

BUILD THE HOMES WE NEED WHILST PROTECTING THE GREENBELT

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
"Protect our precious Green Belt"	Secured more than £650 million from the Government to clean up brownfield sites to reduce the pressure on the region's green belt, and championed local campaigns for the protection of green spaces in the region.	
"Clean up more derelict sites and build on Brownfield First"	Deployed hundreds of millions of pounds of funding from Government to clean up brownfield sites across the West Midlands, creating more than 12,000 jobs, nearly 3.5 million square feet of commercial floor space and over 8,000 new homes.	
"Build more homes more quickly"	On track to hit our target of building 215,000 new homes across the region by 2031, the only region in the UK to be on track, including beating our target of 15,250 new homes every year in the three years 2021-2024.	
"Ensure our heritage is protected"	Committed funding to regenerate historic buildings and championed local pubs and community buildings, including leading the campaign for the rebuilding of the Crooked House Pub.	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Keep building homes faster than our targets	Continue to achieve the best house building figures in the UK against targets by building over 16,000 new homes every year , so even more local people can buy or rent their own home.	
Continue our successful Brownfield First approach	Double down on our Brownfield First approach , cleaning up derelict industrial sites to deliver the homes we need whilst protecting our green spaces.	
Drive a social housing revolution	Use our £400 million war chest to start a social housing revolution to help those on low incomes, support the regeneration of council estates, ensure developers provide truly affordable housing, and extend our successful Housing First scheme to prevent homelessness.	
Get the planning system working more smoothly	Work with local councils to bolster their planning departments to ensure key developments get off the ground quickly.	

FIGHT FOR OUR GREEN BELT AND OUR GREEN SPACES

There are few issues which arouse more concern from local residents than inappropriate development on green spaces near their homes. **As Mayor I have fought successfully to protect our Green Belt and green spaces across the West Midlands.**

My approach to this work has been to understand the detail behind the locations and the proposals, to work with local campaigners and groups such as the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England), and then to **make the case against inappropriate development at all levels, from local councils right up to Government Ministers.**

This approach has been working, and we have made the most progress with brownfield regeneration in decades. But it could all be thrown away if your local leaders are not capable and not committed to protecting our landscapes, and developers are given free rein. And once green spaces are lost, it is almost impossible to get them back. In the next four years, **I pledge to continue our fight for the Green Belt and our green spaces.**

Progress made:

- **Secured a total of more than £650 million from the Government to clean brownfield sites** for new homes and business, to reduce the pressure on the region's green belt.
- **Funded new developments on these brownfield sites**, such as Abbots Lane in Coventry, SPARK / Phoenix 10 in Walsall, Midland Met Learning campus in Sandwell, Bilston Urban Village in Wolverhampton, and Icknield Port Loop in Birmingham, and **blocked the use of any West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) funding for unacceptable green belt development.**
- **Championed local campaigns for the protection of green spaces in the region**, such as Corbett Meadow in Stourbridge, the Straits and Majors Fold in Gornal, Barrows Lane fields in Yardley, and the Coundon Wedge in Coventry.
- **Won the case with the Government to review the National Planning Policy Framework** and legislate in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act to provide additional protections for the green belt.
- **Commissioned the Black Country Brownfield Land Report in 2021**, which examined every possible alternative to Green Belt development in the Black Country, including fitting more homes on brownfield sites, and increasing the density of our town centres.
- **Funded projects to improve green spaces across the West Midlands** and make them accessible for leisure, such as the Community Green Grants and planting around 600,000 trees as part of the West Midlands Virtual Forest.
- Ensured that where Green Belt sites have been allocated for development (for example at Arden Cross), work is being done with the local council, landowners and developers to **ensure that the infrastructure and public services are sufficient for both current and future residents.**



Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Stick with our brownfield first approach**, prioritising regeneration of existing sites rather than permitting green belt development.
- Work with local authorities as they review their Local Plans, and **encourage them to remove proposed green belt sites from development plans where possible and to focus on brownfield development**, following the updated National Planning Policy Framework.
- **Champion local people in their campaigns to protect green spaces** in the West Midlands from inappropriate development, such as Wilderness Lane in Great Barr and Walsall Arboretum, lobbying councils and the Government as appropriate.
- Make the most of the Government's new biodiversity net gain requirements to **improve green spaces for residents and nature in the West Midlands**, for example by helping to develop viable West Midlands off-site projects for developers to invest in.
- **Commission an expert review ("Land Commission 2") into the housing & regeneration activities and powers** of the WMCA and the West Midlands Mayor, including examining strategic planning powers and the power to 'call-in' decisions including Green Belt release.
- **Explore the use of Mayoral Development Corporations** to accelerate brownfield development and relieve pressure on the Green Belt.



BROWNFIELD FIRST: STICK WITH OUR PLAN THAT IS TRANSFORMING THE REGION

Our industrial past means that we are the brownfield capital of Britain, if not the world. We have many vacant sites across the region, which cannot be turned into new housing or business developments without significant investment in cleaning them up first. The public sector can step in and unblock progress, using new funding secured from the Government, and that's exactly what we have been doing at the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Local places which have been stark reminders of our industrial decline have been brought back to life and are now sources of local pride. But there is more to do. The easy sites have been done, and now we need more expertise, more funding and a renewed commitment to tackle the rest. SPARK / Phoenix 10 in Walsall, Abbots Lane in Coventry and Great Charles Street in Birmingham tell the story of the benefits these sites can bring for local people: new homes, new jobs, and new opportunities. **Now is the time to double down on our brownfield first approach, not abandon it just as it is beginning to produce results.**

Progress made:

- **Deployed hundreds of millions of pounds of funding from Government to clean up brownfield sites** across the West Midlands, creating more than 12,000 jobs, nearly 3.5 million square feet of commercial floor space and over 8,000 new homes.
- **Secured an additional £100 million of brownfield land funding** as part of the Deeper Devolution Deal, which will go into a new £200 million Brownfield Housing Fund, to deliver another 12,000 homes in the West Midlands.
- **Funded new homes or business premises on a hitlist of local brownfield sites** such as:
 - Icknield Port Loop, Longbridge and Stone Yard in Birmingham
 - Abbots Lane, Holbrook Lane and Wood End in Coventry
 - Portersfield and the former Cookley Works in Dudley
 - Friar Park and Fountain Lane in Sandwell
 - Simon Digby College and Kingshurst in Solihull
 - The Marches and Cable Street in Wolverhampton
 - Caparo and Harvestime in Walsall
- **Secured Government agreement to the West Midlands Investment Zone which provides tax incentives for new businesses to move into these areas**, at the Autumn Budget in November 2023.
- **Made substantial progress in delivering new transport infrastructure which unlocks brownfield housing and business sites**, such as the Metro extension to Dudley and Brierley Hill and new stations and Willenhall and Darlaston.
- **Kept our pipeline of new potential sites up to date** so that we can continue to deliver as new private or Government investment becomes available.
- **Supported local projects which have needed to alter their plans because of changes in the property market** (for example commuting patterns after COVID-19, or reduction in retail footfall), such as at Coventry City Centre South and Portersfield in Dudley.
- **Funded and opened the £17.5 million National Brownfield Institute in Wolverhampton**, to research new technologies and train local people to remediate brownfield sites.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Make the most of the West Midlands Investment Zone sites**, and the tax incentives for new employers in these areas, to encourage new investment and the redevelopment of these areas:

- **Coventry-Warwick Gigapark:** anchored by a new battery gigafactory and associated businesses and technologies.
- **Birmingham Knowledge Quarter:** running from close to the HS2 station, northeast from Aston University through Duddeston and Nechells to Aston.
- **Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor:** from the city centre to the north, fostering new green industries and skills.
- **Secure agreement to use Mayoral Development Corporations and Compulsory Purchase Orders** to accelerate brownfield development and relieve pressure on the Green Belt, as part of the scope of the “Land Commission 2” expert review.
- **Proactively acquire sites, including from other parts of the public sector where there is the opportunity to develop them.**
- **Take a more assertive approach to site assembly, including compulsory purchase where necessary,** in order to make development happen on difficult sites.
- **Expand the WMCA’s funds, such as the Collective Investment Fund so that we can reinvest proceeds of existing schemes in new projects, and secure further cash from the Government to continue the programme of brownfield development.**
- **Continue to lobby for tax changes to make cleaning up brownfield sites more cost effective,** for example a review of the Contaminated Land Remediation Tax Relief.



SUCCESS STORIES: MAKING THE WEST MIDLANDS THE BROWNFIELD CAPITAL OF THE UK

Three example regeneration projects from across the West Midlands showcase the determined, detailed work that the Combined Authority's team have done in partnership with local authorities and developers. Each of these sites is providing new housing or business space, but they are also providing additional benefits to the region, such as construction work for local firms, new green spaces for the public and training opportunities for youngsters.

These projects prove that, with the right political leadership and commitment, even sites which have lain derelict for decades can be brought back to life.

MAJOR BROWNFIELD CLEAN UP AT SPARK / PHOENIX 10, WALSALL

- **Background:** This large 44-acre brownfield site, near to Junction 10 of the M6, was previously home of the James Bridge Copper Works, was heavily contaminated and had lain unused for two decades.
- **What was done:** The WMCA provided millions of pounds of funding through the Land and Property Investment Fund to kick-start the regeneration. Planning permissions were granted by Walsall Council for the new development in 2023, and remediation work has begun, with 1.3 million tonnes of soil excavated and treated so far on the site, and 150,000 tonnes of concrete have been crushed and processed.
- **Results:** New buildings will be on the site this year (2024), and completion is expected in 2027/2028. SPARK will create more than 1,000 local jobs, 620,000 square feet of well-connected new business space for manufacturing and logistics.

BRINGING NATURE INTO THE CITY AT ABBOTTS LANE, COVENTRY

- **Background:** A derelict former National Grid depot and operations centre on Abbots Lane near the city centre in Coventry, which had been vacant since 2012. One of the few large brownfield sites in Coventry, where there is significant pressure on the Green Belt.
- **What was done:** In 2020, the WMCA provided millions of pounds of funding to unlock the site, and additional funding in 2021 to provide a new 'linear' urban park for local residents as part of the development. In 2023, a planning inspector confirmed that the scheme could go ahead, despite City Council opposition.
- **Results:** Construction starting on site this year (2024), with 690 new homes being built in all, and a new publicly available park with over 1,000 trees.

TRAINING YOUNG PEOPLE IN CONSTRUCTION AT THE BOMB SITE, GREAT CHARLES STREET, BIRMINGHAM

- **Background:** Known as the Bomb Site, just next to Great Charles Street Queensway in Birmingham City Centre, this site was used as a pay and display car park for many years, and had not been developed since the Second World War.
- **What was done:** secured the largest Build to Rent investment outside London. The WMCA provided £100,000 to fund Construction Gateway for skills training on the project with developer MODA, and construction firms John Sisk & Son and McAuliffe, building on the successful training hub at the Mercian tower on Broad Street.
- **Results:** Ground broken on the site in April 2023, 722 homes being built for rent, and further 106 jobs created in the construction of the 37-storey development.



KEEP UP THE PACE OF RAPID HOUSEBUILDING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The pace of construction has continued to be strong in the West Midlands, despite COVID-19, construction costs increasing and the increase in interest rates. As a region we are often given as an example of rapid housebuilding, and we are on track to hit our target of building 215,000 new homes across the region by 2031.

Yet there is still more to be done. The process of securing planning permission, building the homes and handing them over still takes too long. There is no one thing which will solve these problems, but focused energetic work on the detailed local issues in the West Midlands is what will unlock more homes more quickly here. **We have shown in the last few years that it is possible to move faster – we need to keep that improvement up.**

Progress made:

- **On track to hit our target of building 215,000 new homes across the region by 2031**, the only region in the UK to be on track, including beating our target of 15,250 new homes every year in the three years 2021-2024.
- **Signed investment partnerships with key investors to bring billions of pounds of new investment in housing and business projects in the West Midlands**, such as pension fund L&G (£4 billion) and logistics and warehousing developer Segro (£2 billion).
- **Attracted hundreds of millions of pounds of private investment in property development in the West Midlands**, through the work of the West Midlands Growth Company using the West Midlands Investment Prospectus of major schemes across the West Midlands.
- **Trained thousands of young people through our construction training hubs**, for example at the Great Charles Street site in Birmingham.
- **Agreed a unique land reform partnership with the Government**, which gives the WMCA influence over how public sector sites are disposed of in the region – so that they can be unlocked for new homes for local residents.
- **Built a team of housing and land experts within the Combined Authority** who work to accelerate the construction of new housing and business premises in the region.
- **Commissioned an expert report (“Homes for the Future”) to develop a regional strategy for zero carbon homes and advanced manufacturing.**

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Maintain our housebuilding momentum** and review the goal of 215,000 new homes by 2031 to see if we can be even more ambitious.
- **Encourage local authorities in the West Midlands to participate actively in DLUHC’s Digital Planning programme**, using digital technology to speed up plan-making and development.
- **Support local authority planning departments where possible using WMCA resources and staff**, to speed up the development process in the region, and champion the case for Government to permit the ringfencing of income for council planning departments.
- **Commission an expert review (“Land Commission 2”) into the housing & regeneration progress and powers** of the WMCA and the West Midlands Mayor, including examining whether the Combined Authority should have independent Compulsory Purchase powers to speed up developments.

- **Commission further work to develop new funding mechanisms to deliver new housebuilding and regeneration projects**, such as land value capture.

A NEW 'TRANSPORT FOCUSED' HOUSING PROGRAMME

Our 2040 Transport Plan is investing billions in new Metro, rail and rapid bus connections across the region, and the stations and stops on these routes make ideal places for new housing development. Not only are these great places to build new homes, they are also likely to support the financial sustainability of the transport services in the long-term.

If re-elected, I will set up a new programme of activity looking at 'transport focused' housing, including:

- **Proactively examine the parcels of land next to train stations, Metro and bus stops** to see what opportunities there are for development.
- **Use WMCA funds to encourage developers building near to transport hubs to increase the density** of their schemes where appropriate.
- **Seek opportunities to compulsorily purchase land** where this would help with site assembly or speed up development.
- **Learn lessons from London and other cities around the world**, who have successfully built around their transport links, for example the developments above Elizabeth Line stations in London.
- Explore the extent to which **new developments around future transport infrastructure could be used to fund that transport infrastructure** in the first place.

CASE STUDIES: NEW GARDEN SQUARE AND PORTERSFIELD

- **New Garden Square in Birmingham** is a brilliant example of the extension of the Metro to Five Ways where MODA Living are developing a new 1,600 home community with 400 homes already under construction, and new shops, offices, cafes and restaurants. The quick connection by Metro to Birmingham City Centre and beyond has made this an attractive location for city living.
- **Portersfield in Dudley** is the development on the former Cavendish House site, which will be brought to life by the new Metro extension to Dudley which will open later this year. The tram connection will provide the impetus for new investment in housing and regeneration of this site and the wider town centre.



PROVIDE MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

For us to make new homes affordable for everyone, we need to make sure that we go beyond simply building more homes. That's why we have been proactive in ensuring that a good share of the homes that are being built are truly affordable for local residents, and that in the rented sector, standards are high and Government support is at the right level to prevent people ending up in difficulty.

Affordability is a huge challenge, particularly for young people in the region, **and I will continue to do everything I can to make high-quality housing more affordable for everyone.**

Progress made:

- **Exceeded our target to deliver a minimum of 20% affordable homes in schemes funded by the WMCA** – currently at 33% of homes funded being affordable. As part of this we have enforced our more accurate definition of 'affordable', so it is based on people's incomes.
- **Funded new homes of all types, including housing estate redevelopments such as Kingshurst in Solihull**, rather than focusing solely on city-centre apartments.
- **Supported more than 520 people through our Housing First scheme** for rough sleepers or those at risk of homelessness, and secured Government funding for that to continue.
- **Secured a commitment of up to £400 million of the Affordable Homes Programme** in the region with Homes England by 2026, with greater devolution of this funding after 2026.
- **Secured £15 million of funding from the Government to fund improvement works** and tackle hazards relating to damp, mould and condensation in existing affordable housing stock.
- **Campaigned for more local powers to clamp down on unsuitable exempt accommodation**, supporting Crisis' Regulate the Rogues campaign and Bob Blackman MP's Private Members Bill.
- **Campaigned successfully for an increase in the level of Local Housing Allowance benefits at the 2023 Autumn Budget**, to help people at risk of homelessness and being driven into council-provided temporary accommodation.
- **Supported local groups, in particular BrumLAG and UK CAG, in pressuring the Government to resolve the outstanding building safety issues.**
- **Supported the retrofitting of homes in the West Midlands for energy efficiency** through the Sustainable Warmth Competition and the Net Zero Neighbourhood programme.
- **Provided £9 million to social enterprise Cornerstone**, to acquire more properties to help families and others in desperate need of accommodation.

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STEELWORKS ROAD



TRIPLE SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY IN THE WEST MIDLANDS: A NEW PRIORITY FOR THE COMBINED AUTHORITY

While we have made excellent progress on house building, and ensuring that the developments we fund include large numbers of affordable housing units, **but like other places, not enough new social housing has been built**. This means that many people who need stable and secure housing, are on housing waiting lists across the region and often stuck in temporary or unsuitable accommodation.

Until now, we hadn't had funding which we could use to tackle this challenge, but as part of the Deeper Devolution Deal agreed last year, **the Government committed to giving the West Midlands Combined Authority control of the Affordable Homes Programme**. This is going to be worth up to £400 million until 2026, and billions more in the years afterwards, and it is the first time a deal like this has been agreed outside London.

We have an opportunity like never before to use this funding to spark a social housing revolution in two areas in particular:

FUNDING HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS TO BUILD SOCIAL HOUSING

- **Use the new funding from the Affordable Homes Programme to triple the pace of social housebuilding in the region** from the current rate of 500-700 new homes per year started by Housing Associations in the Metropolitan WMCA area, to roughly 1,700 per year by 2028.

ESTATE REGENERATION

- Partner with developers, local authorities and housing associations to **regenerate estates, providing better quality housing for existing residents, and increasing the number of homes available**.
- Identify **estate regeneration plans where this approach and Affordable Homes Programme funding could be applied**, such as the Ladywood regeneration in central Birmingham, Spon End in Coventry, Brockmoor in Dudley (building on the Net Zero Neighbourhood programme), Druids Heath in Birmingham, and Heath Town in Wolverhampton (for example the land around Heath Town Baths).

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Maximise the Government investment of up to £400 million through the Affordable Homes Programme** in the region by 2026, and work with Housing Associations to substantially accelerate the rate of social housebuilding.
- **Secure full local devolution of Government affordable home funding after 2026**, to allow the WMCA to fund the development of new affordable housing schemes in the region.
- **Maintain the delivery of our minimum 20% affordable target** for WMCA-funded developments, directly funding new affordable homes for local residents.
- **Develop an ambitious programme of estate regeneration across the region**, alongside local authorities and housing associations, improving homes, retrofitting with energy efficiency measures and increasing housing numbers across the region.

- **Continue the successful Housing First scheme to help those at risk of homelessness**, and secure additional funding from Government for Housing First and potentially for additional follow-on support.
- Build on the innovative Help to Own model, to **develop new innovative funding and ownership models as part of the Affordable Homes Programme** to give people the opportunity to buy their own homes at an affordable price.
- Explore whether the WMCA could **support the development of new high-quality local providers of temporary accommodation and supported accommodation** in the region, potentially by partnering with an institutional investor such as L&G or Aviva.