



# LOCAL UPDATE

May 2026

Lower Oldpark Community Association. 9-23 Avoca Street Belfast BT14 6EN.



028 90351334/ 028 96928293. Email: [loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com)



@loweroldparkhousing

## Lower Oldpark Strategy Goes Live

A strategy for the physical regeneration of Lower Oldpark and for meeting the needs of the community has gone live (<https://loweroldparkhousing.co.uk/us-eful-info>).

Prepared by Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) after consultation with residents, the three-year plan sets out a series of aims and actions for LOCA. It is hoped that these will help bring about real improvements for local people.

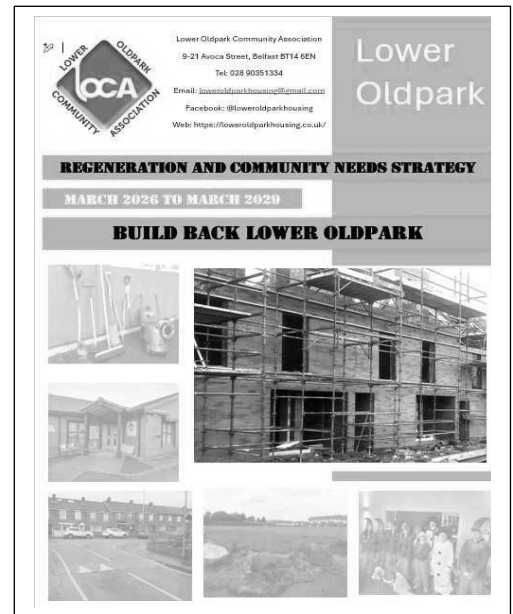
The Lower Oldpark Regeneration and Community Needs Strategy covers a broad range of issues. Its content is based on the findings of a full neighbourhood survey carried out by LOCA during 2025. A copy of the

survey report is available at <https://loweroldparkhousing.co.uk/us-eful-info>. This was a very successful survey with a 51 percent response rate achieved.

After the survey, residents were invited to locally based workshops during which they had the chance to decide on the way forward.

Following the workshops, a Draft Regeneration and Community Needs Strategy was prepared and agreed by LOCA Committee. A summary of this draft was distributed to every household in Lower Oldpark along with a feedback form.

On 19th February 2026, LOCA Committee agreed a final Strategy document. It is the end product of a



process that began in January 2025. It provides a plan that will guide LOCA's work over the next three years from March 2026 to March 2029.

## Gardening Tools Available to Borrow At No Cost

Lower Oldpark residents can make use of a no cost gardening equipment lending service this summer.

The service, which is provided by Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA), allows householders to borrow gardening equipment for up to two days.

It is only available to Lower Oldpark residents who don't have access to gardening equipment and who can physically use the equipment or have someone to do the work for them using the borrowed equipment.

For more information, contact Gary



Hughes at LOCA on 028 96928293 or 028 90351334 or email [loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com)

Limited supplies of equipment may mean having to join a waiting list.

## Housing Advice Service

Help with housing problems is available from the LOCA Housing and Regeneration Worker, Gary Hughes.

Days: Monday to Friday.

Times: 8.30am-11.30am & 1.00pm - 3.30pm.

Phone: 028 96928293 or 028 90351334.

Email: [loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com)

Facebook Message:

@loweroldparkhousing

## Alley Gates. Keep Closed Signs

Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) is working with Belfast City Council (BCC) to encourage local residents to close alley gates after they use them.

Over recent years, BCC has installed alley gates at a number of locations in the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood. The purpose of these gates was to reduce anti-social behaviour in the alleyways. However, when the gates are left open after use, this undermines the job they are doing.

BCC will be providing signs requesting that those using the gates ensure they close them after use. BCC has asked



that LOCA attaches these signs to BCC owned gates.

LOCA would encourage residents to help reduce anti-social behaviour by closing the gates after use.

## Residents Consulted On Classes and Activities

April 2026 saw Lower Oldpark households consulted on what locally based classes and activities they would join.

Every household received a leaflet setting out over 30 different potential classes and activities that residents could say they would take part in. These covered a wide range of subjects including, history talks and classes, arts and crafts, health and crime and community safety related talks, English, Maths and IT classes and much more.

Residents were informed that classes and activities would only go ahead if

enough people said they definitely wanted to take part in a specific class or activity.

An opportunity to complete an online version the consultation was also provided by way of a QR code.

LOCA is still receiving responses to this consultation and would encourage anyone who definitely wants to do a class or activity to complete and return the leaflet or use the QR code. If you need another leaflet, you can get one from the LOCA Centre in the Avoca St Centre or by downloading one from <https://loweroldparkhousing.co.uk/useful-info>.

## Employment Support Clinic

The Employment Support Clinic at LOCA provides practical guidance to help local residents move closer to work, training, or education.

The Clinic offers tailored support with:

- CV development.
- Job search.
- Application forms.
- Interview preparation.
- Confidence building.

Staff work one to one with people to identify strengths, remove barriers, and connect them with suitable opportunities. The Clinic is welcoming and accessible. It helps people of all ages progress at their own pace towards long-term employability.

The Clinic runs on Monday afternoons between 2.00pm and 4.00pm at the LOCA Centre in Avoca Street.

## LOCA Supports NIHE Office Switch

LOCA has given its support to a proposal to move the Lower Oldpark and Rosewood/ Crumlin Road housing areas from being under the control of the NI Housing Executive (NIHE) North Belfast Office to being under the control of the NIHE West Belfast (Shankill) Office.

The proposal goes back to 2018 when LOCA tried for three years to get the NIHE to agree to it.

Recently, it has been supported and taken forward by the BUILD Shankill initiative and local political representatives.

Discussions with the NIHE are ongoing.



## Home Water Pressure Issues

A number of Lower Oldpark residents have highlighted the problem of low mains water pressure at the taps in their homes. LOCA plans to raise this issue with NI Water and request that the problem is investigated.

Anyone experiencing low mains water pressure in their home should contact LOCA by any of the methods set out below. LOCA will pass the information on to NI Water for investigation.

### Contact LOCA

Email: [loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com)

Facebook Message: [@loweroldparkhousing](https://www.facebook.com/loweroldparkhousing)

Phone: 028 96928293/ 028 90351334.

# Peace Barriers Project Ends After Twelve Years

The IMAGINE Peace Barriers Project (IPBP), which was established in January 2014 and was funded by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), has ended.

The cross-community initiative brought together representatives of Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) and Cliftonville Community and Regeneration Forum (CCRF) and, when it ended in March 2026, had four posts.

LOCA understands that in the region of £1.5 million has been spent on the project over its duration, and that the IFI decided not to extend its funding beyond the planned end date of 31st March 2026.

During the latter part of 2025, LOCA Committee concerns over the IPBP increased substantially. There was also growing concern among Lower Oldpark residents, some of whom expressed these at a public meeting in December 2025.

In response, LOCA Committee wrote to the IFI on 19th December 2025 to formally bring its attention to a number of serious concerns regarding the IPBP. The issues that LOCA highlighted related to:

- The submission of a development proposal for a meanwhile use sensory garden/ pop-up café to Belfast City Council Planning without being seen by LOCA Committee or with its agreement.
- The meanwhile use development proposal having been submitted to the Planning Department by the IPBP before a planned door-to-door consultation of Lower Oldpark residents on whether they supported the meanwhile use proposals could be carried out by LOCA.
- The failure of the IPBP to provide hard evidence of consultations and support for the IPBP proposal to develop a permanent social enterprise building across the peace wall at Cliftonpark Avenue.
- The submission to LOCA by the IPBP Co-ordinator/ CCRF of a series of untrue and damaging allegations against LOCA staff.



- The failure of IPBP/ CCRF to formally notify LOCA that the Peace Barriers Worker responsible for Lower Oldpark had left her post or to provide any formal explanation for their departure.

After this, LOCA informed CCRF that LOCA would not be participating in the Imagine Peace Barriers Project initiative beyond 31st March 2026.

The IFI did not respond to LOCA's letter of 19th December 2025 until after LOCA sent a follow-up letter on 10th February 2026. In its response, the IFI did not address any of the concerns LOCA had raised and referred LOCA to the IPBP partner.

LOCA replied to the IFI on 1st April 2026 saying that its approach had been disappointing and unhelpful. Also, that it was the failure of Peace Barriers Project staff to provide information to LOCA that led the group to contact the IFI. LOCA also requested details of

the opportunity it would have to contribute to an end of project evaluation.

In its response dated 1st April 2026, the IFI stated that all programmes under the current IFI strategy, including PBP, are currently ending and the final evaluation of the current strategy has already been completed. No further information was provided.

The IFI letter concluded, IFI considers this matter has been sufficiently addressed and please be advised that any additional correspondence received will be noted, but no further response will be received.

In the light of the above, LOCA would welcome an independent evaluation of the IMAGINE Peace Barriers Project with an opportunity for LOCA and the people of Lower Oldpark to make a meaningful contribution.

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## Men's Group Looking For New Members

Lower Oldpark Men's Group is looking for new members.

The Group, which is open to Lower Oldpark men aged 18 years and over, meets at the LOCA Centre in Avoca Street (in the portacabin) on Friday

evenings between 7.00pm and 9.00pm.

If you're looking to get out of the house on Friday nights and have a chat with other men over a cup of tea, why not come along.

## Get Involved In LOCA's Youth Clubs



### Senior Drop-in

The Senior Drop-In is for those aged 12-17 years. It takes place on Wednesday nights from 7.00–8.30pm, providing older young people with a chilled space to meet friends, chat with youth workers and enjoy age-appropriate activities.

On Thursdays from 7.00–9.00pm, the Senior Youth Personal Development programme offers structured sessions focused on confidence-building, life skills, leadership, and positive decision-making. These activities help young people grow and reach their potential.

### Junior Drop-in

The Junior Drop-in is for those aged 5-11 years. It runs on Monday evenings from 6.00–7.30pm and on Fridays from 6.00–8.00pm. It gives younger members a fun space to unwind with games, creative activities and themed nights.

### Get Involved

There are still places for new members of the Junior and Senior Youth Clubs so if a Lower Oldpark young person would like to get involved, just come along on the days and at the times indicated above. Everyone is welcome.

LOCA's Junior and Senior Drop-in sessions offer local young people a great place to relax, socialise and take part in really interesting and useful activities during the week at the LOCA Centre in Avoca Street.

## Youth Diversionary Programme 2025 – What A Great Success

LOCA's 2025 Summer Diversionary Programme was a brilliant success. Over a week, it delivered a fantastic range of positive, family friendly activities celebrating creativity, culture, and community spirit in Lower Oldpark.

The programme included a youth residential that gave young people the chance to build their confidence and friendships. There were also hands on workshops on topics such as band pole making for children, along with cultural wreath making for adults.

### Movie Night

Families enjoyed a relaxed outdoor

movie night in John Hewitt Park, creating a brilliant shared experience for all ages.

### Funday

The programme rounded off with a lively family fun day featuring a petting zoo, face painters, bouncy castles, and plenty of interactive activities.

### Community Spirit

Together, these events helped bring people together, offering safe and enjoyable experiences that helped strengthen community spirit.

### Diversion

The aim of the programme was to divert children and young people from getting involved in interface trouble. Data provided by the PSNI, and set out below, highlights the great success of the programme in this respect.

July 2024	
Activity	Incidents
• Criminal Damage	3
• Ant-social Behaviour	17
• Total	20
July 2025	
Activity	Incidents
• Criminal Damage	1
• Ant-social Behaviour	1
• Total	2

## Lower Oldpark After Schools Programme

LOCA's Afterschools Programme offers children a safe, structured and interesting hour of activities at the end of the school day. It runs Monday to Friday from 3.30pm to 4.30pm at the LOCA Centre in Avoca Street.

### Mondays

The Homework Club runs on Mondays. During this session, staff provide support, encouragement and a calm space for schoolwork.

### Tuesday

Tuesdays are all about energy with sports and games delivered by 'Our Club Our Community'.

### Wednesday

Wednesdays feature the Children's Book Club, giving young readers the chance to develop a love of reading.

### Thursdays

On Thursdays, 'BEAT Carnival' leads

lively dance sessions

### Friday

We finish the week on Fridays with arts and crafts, where children can get creative and make something unique to take home.

### Get Involved

Come along and register on any of the days and times indicated above.

## Belfast In Bloom Competition

The application process for the 2026 Belfast City Council (BCC) 'Belfast In Bloom' Competition is open.

### Categories

The application categories for individuals are:

- Best Kept Front Garden.
- Best Hanging Basket.
- Best Window Box.

The community awards are:

- Best community street.
- Best community group.



- Best community garden.
- Best alleyway.

### Closing Date

The closing date for these categories

is Friday 19th June 2026. BCC will judge entries during August.2026

### Entry Forms

Applications under any of the categories are made online via the Council's website, by clicking on the line 'Enter Belfast In Bloom Competition', completing the form and attaching photos.

Paper entry forms are from LOCA.

### More Information

For more information email: [belfastinbloom@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:belfastinbloom@belfastcity.gov.uk).

## LOCA Continues Push For Social Housing Scheme On Bonfire Site



During visits by the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons, to Lower Oldpark on 8th May 2025 and 23rd April 2026, LOCA lobbied for the development of social housing on the

'Bonfire Site' adjacent to Mountview Street and the Oldpark Road Peace Wall.

These requests for social housing on the Bonfire Site reflect the views expressed by Lower Oldpark residents during a survey carried out by LOCA during the first half of 2025.

LOCA requested that a social housing scheme on the 'Bonfire Site' is included on the NIHE managed Social Housing Development Programme.

The 'Bonfire Site' has been vacant for about 15 years. It is used for the annual 12th July bonfire, but it has also been the location for regular dumping of rubbish.

This fly-tipping has created health hazards for local people, and particularly children, as well as helping to make the area look run down.

LOCA's efforts to secure the development of social housing on the site are being supported by the BUILD Shankill initiative. LOCA and BUILD Shankill have met with a housing association which has expressed an interest in building social homes on the site.

LOCA has also sought support from local political representatives.

## Parent and Toddlers Group and Mess Makers

### Parent and Toddler Group

LOCA's Parent and Toddler Group offers a warm, relaxed space where little ones can play and explore while parents and carers enjoy time together. It runs on Tuesdays from 10.00am to 12.00pm at the LOCA Centre in Avoca Street.

### Messy Sensory Play Group

The Messy Sensory Play Group gives babies and toddlers the chance to dive into creative, sensory activities that

support early development and provide fun experiences for families. It runs on Thursdays from 10.00am to 12.00pm at the LOCA Centre in Avoca Street.

### Age Group

The Parent and Toddler Group and Messy Sensory Play Group are open to little ones aged 0 – 3 years.

### Get Involved

If you care for a little one, why not bring them along on the days, and at

the times, indicated above. There are places available.



## 'No Cold Caller' Signs

A survey of Lower Oldpark residents last year highlighted concerns about criminal 'cold callers'.

Doorstep crime is when rogue traders come to your door uninvited and pressure you into buying something or signing up for a service. They often try to sell their product or service in a way which can be very intimidating.

### Tips For Dealing With Doorstep Selling

Not all doorstep sellers commit a crime. Stay protected and avoid doorstep selling scams by remembering these tips:

- Don't agree to anything just to get rid of a seller. You don't have to buy.
- Check the seller's ID card. Make sure you have their full address, not just a PO

Box or phone number. Check the address exists and take note of the ID.

-If you tell someone to leave your home, it's a criminal offence if they don't do as you ask.

-Even if a seller tells you your cancellation rights, remember that once you pay them they have the money and you don't.

-Get a receipt for any purchases you make. Remember any guarantee is worthless if a business disappears or ceases trading so be wary of relying on promises about the future.

-Don't pay the full amount or a large deposit up front.

-Get and keep a copy of any paperwork, advert or flyer.

### "No Cold Calling" Sticker

If you don't want anyone knocking on your door to sell you something, you can contact Consumerline and you will be sent a "No Cold Calling" sticker for your door.

Under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, it may be a criminal offence for a trader to ignore your sign.

### Contact Consumerline

Phone: 0300 123 6262 (9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday and 9.00 am to 4.00 pm Friday - except bank and public holidays.)

Online:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/contact-consumerline-make-complaint-or-ask-advice>

## Empty Social Houses In Lower Oldpark

Unoccupied social housing in Lower Oldpark was an issue of concern raised by local residents during LOCA's neighbourhood survey last year.

In response to this concern, LOCA included an Action in its Regeneration and Community Needs Strategy for the area which said, "LOCA will work with social landlords (NIHE and housing associations) to secure action to reduce the number of unoccupied social houses in Lower Oldpark".

During April 2026, LOCA wrote to the NIHE, Radius Housing, Clanmil Housing, Choice Housing and NB housing and asked for details of their empty social houses in Lower Oldpark.

The NIHE advised that four of its properties were empty and awaiting letting. One was undergoing Change of Tenancy (COT) repairs and had been offered out and accepted. Another was undergoing COT repairs and was out on offer and a response was awaited. A third property was awaiting COT

repairs and was out on offer and waiting a response. A fourth empty property has been offered and accepted but an unspecified setback had held things up.

Clanmil Housing advised that, at the end of April 2026, it had two properties that it was expecting to become void and that it was expected that they would be offered out over the coming couple of weeks.

No response has been received from NB Housing which owns properties at Century Street/ Crumlin Road/ Albertville Drive.

Choice Housing which owns properties on the Oldpark Road advised that it has one void property that has been offered and accepted.

Radius has provided limited information on its empty properties.

LOCA will continue to work to try and ensure that the number of void properties is kept to a minimum.

## Concern Over Choice Scheme Consultation



LOCA has written to Choice Housing senior management to express LOCA's concern over how the Association consulted the community before it began work on a development of 14 social housing flats at 205-211 Crumlin Road.

Having reviewed a range of documents, LOCA is worried that Choice did not carry out consultation in accordance with Department for Communities (DfC) Guidance. LOCA has been addressing this issue with DfC and awaits a response to LOCA's request for a meeting with the Choice Director of Development which was made on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

## Oldpark Road Bus Services

In April 2025, LOCA contacted Translink about its bus services on the Oldpark Road.

### Timetable Bus Stops

LOCA raised the issue of the Translink bus timetable for the Oldpark Road not showing all the stops. Translink said that most bus timetables which include a high volume of stops do not list all stops on the route, rather the majority of the main stops are listed for timing reference.

### Lack of Bus Stop Timetables

LOCA also highlighted that there were no bus timetables at the two Shannon Street bus stops. Translink said that they would arrange for the Hillview Road/ Court bus stop to be checked and updated where necessary and for Shannon Street bus stop to be fitted with a timetable holder subject to any issues arising.

### Timetable Reduction

In response to a concern that the Oldpark Road timetable had been reduced, Translink advised that, while the timetable was reduced in September 2024 due to operational issues, the entirety of the Monday to Friday timetable was reinstated in January 2025. A slight reduction remains in place for Saturdays.

### Bus Stop Shelters

LOCA raised the issue of the lack of bus shelters at bus stops adjacent to Lower Oldpark. In response, Translink provided LOCA with a form for community groups or individuals to apply for the provision of a bus shelter at a specific location.

There are three potential locations on both sides of the Oldpark Road (at Lower Oldpark) where a bus shelter could be provided.

The six possible locations for the provision of bus stops are set out below.

#### Traffic Heading Out of Town

(a) Above the Well Pharmacy on the Oldpark Road.

(b) At the Oldpark Road/ Century Street junction.

(c) On the Oldpark Road/ below Hillview Road.

#### City Bound Traffic

(d) Above Manor Drive on the Oldpark Road.

(e) Below Manor Drive on the Oldpark Road.

(f) At the Oldpark Road/ Shannon Street junction.



### Let Us Know Your Choices

Use the cut-off slip below to let LOCA know where you would like to see bus stop shelters provided on the Oldpark Road. It's unlikely that shelters can be provided at all six locations.

On the cut-off slip below, please choose one bus stop on each side of the road where you would like to see shelters provided.

### Send LOCA Your Choices

When you have completed the cut-off slip below, you can return it to LOCA by either of the following methods:

- Drop your completed slip into the LOCA Centre at 9-23 Avoca Street BT14 6EN. You will be given an envelope to put your slip into at the Centre.
- Take a photo of your completed slip with your mobile phone and email it to: [loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com)

-----Cut-off and Return-----

### Oldpark Road Bus Shelter Location Survey

In each of the two boxes below, please choose (by ticking a box) **one** Oldpark Road bus stop where you would like to see a bus shelter provided.

#### Traffic Heading Out of Town (Tick One)

(a) Above the Well Pharmacy on the Oldpark Road.

(b) At the Oldpark Road/ Century Street junction.

(c) On the Oldpark Road/ below Hillview Road.

#### City Bound Traffic (Tick One)

(d) Above Manor Drive on the Oldpark Road.

(e) Below Manor Drive on the Oldpark Road.

(f) At the Oldpark Road/ Shannon Street junction.

➤ Drop your completed slip into the LOCA Centre at 9-23 Avoca Street BT14 6EN.

Or

➤ Take a photo of your completed slip with your mobile phone and email it to: [loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com)

# Helping Hand From Local Foodbanks

The availability of Trussell Trust foodbanks means that households don't have to go hungry when money is short.

## Help Available At Trussell Trust

Provision of no charge food parcels. A typical food parcel includes, breakfast cereal, soup, pasta, rice, pasta sauce, baked beans, tinned meat, tinned vegetables, instant mash, UHT milk, tea, coffee, tinned dessert and biscuits. When available, toiletries will be included.

The foodbank can usually adapt your food parcel to suit your dietary needs. Just let them know when you arrive with your voucher. The Foodbank will also try to adapt the parcel to accommodate any food allergies etc.

The foodbank will adapt your food parcel according to the number of adults and children in your household. They will also endeavour to provide foods that are age appropriate and in suitable quantities for your children. Sometimes baby foods can be offered, but not SMA milk.

The foodbank usually carries a stock of nappies, baby wipes and baby foods (not milk), which can be added to the parcel. Please let the foodbank know when you arrive if you need additional items for your baby.

## Who Can Receive Help?

Anyone in need, but you will need a foodbank voucher. You can check your foodbank voucher entitlement with your social worker or project worker.

You can also be referred by e.g. an advice agency, including Lower Oldpark Community Association, a social housing landlord, a health professional, a charity or a political party.

Once you have been issued with a voucher, you can exchange this for a minimum of three days of emergency



## Local Trussell Trust Foodbanks

### Immanuel Church Foodbank

The foodbank that is closest to Lower Oldpark is based at Immanuel Presbyterian Church at 35 Agnes Street BT13 1GG.

It offers a walk-in service on Mondays, 2.00pm to 3.30pm.

### Contact Details/ More Information

- Mob: 079 0209 9840.
- Email: [info@northbelfast.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@northbelfast.foodbank.org.uk)

### Ekenhead Halls – North Circular Road

Trussell Trust also provides a food bank service at Ekenhead Halls on the North Circular Road in North Belfast.

The service is basically the same as Immanuel above but the day of operation and address are different.

A walk-in service is available Tuesdays, 2.00pm to 4.0pm and on Thursdays 6.30pm to 8.00pm.

### Contact Details

- Mobile: 079 0209 9840.
- Email: [info@northbelfast.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@northbelfast.foodbank.org.uk)

Phone: 07902 099 840

### More Information

<https://northbelfast.foodbank.org.uk/contact-us/>

## Haven Foodbank (133 Shankill Road)

### Help Available

Free emergency food parcels for anyone in need. Walk-in service.

### When Is It Available?

Monday/ Tuesday/ Thursday/ Friday, 11.00am to 3.00pm. Please note that Haven is manned by volunteers, so hours may change at short notice. Before visiting the address below, phone the number below, or message on Facebook, to make sure that someone will be there to help.

### Where Is It Available?

Address: 133 Shankill Road BT13 1FD.

Contact Phone: 0735 4614992.

If you are calling from a withheld number and need to leave a message, please quote your telephone number, otherwise Haven cannot return your call.

## LOCA Seeks Lettings Meeting With Social Landlords

LOCA has asked Councillor Jordan Doran to organize a meeting with the Housing Executive and locally operating housing associations to address the issue of the allocation of homes in Lower Oldpark to applicants who may have a history of anti-social behaviour.

LOCA's recently launched Regeneration and Community Needs Strategy (March 2026 to March 2029) sets out the following Action, 'LOCA will work with social housing landlords and private landlords to try and minimize the letting of accommodation in Lower Oldpark to households with a history of ASB'.

This Action arises from concerns raised by residents about this issue during a neighbourhood survey carried out by LOCA during 2025.