



## Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group

<b>Date</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
<b>Report title</b>	Housing and Land Covid19 Recovery Strategy and Implementation Plan
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	Councillor Mike Bird, Leader, Walsall MBC
<b>Accountable Employees</b>	Gareth Bradford, Director of Housing & Regeneration (Accountable Director) Pat Willoughby, Head of Policy (Housing & Regeneration) (Accountable SRO) Rob Lamond – Strategic Planning Manager (Report Author)
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Draft Economic Recovery Strategy and Implementation Plan received by Housing & Land Delivery Board July 2020

### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Housing & Land Delivery Board is recommended to

- 1) **Agree** the attached draft Housing and Land Covid19 Recovery Strategy can move forward to publication now showcasing the Housing and Land Board's proactive work on this agenda (Annex 1 to this report)
- 2) **Agree** that a public facing document based on Annex 1 be published in order to communicate the Portfolio's Covid19 recovery strategy to a wider audience; to be agreed via delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder and the WMCA Director of Housing and Regeneration
- 3) **Note** the excellent engagement and ongoing development of the Recovery Strategy through strong collaboration with local authorities, LEPs and expert advisory groups and taskforces
- 4) **Note** this Recovery Strategy has informed the region's "*Recharge the West Midlands: Kickstarting the West Midlands Economy*" document published on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and is directly informing future asks of HMG through the Comprehensive Spending Review, forthcoming business case submissions to HMG and the wider business of the Housing and Land Delivery Board.

## **1.0 Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to update the Board on progress made by the WMCA Housing and Regeneration Directorate, working closely with partners in local authorities, the private sector and our expert panels, to develop a Portfolio Covid19 Economic Recovery Strategy and Interventions Plan in response to the challenges and opportunities brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. This Strategy and Plan forms Annex 1 to this report.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Covid-19 Pandemic and the associated economic lockdown restrictions has brought major structural and cyclical changes to the global economy, disrupting all sectors and affecting every region in the world. Nowhere is this truer than in real estate, regeneration and property development – the areas which sit in WMCA within the responsibility and remit of the Housing and Land Board.
- 2.2 Reflecting on these priorities and the regional recovery work to date, the Housing and Land Board on 27th April commissioned WMCA via its Housing and Regeneration Directorate to lead the preparation of a Portfolio Covid19 Recovery Plan that specifically focused on driving forward opportunities and interventions in each of the major programmes of work in the Board's Current Annual Business Plan. This would sit alongside and directly inform and be informed by the wider regional economic recovery work agreed by the Mayor and Leaders.
- 2.3 The WMCA has developed this regional Housing and Land Covid19 Recovery Strategy and Implementation Plan in full collaboration with its public and private sector partners. It responds to the unprecedented challenges the pandemic has brought and the opportunity to further strengthen our mission of delivering accelerated inclusive growth, adapting and refining the existing work programme for the Portfolio and doing so with partnership and collaboration at its core.
- 2.4 To achieve this collaboration two complementary working groups were established: the first consisting of senior housing and regeneration officers from local authorities, LEPs and Homes England, alongside a second group of representatives from the private sector through the Commercial Property Forum jointly operated by WMCA with the British Property Federation. Through workshops, virtual meetings and co-developed documents these forums have contributed and informed the development of our emerging strategy and plans.
- 2.5 In addition we have engaged a wide range of stakeholder groups and taskforces including the Town Centre Taskforce, the Homelessness Taskforce, the AMC Taskforce led by Mark Farmer (National HMG Adviser on MMC), and the national CA Directors Group. These groups have provided tremendous support, challenge, feedback and soundings in developing this strategy and the interventions necessary to turn strategy into delivery. They will continue to do so as the process of economic recovery continues in the weeks and months ahead. We have also worked with Revo (major retail and city centre landlords) on proposals for town and city centre renewal and with teams across WMCA – especially colleagues in transport given the major impact transport investment and services have on any real estate and regeneration economic recovery planning.

2.6 A further update report and draft Economic Recovery Strategy and Implementation Plan was received by Housing and Land Delivery Board at its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020. This report provided the latest position at the time and recommendations for further development of a number of key areas in the report, including the sections on Public Land, Town Centres and Employment Land and Enterprise. Discussion papers focusing on Public Land and Town Centres are included on the agenda for this meeting. The latest iteration of the Employment Land and Enterprise section is included within Annex 1; a more detailed paper on this subject is in development via the officers working group.

### 3.0 Current position

3.1 On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 the West Midlands published “*Recharge the West Midlands: Kickstarting the West Midlands Economy: Our Investment Case to Government*”, a plan collectively drawn up and endorsed by the region’s political, business, and trade union leaders. The investment case detailed proposals for a total of £3.2bn of investment in the region.

3.2 The investment case was developed by WMCA, local authorities and LEPs to lobby HM Government for funding to address immediate issues as the nation emerged from lockdown, **with a specific focus on impact in the next six to twelve months**. Included in the proposals were three specific asks relating to housing and land – for brownfield land funding, affordable housing funds, and an enabling fund for Advanced Manufacturing in Construction (AMC) – all of which were proposed and informed by the Housing & Land Economic Recovery Strategy process.

3.3 Subsequent statements from HM Government have included the announcement of £84m Brownfield Funding for WMCA to be deployed across the region via the Single Commissioning Framework. An additional £66m of “Getting Britain Building” funding has been secured for the West Midlands and is the subject of a combined WMCA and LEPs regional submission.

3.3 Whilst the focus of the regional investment case was understandably on the immediate economic challenges facing the region during lockdown, the Housing & Land Delivery Board recovery planning work is being developed with a longer time frame in mind, with interventions and projects being identified for the next 24 months and beyond and to inform the refinement of key projects and policy work of the Housing and Land Portfolio.

Working to this timeframe and with the consequences of the pandemic still emerging, seven priority areas or game-changers for housing and land in the West Midlands have been identified and agreed by the working groups, namely:

- Brownfield Regeneration
- Affordable Housing Policy and Delivery
- Business and investor partnerships
- Advanced Manufacturing in Construction, high quality design and Zero Carbon
- Public Land/OPE
- Town Centres
- Employment land and enterprise

3.4 For each of these game-changers, key strategy principles have been identified, a range of interventions debated and identified to address the challenges brought about by the pandemic, including proposals for funding, legislative changes, partnerships and collaborations. These interventions are included in Section B of the annexed document

and are directly informing the work of the Board and business cases to HMG being developed at the moment.

3.5 In addition, discussions have been held with local authorities to identify potential projects or schemes that could be brought forward as part of the recovery plan to deliver against the following criteria:

- Timing, investor and delivery readiness
  - a) Restart projects able to see physical impact/delivery on site within 6 - 12 months
  - b) Recovery projects able to see tangible impact on site/implementation within 12-24 months
  - c) Renewal projects able to see impact beyond 24 months
- Game changer contribution - the importance/contribution of each project to our identified "game changers"
- Value for money and the contribution to overall regional economic recovery in terms of GVA
- Contribution to wider themes of inclusive growth, levelling up and responding to climate change - seize this opportunity to drive a dramatic shift towards low carbon, high quality neighbourhoods.

We have also sought to identify the public funding ask on each project within this schedule to inform the value for money position. The projects identified by local authorities to be included under Section C are highly commercially sensitive and therefore not included in Annex 1 to this report.

#### **4.0 Next steps**

4.1 The annexed Economic Recovery Strategy and Implementation Plan, which has been developed by WMCA in full collaboration with our working groups and expert panels, forms the basis of the Portfolio's amended business plan, key policies and programmes for the year. It directly informs the representations to HM Government through the "Recharge the West Midlands" process, the Comprehensive Spending Review due to be held in autumn 2020, and ongoing dialogue with MHCLG on further devolution of funding and powers to the region.

4.4 As noted throughout the Strategy, the ongoing effects of Covid-19 on the economy and society remain far-reaching and constantly evolving. Therefore, the attached Economic Recovery Strategy and Implementation Plan will continue to be subject to developing events and market conditions, and will need to be a fluid and live document. It will inform the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, expected to be held by HM Government in autumn 2020, and the Business Plan, key policies and projects governed by the Housing and Land Delivery Board.

4.5 Subject to approval from the Board, a public facing summary document will be published for Autumn 2020 in order to communicate the Portfolio's direction of travel and the region's collaborative approach to driving and enabling an economic recovery that delivers jobs, homes and growth. The proposed document will follow the approach of TfWM's recent publication ([link](#)) and that of the WMCA Single Commissioning Framework brochure.

#### **5.0 Financial Implications**

This paper sets out the draft Housing and Land Economic Recovery Strategy for the WMCA in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the strategic nature of the paper there are no direct financial implications to discuss or comment on. Therefore, subsequent expenditure arising from the paper must be administered through the Single Commissioning Framework, WMCA Assurance Framework and in line with the accounting and taxation policies of the WMCA and HMRC.

The Single Commissioning Framework provides a single set of criteria and governance systems that will be applied to all applications for available devolved WMCA Housing, Land and Property Development funds, together with a consistent process and timelines for decision.

## **6.0 Legal Implications**

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.

It is noted that the purpose of this paper is to update the Housing & Land Delivery Board on the progress on the Housing and Land Economic Recovery and Implementation Plan. It is further noted that the Plan itself covers a broad programme of work through collaboration with various parties and public bodies including local authorities and LEP's, expert advisory groups and task forces. Legal input will be required at various stages in the development and implementation of the Plan and appropriate governance structures will need to be put into place at the requisite stages. Legal advice will also need to be sought on a case by case basis in line with the requirements of the Single Commissioning Framework. The Single Commissioning Framework may also need to be revised and updated in accordance with new developments arising out of the implementation of the Plan.

## **7.0 Equalities Implications**

The individual interventions and projects arising from the Economic Recovery Strategy and Implementation Plan will be subject to Equalities Impact Assessments in due course.

## **8.0 Inclusive Growth Implications**

The Economic Recovery Strategy is being developed with Inclusive Growth principles at its core, and all interventions will be appraised and considered in alignment with the Inclusive Growth toolkit.

## **9.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

The report covers the whole of the WMCA area.

**10.0 Other implications**

10.1 None.

**11.0. Schedule of Background Papers**

11.1 None.