



TOWN GROWTH PLAN

Stalybridge



TOWN GROWTH PLAN

Stalybridge

Context	4
Extent	8
Fact finding	10
Vision for the future	30
Delivery	34
Policy approach	36



CONTEXT

Stalybridge is one of the nine neighbourhoods located within Tameside. Historically divided between the counties of Cheshire and Lancashire by the River Tame, it is located 2.5 miles from Ashton-under-Lyne town centre and 8 miles east of Manchester. Stalybridge is bound by the neighbourhoods of Longdendale to the south, Dukinfield to the west and Ashton-under-Lyne and Mossley to the north and east respectively.

Today, Stalybridge serves primarily as a commuter town, offering excellent transport links to Greater Manchester and Yorkshire, alongside access to countryside attractions like Stalybridge Country Park and the Pennines. Recent regeneration has focused on housing, public realm improvements, and a growing independent food and drink scene.



1891

During the industrial revolution Stalybridge became renowned for the manufacture of cotton and textiles. This resulted in the development of a number of factories and mills around the town which built a rich identity in industry. Rows of terrace houses for textile labourers were prevalent.

Mills were built on the banks of the River Tame as it was historically used to power the cotton mills. Market Street acted as a main axis to the market town, civic quarter and to the train/tram station.



1938

As the cotton industry declined, the need for factories and supporting housing was reduced. Post-WW2, many of the factories and mills were left derelict.

Historically, there were a number of footbridges acting as links across the River Tame, from the industrial zone leading to the residential areas. These links have since been lost.



2023

The mills and terrace housing largely disappeared within the town centre leaving a substantial amount of undeveloped land. However, the surviving mills play a significant part in the identity of today's Stalybridge Town Centre.

The previously joint station is now simply Stalybridge Train Station, with the tram line terminating at Ashton-under-Lyne since the 1960s.

Market Street has lost some of its standing as a main axis within the town; the high street has been through a period of decline, with some empty and neglected shopfronts. However, many vibrant, independent businesses have appeared on Trinity Street and Melburn Street.



Historic Development of Stalybridge

Human activity in the area dates back to the Mesolithic period, evidenced by flint tools at Harridge Pike and Hobson Moor. Neolithic and Bronze Age finds include a polished flint knife and cairns near Hollingworthhall Moor. Sparse Iron Age remains and Romano-British traces—such as roads near Mottram Rise—suggest early settlement. The name Stalybridge originates from ‘Staef’ (a stave) and ‘leah’ (a woodland clearing), meaning “a wood where staves are collected.” The term “bridge” was added in the early 19th century. By the Late Medieval period, Stayley Hall and Mottram Old Hall marked the rise of local gentry. Before 1750, Stalybridge was sparsely populated, with around 140 villagers working as farmers and weavers. By the mid-18th century, small woollen mills appeared along the river, and in 1796 Edward Hall built the first cotton mill on Wood Street, introducing steam power. Other pioneers, such as John Cheetham and Abel Harrison, expanded the industry, shaping the town’s landscape.

Industrialisation drove rapid growth: the population rose from 5,500 in 1823 to 9,000 by 1825 and reached 20,760 by 1851. The Stalybridge Police and Market Act (1828) established the town’s independence, followed by the opening of the Town Hall and Market in 1831. Stalybridge became a borough in 1857. Despite the Cotton Famine of the 1860s, social improvements continued, including the Mechanics’ Institute (1825), the first School Board (1871), Stamford Park (1873), and the Astley Cheetham Public Library (1901), which also houses an art collection.

The Industrial Revolution transformed Stalybridge into a major cotton town, powered by water and steam. By 1803, eight mills operated with 76,000 spindles, and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal (1811) linked the town to wider trade networks. Later diversification into engineering and metalworking followed, with firms like Summers playing a key role.

In the 20th century, Stalybridge embraced electrification: the Joint Electricity and Tramways Board was established in 1901, and electric trams began running in 1904. The population peaked at 27,623 in 1901 but declined as cotton trade waned. By 1932, seven major mills had closed, prompting efforts to attract new industries such as rubber, plastics, chemicals, and synthetic fibres. Housing estates and light industry gradually replaced redundant mills.

In the post-war period council housing was provided by the local authority as separate council estates. The Buckton Vale estate was built between January 1950 and March 1953, and the Stamford Park estate between January 1953 and January 1955; the Copley estate commenced building in August 1954 and the Ridgehill estate in January 1956.

In 1955, after the adoption of the first post-war slum clearance plan, new housing estates were built to replace the slums and, gradually, redundant textile mills were occupied by firms in the various light industries. New applications of engineering principles, the manufacture of rubber goods, plastics, chemicals and packaging materials were all introduced, as well as the addition of synthetic fibres to the textile trade, reducing unemployment. The plastics industry origin and growth are described by Craig and Bowes in “Cotton Mills to Chemical Plants” (2013).

During the early 1970s, private semi-detached and detached housing estates were developed, particularly in the Mottram Rise, Hough Hill, Hollins, and Carrbrook areas, alongside the redevelopment of Castle Hall. Around the same time, the Buckton Vale overspill estate was constructed. In the early 1980s, the public baths—one of the symbols of late-19th-century civic improvement—closed following the opening of Copley Recreation Centre and were later demolished. By 1991, Stalybridge’s population increased for the first time since 1901, reaching 22,295. The 1990s brought new development at Moorgate and along Huddersfield Road near Staley Hall, continuing into the 21st century with the completion of the Crowswood estate in Millbrook. Around 2010, the Grade II* Staly Hall and its barn complex were repaired and reused, accompanied by new residential development north of Huddersfield Road.



EXTENT

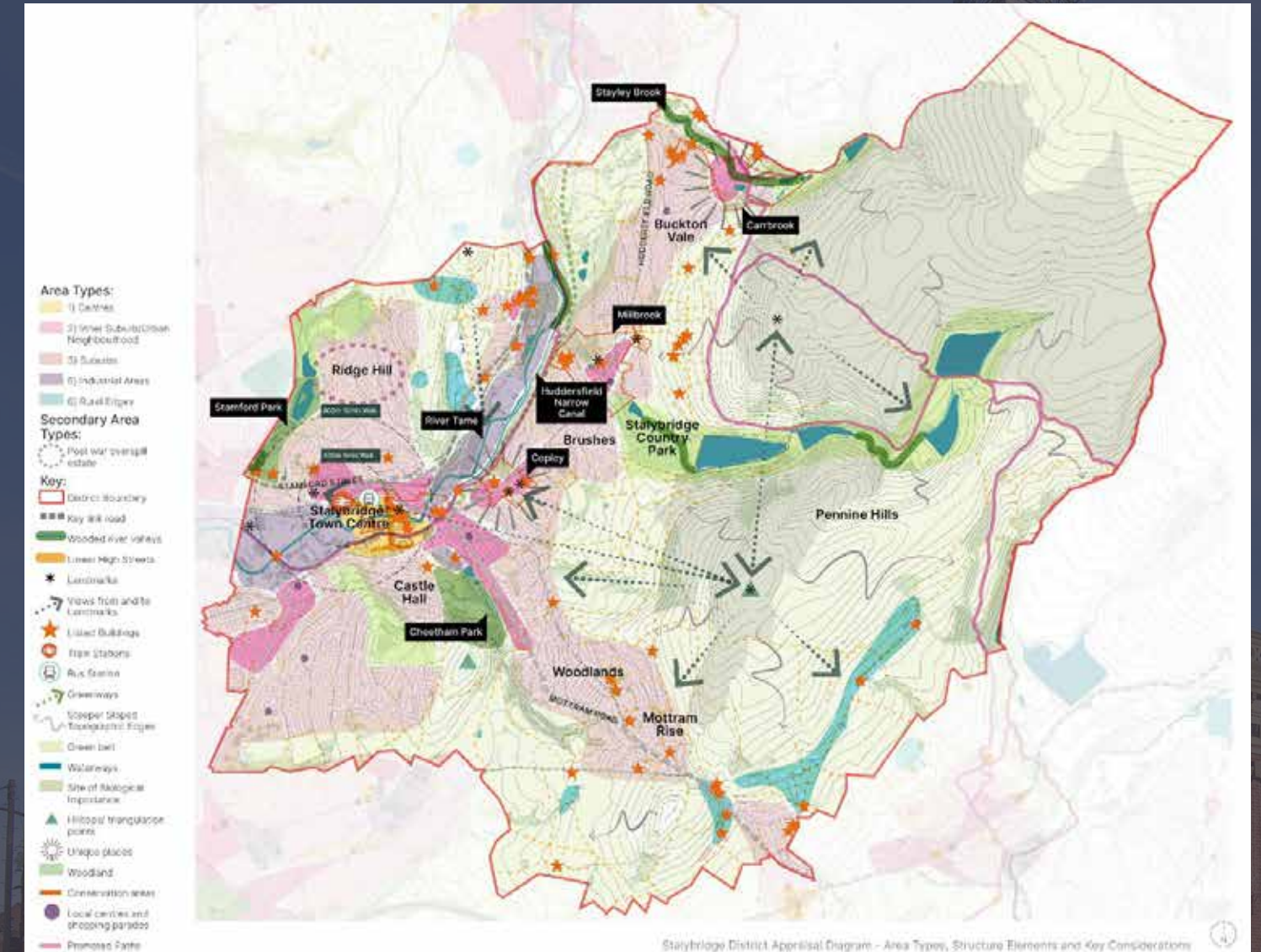
Stalybridge is the semi-rural gateway into Tameside, located in a valley at the foothills of the Pennines. The district has two distinct halves: to the east, within the green belt, lie rural hills of the Dark Peak, Pennine fringe, and open moorland landscapes with dramatic topography; moving west towards Manchester, the character shifts to urban settlements and the town centre. The River Tame and Huddersfield Narrow Canal run through the town, creating a natural separation between the historic core and later urban expansion.

The town offers extensive green and recreational spaces, including Stamford Park, Cheetham Park, Stalybridge Country Park, Cowbury Dale and several recreation grounds. Its strong sense of place is shaped by views of the surrounding hills and its industrial heritage, marked by landmark chimneys and mills. Distinct sub-neighbourhoods include the historic centre; the 19th-century industrial villages of Copley, Millbrook, and Carrbrook; post-war housing estates such as Crowswood, Brushes and Buckton Vale off Huddersfield Road; the late-19th-century villa development along Mottram Road to the east; Castle Hall to the west; and Ridge Hill to the north.

Stalybridge has a rich pre-industrial and industrial

heritage, reflected in its numerous listed buildings. These range from bridges, walls, and memorials to pre-urban weavers' cottages, agricultural buildings, industrial mills, and 19th-century churches and public buildings. The town is also unique within Tameside for having a registered park and garden (Stamford Park) and four designated conservation areas: Stalybridge town centre, Copley, Millbrook, and Carrbrook.

Stalybridge enjoys a strategic position within Greater Manchester, combining proximity to Manchester city centre with the scenic Pennine landscape. The town has a rich heritage, from its textile manufacturing roots to its civic architecture, with significant historic assets concentrated in the centre. Infrastructure from the industrial boom—including canals and railway lines—remains in use, providing excellent east-west rail links to Manchester and Leeds. Well connected by transport and digital infrastructure, Stalybridge is a key commuter town for the regional centre. Stalybridge holds significant potential. By capitalising on its advantages, the town can build resilience and sustainability, playing a vital role in the success of the wider Greater Manchester conurbation.



CENTRES

Strengths

- Independent high street offer
- Conservation area in town centre
- Heritage
- Growing hospitality offer
- Capital investment programme being delivered in town centre
- Landmark civic buildings including library and art gallery
- Excellent rail connections
- Access to canal and riverside environment
- Historic town centre core including numerous listed buildings and structures

Opportunities

- Town Centre Delivery Framework in place
- Further growth of evening economy
- New multi-storey car park and bridge to be delivered
- Planned public realm improvements
- Cultural offer of Victoria Market Hall / Art Gallery & Library
- Mayoral development corporation
- Sites available for new development
- Vacant sites offer space for development

Weaknesses

- Poor quality shop fronts that need improving
- Some areas of public realm need improving
- Leisure offer is out of centre (Copley)
- Waste recycling centre close to town centre
- Industrial uses around rail station and town centre fringe
- Land take of surface level car parks in town centre (Aldi and Tesco)
- Highway congestion in/around town centre
- Conservation management
- Concentration of HFTs on market street
- Lack of canal moorings
- Lack of small office space

Challenges

- Historic reputation
- Town Centre conservation area at risk
- Long term vacant sites and buildings in town centre
- Many vacant buildings in the centre
- Absence of hotel accommodation deterring visitors
- Diversify evening economy and independent retail as to not become too dependent on one type of attraction



FOOTFALL

August 2025

366,099

Unique visitors

68,077

+3.6% from 2024



COMPARISON:

4,603 sq.m floorspace = 16.3% - 40 units



CONVENIENCE:

9,135 sq.m floorspace = 32.3% - 15 units



FINANCIAL SERVICE

768 sq.m floorspace = 2.7% = 7 units



LEISURE CENTRE

7,885 sq.m floorspace = 27.9% = 47 units



RETAIL SERVICE

2,801 sq.m floorspace = 9.9% = 34 units



VACANT

3,076 sq.m floorspace = 10.9% = 25 units

ENVIRONMENT

Strengths

- Local parks and greenspace (eg Stamford Park, Cheetham Park, Stalybridge Country Park)
- Access to peaks and proximity to countryside/South Pennines
- Canal and river
- Tame Valley Loop
- Gorse Hall

Opportunities

- Canal environment around Stalybridge/Ashton (Stalybridge West access to canal)
- Funding for town centre public realm
- Boating and leisure provision
- Potential for biodiversity net gain sites

Weaknesses

- Fly tipping, residential / commercial waste
- Waste recycling centre close to town centre
- Access to Quarry – permission until 2042 (potential opportunity beyond this)
- Highway congestion
- No protected status for Heyrod
- Lack of canal side moorings

Challenges

- Waste collection and bin storage restrictions due to street layouts in certain areas
- Rebuilding of reputation
- Flooding in Carrbrook, Milbrook, Heyrod from runoff from hills
- Threats to greenbelt from encroaching development



1 Country Park
Stalybridge



1 Nature Reserves
Cowbury Dale



18 Sites of Biological Importance

- Alphin Pike & Buckton Moor (South)
- Brushes
- Castle Clough
- Clough at Matley
- Dark Peak Moors
- Eastwood & Acre Clough
- Hartshead
- Hollingworth Hall Wood
- Huddersfield Narrow Canal (South)
- Marshes at Staley Hall
- Roe Cross Quarry
- Silversprings
- Stalybridge Country Park
- Stamford Park Lake
- Swineshaw Moors and Boar Flat
- Westwood Clough & Longlands Hall
- Wild Bank Hill
- Woodland & Grassland at Landslow Green



HOMES

Strengths

- Emerging town centre housing offer with some developments well established, eg Longlands Mill
- Well-connected housing market with good commuter links – Stalybridge station
- Diverse housing tenure

Opportunities

- Public land at Stalybridge West identified for housing
- Other strategic opportunities for housing developments former clinic site, Millbrook Sidings (former power station), Oakwood Mill land
- Delivery of sustainable housing offer
- Look at former garage sites of estates for infill housing.

Weaknesses

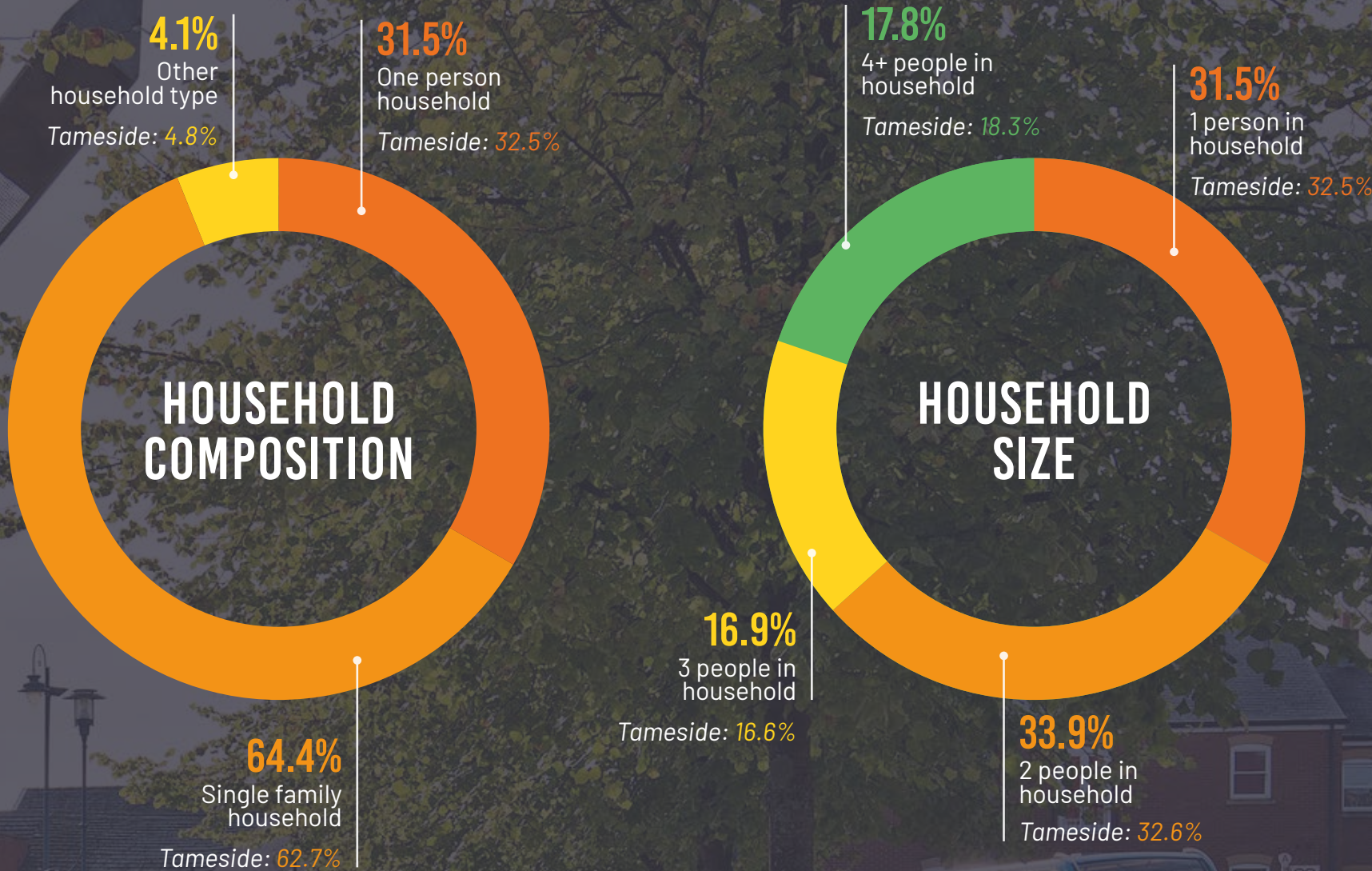
- Lack of a good quality family offer in some areas – bottom of Ridgehill, Crowswood estate in Carrbrook
- Need for supporting social infrastructure
- Connections from residential areas to town centre
- Lack of older person housing – retirement and downsizing
- Concentrations of HMO’s near Stalybridge Station and hospital.

Challenges

- Developer viability
- Demand for affordable housing
- Some opportunity sites long term vacant due to development and/or ownership constraints
- Older social housing stock
- Creation of sustainable homes
- Demographic changes/demands for older population

Lower Quartile house price change (2007-2024) = £109,950 to £150,000 = 36.4%

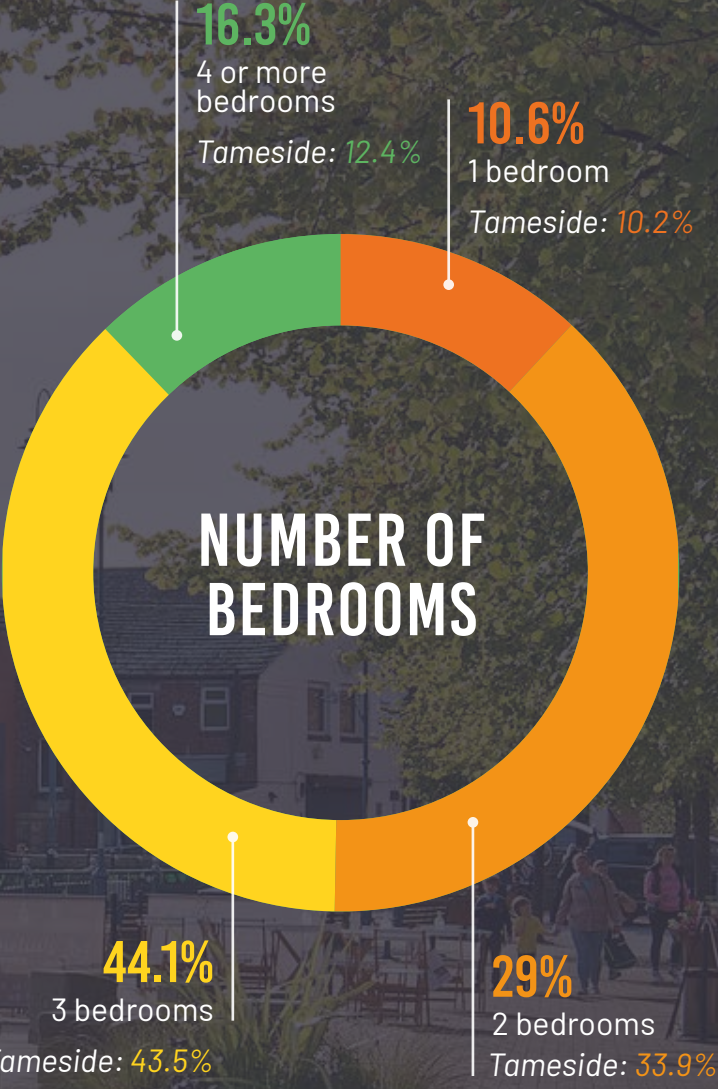
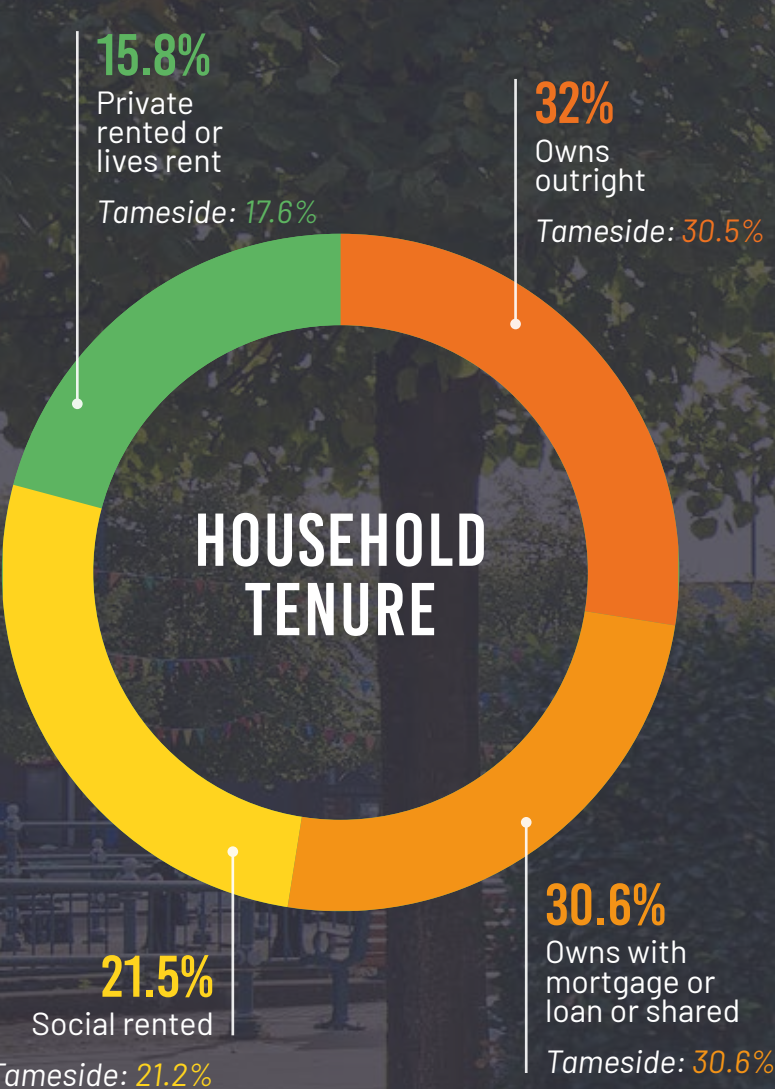
Medium Quartile house price change (2007-2024) = £135,000 To £195,000 = 44.4%



Lower Quartile rent each month = £802

Medium Quartile rent each month = £901

HOMES



- Older people living alone = **32.5%**
- Overcrowded houses = **4.8%**
- Households in fuel poverty = **13.4%**
- Second Homes - **18**
- Vacant Properties - **215**
- HMOs - **21**

JOB

Strengths

- Well established large employers
- Mayoral development corporation transport led regeneration designation
- Growing hospitality sector

Opportunities

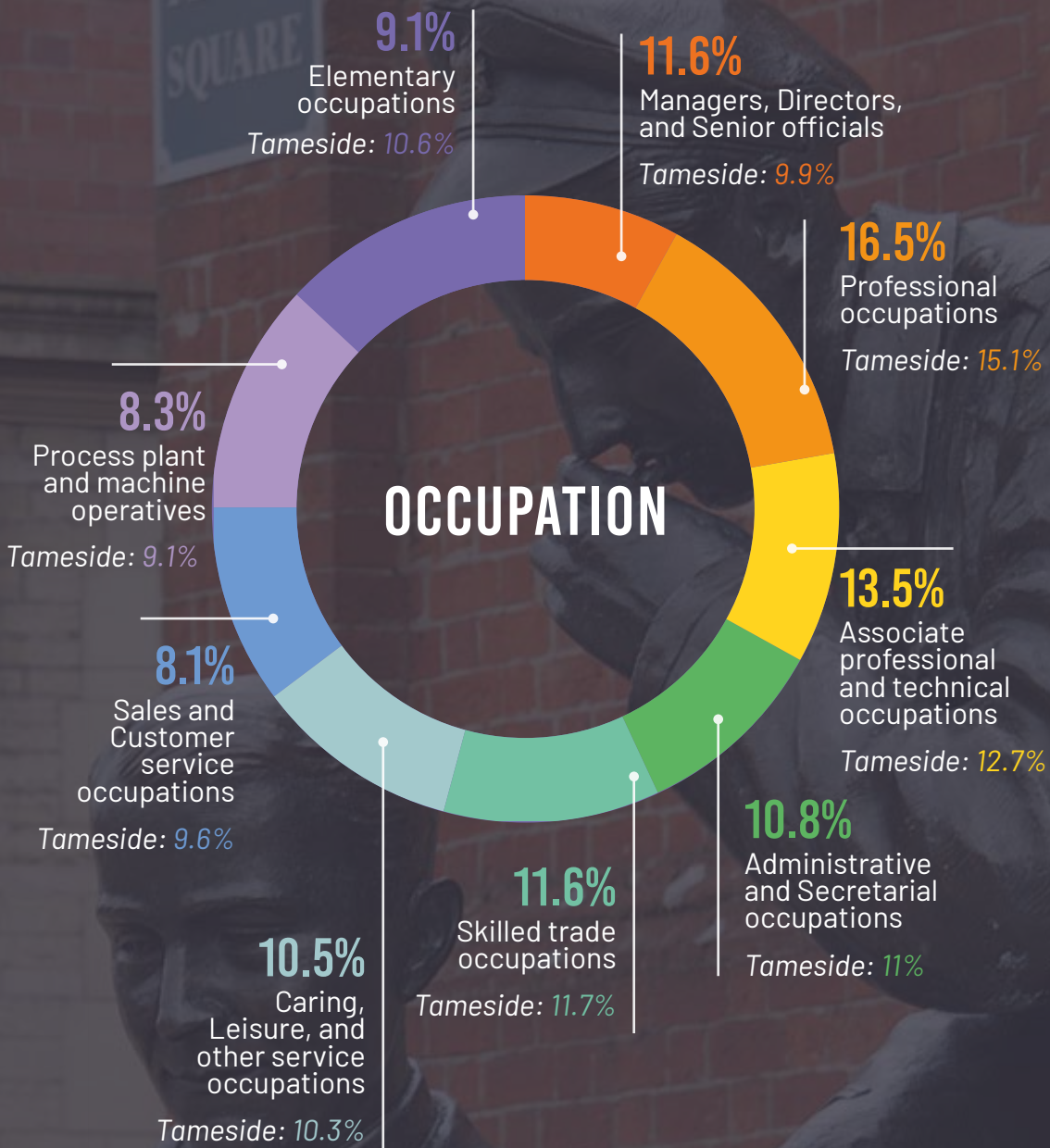
- Land around the fire station and rail station for development/ regeneration
- Tame Street Depot/ Offices and facilities around
- Potential for flexible workspace in the town centre
- Sites for employment development (eg Bailey St opposite to waste centre)
- Tame Valley employment area
- Opportunity to promote growth sectors and non-traditional sectors media, IT/ Culture

Weaknesses

- Need to ensure skills base is ready for new industries
- Limited commercial office market
- Industrial Structure still geared to traditional sectors

Challenges

- Site viability
- Market readiness
- Skills and employment
- Provision of smaller units to support new businesses
- Comparatively high level of economic inactivity.
- Linking job opportunities to people in poorer areas such as Ridgehill.



JOB



 **4 Sites for 17,835 sqm of floorspace**

 **1 Site for 930 sqm of office floorspace**

PEOPLE

Strengths

- Copley Leisure Centre
- Stalybridge Celtic football club – identity
- Local community engagement with events etc
- Accessible greenspace around and close to the town

Weaknesses

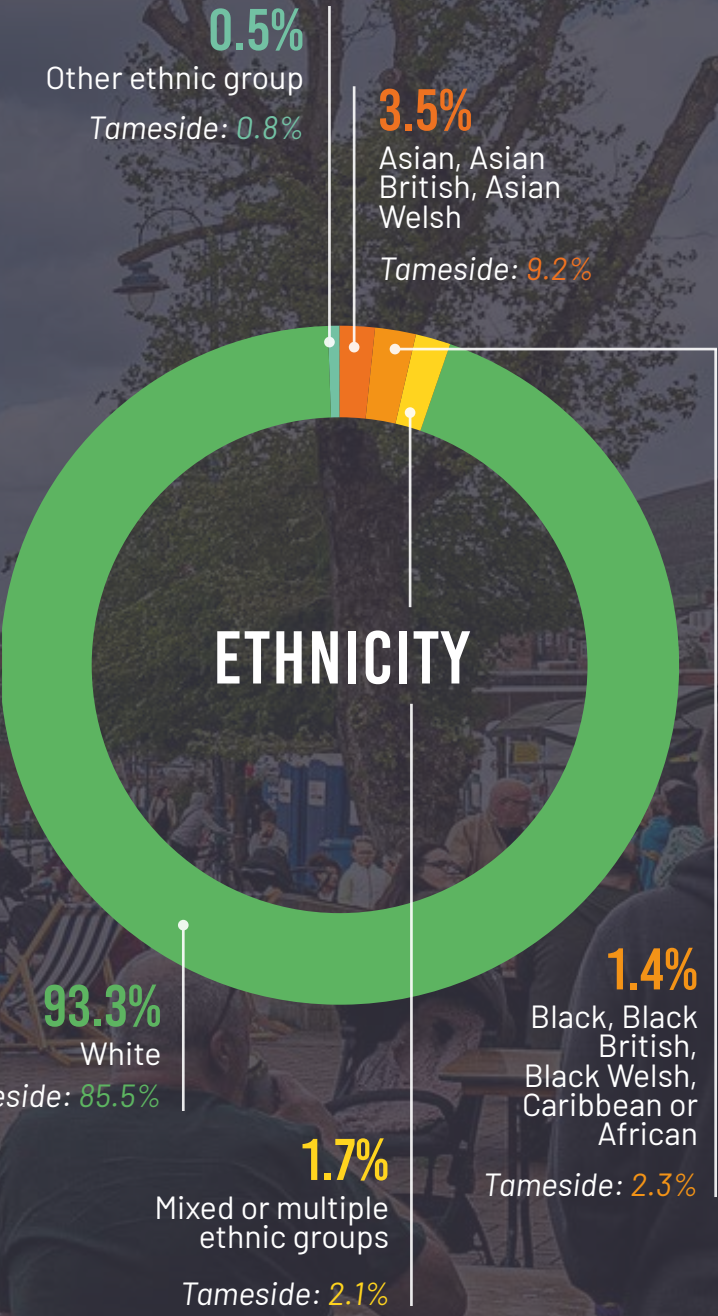
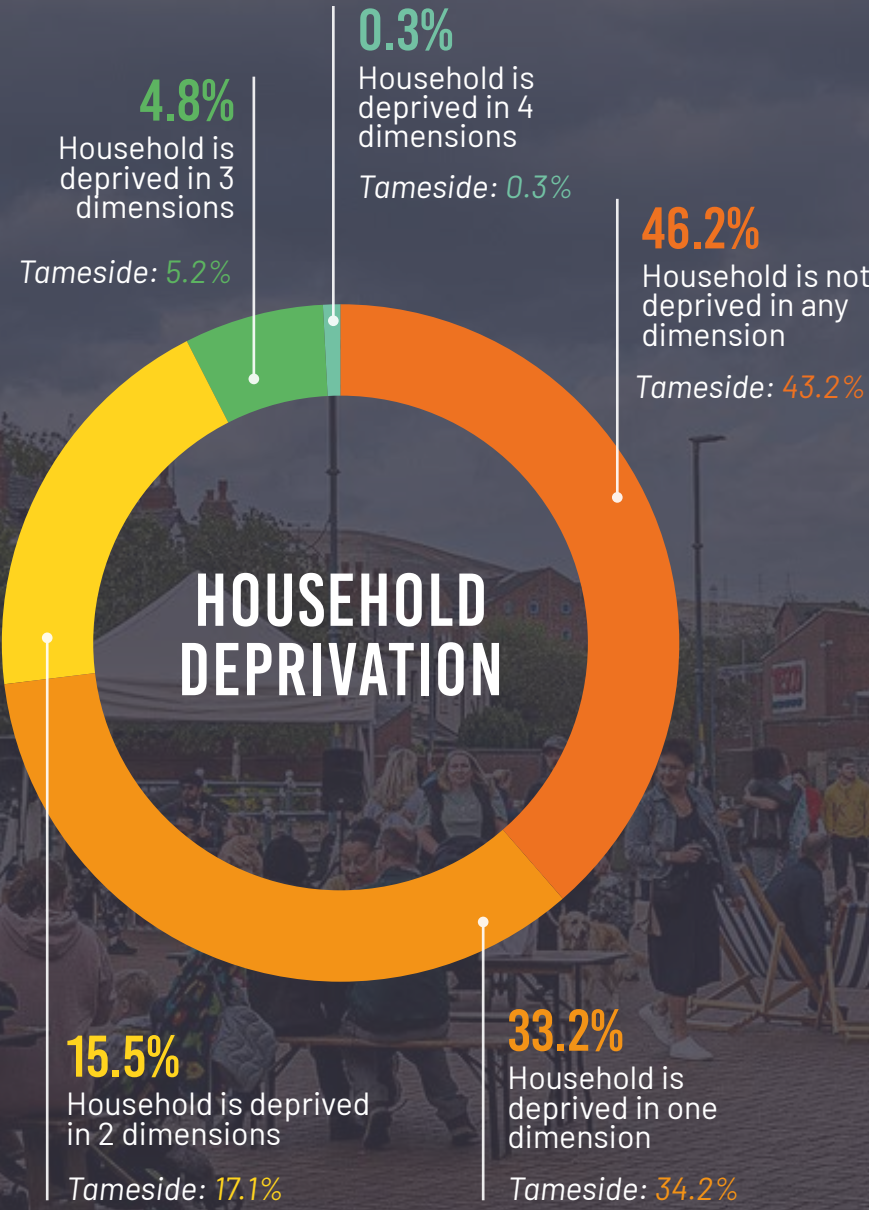
- Leisure offer is out of centre (Copley) and long-term investment required
- Health inequalities and disparities in terms of both health outcomes, as well as the spread of health facilities e.g Ridgehill does not have a doctor’s surgery or pharmacy, despite it’s close location to Tameside hospital.

Opportunities

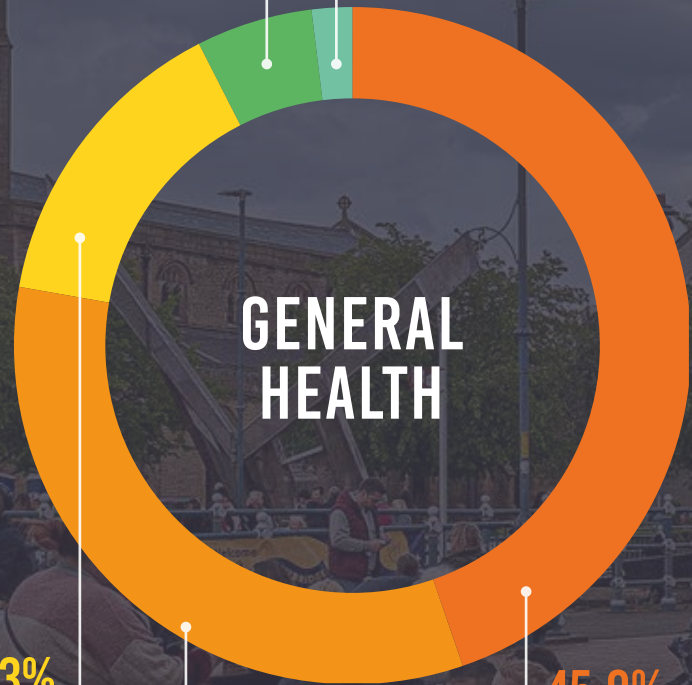
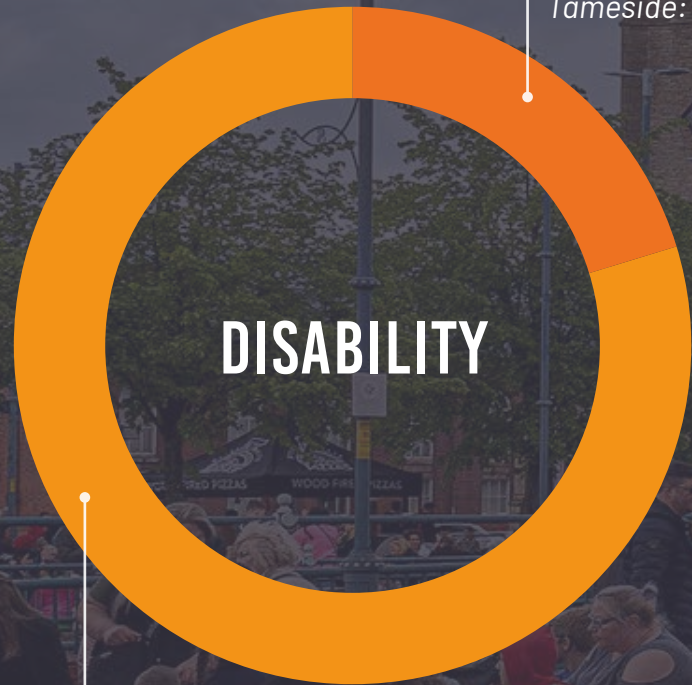
- Reduce inequalities
- Enhanced leisure offer

Challenges

- Commuter population



PEOPLE



15 Primary schools **3** Secondary schools **2** Special schools

Emergency admissions in children under 5 (crude rate per 1000) = **213.1**

Emergency admissions for injuries in children under 5 (crude rate per 10,000) = **169.5**

Emergency hospital admissions for injuries in under 15 (crude rate per 10,000) = **133.7**

Emergency hospital admissions for injuries in 15-24 (crude rate per 10,000) = **164**

TRAVEL

Strengths

- Rail links – connections to Manchester and Leeds (TRU) – Trans Pennine Upgrade
- Local bus services
- Active travel routes

Opportunities

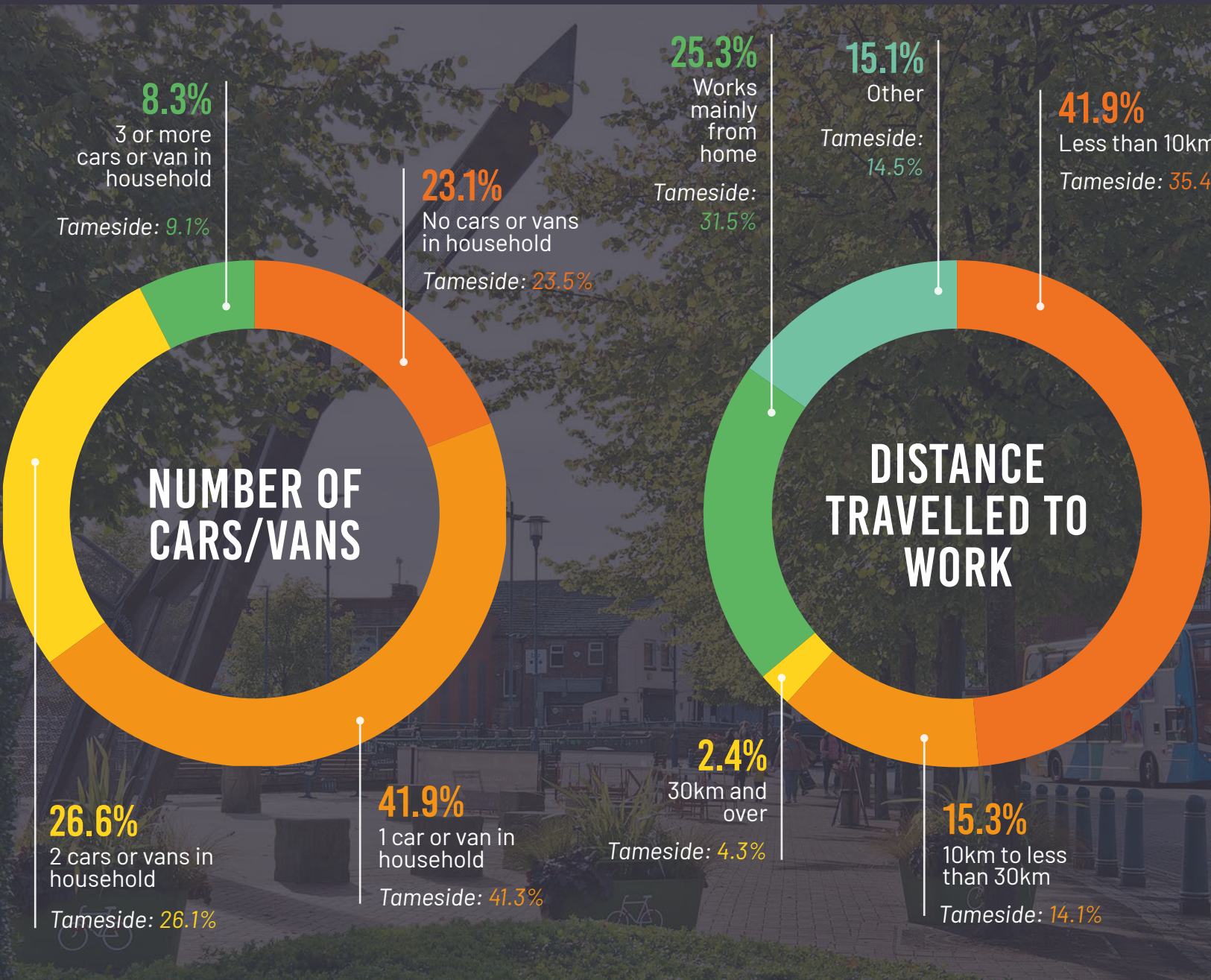
- New station public realm
- Increased rail services to Ashton and other centres
- Consideration of park and ride scheme
- Active travel links/routes
- Greater use of canal network and new moorings
- Re use of bus station land
- Mayoral Development Corporation – opening the Stalybridge to Stockport line, rapid transport

Weaknesses

- Industrial uses around rail station
- Lack of wayfinding
- Traffic congestion
- Poor public transport in some of the poorer areas (e.g Ridgehill)
- Lack of public transport to Tameside Hospital – a major employer.

Challenges

- Poor gateways into town centre
- Poor pedestrian movement across major roads
- Town centre through traffic – congestion
- Maximising use of land around the Railway Corridor.



PLACES

Strengths

- Heritage and listed buildings – library/Gallery a Cultural driver and key destination.
- Conservation areas – 3 in Stalybridge (eg/ Carbrook and Millbrook)
- Hospitality offer
- Stalybridge Street Fest – Monthly and other town centre events
- Buffet Bar and Ale Trail
- Strong identity
- Stamford Park as a Registered Park and Garden
- Access to both the River Tame and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal

Opportunities

- Cultural Quarter focus around Victoria Market Hall and Art Gallery & Library
- Article 4 direction
- Design code to reflect local character
- Restore historic character
- Redeveloping empty buildings on Castle Street/ Melbourne Street axis.
- Designate additional Conservation areas

Weaknesses

- Town Centre conservation area at risk
- Poor quality development and frontages consented in previous years
- Empty buildings, some in disrepair particularly in town centre.

Challenges

- Historic reputation
- Conservation area at risk
- Well managed and well-rounded nighttime offer – purple flag status
- Private ownership of important vacant buildings/sites



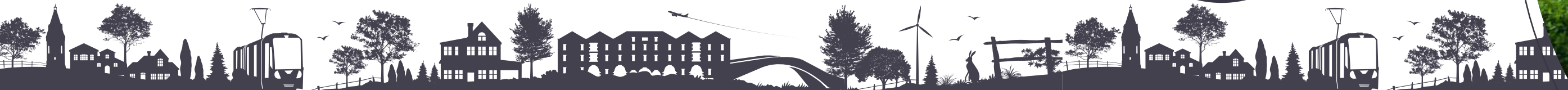
79 Listed buildings
77x Grade II
2x Grade II*



3 Conservation Area
Carrbrook
Copley
Millbrook
Stalybridge
Town Centre



2 Article 4
HMO
Copley



VISION

In 2018, Stalybridge was selected as one of the Greater Manchester Mayor's Town Centre Challenge locations, aimed at unlocking the potential of the region's towns through collaboration between industry and public bodies. In 2020, the town was also designated as a High Streets Heritage Action Zone by Historic England, initiating work between 2020 and 2024 to restore historic character and enhance the public realm.

Recent years have seen positive private-sector interventions, particularly in housing delivery and the growth of an independent food and drink offer. Notable examples include the successful conversion of the Grade II listed Longlands Mill into residential use, alongside developments such as Summers Quay and Pattern House.

In March 2023, Stalybridge was announced as one of 16 Capital Regeneration Projects nationally to receive grant funding. The Council secured £19.9 million through the Levelling Up Fund (Round 2), following a bid submitted in July 2022. This funding focuses on enabling infrastructure to bring forward vacant sites for redevelopment, improving public realm and active travel routes, and delivering the Stalybridge Cultural Quarter at the Civic Hall and Ashley Cheetham Art Gallery. These initiatives will help the town centre reach its full potential, attract further investment, and deliver comprehensive regeneration. The strategic approach to these projects is set out in the approved Stalybridge Town Centre Delivery Framework.

The overarching vision for Stalybridge is **'to deliver a thriving place throughout the day and evening optimising the town's excellent connectivity, waterfront, heritage, culture and passion to provide a hub for living, culture, employment and services supporting a sustainable retail sector'**. This will facilitate the delivery of longer-term successful regeneration of the Town Centre and the surrounding area.

The specific objectives that will help achieve this are:

Bringing forward identified development sites to: Develop unused, under-used or derelict land for a mix of uses; and Promote the refurbishment and enhancement of historic buildings, including Stalybridge Civic Hall and the Astley Cheetham Art Gallery and Library.

Attracting further investment in the Town Centre to: Diversify town centre uses; support town centre facilities, including a higher quality evening economy; Improve housing options; and Create modern and vibrant, mixed-use town centre living environment in a highly sustainable location.

Delivering improved public realm and accessibility to: Provide a strong sense of place; Enhance pedestrian routes; strengthen access to existing public transport provision; and Improve connections to Stalybridge's unique assets and green spaces and deliver clear signage throughout the Town Centre and surrounding area.

Encouraging greater footfall throughout the Town Centre in the day and the evening with the delivery of: A safer and more secure Town Centre; and New residential development and a range of housing types, including affordable housing and routes to home ownership. Changing perceptions of Stalybridge by supporting: Enhanced and higher quality food and drink uses; Closer working with partners to address and deter anti-social behaviour; A Town Centre environment that maximise

the potential of assets such as the River Tame and canal; and an enhanced visitor offer that strengthens the role of Stalybridge as a destination.

This will deliver against the Stalybridge Town Centre Delivery Framework and the principles of the Stalybridge Town Centre Challenge Action Plan:

- A Vibrant and Visited Town - which harnesses its local environment (canals, rivers and parks), heritage, culture, shops, local services and facilities to attract a wide range of people
- A Sustainable Town - which can be accessed easily by foot, cycle, car, train and bus and from which our attractive surrounding countryside and other centres (including Manchester and Leeds) can be easily accessed by a range of transport modes
- A Prosperous Town - where people invest in homes and businesses
- A Liveable Town - where people can access quality homes that meet their needs
- A Safe and Clean Town - where people feel comfortable to walk around and sit in during day and night
- A Proud Town - where local people promote our strengths and local are active in enjoying, supporting and enhancing our offer.



DELIVERY

As set out above Stalybridge has received £19.9m of Capital Regeneration Projects grant funding for delivery by March 2027. This programme of work is focused on enabling infrastructure to bring forward vacant sites for redevelopment at Stalybridge West, public realm and active travel improvements, and the delivery of the Stalybridge 'Cultural Quarter' at the Civic Hall and Ashley Cheetham Art Gallery.

The funding will provide investment to deliver enabling infrastructure works across the sites identified within the Stalybridge West area to facilitate the viable delivery of new housing and commercial space in the Town Centre. Delivery of the Stalybridge West Opportunity Area will create a vibrant Town Centre residential community in a highly sustainable location that will support the local economy. The enabling infrastructure will include a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Tame and a new multi-level car parking facility within the Town Centre proposed to be located at Waterloo Road.

The Heritage Walk public realm improvements to pedestrian routes from the rail station along Market Street to the Cultural Quarter, and funded via the HSHAZ, completed in 2023. These works comprised the first phase of public realm improvements in the Town Centre.

Further delivery of the public realm capital works is now being progressed along the remainder of Market Street, Trinity Street, Armentieres Square and other areas of the Town Centre. This is being aligned with the ongoing work with Transport for Greater Manchester to identify alternative arrangements for the location of the Stalybridge Bus Station, improve integration of bus services with Stalybridge Rail Station and improved bus stop facilities at Armentieres Square.

The main roof repair works at the Civic Hall completed in 2023 supported by match funding from the HSHAZ, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Council Capital Programme. A programme of activity is underway for the main hall including markets, food and drink events, music, theatre, comedy, art and arts/cultural exhibition events and additional internal restoration works will complete within the rest of the building in 2025. Further repair works and internal restoration at the adjacent Astley Cheetham Art Gallery and Library are being delivered to enhance the provision and accessibility, including the installation of a new internal lift. Collectively these two Grade II listed buildings will form the town centre Cultural Quarter.



POLICY APPROACH

- Accelerate the ongoing regeneration of Stalybridge to enable the town to meet its full potential taking full advantage of its heritage, canal and riverside setting, growing the evening economy, cultural offer and access to national rail services.
- Deliver a net increase of around 1200 new homes across Stalybridge.
- Deliver new town centre living including a significant focus on delivering apartments within Stalybridge Town Centre, boosting the resident population.
- Support delivery of the residential-led Stalybridge West masterplan, delivering a vibrant new, high-density community.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive heritage assets of the town centre and its conservation area which recognises the Grade II listed Stalybridge Civic Hall, Victoria Market and Astley Cheetham Art Gallery and Library as a vibrant Cultural Quarter for the Town Centre.
- Be supportive of positive strategies which protect, enhance and deliver the sensitive restoration and long-term future of the Grade II Listed Oakwood Mill, as heritage which is at risk due to its poor condition.
- Deliver transport infrastructure improvements around Stalybridge train station, enable the redevelopment of the existing bus station site for new uses with bus services better integrated with other transport modes, providing improved gateways into the Town Centre to attract additional users.
- Support the continued growth of the evening economy and high-quality food and drink offer, including through improvements to the public realm creating environments to dwell, spend time and encourage businesses to spill into.
- Grow the leisure, tourism and recreational roles of the Stalybridge parks and proximity to countryside in a manner that recognises their existing offer and connections with adjacent communities.
- Unlock the full potential of the canal and river network through Stalybridge with accessibility and environmental improvements.



