

West Midlands Combined Authority Assessment of the Potential for Additional Brownfield Land Development Capacity

Purpose of the Study

The Study was commissioned by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and produced by Chilmark Consulting. The aim of the Study was to prepare an independent assessment of the brownfield land capacity for housing in the Black Country. The final Report was submitted by WMCA to the Black Country local authorities to inform the preparation of the subsequent stages of the Black Country Plan.

Scope of the Study

What the Study does	What the Study does not do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on whether additional brownfield land and buildings can be identified to augment the supply in the Plan. • Review the densities proposed in the Regulation 18 Plan. • To review the 'discount rates' for the non-delivery of sites given past trends and assumptions regarding viability and deliverability. • Advise on whether additional development could be accommodated in the Strategic Centres, town and district centres and smaller local centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate specific sites for development. • Express significant concerns over the overall approach used to assess brownfield land capacity in the Black Country. • Identify such a quantum of additional brownfield land capacity which would enable needs to be met in full on brownfield sites.

Key Findings of the Study

- The approach used to select brownfield sites for development in the Regulation 18 Plan is appropriate. The assessment of other brownfield sites which have not been identified in the Plan is also appropriate.
- The density assumptions used in the Black Country Plan are reasonable.
- Some further explanation is required for the approach to how the non-implementation rates of some employment land to be developed for housing are calculated. The Study suggests

that a reduction in the non- implementation rate currently used by the Black Country Authorities will lead to additional capacity. However, the potential capacity to be derived from this in the context of the overall Black Country shortfall is unlikely to be significant.

- The approach used to identify ‘windfall’ development – sites which are not specifically identified in the Plan, but which will come forward over the Plan period is appropriate.
- Some lower quality employment sites could be redeveloped for housing through a more interventionist strategy. However, given the challenges of land assembly, viability and the need to support the existing and potential business base of the area. The Study acknowledged that the experience of the delivery of the current Black Country Core Strategy has shown that the total housing capacity generated from such sites is likely to be limited.
- The Study also acknowledged the key barriers to unlocking such challenging sites in terms of landowner/occupier intentions and the lack of viability for re-development that is prevalent across much of the Black Country.
- The four Strategic Centres are identified as key drivers for growth and locations which offer opportunities for change and repurposing. Opportunities associated with the repurposing of existing vacant and under-utilised commercial floorspace, especially retail, alongside the potential offered by alternative uses of lower quality employment sites and a proactive approach towards mixed-use development could help to drive new capacity for residential uses. The Study acknowledged that the Black Country Authorities were undertaking further work to review additional capacity to refresh their urban capacity study for the next stage of the Black Country Plan (Regulation 19).
- Furthermore, opportunities for new housing development within the 17 Black Country Tier Two centres, should be explored in further detail as part of a refresh of the Black Country Urban Capacity Study to inform the next stage of the Black Country Plan (Regulation 19).

Implications for the Black Country Plan

- The outcomes from the Study have informed the work programme for the Black Country Authorities as they progress with the next stage of the Plan preparation. This will be used to inform the refresh of the Black Country Urban Capacity Study to update land availability over the Black Country Plan period.
- It is anticipated that some additional capacity will be identified through this work. However, this will not be of a significant scale to close out the shortfall of some 28,000 homes and 210ha of employment land which cannot be accommodated within the Black Country’s administrative area