

Labour Group Amendment

Amendment to be Moved by: Cllr Brownridge

Amendment to be Seconded by: Cllr Iqbal

Delete

Add

Motion 2: Managing HMO Proliferation and Prioritising Oldham Residents

To be Moved by Councillor Ford

To be Seconded by Councillor Jackson

This Council notes with serious concern that:

1. Many Oldham residents increasingly feel unsafe, unheard, and overlooked in their own communities as a result of ~~national policies which have intensified pressures through asylum/migrant dispersal and associated housing demand~~ the legacy asylum dispersal system inherited by the current government, together with wider housing pressures, continue to place significant strain on communities. Residents—particularly women and girls—have expressed growing concern about safety and community cohesion.
2. The Victoria Hotel in Chadderton continues to operate as asylum/migrant accommodation. Residents remain deeply concerned about the scale and nature of its use, coupled with a persistent lack of transparency from the ~~Home Office Serco~~ regarding occupants, management arrangements, and associated impacts on the local area.
3. Oldham is experiencing a sharp and accelerating rise in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), driven by low property values which attract speculative investment. These properties are increasingly used to house high-density occupancies, including migrant dispersal populations, placing unsustainable pressure on infrastructure, waste services, parking, and neighbourhood stability.
4. Oldham is already one of the most deprived boroughs in England, with approximately 37% of neighbourhoods falling within the top 10% most deprived nationally. This significantly limits the borough's capacity to absorb additional pressures without consequences for existing residents and services.
5. ~~The national Asylum Dispersal Scheme continues to allocate placements to areas like Oldham without sufficient regard for deprivation levels, infrastructure capacity, or the cumulative effect on local communities, and against a backdrop of continued high levels of small boat arrivals.~~ While the government is pursuing reforms to the asylum system, Oldham continues to carry a disproportionate share of dispersal responsibility due in large part to historically lower housing costs. Greater regard should be given to deprivation levels, infrastructure capacity, and cumulative local impacts.

This Council believes that:

1. ~~It is wholly unacceptable for central Government to treat towns such as Oldham as convenient default locations for asylum accommodation and associated housing pressures, without proper regard for local impact or consent.~~ Current arrangements have not adequately reflected local impact, deprivation levels, infrastructure capacity, or the cumulative pressures experienced by communities such as Oldham. Oldham's disproportionate share of dispersal responsibility, driven largely by lower housing costs rather than local decision-making, should be recognised and addressed through a fairer national distribution system.
2. Government action should be firm and fair, tackling illegal immigration, dangerous small boat crossings, visa abuse and overstaying, whilst maintaining an asylum system that commands public confidence.
3. The unchecked growth of HMOs, combined with the pressures of dispersal accommodation, is undermining community cohesion and placing intolerable strain on already stretched services.
4. This is exacerbated by poor management of HMOs by some managing companies and landlords.
3. ~~The dispersal of predominantly fighting age men from high-risk countries, without proper checks or security, fuels legitimate public concern and erodes confidence.~~
5. The failure of successive governments between 2010-2024 to address irregular migration into the United Kingdom was exacerbated by the withdrawal from the European Union in 2020, removing return agreements that the UK had with EU nations
5. Oldham residents did not consent to bearing the frontline consequences of national border failures, and their interests must be prioritised in all local and national decision-making.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. **Write to the Prime Minister to ensure that** ~~and Home Secretary to:~~
 - a. Local housing, planning and public service decisions properly reflect pressures on existing communities and the need to maintain access to affordable housing for local residents.
 - b. Asylum dispersal arrangements are managed fairly and equitably across the country and not focused on towns like Oldham
 - c. Ensure that asylum backlogs are cleared with only the people who meet the strict criteria of seeking asylum are successful and those that are not are removed
 - d. The government creates safe routes for asylum seekers and ensures that no one entering the country illegally is able to remain in the UK.
 - e. ~~Demand an end to asylum dispersal arrangements;~~
 - f. ~~Call for the end to any further placements into the borough;~~
 - g. ~~Demand that those who come to this country illegally should be immediately deported.~~

2. **Call for full and immediate transparency from the Home Office** regarding all migrant/asylum accommodation within Oldham, including clear data on occupancy, status, and management arrangements.
3. **Press Join Jim McMahon MP in pressing for the closure of the Victoria Hotel** as an asylum/migrant hotel, with a clear and time-limited exit strategy and ensuring that the closure does not simply increase pressure on family homes leased by SERCO or reduce the supply of affordable rental properties in the borough.
4. **Make HMO proliferation a central planning priority by:**
 - Referring, wherever permissible within relevant planning law, all HMO conversion and creation applications to the Planning Committee for rigorous scrutiny;
 - ~~Applying a strong presumption against approval in areas where developments would exacerbate overconcentration, damage residential amenity, or undermine community cohesion;~~
 - Develop a robust evidence base on HMO concentrations across the borough and ensuring that this information forms part of any report into a HMO application in the borough of Oldham
 - ~~Undertaking an urgent review of planning policies, including consideration of tighter controls, to prevent excessive clustering of HMOs.~~
5. Write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government asking for more powers for Local Planning Authorities to introduce a presumption against approval of HMOs where there is an evidenced concentration of HMOs, unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate the proposal would not exacerbate cumulative impacts on residential amenity, housing mix, neighbourhood character, infrastructure or community cohesion.
6. Further to this, request that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government issues guidance on HMO management, ensuring that fit and proper persons and companies are managing HMOs.
7. **Undertake a full review of all council policies, partnerships, and commitments** relating to asylum/migrant and sanctuary-style initiatives ~~in order to withdraw Oldham from any sanctuary schemes in an efficient and legal manner, with the focus shifting to the needs and expectations of Oldham residents first.~~ so that we can be sure that everything the council does puts the needs of all residents at the top of our priorities.

That the government changes the law to make sure that local residents and veterans come first in housing allocation, planning decisions, and the deployment of local services. We support the comments from the Home Secretary where she said that ~~That~~ no new build housing should go to those who have just arrived on these shores.

Amended Motion to read as follows

This Council notes with serious concern that:

1. Many Oldham residents increasingly feel unsafe, unheard, and overlooked in their own communities as a result of the legacy asylum dispersal system inherited by the current government, together with wider housing pressures, continue to place significant strain on communities. Residents—particularly women and girls—have expressed growing concern about safety and community cohesion.
2. The Victoria Hotel in Chadderton continues to operate as asylum/migrant accommodation. Residents remain deeply concerned about the scale and nature of its use, coupled with a persistent lack of transparency from the Home Office regarding occupants, management arrangements, and associated impacts on the local area.
3. Oldham is experiencing a sharp and accelerating rise in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), driven by low property values which attract speculative investment. These properties are increasingly used to house high-density occupancies, including migrant dispersal populations, placing unsustainable pressure on infrastructure, waste services, parking, and neighbourhood stability.
4. Oldham is already one of the most deprived boroughs in England, with approximately 37% of neighbourhoods falling within the top 10% most deprived nationally. This significantly limits the borough's capacity to absorb additional pressures without consequences for existing residents and services.
5. While the government is pursuing reforms to the asylum system, Oldham continues to carry a disproportionate share of dispersal responsibility due in large part to historically lower housing costs. Greater regard should be given to deprivation levels, infrastructure capacity, and cumulative local impacts.

This Council believes that:

6. Current arrangements have not adequately reflected local impact, deprivation levels, infrastructure capacity, or the cumulative pressures experienced by communities such as Oldham. Oldham's disproportionate share of dispersal responsibility, driven largely by lower housing costs rather than local decision-making, should be recognised and addressed through a fairer national distribution system.
7. Government action should be firm and fair, tackling illegal immigration, dangerous small boat crossings, visa abuse and overstaying, whilst maintaining an asylum system that commands public confidence.
8. The unchecked growth of HMOs, combined with the pressures of dispersal accommodation, is undermining community cohesion and placing intolerable strain on already stretched services.
9. The failure of successive governments between 2010-2024 to address irregular migration into the United Kingdom was exacerbated by the withdrawal from the European Union in 2020, removing return agreements that the UK had with EU nations

5. Oldham residents did not consent to bearing the frontline consequences of national border failures, and their interests must be prioritised in all local and national decision-making.

This Council therefore resolves to:

8. Write to the Prime Minister to ensure that

- a. Local housing, planning and public service decisions properly reflect pressures on existing communities and the need to maintain access to affordable housing for local residents.
- b. Asylum dispersal arrangements are managed fairly and equitably across the country and not focused on towns like Oldham
- c. Ensure that asylum backlogs are cleared with only the people who meet the strict criteria of seeking asylum are successful and those that are not are removed
- d. The government creates safe routes for asylum seekers and ensures that no one entering the country illegally is able to remain in the UK.

9. Call for full and immediate transparency from the Home Office regarding all migrant/asylum accommodation within Oldham, including clear data on occupancy, status, and management arrangements.

10. Join Jim McMahon MP in pressing for the closure of the Victoria Hotel as an asylum/migrant hotel, with a clear and time-limited exit strategy and ensuring that the closure does not simply increase pressure on family homes leased by SERCO or reduce the supply of affordable rental properties in the borough.

11. Make HMO proliferation a central planning priority by:

- Referring, wherever permissible within relevant planning law, all HMO conversion and creation applications to the Planning Committee for rigorous scrutiny;
- Develop a robust evidence base on HMO concentrations across the borough and ensuring that this information forms part of any report into a HMO application in the borough of Oldham

12. Write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government asking for more powers for Local Planning Authorities to introduce a presumption against approval of HMOs where there is an evidenced concentration of HMOS, unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate the proposal would not exacerbate cumulative impacts on residential amenity, housing mix, neighbourhood character, infrastructure or community cohesion.

13. Undertake a full review of all council policies, partnerships, and commitments relating to asylum/migrant and sanctuary-style initiatives so that we can be sure that everything the council does puts the needs of all residents at the top of our priorities.

That the government changes the law to make sure that local residents and veterans come first in housing allocation, planning decisions, and the deployment of local services. We support the comments from the Home Secretary where she

said that no new build housing should go to those who have just arrived on these shores.