Birmingham Development Plan

DUTY TO CO-OPERATE STATEMENT

October 2013

What is the Duty to Co-operate?

1. Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 amended the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to introduce a "Duty to Co-operate" for local planning authorities and other public bodies. As a result, local planning authorities are required to work with neighbouring authorities and other prescribed bodies when preparing their development plan documents for 'strategic matters'. In particular, the duty:

    - Relates to sustainable development or use of land that would have a significant impact on at least two local planning areas or on a planning matter that falls within the remit of a County Council;
    - Requires that Councils set out planning policies to address such issues;
    - Requires that Councils and public bodies to 'engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis' to develop strategic policies; and
    - Requires Councils to consider joint approaches to plan making.

2. Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 states that the Duty to Co-operate applies to Local Planning Authorities, County Councils and other prescribed bodies (these include the Environment Agency, English Heritage, Natural England, Civil Aviation Authority, Homes and Communities Agency. Primary Care Trusts, Office of the Rail Regulator, Centro - the Integrated Transport Authority and the Highways Agency. Local Planning Authorities should also have regard to Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships.

3. On the 27th March 2012, the Government issued new national planning guidance for England in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This reinforces that public bodies have a duty to co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to 'strategic priorities'. Subsequently, local planning authorities are required to work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across administrative boundaries are properly co-ordinated and reflected in development plan documents. The NPPF adds that local planning authorities will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively cooperated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for examination.

4. Local planning authorities are expected to include reference to activities that fall under the Duty to Co-operate as part of their Annual Monitoring Report and to prepare a background paper for public examinations to demonstrate they have fully complied with the Duty to Co-operate (including full details of the process of engagement and co-operation and the bodies involved, along with the outcome of this process, including any agreements secured or areas of non-agreement. This document summarises the steps taken to date in relation to the Birmingham Development Plan.

What the Duty to Cooperate replaces

5. Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) provided regional level planning frameworks for the regions of England outside London.

6. RSS emerged from the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 becoming the strategic level plan charged with informing local development frameworks (LDFs). These were required to be in 'general conformity' with an RSS, which was a statutory, legal document. Prior to the 2004 legislation all types of regional and sub-regional planning guidance did not have statutory status.

7. The Duty to Co-operate replaces the Regional Spatial Strategies for the purposes of strategic and cross-boundary infrastructure planning.

Why the Duty to Cooperate is particularly important to Birmingham

8. Birmingham is the largest of the UK's core cities with a sphere of influence that extends well beyond its administrative boundaries. Historically, Birmingham has acted as 'an engine of growth' at the heart of a wider hinterland. For many years this has meant that the growth pressures arising in Birmingham have been too high for them all to be accommodated within its administrative boundary.

9. The consequence of this position is that Birmingham has for many years been dependent on adjoining authorities to help meet its development needs which have been reflected by the time and effort to ensure these interests are effectively dealt with. Past migration flows of population are a good indicator of these important cross boundary relationships as illustrated by Table 1:

Table 4.1 - The Destination of Gross Intra-Regional Out-Migration Flows from Birmingham 2000/01 to 2010/11

Destination	Percent
Rest of GBSLEP	41.2
Black Country	37
Coventry & Warwickshire LEP	10.9
The Marches LEP	3.8
Rest of Stoke & Staffordshire LEP (i.e. excl those Districts falling within the GBSLEP)	3.7
Rest of Worcestershire LEP (i.e. excl those Districts falling within the GBSLEP)	3.5

Source: ONS (NHSCR, Patient Register Data and HESA)

During the period 2000/01 to 2010/11 there was a net outflow of c75,500 people from Birmingham into the other areas within the wider West Midlands.

Birmingham City Council's approach to the Duty to Co-operate

10. In undertaking work across administrative boundaries the City Council seeks to ensure best endeavours are made to collaborate and where possible agree an appropriate way forward. It is necessary to recognise that mutual agreement may not always be possible but in those circumstances it is important to narrow the scope of the differences and clearly set out the understanding of the respective positions.

There are two perspectives to work that the City Council undertakes on the Duty to Co-operate:

1. Actions in relation to the production of the Birmingham Development Plan including how we work with neighbouring authorities in the production of their development plans.
2. Working collaboratively across local authority boundaries.

Each of these perspectives is considered in more detail below.

Actions in relation to the production of the Birmingham Development Plan including how we work with neighbouring authorities in the production of respective development plans.

Neighbouring Councils

11. Neighbouring Councils have been involved through the usual consultation processes in the preparation of the emerging Birmingham Development Plan. As the scale of the potential housing shortfall in Birmingham emerged during 2012, opportunities to inform adjoining authorities of this position were taken at regular meetings as explained below.

12. In addition to this, in August 2012, the City Council took the step of writing to all the local planning authorities in the metropolitan area, the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and North Warwickshire formally notifying each authority of the position and highlighting the possible need for higher levels of housing in their areas to address an emerging shortfall in Birmingham. Bi-lateral meetings to discuss the position and the possible implications have been held with most of the authorities and will continue to take place as needed. Meetings held are often able to consider not only the content of the Birmingham Development Plan but also the development plan of the adjoining authority.

13. Follow-up letters reflecting the progress made were sent in January 2013 and July 2013. The latter also requested adjoining authorities to highlight any other issues that they felt required consideration under the Duty to Co-operate. This prompted further discussions with Staffordshire and Warwickshire County Councils on infrastructure, waste and minerals issues.

14. The key outcome from this process has been agreement amongst the GBSLEP authorities to commission a Strategic Housing Needs Study to consider the scale of future housing requirements that cannot be met within the local authority area within which they arise, and to identify options regarding where additional development land could be provided to meet any such requirements. This work is about to commence and is programmed for completion at the end of February 2014. The Study is commissioned to cover the GBSLEP area but will also consider adjoining areas which comprise part of the relevant housing market area(s) as appropriate. At the time this statement was drafted the Black Countries authorities have expressed a desire to participate within the study.

15. The City Council is consulted as a matter of course by neighbouring authorities in the preparation of their own development plans.

16. Under the Duty to Co-operate these consultations and any related discussions are very important not only to ensure the integrity of the plans themselves but also to ensure that the interests of Birmingham, and in particular any requirements for cross-boundary provision of development or infrastructure such as new housing or transport network development are taken fully into account, thus helping ensure the soundness of the Birmingham Development Plan and adjoining plans.

17. A summary of the position in relation to all development plans produced was reported to the Cabinet Member for Development, Jobs and Skills in October 2012, and a general position agreed, as follows

18. Where work on development plans of adjoining districts is well-advanced the City Council has taken the view there is little to be gained through representations questioning soundness where the level of growth is broadly in-line with either the ONS 2008-based household projections or the proposals in the incomplete Phase 2 Revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Review. While a significant potential under-provision of housing in Birmingham has emerged in the last few years, the view has been taken that this is a matter that can be effectively handled through subsequent reviews of plans, subject to this point being acknowledged by the relevant local planning authority and where possible reflected in the wording of the plan. The City Council has taken this approach thus far in relation to the Redditch, Solihull, Tamworth, North Warwickshire, Lichfield and Tamworth plans.

19. In relation to the authorities in the GBSLEP the future level and distribution of growth will be considered as part of the work on the emerging Strategic Spatial Framework Plan (see below). The key exception to this approach has been in relation to Coventry and some of the other Districts in the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP area where a serious under-provision of housing appeared to be emerging.

20. The following table summarises the current position in relation to individual authorities. The Duty-to –Co-operate is a continuing process and so in some cases there are on-going discussions, and the position will move forward. A further update will be provided in the Council's next Annual Monitoring Report.

Local Authority	Meeting(s) held	Current Position
Bromsgrove	* Bi-lateral meetings held * GBSLEP Planning Group and Spatial Planning Group * Steering group meetings for the GBSLEP Strategic Housing Needs Study * Meeting of Worcestershire Planning Officers Group	Bromsgrove have expressed concerns over the possibility of some of Birmingham's housing requirement being satisfied outside the City boundary. Bromsgrove is part of the GSLEP and will be covered by the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study which will address this issue. The City Council has requested Bromsgrove to include in their emerging Local Plan a commitment to an early review in the event that it is concluded that provision to help meet Birmingham's needs should be made in Bromsgrove. Further discussions may need to take place in the context of Bromsgrove's Pre-submission Plan which has just been published.
Cannock Chase	* Bi-lateral meeting held * GBSLEP Planning Group and Spatial Planning Group * The City Council attended the public examination into the Cannock Chase Local Plan No 1	No representations made to date on the Birmingham Development Plan Exchange of correspondence has led to an agreed approach to addressing the potential housing shortfall in Birmingham. This is reflected in the pre-submission version of the Cannock Chase Local Plan No.1 The City Council has confirmed its support for this approach at the recent Examination into Cannock's Plan. The area will be covered by the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study
Coventry	* Two bi-lateral discussions held as side meetings to	Coventry have questioned Birmingham's housing requirement on the grounds that it is too high and is

	Duty to Cooperate Task & Finish Group * Meeting of CSWAPO * West Midlands Joint Committee & support arrangements including the Duty to Cooperate Group * The City Council were represented at the Inception meeting into the current Coventry and Warwickshire SHMA * The City Council attended the public examination into the Coventry Core Strategy	undeliverable. The City Council questioned the soundness of Coventry's Plan on the grounds that the level of housing proposed fell well short of the level required to meet the 2008-based household projections. This Coventry Core Strategy has subsequently been withdrawn on the advice of the Inspector and a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment is being undertaken for Coventry and Warwickshire. Further discussions may be required in relation to this.
Dudley	* West Midlands Joint Committee & support arrangements including the Duty to Cooperate Group	Discussions with the Black Country Districts have focussed on seeking technical agreement on the potential surplus of housing capacity in the Black Country which could help meet Birmingham's needs. A figure of 3,100 has been identified. The Black Country authorities have expressed a desire to participate with the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study
East Staffordshire	* Bi-lateral meeting held * GBSLEP Planning Group and Spatial Planning Group	East Staffordshire is located some distance from Birmingham and East Staffordshire have not commented on the Birmingham Development Plan. The potential future scale of growth and its relationship to the Birmingham shortfall will be dealt with by the LEP Strategic Spatial Framework. The area will be covered by the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study
Lichfield	* Bi-lateral meetings held * GBSLEP Planning Group and Spatial Planning Group	Lichfield have raised concerns over the sustainability of green belt housing and employment development options in Birmingham and their potential impact on Lichfield.

	* Steering group meetings for the GBSLEP Strategic Housing Needs Study * The City Council attended the Lichfield Local Plan Public Hearing.	These issues have been addressed through additional evidence-based work. An exchange of correspondence has led to an agreed approach to addressing the potential housing shortfall in Birmingham through a reference in the Lichfield Local Plan. The City Council has confirmed its support for this approach at the recent Examination into the Lichfield Plan. The area will be covered by the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study
North Warwickshire	* Bi-lateral meetings held * The City Council attended the preliminary hearing into the North Warwickshire Core Strategy * Meeting of CSWAPO	North Warwickshire have pointed to the fact that their area has not previously been identified as a potential location for Birmingham 'overspill' The City Council has made representations on the North Warwickshire Pre-submission and revised Pre-submission Plan seeking inclusion of a reference to Birmingham's housing shortfall and the need for further joint work to address the issues and outcome to be reflected in the next review of the development plan. The Council has also put this point to the Examination, which is currently suspended pending the completion of additional technical work. North Warwickshire have agreed to co-operate with the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study.
Redditch	* Bi-lateral meetings held * GBSLEP Planning Group and Spatial Planning Group	No representations made to date on the Birmingham Development Plan There is a shortage of land within Redditch to meet housing needs arising within Redditch due to its tightly drawn boundary and therefore no potential for it to contribute to meeting Birmingham's needs. An exchange of correspondence has led to an agreed wording on this issue for

		inclusion in the Redditch Local Plan No 4. The Pre-submission version of this plan has just been published. The area will be covered by the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study
Solihull	* Bi-lateral meetings held * West Midlands Joint Committee & support arrangements including the Duty to Cooperate Group * GBSLEP Planning Group and Spatial Planning Group * The City Council attended the reopened public examination into the Main Modifications stage of the Solihull Local Plan * Steering group meetings for the GBSLEP Strategic Housing Needs Study	Solihull have raised issues over the implications of Birmingham being unable to meet its full housing requirement within the city boundary and have advocated that this issue should be addressed through the GBSLEP. A form of words has been agreed for inclusion in the current Solihull Local Plan to deal with this issue and the City Council has expressed its support for this to the Examination. Solihull will be covered by the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study
Sandwell	* Bi-lateral meeting held * Meeting with Black Country Districts on 17 October 2012 * West Midlands Joint Committee & support arrangements including the Duty to Cooperate Group	Discussions with the Black Country Districts have focussed on seeking technical agreement on the potential surplus of housing capacity in the Black Country which could help meet Birmingham's needs. A figure of 3,100 has been identified. The Black Country authorities have agreed to co-operate with the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study.
South Worcestershire	* Bi-lateral meeting held * Meeting of Worcestershire Planning Officers Group * The City Council	Malvern Hills have supported the principle that Birmingham should make provision within its boundaries for as much of its housing needs as possible. No responses have been received from other South Worcestershire Councils.

	attended the stage 1 of the public examination into the South Worcestershire Development Plan	The City Council has not at this stage identified South Worcestershire as a location which would be appropriate for significant housing provision to meet Birmingham's requirements. At the recent public examination the City Council supported the level of housing provision proposed. The City Council has, however, raised issues over the imbalance between the levels of housing and employment land proposed for South Worcestershire at the Local Plan examination and the detailed wording in relation the proposed Worcester Technology Park.
Staffordshire	* Bi-lateral meeting held	Minerals, Waste and Infrastructure issues have been raised. The infrastructure issues relate primarily to transportation and ongoing discussions are taking place in relation to this. The City Council believes that the Pre-submission Birmingham Development Plan addresses the minerals and waste issues, but further discussions will be held to confirm this.
Tamworth	* Bi-lateral meetings held * GBSLEP Planning Group and Spatial Planning Group	Tamworth have raised concerns over green belt development in Birmingham in terms of its scale and potential impact on infrastructure in Staffordshire. These issues have been addressed through additional evidence-based work and ongoing discussions with Staffordshire in relation to transportation.. Tamworth's boundaries are drawn tightly and it has difficulty meeting its own housing needs so it is unlikely that it will be in a position to raise the level of growth to help address the Birmingham shortfall. A position statement was provided to

		the Tamworth Local Plan at the Examination Inspector's Request – but the Plan has subsequently been withdrawn. The area will be covered by the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study
Walsall	* Meeting with Black Country Districts on 17 October 2012 * West Midlands Joint Committee & support arrangements including the Duty to Cooperate Group	Discussions with the Black Country Districts have focussed on seeking technical agreement on the potential surplus of housing capacity in the Black Country which could help meet Birmingham's needs. A figure of 3,100 has been identified. The Black Country authorities have agreed to co-operate with the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study.
Warwickshire	* Bi-lateral meeting held * Meeting of CSWAPO	Minerals, Waste and Infrastructure issues have been raised. The infrastructure issues relate primarily to transportation and ongoing discussions are taking place in relation to this. The City Council believes that the Pre-submission Birmingham Development Plan addresses the minerals and waste issues, but further discussions will be held to confirm this.
Wolverhampton	* Meeting with Black Country Districts on 17 October 2012 * West Midlands Joint Committee & support arrangements including the Duty to Cooperate Group	Discussions with the Black Country Districts have focussed on seeking technical agreement on the potential surplus of housing capacity in the Black Country which could help meet Birmingham's needs. A figure of 3,100 has been identified. The Black Country authorities have agreed to co-operate with the GBSLEP Housing Needs Study
Worcestershire	* GBSLEP Spatial Planning Group	No Issues identified.
Wyre Forest	* Bi-lateral meetings held 4 October 2012 * GBSLEP Planning	No Issues raised by Wyre Forest. The area will be covered by the GBSLEP.

	Group and Spatial Planning Group * Steering group meetings for the GBSLEP Strategic Housing Needs Study	Housing Needs Study Since Wyre Forest have an adopted plan it is recognised that any review of that plan will deal with the outcome of this Study.
Other authorities	* Bi-lateral meetings held with Stratford-on-Avon, Stafford and Telford & Wrekin Councils * Meeting of CSWAPO	Potentially includes South Staffordshire and Warwick District Councils. Liaison will occur as and when it is deemed to be necessary.

Prescribed Bodies

21. As part of the plan preparation process and now as part of the Duty to Co-operate the Council is required to consult and engage with a range of Prescribed Bodies in order to help ensure that a sound development plan is prepared. This section summarises the action that has been taken to meet this requirement and highlights where future discussions may be required.

Organisation	Consultation/Meetings	Current Position
Centro	Consulted on Issues and Options, Draft Core Strategy and Higher Growth Option stages. Regular contact and joint working. The City Council is part of the third local transport plan for the metropolitan area	Joint working on public transport issues continuing. No fundamental outstanding issues
Civil Aviation Authority	Consulted on Issues and Options, Draft Core Strategy and Higher Growth Option stages	No issues identified.
English Heritage	Consulted on Issues and Options, Draft Core Strategy and Higher Growth Option stages. Regular contact through Historic Landscape Characterisation process.	Detailed issues addressed through additional evidence work. No fundamental issues outstanding, but continued liaison will take

		place
Environment Agency	Consulted on Issues and Options, Draft Core Strategy and Higher Growth Option stages. Follow-up meetings held. Regular contact through for example SFRA process	Issues raised in relation to floodrisk, water quality, waste management and green infrastructure. Policies have been revised to reflect these concerns. Continuing liaison will be required.
Highways Agency	Consulted on Issues and Options, Draft Core Strategy and Higher Growth Option stages. Regular contact and joint working.	Issues exist over the impact of growth proposals on the motorway and primary route network. Joint work is continuing in relation to this.
Homes and Communities Agency	Consulted on Issues and Options, Draft Core Strategy and Higher Growth Option stages. Regular involvement particularly through Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment process where HCA are part of Steering Group	No issues identified.
Natural England	Consulted on Issues and Options, Draft Core Strategy and Higher Growth Option stages. Natural England have funded subsequent Green Infrastructure work which has fed into the Plan.	Continued liaison required but no fundamental issues identified.
Office of the Rail Regulator	Not previously consulted	No known issues. No fundamental issues raised by Network Rail
Primary Care	Consulted on Issues and	No issues raised by

Trusts	Options, Draft Core Strategy and Higher Growth Option stages. The PCTs were abolished on March 31st 2013.	PCTs prior to their abolition. However continued liaison with the health sector is important and the City Council will work with Public Health to secure this.

Working Collaboratively across Local Authority Boundaries

Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP)

22. Following the establishment of the GBSLEP a Planning Group representing the nine local planning authorities covering the LEP area was established in late 2011 initially to address concerns that the planning system was operating in a manner that was holding back necessary development important to bring about growth and prosperity in the LEP area.

23. Reports from the Planning Group highlighted overall that the planning system within the LEP was not performing as badly as was being portrayed, at the national level and it identified specific areas for improvement which were duly incorporated into a Planning Charter, a set of pledges and an Action/Enhancement Plan and agreed by the Board.

24. Local Planning Authorities within the LEP area have been preparing their Local Plans and Core Strategies. Alongside the individual plans, the need for an awareness of strategic planning matters relevant to the LEP area has been recognised. The development of the LEP Economic Strategy has highlighted the existence of a number of key LEP-wide drivers/factors which need to be considered in any growth strategy as have issues which require a strategic approach.

25. Within the GBSLEP area there are a number of important strategic issues relevant to planning and the development and use of land. The future scale and distribution of housing, the infrastructure to support new and enlarged communities, the demand for and provision of employment opportunities including major employment sites, transport infrastructure and services, energy and water resources etc. Some, but not all, of these matters are being addressed by cooperation between the constituent local planning authorities but the view is that a truly strategic approach needs to be taken as the GBSLEP moves forward.

The LEP Board has endorsed the preparation of a Spatial Plan

26. For Recovery and Growth(SPRG). In requesting the preparation of the SPRG the Board agreed the following guiding principles:

- To sit alongside and provide the spatial expression of the GBSLEP Economic Strategy.
- Be short, 12 pg + illustrations.
- Be an informal plan based on collaborative working.
- Provide a helpful context for individual local development plans - working alongside existing plans and subsequent reviews (subsidiarity, not a reinvention of the RSS).
- Long term, look ahead 20+ years looking at the scale and distribution of growth.
- Provide a focus for relationships with adjoining LEPs.
- Be subject to continuous review and update.

27. Work on developing the SPRG is on-going and has evolved from a launch event held in February 2012. Since then a series of engagement events have been held across the LEP. The events focused on 5 key themes – urban structure and settlement patterns, homes and communities, the economy and growth, connectivity and sustainable living and the environment. The outcomes of the events fed into a scenario testing phase and, in April 2013 a conference was held to publicise the work of the groups and to assist in drawing together a draft version of the SPRG for consideration by the LEP Board. This draft is now out to consultation and is available from the following url: www.centreofenterprise.com/sprgcon/

28. Alongside the work on developing the SPRG the GBSLEP Spatial Planning Group has also taken on a responsibility to help facilitate operation of the Duty to Co-operate. As part of this local planning authorities are encouraged to discuss their emerging plans with the other Districts at key stages in the plan preparation process. Birmingham City Council presented its latest consultation document on 'Planning for a Growing Population' at a meeting of the Spatial Planning Group. Representatives from neighbouring LEPs are invited to meetings of the Spatial Planning Group.

Metropolitan Area including the Duty to Cooperate Group

29. Since local government re-organisation in 1986 the West Midlands Metropolitan Districts have worked closely through the West Midlands Joint Committee and its associated arrangements. These arrangements have co-ordinated cross-boundary strategic planning for more than a quarter of a century. Following the introduction of the Duty to Co-operate a separate group specifically to examine the issues raised by the new power was established. This group has the specific remit to try to help Districts comply with the new duty through collaborative working.

30. In response to recent changes to the planning system, the WMJC was concerned that without the RSS there was a risk that its strategy for urban renaissance would be potentially put at-risk. As a consequence the WMJC endorsed the Strategic Policy Framework for the West Midlands Metropolitan Area in June 2012. The purpose of the Strategic Framework is to:

- Enable a smooth transition between abolition of RSS, and up to date Local Plans and effective wider Duty to Cooperate mechanisms being in place
- Demonstrate commitment to ongoing collaboration in order to meet Duty to Cooperate responsibilities within the Metropolitan Area
- Advise those bodies subject to the Duty to Cooperate and other stakeholders, including Local Enterprise Partnerships, that Metropolitan Authorities remain committed to urban renaissance and are responding to the Government's growth agenda
- Act as a material consideration in plan making and development management decisions; and
- Provide a strategic spatial context for the implementation of the third West Midlands Local Transport Plan.

Elsewhere the Strategic Framework:

- Sets urban renaissance in the context of the Localism Act and wider Government policy, such as the Local Growth White Paper and Treasury Plan for Growth;
- Identifies urban renaissance guiding principles,
- Identifies shared policy priorities relating to key areas such as housing and employment land; and
- Identifies current and emerging spatial priorities in each core strategy / local plan area, and explains that effective implementation of urban renaissance relies on a redistribution of growth within the Metropolitan Area, as well as the need for some Shire Districts to accommodate a reasonable level of out-migration

31. The Duty to Co-operate Task Group was established in June 2012. This group meets on a monthly basis.

While the early meetings of the group concentrated mostly on 'process' issues individual authorities are now encouraged to present key stages of plan preparation to the group so there is scope for discussion on any matters of concern relating to cross-boundary issues. In relation to the Birmingham Development Plan such a presentation was made on the Growth Options consultation at the November 2012 meeting. The current agendas to carry this through effectively into more focussed and harder-edged cross-boundary working on issues such as cross-boundary housing requirements. This includes making joint representations on neighbouring plans to ensure that the approach on urban renaissance is not prejudiced.

West Midlands Planning Officers Group (WMPOG)

32. The West Midlands Planning Officers Group is the only forum in which local planning authorities continue to meet at the regional level. When the West Midlands Regional Assembly was disbanded in 2010 the former Regional Planning Officers Group took the view that planning professionals should continue to meet on a quarterly basis so that strategic matters of mutual interest and concern could be discussed on a continuing basis and key networks of contacts maintained. WMPOG was the first cross-boundary grouping of local planning authorities in the West Midlands to consider the Duty to Co-operate and this is also a standing agenda item.

33. All unitary and metropolitan district authorities are invited to the meeting together with a representative District Council in two-tier areas. Representatives from key partner organisations such the LEPs, Environment Agency, business community, CPREand academia are also represented on the group.

34. Another important function of WMPOG is to oversee the joint monitoring that takes place in the West Midlands, building on the long legacy of joint monitoring including that carried out by the former Regional Planning Body. The joint monitoring results in the production of annual statistics on development-related matters across the former West Midlands region. The material is published annually at District and LEP levels comparing the data from the latest year to the average over the preceding decade.