

OLDHAM PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY 2007 - 2009

SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

The Private Sector Housing Strategy 2007-2009 is a sub document of the Council's Corporate Housing Strategy.

It recognizes the key role that private sector housing plays in making Oldham a great place in which to live and work.

It looks at the analysis of current housing conditions and related issues and outlines the Council's priorities and methods for delivery of various forms of assistance to householders.



The framework of the Strategy takes account of other Council Strategies and Policies under the overarching Community Strategy. The measures adopted in the 2003 Strategy have been expanded to take account of changes in delivery mechanisms since then, and to meet new challenges. For example, those created by the Oldham/ Rochdale Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder initiative; the introduction of a 'decent homes' standard; and replacing grant assistance for repairs or improvements by loan-based packages for homeowners.

The Government's view is that it is primarily the responsibility of private

sector home owners to maintain their own property but recognises that some owners particularly the elderly and most vulnerable do not have the necessary resources to repair or improve their homes. The Strategy outlines the types of assistance available and the criteria applicable to various forms of assistance. When adopted we will give public notice and copies will be made available at key locations across the Borough for information and scrutiny.

The Council's Corporate Housing Strategy 2006-2009 recognises the way our housing is changing and the new phases of regeneration taking place across the Borough. These are challenging times that will offer real opportunities to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Oldham. It will create better housing choice and improve conditions by providing good standards of accommodation. The new strategy "**Decent Homes, Decent Neighbourhoods**" reflects a commitment to create sustainable communities leading to greater community cohesion.

Taken together, the Councils Corporate Housing Strategy and the Private Sector Housing Strategy provide a clear overview and direction of the Council's approach to the owner occupied and private rented tenures within the Borough. We will continuously monitor and evaluate progress and issue further revisions as appropriate in the future.

The Private Sector Housing Strategy can be viewed on the Oldham Council website www.oldham.gov.uk

THE STRATEGY

The revised Strategy feeds into the Corporate Housing Strategy and outlines the proposals for improving housing conditions within the owner/occupied and private rented sectors over the three years 2006-2009. Our programmes will continue with a three themed approach namely:

1. **A neighbourhood approach – area based renewal**
2. **A person centred approach**
3. **A regulatory role – tackling unsatisfactory housing**

The top 10 issues to tackle in private sector housing over the period 2007 – 2009

Meeting the 'Decent Homes' Challenge
Residents taking Responsibility
Making an Impact in Neighbourhoods
HMR and its Overarching Role in Housing Regeneration
Protecting the Borough's Most Vulnerable Residents
Tackling Overcrowding
Tackling Empty Properties
Housing and 'Green Issues'
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Consultation and Engagement

Meeting the 'Decent Homes' Challenge

The 2006 Housing Stock Condition Survey revealed that unfitness now only accounts for 8% of the private stock and major disrepair affects another 9%. Failure to meet decency standards is the most prevalent factor affecting 69% of the private stock in Oldham. Almost 50% of failure was due to a lack of adequate thermal comfort measures particularly in East & West Oldham. The Council's 'Affordable Warmth' policy is currently being reviewed and will look to consider further measures to help vulnerable households and others get help with energy efficiency measures to meet thermal comfort decency standards.



We will

Continue to offer equity based loans to assist householders with repairs/improvements. Similarly, those residents affected by compulsory purchase proposals will also be assisted with purchasing another property via 'Home Plus Plan' loans.

Vulnerable householders of Band A properties earning less than £5,000 per annum will be considered as a **priority group** for 'Home Improve' loans to tackle those key elements of their home that fail to meet the decent homes standard.

The referral system for advice and assistance towards thermal comfort measures for vulnerable households will continue and be promoted whenever refurbishment works are undertaken in neighbourhoods.

The introduction of 'Exterior improvement' schemes will focus on a new initiative to offer a home condition survey (MOT style) to highlight any existing deficiencies and guide householders towards financial assistance packages. The 'MOT' would be routinely offered when householders accessed our other services.

Householders Taking Responsibility

Many households in the borough are asset rich and cash poor. Their property represents an untapped resource, which could unlock funding for essential home

repairs or improvements and/or energy efficiency measures to make their homes meet the decent homes standard and help make communities more sustainable for the future. Traditionally, grants have been the major source of assistance offered by the Council, but the overall reduction in central funding for such activity has meant that equity based loans assistance is now being offered. It is proving popular with householders particularly those who cannot access loans from the high street lending institutions. Other types of loans to help with the purchase of an affordable home are equally popular.

We will

Look to maximize the use of equity based loans to those who cannot access traditional borrowing routes.

Look to promote loans for works to meet decent homes standards.

Offer Home Repairs Assistance as a last resort when other forms of assistance have been exhausted.

Making an Impact in Neighbourhoods

Block Refurbishment programmes have a key strategic role in area regeneration. A block based approach has been used in the Derker and Werneth/Freehold 1st wave HMR Neighbourhoods and the Council's two Renewal areas in Westwood and Glodwick. Very high participation levels from householders have mirrored its success. The effectiveness of these schemes has recently been questioned by the Government in terms of the degree of impact they have on the housing market and whether they offer value for money.

A recent joint Oldham and Rochdale Council's study evaluated the effectiveness of different types refurbishment schemes.

The key findings were:

- That exterior improvement, would not adversely impact on the market, and would offer greater value for money together with increased speed of delivery.
- Homeowner's would need some incentive to participate in refurbishment schemes so schemes should have no payback restrictions.
- Help homeowners to invest in the maintenance of their property by offering equity loans for additional maintenance work.

We will

Introduce 'Exterior improvement' as our general block refurbishment assistance to homeowners. There will be no payback restrictions.

Develop a home condition survey service (MOT style) to highlight any deficiencies and guide householders towards loan assistance packages for extra works. We will aim to offer this routinely when householders participate in 'Exterior' improvement schemes.



HMR and its Overarching Role in Housing Regeneration

The Oldham Rochdale HMR Pathfinder is one of nine Pathfinders across the country. It operates under the banner 'Oldham Rochdale Partners in Action', a multi agency partnership comprising both Councils, the North West Development Agency, English Partnerships, the Police, Oldham and Rochdale Local Strategic Partnerships and the private sector.

The Pathfinder aims to transform neighbourhoods across Oldham and has already begun in regenerating Derker and Werneth/Freehold. This major investment programme will tackle a number of problems including: -

- Neighbourhood improvements such as parking, security, creating and improving street patterns and green open spaces.
- Buying buildings for clearance and redevelopment.
- Giving exterior improvements to blocks of terraced properties.
- Improving choice by building a mix of house types, sizes and tenures that are energy efficient and provide affordable homes for local people and to attract new residents.
- Establishing local offices with teams of staff to assist and support residents through the transformation process of their neighbourhood and to provide support packages to help residents financially.

We will

Introduce 'Exterior' improvement schemes for block refurbishment with priority based on strategic location, environmental impact and level of disrepair. Boundary wall treatments will also be undertaken where appropriate together with associated environmental works.

The Council will put forward its plans for demolition of certain properties by using Compulsory Purchase and secure the redevelopment of acquired sites with new and affordable housing to offer residents more housing choice.

A design guide will be introduced for new build housing undertaken by the consortia developers in HMR neighbourhoods and local consultation with residents will offer an opportunity to influence specific schemes.

Put, which is a not for profit Home Improvement Agency. The Agency is also a member of the Home Improvement Trust and can arrange low cost advances enabling older people to live safely and independently in their own homes helping to prevent poor health and reducing the need for residential care. It also arranges the free services of an independent financial adviser to provide written advice as to appropriate options, based on the circumstances of the client borrower.

The private housing sector can also play an important role in reducing homelessness. A multi agency approach working with private landlords, estate and letting agents, and new housing providers can supply alternative choices for those facing homelessness.

Protecting the Borough's Most Vulnerable Residents

There are a number of proposals outlined in the Strategy that are aimed at assisting vulnerable people within the private sector housing arena. One of the key challenges will be meeting the Government's 'decent homes' target to reduce the number of non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households by 70% by 2010.

Providing assistance to the borough's elderly homeowners and giving support and guidance to disabled people with their home adaptation works is another key role for the Council. Some of this has been provided by Anchor Staying

We will

Promote the use of Resale covenants to provide houses at discounted prices (around 30%).

Improve availability of housing benefit payments to landlords who provide decent accommodation and promote Landlord Accreditation Schemes as well as helping tenants to access rent deposit schemes.

Bring empty properties back into use to provide temporary or more permanent housing accommodation.

Provide advice and timely mediation to reduce evictions.

Use Enforcement powers to improve poor quality rented accommodation to protect the health of private tenants, including looking at the feasibility of using selective Licensing schemes to respond to local neighbourhood issues.

Carry out a review of the Home Improvement Agency service to rationalise structures, have a one point of call for users, and look at how to promote 'decent homes' standards for vulnerable households who seek advice on home repairs.

The Council will strive to meet the Government Decent Homes target for vulnerable households. It will also work with the Home Improvement Agency to deliver support and services aimed at assisting vulnerable elderly and disabled

The Council's Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy will be used to improve standards and raise awareness of hazards in rented accommodation. Appropriate enforcement measures will be taken in response to conditions identified. It will also continue to promote Landlord Accreditation as a voluntary package to assist landlords.

Tackling Overcrowding

The Council and the Housing Corporation both recognize the need to provide more large homes over the next 15 years to meet the needs of overcrowded families as well as community aspirations.

Studies have concluded that overcrowding impacts on all aspects of people's lives e.g. increased risk of infections; the lack of space and privacy affects how children perform at school.

The 2001 Census data shows Oldham is amongst the 17% worst areas for overcrowding and the third worst in the North West. Feedback illustrated that

residents to remain in their homes. Tackling overcrowding amongst existing households in owner occupation will take time and require funding being made available.

We will

Use Equity Loans to fund typical works to relieve overcrowding by way of attic conversions/ extensions. These could also form bolt-on type work at the time Council block refurbishment schemes were being undertaken.

We will look to influence the standardising of overcrowding assessments across the city region or North West for private rented accommodation.

RSL's and FCHO will continue with programmes to convert adjacent properties/flats to provide larger family accommodation as properties and funding become available.

Provide an indicative mix for all new development boroughwide, based on the finding of our housing study group. This recognises the need for larger houses both for rent and owner occupation within balanced mix developments.



Tackling Empty Properties

Oldham MBC is taking the lead in using its resources and enforcement powers to make a difference and bring much needed empty properties back into occupation. Bringing empty homes back into use can bring both financial and non-financial benefits to the public, and their local neighbourhoods. We consider bringing empty homes back into use a key priority, exemplified by its inclusion in our Local Area Agreement.



Our Property Xchange Scheme has been developed to bring back into habitable use previously acquired long term empty properties using HMR funding, to contribute to the aim of reducing the number of empty properties in the Borough and to examine opportunities for bringing suitable properties back into use. The project has been made available to residents in Derker and Werneth HMR areas whose homes are affected by demolition proposals. The Scheme will be self-funding from the first exchange, enabling further long-term empty homes to be purchased, marketed and exchanged.

We will

Give consideration to abolishing the 50% Council Tax discount for owners of empty properties to encourage them to make the property available for occupation.

Continue to take a proactive approach to bringing empty properties back in to use and to keep in the top quartile of performing Councils.

Extend the 'Property Xchange' Scheme to target empty properties across the borough.

Produce a new Empty Property Policy to promote and deliver a range of other enforcement tools.



Housing and 'Green Issues'



Sustainable energy issues are set to become key drivers in regional housing circles and the North West Regional Assembly. The North West Development Agency recently launched a climate change Action Plan and the Domestic Energy Alliance has set up a low carbon Housing and Fuel Poverty Activity plan.

Locally, the Council is in the process of reviewing its 2004 *Affordable Warmth For All* strategy, to consider further measures to help vulnerable households and others get help with energy efficiency measures and to meet thermal comfort 'decency standards'.

We will

Provide advice and awareness around energy efficiency, targeting residents in receipt of Council Tax.

Launch an initiative with the Primary Care Trust to reduce the number of cold related illnesses in winter in Oldham. This will engage help from preventative care workers and others who make home visits to clients.

Produce a design guide for new homes. This will subject all planned

new developments across the borough to attain eco homes 'very good' standard.

Improve energy efficiency measures in the private rented sector and targeted energy advice at landlord/tenant forums.

Strive to meet our LAA target to increase the average SAP rating for private sector dwellings from 59.11 to 62.

Review our 'Affordable Warmth' strategy to give households across all tenures a better quality of life by promoting a number of energy efficiency measures, e.g. replacing inadequate and inefficient heating systems; maximising referral systems and reducing the amount people pay for fuel.

Consider energy efficiency measures when empty homes are being brought back into use via the Property Xchange scheme.



Initiatives in Other Areas

Several regeneration initiatives are programmed in parts of Oldham. These are at the Masterplanning stage and consultation is taking place to shape robust area plans for the following :-

1. **A brighter future for Hathershaw**

The Spatial Masterplan is an ambitious and exciting vision to transform the area based on what residents said they wanted.

The preferred option includes proposals to redevelop and change the area around the Borough Mill triangle to make it an exciting and vibrant place, where people will want to live, work and put down roots. The 5 year scheme proposals are subject to further consultation and funding being agreed together with planning approvals to include: -

Building quality modern family homes to buy or rent, together with a business/office development to provide a new northern gateway into the area; shop improvements on Ashton Road to create vibrant retail clusters; and developing a network of green space to open up the area.



2. **Alt and Sholver mixed tenure neighbourhoods** Consultation and Masterplanning has already begun and will look at reasons for high levels of community dissatisfaction, anti social behavior issues, and other concerns e.g. reasons for high occupancy turnover rates. Both neighbourhoods have significant levels of privately owned properties with 25% at Alt and 19% at Sholver out of a total of over 1300 properties. Sholver offers more redevelopment potential and opportunity for re organization of schools with the development of a community hub between 'Top Sholver and Lower Sholver. Alt is more reliant upon demolition and redevelopment and currently some low rise flats are being considered for such action.

3. **Gateways to Oldham - Clarkwell & Primrose Bank** These estates form part of the 'Gateways to Oldham' bid by the Council to tackle regeneration issues. They have the potential to contribute to the HMR Pathfinder's strategy to provide an attractive environment and high quality mix of new homes. Consultation and masterplanning has already taken place and the proposals for Primrose Bank will consider some demolition to provide a much greater mix of housing type and tenures with refurbishment of some of the peripheral properties. The bid for Clarkwell will need careful consideration of the options to explore the potential for redevelopment, as there are nearly 50% owner occupation levels.

Consultation and Engagement

The Council's *Consultation Strategy 2006-07* sets out the strategic direction for quality, robust consultation to encourage as much involvement on the part of local people and staff as possible, in order that their views can influence the way services are provided. The strategy is intended to apply to all types of consultation undertaken by, or on behalf of, the Council.

Since being successfully chosen as a Pathfinder in 2003, the regeneration Masterplans for changing neighbourhoods have been subject to widespread consultation.



The first wave HMR neighbourhoods of Werneth/Freehold and Derker have benefited from a wide variety of methods to consult and engage with residents and stakeholders.

Consultation is also ongoing in the NDC area and in other areas where regeneration is proposed and subject to masterplanning.

A Community Links team has been established in the 1st wave HMR areas, to support vulnerable people affected by the regeneration proposals and also to support and develop community groups to enable them to have a voice in shaping the future plans for their neighbourhood.

We will

Develop a blue print for HMR community consultation and engagement, looking at how to engage and involve local residents in emerging plans to improve their neighbourhoods e.g. by resident sounding panels.

Provide a range information about our service on the Council website.
Continue ongoing relocation survey of 1st wave HMR residents.

Continue consultation to engage residents and community groups.

Update and extend our suite of information Fact Sheets.

FORMS OF ASSISTANCE

The types of assistance that the Council may be able to provide to householders, tenants and landlords are listed below. For general description criteria for eligibility a library of fact sheets is being updated for most of the schemes. Much has already done to provide useful information via the Council's website. www.oldham.gov.uk in the form of 'Fact Sheets'

A Block Refurbishment Schemes

- Exterior improvement Schemes – including boundary treatments and associated environmental works
- Boundary Wall Treatments
- Group Repair

This type of assistance will be targeted to meet area based regeneration objectives. The works are limited to the external fabric of dwellings and /or the curtilage as deemed appropriate.

OMBC Regeneration Directorate, Improvement Section

Telephone 0161-770 4490 housing.implementation@oldham.gov.uk

B Mandatory Assistance - Disabled Facilities

Telephone 0870 1226 236

www.dclg.gov.uk

C Discretionary Assistance - Disabled Facilities

Oldham MBC Adult & Community Services

Telephone 0161 770 4495

D Empty Homes Incentives - Property Xchange Scheme



E 'Home Improve' Equity Loan



F 'Home Plus Plan' Equity Relocation Scheme



G Affordable Housing Schemes



H Home Repairs Assistance



I Warm Front Scheme

Telephone 0800 521 012 www.est.org.uk

***Detailed information is also available on the
Oldham Private Sector Housing Strategy 2007-2009 main reports.***

<p>Department for Communities & Local Government Eland House Bressenden Place London SW1E 5DU</p> <p>Telephone: 020 7944 4400 (08:30-17:30 Mon-Fri) www.dclg.gov.uk Information leaflets – e.g. Mandatory assistance for Disabled Facilities can be obtained from the 'Publications Centre'- 0870 1226 236</p>	<p>OMBC Regeneration Directorate HMR Neighbourhood Offices</p> <p>Werneth/Freehold – 0161 770 4246 80 Tamworth Street, Werneth, Oldham OL9 7QY Derker – 0161 652 8873 Flint Street, Derker, Oldham OL1 4EX</p> <p>OMBC Adult & Community Services Directorate Private (Rented) Sector Housing Team Telephone: 0161 770 4461 For Landlord Accreditation scheme also contact by e-mail: landlord.accreditation@oldham.gov.uk</p>
<p>Oldham Council Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham OL1 1UG Telephone: 0161 770 3000 www.oldham.gov.uk</p>	<p>Manchester Methodist Housing Association – part of the Great Places Housing Group Home Sales Marketing - Plumlife Telephone: 0161 447 5151 or visit their website at: www.plumlife.co.uk</p>
<p>HMR Pathfinder Core Team Junction 22 Business Park, Meadowbank, Tweedale Way, off Hollinwood Avenue Hollinwood, Oldham, OL9 9HU Telephone: 0161 770 4154 www.oldhamrochdalehmr.co.uk</p>	<p>Anchor Staying Put (Oldham) Agency 131 Catherine Street, Ashton-u-Lyne OL6 7AW Telephone: 0161 339 5699</p>
<p>OMBC Environmental Services Directorate To report dangerous buildings: 0161 770 4122 To report properties causing an environmental nuisance: 0161 770 4494</p>	<p>West Pennine Housing Association Pennine House, 77 Union Street, Oldham OL1 1JZ Telephone: 0161 621 4100</p>
<p>The Greater Manchester North Energy Advice Centre The Parkside Centre, Sheepfoot Lane, Prestwich, Manchester M25 0BW Telephone: 0800 512012</p>	<p>New Deal for Communities (NDC) Borough Mill, Neild Street, Hathershaw, Oldham OL8 1QG Telephone: 0161 785 9716</p>

اگر اس دستاویز کو سمجھنا آپ کیلئے مشکل ہو تو برائے کرم اولڈ ہم لینکونج شاپ کو 0161-770 5168 پر رابطہ کریں اور ریفرنس PSH Strat نمبر کا حوالہ دیں۔

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