



Housing & Land Delivery Board

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| Date | 27 th April 2022 |
| Report title | Trailblazer Devolution Deal: Discussion paper |
| Portfolio Lead | Housing & Land - Councillor Mike Bird |
| Accountable Employees | Gareth Bradford, Director of Housing & Regeneration Rob Lamond, Strategic Planning Manager (report author) |
| Previous reports | <ul style="list-style-type: none">April 2022: Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group |

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Housing & Land Delivery Board is recommended to:

- a) **Note** the positive announcements made as part of the Levelling Up White Paper regarding additional funding for Brownfield Regeneration to be deployed by WMCA via the Single Commissioning Framework in the West Midlands;
- b) **Note** the potential for further devolution to the region from national government, with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester being the only two areas specifically identified for “Trailblazer Devolution Deals” in the White Paper;
- c) **Discuss** the possible Housing, Regeneration and Land proposals that the Board would like to be considered for inclusion in a future Trailblazer Devolution Deal between WMCA and HM Government; specifically reflecting the key areas of focus for the Housing & Land Delivery Board, including regeneration, public land, affordable housing, town centres etc.
- d) **Endorse** the formation of a “task and finish” officer sub-group of Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group to inform and develop the proposals.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the Housing & Land Delivery Board with an update on the implications of the Levelling Up White Paper published by HM

Government in February 2022, and to inform discussion at this and future meetings of Delivery Steering Group and Housing & Land Delivery Board regarding potential devolution proposals for discussion between WMCA and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) during the Summer of 2022.

- 1.2 The discussion and outcomes of this agenda item will inform the development of the region's response to Government as part of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal process.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP) was published on 2 February 2022. The paper defined 'levelling up' as:

- increasing opportunity across the UK;
- reducing disparities between and within regions.

- 2.2 The LUWP also announced a number of policy initiatives for the West Midlands, including a further allocation of £28m from the Brownfield Housing Fund to be deployed by WMCA, and the identification of Wolverhampton as one of the first two (along with Sheffield) of twenty places identified in England for transformational regeneration support from Government.

- 2.3 The LUWP sets out 12 levelling up 'missions' and makes the case for long-term 'system change' involving more effective spatial considerations in policy-making and further devolution to empower local decision-making. These missions of levelling up, to be achieved by 2030, are set out in Appendix 1 to this paper.

- 2.4 In addition to these announcements, the LUWP proposes deepening devolution across the UK, offering a number of devolved powers to regions which want them. The offer for the West Midlands goes even further. Alongside Greater Manchester Combined Authority, **WMCA has been invited to negotiate a Trailblazer Devolution Deal (TDD) which goes beyond what is on offer to the rest of the country.** The West Midlands has the opportunity to seek ambitious changes to increase the powers and resources devolved to us, strengthening our region and providing opportunities for future success.

- 2.5 This represents a significant opportunity for our region to secure new powers and resources in order to drive forward local and regional priorities to bolster economic recovery and build a fairer, greener, healthier West Midlands. Through direct engagement with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities, WMCA has been encouraged to consider options for further devolution relating to areas such as regeneration, public land, town centres, affordable housing, Advanced Manufacturing in Construction, etc. – all areas covered by the remit of the Housing & Land Delivery Board.

3.0 Developing proposals

- 3.1 Since the publication of the LUWP, WMCA has been engaging key partners and stakeholders across the region on potential opportunities to be included in the Trailblazer Devolution Deal.
- 3.2 The WMCA Housing & Regeneration team is currently engaging directly with local authority colleagues, public and private sector organisations and our industry-led taskforces to understand the opportunities, barriers and possibilities that a further devolution deal could unlock for the region and for each partner organisation. This is a comprehensive and wide-ranging work programme throughout the Summer/ Autumn 2022, including engagement with Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group at their meeting in April 2022 and subsequent formation of a Trailblazer Devolution Deal “task and finish” sub-group of the Delivery Steering Group to shape proposals.
- 3.3 A list of possible areas co-developed with Delivery Steering Group and discussed at its meeting in April 2022 for further exploration, consideration and discussion is included below under section 4 to guide to inform the discussion at Housing & Land Delivery Board. This is not an exhaustive or comprehensive set of options and is set out as a **prompt only** for further discussion in the meeting and for further dialogue.

4.0 Suggestions for further discussion co-developed with Delivery Steering Group

- 4.1 As stated above, the list below developed with Delivery Steering Group is **intended only as a guide for discussion by the Housing & Land Delivery Board**, to inform the development of WMCA proposals for a Trailblazer Devolution Deal on elements that Board is responsible for. We welcome soundings on these areas and further possibilities that may be proposed by members of the Board for inclusion.

| Areas for exploration: powers, freedoms and funding |
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| Land assembly/acquisition/disposal powers to co-ordinate strategic investment propositions and address barriers to delivery |
| Flexibilities to establish delivery vehicles and appropriate joint ventures and partnerships to accelerate delivery |
| Regional guidance or similar allowing more localised solutions than national policy – especially on issues such viability, affordability, zero carbon, AMC, etc. based on assessed on local needs |
| Regional Infrastructure Planning Charter including Utilities Infrastructure requirements aligned with Local Plans |
| Greater revenue and capacity funding alongside capital programmes to support regeneration |
| Regional academy for property and construction professions to drive skills supply and future cohorts needed in the region |

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| Public land including new powers/options over land owned/controlled by Government departments in the region and considerations of “best value” in line with the Public Land Charter |
| Zero Carbon Homes and retrofitting of existing stock and commercial property |
| Leading AMC and Future Homes Standard implementation ahead of national guidance |
| Levelling Up Regeneration Fund – supporting mixed-use, commercial and residential projects to deliver genuine placemaking and regeneration (including estate renewal) and a more flexible approach |
| Levelling Up Corridor Zones/Town Centre Investment Zones and similar models, with regional accountability and sign off rather than national prescription and sign off |
| Powers/freedoms equivalent to, and beyond, other Mayoral Combined Authorities (e.g. Private Rented Sector quality and standards) |
| Further items as proposed by Housing & Land Delivery Board |

5.0 Next steps

- 5.1 Following discussion and soundings at Housing & Land Delivery Board regarding the areas for inclusion and options for consideration, and further development of proposals by the devolution task and finish group of Delivery Steering Group, the feedback and input from the Board will be incorporated into the WMCA’s overall Trailblazer Devolution Deal process and a further paper to inform discussion at the next Housing & Land Delivery Board meeting in July 2022.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations within this paper. There will be, in future, financial implications associated with securing and deploying future funding as a result of the Devolution paper, which will be funded from existing Housing and Regeneration budgets.
- 6.2 Any WMCA investment into the Devolution agenda would be governed and administered through the WMCA Single Assurance Framework and in line with the accounting and taxation policies of the WMCA and HMRC

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 Section 113A(1)(a) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 gives the CA 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 the CA. Part 3 of The West Midlands Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017 confers the functions corresponding to the

functions of the Housing Community Agency (now Homes England) has in relation to the combined area.

- 7.2 It is noted that the purpose of this paper is to provide updates on the implications of the Levelling Up White Paper published by HM Government in February 2022, and to inform discussion at the meeting regarding the potential proposals for negotiation between WMCA and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Legal advice may be required going forward in relation to any new powers being sought by WMCA and to support the negotiations with the Government in regard to the Devolution Deal. This will/should be sought as and when required.

8.0 Equalities Implications

- 8.1 Equalities matters lie at the heart of the Government's levelling up agenda and the Housing & Land Delivery Board is asked to consider how best these might be addressed in the Trailblazer Devolution Deal that is being prepared by WMCA over coming months.

9.0 Inclusive Growth Implications

- 9.1 The Government's Levelling Up White Paper defines 'levelling up' in terms of increasing opportunity across the UK and reducing disparities between and within regions. Both matters present significant opportunities for inclusive growth and the Housing & Land Delivery Board is asked to consider how best these might be addressed in the Trailblazer Devolution Deal that is being prepared by WMCA over the coming months.

10.0 Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 10.1 The recommendations of this report apply to the whole of the WMCA area.

11.0 Other implications

- 11.1 None.

12.0 Schedule of Background Papers

- 12.1 None.

Appendix 1: Levelling Up White Paper - Missions

- By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
- By 2030, domestic public investment in Research & Development outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40% and at least one third over the Spending Review period, with that additional government funding seeking to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.
- By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.
- By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.
- By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.
- By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.
- By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by 5 years.
- By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
- By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
- By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas.

- By 2030, homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst-affected areas.
- By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement.

Sourced from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>