

Accountability Statement

2026/2027



Contents

Section 1:	Purpose	3
Section 2:	Context and Place	6
Section 3:	Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement	8
Section 4:	Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities	10
Section 5:	Inclusive Mainstream Fund	16
Section 6:	Local Duty Needs	18
Section 7:	Corporation Statement	21
Section 8:	Supporting Documents	21

Section 1 Purpose



Empowering Potential, Achieving Success

Oldham College plays a central role in the skills, education and economic landscape of Oldham and the wider East Manchester region. Our purpose is to empower individuals, raise aspirations and deliver the skills that local people, employers and communities need to thrive and contribute to inclusive economic growth.

Our Strategic Plan 2024–2027 sets out a clear ambition to improve life chances and create meaningful progression opportunities, particularly for young people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This plan is underpinned by four key strategic pillars, which continue to guide our priorities and investments. The annual Accountability Statement builds on this foundation, setting out the specific actions and measurable outcomes we will deliver each year in response to local, regional and national priorities.

Since the launch of our strategic plan, we have continued to strengthen our role as a responsive, place-based provider, aligning curriculum and provision more closely with employer demand,

skills priorities and the evolving needs of the local economy. Through our engagement with the Local Skills Improvement Plan and wider stakeholder partnerships, we ensure our provision directly supports priority sectors, addresses skills gaps and contributes to sustainable growth.

In fulfilling our Local Needs Duty, we are committed to delivering high-quality technical and vocational education that meets current and future skills needs, supports progression into employment and higher-level study, and drives social mobility across our communities. Our determination remains clear to transform lives through learning, contribute to a stronger local economy and ensure that every learner has the opportunity to achieve their full potential and achieve success.

To realise this purpose and deliver on our strategic ambitions, we focus our efforts across four key area, Students, People, Place and Partners, which together underpin our approach to continuous improvement and impact.

Student



Inspire Learning: where we will foster a passion for knowledge and spark innovative thinking and practice. Our students and apprentices will have engaging, fulfilling experiences and a wide range of opportunities to develop deep knowledge and love for their subject.

Nurture potential: by recognising that a significant majority of our students and apprentices come to the college from economic and socially deprived backgrounds, but we are adamant that this should not define their future. Recognising and supporting them to overcoming the barriers to their future is a key part of our plans.

Unlock success: through providing students and apprentices with an environment where they can achieve their full potential.

Place

Cultivating a safe and thriving workplace: where staff can share their views, where students and apprentices can highlight what they want to be done differently, and where all staff make a difference through their rewarding work.

Ensure financial sustainability: whilst making improvements to the college remains one of our key drivers.

Entrust smarter working: through carefully selected systems and investments that ensure staff can achieve more at work.

Spark inspiration and learning: as all staff have access to an Excellence Programme that is aligned to their role and where the opportunities to learn from peers is readily available and encouraged.



People

Empower wellbeing: looking after the wellbeing of our staff is a key priority for the college – but ensuring staff have the authority and ability to look after their own wellbeing is also something we will strive for.

Learning for Growth: the introduction of our Elevate Programme for all staff is how we are focusing on staff becoming true experts in their areas of responsibility and improving the quality of our provision.

Innovation and Ownership: our staff are problem solvers. We support them to spot and overcome any of the challenges that impact on their working life in the college and look for better ways to support students and apprentices.



Partners



Co-create industry ready curricula: by using our Employer Advisory Boards which have created our ‘Employer Designed; Expert Led’ curriculum planning approach.

Support communities through collaborative growth: as a key anchor institution across Oldham, we intend to ensure every member of our community can thrive through economic, social, and personal growth.

Elevate student potential through partnership: by ensuring that all students work closely with partners to develop their ambition for their futures and explore opportunities.

Section 2

Context and Place

Oldham College is a general further education college serving the borough of Oldham within the Greater Manchester Mayoral Combined Authority (GMCA) area. In the town there is a range of post-16 academic choices available to school leavers, as a result, unlike many other further education colleges in England, the typical student at Oldham College is following a vocational career path, would be from a social-economic disadvantaged background, would have grown up in a workless household, and have limited ambition for their futures.

The role the college plays is to support students to want more for their futures through demonstrating the range of careers available to them, by presenting them with opportunities, and encouraging them to aspire for more than they are familiar with. The college is ambitious for every learner.

The College operates within the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) geography and contributes to the delivery of regional and local skills priorities. Our main campus is located in Oldham town centre, with

learners predominantly drawn from across the borough and neighbouring districts including Rochdale, Tameside and North Manchester, reflecting established travel-to-learn patterns and strong local connectivity within the city region.

Greater Manchester is one of the UK's largest city regions, with a population of nearly 3 million and over 120,000 businesses. The GMCA holds devolved responsibilities for adult education and skills, enabling a more locally responsive and integrated system. The LSIP, developed in partnership with employers, GMCA and providers, identifies key priority sectors including digital and technology, health and social care, construction (including green and retrofit) alongside cross-cutting skills such as digital capability, English and maths, leadership and management, and green skills to support the transition to net zero. These priorities directly inform curriculum planning and investment at Oldham College.

Despite strong economic assets, Greater Manchester faces significant and persistent inequalities. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2025 show that around 23% of neighbourhoods in Greater Manchester are among the most deprived nationally, with wide disparities across the city region. These inequalities are closely linked to gaps in skills, employment and health outcomes, reinforcing the importance of a highly responsive and inclusive skills system.



These challenges are particularly acute in Oldham. The borough has a population of approximately 251,560 (ONS 2024) and continues to grow, with a relatively young and diverse population profile. Oldham has a higher proportion of residents from Black and Minority Ethnic communities than the national average and a larger share of young people, increasing demand for high-quality education and progression pathways.

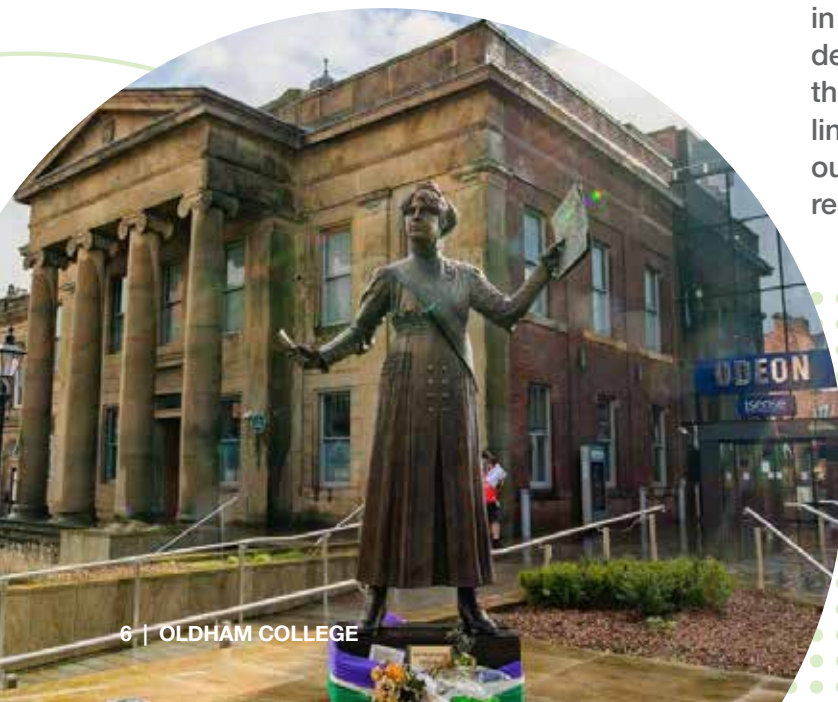
Oldham experiences high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Over 40% of residents live in the most deprived areas nationally, highlighting the scale of need within the borough. Household incomes are significantly below the national average, and around 42% of children live in relatively low-income households, one of the highest rates in England. These factors have a direct impact on educational attainment, progression and employment outcomes.

While employment rates have improved in recent years (around 76% employment for those aged 16–64), unemployment and economic inactivity remain above national averages, with inactivity often linked to health conditions and caring responsibilities. There are also persistent inequalities in labour market participation across different communities, particularly for some ethnic groups and disadvantaged residents.

The borough continues to face significant skills challenges. There is a lower proportion of residents qualified to Level 4 and above and a higher proportion with no formal qualifications compared to national averages, limiting access to higher-value employment opportunities. At the same time, local and regional strategies highlight opportunities for growth in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, green technologies, health and social care, digital

industries, and construction, including major developments such as Atom Valley and wider regeneration activity.

In this context, Oldham College plays a critical role as an anchor institution within the borough and the wider Greater Manchester system. The College works in partnership with GMCA, Oldham Council, employers and other stakeholders to deliver provision that is responsive to local labour market need, aligned to LSIP priorities, and focused on improving social mobility. Our curriculum and delivery model are designed to address skills gaps, support progression into employment and higher-level study, and contribute to inclusive economic growth across the communities we serve.



Section 3

Approach to developing the annual Accountability Statement

Oldham College has taken a structured, evidence-led and collaborative approach to developing this Accountability Statement, ensuring alignment with the priorities identified within the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and the wider strategic direction of the Greater Manchester Mayoral Combined Authority (GMCA).

Engagement has been central from the outset. The College has worked closely with key partners including local employers, industry bodies, community organisations, civic leaders, local authorities, and education and training providers to ensure that priorities and target outcomes reflect current and future labour market needs. This engagement has been ongoing throughout the planning process, enabling a responsive approach to emerging economic trends and employer demand.

The College's approach is underpinned by an employer-informed, expert-led curriculum, with Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) embedded across leadership decision-making and curriculum planning processes. Senior leaders maintain a clear focus on understanding local and regional skills needs and translating this intelligence into provision that supports sustainable employment and progression. This includes responsiveness to national policy developments, such as qualification reform, and the continued development of T Level provision in priority sectors, ensuring that learners can access high-quality technical education aligned to employer need.



To provide robust scrutiny and challenge, a dedicated Governance Task and Finish Group was established to oversee the development of the Accountability Statement. This group has ensured clear alignment between the College's strategic priorities, LSIP requirements and local economic needs. Alongside this, the College has undertaken detailed mapping of LSIP priorities against its curriculum offer, ensuring that provision directly supports priority sectors and identified skills gaps.

The College's curriculum planning process is central to this work. It draws on a wide range of data sources, including LSIP outputs, GMCA labour market intelligence, local authority strategies, sector-based insights and internal performance data. This ensures that priorities are evidence-based and focused on areas of greatest need, while also supporting continuous improvement and innovation in curriculum design.

Extensive engagement has taken place with a broad range of stakeholders to inform this plan.

These include:

- Employers across key priority sectors
- Oldham Council and wider GMCA partners
- The Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce (ERB)
- Local schools and community organisations
- Regional further education colleges and post-16 providers
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and wider employability support partners.

Collaboration with other providers has been a key feature of this approach. Through active participation in regional post-16 networks, including the Oldham Post-16 Education Group, the College has worked with partners to review local provision, reduce unnecessary duplication, and identify opportunities for more coherent and complementary curriculum offers. This includes strengthening progression pathways for learners, improving transitions between education levels, and addressing barriers to participation for disadvantaged groups. While we are continuing to review and develop our engineering offer, we do not currently deliver provision in this area and are working in partnership with other providers to meet local demand.

The College also plays an active civic role within the local system, with representation on key strategic boards such as the Oldham Economic Board. This ensures that the College both contributes to and is informed by wider place-based priorities, including the ambitions set out in the Oldham 2030 vision and the Oldham Employment and Skills Strategy.

Where appropriate, the College is working collaboratively with partners to deliver joined-up provision, share expertise, and develop aligned pathways that support learners to move from entry-level provision through to higher technical study and employment. This collective approach supports a more efficient and responsive local skills system, ensuring that provision is closely aligned to employer needs and delivers meaningful outcomes for learners.

Section 4

Contribution to national, regional and local priorities

Oldham College’s priorities for 2026/27 are directly aligned to national skills priorities, the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), GMCA growth strategies, and local economic priorities including the Oldham Employment and Skills Strategy and Atom Valley developments. These priorities also reflect the College’s Strategic Plan 2024–2027 and its responsibilities under the Local Needs Duty.

As a key partner in both the Eastern Growth Cluster and North East Growth Corridor, the College plays a central role in supporting growth sectors such as digital, construction (including green skills), and health and social care. Our objectives for 2026/27 are informed by robust labour market intelligence, LSIP priorities, and employer engagement.

Oldham College does not currently deliver engineering programmes because a comprehensive engineering provision is already available through established local



providers. These organisations offer specialist facilities, employer aligned pathways, and strong progression routes that meet regional demand effectively. In this context, duplicating provision would not represent best use of public funding, nor would it strengthen the wider post 16 ecosystem.

We continue to monitor regional engineering demand closely, including learner interest, employer need, and any shifts in local capacity. This ensures that our curriculum remains responsive and that we can adapt quickly should gaps emerge.

The development of Atom Valley, a major innovation and advanced manufacturing corridor across North Manchester, creates significant future opportunities for Oldham College. As Atom Valley grows, it will generate demand for skills in:

- Advanced manufacturing and digital production
- Green technologies and low carbon engineering
- Construction and infrastructure linked to large scale development
- Digital and automation including robotics, AI enabled systems, and industrial data
- Business, leadership and innovation supporting new enterprises and supply chains.

Our role is to ensure learners in Oldham can access future facing skills pathways that connect directly to Atom Valley’s growth, without replicating provision already delivered effectively elsewhere.

Priority Sectors	National Priorities	Manchester Priorities	Oldham Priorities	Our Offer
Construction	✔	✔	✔	✔
Manufacturing	✔	✔	✔	
Digital & Technology	✔	✔		✔
Health & Social Care	✔	✔	✔	✔
Haulage & Logistics	✔	✔	✔	
Engineering	✔		✔	
Science & Maths	✔			✔
Retail, Hospitality & Tourism		✔	✔	✔
Business & Professional			✔	✔

LSIP Priority	Employer Advisory Board Feedback	Oldham College Curriculum and Skills Alignment
Construction and Infrastructure		
Major demand for construction, modern methods of Construction, retrofit, civil engineering, and infrastructure skills.	Need for job ready learners with practical skills.	Construction trades, professional construction, modern methods of construction retrofit, and sustainability.
Growth linked to Atom Valley and wider Greater Manchester development zones.	Strong demand for retrofit, green construction, digital tools (BIM), and site management skills. Employers emphasise behaviours, reliability, and readiness for site culture.	Digital construction pathways (BIM, surveying tech). Expansion planned in green skills and low carbon construction aligned to Atom Valley.
Digital, Data and Automation		
Digital skills shortages across all sectors.	Need for digital technicians who can work across sectors.	Digital T Levels, cyber security, software development, data and digital technologies.
High demand for data technicians, cyber security, automation, and digital manufacturing.	Employers request more data literacy, cyber awareness, and automation related skills.	Higher Technical Qualifications in digital.
	Strong interest in digital apprenticeships.	Opportunities to expand into automation and industrial digitalisation linked to Atom Valley.
Green Skills and Low-Carbon Technologies		
Net zero transition requires retrofit, sustainability, environmental technologies.	Employers request retrofit skills, energy efficiency knowledge, and sustainability awareness.	Retrofit, sustainability, modern methods of Construction, environmental technologies.
Green skills embedded across all sectors.	Need for workforce able to work on low carbon construction and infrastructure.	Green construction pathways already in place. Expansion planned in low carbon systems linked to Atom Valley.
Business, Leadership and Professional Services		
SME growth, leadership capability, project management, and innovation skills.	Employers want stronger leadership, communication, project management, and business administration skills.	Business, professional services, leadership and management. Apprenticeships supporting SME development.
Atom Valley expected to stimulate new supply chains and enterprise.	Interest in apprenticeships for workforce development.	Opportunities to expand innovation and enterprise skills linked to Atom Valley.



Priority Objectives for 2026/27

Student

1. Grow provision in LSIP priority sectors

Target: Increase enrolments in LSIP priority sectors (digital, construction, health & social care, education/early years) by 10% by July 2027 compared to 2025/26 baseline.

Actions:

- Deliver a minimum 10% increase in learner volumes in LSIP priority sectors in 2026/27.
- Launch at least 3 new programmes aligned to Atom Valley and GM Skills Strategy by July 2027.

Impact: Curriculum alignment is strengthened with labour market demand and supports regional economic growth.

2. Expand higher level technical education and progression

Target: Increase the proportion of learners progressing to Level 4+ study, higher apprenticeships or university by 5% by July 2027.

Actions:

- Improve GCSE English and maths grade 4+ achievement by 4% by July 2027.
- Increase 16–19 progression to higher level study by 5% compared to 2025/26.

Impact: Improves access to higher skilled roles and supports productivity growth.

3. Continue growth and alignment of T Level provision

Target: Increase T Level enrolments by 10% in 2026/27 and ensure 100% of T Level learners complete a high quality industry placement.

Actions:

- Expand T Level routes in digital, health and construction by adding at least 2 new pathways by September 2027.
- Secure industry placements for all T Level learners by July 2027.

Impact: Provides high quality technical pathways aligned with employer demand.

4. Increase participation and progression for disadvantaged groups

Target: Increase participation of disadvantaged and at risk learners by 10% and improve retention and achievement for these groups by 5% by July 2027.

Actions:

- Increase engagement of NEET and at risk learners by 10% through targeted outreach.
- Expand Level 1 and Level 2 pathways by two new programmes supporting progression into employment or further study.

Impact: Supports social mobility and inclusive growth across Oldham.

People

5. Strengthen employer engagement and workforce development

Target: Increase the number of employers engaged in curriculum design, delivery, placements and workforce development by 20% by July 2027.

Actions:

- Introduce talent pipeline programmes with Health and Construction employers.
- Engage with at least 20 Employer Ambassadors by July 2027.
- Double the amount of active Industry Associates taking part in the Programme contributing to curriculum and mentoring.

Impact: Enhances responsiveness to employer need and improves employment outcomes.

Place

6. Expand adult skills provision aligned to local need

Target: Increase adult participation in technical and vocational programmes to ensure the full allocation is used by July 2027, with a focus on Health and Construction.

Actions:

- Expand English, maths and ESOL provision to meet local demand.
- Introduce two new flexible adult pathways supporting upskilling and reskilling.

Impact: Supports economic participation and addresses local skills shortages.

Partners

7. Grow and align apprenticeship provision

Target: Increase apprenticeship starts in priority sectors by 8% by July 2027.

Actions:

- Strengthen progression from full time study into apprenticeships by increasing internal progression by 10%.
- Expand apprenticeship delivery in health, construction, digital and emerging sectors.

Impact: Supports employer workforce needs and learner progression into sustained employment.



Section 5

Inclusive Mainstream Fund

At Oldham College, inclusion is embedded in every action we take and every decision we make. Inclusion is at the heart of Oldham College, it isn't an initiative, but a daily commitment reflected in all that we do as this is what our learners need and deserve.

Oldham College is committed to ensuring that learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are fully supported to access high-quality education, achieve positive outcomes, and progress successfully into employment or further study. The College will utilise the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) in 2026/27 to support the transition towards the reformed SEND system, in line with the principles set out in SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First.

Our approach is focused on early identification, inclusive practice, and the development of tailored support strategies that enable learners with SEND to succeed within mainstream provision wherever possible.



Key Priorities for 2026/27

1. Strengthening early identification and assessment

We will continue to enhance our processes for identifying learners' needs at the earliest opportunity, ensuring that appropriate support is in place from the start of their programme. This includes transition planning with schools and local authority partners, alongside the use of diagnostic assessment tools and learner profiling.

2. Embedding inclusive teaching and learning practices

The College will invest in staff development to further embed inclusive, adaptive teaching strategies across all curriculum areas. This includes training in areas such as scaffolding learning, use of assistive technologies, and strategies to support learners with a range of needs, including autism spectrum conditions, social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), and moderate learning difficulties.

3. Expanding the use of assistive and digital technologies

Funding will be used to enhance the availability and use of assistive technologies to remove barriers to learning. This includes tools to support literacy, communication, organisation and independent learning, enabling greater participation in mainstream classrooms.

4. Enhancing learner support and wellbeing provision

We will strengthen specialist support services, including learning support, mentoring and wellbeing support, to ensure learners with SEND receive the personalised support required to remain engaged, progress and achieve. This includes targeted interventions for learners at risk of disengagement.

5. Supporting progression and independence

A key focus will be on preparing learners with SEND for their next steps, including employment, apprenticeships and higher-level study. This includes developing employability skills, increasing access to work experience opportunities, and strengthening partnerships with employers to support inclusive recruitment and progression.

6. Aligning provision with SEND reforms and local system priorities

The College will continue to work closely with Oldham Council and Greater Manchester partners to align provision with the evolving SEND system. This includes contributing to local SEND strategies, improving transition pathways.

Contribution to SEND Reform
Through these actions, Oldham College will:

- Support the transition to a more inclusive and joined-up SEND system
- Enable more learners with SEND to access and succeed in mainstream provision
- Improve consistency and quality of support across the College
- Strengthen progression outcomes and preparation for adulthood.



Section 6

Local Needs Duty

In line with the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, Oldham College has undertaken a comprehensive review of how effectively its education and training provision meets local, regional and national skills needs. This review has been led by senior leaders and overseen by the Governing Body, with scrutiny provided through the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

The College offers a broad and balanced curriculum across key priority sectors including digital and creative, health and social care, construction, education and early years, and business services. Provision spans entry level through to higher technical qualifications, including T Levels, apprenticeships and Higher Technical Qualifications, ensuring clear progression pathways for learners. In 2025/26, this included delivery to young people (16–19), adults, apprentices and learners with high needs, with planned growth in priority sectors for 2026/27.

The review concluded that the College's provision is largely well-aligned to local and regional skills priorities, particularly those identified through the Greater Manchester LSIP and local economic strategies. Strengths include a strong employer-informed curriculum, high-quality specialist facilities, and effective partnerships with employers and stakeholders, enabling the College to respond flexibly to labour market demand.

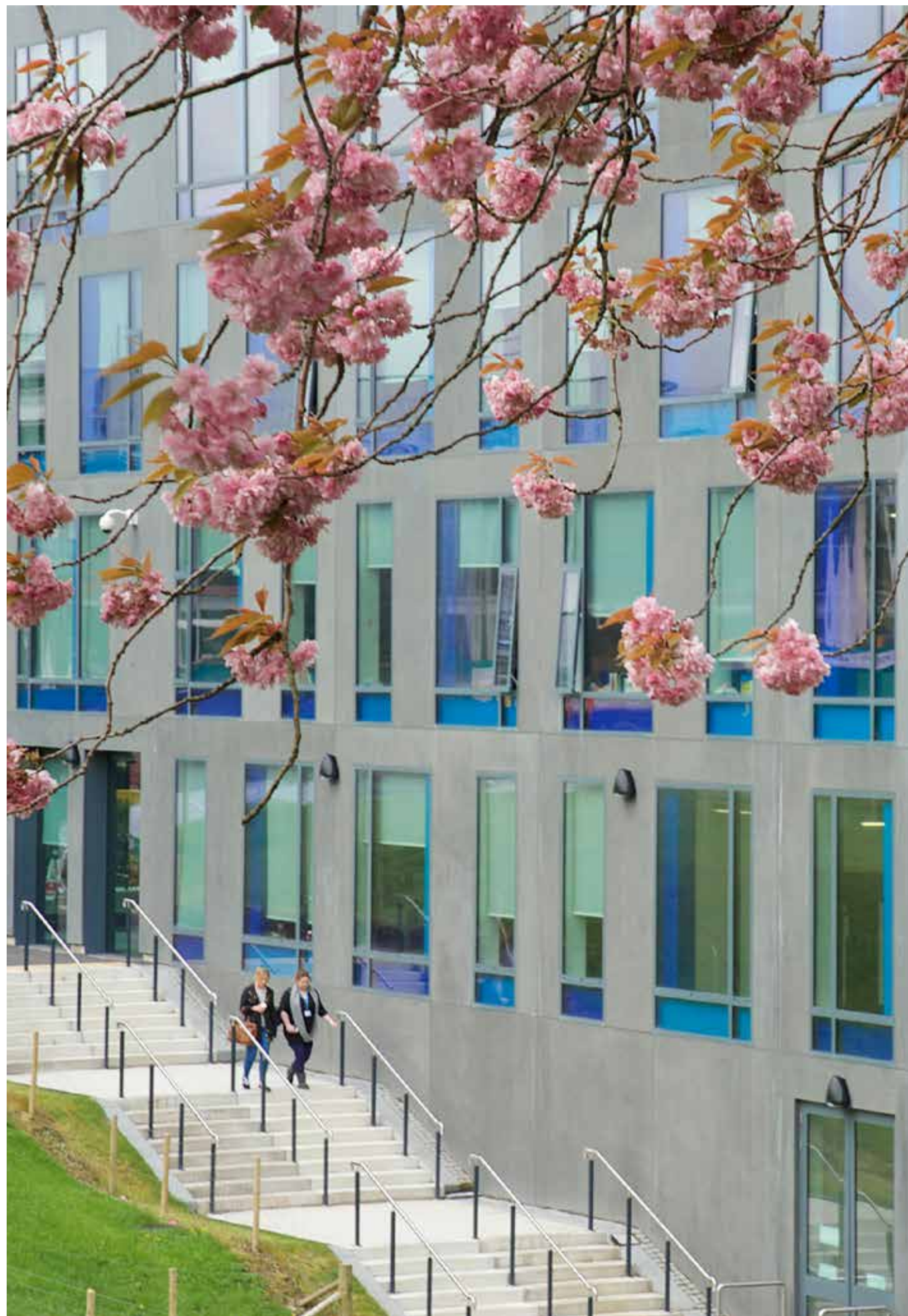
The review also identified key areas for further development to strengthen alignment with local needs:

- Further expansion of provision in priority growth sectors
- Continued growth in higher-level technical provision to support progression and meet employer demand
- Increased focus on adult skills and workforce development, particularly in flexible and sector-based provision
- Strengthening progression pathways, including transitions into apprenticeships, employment and higher-level study
- Reducing barriers to participation and improving outcomes for disadvantaged and SEND learners.

In response, the College has taken the following actions and will continue to build on these in 2026/27:

- Embedding a strengthened curriculum planning process, underpinned by Labour Market Intelligence and LSIP priorities
- Investing in high-quality specialist facilities and resources, including those supporting T Levels and technical education
- Expanding partnerships with employers, including the development of talent pipelines and workforce development programmes
- Working collaboratively with local providers to ensure complementary provision, reduce duplication and improve progression pathways
- Aligning provision with strategic developments such as Atom Valley and the Oldham 2030 vision.





Section 7

Corporation Statement

On behalf of The Oldham College Full Corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the Corporation conducts reviews in line with the local needs duty, as such resulting in this plan. The annual accountability statement sets out an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 30th June 2026.

The plan will be published on the Oldham College website and can be accessed within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link.

www.oldham.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/accountability-statment-2026-27.pdf

Section 8

Supporting Documents

Oldham College Strategic Plan 2024-2027

[Strategic-Plan-24-27.pdf](#)

Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan

[Local Skills Improvement Plan | GM Chamber](#)

GM Five Year Environment Plan 2025-2030

[Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan 2025–2030](#)

Oldham Economic Plan 2030 Strategy

[3ii. 20240529 SCRUTINY Economic Plan Appendix A - AMG updated.pdf](#)

Get Britain Working Local Plan

[Work Local: Get Britain working locally | Local Government Association](#)

Local Growth Plan

[The Local Plan | The Big Oldham Convo](#)

