

Housing & Land Delivery Board

Date	13 January 2021
Report title	Zero Carbon Homes Charter and Routemap
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Mike Bird, Leader, Walsall Council
Accountable Employees	Gareth Bradford, Director of Housing & Regeneration, WMCA Patricia Willoughby, Senior Reporting Officer, WMCA Rachel-Ann Atterbury, Report Author
Report has been considered by	An earlier report on the Zero Carbon Homes Programme was considered by the Housing & Land Delivery Board at its meeting on 2 nd November 2020, and by the officers of the Delivery Steering Group at its meeting on 9 th December 2020.

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Housing & Land Delivery Board is asked to:

- 1) **Consider and agree** the principles and format of the Zero Carbon Homes Charter as set out in Appendix A.
- 2) **Consider and agree** the contents of the Zero Carbon Homes Routemap as set out in Appendix B.
- 3) **Agree** the proposal to launch the Zero Carbon Homes Charter and Routemap in 2021 (date TBC).
- 4) **Note** the excellent support from local authority officers on the Zero Carbon Homes Working Group and industry experts on the Zero Carbon Homes Taskforce in formulating the charter and routemap.
- 5) **Delegate** to the Director of Housing & Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Land, authority to agree the final versions of the charter and routemap (ready for publication).

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update the Housing & Land Delivery Board on the progress being made under the Zero Carbon Homes Work Programme of the Board.
- 1.2 This is work led and developed by WMCA working closely with our regional Zero Carbon Homes (ZCH) Officer Working Group and an independently chaired ZCH Expert Taskforce. The focus of this work in 2020 has been producing a ZCH Charter and Routemap – agreed by the Board as key portfolio business plan deliverables.
- 1.3 Draft final versions of both the Charter and Routemap have been considered and supported by the groups above and are attached to this report as Appendices A and B for discussion and agreement by this Board.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In January 2020, the Combined Authority launched its 2041 Climate Change Action Plan (WM2041) including a commitment to delivering a ZCH standard by 2025. The Housing & Land Delivery Board agreed that a major deliverable for the Housing & Land Portfolio in 2020/21 was to establish a clear ZCH standard for new homes in the region, alongside a Charter and Routemap to achieving it with supporting guidance to enable the industry to meet the ambitious 2025 target. The Board commissioned WMCA officers to take forward this work during the year in partnership with local councils and the private sector.
- 2.2 In April 2020, the Housing & Land Delivery Board agreed that WMCA would adopt the UK Green Building Council's (UKGBC) '[Net Zero Carbon Buildings: A Framework Definition](#)' to define zero carbon development in the region and guide the development of the 2025 ZCH standard. As a reminder, the UKGBC's framework defines net zero carbon in terms of emissions in three ways: construction, operation and whole life.
- 2.3 There is general agreement within the industry that the third part of the definition, meeting net zero **whole life** carbon, is currently aspirational. This ambition cannot be delivered at this stage because it requires us to address **all** aspects of a building's carbon footprint. As such, it places demands upon new development which cannot be implemented in the timescale required. The benefit of the UKGBC's framework definition is that it identifies the steps required to shift towards whole life net zero carbon, allowing clear progress to be made, whilst at the same time demonstrating the scale of the overall ambition.
- 2.4 Alongside UKGBC's definition framework, the Housing and Land Delivery Board agreed **a defined phased programme of work to meet the 2025 commitment at its April meeting**. Following the Board meeting, officers appointed Useful Projects to co-develop and co-ordinate the workplan, programme and activities to accelerate the move towards zero carbon development in the region. Additionally, WMCA assembled a ZCH Taskforce and Officer Working Group to oversee, steer and review the programme as it developed.

2.5 When complete, the programme would deliver the three outputs agreed by the Board at the outset, including the **Baseline Gap Analysis report** (Output 1) discussed and endorsed by Housing & Land Delivery Board at its November 2020 meeting as well as a **ZCH Charter and Routemap** (Outputs 2 and 3 considered by the Board today).

3.0 Output 2: ZCH Charter

3.1 The second agreed output of this programme of work was the production and publication of a ZCH Charter which would frame the commitment by WMCA and its partners, and the objectives for, net ZCH in the region. In this regard, the document would be vision-setting with a focus on delivering associated benefits such as whole life cost savings, supply chain opportunities and social value. The Charter structure broadly follows that of the Regional Design Charter, in both its appearance and hierarchy of themes and principles. Similarly, the ZCH Charter is expected to be included in the Single Commissioning Framework, setting out the desirable features of new low and zero carbon development on all projects supported by WMCA.

3.2 Based on findings from Output 1 (the Baseline Gap Analysis) and workshops with the Officer Working Group and Taskforce, **a final draft of the Charter has been prepared for consideration and agreement by the Board today**. This draft is included in Appendix A.

4.0 Output 3: ZCH Routemap

4.1 The third agreed output of this programme of work was the production and publication of a ZCH routemap, included in Appendix B. The routemap provides an implementation plan for meeting the Charter's aspirations, as well as other short and medium-term goals to meet the 2025 commitment. The routemap is not binding on WMCA or its partners and does not include financial commitments or hold legal status. The recommendations will be used to guide future policy development, with full financial and legal implications considered on a case by case (and site by site) basis. Additionally, monitoring and review protocols are included .

4.2 Approaches to delivering net zero whole life carbon across all development sites are still being developed by UKGBC and will need to be taken on board as the work progresses. For this reason, therefore, the routemap sets out a timeframe for achieving net zero emissions for each element of the definition framework (operational, embodied, whole life). This means the definition of 'ZCH' in terms of the West Midlands approach will evolve over time. This timeframe is set out on p.6 of the routemap.

4.3 Based on findings from Output 1 and input from the Taskforce, it is suggested that **WMCA's initial focus should be on meeting net zero emissions in operation** (i.e.

by 2025). Steps towards achieving net zero embodied and whole life emissions would remain clear ambitions to be delivered over the coming decade and the timescale for their achievement would be reviewed on a regular basis and reported to this Board. One of the clear benefits of prioritising reductions in operational emissions now is that it will reduce the need to retrofit in the future. There are also significant benefits to the occupier in terms of limiting fuel poverty and improved health and wellbeing.

- 4.4 For ease and accessibility, a key is included in the routemap which identifies relevant stakeholders for each action, enabling partners to easily establish where they may be involved in or impacted by the proposed actions.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 Members of the Housing & Land Delivery Board are asked to consider and comment upon the content of both the Charter and Routemap attached as Appendices A and B. Following the meeting further revised drafts will be prepared for publication.

Members are also asked to agree that authority to agree any minor changes (which do not affect the overall purpose or sense of the documents) should be delegated to the Director of Housing & Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Land. WMCA will look to formally launch the routemap in early 2021 with an appropriate communications strategy and publicity.

- 5.2 In the meantime, in collaboration with the officer working group and expert advisory group, WMCA will begin to explore options for implementing the priority actions for 2021 within the routemap.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications from the information contained in the report. 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.
- 6.2 WMCA investment in any proposed Zero Carbon Homes projects, due diligence, feasibility or studies would be governed and administered through the Single Commissioning Framework, WMCA Single Assurance Framework, Commission Pathway and in line with the accounting and taxation policies of the WMCA and HMRC.

Legal Implications

7.1 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.

7.2 It is noted that the purpose of this Report is to update the Housing & Land Delivery Board on the progress being made on the Zero Carbon Homes Work Programme and the launch of the Zero Carbon Homes Charter and Route Map which will accelerate the move towards zero carbon development in the region. It is further noted that the Charter is expected to be included in the Single Commissioning Framework as a consideration for WMCA's investment decisions. Hence any requirements or issues/implications arising from this will need to be reflected and adequately covered in the various Gateway stages and in the funding agreements on a case by case basis.

8.0 Equalities Implications

8.1 There is no equality impact in relation to these reports.

9.0 Inclusive Growth Implications

9.1 The ZCH programme will seek to improve the performance of residential properties across the region as part of wider transition to a more resilient, people-centred low carbon economy. Improving building performance means addressing some of the key impacts of deprivation, such as fuel poverty, reduced levels of comfort and higher risk of disease related to poor air quality. It will also involve limiting exposure to future climate risks. This means that a key output and measure of the programme would be the degree to which it reduces climate inequities related to housing.

9.2 Additionally, the programme would seek to provide new opportunities for local residents and businesses to prosper, through the creation of a low and zero carbon pipeline that brings with it new employment, upskilling and growth opportunities across the region.

10.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications

10.1 The ZCH routemap and charter would inform WMCA investment and policy decisions across the whole geography of the WMCA area, including the 3 LEPs and non-constituent Member authorities.

11.0 Other Implications

11.1 There are no other implications.

12.0 Schedule of Background Papers

12.1 There are no background papers.