

## Housing & Land Delivery Board

<b>Date</b>	24 April 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	Plan for Growth: Update
<b>Portfolio lead</b>	Housing and Land - Cllr Mike Bird
<b>Accountable Employees</b>	Gareth Bradford, Executive Director for Housing, Property & Regeneration (Accountable Director) Patricia Willoughby, Head of Policy & Planning – Housing, Property & Regeneration (Senior Reporting Officer) John English, Policy Officer – Housing, Property & Regeneration (Report Author)
<b>Previous reports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>November 2022 - Housing &amp; Land Delivery Steering Group and Housing &amp; Land Delivery Board</li> <li>April 2023: Housing &amp; Land Delivery Steering Group</li> </ul>

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

The Housing & Land Delivery Board is recommended to:

- a) **Note** the work relating to the West Midlands Plan for Growth and its alignment with and relevance to the work being done under the Housing and Land Board.
- b) **Discuss** the potential for WMCA to commission an additional study, as requested by local partners, to explore the challenges and barriers experienced by growth clusters, providing evidence that could also be used to support local plans and business cases to Government;
- c) **Consider** how this work could be developed to support the continued identification of future pipeline projects which, subject to consideration, might access WMCA's devolved funds, both existing and new funds secured through the Deeper Devolution Deal; and
- d) **Note** the proposal to Delivery Steering Group for representatives to join a working group to progress the work.

### 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Housing and Land Board about progress relating to work on the Plan for Growth and the proposal to establish a working group to ensure widespread engagement across the region on this work.



## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 In November 2022, the Head of Economic Development and Delivery, presented a paper to the Housing & Land Delivery Board outlining the West Midlands Plan for Growth and the potential to align workstreams with the work of the Housing & Land Delivery Board, particularly in relation to the Future Homes Strategy and work on employment land supply, investment prospectus and project pipeline development.
- 2.2 The Plan for Growth focuses on clusters which have the potential to bring high-value growth to the region, create jobs and develop the region's skill base in key growth sectors. More generally, the Plan for Growth also recognises the need to bring forward brownfield land for regeneration, to meet the housing needs of the region and to provide land for industrial development across a range of key sectors. As such, the work aligns with, and supports, the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study commissioned jointly by local authorities across the region, including WMCA.
- 2.3 Both the Plan for Growth and the Strategic Employment Sites Study also respond to the request by members of the Housing & Land Delivery Board, earlier in 2022, that WMCA could help to bring together a regional perspective on employment land supply and help to build a strong pipeline of future employment sites which could be supported by housing and land funding, including in the Deeper Devolution Deal.

## **3.0 Current activity**

- 3.1 Work on the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study has already started, initial findings are due to be available in May 2023 and the final report is scheduled for completion in summer 2023. The findings of the study will include an updated baseline picture of employment land supply and need across the region although, as this is a strategic study, it is likely that the baseline will need to be augmented with more detail on smaller scale development opportunities.
- 3.2 There is considerable activity across the region on assessing employment land need and supply through the review of local plans. Housing and economic development needs assessments and estimates of land supply are updated on a regular basis.
- 3.3 The pipeline of future development sites is also reviewed on a regular basis in a series of meetings between WMCA and local authorities. There is a renewed focus on this work given the increased funding that is being made available by Government through the Deeper Devolution Deal.

## **4.0 Next Steps**

- 4.1 The ambitions set out in the Plan for Growth will only be achieved if there is a clear focus on delivery. This work needs to be underpinned by an understanding of the challenges that are being experienced by existing clusters, including individual occupiers, and an analysis of the ways in which any barriers can be removed, potentially using WMCA's devolved funds. Although a considerable amount of information was collected when the Plan for Growth was being prepared, there is merit in commissioning more detailed work.

- 4.2 Delivery Steering Group endorsed the proposal for WMCA to set up a working group to consider the scope of a potential consultancy study to support employment land supply and, where appropriate, the delivery of individual sites where specific challenges and barriers are delaying potential growth. The scope of work could be designed to support both the findings of the Strategic Employment Sites Study and to provide evidence that would support local plans.
- 4.3 The Strategic Employment Sites Study and the Plan for Growth could also be used to support the further identification and development of future pipeline projects which, if they satisfy the relevant criteria, might be able to access either existing devolved funds or the more flexible funding secured by WMCA in the Deeper Devolution Deal. These discussions will continue with local authorities, developers and investors on a regular basis through planned engagement meetings.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 It is noted that the purpose of the report is to inform Housing and Land Board about progress on the alignment of work on the Plan for Growth with work of the Housing & Land Delivery Board and to discuss the potential to commission a further study to gain evidence to support local plans, and to augment the information collected when the Plan for Growth was prepared.

Whilst the Plan for Growth has the potential to deliver interventions that may require financial commitments in the future, there are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations within this report. The work to date has been and the proposed further study on this will be enabled from existing WMCA resources. As this proposal is developed further, further updates will be brought back to this Board which will include details of any emerging financial implications.

## **6.0 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Plan for Growth and its alignment with the work of the Housing & Land Delivery Board. Although there are no immediate legal implications arising from this report, legal advice should be sought at the appropriate stages in the development and implementation of the Plan for Growth and any opportunities arising out of the work with the Housing & Land Delivery Board.

## **7.0 Equalities Implications**

- 7.1 There are no immediate equalities implications arising from this report but individual strategies and delivery schemes will need to take into account local area, and local stakeholder, needs to ensure the schemes developed through the joint working 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 There are no immediate inclusive growth implications arising from this report but individual strategies and delivery schemes are expected to respond to local area, and local stakeholder, needs to ensure that projects arising benefit local residents, including harder to reach groups.

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

9.1 The report covers the WMCA area.

## **10.0 Other implications**

10.1 None.