



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Housing & Land Delivery Board

Date	22 March 2023
Report title	Place Pilots Programme: Introduction
Portfolio Lead	Housing & Land: Councillor Mike Bird
Accountable Employees	Gareth Bradford, Executive Director of Housing, Property & Regeneration (Accountable Director) Patricia Willoughby, Head of Policy & Planning (Senior Reporting Officer) Ciaran Bolton, NGDP, Housing, Property & Regeneration Directorate (Report Author)
Previous reports:	February 2023: Housing & Land Delivery Steering Group

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

Housing & Land Delivery Board is asked to:

- a) **Note** the work undertaken to date in collaboration with the Office of Government Property and the Local Government Association around HM Government's Place Pilots Programme;
- b) **Note** the selection of the West Midlands Combined Authority area as one of the five geographical pilot areas for testing the Place Pilots concept;
- c) **Note** the potential of the programme to support regional ambitions for public land in line with WMCA's Public Land Charter; and
- d) **Endorse** continued engagement with the Office of Government Property and the Local Government Association in the Place Pilots programme.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview for the Housing & Land Delivery Board of the Place Pilots programme, led by the Cabinet Office, and its initial launch in the West Midlands.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The '*Place Pilots: Public Property in Place*' Programme is a Cabinet Office initiative, delivered through the One Public Estate programme, which aims to bring together public sector landowners and puts place and the needs and ambitions of an area, at the centre of the transformation.
- 2.2 The programme aims to:
- Bring together multiple public estate owners under joint local and central government leadership
 - Optimise investment by driving efficiency and value across the public estate and better public services by identifying opportunity for co-location, disposals, relocations, land assembly and other multi-portfolio collaboration
 - Embed a stronger focus on place into strategic asset management planning by mapping future estate demand alongside key growth and opportunity areas
 - Test new approaches and develop recommendations that can be replicated and scaled up to drive future uptake of a place-based approach across departmental and public sector estate strategies and different scale of place.
- 2.3 The Place Pilots programme has the potential to become a powerful additional tool for delivering transformational change across the region by promoting a more strategic approach to asset management through estate mapping and the development and testing of new approaches that are scalable across departmental and public sector estate strategies.

3.0 West Midlands Place Pilots

- 3.1 Since September 2022, WMCA has been working collaboratively with the Cabinet Office, the Local Government Association and the Office of Government Property through the One Public Estate programme to trial the Place Pilots programme. The Housing, Property and Regeneration Team has been working with these organisations to explore and scope how the Place Pilots concept could work in practice in the West Midlands.
- 3.2 The programme aims to help foster and cultivate more collaborative approaches to the public estate between central government and local partners to help drive/support local plans and ambitions. Any decision-making in respect of land will, therefore, remain with the landowner.
- 3.3 As an initial part of the programme, a series of collaborative workshops were organised by the Local Government Association and the Office of Government Property, but facilitated and run jointly with WMCA, to engage public sector partners.
- 3.4 The first workshop was held in November 2022 and brought together a wide range of public sector landowners across the West Midlands including representation from all WMCA constituent authorities, many non-constituent authorities and a wide array of central Government bodies.

- 3.5 The workshop focused on six key areas: regeneration; warehouse and industrial; disposal; office space; co-location; and infrastructure (Growth Corridors) to help identify and understand any actual or perceived 'blockers' preventing collaborative, efficient use of the wider public estate and how this could be integrated with ambitions for regeneration across the region.
- 3.6 Following the success of the first workshop, a second workshop was held in January 2023, this time focusing specifically on potential opportunities for central and local public sector bodies to capitalise on potential surplus and under-utilised assets across their shared portfolios in town centres and also improve access to more integrated public services.
- 3.7 This workshop was structured in a way that enabled more one-on-one individual conversations about specific opportunities and gave Central Government partners the opportunity to provide a much deeper insight into their estate strategies and requirements within the West Midlands.
- 3.8 The framework of both workshops has served as the foundation for Place Pilots workshops that are being held across the UK and WMCA continues to be the trailblazer for the programme. As a result of the workshops, WMCA, the Local Government Association and members of the WMCA One Public Estate Partnership have been able to identify a number of exciting opportunities between local and central public sector partners for potential joint ventures across the region.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 Currently, the Housing, Property & Regeneration Team is developing an implementation plan for potential projects and initiatives based on the themes identified for increased strategic asset management planning across the wider public sector.
- 4.2 WMCA, in collaboration with local authorities, will also continue to work closely with HM Government, arms-length bodies and similar agencies to develop the programme and agree what the programme could deliver for the region, identify areas for further exploration and development and build a project pipeline.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 It is noted that the purpose of this paper is to provide an overview to the Housing & Land Delivery Board of the Cabinet Office led Place Pilots programme and its initial launch in the West Midlands.
- 5.2 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations within this report. The development of the implementation plan for potential projects and initiatives 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 Housing & Land Delivery Board before subsequent approval by the relevant Board.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Part of the WMCA's economic development and regeneration function is the promotion and facilitation of the improvement, rationalisation, and enhancement of the public sector estate within the WMCA's area. WMCA therefore has the power to undertake and take forward the Place Pilot Concept in conjunction with the other One Public Estate partners.
- 6.2 The source of the power referred to in paragraph 6.1 is Article 10 and Schedule 3 of the West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016 and Section 113A of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

7.0 Equalities Implications

- 7.1 There are no immediate equalities implications in relation to this report. However, individual initiatives funded under the scheme will need to take into account local area needs and local stakeholder needs to ensure the schemes 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 Place Pilots workstream will give opportunity for inclusive growth relating to the needs of individual places. Implications for inclusive growth will arise as future investments are made and strategies are devised in terms of who benefits from those investments and 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