

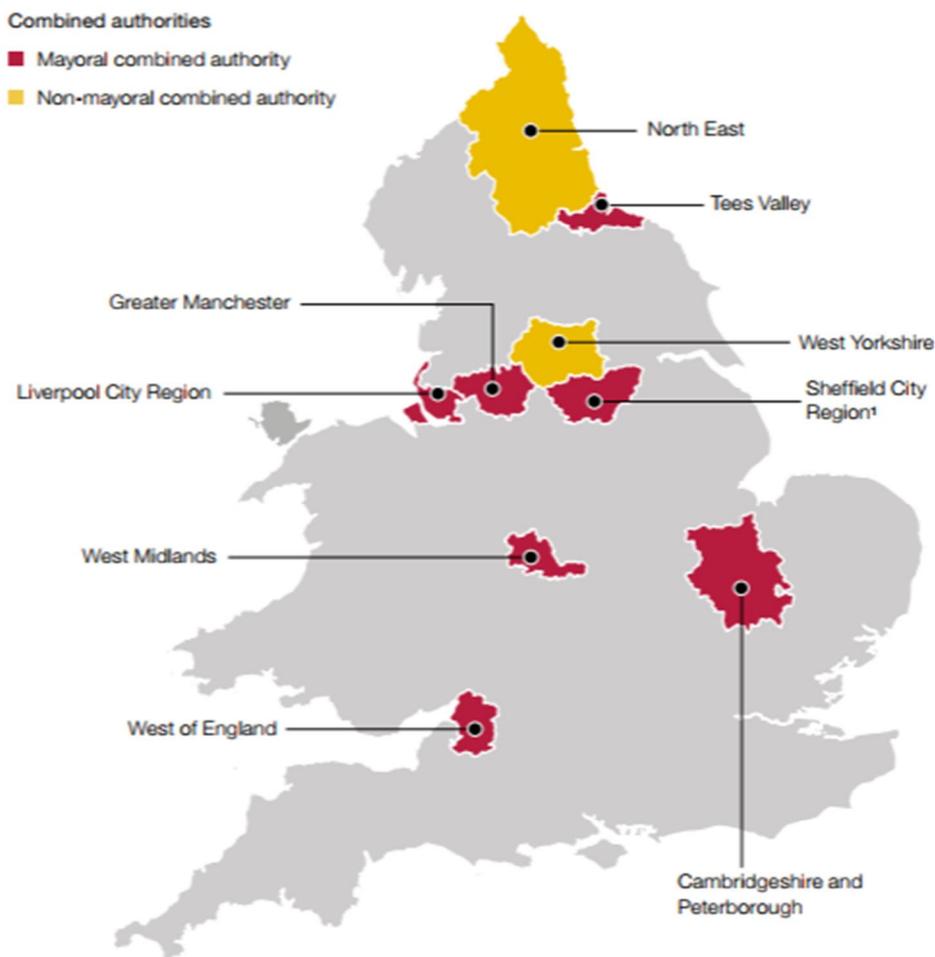
# Combined Authorities and Metro Mayors

## What is a combined authority (CA)?

A combined authority (CA) is a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries. It is far more robust than an informal partnership or even a joint committee. The creation of a CA means that member councils can be more ambitious in their joint working and can take advantage of powers and resources devolved to them from national government. While established by Parliament, CAs are locally owned and have to be initiated and supported by the councils involved.

**Figure 1**

Combined authorities in England, 2017



**Note**

1 Sheffield City Region Combined Authority has a mayoral election planned for 2018.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Office for National Statistics data

- 54 (17%) Number of local authorities (excluding the 33 London boroughs) with full membership of a combined authority
- 22% Percentage of population of England outside London living in a mayoral combined authority area

## Brief background to devolution and the combined authorities

The idea of devolution has excited the imaginations of the political class for a long time even if the public has been less enthusiastic. The turnout rates for the May 2017 Metro Mayor

elections attest to this. Devolution was given a big push under New Labour but John Prescott's North East Devolution Referendum 2004 was decisively rejected by the people (78% of voters were against). The idea was nevertheless pursued by the Coalition. Heseltine's *No Stone Unturned: In pursuit of growth* 2012 report made a reasonable case for the concentration of funding streams and for these to be placed under local political control for greater efficiency and flexibility and to maximise effect.

Fresh impetus for devolution came from the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. Although avoided, Westminster responded to the threat to UK sovereignty by outsourcing more authority through a devolution programme for the English city regions. David Cameron remarked in 2014 that we "need to empower our great cities". The programme gathered momentum under George Osborne, guided by Commercial Secretary to the Treasury, Jim O'Neill, who coined the term the Northern Powerhouse.

### **Combined Authorities formed to date**

Nine combined authorities have been established so far of which six have directly elected mayors in place.

Those with directly elected mayors:

- É [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough \(@CambsPboroCA\)](#)
- É [Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(@Greatermcr\)](#)
- É [Liverpool City Region \(@LivCityRegion\)](#)
- É [Tees Valley Combined Authority \(@TeesValleyCA\)](#)
- É [West Midlands Combined Authority \(@WestMids\\_CA\)](#)
- É [West of England \(@WestofEnglandCA\)](#)

All have three year terms from 2017-2020. Subsequent terms may be longer, similar to the four year term of the Mayor of London.

Yet to elect a mayor:

- [Sheffield City Region \(will hold elections in 2018\) \(@SheffCityRegion\)](#)
- É [North East Combined Authority \(@NorthEastCA\)](#)
- É [West Yorkshire Combined Authority \(@WestYorkshireCA\)](#)

The following combined authorities are reported to be in the making by the National Audit Office:

North Midlands  
Solent  
Cheshire and Warrington  
Lancashire  
North of the Tyne

### **List of Combined Authorities and their constituent local authority members**

*Greater Manchester (Andy Burnham, Lab)*

Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan

*Liverpool City Region (Steve Rotherham, Lab)*

Halton, Knowlsey, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton, Wirral (Warrington and West Lancs are non-constituent associate members)

*Tees Valley (Ben Houchen, Con)*

Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-On-Tees

*West Midlands (Andy Street, Con)*

Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, Wolverhampton

Non-constituent members: Cannock Chase, North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Redditch, Rugby, Shropshire, Stratford upon Avon), Tamworth, Telford and Wrekin, Warwickshire

*West of England (Tim Bowles, Con)*

Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire

*Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (James Palmer, Con)*

Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire, Peterborough

*Sheffield City Region (election scheduled for May 2018)*

Consisting Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster

Devolution Deal deferred because Barnsley and Doncaster would not approve the proposed devolution deal.

No directly elected Mayor yet. This election is scheduled for May 2018 but may be deferred until membership and devolution deal is agreed. Dan Jarvis, MP for Barnsley Central, has just announced he will run for Mayor. The other two known candidates are Richard Caborn, former Sheffield MP and Sheffield councillor Ben Curran. The leaders of the south Yorkshire councils have agreed to a shorter, two-year term mayoral term of office to allow for a ~~One Yorkshire~~ Deal in 2020. See more on this below.

*West Yorkshire Combined Authority*

Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield and York councils and the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

No devolution deal yet (and possibly unlikely). There is also discussion of a ~~One Yorkshire~~ deal but it is hard to imagine authorities like York and Harrogate volunteering to be politically drowned-out by places such as Leeds and Sheffield, and nor for that matter would Sheffield want to concede any power to Leeds.

### **What can they do in relation to planning and housing?**

The individual devolution deals that have been struck with Government are not uniform. Each deal varies to reflect the particular issues of the area and the degree of political leverage each area has: e.g. Greater Manchester has the highest degree of political devolution with controls over policing and fire services.

#### Spatial Development Strategies

All the Devolution Agreements allow for the preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy with the exception of Tees Valley and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (where planning was not part of the devo deals). Before a spatial strategy is adopted it requires the unanimous agreement of all the member authorities.

#### Local Transport Plans and transport spending

Can be overturned by two thirds of the combined authority members.

#### CPO powers

All have CPO powers with the exception of Tees Valley and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This requires agreement of the local authority within which the land is located to be compulsory purchased.

#### Development Corporations

All are able to form development corporations except Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Requires agreement of the local authorities within which the development corporation will be located. Tees Valley so far only authority that has done so . South Tees Development Corp . but this is for employment only.

## Progress to date on housing and planning

### Greater Manchester

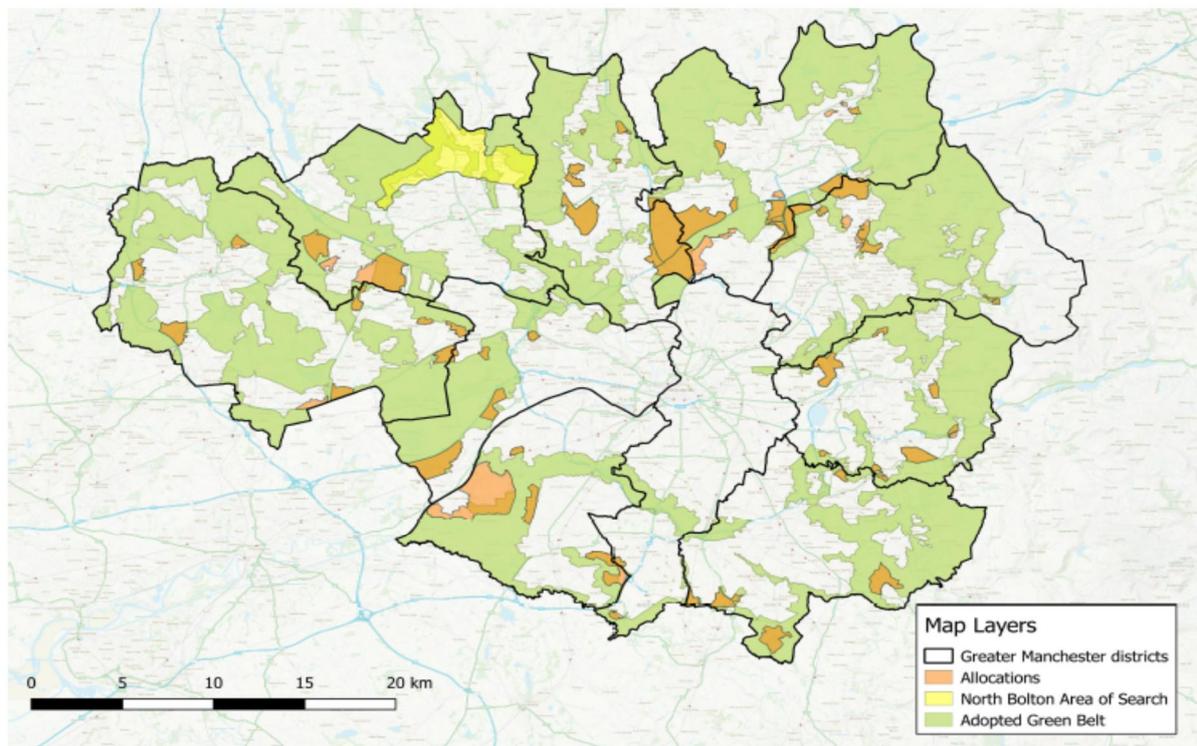
Greater Manchester was one of the most advanced Combined Authorities. The city region has a long history of close collaboration assisted by the strong leadership provided by Howard Bernstein and Richard Leese. Greater Manchester had been the most advanced in terms of spatial plan production for the city region covering the ten local authorities. A draft spatial plan . the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) had been published for consultation in October 2016 and it was anticipated that the plan would be adopted by Spring 2018.

The GMSF was welcomed by the development industry. It was considered to be an ambitious document that provided for 227,000 new homes and 200,000 jobs over the period 2015 to 2035.

The housing supply was to be apportioned in the following way: 24% of the homes would be provided by Manchester City, 15% by Salford, 10% by Wigan, 10% by Trafford, 9% by Stockport, 7% by Bolton, 7% by Rochdale, 6% by Bury, 6% by Oldham, 6% by Tameside. In addition to identifying the housing and employment needs the GMSF was essentially a large scale allocations document that would release significant tracts of green belt land . a net reduction of 8% overall - for housing, employment and transport. Some 30% of the overall housing requirement was planned to be provided on former green belt land.

Diagram below showing green belt releases (in brown) that had been proposed by the draft GMSF.

**Figure 16.1 Proposed Allocations and Green Belt**



The Tory candidate for Metro Mayor, and Leader of Trafford Council, Sean Anstee (now Deputy Mayor for Skills) had been very supportive of the draft GMSF. The new Mayor, Andy Burnham, however, made no secret of his qualms about the draft GMSF. The draft GMSF had generated some 27,000 responses with those objecting focusing chiefly on the question of the green belt release. Mr Burnham had declared that he would undertake a radical re-write of

the GMSF as part of his election campaign, and repeated this promise following the May election.

The development industry was naïve to imagine that the draft GMSF would remain as it was and that the first elected Metro Mayor would not wish to tailor it to reflect his/her political priorities. Following his election, the Mayor declared that he would undertake a review of the GMSF. The draft GMSF has now been effectively abandoned, although this has not been stated explicitly.

Mr Burnham has stated that he wants the revised GMSF to be less developer focused. It will need to provide inclusive growth (a theme that has been developed by the Core Cities Group) rather than green field development serving the needs of more affluent commuters. The focus will shift away from substantial green belt release to focus housing development and regeneration activity on the ten town centres. Much greater attention will also be given to improving the supply of affordable housing, and improving public transport accessibility around the city region as the cost of public transport for young people getting to work can be prohibitive. The development of orbital as well as radial public transport communications are critical. Homelessness is another priority for the Mayor. Mr Burnham donates part of his salary to homelessness causes.

A new GMSF is being prepared. The aim is for this to be ready for consultation in June 2018, but that may be optimistic given the nature of the preparatory work that is required around the town centres. It is unlikely that a new GMSF will be adopted until mid-2020 at the earliest . i.e. beyond Mr Burnham's term of office. The new GMSF is likely to include a housing target that is not too dissimilar to the target in the defunct GMSF. It might align with the Government's proposed method which would indicate a need for a slightly lower requirement of 214,160 homes over the twenty years from 2015-2035. The annual average figures are provided below:

	Draft GMSF	Gov's Method
Greater Manchester	11,360dpa	10,708dpa

Whether green belt release can still be wholly avoided is unlikely. The brownfield registers published at the end of December reveal that GM has capacity for about 100,000 homes on brownfield land . in other words about 50% of its housing requirement. More brownfield capacity can no doubt be tapped, but it is likely that some 30% of the housing need will still need to be provided through green belt release . assuming, that is, that the GMCA will want to meet its OAN in full. Politically, the GM authorities are divided on the question of green belt release. More affluent Stockport is vehemently opposed, but the poorer northern authorities . such as Rochdale, Oldham, Wigan, Bolton and Bury are strongly supportive. Mr Burnham does not appear to be strongly opposed to green belt release but he does want a re-orientation of the GMSF so that the town centres do not decline further.

Deputy Mayor for Housing (and Mayor of Salford) Paul Dennett, is mostly concerned about the supply of affordable housing. The HBF has met with Mr Dennett to discuss how the GLA's fast-track affordable housing approach might be applied across Greater Manchester. It is acknowledged, however, that development values are generally much weaker across large areas of GM, and a minimum percentage for affordable housing, will compete with other priorities, such as S106 and CIL for public transport projects. The development industry is, nevertheless, willing to explore the possibility of fixing a minimum percentage.

The HBF has had a meeting with the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor in December and in January to discuss GMCA's housing priorities. We will work with GMCA on its town centre challenge by bringing developer expertise to devise a policy package that will help to regenerate the town centres. We will also work with the GMCA to explore whether it is possible to copy the Mayor of London's fast-track affordable housing initiative, and we are also working on aligning our work on construction skills apprenticeship training.

A new Housing and Growth Deal is expected soon. It had been expected early in the New Year but has been delayed. This may be because of wrangling over the issue of the franchising of bus services. It is possible that the Government through its Housing and Growth Deal will

expect the GMCA to continue with the OAN in the draft GMSF (227,000) rather than the slightly lower standard assessment output (214,000). This would reflect the deal that the Government struck with Oxfordshire whereby its current, ambitious growth aligned housing target, was endorsed by Government, rather than the lower standard assessment output.

The HBF is keen to work constructively with the GMCA to help it implement its priorities. We have agreed that we would publicly support calls by the GMCA for greater investment in public transport in the region.

### **Liverpool City Region**

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) has faced some difficulties in establishing itself. The Combined Authority is handicapped at the moment by very limited resources and very few dedicated staff. The publicised fall-out between the Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham and Mayor of Liverpool City, Joe Anderson, has further hampered progress, but compromises are gradually being reached.

The Combined Authority is very keen to work more closely with the HBF and the housebuilding industry. In particular the Combined Authority would like to align messaging on issues of mutual interest, producing joint press releases to show how the Combined Authority and the housebuilding industry are working together to help deliver Mayor Rotherham's aim to build 25,000 new homes across the six authorities of the Combined Authority by 2022.

The HBF responded to the new Strategic Housing and Employment Land Method Assessment (SHELMA) consultation in early November. The SHELMA consultation is one of the first components of the evidence base to support the preparation of the Spatial Development Strategy. It is currently agreed that the spatial plan will encompass Warrington and West Lancashire as well as the authorities of the LCRCA. The HBF has argued for higher levels of housing need to align with the City Region's growth ambitions . i.e. a need to provide for 6,122dpa instead of the 5,275dpa advocated by the Combined Authority. This is necessary to justify continued Government investment in the region. The LCRCA is unlikely to adopt the higher, growth related figure. Its favoured scenario of 5,275dpa aligns closely with the Government's Standard method which generates a figure of 5,329dpa. Details of the various projections are provided below:

	<b>2014-based SNPP</b>	<b>Economic Baseline Scenario</b>	<b>Economic Growth Scenario</b>	<b>Proposed OAN</b>	<b>Govt proposed figures</b>
<b>Halton</b>	254	326	565	326	285
<b>Knowsley</b>	280	271	373	280	275
<b>Liverpool</b>	1468	862	1791	1739	1682
<b>Sefton</b>	540	454	587	594	654
<b>St Helens</b>	416	397	855	416	504
<b>Warrington</b>	762	949	973	949	914
<b>West Lancashire</b>	200	221	241	241	212
<b>Wirral</b>	664	536	737	730	803
<b>City Region (+WL)</b>	4584	4016	6122	5275	5329

Although it has published for consultation its assessment of its housing and employment needs to support a new Spatial Development Strategy for the six core authorities and two associate member authorities (West Lancashire and Warrington), it will struggle to progress the spatial development strategy much further without resources. These resources will have to be provided by the member authorities.

It is also likely that the spatial development strategy will be fairly conservative in its housing aims in order to keep the constituent members on board, especially more affluent Wirral. The new Mayor is struggling to impose his authority on the local authority members and will therefore need to adopt a gradual and emollient approach. The LCRCA argues, and the HBF

tends to agree, that the priority is to develop and adopt the Spatial Development Strategy. Higher levels of housing need relating to stronger levels of economic activity could be reflected in a revision to the Spatial Strategy.

Liverpool City and Wirral are both identified by the Government as being on notice for failure to prepare local plans. New housing supply, however, is not a problem in Liverpool. Net additions have remained strong despite not having an up to date local plan.

Affordable housing supply is also less of a political issue across the Combined Authority. The poor quality of homes in the private rental sector is of more concern. Pepper potting affordable housing through S106 agreements is not popular with the RSLs. The LCRCA would like to explore using payments in-lieu to provide shared accommodation for young working adults to help attract and retain them in the area. A housing roundtable on the 23 February will explore these themes. The HBF will be participating.

## **Tees Valley**

The HBF met with the TVCA in January to discuss its housing priorities. Housing supply and affordability are less pressing issues for the area than the question of employment and public transport and this is reflected in the structure of its Devolution Deal. Local plan preparation in the area is good; the housing targets are positive; and the allocations and size type policies are realistic, reflecting the need to attract and retain younger working households in the region.

The delivery of affordable housing is less a priority for the TVCA as the area is one of the most affordable in England. The main housing objective for the TVCA is increasing the supply of intermediate affordable homes. It is judged that this tenure will appeal most to young workers. Those who wish to build-up a transferable equity stake but are not yet in a position, or wish, to become outright owner occupiers. TVCA and Homes England will be experimenting with sites providing this product and they want to work with development partners.

The HBF is in the process of setting-up a housing roundtable with the Mayor to discuss this proposal in more detail.

## **West Midlands**

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is one of the largest and more complex Combined Authorities. It has a core group of seven authorities (Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry and the four Black Country authorities) and a tail of 10 non-constituent authorities. This results in many uncertainties in terms of sub-regional planning and the extent to which the non-constituent authorities are compelled to cooperate.

WMCA is not required to prepare a spatial strategy for the sub-region and the indications are that Mayor Andy Street is unlikely to push for this as part of any future devolution agreement. The WMCA does intend to prepare a spatial expression for its investment decisions through its *Land Delivery Action Plan* (published in September 2017).

Planning is a fraught issue in the West Midlands and there are very major unmet needs across the WMCA area. On the basis of current, adopted, local plans the housing shortfall in Birmingham is 38,000 homes; the shortfall in the Black Country is 22,000 homes; and the shortfall in Coventry is 18,000 although Coventry has reached an agreement with the rest of Warwickshire whereby the full OAN for Coventry and Warwickshire (85,500 over 2011-2031) will be accommodated in full. Accommodating this need (and it falls only slightly under the Government's standard method) will require close cooperation with the non-constituent authorities.

The second devolution deal for the West Midlands published in November 2017 requires the WMCA to provide an ambitious increase in new homes. The Government wants the WMCA to provide 215,000 homes by 2031. This is the level of new housing supply identified by the LEP through its Strategic Economic Plan published in 2015. To assist the Government will provide £6m over three years, beginning in 2017/18, to support a new Mayoral Housing

Delivery Team in the WMCA and make an immediate impact on delivery and longer term supply. The Government wishes to see accelerated delivery and an increase in supply above current local plan targets.

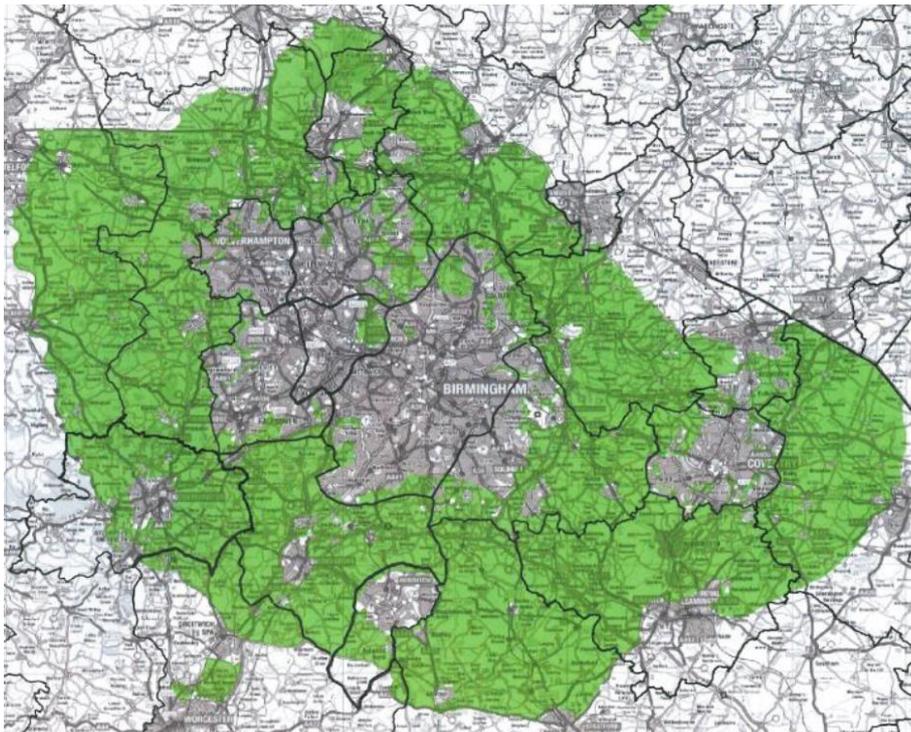
The main focus for planning activity is the *Greater Birmingham and Black Country Growth Study*. This study has been jointly commissioned by the 14 authorities of the combined authority area (that is both core members of the Combined Authority and the associate members) to examine how Birmingham's unmet need of 38,000 homes and the Black Country's unmet need of 22,000 can be accommodated most sustainably. The study is non-binding. It will be down to each local planning authority - constituent and non-constituent members - to decide whether they wish to take forward any of the options. The study is very sensitive as it is likely to involve recommendations for green belt release. It is possible that the study may form part of North Warwickshire's Local plan that is expected towards the end of this month. The HBF was allowed to comment on the initial method statement but attempts to have further meetings to discuss the project have been resisted by the Growth Study Steering Group.

The study was due for publication in early November 2017. The study has been delayed partly because of the implications of the government's standard housing assessment (which overall reduces the housing need for the sub-region, but raises it in some more prosperous authorities like Solihull) but mainly because it will raise political difficulties with how the recommendations of the report will be advanced and addressed. Although the report will be entirely non-binding, the government's consultation *Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places* proposes strengthening the duty to cooperate by requiring local authorities to enter in statements of common ground. This will require local authorities to be far clearer about what they have done or will do to address problems such as unmet housing needs.

It is unlikely that the report will be published before late February 2018.

The development industry and the HBF is struggling to get an audience with the Mayor so that we can understand his housing priorities better. The HBF provided comments on the Mayor's *Land Delivery Action Plan* published in September 2017 although these have not been acknowledged by the WMCA. The plan has been prepared without any input from the private sector. The aim of the *Land Delivery Action Plan* is to guide the WMCA's investment decisions over the next three years. The private sector does not appear to be integral to the West Midlands's housing objectives, even though it identifies a need to increase the number of small developers.

The West Midlands Green Belt



## West of England

The new Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) for the West of England was published in November 2017. The draft plan will plan for 105,500 homes over 20 years compared to the previously proposed number of 90,400 homes but is still lower than the government's standard assessment which indicates that at least 116,000 homes would need to be provided. The Combined Authority has accelerated the production of the JSP (North Somerset is also involved in the JSP although it is not a member of the combined authority) in order to benefit from the government's transition period to the new housing targets. It will not have to plan for the new standard assessed housing targets if it submits its plan before the end of March 2018, or when the new revised NPPF is adopted (which is unlikely to see the light of day before May-June 2018).

The housing numbers are apportioned as follows:

BANES	14,500
Bristol	33,500
North Somerset	25,000
South Gloucs	32,500

Aside from these reservations on the housing numbers, the production of the JSP is a very encouraging development for this critical area of the country (the West of England Combined authority area has the highest GVA per filled job making it the most productive of all Core City LEPs).

The JSP is commendably short. It focuses on the essential housing and employment targets, strategic allocations plus a couple of development management type policies. In this respect, and like the draft GMSF, it differs considerably from the London Plan which is far more detailed and prescriptive. The JSP requires 35% affordable housing from all developments of five or more dwellings. The JSP includes 12 strategic scale development locations including the controversial Buckover Garden Village (3,000 dwellings) on the eastern edge of Thornbury, South Gloucs. The Metro Mayor, Tim Bowles is a former councillor for South Gloucestershire, and some residents have accused him of betrayal.

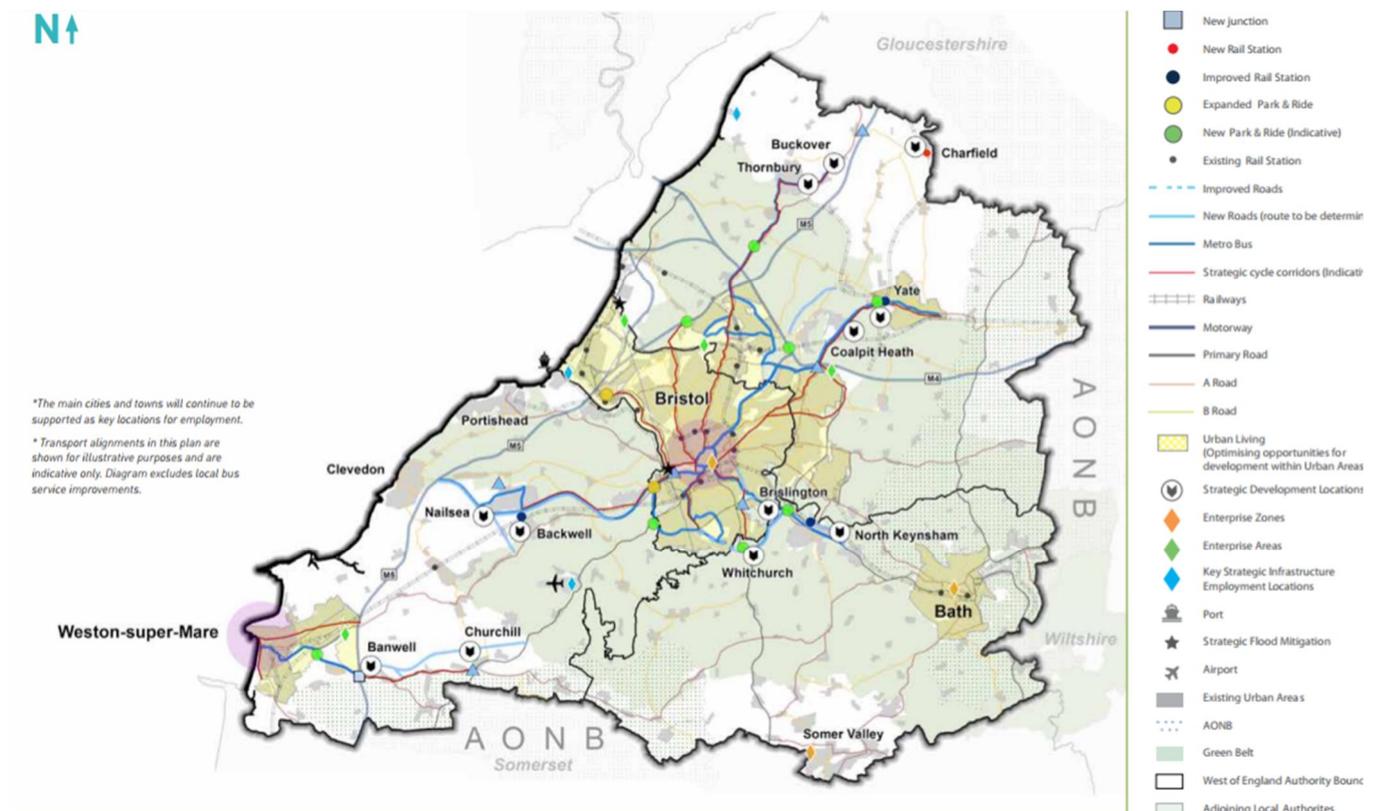


Diagram showing the strategic development locations from the JSP

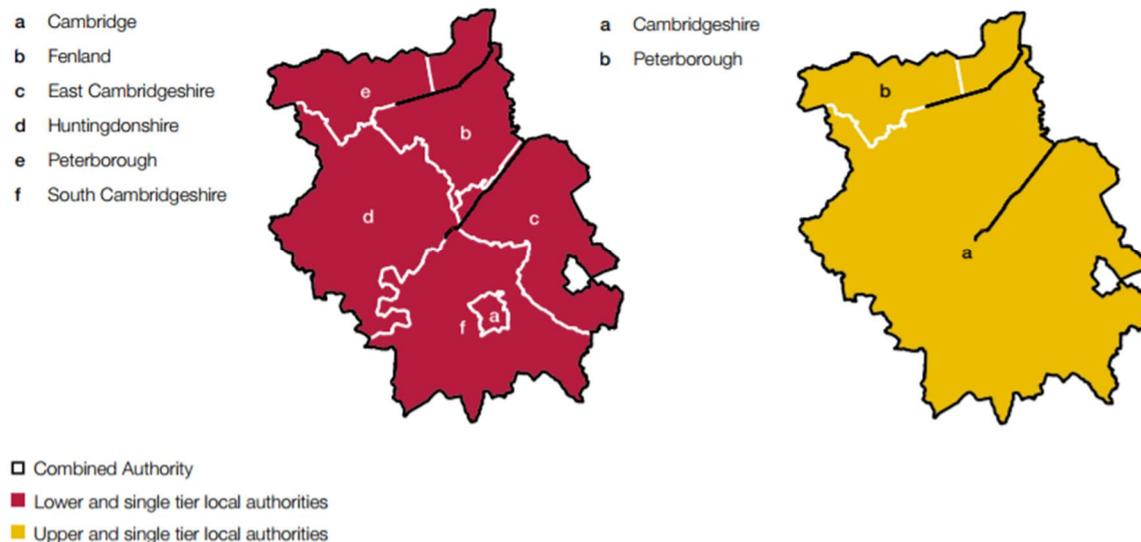
The HBF is still endeavouring to get an audience with the Combined Authority to speak to it about its housing intentions, but without success. Nevertheless, the HBF has been working with Bristol City Council to help shape its approach to affordable housing delivery. The City Council is interested in adopting the Mayor of London's threshold approach to affordable housing delivery. The HBF has been advising the Council on how to do this in such a way that it does not choke-off delivery.

### Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) does not have an agreement to produce a spatial plan but because it is one of the end of the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Growth Corridor this will probably change with the next Devolution Deal to be agreed. This would complement the decision by the Government through its Housing and Growth Deal for Oxfordshire that Oxfordshire authorities should collaborate to produce a joint spatial plan to deliver 100,000 homes over twenty years . a figure that is higher than the Government's standard assessment. (It is possible that Oxfordshire will soon combine to form a Combined Authority).

In the meantime it has been agreed by the CPCA that a non-statutory spatial plan will be prepared. The plan will focus on major additional sustainable and transport-linked sites for housing and jobs, with a focus also on infrastructure needs, affordable housing and assisting growth in disadvantaged areas. Work will be broken down into two phases. Phase one will set out the existing development strategy from adopted and emerging local plans (up to 2031/36), including strategic development locations and dependent strategic infrastructure. The aim is to conclude this work by February 2018. This will establish a baseline for developing a strategic spatial approach for phase two, which will look at growth beyond 2031/2036, possibly to align with the NIC's recommendations for the Growth Corridor up to 2050.

#### Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority



Although affordability issues are acute in parts of the Combined Authority area (especially Cambridge) housing delivery is less of a pressing issue for the Mayor, James Palmer, than resolving the region's transport issues. Transport is his priority since this will enable strategic housing schemes to come forward. The CPCA's transport priorities for the next four years are:

- A10 update
- M11 Extension
- A47 Delivery
- Mass Rapid Transit

A partnership between the Combined Authority and 15 housing associations has also recently been announced to build 40,000 homes over the next 20 years of different tenure types. This will utilise some of the £170m housing grant that was allocated by Government to the Combined Authority. According to reports, the aim is to complete 2,000 homes by 2021.

### **Some tentative conclusions on the devolution agenda and combined authorities**

Combined Authorities have introduced a new tier of government between the national and local. Experience in London shows that there are many positives associated with planning across the larger-than-local scale, but the higher you go, the greater is the loss of detail. Generalisations tend to replace more detailed understanding of local problems.

Whether the devolved powers will result in the boost in the delivery of new homes is uncertain. The provisional view from the development industry - in so far as it has been considered the issue at all - is that this is unlikely in the short to medium term. The Combined Authorities will create an additional layer of complexity in the already complex structure of local government in England. The Combined Authorities could easily get bogged-down with inter-local authority squabbling over power, resources and policy direction (e.g. Liverpool and Sheffield) as well as with arguments with central government over the devolution of powers. All sides can blame the other for inaction.

There also does appear to be a problem of short-termism. The Combined Authorities are preoccupied with lobbying government for money to implement their priorities. While this is understandable, we need to see a much stronger commitment to strategic planning beyond the next three years.

It is also unclear to what extent devolution is driven by a desire or tendency in Westminster to outsource authority - to absolve itself of responsibility for the housing crisis and other devolved matters. There is a concern in the private housebuilding sector that devolution may result in a very fragmented approach to planning and housing policy in England. Some commentators consider that this should be the case.

Nevertheless there have been some positive developments. The production of the Joint Spatial Plan by the West of England; the possibility of a Greater Manchester Spatial Framework by 2020; and the possibility of the publication of spatial plans for the Liverpool City Region and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, is encouraging. This could create a framework for spatial planning at the city region level across England. The publication of a new round of Housing and Growth Deals for the Combined Authorities in 2018 may also reveal much about Government's ambitions for planning and housing, as the recent Deal for Oxfordshire demonstrated.

While there have been some positive developments, the overall verdict from the development industry for the time being is that a combination of local political conflict among the constituent members plus short-termism is delaying important long-term strategic planning decisions. This is particularly the fear for developers operating in Greater Manchester and in the West Midlands combined authority areas. Delivering housing at the scale required in all the combined authority areas will require substantial green field release as well as brownfield development, but with the possible exception of the West of England, few coordinated spatial plans will be ready before 2021-22 at the earliest. The promise of the production of spatial plans may be used as an excuse by constituent local authority members to delay decisions on strategic scale allocations.

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