

Report to CABINET

Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan: approval to publicise the plan and submit the plan to examination

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Elaine Taylor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods

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Reason for Decision

To seek approval to publicise Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan and following this submit Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan for examination in line with The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012).

Executive Summary N/A

Recommendations

To give approval to:

1. Publicise Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan in line with Regulation 16 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations; and following this,
2. Approve the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan for examination in line with Regulation 17 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.
3. Grant delegated authority to the Executive Director Place (Deputy Chief Executive) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, to consider the

recommendations made in the Inspectors Report following independent examination of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan and, in liaison with the Peak District National Park Authority, approve what action to take in response to each recommendation in said report in line with Regulation 17A (4) of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, and approve publication of the examiner's report, plan proposal and decision statement as soon as possible after the decision.

4. Note that the report will be considered by the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board on 18 December 2025, and should therefore be exempt from call-in, under Rule 14 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in the Constitution, and the Executive Director Place (Deputy Chief Executive) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods be given delegated authority to respond to any feedback from scrutiny as part of their consideration of the Inspectors Report referred to in 3 above.

Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan: approval to publicise the plan and submit the plan for examination**1 Background**

- 1.1 Through the Localism Act 2011, Parish Councils or neighbourhood forums were given powers to develop a shared vision and planning policies through a Neighbourhood Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan is a plan prepared by a community guiding future development and growth. The plan may contain a vision, aims, planning policies, or allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development. Neighbourhood Plans should address the use and development of land and relate to social, economic and environmental issues with the aim of promoting sustainable development.
- 1.2 Once prepared, the Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum must submit their Plan to the local planning authority who will consult on, arrange for it to be examined and hold a referendum on the examined Plan before “making” (i.e. adopting) the Plan. Once “made”, the Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the Development Plan for the local planning authority, applying just to the neighbourhood area designated for the Plan to cover.
- 1.3 The National Planning Practice Guidance sets out the key stages of neighbourhood planning:
- Step 1: Designate a neighbourhood area;
Step 2: Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan or order;
Step 3: Pre-submission publicity & consultation;
Step 4: Submission of a neighbourhood plan or order proposal to the local planning authority. At this point the proposals are published for 6 weeks and representations are invited;
Step 5: Independent Examination;
Step 6: Referendum; and
Step 7: Making the neighbourhood plan or order (bringing it into force).
- 1.4 Oldham Council has a statutory duty to give advice or assistance on neighbourhood planning. This is set out in more detail in our [neighbourhood planning policy statement](#)¹.
- 1.5 Currently there are two neighbourhood planning areas designated in Oldham borough – Saddleworth and Chadderton.
- 1.6 The application to designate the Saddleworth Parish Council boundary as a neighbourhood area was approved at Oldham Council Cabinet on Monday 21 November 2016. It was also approved at the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) Planning Committee on Friday 11 November 2016.
- 1.7 Since then, Saddleworth Parish Council has been working on Step 2 – preparing a draft neighbourhood plan.
- 1.8 As part of developing the neighbourhood plan Saddleworth Parish Council has carried out consultation, this has included:
- A public launch event – February 2017;
 - Community group meetings – 2017 and 2018; and

¹ The Neighbourhood Planning Policy Statement can be found at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/4456/neighbourhood_planning_policy_statement

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- Public consultation – survey 2020.

- 1.9 The survey attracted 476 responses and, along with the meetings, has informed the issues and topics to be covered by the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.10 Between 2 April and 10 June 2024, the Parish Council undertook a formal consultation stage as part of Step 3 (Regulation 14 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations). Responses were received from the public on the survey, which summarised policies, as well as more formal responses to the full documents from statutory consultees.
- 1.11 Oldham Council formally responded to this consultation. The response is available [here](#). Officers from strategic planning have also up to this point provided informal feedback on the neighbourhood plan as it has progressed through the various stages. This has included liaising with internal officers.
- 1.12 Oldham Council has also provided comment on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) that Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) have prepared and have screened the neighbourhood plan against the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) regulations and published a [Determination Statement](#)².
- 1.13 There are no sites being allocated for development within the neighbourhood plan. There are four proposed Local Green Spaces at Diggle Fields, Dawson's Field (Scouthead), Playing Fields at Ashfield, Springhead and Church Fields, Dobcross. These include land within Oldham Council's ownership and estates have been consulted.
- 1.14 This report links to The Corporate Plan through demonstrating our values to work together (with Saddleworth Parish Council) on the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan which seeks to achieve sustainable development and therefore will help deliver our missions for healthier happier lives; a great place to live and green and growing.
- 1.15 In terms of the purpose of the report there are limited implications for:
- 1.16 Community Cohesion Implications, including crime and disorder implications under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. N/A
- 1.17 Risk Assessments – there is a risk that the examination may find the plan unsound but officers have been working with Saddleworth Parish Council to reduce the chances of this.
- 1.18 If relevant, Co-operative Implications, Human Resource Implications, IT implications, Property Implications, Procurement Implications and Environment and Health and Safety Implications – Publicising the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan will involve updating our website to make the documents available. Council assets do fall within the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan however planning policies are considered to be consistent with national and local plan policies. No sites are being allocated for development.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 Saddleworth Parish Council have now formally submitted Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan and the supporting documents (including a Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Statement) to Oldham Council and the PDNPA. This is considered to meet the requirements of Regulation 15 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.
- 2.2 Approval is sought to obtain approval to consult on the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 16), along with its supporting documents, in line with the regulations. The

² The Determination Statement can be found at <https://committees.oldham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=5149>

consultation will be held for a period of at least six weeks. In addition, we are also seeking approval at the same time to submit the plan proposal for examination (Regulation 17) following the consultation. The PDNPA will also be seeking approval to carry out these stages given that the designated neighbourhood plan area includes the Peak District National Park.

- 2.3 Oldham Council is the lead authority and will organise the consultation, although the PDNPA will have consultation tasks to undertake too to ensure that appropriate consultation is carried out within the relevant areas of the Peak District. Representations on the submitted Neighbourhood Plan will be invited to Oldham Council. Responses received will be sent to the examiner with the Plan and it is not the Local Planning Authority's (LPA's) responsibility or the Parish Council's responsibility at this point to make further changes to the Plan.
- 2.4 Oldham Council, in liaison with the PDNPA and Saddleworth Parish Council, will appoint the examiner and will be responsible for paying for the examination (approx. £5,000-10,000). The examination will look at whether the plan meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements set out in the legislation.
- 2.5 After examination, the examiner will issue a report to Oldham Council (and PDNPA) and Saddleworth Parish Council. If the plan meets the basic conditions, the examiner will recommend that the plan proceed to the referendum stage. However, they may and usually do, recommend modifications that need to be made to the plan in order to meet the basic conditions, before it can proceed to the referendum.
- 2.6 The examiner may conclude that the plan does not meet the basic conditions and that modification to make it meet the basic conditions is not possible. In that situation, the examiner would recommend that the plan does not proceed to referendum.
- 2.7 If the plan can proceed to referendum (with or without modifications), the examiner will be required to advise the local authority on the referendum voting area. This may include people beyond the boundary of the neighbourhood plan area. If more than 50% of those voting in the referendum vote 'yes', then the neighbourhood plan must proceed to become part of the statutory development plan for the area. This would be ratified by a subsequent decision of both Oldham Council (Council) and PDNPA to "make" (adopt) the Neighbourhood Plan, at which point the Plan must then be used in the decision-making process for planning applications within the designated neighbourhood area (Saddleworth Parish boundary).
- 2.8 Oldham Council would cover the costs of the referendum for land within Oldham Council. Once a decision statement has been issued outlining the intention to send the plan to referendum, Oldham Council can (currently) claim £20,000 to help recover costs incurred in consulting on and examining the Plan, and on the referendum, although the £20,000 will not cover all the costs.
- 2.9 Below is an indicative timetable of the next steps, for information, based on officers' projections and which is subject to change.

Stage	Indicative Date
Consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 16) for six weeks	12 January 2026 – 5pm 23 February 2026
Submission of the Plan to Examiner	March 2026
Examination / Receipt of Inspectors Report	May 2026

Oldham Council (Cabinet) and PDNPA decide what actions to take within 5 weeks of receiving Inspectors Report ³	June / July 2026
Oldham Council and PDNPA publish the examiner's report and plan proposal and the decision statement as soon as possible after the decision.	
Referendum (poll day must be within 56 days from when a decision is made)	August / September 2026
Making (adopting) the Plan – Full Council (must be within 8 weeks of the day following the last applicable referendum)	12 November 2026

3 Options/Alternatives

3.1 Option 1: To give approval to:

1. Publicise Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan in line with Regulation 16 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations; and following this
2. Submit Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan for examination in line with Regulation 17 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

This option will mean that Oldham Council are fulfilling its statutory duties to advise and assist through helping take the Neighbourhood Plan through the statutory stages of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. There are no disadvantages to this option.

3.2 Option 2: To not give approval to:

1. Publicise Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan in line with Regulation 16 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations; and following this
2. Submit Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan for examination in line with Regulation 17 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

This option would mean that Oldham Council without lawful justification is not meeting Regulation 16 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations which requires LPAs to publicise the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents as soon as possible after the correct documents have been submitted. This would then mean that Regulation 17 cannot proceed at this point either (submitting the plan to examination). There are no advantages to this option.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 Option 1: To give approval to:

1. Publicise Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan in line with Regulation 16 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations; and following this
2. Submit Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan for examination in line with Regulation 17 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

³ If the LPA makes a decision that differs from the Inspectors recommendations they must invite representations on the plan again

This option will mean that Oldham Council are fulfilling its statutory duties to advise and assist through helping take the Neighbourhood Plan through the statutory stages of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. There are no disadvantages to this option.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Saddleworth Parish Council have carried out public consultation as outlined above. This report seeks to obtain approval to carry out public consultation as part of Regulation 16 of The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The examination costs are estimated to be £5k-£10k. It is assumed that these costs will be incurred in this financial year and funded from the existing 25/26 revenue budget. The current forecast position as at M7 for Development Control is an underspend of £107k.
- 6.2 The referendum costs are expected to be incurred in 26/27 and are estimated to be around £65,000. It is anticipated that these costs will need to be funded from existing 26/27 revenue budget within Development Control.
- 6.3 There is potentially a £20,000 grant available that will help contribute towards these costs, however, there is a risk that the grant may not be received if the plan does not progress. This financial risk will need to be held by the Development Control budget.
- 6.4 Current estimates are that the worst-case scenario, costs will be a maximum of £75k with a minimum anticipated net spend of £50k.

(John Hoskins)

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Council is required to publicise the proposed neighbourhood plan and submit it for examination in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. The Local Planning Scheme of Delegation currently provides for the Portfolio Member in consultation with the Executive Director to decide what actions to take in respect of a neighbourhood plan within 5 weeks of receiving the inspectors Report. However the Constitution no longer allows individual Cabinet Members to take key decisions, so that decision will have to be taken by the Cabinet.

(A Evans)

8 Procurement Implications

- 8.1 There is requirement for the appoint of an independent Planning Inspector to carry out the examination of the Plan. The envisages spend is between £5,000 to £10,000. The CPR rule 4.3 dictates that as long as the spend is below £10,000 incl. VAT or £8,334 (exc. VAT) business can award the contract to a suitable contractor by seeking and obtaining one written quotation. Procurement will not be involved in the awarding of this contract for this level of spend.

SKapoor (Commercial Procurement Unit)

9 Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

- 9.1 Yes, See attached.



10 Key Decision

10.1 Yes

11 Key Decision Reference

11.1 RBO-04-25

12 Background Papers

12.1 N/A

13 Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1 Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan

Appendix 2 Map of Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan area

Appendix 3 Consultation Statement

Appendix 4 Basic Conditions Statement

Appendix 5 Local Green Space Assessment

Appendix 6 Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination Statement

Appendix 7 Habitats Regulation Assessment

Appendix 8 Equalities Impact Assessment