



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Wellbeing Board Meeting

Date	18 January 2019
Report title	Healthy and Inclusive new places to Live – embedding wellbeing within the WMCA role in new housing delivery
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Report to be/has been considered by	

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

1. Note the progress to date in developing the wellbeing input to the WMCA's enabling role in the delivery of significant new housing.

2. Approve the proposed next steps to embed the wellbeing and housing principles within the key areas of work that will influence and enable the WMCA housing ambition.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To set out progress on work to develop strategic health and wellbeing principles to embed within the WMCA approach and role in the delivery of new housing.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The built and natural environment is a key environmental determinant of health and wellbeing. The linkages between health and the built and natural environment have long been established and the role of the environment in shaping the social, economic and environmental circumstances that determine health is increasingly recognised and understood.
- 2.3 An ever-increasing body of research indicates that the environment in which we live is inextricably linked to our health and wellbeing across the life course. For example, the design of our neighbourhoods can influence physical activity levels, travel patterns, social connectivity and a host of other factors which shape wellbeing outcomes. Land use policy and approaches to delivering new housing presents an opportunity to address some of the contributors to ill health and health inequalities.
- 2.4 In March 2018, a Housing Deal between the WMCA and government was announced. This forms part of a programme of joint work and investment between the West Midlands and Government to deliver 215,000 new homes by 2031. This will involve delivery at a rate of nearly 16,000 homes a year compared to an average of 10,000 over the last three years.
- 2.5 In addition to a significant increase in the release of land for new homes, the West Midlands Housing Deal focuses on innovative methods to deliver a brownfield first policy and joint working with partners to support delivery of a mix of tenure provision based on local housing need.
- 2.6 The WMCA does not have any statutory planning powers and the emerging investment plans and proposals to speed up delivery do not impact on existing or emerging local plans or the statutory planning process undertaken by local authorities.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 Work with the WMCA Housing and Regeneration Directorate identified an opportunity to prepare strategic health and wellbeing principles that can be embedded within the WMCA's enabling role in delivering new housing. From the outset, it has been clear that such work will compliment and add value to existing local planning policy and other local work.

- 3.3 Initially, scoping exercises were undertaken to clarify existing guidance regarding planning, housing and public health and how the input at a WMCA level can add value to local work. A project team was brought together to connect expert networks locally and support delivery.
- 3.4 Based on desk-based research to map evidence and common themes from existing approaches, the project team has developed the following strategic principles. The principles are sufficiently broad to enable flexibility in application but establish universal features of good quality place making design that promote the wellbeing of individuals and communities. The interconnected principles provide a framework for how new homes and neighbourhoods should be expected to function, facilitating the health and wellbeing of residents and contributing to a happier, healthier, better connected and more prosperous West Midlands;
- Healthy, affordable homes that enable people to retain their independence throughout the life course
 - Vibrant streets that promote community interaction and prioritise active travel and movement for all
 - Residents having access to the natural environment and high quality, active social spaces
 - Connected places, with residents having access to services, schools, employment and public transport infrastructure.
- 3.5 Alongside the development of the principles, there is an on-going process of stakeholder engagement. This has the aim of ensuring that stakeholders are briefed on the work, can provide feedback and are also able to contribute to and shape future stages of development.

4.0 Next steps

- 4.1 In parallel with on-going stakeholder engagement, input is proposed in the following areas to support the WMCA's role in delivering new housing.
- 4.2 In January 2019, the Housing and Regeneration team is to commence work to prepare a Design Guide. The National Planning Policy Framework highlights the weight the Government attaches to the importance of design in the built environment. The guide will promote the importance of good design practice and will assist housebuilders, developers and communities in designing proposals. It is anticipated that the Design Guide will expand on the wellbeing principles developed to date and provide further clarity on how new housing development can help improve the built environment and resident wellbeing.
- 4.3 Furthermore, as the WMCA purchases and unlocks land to bring forward for residential development, there could be opportunities to have a greater influence and shape master planning and design in a more hands on way. Discussions will continue with the Housing and Regeneration team regarding these opportunities, which could include funding conditions based on health, wellbeing and wider quality principles.

4.4 In addition, it is proposed to develop relationships with Housing Associations to explore opportunities to embed and trail the wellbeing principles previously set out.

4.5 It is proposed to bring updates on progress in these areas to the next meeting of the Wellbeing Board.

5.0 Wider WMCA Implications

5.1 This area of work has progressed collaboratively with the Housing and Land directorate.

6.0 Financial implications

6.1 There are no immediate financial implications.

7.0 Legal implications

7.1 There are no immediate legal implications.

8.0 Equalities implications

8.1 Effective communication with stakeholders will support WMCA equalities responsibilities.

9.0 Inclusive Growth Implications

9.1 The delivery of new housing which supports wellbeing and provides access to the transport, employment and essential services needed for people to realise their potential is critical to the delivery of inclusive growth.

10.0 Other implications

10.1 None noted.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

11.1 None.

12.0 Appendices

12.1 None.