



Housing & Land Delivery Board

Date	27 April 2020
Report title	Delivery & Investment Plans: Town Centres and Inclusive Growth Corridors
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Mike Bird, Leader, Walsall MBC
Accountable Employees	Gareth Bradford, Director of Housing & Regeneration (Accountable Director) Patricia Willoughby, Head of Policy (Housing & Regeneration) (report author)
Report has been considered by	Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group Previous Housing & Land Delivery Boards since inception of the programme.

Recommendation(s):

The Housing & Land Delivery Board is asked to:

- 1 **Note** the positive progress and engagement on the preparation of Delivery & Investment Plans which are now nearing completion in line with the framework, format, purpose, approach and characteristics set out by this Board over the last 12 months. The Delivery & Investment Plans relate to:
 - *Town Centres:*
 - Bilston
 - Bordesley Green
 - Dudley
 - Walsall
 - West Bromwich
 - *Inclusive Growth Corridors:*
 - Walsall to Wolverhampton
 - Sandwell to Dudley.
- 2 **Note** that this paper has been considered, and the contents endorsed for submission to the Housing & Land Delivery Board, by the Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group in discussion with relevant Members as appropriate.

3 Delegate to the Director of Housing & Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Lead for Housing & Land, authority to agree the final versions of the Delivery & Investment Plans (for publication) for the town centres and inclusive growth corridors listed above. This is conditional on each plan being agreed, in advance, by officers and Members of the relevant local authorities.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to:

- explain the background to this work
- describe the progress to date
- agree to the delegation set out above for the final agreement of the Delivery and Investment Plans.

2.0 Background

2.1 At meetings of the Housing & Land Delivery Board throughout 2019, Members agreed that Delivery & Investment Plans should be prepared for:

- *Town Centres:*
 - Bilston
 - Bordesley Green
 - Dudley
 - Walsall
 - West Bromwich
- *Inclusive Growth Corridors:*
 - Walsall to Wolverhampton
 - Sandwell to Dudley

2.2 Members also agreed the format, purpose, style and approach of these plans and the added value they should bring. An interim presentation was given to the meeting of the Housing & Land Delivery Board in January 2020. The presentation summarised the rationale and added value agreed by the Board previously, underlying the preparation of the plans and what they would contain. It also gave a summary of the key assets and opportunities within each town centre and corridor. This approach and the next steps and timelines suggested was supported by the Board and further work with officers has taken place since that time. By way of a reminder, the rationale for, the added value of and typical content of each plan agreed at the January 2020 meeting, is summarised below.

The purpose of Delivery & Investment Plans

2.3 The Board agreed that the purpose of preparing Delivery & Investment Plans was to provide:

- a single, clear statement of ambition, potential and commitment to change
- a clear focus on delivery – making things happen, articulating public and private sector roles
- co-ordination of activity across multiple partners
- commitment to quick and efficient processes (e.g. planning, procurement)
- a demonstration of a collective commitment to the Regional Town Centres Programme and inclusive growth corridors.

2.4 The Delivery and Investment Plans will be used to help councils and the WMCA unlock public and private sector funding and investment and to assist in acquiring assembling and disposing of land. The Board agreed the documents should be tailored to an investor audience in order to help secure the funding to deliver inclusive growth in the corridors.

The content of the plans

- 2.5 In terms of content, the Board agreed that the plans should:
- provide a clear and succinct synthesis of evidence – infrastructure, investment, housing, skills, property market, etc.
 - articulate a clear coherent single statement of ambition, vision and aspirations
 - demonstrate an understanding of our local assets and unique qualities
 - set out a framework and high level programme for public sector interventions
 - highlight key investor and development opportunities.

What difference they will make

- 2.6 The Board agreed that the Delivery & Investment Plans should provide a clear framework for action in areas around which other streams of work can be focused. Specifically, as agreed by the Board in January, they will:
- demonstrate the potential for transformational change in a defined area
 - show commitment to a shared ambition and outcome
 - facilitate public sector investment decisions
 - help to unlock private sector investment
 - co-ordinate actions and interventions across a multitude of organisations.

2.7 Since the meeting in January 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic has disrupted life in the UK and it is clear that local and regional government will need to play a key role in helping the economy to recover and supporting local communities. Supporting our town centres and inclusive growth corridors as centres of future growth is already a major focus of the Board's work programme but is likely to become increasingly significant in the months ahead.

3.0 Current work and decisions needed

- 3.1 Since the January meeting, a significant amount of work has been undertaken by officers within each local authority, WMCA and Local Economic Partnerships. Work on all plans has reached an advanced stage and 'draft final' versions of all plans have now been prepared and agreed by officers.
- 3.2 Before the plans can be finalised, however, officers appropriate time to discuss them with local Members and, in some cases, go through formal governance processes. It has not been possible to complete these consultation and formal governance processes with all authorities in the time available prior to the meeting of this Board.
- 3.3 However, feedback from officers at the recent Delivery Steering Group meeting was that these discussions could all be completed over the next few weeks, and certainly well in advance of the likely next meeting of this Board (date to be confirmed). To avoid further delay, therefore, and acknowledging that the documents have reached an advanced stage of preparation, Members of the Housing & Land Delivery Board are asked to delegate authority to agree the final versions of the plans to the persons listed in the recommendation, all on the assumption that the necessary discussions and governance processes have been completed to the satisfaction of each local authority.

4.0 Next steps

- 4.1 The overarching principle relating to next steps for these plans is recognition that different places need different responses. At the meeting in January 2020, a range of possibilities was presented to the Board. These were discussed at the recent Delivery Steering Group of officers and are set out for consideration by each lead council with the WMCA below:
- continue development of a programme of public sector interventions supported by WMCA – work up detailed delivery programmes if appropriate
 - use these plans to inform business case development to HMG/Single Commissioning Framework
 - prepare investment propositions for private sector - consider need for investor prospectus and development briefs for sites
 - continue work of Regional Town Centres Task Force
 - develop communications and media strategy
 - engage with local communities, businesses, etc.
- 4.2 Much of this work will be common to all town centres and corridors but the timing of the actions will vary. The next steps for each town centre or inclusive growth corridor will, therefore, be the subject of focused discussions now between local authority and WMCA officers the objective being to produce high quality, highly visual documents with a portfolio of technical documentation underlying and supporting this work.
- 4.3 The scope, specification and programme for the additional work set out in para 4.1 will be brought forward for consideration at a future meeting.
- 4.4 Once the current delivery and investment plans have been published, we will endeavour to move forward with the creation of plans for other town centres and corridors, engaging with constituent and non-constituent council across the region, several of whom are keen to start the process.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications from the information contained in the report. Funding (including any pre/enabling work) for future programmes will be analysed on a case by case basis and projects on which funding is sought will need to demonstrate a clear relationship with the direct outputs required by the WMCA assurance framework and Single Commissioning Framework (as amended following recent meetings of the Housing & Land Delivery Board).

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Section 113A(1)(a) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 gives WMCA a power of competence appropriate for the purposes of carrying-out any of its functions. Part 4 of The West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016 (2016 No 653) confers that the functions relating to any economic development and regeneration in the constituent councils are exercisable by WMCA. Part 3 of The West Midlands Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017 confers functions corresponding to the functions of the Homes and Communities Agency has in relation to the combined area. Paragraph 10 (2) (a) of the 2017 Order confers the function of improving the supply and quality of housing to the Combined Authority, 10 (2) (b) to

secure the regeneration or development of land or infrastructure in the combined area, 10 (2) (c) to support in other ways the creation, regeneration or development of communities in the combined area or their continued well-being and 10 (2) (d) confers the function of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and good design.

6.2 If the Plans are to be relied upon by third parties it is important that any representations in the Plans are accurate and final plans therefore may require legal input and checking.

6.3 It is noted that funding for the interventions is being developed jointly with the local authorities. Once sources of funding have been established, legal input will be required on a case by case basis to agree funding agreements with the relevant local authorities. The funding agreements should ensure that the funds are spent on agreed projects and should cover the matters referred to in the financial section and should provide the outputs required by WMCA's Single Commissioning Framework.

7.0 Equalities Implications

7.1 There are no immediate equalities implications in relation to this report. However, individual strategies and delivery schemes will need to take into account local area needs and local stakeholder needs to ensure the schemes benefit local residents, including harder to reach groups. To that effect equality impact assessments will need to be conducted to understand demographics, key inequality issues and how investment can help address key inequality gaps.

7.2 Engagement and consultation with key equality stakeholders is also crucial to ensure that the programme takes into account diverse community needs. Overall, regeneration in some of the most deprived and diverse West Midlands town centres and inclusive growth corridors is likely to have a positive impact on equalities but it needs to be done in a way that enables a wide range of residents (including the harder to reach groups) to benefit.

8.0 Inclusive Growth Implications

8.1 The proposals themselves are neutral when it comes to inclusive growth. However, implications will arise as investments are made and strategies are devised – in terms of who benefits from those investments and in who is involved in shaping and contributing to them. As such, any programmes should be devised with the responsibility to deliver inclusive growth. The Inclusive Growth Framework and burgeoning Investment Toolkit can be as a guide to shape this process.

8.2 Current governance arrangements are satisfactory for building a strategic picture, but the shaping and delivery of specific programmes will need to involve a wider variety of stakeholders in order to be inclusive.

9.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications

9.1 This paper relates to five town centres (Bilston, Bordesley Green, Dudley, Walsall and West Bromwich) and to the Walsall to Wolverhampton Inclusive Growth Corridor. None of these areas are formally defined with hard and fast boundaries so that development opportunities can be maximised.

10.0 Other implications

10.1 None.

11.0. Schedule of Background Papers

11.1 There have been regular updates on matters relating to WMCA's Town Centres Programme and inclusive growth corridors since the inception of both programmes. These reports have been considered by WMCA's Housing & Land Delivery Board and/or Investment Board.