

# Combined authorities – collaboration on housing and planning

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# 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report looks at how combined authorities have used their powers, resources and partnerships to achieve enhanced outcomes in housing and planning and how they are working with their constituent authorities to deliver these. By focusing on both major innovative approaches and projects, mainstream delivery programmes and smaller scale outcomes, the report recognises that whilst at different stage of development, combined authorities are still evolving.
- 1.2 The report focuses on specific case studies to illustrate innovation and delivery around the following themes:
- Increasing supply through innovative funding and investment
  - Meeting housing need
  - Accelerating housing delivery by co-ordinating and creating sites
  - Alignment with the wider growth agenda
  - Addressing urban renewal through Mayoral Development Corporations
  - Excellence in quality and design
  - Advantages of capacity building, procurement, delivery and resource sharing.
- 1.3 The research confirmed how combined authorities and constituent authorities are using their partnerships, resources and joint knowledge to deal with a range of challenges and creating ambitious and innovative approaches in housing and planning delivery. These include:
- *Innovative funding arrangements:* Investment in housing has been a key success for a number of combined authorities such as the housing investment funds set up in **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough** and **Sheffield City Region**. Creating a housing investment fund or equivalent, used to bring sites forward, could be taken a step further with cross-authority affordable housing provision, land packaging to support sites in lower value or challenging locations and better provision of specialist accommodation.
  - *Land supply and remediation:* There is a common interest and priority attached to enhancing land supply and achieving brownfield redevelopment for housing and employment purposes. There are a number of case studies which show how bespoke financial initiatives and partnerships can be developed which address this issue and potentially develop enhanced supply at scale. These include remediation of brownfield sites in **Liverpool City Region** and the **West Midlands**, as well as the establishment of Mayoral Development Corporations in the **Tees Valley** and **Greater Manchester**.
  - *Housing standards and need:* The activities of combined authorities responding to housing need and driving up housing standards will begin to deliver results which can be evaluated in both the short and medium term. This includes early activity relating to improving the operation of the Private Rented Sector as well as Housing First pilots in the **West Midlands**, **Greater Manchester** and **Liverpool City Region** which have secured government funding, and which will be the subject of robust evaluation.
  - *Improved quality and social outcomes:* In some cases, new statutory strategic planning frameworks are being developed by combined authorities which seek not just to guide development and protect the environment but also to achieve social objectives such as reduced

inequality and maximised social value. This holistic approach also encompasses collaborative approaches to broader strategy development including the **West of England** Local Industrial Strategy and the City Region Energy Strategy in **Sheffield City Region**.

- *Efficiency and shared services*: The extent to which core teams and technical capacity has been assembled through a combined authority differs between places. This would be expected given that the scope of activity differs between places, as does the length of time that each authority has been established. There are a range of approaches, with some areas having significant specialist in-house capacity, while other areas have made “catalytic” appointments around specialist advice such as urban design in **West Yorkshire**.
  - *Pooling of resources and knowledge*: Most of the case studies highlighted in this document have the pooling of resources across local authorities in partnership with the combined authority at their core. Agile management in the public and private sector, if based on collaboration can make the best use of the resources that are available and effectively compete for new resources. This includes new partnerships and funding approaches to trial modern methods of construction in the **North of Tyne** and the **West of England**.
  - *New partnerships for new circumstances*: The development of the combined authority model has enabled policy makers to look at the nature and structure of partnerships. One such innovation has been the combined authorities’ engagement with Registered Social Housing providers across local markets and local government geographies, such as a Joint Venture in **Greater Manchester**. These new rescaled housing partnerships increasingly reflect the reality that these agencies also now operate across borders, even if they originated from local authority stock transfers.
- 1.4 As this report details, there are many examples where collaboration has delivered or will deliver joint benefits for combined authorities and their constituent authorities. As ever, there is scope for more joint working and cross boundary approaches many of which derive from capitalising on the economies of scale created through a combined authority.
- 1.5 As the programme of activity around housing and planning has matured within combined authority areas, interesting projects have emerged which may be adapted by others over time. There is the potential for new methods of working to be evaluated and the experiences of successes and failures to be shared within this continually developing devolution landscape, allowing local policies and programmes to be adapted in a fast changing national and international environment.

## 2. Introduction and context

- 2.1 A key feature of English urban and spatial development over the last decade has been the establishment of combined authorities to facilitate collaboration around economic growth, spatial planning and new housing supply. In some cases, this remit has been extended locally to include public service reform and policies to meet housing need. The approaches which have developed are many and varied and reflect the unique social, economic and political circumstances of each area.
- 2.2 This report seeks to capture how combined authorities have used their powers, resources and partnerships to achieve enhanced outcomes in housing and planning for their localities which would have been more difficult to achieve without this innovation in spatial governance. The report seeks to outline the current collaboration within housing and planning policy between combined authorities and their constituent local authorities and, in doing so, create opportunities to consider further options for collaboration.
- 2.3 This report attempts to strike a balance between reporting on large eye-catching innovations and delivery programmes with smaller scale impacts which may otherwise be lost given the scale of investment programmes. Additionally, an important contextual issue needs to be considered by the reader when assessing progress, which is that combined authorities are at different stages of development and are evolving, therefore it is evident that some have well developed and maturing delivery programmes, whilst others are still crafting approaches which are being tested and tailored to their specific circumstances.
- 2.4 Developed through desk-based research, in-depth interviews with combined authority and local authority officers as well as opportunities to provide feedback through on-line surveys, the report focuses on innovation and delivery around the following themes:
- Increasing supply through innovative funding and investment
  - Meeting housing need
  - Accelerating housing delivery by co-ordinating and creating sites
  - Addressing urban renewal through Mayoral Development Corporations
  - Excellence in quality and design
  - Advantages of capacity building, procurement, delivery and resource sharing.
- 2.5 All combined authorities and their constituent authorities were invited to participate, and we are incredibly grateful to all combined authorities and local authorities that contributed to the research for their time, challenge and insight.

### 3. Combined authorities – origins and location

- 3.1 Ten combined authorities have been established so far of which eight have secured devolution deals and are mayoral combined authorities, which means that they are led by metro mayors who are directly elected via a supplementary vote. As noted above, combined authorities are not homogenous entities, and this is reflected in the devolution deals they have struck with government. Combined authority areas and their powers, functions and funding have been determined by local leaders and negotiated with government.
- 3.2 The combined authority with the greatest degree of devolution, Greater Manchester, has now absorbed control over the office of the police and crime commissioner and fire and rescue service. Generally, a number of core powers have been made available to most areas, whilst most areas have also been provided with one or more unique responsibilities. This very much impacts on the focus and work of combined authorities.
- 3.3 In terms of planning and housing there are a matrix of different deals agreed with combined authorities. In early 2018, 'Housing Deals' were agreed with Greater Manchester and the West Midlands while a 'housing package' was agreed with the West of England. These deals sit alongside the bid-based Housing Infrastructure Fund of £4 billion available between 2018 and 2021, to which combined authorities and other localities have bid during 2017 and 2018.
- 3.4 The mayoral combined authorities have differing degrees of power over different matters but unlike the Mayor of London, the Mayors of combined authorities must seek the approval of their constituent members. For example, where powers to create a spatial strategy are available, this requires unanimous approval from the Mayor and combined authority members.
- 3.5 Details of all powers and funding that have been devolved to individual areas can be found on the [LGA's Devolution Register](#), as well as on the individual combined authority sites. **Table 1** illustrates the key housing and planning elements of the devolution deals in place with combined authorities.

Combined authority	Est.	Single Investment Fund (pa for 30 years)	Powers over strategic planning	Non-statutory spatial framework	Statutory spatial framework	Mayoral Development Corporations	Compulsory purchase orders	Land commission	Joint Assets Board	Additional elements and information
Greater Manchester	2011	£30m	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional planning powers</li> </ul>
Liverpool City Region	2014	£30m	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development management powers</li> </ul>
West Yorkshire	2014	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<p>WYCA does not have a devolution deal but through the LEP, does have a growth deal. Further information on the functions and priorities of WYCA are available <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
North East	2014	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<p>NECA does not have a devolution deal but through the LEP, does have a growth deal. Further information on the functions and priorities of NECA are available <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
Sheffield City Region	2014	£30m	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	<p>This entry captures the powers included in the 2015 devolution deal with Government which is still to be implemented – the latest CA update on devolution to Sheffield City Region is available <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
Tees Valley	2016	£15m	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional <a href="#">government funding</a> secured for MDC site</li> </ul>
West Midlands	2016	£36.5m	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Housing package</a> agreed with Government in 2018</li> <li>Extra £6m pa for housing supply</li> <li>Strategic Plan for Housing and Growth</li> </ul>
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	2017	£20m	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional £70m over five years ring fenced for Cambridge to meet housing needs</li> </ul>
West of England	2017	£30m	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning &amp; Land assembly power</li> </ul>
North of Tyne	2018	£20m	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing and Land Board – power to acquire/dispose land</li> </ul>

## 4. Innovation in housing and planning policy and delivery

- 4.1 When the first combined authorities were established, the legislation gave them responsibility for aspects of transport, economic development and regeneration. The current position is far more open, leaving the functions of a combined authority to be determined by a combination of local choice and the outcome of negotiations with government. Each combined authority has a unique combination of economic, social and spatial issues which in turn play out across different housing markets, tenures and demographic profiles as well as the quality/quantity of existing and potential housing supply.
- 4.2 Combined authorities stand and fall on their ability to be greater than the sum of their parts and the deals and undertakings toward devolution are ambitious. The work of the combined authorities seeks to fully integrate cross boundary working, focusing on housing and economic geographies rather than administrative boundaries. There is a natural proclivity to share best practice, work in partnership and create economies of scale to build a combined authority that is innovative, collaborative and efficient.
- 4.3 Through discussions with combined authorities and their constituent authorities, the research identified innovation around housing and planning delivery which is analysed in this section and supported through a series of case studies.

### Increasing supply through innovative funding and investment

- 4.4 The creation of combined authorities has provided an enhanced platform that enables member councils to be more ambitious in their joint working and to take advantage of the powers and resources devolved from national government. One such example is the ability of combined authorities to access and invest funding devolved from central government.
- 4.5 Accelerating housing delivery to support economic growth is vital if combined authorities are to meet their full economic potential. Increasing the choice, quality and diversity of the housing offer, as well as the numbers, is therefore a priority for the joint working arrangements of combined and local authorities.
- 4.6 A common theme within the suite of approaches adopted by the combined authorities is the development of multifaceted partnerships to deliver a mix of new dwellings across their geography at a greater volume than has been the case since the financial crash of 2008/9. Many arrangements focus on utilising investment funds to advance delivery of all types of housing including investment, loans, guarantees and recoverable grant.



### *Case study: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Strategic Investment Fund*

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has created a Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) made up of various funds including resources accessed via local authority prudential borrowing and private investment from institutional investors. This fund aims to increase the quantum and pace of housing delivery and to improve the range of housing options for local people through an investment plan which drives the distribution of investment. The tools available to the CPCA include recoverable grant and appraisal processes such as collaborative methodologies and standardised mechanisms to assess viability and housing need.

However, the direct delivery tools demonstrate the extent to which the combined authority is taking a direct approach to investment which provides:

- An equity investment option which enables development schemes to benefit from the fund on a matching finance basis. This enables a development to proceed and as sales are achieved the equity loans are repaid. Profits are shared amongst equity investors in proportion to their equity shareholding.
- Through the block purchase arrangement, the CPCA invests in schemes by purchasing assets to be developed on a forward sale basis. This gives certainty over sales risk for developers, enabling improved funding strategies and unblocking delivery. These assets are then owned and operated by the CPCA over the long term, paying back investment and generating returns over longer timeframes than the development / Registered Provider market can access. These assets can be used to further the CPCA's objectives, such as by providing units for alternative tenures, a stepping-stone to home ownership or through models such as Community Land Trusts.
- CPCA will also undertake the development of residential units, or enabling of residential plots, on land either owned by the CPCA, its partners or land that is purchased. These developments are funded through a combination of debt and equity sourced from the SIF in the form of cash or land. Returns from the development are then used to repay these investments either from one off receipts of units / plots that are sold, or from the income from operational assets. This approach can principally be used for schemes that are broadly viable but are blocked due to a lack of a viable funding strategy or other constraints, such as infrastructure requirements, which CPCA funding could potentially resolve.
- The value capture mechanism allows the SIF to invest in elements such as strategic land, or infrastructure. In return, the uplift in value of developable land owned by third parties is captured to repay the costs of the investment plus a profit for the risk taken. This approach can principally be used where a significant infrastructure intervention is required to unblock development.

### *Case study: Greater Manchester Housing Investment Fund and Joint Venture scheme*

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority established a £300m Housing Investment Fund in 2011 based on recoverable loans which can be recycled for investment following repayment to stimulate further interventions, thereby generating a programme of interventions which over time are partially self-sustaining. This fund has provided support to developers to increase the viability and speed of residential development and is forecast to contribute to the development of between 10,000 and 15,000 new homes over a 10-year period. To date, the Housing Investment Fund has committed over £420m to build over 5,150 units at 40 sites across Greater Manchester. Whilst the Fund has reached the £300m milestone after two-and-a-half years, the Fund has said it is open for business utilising recycled funds and will continue to invest in more homes across the region.

The Fund is supported by a rigorous lending assessment framework through which loans are made and without the combined authority to support the development and training of a Specialist Investment Team, the funding would not have been made available from Government which sought to align appraisal processes which are used nationally to allocate similar public sector investment programmes. This fund has been highly focused upon the development of the housing market in the regional centre and has complemented the inflow of investment into commercial development and growth in financial services employment.

Building on the interventions provided by the revolving loans fund, the combined authority has supported the development of a housing delivery partnership based on land ownership. As a result, a strategic partnership is being developed between Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP) and GMCA to enhance the supply of housing for sale and rent. The Joint Venture (JV) has secured equity investment from the GM Housing Investment Fund to help build 16,000 homes in the region over the next five years.

Members of GMHP and GMCA will invest up to £32million over the next seven years to bring forward hundreds of new homes in all-tenure developments in Greater Manchester. Following a feasibility study, funded by GMHP members, to explore the financial and legal feasibility as well as appraise the viability of the ground-breaking initiative, ten of the providers and the GMCA subsequently committed further funds to develop the concept.

The JV will develop new homes for sale, over and above the housing associations' continuing commitment to the delivery of new affordable homes through their mainstream development programmes. The JV will act as a commercial developer, acquire land, take it through planning, procure contractors and build out sites. It will then sell the homes both on the open market and affordable homes to the best placed local housing provider. The profits from the developments will be reinvested in further developments and some returned to investors. A similar JV is now being developed in the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority area, albeit on a smaller scale initially.

In order to mirror the commercial developer model, funding will be provided in the form of equity investment, committed over a lock-in period of seven years, and debt provided on a revolving credit-style facility. The balance of funding will be dependent on the actual programme of sites and the timing of developments but is expected to be broadly one third equity and two thirds debt.

The scale of this JV has been possible because of the combined authority's ability to focus cross boundary and to work with housing providers as one partner.

The key advantages of the venture include:

- Bringing forward sites that may not otherwise be brought forward
- Sharing risks on some of the more challenging sites around Greater Manchester
- Innovative offer to vendors to share risks and returns
- Delivery of new homes in tenure mixes that meet the different requirements of the 10 Greater Manchester districts
- Additional social / affordable housing through S106
- Housing associations and the GMCA will be able to utilise their balance sheets to earn returns for reinvestment. The returns will be comparable to those earned in the private sector and will be re-invested in line with the social objectives of GMHP members and the GMCA, rather than being paid out to private sector shareholders.

Further detail on the Greater Manchester Joint Venture is available on [the LGA website](#).

- 4.7 Combined authorities are taking on a significant role not just in terms of access to funding but also in their potential to take a cross boundary approach to supporting new schemes to come forward and ensuring that the investment is integrated within wider transport and infrastructure frameworks. By investing in a series of sites through grant and investment mechanisms, a cross subsidy approach can operate that will deliver financial returns over time whilst enabling schemes with viability and deliverability issues to be unlocked.
- 4.8 Local authorities consider the combined authorities as key in establishing a strategic framework for investment and delivery to unlock housing sites in sustainable locations and supporting new models of housing delivery and funding that may not have had the economies of scale without the combined authority. This has been seen through many of the plans each has, such as combined authority-wide spatial strategies and frameworks (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough), Mayoral Development Corporations (Greater Manchester, Tees Valley) and compulsory purchase powers (North of Tyne, West Midlands). These interventions aimed at increasing housing supply have also been assisted by new approaches to strategic planning which have integrated proposals for economic and housing growth over a wider spatial geography supported by proposed transport investment.

### Case study: Liverpool City Region – Halsnead Garden Village

Halsnead Garden Village (Halsnead), located near Whiston in Knowsley, is one of 14 sites in England which have been awarded Garden Village status by the Government. Halsnead is a significant housing and employment site for the City Region with the potential to deliver approximately 1,600 homes and 22.5 hectares of employment land. Knowsley Council had been successful in a bid to Government for inclusion of the proposed Halsnead Garden Village development site in its 'Locally-led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities' prospectus. However, the Strategic Investment Funding focused on creating access and improving capacity to support development. The funding was essential to deliver off-site transport infrastructure to build capacity and resilience in the existing highway network and create a platform for future private sector development.

Halsnead Garden Village will contribute to the Liverpool City Region's objectives of providing a mixed supply of housing types and developing Knowsley's employment land offer. Delivering a site of such scale will provide the City Region with a significant new offer to the employment market, attracting large scale investment in the logistic and advanced manufacturing sectors for highly skilled workers, thereby helping to address the socioeconomic challenges caused by the dominant low skilled and low wage economy in the borough.

- 4.9 A benefit of working within the combined authority partnership for constituent authorities is that the combined authority is able to access new forms of funding and work at scale with additional funding, more potential sites and with the potential to attract more investment than a single authority working alone. It can take a cross-boundary approach and share risks on some of the more challenging sites within individual authorities, allowing investment funding to work cross-boundary; this supports more challenging sites to be brought forward. It can also coordinate and package sites for investors, sharing risks and returns in a way that delivers different tenure mixes for local communities through improved viability outcomes during planning.

## Meeting housing need

- 4.10 The widespread housing market failure which emerged in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century impacted on all sections of society and created housing need of varying severity across a wider income span than had previously been the case. One outcome was a rapid rise in street homelessness, the most severe and evident form of need. One of a number of responses to this issue has been the development of the Housing First Programme, which seeks to resettle the street homeless in accommodation and provide wrap around support. Three combined authorities were chosen to pilot a city region wide approach to Housing First<sup>1</sup> and the details of their programmes are linked to at the foot of the page.
- 4.11 The discussions with combined authorities and their constituent authorities focused on two elements for housing need. The first was understanding housing need and the second was delivering homes to meet that need.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/greater-manchesters-drive-to-tackle-homelessness-accelerates-with-housing-first-announcement/>  
<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/housing-first-staff-start-delivery-in-liverpool-city-region/>  
<https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/west-midlands-receives-96m-to-launch-rough-sleeping-pilot/>

## Understanding housing need

- 4.12 There are a number of examples of joint Strategic Housing Market Assessments that identify a housing requirement across regions. For example, the Greater Manchester Strategic Housing Market Assessment was commissioned across the 10 local authorities within Greater Manchester and provides authority level breakdown of data. This very clearly sets out the housing numbers required within the region and has been a central element of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.
- 4.13 As housing markets operate at a scale greater than individual local authority areas, there is a logic to understanding the needs and demands across wider geographies. The combined authorities and their constituent authorities have a wealth of information and analysis about current housing markets, economic trends and locational data and understand the challenges and the opportunities that they face; much of the research is very recent but is often still focused on individual authorities.
- 4.14 This is generally because:
- Data is required at a Local Planning Authority level because local authorities continue to allocate housing sites and require local plans to do so
  - Partner authorities have location specific information on needs analysis and local conditions, which vary significantly from authority to authority
  - Housing needs evidence base needs to be at a local authority geography to enable robust negotiations with developers
  - As an evidence base needs to be regularly updated and consistent, many partner authorities' timescales for updating is 'out of sync' with other local authorities and a combined authority can address this issue of consistency.
- 4.15 Despite this, there is an opportunity for further collaboration in this element of research which could ensure that timescales for undertaking assessments are aligned, methodologies are consistent, and findings are co-ordinated as well as financial economies of scale for joint procurement. In the absence of any formal evidence around housing need, there are a number of useful examples of collaboration where combined authorities have developed innovative approaches.
- 4.16 For example, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has been identifying key worker accommodation needs by working with larger employers to understand what the local economy requires in terms of attracting additional people at a range of income levels and identifying the type, quantity and tenure of homes needed. It has been able to look across a wider area to meet needs (e.g. Astra Zeneca/Universities/Hospitals - media-tech cluster) and gathering this evidence is supported by the influence and scale that the combined authority has as it combines geographies.

## Delivering new affordable housing

- 4.17 Combined authorities consider housing affordability to be one of their most prominent public policy issues, recognising this growing problem not only in terms of the quality of housing available to those on lower incomes but also in how it affects an individual's standard of living. Whilst the primary focus is usually on delivering affordable housing for rent there are many examples from combined authorities of creating region wide products to support different tenures, particularly intermediate homeownership.
- 4.18 For example, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, is planning to develop discounted market sale homes, with property values capped at £100,000 at first sale and profits made thereafter to be shared between the combined authority (as developer) and the initial purchaser. If

the combined authority can deliver discounted market sale homes, with properties capped at £100,000, these homes will be within reach of a much greater proportion of low-income working people in this region.

- 4.19 Recent governments have remained committed to creating a better quality and fairer private rented sector (PRS), encouraging institutional investment to deliver more homes for rent and this was an area for collaboration between combined authorities and constituent authorities. Combined authorities can have a role in supporting local authorities to create opportunities of the scale that would be difficult to create by a single authority, attracting institutional investment and making investment themselves in Build to Rent programmes.
- 4.20 For example, the North of Tyne Combined Authority are working with L&G and the Grainger Trust to consider the role that modern methods of construction can have in its delivery of modular homes through their build to rent programme and with Grainger Trust, a major private landlord.
- 4.21 Recently, the West of England Combined Authority [announced funding](#) for a pilot programme to trial modern methods of construction, as part of its commitment to innovation in housing. The combined authority is investing £150,000 to support pilot trials to be conducted and provide case studies for the wider region, based on the learning gained.
- 4.22 Utilising the PRS as a supply of affordable housing for rent was also being pursued by a number of combined authorities in partnership with their constituent authorities. This focused around projects and initiatives that:
- develop new private rental accommodation to keep pace with demand and tackle rising rents
  - build family type accommodation with longer-term tenure to better meet the needs of families for stability (half of UK properties are one or two bed flats)
  - attract institutional investment into the PRS to be able to build at scale - the reduction in buy-to-let mortgages since the credit crunch means that individual landlords are unlikely to meet the scale of demand that is emerging.
- 4.23 The benefit of collaboration was about creating scale for investment that can make an impact in the market.

#### *Case study: Greater Manchester - meeting need through a high quality PRS*

In 2019, Greater Manchester Combined Authority secured £128,000 from Government to establish a “rogue landlord hub”, targeting landlords and letting agents who flout the law through bad management or by placing housing tenants within neglected and unsafe homes. The hub sought to improve information sharing and enable collaboration across Greater Manchester’s local authorities; develop and share best practice and information to provide a more consistent approach across the city-region; provide advanced training for frontline officers to help bring more illegal landlords to justice through the courts; and deliver communications campaigns targeted at both tenants and landlords. The results will be used to shape future initiatives that will continue to crack down on rogue landlords.

The [Greater Manchester Housing Strategy](#) includes a commitment to develop a Greater Manchester good landlord scheme to encourage and support landlords providing a safe, decent and secure home to their tenants, working with national and regional landlord and letting agencies networks.

- 4.24 The principal difficulty that housing providers encounter is making new affordable housing schemes financially viable and this is where combined authorities can make an impact through collaboration.

Land values, development challenges and employment markets produce variations in the economics of housebuilding across all of the combined authorities and this can result in significant differences in relation to viability assessments *within* the combined authority area.

- 4.25 The challenge to achieve an equitable distribution of development has created a number of opportunities for collaborative working across combined authorities. Bringing a consistent approach to viability has given developers certainty of what is expected and can therefore be reflected in the consideration of land allocations and negotiations with willing landowners. It has also enabled challenging sites to be brought forward by looking at cross boundary land parcels, thinking creatively around infrastructure costs and supporting authorities to unlock different land parcels.

#### *Case study: Sheffield City Region Housing Fund*

The SCR Housing Fund was created to help public and private sector developers bring forward stalled housing developments to accelerate housing delivery. To date, the fund has allocated £7.5m in grants and loans which has brought forward 524 homes which would otherwise not have been built, this is an intervention rate of c£14k per unit.

The SCR Housing Fund is a ‘fund of last resort’ so all other sources of finance and funding need to be explored first, and can be used in conjunction with other funding such as from Homes England. A streamlined Assurance Process for considering scheme funding applications has been put in place to ensure rapid decision-making; for example, the first housing scheme was given funding approval less than 5 months after a strategic outline business case was submitted.

The MCA and LEP have given approval for the SCR Housing Fund to move from a pilot phase to Full Fund status with an enhanced budget, which will enable more housing schemes that would otherwise not come forward for development to go ahead.



### *Case study: West Midlands Combined Authority meeting need through accelerator funding*

West Midlands Combined Authority operates within the context of local authorities setting policies for the mix and tenure of developments within their Local Plans, as it itself does not have planning powers. However, issues of affordability need to align with the Strategic Economic Plan and the Local Industrial Strategy and therefore policy integration is a prerequisite to ensure enhanced and balanced growth. Whilst affordable housing targets for constituent authorities range from between 20 and 40%, in reality this isn't always delivered “on the ground” on individual developments. West Midlands Combined Authority is proposing “Accelerator Investment” from central government to radically drive up supply of new affordable and social housing.

A key element is new funding to ensure affordable housing can be delivered on sites where currently that provision is either unviable or below policy requirements, and therefore these sites are not currently coming forward. This funding, alongside unprecedented local and private investment created through the combined authority’s influence and joint funding, will help treble the supply of new affordable and social homes within a decade. Alongside the proposal for investment to accelerate delivery, the proposal is also exploring opportunities to maximise existing powers and opportunities including procurement, local development orders and CPOs, where appropriate. Establishing the local expertise and capacity to deliver innovatively is central to this approach.

## Accelerating housing delivery by co-ordinating and creating sites

- 4.26 Planning authorities face a major challenge in increasing housing delivery with many sites difficult to develop because of their size and condition. Combined authorities recognise a primary role to support the existing development and delivery activities of the individual local authorities, but their role can be unclear where planning powers are not delivered through a statutory framework. Working cross boundary and in partnership with constituent authorities, combined authorities are identifying ways of increasing the supply of land for housing and employment and there is a particular focus on bringing forward brownfield sites
- 4.27 Brownfield land remains a major issue in the older post-industrial city regions and site remediation is often located in larger fragments of urban space where there is also underused land and buildings as well as a need for urban renewal. Local authorities are required to prepare and maintain registers of brownfield land that is suitable for residential development. It is intended to improve the quality and consistency of data held by local planning authorities to provide certainty for developers and communities, encouraging investment in local areas.
- 4.28 Here there is often a difficult task, as there is with more prosperous suburban locations to generate new development which is also sustainable and well designed. A number of combined authorities have developed consistent approaches to how viability is assessed to enable more certainty to developers as they bring schemes forward and supported local authorities to prioritise sites through strategic viability work.



### *Case study: West of England Combined Authority – Joint Assets Board*

The 2016 Devolution Agreement provided a mechanism for scaling up and elevating collaboration around public sector land and property, through the creation of a West of England Joint Assets Board (JAB), formally constituted in 2018. Crucially, One Public Estate (OPE) funding awarded in 2016 and 2018 has enabled the JAB to be carefully established, at some pace. It has a clear purpose and agreed Terms of Reference with key aims to enable regional collaboration across the public sector to:

- use land more efficiently
- transform public sector services
- strengthen local communities.

Going forward, dedicated resource in the form of a Programme Manager has been created within WECA to manage the JAB, seed funded through OPE.

#### Outcomes:

- The JAB has been created as a senior and influential Board, with membership at chief executive and executive director level. All areas of the public sector are represented on it, covering central government, education, emergency services, health and local government. It focuses on strategy and policy that enables public sector property and land assets to be used to support economic, sustainable and inclusive growth, across the region.
- The primary output from the JAB is a pipeline of public sector land that can be released for development, which is a key component in delivering against housing targets. Many opportunities have already been identified and priorities agreed.
- A pilot review has started, which will create a template for conducting area-based asset reviews in various locations across the region.
- Whilst the JAB is primarily focused on generating a pipeline of surplus public sector land, it also has an interest in how the land will be developed, so that the benefits from collaboration can be maximised and spread across the public sector.
- The JAB links very closely with the West of England Housing Delivery Board. Work is underway to clarify a West of England strategy for Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and other innovations in housing delivery. Bristol's Housing Festival is a key element of this and provides a platform for developing and testing housing innovations that it is hoped can then be adopted at scale across the region.

*Case study: Liverpool City Region Brownfield Land Register*

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has developed a Brownfield Register across its region which contains around 800 sites. The register has supported the provision of a one stop shop for developers to identify potential sites across the region and will assist in identifying sustainable urban housing sites which can potentially deliver over 40,000 new homes. To provide a more detailed cost for the remediation of brownfield sites within the Liverpool City Region, the combined authority completed a Brownfield Housing Site Viability Study. This reviewed all sites with a potential capacity of 80+ dwellings listed in the Liverpool City Region Brownfield Register. The outputs of the study were then used to negotiate potential funding streams.

The combined authority was able to hold funding discussions with both Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding potential funding for brownfield remediation on a larger scale than for individual authorities. While the discussion relating to the development of a programme of land remediation backed by significant resources is still ongoing, the process has identified a number of sites where a modest amount of gap finance would be sufficient to secure development and allow the combined authority to work with Homes England to develop housing projects that can be given the go ahead at short notice.

- 4.29 Combined authorities have established ambitious housing growth targets and delivery is at the forefront of much of their thinking. A priority in nearly all approaches has been to develop an overall housing programme from a 'call for sites' from their constituent authorities and there have been a number of approaches to doing this.

*Case study: West Yorkshire Strategic Sites Strategy*

Whilst West Yorkshire Combined Authority does not have planning powers, the potential to create added value through creating a programme of delivery has been established by developing a list of potential strategic sites. A call for sites enabled local authorities to provide specific information on a mix of sites including housing, employment and town centre locations. Whilst the list was designed to consider strategic sites, there was no definition of strategic sites; though sites did need to be in special priority areas and must be in the Strategic Economic Plan priorities. The list has enabled a pipeline of sites to be established which provides an overall position statement for the combined authority as well as a long-term delivery focus, combining transport and housing funds. The creation of a list of potential sites deliverable to 2036 has helped to make strategic investment decisions and enabled Homes England to make investment decisions.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority has also had a positive impact in bringing challenging sites forward. A site in York Central had been a priority for the City for a number of years and is located close to a transport hub but was constrained by a range of transport issues, poor pedestrian mobility, disparate land uses and multiple ownership albeit primarily in public ownership. However, the site remained a priority as a strategic brownfield site. The Leeds City Region Growth Deal is helping to fund the 72-hectare York Central development programme. The site has also been designated by Homes England as a Housing Infrastructure Site giving it a priority for funding.

The combined authority has committed investment to develop the project and undertake the necessary site surveys and technical works as well as more than £2 million for delivery of the expected £100 million redevelopment. The York Central scheme is a key project to support the continuing economic growth of the city. Once complete, the site is expected to deliver up to 2,500 new homes, 120,000 square metres of Grade A office space to house more than 7,000 jobs and an uplift in the city's Gross Added Value of more than £1.1 billion.

## Alignment with the wider growth agenda

- 4.30 Supporting and underpinning economic growth is central to the combined authority agenda. The Industrial Strategy sets out the Government’s long-term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people in Britain. It was launched in November 2017 and is built around ‘Five Foundations of Productivity’ which have an impact on all sectors of the economy - Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Places. Aligning with this are Local Industrial Strategies in individual regions which include a key focus on housing delivery. Four combined authorities have an agreed Local Industrial Strategy in place whilst others are in the process of developing a strategy.<sup>2</sup>

### *Case study: West of England Local Industrial Strategy*

The West of England Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership brought together businesses and organisations from across the region, working closely with government, to develop and agree a Local Industrial Strategy. The strategy draws on the unique strengths of the region, particularly in innovation, and sets out an ambition to be a driving force for clean and inclusive growth. Key commitments contained within the Strategy relating to housing and planning include:

- Working with government to ensure continued engagement in their Joint Assets Board which enables collaboration across the public sector to use land more efficiently, transform services and strengthen communities.
- Support innovation in housebuilding and accelerate the development of carbon neutral homes.
- Develop an ambitious approach to modern methods of construction (MMC) and other housing innovations e.g. co-living communities, smart homes and carbon/energy efficient homes. A West of England Small Sites (Housing) Strategy is being developed, which is likely to be expanded to provide a wider MMC strategy.

- 4.31 Strategic corridors are also of particular importance in terms of connectivity and economic growth. The underlying rationale for a specific focus on these types of development opportunities and corridors is that they have the potential to bring together a concentration of public and private sector investment across a broad geography (i.e. beyond the boundaries of an individual site) often maximising the opportunities presented by major planned or committed transport investment. These corridors have the capacity to grow, providing new opportunities for establishing and growing economic connections between areas, including complementary approaches to growth sectors and to deliver new housing and the facilitator and potential funding role of a combined authority demonstrates the significance of working across boundaries.

<sup>2</sup> For further detail, see the Local Industrial Strategies for [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough](#), [Greater Manchester](#), [the West Midlands](#) and [the West of England](#).

### *Case study: West Midlands - Adding value through cross-boundary investment frameworks*

The principles of corridor-based working, higher design quality and unlocking new investment were at the heart of the draft Spatial Investment and Delivery Plan developed by the West Midlands Combined Authority. Information assembled for the Draft Spatial Investment and Delivery Plan identified some 27 strategic development opportunities within the West Midlands. In these areas, transport investment, development opportunity (frequently on brownfield land) and untapped potential come together to provide the framework to create a critical mass of activity which can have a significant impact on the regeneration of former industrial areas.

The Spatial Investment and Delivery Plan takes as its starting point accelerating and securing the delivery of development opportunities and the land and infrastructure proposals identified in the local plans of constituent and non-constituent members adjacent to the large metropolitan areas. Adding to that process, it seeks to join up areas of opportunity which extend across local authority boundaries and provide a comprehensive plan for delivery and investment supported by new policy principles to guide investment by West Midlands Combined Authority, Homes England and the private sector.

In the Black Country, an area where there has been a long history of local authority collaboration on issues which cross local boundaries, work on the Sandwell to Dudley Corridor has now reached the implementation stage and is focused on how this investment framework can maximise a range of housing and employment opportunities that will be unlocked via the Transforming Cities Fund for the Metro extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill. This investment in improving connectivity on an East/West axis in the Black Country builds on the improvements achieved in the connectivity of the North/South axis in the Walsall to Wolverhampton Corridor.

The interventions deployed by West Midlands Combined Authority to develop these large post- industrial corridors has included:

- Commissioning programme management and specialist technical support (as necessary) to prepare sites for delivery/investment and engage vendors/developers
- Co-development of strategic investment and delivery frameworks (see below) to coordinate public sector activities and investment opportunities
- Direct intervention and commercial negotiations – e.g. acquisition, site assembly
- Brokering and facilitation with public and private sector partners
- Deployment of funding and expertise and securing business cases for investment.

In both of the corridors identified above, discussions are taking place around how best the combined authority can collectively secure new public and private investment (especially to unlock challenging brownfield development sites), secure public and private infrastructure provision and deliver the quality of development essential for sustainable growth. This has led to a broad consensus emerging for creating an investment prospectus for each corridor tailored to an investor audience that will secure the funding to deliver inclusive growth in the corridor. Furthermore, it has become clear that the approach in each corridor should be tailored to local circumstances rather than adopting a standard approach for all.

## Addressing urban renewal through Mayoral Development Corporations

4.32 Following the fiscal restructuring during the last decade the traditional post war approach to urban renewal was recast, and new forms of delivery and approaches to facilitating urban and economic renewal have been developed. The Mayoral Development Corporation is one such innovation, which

adapts a model of delivery which traditionally was controlled by central Government and anchors it in a local democratic framework. The progress being made in developing these renewal programmes in two locations is outlined below.

#### *Case study: Tees Valley Mayoral Development Corporation*

Tees Valley was the first combined authority to establish a Mayoral Development Corporation using the powers of the Cities and Local Government Act 2016. The Development Corporation is the delivery vehicle which is leading on the regeneration of land south of the River Tees, following the closure of Redcar's SSI Steelworks in 2015. The vision is to transform the site into a hotbed of industry, creating 20,000 jobs and delivering £1 billion per annum into the local economy. The area covers 4,500 acres of land and is marketed as the single biggest investment opportunity in the UK. As of 2019, the Tees Valley Mayor and Combined Authority has secured £137m from Government to support land initiatives.

The assembling of a financial package, while essential to address the scale of the failure in the land and labour market, is not seen as a sufficient response to ensure that the regeneration of the site is achieved in the most efficient way and within a reasonable timescale. The Mayoral Development Corporation is charged with the master planning, promotion and physical and social renewal functions of the site, with a refreshed Master Plan published in December 2019. Critically, it has Compulsory Purchase Powers to assemble land into developable packages and in April an Order was made for the CPO of the former SSI Steelworks site, covering 870 acres. This is one of the largest individual site acquisitions in the country over the last two decades.

#### *Case study: Greater Manchester Mayoral Development Corporation*

Stockport's Town Centre West area in Greater Manchester has the potential to evolve into a new urban village of up to 3,000 new homes with complementary mixed-use development and the social infrastructure required to support a significant increase in the residential population. Large-scale regeneration would ensure that the west of the Town Centre is a healthy, sustainable place which incorporates innovation and smart technology into design and urban living as well as the appropriate social, physical and green infrastructure to support existing and new residents.

The focus on the regeneration of this part of Stockport is a key part of the Mayoral Town Centre Challenge which was launched across GMCA in November 2017. A key part of that challenge is to ensure that a stronger housing and employment offer is developed in GM's Town Centres – as their role as retail centres changes, and to ensure that Stockport is maximising the opportunity of developing brownfield land in sustainable locations. This type of approach to integrated regeneration interventions is designed to maximise the viability of such brownfield land sites for housing and employment through the creation of value and economies of scale enabling cross subsidy.

## Excellence in quality and design

- 4.33 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the standards to ensure that developments create a strong sense of place and function well. The Social Housing Green Paper highlighted the importance of good place-making to overall wellbeing and quality of life, and how poor design can exacerbate feelings of isolation and neglect. There is growing recognition of the contribution which excellent place-making plays in achieving inclusive growth.

- 4.34 The 'Place' agenda is an established priority for combined authorities to create strong, confident and integrated communities. Discussions with combined authorities confirmed that there is clear and essential value to building better. Many combined authorities have committed to planning and delivering a significant number of new homes and underpinning this is an understanding that improving the quality of new development will be fundamental to meeting this ambitious target and leaving a positive legacy.

*Case study: Liverpool City Region - Accelerating sustainable development with quality design*

Funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government through the Planning Delivery Fund awarded to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, funding for design reviews will help design high-quality design across the City Region through collaborative learning. Liverpool City Region Combined Authority secured £100,000 funding to deliver 42 design review panels for major developments in the City Region. This enabled the combined authority to work with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) developers and local authorities, with the objective to make sure every new home is built to a high-quality standard and is fit for purpose. Delivered by Places Matter and supported by RIBA North in Liverpool, the free reviews are available through a programme that aims to promote high-quality design in housing growth and key economic assets. Each review is carried out through Places Matter's established panel of 60 industry experts, at no cost to the applicant.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's Design Champion, Paul Monaghan, shared learning from the Liverpool City Region at the West of England's inaugural Placemaking Conference in June 2019. The West of England is now taking forward a range of initiatives with key partners to promote the Placemaking agenda sub-regionally, including the establishment of Design West, which will ensure a consistent and high-quality design review service across the sub-region.

*Case study: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - Designing sustainable development using international knowledge transfer*

Fenland District Council, with support from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, commissioned a flood risk analysis which demonstrated how a proposed Wisbech Garden Town could be flood resilient, with a suitable flood management strategy for an early Phase 1 development area. The proposal sets out a step change regeneration project to deliver:

- 10,000 – 12,000 new homes over a 40-year period;
- 11,000 new jobs across 100 hectares of employment space;
- The garden town will generate a requirement for 4-5 primary schools, 1-2 secondary schools, and 3 health centres;
- 259 hectares of green space including new open space, retained woodland and orchards, and a country park.

The technical studies sought to investigate how the development of the Garden Town can be designed to avoid the areas at highest risk of flooding and the development as a whole being made safe and sustainable in flood risk terms, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The study included live scenario testing and innovative approaches to long term water management. It is being funded in part by the Dutch government, who are keen to promote the further development of innovative engineering solutions. This type of collaborative learning approach could be applied across the region.



### *Case study: Liverpool City Region - creating social value through Spatial Development Strategy*

Work is ongoing in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to develop a Spatial Development Strategy and the combined authority is set to be the first in the country to incorporate an evaluation of social value in its Spatial Development Strategy. This will evaluate the social value of every policy within the SDS, at every stage in its development, to ensure that policy makers consider the social impacts on outcomes which impact on the broader community such as health and wellbeing, as well as the impact on the local economy.

The Liverpool City Region has established a Fairness and Social Justice Advisory Board to scrutinise all of the policies and decisions that are established as part of the statutory planning process. The Fairness and Social Justice Advisory Board is made up of representatives from across all elements of society and is the first of its kind in the country. Whilst other local authorities have established commissions to look into justice, fairness, poverty and related areas, all of these have produced a one-off series of recommendations and then been disbanded.

The Fairness and Social Justice Advisory Board will be the first to exist as a permanent body, providing an independent sounding board, to ensure that issues of fairness and social justice are considered by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority as part of its decision-making and policy development process. At each meeting, members and officers present their areas of current focus/work and this gives board members a direct opportunity to influence policy and ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups are not overlooked, the board has input on policy from inception to implementation and identifies where the Fairness and Social Justice Advisory Board can make a difference; by highlighting good practice and helping promote new approaches to equality and fairness.

## Advantages of capacity building, procurement, delivery and resource sharing

- 4.35 Combined authorities need strong governance to work well. They provide a forum and a framework for joint decision-making and draw together councillors from their “constituent” councils to make joint decisions on issues of mutual importance. Their governance arrangements are well established, supporting decision making that underpins devolution of power.
- 4.36 Alongside the formal governance arrangements are the practical ways that combined and constituent authorities work together to ‘get the job done’ through informal arrangements that have been established which underpin a valuable network of knowledge, resource and expertise. One of the key features that combined authorities create is a natural ‘place perspective’, joining up strategies, resources and networks across the combined authority geography.
- 4.37 The following examples demonstrate how combined authorities are sharing resources and expertise through the development of cross-boundary housing and planning policies to support increasing economies of scale and sharing of best practice.

*Case study: Liverpool City Region creating networks*

The Mayor of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has created informal governance arrangements that brings the expertise, skills, knowledge and influence of a number of individuals that are able to act as ambassadors of the combined authority, promoting its work, identifying and encouraging investment and championing the region. Seven champions (generally individuals from the private sector) have been appointed by the Mayor and bring their contacts and networks to enable the combined authority ‘an open door’ on many platforms ordinarily not available. These champions can be ‘hands on’ in advising on operational issues and/or offer strategic guidance.

*Case study: West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy*

The West of England (WofE) Combined Authority has been leading the development of the WofE Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy (JGIS). The Strategy is part of a programme of Green Infrastructure (GI) work to specifically assist the WofE vision for sustainable growth. It will provide a new, integrated framework for delivering strategically planned and managed green infrastructure (green and blue) to deliver multiple benefits.

Core purposes of the JGIS include provision of a GI evidence base for spatial planning at either strategic or local plan level and tools for a consistent approach to GI across the 4 unitary authorities.

As a package of work, the JGIS will help the West of England authorities to implement and deliver the ambitions of the Governments 25 Year Environment Plan.

The work is being led by combined authority staff supported by a technical team comprising officers from the four unitary authorities, and key bodies including Natural England, Environment Agency, the West of England Nature Partnership and Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership.

The need to produce the JGIS has been strengthened in view of; Climate and Ecological Emergency declarations; the Environment Bill and current government initiatives linked with the 25-year Environment Plan that all relate to the need to take account of natural assets and services that the natural environment provides, and to maximise the benefits they deliver for people, place and nature.

The JGIS work programme is aligning the regional approach with new national tools and approaches through direct involvement in pilots and commissioned work including, Biodiversity Net Gain, Natural Capital Accounting and National GI Standards. The integration of national approaches at a West of England level will enhance the package of evidence and tools that the JGIS will provide.



*Case studies: Combined authorities developing joint services and sharing resources*

**Sheffield City Region Combined Authority** have created a partnership with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). The SCR Heads of Planning Group have recently agreed a joint 12-month work programme including the development of a shared planning approach, developed with support from PAS. Five pathfinder authorities have undertaken productivity and resource reviews of their planning services and have produced an evidence base on which to base improvement plans. This shared activity is a distinct step-up in terms of collaboration to support the development process and provide a positive experience for investors and developers.

**Greater Manchester Combined Authority** are sharing the expertise, cost and resource of 3 essential planning units which are funded across all constituent authorities. These are the Archaeological Service, Waste and Minerals and Ecological unit. They are funded jointly by Greater Manchester CA's constituent authorities and provide a comprehensive and robust service without each authority having to deliver their own.

**West Yorkshire Combined Authority** has appointed a cross authority Urban Design Manager; a fixed term two-year post, the senior appointment has been funded centrally, but supports all of the authorities in developing best practice around scheme design and supports improvements to strategic schemes. This shared cost will impact positively on design.

The **Sheffield City Region Combined Authority** and Local Enterprise Partnership has developed an SCR Energy Strategy which includes the aim to address fuel poverty and excess winter deaths, with an implementation period of 2020-2040. The main objective is to produce a more robust, resilient and decarbonised energy system across South Yorkshire which accelerates growth in the energy sector. This is an example of a programme which is at its inception stage, but at the forefront of thinking about how to achieve emission targets and embed interventions within a positive programme of economic and household growth. The collaborative approach adopted brings joint capacity and expertise.

## 5. Learning from collaboration

5.1 The interviews and literature review delivered for this research suggests that progress and focus for collaboration in housing and planning has focused on:

- *Innovative funding arrangements:* Funding will always be a constraint and securing and maximising public and private investment from existing and new sources of funding to underpin new delivery was a consistent theme during the research. Investment in housing has been a key success for a number of combined authorities such as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Greater Manchester. Creating a housing investment fund or equivalent, used to bring sites forward, could be taken a step further with cross authority affordable housing provision, land packaging to support sites in lower value/challenging locations and better provision of specialist accommodation.
- *Land supply and remediation:* There is a common interest and priority attached to enhancing land supply and achieving brownfield redevelopment for housing and employment purposes. Achieving this has become more complex with the focus on value capture to finance development. There are a number of case studies which show how bespoke financial initiatives and partnerships can be developed which address this issue and potentially develop enhanced supply at scale. There is considerable potential here for knowledge transfer around the generation of value, pooling of sites and the integration of transport infrastructure with mixed use developments.
- *Housing standards and need:* combined authorities have worked with constituent authorities to deliver initial activity that seeks to respond to housing need and to drive up housing standards. This early activity will deliver results which can be evaluated in both the short and medium term. The drive to reduce homelessness has secured additional funding in some areas, with associated outcomes and evaluation requirements. Additionally, activity relating to the improvement of the operation of the Private Rented Sector will also generate an early action programme which can be considered in the context of whether a combined authority wide approach can generate enhanced results.
- *Improved quality and social outcomes:* In some cases, new statutory strategic planning frameworks are being developed by combined authorities which seek not just to guide development and protect the environment but also to achieve social objectives such as reduced inequality and maximised social value. The case studies here reflect the opportunities to uplift standards across large geographic areas by sharing expertise, developing policy commitments and audit processes, and the utilisation of best practice.
- *Efficiency and shared services:* The extent to which core teams and technical capacity has been assembled through a combined authority differs between places. This would be expected given that the scope of activity differs between places, as does the length of time that each authority has been established. Again, there will be a subtlety to assessing what has worked best looking forward. There are a range of approaches, with some areas having significant specialist in house capacity, while other areas have made “catalytic” appointments around specialist advice such as urban design. In some areas Mayoral Advisors have been appointed on an unpaid basis to assist with decision making.
- *Pooling of resources and knowledge:* Most of the case studies highlighted in this document have the pooling of resources across local authorities in partnership with the combined authority at their core. Agile management in the public and private sector, if based on collaboration can make the best use of the resources that are available and effectively compete for new resources.

Knowledge exchange is a fundamental activity which underpins the ability of partnerships to deliver in an environment where historically resources have been relatively constrained.

- *New partnerships for new circumstances:* The development of the combined authority model has enabled policy makers to look at the nature and structure of partnerships. A reoccurring feature of discussions with officials was the scaling up of the One Public Estate initiative to improve its leverage and visibility to central government. A further innovation has been the combined authorities' engagement with Registered Social Housing providers across local markets and local government geographies. These new rescaled housing partnerships increasingly reflect the reality that these agencies also now operate across borders, even if they originated from local authority stock transfers.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This report has detailed how combined authorities have identified their key priorities for housing and planning and worked collaboratively to achieve them. The combined authorities are in the process of gaining a substantial and varied experience of “what works” and this body of evidence and knowledge will feed into discussions about future resources and the extent to which central government will support the aspirations articulated by this new form of multi-local authority governance and delivery.
- 6.2 This report reflects the differences in approach, scope and scale of activity which in part reflects that combined authorities are at different stages in their evolution but also the freedoms which devolution offers in contrast to one size fits all policy. Combined authorities are relatively new and still evolving. They are reacting to and planning for challenges presented to local government in England flowing from the ten years of reductions in spending power combined with new challenges which are emerging from demographic and household change. The innovations and approaches created by the combined authorities provide valuable learning about how systems of governance and development are evolving.
- 6.3 There are many examples where collaboration has delivered or will deliver benefits for combined authorities and their constituent authorities and there is scope for more joint working and cross boundary approaches many of which derive from capitalising on the economies of scale created through a combined authority. As the programme of activity around housing and planning has matured, interesting projects have emerged which may be adapted by others over time. There is the potential for new methods of working to be evaluated and the experiences of successes and failures to be shared, allowing local policies and programmes to be adapted in a fast changing national and international environment.