now Places for Everyone) or future review of the Local Plan, it can be demonstrated that its release is fully justified.

2.25 Policy GM-G 10 states the Green Belt will be afforded strong protection in accordance with NPPF and will continue to be managed positively. It states that positive and beneficial use of the Green Belt will be supported where this can be achieved without harm to its openness, permanence or ability to serve its five functions. In particular its enhancement of its Green Infrastructure functions will be encouraged, such as improved public access and habitat restoration, helping to deliver environmental and social benefits and providing the high quality green spaces that will support economic growth.

Local Context

2.26 The current Local Plan - the Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (the 'Joint DPD') was adopted in 2011. Policy 22 'Protecting Open Land' maintained the borough's Green Belt and set out that developments are to be assessed against NPPF.

2.27 The policy states that development on OPOL will be permitted where it is appropriate, small-scale or ancillary development located close to existing buildings within the OPOL, which does not affect the openness, local distinctiveness or visual amenity of the OPOL, taking into account its cumulative impact. Where appropriate, development will be screened or landscaped to minimise its visual impact.

2.28 The policy adds that development on Land Reserved for Future Development (LRFD) will only be granted where it would be acceptable in the Green Belt and which would not prejudice the later development of LRFD beyond the life of the Local Plan.

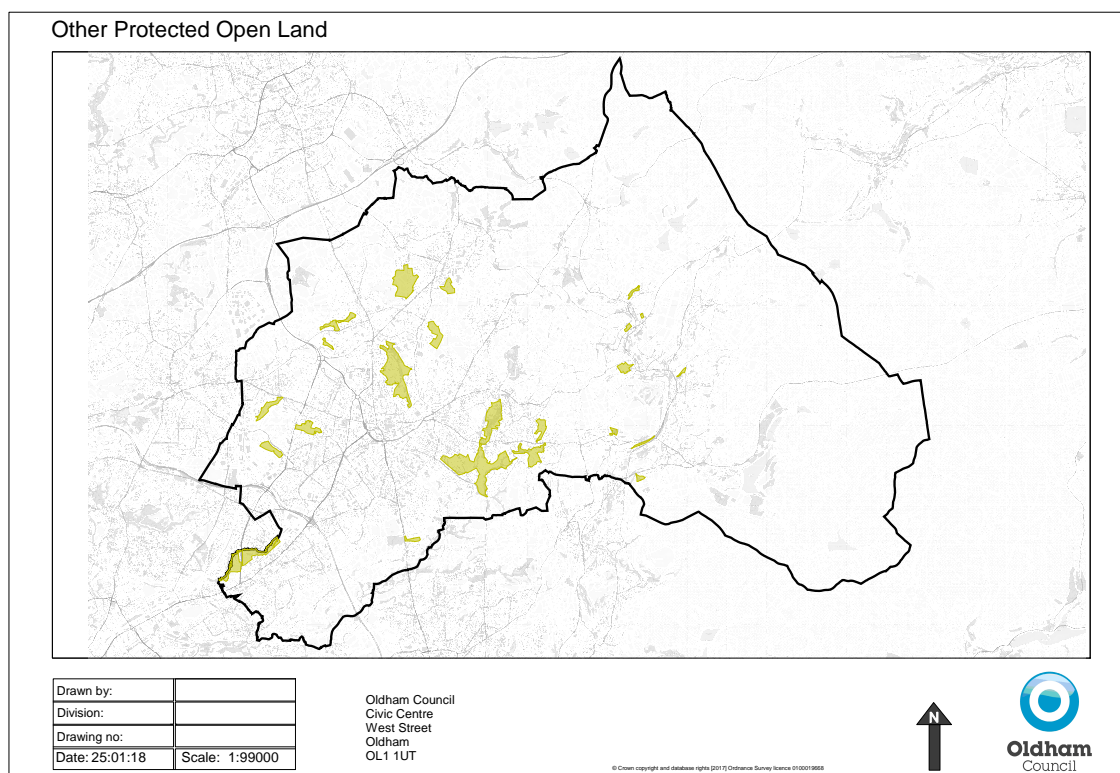
2.29 The borough currently has 22 designated OPOL sites (* OPOL sites proposed for release under Places for Everyone (was GMSF). These are:

Table 1 Other Protected Open Land designations in Oldham

OPOL	NAME	SIZE (Hectares)
OPOL 1	Royley Clough, Royton	8.57
OPOL 2	Ferney Field Road	9.05
OPOL 4	Foxdenton Hall Park	7.96
OPOL 5	Crossley Bridge Playing Fields	10.81
OPOL 6	Moston Brook and Hole Bottom Clough	30.19

OPOL	NAME	SIZE (Hectares)
OPOL 7	Simkin Way	2.75
OPOL 8	Oldham Edge	53.49
OPOL 9	Bullcote Lane*	12.17
OPOL 10	Shawside *	7.09
OPOL 11	Land at Greenacres, Lees	95.99
OPOL 12	Thornley Brook East	16.88
OPOL 13	Stonebreaks	7.97
OPOL 14	Dacres Hall, Greenfield	2.10
OPOL 15	Wall Hill, Dobcross	5.86
OPOL 16	Ryefields Drive	1.13
OPOL 17	Stoneswood	1.59
OPOL 18	Lumb Mill / Rumbles Lane	0.57
OPOL 19	Ainley Wood	2.26
OPOL 20	Land south of Oaklands Road	1.80
OPOL 21	Land at Summershades Lane	2.12
OPOL 22	Cowlshaw*	32.31
OPOL 23	Cotswold Drive	2.10
	Total	314.76

Other Protected Open Land



2.30 These sites have been assessed against the LGS criteria set out in NPPF. The outcome of this assessment recommends whether to either re-designate the OPOL sites as LGS or recommend that they are de-designated. Consideration has also been given to whether there are opportunities for boundary amendments. The outcome of the assessment is set out in the evidence section.

2.31 Oldham also has one LRFD site at Bullcote Lane allocated in the Joint DPD. This forms part of the proposed strategic allocation at Broadbent Moss in Places for Everyone (was GMSF).

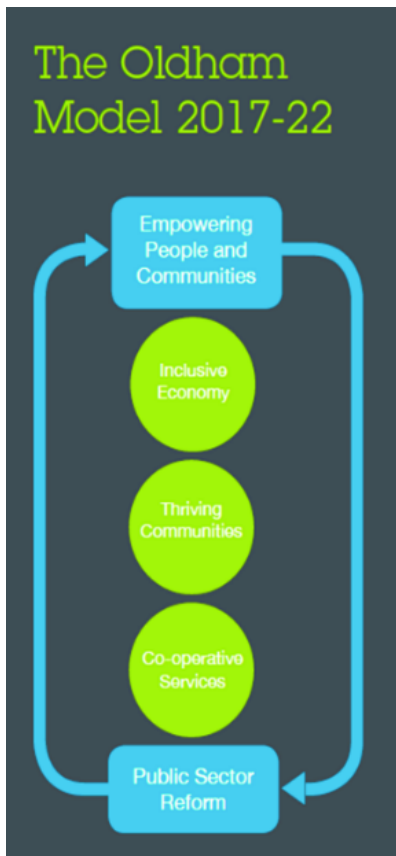
Creating a Better Place (Oldham Council, January 2020)

2.32 Creating a Better Place focuses on building more homes for Oldham's residents, creating new jobs through town centre regeneration, and ensuring Oldham is a great place to visit with lots of family friendly and accessible places to go.

2.33 This approach has the potential to deliver 2, 500 new homes in the town centre designed for a range of different budgets and needs, 1,000 new jobs and opportunities for apprenticeships, and is in alignment with council priorities to be the greenest borough.

The Oldham Plan 2017-2022

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



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

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

2.36 Under the Thriving Communities the vision is for people and communities to have the power to be healthy, happy and able to make positive choices. Enhancing the Green Belt and ensuring its positive use and designating LGSs with a strong protection policy can contribute towards this vision.

The Corporate Plan (Oldham Council)

2.37 Oldham's current Corporate Plan expired in December 2020. Work to refresh Oldham's Corporate Plan was due to be completed by summer 2020, however, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that this was no longer viable. Instead, we are in the process of developing our Covid-19 Recovery Strategy which will act as an interim Corporate Plan until at least 2022.

Covid-19 Recovery Strategy (Oldham Council)

2.38 As a Co-operative council, Oldham is committed to tackling the impact of COVID-19, protecting our most vulnerable residents and communities. The steps we are taking to tackle the pandemic and the subsequent recovery planning, aim to support people, especially those groups who are often most impacted.

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- 2.39** Building on the learning so far and the anticipated events to come, we are developing a comprehensive Recovery Strategy, which will help shape our approach and vision for Oldham over the next eighteen months. We do this whilst we continue to respond to an ongoing critical incident where we are focused each day on saving the lives of Oldham's residents.
- 2.40** Our objectives and approach to our Recovery Strategy are rooted in the Oldham Model, ensuring as we adapt to a changing world that we build Thriving Communities, an Inclusive Economy and work Co-operatively with each other.
- 2.41** Key objectives include championing a green recovery, which includes to protect green spaces for residents to enjoy.

3 EVIDENCE BASE

Regional

3.1 Places for Everyone (was GMSF) is supported by the following pieces of evidence, prepared by LUC, in relation to the Green Belt:

3.2 Stage 1:

- Green Belt Assessment (2016). The aim of the 2016 Study was to assess the extent to which the land within the Greater Manchester Green Belt performs against the purposes of Green Belt.

3.3 Stage 2 Green Belt Study:

- Assessment of Proposed Allocations (2019 and 2020). Assessment of the impact and harm that release of the Green Belt allocations may have and has informed GMSF (now Places for Everyone).
- Cumulative Assessment of Proposed Allocations and Additions (2020). This looked at the cumulative impact of the allocations in terms of harm and took into consideration any Green Belt additions.
- Contribution Assessment of Proposed Green Belt Additions (2020). This looked at the contribution the proposed Green Belt additions make to the Green Belt purposes.
- Identification of Opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt (2020).

These support Places for Everyone and are available on the GMCA website. The identification of opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt has implications however for Oldham locally and the Local Plan.

Identification of opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt (GMCA, 2020)

3.4 An assessment has been carried out focusing on the identification of potential opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of retained and proposed Green Belt in the vicinity of the Greater Manchester.

3.5 For parts of Oldham the assessment suggests beneficial use proposals and potential Green Infrastructure enhancements in relation to access, sport and recreation, biodiversity and wildlife corridors and landscape and visual. These are summarised below for the borough, with some opportunities being cross boundary enhancements.

Table 2 Potential enhancement opportunities

Enhancement Type	Potential enhancement opportunities
Access	Introduce local level PRoW to create linkages to recreational routes / Green Belt from the existing settlement edges to enhance access opportunities for both cyclists and pedestrians.

Enhancement Type	Potential enhancement opportunities
	Upgrade Public Footpaths / create formalised PRow links / implement access improvements to create a better connections.
	Improve access control to ensure accessibility of the existing PRow network, including the creation of new multi-user routes for recreational and health benefits as part of the Carbon Landscape Project as promoted by Lancashire Wildlife Trust.
	Provide surfacing improvements and improve crossing points.
	Improve east-west pedestrian connections across the Rochdale Canal.
	Address gaps in the continuity of the cycle network recognised by TfGM.
	Improve existing access points across the route of the Manchester Metrolink.
	Extend / upgrade the Beeway network improvements to improve off road cycle access and walking routes.
	Develop well waymarked and easily accessible circular 'health' walks.
	Develop a coherent and improved interpretation strategy to improve visitor experience along the network of long distance footpaths.
	Upgrade the lighting provision and drainage at the access point to the Medlock Valley Way / Oldham Way on the carriageway of the A627.
	Improve the single file traffic light controlled junction on Cop Road as it allows limited time for cyclists to navigate the junction before the lights change. This would improve connections between Royton in the west and Sholver in the east.
Sport and recreation	Improve access and visitor facilities at Tandle Hill Country Park. Introduce pedestrian gateway features at Public Footpaths 2 ROYT, 3 ROYT, 8 ROYT and MidFp13 to encourage pedestrian access into Tandle Hill Country Park.
	Offer accessible sports packages to local residents and provide stronger links between existing private sports facilities in the area.
	Improve drainage systems and ancillary accommodation within the existing playing fields at Bishop Park and Churchill Fields.
	Develop a partnership to guide the future management of Daisy Nook Country Park, incorporating a review of visitor facilities and opportunities for 'natural play'. Improve existing features within Daisy Nook Country Park; including the car park and visitor facilities.
	Create recreational facilities which afford views towards the Peak Fringe backdrop.

Enhancement Type	Potential enhancement opportunities
	Enhance the landscape around Dove Stone Reservoir for improved recreational and educational uses.
Biodiversity and wildlife corridors	Supplement and enhance existing Green Infrastructure networks associated with Sudden Brook and the Rochdale Canal to provide both landscape and ecological benefits.
	Enhance the ecological and hydrological beneficial features within the area of retained Green Belt by combining flood risk reduction (including the alleviation of surface water flood risk issues) with green infrastructure improvements.
	Promote and manage wildlife corridors in a way that encourages the movement of species to counter the existing fragmentation of habitats, particularly between existing habitat networks at Sudden Brook and Tandle Hill Country Park.
	<p>Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats and networks, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • riparian, broadleaved and ancient woodland tracts bordering the River Medlock and bordering water courses within the South Pennine Moors; • the tracts of heather moorland, blanket bog, acid grassland and broadleaved woodland associated with the upland landscape. Encourage the natural regeneration of woodland and wetland habitats in order to slow the water flow towards the River Tame below. <p>In addition, explore opportunities for habitat enhancement such as ponds for amphibians.</p>
	Working in conjunction with the EA, the opportunity exists to improve river corridor flood risk management as well as alleviate surface water flood risk issues. This could be achieved through the use of SuDS and water storage techniques in agreement with landowners and third parties.
Landscape and visual	Retain the role of the landscape as an undeveloped backdrop to existing development through the enhancement of semi-natural habitats, including woodland tracts and grassland.
	Deliver large tracts of planting along the M62 corridor through the Northern Forest initiative, providing a significant contribution to containment and visual separation.
	Reinforce the contrast between the well wooded lower slopes and the sparsely vegetated upper moorland through the introduction of structural planting around Dove Stone Reservoir.

Enhancement Type	Potential enhancement opportunities
	Consider incorporating green roof schemes, such as green roof bus stops, in the surrounding urban landscape to compensate for loss of vegetation.
	Maintain views towards the war memorial at Tandle Hill Country Park through the appropriate management of vegetation.
	Review woodland management practices along the valley floor in order to emphasize the gap between discrete settlements.
	Create stronger links between the communities of Ashton-under-Lyne, Failsworth and Bardsley with the river corridor of the River Medlock. This could involve the expansion and maintenance of the PRow network as well as the integration of opportunities for 'natural play'.
	Introduce screen planting along the settlement fringe, employing locally-appropriate species, to help minimise long term visual impact on both residential and recreational receptors within the landscape.
	Maintain and enhance the pattern of traditional species rich hedgerow field boundaries, stone walling and woodland within the wider landscape. Large scale planting of broadleaved woodland could be adopted to enhance habitat connectivity.
	Enhance settlement gateway features along the corridor of the A671.

Local

Local Green Space Assessment (Oldham Council, 2021)

3.6 Currently there are 22 designated Other Protected Open Land (OPOL) sites allocated in the current Local Plan. The below OPOL designations are proposed for release as part of Places for Everyone.

- OPOL 9 (as part of Broadbent Moss);
- OPOL 10 (as part of Beal Valley);
- OPOL 22 (Cowlshaw).

3.7 As there is no reference to OPOL in the NPPF, the council has re-assessed OPOL sites (plus a new site in Sholver) against Local Green Space Criteria in NPPF to ensure that any OPOL sites carried forward as Local Green Space can be justified by up to date robust evidence. OPOL sites are becoming increasingly under pressure for housing development and so it is important that an up to date assessment is prepared to help protect the OPOL sites that meet the Local Green Space criteria.

- 3.8** Local Green Space is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. A Local Green Space can only be designated through a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.9** National Planning Practice Guidance states that “*designating a green area as Local Green Space would give it protection consistent with that in respect of Green Belt.*”
- 3.10** NPPF states the LGS designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:
- Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - Where the green area 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; and
 - Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
- 3.11** The policy approach is likely to be consistent with NPPF policy on Green Belt in terms of assessing developments.
- 3.12** The outcome of the assessment is shown below. All of the sites assessed were considered to be reasonably close to the community and local in character and not an extensive tract of land.
- 3.13** A heritage significance assessment has inputted into the Local Green Space Assessment. For some sites this has identified where the historic environment often linking to recreation could be enhanced. The results of this are shown below. However other opportunities to enhance future Local Green Spaces may also be identified.

Table 3 Local Green Space Assessment

OPOL	Does the site meet Local Green Space Criteria	Identified enhancement opportunities
OPOL 1 – Royley Clough, Royton – with extension including cricket ground	Yes. The OPOL, with the proposed extension, meets the criteria based on ecology, beauty, historic significance and recreation.	N/A
OPOL 2 – Ferney Field Road	Yes. Overall the land is considered to be of local significance due to ecology.	N/A
OPOL 4 – Foxdenton Hall Park with extension	Yes. It is considered that the OPOL with the proposed extension is of local significance due to recreation, historic significance, beauty and ecology.	There is an opportunity to enhance the historic environment by opening the hall to the public and offering

OPOL	Does the site meet Local Green Space Criteria	Identified enhancement opportunities
including Foxdenton Hall Park and Albert Taylor Recreation Ground		updated interpretation boards and a heritage trail around the locations of former estate buildings such as the farm and the icehouse. In addition, the sundial should be restored to its former position.
OPOL 5 Crossley Bridge Playing Fields	<p>Yes. It is considered that the site is of local significance due to its recreational value.</p> <p>It is considered that the boundary should be amended to take account of the recent residential development, which will be removed from the OPOL.</p>	N/A
OPOL 6 Moston Brook and Hole Bottom Clough	Yes. It is considered that the site is of local significance due to beauty, recreation, historic significance, wildlife and tranquillity.	Improvements could be made in line with Moston Brook feasibility and master plan.
OPOL 7 Simkin Way	Yes. It is considered that the site is of local significance due to historic significance.	N/A
OPOL 8 Oldham Edge	<p>Yes. The land is considered to be of local significance due to wildlife, historic significance, recreational value and also tranquillity and beauty in parts of the site.</p> <p>It is considered that the boundary should be amended to exclude the school sports hall extension.</p>	<p>There is opportunity to enhance historic significance further with heritage trails and interpretation boards. The public sculptures appear to coincide with the locations of historic routeways and interpretation could be offered as to what these actually mark. There are opportunities to highlight the historic routeway towards Royton as well as fieldwalk the landscape to find any possible remnants of historic mining.</p> <p>Historic documents show that the Edge was an important location for early coal mining</p>

OPOL	Does the site meet Local Green Space Criteria	Identified enhancement opportunities
		and interpretation boards and heritage trails could also highlight this. They could also be used to highlight the location of Post-Medieval farmsteads and settlements across the Edge and open up more publicly accessible footpaths across the higher ground.
OPOL 9 Bullcote Lane	<p>No. The site is not considered to be of local significance against the Local Green Space criteria. The site has been put forward as a strategic allocation in Places for Everyone.</p> <p>The OPOL is proposed to be de-designated.</p>	N/A
OPOL 10 Shawside	<p>The land has areas that are rich in wildlife and have a recreational role (to the north). However, as NPPF states identifying land as LGS should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.</p> <p>LGS should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and is capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period. The site has been put forward as a strategic allocation in Places for Everyone.</p> <p>If the strategic allocation goes ahead the elements that meet the LGS criteria should be considered as part of the master planning exercise and planning application, particularly in terms of ecology.</p> <p>Therefore the OPOL is proposed to be de-designated.</p>	N/A

OPOL	Does the site meet Local Green Space Criteria	Identified enhancement opportunities
OPOL 11 – Land at Greenacres, including Lees Cemetery	<p>Yes. The land is of local significance due to its beauty, tranquillity, wildlife, recreational value and historic significance.</p> <p>It is considered that the boundary should be amended to remove Roundthorn Primary School and the adjacent public house (The Hawthorne) and brownfield land which is currently used for caravan sales (The Hawthorne). These parts of the existing OPOL are not considered to contribute to the LGS criteria. It is also considered that Lees Cemetery and the Mills recreation ground should be added to the LGS.</p>	<p>There are several opportunities to enhance historic significance further at Greenacres by offering heritage and geological trails, as well as interpretation boards. Some of the current boards are in poor condition, heavily vandalised and repetitive; it is felt that they could be more specific to the area in which they are located.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to create a geologically focused heritage trail at Glodwick Low, to incorporate and celebrate its status as a regionally important geological site.</p> <p>Interpretation boards could also be used to highlight historic remnants of quarrying and mining and identify potential signs of Medieval coal extraction, such as bell pits and adits. The former textile industry in this area has been utilised within the public realm, however the reused engine beds have no accompanying interpretation and it is felt that these need further explanation.</p> <p>Other features such as the Roman Road and the Medieval corn mill could also be highlighted or even targeted for any future archaeological work. There is also an opportunity to celebrate Clem Beckett at Glodwick Lows as well.</p>
OPOL 12 – Thornley Brook East	<p>Yes. The land is of local significance due to its beauty, wildlife, tranquillity, historic significance and local recreational value.</p>	N/A

OPOL	Does the site meet Local Green Space Criteria	Identified enhancement opportunities
	However, an application was approved for 265 homes on part of the OPOL. This part of the OPOL will not be taken forward as Local Green Space.	
OPOL 13 – Stonebreaks	<p>Yes. The land is of local significance due to its beauty, tranquillity, historic significance and local recreational value. A small part of the site is also of local significance due to its ecology.</p> <p>It is also considered that a small extension to the north of the OPOL could form part of the designation.</p>	N/A
OPOL 14 Dacres Hall	Yes. The land is of local significance due to beauty, tranquillity, historic significance and wildlife.	N/A
OPOL 15 Wall Hill	It is considered that the existing OPOL is locally significant due to historic significance and ecology.	<p>There are already a number of interpretation boards on the former Delph Donkey railway line bordering the Site, which includes a small part on the former Bankfield Mill, and there is an opportunity to open up access to the wooded area and extend the heritage trail here.</p> <p>There is also an opportunity to consolidate the ruins and explore the area archaeologically as well in the future.</p>
OPOL 16 Ryefields Drive	Yes. The land is of local significance due to its beauty and richness in wildlife.	N/A
OPOL 17 Stoneswood	Yes. The land is considered to be of local significance due to its historic significance and richness in wildlife.	N/A

OPOL	Does the site meet Local Green Space Criteria	Identified enhancement opportunities
OPOL 18 Lumb Mill / Rumbles Lane	No. Although the site will add to the attractiveness of the area it is not considered that the site is demonstrably special against the reasons set out in NPPF.	N/A
OPOL 19 Ainley Wood	Yes. The site is considered to be of particular local significance due to its beauty, tranquillity, historic significance and richness in wildlife.	There are opportunities to enhance this historic significance further through a heritage trail and interpretation boards focused on the former Hull Mill and the possible Roman Road towards the nearby Castleshaw fort. There is also an opportunity to explore Hull Mill archaeologically and consolidate any standing remains.
OPOL 20 Land South of Oaklands Road	No. Although a section of the site provides some priority habitats it is not considered that the whole site should be designated as LGS due to this alone as the extent is small in comparison to the whole site. The site is a rail embankment.	N/A
OPOL 21 Land at Summershades Lane	Yes. It is considered that the site is of local significance due to wildlife and historic significance.	The historic significance mostly derives from the sites former use as pleasure gardens from the late 19th to mid-20th century. Some of these features still survive, although the site has not been maintained. There is an opportunity to restore these features and make public access easier to this site.
OPOL 22 Cowlshaw	<p>The land has areas that are rich in wildlife. However identifying land as LGS should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.</p> <p>LGS should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and is capable of enduring beyond the end</p>	N/A

OPOL	Does the site meet Local Green Space Criteria	Identified enhancement opportunities
	<p>of the plan period. The site is proposed as a strategic allocation and has planning permission.</p> <p>It is considered that to designate the land as LGS would not be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development.</p> <p>However, any development proposals must follow the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy and provide a net gain in biodiversity in line with NPPF.</p>	
OPOL 23 Rear of Elk Mill / Cotswold Drive	Yes. It is considered that the site is of local significance due to beauty, richness in wildlife, tranquillity and recreational value.	N/A
Sholver Lane (new site)	Yes. It is considered the site is of local significance due to beauty, ecology, historic significance, recreation and tranquillity.	There are opportunities here to enhance the historic environment with a community project focused around Meg Well and the colliery site, as well as further research building on Lathams report in 2008 on the history of Sholver. A heritage trail could also be implemented, detailing the history of Sholver and linking to the former Village Green.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1** To begin preparation of the Local Plan the council carried out a 'Regulation 18' notification between July and August 2017.
- 4.2** To inform this work we asked what the local community and stakeholders thought:
- a. the Local Plan should contain and what the key planning issues are for Oldham; and
 - b. what, in broad terms, should be the main aims of the Local Plan.
- 4.3** In addition we published our Integrated Assessment Scoping Report and invited the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England to comment on the scope of the Local Plan. This was also available for the local community and stakeholders to view and comment on if they wished.

Thematic comments

- 4.4** The main messages that came out of the initial consultation regarding Oldham's Green Belt were:
- The plan should protect, preserve and enhance the Green Belt.
 - Oldham is 3% below the national average for open land and countryside.
 - Major changes to the Green Belt need to consider the preservation of the setting and character of historic towns.
 - Definitions of sustainable development in the Green Belt need reviewing to protect it. There needs to be a strong Green Belt policy.
 - The Green Belt plays a significant part in the landscape, views and overall appearance of Oldham.
 - Benefits of the Green Belt need to be protected such as helping mitigate flood risk, safeguarding local wildlife and health benefits.
 - Review of the Green Belt should be done at the strategic level and also a "tidy up" at the local level to produce meaningful boundaries.
 - There is a need to allocate smaller sites and review Green Belt at the micro level.
 - Consideration should be given to redevelopment of brownfield sites within the Green Belt.
 - The Local Plan should identify safeguarded land.
 - A range of sites is needed, in a range of locations to provide for different types of housing, including low quality Green Belt which have a weak Green Belt function.
 - There is a need to release Green Belt to meet housing needs in Oldham.
- 4.5** The main messages that came out of the initial consultation regarding Oldham's OPOL were:
- OPOL land is more accessible than Green Belt and should be protected.
 - OPOL policy needs to be strengthened.
 - Review of OPOL should be done at the strategic level and also a "tidy up" at the local level to produce meaningful boundaries.
 - OPOL needs to be assessed for either wholly / part release for development; or a hybrid approach that does not prejudice its character; or protection.

- Release of OPOL / less sensitive OPOL is welcomed. Should review OPOL before Green Belt land.
- It was expressed that the Settlement boundary was no longer fit for purpose and that the boundary is a constraining factor with a major influence on the scope for additional housing in the borough.

Spatial Comments

4.6 There was a strong emphasis on the protection of OPOL and Green Belt generally, in addition to sites being put forward for development. Feedback on this stage of consultation was influenced by the preparation of the GMSF (now Places for Everyone). The following sites were specifically mentioned:

- Strategic allocations Northern Gateway 2, Hanging Chadder, Broadbent Moss and Beal Valley should remain as Green Belt.
- Robert Fletchers should enhance the character of the Green Belt.
- Land north of Ashton Road, Woodhouses (Green Belt) submitted for development,
- Low Crompton Road, Royton (Green Belt) submitted for small scale housing.
- Cedar Grove, Royton (Green Belt) submitted for small scale housing.
- Broadbent Moss does not meet the OPOL criteria.
- Prospect Farm, Grotton (Green Belt) submitted for development.
- Chorlton Planning submitted a response on behalf of a number of clients supporting the need to review Green Belt and OPOL and release land for allocation where appropriate.
- There was a high number of comments submitted in relation to OPOL 12 Knowls Lane during the consultation period following on from a planning application submitted for housing. The comments stated that the site should be protected as OPOL / designated as Green Belt / extended to include Knowls Lane housing allocation. Comments noted the benefits of the OPOL land such as ecosystems, biodiversity, climate change, air quality, recreation, its setting and contribution to the beauty, tranquillity, and character of the area. Comments also noted that the land provided a gap between the urban areas.

5 FUTURE EVIDENCE REQUIRED

Green Belt:

- 5.1 At a local level there is a need to embed opportunities for the positive use and enhancement of the Green Belt, using available evidence.

6 KEY ISSUES

Key Issues

- 6.1** From a review of the plans and strategies, evidence and issues raised at the Regulation 18 and Scoping Report consultation the following key issues have been identified:
- The review of the Green Belt boundary is being done through Places for Everyone (was GMSF). The Local Plan review will need to ensure that it is in conformity with the Places for Everyone.
 - The Local Plan review should set out any further detailed policy at the local level, if there is a need for it above NPPF. This may include policy around the need to plan for the positive use and enhancement of the Green Belt, including any compensatory improvements to the environmental quality or accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land.
 - There is a need to identify which sites should be designated as Local Green Spaces, against the NPPF LGS Criteria.
 - There is a need to consider whether there is scope to identify safeguarded land to meet future development needs beyond the plan period.

7 PLAN OBJECTIVES

- 7.1** The following draft plan objectives are proposed as a result of the initial issues that have been identified in relation to this open land paper. These will be refined as further evidence and the Local Plan is progressed, taking into consideration feedback received.
- 7.2** PO5 Ensuring Oldham is the greenest borough by:
- designating Local Green Spaces and giving them strong policy protection against development; and
 - protecting, enhancing and promoting the positive use of the Green Belt.

8 INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** The Local Plan will be supported by an Integrated Assessment (IA). The IA will include the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will still be a standalone document; however its findings will be integrated into the IA.
- 8.2** The role of an IA is to promote sustainable development through assessing the emerging Local Plan against economic, environmental and social objectives. It is a way of ensuring that the preferred approach in the Plan is the most appropriate when assessed against any reasonable alternatives. It also allows for any potential adverse effects to be identified and mitigated and for improvements to environmental, social and economic conditions to be made.
- 8.3** The Scoping Report is the first stage of the IA process (Stage A). It identifies the scope and level of detail to be included in the IA report.
- 8.4** The IA Scoping Report identified the following issues to be addressed in the Local Plan in relation to Green Belt and OPOL:
- There is the need to minimise net loss of the extent of Green Belt and ensure development within the remaining Green Belt is appropriate.
 - There is a need to identify OPOL and ensure development within the remaining OPOL is appropriate.
- 8.5** The IA proposed an Integrated Assessment approach and scoring system to the assessment of the emerging Local Plan.
- 8.6** Consultation on the Integrated Assessment Scoping Report took place between 10 July and 21 August 2017.
- 8.7** The IA Scoping Report has been updated (Update 1) to support the Issues and Options consultation. The issues in relation to this topic paper have been updated to read:
- There is the need to plan for the positive use and enhancement of the Green Belt.
 - There is a need to identify Local Green Spaces and ensure development is treated in line with national Green Belt policies.
 - There is a need to consider whether there is scope to identify safeguarded land for future development needs.
- 8.8** The Integrated assessment has appraised the vision, plan objectives and spatial options.
- 8.9** Plan Objective 5, which addresses open land, scored a mixture of neutral, positives and significantly positive scores. No mitigation / enhancements were identified.
- 8.10** The IA will help to develop and refine the options of the Local Plan as work progresses and assess the effects of the Local Plan proposals and consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects. An IA report will be published alongside each Draft Local Plan published for consultation before the final Publication stage.

9 EVIDENCE SOURCES

- National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2019) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>
- National Planning Practice Guidance (MHCLG, 2019) <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
- Greater Manchester's Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment: Greater Manchester Spatial Framework Publication Plan (GMCA, 2020) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/>
- Stage 1 Green Belt Study: Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment (LUC, 2016 and 2018) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Stage 2 Green Belt Study: Assessment of proposed allocations <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Stage 2 Green Belt Study: Cumulative Assessment of proposed GMSF allocations and additions (now for Places for Everyone) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Contribution assessment of proposed GMSF Green Belt additions (now for Places for Everyone) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Identification of opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt (GMCA, 2020) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Greater Manchester Spatial Framework Topic Paper Green Belt (GMCA, 2019) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing/gmsf2020/supporting-documents/>
- Creating a Better Place (Oldham Council, January 2020) <https://www.oldham.gov.uk/news/1798306-million-investment-strategy-set-to-be-approved-by-oldham-council>
- The Oldham Plan 2017 - 2022 (Oldham Council) <https://committees.oldham.gov.uk/documents/s83732/Oldham%20Plan%202017-22.pdf>
- Covid-19 Recovery Strategy (Oldham Council, 2021)
- Local Green Space Assessment (Oldham Council, 2021)