

<b>Report title</b>	Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Stephen Simkins Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration	
<b>Originating service</b>	City Investment	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Chris Kirkland	Head of City Investment
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<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Regeneration Leadership Team	3 January 2023
	Strategic Executive Board	10 January 2023

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### Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus to outline the Council's vision for investment, development and regeneration in the city and provide a commercially informed business case that will be utilised to secure public and private sector funding and investment.
2. Delegate authority to the Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration, to approve amendments and updates to the Prospectus in order that it is kept up to date, live and reflective of future changes in project development and delivery, the economy and the needs of businesses and residents. This authority will be for amendments and updates to projects already included in the Prospectus with new projects requiring Cabinet approval for inclusion. The Prospectus will be updated as and when required and will otherwise be reviewed on a six-monthly basis.

**Recommendation for noting:**

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. That the full prospectus includes more detailed information on specific investment opportunities and schemes not included in the Executive Summary and as a result requires approval by the Cabinet. A link to download the Prospectus is available in Appendix 1.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The previous prospectus focused on the city centre and was updated in 2019 having initially been commissioned in 2016. Given the significant changes in the economy, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the pace of change and ambition in Wolverhampton a new and whole-city prospectus is required.
- 1.2 The Prospectus reflects the commercial and physical progress made in the city, recent ownership changes of key city centre buildings and assets, development agreements and investment that has arisen from successful funding awards. It has been developed in the context of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) locating within the city and associated links to sustainable and brownfield construction.
- 1.3 Given the scale of ambition and the potential for transformational regeneration the report seeks Cabinet approval for the Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus in order that it can be used to generate interest from investors. The prospectus will underpin the city's Levelling Up ambitions and proposals alongside Our City: Our Plan. Its delivery will contribute to all of Our City Outcomes and Principles, providing inspiration and improving the quality of life for residents.
- 1.4 The new emerging Strategic Economic Plan will be aligned to the Prospectus as the overarching objectives and principles are shaped. The ability to regularly update the prospectus is key to responding to changes in economic conditions and reflecting the city's ambitions for growth. Future opportunities identified through the Wolverhampton Local Plan will also be considered as the Prospectus evolves.
- 1.5 The development of a new City Investment Strategy will identify and articulate how the Council can directly and indirectly, through facilitating and influencing, build on the city's existing competitive advantages to attract new high growth businesses and investment, both domestic and foreign direct investment (FDI). The Prospectus will showcase the investment opportunities available in the city and will be a core component of the collateral that supports the delivery of the strategy.
- 1.6 The West Midlands Combined Authority Economic Growth Board has recently commissioned the West Midlands Growth Company to develop the regional International Strategy. This will provide further evidence, intelligence and opportunities for collaboration to support the council's approach to securing FDI. Part of the Prospectus review process will be to ensure that it aligns with the International Strategy and that projects are promoted to overseas investors in key markets.
- 1.7 The Prospectus will inform discussions with DLUHC and Homes England and will help to shape the Homes England Delivery Plan for the city by identifying key projects and sites, their status and readiness for investment and delivery. It should however be recognised that although public sector funding and subsidy will be important it will be utilised to unlock significantly more private sector investment. Therefore, the Prospectus will be a vital tool utilised to engage the private sector.

- 1.8 A supplementary report on the Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus Delivery Strategy, with recommendations on bringing forward key sites and projects, will be brought back to a future Cabinet meeting.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The previous City Centre Investment Prospectus set out a 10-year plan for growth. It included a summary of the significant progress and achievements in the preceding years and highlighted the pipeline of investment opportunities at that time and in the future. Several change zones were identified with short term and long terms opportunities in offices, retail, leisure, residential and education.
- 2.2 In recent years there has been significant investment in the city. Examples of this economic and physical regeneration include a new railway station as part of the £150 million integrated transport hub and a new commercial district for business services in the city centre.
- 2.3 The UK Government's announcement of the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities creating a second headquarters at i9 in Wolverhampton with at least 500 roles to be based in the city by 2025 will drive further investment into the area and is galvanising the council's relationship with ministers and civil servants.
- 2.4 The Council has already secured £25 million of Town Deal funding from government to help deliver transformational schemes across the city centre, Bilston and Wednesfield. The bid by Wolverhampton's Town Deal Board, which focussed on five core themes: employment and skills; changing perceptions of the city; regeneration and renewal; connectivity (digital and transport); and vibrancy and footfall. An additional £15.7 million has been received from the Future High Streets Fund and Levelling Up funding has also been secured to support the delivery of the City Learning Quarter on the eastern part of the city core.
- 2.5 The new Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus aims to articulate and promote further opportunities to build on the successes achieved to date and support the creation of the conditions for economic growth.

## **3.0 Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus**

- 3.1 In January 2022, the Council commissioned Arup and Glancy Nicholls Architects to work in partnership with council officers to develop and design the Prospectus. The brief of this commission was to provide a regeneration programme or design route map with a robust evidence base and 'story of place' fundamental for any spatial or economic proposition.
- 3.2 Whilst the Prospectus is in some respects aspirational and ambitious, the brief requested a document that highlighted the city's strengths in the wider UK context that is informed by relevant social-economic indicators, market intelligence and investment appetite and therefore realistic and deliverable.

- 3.3 The request was for a document with a high-level narrative, underpinned by high quality visual content in the form of an interactive digital resource. It should set out the vision and objectives for the city with a value proposition for engaging with future commercial schemes and showcasing future major projects.
- 3.4 The brief asked that consideration be given to key council agendas including the circular economy, green growth, and sustainable construction and reflected opportunities to develop across key sectors including office, industrial, retail, leisure, visitor economy, residential and education.
- 3.5 The brief clearly specified that the prospectus should be in an appropriate digital format, rather than a traditional printed format, be innovative and visually striking. The intention is that the prospectus will be regularly updated to reflect changes in project development and delivery and the economic landscape in the city.
- 3.6 Arup and Glancy Nicholls Architects delivered presentations as the prospectus was under development to seek input from investors, developers, businesses, partners and stakeholders. This included a Property, Regeneration and Investors Forum in partnership with Downtown in Business at the School of Architecture and the Built Environment on 8 March 2022. Arup also presented and sought the views of the Council's Strategic Executive Board (SEB) on 4 April 2022.
- 3.7 The Wolverhampton Business Champions, representing some of the large strategic companies in the city, received updates and the opportunity to contribute at their meetings on 31 March 2022 and 8 June 2022, where the Executive Summary was presented.
- 3.8 On 20 May 2022, the Leader of the Council sent an email to over 300 people including key city stakeholders, developers, investors, attendees of city business events, the Wolverhampton Business Champions, Economic Growth Board, Towns Fund Board and city MP's sharing the Executive Summary and inviting feedback. The Towns Fund Board also received a presentation on the Executive Summary on 20 May 2022. Given the dynamic digital nature of the prospectus format and ability to regularly update, feedback will be encouraged, and amendments can be incorporated.
- 3.9 The Executive Summary was shared with and presented to partners and stakeholders at the Wolverhampton Summer Showcase event on 20 June 2022 and to the Wolverhampton Business Improvement District Board on 13 September 2022. The full prospectus was received from Arup on 1 November 2022.
- 3.10 The Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus sets out the case for investment in the city, and the opportunities that can deliver transformational change. It is proposed that the Prospectus will be regularly updated to reflect latest economic information, future opportunities and investment decisions to ensure that the city's proposition remains up to date, active and strong.

- 3.11 As well as providing the Economic Proposition, Market Intelligence and Investment Appetite, the Prospectus provides the critical information on the physical sites and assets in the pipeline that are important to make Levelling Up a reality. It underpins the work the Council are doing around Levelling Up alongside the Strategic Economic Plan, which sets out our ambitions for the local economy and the economic conditions we need to create to deliver Our City: Our Plan and improve the lives of residents of the city.
- 3.12 The Prospectus will support the delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan and be informed by the evidence base. For example, with high growth expected in sectors such as construction, real estate and business and professional services, the Prospectus will continue to be shaped to identify projects and sites that can help to maximise the growth potential in these sectors. This will, in turn, provide employment opportunities for local people.
- 3.13 The Prospectus will inform discussions with DLUHC and Homes England. It will be utilised to identify key projects and sites, their status and where government funding can be channelled in order for it to be maximised for the greatest impact through the Homes England Delivery Plan for the city.
- 3.14 Some of the transformational regeneration schemes that are included in the Prospectus are on the verge of being ready for delivery and just require a small amount of intervention to make that possible. There are many exciting opportunities with strong interest from a range of investors.
- 3.15 The prospectus reflects what is unique about the city through the themes of Diversity of Place, Flair for Innovation and Thriving Culture.
- 3.16 The Prospectus includes large residential schemes such as Brewers Yard and Canalside South, the office led Commercial District and leisure opportunities around the Molineux and City Centre West. It also includes details on the potential for a hotel in the city as well as a proposed green innovation corridor. Available delivery routes to bring some of these key projects forward are detailed in the Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus Delivery Strategy report. As projects progress, the Prospectus will be updated and will be informed by new opportunities arising from the developing Wolverhampton Local Plan.

#### **4.0 Partner Endorsements**

- 4.1 The Prospectus is commercially informed and endorsed by private and public sector partners including ION Developments, Glancy Nicholls Architects and Homes England.

- 4.2 Steve Parry, Managing Director, ION Developments:

‘For some time, there has been a great deal of focus on the resurgence of the UK Core Cities and often this has been at the expense of our smaller cities and towns.

There has however been a realisation in recent years that smaller cities have a vitally important role to play in our economy, and that they can offer a great deal of dynamism

and growth, often without the capacity and infrastructure issues from which larger cities suffer.

Wolverhampton is at the heart of this resurgence and has already achieved a huge amount across a range of investment areas and has surprised many by achievements.

This success is built upon a very focussed approach by its leadership that ensures that the City's strengths and opportunities are fully supported and exploited with a real commitment to quality in everything it does. This has benefitted both inward investors and the people of the City.

The events of recent years have accelerated change and increased the importance of fundamentals such as great accessibility, quality of life and most importantly the availability of good people.

Wolverhampton scores highly in these areas but also has a real sense of place with a distinct identity and character.

The relocation from London of the Department for Levelling Up Homes and Communities which now occupies our i9 development underlines these benefits as does that fact that it has continued to expand since taking occupation.

I can wholeheartedly endorse this prospectus and looking forward to working with the City to continue to achieve its aims.'

4.3 Adam McPartland RIBA, Director, Glancy Nicholls Architects:

'We are proud to have worked in collaboration with City of Wolverhampton Council in the creation of their Investment Prospectus, an evolving vision for the future development and success of the city. The prospectus is bold, ambitious and firmly sets out a plan for investment opportunities that will benefit the residents of Wolverhampton whilst reflecting their unique values, heritage and culture. The prospectus is purposefully expansive in its scope and message but accessible for both residents and investors in order to present a clear strategy and route to a sustainable, vibrant and innovative future for Wolverhampton.'

4.4 Jo Nugent MRTPI, Head of West Midlands - Markets, Partners and Places, Homes England:

'We've worked closely with Wolverhampton Council in recent months, developing a shared vision and objectives for the transformation of the city centre. As part of this, we've supported the Council with our skills, capacity and expertise to help identify priority sites for intervention from the public and private sector, which are reflected in the opportunities outlined in this prospectus.'

## 5.0 Evaluation of alternative options

5.1 Option one would be to retain the previous City Centre Prospectus (2019) and make no changes or updates, given that this was a 10-year plan. This would mean however that

the prospectus wouldn't reflect the local economy and significantly changed needs of businesses and residents.

- 5.2 Option two would be to partially update the 2019 Prospectus, potentially to incorporate a wider geographical remit beyond the city centre. Similarly to option one, given the significant impact and challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and recession the resulting prospectus would not be as current and relevant to investors, residents and businesses to the extent that it could and should be.

## **6.0 Reasons for decision(s)**

- 6.1 Since the release of the City Centre Prospectus in 2019 there have been major economic shocks, predominantly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and the Ukraine war. As a result, the demands of investors, developers, businesses and residents have changed dramatically. Despite this, the scale of the council's ambition hasn't changed, and this was tangibly reflected in the development of the i9 office building. This investment was justified with confirmation of three major occupiers, including DLUHC, prior to practical completion.
- 6.2 The new citywide investment prospectus takes account of the changing investment and economic landscape and the needs of businesses and residents as highlighted in the Strategic Economic Plan. It is based on current market intelligence, is commercially informed, realistic and deliverable. It also reflects the strengths of the city, the Levelling up agenda, future growth potential in city centre living, leisure and night-time economy, and modern methods of construction.
- 6.3 By not commissioning a new investment prospectus would have hindered the Council's ability to effectively articulate the scale of transformational opportunity in the city and inform discussions with investors and central government.

## **7.0 Financial implications**

- 7.1 The prospectus has been funded within existing revenue budgets. There are no direct financial implications associated with the publication of the Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus. Any investor interest in sites, projects and schemes arising from the prospectus will be subject to council processes and procedures and separate reports seeking any necessary approvals.

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## **8.0 Legal implications**

- 8.1 Any investor interest in sites, projects and schemes arising from the prospectus will be subject to council processes and procedures and early engagement with the Legal Services department

[JA/10022023/R]



## **9.0 Equalities implications**

- 9.1 As part of the consultation process, as part of the session with SEB on 4 April 2022 equality representatives received copies of the draft Executive Summary and provided positive feedback on the format, design and accessibility of the Prospectus. In addition, hard copies and/or an alternative format of the Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus can be made available upon request.
- 9.2 There are no other direct equalities implications relating to the prospectus. Many of the images used in the document to showcase projects and schemes are illustrative and as investment is secured and projects progressed all equalities implications will be addressed as appropriate.

## **10.0 All other implications**

- 10.1 The Regeneration department will be responsible for updating, promotion and utilisation of the Prospectus and will involve and consult other departments and teams as appropriate. The Prospectus will not be printed as a hard copy unless requested and will be available as an electronic resource in line with climate change ambitions. Consideration has been given to environmental and sustainability issues in the inclusion and articulation of projects within the Prospectus.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 11.1 The 2019 City Centre Prospectus is available to view [here](#)
- 11.2 The Executive Summary of the Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus is available to view [here](#)

## **12.0 Appendices**

- 12.1 Appendix 1 - [Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus](#)