

REPORT TO CABINET

30 October 2019

Subject:	Brandhall Golf Course – Potential Options for Future Use
Presenting Cabinet Member:	Councillor Yvonne Davies – Chair of Built Facilities Strategy Members Steering Group Councillor Maria Crompton Cabinet Member for Safer Communities
Director:	Executive Director – Neighbourhoods – Alison Knight Director – Housing and Communities – Alan Caddick
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Key Decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member Approval and Date:	Leader of the Council Councillor Crompton
Director Approval:	Dr Alison Knight
Reason for Urgency:	Urgency provisions do not apply
Exempt Information Ref:	Exemption provisions do not apply
<u>Ward Councillor (s)</u> Consulted (if applicable):	Ward members have been consulted
Scrutiny Consultation Considered?	Scrutiny consultation has not been undertaken
Contact Officer(s):	Gemma Ryan Business Manager – Sport & Leisure gemma_ryan@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet consider the findings and recommendations of the Built Facilities Strategy Members Steering Group, as follows;

- (1) that Cabinet be recommended to close Brandhall Golf Course and club house;
- (2) that the consultation with local residents, in respect to options for the land, commence as soon as possible.

Subject to (1) and (2) above, Cabinet is recommended to:-

- (3) authorise the Executive Director – Neighbourhoods to undertake all requisite steps necessary to ensure effective consultation with regards to the proposed closure and alternative uses of the Brandhall Golf Course site as set out in the report.
- (4) following consultation, consider a more detailed report on future use of the site.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Built Facilities Strategy Members Steering Group to the Cabinet, regarding the future use of Brandhall Golf Course and seek authority to carry out public consultation.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S VISION

- 2.1** Agreeing the future of Brandhall Golf Course will ensure that council resource and assets are meeting the needs of local residents. This will contribute to Ambitions 2 and 8 of Sandwell's Vision 2030. Future re-development proposals have the potential to contribute towards Ambitions 4 and 7.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1** At the Cabinet meeting on 31 January 2018, the following recommendations were resolved (Minute No. 19/18);

1. That the adoption of Sandwell Sport & Leisure Built Facilities Strategy be approved;

2. That the Executive Director – Neighbourhoods develop further reports to Cabinet for the following priority opportunities:
 - Opportunity 8 (O8) – Secure the long-term sustainability of golf in Sandwell by supporting independent clubs, creating a golf development pathway, and identifying potential alternative uses for Brandhall Golf Course.
3. That Council be recommended to appoint Members to the Sandwell Sport & Leisure Built Facilities Strategy Members Steering Group.

- 3.2 A Members Steering Group was established to further develop the opportunities contained within the Built Facilities Strategy and oversee the Opportunity 8 (O8) as recommended by the Cabinet.
- 3.3 ‘Sustainability of Golf’ referenced above, refers to ensuring that Sandwell has a sustainable golf offer for residents, which includes provision for entry level golf up to competitive golf.
- 3.4 To explore the golf provision and need in Sandwell external consultants were appointed to investigate and provide a report on a Golf Needs Assessment and golf development pathway (Appendix 1).
- 3.5 The Built Facilities Strategy Members Steering Group has overseen the work relating to the first part of the Cabinet recommendation, i.e. investigating whether Sandwell has a sustainable golf offer.
- 3.6 Officers have explored the second part of the recommendation, i.e. potential alternative uses of the site.
- 3.7 Section 4 outlines the findings of these two key areas of work.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 There are currently seven golf facilities in Sandwell including one pitch and putt facility. Two of these facilities, Brandhall Golf Course and Sandwell Valley Pitch and Putt/Crazy Golf, are operated by third party operators on behalf of Sandwell Council as outlined in the below.

Course	Ownership	Holes	Driving Range	Access	Affiliated to England Golf
Brandhall Golf Course	LA	18	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes
Dartmouth Golf Course	Club	9	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes
Dudley Golf Club	Club	18	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes
Rowley Golf Centre	Club	9	Yes	Pay & play Membership	No

Sandwell Valley Pitch & Putt	LA	18 Plus 18 Footgolf	No	Pay & play	No
Sandwell Park Golf Club	Club	18	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes
Warley Woods Golf Course	Trust	9	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes

4.2 Brandhall Golf Course;

4.2.1 The course is located within the Old Warley ward in Sandwell. However, the club house associated with the golf club is situated in Langley ward.

4.2.2 Brandhall operates as a municipal golf course, managed by Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT). There is also a golf club on site, Brandhall Golf Club, members of which can only play at Brandhall Golf Course via SLT.

4.2.3 Usage;

Attendances have declined overall since 2013/14, as outlined in table 2 below.

Year	Attendances
2013/2014	30,767
2014/2015	26,040
2015/2016	28,832
2016/2017	26,944
2017/2018	22,887
2018/2019	23,019

4.2.4 Membership;

To use Brandhall Golf Course a fee must be paid to SLT, this also applies to members of Brandhall Golf Club. SLT currently has 318 Eagle Pass or Birdie Pass members, i.e. those who are signed up to a monthly direct debit to use the course. Brandhall Golf Club currently has 89 members who will also be Eagle or Birdie Pass members with SLT. The number of SLT golf members has reduced each year since 2016 as outlined in table 3 below. The expected number of members nationally for an 18-hole golf course is 480.

Year	SLT Golf Members
2016/17	352
2017/18	337
2018/19	334
2019/20	318

Of the current members 125 (39%) live in Sandwell. Therefore, 193 of the members (61%) are not Sandwell residents. A total 48 of the 318 members (15%) live within the immediate vicinity (B68 postcode) of Brandhall Golf Course. Appendix 2 shows the distribution of Brandhall Golf Course members.

4.2.5 Operational Costs;

The facility currently operates at a net cost £257,372 to SLT which is a direct cost to the Council as part of the annual subsidy that the Council provides to SLT. Taking into account membership numbers outlined above, the Council is providing a subsidy of £157,000 for golfers from outside of Sandwell.

4.2.6 The facility, including the course and ancillary facilities, is currently in a poor condition. Major improvements are required to bring it up to the required standard and support a robust business plan. The cost to undertake the improvements is estimated to be in the region of £3,000,000.

4.3 **Golf report;**

External consultants were appointed to carry out Golf Needs Assessment and Golf Development pathway. The consultants produced a report to outline their findings:

- The golf market in the UK has changed in recent years from a sport operating through club membership to one where pay and play is now more desirable. All golf facilities in Sandwell offer pay and play options for use.
- There is a high-level supply of golf courses in Sandwell and a low latent demand, leaving each facility competing for the same golfers and increasing the risk of golf courses becoming unsustainable.
- There is a total of 39 golf courses inside and outside the Borough boundary. This includes 7 facilities inside Sandwell and a further 32 golf facilities being within 20 minutes' drive from the borough boundary.
- Brandhall Golf Course is in poor condition and would need significant capital investment to bring it up to the required standard.
- The golf development pathway demonstrates that there is significant opportunity for Sandwell residents to participate in golf at all stages.

- It is a recommendation of the report that the Council explores further the long-term sustainability of Council-owned golf facilities as well how best to deliver the golf development pathway.
- It is also recommended within the report that a full options appraisal is undertaken on all Sandwell Council golf facilities. Therefore, there is an opportunity for Sandwell Council to consider the facilities that it currently supplies and the impact these have on the sustainability of golf in the Borough.
- The report concluded that, due to the high-level supply of golf courses in Sandwell and the low latent demand for participating in golf, there is an over-supply of golf facilities in Sandwell.

4.4 Potential alternative uses of Brandhall Golf Course;

As agreed by the Cabinet on 31 January 2018 (Minute No. 19/18) alternative options have been explored for the use of the site in accordance with the emerging local priorities of improvements to green space, education and housing provision.

Redevelopment proposals forthcoming from the proposed consultation would need to be tested in respect of viability which would require a significant amount of design work and a suite of financial appraisals. Intrusive site investigations and a detailed pre-application process would be required prior to the submission of a potential future planning application.

4.4.1 Green Space;

Brandhall Golf Course is classed as an 'Outdoor Sports Facility'; it is not classified as public open space. Access to the site by the general public is restricted although there are public rights of way that cross the site and afford limited access to walk across the site (Appendix 3).

As outlined in Sandwell's Green Space Strategy, the golf course is excluded from the Unrestricted Green Space calculations for Sandwell. This, as well as the semi-private nature of the site, means that the site is not accessible green space.

Oldbury town has 2.10 hectares of unrestricted open space per 1,000 population. The borough average is 3.63 hectares. Old Warley ward has 0.86 hectares of unrestricted open space per 1,000 population. As noted above, Brandhall Golf Course is not unrestricted open space so is excluded from the figures above.

The redevelopment of the site provides a unique opportunity to increase the amount of unrestricted open space in the Old Warley ward. A small part of the site is already community open space, Parsons Hill Park, however, it is recommended that in any redevelopment option part of the wider site is set aside for a new public park that meets the needs of the local community. This has the potential to provide space for people to walk, play informal sports and provide some facilities for children's play.

Developing a new park in the site provides the opportunity to develop the first new major public park in the Borough's history.

4.4.2 Causeway Green Primary School;

The existing Causeway Green Primary School, located on Pennycricket Lane, is in poor physical condition. As a result, there is an identified need for a new school.

The school, which is a 420-place primary school, is identified as a priority for replacement due to ongoing condition issues associated with the original building construction and localised flooding.

The original school was built in 1953 utilising the 'Hills' system-build method, which consisted predominantly of concrete panel and flat roof construction, with single glazed windows. Core elements of the building are very expensive to maintain, repair or replace. Whilst this building type satisfactorily met its design life of approximately 60 years, the buildings are presenting increasing challenges for repair and maintenance. For similar reasons, 'Hills' type-built school buildings at Abbey Infant School and Yew Tree Primary School have been replaced through the government's 2014 Priority Schools Building Programme.

Unfortunately, the school was also severely affected by flooding during excessive rainfall in May 2018, causing significant damage and disruption. The site has historically suffered with flooding and, despite additional drainage systems being installed, the site appears to continue to be vulnerable to possible flooding during periods of high rainfall. The drainage system and water levels continue to be regularly monitored.

4.4.3 Housing Need;

Sandwell has a shortfall in housing land supply. The unmet housing need is circa 11,062 homes to 2036.

The redevelopment of the site for housing will help contribute towards meeting the unmet housing need in Sandwell. There is the potential to provide a variety of house types in accordance with the adopted Black Country Core Strategy and to meet local needs. Moreover, any redevelopment would be required by adopted Planning Policy to provide affordable housing of up to 25%.

This affordable housing provision should include a variety of house types and a mix of housing tenures including rental and intermediate market-discounted housing. The redevelopment of the site provides an opportunity to improve housing options for local people.

4.4.4 In relation to the planning position, the site is not allocated in the adopted Development Plan for the Borough although there are designations such as a wildlife corridor, a small Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation and a small area of Community Open Space at Parsons Hill Park. Given the site is unallocated, residential redevelopment is considered appropriate in principle, subject to the need for mitigation to reduce any detrimental impact on these designations. Furthermore, the proposed redevelopment will help contribute to addressing the housing shortfall and contribute towards the level of publicly accessible open space in Sandwell. In addition, it is recommended that any potential redevelopment supports the need to replace Causeway Green Primary School.

Three potential options have been developed that provide some indicative ideas of how these three objectives of reducing the housing need in the Borough, reducing the deficit in open space in Oldbury Town and addressing the need to replace Causeway Green Primary School could be addressed.

- Option 1: New school, 4.5 hectares of open space and housing scheme
- Option 2: New school, 6 hectares of open space and housing scheme
- Option 3: New school, 8.5 hectares of open space and housing scheme

The changing variable in these options is the amount of open space which rises from 4.5 hectares in Option 1 to 8.5 hectares in Option 3. Option 3 with 8.5 hectares would be an equivalent size of open space to Brunswick Park in Wednesbury.

It is recommended that public consultation be carried out on these three alternative options.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

5.1 The Sandwell Sport and Leisure Built Facilities Strategy Members Steering Group has overseen the development of this area of work. The findings outlined above have been presented to the members of the steering group. At the meeting of 18 September 2019 members of the steering group resolved the following;

- (1) that a recommendation be made to Cabinet to close Brandhall Golf Course and club house;

(2) that the consultation with local residents, in respect to options for the land, commence as soon as possible.

5.2 The Executive Director – Neighbourhoods, Director for Housing and Communities and portfolio holder, the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, have been consulted on the content of this report. Sandwell Leisure Trust has also been consulted as the operator.

5.3 It is proposed that public consultation is carried out regarding the proposed closure of Brandhall Golf Course and club house as well as consultation on the potential alternative future use of the Brandhall Golf Course site.

The public consultation would include the following;

- (1) An online survey for all stakeholders to provide views on future use of the site
- (2) A series of drop-in sessions for all stakeholders to provide views on future use of the site
- (3) Inbox for all stakeholders to email questions
- (4) Letters to local residents, golf members and representatives of Brandhall Golf Club
- (5) Stakeholders to include;
 - Local residents
 - Golf club representatives
 - Golf members
 - Golf course employees
 - Causeway Green Primary School staff and parents

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 If the Council takes no action the Council would be required to continue to support a golf facility at a current annual net cost of £257k. With a declining membership, the annual net cost to the council will increase for a facility that requires major investment.

6.2 If consultation on closure is not carried out the council would be operating in isolation to the local community and would not be taking account of the views of the local community to determine the future allocation of the site.

6.3 If limited consultation is carried out this is unlikely to provide a clear representation of the views of key stakeholders.

- 6.4** Alternative uses. The land is located in a predominantly residential area. It is not considered appropriate for alternative uses such as commercial use to be considered. Residential, educational and recreational uses would greatly support the Council's 2030 Vision for the Borough.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** Carrying out consultation is expected to cost the Council up to a maximum of £5,000. This will include officer time, production and printing of communication materials and venues for consultation sessions.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1** Brandhall Golf Course is owned and managed by the Council under a lease arrangement with SLT and Brandhall Golf Club. The consultation process would need to take account of and consider the implications on the lease holders of any future changes to the use of the site.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1** An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out (attached).

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1** All information held for this work has been subject to the Council's Data Protection policy.

11 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 11.1** The proposals will ensure that the Council's assets and resources are utilised in the most effective way that best meets local community need.

12 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 12.1** Consulting on the future use of Brandhall Golf Course will ensure that social value is maximised by providing the services and amenities that achieve priority social outcomes.

13 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 13.1** Brandhall Golf Course is owned and managed by the Council under a lease arrangement with SLT and Brandhall Golf Club. The consultation process would need to take account of and consider the implications on the lease holders of any future changes to the use of the site.

14 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 This report and associated papers provides evidence to suggest that Brandhall Golf Course is underused, poor quality and not financially viable. There is an over provision of golf facilities in the local area compared with local demand to play golf. There is an identified need for open space, a new school and housing in the local area. As a result, authority to consult on closing Brandhall Golf Course and potential future options is required to enable the Cabinet to make an informed decision relating the future use of the site.

15 APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Golf Needs Analysis – Final Report (April 2019)

Appendix 2 - Postcode Map of Brandhall Golf Course Members

Appendix 3 - Public Rights of Way

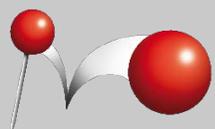
Alison Knight
Executive Director – Neighbourhoods

SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOLF NEEDS ANALYSIS

FINAL REPORT

APRIL 2019



SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
GOLF NEEDS ANALYSIS

INTERNAL REPORT VERSION CONTROL

CLIENT NAME	Sandwell Council
REPORT NAME	Golf Needs Analysis

DATE OF ISSUE	VERSION	CHECKED	SIGN OFF
21.11.18	1	RF	RF
04.12.18	2	RF	RF
10.01.19	3	RF	RF
24.01.19	4	RF	RF
28.02.19	5	RF	RF
15.03.9	8	RF	RF
02.04.19	10	RF	RF

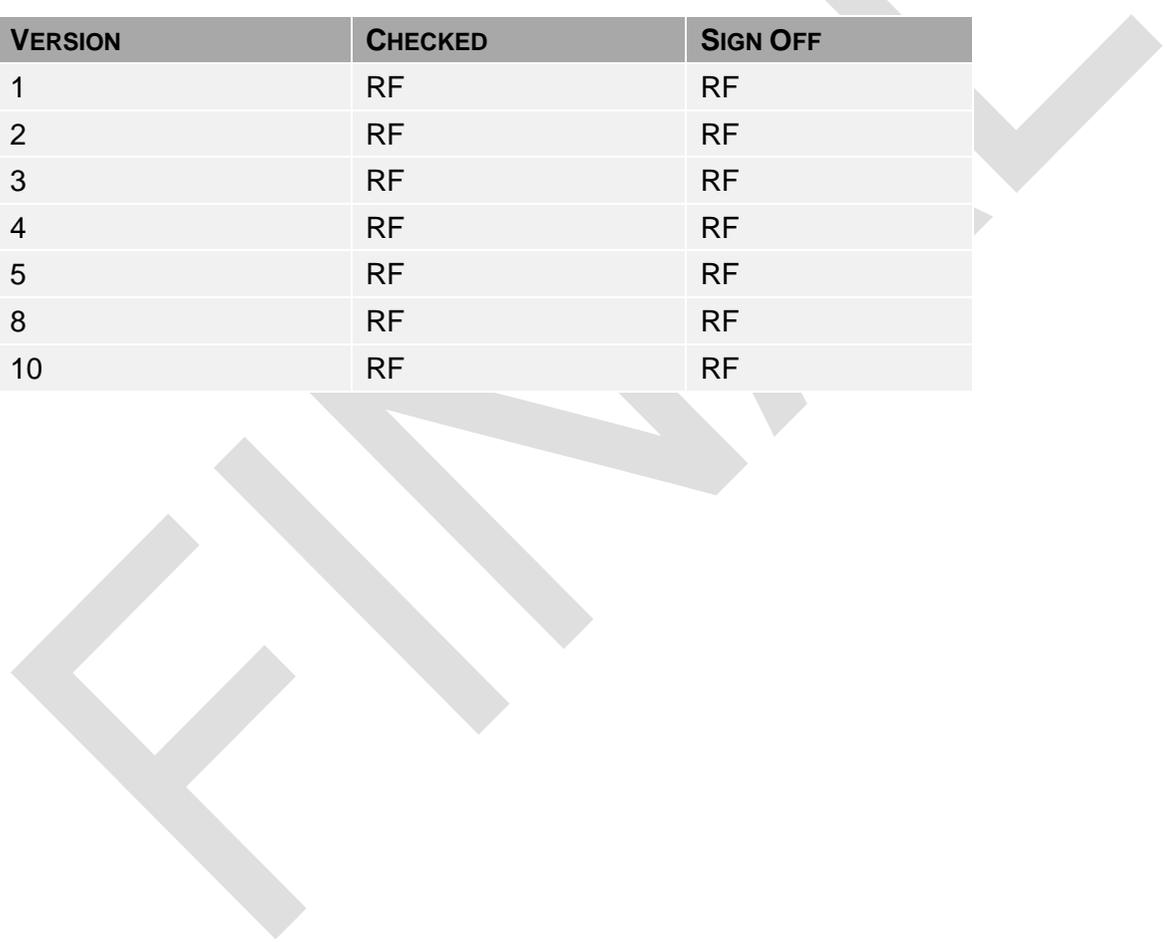


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- 1. GOLF COURSES WITHIN A 20 MINUTE DRIVETIME OF SANDWELL'S 6 TOWNS (MAPS OF GOLF COURSES)**
- 2. GOLF COURSES WITHIN A 20 MINUTE DRIVETIME OF THE SIX SANDWELL TOWNS (LIST OF GOLF COURSES)**
- 3. CONSULTATION WITH NEIGHBOURING GOLF CLUBS**
- 4. GOLF COURSE QUALITY AUDITS**

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. There are currently seven golf facilities in Sandwell including one pitch and putt facility. Two of these facilities Brandhall Golf Course and Sandwell Valley Pitch and putt/Crazy Golf, are operated by third party operators on behalf of Sandwell Council.
- 1.2. Sandwell Council (SC) adopted its Built Facilities Strategy (BFS) – Sport and Leisure in 2018; the BFS highlights that the oldest facilities in Sandwell, are in a poor condition and do not meet the needs of residents. The Sandwell Revised Playing Pitch Strategy and the Sandwell Sport and Leisure Built Facilities Strategy both highlight that there is spare capacity within the Borough's golf facilities to accommodate current and future demand.
- 1.3. Sandwell Council have recently carried out a refresh of their Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) (October 2018) which identified the following recommendation for Golf. 'A further detailed options appraisal is required to identify the potential management and investment options for Brandhall Golf Course. The facility is currently not financially sustainable, and membership is in decline, however the facility does provide a low-cost option for non-member golfers, which is key to the future of the sport although not necessarily through an 18-hole golf course.' It must be noted that whilst this version of the PPS has been signed off by all steering group members, including England Golf, it has not yet been formally adopted by the Council.
- 1.4. The golf market in the UK has changed in recent years from a sport operating through club membership to one where pay and play is now more desirable. Due to this all golf facilities in Sandwell offer pay and play options for use.
- 1.5. There is a high-level supply of golf courses in Sandwell and a low latent demand, leaving each facility competing for the same golfers and increasing the risk of golf courses becoming unsustainable. This risk of unsustainability is further exacerbated by the availability of 32 further golf facilities being within 20 minutes' drive from the borough boundary.
- 1.6. Brandhall Golf Course is in poor condition, requires an annual operational subsidy of circa £170,000 per annum, and would need significant capital investment to bring it up to the required standard.
- 1.7. Golf England's suggested golf development pathway is for golfers to use a driving range, then learn to play on a municipal course prior to becoming a member at a private club. However, now that all private clubs in Sandwell offer pay and play options at their courses, the need for municipal courses has become less important. Therefore, even without the provision of a traditional municipal golf course, a full golf development pathway could be developed in Sandwell.
- 1.8. From this report it can be concluded that, due to the high-level supply of golf courses in Sandwell and the low latent demand for participating in golf, there is an over-supply of golf facilities in Sandwell. The golf development pathway also demonstrates that there is significant opportunity for Sandwell residents to participate in golf at all stages.
- 1.9. Given the over-supply of facilities, the revenue subsidy required for the operation of Brandhall Golf Course, and the capital that would be required to bring this facility up to standard, it is recommended that the Council explore further the long-term sustainability of Council-owned golf facilities as well how best to deliver the golf development pathway.

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GOLF NEEDS ANALYSIS

- 1.10. Based upon this, it is considered that a full options appraisal is undertaken on all Sandwell Council golf facilities. Therefore, there is an opportunity for Sandwell Council to consider the facilities that it currently supplies and the impact these have on the sustainability of golf in the Borough.

FINAL

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. Following the adoption of the revised Playing Pitch Strategy in 2015 and the Sandwell Sport & Leisure Built Facility Strategy 2018, Sandwell Council identified the need to undertake a Golf Needs Assessment for the Borough to identify the future level and nature of golf provision needed to meet residents' demands.
- 2.2. Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) was appointed to undertake this needs assessment on behalf of Sandwell Council in October 2018.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

- 2.3. There are currently seven golf facilities in Sandwell including one pitch and putt facility. Two of these facilities Brandhall Golf Course and Sandwell Valley Pitch and putt/Crazy Golf, are operated by third party operators on behalf of Sandwell Council.
- 2.4. The Sandwell Revised Playing Pitch Strategy, approved at the meeting of Cabinet on 16 September 2015 (156/15), highlights that there is spare capacity at all golf courses in Sandwell to accommodate current and future demand.
- 2.5. Sandwell Council adopted the Sandwell Sport & Leisure Built Facilities Strategy (BFS) at the meeting of Cabinet on 31 January 2018. The BFS identifies the current position of sport and leisure facilities in Sandwell and its ability to deal with residents demands / needs now and forecast in the future. In the Black Country only 1.94% of residents play golf, a figure lower than the national average which is 2.54%. Membership and usage numbers at Brandhall Golf Course have dropped significantly over the past 3 years and the facility requires a substantial subsidy for it to remain open. With demand being catered for by other golf courses in Sandwell and the declining membership numbers at Brandhall Golf Course, the strategy recommends that the future use of the facility is reviewed, and potential alternative uses are identified.
- 2.6. The BFS also highlights that the oldest facilities in Sandwell, including Brandhall Golf Course are in a poor condition and do not meet the needs of residents and sets out a number of opportunities to ensure that demand is met in the future.
- 2.7. At the meeting of Cabinet on 31 January 2018, it was approved that Opportunity 8 within the BFS would be investigated, namely to ***'Secure the long-term sustainability of golf in Sandwell by supporting independent clubs, creating a golf development pathway, and identifying potential alternative uses for Brandhall Golf Course.'***

2.8. The rationale for undertaking the golf needs assessment is therefore to:



Assess the current and future demand for golf in Sandwell;



Identify the nature and level of existing golf provision in the Borough, and other golf provision accessible to Borough residents;



Analyse whether supply meets current and future demand;



Identify any gaps in provision, and/or key issues with existing golf provision; and



Identify the options available to address these gaps/issues.

2.9. The golf market in the UK has changed significantly in recent years from a sport operating predominantly through club membership, to one where pay and play opportunities have increased and become more accessible largely to counteract declining numbers of club membership. Anecdotally, as it is very hard to evidence, given the reluctance of private clubs to share membership trends, many regular golfers are not club members, but instead choose to play at a variety of courses, where they know they can play good quality facilities for a reasonable cost, and enjoy good social facilities. Day package golf for non-members is growing in popularity.

2.10. It is important to consider this shift in traditional golf participation patterns in considering the level and nature of golf provision in the future in Sandwell, to ensure sustainability, and that available facilities address changing needs.

APPROACH TO NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.11. The approach to undertaking the needs assessment comprised:



Audit (quantitative and qualitative) of all existing golf provision in Sandwell;



Audit of golf provision within 20 minutes of each of the towns in Sandwell;



Consultation with identified stakeholders;



Review of participation trends for golf in the UK;



Assessment of supply and demand for golf in Sandwell;



Identification of any gaps in provision, and/or key issues with existing golf provision; and



Identification of the options available to address these gaps/issues.

3 GOLF PROVISION IN SANDWELL

FACILITY SUPPLY

- 3.1 There are seven golf courses within the Borough of Sandwell including one pitch and putt facility. One of these courses, Brandhall Golf Course is run by Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) on behalf of SC. All other golf courses within Sandwell are privately operated facilities. SC also owns the Sandwell Valley Pitch and Putt which also incorporates an 18 hole Footgolf Course; these facilities are operated by Valley Cycles.
- 3.2 Existing golf provision in Sandwell is detailed in Table 3.1 and Map 3.1, which also shows the courses in Sandwell, and those immediately outside the Borough.

Table 3.1: Golf Courses in Sandwell

COURSE	OWNERSHIP	HOLES	DRIVING RANGE	ACCESS	AFFILIATED TO ENGLAND GOLF	OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT
BRANDHALL GOLF COURSE	Local Authority	18	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes	Sandwell Leisure Trust
DARTMOUTH GOLF COURSE	Club	9	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes	Private
DUDLEY GOLF CLUB	Club	18	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes	Private
ROWLEY GOLF CENTRE	Club	18	Yes	Pay & play Membership	No	Private
SANDWELL VALLEY PITCH & PUTT	Local Authority	18 Plus 18 Footgolf	No	Pay & play	No	Sandwell Council
SANDWELL PARK GOLF CLUB	Club	18	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes	Private
WARLEY WOODS GOLF COURSE	Trust	9	No	Pay & play Membership	Yes	Trust

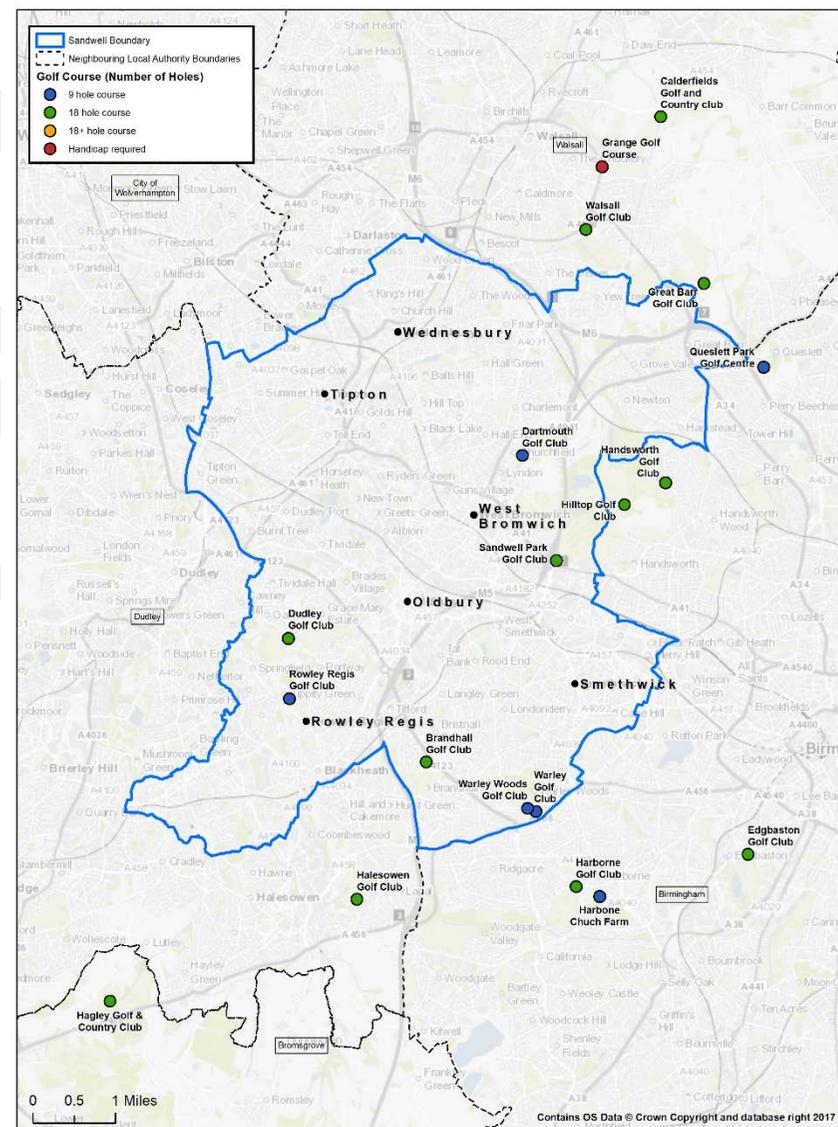
- 3.3 There are 7 golf facilities in Sandwell. Brandhall Golf Course is the only full municipal golf course in Sandwell.
- 3.4 Sandwell Valley is an 18 hole pitch and putt, plus 18 hole Footgolf Course.
- 3.5 Existing golf courses in Sandwell offer 90 holes of golf for the general public to use six days a week (Some clubs have limited public access on Saturdays due to competitions; this is a common operational approach for golf clubs).
- 3.6 A visual quality audit was undertaken on all golf facilities in the Borough. The assessment was made on the basis of the visual appearance and condition of the golf facilities, changing provision, and as available, pro shop, catering, social facilities. The audit did not include on site consultation.
- 3.7 The quality scoring is based on the following rationale:

Table 3.2: Audit Scoring System

KEY	RATING
>80%	Excellent
60% - 79%	Good
40% - 59%	Average
20% - 39%	Poor
<20%	Very Poor

- 3.8 A facility scoring highly in terms of visual quality and condition (good – excellent) is likely to require less investment than one which is in a poorer visual condition (average – very poor). The summary of the quality audit is set out in Table 3.3

Map 3.1: Golf Courses in Sandwell, and those immediately adjacent



Golf courses in and around Sandwell



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GOLF NEEDS ANALYSIS

Table 3.3: Quality audit of golf facilities in the Borough

GOLF FACILITY	QUALITY OF OVERALL FACILITIES%	COMMENTARY ON QUALITY SCORE, CAPACITY FOR INCREASED MEMBERSHIP, AND PLAYING FEES
BRANDHALL GOLF COURSE	54%	Poor-quality built infrastructure, golf playing facilities are average so the overall score reflects both aspects; capacity for additional members;
DARTMOUTH GOLF CLUB	59%	Average quality; capacity for additional members; affordable membership and pay and play cost,
DUDLEY GOLF CLUB	70%	Good quality; capacity for additional members; affordable membership and pay and play cost; good quality lesson offer, Pro shop and practice area
ROWLEY REGIS GOLF CLUB	71%	Good quality; capacity for additional members; affordable membership and pay and play cost; includes a driving range
SANDWELL PARK GOLF CLUB	81%	Excellent quality; capacity for additional members; affordable pay play cost; good quality clubhouse
SANDWELL VALLEY PITCH AND PUTT (INCORPORATING 18 HOLE FOOTGOLF COURSE)	64%	Good quality; not open in winter; different golf offer
WARLEY WOODS	61%	Good – average quality; capacity for additional members; affordable membership and pay and play cost,

3.9 The SC golf facility in the Borough is rated as being poor quality and would benefit from improvement. Sandwell Valley is a seasonal pitch and putt and footgolf facility, and is not the main municipal golf offer in the Borough. The quality audit highlights that there is significant need and opportunity for improvement and investment at Brandhall Golf Course.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS

3.10 Demand for golf in Sandwell comprises membership, 'Learn to Play', casual, corporate and competitive participation.

3.11 England Golf indicates the number of golf members at courses within Sandwell reduced by 16.27% between 2014 to 2016. This has led to all golf courses in and around Sandwell offering tee times for non-members in an attempt to generate additional income. Subsequently, this has led to financial stresses on both municipal and private courses, as customers who would have previously played municipal golf are now able to play at a private course for a similar price. Subsidised local authority facilities work to the detriment of private facilities in the area; the latter are better quality and are not subsidised by a council but are having to compete on price to mitigate the support enjoyed by subsidised municipal facilities.

3.12 The 2015 PPS indicates that 6.8% of the Sandwell public suggested that they would like to play golf. This was the lowest response level of all recorded in relation to participation in a range of sports.

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- 3.13 Importantly, all types of golf demand, except crazy golf, pitch and putt and footgolf in Sandwell can be addressed through the private sector, because it now offers what has previously, and traditionally, been the preserve of municipal courses, and critically, with higher quality playing and ancillary facilities, at the same, or a similar cost.
- 3.14 Nationally, 2.54% of people participate in golf. This figure is lower in the Black Country at 1.94%. The national latent demand for golf is 1.34% (PS9, 2015). Although no equivalent data exists at a Sandwell or a Black Country level, if this figure is assumed to be the same in Sandwell, this would mean 2,966 people (16+) would like to participate in golf who do not already do so.
- 3.15 From Sport England market segmentation data, 'Philip' has the highest participation and latent demand for golf, with 'Tim' being the second highest. 'Leanne' and 'Paula' have the lowest latent demand for golf within the market segments (Sport England, 2015). Sandwell has a lower proportion of 'Philip' and 'Tim' than the national average (11.4% against 17.4%), and a higher proportion of 'Leanne' and 'Paula' (12.9% vs 8.0%). Therefore, Sandwell is likely to have a lower latent demand for golf than the national average, and it is likely that less than 2,966 people in Sandwell would like to participate in golf.
- 3.16 There is a significant level of golf provision in Sandwell (5 private courses as well as two SC facilities (Brandhall Golf Course and the Valley Cycling operated pitch and putt) and close to the Borough. The main municipal facility in Sandwell, Brandhall Golf Course, is of a poorer quality (playing and practice facilities, and ancillary provision) than comparable private golf courses. However, the cost of pay and play golf at Brandhall Golf Course is higher than at similar private golf courses. Membership at Brandhall Golf Course decreased by 53.2% 2014-2016. Annual usage at Brandhall Golf Course has reduced from 30,767 in 2013/14 to 22,887 by 2017/18.
- 3.17 There is high level of 9 and 18 hole provision, one driving range (at Rowley Regis Golf Club, privately operated) although there is no Par 3, entry level course in the Borough. Membership numbers overall are relatively low compared with the national average, but it is worth noting that each club will have a different financial model in terms of income generation from membership vs green fees etc. Given the level of demand across both club-based and independent profiles, there is clearly scope for clubs to offer additional non-traditional and flexible playing opportunities wherever appropriate. High demand, but lower, and reducing membership levels reflects the trend in golf participation, away from club membership to pay and play day use. Club membership has become less relevant as a handicap can now also be calculated using on-line tools.
- 3.18 All 6 golf courses in Sandwell have capacity for additional members.
- 3.19 Due to the number of golf facilities in Sandwell and the low latent demand to participate in golf, there is an over-supply of golf provision leaving all facilities in the Borough at risk of becoming unsustainable. The continued offer of Brandhall Golf Course by Sandwell Council is further diluting the golfing market and adding to this risk.

BRANDHALL GOLF COURSE

3.20 Brandhall is the only municipal golf course in Sandwell. Located in Oldbury Brandhall Golf Course is a par 71, 18-hole municipal course, built in 1903. It offers a small practice area, professional's shop and clubhouse. The woodland course is open to the public on both a pay and play and membership basis.

3.21 Brandhall Golf Course is in need of improved maintenance to the greens and fairways, plus the practice area. One issue is that the allocated ground maintenance team are not golf specialists.

3.22 The Golf Club based at the Course operates a small clubhouse and bar; the clubhouse is in need of significant refurbishment. In 2016 there were 89 members of the golf club reducing by 53% from 190 in 2014.

3.23 The course is used by local and regular participants, although membership levels have fallen. The course is also popular for those learning to play golf, but once competent, these individuals do not always remain as members.

The decrease in membership at Brandhall Golf Club is due to an expansion of the private sector pay and play offer, as well as the poorer quality of Brandhall Golf Course; this includes both the course itself and the ancillary facilities.

3.24 There has been limited investment in the course or ancillary facilities by Sandwell Council. SLT's remit is to operate the course and offer lessons through the Golf Professional.

3.25 The 2015 PPS evidences:

'Multimillion-pound investment would be needed at Brandhall Golf Course to allow the course to compete with other golf provision in the Borough. This would include significant irrigation, drainage improvements and a clubhouse redevelopment.'

3.26 The 2018 refreshed PPS evidences:

A further detailed options appraisal is required to identify the potential management and investment options for Brandhall Golf Course. The facility is currently not financially sustainable, and membership is in decline, however the facility does provide a low-cost option for non-member golfers, which is key to the future of the sport although not necessarily through an 18-hole golf course.' It must be noted that whilst this version of the PPS has been signed off by all steering group members, including England Golf, it has not yet been formally adopted by the Council.

3.27 The 2018 BFS states:

Multi-million-pound investment would be required to allow the course to become sustainable and maintained to a required standard. This would include the relocation of the club house facilities to be directly off the Wolverhampton Road, a major upgrade to the irrigation / drainage of the course as during wet months the course becomes unplayable due to it being water logged, and the overall quality of the greens and fairways. However, this would still not ensure the sustainable future of the site or an overall increase in the number of residents participating in golf. With the declining numbers of golf club members in Sandwell, and with the low latent demand for residents who wish to play golf, it is likely that any upgrade to Brandhall Golf Course would further dilute the market and dislocate participants from other golf clubs / courses in the area.

Therefore, due to the small latent demand to participate in golf, the fact that other Sandwell golf courses are struggling to remain open, the decline in golf club membership numbers, and the condition and cost of making the required improvements to Brandhall Golf Course, it is recommended that an alternative future use is determined for the Brandhall site and that the Council support the sustainability of golf in Sandwell by supporting the independent golf clubs and courses in the borough through the creation of a development pathway for golf.

3.28 The current Brandhall Golf Course operates at a loss of circa £170,000 per annum. The course is unsustainable and will continue to be so unless there is significant capital investment, which would mean the quality of the playing and social facilities improves.

GOLF PROVISION IN NEIGHBOURING LOCAL AUTHORITIES

3.29 There are six main towns in Sandwell. Within a 20-minute drive time of each town, there are a total of 39 golf courses inside and outside the Borough boundary (See Appendices 1 and 2) managed privately, by local authorities or trusts. Across all of these courses there is a significant difference in relation to quality, accessibility and pricing structures.

3.30 As shown in the Appendix 1 maps, and the lists in Appendix 2 there is a very significant number of golf courses and facilities in close proximity to the Borough. Golfers will travel to access good quality courses and facilities; it is ensuring access to provision for those learning to play, or for those who cannot afford to travel that is the challenge.

CONSULTATION WITH PRIVATE COURSES IN AND AROUND SANDWELL

3.31 To identify demand for golf in the Borough, consultation was undertaken with England Golf, private golf courses both those in Sandwell, and those surrounding the Borough, SLT, and SC officers (leisure, grounds maintenance). Feedback from stakeholders is reflected in the supply information above, as well as below.

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- 3.32 Appendix 1 mapping shows which golf courses are within 20 minutes of each of the 6 Sandwell towns. Clearly some courses are within 20 minutes of more than one of the 6 towns. Appendix 2 identifies these golf courses in list format. Appendix 3 details the consultation responses from the golf clubs (via the Pro) that responded to the club survey; responses were received from clubs in and outside the Borough.
- 3.33 In total, 22 golf courses responded to the consultation survey. The responses came from both golf courses in the Borough and those outside the Borough. All feedback can be found in Appendix 3 (green shaded responses are those from golf clubs in the Borough).
- 3.34 All 22 private golf courses responding to the consultation offer a pay and play option for non-members. All 22 golf course professionals confirmed there is capacity to take on new members i.e. both adult and junior members. Six golf courses have increased their membership figures over the last three years, four golf courses have fewer members than in 2015 and ten have memberships which have remained the same.
- 3.35 The cost of membership at these 22 courses ranges from £600 per year to £1,500 per year. Each course offers a monthly direct debit scheme. All golf courses offer a day rate to play ranging between £4.50 (Sedgley Golf Club, 9 holes) to £70 for 18 holes with a considerable variance across the courses. The average price of a green fee is £31. A significant number of these golf courses also provide discounted green fees for juniors, females and older adults.

ENGLAND GOLF

- 3.36 Consultation with England Golf highlights that whilst there is a good number of golf facilities in Sandwell including one driving range (Rowley Regis Golf Club), membership numbers across these facilities have generally decreased since 2014.
- 3.37 Golf is the 5th highest sport in relation to national participation figures. Nationally, 2.54% of people participate in golf. This figure is slightly lower in the Black Country at 1.94%. The national latent demand for golf is 1.34% (PS9, 2015). Although no equivalent data exists at a Sandwell or a Black Country level, if this figure is assumed to be the same in Sandwell, this would mean 2,966 people (16+) who do not currently participate in golf would like to do so. England Golf research identifies that 24% of adults in England are potential players. This is made up of 9% current players, 8% lapsed players and 7% latent players. Within these groups England Golf identify nine defined profiles and clearly identified behaviours, motivations and barriers.
- 3.38 All formats of golf are a priority for England Golf including informal types of the game which have become very popular over the last few years such as Adventure golf and Top golf. However, the suggested pathway to engage committed golfers includes using a driving range, then playing on municipal golf courses before becoming a full course member at a private club.
- 3.39 Due to the change in accessibility at private clubs i.e. very affordable pay and play day access, the need for municipal golf has become less important. The key priority, however, is that there is still a pathway for beginners leading to them playing the full format of the game.
- 3.40 England Golf is running schemes such as 'Get into golf', 'Girls' Golf Rocks, 'Ladies into par' and 'Golf Sixes' to increase participation across the country. Golf Courses across Sandwell are not currently developing and implementing these initiatives; this could be a means of increasing participation, particularly amongst females.

GOLF DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

3.41 It is important to ensure that there are opportunities to participate in golf from the 'learn to' to recreational and competitive participation levels; this is the only way to facilitate participation growth and retention. The existing golf provision in Sandwell Borough provides opportunities at all stages of the Golf Development Pathway, as follows:

Table 3.3: Summary of Golf Pathway in Sandwell

PARTICIPATION LEVEL	EXPLANATION	EXISTING FACILITY PROVISION	SANDWELL VENUES:	PRICE RANGE
LEARN TO PLAY GOLF	Learn to Play relates to both facilities and instruction services; these facilities provide opportunities to learn to play golf, practise and or take lessons.	Driving range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rowley Regis Golf Club 	£3 - £6
		9 hole course/18 hole course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandhall Golf Course • Dartmouth Golf Course • Dudley Golf Course • Rowley Golf Centre • Sandwell Park Golf Club • Warley Woods Golf Course 	£5 - £20
RECREATIONAL /SOCIAL GOLFER	Social golfers do not play regularly necessarily, but may participate in one-off golf days/events, or play infrequently with friends etc. Need access to good quality facilities, which provide value for money.	Driving Range, 9 hole course, 18 hole course (5 day member of private or municipal course)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandhall Golf Course • Dartmouth Golf Course • Dudley Golf Course • Rowley Golf Centre • Sandwell Valley Pitch and Putt • Sandwell Park Golf Club • Warley Woods Golf Course 	£5 - £20
SOCIETY GOLF	Non-members, but play regularly as part of an organised group. Includes corporate golf days.	9 hole course, 18 hole course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandhall Golf Course • Dartmouth Golf Course • Dudley Golf Course • Rowley Golf Centre • Sandwell Valley Pitch and Putt • Sandwell Park Golf Club • Warley Woods Golf Course 	£5 - £20

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PARTICIPATION LEVEL	EXPLANATION	EXISTING FACILITY PROVISION	SANDWELL VENUES:	PRICE RANGE
COMPETITIVE GOLFER	Regular players, may be members of golf clubs; take part in competitions (if club member). Need practice and playing facilities.	9 hole golf course (municipal course)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandhall Golf Course • Dartmouth Golf Course • Dudley Golf Course • Rowley Golf Centre • Sandwell Valley Pitch and Putt • Sandwell Park Golf Club • Warley Woods Golf Course 	£5 - £20
FUN GOLFER	Participation with family or friends; focus on fun	Crazy/adventure golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwell Valley 	£4 - £6
		Footgolf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwell Valley 	

3.42 Based on the above golf pathway, it is clear that at all stages of the Golf Pathway there is significant non-municipal provision in the Borough, with the exception of pitch and putt/crazy golf and footgolf i.e. the fun golf facilities.

3.43 The fun golf provision in Sandwell Valley (comprising Crazy Golf, Footgolf and Pitch and Putt) is very popular, with circa 7,000 users predominantly young people and families) in 2018. Given the Crazy Golf is now 7-8 years old there are aspirations to refurbish and update the facility.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. From this report it can be concluded that, due to the high-level supply of golf courses in Sandwell and the low latent demand for participating in golf, there is an over-supply of golf facilities in Sandwell.
- 4.2. The golf development pathway also demonstrates that there is significant opportunity for Sandwell residents to participate in golf at all stages.
- 4.3. Given the over-supply of facilities, the revenue subsidy required for the operation of Brandhall Golf Course, and the capital that would be required to bring this facility up to standard, it is recommended that the Council explore further the long-term sustainability of Council-owned golf facilities as well how best to deliver the golf development pathway.
- 4.4. Based upon this, it is considered that a full options appraisal is undertaken on all Sandwell Council golf facilities.

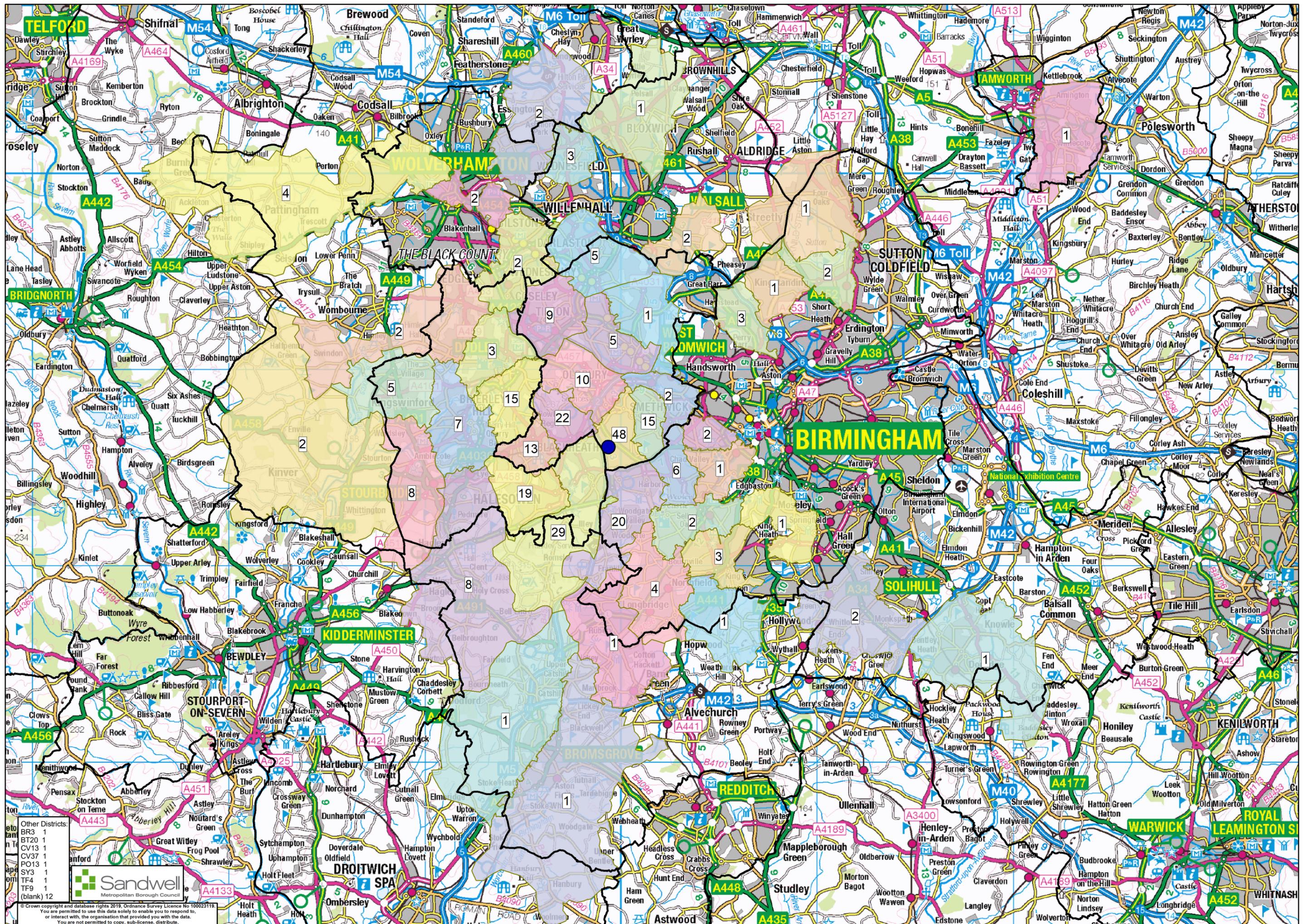
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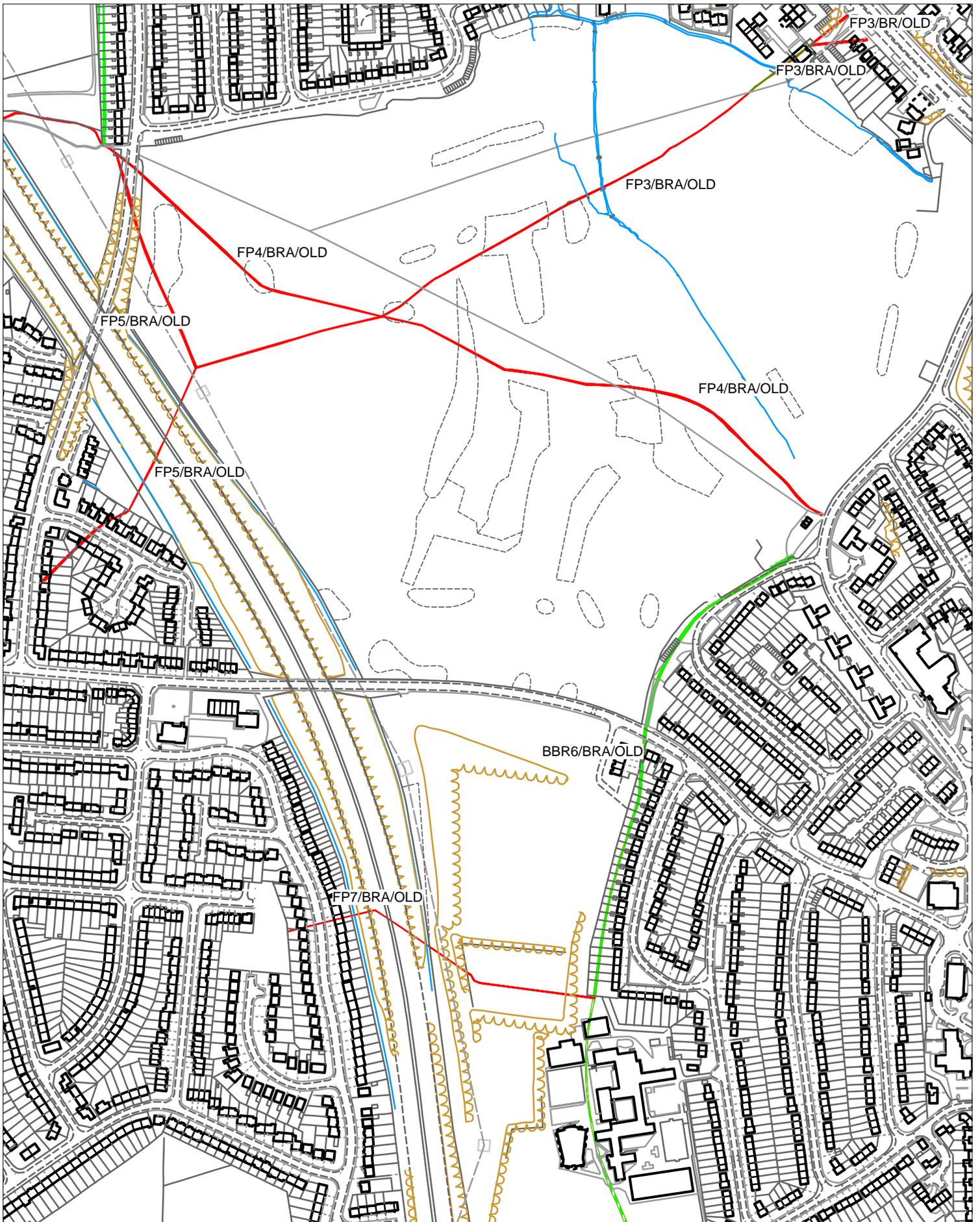




Other Districts:
BR3 1
BT20 1
CV13 1
CV37 1
PO13 1
SY3 1
TF4 1
TF9 1
(blank) 12

Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

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Map of Brandhall golf course showing Public Rights of Way

Scale



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