

Rochdale Borough Renaissance Masterplan

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Prepared for:

The Rochdale Local Strategic Partnership

By:

EDAW

In association with

GVA Grimley

ARUP



THE BIG IDEAS

Borough Vision Rochdale Borough will offer an attractive location in a successful city region, with a distinctive lifestyle and identity.		
Theme	Creating a Step Change	Main proposals
Creating Sustainable Neighbourhoods	Develop attractive, sustainable neighbourhoods, focussing on massive regeneration of the areas close to town centres, and a restructuring of large social rented housing areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regenerate inner area neighbourhoods through Housing Market Renewal and Heywood New Deal for Communities programmes • Raise the density of housing around town centres and along transport corridors. • Invest heavily in transformation of large social rented housing areas
Developing 21st Century Employment Sites	Develop a range of locations suitable for the needs of modern business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop major business parks along the motorway corridors. For example, Kingsway Park and Middleton West Business Park. • Invest in new commercial development on the corridors between motorways and town centres see Rochdale Canal Basin Exemplar. • Promote high quality live/work developments in suburban locations – see Birch Hill Exemplar • Relocate inappropriate employment uses from residential areas onto more appropriate sites.
Establishing Thriving Town Centres	Re-establish town centres as the main focus for shopping, commerce and culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major investment in new shops, offices and housing in Rochdale town centre • Deliver improvement in the shopping offer and urban environment in Middleton, Heywood and Littleborough town centres. • Develop the role of town centres as major hubs of economic activity. • Concentrate leisure and cultural developments largely in town centres, for example, Middleton Civic & Leisure Centre, a new cultural/arts centre at the rear of Rochdale Town Hall. • Promote town centre residential development
Capitalising on our Environmental Assets	Promote the countryside as a major asset and connect it to our neighbourhoods through river valleys and environmental corridors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the most of our countryside by opening up access to it and views to and from it. • Establish green corridors along river valleys and open spaces to connect the countryside to the urban core. • Develop outstanding town parks and local spaces, connected by safe green links • Develop the Pennine villages, and associated countryside and water, as a tourist destination
Focussing on Strategic Gateways and Corridors	Concentrate investment and environmental improvement on key gateways and transport corridors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve major gateways to the Borough particularly at motorway junctions and public transport interchanges eg A627M and Rochdale Railway Station • Focus investment and environmental improvement on the most used transport corridors, eg the A58 Corridor through the Borough • Develop new Focal Points for Investment where corridors meet
Accessible and Integrated Transport	Make a radical improvement to the public transport network to improve connections within the Borough and with the City Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain competitive advantage provided by continuously improving our motorway accessibility e.g. the new Junction 21 on the M62 • Improve rail infrastructure and services on the Rochdale Manchester Leeds line and the Oldham loop line • Develop a complete Quality Bus Corridor network • Build new and improved transport interchanges e.g. Rochdale bus station – Metrolink interchange
Improving Design and Image	Make a dramatic improvement in the design of new developments and open space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place a Rochdale Borough Renaissance Design Initiative to guide developers and ensure good design. • Create more good quality open space in the town centres. • Commission major public art works at key locations • Use the attractiveness of water as a focus for leisure, housing, investment and urban and rural landscape design.

The table summarises the main ideas in this Masterplan. Each point is highlighted and amplified in the main text of the report and signified by an arrow ▶.

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To seize the opportunities of the 21st century the Borough must restructure land use patterns, make improvements to the built and natural environment and improve its public transport.

I . F O R E W O R D

This Rochdale Borough Renaissance Masterplan establishes a new course for the physical development of Rochdale Borough. It is a visionary document that sets out the key directions and priorities which are essential in order to make a dramatic change in the Borough's economy, its physical environment, its residents' quality of life, and its image and reputation.

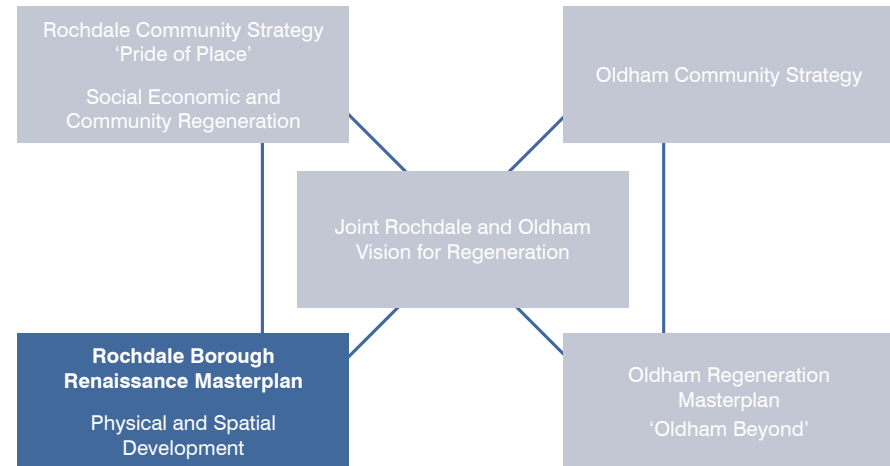
To capture its full potential the Borough needs investment to modernise the physical environment, improve its appeal and make it fit for purpose. To seize the opportunities of the 21st century the Borough must restructure land use patterns, make improvements to the built and natural environment and improve its public transport. A clear framework is required so that public and private sector investment can deliver a true transformation of the Borough.

The Rochdale Borough Renaissance Masterplan sets out a spatial strategy that will direct these essential changes.

The Masterplan links to, and complements, the aspirations for the future that are set out in the Rochdale Borough Community Strategy 'Pride of Place' and the Unitary Development Plan by providing a framework for the physical and spatial change need to achieve this vision.

Rochdale Economic Development Strategy sets out how the Borough intends to develop the local economy including improvements to the local labour supply. The Masterplan provides a regeneration framework from which new economic opportunities will be developed.

Rochdale and Oldham have been working together in close partnership to deliver the national pathfinder - Housing Market Renewal initiative - and this partnership has highlighted many opportunities for joint planning and action. The Rochdale Borough Renaissance Masterplan shows how the Rochdale and Oldham Joint Vision for Regeneration, drawn up at the outset of the Housing Market Renewal process can be delivered in Rochdale Borough, alongside a sister plan in Oldham.



The Rochdale Renaissance Masterplan has been commissioned by the Rochdale MBC on behalf of the Rochdale Local Strategic Partnership.

The Rochdale LSP gratefully acknowledges the support and assistance it has received from: the North West Development Agency, English Partnerships, HMR Partners in Action and Rochdale Development Agency.



Rochdale Borough will offer an attractive location in a successful city region, with a distinctive lifestyle and identity.



2. VISION FOR ROCHDALE BOROUGH

Our Vision for Rochdale Borough in 15 years time is:

Rochdale Borough will offer an attractive location in a successful city region, with a distinctive lifestyle and identity.

We will

- Offer the best of urban and rural living. Nestled within the natural amphitheatre of the South Pennines and within striking distance of Manchester City Centre the Borough will build upon these advantages to offer a unique lifestyle.
- Be nationally recognised for the quality of life offered to residents, visitors and employees. People will choose to come and live in Rochdale.
- Have the best of both worlds. – Taking fullest advantage of the Borough's accessibility and natural location this major competitive advantage will be recognised by investors as a first class opportunity to develop the commercial and leisure destinations of the future.

- Offer high quality living environments, excellent work opportunities, and a wide range of leisure activities. High quality will be expected in the design of buildings, town centres and open spaces.

Why do we need a new Vision?

Rochdale Borough must chart a new course to address two fundamental challenges over the next twenty years.

First, globalization and the rise of the information economy have changed the criteria by which competitive economic advantage is now gained. As new economies emerge, old industrial areas like Rochdale must adapt and embrace new technology and industry. Quality of life is a valuable asset in the new knowledge economy and the true potential of the Borough becomes apparent when the accessibility and location of the area are considered in the context of its environmental advantages.

Second, there is an urgent need to improve living conditions and the prospects of the Borough's residents. This involves tackling the key issues of improving housing quality and choice and of raising the wealth of the Borough through more and better-paid jobs for local residents and of improving the local environment. Moreover, these improvements must be sustainable into the future.

Rochdale Borough has the opportunity to position itself as a first class place to live and work. It is this concept that lies at the heart of our vision. This opportunity arises now because of the scale of the investments now coming on stream. Through this masterplan, the aim is to utilise these funds to develop a number of regeneration 'catalysts' and to create the conditions for private sector investment.

For example, critical opportunity lies in linking the Housing Market Renewal Fund with ongoing key initiatives - Kingsway Park, Rochdale Canal Basin, the proposed Middleton West Business Park, the route of the new Metrolink and the Phoenix Initiative - to transform the quality of the physical environment and attract private sector investment.

This Masterplan seeks to make these connections happen, to define the actions needed to create a permanent change and to weld together all these projects and programmes in a way that will foster further and sustainable investment.



Best of Both Worlds
Within striking distance of Manchester City Centre, Rochdale will offer a distinctive lifestyle catering for the best of urban and rural living.

The Rochdale Renaissance Masterplan seeks to ensure that Rochdale will be able to capitalise upon its strategic location. Rochdale Borough is part of a City Region that is redefining itself nationally and internationally.



3 . S T R A T E G I C C O N T E X T

The Rochdale Renaissance Masterplan seeks to ensure that Rochdale will be able to capitalise upon its strategic location.

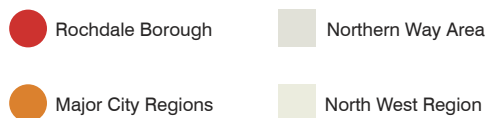
Manchester City Region

Rochdale Borough is part of a City Region that is redefining itself nationally and internationally. Manchester City Centre is in the midst of a dramatic renaissance and is reinforcing its status as the capital of the North of England. Manchester contains a concentration of first class universities, boasts an increasing concentration of creative industries and is defining itself as a key player in the knowledge economy.

The Greater Manchester Strategy clearly recognises the pre-eminence of the regional centre and builds on the concept of an increasingly integrated city-region as a centre for innovation and investment and as a gateway to international markets. The role of satellite towns such as Rochdale and the strategic employment site at Kingsway Park is specifically recognised.

The North West Development Agency Regional Economic Strategy lays out the direction for the regeneration of the region's economy. The Rochdale Renaissance Masterplan establishes the physical framework needed in order to realise the benefits of the regional and sub-regional economic strategies. The Masterplan helps to deliver key regional priorities including:

- Kingsway Regional Employment site
- Supporting Housing Market Renewal
- Improving physical accessibility to jobs
- Improving strategic transport to support economic development and regeneration



Strategic Regional Context

The Borough is strategically situated in the Manchester city-region, which is transforming its image nationally and internationally. The Borough benefits from easy access to Manchester Airport via excellent motorway and rail connections. The Borough is also situated at the heart of the Government's Northern Way and Housing Market Renewal initiatives. Together, these aim to renew the quality of the physical environment and exploit connections to Europe.

The Housing Market Renewal Fund (HMRF) aims to restore sustainability to communities across the North of England by improving the housing stock and local services. The Borough is part of the Oldham/Rochdale HMR which will permit a scale of transformation never before possible in the Borough's most deprived neighbourhoods. This Masterplan ensures that the maximum benefit will be derived from this investment.

The Northern Way

Rochdale Borough has a central location on the 'Northern Way' – the strategic growth corridor connecting an east to west axis - Liverpool to Hull - and a north to south axis - Manchester to Newcastle. The Borough is well placed between the major city-regions of Manchester and Leeds. Through the Northern Way initiative, the Government is working closely with regional development agencies and planning bodies to exploit economic and transport links and lever in new investment. This Masterplan seeks to exploit the opportunities within this initiative.

Rochdale – A Borough of Distinct Townships

The Borough of Rochdale is made up of four distinct townships: Heywood, Middleton, Pennines and Rochdale – each with its own character and opportunities. The township dimension and the democratic structure that underpins them are one of the key strengths of the Borough. In preparing the overall proposals, the Masterplan has taken account of the key issues in each township. The implications and local strategy for each township will be detailed in the Township Regeneration Frameworks which will be prepared as part of the implementation of this Masterplan.





The Masterplan proposes a number of radical and sustainable changes across a number of key topics and will influence the future land use patterns and infrastructure.



4 . T H E M A S T E R P L A N

The Masterplan proposes a number of radical and sustainable changes across a number of key topics and will influence the future land use patterns and infrastructure. This section outlines these proposed changes, and seeks to illustrate how they might be implemented 'on the ground' through a number of exemplar schemes.

The key topics and related exemplars are set out in Table 1.

Table 1

Key topic	Exemplar Project
Creating Sustainable Neighbourhoods	East Central Rochdale Langley
Developing 21st Century Employment Sites	Rochdale Canal Basin Littleborough Live Work Community
Establishing Thriving Town Centres	Rochdale Town Centre
Capitalising on our Environmental Assets	Hollingworth Lake
Focussing on Gateways and Corridors	Kingsway/Oldham Road Corridor
Accessible and Integrated Transport	Phoenix Initiative, Heywood
Design and Image	Design Principles

The proposals will be developed in further detail through the four Township Regeneration Frameworks, which are being prepared in parallel with the Masterplan.



4.1 Creating Sustainable Neighbourhoods

Develop attractive, sustainable neighbourhoods, focussing on massive regeneration of the areas close to town centres, and a restructuring of large social rented housing areas.

► Improving the attractiveness and sustainability of neighbourhoods in each of the townships lies at the heart of the strategy to improve the quality of life in the Borough. It is the key to retaining existing residents, attracting new residents and accommodating the wide range of age groups, family sizes, ethnic groups and income levels that are necessary for diversity and sustainability.

The quality of the Borough's neighbourhoods needs to be improved by focusing on those key elements that make up an attractive sustainable area

- Choice of housing
- Quality local schools
- Access to employment
- Access to local shops and services
- Attractive local parks
- Accessible public transport

Neighborhood planning is essential in order to ensure that development, facilities and services are integrated at neighbourhood level. Where there is major restructuring of neighbourhoods, the practice of preparing detailed neighbourhood masterplans supported by strong community involvement is endorsed wholeheartedly.

Clearly the priority must be on those neighbourhoods that are in greatest need of improvement - the inner area neighbourhoods close to town centres, and the large social rented housing areas.

► Rochdale's housing must be appropriate to meet the needs of all of the Borough's citizens. In particular it must help to retain the Borough's young people and attract new residents. It must be affordable, flexible, attractive and high quality.

In order to achieve these objectives there are changes needed in current policy. In addition the different challenges posed by inner areas, large social rented housing areas and suburban areas need to be recognised.

The proposals in this section have their foundations in the aspirations expressed in the Community Plan 'Pride of Place'.

Overall Policies

In order to create sustainable neighbourhoods some existing policies need to be strengthened and some new policies must be introduced.

- Development should continue to be accommodated primarily within the present urban boundary rather than spilling into the green belt. Brownfield sites, derelict and underused land should be targeted for new development and quality public space in order to both protect greenfield sites and make best use of urban land and infrastructure.
- Housing and employment uses can be mixed within neighbourhoods where these uses are compatible so that journey to work trips can be minimised.
- To encourage greater use of public transport there should be greater density of development around transport links, for example where the proposed Metrolink stops.
- The principles of sustainable development should be adopted. These are social progress that recognises the needs of everyone; protection of the natural environment; prudent use of natural resources, including energy; and, maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
- The current practice of preparing detailed neighbourhood plans supported by strong community involvement in areas of major change is endorsed wholeheartedly. This process has worked well in East Central Rochdale and in Langley and should be continued.

Housing Zones in the Borough

Three types of housing zones with very different characteristics can be identified in the Borough. A differentiated approach to creating sustainable communities is required based on these different zones:

- Inner urban areas of primarily older housing close to town centres
- Larger social rented estates – mainly single tenure estates many of which are located on the edge of the urban area
- Suburban and urban fringe areas – the rest of the urban area including suburbia and the countryside fringe

The approach in these three areas is defined in more detail in the following sections.

Inner Urban Areas

► There are number of neighbourhoods in inner urban areas where intervention is required in order to tackle economic, social and housing issues. The Housing Market Renewal Fund and Heywood New Deal for Communities programmes are on a massive scale and provide a foundation for the needed transformation. However this investment needs to be sustained if the required change is to happen and Rochdale should continue to seek funding to achieve this.

Where there is rapid population growth around Rochdale town centre every effort should be made to provide choice for new residents within these existing communities. ► **The intensity of existing infrastructure (in terms of public transport, services, and town centre amenities) warrants higher intensity development in these areas.** Location of higher intensity development along transport corridors will also encourage use of public transport, improve its viability, and reduce dependence upon cars. Regeneration initiatives in these communities should aim to better connect to features that could significantly improve the quality of life for local residents. For example, the Roch, the Canal and town centre in Rochdale, and the River Irk and Middleton town centre.

Around Rochdale town centre terraced housing is the primary form of accommodation and is often heavily overcrowded. However, terraced houses are part of the area's heritage and for many an important entry level onto the housing ladder. Selective clearance will be required to remove some poor housing stock and to help improve the neighbourhood. This will be mainly smaller scale except where larger-scale clearance is required to transform and redefine certain areas.

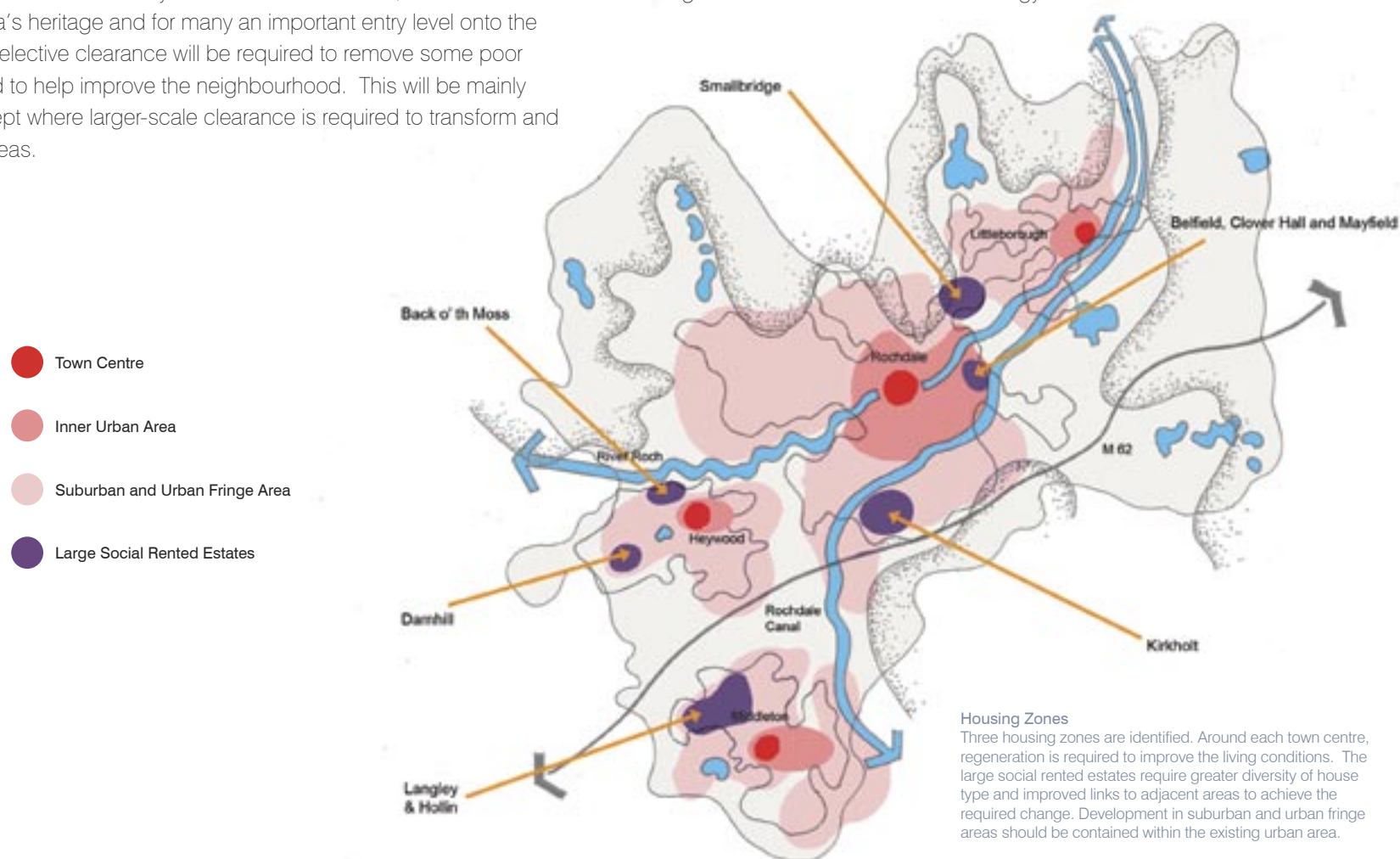
The key aim must be to provide a diverse mix of house types and tenures that are appropriate for the current and future needs of the local populations. Opportunities are explored in the Wardleworth and Hamer (East Central Rochdale) Exemplar Project.

In Rochdale the inner area neighbourhoods for Housing Market Renewal intervention lie in a ring around the town centre. Individual planning exercises for these five neighbourhoods could create problems of knock on housing effects, and lack of consistency in approach.

A more detailed spatial strategy for the entire inner ring should be commissioned in advance of detailed neighbourhood planning in order to ensure maximum benefit from the HMRF.

Converting some existing under-utilised employment sites to housing can accommodate new population growth. Priority should be given to areas adjacent to the River Roch and the town centre that can offer good amenity to residents.

Other opportunities to accommodate growth exist along the Rochdale Canal, such as in Newbold. Here new housing could be promoted as part of a broader goal of encouraging mixed-use development to progress the Borough's Rochdale Canal Corridor Strategy.



Exemplar Project: Wardleworth and Hamer (East Central Rochdale)

The Opportunity

East Central Rochdale consists of Wardleworth and Hamer and the areas of Belfield and Cloverhall. These areas display multiple forms of deprivation and poor housing conditions. However they are well located close to amenities and are popular with the Asian community, which is projected to grow into the future. Through Housing Market Renewal and other housing investment the opportunity is to fundamentally transform these communities in a sustainable way.

Proposals

The proposals for this area illustrate the following main elements of the Masterplan:

- Reducing the oversupply of small terraced housing through selective demolition and developing new larger household units to reduce general overcrowding. Specifically to cater for the demand for better quality housing.
- Developing higher density housing, which can support local services and add to the vibrancy of the neighbourhood.
- Improve linkages to the town centre including a new mixed-use zone along John Street together with improved access to the new Metrolink station and employment opportunities in the town centre.
- An improved network of public open spaces and the creation of new linear open space and walkways along the River Roch including new pedestrian bridge crossings.
- Rationalization of land uses adjacent to the River Roch to create new riverside residential opportunities that overlook the River 'a place where the River Roch is enhanced and celebrated rather than ignored and hidden' – from the Vision for Wardleworth.
- Enhancing the A58 Corridor as it passes through the area by rationalizing unviable commercial areas, improving landscaping and street furniture and including a gateway feature to celebrate the entrance to the area.
- Traffic management schemes that reduce the impact of the car in residential areas through traffic calming schemes and 'Homezone' principles.



East Central Rochdale (Wardleworth and Hamer)

The plan for East Central Rochdale aims to address the area's deprivation and improve the quality of life by reducing the oversupply of terrace housing, developing new higher density housing and improving linkages to Rochdale town centre and to the River Roch (Image courtesy of Shillam and Smith).

Exemplar Project: Langley Estate / Bowlee Park

The Opportunity

The Bowlee Park Housing Association is implementing a strategy to improve the sustainability of the Langley Estate. This Exemplar Project demonstrates the benefit of joined up thinking - what might be possible if the Langley Estate was considered in conjunction with the proposed Middleton West Business Park and Middleton Town Centre.

Proposals

- Bowlee Park should not remain as a cul-de-sac. Windermere Road should be extended as a 'green way' (promoting access to the estate by buses, bicycles and pedestrians) to connect the Langley Estate to the Proposed Middleton West Business Park.
- The internal road network should be better linked up and rationalized.
- Windermere and Wood Street will form the main axis through the Langley Estate. Higher density should be created along this axis to improve the viability of public transport and diversify the housing stock.
- A cluster of shops and services should be consolidated within the existing Wood Street commercial area. Improved connections should encourage people from the wider area to use facilities such as the Healthy Living Centre, and GP and dental surgeries.
- Existing fragmented green spaces should be consolidated and linked together to create a network of green spaces across the neighbourhood.
- Within the proposed Middleton West Business Park uses such as health care facilities, offices and start up space would offer a range of employment training and employment opportunities to local residents easily accessible via the extension of Windermere Road.
- The reorganisation of schools on the estate should provide opportunities for additional public facilities through the extended schools proposals.



Langley Estate New Connections
Connections to the town centre and to the proposed Middleton West Business Park will be enhanced to improve access to shops, services and employment.



Langley Estate Consolidating Green Space and Green Connections
The existing fragmented green spaces will be consolidated into more useable local parks and green links.

Larger Social Rented Estates

▶ Major change is taking place in areas such as Langley and Hollin in Middleton, Kirkholt in Rochdale, and Darnhill in Heywood. These areas have the disadvantage of being single-tenure areas made up almost entirely of housing with little integrated mixed uses. Some areas suffer from low or failing demand and their design and location means that they are often both physically and psychologically separate from the main urban core.

▶ Significant investment is required to create a fundamental change. Improvement should focus on diversifying the housing stock, improving connections to local services, improving the quality of the public realm, diversifying tenure and making new connections with other areas. This is in addition to the investment through Decent Standard Housing Programme.

Suburban and Urban Fringe Areas

There is considerable demand for housing in the urban fringe as demonstrated by levels of growth in some northern wards. In these areas growth should be prevented from eroding green areas. ▶ The key to new development in these areas lies in re-using brownfield and under utilised sites alongside improved access to services either by improving current services or by improving transport links.

The requirement for modern employment locations – explained in the next section - means that there will be new opportunities to re-use older industrial sites. Care must be taken however to ensure that there remains sufficient employment sites within the Borough.



4.2 Developing 21st Century Employment Sites

Develop a range of locations suitable for the needs of modern business.

Maximum advantage needs to be taken of the Borough's existing transport connections to attract new employment opportunities. Transport connections need to be modernised and improved. Improvements in public as well as private transport are required. The town centres and strategic corridors and major new business parks - particularly Kingsway Park - can meet the needs of new economic activities and can offer a wider variety of employment prospects to existing and new residents. Supported by the Metrolink and improved rail services, new jobs can help to create a more balanced commuter flow by bringing more workers into the Borough.

Rochdale has a moderately weak economy. The local economy has a high proportion of jobs in the manufacturing sector compared to the national average and employment in this sector is shrinking. The number of start up businesses is relatively low and there are no significant clusters of firms.

However, Rochdale has a strong presence of medium sized businesses and new businesses have been attracted to the Borough in increasing numbers; there are significant opportunities for future economic growth.

The Rochdale Economic Development Strategy proposes a series of interventions to address these issues and raise the economic performance of the area whilst ensuring residents gain benefit.

There are significant opportunities upon which the Borough can capitalise. Namely its advantageous position within the Greater Manchester conurbation and the spin-off opportunities from the establishment of Manchester as a knowledge capital. The Borough must grow and expand with the regional economy and present and market itself to this end.

The key challenge is to ensure that the physical infrastructure - sites premises and transport - is in place. Resources must be concentrated on those sectors that offer the best prospects for attracting new investment and jobs and sustaining and supporting existing local employment. Key growth and investment points include the major motorway locations (Heywood, Stakehill and Kingsway) the four town centres and sites along the key transport corridors to the south of the Borough linking Rochdale with Manchester.

Exemplar Project: Rochdale Canal Basin

The Opportunity

The Rochdale Canal Basin presents a major opportunity to secure significant regeneration in a location that presently contains a number of vacant and underused large buildings and development sites. It lies at the intersection of a number of corridors and initiatives. The Rochdale Canal has been identified as a significant environmental and economic corridor; Oldham Road crosses the canal and forms part of the new corridor which links the M62, Kingsway Park and the town centre, and the basin lies close to three Housing Market Renewal Neighbourhoods.

Proposals

The Rochdale Canal Basin Development Strategy aims to create a business and leisure destination on the Canal and create employment and environmental benefits for local residents. It contains a number of elements, which illustrate the main proposals in the Masterplan.

- Restoration of the Grade 2 listed Norwich Mill complex on the canal frontage for mixed use development - ground floor active uses such as retail, cafes and other leisure uses and upper floors which may include a mix of workspace, education, residential, and office uses.
- Reuse of Crossfield Mill to attract new sectors of employment to this inner city location.
- A high quality new public space and a new bridge link over the canal - with potential for innovative design - linking development sites which will improve the local environment and create a sense of identity and space.
- Creation of high quality waterside public spaces and moorings to encourage visitors and create local interest and environmental improvement.



Rochdale Canal Basin

The Rochdale Canal Basin is a major opportunity to secure regeneration along the Canal and provide flexible workspace in existing vacant and underutilised buildings.

Motorway Locations. ▶ The Borough has a locational advantage in terms of its road connections. It is well catered for in terms of large employment sites that have easy access to the major road networks. The Borough must capitalize on its location. Through two major new developments - the Kingsway Park and the proposed Middleton West Business Park - it has the opportunity to create a fundamental change in the employment prospects for the Borough. New employment sites should be developed in corridors between motorway junctions and town centres in order to maximise accessibility and minimise traffic disruption.

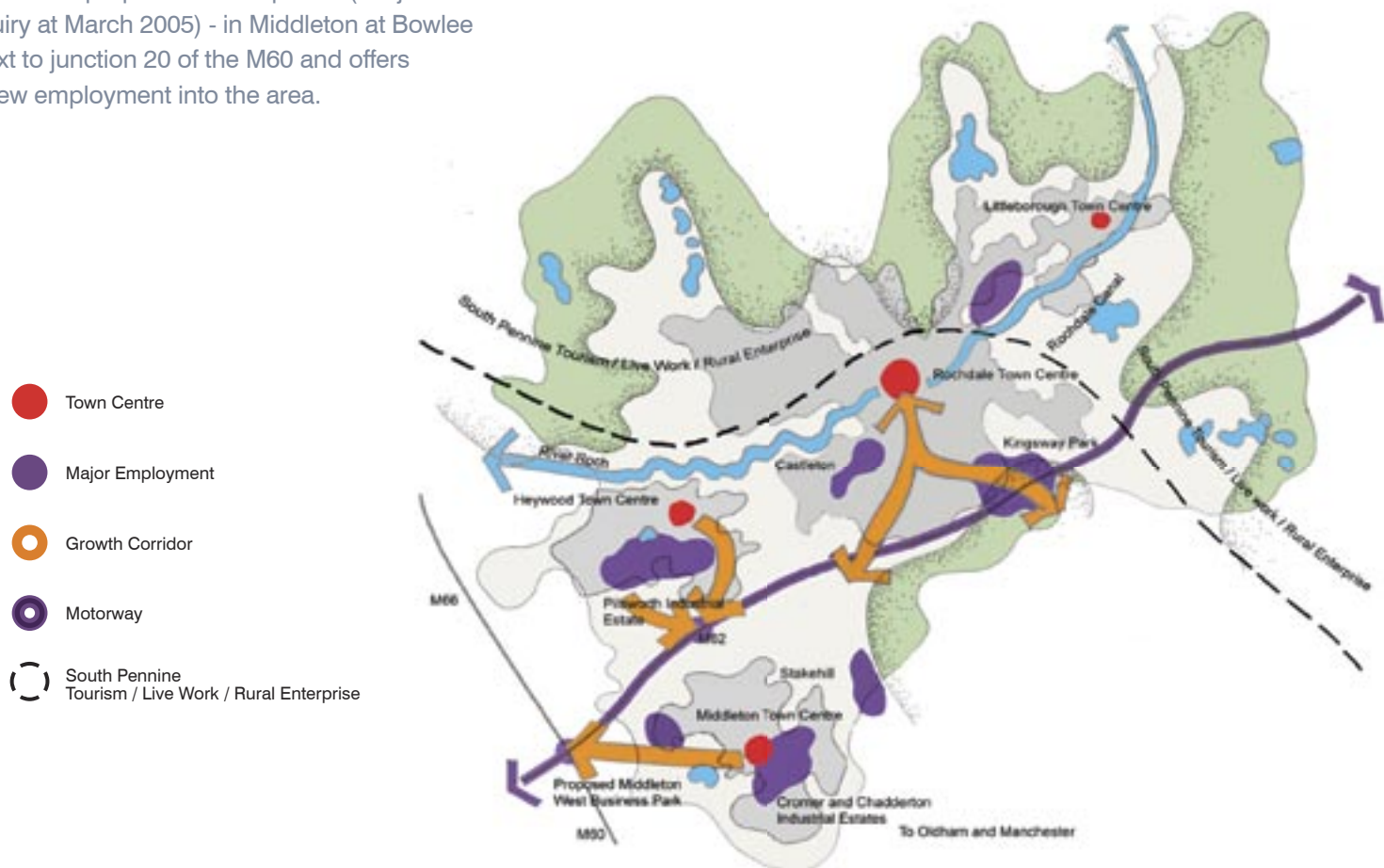
Kingsway Park. ▶ This development is of truly regional significance and will be no ordinary business park. The sheer scale and ambition of the development - 500 acres; 7,000 jobs - will change the employment prospects of the area and create a fundamental shift in the Borough's economic base by attracting new added-value and knowledge-based industries. Moreover, it has the capacity and potential to shift the expectations and image of the area. For all these reasons proposals in this Masterplan support this development as one, which will transform the Borough.

Middleton West Business Park. ▶ The proposed development (subject to the outcome of the UDP enquiry at March 2005) - in Middleton at Bowlee - has an excellent location next to junction 20 of the M60 and offers opportunities to encourage new employment into the area.

Moreover, its location adjacent to Bowlee Park/Langley presents a special opportunity to link employment to an area of special need. Again this is a development that will keep the Borough at a competitive economic advantage and is therefore supported in this Masterplan.

Town Centres. ▶ The Borough's town centres have potential to establish the service sector and for commercial and employment development. Where appropriate new investment should be targeted towards the Borough's town centres to establish focal points. Establishing a strong high value service sector within the town centre will be critical to repositioning the Borough within the region and to capturing the benefits of the emerging information economy.

Growth Corridors. ▶ Economic growth corridors have emerged over time to the south of the Borough linking it with Manchester and other economic centres. These growth corridors tend to follow the principal arterial routes – motorways (M60 / M62), the railway line and the canal. With the development of Kingsway Park and Metrolink new corridors of growth will be established. Employment and commercial opportunities should be focused on these major corridors.



Employment Sites
The Borough will modernise its employment sites to meet the needs of the new economy.

Exemplar Project: The Littleborough Live / Work Community (Birch Hill Hospital Site)

The Opportunity

This exemplar project explores the potential of the Birch Hill Hospital site to become an active lifestyle and live / work community. The hospital will soon cease to operate as a health care facility and plans are already underway for its development as a residential community.

Proposals

- The Birch Hill Hospital site is ideally situated to benefit from the proximity of the moors and the leisure opportunities presented by this semi-rural location. Connections should be made to the adjacent communities, to the moors and to the north through the introduction of 'green fingers', which extend into the site.
- A conference centre, small business and live / workspace could be developed providing modern 'E' enabled facilities and office space for the local community.
- In addition to the clock tower a few of the highest quality historic buildings could be retained and refurbished to form part of a conference centre and luxury flats. All new housing should be developed in the northern half of the site and fully 'E' enabled to house people who want to work from home or from local business space.
- New buildings would be contemporary in style but be "of Rochdale Borough" through the use of local materials such as stone and by references to the local vernacular. The intent is to establish a bold juxtaposition of the old and the new across the site.



Littleborough Live Work Retained Buildings

The Birch Hill Hospital site presents a unique opportunity to develop a live / work community on the edge of the Pennines. The highest quality historic buildings, such as the Clock Tower, should be retained to ensure a strong sense of place.

Live/Work Developments

▶ New patterns of working involve radical new thinking in the relationship of home and work. The South Pennine fringe to the north of the Borough presents the most significant opportunity for high quality living environments and therefore for live/work developments. For example the Birch Hill hospital site in the Pennines Township could be redeveloped for mixed-use activity with real potential for work/live elements as part of the scheme.

Consolidation of Existing Employment Sites

▶ The process of neighbourhood renewal, the desire to eliminate poor quality industrial sites, and the opening up of river valleys will inevitably require the relocation of employment sites. Appropriate sites should be made available to accommodate the transfer and rationalisation / consolidation of traditional economic activity as market needs change. The public sector may need to intervene to assemble this land in appropriate locations.

Higher Education Investment

The development of a Higher Education institution within the Borough would provide a number of benefits:

- Students can be retained within the area;
- Businesses are attracted by the presence of HE;
- HE developments and related student life can act as drivers for regeneration.

4.3 Establishing Thriving Town Centres

Re-establish town centres as the main focus for shopping, commerce and culture.

The Borough is fortunate in having a diverse and cosmopolitan community with varied needs, interests, and traditions. The Borough should build on this advantage, regenerating its town centres to create a vibrant heart for the Borough.

The Borough's four main town centres Rochdale, Middleton, Heywood and Littleborough each have a key role to play both within the context of their townships and the success of the Borough. All can offer a destination for residents and visitors alike and convey a positive image to the outside world.

► **The Borough's town centres are key to the Rochdale Borough Renaissance and the Masterplan proposes re-establishing them as the primary focus for living, shopping, civic, commercial and cultural life.**

Town centres have a role as places for civic expression and as centres of service and economic activity. Improvement should focus on the quality and range of what is on offer, the quality of the built environment, the mix of uses, and the impact of vehicles.

Rochdale Town Centre

Rochdale Town centre is the largest in the Borough. It is designated as a sub regional shopping centre; it is the main civic centre in the Borough and is the location of many public offices.

However, it is under-performing as a shopping centre and it needs particular attention to fulfill its potential and provide the quality of retailing that its catchment area warrants. This is important to reduce the leakage of spending power into adjacent Boroughs and to support the needs of the local community. The expansion of the Wheatsheaf Shopping Centre in Rochdale can make an important contribution to this goal but further improvement will still be required particularly to the existing shopping streets of Yorkshire Street and Drake Street.

There are major opportunities for development and regeneration in Town Centre East – a quadrant of the town centre that has large areas of vacant and underutilised land. The key to unlocking this potential lies in the relocation of the existing bus station.

The open space linking the new bus and Metrolink station through the Butts and the Esplanade and the area around the Town Hall has potential to become a first class public space. Particular attention should be paid to this area since this gives a unique quality to the town centre. This opportunity is expanded upon in the Rochdale Town Centre Exemplar Project.

Heywood Town Centre

Heywood town centre largely serves the population of the town and over the years the main retail area has focused down to a smaller area. Further opportunities should be taken to strengthen this core area.

The Time Retail Park on Dawson Street should be better connected to Market Street to encourage pedestrian travel between both shopping areas. The Heywood Town Centre Strategy identifies a number of options and should be revisited with a view to selecting the one that establishes stronger links between the Times Retail Park and Market Street.

Middleton Town Centre

In Middleton the new Tesco development and the refurbishment of Middleton Shopping Centre will substantially improve the local shopping offer. Care must be taken to ensure that these developments are integrated with the existing shops situated around Middleton Gardens. In addition the new bus station and civic and leisure centre will improve substantially the attractiveness and accessibility of the town centre for residents of Middleton and neighbouring areas.

Littleborough Town Centre

Currently a small local town centre, the emergence of the area as a leisure destination should enable a greater quality and variety of shops and other businesses to be supported in the future, to the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

Employment

► **Town centres provide excellent locations for particular sectors of employment. In addition to the public sector, new sectors of employment such as business services, media, e- services should be encouraged to locate there.** These developments can act as catalysts to regenerate particular parts of town centres.



Cultural and Leisure Facilities

Cultural and Leisure facilities in the Borough are poor in comparison to other places and the size of the population, and their locations are too dispersed. The Borough has a proud tradition of welcoming people who have settled from other countries: from Eastern Europe, the Indian sub-continent and the far east, and the population has a diversity that should be reflected in cultural and leisure facilities. ▶ **Within this context, town centres have an important role as one of the main locations of cultural and leisure activity. Enhanced facilities would also play a role in improving the Borough as a visitor / tourist destination and creating a night-time economy with a wide appeal.**

Town Centre Living

Housing should be encouraged in and adjacent to each town centre to provide new lifestyle opportunities, bring life to town centres, support local shops, and encourage cultural uses and the night-time economy. ▶ **Across England, town centres are being reclaimed for living and quality developments are achieving high value. The Borough must expect and aim to be part of this trend.** The Town Centre East site in Rochdale town centre is one of the first but certainly not the only opportunity for creating housing as part of a larger mixed-use development.

There is a rich heritage of buildings and locations in the Borough which should be marketed as a selling point.

Making Connections to Adjoining Communities

Rochdale and Middleton town centres are isolated from their adjoining neighbourhoods by ring roads that are wide and have few safe or appealing crossing points. Connections across these ring roads must be established to facilitate pedestrian links to adjoining neighbourhoods and the town centres.

Improve the Public Realm

The Borough must give greater attention to the quality of the public realm if it is to bring vitality and vibrancy to its town centres. Well-designed public spaces and landscaping would enhance the attractiveness of town centres, improve the experience of the visitor and create a sense and pride of place.

Exemplar Project: Rochdale Town Centre

The Opportunity

The opportunity is to regenerate Rochdale town centre producing a range of living, working, leisure and cultural activities and creating a focal point for the Borough. There is a key opportunity to create a high quality public space at the proposed Metrolink / bus station interchange, which linked with the Esplanade and the Town Hall Square, will produce a network of public space of European class.

Proposals

General

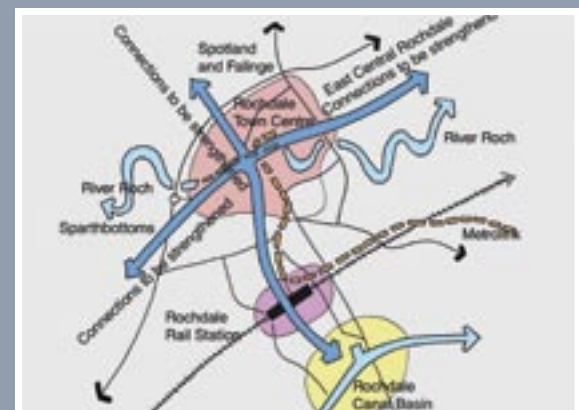
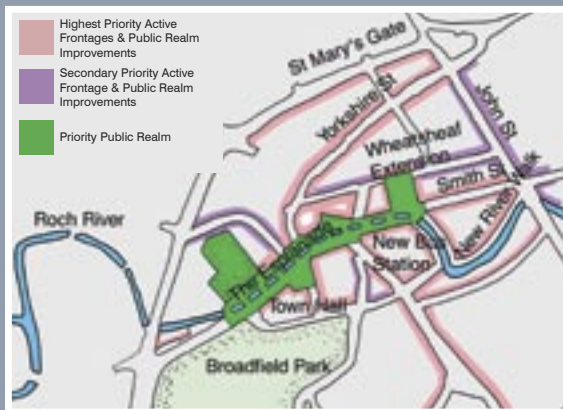
- Attract new investment into the town centre to enhance and promote Rochdale's role as a sub-regional shopping centre and to provide a main focus for retail, commercial, employment, social and community activity.
- Strengthen the central shopping core to attract a variety of new retail uses and in particular increase the number of multiple national retailers. To complement this landscaping, environmental improvements and high quality pedestrian links should be promoted to enhance the centre's visual attractiveness and physical environment.
- Contribute to a comprehensive regeneration of the town centre by bringing vacant / underused land back into effective use particularly within the eastern area of the town centre.
- Rationalise traffic circulation into and around the town centre to discourage through traffic while facilitating easy access at major entry points with appropriate short and long stay parking provision.
- Improve all of the public open spaces throughout and around the town centre to create a safe and attractive environment.
- Maximise the opportunity that Metrolink will provide to regenerate the town centre by creating a modern integrated transport hub, encouraging close links between buses, trams, taxis, and people walking or cycling.
- Develop and promote the cultural, arts and tourism potential of the town centre particularly around the Town Hall Square and the Arts and Heritage Centre.
- Improve and strengthen connections to neighbouring areas both visually and physically with good pedestrian links. Key pedestrian links should be created along The Esplanade / Smith Street, the edges of the River Roch and, from the bus station / Metrolink interchange to Yorkshire Street through the Wheatsheaf.
- New development should restore the network of streets and blocks so as to create visual and physical linkages within the town centre and to adjacent neighbourhoods.

Town Centre East

- Town Centre East is one of the key development opportunities in the Rochdale town centre and will create a critical mass of development attracting people to this area of the centre. The riverside is an ideal location for town centre living. Pedestrian access to and along the river should be maximized. Pedestrian footbridges across the River Roch should create connections to the Town Hall and the south river bank. Pedestrian links with the rest of the town centre should be secured.
- Re-development of the Wheatsheaf is currently planned and will replace a blank façade with an interesting and active southern frontage. This expansion should contain high quality shops overlooking a new public space to be created on part of the site currently occupied by the bus station.
- The new civic square will provide the primary pedestrian link from the bus station, past the Metrolink, north into the Wheatsheaf and then north to Yorkshire Street, and should be edged by high quality shops. Development on the east and west sides of the square should preserve sightlines to the new Wheatsheaf frontage.

Town Hall Esplanade and the Butts

- The bus station should be relocated to a new riverside site enabling the creation of a new modern facility linking public and private transport. The remainder of the former bus station site can be developed with shops at the ground floor and the potential for office and/or hotel use above. Replacement car parking should be developed in the town centre.
- The Municipal Offices (without the bus station) could be a landmark building within the town centre. Refurbishment should focus on creating active uses on the ground floor. The frontage onto the proposed new square should be preserved for higher value retail spaces and leisure uses.
- Care should be taken to ensure that other uses located in the vicinity are compatible with high value retail stores. Refurbishment of the Wheatsheaf will release the library from its current location, which could be relocated at the base of the Municipal Offices, or on another development plot in the vicinity to generate pedestrian activity.
- The surface car park around the Rochdale Town Hall should be redeveloped with a new use – a cultural facility, for example, attached to the rear of the building which could make use of the existing Town Hall entrance and the grand hall on the first floor for receptions; and link to Broadfield Park at the rear.
- Public realm improvement should symbolically restore the connection between the two ends of the River Roch and link Rochdale Town Hall with the Butts and along The Esplanade / Smith Street to Town Centre East. This space has a clear potential for a radical improvement that could elevate the area to European class. Using the theme of water fountains should be developed from the western end of the River Roch to the Butts.
- To provide greater priority to pedestrians at the heart of the town centre, the main vehicular movement should generally be confined to four loops along each edge of the town centre, each having its own multi-storey car park. Parking should be consolidated into four main locations to free up valuable development sites. Yorkshire Street and Drake Street should be enhanced as pedestrian friendly locations. Primary and secondary gateways should be created into the town centre.



1	2	3
4	5	6

1: Rochdale Town Centre: Priority Active Frontages

Whenever possible, redevelopment should aim to create activity at the ground floor level along the high priority active frontages. There is an important opportunity to create a high quality public realm from the Rochdale Town Hall to the proposed Metrolink stop.

2: Rochdale Town Centre: Key Pedestrian Connections

Creating a more attractive environment for walking in Rochdale Town Centre is essential. A new civic square will create the opportunity to have a direct pedestrian link from the new bus station to the Wheatsheaf.

3: Rochdale Town Centre: Gateways, Parking and Vehicle Access

Traffic should generally be contained at the edge of the town centre through the development of vehicular loops, each with an associated car park. Gateways should be created to ensure a clear sense of arrival.

4: Rochdale Town Centre East and Wheatsheaf Extension

A grid pattern will help to restore visual and physical connections in the Town Centre. A new civic square on the site of the former bus station will allow a clear pedestrian connection from the new bus station to the Wheatsheaf.

5: Rochdale Town Centre – Wheatsheaf Scheme

Proposals for a new bus station, Metrolink terminus, new civic square and related developments. (Image courtesy of Aedas)

6: Linking Rochdale Town Centre to the Rochdale Canal Basin

Stronger connections should be made between Rochdale Canal Basin and the Town Centre.

4.4 Capitalising On Our Environmental Assets

Promote the countryside as a major asset and connect it to our neighbourhoods through river valleys and environmental corridors.

The natural environment - the countryside, the topography and the water – is one of the Borough’s greatest assets. Making more use of Borough’s green spaces and promoting active leisure is an essential part of developing the image of the Borough as an active lifestyle place.






The challenge here is to increase accessibility to the countryside and connect the urban area of the countryside through the river valleys and green corridors. A new structure to the green spaces of the Borough is therefore proposed which links all these assets together. A green space strategy should be commissioned in order to develop these ideas in greater detail.

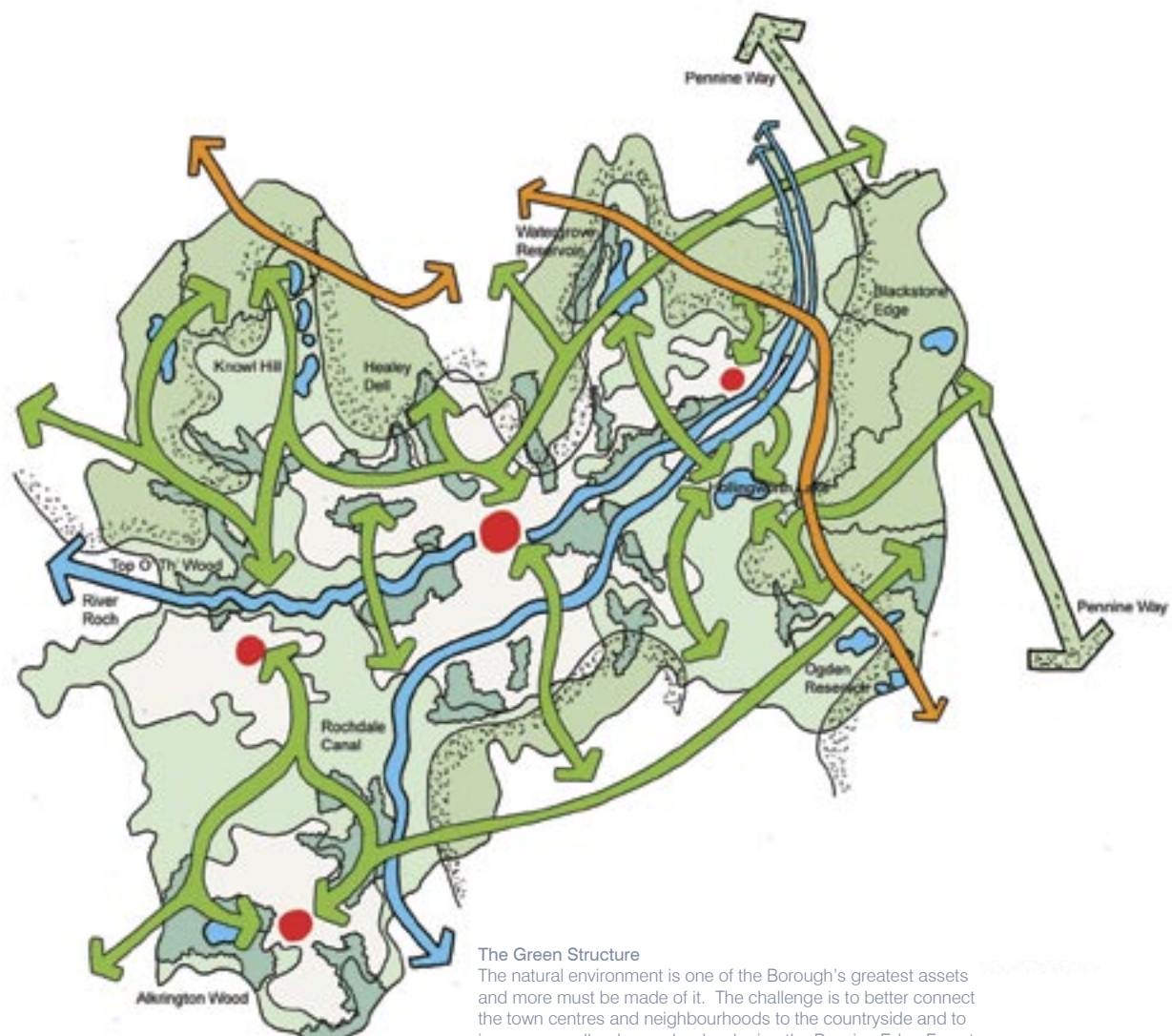
The Moors and Hills

More than two thirds of the Borough is open countryside and most of that is designated Green Belt. The South Pennine Moors are recognised as a Special Protection Area based on their value for moorland birds and are part of the South Pennine Moors SSSI.

The open upland moors form a defining backdrop to the north and east and a fundamental part of the character of Pennines, Rochdale and Heywood Townships. The open moors and countryside must be protected from development. Access to the countryside should be improved through promoting designated access points.

Where possible views and vistas of the moors from the urban area should be maintained and enhanced. Natural vantage points and lookout points from the hills to the urban areas need to be enhanced and developed. Remedial landscape management measures are required to restore and reclaim old mining sites and to restore hedgerow and stone walls that have fallen into disrepair.

-  Countryside and Open Space
-  Hills and Moors
-  Woodlands
-  Green Connections
-  Pennine Bridleway



The Green Structure
The natural environment is one of the Borough's greatest assets and more must be made of it. The challenge is to better connect the town centres and neighbourhoods to the countryside and to improve woodland cover by developing the Pennine Edge Forest.



The Urban Fringe

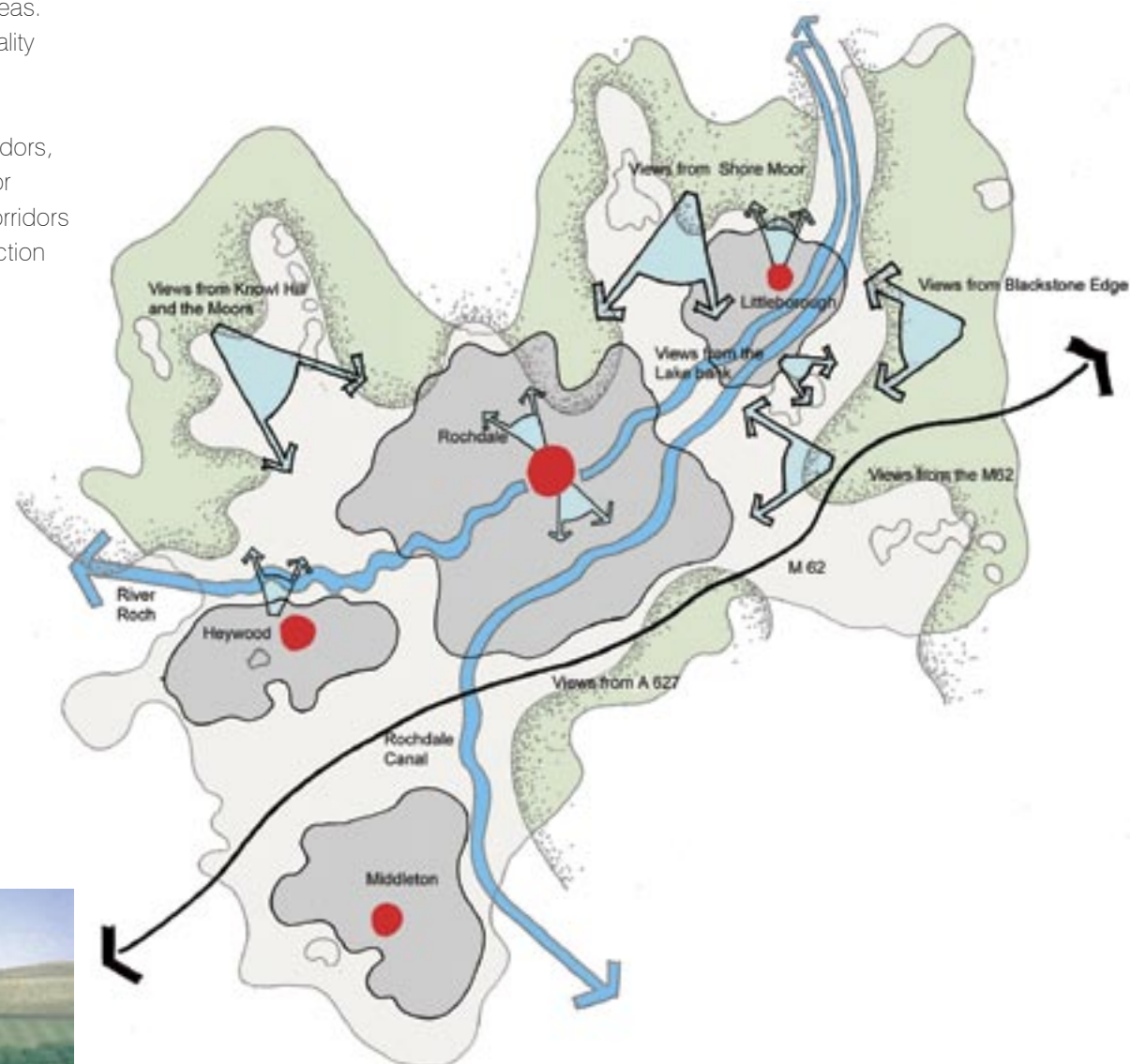
In some areas the urban fringe is poorly defined. The challenge in these areas is to improve poor farmland and run down plots; increase active management of the land; link together disconnected green spaces; prioritise and reclaim derelict and under-utilised land.

River Valleys and Green Corridors

One of the defining features of the urban form is where wedges of green space and river valleys penetrate the urban areas. Examples include the River Irk in Middleton and the Roch and Cronkeyshaw Common in Rochdale. These often extend deep into the town centres, neighbourhoods and employment areas. There are opportunities to make more of these spaces to create high quality community green spaces and to create more attractive places to live.

All too often in the past development has turned its back on these corridors, particularly the River Roch and the Rochdale Canal, and there is a major opportunity to change this relationship in the future. Moreover these corridors can act as major gateways into the countryside making a better connection between the urban and the rural.

The green wedges must also be more clearly defined as attractive green spaces that people will use both actively and passively. Emphasis should be given to those with the potential for improving the adjoining urban areas, for providing recreational opportunities, and for supporting biodiversity close to urban communities. Green wedges should make the Borough footpaths more accessible from the town centres and neighbourhoods to provide residents, visitors and workers easy access to the countryside.



Key Scenic Views

The hilly environment provides many lookouts throughout the Borough. Placing features (follies or public art) at the tops of hills can create a point of interest and entice people to visit them.



Local and civic parks

Each town centre should contain an outstanding civic square or park. In Rochdale town centre improvements to the Butts and the public realm from the Town Hall to the new Metrolink will be an important civic space, which links with Broadfield Park. Major improvements are planned for Broadfield Park in Rochdale, Queens Park in Heywood and Hare Hill Park in Littleborough. In Middleton the Central Gardens area could form the first phase of wider public realm improvement throughout the town centre. These should not be seen in isolation but connected to the strategic network described above.

Green space should also be provided at the local neighbourhood level to meet the needs of families, young people, and children. Green connections should link local green spaces to town centres and to the Borough wide network of footpaths.

Creating a tourist destination

The countryside, the water, and the character of the Pennine villages provide the Borough with the natural resources to position itself as a tourism and leisure destination that is nationally recognised. The existing facilities need to be upgraded and expanded to accommodate and appeal to a wider market. More needs to be made of the Borough's emerging role as a centre of equestrian activity. Promotion is required. Rochdale Borough already contains a small and locally based leisure economy that is focused largely on Hollingworth Lake and the opportunity to improve this offer is shown in the Exemplar Project.

The tourist experience needs to be as diverse as possible to cater to different interests and to capture as large a share as possible of the tourism market, including business tourism. Rochdale Borough needs to harness the strength of all of its resources to reposition itself and to change its image. The Borough has many assets that go unrecognised and uncelebrated including Alkington Wood, Healey Dell, Toad Lane and Clegg Hall, to name a few. A full inventory of Rochdale's tourism assets needs to be undertaken. Identified resources then need to be improved and celebrated and 'packaged' as part of the tourism offer. Accommodation for visitors, including business travellers, needs to be improved significantly.

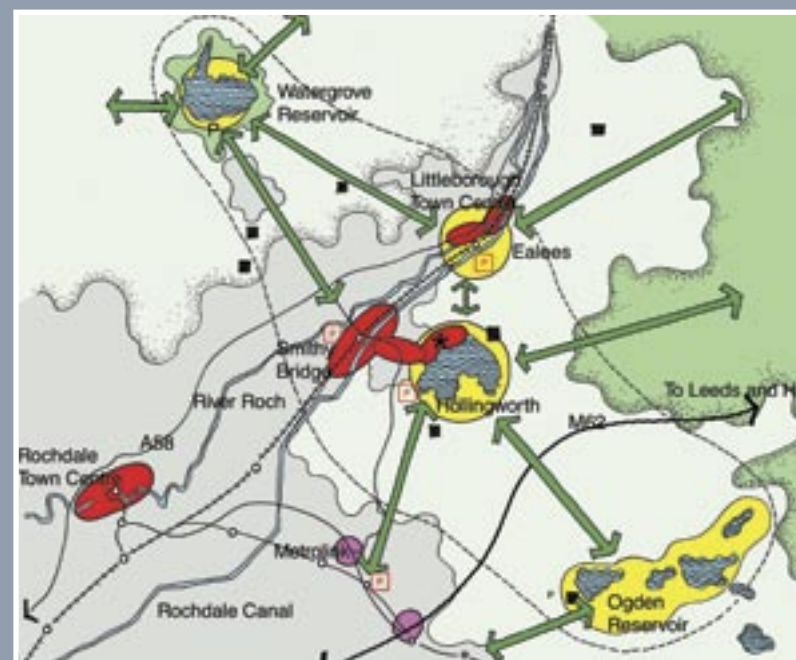
Exemplar Project: Littleborough Leisure Area

The opportunity

The opportunity is to expand the role of Rochdale as an active recreation and leisure destination by building upon the success of Hollingworth Lake Country Park. Many of the ingredients of a leisure destination already exist. Refurbishment, environmental improvements and better promotion are the main requirements.

Proposals

- Promote Hollingworth Lake alongside other water attractions such as Watergrove and the Ogden reservoirs and the Rochdale Canal to create a critical mass of attractions. High quality footpaths, bridleways, and public realm improvements should connect these.
- A major new waterside development is proposed to replace the existing public boathouse at Hollingworth Lake to provide better waterside facilities including a top quality restaurant, shops and apartments. It should be the symbolic heart to the area and the opportunity to create a stunning design should be taken.
- Access to the Hollingworth Lake area should be improved. New car parks should be built on the edge of the area so that visitor's vehicles do not have to penetrate Smithy Bridge and Lakeside Road. The corridor to Smithy Bridge Railway Station should be improved.
- Littleborough town centre, the Rochdale Canal and Hollingworth Lake should be mutually supportive and better connected. The town centre, Eales and Durn developments can provide complementary services and facilities, which take some pressure off the Lake area.
- Initiatives to move people more easily between destinations should be developed. In particular, initiatives should focus on facilitating movement between Hollingworth Lake with Littleborough Town Centre such as a road train or even a cable car.
- The stone buildings contribute to the character of the area and should be respected by new development. The Littleborough Design Statement is an important step towards preserving the character of the area and should be respected.



Littleborough Leisure Area

A much stronger connection should be made between Hollingworth Lake and Littleborough. Watergrove and Ogden Reservoirs should be considered as part of the attraction.

4.5 Focusing On Strategic Gateways And Corridors

Concentrate investment and environmental improvement on key gateways and transport corridors.

Gateways are the main entrance points to the Borough usually related to road or rail. Corridors are the main routes for environmental, transportation and recreational links. Internally they provide key movement routes connecting the Borough's communities with employment, retail and recreational areas.

Gateway and corridors have a role to play in assisting regeneration and physical renewal. Critically these routes affect the perception and image of the Borough and most require substantial and urgent investment in order to provide users with a better experience. In terms of the economic regeneration of the Borough some major investment opportunities are found where these corridors meet.

Gateways

► At a number of locations there are major gateways and these present excellent opportunities to create a sense of arrival and a high quality profile and image for the Borough. The key gateways are:

- M62 junction 19 - to Heywood and Middleton;
- M62 junction 20 - at the A627M;
- M62 junction 21 - where a new junction layout will create a new entrance to Kingsway Business Park and beyond;
- M60 Junction 19 at Rhodes;
- Rochdale Railway station/Metrolink stop;
- A58/Todmorden Road junction in Littleborough; and,
- M66 junction 2 at Heap Bridge.

Comprehensive improvement schemes will be developed for each of them incorporating landscaping and possibly major public art projects. It may also be appropriate to develop buildings of outstanding architectural quality at key gateway locations, such as Kingsway. There are gateways to the Borough, which are unattractive, for example, the Rochdale Rail Station. These should be enhanced in order to improve the environment, the image of the Borough and the sense of identity.

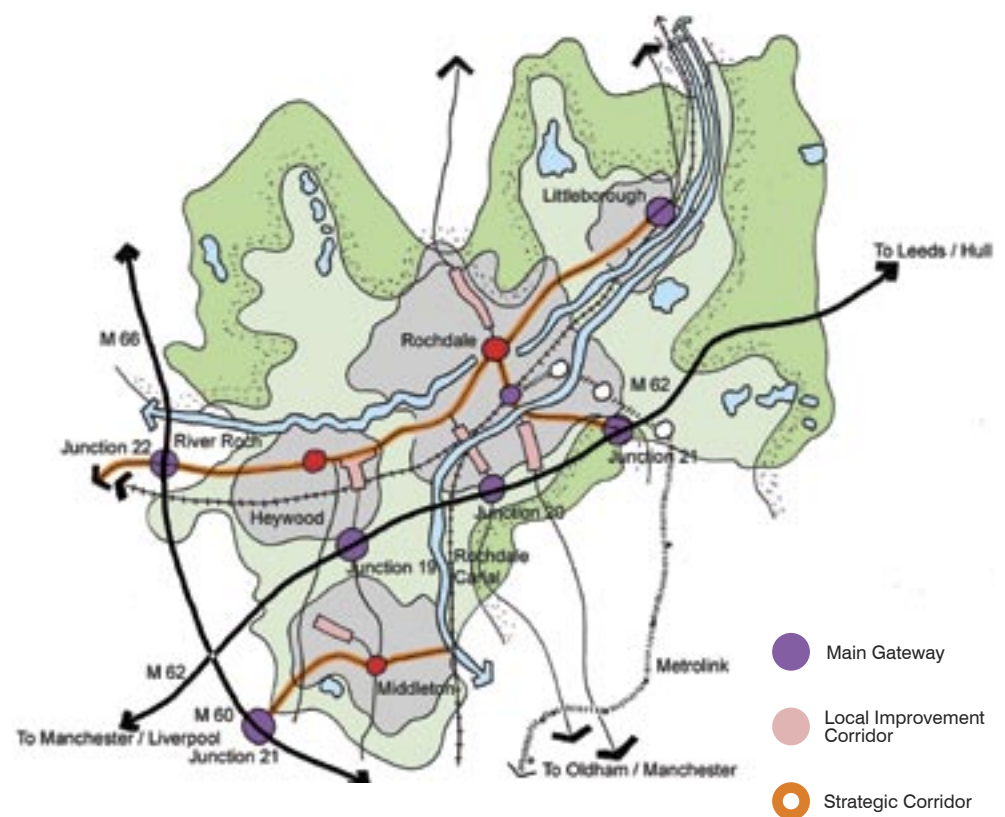
Corridors

► Major strategic corridors will be the focus for investment, development and substantial environmental improvement.

These major corridors include:

- Major motorways (the M62 and M60);
- Local road network (Oldham Road, the A627, the A58 and the A664);
- Major public transport corridors (the Metrolink and existing rail service);
- Rochdale Canal.

Along each of the key corridor there should be comprehensive plans to maximise investment opportunities, create high quality street scenes, integrate transport modes and maximize environmental opportunities and linkages. This corridor approach is explored below in greater detail as the Kingsway Gateway Corridor Exemplar Project.

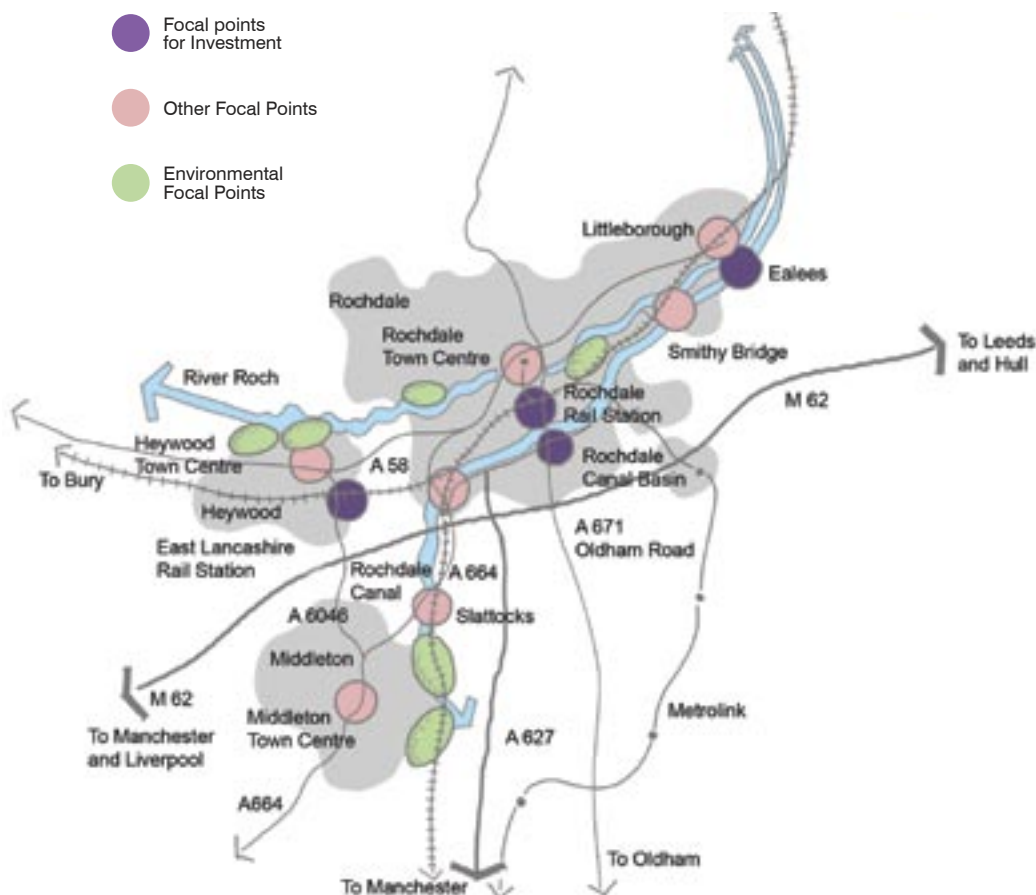


Gateway and Arrival Corridors
There are major gateways to the Borough. Attention to the quality of the local environment is required along the improvement corridors.

Focal points for investment: The junction of corridors

► Some of the greatest development and regeneration opportunities occur where corridors intersect and these places are therefore proposed as focal points for investment. For example:

- The Rochdale Canal basin where it meets Oldham Road;
- Littleborough Town Centre where the Canal and major roads meet;
- At Rochdale Rail Station where the Metrolink meets heavy rail service;
- At the East Lancashire Rail Station in Heywood.



Focal Points for Investment

Strategic corridors cross the Borough and include the motorway, the local road network, public transport corridors and the Rochdale Canal. Investment and development will be encouraged where these corridors meet.

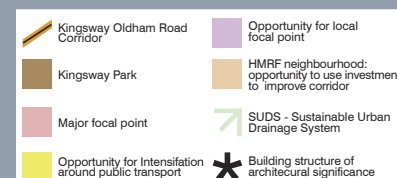
Exemplar Project: Kingsway/Oldham Road Corridor

The Opportunity

This gateway and corridor presents an opportunity to create a high quality environment and investment corridor and to demonstrate a commitment to excellence. The gateway will be at the remodeled junction 21 on the M62 - the main point of arrival into the Borough from Yorkshire via the M62. The corridor will replace Milnrow Road as the main access to the town centre in this segment of Rochdale. It will take advantage of the new road through Kingsway Park to connect north to Kingsway, Oldham Road and north into the Town Centre.

Proposals

- An outstanding quality of built environment should be created along the length of the gateway/corridor. The planning authority should work closely with investors to ensure that new development is of the highest quality and should encourage improvements to existing built form. A building of outstanding architectural quality near or adjacent to the M62 junction should be created, as a first impression of excellence.
- At the northern end of Kingsway Park, the Rochdale Canal could be extended to create a unique business environment and destination.
- The Rochdale Canal Basin should be the focus of investment and regeneration to support live / work communities, creative industries and a potential higher education facility (potentially in the Norwich Mill).
- The Rochdale Rail Station should be improved or redeveloped to create a new station of outstanding architectural quality so as to send a message of excellence and to encourage its use. The design should enable travellers to approach from the north or the south. A park and ride car park should be located at the south side. Improvement to the public realm should create stronger links to Rochdale town centre and to the Rochdale Canal Basin.
- The proposed Metrolink has three stops alongside this corridor at Kingsway, the railway station and at Drake Street, including a new crossing at Oldham Road. It could be a major regeneration catalyst along its route and the quality of the stops will significantly impact the quality of the environment and first impressions.
- Where the gateway corridor follows Oldham Road the neighbourhoods on the east and west sides of the road are targeted for investment from the Housing Market Renewal Fund. Ensuring that renewal is visible from the gateway corridor will contribute to regenerating the corridor.



Kingsway / Oldham Corridor
Taking advantage of the new Kingsway Park, there is an opportunity to create a high quality new investment corridor that will create a positive impression and a commitment to excellence.

4.6 Accessible And Sustainable Transport

Make a radical improvement to the public transport network to improve connections within the Borough and with the City Region.

Accessibility will be critical to achieving the vision for Rochdale Borough. Improving access to town centres, employment sites and services is vital as the Borough develops and redefines its image.

The Borough has an excellent location on the motorway network and this has been reinforced through the completion of the M60 orbital motorway. It is essential that this advantage be built-upon by continuously improving access to the motorways within the Borough and concentrating developments along strategic corridors.

However, it is in the field of public transport that radical improvement is required in order to improve connections within the city region, improve services, and replace outworn facilities.

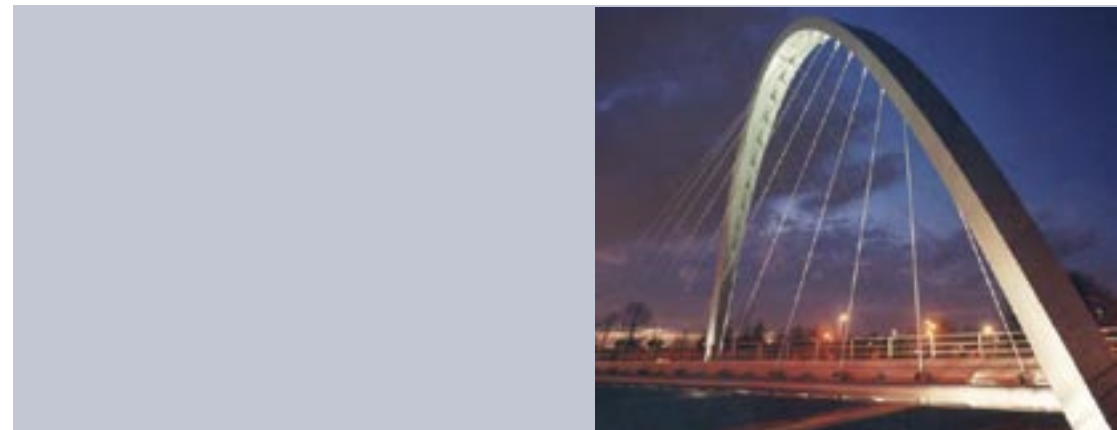
Rochdale should make the most of the existing infrastructure and services by ensuring that transport is a central factor in determining the location of new housing, employment and services. Development around transport interchanges, quality bus corridors, rail stations and proposed Metrolink stops should be encouraged. Town centres are key investment locations given the concentration of existing public transport provision and the need to regenerate town centres to create a strong heart to the Borough.

District, village and town centres in the Borough should benefit from transport improvement and investment. Such transport investment would typically include a package of measures encompassing such things as pedestrian crossings, cycle, and vehicle parking enhancements, car park rationalization, bus stop enhancements, improved signage and improvements to the public realm and footway treatments.

Motorway Access

► The M62, A627(M), M60 and M66 facilitate vehicular access between the Borough, Greater Manchester, the region and nationally. These routes are major assets for the Borough and for industry, facilitating easy vehicular access to employment. Access to the M62 and M60 must be optimised without increasing traffic in residential areas.

Upgrade and amendment to the existing Junction 21 of the M62 is planned in association with the development of the Kingsway Business Park – this will bring benefit to the Borough by further enhancing access. Junction 20 of the M62 intersects with the A627(M) and is a substantial junction that performs a strategic access function. Junction 19 of M62 similarly, facilitates access to the M62 from the southwestern sector of the Borough to Middleton and Heywood. Further investigation is required into options to improve accessibility in this area to the south of Heywood around Junction 19 and the Birch Service area.



Improving Public Transport

Radical improvements are needed to the public transport infrastructure and services. The objective must be to improve connectivity to our town centres, and to employment and leisure destinations both within and outside the Borough, thereby supporting the wider themes in the Masterplan

Rail

The **Manchester - Leeds Main Line** provides swift access to the City Centre to the south and to Leeds in the East. However services and the traveling environment need to be improved. In particular; the railway stations should be improved to provide a better experience for rail users and a positive sense of arrival that makes a good impression on visitors. A direct link to Piccadilly should also be sought in order to get direct access to the west coast main line.

The **Rochdale - Oldham Loop Line** is very important in that it connects the HMR areas and has a potential stop at Kingsway Business Park. The proposed Metrolink uses this line and adds connectivity by the extension to Rochdale Town Centre. If Metrolink does not proceed in full then improvements are still required to the infrastructure, stations and services on this line; and alternative arrangements will be required to connect Rochdale Railway Station with Rochdale Town Centre

The **East Lancashire Railway** through Heywood currently has mainly a leisure function. Possible connections to the main line at Castleton should be investigated, which could increase the usage by attracting commuter traffic.

Bus

▶ **A number of Quality Bus Corridors routes are already planned for implementation through the Borough over the next three to five years providing enhanced bus linkages on the A6271, the A58, the A6046, the A664, the A663 and Manchester Road.** Further improvements to planned quality bus corridors could include:

- Better bus connections between the quality bus corridors to services to the outlying areas.
- Selective introduction of on-highway bus priority measures.

There is scope for major improvements to Bus Interchanges. In Rochdale a new bus station is urgently needed to replace the outdated and unpopular bus station. Such a development could be a catalyst to regeneration in Town Centre East. If Metrolink does not proceed then alternative interchange models should be investigated to connect the railway station and the town centre.

The new Middleton bus station is set to create major improvement to services.

Heywood and Littleborough bus interchange locations should be incorporated into town centre plans as appropriate.

Exemplar Project: The Phoenix Initiative

The Opportunity

The Phoenix Initiative presents an opportunity to regenerate an area of dilapidated and underused buildings and vacant sites in the vicinity of Heywood Railway Station. It will build on the success of the recently opened Heywood Link of the East Lancashire Railway. It will form a gateway project within an employment area where the East Lancashire Railway corridor meets the main road corridor linking Heywood town centre and the M62.

Proposals

- Improve access to the Station.
- Utilise high quality development and public realm improvements to strengthen and improve the link between Heywood town centre and the rail station and to create a positive first impression for users of the tourist railway.
- Refurbish the buildings on the Phoenix Brewery site to develop a pub / restaurant, visitor facility associated with the existing successful micro-brewery and small workspace units within the former brewery tower.
- Develop land at Sefton Street. Potential uses include a transport museum, craft workshops or other tourism and leisure related activity.
- Create a high quality pedestrian link between the attractions including a footpath from the station to the Phoenix brewery and a footbridge over the railway to the Sefton Street site.
- The opportunity to create commuter links should be investigated by re-connecting this line to the Rochdale - Middleton line at Castleton.



The Phoenix Initiative

The Phoenix Initiative will involve the regeneration of a number of vacant buildings and sites and will create a new gateway and employment area in the vicinity of the East Lancashire Railway Station at Heywood.

The design of roads and streets

The design of streets has a significant impact on both the way people live and move. The street is a crucial part of the public realm and is an important social space. Well-designed streets contribute to creating distinctive and memorable places. The measure of a street's success is not just its functional performance, but how it contributes to the quality and character of the urban area and how easy it is to maintain.

In the past the traffic requirements have dominated design. In the future highways engineers and environmental designers should work together to create street scenes that work for everyone and can be maintained economically at a high standard. Street scene investment should be planned alongside highways investment in an integrated way. Such an approach is required in designing the gateways and corridors proposals particularly in town centres and along the Quality Bus Corridors.

The design of interchanges also provides an excellent opportunity to improve the public realm. Currently places like Rochdale bus station present a poor image. The opportunity is to make new interchanges, including Metrolink stops, examples of excellence in architecture that will add to the enjoyment of using public transport and contribute to the improved design of the Borough.

Promoting walking, cycling and a healthier lifestyle

The environment for pedestrians and cyclists should be improved through an enhanced path and cycle network and higher quality streetscapes. This should create opportunities to make safe, strategic linkages between communities and employment areas and enhance access to the countryside.

The Borough currently has no cycling strategy in place and a comprehensive network should be created. Maximum advantage should be taken of all new investments (such as Quality Bus Corridors) to include dedicated cycle ways and high quality pedestrian environments.

4.7 Design and Image

Make a dramatic improvement in the design of new developments and open space.

Across the Borough attention must be paid to the design and quality of newly built development to change the image of the Borough and to contribute positively to the sense of place and character. Natural features – the hills, green spaces and water should play an important role in shaping future development proposals.

Design

Good quality design is central to all of the objectives of this masterplan. Good quality design will improve the investment climate, make the Borough an attractive place to live, and help to improve social inclusion. The following design principles should be followed to ensure the quality of new development and guide the refurbishment of existing areas.

Design Principles for Rochdale

Building on the principles established by The Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), future development in the Borough should create places that:

1. Have a distinct character and sense of identity.
2. Have a sense of continuity and enclosure.
3. Have a quality public realm; which can be easily maintained.
4. Ensure ease of movement.
5. Are legible.
6. Are adaptable.
7. Promote diversity.
8. Designing for Community Safety.

These principles are explained in full in the Design Guide Appendix to this Masterplan.

The Rochdale Borough Design Initiative

All investment should be seen as an opportunity to secure a step change in Rochdale's image. Quality in all aspects of urban design, architecture, and construction are required to change Rochdale's image and to create value, visual interest and appeal. ▶ **A Rochdale Design Initiative is proposed in order to focus attention on the importance of design and to provide encouragement and support to the key organisations and developers involved.**

Achievement of high quality design requires that the planning authority has the necessary design skills and the courage, dedication, and authority to insist on quality design where it is not initially provided. The use of architectural or

developer competitions for exemplar schemes can also help to secure better quality. The people of Rochdale have a key role to play; they must have confidence in the future, promote the area positively and engage new investors.

▶ There are a number of key sites for which major new public artworks could be commissioned to contribute to improving the image of the Borough, including:

- The new civic square in Rochdale Town Centre;
- A hill top location in Heywood, visually Heywood to the Hills;
- The entrance to Borough on M62 – in Littleborough / Milnrow.



Celebrating Water

In many ways water has helped to define the character and image of Rochdale over the years. Numerous streams run from the uplands down into the River Roch valley. Many were dammed in the past in order to form reservoirs to power the mills and feed the canal and as a result the Borough is dotted with small lakes. The Rochdale Canal itself is a significant water asset.

► Water is now seen as one of the most desirable assets in high quality environments – from urban living and landscape features, to countryside and leisure opportunities. Every effort should therefore be made to embrace and connect to watercourses and bodies of water across the Borough. New developments should overlook the water rather than turn its back on it as has happened so often in the past. Water should also feature in public realm initiatives, town centre design and neighbourhood regeneration initiatives.

Rochdale – A Borough of Distinct Townships

The Borough of Rochdale is made up of four distinct townships: Heywood, Middleton, Pennines and Rochdale – each with its own character and opportunities. The design of local development should reflect the distinctive local character and enhance the local heritage.





One of the key mechanisms for ensuring that proposals from the Masterplan are coordinated and prioritised in an overall way is through the Rochdale Capital Investment Strategy.

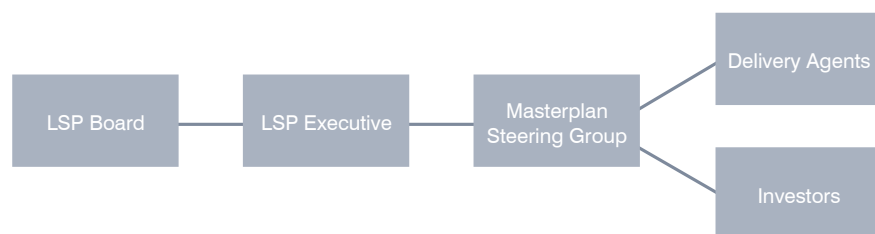
5 . I M P L E M E N T A T I O N

Primary Responsibility

Rochdale Council (RMBC) in its community leadership role has led the Masterplan process on behalf of the Rochdale Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The LSP Board, through an Executive Group, will ensure that the proposals and recommendations are carried through and embedded in the various strategies of its constituent organisations.

RMBC and Rochdale Development Agency (RDA) will set up a Masterplan Steering Group, which will have primary responsibility for delivering the Masterplanning proposals and recommendations.



Strategic Partners

The NWDA and English Partnerships have been involved in the management and approval of the Masterplan and will be key strategic partners in the delivery process. Other strategic partners include:

- Oldham & Rochdale Pathfinder HMRP;
- New Heart for Heywood NDC;
- GONW;
- GMPTE;
- Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords;
- National Health Service
- Environment Agency; and,
- Private investors.

All these partners have been consulted during the process and are prepared to sign up to their part in the delivery of the Masterplan.

Rochdale Borough Capital Investment Plan

One of the key mechanisms for ensuring that proposals from the Masterplan are coordinated and prioritised in an overall way is through the Rochdale Borough Capital Investment Plan. This Plan defines short and medium term investment requirements, based on long term vision and strategies; and defines the investment requirements for each of the main funding agencies.

Aligning Key Local Strategies

If it is to be successful, the Masterplan must influence the ambition and content of a number of key strategies that underpin actions in certain Themes. These include:

- Oldham/Rochdale Housing Market Renewal; Heywood New Deal for Communities; and Rochdale Borough Housing Strategy.
- Rochdale Economic Development Strategy; Rochdale Development Agency Business Plan.
- Unitary Development Plan / Local Development Frameworks; Local Transport Plan.
- Greater Manchester Strategy.

Township Regeneration Frameworks

The townships are one of the key features of the Borough. In preparing the overall proposals, the Masterplan has taken account of the key issues in each township.

The implications for each township will be detailed in the Township Regeneration Frameworks, which will be amended as part of the implementation of this Masterplan.

Consultation

In preparing this Masterplan there has been a wide consultation process involving many key agencies. In addition there have been stakeholder workshops, held at key stages in the process, where organisations have come together to help shape the emerging strategy.

Thanks go to all the organisations and individuals who have contributed to the process.

It is expected that in the future there will be periodic updates on progress in implementing the Masterplan and further opportunities to contribute comment and ideas.

Action Plan and Priorities

An Action Plan has been prepared which allocates lead partners and identifies timescales for the high priority projects and programmes. This will be the main management tool for the Masterplan Board, who are charged with monitoring the implementation of the Masterplan.

Achieving our 15-Year Vision

At the start of this Masterplan we set out a 15-year Vision of how the Borough could be. In this final section we present a snapshot of some of the major elements we expect will have been achieved in 15 years time in order to illustrate the scale of transformation we aspire to.

We will have been successful because the public sector and the private sector will have been ambitious and radical in investing in the borough.

Kingsway Park will be fully developed providing high quality accommodation for a range of new and growing companies within an attractively landscaped setting. Importantly it will create over 7,000 jobs and local residents in Rochdale and Oldham will have filled a large percentage of these.

The Borough will be a popular residential location with a thriving housing market.

Older Neighbourhoods around our town centres will be transformed into attractive places to live, guided by neighbourhood plans, which have been developed with the local community. A variety of new developments will take place offering new housing, health, education, leisure and other facilities for local people and set new standards for design and innovation.

Langley and Kirkholt will be transformed into neighbourhoods where people choose to live. They will offer a choice of housing for a wide range of residents, good quality local services and nearby employment.

Rochdale Town Centre will be revitalised with major new retail and commercial developments around the new public transport interchange providing a new gateway into the town centre. The main shopping area will be revitalised and the pedestrianised areas of Yorkshire Street refurbished. There will be new offices and leisure and residential developments along the River Roch, which will be given greater prominence, and a revamped Wheatsheaf Shopping Centre.

The public space along the Butts and Esplanade will be superbly landscaped. Drake Street, will be a thriving mix of leisure, office and retail uses.

Middleton Heywood and Littleborough town centres will be improved to provide attractive hearts for their communities with new retail, leisure and public service developments in all three towns.

The Countryside on our doorstep will be a major asset. It will be attractive and well used by all our residents with a footpath network linking key focal points. A new green space structure will connect urban communities and the countryside combining the improved natural assets of the Borough – rivers, hills and woods with its most attractive improved man-made features – the canal, lakes, our parks and the East Lancashire Railway.

Littleborough will be a popular regional outdoor leisure destination with good linkages between its town centre, the Canal, the Pennine hills and Hollingworth Lake.

Public Transport services will provide high quality, interlinked and reliable connections within and outside the Borough.

High quality design features will meet people as they arrive at major Gateways into the Borough at key motorway junctions, roads into the Borough and public transport interchanges.

Key transport Corridors through the Borough will be thriving areas, attractive to both residents and investors – including Kingsway/Oldham Road; the A58 from Heap Bridge to Littleborough; and key main roads through Middleton.



Rochdale Borough will offer an attractive location in a successful city region, with a distinctive lifestyle and identity.



For further information, please contact:

Special Projects Team
PO Box 446
Municipal Offices
Smith Street
Rochdale OL16 1WU