



## Housing & Land Delivery Board

<b>Date</b>	5 October 2022
<b>Report title</b>	WMCA & Homes England: Strategic Partnership Opportunity
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	Housing and Land - Councillor Mike Bird
<b>Accountable Employees</b>	Gareth Bradford, Executive Director of Housing, Property & Regeneration (Accountable Director) Rob Lamond, Head of Strategy & Analysis (Senior Reporting Officer) Lauren Rigby-Hopkins, NGDP Graduate (Report Author)
<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) **Discuss and endorse** the principles and progress to date on establishing a formal strategic partnership between WMCA & Homes England to unlock the delivery of new homes in the West Midlands;
- b) **Discuss and endorse** the proposed next steps of the work; and
- c) **Note** that this would be part of the work under the Housing & Land Delivery Board to establish formal strategic partnerships.

### 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to enable the Housing & Land Delivery Board to discuss and endorse the initial conversations between WMCA and Homes England to establish a new strategic partnership - the fifth partnership signed by WMCA under the Housing & Land Delivery Board.
- 1.2 The discussions have explored the potential for what Homes England and the Department for Levelling Up, Homes & Communities (DLUHC) refer to as a “*Strategic Place Partnership (SPP)*” in the West Midlands. This SPP model is a mechanism which Homes England has put in place with public authorities in other parts of the country in order to help increase the scale and pace of new housing delivery.

### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 A key deliverable set by the Housing & Land Delivery Board for 2022/2023 is for WMCA to **establish new partnerships, joint ventures and delivery vehicles**, supporting its commitment to delivering its nationally leading brownfield regeneration and housing delivery programmes.
- 2.2 Since the launch of the first strategic partnership in 2018, WMCA has been actively seeking new opportunities to create collaborative, non-binding agreements with credible developers, investors and public sector partners which commit both parties to work together to implement WMCA's vision for a more prosperous and better-connected West Midlands which is fairer, greener and healthier. To date, four partnerships have been established including WMCA's first 'investor partnership' with Legal & General, announced in May 2022.
- 2.3 Homes England is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by DLUHC, with a remit to accelerate the delivery of housing across England. WMCA and Homes England are key public sector bodies within the West Midlands which offer investment in key regeneration schemes and actively seek collaborative ways of working across local authorities and other key regional partners. **A regionally focused partnership between both parties offers the potential to unlock shared funding opportunities, capacity and expertise** which are additional to the benefits which each organisation can bring to a project. A partnership creates the potential to support key local regeneration priorities which would not be realised without this level of collaborative working between the organisations.
- 2.4 In exploratory discussions to date, WMCA and Homes England have been scoping what a partnership for the West Midlands might help unlock and accelerate, looking at key regional priorities (e.g. the West Midlands Investment Prospectus 2022) and how both parties working together might help drive the delivery of key regeneration schemes. This has involved **identifying key principles** for the partnership and outlining the proposed roles for key regional stakeholders.

### **3.0 The Principles of a Strategic Place Partnership (SPP)**

- 3.1 An SPP could create a **framework for place-based partnership working**, to supply increased housing across the West Midlands. The partnership would align with government priorities in relation to Levelling Up, improving affordability, driving economic growth and recovery and driving innovation in the housing sector, as well as the WMCA's vision and objectives.
- 3.2 An SPP would focus on **what can only be achieved through working collaboratively**. It would aim to work to support regional and local housing needs by unlocking complex brownfield and major city/town centre schemes as well as mixed tenure and additional affordable housing.
- 3.3 Whilst a SPP does not guarantee funding or additional resources, **it has the potential to maximise the use of resources, intelligence and expertise from both Homes England and WMCA** to unlock opportunities of scale, build longer-term supply and achieve place making ambitions. This may include seeking revenue investment to accelerate priorities, drawing upon the respective strengths of the partners to accelerate sites towards delivery. The convening power created by Homes England and WMCA working collaboratively has the potential to enable a joined up approach and increased leverage/alignment of investment.
- 3.4 The principles of the potential Strategic Place Partnership include:

- **Place-based collaboration** with prioritisation and alignment of resources to drive market change
- **Acceleration and consistency in the pace and delivery of new homes**, including affordable homes
- **Combined skills and expertise** to identify solutions and products that unlock localised market challenges
- **Collective pipeline of sites and strategic projects** requiring support to come forward
- **Collaborative approach** with partners to tackle issues of affordability and local market failure
- **Shared housing market intelligence** to inform and monitor delivery
- **Focused and aligned engagement and support** with LAs, RPs, private sector and other partners
- **Shared ambition to challenge traditional norms** in the housing sector and bring forward innovation.

3.5 It is proposed that the Strategic Outcomes would include maximising the quality, pace and number of homes built where they are needed, as well as meeting the WMCA objectives in terms of net zero, retrofit, brownfield land, inclusive growth, design quality, public land, investment and affordable housing.

#### **4.0 Next Steps**

4.1 A priority for the WMCA/Homes England strategic partnership would be to ensure that the partnership aligns with the key deliverables of the Housing & Land Delivery Board and wider devolution priorities for the region as in the Trailblazer Devolution Deal proposals.

4.2 WMCA and Homes England will continue to develop the partnership proposals and commitments during Autumn/Winter 2022. Monitoring arrangements will be established in line with the WMCA's existing Strategic Partnerships and performance reviewed on an ongoing basis. This will include updates to Delivery Steering Group and Housing & Land Delivery Board.

4.3 Any feedback and comments from Members of Housing & Land Delivery Board, Delivery Steering Group and local authority engagement will be used to shape the partnership proposals in detail.

#### **5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications arising as a result of the recommendations within this report. The development of the partnership will be undertaken from within existing resources. Further details on the progress of the initiative, including any potential/emerging financial implications, will be reported to the Housing & Land Delivery Board before onwards approval by the relevant Board.

#### **6.0 Legal Implications**

6.1 It is noted that this paper provides an overview of the principles on establishing a Strategic Place Partnership in the West Midlands partnership between WMCA and Homes England to develop a pipeline of opportunities with local authorities that could benefit from revenue funding opportunities. Governance systems will need to be developed in delivering the partnership objectives and to facilitate decision making. Consideration will need to be given to the frameworks that will apply to any co-investments and legal input should be sought as and when required.

## **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 developed through the investment prospectus 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. Engagement and consultation with key equality stakeholders is also crucial.

## **8.0 Inclusive Growth Implications**

8.1 The High-level Deliverables have been developed in close consideration of Inclusive Growth principles and are themselves 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.

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

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

## **10.0 Other Implications**

10.1 None

## **11.0 Schedule of Background Papers**

11.1 None.