

West Midlands Land Commission - Call for Evidence

Role of the Commission

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has developed a Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) that aims to create 500,000 additional jobs and secure GVA 5% higher than the national average by 2030. The delivery of current targets for jobs and economic growth is already constrained by land supply, with the pinch being felt on land for both residential and employment uses. The WMCA SEP is likely to prove an even greater stretch, and the West Midlands Combined Authority is concerned that the delivery of the WMCA SEP should not be constrained by a lack of developable land.

The role of the West Midlands Land Commission is to take a fresh look at matters affecting the West Midlands land supply. It will consider what measures could be initiated and undertaken to ensure an improved supply of developable land which supports the growth ambitions of business, the housing needs of residents, and the future diversification of the local economy.

Approach and scope of the Commission

The West Midlands Land Commission is independent, and is seeking to adopt an evidential and diagnostic approach including, where appropriate, using case study material.

The Commission's geographic scope is the land covered by the three Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas: the Black Country LEP, Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP, and Coventry and Warwickshire LEP.

The Commission will consider both public and private sector land holdings.

The Commission has recently conducted a wide consultation process, in particular with representatives of the LEPs and constituent and non-constituent members of the WMCA. This consultation exercise has informed the drafting of the Commission's Terms of Reference and this call for evidence.

Call for evidence

The Commission is issuing a call for evidence to all parties with an interest in, or knowledge of, land and development in the West Midlands. The Commission anticipates that this will include, amongst others: developers, housebuilders, construction companies, real estate and infrastructure investors, landowners, employers and occupiers, academic institutions, consultants, LEPs, local authorities, and other public sector bodies.

Evidence received from interested parties will be reviewed by the Commission and used to help inform the Commission's recommendations. It is anticipated that three oral evidence hearings will be held in late September and October, one in each LEP area. Written evidence submissions will be reviewed prior to those meetings, and selected evidence providers may be asked to attend the oral evidence hearings to enable the Commission to further develop its understanding of the issues covered by the written submissions.

The intention is that the Commission will report back with its recommendations to the WMCA Board by the end of 2016.

The Commission intends to focus on three key areas:

- What are the challenges associated with delivering the employment land and housing targets set out in the WMCA SEP?
- What are the blockages to the delivery of developable land across the West Midlands?
- How can a sufficient supply of developable land in the West Midlands be secured?

In order to inform these areas, the Commission invites submissions of evidence on the following issues:

1. The viability of development on brownfield land.

2. The costs and benefits of Green Belt land.
3. The ways in which developable land can be better identified and / or proactively 'created' where it may not be currently viewed as 'developable' or available for development.
4. The impact and operation of the statutory planning system on the West Midlands developable land supply.
5. What the role of strategic economic and spatial planning across the West Midlands should be, and the extent to which there should be local flexibility in the application of the planning system.
6. What tools / powers / incentives are needed to unlock sites and bring forward development (e.g. tax incentives, valuations of public land, definitions of 'best value', compulsory purchase orders (CPOs), and re-definitions of existing land uses), and what delivery mechanisms are needed.
7. The relationship between investment in new and enhanced infrastructure (transport, energy, water, sewage etc.) and the scale and pace of development of new homes and employment space required to help deliver the level of economic growth implicit in the Strategic Economic Plan.
8. Examples of effective collaboration between public and private sector partners in delivering new development.
9. How to make more productive use of the public estate - including through greater collaboration between public sector bodies in its utilisation - to support growth in the supply of developable land.
10. The role estates renewal programmes can play in delivering new homes.
11. Any other matters which directly impact upon the three key areas identified above, or which you consider critical to the Commission's work.

The Commission will not make site specific recommendations, nor should any of its recommendations be construed as relating to the valuation of sites or assets, either implicitly or explicitly. However, the Commission is interested in receiving evidence in response to the above-mentioned issues, which is supported by relevant case studies which might include reference to specific sites.

How to respond

Your attention is drawn to the Terms of Reference (available [here](#)) which outline the scope and remit of the Commission. Before submitting written evidence to the Commission, please review the Terms of Reference to ensure that your evidence is relevant to the focus of the Commission as set out in those Terms.

Metro Dynamics will provide strategic advice to the Commission, and will also provide the Commission secretariat.

The deadline for evidence has now closed. We thank you for participating in the work of the Commission. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of the call for evidence, please contact wmcaland@metrodynamics.co.uk