

## Housing, Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018

**Subject:** GM Housing Vision

**Report of:** Paul Dennett GMCA Portfolio Lead, Housing, Homelessness and Infrastructure

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### PURPOSE OF REPORT

In setting the future direction of Greater Manchester's development through the GM Spatial Framework, one vital element is the need to ensure GM residents have the safe, decent and affordable homes the Greater Manchester Strategy requires.

To accompany the Spatial Framework therefore, Leaders have asked that a 'Housing Vision' for Greater Manchester be produced. This is intended to provide a concise, high level statement of our collective ambitions for the future of housing in the city region. The Vision will also offer a firm basis for the development of a full Greater Manchester Housing Strategy.

### RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee consider and comment on the draft Housing Vision attached.

### CONTACT OFFICERS

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### BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following is a list of the background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100D (1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents, which would disclose exempt or confidential information as identified by that Act.

**The above papers and documents may be inspected during normal office hours at GMCA, Churchgate House, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester M1 6EU.**

## **A Greater Manchester vision for housing**

### **1. Introduction: addressing the housing crisis**

- 1.1. Britain's housing system is not delivering the homes that the country needs or that people can afford. Government's 2017 White Paper 'Fixing our broken housing market' is the latest attempt to wrestle with this crisis at a national level.
- 1.2. The housing crisis takes many forms, and the challenges we face in Greater Manchester need solutions that fit our own local circumstances. Rough sleeping and homelessness are the most visible and damning indication of the crisis we face. But there are many other aspects, including the barriers facing young people trying to set up their first home, older people looking for better choices to help them stay living independently, families wanting somewhere stable to put down roots but living on short term tenancies in the private rented sector as well as the bad landlords and agents operating in the sector.
- 1.3. The Greater Manchester Strategy identifies **safe, decent and affordable housing** as our priority – homes to fit the needs and aspirations of current and future citizens. This vision is intended to sketch out our ambitions, and to give a framework for more detailed work to follow, including through the forthcoming Greater Manchester Housing Strategy and the final version of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.
- 1.4. We know we can't do this alone, and some of these issues could need a twenty year effort to really resolve. As Greater Manchester's Mayor, a Combined Authority and ten Councils we pledge to do all we can. But we know we will only succeed with the help, support and commitment of local communities, landlords, housing associations, developers, investors, landowners, the construction sector, utilities, central Government and many more. We look forward to working with you.

### **2. Connections – housing, people and place**

- 2.1. Housing plays a central part in people's lives. We all need and deserve a safe, decent and affordable home to provide the stable foundation for everything else that we want to achieve for ourselves and our families, a home that gives us the secure, warm, dry haven we all need. When we fail to provide that, the impacts on individuals and society as a whole can be severe and long lasting, as we see all too clearly in our work to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 2.2. For a place like Greater Manchester to be successful in the twenty first century, we need to make the connections between housing and our overall vision for our future.
- 2.3. To give our children the best start in life, we know that good housing with room for families to grow, and access to green spaces to play, helps to give kids the healthy and stable start that sees them starting school ready to learn, and better placed to do well as they progress.

- 2.4. Our economic future depends on keeping and attracting the people who will make Greater Manchester a place of ideas and invention, a modern economy that draws in investment, visitors and talent. We need our housing offer to be an affordable and attractive one – to provide an excellent quality of life, connected to education and employment, in neighbourhoods all across the city region that our future workforce will want to make their home.
- 2.5. For many of us, the right home can enable us to live healthier, more independent lives for longer than would otherwise be possible. Health inequalities within Greater Manchester are often reinforced by poor quality housing, which we need to address if we are to achieve our ambitions to deliver a radical upgrade in the health of GM’s residents. Providing specialist supported housing will be an important contribution, but well-designed mainstream homes need to be at the heart of our approach.
- 2.6. And all of these need to be homes GM residents can afford – our aspirations for inclusive growth, bringing the benefits of economic development to everyone in Greater Manchester, will be frustrated if the cost of finding the right home in the right place is out of reach for too many of us. That includes the cost of keeping your home warm – quality, modern, properly insulated and energy efficient homes are cheaper to run as well as helping reduce carbon emissions and being better suited to deal with our changing climate. This is why our ambition to be a world leader in delivering new net zero carbon homes alongside finding ways to accelerate retrofitting of our existing homes is so important.

### **3. The homes we have**

- 3.1. Housing is a long term business. With 1.2 million homes already built in Greater Manchester, even with a substantial and sustained acceleration in new building – which is high relative to our existing stock – the great majority of the places we will be calling home in 20 or 30 years are already built and being lived in now.
- 3.2. For Greater Manchester, that means a housing stock that, despite the visible additions of new apartment development in the city centre and Salford Quays in the last decade or more, is still dominated by traditional housing types – older terraced housing and suburban semis in particular.
- 3.3. Many of these older homes remain popular and well adapted to modern requirements, and take their place in attractive, successful (and in places, very expensive) neighbourhoods. But in some of our less affluent communities, older properties often show their age, presenting substantial concerns in terms of their condition, with common issues of damp, cold and other health and safety hazards, including their accessibility for those with mobility challenges. We want all our homes to be safe, decent and affordable, and our commitment for net zero carbon homes includes making improvements to drive up standards and reduce carbon emissions of our existing stock.

3.4. Social housing providers have seen substantial investment from their own resources and Government to achieving and maintaining Decent Homes standards, but for many less affluent home owners and tenants at the lower end of the private rented sector, the fabric of their homes is a real threat to their health and wellbeing. At the same time, all tenures are represented in high rise residential blocks where lessons from the tragedy at Grenfell Tower need to be applied swiftly and thoroughly as they emerge.

3.5. For many owner occupiers and private landlords, investing in maintaining and improving their properties is a commitment they are able and willing to make. But for some that can be too great a financial challenge or, for a small but significant minority of private landlords, an active choice to invest as little as necessary to maximise returns despite the risks to the health and safety of their tenants. We need to eliminate the exploitation of vulnerable tenants and support the work of good landlords who want to offer their tenants good quality, properly managed homes. And we need to find ways to help owner occupiers struggling to maintain their own properties.

3.6. Our vision is:

) for our existing homes receive the investment they need to meet and exceed modern requirements for their safety, security, warmth and physical accessibility. This includes retrofitting our existing homes to meet our ambitions for net zero carbon homes

) those homes will be part of neighbourhoods of choice, connected to economic opportunities and strategic infrastructure, and offering an excellent quality of life for all parts of the community

) when we rent in either the social or private sector we can be confident that our homes will be well managed and safe, decent and affordable

) that those of us in need, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless can quickly access social housing or other affordable housing options so we can retain our place in the community

) that no-one will need to sleep rough in Greater Manchester

#### **4. The homes we need**

4.1. We have not been delivering enough new homes since the 2007-2008 financial crisis. While the numbers being built have been steadily recovering, we need to increase the pace of delivery if we are to meet local needs, support economic growth, and help to reduce the pressures which contribute to overcrowding, rough sleeping and homelessness.

4.2. But while the numbers are important, we need to think more broadly about the new homes we are building, how they fit into the overall housing supply and into the places and neighbourhoods where they will be built. We need to provide the right homes in the right places as these new homes will be around for a long time, and be part of the landscape of Greater Manchester for generations to come.

- 4.3. We need to get the new homes right, but it's vital that new development helps to improve and create successful places that people want to live in. That's true in existing residential neighbourhoods and where we are creating new communities. But, as the Mayor's Town Centre Challenge helps to highlight, there are real opportunities for new homes to be an important part of creating a new future for our town centres as their retail role continues to evolve.
- 4.4. We need to find ways to deliver more homes:
- ) in our town and district centres where people want to live near public transport, shops, leisure and cultural facilities
  - ) on brownfield land, to help protect our valued green spaces
  - ) that people of all incomes can afford
  - ) that fill the gaps in the current supply to give more choice of different types, tenures and sizes of homes, especially in neighbourhoods where existing homes don't match local needs
  - ) to better meet the needs of our increasing older population
- 4.5. At the same time, we can't compromise on the quality of design and construction of these thousands of new homes. To do that, we need to work with the industry to help make the transition to more modern methods of construction and to create jobs for our residents in a more competitive and sustainable construction sector fit for the twenty first century. The commitment to quality has to reach beyond the front door of the new homes and encompass their surroundings and the neighbourhoods as a whole, including where we are creating higher density communities.
- 4.6. We will need to find new models and investment tools to meet these aspirations, and to make better and more entrepreneurial use of the resources of the public sector and housing providers, and to explore other routes to development such as cooperatives. The private sector will be important to the delivery of new homes for sale and market rent, but past experience suggests they cannot do the job alone. We also need to look beyond the Government's current definition of affordable housing, and think more clearly about the relationship between housing costs and household incomes in a Greater Manchester context, to ensure affordable options are available for all GM residents.
- 4.7. Our vision is:
- ) we consistently deliver the right homes in the right places, providing the number and mix of new homes for the future needs of Greater Manchester
  - ) the new homes we build enhance the choice, affordability, quality and variety of housing available in their neighbourhoods, and are accompanied by the transport, social and other infrastructure they need for their residents and the existing community to thrive, including schools, health facilities and green spaces

- ) that the quality and design of new homes means we can better match the housing supply to the future housing needs and incomes of all of Greater Manchester's residents
- ) the construction industry in Greater Manchester is a centre of excellence and innovation, and an attractive employer for a new generation of skilled workers

## **5. Delivering change**

- 5.1. Together, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, the Combined Authority and the ten Greater Manchester authorities bring a significant portfolio of land and assets, powers, finance, experience and a track record of collaboration to the task of delivering the vision set out in this document. But the scale and urgency of the housing crisis requires a wider effort.
- 5.2. By the end of 2018 we will publish a Greater Manchester Housing Strategy, co-produced with the help of stakeholders, Greater Manchester districts and independent experts. The Strategy will set out our plans to deliver this vision with the help of our partners in the city region and beyond, and the first phase of work needed to implement those plans. Taken together with our Greater Manchester Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies and the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and complementary district Local Plans and other Greater Manchester and local strategies, we will have a clear blueprint to translate this future vision into reality.
- 5.3. We will work hand in hand with Government to make best use of the resources available. In return, we expect Government to ensure that those resources are fairly allocated, and that the formulas applied to their investment decisions offer a level playing field for projects in Greater Manchester that will enable us to meet everyone's housing needs.
- 5.4. We will continue to make an evidenced case for greater devolution where we see it will make a real difference to the lives of Greater Manchester's residents. We will make the case for additional powers for local authorities to intervene, especially where the safety and security of our residents is at risk from the effects of poor housing or rogue landlords, or where we can see ways to remove barriers to delivering the new homes we need. We will ensure the lessons learned from Grenfell Tower will be rigorously applied.
- 5.5. We will work with communities, the breadth of the private sector, with housing providers, with academics and with the voluntary sector to find solutions, to innovate, to bring and adapt ideas and models from elsewhere that will work for us. We will establish a 'GM Place' team based at the Combined Authority but working with the Greater Manchester authorities to help them bring forward the new homes and communities the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework requires. The team will also work to share good practice, exchange experience and knowledge and connect the delivery of individual projects with our work to raise the skills and quality of our construction industry.
- 5.6. The next stage in this journey is the development of the Greater Manchester Housing Strategy. If you have ideas to contribute, please share them with us at [planningandhousing@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:planningandhousing@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)