



Oldham
beyond

Oldham

A Vision for the
Borough of Oldham

beyond

A report by...
URBED, Comedia, S333,
King Sturge and WSP

April 2004



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Oldham Local Strategic
Partnership and Northwest
Development Agency
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urbed The urbed logo, which includes a stylized green leaf icon.

Introduction

Oldham Beyond has been commissioned by the Oldham Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) to develop a vision and strategy for the renaissance of the Borough of Oldham. This document sets out a route for Oldham's renaissance, which encompasses its people and communities, economy, transport, housing market and physical environment.

This has been a huge task and has been undertaken by a consultancy team led by URBED with Comedia, King Sturge, S333 Architects and WSP. Expert input has also been provided by Professor Brian Robson and Professor Sir Peter Hall. The study has involved conversations with more than 2,000 people in the borough including work with schools, two workshops, a series of sector working groups, eight focus groups, presentations to each of the Area Committees and the Oldham 'Satellite' ('Thought Bubble'), an inflatable room that toured different venues in Autumn 2003. These consultations are summarised in Appendix 1 and have made an important contribution to the strategy we propose for the borough's renaissance.

Consultation has been combined with a wide range of research by the *Oldham Beyond* team. A number of working papers provide detailed analyses of the borough's economy, culture, transport and urban design. These themes are summarised as appendices to this report and are available as separate working papers.

In addition to the borough-wide work, the team has also undertaken a series of more detailed masterplans to demonstrate and explore the themes emerging from the wider vision. These 'demonstrator plans' are:

- **Werneth/Freehold:** A masterplan for one of the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) pilot areas, which looked at how to revive low-value and low-demand terraced housing markets. This masterplan formed part of a £55 million initial bid for HMR funds (since approved).
- **Oldham Town Centre:** A masterplan for Oldham Town Centre focusing particularly on the Economic Development Zone around its southern fringe.
- **Further demonstrators:** A series of smaller plans for sites throughout the borough including Zetex, Hollinwood, Oldham Athletic FC, the Robert Fletcher site in Greenfield, Royton Town Centre and Featherstall Road.



Throughout the study, the emerging findings have been discussed and evaluated with a Sounding Board made up of council officers, LSP and NWDA representatives. This body has helped to shape the findings and themes to emerge out of this study. This work is brought together and summarised in this report. In the hope that it will be widely read, this vision report has been concisely written and so inevitably is unable to cover some of the detail of our recommendations. We have therefore listed the full range of supporting papers for *Oldham Beyond* at the end of this report, as well as including details on how to comment on any of these.

This report starts with a vision for Oldham Borough in 15 years' time before setting out the 10 key proposals that make up our strategy to realise this vision. The sections that follow summarise our research and the thinking behind the strategy and are supported by a series of appendices. The report concludes with six strategic themes and sets out 89 more detailed recommendations.

Oldham Vision

Our vision for Oldham in 15 years' time...

A confident place, at ease with itself and celebrating in its diverse communities and landscapes – from the tight-knit terraced communities to the wild moors and valley villages to the east. A borough that is proud of its industrial past but which has reinvented its economy by making the most of the creativity and drive of its young people. The world will see the borough as a place transformed and people will be attracted to live and work in the borough by the quality of life that it offers and by its reputation for tolerance and diversity.

A generator of wealth:

The borough will be a good place to do business, where bold developments at Hollinwood and Mumps have created an attractive alternative to the sterile 'business parks' that characterise many towns, creating dramatic gateways to the borough. Oldham Town Centre will be a hotbed of creative and knowledge industries where talented people are attracted from elsewhere because of the convivial environment and affordable accommodation. The borough's 138 mills will have been refurbished for new business and illuminated as a potent symbol of the borough's transformation.

Many places not one

The borough will be attractive as a place to live and work because of the fusion of countryside and community on the doorstep of one of the great European cities. A place that people relate to on three levels:

► **Neighbourhood:** A constellation of

diverse neighbourhoods, smaller towns and villages each with its own centre creating a sense of community and providing local services. To symbolise this, the heart of each of these communities will have been 'marked' with a sculpture or building. These communities will be proud of their history but welcoming of people from different backgrounds and there will be a much broader ethnic mix throughout the borough. There will, however, be neighbourhoods that remain Asian in character. These will become part of Oldham's appeal because their shops and restaurants attract people from across the borough and further afield.

► **Borough:** A reborn industrial borough focused on a thriving Oldham town centre that attracts people from throughout the region because of its university college, excellent cultural facilities and broad range of shopping and leisure uses. They will come to Oldham town



centre, rather than other towns, because of its striking new buildings and the convivial creative atmosphere of the centre.

► **City:** A short Metrolink ride away will be Manchester City Centre and beyond the Airport, Salford Quays and the Trafford Centre. Through the new 'tube map' of Greater Manchester people in Oldham will feel part of the wider city and able to access all of its opportunities and facilities.

A desirable place to live

Oldham will become a good place to live with a range of aspirational and affordable housing. A Smart Communities strategy will develop and consolidate compact walkable communities around Metrolink stops and town centres. Elsewhere in the borough some of the terraces will have been redeveloped to reduce densities and create more suburban housing. A focus on design quality and sustainable development will have marked the borough out for its attractive and innovative housing. This will have strengthened the housing market and householders will invest in their homes in the confidence that values will rise.

An ambitious people

The borough's excellent education facilities will have created opportunities for young people to achieve their full potential. The



new confidence in the borough and the knowledge that exciting opportunities are available will have encouraged more young people to stay on at college and university. The quality of life in the borough will have also persuaded many more talented young people to stay in Oldham when they graduate, or to return after studying elsewhere. This will transform the low wage/low skilled culture of Oldham – not just by attracting people into the borough (although its positive image means this will happen) but because local people will decide to stay. The renaissance of the borough will therefore happen through a virtuous circle – a more skilled population with better jobs – increased spending power – a resurgence of the town centre and more money in the local economy – more jobs because the borough is more attractive to entrepreneurs and inward investors – an improved image attracting even more talented people etc...

A sustainable borough

The borough will have invested in



sustainability and the benefits will be not just to the environment but to Oldham's people and its economy. Housing Market Renewal will have radically improved the energy efficiency of the housing stock and reduced heating bills for some of the poorest households. Companies in the borough will have found new markets in environmental industries such as recycling, remanufacturing and renewable energy.

New Oldham

The new Oldham will be viewed differently by its people – they will be proud to live and work in the borough and willing to be active citizens. The council will have encouraged this by devolving further power and responsibilities to the local level and encouraging a range of organisations and partnerships to flourish. These diverse groups will have been working together over the last fifteen years to bring about this dramatic transformation with a common purpose and a determination to make things happen. They will be planning to build on these successes with a new strat-



egy and challenges for the next 15 years. This vision is within Oldham's grasp. In this report we set out a strategy that will generate the momentum to start this process. As with all major change – starting the process will be difficult and may be expensive. However, the aim is to create the self-fuelling, virtuous circle of regeneration described above.

We summarise this strategy on the following page, which sets out our 10 key proposals. The body of the report is then structured in three sections:

- **Oldham Before:** Which reviews the history of the borough and the roots of the situation today.
- **Oldham Today:** Which explores a series of drivers for change in Oldham today.
- **Oldham Beyond:** Which sets out a strategy for Oldham under six themes: Wealth Creation, Liveability, A Learning Community, Common Ground, Sustainability and New Oldham.



Strategy: 10 key ideas

The Vision for the Borough of Oldham set out on the previous page taps into the strengths of the borough as well as the wider economic and social trends that Oldham must exploit. We have also looked at the drivers for change in Oldham and the issues that industrial boroughs like Oldham need to address (see pages 12-15). These issues have been developed into a strategy for the borough as summarised below.

In pages 18-27 of this report we set out a series of 82 recommendations under six headings: Wealth creation, Liveability, a Learning Community, Common Ground, Sustainability and New Oldham. These recommendations are not, however, a shopping list, they are part of a coherent strategy for the renaissance of the borough.

The overall aim of this strategy is to kick start the virtuous circle of recovery that we described in the vision whereby each part of the strategy fuels the next. Some of the 82 proposals are very basic, like better street cleansing, improved services and support for existing business. It is important to get these basics right and this is already happening. It is, however, also important to have transformational initiatives that can make a real difference. We have therefore highlighted the ten main initiatives that we are proposing:

1 New business: The promotion of two major new business locations. The first at the Hollinwood junction of the M60 and the A62 (see page 13) should be a prestige business location at one of the gateways to the borough. The other, the Mumps Enterprise area within Oldham Town Centre should create a quality in-town business location (see Town Centre Masterplan).

2 A creative borough: One of Oldham's strengths is its creative people because of the excellent courses at the College. Preventing the loss of many of these people to Manchester is an important part of the strategy through the creation of the Rhodes Bank Creative Quarter, the development of a striking new home for the Coliseum and Peskar Productions and the creative use of space within mills.

3 The mills of Oldham: We are proposing the gradual transformation of the mills of the borough. While few of these are vacant, many are underused.



We believe that they should be converted over time to a combination of creative workspace and housing. The starting point is a number of demonstrator projects including Hartford Mill (see Werneth/Freehold masterplan) and Anchor Mill (see page 15). This will help to establish a market to encourage other mill owners and developers to do the same. Our market research suggests that there are a number of mill owners who would be interested in this if values were right. In order to change perceptions of the mills we are proposing that they should be illuminated which will create a striking spectacle to people passing through the borough.

4 An intercultural borough: We are proposing new ways of addressing the ethnic diversity of the borough. In this communities define themselves positively both by what makes them different and by what unites them. Activities which encourage intercultural exchange should be given priority for funding. The Housing Market Renewal process should be used to



break down geographical ethnic segregation by creating model, mixed neighbourhoods starting with Werneth/Freehold. Oldham should also celebrate all of its ethnic groups through events and celebrations throughout the year. It should also create Zones of Exchange where the Asian and the White communities can meet and trade (see Featherstall Road page 15).

5 An educated population: The proposal for the University College predates this study but is absolutely central to the renaissance of the borough. This will be the jewel in the crown of an education system that is completely transformed from that of 10 years ago. This process is well underway and significant improvements have been made in the achievement of school-leavers. The next step is to look at the secondary schools of the borough through PFI.

6 Smart communities: We have proposed a strategy for restructuring the housing neighbourhoods of the western part of the borough through a Smart Communities plan. This would use Housing Market Renewal and feed into the local planning process. The aim is to create dense, urban, walkable neighbourhoods around Metrolink stops and existing towns and neighbourhood centres (see Werneth/Freehold page 19 and Royton page 23). Away from these areas the HMR

process should be used to reduce densities and to create a broader range of suburban housing. Over time this will strengthen local centres and transform housing choice in the borough.

7 Regeneration web: A borough the size of Oldham is impossible to masterplan. Our physical proposals therefore use a 'point and line' technique to reach across the whole borough. We have proposed a series of sculptures or buildings in the heart of each community commissioned from world 'renowned' designers. These would be linked together by improvements including lighting, signage and tree planting along the major routes through the borough. The starting point for this should be the boulevarding of the A62 into Manchester.

8 Common Ground: We have proposed a range of improvements to the public realm of the borough - the spaces where people meet and interact. The most important of these is Town Square, the refurbishment of the traditional heart of Oldham Town Centre (see page 24). We have also proposed a series of corridors through Oldham Town Centre including Green Walk running from



Oldham Edge to Alexandra Park linking the countryside to the town. More symbolically our proposals across the borough, from the outdoors pursuit centres in Greenfield to the regeneration of Oldham Athletic's Boundary Park ground and the 'social computer' are all suggestions that will create places where the people of Oldham can come together.

9 Sustainability: We believe that environmental sustainability should play a central part in the strategy from the environmental efficiency of the housing stock to the economic impetus of environmental industries.

10 Many places not just one: Our proposals are based on a federal structure for the borough in which people can feel a sense of belonging to their town and neighbourhood, their borough and indeed Greater Manchester. This involves the devolution of power to the local level, the regeneration of local town and neighbourhood centres (regeneration web) and the promotion of local pride and identity. This is based on the idea that people should be encouraged to relate to their local area and will feel more positively towards the borough as it becomes a place to be proud of.



Oldham Before

In order to look forward, one must first understand how we have got to where we are today. The study therefore started by looking at Oldham's history, from its Victorian boom town roots through the decline of the textile industry, the great optimism of the 1960s to the riots of 2001. Oldham's problems are not new but the pages of its history can also provide the clues to its renaissance.

Boom town

Oldham was the most important spinning centre in Lancashire when the county was the world centre for the cotton industry. Lancashire was transformed in the nineteenth century from an 'obscure, remote, insular' backwater into the richest industrialised region in the world. This was driven by technological innovation in weaving and spinning, steam engines, canals and railways. It led to the explosive growth of Manchester, followed by satellite towns like Oldham that came to specialise in spinning: at its peak in 1890 Oldham had 330 mills with an eighth of the world's spindles. Oldham was also the leading manufacturer of cotton machinery with Platts of Werneth employing 15,000 people in the 1890s.

Smaller towns such as Crompton, Royton and Chadderton, specialised in heavy cotton products such as calico and velvet. These towns prospered greatly and in 1929 Shaw was described as the 'richest little town in England'. Saddleworth, by contrast was seen as a rural backwater, with its textile industry based on the worsted (wool) trade for Yorkshire markets.

Oldham, unlike Rochdale or Bolton, was not a traditional market town. It was little more than a village, plucked from obscurity by the Industrial Revolution and made, within 50 years, into one of the most important towns in Britain. Its population increased from 12,000 in the 1830s to almost 150,000 by the First World War. This growth that was more Klondike than Port Sunlight and as Engels describes, Oldham was '...badly and irregularly built with foul courts, lanes and back alleys and reeking of coal smoke'.

The town grew more quickly than did its civic institutions. In Oldham public expenditure was seen as an overhead that undermined the competitiveness of the town. It was thus the last Lancashire town to invest in a purpose-built town hall (and a century later would also be the first to allow



it to fall into dereliction). It was the largest Victorian town not to have a free public library and there were years of acrimonious debate over the development of Alexandra Park. The exception to this was education where industrialists were prepared to invest in institutions like the Bluecoat School and the Mechanic's Institute (now the Lyceum).

The merchants of Oldham, with notable exceptions like Platt, were also reluctant to get involved in the running of the town. In 1902 only 12% of councillors were business people and the press complained of 'an apathy to public life'. It remains difficult to involve businesses in Oldham as witnessed by the problems of the Chamber of Commerce and the lack of an economic partnership on the Local Strategic Partnership.

The legacy of Oldham's industrial past is its working class culture with important strands of radicalism and cosmopolitanism. Many of the thousands who marched at Peterloo in 1819 were spinners from Oldham. The Chartist and Co-operative movements put down strong roots in the town and Oldham millworkers protested in support of the emancipation of slaves.





However, this working class culture has always had a darker side and it is clear from our consultation that Oldham's 'roughyed' culture and distrust of 'outsiders' remains an issue today.

A disappointing century

The start of the 20th century was the zenith of Oldham's success. However, by the 1920s its cotton prices were being undercut by foreign competition, ironically often using machinery made in Oldham. The cotton industry entered a protracted decline culminating in large scale closures in the 60s and 70s. Paradoxically, loss of confidence in the industry caused workers to leave, so in the midst of decline, it suffered labour shortages, particularly on the night shift. These jobs were filled, as they always had been, by immigrants, this time not from Ireland but from Pakistan and Bangladesh. These groups arrived to work in a declining industry in a town with little tradition of welcoming outsiders.

Model town

Yet from this despair came one of the most energetic periods of Oldham's history. In the 1960s, what the Labour Minister Richard Crossman called, the 'Oldham experiment' put the town at the centre of the government's 'white heat of technology' revolution. The St. Mary's estate was the first deck access housing project in the UK and attracted huge attention. In 1966 Oldham became one



of the first boroughs to introduce comprehensive education and 1968 saw developments such as the concrete and glass St. Peter's shopping precinct along with the Oldham Way and, a little later, the Civic Centre. For a while Oldham was the place to be – a modern, model borough.

Creating the metropolitan borough

The 1960s was, however, not a good time to innovate. A number of these projects turned sour leaving the Council with a legacy of debt and a loss of confidence. This led to resentment when in 1974 Oldham Metropolitan Borough was created and absorbed the town councils of Royton, Shaw, Chadderton, Failsworth and Saddleworth. In few other places would the 1974 Local Government reorganisation continue to be such a burning issue as it appears to be from our consultations as part of this study.

The recent history of Oldham has seen mixed fortunes. It saw success in the 1980s and early 1990s as the new motorway links enabled mills to find new uses such as distribution and mail order. Oldham Athletic FC (the Latics) were doing well and



the Council were successful in promoting a range of building projects including Town Square and Spindles shopping centres, the Business School and Sixth Form College and more recently, Gallery Oldham.

However, this external confidence masked internal tensions. From the 1970s many neighbourhoods came to be associated with particular ethnic groups. In the absence of concerted attempts to build intercultural exchange and integration, these became defined by difference rather than commonality. Well-intentioned attempts to address need through area-based initiatives backfired and became a source of resentment between neighbourhoods fueling political extremism. This was a contributory factor to the outbreak of rioting in May 2001 which brought Oldham to prominence for all the wrong reasons. The *Independent Review* (the Ritchie Report) that followed the disturbances made a series of recommendations that were reinforced by a critical Audit Commission Report. Oldham had become inward-looking, fixed in its ways and wary of independent voices. Since that time there have been widespread change in the borough and the Council. There remain important problems, particularly in the areas of civic society and social cohesion. However, there is a feeling that a corner has been turned and there is a new sense of optimism in the borough. *Oldham Beyond* has been commissioned to harness this spirit to develop a vision to take the borough forward with confidence.

Oldham today

As part of the study a wide range of research and consultations have been undertaken. These are summarised as appendices to this report and full write-ups are available as separate working papers. This research has been condensed into a set of drivers for change that have been used to shape the strategy.

The research and consultation undertaken as part of the study includes:

- ▶ Consultations with more than 2,000 people (Appendix 1)
- ▶ A renaissance audit that has compared Oldham to a number of similar towns (Appendix 2)
- ▶ A review of the borough's economy by King Sturge (Appendix 2)
- ▶ A review of cultural activity and provision by Comedia (Appendix 3)
- ▶ An assessment of accessibility by WSP (Appendix 4)
- ▶ An urban design study by URBED (Appendix 5)

It is clear from this work that there are parts of the borough that are currently doing well and where radical change is not needed. However, in the more urbanised parts of the

borough there are a number of drivers that make change a necessity.

Population: While the borough's overall population is stable this masks population growth in some areas and moderate decline in the urban parts of the borough. While this is not yet a major problem it has the potential to undermine the competitiveness of the borough since it tends to be the talented and motivated who leave. This was a point emphasised by the Oldham Beyond focus groups where many participants said that they felt that their children would have to move away in order to get on.

The lost middle class: Oldham is a working class town and the western part of the borough lacks the areas of middle-class housing found around similar towns. Many of the borough's middle-classes live in Saddleworth, which has stronger rail links to Manchester and indeed Leeds than it does to Oldham. The lack of aspirational housing in the west of the borough adds to the pressure on people who do well



to leave. It also means that companies looking to relocate can see nowhere in the centre of the borough for their managers to live. This relates in part to middle-class suburbs, however today it might equally relate to 'loft apartments' and urban housing. This is the type of housing likely to appeal to the young and talented as much as the three bedroom semi.

The future of terraces: 67% of Oldham's housing stock is in the form of Victorian terraces and a proportion of the rest is in high-rise and deck-access council housing. It is not possible, nor we believe desirable, to replace all of this housing in the foreseeable future. The Housing Market Renewal process therefore needs a twin-track approach of planned redevelopment of the poorest stock and measures to improve the remaining homes and to stimulate the terraced housing market.

Employment change: Oldham has responded well to the loss of the textile industry but has diversified into sectors



that are also declining and which remain low skill and low wage. It therefore remains vulnerable to rationalisation or the transfer of employment overseas.

Community cohesion: It is clear that the tensions between communities in Oldham remain an important issue and that the most important of these tensions relates to race. The growth in the Asian community will cause them to expand out of the relatively small areas where they are currently concentrated. It is therefore vital to create models for harmonious inter-cultural neighbourhoods. We believe that Werneth/Freehold is an excellent opportunity to do this. If this is to work, all communities in the borough, including the white community need to feel more valued and believe that their problems and aspirations are being addressed.

The town centre: Oldham town centre is the economic heart of the borough, a major centre for employment and wealth creation as well as creating the image and 'shop front' of the borough. The town centre has not realised its full potential and it now faces significant challenges from surrounding centres that are improving their offer. The town centre therefore needs to improve if it is to retain its current position and yet has the potential to do even better than this. An important part of this is the diversification of the centre's offer as a



place for living, leisure and culture as well as shopping and drinking.

The image of Oldham: One of the problems of industrial towns is getting noticed. While cities tend to have strong images – either positive or negative – many industrial towns suffer from a weak rather than a particularly negative image. Because there are so many of these towns it is difficult to stand out of the crowd. This explains the proposals in Barnsley to reinvent itself as a Tuscan hill town and to project a halo of light into the sky that can be seen from Sheffield. Oldham, however, has a bigger problem than most industrial towns because the disturbances mean that it has been noticed for all of the wrong reasons.



Oldham therefore has a poor external image and an even poorer self-image. This is a major impediment to the regeneration of the borough and must be addressed alongside the borough's other problems.

Oldham's problems have been the focus for a significant amount of the work of the *Oldham Beyond* team and are not to be underestimated. However, these problems in areas such as housing and the economy are similar to those faced by many industrial towns. There are two characteristics that have emerged from the *Oldham Beyond* consultation that make Oldham different.



The first is a breakdown of understanding and trust between different ethnic groups in the borough and the residential segregation of different ethnic groups. The second linked characteristic is a loss of self-confidence and pride in the borough and its future. Our consultations suggest that many people feel faintly embarrassed to say that they come from Oldham even though they remain loyal and proud of their town or neighbourhood. *Oldham Beyond* needs to build upon this, unite the people of the borough and start to change internal and external perceptions. In developing this vision the *Oldham Beyond* team has been exploring two scenarios, which are explored in the next section.

Oldham Beyond

While many parts of the borough are doing well there is a need to transform the western parts of the borough, particularly Oldham town. In doing this we need to ask some important questions about who will live in Oldham, where they will earn their money and the image that people will have of Oldham. In answering these questions we must look at Oldham both in relation to Greater Manchester and as an independent industrial town.

'Greater' Manchester:

Manchester is presently regarded as an urban renaissance success story. 300,000 jobs are predicted to be created in central Manchester in the next five years much of which is based on the 'Knowledge Capital' initiative. This builds on the merger of Manchester University and UMIST and uses knowledge industries as a major spur for economic growth. Just as Oldham grew up, in part, as a satellite of Manchester, it must base its recovery, in part at least, on Manchester's revival.

This could take a number of forms including an increase in commuting into Manchester from Oldham. This already happens to an extent; travel to work figures show that 12,200 people commute every day from Oldham into Manchester while only 2,760 travel the other way. This will be greatly assisted by the expansion of the Metrolink network which is due to more than double over the next decade. This will give Manchester a 'Tube map' similar to London's which will include stations in Failsworth, Werneth, Oldham Town Centre, Derker and

Manchester's Northern Quarter



Shaw. Commuting into Manchester will be made easier and the areas around stations will become attractive to people working in Manchester but looking for affordable housing close to attractive countryside.

One analogy for this is Greater London. Most of the London boroughs are based on towns that were absorbed into London. There is a certain symmetry in



comparing Oldham to Newham in London. Both are in the 'east end' and were seen for years as backwaters. Newham however has revived itself and in particular is seen to have transformed itself from one of the worst governed boroughs to one of the best. It is also the focus for major regeneration initiatives as part of the Thames Gateway including the new University of East London.

'Oldham' Renaissance

Oldham is far more than a commuter centre. There are far more people living and working in the borough than there are who commute into Manchester. Indeed there are almost 20,000 people who commute to work into Oldham from surrounding boroughs. It is also important to recognise that Manchester's economic recovery is patchy. While parts of Manchester are booming, there are substantial areas where there are problems far greater than those in Oldham, not least in East Manchester. It is also true that Oldham must compete with the other seven Greater Manchester towns for the benefits of Manchester's growth.



University of East London in Newham

Hollinwood

One of the smaller demonstrator plans undertaken as part of *Oldham Beyond* has looked at the Hollinwood area as a potential site for inward investment. Hollinwood is a gateway to the borough standing at the junction of the M60, the A62 and the Metrolink. This is combined with a significant amount of land that is either vacant or underdeveloped creating an important opportunity for a transformational development as the most prominent inward-investment location in Oldham. This is a location that can attract commercial uses into a high quality business environment that promotes economic development and projects a strong image for Oldham. The main part of the development mix should therefore be B1 offices. However, to

make the area work as a destination it needs a mix of other uses which could include housing, leisure uses, retailing that will not compete with the town centre, and associated eating and drinking uses.



So while Oldham's future must be based in part on Manchester's recovery, it must also look to its own renaissance as a strong, independent borough. This means retaining Oldham's character as somewhere distinct from Manchester – more Newark than Newham – a borough where people can live and work and where they feel a strong sense of belonging to the borough as well as their town and neighbourhood. This implies a transformation of Oldham town centre to secure its role as a major shopping centre and as a place for leisure and civic life. It also depends on the economic development to generate new wealth and a focus on liveability in the borough.

Inevitably the future for Oldham will include elements of both of these approaches. It will never be entirely independent of Manchester and would be foolish not to take advantage of the current growth of the city. However, Oldham is more than a satellite of Manchester and it can and should rediscover its role as a proud, independent town.

A good example of this is the

University College. This is vital to Oldham's independence because it will help to retain talented people and to attract young people to the borough as well as strengthen its image. However, while the University College will be allied to Huddersfield University it should also be linked to the Manchester Knowledge Capital Initiative and should exploit the prestige of the Manchester Universities. We believe that this should be reflected in the name of the institution.

It is also important to remember that the borough of Oldham is greater than the town and that different approaches may be appropriate in different parts of the borough. Saddleworth, for example, acts as a commuter suburb for Oldham but also for Manchester and Leeds because of its rail links. Failsworth relates as much to Manchester as it does to Oldham while Royton and Shaw see themselves as independent Lancashire towns.

One model for this type of growth is Lowell near Boston in the US. This, like Oldham, was a textile town that was



devastated by the closure of its mills. As part of its strategy for recovery it started by making itself into a good place to live and many of its people found work by commuting into Boston to work. However, as a result of improving its 'liveability' the town started to attract economic activity including Wang computers that established itself in a former mill. Gradually economic activity started moving out of Boston and people who had been attracted to the town started businesses. Today there are as many people commuting from Boston to Lowell as there are in the other direction. It is this type of model that has been explored by the *Oldham Beyond* study.

Former mills reused for high-tech companies in Lowell



Oldham renaissance

The issues faced by Oldham are not unique. They are faced to a greater or lesser extent by many of the towns that were created by the Industrial Revolution. While the industrial cities have been remarkably successful at reinventing themselves in the last decade, real questions remain as to how to do the same for the much more numerous industrial towns.

The Industrial Revolution created a dense network of closely spaced towns in Northern England unlike anywhere else in the world. These towns grew rapidly and some, often the least organised, carried on growing to become cities. However, most remained as towns and their economic dynamic is very different to a city. When cities reach a certain size they are able to suck in people and investment from a wide area. Towns by contrast have more stable economic 'eco systems'. They grew up, or expanded, in locations that were suitable for manufacturing industry and were clustered around the mills and factories because people were not able to travel far to work. The limited ability to travel also meant that towns, like those in Oldham, could grow up close to each other without being in direct competition. It is possible to see Oldham Parish Church from the centre of Royton but it grew up as an independent town.

Many places became dominated by one industry and some even by just one major employer such as ICI in Middlesbrough, Pilkingtons in St. Helens or indeed

Manningham Mill in Bradford an Urban Splash development



Platt's in Oldham (that once helped to support 42% of the town's population).

These towns thrived, not because they were attractive or pleasant places to be, but because they generated wealth and people were stuck with them. Most people had little choice over where they lived, and low housing standards and a poor environ-



Environmental improvements in Wigan

George Yard in Barnsley - upmarket cafes and restaurants



ment were accepted facts of life. In the last few decades this stable economic 'eco system' has broken down. The traditional manufacturing base of these towns has disappeared and the new economic activity that has been attracted is often more footloose, low skilled and poorly paid. Increased mobility and better transport links mean that these towns can no longer rely on captive markets but must compete to attract employers, residents and shoppers. URBED's work on the renaissance of industrial towns suggests that their future depends on the following issues:

Liveability: The most important issue is the quality of life in the town, what is now called 'liveability'. This is based on a range of factors including the quality of education, levels of crime, local services, cultural facilities, the housing stock and the quality of the environment. Liveable towns retain their existing population and attract people from outside. Liveable towns are popular, attractive places that also tend to have high business start-up rates. They are also attractive to inward investors, partly because they are good places to be but also because they have a stock of skilled articulate employees.

Wealth creation: The second issue is where people earn their money. Here there are broadly two options. Traditionally in industrial towns people earned their money

Featherstall Road

This demonstrator plan suggests the development of a section of Featherstall Road as a centre for Asian restaurants and retailing. This is seen as a Zone of exchange and understanding as part of the overall vision – a place where the Asian community can trade and interact with the white community as happens in places like Rusholme in Manchester and Brick Lane



in London. This does not presently happen in Oldham other than in the Open Market because most of the Asian commercial areas serve a largely Asian market.

This builds on some progress that has been made and the aspirations of the Featherstall Road Traders Association. It also ties in with the proposed conversion of Anchor Mill for a range of business uses possibly including an Asian Bazaar and the community's intention to build a Mosque. The masterplan suggests a series of temporary uses similar to Gabriel's Wharf in London as a spur to developing this activity with development of housing and permanent facilities following. Key to the proposals is a new surface link over Oldham Way to the College and beyond to the town centre.

locally and, as they became more affluent, they tended to live outside the town. In this way industrial towns were great wealth creators but tended to 'export' this wealth. Alternatively suburbs generate little wealth but attract people who work elsewhere. They are therefore 'importers' of wealth and many grow rich in this way. Whichever way the wealth is earned, the key to a prosperous town is encouraging people to spend their money locally. In this way the wealth supports local jobs and businesses and is recycled through a number of pockets before leaving the town.

Community and belonging: Most towns generate feelings of loyalty to a much greater extent than cities. This is one area where towns have an advantage because people choose to live, work and do business in a town because it is their community, regardless of the attractions of other places. This has insulated many towns from the worst effects of decline but it is worrying that people seem to feel less of a connection to Oldham.

Distinctiveness: Unlike cities, towns need to fight to be noticed because there are so many of them. Many towns have a weak image. However, as described above, in Oldham's case its image has become negative. This has a real effect on people's decisions about where to live or locate their business

Leadership: While cities can sometimes thrive despite their leadership, towns almost never can. The ability of a town to organise and to unite behind a shared vision is crucial to its success. This includes all sectors, the local authority, public institutions, the business sector and the community. The vehicle for this is the LSP that together with the NWDA has commissioned this study.

This leadership has in the past sometimes been lacking in Oldham. There has also been a lack of civic society as we have described elsewhere. The current initiative to develop a shared vision is hugely encouraging. It demonstrates a clear sense of ambition and partnership working.

Walsall Gallery - Iconic architecture on a small scale



These elements need to form the basis of the vision for Oldham. We have therefore developed them into a strategy for the renaissance of Oldham set out in the following section. This strategy is developed into five themes: Wealth Creation and Liveability, A Learning Community - which focuses on education, Common Ground - which looks at the physical environment and planning of the borough and New Oldham which develops ideas of community cohesion and governance.



Warrington - A new contemporary public space



Wealth Creation

A fundamental question for the borough is where wealth is created. While many of Oldham's people will travel outside the borough to work in the future, particularly to the NWDA's nearby strategic development sites, Oldham must also generate more wealth internally. In doing this it must compete in a global as well as regional market.

Our economic analysis of Oldham shows that it successfully diversified following the loss of its textile industry. The new areas of employment have, however, tended to perpetuate the borough's low skill/low wage economy and are vulnerable to future decline. It is therefore important that Oldham protects its employment base and continues to diversify its economy through inward investment and new economic activity. It must also tap into the growth potential of Greater Manchester and particularly the Knowledge Capital initiative. In this respect the completion of Metrolink is important since it will tie Oldham into the wider conurbation.

Protecting jobs: The first step must be to protect and expand existing employment. This can be done through accounts managers in the council to act as a single point of contact for major firms delivering services

and tackling problems. For smaller firms this can be done through a One-stop-shop providing support and links to other agencies. There is also a need to involve employers in the borough through an economic partnership for the LSP and business networks: Other initiatives should look at training and recruitment support and a ladder of accommodation to enable companies to expand, consolidate or downsize.

Inward investment: Oldham has recently been identified as a possible site for the relocation of government office functions such as call centres and document processing and there are also opportunities for private inward investment. The Council should identify sites and work with MIDAS to identify the needs of the sectors most appropriate for Oldham. Key sites are at Hollinwood on the motorway junction, and in Mumps.

Encouraging New Firm Foundation:

Oldham has a low rate of new business registrations. Entrepreneurs need to be supported and the conditions created for start-ups. This should focus on graduates with business aspirations and include the under-realised potential of the Asian community, especially the young. An important part of this are the proposals for the Rhodes Bank Creative Quarter. Creative industries employ more than 3,200 people in Oldham. Distinctive clusters could include the media, performing arts, urban/youth music and Asian performance and visual arts. An early project could be the collaboration between the Chronicle and New Roots music development agency.

Reusing the mills: An important part of this strategy is the creative use of the 138 mills that survive in Oldham. While there remains a strong market for mills, many do not generate sufficient value to maintain the fabric of the buildings. There is we believe the potential to use the mills more innovatively to support new and creative business. As pilots for this we have looked at Hartford Mill in Werneth, the Gem Mill in Chadderton and Anchor Mill on Featherstall Road.

Zetex

Zetex are consolidating their operations at Landsdowne Road in Chadderton. This is a modern plant but is surrounded by uses that are not good for the image of the plant or indeed for the clean air that it needs. The masterplan proposes to relocate these uses to create serviced sites for more high-tech industries that would be interested in locating near to Zetex.

The other part of the masterplan proposes the reuse of a mill as a 'Social Computer' as part of a network of similar facilities supported by the EU and IBM. This would be a facility where high tech companies collaborate with the public on product development and testing.

The two proposals are linked because the Social Computer would increase the attraction of

Oldham to high-tech companies (Zetex are there by historical accident). It would help develop workforce skills as well as a focus for design and innovation. There is a synergy between this and Oldham's Asian population given that the major centre for predicted future growth in high-tech industries is the Indian sub-continent.



Tourism: Oldham should use its tourist assets including Saddleworth and its gateway function to the national park as an economic driver. This has been explored through the Robert Fletcher demonstrator plan. We do not however believe that there is the scope to develop a industrial heritage attraction given those that already exist in the region.

Zones of exchange:

We believe that the economic potential of the Asian community is under-exploited partly because Asian businesses trade largely within the Asian community. There is we believe the potential to create areas where Asian businesses can reach a wider market particularly in Oldham Town Centre, Tommyfield Market and Featherstall Road.

Social Enterprise: There is potential for widening involvement in wealth creation by promoting of Social Enterprises – business whose surpluses are used to deliver social objectives. These can include housing co-operatives, credit unions, home maintenance organisations, managed workspaces,

recycling initiatives. There are important opportunities in the HMR areas to use public investment to promote social enterprises. A powerful alliance of local organizations – The Oldham Collective – is already in place to drive the initiative

Protecting jobs

Aim: To ensure that existing firms thrive and remain in the borough.

- ▶ **Accounts managers:** A single point of contact for major employers
- ▶ **A one stop shop:** To give advice and support smaller firms
- ▶ **Business network:** Where businesses can come together for mutual benefit
- ▶ **JET Centres (Jobs, Employment, Training)** Offering employment and training advice.
- ▶ **A ladder of accommodation:** Allowing firms to expand, consolidate or downsize.

Attracting Inward investment:

Aim: to create opportunities for inward investment.

- ▶ **Hollinwood:** The promotion of the area around the motorway junction.
- ▶ **Mumps:** A new town centre business location.

Encouraging New Firm Foundation

Aim: To create the conditions to allow businesses to be created.

- ▶ **One stop shop:** See above
- ▶ **Business incubators:** Managed workspace to support new business

Creative industries:

Aim: To nurture a creative business cluster of regional or national significance

- ▶ **Rhodes Bank:** Promotion as a creative industries quarter.
- ▶ **Vocational skills:** Links the college media and performing arts courses.
- ▶ **Music production:** Support for the proposed production centre.

Reusing the mills

Aim: To use space in mills more intensively to promote economic activity

- ▶ **Hartford Mill:** Conversion to workspace housing and community facilities
- ▶ **Anchor Mill:** Conversion to an Asian Bazaar and workspace
- ▶ **Another Mill:** Conversion to a Social Computer (see above)

Tourism

Aim: To exploit the borough's tourism assets.

- ▶ **Robert Fletcher:** Conversion to an extreme sports and national park centre.
- ▶ **Town centre:** Broadening the attractions of the centre such as a new cinema, restaurants and Coliseum

Zones of exchange

Aim: To create areas for economic interaction between communities

- ▶ **Featherstall Road:** The promotion of restaurants, shops and the Anchor Mill Bazaar.

Social Enterprise

Aim: To establish social enterprise as a significant strand of service provision and wealth creation for the borough

- ▶ **Opportunities:** A social enterprise opportunity audit to identify three pilot initiatives in care, housing maintenance and environmental services.



Liveability

The key to the future of boroughs like Oldham is to make themselves good places to live for the whole population. In this way they will retain talented and creative people and attract new people into the borough. Employers will be able to attract a better workforce and businesses will be more likely to locate here. The most 'liveable' town in the UK at present is Bath, which also has the highest rate of new business formation.

The liveability agenda encompasses a wide range of issues that are covered elsewhere in these themes. It relates to the range and condition of housing but also the performance of local schools, the cleanliness of the environment, the efficiency of local services, the quality of the town centres and the levels of crime. As the *Oldham Beyond* Renaissance Audit shows, Oldham does not do well in many of these areas at the moment and there is a need to really focus on these issues.

Social Cohesion

However, the most important liveability issue in Oldham at present is community cohesion and the fact that many people do not feel at

home in parts of the town. As we describe in the New Oldham section, this needs to be addressed head on and turned from a weakness into a strength. Research by Professor Richard Florida in the US has shown that the most successful and attractive places in the future will be those with the most diverse populations. He was commissioned by Demos¹ to prepare a 'Boho Index' of the UK which ranked Oldham 36th out of 40 in terms of population but 22nd in terms of diversity and creativity. Werneth/Freehold, as one of the most ethnically mixed parts of Oldham, has the potential to create a model for this type of harmonious community in Oldham. The development of Featherstall Road and inter-cultural festivals also have

the potential to project a much more positive image of the Borough.

The housing market

A key aspect to liveability is the housing market that we have explored through our work on Housing Market Renewal – see *Oldham Beyond* Housing Working Paper. Oldham has a weak housing market but



has not experienced the collapse that has taken place elsewhere (such as East Manchester). The private sector vacancy rate is 3.7%, lower than the regional average of 4.8% and in much of the Borough house prices are only marginally lower than the regional average. The problems are concentrated in the terraced stock

1. Boho Britain Creativity Index - Richard Florida, published by Demos May 2003 - <http://www.demos.co.uk/>

Robert Fletcher Greenfield

The demonstrator plan envisages the development of the Robert Fletcher site in Greenfield as a resource that can provide a recreational resource to the entire borough and a gateway to the Peak District National Park. One idea is to develop the site as a study centre for all schools in the borough with associated facilities including, extreme indoor and outdoor sports, national park centre, accommodation, conference facilities and associated uses for eating and drinking. This would bring a prominent vacant site in the most sensitive part of the borough back into use, promote the leisure economy to the benefit of the borough as a whole and create a 'common ground' resource for all the people of the borough to experience the Saddleworth area.



which makes up 60% of the privately owned housing in the Borough (40,000 properties). The Housing Market Renewal Initiative needs to replace the poorest of these terraces while reviving the market for those that remain.

A place to be

As part of this vision we are proposing substantial new housebuilding in parts of the borough. These include the proposals for the Werneth/Freehold area, development around the Oldham and Royton town centres and in a number of the other demonstrators such as Hollinwood. This has the potential to increase the population of the borough; although this is not an

explicit aim of this vision, the population will undoubtedly increase if the vision is successful.

A central part of the vision is to broaden the range of housing available in Oldham so that people wishing to live in the borough have a wider choice of housing than just terraces. This will encourage a broader range of people to choose to live in Oldham and can be achieved through Housing Market Renewal. This involves two components. The first is aspirational urban housing and apartments around the Metrolink stations, Oldham Town Centre and smaller centres. This will cater for the changing demographics of the housing market and the growth in demand from childless households.

However, allied to this should be the redevelopment of other HMR areas at lower densities with a greater number of family homes with gardens. This twin strategy we have called a Smart Communities Plan and is described in more detail in the Common Ground section.

Social Cohesion

Aim: To turn Oldham's diversity from a source of conflict into one of the attractions of the borough

- ▶ **Social Cohesion measures:** See New Oldham theme.
- ▶ **Werneth/Freehold model:** The regeneration of a confident, mixed neighbourhood a model which others may choose to follow.
- ▶ **Featherstall Road:** An Asian entertainment area as a zone of interchange with a wider market.
- ▶ **Cultural life:** Using animation and cultural activities to break down barriers between young people.

Housing Markets

Aim: A healthy housing market across the borough.

- ▶ **Housing Market Pilot areas:** The development of the pilot areas in Freehold and Deker to demonstrate the improvement of terraced housing areas that can be applied to other neighbourhoods.
- ▶ **Thematic work:** Work across the housing market renewal areas to address environmental problems and voids.

A place to be

Aim: To broaden the range of housing available to encourage people to choose to live in the borough.

- ▶ **Compact nodes:** The development of areas around transport nodes and town centres for compact urban housing.
- ▶ **New suburbs:** The thinning out of other parts of the HMR area to create more family housing with gardens.

At Home in Oldham

Aim: To make Oldham a good place to live by improving services.

- ▶ **Street Cleansing:** See Common Ground
- ▶ **Education:** See Learning Community
- ▶ **Crime:** Continuing the work that is being done through the area committees and LSP with the police.
- ▶ **Services:** Extending the work through the area committees to improve council services making them more responsive to local needs.



A Learning Community

Oldham has a young population unlike the aging population of many towns and cities. These young people are Oldham's future: it is through them that Oldham will rebuild mutual respect, cohesion and citizenship. It is also these young people who will form the future workforce, create wealth, provide leadership and galvanise the Borough. For this to happen two issues must be addressed: the low skills-base of the population and the loss of talented young Oldhamers who are taking their energy, optimism and talents elsewhere.

Long-term improvement in standards of education and learning are vital to the revival of Oldham. This is a field where real progress has been made. There is a sense of optimism in the borough's schools. The Sixth Form College is a huge success and now draws young people from outside the borough. The College and Business School are strong and together have brought the University College idea within Oldham's grasp. The Local Learning Partnership has developed an ambitious vision to take this to the next stage, which we endorse.

Secondary schools

The vision aims to maintain and build levels of aspiration and performance from 14 so that more 19 year olds reach higher education (HE) and better jobs. This includes the Oldham Junior University, a programme of mentors to tackle those educational and cultural barriers to HE.



Recent work has looked at secondary school buildings and ways of using the government's *Schools for the Future* programme to redevelop and even relocate schools. The aim is to better relate schools to their communities. It also seeks to overcome the racial polarisation that has taken place in certain schools. This undermines social cohesion but is very difficult to counter in an era of parental choice.

We recommend that Oldham explores ways of creating secondary schools with a diverse intercultural mix of pupils whilst we acknowledge that there are legal and practical factors that need to be considered. One possibility would be to develop a new model school for intercultural education that would recapture Oldham's reputation as an educational pioneer by acting as a resource for the whole of the borough and exploring new forms of teaching.

Higher Education

The proposed development of a University College in Oldham is one of the most important initiatives for the borough. It is a

Town Centre

One of the two major masterplans undertaken as part of the *Oldham Beyond* study has focused on Oldham Town Centre. This sets out a strategy for the town centre based on eight themes; its importance as a community hub, the better integration of the centre into the rest of the town, and its roles as a cultural centre and a place to learn, shop, do business, play and live. The strategy sets out proposals for three corridors through and around the centre to overcome the barriers that currently deter some people from using the town centre. These include the Golden Road from Featherstall Road along High Street and Yorkshire Street to Mumps, the Green Walk from Oldham Edge to Alexandra Park and the boulevard along Oldham Way. The strategy also suggests a series of town centre quarters

including the shopping heart, the Rhodes Bank creative quarter, a new West End south of the Civic Centre based around a new Coliseum and Roxy cinema, a 'top of the town' housing area close to St. Mary's Way an educational campus based around the University College and a Mumps Enterprise area.



radical solution to the low aspiration /low skill cycle and will raise the number of HE students from almost 1000 to 5000 by the year 2010 in a purpose-built campus. We fully endorse this new level of ambition for Oldham and believe that it has tremendous potential to boost the borough's economy and status by bringing extra spending power, attracting active, confident citizens, putting Oldham on other people's radar screens and driving urban regeneration. However, we believe that the impact of the University College will be even greater if it is linked to the Knowledge Capital Initiative in Manchester.

Further and Adult Education

Important as the University College is, it is only part of the picture in a borough. There have been some significant recent improvements in the attainment of school leavers in the borough but the population as a whole still has low levels of qualifications. The Learning Partnership has a number of excellent initiatives in this area including the Oldham Apprentice, the 'Grow our own'

professionals initiative and programmes for re-skilling the workforce and communities which we fully endorse. We have suggested two further initiatives to add to this work. The first is a Young People's Enterprise Centre, with a twin focus on social enterprise and creative industries. This would include managed workspaces alongside advice and support to young people and could form part of the Rhodes Bank Creative Quarter. Our second suggestion is a Vocational Centre for Excellence for Craft Skills, linked to Oldham College. This would cater for the increasing demand for vocational skills and perhaps would be located in a refurbished mill.

Schools

Aim: To raise the aspirations and achievement of children in the borough.

- ▶ **Twinning:** Support for the continuation of the programme of twinning schools in different parts of the borough.
- ▶ **Junior University:** Endorsement of the programme of mentoring and support for 14-19 year olds.
- ▶ **Intercultural school:** Explore the possibility of creating a model intercultural school in the borough.

Higher education

Aim: To retain and attract talented young people in the borough and to increase Oldham's profile.

- ▶ **University College:** Support for the development of the University College and for the continued development of the College, and Sixth Form College.
- ▶ **Masterplan for Campus:** The development of a detailed masterplan for the town centre learning campus

Further and adult education

Aim: To provide lifelong learning opportunities for all people in the borough.

- ▶ **Local Learning Partnership:** Support for the Oldham Apprentice, Grow our own professionals and workforce reskilling initiatives.
- ▶ **Young People's Enterprise Centre:** The development of a centre to provide workspace and support for young people starting in business
- ▶ **Vocational centre for Excellence in Craft Skills:** An initiative in the College for young people to develop practical skills.



Sustainable Oldham

The renaissance of the Borough of Oldham must be built on a firm foundation of sustainability. Concern to protect the environment far from being a barrier to renaissance is rather an opportunity to demonstrate how pressing environmental issues can be tackled to the benefit of the quality of life and prosperity of the borough.

The problems of industrial towns like Oldham have predominantly been characterised economically and socially. Issues such as climate change and resource depletion can often come across as marginal to the day-to-day lives of people (especially in poorer and deprived areas). However, environmental problems manifest themselves in the form of social and economic concerns such as fuel poverty, litter, air pollution and broader issues such as the erosion of social capital.

Sustainability covers a broad spectrum of issues including energy, recycling, transport, water use, pollution etc... We have concentrated here on energy and recycling although other parts of the strategy such as the Smart Communities plan will have important environmental benefits in

areas such as transport.

Energy use is currently contributing to the rapid depletion of natural resources and the rise of environmental problems such as climate change. There is a need in Oldham to improve energy efficiency and to exploit opportunities for sustainable energy production.

Waste is a core local authority function and Oldham must reduce the amount of waste it produces, by promoting the waste hierarchy of 'reduce, reuse, recycle'.

Sustainability initiatives are not just something that should be done for the sake of the environment. There is the potential to use environmental initiatives as a central part of the borough's renaissance. For example energy efficiency will reduce

the heating costs for local people and 'green industries' such as remanufacturing parks and environmental technology centres could generate wealth, as well as contributing to Oldham's image as an innovator in sustainability. This is a long-term challenge, but a sustainability strategy for Oldham is likely include:

Awareness raising: Ensuring that the whole community is aware of environmental issues and how they can do 'their bit'.

Education: Ensuring that sustainability is part of everyday thinking and action, particularly through targeting the younger generation.

Eco-pioneers: Changing Oldham's image by being a focal point for eco-pioneers in green housing and industry. Showcasing this could also be used to attract visitors from across the region.

Community stakeholding Local ownership of and investment in environmental projects.

Werneth/Freehold

Werneth/Freehold is one of the two pilot areas (the other being Derker) being put forward by Oldham as part of the Housing Market Renewal Programme to revive weak housing markets. The Werneth / Freehold area covers 1,883 properties and the masterplan has formed part of a £55 million bid to the Housing Market Renewal Programme which has since been approved.

The masterplan was developed in close consultation with local people including a three-day workshop and an exhibition. The resulting plan proposed the demolition of 752 properties in two clearance areas and the development of 691 new homes and 295 flats. This included the development of under-used surrounding land. As part of this a Concerto bid was submitted to address the energy efficiency of the housing. The masterplan

was therefore able to propose to expand the area's population without increasing densities while also increasing open space provision and space standards. The retention and expansion of the population of the area was appropriate given the proximity of a proposed Metrolink station. The plan also proposes the conversion of the derelict Hartford Mill to a mix of apartments, workspace and community facilities.



Innovation: Oldham should support initiative and enterprise. This may include developing research and development links with local universities.

Rewards and incentives: Developing a range of approaches to encourage the Borough's citizens to participate in environmental projects and realise tangible gains.

'Green collar' opportunities: Developing apprenticeships and employment opportunities in order to realise the value of the emerging environmental industry sector.

Energy efficiency

Aim: To reduce energy consumption in Oldham and the consequences of resource depletion and environmental degradation.



- ▶ **New financing and investment mechanisms:** Creating finance mechanisms such as Community Land Trusts and revolving loans to help homeowners improve the efficiency of their homes.
- ▶ **Innovative new-build housing:** Demonstrating high standards of energy efficiency in new housing (e.g. BedZED or Integer) by working with innovative developers.
- ▶ **Sustainable upgrades:** Building the capacity of local contractors to upgrade housing including sustainable building components.
- ▶ **Energy technology centre:** A centre of regional excellence to develop and demonstrate best practice and sustainable technologies (such as CAT in North Wales).
- ▶ **Community learning initiative:** Encouraging practical measures such as energy-efficient light bulbs and appliances.

Energy supply

Aim: To reduce the demand for non-renewable energy resources.

- ▶ **Wind power:** Using a range of technologies, prototype turbine designs, to exploit Oldham's wind resource. This could include Oldham Edge, Oldham Way, Werneth/Freehold HMR area and Saddleworth.
- ▶ **Community owned wind farms:** A local source of energy, run as a co-operative that



provides local people with a shareholding and returns on their financial investment.

- ▶ **Community energy centres:** Using combined heat and power technology (CHP) to deliver affordable warmth and electricity for new housing. These could be fuelled by biomass woodfuel and could use the engine rooms of mills (see Hartford Mill).
- ▶ **Solar communities:** The establishment of co-operatives to install solar arrays across large numbers of homes and community buildings. This would reduce costs through bulk purchase, pool electricity sales and support local installers.
- ▶ **Solar Manufacturing:** Establishing a solar module manufacturing plant to link supply and demand.

Waste

Aims: To reduce the amount of waste so minimising resource demand and consumption, and environmental damage.

- ▶ **Kerbside collection services:** Extend the pilot kerbside collection service to the whole borough using a community recycling company.
- ▶ **Recycling centres:** To develop spin-off enterprises recovering, refurbishing and dismantling waste products.
- ▶ **'Community value':** Pilot schemes that encourage communities to realise the value of their waste, including local 'buy-back shops' and neighbourhood composting.
- ▶ **Recycling industries:** Wealth creation strategy based on reprocessing and value-added manufacturing. Opportunities could be in the traditional sectors of paper and textile, as well as polymers and insulation.
- ▶ **Recycled warmth:** Establishing a manufacturing plant for newsprint insulation to deliver home energy improvements.



Common Ground

One of the key issues in Oldham's regeneration is the quality of the borough's streets, parks and public spaces – its public realm. This is an important part of liveability and affects people's confidence and pride in the borough and their choices of where to live, work and do business. It is also the space in which the people of the town meet and interact. In places the quality of Oldham's public realm is already very good, however, in some of the urban parts of the borough a degraded public realm is one factor in undermining the civic life of the borough.

Oldham has some exceptionally good public realm including countryside, villages and small towns particularly to the east. However, the urban areas in the west of the borough do not have easy access to these areas. In these western areas there is a general neglect of public space. An important first step must therefore be a campaign to clean up the borough similar to the Barcelona Posa't Guapa (Barcelona 'Make yourself beautiful') campaign that started the city's regeneration. Manchester's '100 days to clean up the city' has recently done something similar. This needs to be linked to a review of council cleansing services.

This should be the start of a strategy to renew the public realm and urban

structure of Oldham. We have explored a 'cross section' through the borough from the heart of the town centre to the moors. This has been used to analyse the character of the whole borough and to identify its problems. These lie in the urban areas and particularly in the mill neighbourhoods.

Smart communities

We have therefore developed a planning strategy based around the transformation of these neighbourhoods. The aim is not to grow the population, but to redistribute development to broaden the range of housing and neighbourhoods. We have called this a 'Smart Communities Plan'. It would involve the consolidation of existing town centres

and high-accessibility nodes (or Ped-Sheds) particularly around Metrolink stops. In these areas (see Town Centre, Werneth/Freehold and Royton plans) we are proposing the creation of compact, walkable neighbourhoods with an increase in housing density.

This contrasts with a view held by some that Housing Market Renewal areas need to be reduced in density to create larger homes with gardens. Suburban housing is indeed under-represented in Oldham and we believe that there is scope to reduce densities in HMR areas away from transport nodes. The *Oldham Beyond* Urban Design report includes examples of how this thinning might take place.



Royton Town Centre

One of Oldham's strengths is its varied town centres. We have looked at Royton as typical of these centres. It is built on a crossroads with a range of shopping, anchored by a supermarket, a successful market plus a range of civic institutions - church, community centre and town hall as well as banks, pubs and an Italian Restaurant.



Royton is doing much better than many similar town centres in north Manchester with similar catchment areas. These have lost out to their larger neighbours and are in serious decline. Royton by contrast is thriving with few vacancies, good footfall and a successful market. The reason is that in Royton people unlike those elsewhere shop often locally rather than going into Oldham or Manchester.

The masterplan therefore does not suggest major changes to Royton. The key proposals are to improve the public realm of the precinct; to consolidate the centre with new housing development on underdeveloped landscape areas; to create a Common Ground landmark in the heart of the town, and to light and make more efficient use of the mills that surround and dominate the centre.

Work will soon commence on a new borough plan based on the framework in the Planning Bill. This should create a spatial framework for the above strategy with Action Plans for areas of change. It would also include planning guidance to promote and reinforce the character of each part of the Cross Section.

Regeneration web

To turn the public realm of the borough into a positive and unifying force we have adopted a technique called 'point and line', also developed in Barcelona. This involves a range of small, high-profile projects (points) in public spaces at the heart of communities across the borough. These could include anything from a bandstand to market stalls, sculpture or even public toilet. Their prominence would come because they would be commissioned by a range of international and local designers all judged by the same high standards. At the heart of this web would be the new Town Square in Oldham Town Centre. The next step is to join these points together (lines) with corridor

improvements along the main roads through the borough including the boulevarding of the A62 and Oldham Way to create a web. These lines could also be symbolic with maps highlighting the projects as a visitor attraction to illustrate the links within the borough.



Country to town

Aim: To make better links between the urban and rural parts of the borough.

- **Green walk:** A route from Oldham Edge to Alexandra Park linking the countryside to the heart of Oldham.

Clean up campaign

Aim: To bring about a lasting transformation in the cleanliness of the public realm.

- **Campaign:** A clean-up campaign to engage the public and schools



- **Review of cleansing services:** A review of the organisation of street cleansing services (now underway).
- **Wardens:** The wider use of wardens in the smaller towns to assist with cleansing and maintenance.

Smart Communities Planning:

Aim: A review of the Local Plan to create a clear planning framework for the borough:

- **Ped-Shed development:** The development of compact walkable communities around high accessibility locations (Werneth/Freehold demonstrator plan).
- **Town centres:** The consolidation of existing town centres with new housing (see Royton demonstrator plan).
- **Thinning out:** The planned reduction in densities of the HMR areas away from transport corridors and town centres.
- **Supplementary Planning Guidance:** Policies to increase the quality of development based on the Cross Section.

Regeneration Web

Aim: To create a borough-wide initiative that can change internal and external perceptions:

- **Network of public spaces:** The identification of public meeting spaces in the heart of each community. In mill communities this could be within a refurbished mill.
- **Point markers:** A budget of £50,000 to create a public work to mark this space. To be commissioned with the Area Committee.
- **Town Square:** The creation of Town Square in Oldham as the heart of this system.
- **Corridor improvements:** Improvements along the routes through the borough.
- **Interpretation:** Leaflets and displays to promote the Regeneration Web.



New Oldham

Boroughs like Oldham operate in an intensely competitive environment to capture business, to access government resources, and to attract and keep talent. To succeed, Oldham must rebuild its economy and its physical infrastructure - but this alone is not enough. Successful places also cultivate their *soft* infrastructure, by which we mean the way the borough is governed, how it engages with its citizens and how it harnesses the energy of *all* of its people and organisations.

Successful places mobilise ideas and talents, retain gifted young people, improve their connections both internally and externally and raise the aspirations and expectations of local people. Places dominated by internal squabbles, with an alienated populace or an inability to get things done could, in the future, simply be left behind. Oldham (and here we mean the whole borough, not just the Council) therefore needs:

- ▶ A clear mission
- ▶ A sense of common identity
- ▶ An open organisational culture
- ▶ Effective decision-making
- ▶ Strong leadership from the top, and
- ▶ Active engagement from below.

These factors have not been given enough attention in Oldham in the past, something that contributed to the 2001 disturbances. Leaving it to 'them' (be it the mill or the Council) to solve a problem or take the blame is an Oldham disease that must be cured. The revival of Oldham must begin with active citizens and empowered communities who are prepared to take responsibility.

The Council must actively enable this to happen and, whilst there is still work to be done, we see a genuine effort being made to address the criticisms of its past performance and culture. It is certainly in no-one's interest for the Council to remain the 'whipping boy' for the ills of the bor-

ough. For its part the Council must therefore have the courage to go further in opening itself up to greater scrutiny and to sharing power and responsibility. The Borough of Oldham will only thrive from the bottom up through people's pride and hope in their neighbourhoods and towns and their capacity to bring about change.

Active citizenship

Part of Oldham's problems is a weakness in civic society that stretches back to the town's origins. The New Oldham agenda must therefore be driven by all parts of the community. The voluntary and faith sectors must become more confident and effective throughout the borough in delivering improvements to quality of life. They are best placed to act as ambassadors, intermediaries and interpreters to develop intercultural understanding and co-operation. They should also have a role in providing services and contributing to the generation of wealth in the borough. This is even more the case for the private sector, which, for too long, has been the empty seat at the table in

Oldham Athletic Football Club

Oldham Athletic have recently been bought by new owners who want to invest in the club by improving facilities and expanding the range of uses around the ground. The success of football clubs such as Premiership Blackburn and Bolton has been hugely important in the confidence and image of these towns. This is partly about the



success of the team but also relates to the quality of the ground and the revenue that the ground is able to generate. The proposals to develop the Latics is therefore potentially an important part of Oldham's regeneration.

In the past schemes for retail development on the playing fields to the west of the ground have been rejected and this land now has protected status. The masterplan proposal is to develop the sites to the east and west of the ground to include a range of business and conference uses integrated with the redevelopment of the north stand. This could also include a hotel and accommodation for nurses. This would be made possible by a new road connection along Furtherwood Road to Chadderton Way. The area to the north of the ground would be retained for parking and the scheme would include investment in the playing fields to create a park area.

Oldham. There may have been good reasons to stay away in the past but the people who create wealth and jobs in the borough must take the opportunity of the new economic partnership to become engaged in the governance of the borough.

Cultural identity

Central to the New Oldham agenda is the cultural identity of its people. These identities relate to their origins, whether in Shaw, Failsworth or Delph, Pakistan, Bangladesh or the Caribbean. People are different and have a right to expect that their differences will be respected and celebrated and there will be no mileage in trying to build the New Oldham on uniformity. But all communities must define themselves positively; not only by what distinguishes them but also by the common attributes they share with others. This is a new way of working which we call *Interculturalism*. It is important because it encourages both Integration and Choice. It is the key to unlocking pride and confidence in all of Oldham's communities. In 10 to 20 years Oldham should be a place of diverse

and confident cultural communities - aware of what makes them special and distinct but proud of what they share as Oldhamers. Oldham's diversity will become one of its key competitive assets and the source of the innovation on which its economic success must rely.

Many places not just one

Aim: To emphasise the distinctive character of each part of the borough:

- ▶ **More power to the local:** The further devolution of power (other than planning) to Area Committees and making their activities more relevant to local people.
- ▶ **Distinctiveness:** The creation of local identities through the regeneration web and common ground proposals.

Many voices not just one:

Aim: To promote self-confident, proud communities in all parts of the borough:

- ▶ **Inter-cultural festivals:** Existing and new inter-cultural celebrations.
- ▶ **Intercultural funding:** Making collaborative working between groups a condition of funding where appropriate.
- ▶ **Go and see grants:** Funding for visits to communities elsewhere in the UK and abroad.



- ▶ **School twinning:** Broadening of the programme and extension to secondary schools.
- ▶ **Interfaith Tours:** Exchange visits between religious venues in the borough.

Civic society

Aim: To build a partnership of active citizens and organisations committed to the borough:

- ▶ **Oldham United:** Extend this important private sector initiative for social responsibility.
- ▶ **New leaders programme:** Training and mentoring to nurture a generation of leaders from every community in the borough.
- ▶ **The LSP:** It is important to establish cultural and private sector partnerships on the LSP. This is underway.
- ▶ **Partnership working:** Such as the cultural groups that have started to meet during the course of the study.
- ▶ **Taking government to the people**
Innovative electronic techniques for public involvement.

New Oldham

Aim: To transform the image of the borough to its people and the outside world:

- ▶ **Oldham Athletic:** The regeneration of the ground as part of Latic's importance to the image and pride of the town.
- ▶ **Town centres:** The promotion of town centres as shop windows for the Borough and community hubs.
- ▶ **Reimaging the borough:** A five-year campaign to change the image of Oldham to its own people and to the outside world.

Conclusion

The development of a vision for a place as large and diverse as Oldham is a huge task. The outside world's view of Oldham may be a working class town of terraces and racial tension. This, however, does not do justice to the town of Oldham let alone the borough as a whole. The town is a place of strong independent neighbourhoods and tight-knit communities. Its problems are, in many respects, the flip side of its strengths. The borough is a place of even greater contrasts, of successful market towns, idyllic rural villages and mill communities set within the foothills of the Pennines.

As with all places that grew up in the Industrial Revolution, Oldham has had to change. In many respects it has done this very successfully by diversifying its economy, improving the educational qualifications of its people and investing in cultural institutions. However, there remain some deep-seated problems that must be addressed. These include the declining state of the terraced housing that dominates the borough, the low skill, low wage economy, the loss of talented people and the underperformance of Oldham town centre. These are problems that affect many northern towns. However, there are two issues that set Oldham apart: The first is a breakdown of understanding and trust between different communities on racial lines and the resulting residential segregation of different ethnic groups. The second is a loss of self-confidence and pride in the borough and its future.

These are not problems that can be solved overnight, and Oldham's nadir came in May 2001 when rioting broke out in parts of the borough. However, since that

time Oldham has turned a corner and there is a new sense of common purpose and commitment in the borough. The commissioning of this report is evidence of this new resolve.

We have found many of the 2,000 or so people that we have spoken to, prepared to admit past mistakes, but committed to looking to the future. We have sought to reflect these feelings in this report by being honest about Oldham's problems but emphasising the positive and looking to the future.

The vision that we have described, of a self-confident community, at ease with itself and celebrating its diversity and prosperity, is within Oldham's grasp. The



strategy required to achieve this vision is inevitably complex, because it reflects the complexity and diversity of the borough. We have tried to set out this strategy in a concise and readable form. The 40 pages of this report could so easily have been 400 and we have inevitably been unable to include the detail of all of our research and proposals. This report should therefore be read in conjunction with the three demonstrator masterplan reports: Werneth/Freehold, The Heart of Oldham which looks at the town centre and The Oldham Net, which includes a range of smaller masterplans. There is also a series of background papers produced by the consultancy team that provide more background and detail.

This report contains 82 proposals grouped into six themes. Many of these proposals are about getting the basics right. Important as these are they will not bring about lasting change in the borough. There are another set of proposals relating to issues like social cohesion, education, housing, creativity and the economy. These are the bedrock of our strategy.





Beyond this there is a further set of proposals relating to ambitious projects such as turning Featherstall Road into a Asian Bazaar, converting the vacant Robert Fletcher mill in Greenfield into an outdoor pursuits centre, illuminating the mills of the borough, building striking business quarters at Hollinwood and Mumps, creating a landmark new building for the Coliseum and Peskar productions and redeveloping the Latics stadium. These and many other proposals are intentionally ambitious and may grab the headlines. They are all possible, however some may not happen and others will change and evolve over time. This is not a problem – with imagination goes risk. If only a proportion of these projects happen, they will have a dramatic and symbolic effect on the confidence and the image of the borough. They must, however, be seen as symbols of the wider and deeper change that is taking place in the borough.

Together these proposals are designed to create a virtuous circle of renaissance in Oldham. This is based on the borough becoming a better place to live (liveability) and a place where people can make a good living (wealth creation). This means that when the education system and new University College succeeds in improving the qualifications of Oldham people they will choose to stay in the borough and to become engaged in its social and civic life. This in turn will make the borough a better place to do business, attracting people and

companies into the borough and improving the image of Oldham and the confidence of its people. This self-confidence will remove many of the causes of racial tension and over time the racial diversity of Oldham will become one of its attractions. This will persuade more people to stay, to shop in the town centre and to set up businesses in the borough, reinforcing the virtuous circle.

This is an achievable strategy and the proposals that we have set out have the potential to achieve the vision within a 10-15 year timescale. The strategy must engage and energise all of the people and organisations of the borough – including the private sector, voluntary groups, faith organisations and cultural sector. The first stage is therefore to consult on this strategy and to use it as a basis for an ongoing dialogue with the many and varied peoples of the borough.

While this is happening there is a need for an implementation plan which sets out a path to take forward each of the proposals that we have made. This we have done as part of the study and will be published alongside this report. In this implementation plan we set out the priority of each proposal, timescales, critical path, cost and grant requirements, who is responsible and what are the first steps.

We are, however, greatly encouraged by the progress already being made. Many of the recommendations that we have made are already well on their way to being realised. For instance, the approval of Old-

ham's Housing Market Renewal bid will fund the Werneth/Freehold proposal. Design work has been commissioned by Catalyst to extend the shopping centre. The Chronicle intends to proceed with the first development in the Rhodes Bank Creative Quarter and plans an interior design company to convert the Old Bank in Mumps. The Latics have recently announced plans to redevelop their ground and both the Roxy and the Coliseum are commissioning feasibility work into new buildings in the new West End of the town centre. We are also hopeful that positive decisions will soon be made on Metrolink and the University College. Together these early wins represent a tremendous start to the Oldham Beyond process. We believe that this strategy has the potential to build on this and to make Oldham into a 21st century success story.



Appendix 1

Oldham views

The Oldham Beyond process has employed a range of techniques to consult with the people of the borough. In total we estimate that more than 2,000 people have been involved in discussions as part of the study giving us an excellent insight into the views of people from across the borough.

The consultations have included the Oldham Satellite, an inflatable room that toured the borough in Autumn 2003. Other techniques included 8 focus groups, a postcard campaign, a workshop which attracted 110 people, work with 12 schools, presentations to each of the area committees and a series of sector working groups. The findings of this work along with a range of individual discussions are described below:

The Oldham Satellite

The most high-profile consultation method that we used was the inflatable Oldham Satellite or 'Thought Bubble' that toured eleven venues across the borough. This was visited by more than 700 people who were asked about what they like and dislike about their neighbourhoods and their hopes for the future. The main themes that emerged were:

- ▶ Across the borough there is a strong sense of belonging to local neighbourhoods but a much weaker sense of connection to Oldham Borough.



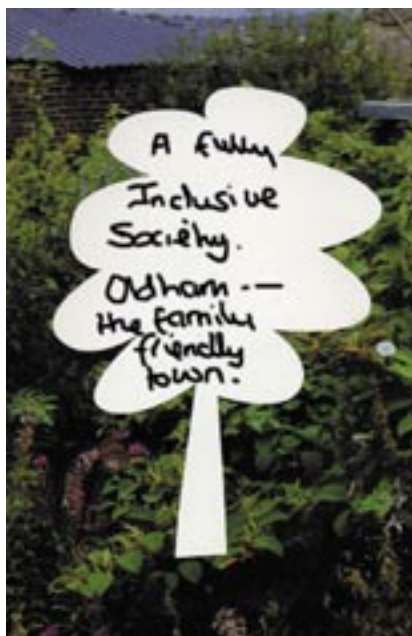
- ▶ The things that people liked related to a sense of community, local town centres, links to the countryside and (in some areas) community facilities.
- ▶ The main problems were anti-social behaviour, the poor state of the local environment and a lack of things to do for young people. There was also an alienation from institutions such as the Police and the Council and concerns about racial tensions.
- ▶ Looking to the future there was a real desire for Oldham to succeed as a place where people can live together in harmony and achieve their full potential.



Focus groups

A series of nine focus groups have been held to delve deeper into these views and to engage under-represented. These also explored people's attitudes to the borough and found:

- ▶ Many people felt that they would stay in Oldham but felt that their children would have to leave to realise their full potential.
- ▶ People were proud of their neighbourhood but 'faintly embarrassed' to say that they come from Oldham for fear of being branded a racist.
- ▶ The Asian participants were more likely to be proud of Oldham and more committed to staying in the borough.
- ▶ People from all communities believe that racial tensions are holding Oldham back. They believe that more should be done to build awareness and respect for all cultures (including that of the white



community). It was stressed by the Asian participants that this should mean integration rather than assimilation.

- ▶ There remains a feeling that funding is allocated to different communities unfairly.
- ▶ There was a positive response to the idea of an influx of more affluent people to the borough.

Round Table Workshop

A workshop was held at Gallery Oldham in September 2003. This attracted 110 people and explored a vision for the borough through five themes:

- ▶ **Liveability:** suggestions included events and activities to give positive expression to Oldham's different communities, improved access to culturally mixed schools, youth facilities, sustainable housing, safer car parking, better access to the countryside.

- ▶ **Wealth creation:** suggestions included a more positive multi-cultural image, cultural industries, environmental industries as a growth sector, support for entrepreneurs, a more strategic approach to industrial sites and business premises and better transport and parking.

- ▶ **Leadership and governance:** It was suggested that Oldhamers should take more responsibility and stop blaming the council and 'others' for problems. There was a need to grow more active citizens and to devolve more decision-making.

- ▶ **Identity and distinctiveness:** It was agreed that renewed civic pride must be based on thriving town centres, a solution for the old town hall, performing arts venues, an Asian bazaar, revived mills and a positive telling of Oldham's history.

Schools

The consultation included ten primary schools and two secondary schools who were asked to complete a photographic project to look at their local area in terms of what was good, bad and what could be improved. The secondary schools carried out an environmental audit in the town centre, together with classroom discussion and also attended the town centre workshop.

Conclusions

Many of the issues raised through issues are not unique to Oldham. What was different were the concerns expressed about community cohesion and a feeling of alienation in elements of the white community. What was also striking was the hostility felt by many people towards the council. This is not directed at the current administration but at the very notion of an Oldham Borough as conceived in the 1974 reorganisation.

Appendix 2

Renaissance Audit

The next question is how is Oldham doing today. This has been assessed by the *Oldham Beyond* team through a series of studies looking at the social, economic, cultural and environmental performance of the borough. One of these, the Urban Renaissance Audit, looked at Oldham's performance with reference to boroughs such as Halifax, Bury, Barnsley, St. Helens and Warrington that are of similar size and that have similar historical trajectories.

The people of the Borough

Oldham's population is currently stable. In 2001 the borough had 217,300 inhabitants, making it one of the fifty most populous boroughs in England. The population of the town of Oldham was 103,900, a substantial figure that places it above Warrington, Halifax and Wakefield. The borough's population fell slightly (by 0.6%) between 1991 and 2001. In an area with a relatively low house-building rate, this is a natural rate of decline resulting from declining household size. It means that Oldham has not experienced the type of depopulation that has been seen in other areas such as East Manchester.

These overall figures mask internal change with the demographic expansion in the more affluent eastern parts of the borough and contraction in the west. Indeed the National Statistical Office is predicting a fall of 1.3% in population between 1996 and 2006. While this is not catastrophic there is a need to retain the population of the borough by making it attractive as a place to live.

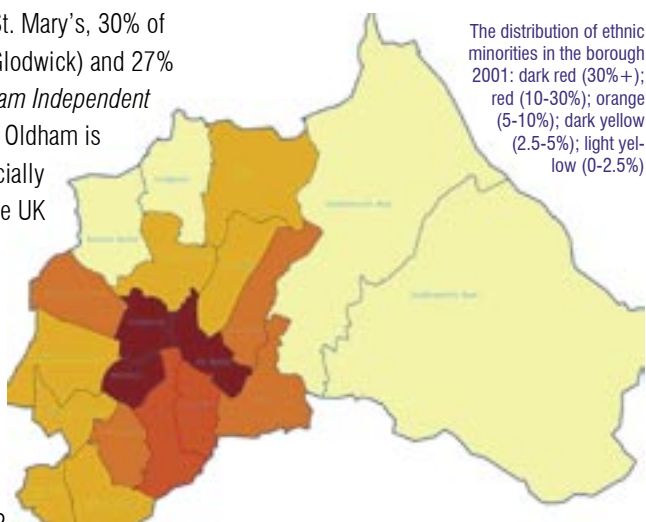
Ethnicity

The Borough of Oldham has a relatively small Asian community. People of Asian origin make up just 12% of the borough's population today, which is considerably less than towns like Leicester (36%) or Bradford (22%). However, this community has grown from 8.7% in 1991 and is projected to be 18% in the next few years. The Asian community is predominantly Muslim with the largest groups being Mirpuri Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. It is also overwhelmingly concentrated in certain neighbourhoods – the non-white community makes up 58% of the Werneth ward, 56% of Coldhurst, 41% of St. Mary's, 30% of Alexandra (including Glodwick) and 27% of St. Paul's. The *Oldham Independent Review* suggested that Oldham is the one of the most racially segregated towns in the UK and that this is both a symptom and a cause of the tensions in the town.

A working class population

The 2001 Census paints a picture of a predominantly working class population. A relatively high proportion (64.8%) of people in the borough are economically active which is higher than the Northwest average of 63.9%. The proportion of people in employment is 41.5% and the unemployment rate just 3.6% which is in line with the regional average and not far behind the national average.

However, while many people in the borough are in work, wage and skill levels are very low. Average gross weekly earnings in 2001 were just £297 in Oldham, £50 less than the national average and more than £70 less than Halifax. 37.7% of people in Oldham have no qualifications compared to 29.2% in Bury. In the 1997 Labour Force survey, only 11.5% of people in Oldham had NVQ4 qualifications or above which was half the figure in Manchester, and 4.2% less than Rochdale.





This is also reflected in the figures for professionals which make up just 21.1% of the Oldham population compared to 27.7% in Bury and 30% in Warrington.

The borough also has a young population with the lowest proportion of pensioners (16.8%) of any of the boroughs that we have looked at. In the town of Oldham there are high proportions of young people, especially in the Asian community.

Like ethnicity, all of these figures are an average of a borough that has within it huge variety as illustrated by the Mosaic Plan from Experian. The Saddleworth villages have developed into affluent commuter settlements and parts of Royton, Shaw and Chadderton are also relatively affluent. The borough's problems are therefore disproportionately concentrated in the town of Oldham. In certain wards, such as Werneth, for example, unemployment rises to 11% and in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities it is as high as 25%.

Education

In Oldham a high proportion of people have left school with no qualifications because historically they were not needed. This is changing as the 2001 Inspection illustrated. This showed that pupils entering Oldham schools are below the

national average but that the performance of schools while still below the national average is improving and is comparable with similar authorities. Between 1998 and 2000 Oldham achieved the 7th best improvement in the UK at Key Stage 2 in English and the proportion achieving 5+ A-C Grades at GCSE rose from 39.9% to 42.4%. At Bluecoat School the figure is 80% which puts it in the top 50 comprehensive schools in the UK.

One of the great educational successes in the borough has been the Sixth

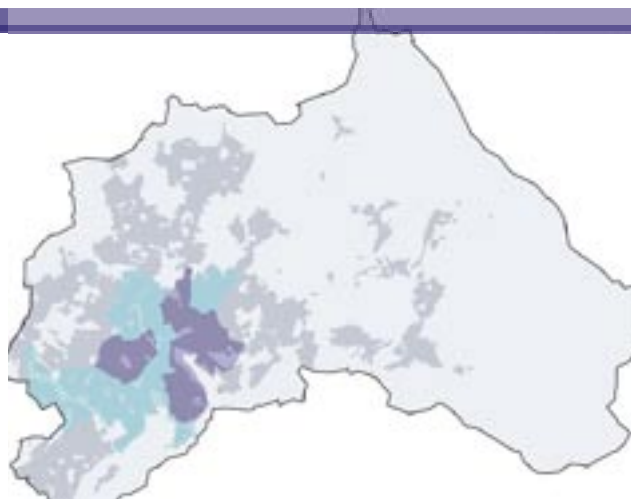
Form College. When this was established in 1992 it was suggested that there were not enough potential sixth formers in Oldham to make it worthwhile. It now has 2,000 students and has recently been rated¹ in the top 10% in a value added assessment of 98 sixth form centres across the UK and in many subjects is in the top 25% in terms of overall results making it comparable to some of the best institutions in the UK.

1. Research by Dr. Kevin Conway former principal of Greenhead College in Huddersfield



A Mosaic plan of Greater Manchester prepared by Experian. The blue colours are suburban middle-classes, the red are council tenants, the yellow working class owners and the green 'stylish singles'

Areas of weak house prices: Light blue - 25% of all transactions below £30,000, dark blue 25% of transactions below £20,000



Housing

The housing market of Oldham has been analysed as part of our work on the Werneth/Freehold masterplan (see Housing Working Paper). Average house prices in Oldham (£45,000) are about three quarters the average of Greater Manchester. However, detached and semi-detached property and even flats in Oldham are less than 10% below the regional average. The issue lies with the terraced stock that makes up 65% of the borough's housing. The average price of a terrace in Oldham is £32,950 which is around £10,000 less than the regional average.

Again, this masks internal contrasts. In a substantial part of inner Oldham in 2001, a quarter of house sales were below £30,000 (light blue areas) and below £20,000 (dark blue). Parts of Oldham's housing market are weak but this has been true for some time. Recently house prices have risen in line with national trends. Indeed detached and semi-detached property has outperformed the national trend and even terraces rose by 18% in the year to 2003. Oldham has not therefore experienced housing market collapse like in East Manchester. It is, however, important to address housing market weakness in the borough and particularly low demand for terraced property.

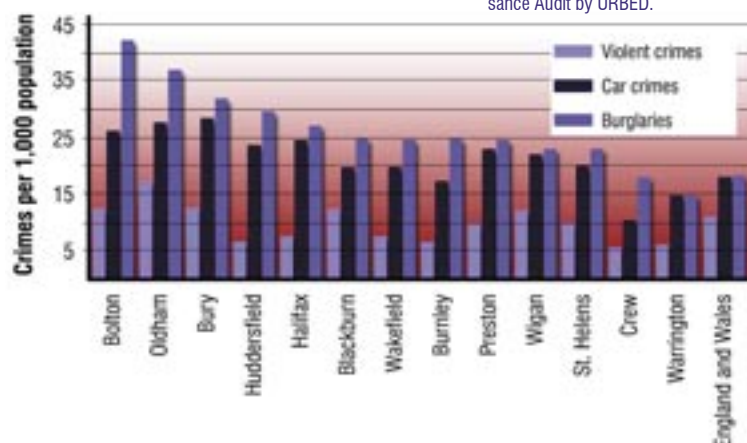
Liveability

The Renaissance audit also looked at a range of liveability issues in Oldham. These included:

- ▶ The crime rates in Oldham are above the national average. There are more violent crimes per thousand people than any of the other towns and high instances of car crime and burglaries (although burglaries have recently been reduced significantly).
- ▶ The town centre is analysed in detail in the Town Centre masterplan. It is ranked 161st nationally in 2002 more than 100 places behind Bolton and 11 places behind Rochdale. The centre is however improving its ranking and has enormous potential and the borough also benefits from a range of strong smaller centres.

- ▶ Despite past criticisms by the Audit Commission, Oldham has in fact scored reasonably well for its service provision which is what affects liveability.
- ▶ However, the Audit Commission did find that only 18% of streets in Oldham had a high level of cleanliness compared to 61% in Wakefield and almost 90% in Bury.
- ▶ The Bartlett School of Planning has ranked UK urban centres by the facilities that they are able to offer. Oldham has 14 of the 20 facilities that they use which puts it on a par with Huddersfield and Bolton and a long way ahead of St. Helens that has just 8.

For further details see the *Oldham Beyond Renaissance Audit* by URBED.



Appendix 3

Economy

A review of the economy of the borough has been undertaken by King Sturge as part of the *Oldham Beyond* study. This has included a review of key economic indicators and of the property market for the borough, and discussions with a range of leading employers.

Oldham has traditionally been a low wage, low skill economy. Its foundation was textile spinning and textile machinery. This industry had all but disappeared by the early 1980s. This has given Oldham time to adjust compared to towns like Barnsley and Stoke that have lost their traditional industries more recently and suddenly.

Part of the adjustment has been to diversify the borough's manufacturing base which still accounts for 23% of employment compared to 15% nationally. Manufacturers include Zetex, Ferranti and Salton alongside smaller high-tech firms such as Digital Projection one of the leading manufacturers of digital projection equipment. However, overall, manufacturing continues to decline in the borough and between 1995 and 2000 employment in the sector fell by 15%.

Despite this, overall employment in the borough increased by 3% over this period due to a 23% growth in construction and a 10% increase in services. Many of the 130 mills that remain have been reused for

storage and distribution. Littlewoods remain significant employers despite the recent sale of a number of their mills.

Oldham has therefore been successful in restructuring its economy and maintaining levels of employment. There are around 90,000 people working in Oldham, of which a large proportion (62,000) live in Oldham too and almost 20,000 people commute into Oldham to work. However, the economy of the borough remains vulnerable. Some of its employment sectors such as textiles, dyeing, paper, chemicals and fabricated metals are predicted to decline. It does have strengths in growth sectors such as food, publishing and electrical and medical equipment. However, the activity in Oldham is not necessarily at the value end of these sectors. The strength in publishing, for example is mostly in newspaper printing.

Oldham has a concentration of employment in business sectors forecast to decline in employment terms nationally, many of which also require few skills and pay low wages. It is therefore important to continue to diversify the economy to consolidate the successes that the borough has achieved in the recent past.

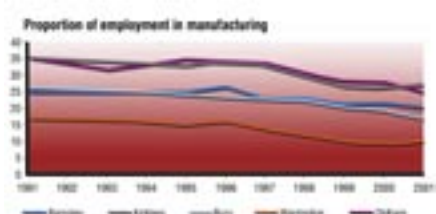
One option is inward investment. Here Oldham has many advantages - five



of its wards score on the top quartile of the Urban Competitiveness Index and parts of the borough are eligible for UK and EU funding. While it currently lacks strategic sites it is within easy reach of four of the region's main employment locations; Kingsway in Rochdale, Ashton Moss and Waterside Park in Tameside and Manchester's Central Business Park. It is important that Oldham residents can access jobs at these locations but the borough must also create its own sites for inward investment with a differentiated offer.

The borough cannot, however, rely on inward investment and must grow its own employment. Currently, Oldham has a relatively low rate of new business registrations. The Business School is however working to address this and has created incubator business units to encourage graduates to start businesses in the borough. There is also potential in the creative industries drawing on the strength of the college in these areas.

For further details see *The Oldham Beyond Economy Working Paper* by King Sturge.



Appendix 4

Culture

Comedia have explored the cultural life of Oldham as part of the study, from the development of arts and sporting activity from the late nineteenth century, through to the current cultural activities and institutions in the borough.

Cultural institutions

The Council operates 14 libraries and there are advanced plans to move the Central Library from its current site to a new £22 million Lifelong Learning Centre in the Cultural Quarter expected to open in 2006. This is Phase 2 of a four-phase programme for the Cultural Quarter – the first phase being the completion in February 2002 of Gallery Oldham. Phase 3 will see the building vacated by the library converted to a museum and the proposed fourth phase includes a new mid-scale venue for the performing arts to house the Coliseum, the Theatre Workshop and the Lyceum.

The largest space in the town centre is the 1500-seat Queen Elizabeth Hall. This lost some trade to the more specialised performance venues at the Bridgewater Hall and the Lowry Centre. It has been moth-balled and the council is reviewing plans for its future. The College campus was started in 1968 and includes the Grange Arts Centre now principally used by the performing arts and media courses. The Oldham Bangladeshi Association Millennium Cultural Centre in Westwood is also a substantial venue capable of hosting large events. However, the borough lacks a venue that can cater for larger concerts and events.

The most important independent arts organisations are the Coliseum and Peshkar Productions. The Coliseum has a regional reputation but needs to relocate to a new venue. Peshkar Productions is a theatre company that tours nationally. The organisations have been collaborating on a feasibility study for a new venue. The local authority also runs the Oldham Theatre Workshop and the Oldham Music Service both with a very strong track record. There are a further 170 groups in the borough ranging from the Saddleworth Handbell Ringers and Delph Band to the Glodwick West Indian Association and Fatima Women's Association.

Events

As a working class town Oldham has always had a lively cultural life from the bawdy Wakes holidays of the nineteenth century to the more recent Carnival and Oldham Mela. There are a range of events in the borough such as the William Walton Festival, the Saddleworth Whit Friday Band Contest and the August Rickshaw Derby. Oldham's main rock venue is The Castle which has plans for a community recording studio. In 2003 Oldham hosted the national Urban Music Conference and a Festival of Diversity is planned for August 2004.



Media

Oldham has one of the few remaining independent local newspapers. The Chronicle founded in 1854, has charted the course of Oldham's development and has become as much a part of the story as a recorder of it.

Sport

Oldham Rugby League Club was set up in 1876 and Oldham Athletic Football Club in 1907. The Latics achieved success under Joe Royle in the early 1990s appearing at Wembley and gaining promotion to the First Division. The club has new owners who are looking to improve its ground. There are a range of sporting facilities in the borough, including swimming pools, sports centres and synthetic pitches run by Oldham Community Leisure Ltd. This has been linking new sports facilities with schools, such as at Hathershaw Technology College, Breeze Hill and Failsworth. Plans are currently being considered for a state-of-the-art leisure complex to replace the facility in the town centre.

For further details see the *Oldham Beyond* Cultural Report by Comedia.

Appendix 5

Transport



WSP have undertaken an accessibility audit of the borough as part of the study. This has looked at movement within the borough and its links from a regional and national perspective. Transport in Oldham is potentially a key driver for the prosperity of the borough and its sub-areas.

While Oldham may be peripheral to the North West, it is at the heart of the Trans-Pennine region encompassing Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Yorkshire. This is a key Trans-European Network route linking Ireland to Northern Europe.

Road access

The east/west connections are mainly by road via the M62. Oldham is also midway between the two main north south motorways, the M6 and M1. It is therefore within safe and legal driving distances of a significant part of the country. The opening of the M60 provides convenient access to the conurbation including Manchester Airport. It is also within easy reach of Liverpool and Leeds/Bradford Airports.

While the A627M and the M60 pass through the borough, Oldham has a fairly low profile on the Motorway network. In terms of trunk roads the primary routes radiate out of Oldham town centre. The exception to this is the A6052, which creates an orbital corridor through Chadderton.

Rail

Oldham has the poorest rail service of all of the Greater Manchester boroughs. There are two rail routes within the borough. The

main Trans-Pennine route between Leeds and Manchester is one of the key corridors in Northern England. Oldham, however, has a low profile on this route its only station being Greenfield which has only local services. The other line is the North Manchester suburban network which stops in Middleton. Oldham town centre is served by a loop from this line. This has seen a 18% reduction in passengers from the 1997 peak although the use of the Mumps Station has increased by over 30%.

The Oldham Loop will be converted to Metrolink. Once this is complete, much of the Western part of the borough, other than Royton, will be within a 20 minute walk of a station. However, a relatively small area is within 800m of a station (normally considered to be the maximum walking distance). The situation is worse on the eastern side of the borough. It will therefore be important to consider park-and-ride and interchange from bus to rail.

Buses

The borough is well served by bus routes. Most of the west of the borough is within 400m of a stop. The eastern side of the borough is, however, poorly served. The key issues relate to the level and quality of

service. Frequency on key corridors is good during the peak periods but evenings and weekends service levels fall dramatically leaving large areas uncovered by public transport.

Quality bus corridors are being created to Manchester, Rochdale and Ashton-Under-Lyne. Future routes are planned to create an arc through north Manchester. Town centre bus services have been improved through the creation of the new bus station in the north-west part of Oldham town centre, and the second phase of this is to be implemented shortly to cover the stopping points on West Street.

Walking and Cycling

Walking and cycling opportunities within the borough are affected by topography. WSP's work has shown that key educational, shopping and employment functions are for the most part within walking distance (20 minutes or less) of housing areas. The cycle network forms good linkages between locations such as town centres and the Council has a detailed cycle strategy covering route development and opportunities.

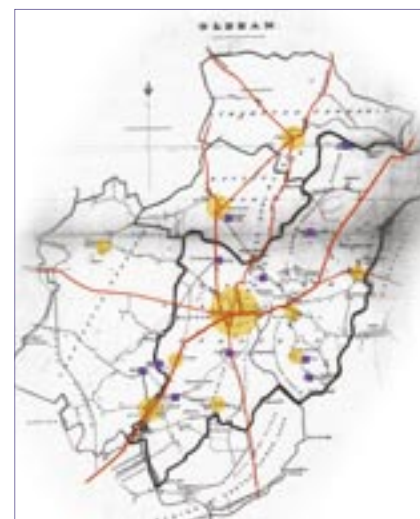
Car Parking

Oldham lacks a comprehensive car parking policy for the borough covering the needs of the town centre, district centres, park and ride, public/private partnerships and pricing. Parking in Oldham Town Centre is dealt with in the Town Centre Masterplan

Appendix 5

Urban design

As part of the study URBED have undertaken an environmental/urban design assessment of the borough. The scale of the borough makes this a huge task and inevitably it has not been possible to examine the whole borough in detail. However, our aim has been to understand the physical structure of the borough, the interplay between topography, settlement patterns and the historical development of the borough.



Above: Oldham Township in 1831
Above left: Oldham in 1890

The structure of North Manchester

Greater Manchester is a conurbation of 2.4 million people which includes 2 cities, Manchester and Salford, 7 industrial towns of 70-100 000 people and more than 40 smaller industrial towns of 20-40 000 people. During the industrial revolution Manchester grew to engulf Salford. The surrounding industrial towns also grew and were linked to Manchester by ribbon development. The appearance was of one great city stretching for miles. However there remains large areas of countryside within the structure of this endless city.

The conurbation has three bands: The city of Manchester lies broadly within the M60 and is a city of around 1 million people. A band of satellite towns contains another million people including the larger towns and smaller towns. The outer band includes the rural surrounds from the pastures of the Cheshire Plain to uplands of the Pennines. Once rural backwaters, these are now affluent commuter areas.

The Borough of Oldham slices through these three bands, from Failsworth

which relates to Manchester through the independent industrial towns of Oldham, Royton, Shaw and Chadderton to the rural fringes of Saddleworth. We have therefore used the cross section as a device to look at the character of the borough.

Historical Development

The map above shows Oldham in 1831. When Manchester was already a booming city, Oldham was a small town in the Parish of Prestwich-cum-Oldham. Mumps at the time was a separate village and other small villages included Sholver and Werneth, however most of the borough was rural and Crompton, Royton, Chadderton and Failsworth were separate townships although contained only the hamlet of Chadderton Fold. To the south east lay the separate parishes of Ashton-under-Lyne and Saddleworth.

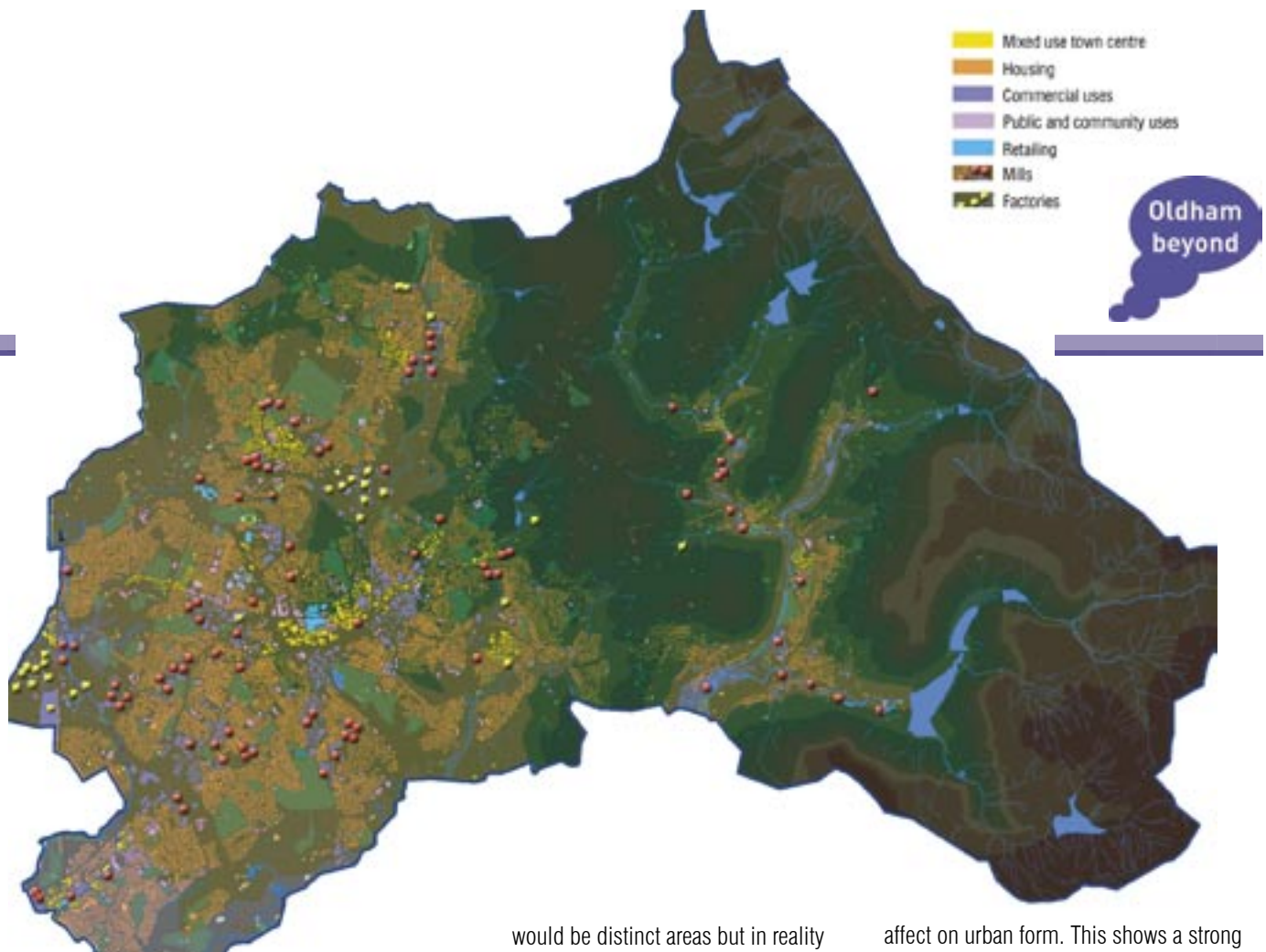
The signs of industrialisation can already be seen with the Rochdale Canal to the west and the Failsworth Branch of the Ashton Canal to the south. There are no mills, because the mechanisation of

spinning had not yet taken place but there are 11 collieries. The 1890 plan illustrates the dramatic growth of Oldham and Mumps and the corridor into Manchester. It does, however, show that Royton (and probably Shaw although it is off the plan) have not grown at all. By this time Oldham had become a densely built working class town of terraces and mills. The poorest and most densely packed housing was around the fringes of Oldham Town centre such as the site now occupied by the civic centre.

Urban structure

The plan opposite has been created by combining a series of plans prepared as part of the urban design audit of the borough. Our goal was to understand the current urban structure and form of the borough.

The figure ground plan shows just the buildings of the borough and lays bare the structure of the town. It illustrates that the western half of the borough contains almost 90% of the buildings. The remainder are contained in the valleys



containing Greenfield, Uppermill and Delph and the eastern quarter of the borough is empty - because it is the high moors. The western part of the borough is relatively dense, dominated by dense terraced property in a star shape with fingers of development stretching up the valleys and roads converging on Oldham town centre.

The land use plan shows up the nine main town centres with retailing surrounded by mixed town centre uses. There is a large amount of industry and commercial development and this is mixed with dense housing development. This reflects the historic structure of the terraced housing around the mills. We have combined these elements into a cross section of the town (not shown on the above plan). This includes seven types of development:

- ▶ **Oldham town centre:** which has a more urban and civic feel than any other part of the borough.
- ▶ **The Town Centre Fringe:** which is fractured with very poor urban form.
- ▶ **Inner terrace and mill neighbourhoods:** Initially we believed that these

would be distinct areas but in reality they are very similar. They include tightly packed terraces with a strong urban form but lacking in open space. The Mill neighbourhoods are gathered around mills and lack a focus now that the mill is no longer a major employer.

- ▶ **Suburbs:** There are relatively few suburbs in Oldham. Many are 1930s garden city suburbs especially in the Chadderton area.
- ▶ **Smaller town centres:** These are smaller in scale than Oldham but also have a sense of civic pride and grandeur albeit on a smaller scale.
- ▶ **Villages:** There are a number of very attractive smaller villages especially in the east of the borough.

We have also looked at the road and rail networks in the borough in terms of its

affect on urban form. This shows a strong pattern of radial routes emanating from the centre of Oldham. Generally there are strong north south routes through the borough but the east west links are poorer mainly because of topography.

The topography (shown on the plan above) is perhaps the greatest determinant of urban form. Oldham Town Centre is on a shelf on the edge of the Pennines overlooking the Cheshire Plain. The Saddleworth settlements are in a separate valley system and are in this sense cut off from the main part of the borough.

The plan also shows the distribution of mills and factories in the borough. It is clear that those in the east are based on water. However, most of the others seem random in their location because they were accessed by road and often powered by electricity.





Oldham LSP



Oldham Beyond has been commissioned by the Oldham Local Strategic Partnership in collaboration with the Northwest Development Agency.

