



## Housing & Land Delivery Board

<b>Date</b>	5 October 2022
<b>Report title</b>	West Midlands Brownfield Regeneration Strategy: Discussion paper
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	Housing & Land Portfolio - Councillor Mike Bird
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<b>Previous reports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>September 2022: Discussion at Housing &amp; Land Delivery Steering Group</li></ul>

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

The Housing & Land Delivery Board is recommended to:

- a) **Consider and endorse** the proposed approach to developing a West Midlands Brownfield Regeneration Strategy in a format similar to the tried and tested West Midlands Investment Prospectus;
- b) **Consider and endorse** the inclusion of **town centres** as a specific feature of this strategy in recognition of their critical importance to local communities and the particular challenges they face as a result of the decline in retailing, particularly in a post-pandemic world;
- c) **Note** progress to date with developing a Brownfield Regeneration Strategy for the West Midlands as commissioned by the Housing & Land Delivery Board to help drive the supply of brownfield land in the region and continue to strengthen the West Midlands as the leading UK region in terms of brownfield policy and delivery;
- d) **Note** that the product of this work will be an integrated strategy that directly supports key policy agendas of WMCA and local authorities such as enabling affordable housing delivery, public land and driving Advanced Manufacturing in Construction, zero carbon homes, design quality and the devolution asks; and
- e) **Consider and endorse** the proposed next steps.

## 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to seek views from members of the Housing & Land Delivery Board on our **current thinking on the nature and form of a West Midlands Brownfield Regeneration Strategy** as previously commissioned by the Housing & Land Delivery Board. The paper seeks to invite discussion on these matters, the proposed approach to preparing the document, the indicative content (to be co-developed with partners) and the proposed next steps.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Housing & Land Delivery Board in April 2022, it was agreed that **an integrated brownfield regeneration strategy should be produced** to bring together the different brownfield, housing and regeneration initiatives, projects and programmes under the Housing & Land Delivery Board (e.g. public land, town centres, etc) into a single coherent strategy.
- 2.2 At the meeting of the Housing & Land Delivery Board in July 2022, the **Board further endorsed the overall approach and scope of the strategy**, its importance to drive the supply of brownfield land in the region and gave some early steers on its content and form. Further discussions have taken place with members of the Delivery Steering Group and with industry-led taskforces on the proposed strategy scope and impact.

## 3.0 Brownfield Opportunity

- 3.1 The West Midlands is a region of significant potential which sits at the heart of the UK. Its industrial legacy has left swathes of brownfield land in need of remediation but ripe for development.
- 3.2 The region operates at the heart of the national devolution agenda, having secured new powers and funding, and now has an invitation in the Levelling Up White Paper to go further and submit a 'trailblazer devolution deal'. The National Brownfield Institute at the University of Wolverhampton also increases significantly the region's capacity and expertise.
- 3.3 Collaborative working through the many public sector organisations is helping to put the region on a national and global stage as a place to learn about and deploy brownfield regeneration thinking/techniques/activity and to showcase, nationally and internationally, the 'brownfield first' policy and the potential to deliver even more than has been achieved to date. Growing and augmenting this opportunity is central to the Brownfield Regeneration Funding ask in our devolution deal proposals and thus central to this new brownfield regeneration strategy.
- 3.4 Underpinning this ambition is a demonstrable and growing capability in the West Midlands to unlock and accelerate stalled brownfield sites and to attract private sector capital for deployment in brownfield sites. The confidence of HM Government has been amply demonstrated in the high levels of brownfield funding which has been awarded to WMCA and the confidence of the private sector through new industry investment and the strategic partnerships which WMCA has been able to sign.

- 3.5 The strategy document will demonstrate the West Midlands proof of difference nationally and its additionality. It will highlight its combination of scale (a region with 4.2 million people); prime location as the most connected region in the UK; business and investor confidence; local and regional leadership; the region's extensive capability; its outstanding delivery record; its ability to connect the dots between different types of infrastructure; its record of devolution leadership; public landowner collaboration; as well as its access to, and confidence of, HM Government.
- 3.5 As an investor-facing strategy, the document will act as a best practice guide, to be used by WMCA to demonstrate our proof of difference and value added. It would be used by WMCA when assessing applications for funding and supporting business cases to Government. The document would showcase the ambition around brownfield regeneration in the West Midlands and our regional desire to be a global leader driving changes in the scale, type and delivery of brownfield regeneration. Following discussion at Delivery Steering Group, the document would also address town centres and the particular challenges that are faced in these locations.
- 3.6 The document will articulate a move away from individual "initiatives" and "projects" and towards a strategic approach that can be applied across the region and referenced by partner organisations in their own work. The underpinning framework would have a strong evidence base and clear policy logic demonstrating our robust attitude towards delivery.
- 3.7 The intention is that the document would be produced in early 2023 and would be similar in format to the West Midlands Investment Prospectus 2022, a highly visual, attractive statement of a shared ambition across the region.

#### 4.0 Key themes

- 4.1 It is suggested that that certain key themes or principles need to be front and centre of the strategy document:
- **Scale of Opportunity** – showcasing the region's industrial past, extensive land supply, diverse public sector land development opportunities, exceptional connectivity through HS2, experience with devolution, potential to build on the legacy of the Commonwealth Games and Coventry's City of Culture.
  - **Innovation** – supporting new models of delivery, use of public sector land, density on brownfield sites, re-purposing of town centres, levelling up investment zones and the strength of wide-ranging academic institutions in the region.
  - **Unlocking private sector investment** – emphasising the role of the private sector, working with public sector organisations to deliver a shared ambition and shared success, and deploying public sector funding to provide essential infrastructure, improved connectivity, enhanced public realm.
  - **Strengthening HMG investment, support and confidence** – creating an environment of delivery and innovation to unlock additional public sector funding

- **Speed and clarity of decision making** - through WMCA's exemplary Single Commissioning Framework and collaborative decision-making across public sector organisations.

4.2 The initial review of successful brownfield regeneration projects also demonstrates that key interventions including those listed below, must be deployed at the appropriate stage. This also highlights the importance of having the necessary skills and resources available:

- Land assembly
- Capital infrastructure
- Delivery vehicles
- CPO
- Strategies/frameworks to give confidence
- Strategic partnerships
- Mapping of land and assets

## 5.0 Next steps

5.1 To be fully effective, the strategy will need to be underpinned by authoritative research and understanding of the particular challenges relating to brownfield land in the West Midlands, in a similar way to the approach taken with our Future Homes Strategy work.

5.2 Indicative milestones have been identified for the programme:

- October/November/December 2022 – commissioning specialist advice and research, co-design with officers on Delivery Steering Group and engagement with taskforces
- December 2022 - an early draft of the strategy will be presented to the Housing & Land Delivery Board
- January – revised draft strategy presented to Housing & Land Delivery Board
- February – preparation of publication version
- March - launch

## 6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 There are costs associated with the external advice noted within the document, and with the compilation and production of the strategy document proposed as a recommendation within this report. The research, external advice costs and other costs required for the development of this document will require external commissioning, to provide expertise and knowledge not held within the current team. It is not currently clear whether the costs will be fully covered within existing resources and there may be a need to seek further funding. Further details on the progress of the initiative, including any potential/emerging financial implications and any requirement for spend outside the existing budget, if any, will be reported to Housing & Land Delivery Board before onwards approval by the relevant Board.

## 7.0 Legal Implications

7.1 It is noted that this paper considers the proposed approach to the creation of an integrated Brownfield Regeneration Strategy with the aim of being a best practice

guide that can be applied across the region and wider. As it is intended that the strategy document will be a published document, care will need to be taken over the wording to ensure that it is factually correct and that all representations made in the document can be validated. In delivering an integrated strategy there will be legal implications around such matters as the powers of the Combined Authority and the different interventions to be deployed as referred to in the Paper for example delivery vehicles, CPO, land assembly and strategic partnerships etc and also the commissioning of work from specialist consultants. Governance systems will need to be in place at the appropriate stages to facilitate decision making and ensure compliance with the relevant frameworks. Legal advice should be sought as and when required.

## **8.0 Equalities Implications**

8.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

## **9.0 Inclusive Growth Implications**

9.1 There are no direct inclusive growth implications arising from this report. However, it can be expected that there will be positive inclusive growth outcomes from the publication and implementation of the Brownfield Regeneration Strategy.

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

10.1 The report relates to the whole of WMCA's geographical area.

## **11.0 Other Implications**

11.1 None

## **12.0 Schedule of Background Papers**

12.1 None

## APPENDIX 1

### International Exemplars

Innovative brownfield transformations are being undertaken across the world and WMCA could learn from these examples of best practice. Examples include:

#### 1 Schumacher Quartier, Germany

The site is based at the east end of Berlin's now defunct Tegel Airport. The new neighbourhood has focused on climate adaptation with a climate neutral aim with the largest collection of mass timber buildings in the world and almost every home Passivhaus or equivalent efficiency.

The neighbourhood has also made itself car free, instead prioritising excellent bike route connections. It consists of 5000 non-market homes (50% social housing, 40% cooperatives, 10% student houses), as well as a range of amenities: school campuses, day-care facilities, retail space, commercial space, large green space areas and very close to 2 metro stations. The plans for the neighbourhood were established through urban planning competitions with citizen participation prioritised.

#### 2 Vauban, Freiburg, Germany

Construction began in the mid-90s and was completed in 2000. The site was a former French barracks but now houses 5000 inhabitants and provides around 600 jobs. The area began as a squatting community who collaborated to develop the neighbourhood plan through a people's forum.

Green transportation was placed at the core of the neighbourhood with a community car park and cars rarely present, as well as many cycling and walking paths with large pedestrianised zones. All houses are in walking distance of a tram stop and 70% of people live within 500m of a tram stop with trams coming every 7.5 minutes during rush hours and their costs subsidised for residents. All schools, businesses and shopping centres are also in walking distance with many shops and offices on the ground floor of blocks of flats.

All buildings must also meet the minimum low energy consumption standards of 65 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>a and all buildings have solar panels. Public energy and heat are generated by a woodchip-powered combined heat and power generator connected to a district heating grid and surplus energy is sold back to the city grid and households split profits. There is also a local organic sewage system.

The project is being monitored and is considered to be the greenest area of the greenest city within Germany with easy recycle units, 5000 hectares of forest, 600 hectares of parks, 160 playgrounds, reduced mowing, 3800 allotments on the outskirts, farmers market, local winery, beehives, butchers, bakers and plant nursery.

#### 3 Seestadt, Vienna, Austria

This project totals 5 billion euros of investment in order to create 20,000 workplaces and homes for 25,000 residents. It is one of Europe's largest urban development projects, recognised as a smart city with multi-phase development, essentially a city within a city. It prioritises high quality of life with economic drive, as well as a diverse,

open plan for the future with excellent transport links, a business hub of international calibre and mix of urban flair and laid-back pace of life.

#### **4 Merwede, Utrecht, the Netherlands**

Utrecht showcases many schemes. Previously, an island of dilapidated factories and a business park, it is to be transformed into a home for 12,000 people, with 60 acres and 6000 dwellings in 200 buildings. With the first residents are expected in 2024, non-market housing accounts for around 50% of homes.

All homes are low-energy (close to Passivhaus standard) and a fleet of shared cars and bikes allows for 1 car per 3 homes. It aims to enhance Dutch biking culture, by being specifically designed as car free and aiming to connect to the rest of Netherlands through public transport. Everything will be within walking distance with walking routes along the canal.

#### **5 Zug Pi, Switzerland**

This scheme will build the tallest wooden tower in Switzerland, consisting of 220 affordable flats. To be constructed by 2024, units will consist of three floors with shared rooms, made to feel bigger through high ceilings and large windows. Each area is designed for a target group with different living requirements: Singles and young couples, families, seniors but also shared apartments with several bedrooms. There will be public areas designed to host cinemas or concerts. Other countries such as Norway and Austria have also invested in tall wooden towers for housing.

#### **6 Champs-Élysées, Paris, France**

The aim of this project is to pedestrianise the Champs-Élysées. 4 of 8 driving lanes will be converted to walking lanes, cafes, gardens, playgrounds and bike lanes. There will be a tunnel of trees to improve air quality. The area currently has the highest emissions in Paris with 3,000 drivers per day but 100,000 pedestrians. It is hoped that this scheme will reduce the urban heat island effect. The project is set to begin construction after the Paris 2024 Olympics & Paralympics. 10,000 residents engaged through public engagement.

#### **7 Productive City, Brussels, Belgium**

Brussels is currently thought to be one of the highest performing, rapidly transforming city in Europe in terms of construction. This project aims to transform the whole city with 30 schemes to progress. The city currently has large amounts of wasteland alongside the canal. The project therefore centralises the canal. There are various challenges such as de-industrialisation and social contrasts with areas strongly divided by wealth. It seeks to prioritise urban integration, circular economy, vertical and horizontal mixed use living, brownfield redevelopment, dense city living, productivity, multi-functional productivity, micro-zoning, re-localisation, urban farming, learning centre, inclusion, heritage, mix of residential & industrial and a mix of social classes.

## **8 EU parliament Circular Economy Action Plan as part of the European Green Deal**

Central to this plan is to reduce waste, empower consumers, change food systems and make sustainable production the norm. Brussels, Amsterdam and Rotterdam are at the forefront of the movement which prioritises doughnut economics. It centralises disassembly projects and mass timber use (European Bauhaus & Floating Office Rotterdam).