



# Paul Dennett

## Salford City Mayor

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14<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Dear Councillor Shah,

As Portfolio Lead for Places for Everyone, I have been asked to write to you, on behalf the other eight Places for Everyone (PfE) Plan Council Leaders and also the Mayor of Greater Manchester. We are very concerned about the implications of the Motion to seek the revocation of the PfE Plan, in so far as it relates to Oldham which is to be discussed at your Council meeting in November.

We accept that the decision on the Motion is one for Oldham Council alone, however we feel it is important that you and your fellow councillors understand and consider the ramifications, as part of your deliberations on the matter.

We have all very recently adopted the Plan and it has only been in force since March of this year, therefore it is very concerning to hear that one of the PfE Councils is considering requesting the Secretary of State revokes it.

We are not aware of any lawful basis for your Council to request the Secretary of State to revoke the plan, even only in so far as it relates to Oldham. The reasons set out in the Motion brought before your Council meeting in July do not amount to a lawful basis and we are not aware of any others which might. We are also confident that, should Oldham Council request the Secretary of State to revoke the PfE Plan for Oldham, there is little prospect of the Secretary of State agreeing to such a revocation. It is very clear that Government is committed to a planned approach to development and that forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) changes are likely to strengthen the importance of having an up-to-date plan not diminish it. They are also clear that the presumption in favour of sustainable development will be strengthened and will apply to those authorities who do not have an up-to-date plan and who cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply – a position that Oldham could find itself in if the plan is revoked.

**From the office of the City Mayor**



**Salford City Council**

Notwithstanding our view that there is no lawful basis for such a decision, or that the Secretary of State would agree to such a revocation, we feel it necessary to bring to you and your fellow councillors' attention the implications such a step would have on delivering Oldham's ambitions, many of which are common across the sub-region.

As you know there is a development site at Stakehill which is being jointly promoted with Rochdale Council. This allocation is an agreed priority within the wider Atom Valley Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ), and returning this site to Green Belt would result in uncertainty and risks around its delivery. It is very unlikely that the Stakehill site will be able to be brought forward in isolation. As such, there will be consequential impacts on infrastructure planning and delivery across the northern parts of Greater Manchester.

One of the key public transport improvements in this area is the delivery of a new rail station at Slattocks. This station would benefit residents in Oldham as well as in Rochdale. Without the proposed scale of development at Stakehill it is very hard to see how a successful business case for this new rail station at Slattocks could be developed and therefore the delivery of this new station would be significantly undermined. In turn, this will significantly impact on improving the economic prospects of your local communities.

The PfE Plan has at its heart, an ambition to change the fortunes of the northern boroughs of Greater Manchester, one of which is clearly Oldham. For too long growth and prosperity has been centred around the southern parts of Greater Manchester and PfE seeks to rebalance the economy and housing markets. Alongside Northern Gateway/Atom Valley, possibly the largest employment site in the country, one of the key ways that PfE proposals will boost the competitiveness of the north is by allocating a small number of sites in the northern areas specifically to increase attractiveness of the northern areas to highly paid, highly skilled workers. These higher value sites are in very short supply in the northern districts, where house values are generally lower than in the southern districts of GM. The Chew Brook Vale (Robert Fletchers) in Oldham is one of three such sites highlighted in the plan. Revoking the PfE Plan for Oldham would mean this site would remain in the Green Belt and would therefore significantly impact its delivery and its ability to deliver change in the northern districts, such as Oldham.

Finally, I am sure that you and your fellow councillors are aware that following your council meeting in July when this motion was first discussed, the newly elected Government published proposed revisions to NPPF, for consultation. These included a revised methodology for calculating local housing need. This revised methodology would result in a far higher housing target for Oldham than that in the recently adopted PfE Plan (which would be in force for more than four years). For Oldham, your housing target would increase from 680 to 1049 per annum and for the PfE plan as a whole it would increase from 10,305 to 13,037 per annum.

The proposed changes also make it very clear that local authorities will be expected to meet their housing need in full, and whilst brownfield land continues to be the preference for development, local authorities should review Green Belt boundaries if there is not sufficient brownfield land to accommodate their need. In the unlikely event that the Secretary of State accedes to a request to revoke the plan in relation to Oldham, any successor local plan would be required to take forward the new higher housing numbers. Looking at the current land supply information for Oldham it is impossible to see how these housing numbers could be delivered wholly on brownfield land. Any subsequent local plan would therefore need to consider significantly increasing the amount of land to be released from the Green Belt, which may indeed be an unintended consequence of the motion given the change in planning policy proposed.

Being part of the PfE spatial plan provides protection from the proposed higher housing figures for more than 4 years and makes it easier for Oldham to maximise investment in infrastructure, including for example brownfield housing funding, transport funding. Disconnecting from PfE would inevitably make this more difficult, resource intensive and time consuming, not to mention the risks of 'planning by appeal' that Oldham will face if they cannot demonstrate a 5-year land supply (assessed against the new Local Housing Need figures). I am sure that you and your fellow councillors will be aware of the situation Stockport Council regularly finds itself in, in terms of planning by appeal since it resolved to leave the joint plan in 2020. Land which is currently allocated in PfE will come forward in this way, but so too will other Green Belt sites. I am sure you would not want to replicate that in Oldham, not least because of the unnecessary costs it would result in for the Council, in these times of limited resources.

Whilst we acknowledge this is a matter for Oldham Council to decide on, for the above reasons, we have felt compelled to write to you ahead of your Council making its decision on the matter as we feel very strongly that you must ensure all these matters are brought to the attention of all Members of your Council prior to the decision being made.

Yours sincerely,

**Paul Dennett**  
**City Mayor of Salford**  
**GMCA Deputy Mayor - Portfolio Lead for Places for Everyone**