

Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard
West Bromwich Town Level Equality Impact Assessment

Draft (June 2021)
Template V4: January 2019

Title of proposal <i>(include forward plan reference if available)</i>	West Bromwich 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 West Bromwich 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.

West Bromwich, along with Smethwick 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 created that met the Governments criteria. These were tested against success criteria outline by Government, the contribution to the inclusive economy principles and Sandwell's vison and values to develop the shortlisted projects.

West Bromwich Town Investment Plan

The Towns Fund represents a pivotal moment for West Bromwich. The Town Investment Plan (TIP) will look to kickstart a programme of regeneration of West Bromwich town centre that will provide significant new opportunities for residents and businesses alike. It provides a new opportunity to level up West Bromwich, to build on the successes in housing, infrastructure, retail and education, to complement existing investments and help drive long term sustainable economic growth in the economic centre of Sandwell.

The Inclusive Economy Deal, published in 2020, is at the heart of the West Bromwich 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 in West Bromwich. The move from retail dominance to mixed-use retail, leisure and residential will support local businesses and make better use of space in the town centre, revitalising the high street. New greenspace and improvements to local buildings will improve the town's appearance to help attract more private sector investment and greater footfall. Finally, undertaking vital works on the Town Hall creates a new cultural and performance centre, in time to capitalise on the 2022.

Skills and Enterprise Infrastructure

The West Bromwich Town Investment Plan Skills and Enterprise Infrastructure investments will address long-standing & COVID skills demands by delivering new and upgraded facilities, linked to resident and business needs. This will enrich and upskilling the local talent pool, supporting local businesses, and ensuring residents from can access the necessary resources to gain further qualifications to seek employment. These projects will support regional and national needs by providing new facilities which directly align with skills demands in digital, construction and engineering.

Connectivity

The Connectivity investment (active travel) has the potential to make a long-term difference to how people access West Bromwich town centre. Better air quality and more active travel can help improve resident health and wellbeing.

2. Evidence used/considered

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

- Town level demographic profile
- Identified trends in the local sectors, employment, business base and demographics, crucially analysing how the West Bromwich economy operates
- Data collection provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) including census data (2011), town analysis (2019), population estimates, deprivation, employment/ GVA estimates, business base, BRES 2013 - 2018, spatial distribution of occupation, earnings and skills
- Data collection provided by MHCLG indices of deprivation (2015 and 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)
- 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 Ordnance Survey
- Data collection provided by Sandwell Trends 2020
- Evidence on digital inclusion, SMBC
- Spatial distribution of crime activity in Sandwell and West Bromwich
- West Bromwich Economic inactivity and inclusive growth profile
- Sandwell Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment (2018)
- Previous Engagement activities including Aspire Vision 2030 Survey, Sandwell Resident Inclusive Economy Survey (2019) and West Bromwich High Street – Soft Interventions Proposal (2019)
- Critical assessment and consideration of the economic opportunities and challenges for West Bromwich
- Towns Fund specific online surveys with residents, community and businesses organisations
- Towns Fund specific Worksop feedback with young people.
- Towns Fund specific workshop feedback with community and business organisations

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 West Bromwich 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 on a regular basis to ensure their contribution.
- Consultation with residents and the West Bromwich 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 West Bromwich TIP.
- Workshops have been held with partners from the voluntary sector, community organisations and representatives, West Bromwich Business Improvement District and educational providers 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 West Bromwich
- Residents expressed what they would like to see incorporated within projects e.g. free parking, climate change and more places for social activities in West Bromwich
- Young people expressed their desire to see cleaner high streets, a new drinks and food hall, a new live entertainment area and more green space within the town centre
- Crime and safety remain high on young people's agenda
- Whilst young people welcomed raising aspirations through education and improving provisions, it needs to be coupled with better job and career opportunities
- Greater opportunities for the community
- Improvements to the retail offer within West Bromwich
- Improvements to security provisions
- Improvements to the connection of the town via walking and cycling routes
- Improved housing

The engagement findings have contributed to project identification for the long list including improvements to the Town Centre through outdoor market improvements (accelerated funding), green corridor and town centre retail development, facilities for young people through social space in the Town Centre and Town Hall proposals and improving access to job and career opportunities through strengthening the mechanical engineering training offer. Concerns around safety in the town centre will be considered throughout the full business case development phase of all the Towns Fund proposals.

A detailed Consultation and Engagement Strategy has been developed for Phase 2 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.

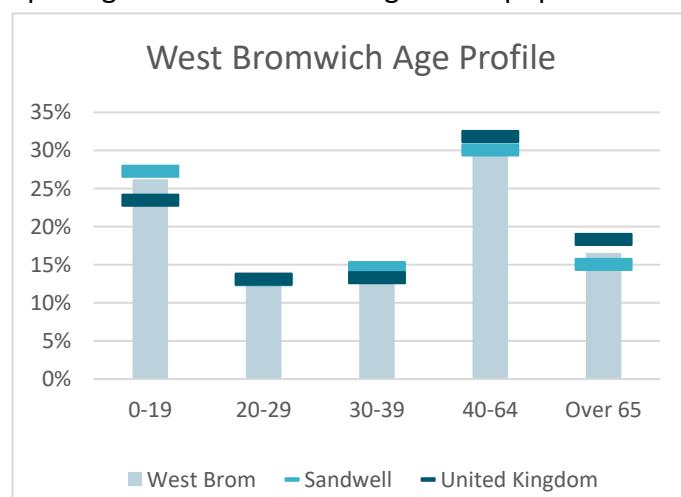
4. Assess likely impact

Context

West Bromwich is Sandwell's largest town, equating to 25% of the boroughs total population.

The town's age profile is quite polarised, with over a quarter of the town's population aged between 0 and 19 (higher than the UK average) and nearly a third of the population aged between 40 and 64.

20-29 and 30-39-year-olds make up 27% of West Bromwich's total population, which is in line with the UK average but slightly lower than the Sandwell average.



The 20-29s is the only age cohort to have declined in size. This is a cohort that includes young professionals who are both highly skilled and well educated and represents a loss of talent. The decline in numbers has resulted in the group making up a smaller proportion of the town's population (1% less).

Overall, West Bromwich is growing with the population increasing by 5.7% between 2013-2018, 1.4% higher than the borough average. 35.5% of West Bromwich's population are from ethnic minorities. This is higher than both Sandwell (30.1%) and England (14.6%).

21% of West Bromwich's population have limited day to day activities. This is higher than the Sandwell Average (20.9%), England Average (17.6%) and West Midlands Region Average (19%).

Deprivation

West Bromwich has the most prominent retail offering in the borough, with multiple shopping centres, markets and its 'golden mile' high street. However, this is a town with high levels of deprivation, within the 8th most deprived local authority in the country.

The town has lower wages than national averages, high unemployment and a high numbers of West Bromwich residents with low/ no skills. 22% of the population are living in income deprived households and 25% claiming job seekers allowance. Despite not having access to specific data, there may be a considerable difference in the unemployment rates between areas for each ethnic group, as well as between ethnic groups.

Whilst data around skills are not yet available at town-level, we can make a fair assessment of the overall skill levels within the borough. The working age population in Sandwell is relatively low skilled: 20% have no qualifications and, for 33% of the population, GCSE's are their highest qualification. Only 21% of residents are educated to degree level. More specifically, the west of West Bromwich is where skill levels are lowest – over a third of the working age residents have no qualifications or NVQ level.

In addition, the town is a deprived place suffering from a lack of investment, limiting the attractiveness of the town. Whilst there are recent successes of New Square and the Sixth Form Campus, areas of the town are dilapidated and no longer attractive for visitors.

Nearly one in five of the neighbourhoods are in the 10% most deprived areas in England, while 70% fall into the 40% most deprived. Few areas are showing signs of improvement or affluence. Deprivation within West Bromwich is higher in the South of the town and is lower in the north. Neighbourhoods surrounding town centres usually exhibit relatively higher levels of deprivation. This is the case in West Bromwich, where the centre is located in the south of the town. This is having an adverse impact on West Bromwich, reflected in the levels of criminal activity. It has 2.5x the average number of crimes, which is almost twice as high as the next town in the borough.

Towns in Sandwell have a poorer coverage of superfast median broadband speeds than those outside of the district. Within the district, coverage of superfast median broadband speeds is poorer in the east than in the west. West Bromwich has some of the districts most poorly covered areas, namely within the south of the town. A high proportion of West Bromwich cannot access ultrafast broadband in comparison to other towns across Sandwell.

Residents in the north have a much different quality of life to those in the south. The north has relatively low levels of deprivation. Generally, these areas have high amounts of green, open space and experience fewer instances of crime. Where deprivation is lower, residents here also have higher life expectancies: Females 84, Males 80. Here, life expectancies are higher than both the district and England averages.

Moving further South towards the town centre, where deprivation is higher, life expectancies are lower. For females it drops to 81, and for Males, 75. In both instances, these are below the district and England averages. Neighbourhoods surrounding town centres usually exhibit relatively higher levels of deprivation and, as seen in the data, considerably higher levels of crime.

The evidence collated has been a key factor when prioritising projects within the Town Investment Plan. The delivery benefits for projects include: -

- 900sq. m teaching and learning space via a new Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre.
- Redevelopment of 0.54 acres of brownfield land.
- Delivering new T-Level qualifications in high value sectors.
- Engage and provide training for 50-70 SMEs.
- 150 x Apprenticeships.
- 40 T levels.
- 200 new construction related activities.
- 90% learners classified as job ready.
- 75% learners with new qualifications achieved.

Digital Den

- Increase in capacity and accessibility to improved skills facilities.
- 200 beneficiaries annually.
- 70 people completing accredited training annually.
- Over £2m return on investment.

West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter

- Over 700 sq. m expansion to Town Hall and Library.
- Refurbishment of over 4,120 sq. m.
- New performance space.
- Creation of enterprise and community workshops
- An improved Town Hall and Central Library with c40,000-60,000 visitors a year
- A concert hall with a capacity of 1,000 anticipated to host c130,000 attendees annually.
- Potential for Private sector investment into adjacent vacant land

Retail Diversification Programme

- Targeted demolish and remediation of c.4.4 ha town centre land enabling the indirect delivery of c. 650 new homes and c.63,000 sqft commercial floorspace

Urban Greening

- 4 new greenspace routes in the town centre forming 1 linear park.
- New signage to support way-finding around the town and to other local assets such as Sandwell Valley.
- Upgrades to existing greenspaces.

Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Provision

- 3 new or upgraded cycle or walking routes.
- 3 new or upgraded road infrastructure.
- Increased number of trips by bike
- Increased number of trips by walking

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?)
Age	✓	✓	✓	The West Bromwich Town Investment Plan proposals 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. No negative impacts have been identified.
Disability	✓			The West Bromwich Town Investment Plan proposals will improve mobility and accessibility for disabled users in the public realm. Proposals will consider residents and visitors with disabilities, in the design stage including street furniture accessibility and the improved access to buildings to ensure DDA compliance.

Gender reassignment			✓	The West Bromwich Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all, regardless of gender assignment.
Marriage and civil partnership			✓	The West Bromwich Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all, regardless of marriage and civil partnership.
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	The West Bromwich Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all, regardless of pregnancy or maternity.
Race	✓			The West Bromwich TIP provides opportunities that are accessible by all, regardless of race.
Religion or belief			✓	The West Bromwich Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all, regardless of religion or belief.
Sex			✓	The West Bromwich Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all, regardless of sex.
Sexual orientation			✓	The West Bromwich Town Investment Plan proposals are accessible by all, regardless of sexual orientation.
Other				

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.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?

N/A

6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?

N/A

7. Monitoring arrangements

As projects are developed to Full Business Case, they will each conduct a full quality assessment.

8. Action planning

N/A

9. Publish the EIA

Where can I get additional information, advice and guidance?

In the first instance, please consult the accompanying guide “Equality Impact Assessment Guidance”

Practical advice, guidance and support

Help and advice on undertaking an EIA or receiving training related to equalities legislation and EIAs is available to **all managers** across the council from officers within Service Improvement. The officers within Service Improvement will also provide overview quality assurance checks on completed EIA documents.

Please contact:

Kashmir Singh - 0121 569 3828