Research & Insight

Greater Manchester Mayor Manifesto

July 2026

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Home Builders Federation manifesto for the new Mayor of Greater Manchester

Introduction

The Government's commitment to deepen devolution across England gives Combined Authority mayors a major opportunity to accelerate housing delivery and support economic growth.

Greater Manchester is particularly well placed to seize this opportunity. As one of England's most established and powerful Combined Authorities, it can demonstrate how devolved powers can help tackle the housing crisis and provide a model for other Combined Authorities to follow.

The Home Builders Federation (HBF) is therefore calling on the next Mayor of Greater Manchester to use their new and existing powers, particularly strategic planning powers, to increase housing supply, unlock investment and make home ownership more attainable.

To support this ambition, this manifesto sets out five practical recommendations for the new Mayor:

- **Begin preparing the new Spatial Development Strategy immediately.**
- **Allocate small sites for SME home builders.**
- **Unlock brownfield development near public transport.**
- **Develop the local construction workforce.**
- **Support first-time buyers.**

Delivering these recommendations would not only help to tackle the housing crisis, but also deliver significant economic and social benefits for the city region. If Greater Manchester were to achieve its new housing target of 14,400 homes, every year this would:

- Support **50,000 jobs**
- **Generate £3.2 billion** in economic activity

- Lead to **investment of £650 million** in Affordable Homes
- Generate **investment of £90 million** in new infrastructure, including £40 million for new and improved schools
- Support over **£400 million of spending** in local shops.

Background

Housing affordability in Greater Manchester

Housing affordability has deteriorated across Greater Manchester over the past two decades as the supply of new homes has failed to keep pace with demand. Every constituent local authority of the Combined Authority has become less affordable in the past twenty years, with house prices increasing more rapidly than earnings. The trend has been particularly acute in Trafford, where the median house price has risen from 7.3 times median earnings in 2006 to 9.6 times in 2026.

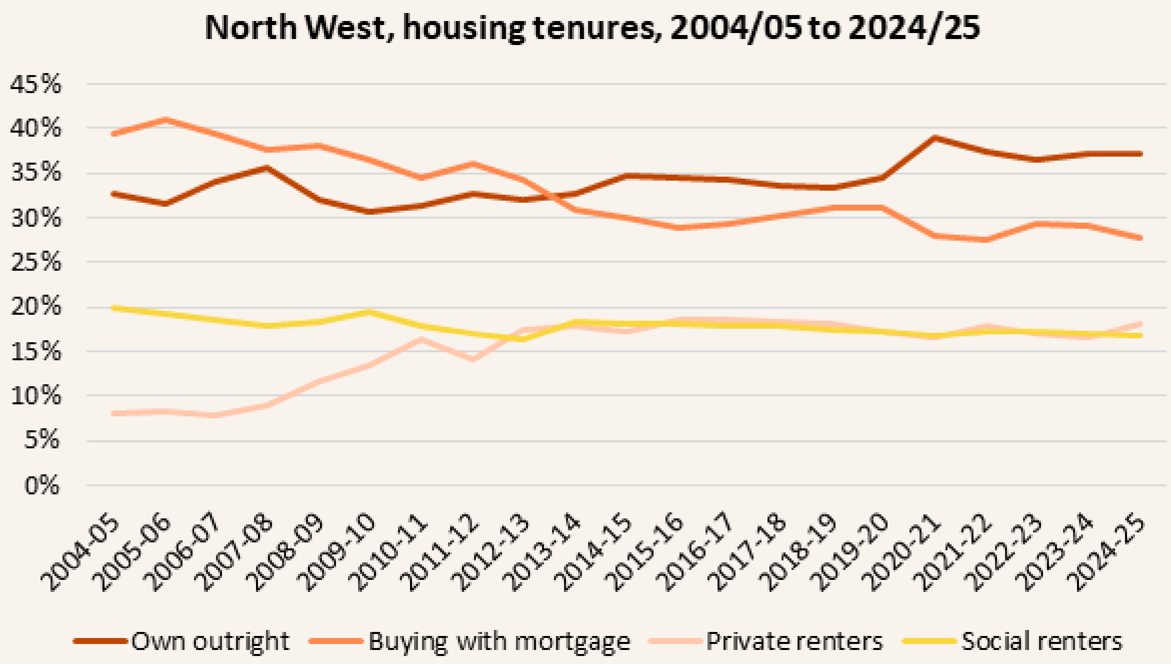
Table 1: Housing affordability ratios, 2006 vs 2026

Constituent local authorities of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Local authority	Median house price to median earnings ratio: 2006	Median house price to median earnings ratio: 2026
Bolton	5.6	6.2
Bury	6.2	7.0
Manchester	5.3	6.1
Oldham	5.2	6.1
Rochdale	5.1	6.1
Salford	5.0	6.0
Stockport	6.6	8.6
Tameside	5.8	6.9
Trafford	7.3	9.6
Wigan	5.3	5.9

The consequences of worsening affordability are reflected in changing patterns of housing tenure. Across the North West, the proportion of households purchasing their home with a mortgage has fallen from 39% to 28% over the past two decades, illustrating the increasing barriers facing prospective first-time buyers.

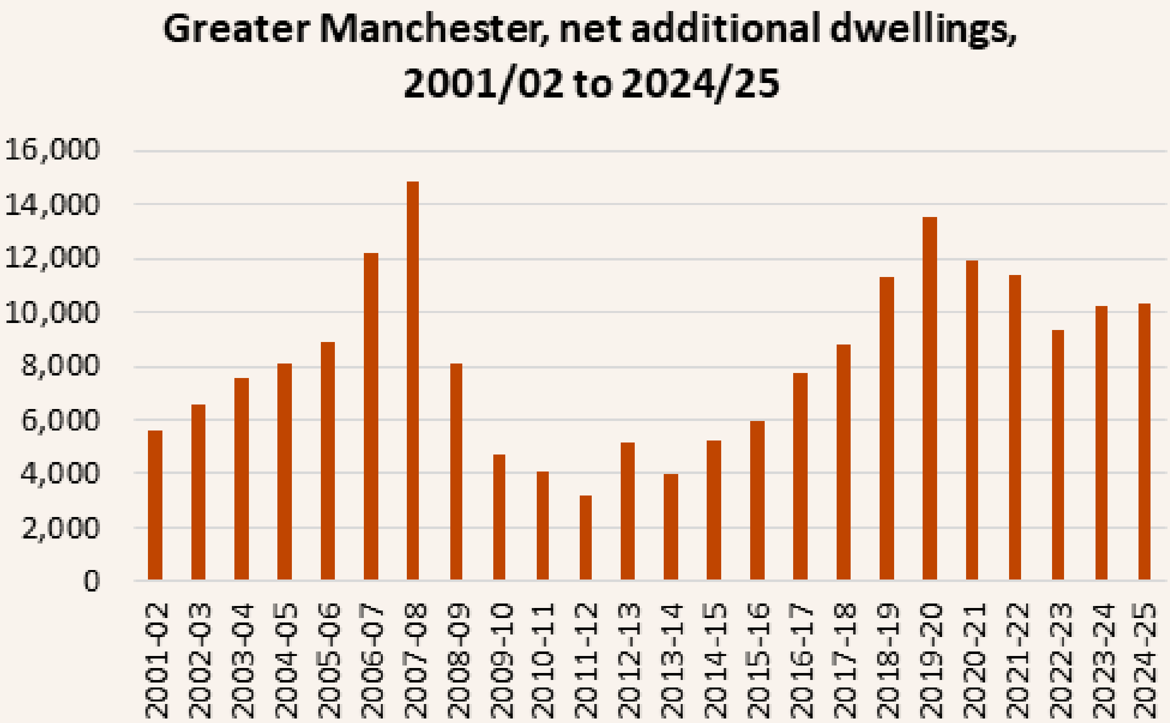
At the same time, the proportion of households owning their home outright has increased from 33% to 37%, while the proportion privately renting has more than doubled from 8% to 18%, overtaking social renting. These trends underline the growing difficulty of accessing home ownership and the need to increase the supply of new homes across Greater Manchester.



Housing delivery in Greater Manchester

While housing delivery has slowed in recent years, Greater Manchester has remained one of the country's stronger-performing cities.

An average of 10,650 homes has been completed each year across Greater Manchester in the past five years, roughly in line with the Greater Manchester spatial plan - 'Places for Everyone' - target. Furthermore, despite a national decline of 6% in housing delivery from 2023/24 to 2024/25, delivery increased by 1.3% in Greater Manchester - against national headwinds.



National challenges

While Greater Manchester has performed relatively well, housing delivery continues to be constrained by a number of national challenges affecting the home building industry across England:

- The absence of government support for first-time buyers: For the first time in over 60 years, there is no national support scheme to help first-time buyers access home ownership, weakening effective demand and reducing confidence to invest in new housing.
- Development viability pressures: The cumulative impact of taxes, policy requirements and regulatory costs is undermining the viability of housing developments across many parts of the country, limiting the number of homes that can be delivered.
- Constraints on affordable housing delivery: Housing associations are increasingly unable to acquire the affordable homes secured through Section 106 agreements, delaying development and restricting the delivery of homes across all tenures.

- Local authority capacity constraints: Local authority planning departments continue to face significant resource pressures, resulting in lengthy delays in determining applications and extending the period between outline planning permission and the start of construction.

Against this backdrop, Greater Manchester will need to build on its recent performance if it is to achieve its new Standard Method target of 14,400 homes a year. The recommendations set out below focus on the areas where the Mayor can make the greatest difference, particularly through strategic planning, skills and collaboration with the home building industry.

Recommendations for the new Mayor of Greater Manchester

1) Begin preparing the new Spatial Development Strategy immediately

The Government expects Combined Authorities to prepare Spatial Development Strategies during this Parliament. The SDS will play a critical role in identifying sufficient land to meet Greater Manchester's housing needs in full and in coordinating new development with transport, infrastructure and employment opportunities.

Although the current 'Places for Everyone' strategic plan will remain up to date until 2029, work on the next Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) should begin as soon as possible to ensure continuity in strategic planning and provide certainty for local authorities, communities and the home building industry.

The Mayor should also ensure that the new SDS supports the delivery of viable housing schemes by avoiding unnecessary additional policy burdens on development.

2) Allocate small sites for SME home builders

Small and medium-sized (SME) house builders play a vital role in increasing housing supply, supporting local employment and bringing forward smaller sites. However, they face particular challenges in bringing forward development in the current planning system. Smaller sites are often not allocated in local plans and instead come forward as windfall developments, creating greater planning risk and uncertainty.

The Mayor should use the next SDS to encourage the allocation of more small sites, particularly in areas with good public transport connectivity and close to Greater Manchester's town centres. The SDS should require constituent local authorities to identify and allocate land for small sites and give significant material weight to well-designed development proposals on these sites, as well as setting an overall small sites target for Greater Manchester.

3) Unlock brownfield development near public transport

The Mayor should include a policy in the next SDS that weighs strongly in favour of residential development on previously developed sites of up to 0.5 hectares located within 800 metres of railway stations, Metrolink stops or town centre boundaries. Such a policy would encourage the redevelopment of underused brownfield land in sustainable locations, make better use of Greater Manchester's public transport network and support the incremental intensification of urban areas.

It would also benefit SME builders, who are often best placed to bring forward smaller redevelopment schemes but are disadvantaged by the limited allocation of small sites in local plans.

4) Develop the local construction workforce

The Mayor should use their convening power to strengthen links between home builders, Further Education colleges and training providers. This will help expand employer involvement in curriculum design, industry placements, work experience and site-readiness training to ensure learners progress more effectively into construction and housing-related roles.

The Mayor should also use the Local Skills Improvement Plan to identify the construction occupations where skills shortages are constraining housing delivery, and the areas where housing demand is strongest. Funding can then be targeted accordingly.

5) Support first-time buyers

The Mayor should champion measures to improve access to homeownership for first-time buyers across Greater Manchester. While housing demand remains strong, translating this into effective demand is becoming increasingly difficult as prospective buyers face high deposit requirements, affordability constraints and limited access to mortgage finance. The absence of a national government-backed support scheme for the first time in over 60 years has further reduced opportunities for first-time buyers to access the housing market, while also suppressing housing delivery.

Working with Government, Homes England, lenders and the home building industry, the Mayor should use their national profile to support the introduction of a new first-time buyer equity loan scheme. Housing funds allocated to the Combined Authority could also be directed towards schemes such as First Homes or discounts for first-time buyers.

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The voice of the home building industry

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