



# Steady State Manchester

steadystatemanchester.net

## HOUSING IN THE VIABLE ECONOMY

### Principles for Housing in the Viable Economy

- Everyone should have secure access to adequate, truly affordable housing throughout their life, providing the basis for living well through promoting stability, physical and mental health, and strong communities. Adequate housing has sufficient space and amenities and is free from damp or structural defects.
- In order to stabilise housing markets and promote equitable distribution, new housing should be built only to meet housing needs and not as investment.
- New and existing homes should be designed to be carbon neutral during construction and use, and residents should be empowered to use energy as efficiently as possible.
- Wherever possible, better use should be made of existing buildings rather than building new homes. Agricultural land, green belts and flood plains should be protected from development.
- Everyone should be able to live in neighbourhoods with a healthy environment and good access to public transport, services, work opportunities and green spaces for recreation and production.

### Ideas for policies and action:

#### Homelessness

- Introduce the Housing First model (i.e. giving people a home straightaway) throughout Greater Manchester for homeless people and those in precarious accommodation situations, for example ex-offenders and families fleeing domestic violence.  
<http://icmblog.shelter.org.uk/housing-first/>

#### Equitable access to housing

1. Invest in public (social) housing, ending the risky wager on excessive borrowing and asset price inflation as the route to prosperity and life satisfaction.

- Use all the powers available to require that developers build social housing (euphemistically called affordable housing). e.g. s106 agreements under 1990 Town and Country Planning Act,

see [http://www.pas.gov.uk/3-community-infrastructure-levy-cil/-/journal\\_content/56/332612/4090701/ARTICLE](http://www.pas.gov.uk/3-community-infrastructure-levy-cil/-/journal_content/56/332612/4090701/ARTICLE)

- Do not allow financial viability assessments to allow developers to side step their obligations to build social housing.
- Focus the Greater Manchester Housing Fund on meeting the needs of the existing population, starting with those whose need is greatest, and not on attracting higher earning mobile populations.
- Use the Housing Fund to enable councils to build their own houses, with substantial apprenticeship schemes, rather than go through developers.
- Oppose the extension of the voluntary Right-to-Buy to existing social housing stock.

## 2. Introduce legislation to guarantee security of tenure and controlled rents for private tenants.

- Give support for the idea of living rents, set against local earnings, as proposed by the Mayor of London<sup>1</sup> and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation<sup>2</sup> Work would need to be done on what living rents could look like in Greater Manchester.
- Develop standards, regulations and agreements to require private landlords to fill tenancies and uphold maintenance and repair of buildings and estates.

## 3. Develop and support co-operatives and other forms of mutual and common ownership and not-for-profit enterprise that can promote more convivial housing models

- Support and encourage co-housing developments, housing cooperatives and community land trusts (see for example Granby4Streets in Liverpool 8), all forms of development that entail co-operation and collaboration. However support and capacity building will be needed to ensure that everyone is able to take up these options and that they are not the province of the more privileged. For more information on community land trusts, see <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/>
- Encourage and support self-build by people of all income brackets, including through self-build coops and experiments with low-carbon and convivial housing models. Self-builders should be provided with all necessary support in design and construction.

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1 The Mayor is proposing rents based on median gross household incomes, with variations across the City. For new builds (only) rents would be offered to those earning between £35-45K at a third of average household income.

2 “The earnings figures used are based on lower-quartile average earnings which, at the national level, are equivalent to an average week on minimum wage. A rent is then set for each area, based on charging a fixed percentage (28 per cent) of the net local earnings figure. This means that rents vary according to local labour market and pay rates. The figure of 28 per cent is in line with the current share of income spent on rent by social renters, and substantially lower than the share of income spent by low-income private renters.” <https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/housing-market-isnt-helping-people-make-ends-meet-time-living-rents>

#### 4. Develop and implement strategies for people with special housing needs

- Join up housing strategies with environment and social care strategies, ensuring there is adequate accommodation for those with complex care needs, not in segregated facilities but fully integrated in their communities (especially needed for those with mental health problems and dementia).
- Work with Age Friendly Manchester and MICRA to identify to best practice for developing housing with and for older people across Greater Manchester to ensure a range of appropriate housing enabling people to stay active and connected to their communities.
- Work with disabled people to invest in adaptations and assistive technologies to ensure adequate and fit for purpose housing in places where people want to live.

#### 5. Introduce measures to ensure more equitable distribution and efficient occupation of the housing stock

- Discourage building for investment by introducing an empty homes tax (see, for example, in Vancouver <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-vacant-home-tax-1.3761496> )
- Explore the feasibility of additional taxes on large properties and on second (or successive) homes (which currently benefit from council tax discounts).

#### **Cutting carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency**

- Strengthen building regulations in order to achieve carbon neutral buildings. Consider imposing Passivhaus standards for all new build housing.
- Radically increase the rate of retrofitting of buildings to reduce fuel demand and thus carbon emissions, for example by street by street deeper retrofit schemes for existing housing stock. This will require the development of affordable retrofit (currently the average cost is £70k per unit!) and will also need the development of new skills.
- Promote low embodied carbon technologies in building and retrofitting (for retrofitting, see [www.engineering.ucl.ac.uk/.../10/Fact-Sheet-Embodied-Carbon-Social-Housing.pdf](http://www.engineering.ucl.ac.uk/.../10/Fact-Sheet-Embodied-Carbon-Social-Housing.pdf))
- Develop collective energy purchase schemes that incentivise lower unit levels of energy use.
- Strengthen educational programmes and incentives for saving energy in the home.
- Develop standards, regulations and agreements to require private landlords to reduce energy bills through retrofit of properties. It may also be necessary provide funding to enable/incentivise action by landlords.

#### **Efficient use of land and buildings**

- Use existing housing, buildings, and land as effectively as possible. This may mean the conversion of office blocks to housing where appropriate.
- Ensure new houses are built on used brownfield land or sites of empty buildings rather than on green belt sites.

## Neighbourhoods/communities/local infrastructure

- Develop a plan to transform Greater Manchester into a new kind of garden city where everyone is within easy reach of productive, recreational and living spaces, while improving the eco-efficiency of this large settlement, integrating land use under a comprehensive spatial strategy.
- Give particular emphasis to investing in the social and physical environment of neighbourhoods where there is currently a low demand for housing and high numbers of empty homes.
- Strengthen and enforce regulations on air pollution in all neighbourhoods.
- Develop policies to encourage walking and cycling.
- Provide clean, effective and comprehensive public transport.
- Balance the need for higher densities with the need for green spaces within housing developments, to provide spaces children to play and for growing food.
  
- Encourage local authorities to use the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)<sup>3</sup> to fund local infrastructure.

## Funding

- Raise money from the local economy, for example through municipal housing bonds or other bond issues
- Use the GM pension fund to invest in housing
- Promote schemes such as the [Real Estate Annuity Plan \(Reap\)](http://www.myreap.co.uk/)<sup>4</sup> (<http://www.myreap.co.uk/>) which allows people to lend money to a social enterprise that specialises in converting derelict properties into affordable rented homes for those in need, such as families on council waiting lists; or [Radical Routes](http://www.radicalroutes.org.uk/) (<http://www.radicalroutes.org.uk/>) which is a longstanding network of (mainly) housing coops and has an ethical investment scheme – Rootstock- raising funds to help grass roots co-ops set up.
- Work with the land value tax campaign to investigate the potential of a land value tax to replace a property tax (Council tax) that values land and not the houses built on it, as the principal source of public revenue. See [www.landvaluetax.org](http://www.landvaluetax.org)

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<sup>3</sup> The CIL is a charge on planning applications which came into force in April 2010. It allows local authorities in England and Wales to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their area. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development, including schemes for new or safer roads, flood defences, schools, hospitals and other health and social care facilities, park improvements, green spaces and leisure centres.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1897278.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1897278.pdf)

[http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas1/3-community-infrastructure-levy-cil/-/journal\\_content/56/332612/15149/ARTICLE](http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas1/3-community-infrastructure-levy-cil/-/journal_content/56/332612/15149/ARTICLE)

<sup>4</sup> Reap is being offered by a Merseyside-based mutual organisation called Equfund, and is aimed at those looking for a better return than they would get from a traditional annuity.

<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/may/23/equfund-reap-social-housing-real-estate-annuity-plan-returns>

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