

**Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard  
Smethwick Town Level Equality Impact Assessment**

Draft (June 2021)  
Template V4: January 2019

Title of proposal <i>(include forward plan reference if available)</i>	Smethwick Town Deal
Directorate and Service Area	Regeneration and Growth
Name and title of Lead Officer completing this EIA	Towns Fund Programme Office
Contact Details	town_deal@sandwell.gov.uk
Names and titles of other officers involved in completing this EIA	Reviewed by Kashmir Singh and Smethwick Local Board
Partners involved with the EIA where jointly completed	
Date EIA completed	Draft Release June 2021
Date EIA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	To be arranged following Superboard approval
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EIA	To be arranged following Superboard approval
Date EIA considered by Cabinet Member	To be arranged following Superboard approval

## 1. The purpose of the proposal or decision required (Please provide as much information as possible)

### **Towns Fund Programme**

On 6 September 2019 it was announced that 101 towns had been identified by Government to benefit from the £3.6billion Towns Fund, with up to £25million per town being available. The amount of funding allocated to each town will be based on a Town Deal agreed with Government.

The objective of the fund is to drive the economic regeneration in towns to deliver long term economic and productive growth through urban regeneration, planning and land use, skills and enterprise infrastructure and connectivity.

Smethwick, along with West Bromwich and Rowley Regis, have been invited by the Government to create a Town Deal.

### **Project Prioritisation**

The Local Boards and Superboard considered a range of information including statistical evidence, opportunities and strengths, engagement findings, project ideas raised and economic challenges facing the town. A long list of projects was developed that met the Governments criteria. These were tested against success criteria outlined by Government, the contribution to the inclusive economy principles and Sandwell's vision and values to develop the shortlisted projects.

### **Smethwick Town Investment Plan**

The Towns Fund represents a pivotal moment for Smethwick. The TIP will invest in projects in some of Smethwick's opportunity areas, creating an arc of new infrastructure connecting neighbourhoods, major employers, new and existing skills centres to national and regional transport infrastructure. Through this, we will invest directly in Smethwick's diverse neighbourhoods, maximise the impact of existing investments, and improve the internal connectivity of the town for local people. Smethwick's TIP projects will connect residents to employment and training opportunities wherever they exist in the town, while simultaneously connecting our neighbourhoods to one another.

The Inclusive Economy Deal, published in 2020, is at the heart of the Smethwick TIP. As new opportunities arise, like the Towns Fund, we must ensure investments directly benefit local people and build community wealth.

Plans have been set out to radically transform the trajectory of the town through six projects submitted within the Town Investment Plan, each with a clear set of objectives and outcomes aligned to our Vision 2030, Inclusive Economy Deal and the Towns Fund Criteria.

### Urban Regeneration, Planning and Land Use

The projects set out in the Town Investment Plan form a strong delivery of regeneration and will invest in regeneration sites to stimulate the development of attractive urban neighbourhoods in Smethwick, removing the blockages to commercial development, satisfying local housing demand, dramatically improving our gateway areas and industrial neighbourhoods, and revitalising the built environment in Smethwick.

### Skills and Enterprise Infrastructure

The Smethwick Town Investment Plan Skills and Enterprise Infrastructure investments will put in place the skills infrastructure to allow residents at all levels of the labour market to find fulfilling and well-paid work in the town. This will include the first university presence in the town. These projects will raise aspiration, improve life chances, and secure the skills and training that young people and residents need to access and progress in the local and regional labour market.

### Connectivity

Connectivity investments will increase the accessibility of Smethwick's major gateways and its skills and employment sites to pedestrians and cyclists, connecting neighbourhoods with new cycling and walking routes that provide safe and attractive ways to navigate the town. It will support residents' health through better air quality and higher levels of exercise.

## **2. Evidence used/considered**

A variety of data streams have been used to formulate the Smethwick Town Investment Plan: -

- Town level demographic profile
- Identified trends in the local sectors, employment, business base and demographics, crucially analysing how the Smethwick economy operates
- Data collection provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) including census data (2011), town analysis (2019), population estimates (2017, 2018), deprivation, employment/ GVA estimates, business base, BRES 2013 - 2018, spatial distribution of occupation, earnings and skills
- Data collection provided by Runnymede Trust (2019)
- Data collection provided by MHCLG indices of deprivation (2019)
- Data collection provided by Public Health England (Local Health Profiles)
- Data collection provided by Department for Education (KS4), Ofsted Rating and student destinations after 16 – 18 (2017)
- Smethwick Metro Connectivity, West Midlands Metro
- Costar – The Black Country and South Staffordshire Housing Market Assessment (spatial distribution and quality of housing and commercial property)
- Data collection provided by Ofcom Connection Nations (2019)
- Data collection provided by Sandwell Trends 2018 - 2020
- Smethwick Economic inactivity and inclusive growth profile
- Sandwell Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment (2018)
- Evaluation of the commonwealth Games Legacy Programme
- Sandwell Green Space Strategy (2020-2030), Sandwell Green Space Audit (2019), Warley Woods Community Trust Visitor Observation Study Report (2019)
- Aspire Sandwell Research Report (2018)
- Previous Engagement activities including Aspire Vision 2030 Survey, Sandwell Resident Inclusive Economy Survey (2019)
- Critical assessment and consideration of the economic opportunities and challenges for Smethwick
- Towns Fund specific online surveys with residents, community and businesses organisations
- Towns Fund specific Workop feedback with young people.
- Towns Fund specific workshop feedback with community and business organisations

- Engagement and feedback from Smethwick Local Board which is drawn from a broad range of local organisations and interests and has local knowledge of communities and issues

### **3. Consultation**

Consultation activities were carried out to inform residents and stakeholders about the Towns Fund opportunity, to understand a broad range of views about Smethwick to build on evidence and collate views to help shape the TIP. This consultation consisted of: -

- Consultation and engagement findings collated from historic engagement activities including Vision 2030 and Inclusive Economy Deal surveys
- Consultation with Local Board members and Superboard Members on a regular basis to ensure their contribution. The Smethwick Local Board is drawn from a broad range of local organisations and interests.
- Consultation with residents and the Smethwick community via online surveys, social media, telephone 1-1 discussions and via Local Board and community networks to provide further evidence and help shape the Smethwick TIP.
- Workshops have been held with partners from the voluntary sector, community organisations and representatives, where response has been positive.
- Workshops and youth groups with young people via world-café events, online surveys and face to face where possible to ensure input from young people.
- Consultation with all elected members.

#### **Consultation Findings**

- Residents and young people agreed with the Town Priorities for Smethwick
- Residents expressed they would like to see regeneration of historical buildings and investment on the high street
- Young people wanted to see better and improved youth facilities, improved green spaces, multi-used game areas, skate parks, lighting and exercise/ sports equipment
- Young people reinforced the need for improved cycling lanes and better connectivity around the town.
- The need for new and better education facilities, emphasising for this to be matched with better employment and career opportunities to ensure skills and talent retained in the town
- Young people and children felt safe playing in the community, with 92% stating they felt safe and identified major roads as the only constraining factor.
- Improved public services and security provisions (ASB, Crime and fly tipping)
- Creation of more opportunities for local people and businesses
- Housing improvements, including low cost housing
- Improved park facilities and activities.

The engagement findings have contributed to project identification for the long list including the Midland Met Learning Campus, improvements to cycling and walking provision, improvements to heritage assets, regeneration for housing, and green space improvements.

A Consultation and Engagement Strategy has been developed for Phase 2 and project level consultation and engagement plans are in development which will focus on the development of Full Business Cases for each of the projects put forward in the TIP. The objective of our engagement activity for Phase 2 is to engage with residents, partners and stakeholders to assist in shaping the details of projects and continue an open dialogue to inform them about the progress of the projects. Engagement will take place at Programme Level and Project Level.

Covid-19 has impacted usual consultation and engagement methods. As a result, activities have been adapted (face to face consultation, events and workshops). The programme team continue to explore how to best engage with key stakeholders incl. residents, local communities and businesses.

## 4. Assess likely impact

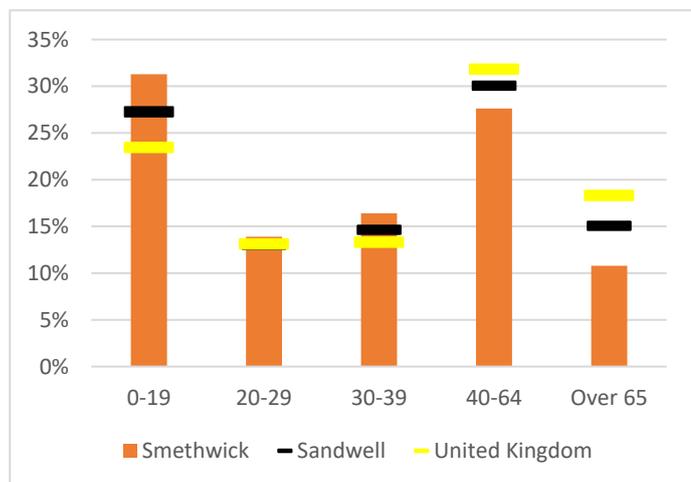
### Context

#### Population

Smethwick is a young, diverse and growing town. Between 2003 and 2018 Smethwick's population grew by 7.2%, considerably higher than population growth across the district of 4.3%.

31% of the town's population is under twenty years old, considerably higher than the UK average of 23.5% and higher than the proportion in Sandwell of 27.3%.

Conversely, Smethwick also has lower proportions of older age groups in the population. 10.8% of the population in Smethwick is of retirement age, and the 40-64s make up 27.6%. The proportion both of these age groups make up of the total population is significantly lower than the district and UK average.



The town has a higher proportion of residents in their 30s than in their 20s than either the UK or Sandwell district, the age range of young professionals and young families. 16.4% of residents are aged 30-39 and 13.9% aged 20-29. Combined, both age groups make up 30.3% of the resident population compared to 27.6% in Sandwell and 26.4% in the UK.

More concerning for the town is the decline in the number of 20-29-year olds within Smethwick. An out-migration of this age cohort is likely due to residents leaving for university, but the overall decline suggests that those people leaving the area for study have outnumbered those

entering the area for work. This has contributed to a 5.8% decline in the number of 20-29s, leading to -1.9 percentile change in their proportion of the overall population.

The town has more females than males which is the case across all towns in Sandwell; 50.5% Female and 49.5% Male. Many of the residents in Smethwick have a life expectancy lower than the England average. Life expectancy differs between wards, but residents in the south of the town have a higher life expectancy than elsewhere across all genders.

Females in the south of the town have a life expectancy of 85 years, making them the only group with a higher than average life expectancy; this is 5-6 more years than those living elsewhere. In Males, the difference is 4-5 years, with life expectancies of 79 years towards the south of the town. The centre of Smethwick has the poorest life expectancy; 79 for Females, 74 for males. Both are considerably lower than the district and England averages.

19% of Smethwick's population have limited day to day activities. This is slightly lower than the Sandwell Average (20.9%) and higher than the England Average (17.6%).

Day-to-day activities not limited (%)	Day-to-day activities limited a lot (%)	Day-to-day activities limited a little (%)
81.0%	9.6%	9.4%

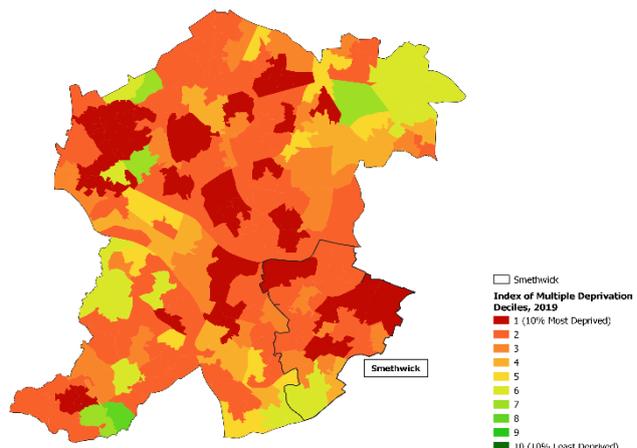
### Diversity

Sandwell is a diverse borough, and Smethwick its most diverse town. 40% of Sandwell's residents are ethnic minorities, much higher than the regional and UK average of 18.8% and 14.0%, respectively. In Smethwick the proportion is 56%, a majority of residents, and 53% of Smethwick children have a first language which is not English.

This migration has shaped the character of the town and contributes to economic renewal and cultural life. Many of the retailers on the high street are distinctive independent stores, with speciality Indian sweet shops and food stores. Faith centres, such as the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, the largest Sikh temple in Europe are landmarks in the town and centres of community life. This ethnic diversity is one of Smethwick's strengths and contributes to economic renewal and the cultural life of the town.

### Deprivation

90% of neighbourhoods in Smethwick are among the most deprived in the country with 60% of Smethwick's neighbourhoods are among the 20% most deprived in the country. High levels of deprivation are located towards the north and in central Smethwick, with relatively less deprived areas located to the south.



Towards the north-east of Smethwick is a large area of several neighbourhoods experiencing levels of deprivation in line with the 10% most deprived in the country. These neighbourhoods border the district of Birmingham. Only one area of the town to the south has a relatively low level of deprivation in line with the 40% least deprived in the country. This part of Smethwick borders the district of Birmingham

and is home to a high number of young urban renters who are face relatively lower levels of deprivation than the rest of the Smethwick population.

Despite the high levels of deprivation across the town, young people in Smethwick have higher aspirations than elsewhere in the district. A survey of KS3 secondary school students shows that Smethwick's students are most aspirational in Sandwell. However, in neighbourhoods along Smethwick's north west boundary and around the Smethwick and St. Pauls council wards between 31% and 33% of residents have no qualifications or NVQ Level 1. Southern areas of Smethwick within the Abbey ward have the lowest shares of the population with no qualifications or NVQ level 1 of any area in the Sandwell borough: less than 20% of residents here have no or low qualifications.

While Smethwick has a low unemployment rate of 7%, below the district average, the low employment rate of 64% suggests that a high proportion of Smethwick residents are economically inactive. The poor health outcomes in the town suggests that many of these are long term sick.

The town has the lowest incomes and the highest living costs in the district. Over 20% of Sandwell's households are fuel poor, 7% higher than the regional average and nearly 10% higher than the national average. The median weekly wage in Smethwick is £435.20, equal with Oldbury as the lowest in Sandwell. Conversely, human capital levels, i.e. the proportion of the population with skills, are relatively high, and 57.4% of the population has NVQ level 2 and above, higher than the district average. The unemployment rate is also higher than the district average.

### **Connectivity**

Smethwick has good transport links; it is well served by public transport and well-connected to the heart of the Birmingham conurbation. The Midland Metro runs through the North of the town providing residents transport across Sandwell and into Birmingham.

There are three railway stations in the town: Smethwick Rolfe Street; Smethwick Galton Bridge; and the Hawthorns. Galton Bridge, with its ten trains an hour, is one of Sandwell's railway hubs, the fourth highest number of passengers in Sandwell pass through the station.

Smethwick is also served by regular bus services, and, thanks to its connectivity, Smethwick is well placed to develop as a commuter town as Birmingham's economy grows.

When comparing the average number of crimes per neighbourhood, Smethwick has a low crime rate, where it is only just above half the Sandwell average. Whilst ward boundaries have a relatively even population distribution, some areas have factors that make them crime generators and attractors such as shopping centres. These areas therefore have a higher percentage of the crime.

### **Delivery Benefits**

With the potential of up to £25m of funding, the projects outlined in the Town Investment Plan submitted to Government, there will be a range of direct and indirect benefits to the residents and employees in Smethwick. In particular, the project for a Learning Hub linked to the new hospital is likely to provide for over 1000 students studying qualifications from grades 3 – 7. In

addition to the other projects, the extension to Ron Davis Centre and the Albion Family in the Park, overall there is likely to be in excess of 2,300 new training places.

With the developments of Rolfe Street and Grove Lane for housing, over 2.2ha of land will be remediated delivering approximately 225 new homes. These projects are only the first phases of development which could ultimately lead to over 800 new homes in this area – with a range of type, size and tenure to meet the growing need for good quality and affordable housing in this area. In addition, the environmental quality of the town will be improved.

Indirectly, there will be a number of short term jobs available in the construction of these new developments, with longer term job opportunities in the new hospital and university that could benefit the local people. The connectivity projects will enable easy movement for residents between homes and accessing these jobs or accessing local public transport hubs to travel further afield if necessary which will benefit those on lower incomes and without access to a car.

The proposals overall, have no adverse impact on any individuals or groups with protected characteristics. It is assessed that proposals will have a positive impact on a number of groups in terms of having the increased capacity and accessibility to improved facilities and an increase of opportunities within West Bromwich.

**Please complete the table below at 4a to identify the likely impact on specific protected characteristics**

**4a. Use the table to show:**

- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality strands (protected characteristics), that is it could disadvantage them or if there is no impact, please note the evidence and/or reasons for this.
- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relationships within equality characteristics.

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact ✓	Negative Impact ✓	No Impact ✓	Reason and evidence (Provide details of specific groups affected even for no impact and where negative impact has been identified what mitigating actions can we take?)
<b>Age</b>	✓			<p>The Town Investment Plan provides opportunities to all age groups, improving the social, cultural, educational and economic benefits by providing new and improved facilities that are accessible by all.</p> <p>Specific benefits are anticipated for younger age groups and those of a working age through a large growth in the local skills offer through 3 projects. Benefits are also likely to be achieved for people in younger age groups and families through the mixed tenure of the new housing that will be delivered as a result of the Rolfe Street and Grove Lane projects will also</p>

<b>Disability</b>	✓			<p>The Town Investment Plan proposals are likely to bring benefits for Smethwick residents with a disability through the new sports and community education facility which will specialise in alternative provision for disadvantaged, disabled and BAME students.</p> <p>Benefits for people with disabilities may also be achieved through providing safe walking and cycling routes to improve connectivity in Smethwick to key transport hubs.</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>			✓	<p>The Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all. A general positive impact is expected to be achieved for all groups including those with protected characteristics, but specific benefits have not been identified for these groups.</p> <p>.</p>
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>			✓	
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>			✓	
<b>Race</b>			✓	
				<p>Smethwick is comprised of 56% from ethnic minority groups. The Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all and a general positive impact is expected to be achieved for BAME groups. Specific benefits have not been identified for these groups at this stage of project development.</p>

<b>Religion or belief</b>			✓	The Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all. A general positive impact is expected to be achieved for all groups including those with protected characteristics, but specific benefits have not been identified for groups.
<b>Sex</b>			✓	The Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all, regardless of sex.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>			✓	The Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all, regardless of sexual orientation.
<b>Other</b>	✓			The Smethwick Town Deal interventions are concentrated within an arc in the North of Smethwick. This correlates with the higher levels of deprivation within the Towns Fund Intervention area and will bring greatest benefit to residents in the immediate vicinity.

Does this EIA require a full impact assessment? Yes  No

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then you do not need to go any further. You have completed the screening stage. You must, however, complete sections 7 and 9 and publish the EIA as it stands.

If you have answered yes to the above, please complete the questions below referring to the guidance document.

<p><b>5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?</b></p>
<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?</b></p>
<p>To be considered by Smethwick Local Board and Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard.</p>
<p><b>7. Monitoring arrangements</b></p>
<p>As projects are developed to Full Business Case, they will each conduct a full equality assessment. This Town-level assessment will be updated to reflect the specific project-level assessments.</p>
<p><b>8. Action planning</b></p>
<p>Action 1 – To update this Town-level equality impact assessment on the completion of project equality impact assessments.</p>
<p><b>9. Publish the EIA</b></p>
<p>This draft EIA will be considered by the Smethwick and Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard. It will be published following the production of a final version.</p> <p>Project-level EIAs will be published alongside the Full Business Case approval for each Towns Fund project.</p>