

# Oldham

## Housing Strategy 2019

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**Oldham**  
Council



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# Foreword

## A Vision for Oldham

**Oldham is a borough of contrasts and strong communities. We have an impressive history of technological innovation and entrepreneurship which made us the world's cotton manufacturing centre.**

The borough is the home of many inspiring individuals who have helped shape our lives and whose legacy we honour, including many ordinary men and women who did extraordinary things. We have remembered many of these in our commemorations of the First World War over the past four years. A promise made in 1919 to build 'homes fit for heroes'. Our vision a hundred years later is to work to secure every resident a home which meets their needs: a home which is safe, warm and affordable.

We want to make Oldham a place where every resident, as well as those looking to settle here, can find a home they want at a price they can afford. We know we have too much older terraced housing in central areas, much of which is in poor condition. This means too many residents live in homes that are in poor repair or overcrowded. At the same time economically active households look outside the borough for more modern, attractive housing to settle and bring up their families. The Government has set us a challenging annual development target of 716 new homes. This is an opportunity to increase the quality and choice available at different prices, and across tenures, including homes for social rent. There are too many local people who have no home at all, including rough sleepers, and some neighbourhoods have large numbers of transient households. In common with other areas, Oldham has growing numbers of older residents who will need homes to meet their changing needs. We face growing pressure on restricted resources in the context of Government policy which focuses on home ownership and offers subsidies for social rented and affordable housing largely elsewhere in England.

Our overall aim is to create an attractive 'housing offer' for existing and new residents by making a wider range of housing and financial products available alongside good advice and publicity about how to access those opportunities. We will need to be bold and innovative to tackle all the challenges this strategy has identified. For example, we are working to bring empty homes back into use and up to a good state of repair. We will need to make the best use of our resources and find ways to make existing homes suitable for changing needs. One step could be helping older home owners to access ethical equity loans to improve their home. We anticipate more movement as people find homes that are more suitable for their needs and lifestyles and vacate others which will, in turn, increase choice for other people to find a suitable home.

Oldham's rapidly improving schools are committed to an educational experience for our children and young people, that raises the bar. We will make the most of the road, rail and tram network to create a place where people can enjoy good connectivity and get on in their lives. We want business leaders to establish high quality businesses here – both large and small – and to help local people to find routes into good employment. We will create a good mix of appealing homes in safe and attractive neighbourhoods so that people will want, and be able to afford, to live here. We will develop sustainable ways of looking after our older and more vulnerable residents so that they get the support and care they need and have the opportunity to give something back.

## We've made a start but there's much more to do

The 'Oldham offer' will underpin our efforts to reverse some negative trends. We must halt the outflow of too many talented young people who move away never to return. We must derive greater benefit from our proximity to Manchester – the major, growing economic centre of the north – enabling more of our residents to secure high quality jobs in the city and drawing people who work there to live and spend their money in Oldham. And we must continue to make Oldham a place where people from different cultural backgrounds feel good living, working and spending their time in shared spaces and neighbourhoods.

We are working to modernise the district town centres too. The Oldham Town Centre and Royton Masterplans, which are being shaped by local people and partners, are driving the development of new shops, restaurants, independent businesses, leisure facilities, homes and communal spaces. We want each of our town centres to be a place that everyone can enjoy and for Oldham Town Centre to develop a residential offer that is attractive for young and old alike. We are committed to securing brownfield development, re-purposing our derelict industrial sites, including those occupied by redundant cotton mills. This is complex work, but we are determined to find positive purposes for these over time, so they can support our wider vision.

We have the right ingredients to make Oldham a modern thriving place where people can fulfil their potential, businesses can succeed, and vulnerable citizens can live happily. We have made a start and the changes are already underway. Significant challenges remain, but we will work through them drawing on the energy and creativity of our workforce, residents and partners to find solutions together. We will do #ourbit and we hope you will do #yourbit so that together we will get the #result: safe, warm, comfortable homes that meet the needs of Oldham's residents



*Hannah Roberts*

**Councillor. Hannah Roberts,**  
Lead Cabinet Member for Housing

# 1 Executive summary

**This Housing Strategy and underpinning delivery plan mark a significant change in how we think about, organise for and take decisions and action on housing over the coming years.**

## **An attractive 'Housing Offer' to support an inclusive economy**

Our aim is to provide a diverse Oldham Housing Offer that is attractive and meets the needs of different sections of the population at different stages of their lives. We are being more creative than in the past in our efforts to enable people to find housing solutions that suit them. Our proposals here go beyond the projected numbers of new homes and focus on the dynamics between people, homes and the wider economy. For example, helping an older person to meet their need for a smaller more manageable home might also provide an opportunity to help an overcrowded household to meet their need for a larger home. Providing specific types of residential space close to facilities that we know young people will find compelling might help to bolster Oldham's economy and reduce the outflow of younger economically active people from leaving. Providing a locally focused mutual exchange scheme for council and housing association residents to swap homes, might enable more people to find a more suitable home without having to sit waiting on the housing register for a home allocation.

As well as our ambitions to build a broader range of housing in the borough, we are considering how best the council can support people in a wider range of housing situations. For example, by putting up equity that enables people to buy a home or to renovate a poor condition home, or both. Through owning loan shares in many homes that are repaid either over a given time period or on sale of the home, Oldham Council could create a progressive and gradual new way to subsidise housing to make it affordable.



A stylized graphic at the top of the page features a dark teal background. In the center, there is a white outline of a house roof with three peaks. Above the roof, there are two concentric, semi-circular arches in shades of teal and light blue, resembling a rainbow.

# The Oldham Housing Offer

- Greater diversity in the type of new homes built
- More choice in affordable homes and financial products
- Homes attractive to young people
- Homes suitable for older people
- Specialised and supported housing for vulnerable people
- More homes accessible to large and intergenerational families to relieve overcrowding
- Options to 'Do It Yourself' and support for community-led housing
- Greater choice for existing tenants
- Making better use of existing properties by bringing empty homes back into use
- Improved quality and condition of homes and tenancies for private tenants.

We will provide advice and signposting to the full range of housing options available through the Oldham Housing Offer

## New ways of working

When it comes to delivering the new housing offer, the old methods will not be adequate. Oldham for example, now needs to account for the number of new homes it builds against a nationally set target number, in a Housing Delivery Test, yet there is a limited land supply and many unviable brownfield sites that are not, as they stand, sufficiently attractive to developers.

The council therefore intends to develop a broad ‘toolkit’ of approaches that will help increase certainty for developers and reduce the burden on difficult sites. This can be done for example, by changing the way we negotiate planning obligations and by exploring the creation of a flexible Oldham Housing Fund and improving existing homes to make neighbourhoods more attractive to potential purchasers. We intend to draw on these new tools in a flexible way on a site by site basis. We will encourage and develop partnerships with those developers and registered housing providers that show a high level of commitment to our vision and work with them to support sites being built out.

The council will also take direct action to build new homes. We will consider how we might best deliver this using our new Housing Revenue Account borrowing capability, and which partnerships and/or delivery models will enable us to do this most effectively.

## Delivering the housing offer

### The scale of housing development

The Greater Manchester (GM) Plan for Homes, Jobs, and the Environment is starting to provide a credible framework for Oldham to design its future on a broader stage. In a bid to boost northern competitiveness, the GM Plan projects the need for more new homes in Oldham over the period 2018-37. At the time of writing Oldham’s Local Housing Need is for 716 homes a year. More than double the number built annually over recent years. Scaling up the level of development over the next five years and making sure we deliver the right mix of size, type, tenure and affordability of homes in each neighbourhood, to make Oldham an attractive place to live (see page 7), is going to require a whole new way of working.

## Making evidence-based decisions about housing

In order to improve our ability to steer housing development across the borough, we have undertaken a resident-informed local housing needs assessment and further research into how Oldham’s private rented sector is operating. These published documents have given us a detailed and comprehensive evidence-base and together they show what is happening in our housing market. We have also consulted a wide age range of residents on housing-related matters and have listened to what disabled people, people with dementia, people who have a mental health problem, people with a learning disability and care leavers say they need in terms of housing. Together, these help to explain some of the changes and challenges Oldham is experiencing. They point to land and investment decisions that will need to be taken; and they put forward proposals for the type and size of homes, and specialised/supported housing, that could be built in each district to provide for the projected population increase.



## Place offer to support the Oldham Plan

We want to build on our Oldham plan model and housing policies like our Private Sector Housing Selective Licensing Scheme, which are enabling a more proactive approach to solving neighbourhood problems with residents. We want to take further steps and continue to invite residents to work co-operatively with us to co-produce Place Plans that will provide a blueprint for how their neighbourhood might develop over the next 20 years.

Our newly-refreshed local housing needs assessment provides us with a robust evidence-base that helps provide substantiated insights into how Oldham's Housing Economy currently works, forecasts future housing needs projections and identifies gaps. These 'Housing Insights' will help to contribute to the development of a better Local Plan and help steer the right sort of new housing development. But rather than being merely a paper exercise, we want residents to work with us to make sense of the evidence and shape what happens in their neighbourhoods. We will ask them to consider what the evidence is saying about housing requirements in their neighbourhoods and together these will provide a vehicle for constructive conversations about how both the housing and the place offer for their neighbourhood might change for the better.

We therefore want to provide a vehicle through the creation of Place Plans for local people to share the long-term future for their neighbourhoods within the wider context of the Oldham Plan and Greater Manchester Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment.

While Place Plans and the Housing Insights that inform them would not in themselves be statutory documents, they would contribute to the statutory Local Plan or neighbourhood planning processes. These 'Place Plans' would build on the three themes of the Oldham Plan: thriving communities, an inclusive economy and co-operative services. They would be a vehicle for conversations about how neighbourhoods might respond to evidence of need, draw on their many strengths and make the most of opportunities available in order for us to work co-operatively to meet future housing and employment needs and shape the public realm over the next 15-20 years to support a compelling vision for the community.





## **Better housing and support to improve people's lives**

Partners in Oldham share an ambition to achieve and sustain the greatest and fastest possible improvement in the health and wellbeing of Oldham's residents by 2020. While we made significant physical improvement to privately owned homes between 2010 and 2015. Our privately owned housing, and especially its private rented sector, remains in some areas in very poor condition and relatively unhealthy compared to the national average.

This industrial legacy that created swathes of terraced housing presents a heavy cost to some of our residents and our public services today. Despite having very little capital resource to invest in these poor condition predominately terraced homes, we intend to develop a long-term joint 'Healthy Homes' plan of action to radically improve them.

Our health and social care services have a key interest in many housing issues. The health of our population is at a greater risk from poor housing conditions. The quality of homes is a driver of health inequalities, with those living in poverty more likely to live in poorer housing, unstable housing circumstances or lack accommodation altogether.

We intend to change our governance arrangements so that the Strategic Housing Partnership Board and Oldham Cares work together to develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated and person-centred approach across health, plus Adult and Childrens social care to improve people's health and wellbeing through the home.

This will include campaigning with our Greater Manchester partners for more 'Healthy Homes' resources that will enable us to take action. In the short term we will continue to do more to reduce the number of residents living in fuel poverty by increasing the resources for our very successful Warm Homes Scheme. We will also increase our ability to identify the most vulnerable people living in the poorest quality homes and concentrate efforts on them.

## **Taking opportunities**

While we are proposing significant changes to the way we do things, we have built this strategy and delivery plan on exciting work that is already underway and working well. We are not deterred by the major challenges and a lack of resources, rather we are determined to create and to readily take opportunities to overcome the significant housing, economic and other challenges Oldham faces and work towards achieving our long-term vision for the borough with Greater Manchester.

We are confident this strategy will take Oldham closer to realising its ambitions.

## 2 Housing and the Oldham Plan

**This Housing Strategy is grounded in the ethos of the Oldham Plan. The delivery model is based around three fundamental changes which will work together to deliver the ambitions of this Plan. These shifts are complemented and supported by a focus on two key enablers – public service reform and empowering people and communities.**

While we made significant physical improvement to privately owned homes between 2010 and 2015, Oldham's privately owned housing, and especially its private rented sector, remains in some areas of the Borough in very poor condition. This industrial legacy that created swathes of terraced housing presents a heavy cost to some of our residents and our public services today. Despite having very little capital resource to invest in these poor condition predominately terraced homes, we intend to develop a long-term joint Health and Housing plan of action to radically improve them.

Our health services have a key interest in many housing issues. The health of our population is at a greater risk from poor housing conditions. The quality of homes is a driver of health inequalities.

We intend to change our governance arrangements to work together to develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated and person-centred approach across health, Adult and Childrens social care to improve people's health and wellbeing through the home.

This will include campaigning with our Greater Manchester partners for more 'Healthy Homes' resources that will enable us to do more. In the short term we will seek to increase the resources for our Warm Homes Scheme. We will also increase our ability to identify the most vulnerable people living in the poorest quality homes and concentrate our efforts on them.

The actions we take with our partners in the delivery plan that underpins this strategy will support the three changes.

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**1 Inclusive Economy:** We will facilitate development of the right mix of new homes in accessible locations and set out a long-term plan to improve our existing housing to create an 'Oldham Housing Offer'. This will meet the aspirations and needs of Oldham's residents and will continue to welcome newcomers to the town – people who have come here to work or commute to the major regional centres and contribute to the local economy. We will support developers that are committed to delivering our vision and that offer good well designed housing, employment opportunities and training for our residents.

We will continue to work with our housing partners to push for the best possible outcomes from Greater Manchester devolution through influencing the investment model and the delivery of public service reform. We will maximise the collective strengths by making the most out of every pound we spend, every asset we have and through our collective workforce for public good. We will also use our collective influence across our housing partnerships to campaign on the issues that matter most to residents and have a collective Oldham voice at Greater Manchester level.

**2 Co-operative Services:** We are listening hard to understand our communities' experiences of housing and how people want to live their lives. We will work in partnership with local communities inviting them to work co-operatively with us to co-produce evidence-based Place Plans, Housing Insights and Masterplans to shape Oldham's neighbourhoods and town centres, including decisions about where new homes are built and priorities for action on housing.

**3 Thriving Communities:** We will continue our work with residents to solve difficulties that arise in their neighbourhoods. Selective licensing is enabling us to take a more proactive approach in areas where there are high levels of private renting and our more focused and tailored localised responses enables us to be effective in tackling specific issues that arise. We will ensure that the condition of people's homes is taken into account when determining how best to address people's health and social care issues and target our limited resources, for example, to keep people warm in their homes. We will help new residents to settle into communities and for our existing residents we will continue to help connect and create opportunities for them to meet and socialise with their neighbours.



# 3 Oldham Housing

## Successes, challenges and opportunities

### 3.1 Our successes so far

Oldham Council and our partners have had many successes over the last few years that have helped improve housing in Oldham. These include:

- The council has used its land to deliver more than 300 high quality affordable and aspirational homes over the last three years, and developers are on site building a further 388 properties.
- Between 2010 and 2015 the condition of private housing improved significantly. The number of dwellings with a category 1 hazard as defined by the Housing health and safety rating system (HHRS) reduced from 14.5 per cent in 2010 to 9.4 per cent in 2015 and the percentage of non-decent private homes decreased from 30.6 per cent to 22.2 per cent. This was due principally to the now-expired nationally funded Oldham-Rochdale Housing Market Renewal programme that enabled major change and some selective clearance to privately owned housing to improve the lives of residents in a few locations.
- Oldham Council has a private landlord forum providing a point of contact and place for dialogue and learning.
- Since May 2015 the council's selective licensing team have licensed 1894 properties and carried out 1199 audits to protect the public health and make a positive difference to tenants in those areas.
- We work closely with other services, such as the police, taking a multi-disciplinary approach to tackling issues of community safety and to resolve problems when they arise.
- Tenants appear to be staying longer in their current properties, which could indicate they are more settled. The council's Selective Licensing Scheme which has served over 1,200 Enforcement Notices to protect public health could be making a positive difference to tenants in those areas.
- In the last year the selective licensing team have prosecuted 34 landlords who have refused to license their properties.
- We have helped more than 6,000 households out of fuel poverty over the last six years and others living in very poor condition homes.
- We have prevented 487 people from becoming homeless in 2017-18
- We currently offer a Home Improve Equity Loan Scheme across the borough. From 2005, we have provided 267 loans with currently a value of £5.55 million in outstanding value to be repaid on sale of property. The council has committed further funding of £508,000 over the next two years. We have received repayments of £990k to date.

### 3.2 Our challenges

Oldham has many housing challenges. They are, as in many parts of England, quite complex and resolving them will take a range of actions on many fronts sustained over a long period of time. The council, working co-operatively with residents and partners, is determined to address the challenges and to forge a new future using all the available powers at our disposal.

#### The key issues are set out below:

- Oldham is not considered nationally to be a place of high housing need and so is not currently a priority for funding or assistance from many Government housing funding programmes.
- Oldham's local housing need is for 716 homes a year, this is a big increase from the current Local Plan housing requirement of 289 homes annually. The new national Housing Delivery Test also requires the council to put in place an action plan to set out how the local housing need will be delivered.
- Oldham's housing has been affected over the years by poor performance of the local economy. Our income levels are 6 per cent lower than Greater Manchester and 12 per cent lower than the national average.
- Our borough has the highest proportion of pre-1919 terraced homes in Greater Manchester (41 per cent) and they're concentrated in East and West Oldham (58.4 per cent and 56.1 per cent), those parts of the borough that show the greatest levels of disadvantage and deprivation.
- Although private sector housing conditions improved between 2010 and 2015 levels of disrepair in this sector remain high. In 2015, 13.6 per cent of homes were in disrepair compared to the national average of 5 per cent.
- Oldham also has a high proportion of properties in lower council tax bands, with 71 per cent of households in a band A or B property.
- The borough has lower than average, (and falling), home ownership levels compared both to GM and England. This due to persistent outward migration of more economically active groups and buy to let purchases, especially in the urban core.
- Younger people (aged 20 – 29) are leaving the borough to live elsewhere. There is projected to be a 7 per cent fall in the number of people living in Oldham aged 20-29 between 2016 and 2026.
- Levels of overcrowding are high and are a legacy of historic low new supply of larger family accommodation; our terraced housing stock has been absorbing a large proportion of household growth.
- There is a limited supply of viable sites on which to support the intended scale of housing development.
- Action to make brownfield land ready for new housing development is something we need to prioritise. We will need to implement a range of ways to improve the viability of these sites.
- The number of social rented, affordable and private rented homes becoming available for letting to new tenants is declining sharply. A so called 'tightening' of access to our rented housing stock is therefore occurring.





- Fewer homes becoming available for lettings makes it difficult for the council to assist residents in meeting their housing needs.
- Our population is ageing. By 2035 the number of people over 75 is projected to increase by more than 10,000. We will need to create many more homes that are attractive, accessible, affordable and suitable for older people.
- Welfare reform and particularly the introduction of Universal Credit is putting pressure on people's finances and leading to increased homelessness.

### 3.3 Our opportunities

There are also some opportunities to improve our housing offer and the place offer. We intend to reshape them to the benefit of our residents.

- Oldham's housing is relatively affordable compared to other parts of the North West and nationally. Given the right 'housing offer' and 'place offer', housing affordability could attract economically active young professionals and families considering settling here; it could also help to address the current out-migration of some of these households.
- Building new homes at the level of annual new supply required (an average of 716 homes a year) provides an opportunity to increase the choices available so that more people can find a suitable home in a place they like and at a price they can afford.
- Through the delivery of a broader range of housing tenure and type, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas, there is an opportunity to reduce social and economic segregation and achieve a better mix of incomes.
- There is an opportunity to explore new housing development models, such as a Local Housing Company and alternative financial incentive schemes to support more of Oldham's residents from a wider variety of income groups, including young people, who want to access home ownership. These may also help to attract new economically active residents to live in Oldham.
- Selective Licensing and our continued efforts to review our approach and develop constructive working relationships with private landlords has the potential to drive up property and management standards in the sector.
- Developing Housing Action Area Pilots in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods to help build resilience, community confidence and raise standards in the private rented sector increasing their desirability.
- Working with Greater Manchester on improving transport networks and helping to bring new investment and businesses to the region presents many opportunities to strengthen our place and housing offer.
- Greater Manchester Devolution and working locally to develop 'Healthy Homes' between housing, health and social care will provide many opportunities for coordinating and joining up services around people.

# 4 An attractive Housing Offer

## Supporting an inclusive economy

**Year-on-year, significantly fewer of Oldham's homes are becoming available to rent in both the social and private sectors. This is partly due to the choice of housing available being fairly limited, making it difficult for people to find a new home that suits them when their needs change.**

We expect to diversify what is available creating a better range of types of housing for people to choose from. This will give people more scope to move from their current home to something that suits them better, freeing up their home for someone else to occupy. We want to create a housing offer that works for people who already live here, for economically active people thinking about whether to settle and stay living in Oldham, and for those in housing need. We want everyone to be able to find a place they can afford that meets their needs and where they can live happily.

### 4.1 More new homes providing greater choice in type, size, tenure and affordability

The 2019 draft Greater Manchester Strategic Framework: GM Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment proposes a target of around 201,000 additional homes (net) to be delivered over the period 2018-2037 to accommodate its growing population. It is proposed to phase the provision of these new homes: in Oldham it proposes the provision of 450 new homes per year between 2018-2023, increasing up to 860 new homes per year between 2024 and 2037. .



The evidence is telling us that as well as needing to build significantly more than double the number of new homes as have been built in recent years, we need:

- A more diverse range of homes in terms of their size, type, tenure and affordability offering greater choice in all areas;
- New homes for social rent in places with lower levels of social housing;
- New homes for affordable rent;
- An expansion of the ‘intermediate sector’ including new homes for shared ownership;
- To provide a stronger steer through the planning system to ensure the right homes are built on each site that comes forward so we can create a better balance of housing on offer in each neighbourhood;
- To favour strategic locations for new housebuilding – including Oldham Town Centre and other district centres and sites accessible to tram stops, road and rail networks and motorways. Homes are built on each site that comes forward in order to create a better balance of housing on offer in each neighbourhood;

## What we will do



**Working with developers and registered providers, we intend to make sure that the new homes built in Oldham are matched to the evidence of what’s required and where.**

### 4.2 Financial schemes to help people access home ownership

For many of Oldham’s residents, access to social housing or affordable rent is not necessarily their preferred option. There is a range of financial schemes now available that can help people to buy a home they want at a price they can afford. We intend to make these schemes available for those who can’t afford to purchase a home on the open market but who can’t readily access a social or affordable housing either.

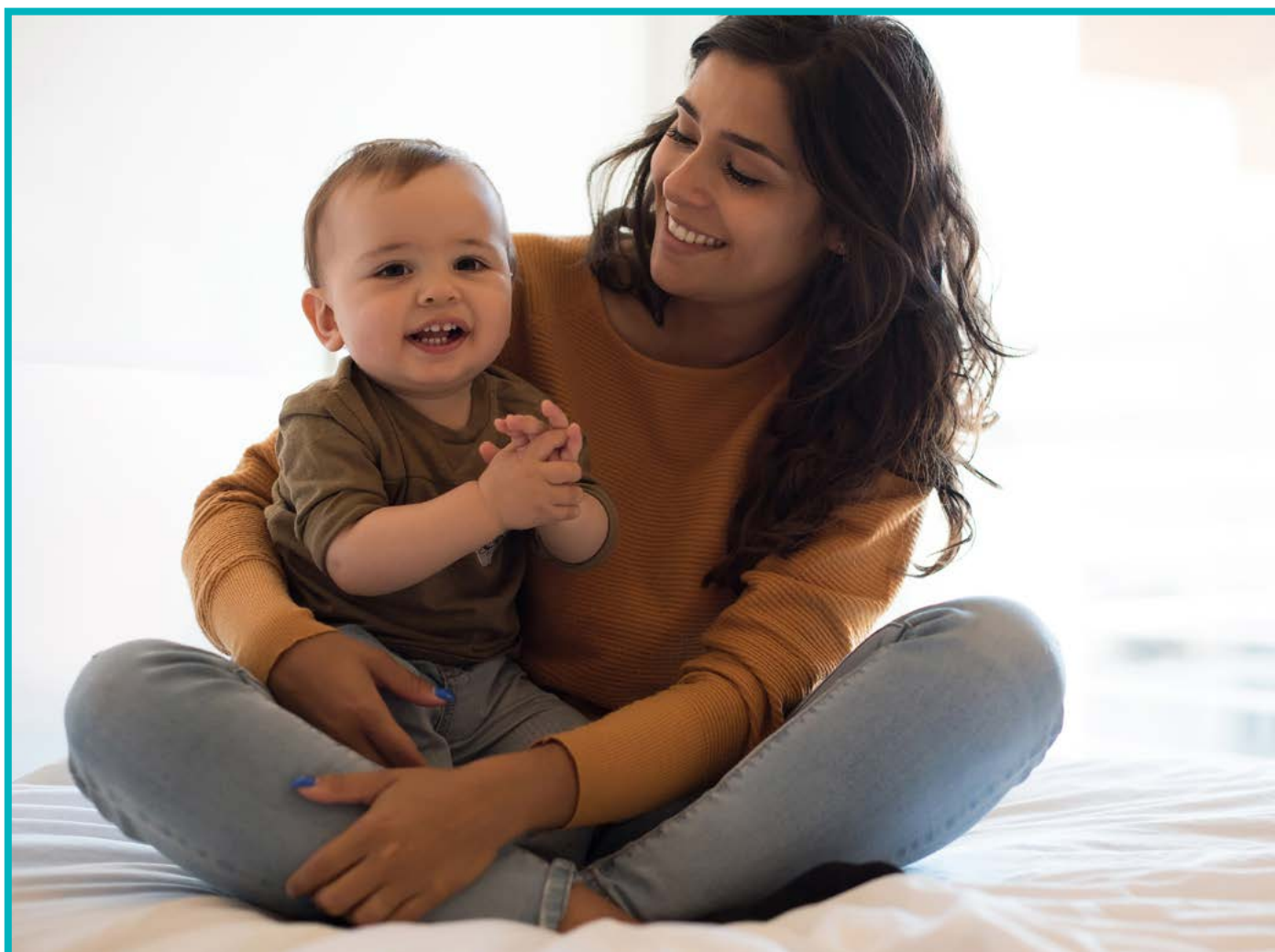
## What we will do



**We will provide targeted information to Oldham’s residents on government Help to Buy schemes and encourage developers to provide bona fide assistance to help people to purchase a home. We are also considering introducing a Tenants Incentive Scheme to help social housing tenants to access home ownership and other types of direct support that might be appropriate.**

### 4.3 Homes attractive to young people

The most successful places over the next decade will be those that can retain a younger labour force. It is essential that Oldham finds a way of retaining more of its talented and economically active young people.



We want all young people to have routes to independence and to choose to stay living in here. These groups include those graduating from nearby colleges, those learning a trade or profession through an apprenticeship, young people who might be attracted to move to Oldham after university to take up a job locally, people with learning and physical disabilities and those leaving the care system.

We are committed to finding out what young people really want from their housing and living experience and to making sure that is available, including in Oldham Town Centre.

## What we will do

We will undertake a range of consultation, research, mapping and modelling and will work with young people to make sure they can access suitable and attractive accommodation.



#### 4.4 Homes attractive, suitable and accessible for older people

The number of people in Oldham over the age of 75 is projected to increase by more than 10,000 by 2035. We currently have too few homes that are attractive and suitable for older people as they become frail and there are indications that too many older people are living in residential or nursing provision when they may not need to be there.

In 2017 there were 253 extra care flats, 325 sheltered and 700 bungalows all for social rent and with provisions for level access and bathroom facilities. Demand for these types of homes outstrips supply. At the same time, analysis of GM comparator authorities shows that Oldham has 118 per 1,000 people aged over 75 living in private residential and nursing provision – the highest level across Greater Manchester. The top reasons older people ask to be rehoused through the housing register are that their current property is unadaptable, they want to move into sheltered housing, or because their current home is too big.

A Strategic Housing for Older People (SHOP) analysis in 2016 recommended that Oldham should aim to expand the number of Extra Care places available as an alternative to residential care. It showed a current shortfall of 80 units that will rise to 340 by 2035. Two projects completed within the last six years have shown us that there are older people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities who require specific forms of support to access suitable housing, health and extra care services.

Based on this evidence, we are taking a range of actions to expand the housing choices available for Oldham's growing older population so that they can find suitable homes with good facilities and a range of support options on hand. We want people to feel supported to make a positive decision to move to a new home in later life that better suits their needs. We also want older people to be well supported if they decide to stay in their existing home.



## What we are already doing

- We provide Disabled Facilities Grant funded adaptations to around 200 people each year, most of whom are older people;
- We have 253 units of extra care housing with support and care;
- We have 2,000 sheltered housing units, around half of which are category 2 and have scheme managers on site;
- We have three 'reablement flats' in our extra care schemes, that are used as temporary accommodation for mainly older people to receive 'reablement' support once they've left hospital;
- We have a Community Alarm scheme, 'helpline' that is currently being reviewed along with a review of our use of assistive technology;
- We have a CQC-registered mobile response team who assist older people who have fallen in their homes, and help them to recover quickly in most instances avoiding a hospital admission;
- Greater Manchester is undertaking a review of Home Improvement Agency/Care and Repair provision across the conurbation and will draw up recommendations from that in due course.

## What we will do



We will consider the recommendations emerging from the Greater Manchester Home Improvement/Care and Repair review as soon as they emerge. We will also consider reviewing our existing ethical equity loan fund. This will look to widen equity loans to enable poorer older home owners, living in the worst condition accommodation, to improve their homes. The loan funding plus any interest or value-linked uplift would be repayable on sale of the home and would, therefore, become available for further lending.

### 4.5 Specialised and supported housing for vulnerable people

We aim to ensure provision of sufficient specialised homes with support to meet local needs. Our overall approach is:

- Early intervention and prevention;
- Reduce the need for residential and acute services;
- Personalised, locally delivered services including information and advice to promote independence and use local assets.

**For disabled people**, our priority is to help the 728 applicants on the Disabled Persons Housing Register to match with accommodation that works for them, adapting it where necessary. We are also focused on getting the right type of housing built to meet existing and emerging needs.

**For people with dementia**, our priority is to support people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible and to prevent hospital stays and moves to residential care. We also need to explore housing options for people with advanced dementia.

**For people with mental health problems,** our priority is to provide high quality, varied and flexible supported housing solutions that enable people to step up and step down; adjusting to their changing health needs and with a focus on rehabilitation and improvement. This includes solutions for people living in mainstream housing with family or friends, providing the right levels of supported housing with wrap around care and support and also some intensive support in semi-secure and hospital settings.

**For people with a learning disability,** our priority is to provide a better range of housing options for people which meet their support and care needs. This includes people with low and medium care needs in transition and who need options to support their route to independence, those living with older carers, and those with complex needs/behaviours which challenge.

**For care leavers,** our priority is securing sufficient suitable and semi-independent accommodation with support and emergency accommodation that can be accessed 'on the day' if necessary, to support the increasing numbers of young people moving from the care system into independence.

## **What we have already done**

The council has recently undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the needs for different types of specialised accommodation with support. This has involved listening extensively to what people, families and carers have said they need and want, including disabled people, people with dementia, mental health difficulties or people with a learning disability.

### **In response to our findings we:**

- Have made some changes to the way we manage and advertise the Disabled Persons Housing Register and support people in order to enable more direct matching, promotion between partners and automated bidding for those who need specialist support to access housing;
- Have identified a range of ways of filling gaps in provision for people with mental health difficulties and for some people with a learning disability including: good neighbour schemes, a network model where people living in their own homes support each other with their daily lives, Shared Lives – a CQC registered model in which people live with a family and are helped in various ways with their day to day lives to live interdependently, housing with support services or personal assistants, respite and rehabilitation options, shared accommodation with floating support and information and advice services;
- Are building a new purpose built supported housing scheme for adults with a learning disability and complex needs in Hollinwood;
- Are looking into new models of accommodation for people with a learning disability which can provide a positive and supportive environment.

## What we will do



Continue to make changes to improve how we manage the Disabled Persons Housing Register and the process of applying and matching with suitable properties to support greater opportunities for community integration and minimise harassment and victimisation. are looking into new models of accommodation for people with a learning disability which can provide a positive and supportive environment.

Investigate housing-with-care options for people with dementia with Health and Social Care and our partners that facilitate people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible and prevent hospital stays. This will inform how we provide accommodation, support and care options in future.

Explore best practice in housing options for people with advanced dementia, including whether or not enhanced extra care schemes could provide a suitable solution.

Explore opportunities to provide accommodation with integrated opportunities for training, employment and apprenticeships for people with a Learning Disability, to help maximise independence.

Talk to care leavers to find out what it is that they would find most useful in terms of pathways into independence.

Review our approach to sourcing suitable accommodation with support for young people between 16 and 25 leaving the care system, including consideration of dedicated units to provide 'on-the-day' emergency accommodation and semi-independent homes for longer-term occupation for those moving to independence.

### 4.6 Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation needs

We will continue to work with our other Greater Manchester authorities to review the current and future accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople.

#### What we have done:

In late 2013 arc4 was commissioned to update the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) for the Greater Manchester Authorities of Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan.

This concluded that the overall pitch and plot requirements over 5 years 2014/15 to 2018/19 and subsequent 15 years 2019/20 to 2033/34 in Oldham was zero.



## What we will do



We will keep under review the level of pitch and plot provision that would remain appropriate for the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople population in line with the Greater Manchester (GTAA).

### 4.7 More homes accessible to large and intergenerational families to relieve overcrowding

Evidence shows that there are high and rising levels of overcrowding in Oldham caused partly by the lack of new supply of homes compared to household formation. Too many people have to continue living in the family home beyond when they're ready to move out. We want to create more options for larger and intergenerational households to live comfortably together.

We will seek to address this by creating opportunities for older people living in large homes to rightsize, supporting the development of more large homes and helping overcrowded households to raise the finance to move to a larger, more suitable home.

## What we will do



We will address this by creating opportunities for older people living in large homes to right-size, supporting development of more large homes. We will also look to help overcrowded households, subject to an eligibility criteria, to raise the finance to move to a larger, more suitable home.

### 4.8 Options to Do It Yourself and support for co-operative community-led housing options

Some people want a more hands-on experience to designing, building and managing their home. Others want to live in semi-communal environments or to own property within a cooperative model of home ownership. We want to make it possible for individuals and self-organising groups to develop their own homes, and cooperative schemes and management models that may be outside of traditional provision. We are particularly interested in encouraging intergenerational co-housing schemes where people of different ages live in close proximity, become friends and share many aspects of everyday living.

Working with our registered housing partners, and looking at innovations happening elsewhere, we aim to expand the options for self-build, custom-build and a range of community-led and owned schemes within Oldham. We will explore how we might best support development of these schemes, including the potential to draw on resources from Homes England's Community Housing Fund. We will also promote Homeshare as a route to companionship for some people.

## What we will do



Working with our housing partners, and looking at innovations happening elsewhere, we aim to expand the options for self-build, custom-build and a range of community living within Oldham. We will also explore the potential for Homes England's Community Housing Fund to support the above developments.

### 4.9 Greater choice for council and registered provider tenants

Almost half of households that can no longer readily apply to our housing register were already housing association tenants who are seeking a transfer to a more suitable home. And almost half are overcrowded households.

It may be possible for some households who are already council or housing association tenants to find another home that is more suitable to their needs through direct contact with each other. Oldham Council does not currently have a borough wide local Mutual Exchange scheme in place with all its partners with access to affordable housing. However, we know that most moves of social housing tenants take place within the borough.

We will consider re-establishing a local mutual exchange scheme, working with all of our local housing association partners, building on existing schemes and best practice from elsewhere. We will also consider additional activities to help people to meet face to face, such as speed-meeting events.

### 4.10 Making better use of existing properties by bringing empty homes back into use

On 1 December 2018 there were 1,109 properties that have been empty for more than six months in Oldham and is consistent within the national average. Of these, 229 have been empty for more than two years, 135 for more than five years and 13 for longer. These dwellings often need attention to bring them up to a decent standard. Those in the worst condition can sometimes reduce the desirability of neighbourhoods.

Over the last year the council has helped bring 488 empty homes back into use. We are now upping our efforts in taking action on empty properties in order to both increase the supply of homes available and to increase the desirability of certain neighbourhoods.



## What we are already doing

- We are working with Homes England on pilots to establish two viable schemes to bring empty homes back into use – a ‘Lease and Repair’ scheme and a ‘Purchase and Repair’ scheme.

## What we will do



If these pilots are successful, they will be rolled out elsewhere. We will also consider variations on these schemes in order to bring more empty homes back into use.

### 4.11 Improved quality and condition of homes and tenancies for private tenants

Some neighbourhoods have very high levels of private renting concentrated in pre-war terraced homes. Some landlords only own and rent out one property and we know that many use one of the 97 letting agents operating locally. It’s important that the relationship between landlord and tenants works. The council already provides a bond scheme, through which we help tenants to negotiate terms, and provide a deposit or equivalent to enable the tenant to secure the tenancy. We also provide a tenancy sustainment service.

## What we’re already doing

- Three years ago, we introduced ‘Selective Licensing’ in eight tightly defined neighbourhoods. Landlords operating in these neighbourhoods are required to purchase a licence from the council and to meet certain standards. We are considering a range of other actions to support tenants.
- We are currently undertaking a review of our Selective Licensing programme to understand what it is achieving in terms of improvements in housing and management and for the wider neighbourhoods.
- We also license some Houses in Multiple Occupation as required by law and are extending this to include properties which house five people or more in two or more separate households that require licensing under the Prescribed Description Order 2018.

## What we will do



We are considering a range of actions through developing Housing Action Areas and an appropriate intervention delivery model to drive up standards such as a Local Housing Company. This will run alongside Selective Licensing to drive even further improvement in the private rented sector.

## 4.12 Advice and signposting to the full range of housing options

We want people to be well-informed about their housing choices and how to access different types of homes. That includes people currently living here and those attracted to move to Oldham from elsewhere. Our intention is to provide more and better targeted information and advice about the full range of options to rent and buy through the Oldham Housing Offer.

We intend to undertake a review of our Housing Options, Advice and Tenancy Support Service and look at how we can best provide a progressive service.

### What we will do



As well as our register of people in housing need seeking a social tenancy, we will hold a broader register of people looking to access home ownership or a private rented home so that we can provide access to appropriate information on relevant options.

The service will help people who are struggling to access a social housing tenancy due to affordability issues to take steps towards making sustainable rent payments and fulfilling other aspects of the tenancy conditions. The service will also interrogate why some tenancies fail and develop better approaches to sustaining them in future. We will look to review the service more regularly and extend the reach of the options more widely, identifying places where we will reach people who may be looking for a home within the Oldham Housing Offer.



# 5 Delivering the Housing Offer

**Oldham needs to build more than twice as many homes a year up to 2037 than it currently does and will have to account for the numbers built against a national target through the Housing Delivery Test.**

At the same time it needs to develop places and neighbourhoods that are attractive to existing and new residents. It also needs to meet a wide range of needs and aspirations for housing. The large majority of new homes will be built by developers and registered housing providers with the council playing a critical role in enabling effective partnerships so that sufficient homes are built of the right types and in the right places.

At the heart of this is building strong relationships with and understanding our partners, their strengths, specialisms, ambitions and motivations. In particular, how they match the vision for our borough set out in this strategy and in our Oldham Plan. We want to develop our relationship with the full range of registered housing providers and developers who are committed to improving Oldham in the long-term, offering good jobs, training and apprenticeships for Oldham's residents and who are using local supply chains.

The ambitions set out in this strategy to deliver more new homes will require a different approach to supporting viability in the most appropriate way on a site-by-site basis. In particular, if we are to be successful, in redeveloping more of the borough's brownfield land.

We also want to support local people who want to build their own home, to manage their own scheme or to live in semi-communal environments where people share aspects of their daily lives and which provides the context for low level support. The council also intends to take on a development role focused on filling gaps in market and registered housing provider provision.

As a council, we will upgrade our approach to both enabling and direct delivery, drawing intelligently on a wide range of approaches and tools to support our partners and residents to deliver the numbers and the range of types of home required.

Homes England periodically updates the types of funding and support it makes available to councils and registered housing providers and the conditions of that support. Specific funds usually last for a finite period. We want to be always looking ahead and prepared, with residential-led schemes ready to be developed, so that we can bid for gap funding from these funds or other sources, such as at Greater Manchester level, to enable development to go ahead.

## **5.1 Partnerships with committed developers and registered housing providers to build homes and places**

We see our developers and registered housing providers as a valuable asset and want to work in partnership with them to engender support for the ambitions set out in this strategy.

We know that each registered housing provider has different capacities, capabilities and strengths. Some have the development capacity to build large numbers of new homes while others have innovated and developed specialisms in care and support, or in building cohesive neighbourhoods. We want to make sure that we play to all those strengths. We also want to make sure that all partners are taking actions in support of our housing delivery targets.

## What we will do



**Actively manage relationships with registered housing providers, drawing up a simple MoU with each one, to identify and draw on their particular strengths in support of the ambitions and targets set out in this strategy.**

**We want to provide better opportunities for local small and medium sized housebuilders and developers who are committed to playing a positive role in achieving our housing targets, to submit and win contracts with Oldham Council**

### 5.2 Extracting greater co-operative and social value from contracts

The council is in the process of adopting a new methodology for maximising social value opportunities across all its contracts. Close working with us and community partners throughout the term of the contract will ensure that contractors deliver types of social value that are most useful to communities, because they are co-produced with them.

## What we will do



**There is no limit to the types of Social Value that might be negotiated with contractors. We envisage elements such as improvements to the public realm, street furniture, children's play facilities and design features to make neighbourhoods more secure and age friendly could be among those required by developers as their added contribution to improving neighbourhoods.**

### 5.3 Improving the viability of difficult sites with developers

The council wants to address the issue of difficult-to-develop sites for two reasons. The first is that brownfield sites, and to differing degrees the high numbers of former cotton mills, are preventing Oldham from moving on from its rich industrial past and are now holding it back from achieving the delivery of new homes. The second reason is that the number of greenfield sites available for development is very limited and we know that many of these are valued and used by the community.

The council needs to take action through a combination of measures and in partnership with registered housing providers and Homes England, to make sure developers get a viable return on their investment. We want to listen to housing developers and develop a positive dialogue with them so we can support viability in the most appropriate way on a site-by-site basis, and so that they agree to employ local people, create apprenticeships and draw on local supply chains

## What we will do



**The range of actions we are taking to improve development viability include:**

**Land price and planning obligations:** We want to make sure that the places where we want development to happen are viable and attractive from a development point of view. We will look into a range of approaches to improving viability including how we might adjust our approach to planning obligations, packaging sites, providing greater clarity and exploring sources of ‘gap funding’.

**Developer certainty and cash-flow:** We want to make sure that developers feel free to develop, unconstrained by concerns around their ability to sell new homes. We intend to support sales of completed homes and defer payment on the sale of council land for housing until house sales have taken place.

**Identify new sources of funding:** Those earmarked for specific purposes, where this helps Oldham to achieve its aims, and to create an Oldham Housing Fund that can be drawn on, for example by offering developer loans to make sites viable.

**Improving housing markets:** In some localities, action is required to upgrade the quality of existing homes, environments and management practices.

## 5.4 Support for self-build and co-operative community-led models of housing

As a Co-operative Council, we want to support individuals and groups to develop their own homes or cooperative models of housing such as housing cooperatives, co-housing and community land trusts.

As well as Homes England's Community Housing Fund, new possibilities for enabling community-led models are emerging, as shown by recent work carried out for Greater Manchester. These include acquiring suitable land for example through One Public Estate, securing finance through Social Investment Funds and capacity building support through enabling hubs.

### What we will do



**The council will investigate these and other models with interested residents and explore how they might best be employed to meet the demand and aspiration among our residents for self-build and community-led housing schemes.**

## 5.5 The council's direct roles in delivering homes

The council owns around 2,300 homes, including 1,500 sheltered homes. We have a small home-building programme which includes a supported housing scheme for people with Learning Disabilities.

We are committed to building some new social housing in the future, despite this tenure no longer being supported through the government's affordable homes programme. We will consider how best to use our HRA borrowing capabilities and explore ways of providing new social homes using other sources and through partnerships with registered housing providers.

### What we will do



**Consider a range of development vehicles for increasing the volume and filling gaps in provision so that the right types, sizes, tenures, affordability and specialised homes are developed. This could include high quality private rented accommodation as well as other types of housing to fill gaps in the market and improve developer confidence.**

## 5.6 Co-ordinated working between housing and planning

We will improve our internal working so that housing and planning decisions are better coordinated. For example, this strategy and the evidence that underpins it will help to inform the Local Plan. In terms of operational coordination, the Housing Insights we produce will be used in pre-application discussions with developers and planning permissions that align to and help deliver the strategy will be favoured.



# 6 Place offer to support the Oldham Plan

**A good mix of new and improved homes and support services must go hand in hand alongside building the confidence and desirability of Oldham's neighbourhoods.**

People place a high value on the quality and suitability of local environments, facilities and services, the local education and employment offer and on having a stake in community life. This is because these things are critical to people's health, happiness and productivity. A good place offer and high-quality public realm are a major consideration for people who are making decisions about whether or not to live, work and spend their time and money in the borough.

Oldham's places vary to a large extent in terms of the types and condition of homes, their demographics, character, culture, affluence or poverty levels, quality of the public realm and assets. Given that places/neighbourhoods have different needs and aspirations we intend to move away from a 'one-size-fits-all' approach and adopt a tailored approach, working with local communities to shape the housing offer, amenities, services and public realm in each area.

## 6.1 Place-based approach to solving problems and co-producing solutions with residents

We want to work with residents to understand and develop solutions to local issues including difficult and deep-seated issues. We will support them to take the lead where possible; where it is more appropriate for the council or one or more of our partners to take action we will listen to residents and work with them to deliver the right response in a timely way.

### What we are already doing

We have a Thriving Communities Programme focused on building community strengths and resilience. What happens and where is informed by evidence emerging from a Thriving Community Index (TCI) of 26 indicators that give a deep insight into how well each neighbourhood is functioning, what is driving demand and behaviour, and how that's changing over time.

It is used to inform what type of public services or intervention might be appropriate in which locations, in order to support that neighbourhood to become more resilient and to thrive. The programme has several other elements including:

- Building community groups and community-led activities to widen the choice of activities available to residents;
- Social prescribing with guidance to connect patients to suitable community support;
- Fast Grants (£50 to £500) to enable grassroots community groups to make small but significant changes, locally;
- Social Action Fund (£850k) to address loneliness, physical and mental health;

- Workforce Development to empower hairdressers, off licence workers, taxi drivers and others to play their part in connecting and supporting vulnerable people.

We have also undertaken a Locality Asset Review that establishes the types and quantity of public assets available within the districts of Chadderton, Failsworth and Hollinwood, Oldham East, Oldham West, Royton and Shaw, and Saddleworth and Lees, and their constituent neighbourhoods and how they can be best utilised to support this programme and our wider Public Service Reform priorities.

Multi-agency place-based teams working in a truly integrated way across agencies (including housing/environmental health) have started a radical transformation of public service delivery in four neighbourhoods: Holts and Lees, Limehurst and Hollinwood, Westwood and North Chadderton and Hathershaw. Their work is informed by insights from the Thriving Communities Indicator and the teams are starting to address difficult issues such as organised crime.

## What we will do



**Establish a Community Hub in some areas to support and take forward many of these programmes.**

**We will consider how best to bring together the work of these Place-Based Teams and private sector housing work – including selective licensing and empty homes – and with resident involvement, to make the biggest impact possible on one or more areas where there are high levels of dissatisfaction, resident churn and crime. We will learn what works best from one or two areas and where appropriate roll this out to other areas.**

### 6.2 Co-designing future-facing ‘Place Plans’ and masterplans with local communities

We also want to provide a vehicle for local people to shape the long-term future for their neighbourhoods within the wider context of the visions being developed for Oldham and Greater Manchester.

We would like to work with residents to draw up ‘Place Plans’ as part of the Local Plan or neighbourhood planning processes.

These plans would then be a vehicle for conversations about how neighbourhoods might respond to evidence of need, draw on their many strengths and make the most of opportunities available in order for us to work co-operatively to meet future housing and employment needs, and shape the public realm over the next 15-20 years to support a compelling vision for the life of the community.

If we decide to draw up a series of Place Plans, they could include a wide range of considerations that will determine what sort of place the neighbourhood becomes, including the design of physical developments, community spaces and services.

While these would not in themselves be statutory documents, Place Plans would inform the development of the emerging Local Plan and any neighbourhood plans, the latter two being both statutory documents.

There are some difficult decisions to be taken about how to develop the brownfield industrial legacy sites in Oldham, some of which have derelict mills on them. There are many complexities associated with their regeneration, not least because they are often in private ownership and have high re-mediation costs. It will take time to address these complex issues. However, the council is exploring new ways of making some of these sites viable for new development, including for both new homes and employment purposes.

As the above sites become available for redevelopment, we will develop detailed plans, in partnership with residents, in order to make sure that both the homes built and the spaces between the homes suit the community's ambitions and purposes. We will be guided by analyses of the suitability of sites for redevelopment.

We are serious about reversing the trend of some of our young people leaving the borough and taking their energy, intellect and talents with them. So we want to create attractive homes they can afford and spaces that meet their needs and where they enjoy spending time with others.

We have completed a masterplan for Royton Town Centre and are undertaking detailed master planning and a visioning exercise that will steer the redevelopment of Oldham Town Centre.

### **6.3 Evidence-based 'Housing Insights' to create more balanced, thriving communities**

There is currently a significant variation in the different types of homes in different neighbourhoods within Oldham. For example, West Oldham has over 30 per cent social homes which is very high compared to the national and GM average, while Saddleworth and Lees has around 7 per cent. Chadderton has over 55 per cent 3 or 4 bed houses, but only 1 per cent 2 and 3 bed flats. Around 1.1 per cent of homes in East Oldham are 3 bed bungalows compared with 8.1 per cent in Royton.

There are also very different needs and aspirations relating to housing in different neighbourhoods that could be best addressed by particular interventions and investment. Plus there may be instances where we know that, by focusing our efforts on a specific place for a period of time, we could make a significant difference to that place.

The Housing Insights will set out the evidence behind the above proposals. It will explain how the mix of new homes and other interventions/investment is expected to achieve the overall vision for that place as articulated in the Place Plan and how this will help the neighbourhood to thrive.

Housing Insights provide an opportunity to present the evidence and proposals around housing to communities at an early stage and for this to be a part of the place-planning / or future master planning process. They will also inform the Local Plan and will be the starting place for discussions for example with developers. Oldham will support development and actions in line with the Housing Insights evidence including through developing a range of new tools to support site viability. We intend to monitor progress against the Housing Insights evidence base including outcomes such as new homes delivered on the ground.

## What we intend to do

If we decide to draw up Place Plans we also would aim to set out, in a series of 'Housing Insights', what the evidence is telling us might work best in terms of the mix of new homes (from the recent refreshed evidence base for example the Local Housing Needs Assessment) as well as other housing interventions and the investment we are considering prioritising in each place.

**There will be one evidence based Housing Insight per Place Plan.**

**Each 'Housing Insight' will:**

- Set out the current and future target mix of type, size, tenure, affordability and density of homes relative to local incomes for that part of the borough, and therefore the number of new homes of each that are required to achieve the desired balance of homes over a specified period;
- Specify whether the area will be a focus for particular council interventions and investment. This includes for example, Selective Licensing, empty homes programmes and potential interventions to improve the quality of the private rented sector and neighbourhoods like proactive enforcement of standards, options for private landlords to improve their homes, targeted investment in the private housing stock;
- Set out what financial products might be available to help first time buyers to secure a home in that area.



## 6.4 Major development sites identified within the GM Spatial Framework

We are currently consulting on proposals within Greater Manchester's Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment for major new developments over the next 20 years on 10 key sites. These have the potential to deliver around 4,000 new homes between 2018 and 2037. Given their scale it will be important to ensure that these sites are developed in a comprehensive manner that delivers a mix of housing to meet our local housing needs, high quality places and neighbourhoods and the supporting infrastructure required, thereby contributing to mixed and balanced sustainable communities.

Each of these sites propose between 50 and 1,450 new homes and were they to go forward would deliver a total of 4,007 new homes between 2018 and 2037. They have been chosen partly because they are sustainable locations – close to town centres and the Metrolink. At least two of the sites are close to locations of proposed new employment sites and these are proposed as part of the M62 North East Corridor which seeks to boost the competitiveness of the northern districts.

### What we will do



Through the Housing Insights evidence base and Local Plan, we will provide a steer on the requirements for major development sites that come forward in order to support their comprehensive sustainable development and integration into the surrounding neighbourhoods. This includes:

- High quality landscaping and provision of green infrastructure to enhance the attractiveness of developments and provide opportunities for recreation for residents and other people;
- Homes built to high quality design and at a density that are appropriate to the location and nature of the site;
- Where appropriate, the provision of additional school places, health facilities, shops, community and leisure facilities;
- Safe pedestrian/cycle friendly routes to Metrolink stops and neighbouring areas as part of a broader network of recreation routes;
- Road improvements to cater for the increase in traffic associated with the expanded and enhanced employment; and
- Noise and air quality measures to protect the amenity of any new and existing occupiers.

## 6.5 Community Cohesion – new and existing neighbourhoods

It is important, for the future of Oldham, that all residents feel safe and positive about where they live. We know that some people prefer to live in a tight-knit community of people from the same or similar background. However, we want all of our neighbourhoods to be places where people feel they can choose to live, no matter what their background or which community they identify with most closely.

### What we're already doing

We are developing mechanisms for people from different backgrounds to work together to improve their neighbourhoods.

Supported by funding from The Big Lottery and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, we are delivering a range of activity to increase and improve English language skills amongst children and adults. This is key to resident communications, supports the development of positive relationships and access to employment. We are also providing additional support for people to access employment and training to improve their employment prospects.

## 7 Better housing and

### What we will do



**Take a variety of actions, across multiple agencies and with a range of partners, to increase the level of trust and confidence between people from different backgrounds and to encourage mixing within both existing and new residential areas**

**These activities take different forms in different neighbourhoods and could include ensuring new homes are advertised through media that will reach the full range of community groups, social events to help new neighbours to meet each other and mix, supporting new migrant communities to settle, providing language support, education work with schools and dealing with hate crime.**

**A youth project will support cross-community activity with young people in schools and the community. The project will increase young people's understanding of different cultures and develop an awareness of celebrating diversity within the borough. Focussing on Oldham, young people will be supported to develop a range of skills including leadership skills to increase their own self-confidence and esteem.**







# support to improve people's lives

**Partners in Oldham share an ambition to achieve and sustain the greatest and fastest possible improvement in the health and wellbeing of our residents by 2020.**

Our population's health is influenced by social inequality, often driven by poverty, and the wider determinants of health such as education, employment, housing and transport. Helping people to be more in control of their lives and having a strong voice can improve people's quality of life which in turn improves their ability to play a productive part in the workforce.

Oldham's Locality Plan for Health and Social Care Transformation recognises that registered housing providers make a significant contribution, working in many ways to improve health and wellbeing and address the specific needs of more vulnerable people. This strategy aims to set out ways in which we can collectively go further and improve the integration of housing, health and care to build on the Oldham Plan.

## **7.1 Integrating housing into the Oldham Cares governance structures**

In Oldham, the health and social care teams have recently adopted a new model of working.

Oldham Cares has established five 'GP Clusters' which now have responsibilities for the health and care of population groups of 30-50,000 people. Social prescribing, in which GPs make social (as well as medical) prescriptions for improving people's health and wellbeing, is being implemented. Frontline services have been trained in Making Every Contact Count (MECC) whereby staff who regularly make visits to resident's homes are trained to spot issues that might be negatively affecting residents – such as ill health, abuse, money problems, poor conditions homes or hoarding behaviour – and make a referral to a relevant service such as Early Help or the Warm Homes Scheme.

The council and NHS are at an early stage of operating this new joined-up model of care. We want to ensure that housing-related matters that have an impact on people's health – such as living in a cold home or money problems that could lead to eviction – are addressed alongside their medical and care needs. We want to reduce barriers to people moving into a more suitable home. We also want to develop preventative approaches that reduce the prevalence of unplanned hospital admissions via A&E and that enable patients to be discharged to a safe, secure home with support that promotes recovery.

We are currently considering how we might best integrate housing-related matters into the work of our health and care work streams to provide better services and outcomes for patients.

Looking forward, we will consider how we might develop a 'predictive' data-driven approach across housing, health and care that would enable us to identify the most

## What we will do



Some of the ways forward that we're considering include:

**Changing our governance arrangements so that the Strategic Housing Partnership Board and Oldham Cares work together to consider and make decisions about how services are organised and funded in order to help people to stay well and living independently in their homes.**

**Developing a Housing, Health and Care Delivery 'Healthy Homes' plan that sets out the full range of actions we will take in order to ensure that housing-related matters that impact on people's health and wellbeing are addressed, both as a preventative measure and on discharge from hospital.**

vulnerable households and work with them to take appropriate action ahead of a crisis occurring. This will enable us to spend limited resources in the best way possible.

### 7.2 Addressing homelessness

Oldham's Homelessness Strategy 2016-21, Working together to prevent homelessness in Oldham has three priorities:

#### **Access to information and accommodation**

#### **Early intervention and prevention**

#### **Targeted support to those most in need**

That document was published at a time of rising numbers of households approaching Oldham Housing and Advice Services and before the introduction of new legislation, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The numbers of people presenting to the authority as homeless continues to rise significantly from 457 in 2017/18 to 1,122 in 2018/19, (130 per cent increase). Over the same period, the number of people accepted as homeless rose from 300 in 2017/18 to 621 in 2018/19 with a consequential increase of accepted homeless people having to be placed in temporary accommodation from 308 in 2017/18 to 428 in 2019/19.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has placed new duties on councils to prevent and relieve homelessness. This and a concerted GM-wide effort to tackle homelessness and rough-sleeping, driven by the GM Mayor through the GM Action Homeless Network (see appendix for details), is placing greater pressure on finding suitable temporary accommodation and is also changing the way we work.

The Homelessness Reduction Act increases the length of time that councils have responsibilities towards homeless people and to relieve homelessness and prioritises some specific categories of people, such as ex-armed forces personnel, for support. It has increased the number of applicants and councils' requirement for temporary accommodation. In addition to this, Universal Credit is making it more difficult for people to pay their rent so the Council is experiencing an increase in the number of people whose private tenancies are ending and presenting as homeless.

These pressures are common to all councils and they are making it difficult for councils across GM, including Oldham, to secure sufficient accommodation to meet

their duties. This is happening at a time of increasing pressure on Oldham’s rented housing. There has been a ‘tightening’ of the rental housing offer over the last two years with many fewer homes for rent becoming available. We know that Oldham’s housing is attractive to investors living outside the borough because it is relatively low-priced to purchase and delivers high yields in some areas.

### **What we are already doing to reduce the impact of increases in homelessness**

- Improving the private rented sector in eight areas of the borough through Selective Licensing and enforcement of the licence conditions in these properties. (see chapter 5);
- Providing a Tenancy Support service for tenants living in the private rented sector;
- Providing a bond scheme through which landlords’ income is assured;
- Looking at how we enhance our tenancy support service so that more private tenants are in a position to negotiate better terms and longer Assured Short hold Tenancies than just six months with landlords, and avoid eviction;
- Increasing the use of networked community support, to enable people to support each other while living in the community.

### **7.3 Making homes warm, energy efficient and carbon-zero**

Oldham Council has been working for many years, through its award-winning

## What we will do



**We intend to take further action to improve our offer to homeless households, meet the GM Homelessness Pledge to support a Housing First approach for rough sleepers and fulfil our statutory obligations.**

**We will also develop a Temporary Accommodation strategy in response to the need for higher levels of provision, which will include some new council-owned provision.**

Warm Home Scheme to make life better for the 11,000 households who are living in fuel poverty at any one time, around 12 per cent of Oldham’s population. Oldham has on average 100 excess winter deaths per year, many of which are preventable.

In addition, Greater Manchester’s Vision is to be at the forefront of action on climate change and to make its ‘fair’ contribution to international commitments. The commitment is to be carbon neutral by 2038 and for all new homes to be carbon-neutral by 2028. This will require a much greater effort in order to reduce emissions and demand for heat and find alternative sources of energy in both new and existing homes.

### **What we are already doing**

**The Warm Homes Oldham scheme delivers home energy improvements and advice to people at risk of fuel poverty, with a focus on people at risk of poor health or death.**

During the six years we helped over 6,000 households out of fuel poverty. . The £175,000 annual investment by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health enables us to draw on capital funding sources such as the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and the Warm Homes Fund to undertake works to people's homes. The main aim is to reduce admissions to hospital. In 2016, an independent review by CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University indicates that the scheme delivers a range of positive outcomes, lifting 75 per cent of participants out of fuel poverty, reducing the number of avoidable deaths and improving most participants' physical or mental health.

The Council is also engaged in several innovative projects to explore the feasibility of approaches to reducing the carbon footprint by increasing energy efficiency, reducing heating bills and switching to more sustainable types of fuel. These include Oldham Community Power which is the largest generator of community energy in Greater Manchester as well as several Passivhaus homes in St Mary's and the retro-fitting of solar arrays to our own Council Housing We are also exploring several new models for delivering zero-carbon new homes with one of our registered housing partners First Choice Homes Oldham.

To move faster towards our target of reducing the proportion of households in fuel poverty in Oldham to 10 per cent by 2020, we intend to seek further funding from the CCG and through the Better Care Fund to expand and enhance the Warm Homes Scheme. This will enable us to increase the number of households supported through the Scheme.

#### **7.4 Making homes healthy: improving the condition of our poorest homes**



**Warm  
homes  
Oldham**

## What we will do



We also intend to develop a more proactive, preventative approach by requiring all frontline health and social care staff to check whether their patients are living in cold or unsafe homes as part of their assessment and care pathways and to refer those who are to the Warm Homes scheme, including via Oldham's Social Prescribing scheme.

In addition, Oldham Councils Environmental Protection Team will start to enforce new regulations requiring landlords of privately rented homes to ensure that their properties meet a defined minimum standard before granting a new tenancy.

- Exploring a new heat network to supply heat to any new homes built in Oldham Town Centre. This would be served by two sources of heat; spare capacity of biomass boilers in an existing district heating system and ground source heat from flooded disused coal mines under the town centre, the latter being at feasibility stage;
- Developing an 'Oldham Code' for low/zero-carbon homes. Proof of technical deliverability is being developed through an EU-funded project to build 20 new low-carbon homes that are electrically heated but without putting demands on the national grid, through a combination of modern storage heaters, solar PV and battery storage to spread supply throughout the day. The pilot work we do to develop the Oldham Code will inform our approach to development viability and will also inform approaches across Greater Manchester to meet the GM zero-carbon targets.

Between 2010 and 2015 the condition of private housing increased significantly in Oldham through a government Housing Market Renewal programme that has ended. Despite our efforts, Oldham's private homes have, on average, much higher levels of disrepair than the national average (in 2015, 13.6 per cent of homes were in disrepair compared to the national average of 5 per cent) and this is principally a consequence of the propensity of old terraced Housing arising from our industrial heritage.

Damp, unfit and cold housing causes a range of health problems including respiratory conditions, arthritis, heart disease, stroke and immobility causing falls – as well as mental health problems, often caused by stress and anxiety. The main groups affected are overcrowded households, disabled people, people with mental health problems and older people. In 2015, they cost the NHS at least £1.4bn in first year treatment costs but the human cost and misery is far higher.

There is currently no government or NHS programme, or appetite, for addressing these housing related health problems anywhere near the scale needed in Oldham. In spite of this, Oldham Council, working with health and social care partners, intends to develop a long-term plan for improving our poor private housing to reduce the burden of ill health they cause.

## What we're already doing

We regulate the private rented sector mainly by using our legal powers to require landlords to take action whenever we become aware of a privately rented dwelling in disrepair. Our Selective Licensing Scheme requires a landlord to pay for a licence to rent out a property. The licence fee covers the cost of the council processing the licence and carrying out an audit of the property ensuring mandatory conditions are met. From 2005, we have provided 267 loans with currently a value of £5.55 million in outstanding value to be repaid on sale of property. The council has committed further funding of £508,000 over the next two years and we will continue to review and examine investment opportunities.

A review is underway at the Greater Manchester level to develop a scalable, replicable and financially sustainable care and repair/home improvement model that the localities can adopt to assist people living in poor condition or unsuitable homes or in precarious housing circumstances.

Oldham's public health, environmental health and housing teams will work with Oldham Cares, to develop a position statement and long-term 'Healthy Homes' action plan for addressing the poorest housing in the borough. We will also undertake a review of private housing condition in 2020 so that we can keep track of how conditions are changing over time. The most significant public health gains can be achieved by engaging the most cost-effective improvements to the poorest housing, usually occupied by the most vulnerable people.

## Appendix 1:

### The national context for this housing strategy Increasing housing supply and

## What we will do



In order to better target scarce resources, our joint action plan will include a number of short-term actions to:

1. Marry up intelligence on home condition with other sources of data already being collected such as those sources that currently inform the Thriving Communities Index and data collected by health colleagues that identify which people are most at risk of ill health (through risk stratification) - to give a clearer picture of where the compound problems lie
2. Include 'concerns about the condition of the home' as a criterion for raising a concern within Making Every Contact Count, so that all frontline workers who routinely access people's homes are expected to feed back whenever the quality of the home gives then cause for concern
- 3 Undertaken assessments of home condition where a concern has been raised and consider options for improvement

Healthy Homes action plan will set out our medium and long-term actions and ambitions, campaigning for resources to deliver the scale of improvement for Oldham's needs.



## access to home ownership

The Housing White Paper, Fixing our broken housing market published in February 2017 made a number of proposals principally designed to boost the rate of new house building and improve access to home ownership. These have been taken further in the Autumn Statement 2017, the Housing Green Paper 2018 and Autumn Budget 2018. A new National Policy Planning Framework setting out the government's policy for Local Planning in England was published in July 2018. The combined effect of these has been to:

- Increase funding to support provision of 300,000 new homes per year by the mid-2020s;
- Introduce a Housing Delivery Test for councils with targets for the delivery of homes;
- Lift the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap, allowing councils to borrow against their HRA in order to build new affordable homes (and estimated 10,000 per year);
- Provide further help to get onto the housing ladder, including through a new Help-to-Buy scheme (from April 2021) for first-time buyers and by extending Stamp Duty relief to first-time buyers of shared ownership properties worth up to £500,000;
- Specify 'social rent' within 'affordable rent' as one of several affordable products;
- Boost the Housing Infrastructure Fund of £500m (bringing the total to £5.5 billion);
- Consult on how local authorities can use RTB receipts to build more homes;
- Introduce measures to make best use of the existing social homes;
- Introducing a new rent settlement, allowing rents to be raised by CPI + 1 per cent to 2025;
- Maintain a presumption against developing in the Green Belt.

The new Homes England Strategic Plan 2018/19-2022/23, Making Homes Happen explains its offer of expert support for priority locations to create and deliver more ambitious plans to build homes, especially for home ownership. Key objectives include:

- Unlocking land, using a £1.03 billion Land Assembly Fund to acquire challenging, unviable sites;
- Unlocking investment, to support housebuilding and infrastructure, including more homes for rent and affordable (but not social) housing;
- Increasing productivity through supporting modern methods of construction (MMC) and increasing the number of skilled apprenticeships;
- Driving market resilience by supporting smaller builders, new entrants and promoting better design and higher quality homes.

Oldham is not considered by Homes England to be a place of high housing need and so will not be a priority for funding or assistance from these programmes. The role and purpose of social housing – giving residents a stronger voice

Since the Grenfell Tower Fire tragedy in June 2017, there has been a new focus on safety and listening to residents. The Social Housing Green Paper, published in



August 2018, started a 'national conversation' on the issues raised by over 8,000 residents and on the role of social housing. The key ideas being explored within the paper include how best to:

- Ensure that social homes are safe and that they meet the Decent Homes standard
- Improve and speed up the complaints resolution process;
- Make landlords more attentive to the voices of their residents by actively regulating 'consumer standards' and improving access to information about landlords' services;
- Tackle the stigma faced by people living in social housing by celebrating thriving communities and involving tenants in design of new homes and places.

### **Homelessness, children leaving care and welfare reform**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires councils to engage and work with households threatened with homelessness 56 days in advance of the date on which they are expected to become homeless (28 days earlier than previously). It requires tailored advisory services for specified vulnerable groups. Councils must assess and develop an agreed Personalised Housing Plan and help relieve homelessness where prevention has not been an option or successful for a period of 56 days (before any decision on the main homelessness duty). The Act dissolves the local connections rules at the prevention stage apart from a duty to provide care leavers with accommodation.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 goes further by introducing a new duty on councils to publish a local offer for care leavers with regards to accommodation and wider support.

Welfare Reforms continue to present challenges for residents, the Council and Registered Providers. Changes that have already been implemented include: a reduction in the Benefit Cap to £20,000 for families and £13,400 a year for single people, the Under-Occupancy Charge (Bedroom Tax) that limits the Housing Benefit entitlement for claimants who are deemed to have one or more spare rooms. The Shared Accommodation Rate now applies for people under the age of 35. Universal Credit has been rolled out fully in Oldham and from April 2019 Housing Benefit will be moving to the Local Housing Allowance rate.

Some minor changes were made to Universal Credit in the Autumn Statement 2017 to help soften the impact on claimants and a further £1.7 billion was announced in the Autumn Budget 2018 to increase work allowances and provide extra help for people moving from existing benefits to UC. Further changes have recently been made by the Secretary of State to address some of the design flaws of Universal Credit. However, the scheme continues to make the lives of some of Oldham's' poorest people more precarious.

## **Appendix 2:**

## **The regional context – Greater Manchester**

In January 2019, Greater Manchester Combined Authority published a Vision for Housing: Doing Housing Differently to address the housing crisis and connect housing, people and places. There are three strands to the vision: the homes we have, the homes we need and delivering change. The vision reinforces Oldham's view that, for Greater Manchester and the places that make it up to be successful in the twenty first century, we need to make the connections between housing and our overall vision for our future.

This 'overall vision' is set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy. It means making the connection between housing and our plans for inclusive economic growth – raising growth and productivity, whilst improving social and economic inclusion and tackling the underlying barriers to participation and productivity – in order to make the region one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old and to enable everyone to realise their potential. It confirms our commitment for the City Region to be 'carbon neutral' by 2038, and for all new homes to be carbon-neutral by 2028, which will require us to reduce emissions and demand for heat and find alternative sources of energy in both new and existing homes. "We need our housing offer to be an affordable and attractive one – to provide an excellent quality of life, connected to education and employment, in neighbourhoods all across the city region that our future workforce will want to make their home" GM Vision for Housing: Doing Housing Differently.

The next step is the development of a Greater Manchester Housing Strategy. As a core partner, Oldham Council and housing partners will participate in this process in order to shape a GM-level strategy that supports a healthy and prosperous future for Oldham's residents.

## **GM Spatial Framework – the GM Plan or Homes, Jobs and the Environment**

A draft GM Spatial Framework: Greater Manchester's Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment was published for consultation on 7 January 2019. This document contains thinking and proposals for land use across the region, including for housing, economic development, transport, infrastructure and the environment to make the GM Strategy a reality. Key features include: an ambition that by 2040 half of all daily trips in GM will be by public transport or cycling/walking; 65 transport improvements across the region; a commitment to being carbon zero by 2038 and to improving air quality; a 'Brownfield Preference Policy coupled with higher density homes and some new designations in greenbelt land.

The Framework sets the housing targets for GM as a whole - 201,000 new homes over the period 2018-2037 of which it is proposed 50,000 are 'affordable', with 30,000 of these being for social rent or affordable rent'. The proposed target for new homes of all types in Oldham is 14,290 representing an annualised target of 752 per annum. Given that this is more than double current building rates, it proposes phasing the increase aiming for 450 new homes per annum between 2018 and 2023, and 860 new homes per annum between 2024 and 2037.

The Framework sets out to boost northern competitiveness. Some of Oldham's opportunities will come from interventions for create a nationally-significant area of economic activity and growth (over 2 million sqm. of new employment floorspace and 24,000 new dwelling), extending along the M62 motorway to the north of Oldham from M62 North-East Corridor.

The Framework also sets out proposals for ten new development sites in the borough of Oldham that will, between them, deliver over 4,000 new homes.

The Framework is currently out for public consultation and the emerging Local Plan will provide more detail on how the GMSF will be delivered in Oldham.

GM approach to homelessness and rough sleeping

### **The GM homelessness programme:**

- Embraces the new requirements in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017), to start working earlier and more intensively with households to prevent and relieve homelessness;
- Requires registered providers to deliver on the GM Homelessness Pledges to support the Housing First programme which is an evidence-based approach to successfully supporting homeless people with high needs and histories of entrenched or repeat homelessness to live in their own homes. The programme will be delivered by increasing rehousing opportunities for people living in temporary and supported accommodation, develop models of support for those moving to a secure tenancy, identify and refer suitable people into the Greater Manchester Motiv8 programme;
- Has adopted a GM Homelessness Trailblazer to drive forward a common approach and ensure the same quality of service across the 10 GM authorities, supported by a single data system across GM, and through seven themed strands of work;
- Includes a Social Investment Bond (SIB) Project to address entrenched rough sleeping by implementing a coordinated support service through the GM Homes Partnership;
- Commits the GM localities to making submissions for other funds together (e.g. to MHCLG) to address homelessness.

### **GM devolution of health and social care and the GM Population Health Plan**

In February 2015 the 37 NHS organisations and local authorities in Greater Manchester (GM) signed a landmark devolution agreement with Government to take charge of the £6bn health and social care spending and decisions, from April 2016. A Five-Year Plan: Taking charge of our health and social care in Greater Manchester to radically change the way health and social care is delivered across GM was published in 2015. And a GM Population Health Plan published in 2017, sets out GMs approach, focused on people and communities, to deliver a radical upgrade in population health and tackle deep-seated health inequalities. Person and community-centred approaches are at the centre of our plan as a life course approach to enhancing future quality of life.

Drawing from these, Oldham has its own 'Locality Plan' for health and care devolution that sets out how it will deliver better care and reduce inequalities and work continues to deliver an integrated health and social care service through multi-disciplinary teams and place-based approaches.

There are six principles that underpin the Locality Plan and will support the way we work with our key stakeholders across Oldham to deliver it:

- The deployment of resources flexibly to enable professionals to do the right thing to achieve shared aims and objectives. This will include integrating delivery and pooling NHS and local government resources where it makes sense to, and a closer relationship and different contracting arrangements between commissioners and providers;
- A commitment to taking a whole system approach to health and social care in Oldham and across Greater Manchester, with a jointly owned model of inclusive

governance and decision-making across commissioners, providers, patients, carers and the housing, voluntary, community and faith sectors;

- A new relationship in Oldham between public services and citizens, communities and businesses that supports genuine co-production, the joint delivery of services, and a reduction in demand – “Do with, not to”;
- A focus on the life course, prevention and the most disadvantaged, and a commitment to promote and use asset-based approaches that recognise and build on the strengths of individuals, families and our communities rather than focussing on the deficits;
- The Council and the CCG being responsible and striving to support innovation, reduce unwarranted interventions and admissions, reduce costs and improve productivity to get the best value possible and achieve financial sustainability without compromising the safety and quality of treatment and care;
- Partners across Oldham working with each other to ensure that all resources are used to the best effect to meet the needs of and to benefit the whole of Oldham’s civil society and financial economy. This will include taking account of the national and international evidence and best practice.

The devolution and transformation of health and social care presents a huge opportunity for housing and housing-led services to become integrated into the borough’s redesigned health and care services.

We would like to acknowledge the input from Campbell Tickell and Arc4 for their contribution to this document.





**Oldham**  
Council