

Our Future Oldham

A Shared Vision for 2030

DRAFT

Foreword

In Oldham we've got a proud history of punching above our weight. There's the mills that remind us where we came from, and the bright young businesses that show us where we're going. The population of our borough may only account for 0.3% of the UK, but we've produced leaders in business (like Sir Jim Ratcliffe, one of the world's richest men), sport (like David Platt and Mike Atherton, who were England football and cricket captains at the same time in the 90s) and culture (like Suranne Jones, Sarah Lancashire and Nick Grimshaw).

Our population is young, diverse and optimistic. Set between an energetic 21st century city and the timeless beauty of the Peak District, Oldham is a great place to call home. If we're to achieve our potential, though, we need a clear, shared plan for the future.

That's what we've produced here. After extensive conversations with residents, businesses, community groups and organisations around the borough, we've agreed this vision. Ambitious, but achievable. Reflective of the world in which we find ourselves, but with an unmistakable Oldham accent.

Now we've got a shared target, it's up to us all to work together to achieve it. We're aiming for 2030 – far enough away that real change is possible, but near enough to drive action today.

Every Oldham resident deserves a rich, fulfilling life. This is how we make that possible. This is Our Future Oldham.

Our Oldham

Who We Are

Oldham is a diverse place in many senses. We're more than the stereotype of a tough, simple, Northern mill town. We're a radical place: we sent people to Peterloo and the Spanish Civil War, and were the birthplace of suffragettes and some of the founders of the cooperative movement. We're an innovative place: from the cotton industry to the tubular bandage and the world's first test tube baby. We're a bold place: Many of our parents came here from far away with a determination to build a good life for themselves. We're a proud place, and yes, a tough place: being on high ground next to the Peaks, you won't last long if you can't handle the wind and a bit of rain.

The borough is divided into five districts, with many services coordinated at a district level to address local needs. Our population is focused around Oldham town centre and the towns of Failsworth, Chadderton, Royton and Shaw, with the eastern half of the borough more rural, comprising Saddleworth and its villages. Our communities benefit from fantastic local parks, like Alexandra Park and Tandle Hill. Transport links take people easily into Manchester (via the tram and bus network) and elsewhere (via the M60 and M62).

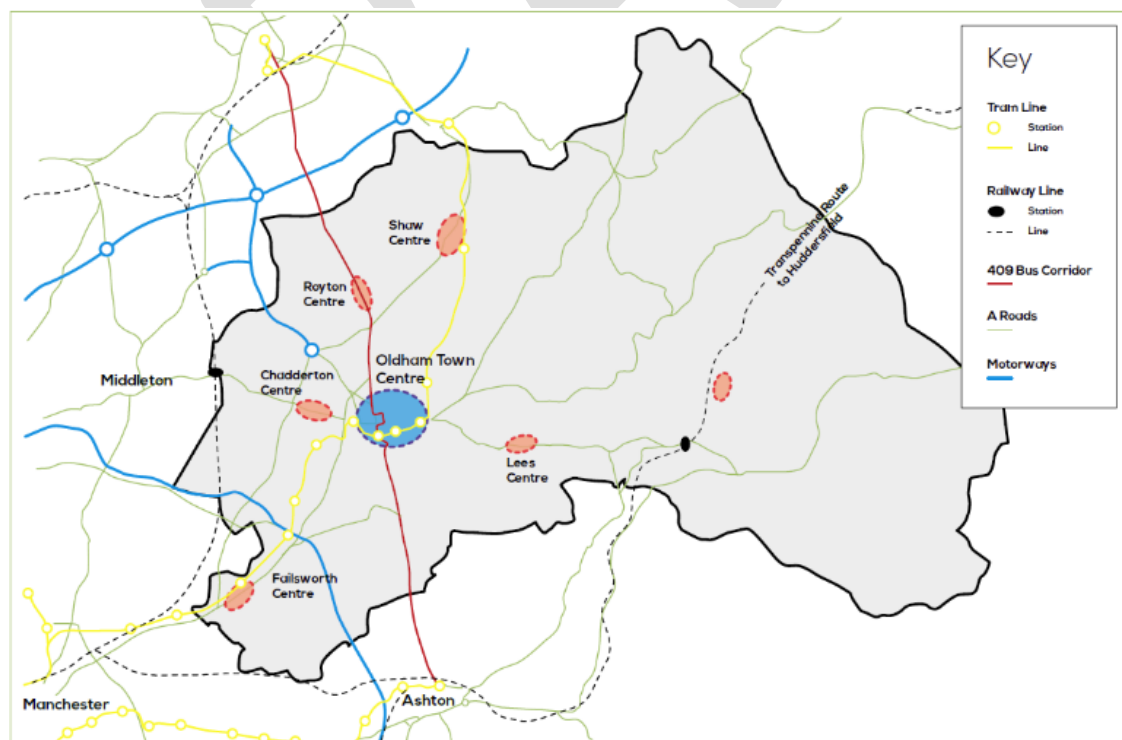



Figure 1.9: Oldham's Key Transport Infrastructure (Oldham Council, 2019) ¹⁷

Oldham today is younger than the national average. We're diverse, with significant numbers of residents of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage, and other emerging communities.



Population

Our population is **237,628**

with **117,387** males (49.4%) and **120,241** females (50.6%)

making us the sixth largest borough in Greater Manchester.

Between 2001 and 2020 our population increased **9%**

This is a smaller increase than that seen across Greater Manchester (13%) and England (14%).

Age	0 - 18	18 - 65	65+
Oldham	25%	58.8%	16.2%

According to the ONS, our population is projected to reach **261,018 by 2041** a **10%** increase from the **2020** population.

It is expected that the number of older people in Oldham's population will grow by **30%** in the next 20 years.

Age Band	% increase 2021 to 2041
0-14	0.02%
15-64	6%
65+	30%
Overall	9%

This will bring major challenges for adult social care and health provision.

Unemployment

Unemployment in Oldham is 7.3%
The highest in Greater Manchester and higher than the England rate.

	March 22	March 21
Oldham	7.3%	9.9%
GM	5.6%	8.0%
England	4.3%	6.6%

Alexandra has the highest rate at **13.6%**

Saddleworth North has the lowest at **1.8%**

Youth unemployment in Oldham is 9.8%

The highest in GM, and significantly higher than the national rate.

	March 22	March 21
Oldham	9.8%	16.4%
GM	6.5%	10.8%
England	5.0%	9.2%

Hollinwood has the highest rate at **16.5%**

Saddleworth South has the lowest at **2.7%**

Oldham is a place of contrasts, with areas of very high levels of deprivation, some of the most aspirational places to live, and everything in between. Every part of the borough has things to celebrate and be proud of, but all have their own unique challenges too.

Annual Pay

The median annual gross pay for residents of Oldham is below that of GM and England.

Oldham	£27,594
Greater Manchester (Met County)	£28,980
England	£31,490


Deprivation

Oldham currently has four areas within the borough which are among the top 1% of the nation's most deprived areas.

However, **26.2%** of areas in Oldham are among the **10%** most deprived areas in England


Life expectancy 2018 - 2020

	Oldham	England
Male	77.2	79.4
Female	80.5	83.1

Oldham's life expectancy is significantly lower than England 

Healthy life expectancy 2017 - 2019

	Oldham	England
Male	58.3	63.2
Female	58.3	63.5

Oldham's healthy life expectancy is significantly lower than England 

Life expectancy in Oldham

The difference for males between the ward with the highest life expectancy and the lowest life expectancy is **11.8** years.

Saddleworth South ranks highest at **82.3 years**

Alexandra the lowest at **70.5 years**

The ward with the highest female life expectancy at birth

Saddleworth South ranks highest at **86.6 years**

Alexandra the lowest at **73.8 years**

The inequalities between wards are higher for females than for males at **12.8** years.

Overall levels of income, health and education are somewhat below regional and national averages. These averages mask the significant inequalities that exist within the borough, however. People in Alexandra are expected to live on average 12 years less than those in Saddleworth South. Youth unemployment across the borough is the highest in Greater Manchester at 9.8%, but in Hollinwood it reaches 16.5%. Oldham as a whole is the second happiest borough in Greater Manchester, reflecting the fact that for many it's a great place to live. But we can't hide from the reality that many of our friends and neighbours are struggling.

Secure, well paid and fulfilling work makes a big difference to people's life chances. The Oldham Independent Economic Review identified a strong "entrepreneurial culture" in the borough, with large numbers of business start-ups and small and micro businesses. Wholesale and retail, construction, and professional services contribute significant numbers of jobs, with manufacturing the largest single sector in terms of Gross Value Added (although this has declined).

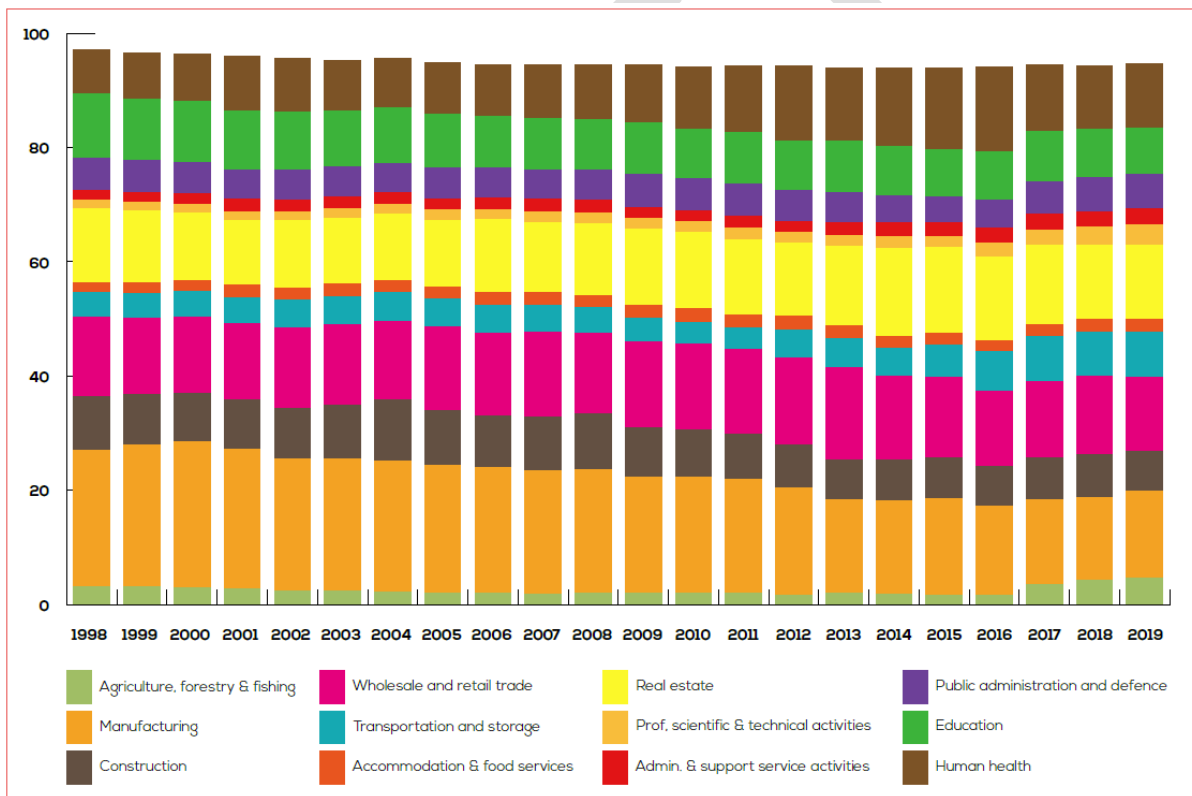


Figure 3.3: Oldham Gross Value Added by Industry, 1998-2019 (ONS, GVA (balanced) by industry, 2021) ⁴³

But unemployment is relatively high, and the Review noted an over-reliance on the "foundational" economy – the kind of jobs that are found everywhere like retail and the public sector that, while vitally important to the functioning of the borough, don't generate significant additional wealth.

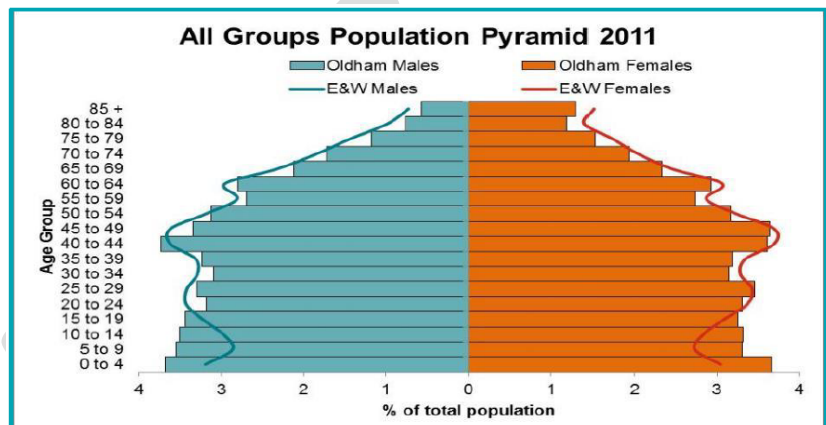
What We Know About The Future

The Covid pandemic reminded everyone that the future is unpredictable, and inevitably any strategic vision will have to adapt to changing circumstances. But there are some things we know will happen in the years ahead that will affect our borough.

Our Population is Ageing

While Oldham today has a younger than average population, over the next decade the number of people reaching retirement age is expected to increase significantly. This will create greater pressures on our health and social care system, and on public and personal budgets. This demographic shift makes it

more important than ever that we take a preventative approach to public health, supporting people to live healthy and active lives for longer.



Source: ONS Census 2011

Our Town Centres are Changing

Around the country high streets are changing as online and out-of-town retail puts pressure on local shops. Towns that succeed will do so because of the experience they create for people, attracting people with the mix of shops, leisure, employment and housing.

Places like Royton and Uppermill are already doing well, drawing locals and visitors with their independent shops and options for food and drinks. There are a clear set of commitments in place to improve Oldham town centre, with work already underway. We know that by 2030 Oldham will have more places to eat and drink in the town centre, there will be thousands more people living in town, and the infrastructure will be in place for a thriving cultural scene.

Transport Improvements

Improving public transport makes a huge difference to people's life chances, particularly if you live in more remote parts of places like Saddleworth and don't have access to a car.

The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy sets out a range of improvements that will be taking place to our network over the next two decades. For Oldham this includes increased capacity on our existing tram network, improved bus transit between Rochdale, Oldham and Ashton, and accessibility improvements that will make active travel in and around our towns easier.¹

Greater Manchester will also soon be implementing a franchised bus network, enabling democratic control over fares, routes and timetables. Historic data on the performance of franchised and non-franchised bus systems means we can expect significant growth in bus journeys in the coming years.

Changing Land Use

The Places for Everyone plan, a spatial plan for nine Greater Manchester boroughs including Oldham, is currently being undergoing independent examination ahead of approval by the Government and implementation from 2024.² This plan indicates the parts of the borough that will be available for development as housing or employment space, if the developments also meet the requirements set out in Oldham's Local Plan.

A commitment to meeting the Government's requirements for house building while retaining the maximum amount of green space means Oldham has relatively little employment space in the Places for Everyone plan. This reduces the scope for new jobs within the borough in industries that require a substantial footprint, such as logistics. Instead, economic growth can be expected in sectors that can better make use of existing infrastructure and brownfield sites, including manufacturing, digital and professional services.

Levelling Up Oldham

Nationally the mission to "Level Up" the UK presents opportunities for Oldham. The Government's agenda, echoing previous initiative like the Northern Powerhouse, suggests that there will be funding opportunities for capital investment, particularly for projects that promote civic pride and encourage economic growth.

While the specific focus of the political agenda may shift, there is a broad consensus around the importance of regional devolution, and on this Greater Manchester is a trailblazer in the UK. Oldham's relationship with the rest of the city region will strengthen in the coming years, and we can expect progress in the three areas at the heart of the GM Strategy: economic growth, greater equality, and climate change.

¹ GMCA: Our Five Year Transport Deliver Plan 2021-2026 (https://downloads.ctfassets.net/nv7y93idf4jq/5Y95swfmf42WVZozNA4fE/84092928376473c507ec000098b18c35/Delivery_Plan_2021-2026_Jan_2021_Final.pdf)

² GMCA: Places for Everyone (<https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/>)

What Residents Want

We've been talking about the future a lot over the last couple of years, through two mass consultations on resident priorities, an ongoing sequence of "Big Oldham Conversation" events, focus groups and surveys with young people, and numerous sessions with community groups and businesses.

Just before the pandemic struck in 2020, "Let's Talk Oldham" generated 10,000 responses on social media and 1,000 direct conversations across 17 events. Residents called for cleaner streets, and a focus on job creation, and said these were the top priorities to make Oldham a better place to live:

1. Homes that fit different needs and budgets
2. Better public transport
3. Well maintained roads and pavements
4. Town centres that are well used

As we started thinking about recovery from the pandemic in 2021, 616 residents responded to a survey and once again highlighted the need for safe and decent homes for everyone and more employment opportunities. The top priority, however, was ensuring those most in need were given the support they need. The value of parks and open spaces was also emphasised.

Building on these insights, this year over 300 Oldham young people took part in focus groups and surveys where they were challenged to make hard choices about the future they wanted in the borough. Their contributions again emphasised a desire for Oldham to be a clean, green and safe place where public transport allowed them to access opportunities, where they felt part of the city region, and where there were activities for young people and communities.

Focus group sessions with voluntary and community groups demonstrated the strength of our local third sector. People who work everyday to create a supportive and colourful environment in our neighbourhoods made clear that our future Oldham must be local (with services and opportunities close to home), accessible (with provision cheap or free wherever possible), and tailored to the needs of the residents nearby. Oldham people are proud, and they are leaders. Oldham in the future should be a place where residents are trusted and empowered to get on with doing what's needed for their neighbourhood. Where support from public services is necessary, the driving considerations should be: Long-term over short-term; Focused on providing for the most vulnerable; In and for local areas, rather than universal.

Uplifting Every Resident

If there's something that binds every Oldham resident together it's a pride in community and an instinct to help people up when they're struggling. What people need looks different in different parts of the borough, and there's no desire to make every part of Oldham look and feel the same. But there are some things that everyone should be able to expect. These include:

1. The chance to attend a good school, and to gain the skills and experience for a fulfilling life
2. The opportunity to get a good job that pays well and offers security and flexibility
3. A healthy environment and green space that is open to enjoy within 15 minutes
4. Opportunities and support to maintain good health, and access to help when it's needed
5. Easy and affordable access to every part of the city region
6. Homes that are affordable, well maintained, and appropriate
7. Neighbourhoods where people feel safe and at home
8. Opportunities to get together with neighbours across communities

These expectations are the central element of Oldham's vision for the future. Of course, as individuals our lives and expectations will go far beyond this. For some a good job might mean catching the tram across to Media City every day, while for others it will be close to home and fit around family life. For some green space means somewhere on the corner to kick a ball, for others it's climbing the hills round Dovestones. A neighbourhood where you can feel at home might be vibrant and full of life, or somewhere quiet and peaceful.

This is what we're aiming to achieve: to uplift every resident. When "anchor" organisations like the council, police, college or hospital are making strategic choices or day to day decisions, these expectations will be in mind. When businesses are setting up in Oldham, they'll know that this is what we're trying to achieve. When someone decides they want to help their neighbourhood, this can guide their thinking about what will make the most difference.

How We'll Make It Happen

The Oldham Partnership

Our Future Oldham will only become reality if every major organisation in Oldham is focused on it. That means placing it at the heart of strategies and decision making. With the same goals in mind, we can more easily work together, and hold each other to account.

Central to that work is a refreshed and empowered Oldham Partnership. The Partnership consists of representatives from Oldham Council, Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group, the NHS, Oldham College, Regenda Homes, the Interfaith Forum, Action Together, First Choice Homes, Oldham Sixth Form College, Greater Manchester Police, Oldham Community Leisure, the Coliseum, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue, the Department of Work and Pensions, the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the private sector and the voluntary sector. The group will meet annually to monitor progress against the Uplifting Every Resident ambitions, to celebrate successes and to agree interventions and actions for the coming year.

These interventions and actions and the responsibility for delivering on Oldham's ambitions will sit with two sub-groups: The Economy Board, and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

[Details of governance arrangements to be expanded following consultation with Oldham Partnership]

How We'll Know We're Making Progress

The future is unpredictable, and there will be bumps in the road as we work to make Oldham the place we want it to be.

The best measure of Oldham's success is how we as residents feel about our lives and the place we live. There are, however, other ways to track the borough's progress. These metrics, which will be utilised by the Oldham Partnership and its sub-groups to assess our efforts and flag up the need for further interventions, include:

[Metrics to be determined once statements in Uplifting Every Resident section have been confirmed]

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