



WEST MIDLANDS
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Board Meeting

Date	17 February 2017
Report title	The West Midlands Land Commission
Cabinet Member Portfolio Lead	Councillor Sean Coughlan – Housing & Land
Accountable Chief Executive	Jan Britton Sandwell MBC Email jan_britton@sandwell.gov.uk Tel 0121 569 3501
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Report to be/has been considered by	Chief Executive and Leader briefings

The Combined Authority Board is recommended to:

1. Receive the West Midlands Land Commission Final report.
2. Thank the Chair of the Commission, Paul Marcuse, and the other Commissioners for their diligent work in the preparation of the Final report.
3. Receive the Final Report and in so doing acknowledge that it is not a material consideration in the determination of planning applications or the formulation of planning policies.
4. Note that Cllr Sean Coughlan shall take responsibility for a programme of work to determine the WMCA response to the independent Land Commission report in due course.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the West Midlands Board to receive the Final Report of the West Midlands Land Commission.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Board will recall that in the spring of 2016 it commissioned Paul Marcuse to Chair the West Midlands Land Commission. Additional Commissioners were subsequently endorsed. The Terms of Reference for the Commission were approved by the Board at its June 2016 meeting. Over the summer of 2016 the Land Commission held three evidence gathering sessions located within the three bespoke LEP areas to ensure that the differing factors impacting on the West Midlands property market were ascertained. Clearly, speculative office market within central Birmingham is significantly stronger than elsewhere in the region. Sessions where evidence was heard were held at Wolverhampton Science Park, the National Exhibition Centre to cover the Birmingham area and central Coventry. The Commission has gone out of its way to receive input from as many interested parties as possible.
- 2.2 The creation of the West Midlands Combined Authority provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at the West Midlands Land Supply and consider what measures could be initiated to ensure an improved supply of developable land from a strategic and regional perspective. All local authorities will retain their existing sovereignty over land and planning matters within their boundaries. The Combined Authority provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at the supply of land for commercial and residential development.
- 2.3 The Emerging Recommendations of the West Midlands Land Commission were reported to the Board at its meeting on 9th December 2016. Since that date the recommendations have been further refined to reflect the views of the Commissioners after reflecting upon the information gathered by the Commission.
- 2.4 The aim of the Commission was to identify measures by which the amount of developable land could be increased with a view to raising the level of housing completions and the quantity of developable employment sites to accommodate the ambitious levels of growth outlined in the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). It should be emphasised that the West Midlands Land Commission has made no site specific recommendations. The Commission's Recommendations are for the Board to progress as appropriate to accelerate a balanced portfolio of development across the Combined Authority area.
- 2.5 The West Midlands Combined Authority's Strategic Economic Plan established ambitious growth targets and anticipates that some 500,000 new jobs will be created by the year 2030. To accommodate this level of economic growth it has been estimated that significant additional development land will be required to be identified to accommodate the proposed growth together with measures that might be taken to deliver existing planning permissions.

3.0 Wider WMCA Implications

3.1 There are no direct implications arising directly from this report. This report is receiving the final report of The West Midlands Land Commission. The Report will assist in the Agenda Setting for the Cabinet Member Portfolio holder for Housing and Land within the Combined Authority.

4.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

4.1 Since its establishment in the spring of 2016 the West Midlands Land Commission has diligently undertaken detailed research to fulfil the approved Terms of Reference of the Commission that were approved in June 2016. Significant evidence has been considered by the Commission from interested parties concerned with residential and commercial development across the West Midlands. This original research has been assimilated by the Commission and a number of strategic recommendations contained within the Final Report have been made to the Combined Authority.

4.2 Whilst the pace of delivery of commercial and residential development across the region over the last twenty years has been good, in order to make the 'step change' that will be required to deliver growth new delivery mechanisms will need to be considered by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

4.3 It is essential that the region has a balanced portfolio of development sites to accommodate the economic growth. This will mean that the regions local authorities and Local Economic Partnerships will have to work closely in the future to maximise the investment decisions to deliver economic growth.

4.4 The Land Commission's Final Report provides a regional backcloth to the Government's White Paper 'Fixing our broken housing market' published in February 2017 on the delivery of housing and the recent green paper 'Building Our Industrial Strategy published in January 2017. These three documents reinforce each other to provide a sound policy background for the Combined Authority to drive forward economic growth across the region so that all the citizens are able to benefit from the proposed investment and economic growth.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the Board's consideration of the attached Final report of the West Midlands Land Commission.

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 The Final Report has been considered by external solicitors to ensure that there are no legal implications arising from the Board's receipt of this Final Report.

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 The proposals are likely to have a positive impact on all. Failure to increase capacity will result in failure to meet the anticipated economic growth and employment land requirements which will, in turn, negatively impact all, but especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It is vital that future housing and employment sites are easily accessible and there is a close strategic link between the sites and transport links/accessibility. Failure to do so consistently will have a negative impact on a number of people, but especially so on people with disabilities, older people and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds who will find it especially difficult to access any opportunities.

8.0 Schedule of background papers

8.1 Terms of Reference of the West Midlands Land Commission approved by the Board in June 2016. The Emerging Recommendations of the Land Commission were considered by the Board at its meeting in December 2016.