



Draft vision for Oldham Town Centre

Oldham Town Centre Community Conversation - Summary

Muse and Oldham Council have formed a long-term Partnership to deliver positive change for the Town Centre.

We ran a community conversation on our draft plans between 24th July 2024 and 11th September 2024.

This report provides a high level summary of the engagement activity undertaken and the feedback we received.

Further details can be found in the full Community Conversation report.

Report date: October 2024

1.	Executive Summary	i
2.	You said, we're listening	2
3.	Conclusion	8

1. Executive Summary



2. You said, we're listening

- 2.1 In addition to the written feedback received, hundreds of conversations have taken place throughout the community conversation. All the feedback has been recorded, reviewed and analysed by the project team.
- 2.2 Following the Oldham Town Living community conversation, the project team undertook a review of the draft Development Framework – using the community and stakeholder feedback to underpin changes to the document. Full details of the feedback received, and wider details of the community conversation activity, can be found in the full report.
- 2.3 As a result of the feedback we have received from statutory consultees, members of the public and wider stakeholders, a number of amendments and additions to the final version of the Development Framework have been incorporated and include:

Theme	You said...	We're Listening...
Parking	<p>You wanted a wider range of public parking options across the Town Centre. This included people requesting more free or affordable parking, as well as accessible and disabled spaces to ensure more people are able to access and use the Town Centre. It was noted that public transport isn't always a feasible option for some people who live on the outskirts, especially in bad weather, and so parking is key. Reference was also made to the closure of current car parks within the Town Centre to make way for development, which people felt was contradictory. Similarly, people stressed the need for surface level parking rather than just relying on multistorey, which many female drivers were uncomfortable using from a safety perspective.</p>	<p>We have previously undertaken a review of how frequently the car parks in the Town Centre are used and found many were underutilised and able to absorb the overflow from the closure of some of the existing surface car parks. For example, Spindles Town Square is both one of the most underutilised car parks and the highest capacity car park with 1,288 spaces. Located in the heart of the Town Centre, the car park is a perfect location for accessing many of the town's amenities.</p> <p>However, following your feedback, Oldham Council are aware of the perceptions about the car park at the Spindles and how this could impact on people using it. Oldham Council will be undertaking a review of the parking provision at the Spindles to ensure those using the parking feel safe and welcome.</p>

		<p>For those, who are nervous about using the Spindles car park, the Council will also review the possibility of introducing mezzanine decks to existing surface level car parks, where no developments are planned. If these are possible, they would provide increases in capacity at prime locations.</p> <p>All planning applications related to the sites in the Development Framework will also be supported by a Travel Plan, which will promote sustainable travel and reflect the aims of the Council's Parking Action Plan.</p>
Housing mix and provision	<p>You support Town Centre housing, with respondents noting it will increase Town Centre footfall and bring economic benefits. However, some expressed concerns that it could turn the Town Centre into a housing estate, with worry over several high rise building and how this will look as a result of the topography of the town. Similarly, a concern around safety and crime was raised due to increases in residential properties. With regard to the mix of housing types, many people assumed that the housing provided would be apartments and often responded "well it isn't for me then". There was an assumption that affordable housing would not be provided and was a popular theme amongst respondents, with people questioning pricing and if the new homes would be truly affordable for the average person. Similarly, feedback received indicated that young people would be more likely to stay in the town if an appropriate mix of housing was provided from apartments through to houses. The business community were supportive of mixed housing,</p>	<p>There will be a mix of high-quality homes of different types and sizes provided when the plans are complete. The high-quality design of the new homes will ensure the needs of all Oldhamers, whether residents or businesses, are met; and the homes will be in keeping with their surroundings to ensure they reflect Oldham's heritage and character.</p> <p>The housing mix will include social housing, build to rent apartments and properties available for sale at an affordable rate. As each site comes forward, the detail of the type of housing will be shared with the public and included in the planning applications submitted to Oldham Council, all of which will be consulted on.</p>

	<p>but expressed a nervousness around there only being social or affordable housing as they are concerned those residents would be less likely to spend money in Town Centre businesses and therefore they would not benefit from the proposals.</p>	
Trust and Confidence	<p>You were hopeful the scheme would come forward and expressed a desire to see positive change in Oldham. It was clear from the conversations and feedback received that many people are proud to be from Oldham and want it to be the best version of the town it can be. However, there was an equally prominent lack of belief and distrust with the proposals, that the public's views would be listened to, and the Council would deliver the proposed interventions. Similarly it was referenced that the Council has undertaken many rounds of consultation or plans similar to this with little change coming forward, and many buildings which "aren't that old" often being demolished to make way for new (reference was frequently made to the M&S site near Mumps, the Civic Centre and Tommyfield Market, as well as the old Natwest building that is not part of our plans).</p>	<p>Building a positive and trusting relationship with Oldhamers is important to both Muse and Oldham Council. Our community consultation on the Development Framework was the first step to introducing the Oldham community to Muse and an important part of helping us build a relationship with you. We recognise Muse is new to many people in Oldham, but as a national placemaker with a track record of successful regeneration projects across the UK, including several projects in Greater Manchester, we are committed to delivering these new homes and will endeavour to keep you updated on the plans as they progress. Your feedback will help shape our proposals and as each site comes forward, we will invite your feedback to ensure we are delivering a Town Centre for all Oldhamers.</p>
Transport	<p>The current lack of reliable and safe public transport was an issue, with respondents noting the bus services were usually late or too infrequent and this put them off coming into the Town Centre. Similarly, the location of bus stops was flagged as being a barrier to people coming into the town for shopping. Many people cited that it is easier for them to go to other places (notably Bury and Manchester)</p>	<p>In addition to creating convenient and accessible links to the public transport network, we will work closely with TfGM to ensure these concerns are addressed.</p> <p>Oldham Council will continue to work closely with TfGM on highway scheme development and design to ensure the needs of public transport users and public transport services and facilities</p>

	<p>than directly into Oldham from other parts of the borough, which when coupled with the provision of retail and hospitality offers puts them off coming into the town.</p>	<p>are fully considered in order to improve the accessibility of and connectivity to public transport across the Town Centre and beyond.</p> <p>In addition, many of the projects being developed or already delivered in and around the Town Centre are designed to make walking and cycling an easier, safer, and more pleasant experience.</p> <p>We will continue to work with TfGM on Bus Network Reviews to promote bus service, route and timing changes to better reflect customer needs wherever possible.</p> <p>You can read more about our Access and Movement Strategy on pages 98-101 of the updated Development Framework.</p>
Safety	<p>Feeling safe and secure in the Town Centre should be a top priority for any future development, especially in terms of travelling in the Town Centre at day and night. Reference was made to crowds gathering and congregating in parts of the Town Centre which puts people off.</p>	<p>All of our landscape and public space will be designed so that they feel welcoming, comfortable and safe. Guidance from professional bodies, such as Secured by Design, who have expertise in creating safe and welcoming public spaces will be considered when finalising our design plans.</p> <p>As new developments come forward, we will ensure that safety and security considerations, such as lighting, are thoroughly worked through and implemented in the design.</p>
Accessibility	<p>You felt that more could be done by way of design to make places and spaces more inclusive. Specific examples were given including a lack of adequate lifts, cobbles on the streets and the lack of accessible toilet offerings. People said that they feel intimidated at the thought of</p>	<p>We want the Town Centre to be a welcoming place for all abilities and have included accessibility as a key consideration when developing plans for how we link the sites to one another. As each site comes forward, best practice and standard guidance, such as adequate disabled parking and bathrooms,</p>

	<p>coming into Oldham as a result of this. Those with ASD also mentioned that the constant change in the Town Centre made visits to the area too overwhelming for them and careful consideration needs to be given with regard to how the Council informs this group of upcoming developments.</p>	<p>dropped kerbs and wheelchair friendly design will be implemented as standard.</p> <p>We will continue to be transparent and open about changes to the Town Centre, including the use of updates on our social media channels and the production of easy read materials to meet all needs.</p>
Green space	<p>You wanted clarity on how the proposed parks and public spaces will be managed, especially in terms of safety, cleanliness and maintenance. Most people were glad to see that more green space in the Town Centre was being proposed, but others criticised prioritising this rather than businesses and shops.</p>	<p>We recognise that the open, accessible and green public spaces outlined in the Development Framework need to be maintained long-term for the benefit of all Oldhamers and visitors to the Town Centre. Therefore, on new developments we are going to develop a Landscape Management and Stewardship Strategy to outline how the new open and public spaces outlined in the Development Framework will be maintained and managed long-term. Details of this strategy for each new development will be required as part of the detailed planning applications that come forward.</p>
Community and character	<p>Community and character were also important and expressed a desire to preserve the history, architecture and reuse old buildings throughout the Town Centre. You also identified that local community services, such as GPs and dentists, were already difficult to access and wanted to ensure adequate services would be included to support both the new and existing residents in the Town Centre.</p>	<p>Preserving the historic character of Oldham is important and the project team will identify opportunities to celebrate Oldham's heritage where possible.</p> <p>We have also updated the Development Framework to outline the need for increased local service provision to be a consideration for any Section 106 requirements that are included as part of the approval on planning applications for the sites.</p>

		Section 106 requirements are legally binding agreements between developers and councils that are used to off set any potential negative impacts of development.
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3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Together with the wider project team, Oldham Council and Muse have undertaken a comprehensive community conversation with key stakeholders and the local community, demonstrating a wide reach across numerous communication channels. Our key objective during this process was to involve people in our plans and craft the next steps using the insights and experiences of local people.
- 3.2 We developed a locally responsive and bespoke strategy for the community conversation, seeking to involve local stakeholders and the community early in the process with an opportunity to influence the proposals where possible.
- 3.3 The expectations for activity such as this set out nationally and locally have been exceeded, and best practice has been followed to ensure the local community could find out about the proposals and share their views.
- 3.4 By providing a mix of both digital (website, webinar and social media) and more traditional methods of consultation (hard copy materials, in person events and engagement), the Partnership has taken an inclusive and accessible approach to consultation which has provided a range of opportunities for people to provide feedback.
- 3.5 A range of feedback channels were provided to ensure that a wide segment of the local community were able to participate in the consultation, including an online survey, hard copy survey, dedicated project email address, consultation freephone number, freepost address and in-person events where all feedback received was logged.
- 3.6 From this wide-reaching awareness raising and engagement activity, a total of 523 pieces of written feedback were received via survey or email and over 600 conversations took place. Throughout this activity, several recurring themes emerged which has given the project team a better understanding of the local context and increased awareness of local concerns which have been fed into the next stages with the design of the Development Framework.
- 3.7 The Partnership considers that the pre-application engagement undertaken with the local community and stakeholders has been timely, meaningful and effective with lessons learnt for how to improve this for next time.
- 3.8 The Partnership has been, and will remain, open and transparent throughout the process and has committed to ongoing engagement with local stakeholders throughout the next steps and into construction on any of the identified sites.