



TOWN GROWTH PLAN

Droylsden



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CONTEXT

The name 'Droylsden' is of Anglo-Saxon origin, meaning 'Dreolfr's valley' or 'Dreolfr's settlement', suggesting an Early Medieval beginning to the town. Late Medieval Droylsden's economic environment was centred largely around agriculture, with scattered farmsteads and smallholdings. Subsequently, Droylsden grew into a small but established agricultural community by the 16th and 17th centuries, with some inhabitants growing their income through domestic textile production.

The urban structure of Droylsden is defined by its historic linear development along key transport and topographical features that run east-west. The opening of the Ashton Canal in 1796 was a transformative moment, allowing for the efficient transport of coal, raw cotton and finished goods, consequently fuelling the town's industrial growth and shaping the urban form. The canal, along with various mills and the old Robertson's Jam factory, became the industrial core and economic anchor of the town during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The canal corridor and the nearby Manchester Road (A662/A635) axis established a strong spine that continues to house the town centre, the Metrolink line, and significant residential areas. In contrast, the northern boundary is delineated by the Medlock Valley, a major river corridor that historically acted as a physical barrier to expansion and now functions as a vital corridor of green infrastructure and natural open space, separating Droylsden from the city of Manchester's inner suburbs. Consequently, the townscape transitions from dense, often Victorian-era residential and commercial development around the canal to a more suburban, interwar housing overflow development (Littlemoss, Fairfield) as it meets the boundary and approaches Ashton-under-Lyne.

Historically, it developed as an industrial mill town, with the early settlement focused on Fairfield, where the Moravian community established a distinctive planned neighbourhood in the 18th century. Today, Droylsden is the gateway town between Manchester City Centre and Tameside. Droylsden is well located, only 13-minute tram ride journey away from world class leisure and events offer at the Sport City and Etihad Stadium and the Coop Live Arena. However, Droylsden's early rapid expansion from Cotton Mills created natural growth around the key roads and canal. At this point, there would have been little thought given to creating spaces and environments for any other reasons other than practical and logistical. As a result, today's town centre lacks a properly functioning town heart, is vehicle dominated, and suffers from severed pedestrian connections, leaving Droylsden's edges feeling disconnected.



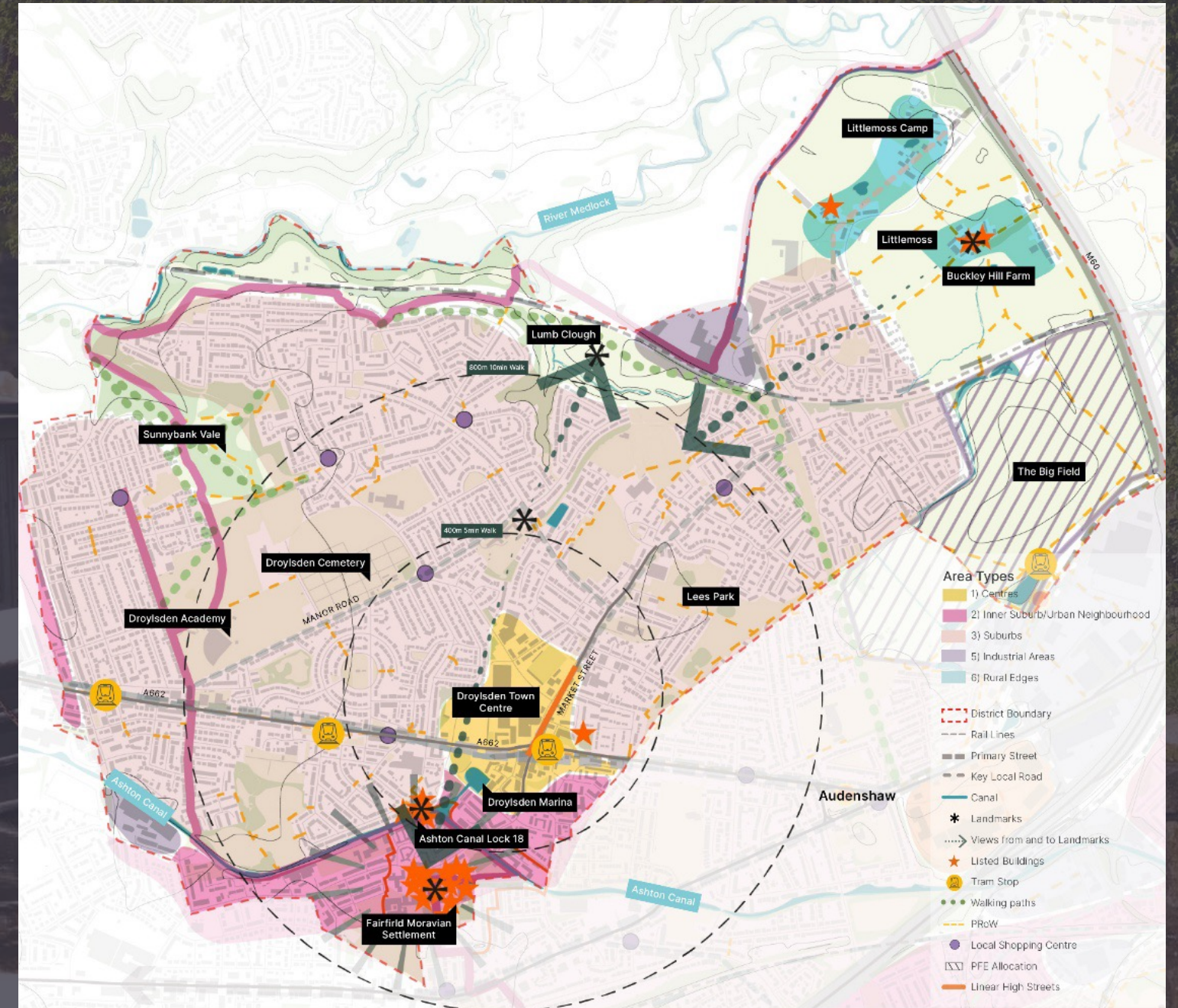
EXTENT

Droylsden is the western gateway town of Tameside, located directly on the boundary with Manchester. Covering 5,394 sqkm and home to 23,600 residents, Droylsden is a key metropolitan town within the Borough.

The Borough sits just 4 miles east of Manchester city centre, connected by links such as the M60 orbital motorway on its western side – connecting it also to West Yorkshire. The Town Centre also sits on the Manchester Road/Droylsden Road corridor, which links the town with Ashton-under-Lyne, 2.2 miles to the east. It's position on the edge of Manchester gives Droylsden a distinctive character.

The neighbourhood area covers by Clayton and Openshaw to the West, then Fairfield and Littlemoss to the north-east. It's bounded by the River Medlock to the north and Ashton Canal to the south.

Droylsden's centre is focused around the junction of Market Street and A662, forming a compact, mixed-use core that serves as both a civic and retail hub. The towns-built extent is largely contiguous of wider Manchester's urban area, characterised by interwar and post-war residential development.



CENTRES

Strengths

- Some large-format comparison brands which continue to trade from the Shopping Centre, these being B&M, Poundland and Home Bargains.
- Traditional high street character
- New library and mixed-use development
- Mixed-use development along the High Street, together with Former Cooperative Hall building, strengthen the civic presence and identity of the area

Opportunities

- Masterplan focus on regeneration of Droylsden town centre core and associated civic spaces
- Civic hub, Concord Suite transformation
- Voids and underutilised development allow for a chance for revitalisation

Weaknesses

- High levels of vacancy
- Dominance of road infrastructure and heavy traffic
- Town centre feels outdated
- Surface car parks dominate the town centre and create large urban voids and hard, uninviting spaces that weaken the sense of place
- Lacks clear gateway and sense of arrival

Challenges

- Vacancy rates – number of vacant units double the national average
- Fragmented retail core
- Market square civic space with vacant concord suite creates an inactive edge
- Vacant shopfronts resulting in low vitality and limited public use.



FOOTFALL
August 2025
340,052
+2.2% from 2024

Unique visitors
70,654
+3% from 2024

COMPOSITION OF DROYLSDEN TOWN CENTRE:



COMPARISON:
5,078 sq.m floorspace = 20.7% - 16 units



CONVENIENCE:
4,221 sq.m floorspace = 17.2% - 10 units



FINANCIAL SERVICE
509 sq.m floorspace = 2.1% = 5 units



LEISURE CENTRE
3,821 sq.m floorspace = 15.6% = 30 units



RETAIL SERVICE
1,611 sq.m floorspace = 6.6% = 23 units



VACANT
9,282 sq.m floorspace = 37.9% = 36 units

ENVIRONMENT

Strengths

- Ashton Canal providing the main blue-green corridor
- The River Medlock valley
- Sunnybank Vale, a seminatural green corridor, leads to a large open space to the north of Manchester Road – includes Ash Road allotments
- Small green corridors, playing field and pockets parks are interwoven with suburban estates
- Littlemoor creates semi-natural transition between Droylsden and further countryside
- Lees Park and the Ashton Canal network provide access to a much wider network of outdoor spaces including the Medlock Valley, Clayton Vale, Daisy Nook Country Park and Debdale Park

Opportunities

- Implementation of shared green space to build the town's settlement pattern, and provide landscaped communal spaces to enhance liveability.
- Greening main arterial routes

Weaknesses

- Air pollution from traffic congestion along key transport corridors (A662, M60)
- Low quality of public/green spaces in the town centre
- Lack of poor pedestrian/cycle connectivity leads to poor local environment due to car use
- Droylsden has an under provision of parks and gardens

Challenges

- Potential for street greening and trees is restricted by unassessed below-ground services
- Issues with fly tipping – poor environmental quality
- Lack of environmental cohesion from voids around Concord suite and similar vacant buildings



2 Nature Reserves

- Clayton Vale
- Hollinwood Branch Canal



5 Sites of Biological Importance

- Ashton Canal (East)
- Ashton Canal (West)
- Hollinwood Branch Canal
- Medlock Vale & Lumb Clough (North)
- Medlock Vale & Lumb Clough (South)

HOMES

Strengths

- Red brick housing dominance of terraces and modern housing developments
- Recent increase in high quality housing delivered just east of the town centre, with the redevelopment of the former Robertson’s Jam Factory site (first built in 1891) to a variety of family homes delivered by Bellway and Taylor Wimpey
- Affordable housing

Opportunities

- Ashton canal basin development of apartments feeds into a future focus on adding a large affordable housing scheme and new green public spaces.
- Slightly increase urban heights along the High Street to increase capacity and signpost Droylsden’s urban core and strengthen it identity
- Clustering of building designs for harmonious townscape transition
- Sustainable improvements around Ellen Street

Lower Quartile house price change (2007-2024) = £103,000 to £165,000 = 60.2%

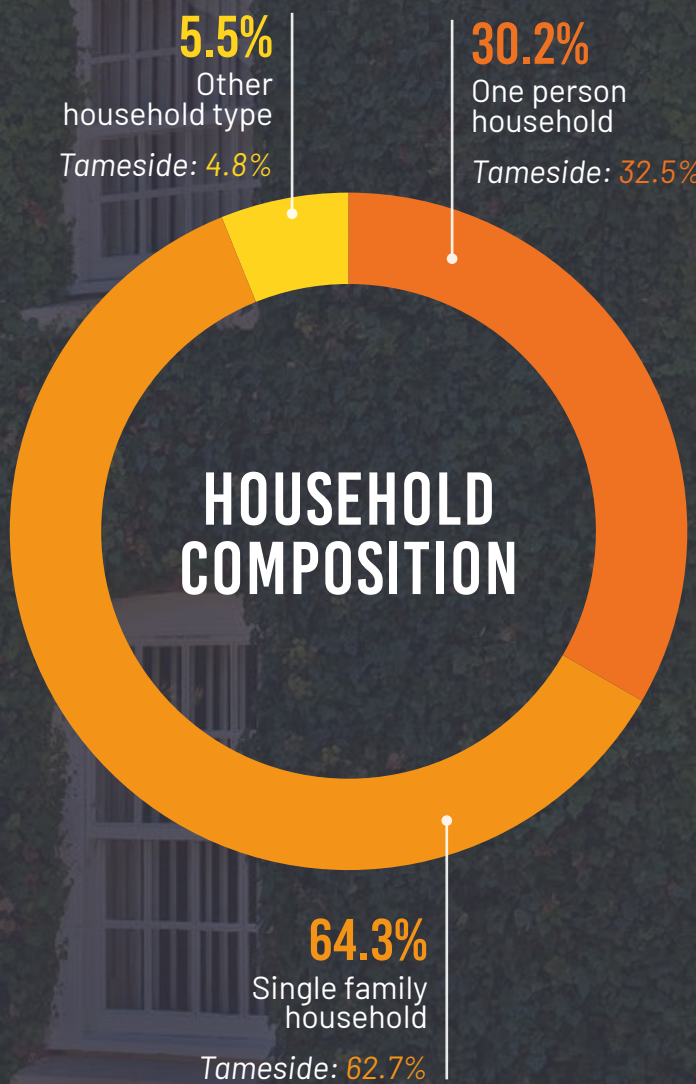
Medium Quartile house price change (2007-2024) = £120,000 To £191,000 = 59.2%

Weaknesses

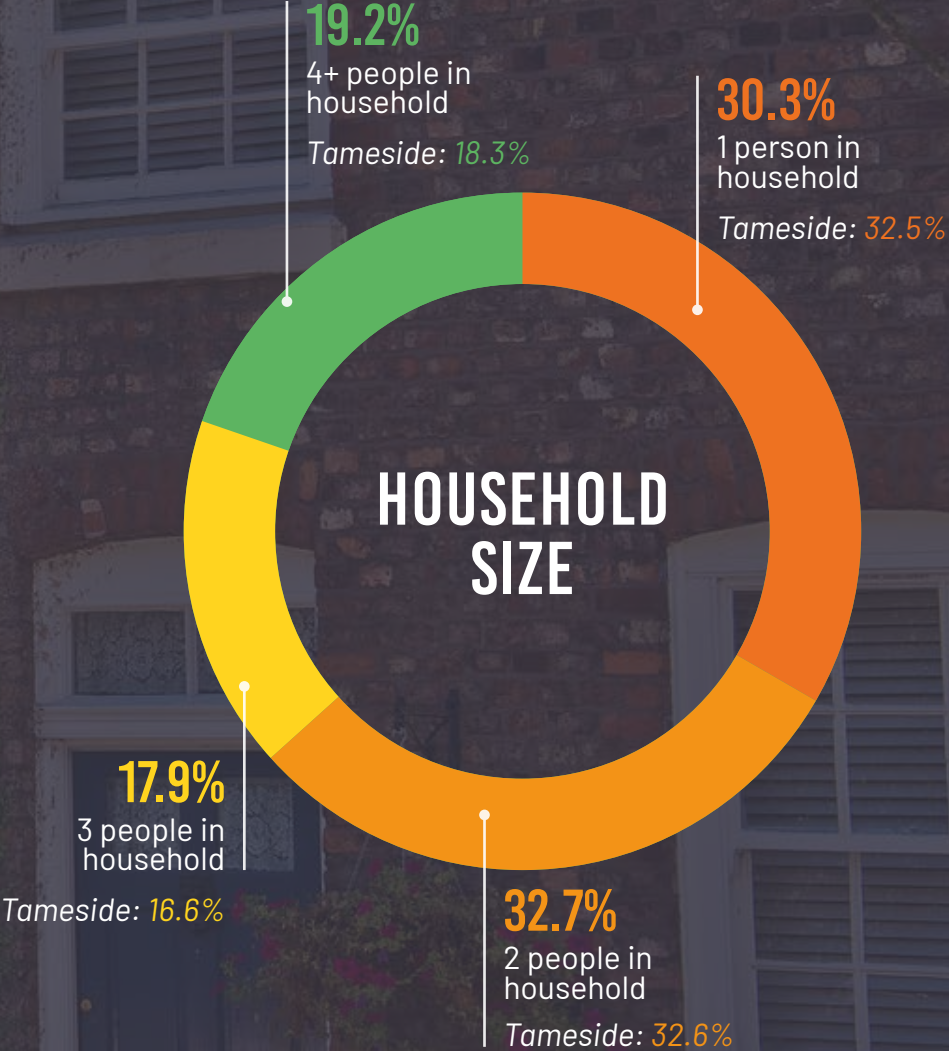
- Disconnected neighbourhoods have become isolated from the Town centre.
- Over 26% of houses rely on public transport which is lacking in some regions – limits socio-economic opportunities
- Poor quality public realm in places undermining residential amenities
- Large number of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs)

Challenges

- Limitations on size of dwellings within the borough for the purpose of continuation and cohesion
- Demand for affordable housing
- Vacant/stalled development sites near residential zones lowering value of properties

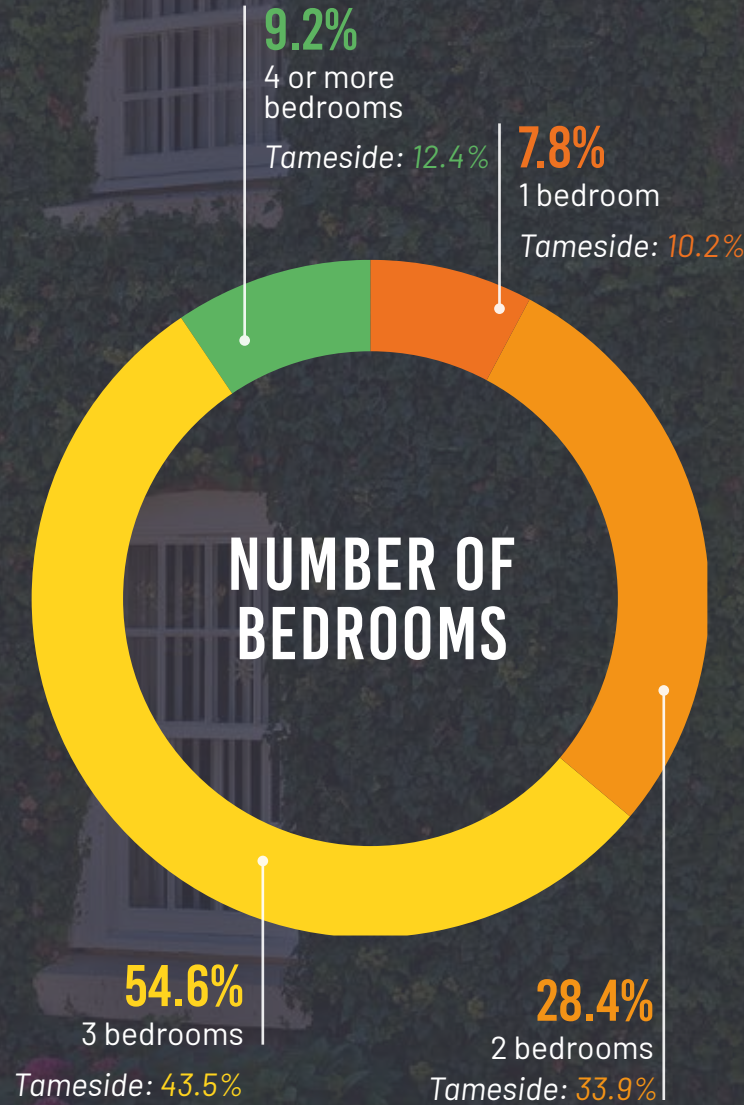
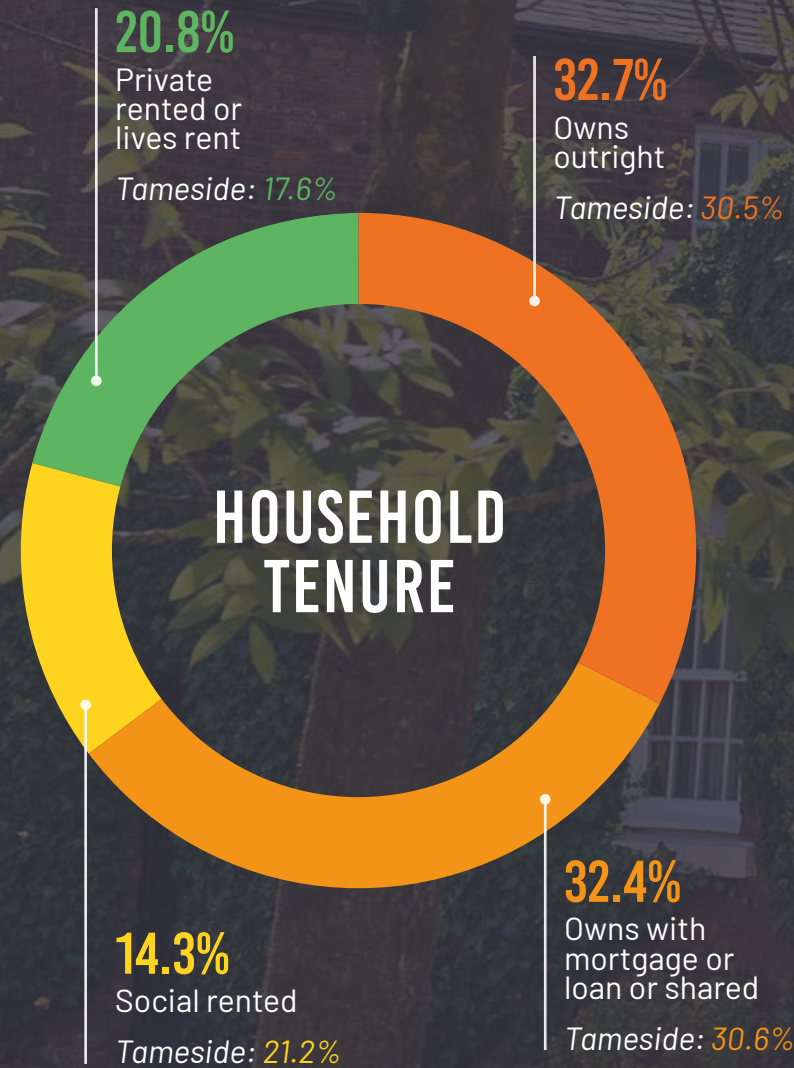


Lower Quartile rent each month = £949



Medium Quartile rent each month = £1096

HOMES



Older people living alone = **37.8%**

Overcrowded houses = **5.5%**

Households in fuel poverty = **13.2%**

Second Homes - **6**

Vacant Properties - **188**

HMOs - **34**

JOB

Strengths

- Marina offers employment due to tourism
- Greenside Mill (within Greenside Trading Centre) is a fully let former Co-Operative Mill built in the 1900s. Its home to a wide variety of small, independent business and industries
- Guardsman Tony Downes House occupied by the Greater Manchester Pension Fund, is one of the newest office developments in the Borough and provides employment as well as a modern community library space

Opportunities

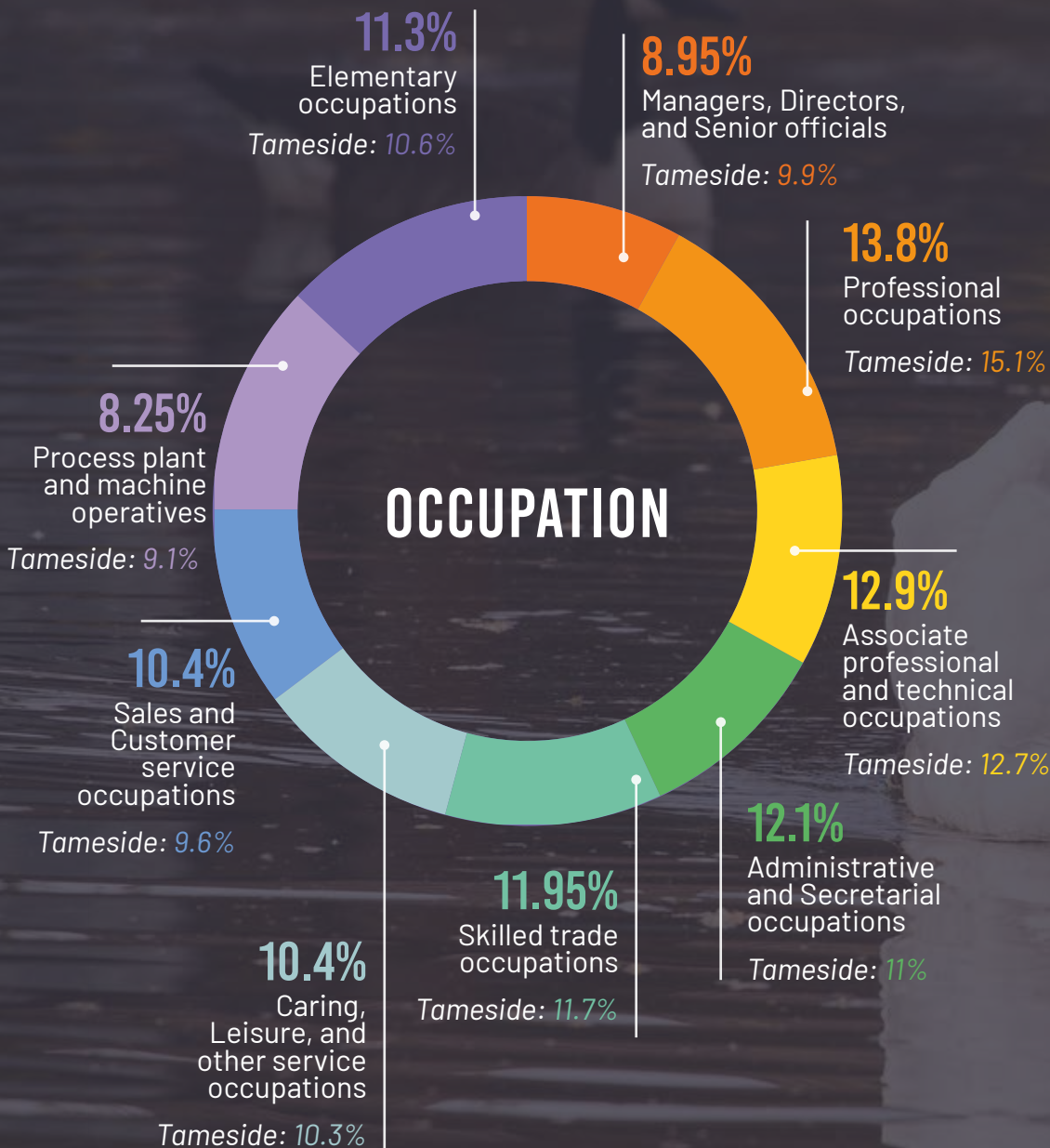
- Low productivity base allows space for improvement
- Area offers a growing pool of workers
- Push for mixed-use regeneration to bring in a variety of businesses
- Utilise upper-floor housing properties
- Harness benefits from investment in Sports City Area
- Unemployment offers a growing pool of workers to help local businesses succeed

Weaknesses

- Low rate of economic growth and business survival
- Over 28% of employees earning below the living wage
- Residents earn below the Greater Manchester average and over 1/4 of employees earn less than the living wage

Challenges

- Employment is concentrated in sectors vulnerable to automation
- Low rates of labour with higher qualifications limit's ability to compete in future economy
- National brands leaving due to retail restructuring



JOB



1 Site for 160,000 sqm of floorspace



PEOPLE

Strengths

- Droylsden sport centre
- Droylsden Academy
- Aldwinians Rugby Union Football Club
- Active Medlock Leisure Centre
- Droylsden Cricket Club

Opportunities

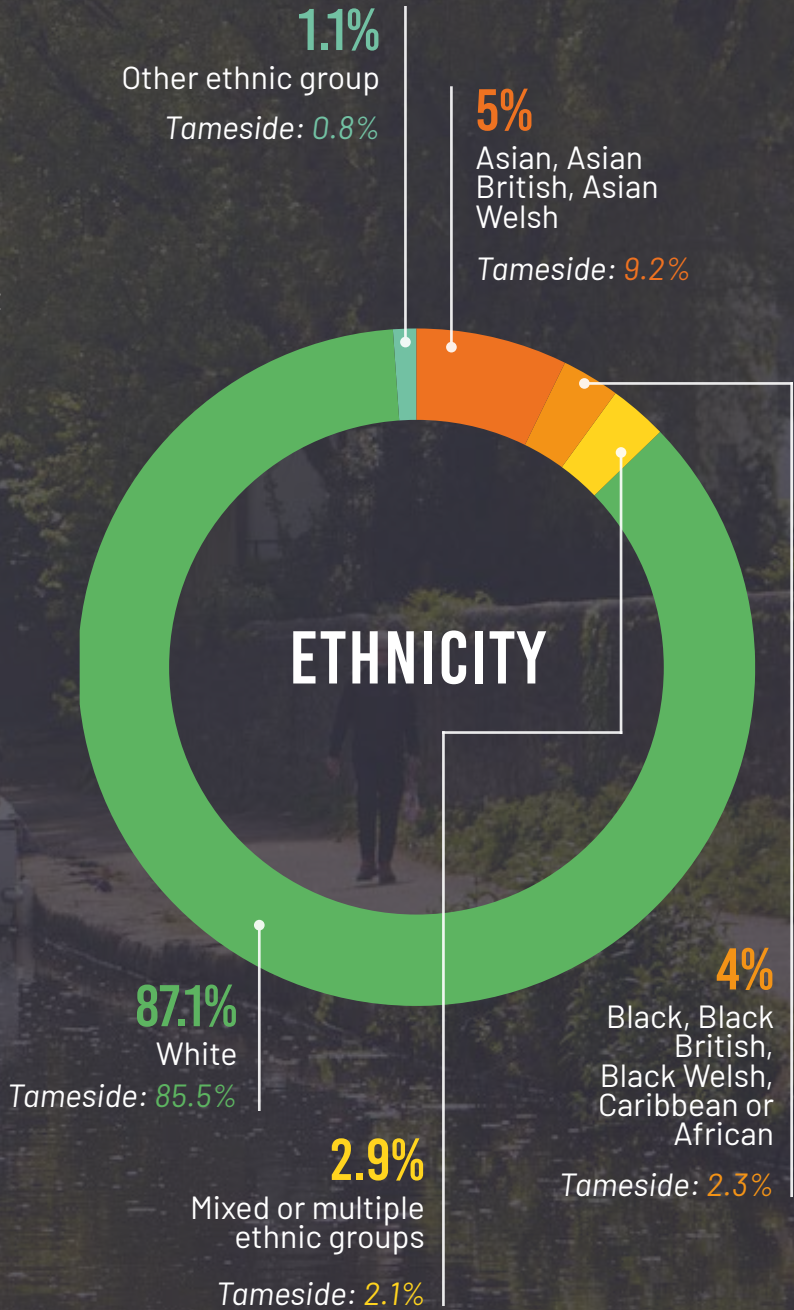
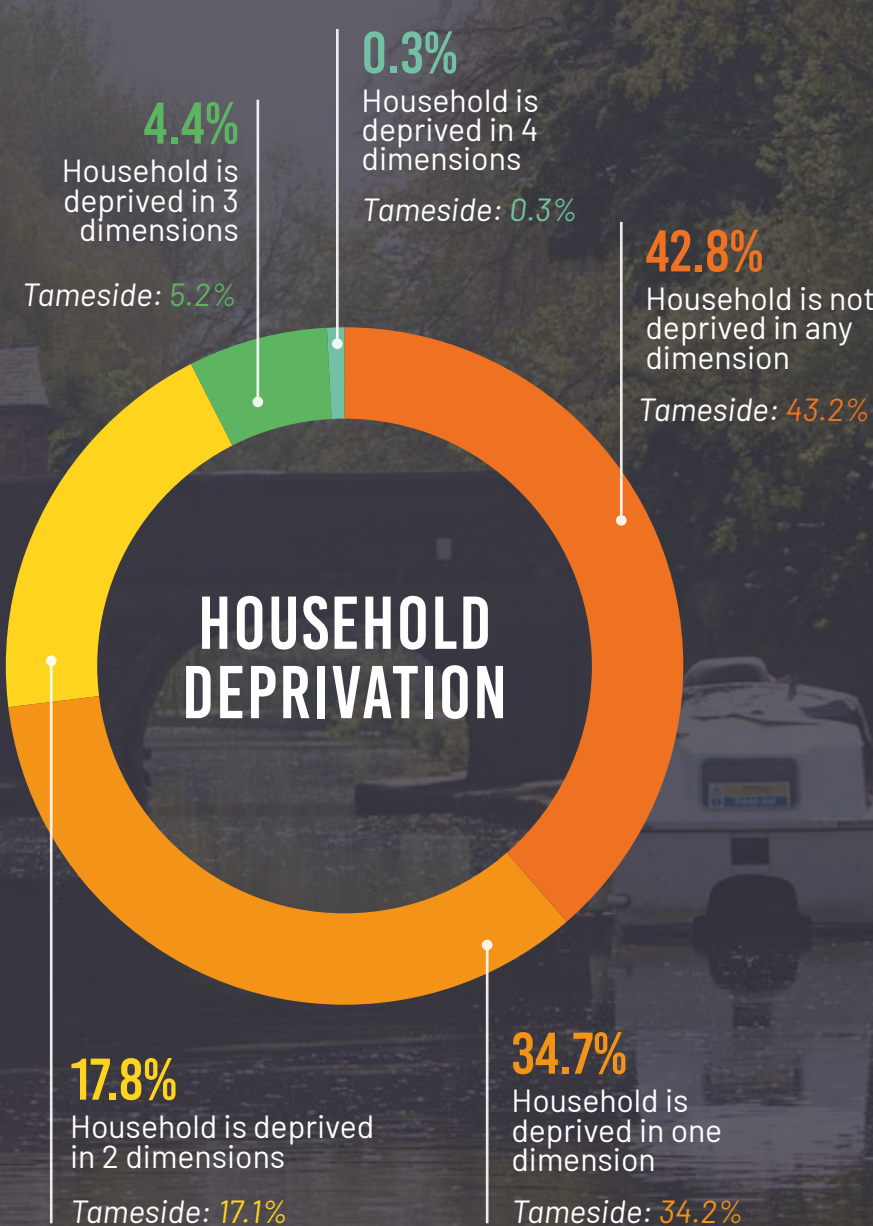
- Population growth exceeds that of Greater Manchester and national levels
- Masterplan development and regeneration funding

Weaknesses

- Vacant retail units and surface car parks create inactive spaces
- Town centre decline – less recreation, less amenities and services, less jobs
- Weak childcare provision
- Safety surrounding vacant buildings – antisocial behaviour
- Low provision of open space for children and young persons’

Challenges

- Tameside has fewer people with higher qualifications compared to Greater Manchester and England
- Jobs vulnerable to automation leaves economic gaps in the population – instability of income
- Persistent economic inactivity
- Child obesity is prevalent



PEOPLE

DISABILITY

80.1%
Not disabled under
the Equality Act
Tameside: 82.5%

19.95%
Disabled under
the Equality Act
Tameside: 17.3%

14.6%
Fair health
Tameside: 12.7%

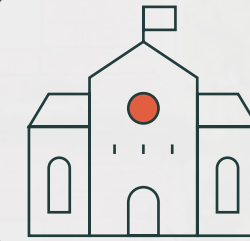
4.95%
Bad health
Tameside: 4%

33.7%
Good health
Tameside: 33.7%

1.5%
Very bad health
Tameside: 1.2%

45.3%
Very good health
Tameside: 48.5%

GENERAL HEALTH



9 Primary schools
3 Secondary schools

Emergency admissions in children under 5
(crude rate per 1000) = **209.4**

Emergency admissions for injuries in children
under 5 (crude rate per 10,000) = **205.8**

Emergency hospital admissions for injuries in
under 15 (crude rate per 10,000) = **139.7**

Emergency hospital admissions for injuries in
15-24 (crude rate per 10,000) = **126.7**

TRAVEL

Strengths

- Served by the Metrolink with three trams stops, links to Manchester and Ashton
- Ashton Canal provides a strategic walking and cycling route, connecting Droylsden with the wider network
- Rail links accessed via Fairfield train station
- Local bus services

Opportunities

- Proximity to Etihad/Co-op Live offers potential for Park & Ride and pre-event destination.
- Improve pedestrian routes for better connectivity, leverage central tram stop and retain and grow the local catchment
- Connection of key civic landmarks and main high street to increase footfall
- Ongoing TfGM corridor study on improving the A662 Droylsden Road key arterial route into the city centre – focus on tram efficiency

Weaknesses

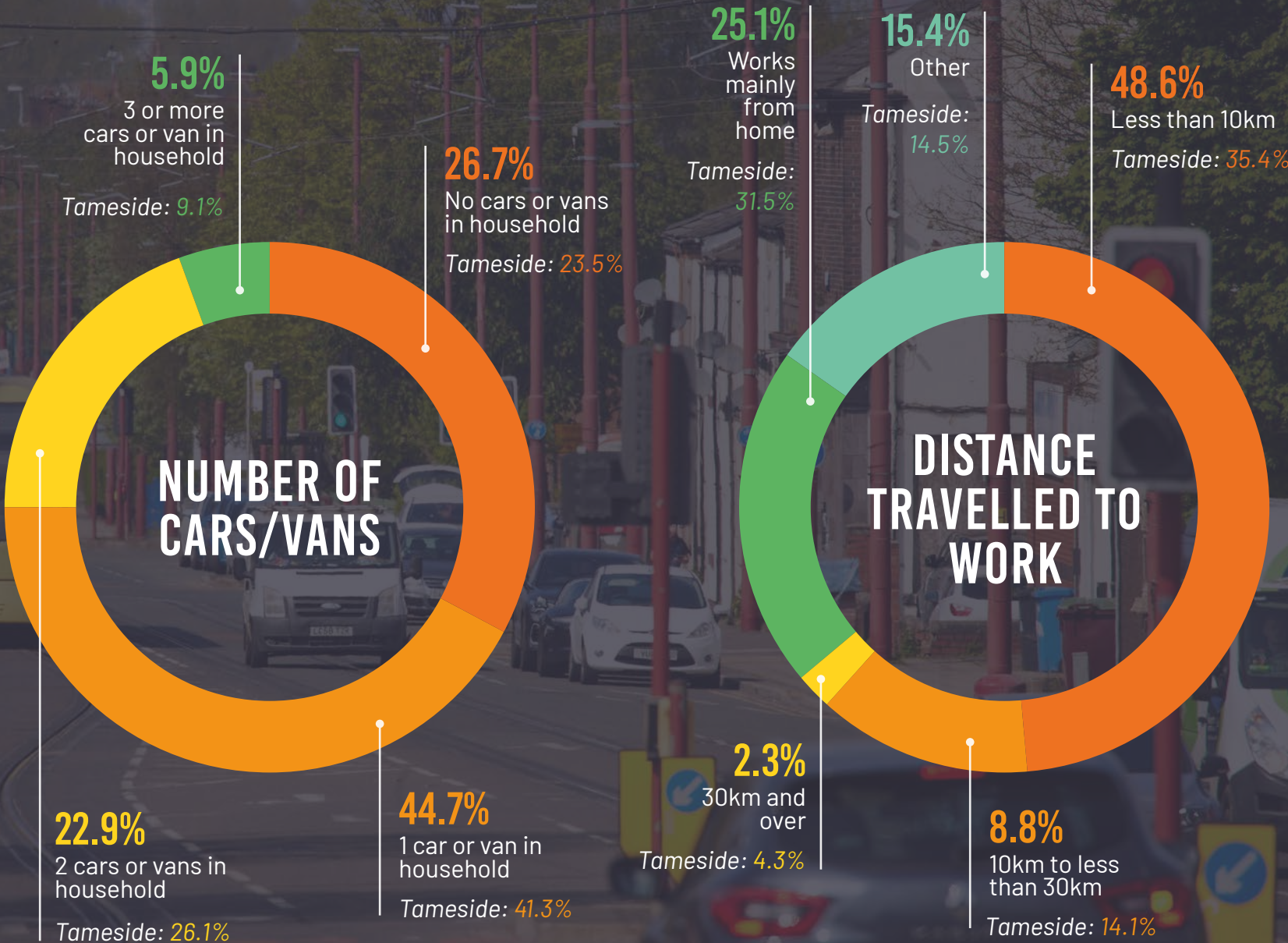
- A662 and Market Street create barriers to pedestrians, separating key areas
- No train station – rail line passes through as a regional corridor – creates local severance
- Lack of wayfinding signage to the marina

Challenges

- Connectivity via the Metrolink sees east–west routes dominate, while north–south permeability remains weak.
- Isolated pedestrian movement from poor crossings on Manchester Road and Market Street



- 3 Tram stations**
- Droylsden
 - Cemetery Road
 - Edge Lane



PLACES

Strengths

- Evening economy
- Droylsden marina
- Historic Moravian Settlement – unique tourist/heritage attraction – retains a distinctive character/ townscape
- Retention of character through repeated/replicated street/ housing design for cohesion
- Villemomble square events

Opportunities

- Revitalise underutilised spaces and historic assets
- Adaption of older industrial buildings – retaining character and heritage where possible
- Strengthen pedestrian connections
- Masterplan development and regeneration funding

Weaknesses

- Lacks sense of place – no clear arrival experience or identity
- Fragmented spaces
- Lacks urban legibility
- Views of key regions are obscured

Challenges

- Public realm spaces offer poor quality, inconsistent materiality – dominated by macadam and concrete pavers
- Negative perception of place and low sense of pride
- Limited project and maintenance budgets



37 Listed buildings
34x Grade II
3x Grade II*



1 Conservation Area
Fairfield



1 Article 4
1 HMO



VISION

Our Vision for Droylsden is to restore a strong sense of identity and pride and raise awareness of the town's eclectic cultural heritage, through restoration and regeneration, showing its true value.

We aim to create a thriving town centre with a renewed sense of place and better connect regions. We aim to bring back purpose, and to support the growth of an aspirational and entrepreneurial community to do more in their town centre. To create a heart full of vitality, multi-use spaces and opportunities. This collaborative vision was curated through public consultation, whereby 83% of local people, stakeholders and businesses said it was important to improve the town centre evening offer. Safety within the town centre, shop frontages/selection, event programming and access to the canal network were all targets identified for improvement.

We will enhance both sustainability and physical greenspace within the public realm, and diversify the semi-rural environment. Each of these, along with more comprehensive projects, will push Droylsden to become a people-focused borough.



DELIVERY

- Bring activity and life back to Droylsden Marina, including the Hollinwood branch – connecting green and blue spaces.
- Bring vacant and historically significant buildings back to life to reinforce local identity.
- Introduction of green spaces and regeneration of street design to incorporate holistic sustainability
- Creation of desire lines connecting neighbourhoods to the Town Centre, and each other, through designing new legible and safe streets.
- Prioritisation of pedestrian access through the Town Centre, enabling use of open spaces and leisure destinations – softening the impact of infrastructure.
- Deliver a sustainable approach to regeneration through a holistic approach to achieve net zero.
- Discussion with Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and Greater Manchester to improve general bus services
- Improvements to existing affordable housing stock for more sustainable and modern dwellings.
- Improvements to the public realm (streetscapes, lighting, wayfinding)
- Enhancement of canal towpaths and canal basin in Droylsden will help improve recreational opportunities and connectivity to existing open spaces for existing and new residents of Droylsden.



POLICY APPROACH

- Support a masterplanned approach to the comprehensive reimagining of the town centre shopping environment encompassing the Concord Suite and Greenside Lane Shopping Park, to create a vibrant mixed-use destination.
- Support the provision of a new Littlemoss, Ashton Moss West train station, east of Littlemoss Road Bridge and west of the M60.
- Maintain and enhance the suburbs of Droylsden as attractive residential neighbourhoods seeing relatively little change over the plan period.
- Deliver a net increase of around 740 new homes across Droylsden.
- Support the enhancement of connectivity between neighbourhoods encouraging greater use of the canal network and valued green spaces offering public benefit including the Medlock Valley for recreation and leisure, whilst protecting this as a key landscape and wildlife corridor.
- Build on the physical strength of Droylsden's proximity to Manchester city centre and connectivity via Metrolink, as a centre of choice for high-density residential development through delivering key brownfield sites.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive historic character of the Fairfield conservation area, the Moravian settlement within it and its many listed buildings.
- Support the growth of the leisure and recreational role of the cluster of uses located at Medlock as a key hub site for sport and physical activity.





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