



Chapter 7:

Employment Potential

7. EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL

Introduction

7.1 The remaining mills across Oldham provide ubiquitous reminders of the growth of the town during the industrial revolution as the main cotton spinning centre in Lancashire and the overwhelming majority of the mills remain in employment use in the present day, although they have been repurposed following the decline of the cotton spinning industry.



Bell Mill (Currently in Use as Textile Factory by Turner Bianca)

7.2 The adopted Oldham Local Plan designates a number of Business

Employment Areas (BEAs) and Saddleworth Employment Areas (SEAs) to provide for a broad and diverse range of employment generating uses, which will help meet the needs of a changing local economy and provide opportunities for investment for new businesses and existing firms.

7.3 There are a number of other established industrial / trading estates across the Borough which are not formally designated for employment use within the adopted Development Plan but which provide low cost employment premises for a range of types of business.

- 7.4 The majority of the remaining mill stock is located within designated employment areas or within existing industrial / trading estate locations and is currently in active employment generating use providing accommodation for single tenants (e.g. storage and distribution warehouses) or low cost premises for a number of businesses within an individual mill.

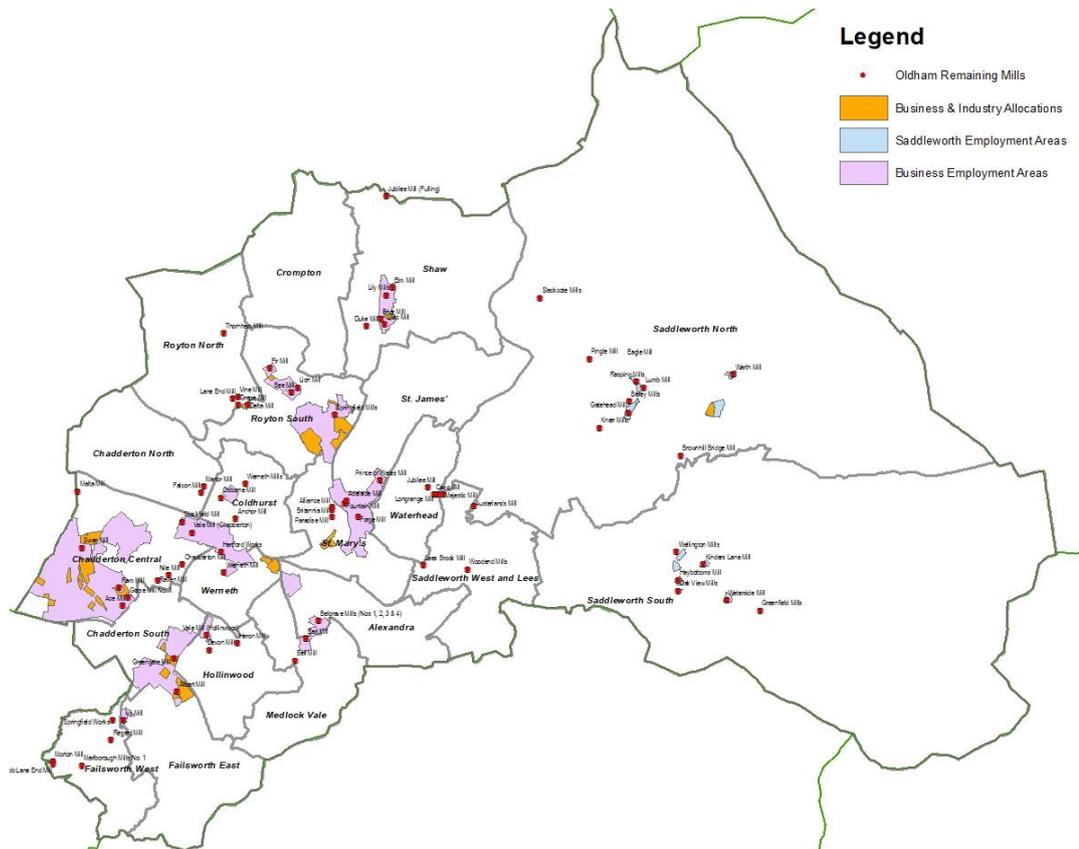
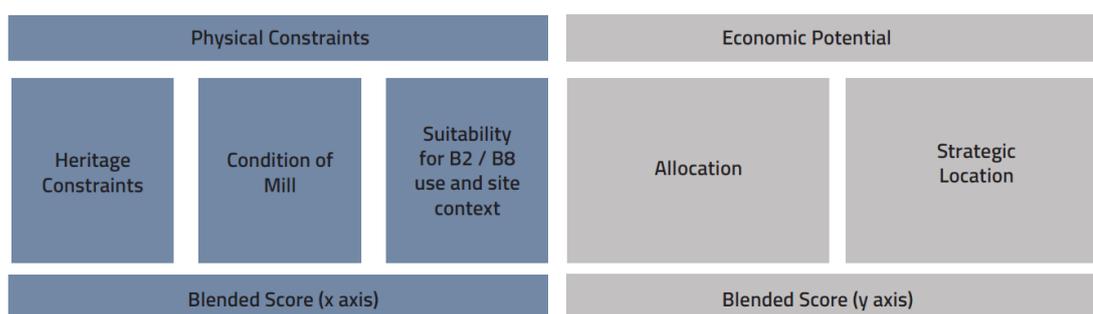


Figure 7.1: Location of Mills Relative to Designated Employment Areas

- 7.5 There are however inevitably some mill buildings within established employment areas that are underutilised, particularly the upper floors, or which may become vacant in the short term, for example at the end of a lease period or due to business failure, which may become more prevalent as the wider economic impacts of COVID-19 become clearer. It is apparent that the existing mill stock can provide low cost premises within established employment areas that could prove attractive to a number of employment sectors to help meet economic needs over the Plan period and beyond.

- 7.6 This section of the Mills Strategy therefore seeks to assess the potential for the individual mills to be utilised for employment use. However, given the limitations of the study, it should be acknowledged that this exercise merely seeks to provide a high level overview of the economic potential of each mill based upon a limited range of criteria relating to heritage, condition, suitability, allocation and strategic location, as detailed below. It is not therefore intended to provide a detailed appraisal of the suitability or viability of the conversion of individual mills to alternative or new economic uses. On this basis, it should be noted that there may be instances where a particular mill scores poorly in terms of economic potential even though it is within a well-established employment use and is likely to remain so in the long term as a consequence of the limited range of criteria assessed for the purposes of this study.
- 7.7 The assessment follows a similar approach to that adopted in relation to housing potential (Chapter 5) with values assigned to each of the inputs, which are explained in further detail below. An average '*Physical Constraints*' rating of each mill is set against the '*Economic Potential*' to give an overall score, which will provide a broad indication of the potential for the re-use of the individual mill for employment purposes.



Physical Constraints

Heritage Constraints and Condition

- 7.8 The scores attributed to the individual mills in respect of heritage and condition reflect those utilised within the assessment of housing potential for consistency.

Suitability for Employment Uses and Site Context

- 7.9 The suitability for employment use score considers the site specific constraints and opportunities that may impact upon the suitability of an individual mill for employment use, primarily focusing on general suitability for industrial and storage and distribution uses (Use Class B2 / B8) reflective of the fact that by virtue of their size, many mills lend themselves to use as storage and distribution facilities or factories for other purposes. It is however acknowledged that former mills can be successfully repurposed to other employment generating uses, however, for purposes of this high level assessment, the scoring is focussed on adaptability to B2 / B8 use.
- 7.10 This assessment therefore considers factors including the scale of the mill, level of curtilage space, suitability of access and surrounding road network and space available for the manoeuvring of HGVs and service vehicles. A score of 5 would indicate that the mill is highly suitable for such use, whereas a score of -5 would indicate that a mill is totally unsuitable for re-use for such purposes.

Blended Score

- 7.11 The blended score is not weighted. It is an average of the three sections which collectively make up the physical constraints. The blended score for each mill gives the numerical value for the x-axis for each mill.

Economic Potential

Allocation

- 7.12 The allocation score is reflective of any specific land use designations affecting the individual mills with scores ranging from +5 to -3. A score of 5 was given to any mills which are situated within BEAs and SEAs identified within Amion's SIF Refresh Report as having the greatest potential to attract and accommodate priority sectors, namely Hollinwood, Foxdenton and Greengate / Broadgate. A score of 3 was given to any mills which were located within any other allocated BEA or SEA. A score of 0 has been attributed to any mills not subject to any specific land use designation but which are in either an established employment area or other predominantly mixed use or commercial area. A score of -3 was given to any mills not in an allocated employment area and where employment uses would not be complementary to surrounding land uses giving rise to potential amenity concerns, for example, mills located within predominantly residential areas.

Strategic Location

- 7.13 Oldham has a good level of accessibility to the strategic road network and access to Manchester, particularly to the west of the Borough, which is likely to prove attractive to a range of employment sectors. In order to attribute a strategic location score to each mill, the

Borough was divided into three areas - high, medium and low as illustrated below, which received scores of 3, 0 and -3, respectively.

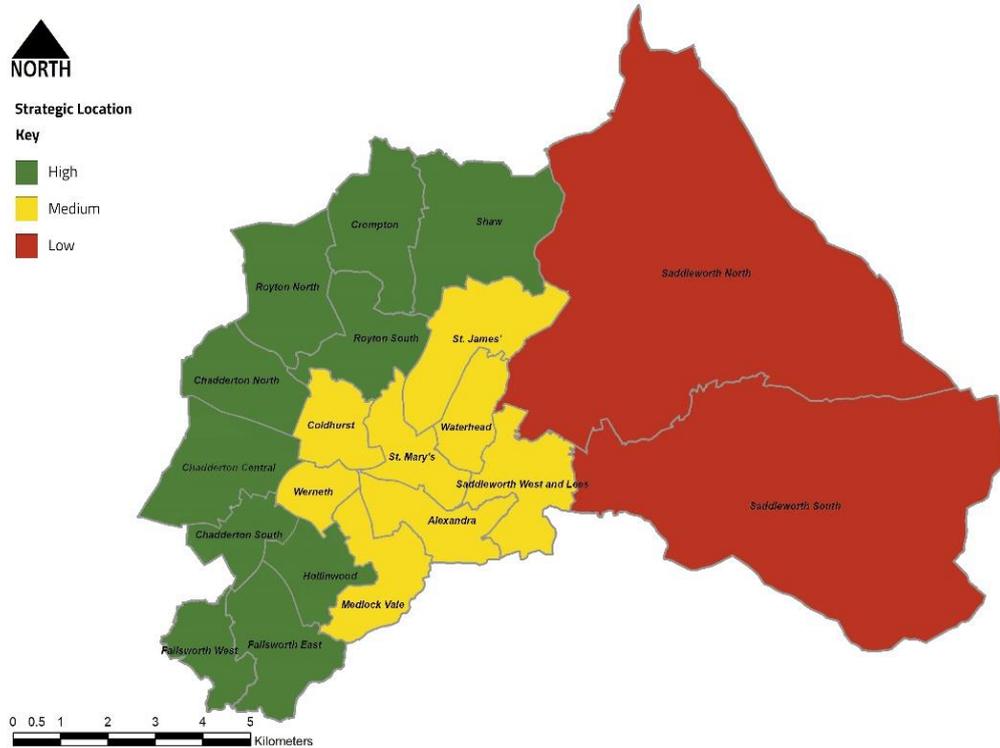


Figure 7.2: Strategic Location Classification

- 7.14 The wards identified in the 'high' strategic location area are considered to have the strongest linkages to the strategic road network and the local workforce, whereas those within the 'low' strategic location area are the more isolated rural wards to the east of the administrative area.

Findings

- 7.15 Following the assessment of the 64 mills against the criteria outlined above, each mill was given an overall blended score, which was the average of the x-axis (Physical Constraints) score and the y-axis (Economic Potential) score. In order to give an indicative illustration of

the suitability of each mill for employment re-use, the following scoring system was devised, which would then allow each mill to be categorised as high, medium and low to ensure consistency with the approach adopted to the assessment of heritage and landscape value, as well as housing potential. It is important to reiterate that this exercise is intended to provide a high level overview of the economic potential of each mill based upon a limited range of criteria and does not provide a detailed appraisal of the suitability or viability of the conversion of individual mills to alternative or new economic uses.

Overall Categorisation	Categorisation Score Thresholds
Low	< 1.0
Medium	1.0 – 2.5
High	>2.5

7.16 In total, 21 of the 64 mills that were assessed fell into the low category having regard to the range of criteria assessed. However, a number of the mills in question provide low cost employment units for local businesses within established trading estate settings and, as such, are likely to remain in such use over the medium to long term. However, there are other mills identified within this category, which, although currently in employment use, may be better suited to alternative future use as a result of their physical or locational characteristics.

Low Category	Alliance Mill, Austerlands Mill, Britannia Mill, Fountain Mill, Gatehead Mill, Greenfield Mills, Jubilee Mill, Jubilee (Fulling) Mill, Kinders Lane Mill, Knarr Mill, Majestic Mill, Morton Mill, Paradise Mill, Pingle Mill, Prince of Wales Mill, Rasing Mills, Slackcote Mills, Springfield Works, Thornham Mill, Wellington Mills, Woodend Mill
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7.17 Following the assessment, 26 of the 64 mills fell into the medium category and, again, many of these mills are in active employment use within established industrial estate / allocated employment site settings and have therefore secured a viable use appropriate within their wider land use setting and, as such, the continuation of these established uses will overwhelmingly represent the most sustainable option for these mills going forward. However, such matters are considered in more detail within Chapter 9 and the individual site appraisals appended to this document.

Medium Category	Adelaide Mill, Belgrave Mills, Bell Mill, Cairo Mill, Delta Mill, Dob Lane End Mill, Duke Mill, Earl Mill, Falcon Mill, Forge Mill, Grape Mill, Haybottoms Mill, Heron Mill, Lane End Mill, Longrange Mill, Lumb Mill, Malta Mill, Marlborough Mill (No.1), Oak View Mills, Osborne Mill, Raven Mill, Vine Mill, Warth Mill, Waterside Mill, Werneth Mill, Werneth Mills
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7.18 Of the 64 mills that were assessed, 17 were categorised as high in terms of economic potential. These mills are overwhelmingly located within allocated employment areas, including those identified as having greatest potential to accommodate identified priority sectors within Amion's SIF Refresh and have easy access to the strategic road network and local workforce.

High Category	Ace Mill, Alberts Mill, Bee Mill, Briar Mill, Elm Mill, Fir Mill, Gorse Mill (No.1), Greengate Mill, Ivy Mill, Lilac Mill, Lily Mills, Ram Mill, Springfield Mills, Stockfield Mill, Swan Mill, Vale Mill (Chamber Road), Vale Mill (Stockfield Road)
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