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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This Interim Planning Position Paper supports implementation of policy 23 'Open Spaces and Sports' within Oldham's Local Plan – The Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document, adopted November 2011¹. This paper supersedes the previous 'Open Space Interim Planning Position Paper' published by the council in March 2012.
- 1.2. The paper sets out the council's position in relation to open space policy - including the gathering of developer contributions towards open space provision (including playing pitch and outdoor sports provision).
- 1.3. The paper will be used when assessing planning applications and development proposals relating to open space provision and developer contributions for open space provision (including those required as part of new residential development) in line with Local Plan Policy 23 'Open Spaces and Sports'. It must also be read alongside Places for Everyone (PfE) policy JP-P7 'Sport and Recreation'.
- 1.4. This paper is informed by the council's Open Space Study (2022) and the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) (2025) as key evidence base documents. Further detail on these evidence base documents is provided in the following sections of this paper.
- 1.5. This paper provides updated evidence to inform the interpretation and implementation of the policies in Oldham's Local Plan. It is a material consideration and should be used in decision making as appropriate. The positions set out within this paper are summarised below.
- 1.6. In terms of new or enhanced open space, the paper sets out that residential development of 10 homes and above should contribute towards the provision of new or enhanced open space, unless it can be demonstrated by the developer that it is not financially viable for the development proposal or that this is neither practicable nor desirable. In line with national planning policy the threshold for seeking new or enhanced open space has been updated from 'all residential development' to major development (of 10 homes and above). However, where the loss of an open space is proposed, the policy requirements set out within policy 23 remains as is published in the Local Plan. The policy requirement for replacement provision or contributions towards new or enhanced open space provision to account for any loss of open space continues to apply to all levels and types of development.
- 1.7. In determining the appropriate location for or contribution to new or enhanced provision, the council will have regard to the proposed development and the open space surpluses and deficiencies in the area, as determined by the Open Space Study (2022). Where an area (ward) within which a site is located is deficient in at least one of the standards of open space provision (accessibility, quality and quantity), the area is classed as being deficient. In this circumstance, onsite provision or a developer contribution towards off-site new or enhanced existing open space provision is required.

¹ Oldham's Local Plan:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201229/current_local_planning_policy/978/joint_core_strategy_and_development_management_policies_development_plan_documents_dpds

- 1.8. Developer contributions will be used as appropriate to secure the provision and maintenance of new, or enhanced, open space provision. Contributions should go towards at least one of the deficient typologies within the area and considering the accessibility and quality assessment (carried out as part of the Open Space Study 2022).
- 1.9. The current local standards of open space provision set out in table 11 of the Local Plan is superseded by table 1 'Open Space Standards' within this paper, as updated evidence. New or enhanced open spaces should aim to meet the open space standards set out within table 1.
- 1.10. In terms of playing pitches and outdoor sports provision, the PPOSS provides updated evidence in relation to the borough's playing pitch and outdoor sports provision. It identifies the current and future needs for particular sports and sets out an Action Plan for future investment and improvement. The PPOSS should be used to inform where and what type of new or enhanced playing pitch and outdoor sports provision is provided.
- 1.11. In terms of new residential development, Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator should be used to inform contributions towards new or enhanced provision as part of new residential development. The calculator considers the provision needs identified by Oldham's PPOSS.
- 1.12. Informed by the outcomes of the Playing Pitch Calculator, the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to identify potential sites for offsite enhancement or where new provision may be needed, based on the identified deficiencies/ need.
- 1.13. Any enhanced or replaced playing pitch or outdoor sports provision provided to account for the loss of such provision should also be informed by the PPOSS, considering need and the Action Plan.
- 1.14. The council's approach to reflecting updated evidence will be considered further and finalised as part of the Local Plan Review. Further details about the Local Plan Review can be found [online](#)².

² Oldham's Local Plan Review: https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201233/local_plan_review

2. Background

2.1. This section provides a summary of the national and local planning policy context and evidence that has helped to inform the approach taken within this Interim Planning Position Paper.

National Planning Policy Framework

2.2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2024, which sets out several policy considerations that are relevant to this paper.

2.3. Paragraph 88 sets out that to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

2.4. Paragraph 103 emphasises the importance of access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity for the health and well-being of communities, recognising that open spaces can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. It states that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.

2.5. Paragraph 104 sets out that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

2.6. Paragraph 156 sets out where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, the contributions (or ‘Golden Rules’) that should be made. This includes the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces.

Planning Practice Guidance

2.7. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) ‘Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space’ is relevant to this paper.

- 2.8. The PPG sets out that open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space. Open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development.
- 2.9. The PPG states that it is for local planning authorities to assess the need for open space and opportunities for new provision in their areas.
- 2.10. It goes onto provide guidance on how to carry out assessments and emphasizes the need for appropriate consultation in relation to planning decisions affecting open space and sports provision, in particular with Sport England.

Places for Everyone (PfE) Joint Development Plan Document

- 2.11. Places for Everyone (PfE) was adopted on 21 March 2024, becoming part of Oldham's development plan.
- 2.12. JP-P7 'Sport and Recreation' sets out that a network of high quality and accessible sports and recreation facilities will be protected and enhanced, supporting greater levels of activity for all ages, including by:
- creating a public realm that provides frequent opportunities for play;
 - where appropriate setting out more comprehensive and detailed recreational standards and standards for provision for designated play areas in district local plans, having regard to existing and future needs;
 - requiring new development to provide new and/or improved existing facilities commensurate with the demand they would generate. The provision of sports facilities will be determined by individual local authorities through an evidence-based approach; and
 - encouraging the incorporation of a sports facilities mix in all education settings, that meet both curriculum and local community sport needs as identified by an up-to-date Local Authority Sports Needs Assessment, and made available for community use where possible;
- 2.13. JP-D2 sets out the policy for gathering developer contributions as part of new development. It states that developers should provide, or contribute to, the provision of mitigation measures to make the development acceptable in planning terms. These will be secured through either planning conditions, Section 106 planning obligations, Section 278 agreements or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (where it is in place). If an applicant wishes to make a case that a development is not viable, they should provide clear evidence at the planning application stage. The Local Planning Authority should determine the weight to be given to a viability assessment alongside other material considerations.

Oldham's Local Plan – the Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2011)

2.14. Oldham's existing Local Plan (The Core Strategy) was adopted 9 November 2011.

2.15. Policy 23 'Open Spaces and Sports' sets out requirements for protecting and enhancing open space, including seeking new or replacement open space provision (or developer contributions) as part of development. The policy is set out in figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Oldham's Local Plan Policy 23 Open Spaces and Sports

Policy 23 Open Spaces and Sports

Open space can contribute to people's quality of life. It has a key role to play in the protection of the environment, enhancing the biodiversity of the borough and creating habitats for flora and fauna. Access to quality open space is essential to health and well-being, encouraging increased physical activity and exercise and contributing to improved mental health. Quality open space provision can contribute to social inclusion and community cohesion in Oldham and can support and enhance the image and appeal of the borough for residents and visitors. Open spaces are defined in Policy 6 on Green Infrastructure.

Protection of Open Spaces

The council will protect, promote and enhance existing open space in the borough, and will seek to secure new and improved well-designed open spaces where appropriate.

New Open Spaces

All residential developments should contribute towards the provision of new or enhanced open space, unless it can be demonstrated by the developer that it is not financially viable for the development proposal or that this is neither practicable nor desirable. The council will have regard to the proposed development and the open space surpluses and deficiencies in the area to determine whether on-site or off-site new provision, enhanced existing provision or a financial contribution will be required. Open space surpluses and deficiencies will be defined through the Annual Monitoring Report.

The required type and amount of provision in any instance shall be calculated in accordance with the council's current local standards of provision and the surplus and deficiencies of open space provision identified in the Open Space Study (Open Space Study, PMP consultants and Oldham Council, 2006 – 2010). These will be monitored and reviewed over the lifetime of the LDF.

Table 11 Current Local Standards of Provision

| Type of Open Space | Quality - The required quality of open spaces measured as a percentage. Good quality is measured as 70% | Quantity The number of hectares required per 1,000 population. | Accessibility The required walk time in minutes or metres from residential development to open spaces |
|---|--|---|--|
| Parks and Gardens | At least 70% | 0.26 | 15 minutes/ 720 metres |
| Natural/ Semi-Natural | At least 70% | 1.95 | 15 minutes/ 720 metres |
| Amenity Greenspace | At least 70% | 0.46 | 15 minutes/ 720 metres |
| Allotments | At least 70% | No standard provided | No standard provided |
| Provision for Children | At least 70% | 0.37 | 10 minutes/ 480 metres |
| Provision for Young People | At least 70% | 0.10 | 10 minutes/ 480 metres |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities | At least 70% | 1.35 (excluding golf courses) | 15 minutes/ 720 metres (all outdoor sports facilities excluding golf courses) 20 minutes/ 12.63 kilometres (for golf courses) |
| Cemeteries and Churchyards/ Green Corridors / Civic Spaces | At least 70% | No standard provided | No standard provided |

Where new, replacement or enhanced provision or a financial contribution is provided, the developer will be required to enter into a planning obligation with the council for the provision and maintenance of the open space. This will be in accordance with the national circular on planning obligations and the council's Good Practice Guide (Oldham Council, 2008).

Loss of Open Spaces

The loss of an open space will be permitted where:

- a. land is allocated for built development; or
- b. proposals relate to cleared sites on previously developed land, including those that have been landscaped, where there is a clear intention by the council for future development; or
- c. proposals relate to a masterplan, policy, programme, strategy or action plan approved by the council or Oldham Partnership; or
- d. proposals comprise of a small-scale development which is ancillary or complementary to the open space function of the site, and the quality and character of the site is maintained; or
- e. proposals are for a new outdoor or indoor sport or recreation facility which is of sufficient benefit to the development of sport and recreation, or to the open space function, to outweigh the harm resulting from its loss, and it could not be reasonably located elsewhere, and does not create or worsen an existing deficiency of open space in the area; or
- f. in the case of playing fields only, the development only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch or part of one.

Development of a site that is currently or was most recently used as open space or for sport or recreation will be permitted provided it can be demonstrated the development brings substantial benefits to the community that would outweigh the harm resulting from the loss of open space; and

- g. a replacement facility which is at least equivalent in terms of usefulness, attractiveness, quality and accessibility, and where appropriate quantity, to existing and future users is provided by the developer on another site prior to the development commencing; or
- h. if replacement on another site is neither practicable nor desirable, an agreed contribution is made by the developer to the council for new provision or the improvement of existing open space or outdoor sport and recreation facilities and its maintenance within an appropriate distance from the site, or within the site; or
- i. a mixture of both g. and h; and
- j. in the case of playing fields, the development is approved by Sport England.

The LDF proposals map shows strategic open spaces and Green Flag parks in Oldham. Strategic open spaces include strategic parks and gardens (sites of 15 hectares and above) and strategic natural and semi-natural open spaces (sites of 20 hectares and above). This policy applies to all open spaces, whether or not shown on the proposals map. The council will provide further advice and guidance on this policy. The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision SPD (Oldham Council, 2008) sets out guidance and costs and will be reviewed to provide an update once this joint DPD has been adopted.

2.16. Policy 23 refers to the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision SPD (published in 2008). This was superseded by the Open Space Interim Planning Position Paper published in 2012, following the completion of the Open Space Study in 2010.

Evidence Base

Open Space Study

2.17. An updated Open Space Study was published in 2022. The 2022 Study updates the previously published Open Space Study (2006, 2010).

2.18. The updated Open Space Study (2022) comprised an assessment³ of the quantity, accessibility, quality and value of Oldham's open spaces⁴.

2.19. It also identified open space deficiencies based on current (2021) and anticipated future needs (2037)⁵ (based on population projections) and set out recommended standards for quantity, accessibility, quality and value, based on national benchmarks and guidance⁶, for provision of open space. In some instances, due to the nature and characteristics of some types of open space provision it was considered that it was not appropriate to set a standard.

³ Appendix C of the Open Space Study (2022) provides the full breakdown of the open space site assessment data, available at: https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2184/open_space_study_documents_2022

⁴ The following open space typologies were not included in the site audits, for the reasons set out below: sites smaller than 0.2 ha (except for Provision for Children and Young People). Smaller sites have limited usage compared to larger sites and have limited multi-functionality (however it is recognised they may serve some quantitative/ landscaping function); sites larger than 10 ha as these sites are too large to record accurate information; Indoor Sports Facilities as these are not freely accessible; outdoor spaces associated with education sites as these are also not publicly accessible; and inaccessible or 'land-locked' sites.

⁵ At the time the Open Space Study (2022) was prepared the anticipated Local Plan period was up to 2037 (in line with the PfE Publication Plan 2021). Modifications presented during the Examination in Public of PfE resulted in a change to the PfE plan period to 2039. In any case, the Study represents a comprehensive assessment of open space needs over the long term, capable of informing existing Local Plan policy and policy preparation for the new Local Plan.

⁶ See section 7 'Setting Standards' of the Open Space Study (2022) for further information on the identification of the open space standards.

- 2.20. The Study identified that there were 1,159 open space sites with a total area of 1,578 hectares (ha) within the borough⁷. The current population of Oldham is estimated at 238,984 people (as of 2021), as such the amount of open space equates to 6.61ha per 1,000 population. In 2037, Oldham’s population is projected to increase to 254,829 people.
- 2.21. Natural and semi-natural open space accounts for the majority of the boroughs open space provision - 42.33% of the total open space provision – whilst provision for children and young people accounts for the least – 0.74% of the total open space provision. The amount of provision identified within each typology (type) of open space provision is set out within Appendix 1 – Table A.
- 2.22. The Study proposed open space standards for quantity, quality, accessibility and value based on a review of existing open space provision and using best practice guidance⁸. A standard was not identified for some types of provision where the type and nature of provision would make it inappropriate or impractical, for example not applying a quantity or accessibility standard to cemeteries and churchyards. In these cases, the provision needs for these types of spaces will be considered separately, as appropriate. A quality standard is applied to all types of open space provision, however, as it is considered that this is beneficial to the user.
- 2.23. Table 1 shows the identified open space standards, as set out within the Open Space Study.

Table 1: Open Space Standards (Open Space Study 2022)

| Type of Open Space | Quantity Standard (the number of hectares required per 1,000 population) | Quality Standard | Accessibility Standard |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------|---|
| Allotments and Community Gardens | No standard | At least 70% | No standard |
| Amenity Greenspace | 0.46 | At least 70% | 720 metres (15-minute walk) |
| Cemeteries and Churchyards | No standard | At least 70% | No standard |
| Civic Spaces | No standard | At least 70% | No standard |
| Green Corridors | No standard | At least 70% | No standard |
| Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace | 1.95 | At least 70% | Natural and Semi-Natural - 720 metres (15-minute walk) Strategic Natural and Semi-Natural over 20ha - 7.85km (20-minute drive) |

⁷ See Appendix 1 – Figure A for a map of the borough’s open spaces.

⁸ See Section 7 of the Open Space Study (2022) for further information on the identified open space standards and how they were devised.

| Type of Open Space | Quantity Standard (the number of hectares required per 1,000 population) | Quality Standard | Accessibility Standard |
|--|--|------------------|---|
| | | | time) |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities (excluding Golf Courses) | 1.35 | At least 70% | 720 metres (15-minute walk) |
| Parks and Gardens | 0.40 | At least 70% | Local Parks and Gardens - 720 metres (15-minute walk) Strategic Parks and Gardens of 15ha and above - 7.85km (20-minute drive) |
| Provision for Children and Young People | 0.25 | At least 70% | 480 metres (10 minute walk) |

2.24. The Study assessed open space provision within the borough against the identified standards (table 1 above).

2.25. In terms of quantity, the Study found that there is a deficiency within the current (2021) and future (2037) quantity of open space provision for amenity greenspace and provision for children and young people. Indeed, there is expected to be a decrease in all types of provision per 1,000 population over the next 15 years, as population is expected to increase by around 6.36%⁹.

2.26. In terms of the quality of open space provision, the Study assessed open space provision against the following assessment bandings:

- Excellent - 90% to 100%
- Very Good - 80% to 89%
- Good - 70% to 79%
- Fair - 50% to 69%
- Poor - 0% to 49%

2.27. A total of 455 sites were assessed for quality¹⁰. The Study found that the majority of the borough's open spaces (56.7%) met the proposed quality standard of 70% (8.55% scored 'excellent', 18.46% scored 'very good' and 29.67% scored 'good').

⁹ See Appendix 1 – Table B of this document for the quantity of provision assessment compared to the identified quantity standards.

¹⁰ See Appendix 1 – Table C of this document for a summary of the quality assessment.

- 2.28. A detailed explanation of the quality findings is provided within section 5 of the Open Space Study (2022) and Appendix C of the Open Space Study contains the full assessment findings¹¹.
- 2.29. The Study assessed the accessibility of the borough's open spaces compared to the identified standard. Accessibility Maps were produced for each typology of open space¹².
- 2.30. In general, the assessment found that there is good access to open space across the borough, however some typologies are more accessible than others e.g. there are distinct gaps in provision for children and young people and parks and gardens, whilst there is extensive provision of outdoor sports facilities and natural/semi-natural spaces. This generally reflects that formal provision such as that for children and young people and parks and gardens is less common than more natural types of provision such as natural/ semi-natural. It also reflects the general size of provision, whereby outdoor sports facilities and natural/semi-natural spaces can be large in size compared to provision for children and young people.
- 2.31. The accessibility findings also reflect the topology and landscape of the borough with those areas which are more rural in nature (such as the eastern and northern parts of Shaw and western and northern parts of Saddleworth) having distinct gaps in several typologies of open space provision.
- 2.32. In these areas, access to formal open space provision may be limited however generally they tend to have better access to countryside sites (such as Tandle Hill, Crompton Moor and Daisy Nook) or open countryside and moorland (including the Peak District National Park) where there is an extensive Public Right of Way network.
- 2.33. The Study also assessed sites in terms of their value. Open space value is closely linked to quality and is an additional measure of functionality and usage by communities. The assessment scored sites as 'high (60-100%)', 'medium (40-59%)' and 'low (0-39%)' based on the value criteria¹³.
- 2.34. The Study recommended that a value standard of 60-100% (high value) be applied for destination or flagship sites¹⁹ and a standard of 40-50% (medium value) be applied for all other open space sites¹⁴.
- 2.35. The value assessment found that 41.7% of sites were high value, 31.6% were medium value and 26.5% were low value¹⁵. The greatest value scores range was for amenity greenspace.
- 2.36. As part of the Open Space Study a calculator was provided to the council to be used in the calculation of open space developer contributions as part of new development. It incorporates industry costings/ assumptions for the implementation and maintenance of types of open space provision (including assumptions for specific elements of

¹¹ Open Space Study (2022) – Appendix C – Site Audit Data:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7644/appendix_c_-_site_audit_data

¹² Open Space Study (2022) – Accessibility Maps (by open space typology):

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2184/open_space_study_documents_2022

¹³ Sites were assessed against several value criteria including, context, historical/ heritage, contribution to local amenity, vitality and Sense of Place, recreation, play, ecological and biodiversity.

¹⁴ The value standard ensures that the borough's open spaces are meaningful and beneficial to the local community. It ensures locally important, or flagship open spaces, are protected and that investment towards existing provision is focused where it is most needed.

¹⁵ See Appendix 1 – Table D of this document for a summary of the value assessment.

spaces) having regard to the findings of the open space assessment (and application of identified standards).

Oldham's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2025)

- 2.37. In April 2025 Oldham's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) was published¹⁶. The PPOSS updates the previous (2015) PPOSS and builds on the assessment of outdoor sports facilities undertaken within the Open Space Study (2022).
- 2.38. The PPOSS provides a more in-depth assessment of the borough's pitches and outdoor sports sites, identifies the current and future needs for particular sports and sets out an Action Plan for future investment and improvement.
- 2.39. The PPOSS provides evidence to support the implementation of existing local planning policies, will inform planning policy within the new Local Plan and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The PPOSS will also inform S106 developer contributions.
- 2.40. The preparation of the PPOSS has followed five stages, as recommended by Sport England, including an assessment of supply and demand. The assessment of supply and demand was undertaken over 2023-2024. A variety of consultation methods, including surveys, site visits, desktop assessments, and face-to-face meetings, have been used to collate supply and demand information about leagues, clubs, county associations and national/regional governing bodies of sport.
- 2.41. Where possible, sports were assessed in the season in which they are played (i.e. Summer/ Winter). The Assessment Report¹⁷ provides further detail on the context/background to the PPOSS, the supply and demand assessment process and the sport-by-sport supply and demand findings.
- 2.42. The main findings from the supply and demand assessment are that:
- There are shortfalls for sports played on natural turf grass pitches (football, rugby, cricket).
 - There is a clear need to protect all existing playing pitch provision, in line with planning policy.
 - Demand is being met in the main for non-turf/ pitch sports (e.g. tennis, bowls, netball, athletics). However, this does not equate to a surplus of provision - any spare capacity should be considered as a solution to overcome identified shortfalls.
 - Most of the identified grass pitch shortfalls can be met by better utilising current provision - improving quality, additional sports lighting, improving ancillary facilities, increasing match play on 3G pitches, and enabling access to existing unused provision (e.g. unavailable school sites).
 - This means that new grass pitches are not generally required, although such a need will increase if other methods of reducing deficits are not possible.

¹⁶ Oldham's PPOSS:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201236/evidence/3270/playing_pitch_and_outdoor_sports_strategy_2025

¹⁷ PPOSS Assessment Report:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8145/oldham_pposs_assessment_report

- Despite this, there is a clear quantified shortfall of 3G pitches (mainly for training) that can only be rectified through the installation of new facilities. This could also alleviate turf pitch issues.

2.43. The Assessment findings underpin the Strategy¹⁸ and Action Plan¹⁹ documents.

2.44. The Strategy and Action Plan provide a clear, strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2041 (in line with the Local Plan review). It has been developed to provide:

- Evidence of supply and demand of playing pitch and outdoor sports provision;
- A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities;
- Aims to help deliver the recommendations and actions – based around the notions of ‘protect’, ‘enhance’ and ‘provide’;
- A series of strategic recommendations which provide a framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock;
- A series of sport-by-sport recommendations which provide a strategic framework for sport led improvements to provision; and
- A prioritised area-by-area Action Plan to address key issues on a site-by-site basis.

2.45. The site-by-site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the Supply and Demand Assessment and Strategy. It provides actions based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. It is organised by Analysis Area (North, South, East, West and Central) and includes information on expected timescales, costs, partners, priority etc. Each action is linked to one or more of the Strategy Aims (protect, enhance, provide) and Strategic Recommendations.

¹⁸ PPOSS Strategy Report: https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8146/oldham_pposs_strategy_report

¹⁹ PPOSS Action Plan: https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8144/oldham_pposs_action_plan

3. Open Space Policy

3.1. Policy 23 of the Local Plan (see figure 1) sets out policy for the protection of open space, provision of new open spaces and the loss of open spaces.

Policy Threshold

3.2. Policy 23 states that “all residential development should contribute towards the provision of new or enhanced open space.”. NPPF Annex 2: Glossary defines major developments as ‘development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more’. Annex 1 of NPPF makes clear that ‘policies in this Framework are material considerations which should be taken into account in dealing with applications ...existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).’

3.3. Therefore, having regard to Annex 1 it is considered appropriate that the council should give less weight to the threshold in Policy 23 in relation to new or enhanced open space provision as part of new residential development²⁰. As having regard to the significant changes in national planning policy over the last 14 years, since the publication of the current Local Plan, it is clear that these amendments to NPPF have limited the thresholds for gathering developer contributions, to all major schemes (as per the definition of major development set out NPPF Annex 2: Glossary).

3.4. In light of the above it is considered that the policy requirement for seeking new or enhanced open spaces should only apply to major residential development (10 homes and above) in line with NPPF.

3.5. The exception to this is where an application (for residential or other development) would involve the loss of open space provision. Any replacement provision or contributions towards new or enhanced open space provision to account for any loss of open space continues to apply to all levels and types of development, in line with policy 23 and wider aims of NPPF, to ensure that development does not have an adverse impact on the local environment. The policy requirements relating to the loss of open space remain as published in policy 23 of the Local Plan.

Open Space Standards

3.6. Policy 23 states that “The council will have regard to the proposed development and the open space surpluses and deficiencies in the area to determine whether on-site or off-site new provision, enhanced existing provision or a financial contribution will be required. Open space surpluses and deficiencies will be defined through the Annual Monitoring Report.”. It goes on to state that “the required type and amount of provision in any instance shall be calculated in accordance with the council’s current local standards of provision and the surplus and deficiencies of open space provision identified in the Open Space Study (Open Space Study, PMP consultants and Oldham

²⁰ This threshold does not apply to the loss of open space provision.

Council, 2006 – 2010). These will be monitored and reviewed over the lifetime of the LDF.” and that “the council will provide further advice and guidance on this policy”.

3.7. The local standards of provision and the surplus and deficiencies have been reviewed by the Open Space Study (2022). As such, in line with the policy, the reviewed evidence from the Open Space Study (2022) should be used to inform the implementation of new open spaces, and guide developer contributions towards new or enhanced provision by identifying deficiencies in provision (in terms of quantity, quality, accessibility). It has not been possible to monitor the surpluses and deficiencies of open space through the Annual Monitoring Report, however the 2022 Open Space Study provides an updated position of the borough’s open space provision in this regard.

3.8. As such, the updated standards of open space provision set out overleaf (table 1) should be used, replacing the existing standards set out within table 11 - policy 23 of the Local Plan.

Table 1 – Open Space Standards (Open Space Study 2022) (repeated)

| Type of Open Space | Quantity Standard (the number of hectares required per 1,000 population) | Quality Standard | Accessibility Standard |
|--|--|------------------|--|
| Allotments and Community Gardens | No standard | At least 70% | No standard |
| Amenity Greenspace | 0.46 | At least 70% | 720 metres (15-minute walk) |
| Cemeteries and Churchyards | No standard | At least 70% | No standard |
| Civic Spaces | No standard | At least 70% | No standard |
| Green Corridors | No standard | At least 70% | No standard |
| Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace | 1.95 | At least 70% | Natural and Semi-Natural - 720 metres (15-minute walk) Strategic Natural and Semi-Natural over 20ha - 7.85km (20-minute drive time) |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities (excluding Golf Courses) | 1.35 | At least 70% | 720 metres (15-minute walk) |
| Parks and Gardens | 0.40 | At least 70% | Local Parks and Gardens - 720 metres (15-minute walk) Strategic Parks and |

| Type of Open Space | Quantity Standard (the number of hectares required per 1,000 population) | Quality Standard | Accessibility Standard |
|---|--|------------------|--|
| | | | Gardens of 15ha and above - 7.85km (20-minute drive) |
| Provision for Children and Young People | 0.25 | At least 70% | 480 metres (10 minute walk) |

3.9. Compared to table 11 of policy 23 (Local Plan), as shown in table 1 above, the standards for most types of open space provision remain the same. The accessibility standard has not changed for any types of open space provision, although clarification has been added in terms of non-strategic (local) and strategic open spaces where relevant. The quality standard is also unchanged from the standards set out in table 11 of policy 23. Quantity standards have been updated for Parks and Gardens and Provision for Children and Young People only.

3.10. In addition to the table above, the Open Space Study identified an open space value standard of 60-100% (high value) be applied for destination or flagship sites¹⁹ and a standard of 40-50% (medium value) be applied for all other open space sites²¹. Adding value to open space is important as it enables them to provide multi-functional benefits, maximising the positive impacts of open space for communities. Providers can add value to open spaces in various ways, through for example, adding street furniture, planting, improving signage and accessibility, and promoting spaces for events or sports use, to promote or improve their contextual, heritage, local amenity, sense of place, recreation, play and ecological value.

3.11. Whilst the standard is not enforced through policy 23 at this time, value should be considered in the designing of new open spaces and added where possible to ensure open spaces can provide multi-functional benefits and maximise user experience. Further detail on value is provided within the Open Space Study. The value standard will be considered in future policy making as part of the Local Plan Review.

3.12. In line with policy 23 the council will have regard to the proposed development and the open space surpluses and deficiencies in the area to determine whether on-site or off-site new provision, enhanced existing provision or a financial contribution will be required. Open space provision against the identified standards (see appendix 1) should be used to inform where new or improved spaces are needed in line with the identified surpluses and deficiencies. Contributions should go towards at least one of

²¹ The value standard ensures that the borough's open spaces are meaningful and beneficial to the local community. It ensures locally important, or flagship open spaces, are protected and that investment towards existing provision is focused where it is most needed.

the deficient typologies within the area and considering the accessibility maps²² and quality assessment²³.

- 3.13. Where an area within which a site is located is deficient in at least one of the standards of open space provision (accessibility, quality and quantity) it will be classed as deficient and onsite provision or a developer contribution towards new or enhanced existing open space will be required.
- 3.14. The council's Parks and Greenspaces team will assist in identifying opportunities for new or enhanced open space provision based on the assessment findings.
- 3.15. New open spaces should aim to meet the standards set out within table 1 (and considering adding value where appropriate).
- 3.16. A developer contributions calculator, produced as part of the Open Space Study (2022) will assist the council in determining deficiencies affecting proposed development sites based on their location (ward). It will identify appropriate developer contribution figures that will be used to create new or enhance existing open spaces based on the type of provision, relevant industry costings and the number of bedrooms/ bedspaces proposed in the development.
- 3.17. This is a similar approach to that which has been previously used to determine open space developer contributions, however the industry cost estimates used have been updated (as part of the Open Space Study) using SPON'S industry estimating cost guides (2023) and professional judgement.

²² Open Space Study (2022) – Accessibility Maps (by open space typology):
https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2184/open_space_study_documents_2022

²³ Open Space Study (2022) – Appendix C – Site Audit Data:
https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7644/appendix_c_-_site_audit_data

- 3.18. In terms of outdoor sports facilities, the open space standards provide a guide as to the quantity, quality and accessibility that provision should achieve. However, the assessment of outdoor sports provision, particularly in terms of quality, carried out by the Open Space Study has been updated and supplemented by the more detailed supply and demand assessment²⁴ carried out as part of the PPOSS. This should be used as evidence when considering outdoor sport's needs as part of new development. This will be discussed in more detail in section 4.

Policy Position – New or Enhanced Open Space Provision

Residential development of 10 homes and above should contribute towards the provision of new or enhanced open space, unless it can be demonstrated by the developer that it is not financially viable for the development proposal or that this is neither practicable nor desirable.

The council will have regard to the proposed development and the open space surpluses and deficiencies in the area, as determined by the Open Space Study (2022), to determine whether on-site or off-site new or enhanced provision will be required. Where an area (ward) within which a site is located is deficient in at least one of the standards of open space provision (accessibility, quality and quantity) the area will be classed as deficient and onsite provision or a developer contribution towards off-site new or enhanced existing open space provision is required.

Developer contributions will be used as appropriate to secure the provision and maintenance of new, or enhanced, open space provision. Contributions should go towards at least one of the deficient typologies within the area and considering the accessibility and quality assessment (Open Space Study 2022).

The current local standards of open space provision set out in table 11 of the Local Plan is superseded by the open space standards set out in table 1 above, as updated evidence. New or enhanced open spaces should aim to meet the open space standards set out within table 1.

Loss of Open Spaces

- 3.19. The Open Space Study (2022) identifies the borough's existing open space provision²⁵. In line with policy 23 any loss of provision will only be permitted where the proposed development would meet criteria a-f.
- 3.20. The policy goes on to state that development of a site that is currently or was most recently used as open space or for sport or recreation will be permitted provided it can be demonstrated the development brings substantial benefits to the community that would outweigh the harm resulting from the loss of open space; and meets criteria g-j.
- 3.21. This policy remains as is published in the Local Plan, although the Open Space Study (2022) and PPOSS (2025) provide updated evidence in terms of open space need and

²⁴ Oldham PPOSS Assessment Report:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8145/oldham_pposs_assessment_report

²⁵ See 'Green Infrastructure' web map for identified open spaces:

<https://map.oldham.gov.uk/map?name=Green%20Infrastructure>

will be considered when assessing the appropriateness of any loss of open space provision.

- 3.22. The existing policy criteria relating to the loss of open spaces set out within policy 23 applies to the loss of *all* open spaces, whether it is proposed to be lost as part of minor or major residential development, or by non-residential development.

4. Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sports

- 4.1. As set out in section 3, new or enhanced open space (including through the use of developer contributions) will be sought as part of major residential development (10 homes and above) in line with policy 23 of the Local Plan.
- 4.2. The council's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2025) provides updated evidence in relation to the borough's playing pitch and outdoor sports provision.
- 4.3. The PPOSS identifies the current and future needs for particular sports and sets out an Action Plan for future investment and improvement.
- 4.4. The PPOSS has considered the needs of several types of sporting provision, including pitches/ courts/ facilities associated with football, rugby, cricket, hockey, netball, golf, athletics, tennis, bowls. It has also considered outdoor provision of multi-use games areas (MUGAs), which can be used for informal sports and recreation.
- 4.5. Building on the PPOSS Assessment, the PPOSS Strategy and Action Plan provide a clear, strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitches and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2041.
- 4.6. The Action Plan sets out actions to address key issues identified by the Assessment. It includes information for each identified action on expected timescales (short, medium, long)²⁶, costs (high, medium, low)²⁷, partners (i.e. sports club/ national governing body/ council), site hierarchy²⁸ and priority (high, medium, low)²⁹, as a guide to support delivery of the action.
- 4.7. In terms of delivering the actions in the context of planning policy, the PPOSS Strategy sets out that Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC)³⁰ should be used to inform contributions towards new or enhanced provision as part of new residential development. Sport England's PPC helps local authorities estimate the demand that may be generated for the use of playing pitches by a new population.
- 4.8. Access to the PPC is currently restricted to local authorities with an up-to-date assessment of the need for playing pitches in their area. The council have access to the Sport England PPC - data from Oldham's PPOSS directly feeds into the calculator to generate the results.

²⁶ Short = 1-2 years; medium = 3-5 years; long = 6+ years.

²⁷ High = 750k and above; medium = £150-£750k; low = less than £150k.

²⁸ The identification of sites is based on their strategic importance in a regional context i.e., they accommodate the majority of demand, or the recommended action has the greatest impact on addressing shortfalls (either on a sport-by-sport basis or across the borough as a whole. The hierarchy is hub sites (high-quality, district important, multi-sport sites), key centres (community/ sport focused, although some are still likely to service a wider analysis area) and local sites (primarily sites with one pitch/facility or a low number of pitches/facilities that service just one or two sports). See PPOSS Action Plan for more information.

²⁹ Priority is based on strategic importance or the potential impact the action will have on addressing key issues identified by the assessment. High priority actions are usually related to hub sites given their potential reach and impact on sporting needs. Medium priority actions have analysis area importance and are identified on the basis of the impact that they will have on addressing the issues identified in the assessment, although not to the same extent as high priority actions. Low priority actions tend to be for single pitch or single sport sites with local specific importance but that may also contribute to addressing the issues identified in the assessment for specific users. See PPOSS Action Plan for more information.

³⁰ See Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator for further information: <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport/playing-pitch-calculator>

4.9. Informed by the outcomes of the PPC, the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to identify potential sites for offsite enhancement or where new provision may be needed, based on the identified deficiencies/ need.

Loss of Playing Pitches or Outdoor Sports Provision

4.10. As set out in section 3, the loss of open space, including any loss of playing pitches or outdoor sports provision, will continue to be considered in line with the criteria (a-j) set out within policy 23 of the Local Plan and considering the updated need evidence set out within the Open Space Study (2022) and PPOSS (2025). This part of the policy applies to the loss of all open spaces, whether it is proposed to be lost as part of minor or major residential development, and also by non-residential development.

4.11. Any enhanced or replaced playing pitch or outdoor sports provision provided to account for the loss of such provision should be informed by the PPOSS documents, considering need and the Action Plan.

Policy Position – Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Provision

The PPOSS provides updated evidence in relation to the borough's playing pitch and outdoor sports provision. It identifies the current and future needs for particular sports and sets out an Action Plan for future investment and improvement.

The PPOSS should be used to inform where and what type of new or enhanced playing pitch and outdoor sports provision is provided.

In terms of new residential development, Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator should be used to inform contributions towards new or enhanced provision as part of new residential development. The calculator considers the provision needs identified by Oldham's PPOSS.

Informed by the outcomes of the Playing Pitch Calculator, the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to identify potential sites for offsite enhancement or where new provision may be needed, based on the identified deficiencies/ need.

Any enhanced or replaced playing pitch or outdoor sports provision provided to account for the loss of such provision should also be informed by the PPOSS, considering need and the Action Plan.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. This Interim Planning Position Paper supports implementation of policy 23 'Open Spaces and Sports' within Oldham's Local Plan – The Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document, adopted November 2011.
- 5.2. This paper supersedes the previous 'Open Space Interim Planning Position Paper' published by the council in March 2012.
- 5.3. The paper sets out the council's position in relation to open space policy - including the gathering of developer contributions towards open space provision (including playing pitch and outdoor sports provision).
- 5.4. The paper will be used when assessing planning applications and development proposals relating to open space provision and developer contributions for open space provision (including contributions required as part of new residential development) in line with Local Plan Policy 23 'Open Spaces and Sports'. It must also be read alongside PfE policy JP-P7 'Sport and Recreation'.
- 5.5. This paper is informed by the council's Open Space Study (2022) and the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2025) as key evidence base documents.
- 5.6. This paper provides updated evidence to inform the interpretation and implementation of policy 23 of Oldham's Local Plan. It is a material consideration and should be used in decision making as appropriate.
- 5.7. The council's approach to updated local evidence will be considered further and inform policy preparation as part of the Local Plan Review.

Appendix 1

Table A: Open space provision, by typology, within the borough (Open Space Study 2022)³¹

| Open Space Typology | Description | Number of sites | Current amount of provision (ha) |
|---|--|------------------------|---|
| Allotments and Community Gardens | Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. | 36 | 14.93 |
| Amenity Greenspace | Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces and village greens. | 383 | 90.14 |
| Cemeteries and Churchyards | Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds. | 78 | 83.94 |
| Civic Spaces | Hard surfaced areas usually located within town or city centres. | 22 | 2.18 |
| Green Corridors | Linear natural infrastructure, such as trees and plants, that link up other green and open spaces to form a green urban network. | 26 | 38.07 |
| Natural and Semi-natural Greenspace | Includes country parks, nature reserves, publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wetlands and wastelands. | 217 | 667.97 |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities | Usually in the form of pitches or other sports provision, such as football, rugby or cricket pitches as well as tennis courts or bowling greens. | 253 | 478.81 |
| Parks and Gardens | Includes urban parks and formal gardens. Parks usually contain a variety of facilities and may have one of more of the other types of open space within them. | 49 | 192.52 |
| Provision for Children and Young People | Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, multi-use games areas and skateboard parks. | 95 | 9.54 |

³¹ This table includes all identified open space provision – including provision which was excluded from the quality assessment. See section 3 of the Open Space Study 2022 for further information on excluded sites and the assessment methodology.

| Open Space Typology | Description | Number of sites | Current amount of provision (ha) |
|------------------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Total provision | | 1,159 | 1,578.09 |

Table B - Existing Quantity of Provision against the Identified Quantity Standard (Table 28 – Open Space Study 2022)

| Open Space Typology | Existing Provision (ha/1,000) | Proposed Standard (ha/1,000) | Current (2021) Surplus/Deficiency (ha) |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Allotments and Community Gardens | 0.06 | No standard | n/a |
| Amenity Greenspace | 0.38 | 0.46 | -0.08 |
| Cemeteries and Churchyards | 0.35 | No standard | n/a |
| Civic Spaces | 0.01 | No standard | n/a |
| Green Corridors | 0.16 | No standard | n/a |
| Natural and Semi-Natural Areas Greenspace | 2.80 | 1.95 | 0.85 |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities | 2.00 | 1.35 | 0.65 |
| Parks and Gardens | 0.81 | 0.4 | 0.41 |
| Provision for Children and Young People | 0.04 | 0.25 | -0.21 |
| Total | 6.61 | - | - |

Table C - Open Space Quality Assessment Summary (Table 8 - Open Space Study 2022)

| Quality Banding | No. of Open Space Sites | Percentage of Sites |
|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Excellent | 39 | 8.55% |
| Very Good | 84 | 18.46% |
| Good | 135 | 29.67% |
| Fair | 162 | 35.60% |
| Poor | 35 | 7.69% |
| Total | 455 | 100% |

Table D – Open Spaces by Value Score (Table 11 of Open Space Study 2022)

| Value Banding | No. of Open Space Sites | Percentage of Sites |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| High | 190 | 41.76% |
| Medium | 144 | 31.65% |
| Low | 121 | 26.59% |
| Total | 455 | 100% |