Report to the Chief Executive

Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan

Officer Contact: Emma Barton, Deputy Chief Executive – Place]

Report Author: Elizabeth Dryden-Stuart, Head of Strategic Planning and Transport; Emma Brennan, Graduate Planning Officer (Policy)

Email: elizabeth.dryden-stuart@oldham.gov.uk; emma.brennan@oldham.gov.uk

19 October 2026

Reason for Decision

Following receipt of the Inspector's Report on the Independent Examination of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Development Plan, Oldham Council and the Peak District National Park Authority must now decide what action to take in response to the recommended modifications; and if the Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to referendum.

Recommendations

Approve:

1. The recommended modifications to be made to the submission Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan, as set out in the Inspector's Report to Oldham Council and the Peak District National Park Authority of the Independent Examination of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Development Plan, and publication of the Decision Statement.

2. Submission of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Development Plan for the plan period up to 2045, subject to the recommended modifications (see recommendation 1), to a referendum based on the area that was designated as a Neighbourhood Area by the Peak District National Park Authority on 11 November 2016 and by Oldham Council on 21 November 2016.

Leaders' Consultative Session **19 October 2026**
Governance Strategy & Resources Scrutiny **22 October 2026**

Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan

1 Background

1.1 Designation of the Saddleworth Parish Council boundary as a neighbourhood area was approved by the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) on the 11th November 2016 and by Oldham Council on the 21st November 2016. Since that time, Saddleworth Parish Council have been preparing the neighhourhood plan, with advice and support from Oldham Council and the PDNPA.

1.2 As part of developing the neighbourhood plan Saddleworth Parish Council have undertaken various stages of consultation including:

- A public launch event – February 2017
- Community group meetings – 2017 and 2018
- Public consultation – survey 2020
- Formal consultation on the pre-submission neighbourhood plan (as per Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012[1]) took place between 2nd April and 10th June 2024

1.3 The Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to Oldham Council and the PDNPA on 11th November 2025, and approval was sought to publicise the Plan, and subsequently submit it for examination, by the PDNPA and Oldham Council in December 2025[2]. A period of consultation then took place between the 10th of June and 24th of July 2026, during which time any interested parties were invited to comment on the plan and supporting documents as per Regulation 16. The Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan was then submitted, alongside representations received to the consultation, for examination by an independent examiner in line with Regulation 17, on 10th August 2026. Through the examination, the independent examiner has considered whether the plan meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements set out in the legislation. Details of the Submission and Examination stages (to date) can be found online here https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201235/neighbourhood_planning/2936/saddleworth_neighbourhood_plan

1.4 In terms of any Co-operative implications, the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan supports Oldham Council's Corporate Policies:

- Supporting Great Places to Live by helping to achieve thriving communities through policies around housing, as well as environment and enjoyment.
- Supporting Green and Growing policies by designating four Local Green Spaces and including policies on Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity, Protected Sites, sustainable construction and clean fuel vehicles.
- Supporting Happier Healthier Lives by including policies on health, social care and education.

1.5 Furthermore, the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan gives residents the power to develop a vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local

[1] The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 can be found online at https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents

[2] Report of the Statutory Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods seeking approval to publicise Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan and following this submit Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan for examination in line with The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012) can be found on the Council's website at https://committees.oldham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=144&MId=9617&Ver=4

area. As set out at paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 preparation of the neighbourhood plan has been supported through extensive consultation with people who live, work and own businesses within Saddleworth. The referendum (see paragraphs 2.8 and 2.9) will also provide the local community of Saddleworth with the decision as to whether to adopt the plan.

2 Current Position

2.1 The Inspector's Report on the independent examination of the submission Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan was received by Saddleworth Parish Council, the PDNPA and Oldham Council on the 17th September 2026. The report finds that subject to specified modifications, the Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other requirements and should be submitted to a referendum.

2.2 In summary, the examining inspector recommended the seven modifications within their report, for the submission Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan to meet the Basic Conditions:

- To clarify that the Parish Actions are identified as community aspirations but are points that are not suitable to be statutory planning policies and so do not form part of the Development Plan (*recommended modification 1)*.
- To retitle and adjust the content of the Map on page 6 of the Neighbourhood Plan so that it identifies the boundary of the Neighbourhood Area only (*recommended modification 2)*.
- Amendments to several policies so that all policies have sufficient regard for national policy and are 'clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals' *(recommended modifications 3 to 7).*
- The deletion of Policy 16: Consultation, which states that major developments should require consultation and engagement with local residents and groups as a condition of their approval as this is dependent on the actions of third parties, which is not permitted and it seeks to establish a basis for community engagement that is not proportionate to the scale of proposal and that does not have sufficient regard for national policy relating to pre-application engagement. *(recommended modification 5).* The inspector has recommended that this could be included under Parish Actions instead.

2.3 The Inspector has only recommended modifications and corrections to the Neighbourhood Plan where required so that the plan meets the Basic Conditions and the other requirements. If to any extent, a policy set out in the Neighbourhood Plan conflicts with any other statement or information in the plan, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy - supporting text and other information in the plan must be adjusted to achieve consistency with the modified policies. As such, the Inspector has recommended an additional modification (*recommended modification 8*) to modify general text and figures to achieve consistency with the modified policies; to achieve updates and correct identified errors; to achieve necessary clarifications; and to ensure sufficient regard for national policy.

2.4 The full Inspector's Report can be found at Appendix 1. The individual modifications recommended are set out in Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan Post-Examination Decision Statement at Appendix 2.

2.5 As per Regulation 17A of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, we now have 5 weeks from the day immediately following that on which we received the Inspector's Report to decide what action to take in response to the modifications recommended. A decision is therefore required by 23rd October 2026.

2.6 Oldham Council and the PDNPA, in liaison with Saddleworth Parish Council, have considered the modifications recommended in the Inspector's Report as set out in the Post-Examination Decision Statement at Appendix 2. The Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan document will be updated to incorporate all the modifications required, including any additional modifications needed to address recommended modification 8, and re-titled Referendum Version in time for referendum to be held.

2.7 As part of the Inspector's Report, the examiner is also required to advise the local authority on the referendum voting area. In this regard the examining inspector has confirmed that the Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a referendum based on the area that was designated as a Neighbourhood Area by the PDNPA on the 11th November 2016 and by Oldham Council on the 21st November 2016.

2.8 Following approval, the Inspector's Report, and accompanying decision statement (see Appendix 2), will be published on the Council's website. The Council then must hold a referendum to adopt the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan within 56 working days beginning with the day immediately following the day on which the decision that the referendum must be held is first published, in line with Regulation 2A(2)(b) of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012[3]. Officers will work with colleagues in the Elections Team to arrange, and prepare for, the referendum. Details of the referendum must be published not fewer than 28 working days ahead of the referendum, in line with Regulation 4 of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.

2.9 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. Oldham Council and PDNPA then have 8 weeks 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).

2.9 The date for the referendum is to be agreed with the Elections Team and this will inform the publication date for the Decision Statement and notification of the referendum. In the meantime, indicative dates for each key stage that the Council will need to meet are set out below for information:

Stage	**Date**
Receipt of Inspectors Report	17th September 2026
Oldham Council and PDNPA decide what actions to take within 5 weeks of receiving Inspector's Report. *As per Regulation 17A of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012*	By 23rd October 2026
Oldham Council and PDNPA publish as soon as possible after the decision: a) the decision and their reasons for it ("the decision statement"); b) details of where and when the decision statement may be inspected; and c) the Inspectors Report	23rd October 2026 (subject to change as dependent on referendum date)

[3] https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201235/neighbourhood_planning/2936/saddleworth_neighbourhood_plan .

Stage	Date
As per Regulation 18(2) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012	
Details must be published not fewer than 28 working days before the date of the referendum. *As per Regulation 4(1A)(b) of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012*	2nd November 2026 (subject to change as dependent on referendum date)
Referendum (poll day must within 56 working days beginning with the day immediately following the day on which the decision that the referendum is first published). *As per Regulation 2A(2)(b) of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012*	10th December 2026 (subject to change)
Making (adopting) the Plan – Full Council (must be as soon as reasonably practicable after the referendum is held and in any event within 8 weeks of the day immediately following the day on which the referendum was held). *As per section 38A(4)(b) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.*	Potential special Council meeting on 3rd February 2027 (subject to change as dependent on referendum date)

2.10 Once a neighbourhood plan has been independently examined, and a decision statement is issued by the local planning authorities outlining their intention to hold a neighbourhood plan referendum, it must be considered and can be given significant weight when determining a planning application, in so far as the plan is material to the application.

2.11 Once the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made' (adopted) it will then form part of the Development Plan for Oldham and the PDNPA and be given full weight in the determination of planning applications and decisions on planning appeals in the plan area.

2.12 The cost of the referendum is estimated to be in the region of £65,000. There is the possibility that the Council is eligible to apply for a Neighbourhood Planning Grant of £20,000 once the Regulation 18 decision statement, confirming our intention to send the neighbourhood plan to referendum, has been published.

3 Options/Alternatives

3.1 There are two options to be considered:

3.2 Option 1: Approve the modifications recommended by the Independent Inspector. Oldham Council will then publish a decision statement and arrange the referendum for the Neighbourhood Plan.

- Advantage: accepting the recommended modifications will ensure that the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other requirements, so that it can move forward to a referendum.
- Disadvantage: there are no disadvantages to this option.

3.3 Option 2: Not approve the recommended modifications made by the Independent Inspector, and publish a decision statement.

- Advantage: there are no advantages to this option.
- Disadvantage: the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan will not meet the Basic Conditions and will not move forward to a referendum.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 Approve the recommended modifications, as set out in the Inspector's Report to Oldham Council and the PDNPA of the Independent Examination of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Development Plan; publication of the Decision Statement; and submission of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Development Plan to a referendum based on the area that was designated as a Neighbourhood Area by the Peak District National Park Authority on 11 November 2016 and by Oldham Council on 21 November 2016.

5 Consultation

5.1 As set out in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 above, Saddleworth Parish Council have undertaken various stages of consultation to inform preparation of the neighbourhood plan, including consultation as part of Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 between the 10th of June and 24th of July 2026.

5.2 Further details of consultation carried out to inform preparation of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan can be found in the Consultation Statement[4] published at the Regulation 16 stage. Details of representations received to the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan at the Regulation 16 consultation are available online at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201235/neighbourhood_planning/2936/saddleworth_neighbourhood_plan .

6 Financial Implications

6.1 If Oldham approves the modifications recommended by the Independent Inspector, Oldham Council will then need to publish a decision statement and subsequently arrange a referendum for the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.2 The referendum is estimated to cost approximately £0.065m, with the possibility of claiming a £0.020m grant from the MHCLG towards the administration of the referendum proceedings.

6.3 The estimated costs will need to be funded from existing revenue budget held within the Planning Service.

6.4 The estimated net cost of the referendum has already been assumed within the current Planning forecast for 2026/27.

6.5 The current year end forecast for the Planning Service as at Month 6 is a budget pressure of £0.181m.

(John Hoskins)

[4] The Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement and Appendix can be found online at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/download/2524/saddleworth_neighbourhood_plan_consultation_statement_and_appendix

7 **Legal Implications**

7.1 In accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation for local development plan matters, the power to consider the recommendations contained in an Inspector's report on a neighbourhood plan is delegated to the relevant portfolio Member in consultation with the Executive Director. However, the absence of a Cabinet, in accordance with paragraph 3.6 of Part 4D (Executive Procedure Rules) of the Council's Constitution, in the event of there being no Leader, Deputy Leader or Cabinet members, executive functions shall in the interim be carried out by the Chief Executive, subject to the Access to Information Rules.

(Alan Evans)

8. **Procurement Implications**

8.1 There are no immediate procurement implications contained within this report.

(Tom Pyne - Assistant Director Procurement)

9 **Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People**

9.1 Yes - see Appendix 3

Please do not embed the assessment here. Attach it separately as an appendix.

10 **Key Decision**

10.1 Yes

11 **Key Decision Reference**

11.1 KDD-26-01

12 **Appendices & Background Papers**

12.1 Appendix 1 – Inspector's Report
Appendix 2 - Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan Post-Examination Decision Statement
Appendix 3 – Oldham Impact Assessment

12.2 Background Papers:

- Information on the preparation of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan can be found online at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201235/neighbourhood_planning/2936/saddleworth_neighbourhood_plan
- The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 - https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2031/regulation/4
- The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 - https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents

Please do not embed the appendices here. Attach separately.

Approved by the Chief Executive following consultation with the political group leaders who were in attendance as follows:- Councillors: Decision made under the authorisation contained in Section 9C (5) Delegations of Specific Officers of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) and Section 3.6 of Part 4 (Executive Procedure Rules) of the Council Constitution for the Chief Executive to take emergency decisions in respect of the Council's executive functions.
Signed: Shelley Kipling, Chief Executive Dated:
Date of Leaders' Consultative meeting:
Summary of feedback from the political group leaders