

one home

Oldham housing strategy 2009–12



Oldham
Partnership

Contents

Section 1: Strategic housing challenges

Forward by Chair and Vice Chair of Oldham Housing Partnership

- 1 Oldham's vision
 - 2 What will this strategy do?
 - 3 Oldham Overview
 - 3.1 Oldham facts and figures
 - 3.2 What makes Oldham different?
 - 3.3 Housing in Oldham
 - 4 What are we already doing?
 - 5 What did we achieve in 2006–2009?
 - 6 Strategic context and partnerships
 - 6.1 Local context
 - 6.2 Regional context
 - 6.3 National context
 - 7 What have people said to us?
-

Section 2: Our priorities

- 8 Oldham's themes
 - 9 Quantity
 - 10 Quality
 - 11 People
 - 12 Action plan
-

Section 3: How we will do this

- 13 Monitoring and performance
 - 14 Contacts
 - 15 Glossary
 - 16 Appendices
-

A sustainable strategy

We aim to make this a sustainable strategy in more ways than one. This strategy is only being produced electronically, significantly reducing the amount of paper we use and costs to produce it.

Please think before you print out this strategy.



Foreword by Chair and Vice Chair of Oldham Housing Partnership

Welcome to Oldham's 2009–2012 Housing Strategy.

This is a new format for the housing strategy that is designed to bring clarity to the strategy and its linkages with other documents. We hope that you find our new strategy clear and concise and it provides you with an insight into Oldham's housing challenges and how, through partnership working, we seek to address these.

Our new strategy has been developed based on robust research and diverse customer consultation and contains our key priorities and actions for housing over the next three years. It sets out the main linkages with other regional and local plans and strategies and outlines how we are seeking to improve the housing offer for Oldham's residents.

This document has been prepared under very challenging economic conditions. The collapse of the United States sub-prime housing market has had a massive impact on the world economy and on our national and local housing markets. It's not yet clear when we will come out of the downturn, but there are opportunities to use this period to plan for the 'upturn' and work with partners to improve the quantity and quality and access to housing for Oldham's residents.

We recognise that market conditions can change very rapidly and that's why we've developed an action plan which focuses on addressing issues over the first two years of the three year strategy. We will refresh this action plan after the first year to reflect changes, changing policy and new opportunities.

We hope that you find this new style of strategy easier to read, but most importantly, we hope that it gives you a clear understanding of the priorities and actions Oldham Housing Partnership will be striving to deliver over the next three years. We are committed to working across the Oldham Partnership to ensure improved housing, services and quality of life to meet the needs and demands of our residents.

Regards,

Councillor John McCann

Chair of Oldham Housing Partnership and
Cabinet Member for Community Services and Housing



John Cockerham

Vice Chair of Oldham Housing Partnership
and Chair of Oldham Housing Investment Partnership



Section 1 Strategic housing challenges

1. Our vision

Over the next three years Oldham Partnership will tackle the issues arising from the economic downturn to improve the quantity, quality and access to housing for Oldham's residents.

Our focus on housing will be on:

- Achieving the right quantity of housing
- Continuing to raise the quality of our existing housing stock
- Connecting Oldham's residents to an improved housing offer

In order to deliver our objectives, it is important that Oldham Housing Partnership works together with a range of agencies and organisations to deliver our actions set out in the strategy to improve the quality of lives for Oldham's residents.

Whilst delivering our actions, Oldham Housing Partnership will forge strong relationships with the new regulatory authorities, the Homes and Communities Agency and Tenants Services Authorities, to make best use of resources and best practice from across the country.

Oldham Housing Partnership will continue to work with regional and local agencies to help complement and improve the housing offer across the local area.

Local residents will play a crucial role in delivering our priorities. Oldham Housing Partnership will keep residents informed of our achievements through the life of the strategy and engage residents in developing specific actions and projects to improve all aspects of housing in Oldham.

Our vision

By 2020 Oldham will have undergone an ambitious process of transformational change both in terms of the services delivered to residents and the physical improvement of the town.

These changes will redefine Oldham as a high quality place in which to live, work and play.

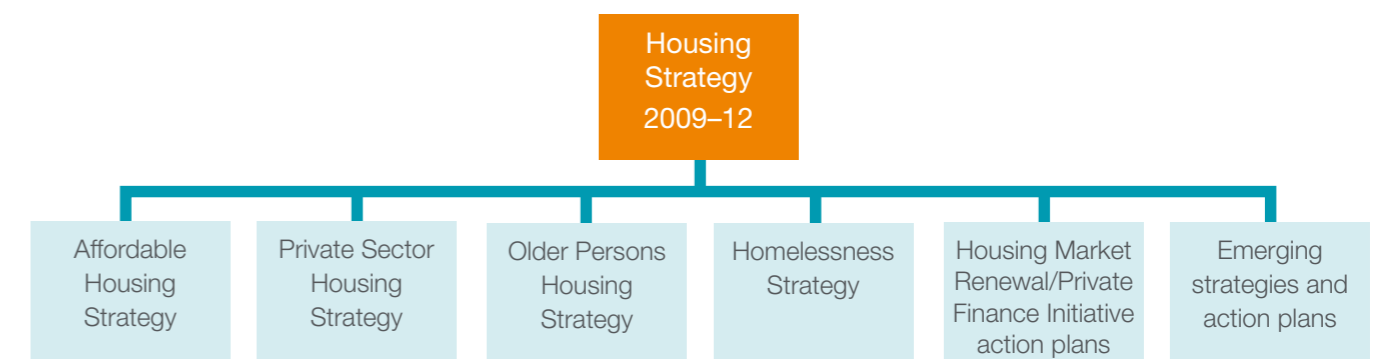
(Oldham's Sustainable Community Strategy)

2. What will this strategy do?

2.1 Strategy format

Oldham's previous Housing Strategy (2006–09) was written to meet the Government's 'fit for purpose' criteria. It is a detailed document providing a comprehensive amount of information on housing projects, schemes and initiatives throughout the borough. As a result, the strategy duplicated a lot of information already found in related strategies.

Our new 2009–2012 Housing Strategy provides an overview of high level priorities and actions to be delivered over the next few years. Detailed actions and targets relating to specific housing challenges can be found in a number of specialised strategies and actions plans, including those detailed below.



2.2 Improving the quality of residents' lives

The strategy identifies actions which will produce positive outcomes for Oldham residents. The strategy aims to provide a clear link between all of the strategies and action plans which relate to housing and have an impact on our customers.

2.3 How does housing affect residents' lives?

Housing cannot be seen in isolation from other areas of work. Access to suitable housing is essential for all residents of Oldham and links into a number of other issues being addressed by the Oldham Partnership in our Local Area Agreement 2008–11 including those around health, the economy, education, the environment, crime and anti-social behaviour.



2.3.1 Good housing, good economy?

- Unless we have the housing to which people aspire, we cannot expect to attract and retain the talented and dynamic people who are critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Community Strategy vision (Sustainable Community Strategy 2008–2020)
- The Regional Spatial Strategy recognises that demand for housing is related to a strong economy and the quality of the local environment and local services
- Low rents can help tenants get into work as they reduce benefit traps. But more than half those of working age in social housing are without paid work, twice the national rate. (Hills Review, February 2007)

2.3.2 Improved housing, improved health?

- Children who live in overcrowded housing are up to ten times more likely to contract meningitis and children in bad housing have up to a 25% higher risk of severe ill-health and disability during childhood and early adulthood (Shelter 2006)
- One in three people who had lived in overcrowded housing at the age of seven suffered from a respiratory disease at the age of 33¹
- People living in deprived areas in Oldham have higher mortality rates than people living in the least deprived areas. There is a 12 year life expectancy gap between the most deprived ward in Oldham and the most affluent (Joint Strategic Needs Analysis 2008)

2.3.3 Better housing, better education?

- The link between poor housing and low educational achievement is well-documented. According to a 2006 Shelter study, children living in bad housing are twice as likely to be excluded from school
- As well as lack of space to study at home, overcrowding affects children's educational, social and emotional development: interrupted sleep, not being able to invite other children back to play, and household tensions (Shelter 2006)
- Overcrowding needs to be tackled because it has a negative effect on children's education and health. Just 53% of children living in overcrowded housing attain five or more A* to C grade GCSEs, compared with 71% of children not living in overcrowded housing (Oldham Housing Market Renewal)

2.3.4 Quality housing, quality neighbourhood?

- Where homes are poor quality, neighbourhoods are more likely to suffer from social problems and a lack of access to services (The Survey of English Housing 2005/06)
- The public assume that new build homes will be a scar on their neighbourhood, rather than an asset to it. Putting quality first offers the best chance of reducing the local and regional objections that often delay the planning process and slow down the release of land. (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment)
- Levels of tenant satisfaction could be better: one in seven social tenants are dissatisfied with their local area and their accommodation; one in five with their landlord; and one in four with the standards of repair and maintenance. (Hills Review, February 2007)
- In the 2008 Stock Options Survey, 98% of First Choice Homes Oldham tenants said that the main priority in their neighbourhood was tackling anti-social behaviour and the area's cleanliness.

¹ Chance of a Lifetime, The impact of bad housing on children's lives, Shelter, September 2006

3. Oldham overview

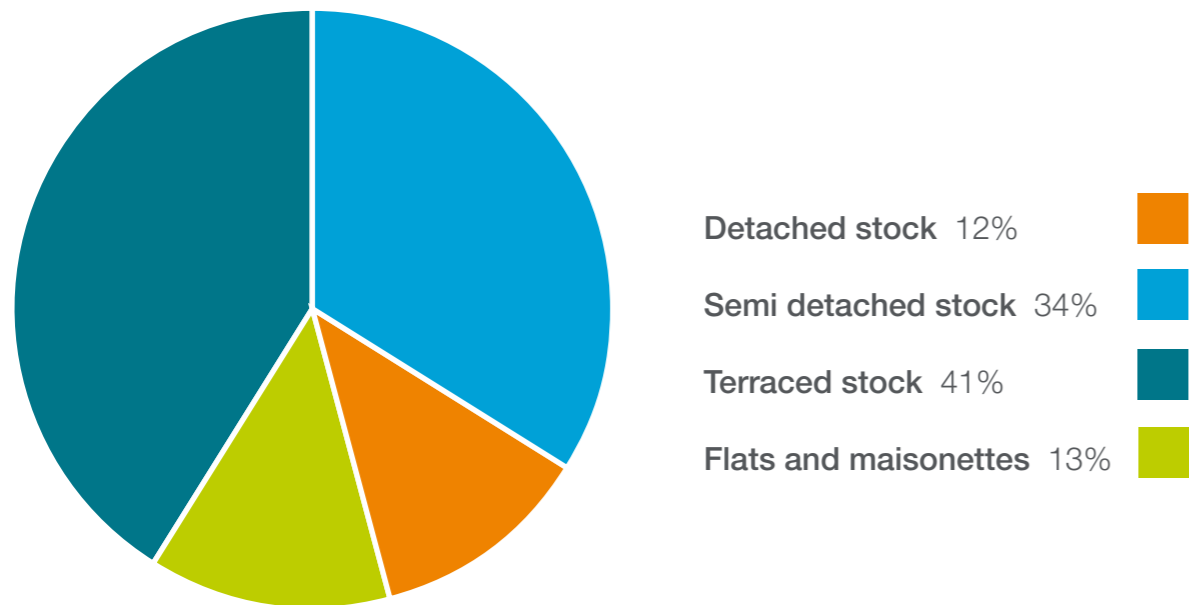
3.1 Facts and figures

The following information shows some of the key facts and figures about Oldham and provides the context for the Housing Strategy. The strategy has been developed using a robust evidence base including the Oldham Housing Needs and Demand Study 2008, the Greater Manchester Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008, Oldham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2008 and a number of other sources of housing based research and evidence.

Housing mix

Type	Oldham	North West	England
Other Households	149 (0.16%)	0.52%	0.78%
Flats and Maisonettes	11,694 (12.79%)	13.56%	19.30%
Terraced	38,326 (41.92%)	31.74%	25.84%
Semi Detached	30,720 (33.60%)	36.55%	31.57%
Detached	10,546 (11.53%)	17.63%	22.51%

Census data 2001

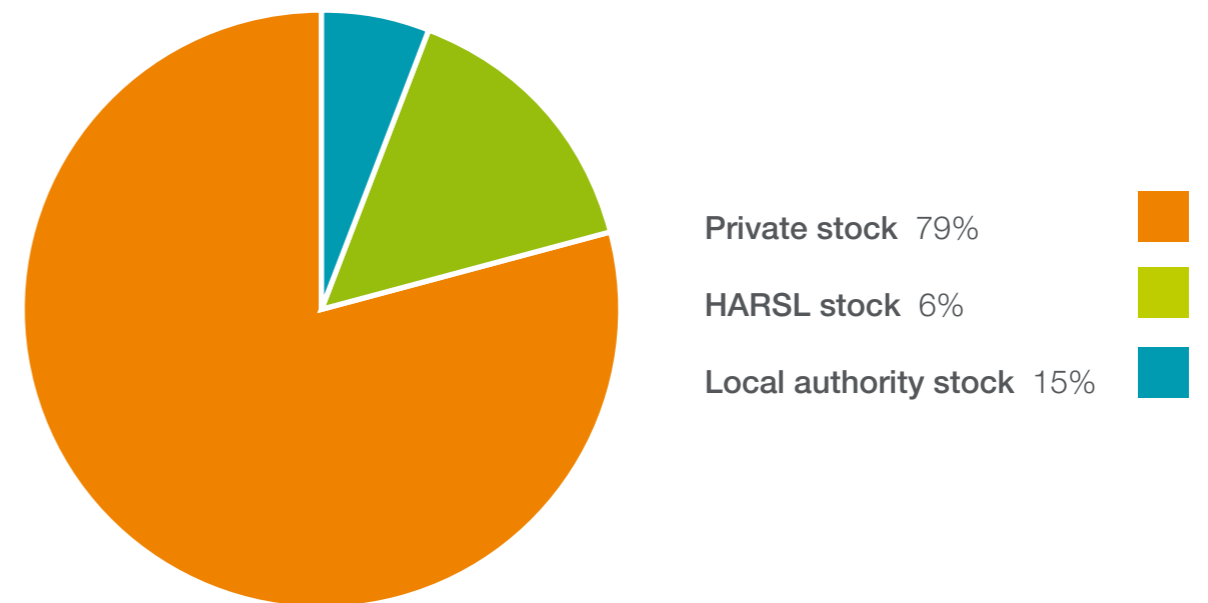


Population	219,600
Households	90,000
Area	142.5 km ²

Sustainable community strategy

Demographics	Oldham	North West	England
0–15	22.2%	19.1%	18.9%
16–29	18.1%	18.7%	18.6%
30–44	21%	20.7%	21.7%
45–64 (males), 45–59 (females)	21.3%	20.7%	21.9%
65+ (males), 60+ (females)	17.3%	19.2%	18.9%
White	83.9%	92.5%	88.7%
Black and minority ethnic (BME)	16.1%	7.5%	11.3%

Office for National Statistics 2006/7



Tenure

Tenure	Stock 2005/06 (%)	Stock 2006/07 (%)	Stock 2007/08 (%)
Private Stock	71,998 (77)	71,773 (77)	73,721 (79)
Housing association/ registered social landlord stock	6,382 (7)	6,434 (7)	5,762 (6)

Housing provision in Oldham by provider 2005 - 2008: Housing strategy statistical appendix

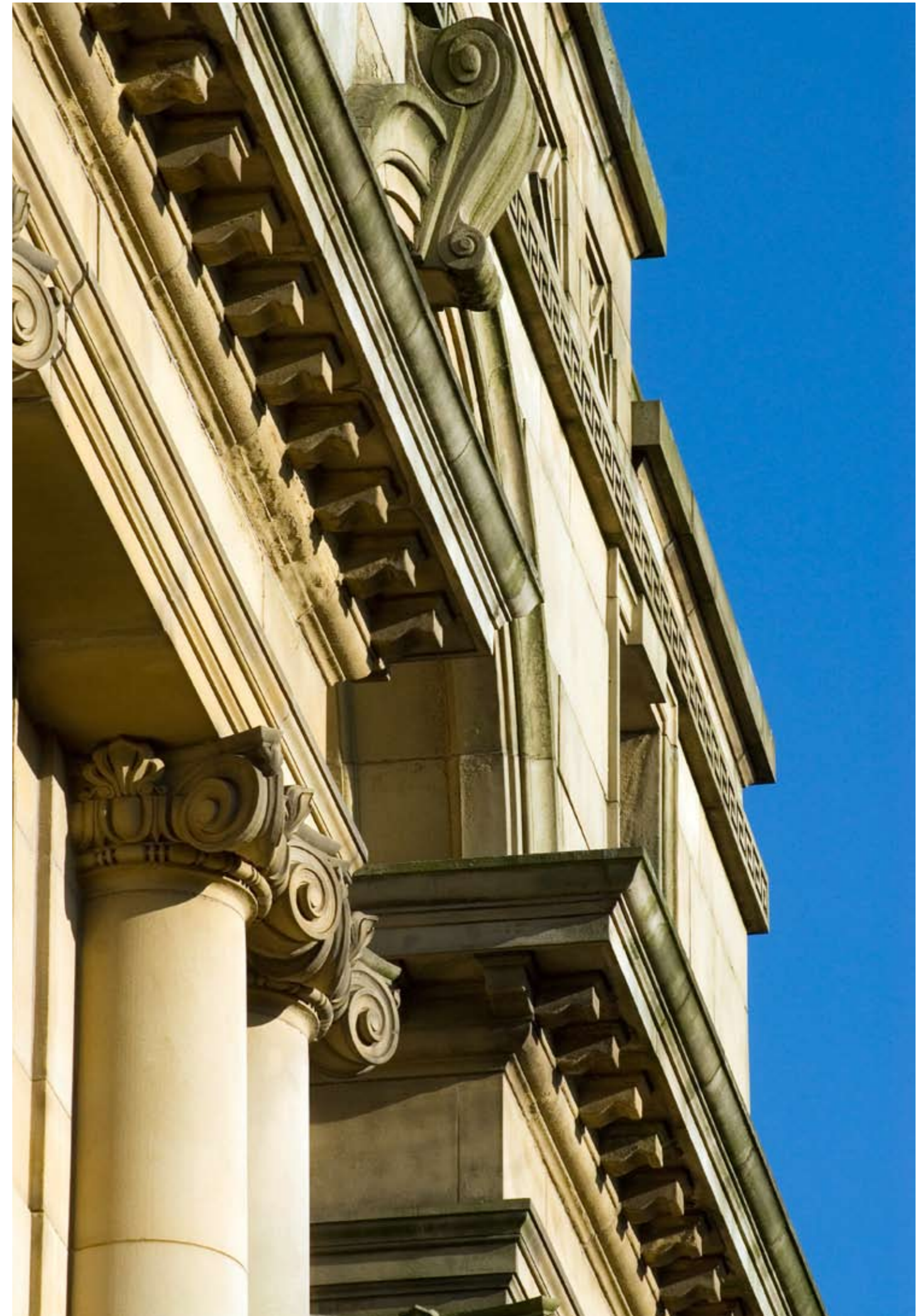
3.2 What makes Oldham different?

Oldham is not just like any other town in the North West. It is therefore important to consider what actions can be taken to ensure that we tackle the issues in Oldham. Regional and sub regional plans might be useful in helping us to shape our ideas, but it is very important to understand how the issues relate to Oldham. So what makes housing different in Oldham?

- Two-thirds of Oldham remains open countryside, including the Peak Park and green belt
- Oldham has segregated communities. It is now essential to begin to break down the segregation in neighbourhoods, especially in terms of housing and education, by giving individuals and families real choices and to at least ensure that clusters and patterns of segregation do not become even more entrenched. (Cantle Review, 2006)
- Forty two per cent of Oldham's housing stock is terraces, compared with 32% across the North West and just 26% across England as a whole (Census 2001)
- Oldham is the only district in Greater Manchester to have experienced a worsening in its relative position in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation between 2004 and 2007
- Oldham has a proportionally young population. Currently around a fifth are aged 15 or less. 27.5% of children under 15 are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups (Oldham's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2008)
- Nearly a quarter of Oldham's population will be made up from people of BME heritage by 2022 (Oldham's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2008)
- The 2001 census showed 7% (6,400 households) of Oldham's housing stock is overcrowded. This was the second highest level in Greater Manchester. Overcrowding is highest in private renting, affecting 13% of households, then 11% in the social sector
- Oldham is home to the largest Private Finance Initiative (PFI) sheltered housing project in the country, transforming over half of Oldham's sheltered stock and worth £400m over 30 years
- Oldham has a relatively high number of families with one or more children with a disability (Oldham Council Children with Disabilities Team)

And a couple of interesting facts which help to make Oldham the place it is today...

- By the end of the 19th century Oldham was recognised near and far as nothing less than the greatest cotton spinning town in the world
- The world's first test tube baby was born in Oldham in 1978
- The Wrigley family, of chewing-gum fame, hail from Dobcross
- It was from Oldham Town Hall steps that Sir Winston Churchill made his inaugural acceptance speech when he was first elected as a Conservative Member of Parliament in 1900





3.3 Housing in Oldham

3.3.1 Oldham's housing market challenges

There are many challenges affecting Oldham's housing market today. This has been identified in research and evidenced through the increasing pressures we find on our services. It is important that Oldham Housing Partnership uses this strategy and its sub documents to focus our resources and priorities in addressing these issues.

The scale of our housing issues distinguishes Oldham from many other places. The borough has an unusually high proportion of small, densely packed, nineteenth century terraced houses. These are particularly concentrated in the inner areas where flats and maisonettes are also a common housing type. The supply of current homes does not match the needs and aspirations of people in Oldham and the wider city region.

3.3.2 Physical challenges

The quality of the housing stock in Oldham is a concern, with approximately 30% of private housing failing to meet Decent Homes Standard, providing very poor living conditions by 21st century standards (Decent Homes Survey 2006). Higher quality housing is limited and is predominantly located in the outer areas around Saddleworth and Shaw. Demand is high for council and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) properties in these areas, but availability is low due to low turnover rates, a high number of Right to Buys, and limited construction of new social housing. In March 2009, there were approximately 9,100 people on the council waiting list, although 16% of these were already council tenants in properties managed by First Choice Homes Oldham.

Terraced housing makes up the overwhelming majority of properties among the private rented sector (PRS), and they make up an even bigger share inside the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) boundary. Research undertaken by Ecotec on behalf of the Housing Partnership highlighted poor quality issues within the PRS in the lower end of the sector, particularly within the HMR area including problems around damp, inadequate heating and poor quality windows.

Satisfaction with the home overall is generally good, however, by ethnicity, white tenants are more satisfied with their home overall than are Asian households; by rental level, there is much higher satisfaction with the home among those paying the highest rent compared with those paying the least.

In April 2008, there were 2368 empty properties across Oldham. This is a big issue for the borough as long-term empty houses are the cause of a number of problems.

They can:

- deny homes to those in need, for example. homeless and vulnerable people;
- attract crime and anti-social behaviour;
- have a negative impact on the image of an area and devalue surrounding homes;
- cost us money to maintain through the loss of council tax revenue;
- be a wasted asset for owners;
- increase the pressure for new housing in our green and rural areas;

Despite two thirds of Oldham consisting of fields and open land, we have a relatively small amount of available housing land. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) identifies sites with potential for housing in the short, medium and long-term.

The SHLAA identifies a potential housing land supply with the capacity to deliver 457 dwellings per annum (net of clearance) during the period 2009/10 to 2030/31. Approximately 61% of the potential housing land supply is in East and West Oldham reflecting the regeneration priorities for the borough.

3.3.3 Social challenges

Oldham has the second highest level (7.3% of households affected) of overcrowding in Greater Manchester. The issue of overcrowding is most prevalent in Coldhurst and Werneth, where there is a high proportion of BME residents.

Following guidance from Communities and Local Government (CLG) the 2008 Oldham Housing Needs and Demands Survey identified a need for an additional 321 affordable houses per year in Oldham over a five year period.

A lack of affordable housing is a serious issue. Even though house prices are lower in Oldham than other areas of the country, Oldham's relatively low wages mean that many people are unable to buy a house. Research in 2008 showed:

- Despite recent decreases in entry level house prices, it is still virtually impossible for any lower quartile income single person and household buyers to enter the housing market
- As with entry level first time buyers, first time buyers on an average income would find it virtually impossible to afford an average priced property
- For single first time buyers, nobody could afford to stay in the areas in which they currently live based on average income and average house values

Oldham's population demographic is changing. This will bring about a number of housing challenges. The total population of the borough is forecast to grow by around 4% from the current level by 2022, and the make up of the population will change significantly. (See Oldham in Profile).

- Oldham has a proportionally young population. The proportion of the borough's population aged under 15 will decrease slightly from 20.7% to 20%, but remain above national average
- Currently, around 27.5% of children aged under 15 years are from BME groups. This is forecast to increase to around four out of ten (37.2%) by 2022
- In future years, the population of older people is projected to increase significantly in Oldham.
- The borough's working age population is currently 133,200. This is 60.7% of the borough's population, compared to a national average figure of 62.2%

The proportion of our population from (non-white) black and minority ethnic (BME) groups is forecast to increase from around 16.6% in 2007 to 24.6% in 2022. This will arise predominantly from the growth of Oldham's Pakistani and Bangladeshi-heritage communities.

BME groups are disproportionately represented in the labour market. In July 2008, twice the proportion of people of working age belonging to non-white minority ethnic groups in Oldham were unemployed (claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, 5.2%) compared with the white population (2.6%).

Overcrowding (Census 2001)

Tenure	Number	% tenure
Private rented	1,003	13.18
Social rented	2,311	11.48
Owner occupied	3,097	5.15
Total	6,411	7.30

There is a greater need for three bedroom or larger houses amongst the BME applicants for local authority housing. The growing elderly BME population, which suffers from higher levels of respiratory and coronary problems, will add additional pressure on providing suitable housing for older people.

Whilst the numbers of new asylum seekers coming to Oldham in recent years have fallen, recent expansions to the European Union have increased the number of Eastern European migrants coming to Oldham.

Oldham is characterised by highly segregated ethnic communities. There are significant barriers around age, housing tenure and economic status. Housing is acknowledged as one of the key priorities in Oldham for addressing tensions between different communities. Access to good affordable housing, which meets the needs of families and individuals regardless of their background and economic circumstances, is fundamental. Segregation is a particular issue, with a concentration of BME households in private sector terraced housing in central Oldham, many living in overcrowded conditions and much of the accommodation of a poor standard. (Cantle Review, 2006) It is important that interaction is encouraged in other settings, such as in the workplace, in our schools, and in cultural, sporting, and community activities to help break down these barriers.

There are currently a number of challenges around supported housing provision. The North West Needs Assessment model indicates a mismatch between the supply of and demand for supported accommodation within Oldham. This highlights a particular shortage of accommodation for socially excluded groups, including homeless households, care leavers, young people, ex-offenders and customers with substance or alcohol misuse issues.

There are currently no authorised Gypsies and Travellers sites in Oldham. The Greater Manchester Gypsies and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) commissioned by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities identified a current need of 24 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers increasing to 26 pitches by 2016.

3.4 The economic downturn

The dramatic contraction of the world economy (fall out from the USA sub prime market) has never been far from the front page and the crucial role the collapse of the housing market played in this is well documented.

- House prices have seen the biggest fall since records began 25 years ago
- Repossessions and possession orders are rising across the UK
- Mortgage arrears are increasing and more households find themselves in negative equity
- Getting a mortgage has become much harder and home loan approvals are falling
- New housing starts are the lowest for 60 years and orders for house building are down
- The buy to let market is in decline and the demand for rented homes is increasing

Oldham has not been isolated from the impact of the credit crunch and subsequent economic downturn. This is having a substantial influence on the borough's housing market.

3.4.1 Before the credit crunch (approximately Summer 2008)

As with the rest of the country, house prices were rising and new developments were being built across the borough.

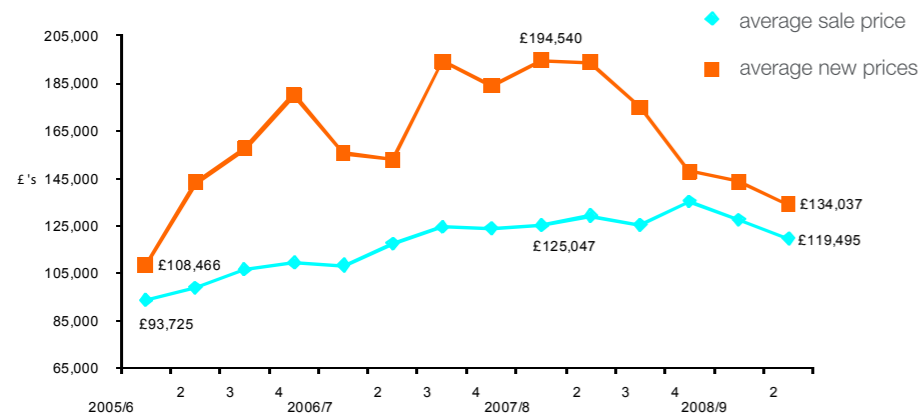
- Between March 2002 and March 2008, the value of entry level (lower quartile) housing rose by 180% in Oldham compared to a 163% rise in Greater Manchester and 108% across England
- Between April 2005 and March 2008, the average re-sale price of a property in Oldham increased from £93,725 to £125,047. During the same period, new build properties increased from £108,466 in April 2005 to £194,540 at the end of March 2008.

Despite these huge increases in house prices, average wage levels remained relatively stable and more and more people were being priced out of owner occupation.

3.4.2 The credit crunch fall out

- Between the July and Sept 2007/8 and the same period in 2008/9, the average house price in Oldham fell by 7.4% from £128,964 to £119,495. Only in East Oldham did prices rise (+3%)
- The new build market saw house prices increase from £108,466 in 2005/6 to £194,540 at the start of 2007/8. By the second quarter of 2008/9, new build prices plummeted to £134,037, a reduction of 31.1%

Chart to show average sale and new build market values 2005/6 to 2008/9



- There is increasing pressure on social housing: more first time buyers need to rent; and there are concerns homelessness will grow as people fall into arrears with mortgage payments and repossessions rise
- The huge fall in new developments is reducing the number of new affordable houses delivered through commuted sums arising from section 106 planning agreements

3.4.3 Property sales

- Between October 2007 and September 2008, the volumes of both re-sales and new build sales have reduced across all property types. The sales of flats and detached properties have been particularly affected
- Over the same period, there has been a decrease of 61% and 81% in the volume of re-sale and new build markets respectively

3.4.4 The economic downturn and housing in Oldham

Despite the downturn, there are a number of opportunities for Oldham.

- Registered Social Landlords (RSL) have the ability to add to their housing stock as private developers look to sell off unsold private properties
- First Choice Homes Oldham are now able to bid for resources to build new homes from the Homes and Communities Agency
- A more competitive construction industry means that developers are now more likely to build homes which suit our housing need
- Through HMR, there is an opportunity to acquire and prepare land in readiness for the upturn
- The proposed stock transfer of council stock to a new RSL would generate significant investment in homes and neighbourhoods and in the construction industry
- House prices are falling, making it slightly easier for people to get on the property ladder
- There will be significant investment through Private Finance Initiatives two and four

However, as the building of new houses becomes affected by the downturn, it is very important that we reflect on the current short term conditions for this strategy. The action plan at the end of this strategy reflects our aims and objectives in this particularly challenging market.

4 What are we doing already?

In recent years Oldham has campaigned for additional resources to help tackle some of the difficult housing issues. A number of initiatives are currently being delivered to improve the housing offer to Oldham's residents.

4.1 Housing Market Renewal (HMR) [Oldham Rochdale HMR - Home](#)

The Oldham Rochdale Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder is one of nine such projects in England. Since the pathfinder began in 2004 £153.9 million has been invested, which has attracted hundreds of millions more from the public and private sectors.

By March 2008, HMR had:

- **Supported the building of 390 new homes**
- **Refurbished 722 houses across Oldham between April 2006 and February 2009**
- **Cleared 770 properties to enable new development**
- **Trained and found construction jobs for more than 300 local people through the J21 construction partnership**
- **Been scored as 'performing strongly' by the Audit Commission. The pathfinder is one of only three in the country to receive the highest mark available**

4.2 Private Finance Initiative (PFI) 2 [Oldham Council - Home](#)

The PFI 2 initiative is the biggest sheltered housing PFI project in the country. The project is changing the face of sheltered housing in the borough. It will deliver around 1,500 designated sheltered council owned properties, which includes 854 bungalows and 19 group schemes. The project will ensure that all sheltered housing meets decent homes standards by the end of the refurbishment. It's improving the quality of life for older people in Oldham.

4.3 Private Finance Initiative 4 [Oldham Council - Home](#)

The PFI 4 Gateways to Oldham project will involve the building of around 300 new 3, 4 and 5 bedroom family homes, replacing 1 and 2 bed flats. This will take place on five sites across Oldham, specifically the existing Crossley and Primrose Bank estates and three brownfield sites in Coldhurst, Westwood and Fitton Hill. A further 300 properties will be refurbished as part of the scheme.

4.4 Future of council homes

During the last ten years, Oldham Council found itself facing four conflicting pressures around our housing stock:

- **A sharp downturn in the overall housing stock of about 25%**
- **A huge growth in the numbers of applicants for social housing**
- **A reduction in the amount of capital resources to put into schemes for additional housing**
- **A particular shortage of family accommodation available to rent**

As a result of the situation, the council is progressing down the stock transfer route. The proposed transfer of 12,000 council homes to a transformed First Choice Homes Oldham as a newly-created local Registered Social Landlord (RSL) would generate £468 million in capital investment in homes and neighbourhoods over 30 years, safeguarding the future of social housing in the town.

4.5 Review of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Oldham

Oldham Council and the Oldham Rochdale HMR Pathfinder have reviewed the current partnership arrangements with RSLs. As a result, there are clear agreements between the council and the RSLs regarding neighbourhood priorities and the role each RSL will play. The review will enable RSLs to improve standards and services for tenants and residents and become more accountable for the work they deliver in a neighbourhood.

4.6 Private sector/private rented sector improvements

Private housing makes up nearly three quarters of the housing stock in Oldham. It is imperative that this is kept to a high standard, adding to Oldham's choice and variation of places to live. Oldham currently focuses on a number of measures to improve the quality and sustainability of our private housing stock.

Bond scheme: Since November 2006 the bond scheme has helped over 200 people, who are in housing need, to access private rented sector accommodation. Landlords taking part are issued with a written guarantee, or 'paper bond', by the council on behalf of the tenant. The scheme allows people who would not usually be able to afford a deposit to take up this kind of accommodation.

Equity loans for improvements are a sustainable way of providing assistance to vulnerable homeowners. They enable homeowners to release equity in their property to carry out repairs and improvements.



Initiatives to tackle empty properties: Work to bring empty properties back into use is ongoing. Officers are currently working with absent owners to bring their properties back into use. This is already proving to be very beneficial. One hundred and four empty properties were returned to occupation during 2007/08 as a result of council action. The need to bring existing properties back into use will be particularly important given the likely economic conditions over the next two to three years.

Full details of initiatives to tackle problems in the private sector can be found on the council website and in the Private Sector Housing Strategy. [Oldham Council](#)

5 What did we achieve between 2006 and 2009?

This strategy has been developed to help focus on what Oldham Housing Partnership needs to do over the next two years. However, it is important to briefly reflect on some of the achievements that have been delivered through the previous Housing Strategy.

- From April 2006 to March 2008 1,176 properties were built in Oldham and 462 demolished
- One hundred and six new affordable homes were built across Oldham in 2006/07, 65 in 2007/8 and 115 during 2008/09. Most of these properties were family homes with three or more bedrooms
- Oldham's first ever home zone was completed in Norfolk Street giving children and families on foot priority over cars through clever design
- Two hundred and thirty nine houses which had been empty for a long time were brought back into use between April 2006 and October 2008
- Grant money has been used to help improve the energy efficiency of homes for vulnerable people who are struggling to keep their home warm and dry. From March 2006 to April 2007, 2,452 homes in Oldham benefitted from £2.6 million in Warm Front funding
- Equity loans have allowed residents to improve their properties by releasing equity in their homes. Sixty equity loans have been granted with over £1 million being spent
- We have achieved over a 50 per cent reduction for the number of people being accommodated in temporary homelessness accommodation down from 35 in December 2007 to 10 by the 31 December 2008
- We have worked closely with partners through a number of services to address homelessness and improve advice and support to young people, new and emerging communities and survivors of domestic violence
- By March 2008, 83% of Oldham Council properties (91% properties managed by FCHO) and 90% of housing associations' properties met Decent Homes Standard

6. Strategic context and partnerships

6.1 Local context

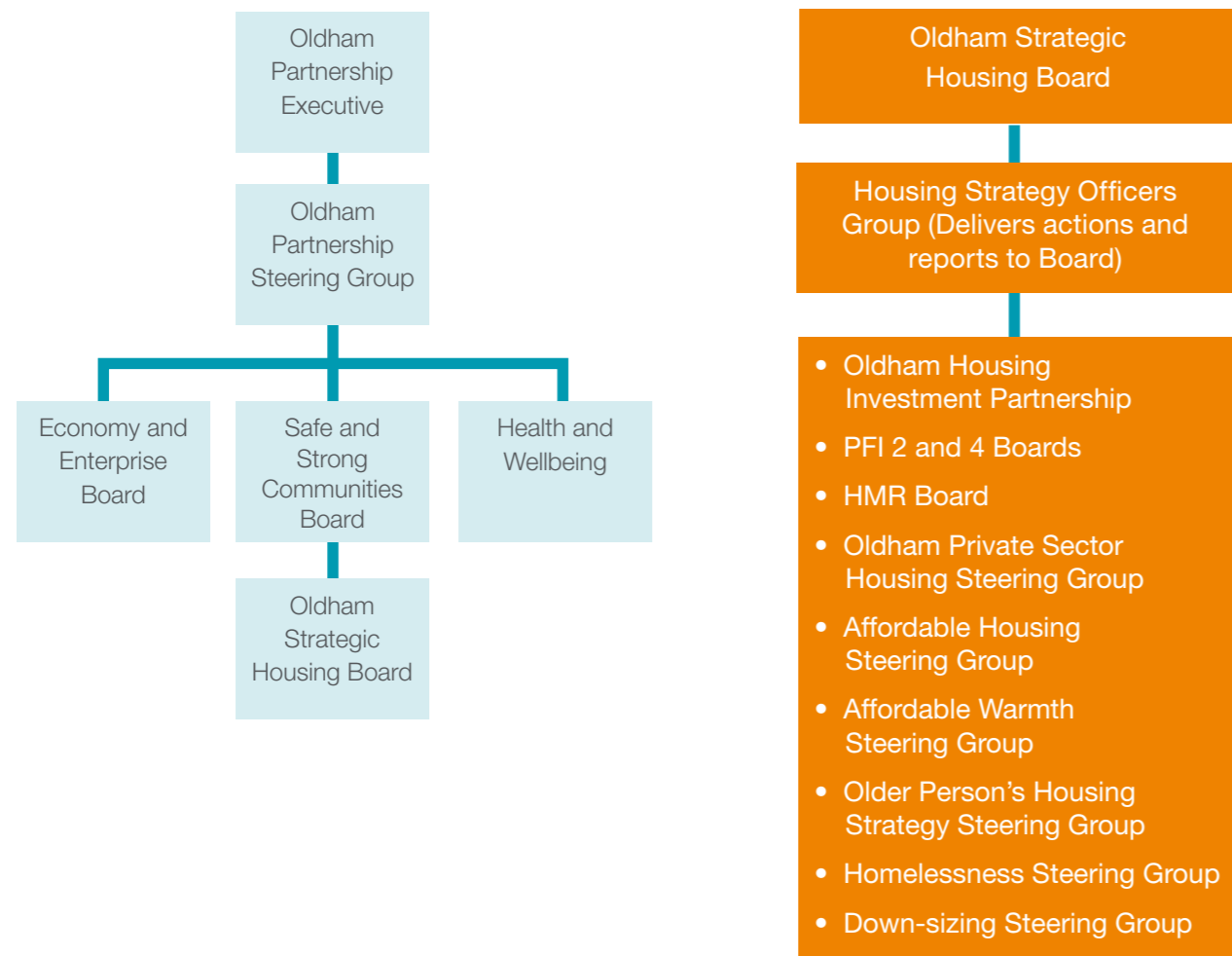
The new Housing Strategy does not sit alone. It is linked into a number of other documents and forms part of the wider Oldham vision. These local Oldham linkages are detailed below.

Oldham Partnership is the local strategic partnership (LSP) for Oldham. It brings together partners from all sectors of Oldham's community to work together to improve the quality of life and prosperity of the borough. Its vision is to make:

Oldham a place where everyone is proud to belong by increasing life opportunities for all

Oldham Housing Partnership

With the emergence of the 2008–11 Local Area Agreement (LAA), the Government introduced a range of national indicators under three themes – Economy and Enterprise, Safe and Strong Communities and Health and Wellbeing. The Strategic Housing Board sits under the Safe and Strong Communities Board. (Figure 6.1).



The Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a plan of what Oldham Partnership aims to do between 2008 and 2011 and is a combination of Government's aims for the country as a whole and Oldham's local priorities as identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Oldham Beyond

Oldham Beyond is a 15 year vision looking at how we will develop the physical side of Oldham, including buildings such as schools, homes, offices and the transport system.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

Local Development Framework (LDF) is a plan that will guide future development and use of land in the borough. The LDF will replace the current land-use plan, the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). It will reflect the aims of several other plans including Oldham Beyond, the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA, Building Schools for the Future, and HMR.

6.2 Regional Context

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) sets out key policies that inform spatial planning across the North West. The RSS sets Oldham's annual average rate of housing provision at 289 new houses, net of clearance. Eighty per cent of new housing should be built on brownfield land or buildings.

North West Regional Housing Strategy provides a framework for future priorities and investment plans across the region. The three themes under the Regional Strategy, which are reflected in Oldham's Housing Strategy, are:

- **Achieving the right quantity of housing**
- **Continuing to raise the quality of the existing housing stock**
- **Connecting people to an improved offer by helping increase access to affordable homes**

Greater Manchester Housing Strategy

Greater Manchester Housing Strategy is being developed during 2009 by the Greater Manchester Planning and Housing Commission. The Strategy will set the sub region's priorities for the 'single conversation' with the Homes and Communities Agency.

The Housing Strategy links with the regional and sub regional strategies as follows:



6.3 National context

In December 2008, a new structure was formed which governs and monitors housing in England. Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the national housing and regeneration agency for England, with an annual investment budget of more than £5 billion.

Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the regulator for affordable housing having taken over from the Housing Corporation. The TSA believe housing matters, and that access to good quality housing improves lives. Their goal is to raise the standard of services for tenants.

General/ private sector housing) Housing – Communities and Local Government, (CLG) has responsibility for overseeing all facets of housing. The CLG implement high-level policy changes and drive change through regional teams.

7. What our residents said

7.1 How have we consulted people?

We have consulted a wide number of people through a variety of methods during the preparation of this strategy including:

- Questionnaires and focus groups looking at people's priorities
- Oldham Housing Conference
- Specific housing research
- Tenants and residents survey (stock options appraisal)
- Online consultation
- Consultation with elected members
- Partner consultation

We have been careful to ensure that as many people as possible have had the opportunity to get involved and shape our action plan. There will be further opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the consultation around detailed action plans in the future.

A huge number of views, comments and opinions have been gathered. They will also be used to direct specific housing strategies and action plans in the future. A summary of the key messages is detailed below. You can view the strategy consultation report for more in-depth information.

7.2 Stakeholder feedback

Stakeholder feedback was received in a number of forums including the Oldham Housing Conference, the council website and through elected members briefings. A wide range of views, comments, questions and suggestions were received reflecting the need to:

- Identify a strategic approach to prepare land for future development
- Carefully manage the council's assets in relation to the stock transfer process
- Prepare sites that are attractive to developers and supported by infrastructure
- Increase landlord licensing to focus on the standard/quality of the neighbourhood and management as well as the property
- Reduce fuel poverty by seeking investment from NHS Oldham
- Focus on the quality of the place, neighbourhood and community and not just the buildings
- Make improving housing choice a top priority
- Focus on quality that works for people, and not just for the designers
- Provide more high quality, high value housing to retain and attract the economically active
- Achieve mixed communities in the current economic climate
- Make the best use of the land we have
- Work with all partners to deliver positive outcomes for Oldham people
- Tackle the problem of overcrowding
- Support bids to the Homes and Communities Agency for schemes which are built or part built and private developers are looking to sell them
- Have a bold vision for change management

7.3 Research consultation

Research commissioned has identified a number of housing issues and challenges. Some of the key challenges and priorities are detailed below. Reference to these documents can be found in the appendices.

Oldham Partnership- priorities survey (July 2008, 679 responses)

- There needs to be more high quality affordable housing to buy 54%
- Improve energy efficiency of homes 40%
- More high quality affordable housing to rent 36%

Oldham Council housing options survey (July 2008, 2,747 responses)

- Eighty two per cent of tenants have no particular view who the landlord is as long as home is in good repair and rents are reasonable
- Seventy per cent of tenants are happy with the housing services they currently receive
- Two thirds of tenants do not believe there is a good choice of housing in their area which they can afford to rent
- When asked about their neighbourhood priorities, the most common responses were cleanliness in the area and tackling anti-social behaviour (98%), better street lighting (94%), the maintenance of open spaces (92%) and improved maintenance of roads (90%)

Private rented sector, quality and choice in Oldham (April 2008, 505 responses)

- The main reasons for private renting are: rent was attractive (30%), nice place to live (21%), close to family and friends (19%), the right size for my family (19%) and the only one I could afford to rent at the time (17%)
- Almost three-quarters of private tenants are satisfied with private renting overall.
- Standards are poor at the lower end of the private rented market

Making best use of Oldham's stock (April 2008, 8 focus groups and stakeholder interviews)

- Residents believe overcrowding is worse in areas near to the town centre, particularly, Clarkwell, Westwood, Glodwick and Coppice
- People are reluctant to leave areas where they had social networks and were near to their places of worship
- Under-occupation is not seen as a problem in the private sector. People have high aspirations for space and they like the status that goes with having a big home and garden

New build survey report (January 2008, 750 interviews)

- A high proportion of respondents in newly built housing developments in the Oldham Pathfinder area felt their neighbourhood feels isolated and cut off from the wider area
- New build housing is influential in persuading households to remain in Oldham

Section 2 Our priorities

8 Oldham's themes

This high level strategy has highlighted a number of the key challenges and housing issues in Oldham. These issues have been further compounded since the credit crunch and subsequent economic downturn experienced towards the end of 2008.

The Housing Strategy reflects the themes set out in the Regional Housing Strategy and the emerging Greater Manchester Housing Strategy. Our two year action plan has been developed around the themes of -

- **Quantity: Achieving the right quantity of housing**
- **Quality: Continuing to raise the quality of our existing housing stock**
- **People: Connecting Oldham's residents to an improved housing offer**

The three themes, and subsequent priorities and actions, reflect the challenges highlighted as a result of our robust evidence base and through consultations with a range of stakeholders.

Achieving the right quantity of housing

9. Quantity

Our long term vision for Oldham is to ensure that we achieve the right quantity of suitable housing across the borough. It is important that the right quantity of housing includes the right mix of both new affordable housing as well as private housing. The right quantity of housing is essential to provide choice and access for a wide range of people of mixed socio-economic backgrounds.

The economic downturn means that our short term aims (2009–2012) need to be carefully considered to ensure that they are deliverable in the current climate. Our priorities and actions are focused around initiatives to ensure that Oldham is prepared for the market upturn and makes best use of existing resources during a period of economic uncertainty.

9.1 Why is quantity a challenge?

Research and consultation highlighted a number of issues with the quantity of housing in Oldham. The action plan sets out the key priorities and actions Oldham Housing Partnership will aim to deliver to meet the challenges around quantity. In order to achieve the right quantity of housing in Oldham we need to:

- Meet the challenge to increase the number of larger family homes. Careful consideration needs to be given to meet the specific needs arising for larger family housing within the BME sector
- Consider how we meet the increasing demand for social housing in the short term, as pressure increases due to the economic downturn, without compromising long-term goals
- Link housing to economic regeneration and the Local Development Framework ensuring it supports complementary growth, regeneration programmes and sustainable development
- Ensure that the appropriate amount of all types of housing is developed to meet the needs and demands of all Oldham's residents
- Build the right quantity and choice of housing despite having a shortage of easily developable housing sites in the borough
- Ensure that the Regional Spatial Strategy targets for the borough are achieved
- Make better use of Oldham's existing housing stock and reduce the number of empty properties which have a detrimental effect on local neighbourhoods
- Ensure that the needs and demands of all vulnerable and minority groups are considered when planning new development
- Ensure our evidence base and housing strategies are kept up to date in turbulent times, so that robust frameworks are in place for the delivery of the right type of homes across the borough

A summary of actions, which can be found later in this section covers the initial two year period and will be updated annually. The detailed action plan, including milestones and outcomes will be produced alongside the strategy and can be found in the appendices. The action plan focuses our resources and efforts on delivering the following priorities in relation to the quantity of housing in Oldham.

Priorities

- Make better use of our underused stock and 2000 empty homes to offer people greater choice and access to housing
- Develop a mixed approach to new build housing including for sale, part ownership, rent
- Make better use of our land by acquiring it in the short term or land banking with partners

Continuing to raise the quality of the existing and future housing stock

10. Quality

Quality is about more than just physical bricks and mortar. Oldham is committed to delivering new housing developments to consistently high standards. Over the coming years, it will be imperative to meet increasing standards and challenges around carbon emissions, Building for Life, Code for Sustainable Homes, Lifetime Homes and Design and Quality Standards.

However, it is important to recognise that the quality of buildings alone is not the only factor affecting the quality of people's lives. It is becoming increasingly important to focus on the quality of the place, the neighbourhood and the quality of service we offer to all Oldham's residents.

10.1 Why is quality a challenge?

Research and consultation highlighted issues with the quality of housing in Oldham. In order to continue to raise the quality of the existing and future housing stock we need to:

- Meet the challenges of poor quality in a number of areas in Oldham which have particularly severe levels of deprivation and poor housing, particularly in the Housing Market Renewal areas
- Address the issues of quality across all sectors. There are particular challenges around quality found at the lower end of the private rented sector
- Tackle the problem of overcrowding across all tenures of housing.
- Tackle the effects of fuel poverty, affordable warmth and issues around quality for all residents but particularly for vulnerable clients
- Meet the future challenges arising from an ageing population (particularly in BME communities). This is likely to have considerable impact on the need for suitable housing and support

Oldham Housing Partnership will be focusing our resources and efforts on delivering the following priorities in relation to the quality of housing in Oldham.

Priorities

- Ensure all new developments are high quality and meet Oldham's needs
- Improve the quality of Oldham's existing housing stock
- Provide a high quality standard of services to all tenants and residents
- Ensure that we focus on the quality of the place, neighbourhood and community and not just buildings

11. People

Aiming to improve the quality of lives for Oldham's residents is at the forefront of everything we do. Through this strategy we want to focus on delivering actions to meet the needs and demands people place on housing. This will ensure that people have the choice and access to housing which is suitable for them and enables them to live happy and healthy lives.

Improving services is very important. This might not only be about direct housing services, but other services such as neighbourhood management and worklessness. We want to ensure that people have the appropriate access to and range of advice to enable them to live in homes which meet their needs. Access to appropriate housing needs to be available to people from all backgrounds, housing tenure and areas if we are going to significantly improve the housing offer in Oldham.

11.1 What is the people challenge?

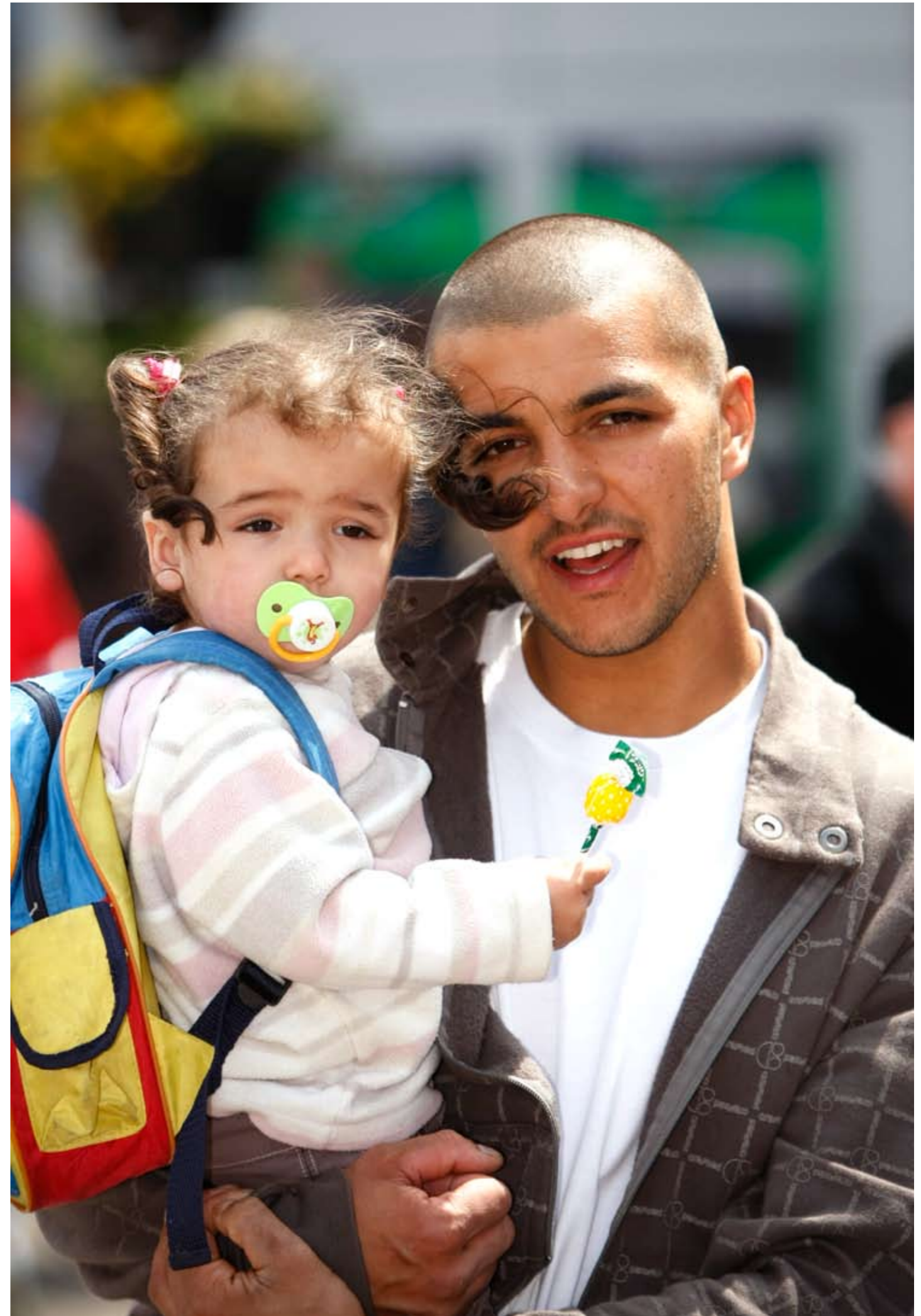
The action plan sets out our key priorities and actions Oldham Housing Partnership will aim to deliver. In order to connect people to an improved housing offer we need to:

- Meet the challenges arising from changing population
- Provide linked up services and advice so that everybody can access appropriate housing
- Ensure our strategy supports strategic commissioning of Supporting People-funded services and other health and social care services
- Addresses the needs and demands of specific groups within our community
- Ensure the sub strategies around homelessness, older people and Supporting People are focussed on the issues which need tackling and provide a clear approach to how these will be delivered

Oldham Housing Partnership will be focusing our resources and efforts on delivering the following priorities in relation to improving the housing offer to people in Oldham.

Priorities

- Improve housing choice in all areas and across all tenures
- Improve support for independent living
- Increase people's aspirations and improve the work prospects of Oldham's residents
- Address inequalities around health and housing across the borough



12. Action Plan 2009–2012

Quantity vision: Achieving the right quantity of housing

Our priorities

- Make better use of our underused stock and 2000 empty homes to offer people greater choice and access to housing
- To develop a mixed approach to new build housing including for sale, part ownership, rent
- Make better use of our land by acquiring land in the short-term or land banking with partners

Objectives to achieve our priorities

- Reduce the number of empty homes in the borough improving the sustainability and appearance of people's neighbourhoods
- Work with partners, including Housing Market Renewal to use the council's assets to deliver homes now and in the future by preparing sites that are attractive to developers
- Make the best use of Oldham's existing housing stock across all tenures
- Develop and implement a new Affordable Housing Strategy to meet the needs and demands for people choosing to live in Oldham
- Develop and implement a new Private Sector Housing Strategy to help meet the needs and demands of people living in private housing

- Improve our partnership working to support all residents of the borough

Action Plan 2009–2012

Quality vision: Continuing to raise the quality of the existing housing stock

Our priorities

- Ensure all new developments are high quality and meet Oldham's needs
- Improve the quality of Oldham's existing housing stock
- Provide a high quality standard of services to all tenants and residents
- Ensure that we focus on the quality of the place, neighbourhood and community and not just the individual buildings

Objectives to achieve our priorities

- Improve energy efficiency of homes, ensuring vulnerable residents benefit from improved measures to address fuel poverty
- Improve standards in the private rented sector improving the quality of life for tenants and communities
- Ensure all new developments consist of high quality, sustainable housing, places and neighbourhoods which meets Oldham's needs and demands
- Provide more high quality, high value housing in the borough to retain and attract the economically active
- Deliver the stock transfer process

- Improve our partnership working to support all residents of the borough



Action Plan 2009–2012

People vision: Connecting people to an improved housing offer

Our priorities

- Improve housing choice in all areas and across all tenures
- Improve support for independent living
- Increase peoples aspirations and improve the work prospects of Oldham's residents
- Address inequalities around health and housing across the borough

Objectives to achieve our priorities

- Develop a tenure blind one-stop shop approach for housing services improving choice and access for Oldham's residents
- Use regeneration, new and existing housing schemes to break down barriers around education, training and worklessness
- Develop and implement a new Homelessness Strategy protecting the needs of vulnerable residents
- Work with NHS Oldham to develop links to reducing housing and health inequalities for Oldham's residents
- Develop clear action plans for meeting the needs and demands of key groups
- Review and update our evidence base to ensure we focus on the needs and demands of our residents

- Improve our partnership working to support all residents of the borough



Section 3 How we will do this

13. Monitoring and performance

13.1 How we will monitor performance

We recognise the importance of ensuring that we manage and monitor our performance in relation to our targets. The strategy has been developed in consultation with partners who have a key role to play in helping to deliver specific actions. The strategy's action plan will be monitored by a strategic housing officers group on a quarterly basis and reported back to the Oldham Strategic Housing Board.

The partnership recognises the importance of providing an excellent service to all communities. The partnership will ensure that equality impacts are considered in the development of projects and specific strategies as appropriate. In order to ensure equitable services are provided across the board, monitoring arrangements will be developed enabling the partnership to assess the impact throughout the borough.

13.2 How we will share our achievements with Oldham residents

We recognise that it is important to share our progress with Oldham's residents and partners. Progress on the Housing Strategy will be made available to all residents and partners through the housing section of the council and Oldham Partnership websites. Residents and partners will be encouraged to give us your feedback, ideas and thoughts as we deliver our actions. Oldham residents will be able to keep up to date on housing achievements or issues through One magazine which is delivered to every house in the borough.

13.3 Resourcing the strategy

Priorities and actions are resourced through a variety of funding streams, partners and human resources. It is not possible to identify all of the resources that will be available over the time period of this strategy. The following table highlights some of the current financial resources which will be used to help deliver the actions highlighted in this strategy.

* refers to net present value

Source	Funding	Funding Period
Private Finance Initiative 2	£100 million	Over 30 years*
Private Finance Initiative 4	£130 million	Over 25 years*
Stock Transfer	£468 million	30 years from 2010
Local Area Agreement Allocation	£150,000	April 2009–March 2010
Private Sector Capital Programme	Allocated annually	April 2009–March 2010
Public Sector Capital Programme	Allocated annually	April 2009–March 2010
Housing Market Renewal	£27 million	April 2009–March 2010

14. Contacts

If you require any further information about this strategy or any of its related documents, please contact the Oldham Housing Strategy team on the following:

14.1 Housing Strategy team

Oldham Council

E: housingstrategy@oldham.gov.uk

T: 0161 770 2045

If you require any further information, or more specific information you might want to contact some of the agencies or organisations detailed below.

14.2 Partners and agency websites

[Oldham Council](#)

[Oldham Partnership](#)

[Oldham Housing Investment Partnership OHIP](#)

[Oldham Rochdale Housing Market Renewal](#)

[Homes and Communities Agency](#)

[Tenant Services Authority](#)

[Communities and Local Government](#)

[NHS Oldham](#)

[4NW](#)

15. Glossary

Affordable housing Housing that is made available to eligible house holds at a cost low enough for those who cannot afford to meet their needs within the general housing market.

Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) A company that is employed to manage the council's housing stock and which is owned by the council but operates at "arms length".

Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) A group made up from representatives of the ten local authority areas in Greater Manchester. This includes Oldham.

Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) The Government department that sets policy on local government, regeneration, housing and planning.

"Fit for purpose" criteria The framework used by the Government for assessing the previous housing strategy, this no longer applies.

Fuel poverty Where a household cannot afford to adequately heat their home. This is defined as when energy costs are at least 10% of household income.

Greater Manchester sub region A defined geographical area surrounding the city of Manchester, which includes Oldham.

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) The new national housing and regeneration agency that was formed on 1 December 2008. It incorporates the previous remit of the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships and parts of the CLG for planning and enabling regeneration, including investment in affordable housing.

Housing Corporation The former agency with a remit in allocation funding for the development of affordable housing and the management and regulation of Registered Social Landlords. The Housing Corporation has now been replaced by the Homes and Communities Agency and the Tenant Services Authority.

Housing market area A contained area in which the majority of housing moves tend to occur.

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) A measure of deprivation covering a number of areas such as health, incomes, education and housing. The index covers the whole country and allows comparison between local authorities and between neighbourhoods within authorities.

Local Area Agreement (LAA) A three year agreement between the council, key partners and Government that sets out priorities for the local area.

Local Development Framework (LDF) A portfolio of spatial planning documents which set out the planning policies that will direct the future development pattern of the borough.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) A partnership between the council and its key partners, such as police, health, voluntary and community groups. The partnership has overall responsibility for performance against the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Mixed communities Neighbourhoods that contain members from a range of social backgrounds including tenure, ethnicity, age and income.

Place-making Influencing the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the borough. The council and Housing Strategy have a role in this.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL) An independent organisation providing affordable housing, regulated by the Tenants Services Authority. Also known as housing associations.

Section 106 Affordable housing (S106) Under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 any person interested in land in the area of a local planning authority may, by agreement or unilaterally, enter into a legal obligation. Amongst other things, this can be used as a method to provide affordable housing.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) An assessment of the characteristics and performance of the local housing market, including estimates of future need and demand for accommodation, that assists in planning future provision.

Supporting People (SP) Fund provided to the council to deliver housing related support for vulnerable groups, such as older people and homeless people, promoting independent living.

Sustainable communities Successful, thriving and inclusive communities that people will want to live in.

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) A strategy produced by the local strategic partnership setting out a long term vision and priorities for the borough as a whole.

Tenant Services Authority (TSA) The new regulatory agency for social housing, formed on 1st December 2008, it takes over the previous remit of the Housing Corporation.

Tenure blind A service/development where there is no recognisable difference between owner occupiers, private renting and social renting

16. Appendices

There are a number of documents including strategies and research which sit under the umbrella of this strategic document. The majority of these documents are available online (web link correct at time of writing). A list of the key documents under this strategy is detailed below:

16.1 Strategies and plans

Oldham Sustainable Community Strategy

Local Area Agreement 2008–2011

Oldham Private Sector Housing Strategy

Oldham Affordable Housing Strategy

Oldham Affordable Warmth Strategy

Oldham and Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Business Plan

First Choice Homes Oldham Customer Involvement Strategy

Regional Housing Strategy

16.2 Research and Evidence

Oldham Housing Needs and Demand Study 2008

Oldham in Profile

Making the best use of Oldham's Housing Stock

The Private Rented Sector

Greater Manchester Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Published June 2009

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Oldham
Partnership