

Agenda Cabinet

**Wednesday 17 January 2024 at 3.30 pm
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

Members to declare any interests in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

3 Minutes (Pages 7 - 28)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2023 as a correct record.

4 Additional Items of Business

To determine whether there are any additional items of business to be considered as a matter of urgency.

5 Review of Information Rights Policy (Pages 29 - 44)

Leader

To approve the Information Rights Policy which sets out how the council complies with requests for information and corporate compliance with the publication scheme.



6	Performance Management Framework - Q2 Monitoring (Pages 45 - 110)	Finance and Resources
	To consider progress on the Corporate Performance Management Framework and approve the Q2 monitoring reports.	
7	Child Friendly Sandwell (Pages 111 - 146)	Children, Young People and Education
	That the Council prepare and submit an expression of interest and application for Sandwell to become a UNICEF Child Friendly Borough.	
8	Determination of Admission Arrangements for Sandwell's Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2025/26 (Pages 147 - 174)	Children, Young People and Education
	To approve the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025-26 academic year.	
9	Sandwell Residential Education Centres: Charges for the period 1 August 2024-31 July 2025 (Pages 175 - 186)	Children, Young People and Education
	To consider proposals in relation to Sandwell Residential Education Centres.	
10	Housing & Asset Management Procurement Approvals (Pages 187 - 196)	Housing and Built Environment
	To consider proposals in relation to the procurement and contract award of internal improvement works and external improvement works.	
11	Allocation of Village Green Status and Park Designation - Goldicroft Playing Fields (Pages 197 - 202)	Leisure and Tourism
	To seek approval for the site currently designated as Goldicroft Playing Fields to be amended to a Neighbourhood Level Park.	

12	Smoke Control Area and associated enforcement procedure (Pages 203 - 220) To determine the commencement date of Sandwell's new boroughwide Smoke Control Area and associated enforcement procedure.	Public Health and Communities
13	Wednesbury Conservation Area Appraisal, Management Plan and boundary review (Pages 221 - 314) To seek approval to Wednesbury's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.	Regeneration and WMCA
14	Dudley Local Plan - proposed response to draft local plan consultation (Pages 315 - 324) To approve Sandwell's response to Dudley's Local Plan.	Regeneration and WMCA
15	Social Value in Sandwell Policy (Pages 325 - 340) To approve the Social Value in Sandwell Policy.	Regeneration and WMCA
16	Sandwell Local Development Scheme 2023 (Pages 341 - 354) To seek approval for the updated Local Development Scheme for the period 2023 - 2026.	Regeneration and WMCA
17	Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor - Initial scheme approval (Pages 355 - 366) To consider and approve proposals in relation to Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor – Initial scheme.	Regeneration and WMCA
18	Single Use Plastics Policy (Pages 367 - 376) To consider the adoption of the Single Use Plastic Policy.	Regeneration and WMCA

Shokat Lal
Chief Executive
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution

Councillor Carmichael (Chair)
Councillors Hackett, Hartwell, Hughes, Khatun, Millard, Padda, Piper and
Rollins

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Minutes of Cabinet

Wednesday 6 December 2023 at 3.30pm
In the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Carmichael (Chair);
Councillors Hackett, Hartwell, Hughes, Khatun, Millard,
Padda, Piper and Rollins.

In attendance: Councillors E Giles, J Giles, Moore and Taylor.

Also present: Shokat Lal (Chief Executive), Brendan Arnold (Interim Section 151 Officer), Michael Jarratt (Director of Children's Services and Education), Dean Epton (Interim Director of Housing), James McLaughlin (Assistant Chief Executive), Mike Jones (Assistant Director – Legal and Assurance), Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic and Member Services Manager), Connor Robinson (Democratic Services Officer) and John Swann (Democratic Services Officer).

143/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fenton and Lewis.

144/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.



145/23 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

146/23 **Additional Item of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.

147/23 **Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Sandwell**

Approval was sought to the Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Sandwell. Responsible authorities, chosen by the Government to prepare Local Nature Recovery Strategies, were required to work with stakeholders to map the most valuable existing areas for nature, agree nature recovery priorities and to agree what actions should be taken to recover nature and where.

It was a requirement of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 that all public bodies had regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their duties and functions. The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) was a major commitment in the Government's 25-Year Environment Plan (2018) designed to help wildlife recover by providing more habitat, in better condition and across larger areas that are more closely connected, as set out in Making Space for Nature (2010).

The Environment Act 2021 introduced mandatory Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to support spatial planning for nature and reverse the national decline in biodiversity. LNRS would be prepared for 48 areas that would effectively cover the whole of England and which were intended to help deliver the NRN.



In response to a question from the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA confirmed that the £26,807 made available to the council by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was a ring- fenced grant. It was unclear if further funding would be made available.

In addition, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA outlined that the Council would appoint an Ecology Officer who would be responsible for managing the Biodiversity Net Gain process, this position was to be funded by the Planning Policy and Development Management services.

The Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board endorsed the report and associated strategy and highlighted that it would be of particular benefit to residents living within the Hateley Health ward.

Reason for Decision

The Council was required to approve adoption of the Sandwell element of the Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy for planning purposes.

The requirements would be introduced in 2024 and local authorities were required to prepare in to ensure certain types of developments would meet the minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could have decided to make no preparations for the introduction of statutory biodiversity net gain. This would have resulted in missed opportunities to direct biodiversity net gain to locations of strategic value for nature recovery which would benefit residents. This would also result in an inability to progress the Sandwell Local Plan, which was needed to support the regeneration of the Borough.

Resolved:-

(1) that approval be given to:-



- a) the adoption of the Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy ([Appendix 1](#)) for planning purposes, including strategic delivery of biodiversity net gain in Sandwell;
 - b) the establishment of six areas of Council-owned land to act as biodiversity net gain habitat banks, as set out in the draft Sandwell Local Plan and in time for the start of the mandatory requirement for biodiversity net gain on development sites ([Appendix 2](#));
 - c) authorise the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Growth, to:
 - i. authorise completion of Conservation Covenants between the Council and an appropriate responsible body for the delivery of these sites as detailed in this report; and
 - ii. secure the addition of these sites to the national Biodiversity Gain Site Register;
- (2) that future authority for any additional working on the drawing-up and delivery of biodiversity net gain habitat banks and associated projects be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA and the Director responsible for Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism and the Director responsible for Leisure and Tourism.



Review of Council Tenant Rents and Housing Related Property Charges

Approval was sought to adjust council rents and Housing Charges from 1 April 2024 by the consumer price index (CPI) (September 2023) plus 1%.

In 2019, the Government set a rent policy for social housing that would permit rents to increase by up to CPI plus 1% per annum and made clear its intention to leave this policy in place until 2025.

From 2020, the Council had control over its own rent setting in line with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Rents Standard, and Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing.

Council tenants, leaseholders and other residents were to be notified of the rent and other related housing charges to take effect from the new financial year of 2024/ 25.

Reason for Decision

The council had to achieve the right balance between supporting tenants to mitigate the continued cost of living pressures and protecting the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to ensure the council could continue to provide affordable social housing for Sandwell residents.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could have increased rent below the rate of inflation or by a lower percentage. However, this would have created financial pressure for the Council to deliver key services. The provision of good quality Housing and Neighbourhoods were key to improving lives and life chances of residents. Reducing the level of income to the HRA would seriously impact the Councils 30- year business plans and result in less funding for maintenance of Council stock and funding for new homes.

The challenges presented through the Consumer Regulation Act and the Building Safety Act put financial pressures on the HRA to reshape the Councils services to meet the requirements.



Resolved that Full Council be recommended to authorise the Interim Director of Housing to adjust council rents and housing related charges with effect from 1 April 2024 as follows:

- (1) that the housing rental charges be increased by 7.7% which is the consumer price index 6.7% (September 2023) plus 1%, which is equivalent to a 7.7% increase;
- (2) that the housing service charges increase by the consumer price index (CPI)+ 1%, equivalent to a 7.7% increase;
- (3) that housing service charge be implemented on properties not currently being charged but are receiving the service in line with similar properties receiving the service provision, including heating, water and laundry facility following consultation with residents.
- (4) that subject to consultation with the residents of the site, to increase rent at the traveller's pitch in Hills View, Tipton;
- (5) that rental charges for garage sites be increased in line with other council fees and charges agreed by Cabinet and Council;
- (6) that properties managed by Riverside under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) agreement receive a 7.7% rental increase and a 7.7% increase in service charges to match the council's rent and service charge increase;
- (7) that properties that sit outside the Housing Revenue Account (including service tenants for Parks, Sandwell Valley and Caretaking) receive a 7.7% increase in rental charges and service charges equivalent to CPI plus 1%;
- (8) that the leaseholder annual management fee be increased by 7.7%, CPI + 1% in 2024/25 from £115.66 to £124.57;
- (9) that the Director of Housing be authorised to implement adjustments to council rents and housing related charges as set out in this report with effect from 1 April 2024; and



(10) that the Director of Housing be authorised to introduce associated service charges in respect of Building Safety Regulation requirements for Leasehold properties.

(Councillor Hughes declared a pecuniary interest in this item on the basis that his spouse was a tenant of a Sandwell Council owned garage and subsequently took no part in the discussion and did not vote on this matter).

149/23 **10 Year Business Rates Retention Agreement**

Approval was sought for the Council to enter into a 10- year business rates retention arrangement with the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC), the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the six other West Midlands metropolitan local authorities.

In 2017, the seven constituent Local Authorities of the WMCA entered into a pilot agreement with DLUHC allowing them to benefit from retaining 100% of the business rates generated within their respective local authority areas, compared with 50% nationally, in exchange for forgoing Revenue Support Grant ('RSG').

It was initially expected to be a short- term pilot in advance of national rollout of 100% business rates retention, however, the arrangement had been rolled forward under the same terms and conditions annually and remained in effect during 2023/24.

The proposed agreement was similar in many respects to the existing pilot arrangements and was therefore not expected to have any impact on projected business rates income in the short term.



Reason for Decision

The 10- year business rates retention agreement would allow the seven West Midlands metropolitan local authorities to retain 100% of their business rates income for ten years from 2024/25, with a share payable each year to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and 1% payable to the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority.

The agreement was in accordance with the ‘West Midlands Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal’ which had been approved by Cabinet on 13 September 2023.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could choose to opt out of the proposed 100% business rates retention “Devolution Deal” offer proposed by DLUHC and would return to 50% business rates retention, in line with the arrangements of the majority of local authorities across England.

If the WMCA and West Midlands authorities did not agree to enter into a new ten- year business rates retention arrangement in time for 2024/25 or 2025/26, then it was assumed that the pilot would come to an end and the member authorities would revert to the national 50% scheme. This would mean that the Council was again liable to pay a levy on business rates growth above the baseline and would lose the enhanced safety net protection offered under the pilot. Without the additional regional share of business rates growth from which to fund the WMCA contribution, the WMCA would need to either seek financial contributions from the West Midlands authorities outside of the business rates scheme or seek government support to ensure its ongoing sustainability.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to:-

- (1) authorise the Council to enter into a 10-year business rates retention arrangement with the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC), the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the six other West Midlands metropolitan local authorities;



- (2) that the Director of Finance in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, be authorised to complete any necessary agreements for the retention arrangement referred to in Resolution (1) above;
- (3) that the Director of Finance be authorised to make an annual payment to the West Midlands Combined Authority of £1.264m in 2023/24, which constitutes the Council's proportion of the "WMCA Share" of regional business rates income collected in the current year under the existing 100% business rates retention pilot arrangements;
- (4) the Director of Finance be authorised to make an annual payment to the West Midlands Combined Authority in each year throughout the 10-year period commencing on 1st April 2024, comprising of the Council's proportion of the "WMCA Share" of regional business rates income collected in that year.

150/23 **A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor – Initial scheme approval**

Approval was sought to the initial scheme in relation to the A461 Bus, Cycle and Walking Corridor.

The A461 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor formed part of the West Midlands City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Programme which had been approved by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board on 14 January 2022. The Sandwell elements of this programme were approved by Cabinet in July 2022.

In response to a question from the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA confirmed that the highway network was usually the most direct route for residents to travel.



In addition, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA outlined that 68% of the canal towpath network in Sandwell had been upgraded to make it suitable for cycling, with further upgrades to be made subject to the availability of funding.

Reason for Decision

The Council was required to approve the scheme to enable it to progress through the WMCA Single Assurance Framework Process, receive consultation from the public and stakeholders and proceed to the next stages of design and business case preparation.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could decide not to continue with the scheme and reallocate the funding back to the WMCA for spending on a different scheme. This was not recommended, as it would leave the WBHE without essential connections to nearby communities and amenities and there was no guarantee that the Council would be able to retain the funding for a different scheme, resulting in Sandwell residents becoming disadvantaged against other areas in the region.

The scheme could also be amended, however, this would make it difficult to deliver by 2027 and would risk the funding being reclaimed.

Resolved:-

- (1) approval in principle be given to the proposed sustainable transport and highway improvements that make up the A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor as shown on Drawing at [Appendix A](#);
- (2) authorise the Director of Regeneration & Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA, to carry out public consultation on the proposed sustainable transport and highway improvements that make up the A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor;



- (3) that in connection with Resolution (2) above, the Cabinet Member for Environment & Highways in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to consider and determine any objections received at a future Decision Making Session;
- (4) authorise the Director Regeneration & Growth to approve the submission an Outline Business Case to the West Midlands Combined Authority;
- (5) authorise the Assistant Director - Legal & Assurance, in conjunction with Assistant Director – Highways, to enter into an agreement with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council under section 8 of the Highways Act 1980 in connection with Resolution (1) above;
- (6) that the Scheme of Delegation to Officers (Executive side) be amended to include authority to the Assistant Director - Legal & Assurance in conjunction with Assistant Director - Highways to enter into agreements under section 8 of the Highways Act 1980 for future schemes as required.

151/23

Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030

Approval was sought to the Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024- 2030 and the continued use of the Safe System approach which considered the five elements of Safe Road Use, Safe Speeds, Safe Vehicles, Safe Roads and Roadsides and Post- crash Response.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways highlighted the positive input of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board which had considered the matter in October 2023.



In response to a question from the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways confirmed only the Police had statutory powers to enforce speeding contraventions.

Reason for Decision

Every Highway Authority in England and Wales had a statutory duty under 'Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to carry out studies into road casualties arising from the use of vehicles on their road network and in light of those studies put together and adopt a programme of works and initiatives to help prevent such incidents in the future. The adoption of the new Strategic Road Safety Strategy 2024-2030 helped the Council discharge this Statutory duty.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could have no strategic vision and long-term plan to reduce identified road casualty problems in the Borough, however, basing decisions on community concern and perceived problematic areas only would have a detrimental effect on the success in reducing road casualties.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to the Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 to inform and prioritise the delivery of road safety projects, initiatives and campaigns within the Borough until 2030;
- (2) that approval be given to the continued use of the Safe System approach to improving road safety and reducing road casualties, and adoption of the Vision Zero principle;
- (3) that the new road casualty reduction targets included within the new Road Safety Plan for the Borough be endorsed;
- (4) that approval be given to the publication of the Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 on the Council website.



Q2 Budget Monitoring 2023/24

Approval was sought to the Quarter 2 position for 2023/ 24. Due to budgetary pressures, the projected outturn for the General Fund was £1.222m.

The reports were due to be referred to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment.

In response to a question from the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources confirmed that the £10.177m of the projected £16.933m draw from reserves was related to legacy grant funding received during the Covid- 19 pandemic. In addition, it was confirmed that the forecast year end reserves balance of £110.522m was appropriate for a council of Sandwell's size.

In response to a question from the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources confirmed that adult social care users were charged for social care in accordance with rules prescribed by government, with the service users contribution decided following a financial assessment.

Reason for Decision

Section 151 of the 1972 Local Government Act required the Chief Financial Officer to ensure the proper administration of the council's financial affairs. Budgetary control, this included the regular monitoring and reporting of budgets, was an essential element in discharging this statutory responsibility.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could consider other spending controls that could be needed to avoid reliance on use of reserves.



Resolved:-

- (1) that the financial monitoring position as at 30 September 2023 (Quarter 2) be received and the report be referred to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment;
- (2) that the following budget virements above £1m be approved in line with the revised delegated limits for Cabinet Members and Directors:

Virements above £1m for approval by Cabinet		£'000	£'000
Contingency	Transfer of budget for asset rationalisation savings, achieved in year within Regeneration and Growth	1,660	
Regeneration and Growth	Transfer of budget for asset rationalisation savings, achieved in year within Regeneration and Growth		1,660
Contingency	Transfer of one-off property budgets held within Regeneration and Growth - no longer required	1,658	
Regeneration and Growth	Transfer of one-off property budgets held within Regeneration and Growth - no longer required		1,658
TOTAL		3,318	3,318

153/23

Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension (Sustainable Access Measures) - Initial Scheme Approval

Approval was sought to the initial scheme in relation to the Sustainable Access Measures as part of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension.



The project aimed to link up the Metro Extension effectively with the local community, to ensure users could access the metro from their homes and nearby amenities via sustainable transport modes.

In response to a question from the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA confirmed that funding had been secured for the whole route through Sandwell. Construction was in the advanced stages and tram services were scheduled to be running by 2024.

Reason for Decision

The Council was required to approve the project to enable it to progress through the WMCA Single Assurance Framework Process, receive consultation from the public and stakeholders and proceed to the next stages of design and business case preparation.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could decide not to continue with the scheme and reallocate the funding back to the WMCA for spending on a different scheme. This was not recommended as it would leave the WBHE without essential connections to nearby communities and amenities and there was no guarantee that the Council would be able to retain the funding for a different scheme, resulting in Sandwell residents becoming disadvantaged against other areas in the region.

The scheme could also be amended, however, this would make it difficult to deliver by 2027 and would risk the funding being reclaimed.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval in principle be given to the proposed package of improvements that make up the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension (Sustainable Access Measures) as shown on the drawings contained at [Appendix A](#);



- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to carry out public consultation, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment & Highways;
- (3) that the Cabinet Member for Environment & Highways be authorised to consider and determine objections at a future Decision Making Session;
- (4) that the Director Regeneration & Growth be authorised to submit an Outline Business Case to the West Midlands Combined Authority.

154/23

Council's Use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016

Approval was sought to the Corporate Policies regarding Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources and Acquisitions of Communications Data.

The circumstances in which a local authority could carry out covert surveillance and access communications data were detailed in the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. The Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office (IPCO) had responsibility for reviewing the use of investigatory powers by public authorities, the Council had been the subject of a desktop review in 2023 and the IPCO had been satisfied that it had complied with its requirements.

In response to a question from the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, the Leader of the Council confirmed that powers had been used rarely by the Council and that nationally there had been a large reduction in the use of investigatory powers. The Council was able to use the powers in the context of counter fraud, fly tipping, counterfeiting, unlawful eviction and under- age sales.



Reason for Decision

Compliance with the legislation was a statutory obligation of the Council.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could decide not to have a public policy, but this would be contrary to transparency and good practice expectations.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the information regarding the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and Investigation of Powers Act 2016 from July 2017 to October 2023 be received and noted;
- (2) that the following policies be approved:
 - i) Corporate Policy: Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources;
 - ii) Corporate Policy: Acquisitions of Communications Data
- (3) that the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to make administrative amendments to policies referred in Resolution (2) above as required.

155/23

Forge Mill Farm Animal Welfare Policy

Approval was sought for the Forge Mill Animal Welfare Policy. The policy applied to all animals within the management control of Forge Mill Farm across Sandwell Valley Country Park, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Forge Mill Farm and any other Council location where animals were present. This included a variety of rare breed animals including sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, alpacas, horses, ponies, donkeys, chickens, ducks and rabbits.



The policy included the provision of regular inspection, accreditation and certification from external organisations including a nominated vet practice.

Reason for Decision

It was Forge Mill Farm's ambition to become a centre of excellence in animal welfare food and farming education. The policy ensured that during the expansion of Forge Mill Farm's public facing operations, animal welfare would continue to be at the centre of that growth.

The approval of the policy would ensure high standards of animal welfare persists through any future changes in leadership, management or commercial direction.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council could have chosen not to approve the policy presented and the farm could have continued to base decisions on legal minimum requirements and best practice recommendations outside of Council policy. However, having a clear policy set standards and expectations, against which performance could be measured.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Forge Mill Farm Animal Welfare Policy be approved;
- (2) that the Assistant Director of Borough Economy be authorised to implement and review the policy in line with legislation, best practice guidance and advice from industry experts/ veterinary professionals.



Improvement Plan Progress to 1 November 2023 and Letter to Secretary of State December 2023

Approval was sought for Cabinet to recommend to Council that the Improvement Plan Progress Report, the October 2023 progress report and an accompanying letter be submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to form the Council's six-monthly update on progress against the Improvement Plan.

In response to a question from the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the Customer Journey Programme Board continued to meet monthly to review progress. The telephony contract working group had continued to progress with the BT contract which was due to be implemented in 2024 and the high-level design was in process of being agreed.

Reason for Decision

Under the Statutory Directions, the council was required to report progress against the Improvement Plan to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities every six months. Reports had been submitted in December 2022 and June 2023. It was proposed that this report and the quarterly update received by Cabinet in September 2023 would form the basis of the report to the Secretary of State along with a covering letter. Council were responsible for approving the report for submission to the Secretary of State and Cabinet would make a recommendation to Council.

Alternative Options Considered

The Directions issued by the Secretary of State were a statutory requirement and the Council had a legal obligation to respond appropriately. Failure to do so would likely result in further intervention measures.

Resolved:-

- (1) that progress against the Improvement Plan up to 1 November 2023 be received;



- (2) that Cabinet receive the Improvement Plan Risk Register.;
 - (3) that Cabinet receive changes to the Improvement Plan;
 - (4) that Cabinet receive any recommendations or comments made by Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in relation to the Improvement Plan progress.
- (5) that the Council be recommended to consider this report along with the October progress report and an accompanying letter be submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to form the Council's six-monthly update on progress against the Improvement Plan.

157/23 Regeneration Programme Performance

Approval was sought to amend the Regeneration Pipeline, which was to incorporate the long- term plan for towns programme, the millennium centre expansion and the Grove Lane, Smethwick project.

The Regeneration Project Pipeline had set out the major investment projects that the Council, its partners and the private sector intended to deliver. It had identified the infrastructure priorities for the council and had established where resources would be focused.

Reason for Decision

In March 2022, Cabinet approved the Regeneration Strategy, Regeneration Project Pipeline and the Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Business. These documents set out the corporate regeneration priorities for the period 2022 to 2027. The pipeline was a live document and Cabinet resolved for it to be monitored via a report submitted to Cabinet every 6 months. The last report was submitted in July 2023.



Alternative Options Considered

Cabinet were required to consider additions to the regeneration project pipeline. There were no alternative options.

Resolved:-

- (1) that Cabinet note the Performance of the Regeneration Programme.
- (2) that the Director of Regeneration & Growth be authorised to make the recommended amendments to the Regeneration Pipeline:
 - Add Long-Term Plan for Towns programme to the project pipeline.
 - Add Millennium Centre expansion project to the project pipeline.
 - Add Levelling Up Fund Round 3 - Grove Lane, Smethwick to the project pipeline.

(Councillor Hackett declared an other interest in this item as he was a Board Member and Trustee of the Friar Park Millennium Centre and left the room during consideration of the matter).

Meeting ended at 4.12pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk



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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Review of Information Rights Policy
Cabinet Member:	Leader – Councillor Carmichael
Director:	Assistant Director – Legal and Assurance Mike Jones
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Vanessa Maher-Smith Legal Services Manager – Governance and Regulatory Team and DPO

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the updated Information Rights Policy as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.
- 1.2 That in connection with 1.1 above, the Assistant Director for Legal and Assurance be authorised to make administrative amendments to these policies as required.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 In February 2022, the council’s cabinet approved the Information Rights Policy which is the public facing policy setting out how the council complies with requests for information (Data Subject Access Requests, and requests under Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations), and corporate compliance with the publication scheme. This Policy was due for review in January 2023.
- 2.3 Over the last 7 months the council has reviewed the policy through consultation with members of the Information Governance Board (IGB) and key stakeholders in the Governance Team and ICT.









2.6 Key changes to the Information Right’s Policy are:

- i) Updates in relation to changes in practices within the council.
- ii) Process in relation to other individual rights have been included.

2.7 The Information Rights Policy was presented to Leadership Team for approval on 12th December 2023.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Having clear policies and procedures underpin the council’s commitments to transparency through access to and disclosure of information via Subject Access Requests, Freedom of Information Act request and Environmental Information Regulations and the publication scheme. This is an underlying foundation for all of the work the council does to deliver its objectives.</p>
	
	
	
	
	

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Council has statutory obligations to comply with requests for information via Subject Access Requests, Freedom of Information Act request and Environmental Information Regulations.
- 4.2 Having a public policy that sets out how we comply with those obligations assists members of the public to exercise those rights and offers assurance that the council is meeting its duties.
- 4.3 The policy has been in place since January 2022, and an update was required to ensure it reflects current practices and emergent sector best practice.



5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative options would be to not have a public policy or to retain the existing policy, neither of which would be satisfactory. Whilst the existing policy does provide the relevant information, there are updates that are required to offer the assurance to members of the public that the council is meeting its statutory obligations.

6 Implications

Resources:	None directly. Indirectly, compliance with data protection and information governance legislation is inherent within all processes and is therefore contained within existing resource provision.
Legal and Governance:	The Information Rights Policy sets the basis for the council's compliance with data protection legislation and access to information under SAR, FOIA and EIR.
Risk:	It would be a risk to the council if it did not comply with data protection legislation and requests for information under FOIA and EIR.
Equality:	None – the Governance Team ensures that relevant training on the policy and aspects thereof are accessible to all.
Health and Wellbeing:	No implications directly related to this report.
Social Value:	The policy operates to assure the public as to how the council deals with requests for information, and ensures transparency of information.
Climate Change:	No implications directly related to this report.
Corporate Parenting:	No implications directly related to this report.

7. Appendices

Appendix One - Updated Information Rights Policy

8. Background Papers

Cabinet meeting that approved the Information Rights Policy in January 2022:



Current Information Rights Policy



Appendix

Information Rights Policy

Author:	Vanessa Maher-Smith
Owner:	Governance Team
Version:	2.0
Modified by	Vanessa Maher-Smith - Legal Manager – Governance and Regulatory & Data Protection Officer
Date:	December 2023
Review Date:	December 2024



1. Summary

This policy sets out how the Council will comply with the UK-General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and any other applicable regulations and good practice in relation to requests for information. It will inform individuals what their rights are, any restrictions on those rights and how these rights can be exercised.

Fairness, transparency and openness are fundamental to the council's approach to information rights and requests. The council recognises the public interest in the disclosure of information and respects the rights of individuals and organisations to make requests for personal information, and for information under Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

2. Rights of the Individual

The UK-GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 give individuals certain rights with regards to the personal data held by the Council and includes the following:

- The right to be informed
- The right of access (also known as a Subject Access Request)
- The right to rectification
- The right to erasure
- The right to restrict processing
- The right to data portability
- The right to object
- The rights of individuals where automated decision-making and profiling is carried out by the Council

Complying with requests to enforce these rights is subject to exemptions provided in the relevant legislation. It is the role of the Council's Data Protection Officer (DPO) to determine when these rights should be upheld and where applicable, exemptions that should be used.

3. The Right to be Informed

The right to be informed incorporates some of the key transparency requirements of the UK GDPR. It is the requirement of the council to provide you with clear and concise information about what we will do with your personal data. This information is provided to you within the council's Privacy Notice and outlines:

- Why we collect your personal information
- What personal information we may collect

- How we collect your personal information
- The laws that allow us to use your personal information
- Who we might share your personal information with
- How long we will keep your personal information
- Your rights under the law
- How to access your personal information held by the Council
- Information about the council's filming and photography
- Contact details for the Council's Data Protection Officer and the Information Commissioner
- An overview of our service areas

The Privacy Notice is available on our website at <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/privacynotice>

4. The Right of Access – Subject Access Request (SAR)

This right is commonly known as a Subject Access Request and gives you the right to obtain copies of the personal information the council holds about you.

Requests for a Subject Access Request may be made verbally or in writing to any officer of the council. There are a number of ways in which you can make your request, and these are detailed under section 14.

Identification of the Requestor

We may need you to provide identification in the form of nationally accepted photo identification such as a copy of your passport or driving licence. This is to ensure that when we undertake searches we identify the correct information and not that of another person and to ensure that before providing you with the information you are the person to whom the information relates.

Where the council requires you to provide identification, copies of the personal information requested will not be provided to you until this has been received.

Timescales for Responding to your Subject Access Request

There is a statutory requirement for the council to respond to your request within one calendar month from the date of receipt i.e. a request received on 1st January will be responded to on or before the 1st February. However, this timescale may be extended by up to two further months where the request is deemed to be particularly complex or onerous.

Processing your Subject Access Request

Once you have told us what information you require we will search all relevant records and systems and extract all the personal information that relates to you and your request. Information about other people will be redacted unless we think you

would already know this information or you provide consent from the other individuals to disclose their information.

There may be some instances where the council requires clarification of the personal information being requested by you. It is important that you respond as quickly as possible as the council will not start any searches for your information until this clarification has been received.

There are some circumstances where the information will be exempt from the right of subject access. However, where this is the case our response will outline the relevant exemptions from within the legislation that has allowed us to do this.

Subject Access Request made on Behalf of a Minor (Data Subject under the age of 13)

Where a Subject Access request is made in relation to a minor then we will need nationally accepted photo identification and proof of your parental or guardian right to make the request and receive the response. This might take the form of birth certificates, proof of residence or a document issued by a competent court of law in the UK and European Union.

Before responding to a SAR for information held about a child, the council will consider whether the child is mature enough to understand their rights. If the council believes that the child can understand their rights, then we may respond directly to the child. In these circumstances the council will however, allow the parent to exercise the child's rights on their behalf if the child authorises this, or if it is evident that this is in the best interests of the child.

Subject Access Request made on Behalf of an Adult with Capacity to Consent

Where a Subject Access Request is made on behalf of another adult who has the capacity to consent then nationally accepted photo identification is required for the individual whose personal data is being requested. Consent or a letter of authorisation must also be provided from the individual whose data is being requested.

Subject Access Request made on Behalf of an Adult without Capacity to Consent

Where a Subject Access Request is made on behalf of another adult who does not have the capacity to consent, nationally accepted photo identification and proof of the legal right to make the request and receive the response is required. For example, a lasting power of attorney.

Subject Access Request made for the Personal Information of someone Deceased

To make a request for the personal information of someone who is deceased the request must be made by the personal representative of the deceased. To do this the requestor must provide a nationally accepted photo identification and proof of the legal right to make the request and receive the response. For example, probate, letters of administration, proof they are the executor of the will, authorisation from the executor of the will.

Charging a Fee for a Subject Access Request

In accordance with the provision of UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, the council does not charge for SARs. Data protection law however, permits the council to apply a reasonable administrative charge if the request is repetitive, manifestly unfounded or excessive in nature.

Refusing a Subject Access Request

The council may refuse to act on a SAR for one or more of the following reasons:

- The requester has made more than two repetitive requests within a 12-month period
- The request is judged to be manifestly unfounded
- The request is excessive in nature
- There are legal prohibitions around the release of the requested information
- Releasing the information will cause harm and distress to one or more living individuals

Should your request be refused then you will be advised of this decision in writing within one calendar month from the receipt of your request.

Subject Access Request Review

If you are dissatisfied with our response to your Subject Access Request, you can make a request for review within 21 days of the date of our response. If a request for review is received after 21 days, the council will treat the SAR as a new request. To request a review, please contact the council's Data Protection Officer, contact details can be found below at point 14.

5. The Right to Rectification

This right allows you to request that personal data held about you is rectified. If you believe we hold information about you which is inaccurate or incomplete you can ask us to rectify (i.e. correct) the information or complete it if it is incomplete.

In some circumstances you may be asked to provide supporting information to evidence the requested changes / alterations. Where a right to rectification request is

received the council will review the information and the details you have provided and make a decision as to whether we need to change the information we hold.

After reviewing your request, we will inform you of our decision and outline the reasons for our decisions.

6. The Right to Erasure

The Right to erasure also known as the '*right to be forgotten*' is your right, in some circumstances, to ask for any personal information held by the council about you to be erased / deleted. You have this right where:

- You withdraw your consent for the Council to hold this information and the council's legal basis for processing this information is consent.
- It is no longer necessary for us to hold the information for the purpose for which it was originally collected / processed
- You object to the processing of your information and we have no overriding legitimate reasons to allow us to continue using your information
- Your information has been unlawfully processed by the council or has to be erased in order to comply with a legal obligation e.g. a court order;

This right does not apply where the information is processed:

- To comply with a legal obligation or for a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of the council's official authority.
- Exercise or defend legal claims
- For certain purposes relating to public health, for archiving in the public interest, scientific or historical research or statistical purposes.

After reviewing your request, we will inform you of our decision and any actions we have taken regarding the personal information the council holds about you.

7. The right to Restrict Processing

You have the right to ask the council to restrict the processing of your personal data in the following circumstances:

- You contest the accuracy of the personal data the council holds about you
- The personal information has been unlawfully processed
- The data is due to be destroyed in accordance with the council's retention schedule but you require it to establish, exercise or defend a legal claim.
- You have objected to the processing and we are considering whether we have a legitimate reason to process your information which overrides this.

Where you exercise your right to restrict processing the council will write to you outlining our decision.

8. The right to data portability

The right to data portability allows you to obtain and reuse the personal data held by the council for your own purposes.

Where this right applies, the council must provide the personal data to you in a structured, commonly used and machine-readable format. If you request it, we may transmit the data directly to another organisation if this is technically feasible.

The right to data portability only applies to personal data you have supplied to the council, where the legal basis for processing the information is that you have consented, or you have given us the information for a contractual arrangement and the processing is carried out by automated means.

The right to data portability does not apply if information is being processed for a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of the council's official authority.

9. The Right to Object

The right to object gives you, in certain circumstances, to object to the council's processing of your personal information. This effectively allows you to stop or prevent the council from processing your personal data.

You have the absolute right to object to the processing of your personal data if the legal basis used by the council is that of consent i.e. newsletters from our communications team.

You can also object to the processing of your personal information if the council processes your information for:

- Its legitimate interests
- A task carried out in the public interest
- The exercise of the council's official authority
- Certain scientific / historical research for statistical purposes

However these circumstances are not absolute and in line with the applicable legislative requirements the council may refuse your right to object.

Where you exercise your right to object the council will write to you outlining our decision and the reasons for these.

10. Rights of individuals where automated decision-making and profiling is carried out by the Council

Where the council uses automated decision making or profiling and that decision could affect you or another individual, you have the right to:

- Ask for human intervention to review or challenge a decision made by automated means
- Obtain an explanation of the decision and challenge it.

11. Freedom of Information Requests

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides you with the ability to access information held by the council. It does this in two ways:

- By obliging the council is to publish certain information about our activities.
- Allowing you to request recorded information held by the council.

The Freedom of Information Act places the following responsibilities on the council:

- To accept and consider requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act
- To ask the requester for further information to enable the council to gain an understanding of the requester's expectations.
- To provide advice in writing to the requester as to whether the council holds the requested information
- Where allowable under the Freedom of Information Act to provide the requested information
- To inform the requester if the information / part of the information requested is exempt from disclosure.

Making a Freedom of Information Request

There are a number of ways in which you can make your request, and these are detailed under section 14.

When making a request you must:

- Make the request in writing (this can include requests made by email, social media, postal etc.)
- Include your real name (this can be a company name or a person on behalf of a person e.g. solicitor on behalf of a client)
- Include an address for correspondence (this can either be a postal address or email address)
- Clearly detail the information required. It must be subject specific - "tell me everything about" ... is not a valid request

Timescales for Responding to Freedom of Information Request

The council has a statutory timescale of 20 working days from the date of receipt to respond to your request. Day 1 is calculated as the first working day after the request has been received. You will however receive an email from our system (DASH)

informing you that we have logged your request along with the response target date and the FOI reference number.

An extension to the statutory timescale of 20 working days for responding to an FOI can only be made where:

- An exemption being used requires a public interest test to be undertaken
- More time is needed to consider whether it would be in the public interest to confirm or deny whether the information is held.

Where the council needs to extend the statutory timescale we will inform you of this and the reasons for the extension.

Requests for Clarification

It may be necessary to seek clarification from you regarding the information being requested. Where this is required you will be given 2 months to respond after which the request will be closed. The timescale for responding to your request will not start until the council receives the clarification regarding your request.

Refusal of a Freedom of Information Request

The council can refuse an entire request under the following circumstances:

- The request is vexatious.
- The request repeats a previous request from the same person.
- Requests which include abusive or hostile language

In line with the Freedom of Information Act the council limits the cost threshold for responding to Freedom of Information requests at a maximum of 18 hours to locate, retrieve and extract the information requested (this does not include time required to apply any necessary exemptions or redactions). Where responding to the request will take longer than 18 hours it will be refused. Where this happens however you will be advised as to how you may be able to amend your request to meet the cost threshold.

Exemptions to withhold information held by the Council

The Freedom of Information Act contains a number of exemptions that allow the council to withhold information from a requester. In some cases, the council may refuse to confirm or deny whether it holds the information.

Any exemption used and the reasons for using them will be outlined in the response to your request.

Freedom of Information Request Review

If you are unhappy with our response to your Freedom of Information Request, then you are entitled to an Internal Review. Internal Review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of receipt of this correspondence.

To request a review, please contact the Council's Data Protection Officer, contact details can be found below at point 14.

12. Environmental Information Requests

The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 is the legislation that provides you with the ability to access environmental information held by the council. It does this in two ways:

- By obliging the council to proactively make environmental information available
- Allowing you to request environmental information held by the council.

Environmental information is recorded information in any form regarding the state of elements of the environment and their interaction (air, atmosphere, water, soil, land and landscape, natural sites, flora and fauna) discharges, emissions, noise, radiation, waste.

Environmental Information Regulation requests are similar to FOI requests and will be processed in the same way as described above under section 11 'Freedom of Information Requests'.

13. Publication Scheme

The council maintains a publication scheme and updates it regularly to maintain its relevance. The publication scheme contains documents, policies, plans and guidance used by the Council. It also specifies how this information will be made available to the public.

The publication scheme can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/council/publication-scheme>

14. How to access your rights and request information?

In order to make a request regarding your rights and access to information discussed above please contact the Council in one of the following ways;

By Post:

Information Management Unit
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

B69 3DE

By email:

Info_Management@Sandwell.gov.uk

Or if you have a My Sandwell account at:

<https://my.sandwell.gov.uk/>

If you are unhappy with how the Council has processed your personal data or handled your request then you can make a complaint to the Councils Data Protection Officer

By Post:

Office of the DPO
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands
B69 3DE

By email:

dp_officer@sandwell.gov.uk

If for any reason you are not happy with how we have handled your personal information or the response from our Data Protection Officer, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

You can contact the Information Commissioner at the following address:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Alternatively, you can use their online tool for reporting concerns:

<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

You can telephone them on 0303 123 11113.

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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Performance Management Framework – Q2 Monitoring
Cabinet Member:	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources Cllr Bob Piper
Director:	Chief Executive – Shokat Lal
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Kate Ashley – Strategic Lead: Service Improvement Kayleigh Walker – Senior Lead: Service Improvement Sarah Sprung – Senior Lead: Service Improvement

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet note progress on the further development of the Corporate Performance Management Framework and approve the Q2 monitoring reports.







2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Council approved a Corporate Performance Management Framework (PMF) on 12 April 2022, to address the recommendations of the Governance Value for Money Review by Grant Thornton and as a key element of the Council's Improvement Plan.



- 2.2 Since then, the corporate PMF has been further refined and built into business processes. In June 2023, Cabinet approved a revised Corporate Plan with a revised set of Corporate Performance Indicators. This report sets out the Council’s performance against the Corporate Performance Indicators for Q2 of 2023/24. **Appendix 1** lists the measures and performance, including a RAG rating against target where applicable. The appendix also includes the direction of travel of performance since last quarter (Q1) and compared to the same period last year.
- 2.3 Performance of key contracts is included in the quarterly performance reports to provide oversight of the performance of these services and assurance that contract management mechanisms continue to be in place and effective.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The corporate PMF includes measures under all strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan to monitor progress in these key areas. The PMF also includes elements that measure the council’s use of its resources to ensure delivery of the strategic objectives.</p> <p>The Strategic Risk Register details the key strategic risks that need to be managed to ensure that they do not negatively impact on the successful delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives.</p>
	
	
	
	
	



- 3.1 An effective performance management framework facilitates increased accountability, learning and improvement. It also provides early warning signals and facilitates decision-making.
- 3.2 On a quarterly basis, the council gathers and analyses a wide range of data and information to understand how effectively its plans are being implemented and whether the strategic outcomes contained in the Corporate Plan are being achieved.
- 3.3 The information collected is used to enable the authority to better understand the impact of its work on local people, and where necessary, target actions and resources.

4 Quarter 2 Performance – key messages

Corporate Performance Report

- 4.1 In Q2, the number of Quarterly PIs given a RAG status has increased from 65 to 71 (out of a total of 128). In total, the percentage of 'red' and 'amber' PIs has increased, and the number of 'green' PIs has decreased, as can be seen below.
- 4.2 Of the 71 indicators given a RAG status this quarter,
 - 25 (35%) are RAG rated 'red' (compared to 21 (32%) in Q1*)
 - 15 (21%) are rated 'amber' (compared to 10 (15%) in Q1*)
 - 31 (44%) are rated 'green' (compared to 34 (52%) in Q1*)

**Totals have been amended from Q1 to include quarterly PIs only, the summaries provided last quarter included some Annual PIs where data was available)*

32 PIs do not have a RAG rating as a target is not applicable and/or the PI is for information only. For 25 PIs no data is available; this is because there is no data available this quarter or the PI is being developed. The Corporate Performance Team is working with Directorates to develop PIs and ensure more data is available next quarter.



Area	Total	Red	Amber	Green	RAG NA	Data not available	Annual
Best Start	39	3	7	7	1	0	21 (4 reported in Q2; 1 'red'. 1 'amber' and 2 'green')
Live well Age Well	36	1	1	3	4	11	16 (1 reported in Q1: 'red')
Strong Resilient Communities	24	2	2	5	3	1	11
Quality Homes	21	8	1	4	1	0	7
Strong Inclusive Economy	15	2	0	1	3	3	6
Connected and Accessible	11	0	0	1	0	0	10
One Team One Council	58	9	4	10	20	10	5
Total	204	25	15	31	32	25	76

Corporate Plan

4.3 In total in Q2, 210 Business Plan actions were given an update, compared to 212 in Q1 (of 255 actions in total). In total, the number of 'red' and 'green' issues has slightly decreased, and the number of 'amber' issues has increased.

4.4 Of the 210 Business Plan actions given a RAG Status this quarter:

- 6 (3%) were rated as 'red' (significant issues) (compared to 8 (4%) in Q1)
- 42 (20%) were rated as 'amber' (medium issues) (compared to 37 (17%) in Q1)



- 162 (77%) were rated as 'green' (on track) (compared to 167 (79%) in Q1)

There were 44 actions with no update available.

4.5 Last Quarter it was identified that the following actions were 'red' or 'amber' because the action or piece of work has stalled or need to be re-evaluated. An update on these actions for Q2 is included below.

4.6 **The redesign of the communal areas at Walker Grange (extra care housing complex) (rated 'red' in Q1):** It was reported in Q1 that draft proposals have been prepared by Urban Design, but no budget has been approved yet because of the pressures on the HRA budget and that HRA forecasts need to be remodelled. At the end of Q2 this is rated 'red' with plans to start remodelling from February after receiving housing stock condition data. Accurate remodelling is important because over the past year, a number of pressures against HRA budgets have been identified that result in a significant deficit if we continue to deliver work already approved in the timescales proposed. We need to remodel the HRA forecasts for the coming 5 years to avoid that situation. Walker Grange communal work will be included in those discussions to identify when the work could commence.

4.7 **The plan for replacement of diesel fleet with sustainable fuel vehicles (rated 'red' in Q1):** In Q1 it was reported that this was an area of risk given the number of electric charging points available and technological limitations in replacing some of the larger fleet with EV or an alternative fuelling option. Consultancy, EVP solutions were appointed to look at this and develop a plan for electrification going forwards. In Q2 this is still rated as 'red', but EVP have been working on this and the results of the review will shape the replacement strategy going forward. The Service confirmed that when vehicles are due for replacement, they will consult to ensure the most appropriate type of vehicles are ordered and retain the policy requiring business case for any non-electric vehicles.



- 4.8 **A number of new build housing schemes have been impacted by construction costs (due to increased inflation) and are not able to proceed at the current time (rated ‘amber’ in Q1):** This remains ‘amber’ in Q2.
- 4.9 **The government has withdrawn the Housing Transformation Fund so the planned work to support independent living using this funding is on hold (rated ‘red’ in Q1):** This has been rated ‘amber’ in Q2. The project remains on hold as per Q1 but work with colleagues in Adult Social Care has taken place to develop dementia friendly units of accommodation at Walker Grange. Viewings of the showflat have taken place and feedback will inform the development of a further 5 units in 2024.
- 4.10 **Commercial bus services in the West Midlands are being reduced due to viability/footfall issues and this has impacted on the level of bus service provided in Sandwell.(However, the metro extension project from Wednesbury to Dudley is on track and in budget to open to passengers by December 2024.) (rated ‘amber’ in Q1):** This is rated ‘amber’ again in Q2. The metro extension project is still on track to open to passengers by December 2024.
- 4.11 **Year-end commercial income projections for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Forge Mill Farm, Lightwoods House and Park (Visitor Services) for 2023/24 were lower than target in Q1 (rated ‘amber’):** This is rated ‘amber’ again in Q2; income targets for the year to date have not been met because of the operational delays and poorer than expected weather in Q1.
- 4.12 In addition to the above updates, the following actions have been rated ‘amber’ or ‘red’ in Q2 for reasons other than slippage.
- 4.13 **Stop Smoking Support:** This was rated ‘green’ in Q1, but ‘amber’ in Q2 because the latest prevalence estimates show that Sandwell has increased and now has a higher estimated rate of smokers than regional or national levels (however there is a new survey methodology being



used with a larger confidence interval). Cessation provision in Sandwell continues to be strong (delivering quitters above the regional and national average per head), with the stop smoking cessation service in Sandwell offering vapes as a quit aid as well as a new digital offer which went live earlier this year. This will help to ensure as many smokers can access the support they need. The focus is on supporting priority groups to quit continues through partnership working and joint referral pathways with e.g. homelessness services, maternity, drug & alcohol services, mental health services etc. Public Health are working closely with Regulatory Services to expand their capacity towards tackling illegal tobacco and vapes.

4.14 **Greenspaces utilisation:** This was rated 'green' in Q1, but 'amber' in Q2 because of some issues with the Albion Foundation, the provider who is delivering a physical activity programme within the green space of each of the borough's six towns with a focus to improve public health outcomes and increase physical activity levels of those who are inactive. There are concerns that are being addressed regarding diversity of activities being offered and promotion. There are also issues with data being provided due to issues with provider's system. Again, is being addressed and service provision is continuing.



4.15 Below is the summary of Corporate Plan actions for Q2.

	Best Start	Live Well & Age Well	Strong Resilient Communities	Quality Homes	Strong Inclusive Economy	Connected & Accessible	One Council One Team	Total
No of Corporate Plan 'we wills'	12	21	20	17	11	8	18	107
No of Directorate Business Plan Actions	23	85	38	23	18	17	51	255
On Track	9 (12)	59 (62)	22 (21)	15 (11)	15 (14)	13 (12)	29 (35)	162 (167)
Medium Issues	2 (5)	12 (10)	6 (6)	7 (5)	2 (2)	2 (3)	12 (6)	42 (37)
Significant Issues	-	5 (4)	1 (1)	0 (1)	-	-	0 (2)	6 (8)
No Update available	12 (6)	9 (9)	9 (10)	1 (6)	1 (2)	2 (2)	10 (8)	44 (43)
Totals	23	85	38	23	18	17	51	255



- 4.16 The comments for 8 Quarterly PIs reference recruitment and recruitment issues impacting performance. However, closer analysis has found there is no common theme in the commentary across these PIs.
- 4.17 The comments for 3 Corporate Plan updates refer to construction cost inflation as impacting performance
- 4.18 The following sections provide on oversight of Corporate Plan monitoring and performance across the strategic outcomes

5. The Best Start in life for Children and Young People

Performance Monitoring

- 5.1 We are below target for 'Financial performance against budget (SCT)'. At the end of Q2, SCT are projecting a £207k Annual Deficit against the Contract Sum. In response to this, the council has requested details on the mitigations the Trust are employing to address the overspend. Finance reports are being made available through Operational Partnership Board (OPB) and Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) and during four way meetings with the S151 officer, Director of Childrens Services (DCS), Chief executive of the Trust and Director of Resources at the Trust.
- 5.2 The 'percentage of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating - Special and alternative provision' is below target (71% against a target of 86%). Performance for Primary and Secondary Schools is also just below target ('amber'). This data includes academies as well as Local Authority maintained schools
- 5.3 'Early Help - Referrals to Social Care with no evidence of Multi-Agency Early Help in the prior 12 months' is above target (RAG rated 'red'). Performance has remained relatively stable since last quarter and is 5% better than 12 months ago.



5.4 The number of Children on a Child Protection Plan has risen from 338 in April 2023 to 479 in August 2023, although there has been a slight decrease in September 2023 to 462, now at a rate of 54.4 per 10,000 (RAG rated 'Amber'), this is slightly above Statistical Neighbour Average (52.6). The increase in CP plans over the quarter is due to a number of factors including:

- Some delays in core groups (review meetings) has impacted on plans being updated and progressed, resulting in some children being on plans for longer
- Threshold discussions not taking place consistently prior to a conference being arranged, meaning less challenge on how best to manage risk

Children on a CP Plan for a 2nd or subsequent time (within two years) has increased from 18.7% in Q1 to 22% in quarter (3.3% increase – RAG rating 'amber').

5.5 Improving the opportunities for Care Leavers continues to be a priority for the Children and Education Directorate and the wider Council, and senior managers met in Q2 to discuss how they could improve opportunities for Care Leavers this quarter. Performance for percentage of Care leavers that are NEET (aged 19-21)' remains above target at 54% (amber). In addition, a NEET panel has been set up where cases are discussed every 2 weeks and solutions can be found for Care Leavers to prevent them becoming NEET.

5.6 Provisional data for 'Key Stage 4: Attainment 8 - Reduce the Points gap between the LA Disadvantaged and Non-Disadvantaged pupils nationally' is available and is above target at -14.9 (RAG rated 'red'). The national gap measure was larger than in Sandwell at -15.2, with West Midlands slightly smaller at -14.8.



- 5.7 Provisional data for 'Educational Attainment Sandwell All Pupils – attainment at the expected level or above in reading, writing and maths at KS2' (56% - RAG rated 'Green') and 'Educational Attainment Sandwell All Pupils - KS4 attainment of English and maths at Grade 4 or above' (55% - RAG rated 'Amber') is available, however the figures for Children in Care are not yet available.

Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 5.8 Libraries continue to provide good outreach with 132 Deliver Play, Talk, Read sessions in all libraries.
- 5.9 Improving School attendance remains a priority, all schools now have a dedicated school attendance officer, 'how to' guides produced for school & partners i.e., how to manage illness.
- 5.10 There has been some slippage on projects such as the review of School Admission Appeals, this is to enable the annual school appeals to be heard within statutory deadlines. The review will commence in October 2023 in consultation with Schools Admissions.

6. People Live Well and Age Well

Performance Monitoring

- 6.1 The proportion of section 42 safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified and the reported outcome was that this risk was reduced or removed is below target at 87% (RAG rated 'red'). Due to a change in management structure staffing in the team, there has been an increase in the backlog of allocations that has meant that by the time cases are allocated, the degree of the issues would either be resolved or risk removed, reducing transition into S42.



- 6.2 Safeguarding has also opened up across the service with a change in practice. Whilst the opening up of safeguarding across services is helping to make safeguarding everyone's business and increasing ASC operational capacity to respond to the increased demand in the system, impact of the knowledge gap previously has meant that understanding best practice and performance outcomes for safeguarding is low among staff. To address this, teams are offered support through surgeries and feedback from learning from performance validation meetings on specific areas of performance.
- 6.3 We are also addressing practitioner knowledge relating to best practice in analysing and applying the threshold questions resulting from point (a) (receipt of the contact) and practice at large. With this, we should now see an increase in the transition rate into S42 as delegated enquiries and a proportion of enquiries would be completed on this step on the module. This should have the effect of increasing this performance measure overtime. Regular meetings are also taking place with performance to address any quality issues, following this we are engaging with safeguarding and area teams.
- 6.4 The target for the 'Use of the Sandwell Language Network to support learning English and Health literacy' has been exceeded with 586 participants enrolled (against a target of 270). There have been 32,851 language learning hours completed, 56 volunteers have enrolled of which 6 volunteers achieved Adult Education Training Qualifications, 84% have improved ability to understand the NHS and 90% have improved ability to explain a personal health concern to a healthcare professional (contract year runs 1st Sept 22 - 31st Aug 23). The new contract year reporting will be available at the end of Q3 23/24.

Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 6.5 Work with faith sector continuing to build with the Corporate Faith Covenant verified by Faith Leaders.
- 6.6 Co-production agenda is well on track. Following reports in Q1 the conversation has now moved to a Place Based approach with a number of place-based colleagues having participated in working groups and represented on the steering group.



- 6.7 There is ongoing slippage in some areas. These include implementing the new day opportunities model across the market which is on hold whilst the barriers to Direct Payments and delays in processing are resolved. There has been an external report undertaken by Community Catalysts that has been shared through the Commissioning Board which identifies what needs to be done. Social Work capacity to undertake reviews and consider people for Direct Payments to enable them to access a diversified day opportunities model will also be considered.
- 6.8 Another area of slippage is the Joint Equipment Stores Development. The company A1 clutches share land on the site at Dolton Way alongside several other businesses and they installed a barrier that they padlock closed each evening and at weekends. The Community Alarms Team require 24/7 access and the barrier needs to be removed (Staff safety will be a concern if they have to get in and out of vehicles to unlock a padlock barrier each time they want to access/exit the site). The Council's Legal team continue to chase the company for a response.
- 6.9 The upgrade of the Walker Grange Communal areas has slipped because the HRA budget and that HRA forecasts need to be remodelled (as referenced in paragraph 4.6). Accurate remodelling is important because over the past year a number of pressures against HRA budgets have been identified that result in a significant deficit if we continue to deliver work already approved in the timescales proposed. The Housing Directorate needs to remodel the HRA forecasts for the coming 5 years to avoid that situation. Walker Grange communal work will be included in those discussions to identify when the work could commence.

7. Strong Resilient Communities

Performance Monitoring

- 7.1 The number of Friends Groups working in Partnership with The Council' is below target (9 against a target of 10). The Parks and Open Spaces team are currently working with a number of groups and individuals who are interested in becoming Friends Groups working in partnership with the Council. We therefore expect to meet the year-end target of 14.



- 7.2 The number of library visits in person is 4% under target (RAG rated 'amber'). This was due to unavoidable one day library closures (six) over the summer period due to staff sickness and job vacancies. The service is operating on minimum staffing due to reduced budgets, which means when staff are sick there is often no-one to cover. The libraries that were closed (all Saturdays) were Oakham Library (12 August), Great Bridge and Hamstead (2 September) Brandhall (23 September), Great Barr and Oakham (30 September). Brandhall, Oakham, and Great Barr now have the Library Plus system installed, which means we can allow registered members into the library even when it is not staffed. Great Bridge and Hamstead are also due to have this system installed before 31 March 2024.
- 7.3 Under 16 issue figures (physical and electronic to include books, audiobooks, magazines & comics) is 4% under target. A charge for reserving items were introduced 1 April 2023, this was previously a free service. The charge has led to a 61% reduction in the number of items reserved during Q2, resulting in fewer issues. All other Corporate Library PIs are 'Green' and measures have been taken to help residents during the cost of living crisis, for example more events (most are free) and increasing the hours that PCs can be accessed (beyond library opening hours).
- 7.4 Domestic Abuse has increased in this quarter compared to the previous quarter by 880 offences. (No target so no RAG rating). There was a decrease of 175 offences when compared to the same time period as last year. Non-Crime incidents have increased by 145 compared to the previous quarter, and by 148 non-crime incidents compared to the same time period of last year. Year to date there has been a decrease of 260 offences and an increase of 169 non-crime incidents compared to the previous year. *(A non-crime is where police have been called but no crime has been committed - for example two family members having a loud argument, a third party calls the police, the police attend and calm the situation down, but no crime has taken place).* As set out in the Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment that was recently approved by the Safer Sandwell Partnership, the increase in Domestic Abuse cases may be attributed to various factors such as the COVID 19 pandemic and increased awareness and reporting.



- 7.5 An organisation called Safer Together have been commissioned to write the Serious Violence Strategy which includes a focus on Domestic Abuse, to ensure all local partners meet the Serious Violence Duty and pick up on the recommendations from the Strategic Needs Assessment. A launch event for this work took place on the 4th of December.

Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 7.6 The Libraries and Archives Strategy is being delivered which includes rollout of Library+ (a new model of delivery) - 4 libraries live with Library Plus (as referred to in paragraph 6.2).
- 7.7 There were 3,369 attended fly-tipping incidents in Q2. The total cost of removal of these fly-tips was £195,754. The increase from the previous quarter is in part due to a system issue impacting on reports in July and also linked to the industrial action prevention or reducing attendance by Serco colleagues at fly tip incidents and increased clear-up timescales following the resolution of the industrial action.

8. Quality homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

Performance Monitoring

- 8.1 The 'Percentage of homelessness cases successfully prevented (under Homelessness Reduction Act duty)' is below target (57.60% - RAG rated 'RED'). Due to the impact of the historic backlogs, we are still seeing a number of cases that have escalated beyond prevention and into relief. This has been progressing through the system and prevention levels returned to target levels in September 2023; therefore, the overall Q3 should show improved performance.
- 8.2 The 'Number of long-term empty homes brought into use' is below target (1 against a target of 6). An Empty Homes Officer started in October and will be able to progress a number of cases in train.



- 8.3 The 'Rough sleepers bi-monthly count outturn' is above target at 5 against a target of 3. Nationally there has been an increase in rough sleeping. This was demonstrated in the 2022 annual count for a majority of local authorities, including the West Midlands region. Sandwell has continued to perform well over 2023/24 with an increase in the September 2023 count which was largely due to a number of people with no recourse to public funds being discovered in one place. Subsequent counts have seen the number return to previous levels.
- 8.4 The percentage of current tenancies with a live valid Home Check in place (in the last 3 years) is below target (17.60% against a target of 20%) but has improved since last quarter (12.70% in Q1). Performance has been impacted by a new structure, which has impacted on Housing Services Officer's ability to focus on Home Checks. Additional temporary resources have been agreed which should lead to an increase in the rate at which Home Checks are completed.
- 8.5 The 'Percentage of properties with a Domestic Electrical Installation Condition report (DEICR) under 5-years old (or in legal resolution)' is worse than target (93.31% against a target of 100%) but has improved since last quarter. We continue to struggle with access issues, but the no access escalation process we have introduced is having a positive impact. Efforts will continue to be increased with the objective of achieving compliance by December 2023.
- 8.6 Fire Safety Checks and Asbestos Safety Checks are both below target and RAG rated 'Red'. Performance is below target for Fire Safety Checks because the team were completing the data collation, verification and registration of high-rise buildings (55) to the Building Safety Regulator by the 1st of October 2023. The team intends to catch up on Fire Safety Checks by the end of 2023.
- 8.7 Performance is below target for Asbestos Safety Checks because the inhouse team that deal with the surveys also carry out other building surveys and due to the rise in the Housing Disrepair (HDR) claims they have been focusing their time on these. Recruitment is underway to increase capacity to manage the HDR claims in the short and long term. This will be looked at by the transformation team which is being established to look at HDR backlogs with the intention of clearing them as soon as possible. The aim is to have resolved the majority of current cases by the end of the year.



8.8 The number of residents assisted by Welfare Rights in Q2 is below target by 549 cases (RAG rated 'RED'). This is due to the increase in complex cases which is resulting in officers having to spend more time on each case. The team are still working overtime which has been introduced within the service to support the increasing number of residents and the service has recruited two new members of staff into temporary posts which will increase the support to residents. This did not hinder performance on the monetary gains for the quarter as the service were successful in gaining £1,621,554 for residents, which was above target.

Corporate Plan Monitoring

8.9 The majority of actions under this theme are on track.

8.10 Those under medium /risk of slippage include construction costs increasing for council home new builds (as referenced in paragraph 4.8).

8.11 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1 – delivery of properties reduced due to delivery difficulties of contractors. The works have now concluded and the funding element to the project is being finalised (which will take place by the 15th December).

9. A Strong Inclusive Economy

Performance Monitoring

9.1 "The number of Businesses supported' is below target at 58 against a target of 100 and 'Businesses receiving Financial Assistance or Grants' is below target at 2 against a target of 20. Delays in funding to support/start business support programmes coupled with lower enquires for business support than anticipated have resulted in the target not being met. The delay in funding was a result of the West Midlands Combined Authority being late in releasing the budget for the business support programmes. The funding has now been released and we anticipate that we should be back on target by the end of next quarter.



9.2 The latest data from NOMIS (an Office for National Statistics Service) shows that in Sandwell, of the 69.1% of people economically active, 64.7% are employed. For the West Midlands, 77.5% are economically active with 73.6% in employment and for Great Britain, 78.4% are economically active, with 75.5% in employment. The employment rate had been on a downward trajectory since March 2021 in Sandwell when it peaked at 74%; however, the latest data shows an increase for the first time since then.

Corporate Plan Monitoring

9.3 Development of safer green spaces strategy has been rescheduled for March Cabinet.

9.4 Development of Corporate Fleet Strategy – an interim report of the Fleet Review was received by Leadership Team in November, with development of strategy underway.

9.5 Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing visited Wednesbury as part of programme announcement. Cabinet decisions taken in Q2 to progress Levelling Up Programme. Project team now established, and this is now in operational delivery.

9.6 Three of the four apprentice opportunities available in Registration Services have now been successfully filled.

10. A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

Performance Monitoring

10.1 We have completed 4 more road safety improvement schemes this quarter than target (6 in Q2). Schemes completed this quarter include:

- 1. Londonderry Lane, Smethwick** – Traffic Calming and Cycle Infrastructure – Final phase of road safety and sustainable travel improvements to compliment the new Sandwell Aquatics Centre
- 2. Windmill Lane Puffin Crossing, Smethwick** – Installation of a new controlled pedestrian crossing between Trafalgar Road and Ballot Street



to aid child and parents walking to and from St Matthews CofE Primary school and the practitioners at the Jamia Masjid Mosque.

3. Puffin Crossing Manor House Road Wednesbury - Installation of a new controlled pedestrian crossing outside of St Mary's Primary School to aid child and parents walking to and from school following retirement of School Crossing Patrol point.

4. Lightwoods Hill Safety Scheme, Old Warley – Installation of new Vehicle Activated electronic Speed Signs and new 20mph limit to reduce vehicle speeds and improve safety environment following petition and community concerns.

5. Vehicle Activated Speed Sign (VASS) Project – Installation of a number of electronic speed activated warning signs at various location in the borough in response to community concerns over speeding vehicles. Includes:

6. School Street, Ferndale Road, Hamstead – an 18-month pilot project of closing off road to vehicle traffic at Ferndale Primary School entrance at school arriving and leaving times to improve safety environment for children and to help encourage walking to school.

Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 10.2 Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2023 – 2030 was considered by Scrutiny in October, prior to Cabinet in December.
- 10.3 Blackheath Interchange - feedback from consultation with indoor market traders indicates a low level of support for this scheme and therefore it is subject to review.
- 10.4 Progress on delivering the capital programme of maintenance in relation to highways infrastructure is on track. The expenditure profile delivers more costly work in the final two quarters.



11. One Team One Council

Performance Monitoring

- 11.1 Sickness absence levels have increased for the last two consecutive years since the coronavirus pandemic began in 2020-21. An average of 5.75 working days were lost per employee due to sickness in Q2 compared to 5.29 days during the same period last year. Housing achieved a reduction in sickness compared to last year, and a marginal decrease was achieved by Children and Education and Public Health directorates. All other directorates have seen a marginal increase apart from Adult Social Care and Borough Economy who encountered the highest increases. The most significant increase is for stress related sickness, followed by 'other' problems. There has been a decrease in infections, due to a decrease in coronavirus cases.
- 11.2 The average waiting time in the Adults Contact Centre has increased from 1 minute 9 seconds to 1 minute 27 seconds. There has been a significant increase in the level in new Blue Badge enquires (doubled in the recent month) which take a long period of time to complete and we are carrying 4.5 vacancies. Once recruitment is completed, we should see this reduce. Through the transformation programme we are looking at our demand and capacity modelling and how we can make improvements and efficiencies in this area.
- 11.3 The Abandonment Rate and Average Wait measures in the Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre have been affected by short term staffing issues in July and August; performance significantly improved in September. Across the period there were also days where corporate systems were down so wait times were longer. New staff have been appointed and are undertaking seven weeks of training. Once this is completed, they will be fully operational.



- 11.4 The Abandonment Rate targets were missed in the Corporate Contact Centre (9.09% against a target of 8%) due to continued staff vacancies (28%) and sickness (9.1%). The Corporate Contact Centre Average Wait measure was 9 seconds above target (RAG rated 'Amber'). During Q2, there have been two recruitment drives, and the service will continue to undertake a rolling recruitment programme in an attempt to fill all vacancies. We have also continued to support the face-to-face delivery of services at the OSS (two advisors daily) and at the Community Hubs Pilot at West Bromwich and Blackheath Library twice weekly each Tuesday and Wednesday (two advisors each day). Sickness has continued to be managed as per the sickness management procedure.
- 11.5 'SARs compliance with timescales' is significantly below target at 50% (target 95%). Performance is being massively impacted by the volume of requests for Housing Disrepair claims whereby the documents required to make a HDR claim are being requested through the SAR process. Excluding SARs made for HDR claims the compliance rate would be 68%. SARs for HDR claims make up 33% of all SARs received in Q2 (25 out of 75).
- 11.6 'FOI compliance with timescales' is below target at 83% (against a target of 95%). However, the final month of Q2 (September) has seen us reach our highest ever rate of compliance at 90% (July - 81%, August - 79%).
- 11.7 The percentage of complaints responded to in 10 working days (also service standard) has improved since last quarter but is still significantly worse than target. In Q2 of all Stage 1 complaints received only 64% were responded to within the SLA of 10 working days (68% excluding ASC). The average number of days complaints were responded to in Q2 was 14 days.
- 11.8 Council Tax Collection and Business Rate Collection are slightly down on last year (both RAG rated Amber). The Council have just carried out a single person review which has removed 2,000 Single Person Discount awards and therefore increased our outstanding debt. However, by doing the Single Person Discount review it has increased



our council tax base which will help when setting the council tax and with New Homes Bonus. This additional debt will be collected over the remainder of the year. Business Rate Collection is down on last year due to the £6m COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) payments added last year, but the gap is closing.

Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 11.9 Libraries support to delivery of Community Hubs - Pilots at Blackheath Library and Central Library, West Bromwich going well.
- 11.10 Medium risk on achieving full cost recovery for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Forge Mill Farm, Lightwoods House and Park (Visitor Services) - Income targets not met for Q1 and Q2, due to weather and operational delays in Q1 (as referenced in paragraph 4.11)
- 11.11 Design & Deliver a new EDI Strategy is medium risk. The EDI team are currently developing the EDI Strategy Timetable and format, phase one of the strategy development will commence during Q3.
- 11.12 Development of a Customer Access Strategy that offers a range of high-quality ways to contact the council that meets the needs of all Sandwell residents has been subject to delay due to resource allocation. It has been agreed that internal resource will be directed to develop a Strategy for the next 3 years whilst a wider piece of work runs concurrently to procure a Strategic Partner/Provider to undertake a more in-depth Strategy across Customer taking into account co dependencies with ICT/Digital Strategies.

12. Housing Improvement Plan

- 12.1 A series of additional directorate and service level performance dashboards and monitoring plans are being developed as part of a wider Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan. This will also take into account existing internal and external improvement plans to ensure better governance, service delivery and improve the management of



resources across the Housing Directorate. An officer is being recruited to lead this work (which will include developing a team to solely focus on this) which will form part of the wider Corporate Transformation programme. The Housing Directorate will work with the Corporate Team to identify the information needs to be included in the Corporate Performance Report moving forwards to ensure corporate oversight. An update will be provided in the Q3 report.

13. Contract Governance

13.1 Reports on contract governance have been provided for Sandwell Childrens Trust (SCT), Serco, Places Leisure and Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) and assurance of governance arrangements has been provided through these reports. A summary for each one is detailed below.

Sandwell Children's Trust

13.2 Since April 2018, children's services have been delivered by Sandwell Children's Trust on behalf of the Council. The Trust delivers the following range of services:

- Children's Social Care
- Fostering
- Targeted Early Help

13.3 SCT was part of the Area SEND inspection that took place in Q1, the report was published in September 2023. SCT, as one of the parties jointly responsible for the commissioning of SEND services, along with the Council and ICB, are working with the partnership to address the areas of improvement identified by inspectors.

13.4 With regards to governance, approval was gained from Cabinet on 18th October to extend the appointment of the independent non-executive director Stephen Rimmer for up to 3 years and the process of agreeing the contract sum for 2024/25 has commenced in line with the process laid down in the Service Delivery Contract.



- 13.5 At the end of Q2, SCT are projecting a year end deficit of £2.073m against the Contract Sum of £74.475m, in real terms this is an overspend of £2.815m as there is an expectation for them to achieve a surplus of £742k by the end of the year. These projections are based on 6 months of activity and subject to change. In response to the projected deficit (and as set out in paragraph 5.1), formal contract sum negotiations have commenced in Q2 and will conclude in Q3.
- 13.6 Performance against the contract KPIs continues to be monitored. There was a significant fall in performance at the beginning of Q2, with only 5 of the 15 KPI's being green. This improved over the quarter to the point that there are no KPI's in the red zone and 11 being green. Some of the falls in performance can be attributed to SCT introducing a new system for the allocation of initial child protection conference chairs that led to some children waiting for longer than normal. SCT has now rectified this, and performance has rebounded.

Serco

- 13.7 The council's contract with Serco was awarded in 2010 and runs until 2035. It has a contract value in the region of £34m per annum. The contract covers services including waste and recycling collection, household recycling centre management, street cleansing and fleet management and renewal.
- 13.8 The contract has a set of regular meetings in place with standard agendas relating to the contractual requirements from key outcome targets (KOTs) to operational issues. These meetings are supported by regular cross channel communications between the SMB and Serco teams. Leadership Team also receive regular contract reports that provide oversight and issues are raised as appropriate.



- 13.9 The contract contains the requirement for the provision of regular data from the contractor to be provided, there is also an associated requirement for SMBC to provide information to Serco, relating to Council priorities annually and fleet maintenance through a set of KPIs.
- 13.10 As reported in Q1, the impact of the summer's industrial action spilled over into the first few weeks of Q2, specifically
- Refuse catch-up (backlog of accumulated waste) was completed on the 9 July.
 - Recycling collections recommenced on the 10 July
 - Recycling catch-up (backlog of accumulated waste) was completed on the 21 July.
- (Performance figures for Q2 remain interim figures and do not yet accurately capture actual performance.)
- 13.11 The financial settlement of the missed service during the industrial action remains ongoing. Based on legal advice an initial claim was submitted to Serco in November and discussions are taking place.
- 13.12 Other works that were necessarily stood down / delayed as a result of the industrial action have now been reactivated, notably:
- The consultation on the Litter Bin Strategy was concluded at the end of October. More than 900 survey responses were submitted. The Litter Bin Strategy will be reported in Q3.
 - The Waste Insights work – looking at how frequently residents present their bins – was also concluded in October. The outcome of this research will also be reported in Q3.

Places Leisure

- 13.13 A 25-year contract is in place with Places Leisure to operate West Bromwich Leisure Centre and an annual management fee of approximately £20K is paid to the Council.



- 13.14 Monthly operational reports are provided to update on performance – operational and technical. Quarterly contract management meetings are held to ensure the ongoing monitoring of the contract and performance.
- 13.15 In terms of Q2 participation, there has been an increase visits, Fitness Live memberships and swimming compared to last year and the occupancy of group exercise sessions is also higher than last year.

Sandwell Leisure Trust

- 13.16 In Q2, Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) managed the following leisure centres in Sandwell:
- Haden Hill Leisure Centre
 - Hadley Stadium
 - Harry Mitchell Leisure Centre
 - Langley Swimming Centre
 - Portway Lifestyle Centre
 - Sandwell Aquatics Centre
 - Smethwick Swimming Centre
 - Tipton Leisure Centre
 - Tipton Sports Academy
 - Wednesbury Leisure Centre

(In July 2023, Langley Swimming Centre and Smethwick Swimming Centre closed and the Sandwell Aquatics Centre opened. The swimming pool at Haden Hill Leisure Centre has also been closed since Mar 2023; the rest of the site is still open and will be until early next year when it will close for the rebuild/refurbishment.)

- 13.17 As part of the council's resolution of the issues identified, Cabinet at their meeting 9 February 2022 terminated the Management Funding Agreement (MFA) with SLT and SLT will formally ceasing to deliver services on 30 April 2023.



- 13.18 Cabinet at their meeting 22 June 2022 decided that SLT will be replaced by a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC). However, following approval from Leadership Team and Cabinet, officers have extended the termination period with SLT to March 2027, due to the cost benefit in relation to utility costs, improved partnership working and revised governance arrangements.
- 13.19 In terms of performance, attendance cannot be directly compared with Q1 or last year given Langley and Smethwick Swimming Centres closed and Sandwell Aquatics Centre opened. Nevertheless, looking at the figures, the overall number of visits has increased significantly at 574,886 visits in Q2 23/24 compared to 540,261 in Q2 23/24. This can be largely attributed to Sandwell Aquatics Centre that had over 60,000 visits in August and in September.
- 13.20 In terms of finance, the current forecast outturn is £167k over budget; SLT have identified management action to bring this back to budget by the end of the year.

14. Strategic Risk Register

- 14.1 Effective risk management is a key element of good corporate governance, as noted in the council's [Code of Corporate Governance](#), and is essential to the overall performance of the council in meeting its corporate plan objectives. Good risk management will ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively and that assets and resources are protected against risk in the most efficient way.
- 14.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) receive the Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR) on a regular basis for review and comment. The role of the ARAC is to provide assurance to the Council that it has a system of governance, risk management and internal control in place and that the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements continue to inform decision making.



14.3 The SRR does not include all of the risks faced by the Council. Other risks are captured within directorate, programme and project risk registers in line with the Council's risk management framework. The latest SRR was presented to ARAC on 23 November 2023 (providing an update to those risks that were not updated in September 2023) and is attached as Appendix 2.

15. Amended or deleted PIs (for approval)

It is proposed that the targets for 2 PIs are amended this quarter and 1 PI is changed. They are set out below, with a justification for the changes.

PI	Strategic Outcome and Directorate	Justification
% Care leavers that are NEET (aged 19-21)	The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People Children and Education	The target has been amended from 50% to 46.5% to drive service improvement.
The proportion of people who receive long-term support who are enabled to live in their home or with family	People Live Well and Age Well Adult Social Care	The target for this indicator has been revised due to a change in definition. It is now 70% (was 86%)
Forge Mill Farm Income (admissions, events, other & education)	Strong Resilient Communities	'Visitor spend per head (including secondary spend)' has been amended to 'Forge Mill Farm Income (admissions, events, other & education)' as spend per head is not fully reliable until Oracle Fusion is implemented and income data is readily available.

16. New PIs (for approval)

3 indicators have been put forward to be added this quarter. They are set out below, alongside the reason for their addition.



PI	Strategic Outcome and Directorate	Justification
A percentage reduction in carbon emissions within our corporate estate and across the wider borough	Strong Resilient Communities Regeneration	This will measure reductions in carbon emissions as per Climate change strategy.
A reduction in sites from surplus property/management of Land Register	One Council One Team Regeneration	This indicator monitors the progress of the Surplus Asset programme.
Number of surveys conducted through the Sandwell Consultation Hub	One Council One Team Assistant Chief Executive	This indicator will monitor how we are embedding an evidence-based continuous improvement approach to ensure we are directing our resources to meet our priorities.

17. Implications

Resources:	There are no direct financial implications to this report.
Legal and Governance:	A corporate performance management framework was identified as a key gap in the council's governance arrangements by Grant Thornton in 2021. The establishment of the corporate performance management framework was a key action in the council's Improvement Plan agreed by Council in January 2022 and updated in June 2022. The PMF will enable officer and political leadership to improve oversight and corporate grip of the council's performance.
Risk:	Should the council not implement a robust performance management framework, then it will not have the corporate oversight and intelligence to inform decision making and effectively manage risks



	<p>to achieving service delivery and the strategic objectives identified in the Corporate Plan. These risks and the associated mitigations are noted in the SRR.</p> <p>The corporate performance management framework is a key mechanism to report progress and performance to the Government appointed Commissioners.</p>
Equality:	Equality measures are included in the PMF, including the Organisational Health workforce indicators and the progress of the Corporate Plan.
Health and Wellbeing:	The measures to track progress of the Corporate Plan include a series of health and wellbeing indicators. This enables the council's leadership to see at a high level the direction of travel of the borough's health and wellbeing and seek to continue good practice or identify mitigating actions to address issues.
Social Value	Measures in the PMF include looking at percentage of spend in the local area.
Climate Change	There are measures in the PMF that look at air quality and passenger journeys on public transport and 'we will' statements in the Corporate Plan on renewable energy measures in the build of new homes.
Corporate Parenting	There are measures in the PMF that look at children in care related to education, placements moves, health assessments and NEET figures.

18. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 Q2

Appendix 2 – Strategic Risk Register



19. Background papers

Performance Management Framework – Q1 MonitoringThe appendices to this report are available here:

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=6561&Ver=4>

Report to Council 21 April 2022:

Performance Management Framework for the Council



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Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 - Quarter 2

Rag Rating

Green	On or better than target	DOT	Direction of travel - comparator to previous quarter and the same quarter in the previous year
Amber	Worse than target but within target tolerance		
Red	Worse than target and outside the target tolerance		

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People									
B3e	% of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating Special and alternative provision	Bigger is better	86%	5%	71% (30th Sep 2023)	86% (30th June 2023)	100% (30th Sep 2022)	Data for published reports as at 30th September 2023. The figure for England is 89%, and the West Midlands 80%. Please note that this data includes academies.	Children and Education
B8c	Financial performance against budget	Bigger is better	£740k Annual Surplus	5%	£207k Annual Deficit	£209k Annual deficit (revised from £224k)	£570k Annual Deficit	At the end of Q2, SCT are projecting a £207k Annual Deficit against the Contract Sum. In response to this, the council has requested details on the mitigations the Trust are employing to address the overspend. Finance reports are being made available through Operational Partnership Board (OPB) and Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) and during four way meetings with the S151 officer, Director of Childrens Services (DCS), Chief executive of the Trust and Director of Resources at the Trust.	Children and Education
B12b	Early Help - Referrals to Social Care with no evidence of Multi-Agency Early Help in the prior 12 months	Smaller is better	<70%	70.1%-75%	77%	76%	82%	Whilst performance is worse than tolerance, it has remained relatively stable since last quarter, and is 5% better than 12 months ago.	Children and Education
B3c	% of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating: Primary	Bigger is better	89%	5%	87% (30th Sep 2023)	86% (30th June 2023)	86% (30th Sep 2022)	Data for published reports as at 30th September 2023. The figure for England is 90%, and for the West Midlands 88%. Please note that this data includes academies.	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B3d	% of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating: Secondary	Bigger is better	80%	5%	79% (30th Sep 2023)	79% (30th June 2023)	79% (30th Sep 2022)	Data for published reports as at 30th September 2023. England 82%, West Midlands 82%. Please note that this data includes academies.	Children and Education
B6a	Rate of Children on a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 CYP population	Smaller is better	45	45.1 to 55	54.4	45.2	48.6	The number of Children on a Child Protection Plan has risen from 338 in April 2023 to 479 in August 2023, although there has been a slight decrease in September 2023 to 462, now at a rate of 54.4 per 10,000, this is slightly above Statistical Neighbour Average (52.6). The increases in CP plans over the quarter is due to a number of factors including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some delays in core groups (review meetings) has impacted on plans being updated and progressed, resulting in some children being on plans for longer • Threshold discussions not taking place consistently prior to a conference being arranged, meaning less challenge on how best to manage risk 	Children and Education
B6c	% Care leavers that are NEET (aged 19-21)	Smaller is better	50%	50.1%-55%	54%	53%	60%	The target has been amended from 50% to 46.5% to drive service improvement. Improving the opportunities for Care Leavers continues to be a priority for the Directorate and wider Council and senior managers met to discuss how they could improve opportunities for Care Leavers this quarter. In addition, a NEET panel has been set up where cases are discussed every 2 weeks and solutions can be found for Care Leavers to prevent them becoming NEET.	Children and Education
B9e	Children in Care - Same Placement for 2+ years	Bigger is better	68%	60-68%	64%	65%	68.60%	Performance is 1% worse than Q1, but is still within the target tolerance.	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B12c	Early Help - Number of Step Downs to Multi-Agency Early Help that do not return to Social Care within 12 months	Bigger is better	>80%	75%-79.9%	79%	83%	83%	Performance is just below target; this is the first time performance has dipped below target.	Children and Education
B6b	% children becoming subject of a CP Plan for the second or subsequent time (within two years)	Smaller is better	15%	15% to 22%	22.00%	18.70%	18.20%	Children on a CP Plan for a 2nd or subsequent time (within two years) has increased from 18.7% in Q1 to 22% in quarter (3.3% increase)	Children and Education
B8a	Permanent vacancy rate of social workers	Smaller is better	<37%	37.1%-43%	27.40%	40.40%	38%	There has been an improvement in this area with the increase in recruitment of ASYE (Assessed and supported year in employment programme) social workers and the SW establishment reducing from 203 to 187, we have also seen an improvement in Social Work retention over the last 6 months	Children and Education
B9f	Children in Care with 3+ moves (placement moves)	Smaller is better	9%	9-12%	8.70%	7.50%	8.20%	Performance is slightly worse than last quarter but still better than target.	Children and Education
B9g	Children in Care - Health assessments	Bigger is better	85%	80-84.9%	96.70%	NA	NA	This is a cumulative measure throughout the financial year (data runs April to March each year). Performance is well above target.	Children and Education
B9h	Children missing from placement and return interviews in time (based on accepting and completed within 72 hours)	Bigger is better	75%	65-75%	92.90%	100.00%	94.70%	Performance is worse than last quarter and last year but above target.	Children and Education
B12a	Early Help - Number of Allocated Lead Professionals by Organization	Smaller is better (strengthening families) Bigger is better (other partners)	Strengthening Families <60% Other Partners >40%	Strengthening Families 60.1%-65% Other Partners 35%-39.9%	52% Strengthening Families Other Partners 48%	62% Strengthening Families Other Partners 38%	57% Strengthening Families Other Partners 43%	This is the first time the target has been achieved since Q2 2022-2023.	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B12d	Early Help - Number of Children/Young People receiving intervention	NA - dependent	900-1200	<>10% of the range	1023	1138	974	The number of multi-agency early help involvements has significantly increased, however this does not necessarily mean they are still actively working with those families. This will also include those still open where the EH assessment has been completed but is awaiting transfer to Strengthening families or closure.	Children and Education
B6d	% of 16s and 17s not in employment, education or training (NEET)	Smaller is better	1.75%	5%	1.50%	1.80%	1.1%	The Q2 % increase in NEET figures compared to Q2 2022/23 is a reflection of the national and regional increase in % NEET. However, Sandwell Q2 performance compares well with statistical neighbours at 2.3%, West Midlands at 1.8% and England at 2.0%.	Children and Education
B11c	The number of Children who receive travel assistance (that is not transport to school)	Bigger is better	201 (year-end 2023/24)	5%	168	175	NA - New PI	There is a year-end target for this PI and it is also being monitored quarterly. As of 01/11/2023 (data not available at the end of Q2), there were 967 on Transport and 168 receiving travel assistance (made up of 72 claiming parent mileage, 92 claiming a PTB and 4 with a travel pass). This compares to 848 on transport and 175 (made up of 63 claiming parent mileage, 108 claiming a personal transport budget and 4 with a travel pass) receiving travel assistance at the end of Q1. At the end of September, the number of pupils on transport was 943, so this is increasing. We continue to encourage parents wherever possible to not use transport but to claim mileage, a personal travel budget or travel pass to reduce overall costs. Increases in pupils using transport will inevitably impact on the budget, however, the service is working on a range of mitigations that have been shared with Cabinet and the Leadership Team.	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B5a	Key Stage 4: Attainment 8 - Reduce the Points gap between the LA Disadvantaged and Non-Disadvantaged pupils nationally	Smaller is better	-13.5 (2023)	5%	-14.9 (2023 provisional)	-14 (2022)	-13.4 (2021)	Final Published data will be available in February 2024. In 2023 the attainment 8 of Sandwell disadvantaged pupils was 35.4 which compares positively with 35.1 nationally. Whilst performance is worse than our target, the national gap measure was larger than in Sandwell at -15.2, with West Midlands slightly smaller at -14.8.	Children and Education
B9d	Educational Attainment Sandwell All Pupils - KS4 attainment of English and maths at Grade 4 or above	Bigger is better	56%	5%	55% (2023 provisional)	61% (2022)	NA	Nationally there was a drop in performance compared to 2022 following return to pre-pandemic grading. Subsequent years up to 2022 were atypical. Targets set to reflect 2019 performance. (National E&M 4+ 69% - 2022, 65% - 2023 (provisional), West Midlands E&M 4+ 67% - 2022, 62% - 2023 (provisional)) Please note the figures for Children in Care are not yet available.	Children and Education
B8g	Area SEND Inspection	Bigger is better	Category 2	NA	Category 2	NA	NA	The report following the inspection in July, was published in September 2023. Under the new grading system of Category 1, Category 2 and Category 3 (Category 1 being the best that can be achieved). The report stated 'Children and young people with SEND are valued in Sandwell. However, their experiences are variable due to the inconsistencies that exist across the local area partnership. Area leaders are aware of the inconsistencies and are taking appropriate action to address them.' The next full area SEND inspection will take place within approximately 3 years. The full report is available on the Ofsted website.	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B9c	Educational Attainment Sandwell All Pupils – attainment at the expected level or above in reading, writing and maths at KS2	Bigger is better	56%	5%	56% (2023 provisional)	55% (2022)	NA	Sandwell 2023 provisional data indicates a 1 ppt improvement on 2022. National data remained stable between 2022 and 2023 and West Midlands data was also up by 1ppt. (National 2023 Provisional figure is 59%, West Midlands 2023 Provisional figure is 58%). Please note the figures for Children in Care are not yet available.	Children and Education
People Live Well and Age Well									
L17b/ASCOF 4B	The proportion of section 42 safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified and the reported outcome was that this risk was reduced or removed	Bigger is better	95%	92% (tolerance score)	87%	NA - New PI	NA - New PI	<p>Due to a change in management structure staffing in the team there has been an increase in the backlog of allocations that has meant that by the time cases are allocated, the degree of the issues would either be resolved or risk removed, reducing transition into S42. Safeguarding has also opened up across the service with a change in practice. Whilst the opening up of safeguarding across services is helping to make safeguarding everyone's business and increasing ASC operational capacity to respond to the increased demand in the system, impact of the knowledge gap previously has meant that understanding best practice and performance outcomes for safeguarding is low among staff. To address this, teams are offered support through surgeries and feedback from learning from performance validation meetings on specific areas of performance.</p> <p>We are also addressing practitioner knowledge relating to best practice in analysing and applying the threshold questions resulting from point (a) (receipt of the contact) and practice at large. With this, we should now see an increase in the transition rate into S42 as delegated enquiries and a proportion of enquiries would be completed on this step on the module. This should have the effect of increasing this performance measure overtime. Regular meetings are also taking place with performance to address any quality issues, following this we are engaging with safeguarding and area teams.</p>	ASC

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
L18a/2D (formerly 2B)	The proportion of older people (65 and over) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into rablement/rehabilitation services	Bigger is better	68%	66% (tolerance score)	66% (Q1)	66.3% (2022/23)	Not available	Figure reported is for Q1 as the Q2 figure is not yet available. Performance in Q1 is slightly worse than at the end of Q4 22/23, but still within target tolerance.	ASC
L14b/2E (formerly 1G)	The proportion of people who receive long-term support who are enabled to live in their home or with family	Bigger is better	70%	66% (tolerance score)	70%	NA	NA	The target for this indicator has been revised due to a change in definition. Performance is on target for Q2.	ASC
L21b/6B	The percentage of adult social care providers rated good or outstanding by the Care Quality Commission	Bigger is better	70%	66% (tolerance score)	70%	71%	NA - New PI	Performance is on target. Performance has improved from 57% in Q4 2022/23.	ASC
L1d	The use of the Sandwell Language Network to support learning English and Health literacy.	Bigger is better	270	5%	586	586	NA	The 2022-23 programme 270 learners target has been exceeded target with 586 participants enrolled, 32,851 language learning hours completed, 56 volunteers enrolled of which 6 volunteers achieved Adult Education Training Qualifications, 84% improved ability to understand the NHS, 90% improved ability to explain a personal health concern to a healthcare professional (contract year runs 1st Sept 22 - 31st Aug 23). New contract year reporting will be available at the end of Q3 23/24 - 2023-24 target is to reach 325 individual learners, deliver 20 employability booster sessions, deliver 21 ESOL courses and 1x IELTS course	Public Health

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
L1e	The targeting of the health checks at those most in need	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	1167	200	NA	So far, 1167 people received an Health Checks. The Health Check target is spread over two years of the contract. Overall target for the 2 years is 12,000 eligible people. Quarterly performance data is uploaded and available from fingertips.phe.uk website.	Public Health
L3	We will continue to push for improved vaccine take up, childhood vaccines, flu season and COVID boosters	Bigger is better	90%	5%	NA	80.40% (2021/22)	82.60%	Flu season vaccination doesn't start until October and data will not be available until later in the year.	Public Health
L1b	Engagement of faith sector in Public Health work	Bigger is better	NA	5%	TBC	NA	NA	The Faith Sector & Inclusion Health Development Officer has been in post since July 2023 and has refreshed and relaunched the Faith Sector Board meetings with a number of new members of different faiths now engaging. We are looking at how we capture new metrics for this engagement work moving forward.	Public Health
L1c	Healthy pregnancy programme	Bigger is better	NA	5%	TBC	NA	NA	TBC	Public Health
L1f	The release of the Healthy Aging App - directed at providing information in multiple languages	Bigger is better	NA	5%	NA	NA	NA	App to be release in Autumn 2023	Public Health
L1g	Universal Healthy Start Vitamins	Bigger is better	90%	5%	TBC	NA	NA	Since May 2023, every pregnant woman and new born are given these universally.	Public Health
L2	Number of grants provided concerning Vision 2030, Better Mental Health and Healthy Lifestyles	Bigger is better	NA	NA	7	16	TBC	£ 1,978,000 total grants (2022-23). As of Q2, there are currently 7 active Better Mental Health grants operating across the Borough, with a further 6 scheduled to commence before the end of the financial year.	Public Health

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
L4b	LGBTQ+ needs assessment and Challenge fund to support outcomes.	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	Five CVS organisations have been funded to deliver projects that support the recommendations from the Needs Assessment including Proud Baggies, Friar Park Millennium Centre, Crossroad Caring for Carers, Birmingham LGBT and Wolverhampton LGBT.	Public Health
L4c	Inclusive cycling programme	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	TBC	Public Health
L5a	Investment and support of community mental health programmes (including pre-and post-natal support groups; a parenting programme; an anti-bullying campaign)	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	NA	Being developed this year.	Public Health
L5b	Grants to the SCVO around child wellbeing, Grants for child wellbeing for special school mental health and wellbeing	Bigger is better	NA	NA	Over £100K	£550K	NA	Over 100k distributed to 5 x CVS via SCVO, 2 x grants provided to special schools. Pre-procurement being undertaken for grant to support headteachers and senior leaders wellbeing.	Public Health
L6	Towns based awareness of Public Health offer/ Stronger Sandwell	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	TBC	NA	NA	TBC	Public Health
L7	Sandwell Stride programme (volunteer-led walking scheme) and digital appbased walking offer	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	TBC	NA	NA	TBC	Public Health

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
L8	Greenspace utilisation (physical activity in parks and open spaces)	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	TBC	NA	NA	TBC	Public Health
L10	Number of sites that are non-compliant with the national NO2 air quality objective	Smaller is better	TBC	5%	1	NA	NA	1 (as of Oct 2023)	Public Health
People Live Well and Age Well - Annual PIs reported this quarter									
L13d	Smoking at time of delivery	Smaller is better	8.8% (national average 2022/23)	5%	9.8% (2022/23)	NA	9.3 (2021/22)	Sandwell remains above the national average for smoking during pregnancy. The team will work with acute sector to ensure identification and appropriate referral into community treatment services needed. This is an annual metric therefore no quarterly metric updates available.	Public Health
Strong Resilient Communities									
C5a	The number of Friends Groups working in Partnership with The Council	Bigger is better	10	5%	9	8	NA - New PI	We are below target in Q2, but are currently working with a number of groups and individuals who are interested in becoming Friends Groups working in partnership with the Council. We therefore expect to meet the year end target of 14.	Borough Economy
C14/ NI195a,b,c,d	Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly-posting).	Smaller is better	litter - 2.50% detritus - 6.50% graffiti - 1.50% fly-posting - 0%	5%	litter - 4% detritus - 7% graffiti - 1.50% fly-posting - 0% (Apr -July 2023/24)	TBC	litter - 3.50% detritus - 10.00% graffiti - 0.50% fly-posting - 0% (Apr -July 2022/23)	This PI is measured 3 times a year: April-July, August-November, December-March. We are above target for litter and detritus, but on target for graffiti and flyposting. Detritus has reduce significantly since last year.	Borough Economy

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
C7a	The number of library visits in person	Bigger is better	170,625 (328,125 cumulative)	5%	163,278 (321,009 cumulative)	157,731	NA - New PI	Performance is 4% under target. This was due to unavoidable one day library closures (six) over the summer period due to staff sickness and job vacancies. The service is operating on minimum staffing due to reduced budgets, which means when staff are sick there is often no-one to cover. The libraries that were closed (all Saturdays) were Oakham Library (12 August), Great Bridge and Hamstead (2 September) Brandhall (23 September), Great Barr and Oakham (30 September). Brandhall, Oakham, and Great Barr now have the Library Plus system installed, which means we can allow registered members into the library even when it's not staffed. Great Bridge and Hamstead are also due to have this system installed before 31 March 2024.	Borough Economy
C7c/L2	Under 16 issue figures (physical & electronic to include books, audiobooks, magazines & comics) (c)	Bigger is better	46,000	5%	44,169 (86,002 cumulative)	41,833	56,680 (99,553 cumulative)	Performance is 4% under target. A charge for reserving items were introduced 1 April 2023, this was previously a free service. The charge has led to a 61% reduction in the number of items reserved during Q2, resulting in fewer issues.	Borough Economy
C7b/L3	The % of Meaningful gifting of Booktrust packs	Bigger is better	95%	5%	95%	95%	NA - was Annual	This is also measured annually at the end of the year. We are on target.	Borough Economy
C7d/L4	The number of community activities & events held in libraries or online (c)	Bigger is better	1750 (3,500 cumulative)	5%	2,528 (4,970 cumulative)	2,442	1,486 (2,706 cumulative)	We have increased the number of activities offered to help our customers with the cost of living crisis. Most activities and events are free of charge.	Borough Economy
C7e/L6	The number of PC sessions held in libraries (c)	Bigger is better	21,000	5%	35,193 (78,376 cumulative)	43,183	15,376 (29,288 cumulative)	We have increased the hours that PCs are available via the Library Plus scheme, which allows library members (aged 16 and over) to access libraries beyond regular opening times.	Borough Economy
C10a	Forge Mill Farm Education Visits (students)	Bigger is better	2,100	5%	2,535 (3,531 cumulative)	996	NA - New PI	Performance has improved since Q1 and is above target.	Borough Economy

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
C10b	Forge Mill Farm Income (admissions, events, other & education)	Bigger is better	£289,500	5%	£294,709	NA - New PI	NA - New PI	This is a new PI replacing 'Visitor spend per head (including secondary spend)'. Performance is above target this quarter.	Borough Economy
C10f	Visitor Services and Events Mystery Shopper Scores	Bigger is better	Annual 80%	5%	Figures not available in Q2	NA	NA	NA	Borough Economy
C16a	Total recorded crime in Sandwell	Smaller is better	No target	5%	9,111	9,652	9,732	In Q2, there were 9,111 offences. This is a decrease of 541 offences compared to the previous quarter and a decrease of 621 offences compared to the same quarter from the previous year. Year to date there was a 928 offence decrease (-4.7%). Total Recorded Crime in Sandwell for Q2 showed that all six towns had a reduction in reported crime over the three-month period compared to the same time period in the previous year, with Smethwick having the largest decrease of 211 offences.	Borough Economy
C16b	Domestic Abuse incidents in Sandwell reported to police	Smaller is better	No target	5%	2,812 (1,068 non-crime)	1,932 (923 non-crime)	2,987 (920 non-crime)	Domestic Abuse has increased in this quarter compared to the previous quarter by 880 offences. There was a decrease of 175 offences when compared to the same time period as last year. Non-Crime incidents have increased by 145 compared to the previous quarter, and by 148 non-crime incidents compared to the same time period of last year. Year to date there has been a decrease of 260 offences and an increase of 169 non-crime incidents compared to the previous year. (A non-crime is where police have been called but no crime has been committed - for example two family members having a loud argument, a third party calls the police, the police attend and calm the situation down, but no crime has taken place).	Borough Economy

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
C16c	The number of cases referred to MARAC	Smaller is better	No target	5%	238	319	NA - New PI	This PI measures the number of cases referred for discussion. There were fewer in Q2 than in Q1.	Borough Economy
Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods									
CP74 / HM02	Percentage of homelessness cases successfully prevented (under Homelessness Reduction Act duty)	Bigger is better	65%	5%	57.60%	58.70%	61.80%	Due to the impact of the historic backlogs we are seeing a number of cases that have escalated beyond prevention and into relief. This has been progressing through the system and prevention levels returned to target levels in September 2023; therefore the overall Q3 should show improved performance.	Housing
CP79 / PRS07	Number of long term empty homes brought into use (c)	Bigger is better	6	5%	1	NA - C	2	An Empty Homes Officer is now in post who will be able to progress a number of cases in train. Performance should improve in Q3.	Housing
H8 / RS04	Rough sleepers bi-monthly count outturn	Smaller is better	3	5%	5	2	2	Nationally there has been an increase in rough sleeping. This was demonstrated in the 2022 annual count for a majority of local authorities, including the West Midlands region. Sandwell has continued to perform well over 2023/24 with an increase in the September 2023 count which was largely due to a number of people with no recourse to public funds being discovered in one place. Subsequent counts have seen the number return to previous levels.	Housing
H12 / HC2	The % of current tenancies with a live valid Home Check in place (in the last 3 years) (c)	Bigger is better	20%	5%	17.60%	12.70%	5.60%	Performance is below target but has improved since last quarter. Performance has been impacted by a new structure, which has impacted on Housing Services Officer's ability to focus on Home Checks. Additional temporary resources have been agreed which should lead to an increase in the rate at which Home Checks are completed.	Housing

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
H14 / RM3	The percentage of properties with a Domestic Electrical Installation Condition report (DEICR) under 5-years old (or in legal resolution)	Bigger is better	100%	5%	93.31%	89.40%	NA - New PI	Performance is worse than target but has improved since last quarter. We continue to struggle with access issues, but the no access escalation process we have introduced is having a positive impact. Efforts will continue to be increased with the objective of achieving compliance by December 2023.	Housing
H14 / BS02	Fire Safety Checks - Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	81.43%	100.00%	NA - New PI	There are 432 Properties have a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) on a 3-year programme. Of these, 70 are due by the end of September with 57 being completed so far resulting in a performance of 81.43% (13 down on the total for the year). This is due to the team completing the data collation, verification and registration of high rise buildings (55) to the Building Safety Regulator by the 1st October 2023. We intend to catch up on Fire Safety Checks these by the end of November 2023.	Housing
H14 / BS03	Asbestos Safety Checks - Proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	92.35%	NA - No checks	NA - New PI	<p>The inhouse team that deal with the surveys also carry out other building surveys and due to the rise in the Housing Disrepair (HDR) claims they have been focusing their time on these. There is a advert out for a team to take on the HDR claims but this is likely to take around 3 months before this happens so will be looking at out sourcing these in the short term.</p> <p>This will be looked at by the transformation team which is being established to look at HDR backlogs with the intention of clearing them as soon as possible. The aim is to have most clear by the end of the year.</p>	Housing

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
CP78b/SLM054	The total number of people assisted by Welfare Rights Service to claim additional benefits (c)	Bigger is better	5500	5%	4951	2475	6919	The number of residents assisted by Welfare Rights in Q2 is below target by 549 cases. This is due to the increase in complex cases which is resulting in officers having to spend more time on each case. The team are still working overtime which has been introduced within the service to support the increasing number of residents and the service has recruited two new members of staff into temporary posts which will increase the support to residents. This did not hinder performance on the monetary gains for the quarter as the service were successful in gaining £1,621,554 above target.	Housing
H14 / BS01	Gas Safety Checks - Proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	99.45%	99.19%	99.75%	Out of 25,257 properties, 25,117 have received a gas service. This equates to 140 without a current Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR) which are all in legal status. We are in the process of reviewing the access procedure to see where we can save time in getting to court if necessary, so we can do this before the expiry date. Currently there are some issues with the engineer being available which don't match the numbers that are required. Meetings have taken place with the contractor (Phoenix) and we are working to see what we can do to give them more flexibility to meet the targets.	Housing
CP77a / HIA2	Home Improvement Agency - Number of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) approved (c)	Bigger is better	138	5%	157	NA - C	304	Although target has been met for this measure the overall performance for the service has been impacted by a number of factors including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Significant change to delivery arrangements meaning that Council Tenants no longer need to apply for a Disabled facilities Grant •Lower than anticipated level of demand from Adult Social Care •Contractual issues with a Lift and Hoist supplier that has resulted in delays to the installation of lifts and hoists 	Housing

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
CP77b / HIA3	Number of DFG's certified as complete (c)	Bigger is better	110	5%	184	NA - C	194	As above, although target has been met for this measure the overall performance for the service has been impacted by a number of factors.	Housing
H14 / BS04	Water Safety Checks - Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	100.00%	100.00%	NA - New PI	Performance is on target.	Housing
H14 / BS05	Lift Safety Checks - proportion of homes for which all required communal passengers lift safety checks have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	100.00%	100.00%	NA - New PI	Performance is on target.	Housing
CP76 / PRS04	No. of private sector properties reported to be in state of disrepair with a positive resolution (c)	Bigger is better	NA	NA	210	NA - C	325	In Q2, 29 cases were closed formally by inspectors. 32 were closed at triage by Duty Officers.	Housing
A Strong and Inclusive Economy									
E7a	The number of Businesses supported (c)	Bigger is better	100	5%	58	40	46	Delays in funding to support/start business support programmes coupled with lower enquires for business support than anticipated have resulted in the target not being met. The delay in funding was a result of the West Midlands Combined Authority being late in releasing the budget for the business support programmes. The funding has now been released and we anticipate that we should be back on target by the end of next quarter.	Regeneration

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
E7b	Businesses receiving Financial Assistance or Grants	Bigger is better	20	5%	2	NA	13	The target was not achieved due to the West Midlands Combined Authority being late in releasing the budget for the business support programmes. The funding has now been released (October 2023) and we anticipate that we should be back on target by the end of next quarter.	Regeneration
E11a	The number of work experience placements	Bigger is better	75	5%	125	38 (Revised)	NA	This is monitored by calendar year with an annual target of 100 (end of Dec 2023). Performance (for Q3 calendar year and Q2 financial year) is above target. Between January - September 125 young people have been supported into work experience placements. 78 of these were in Q2.	Assistant Chief Executive
E10	Employment rate (nomis)	Bigger is better	NA	5%	64.7% (Apr 22 - Mar 23)	63.9% (Jan 22 - Dec 22)	64% (Oct 21 - Sep 22)	Data provided is the latest available. In Sandwell, of the 69.1% of people economically active, 64.7% are employed. For the West Midlands, 77.5% are economically active with 73.6% in employment and for Great Britain, 78.4% are economically active, with 75.5% in employment. The employment rate had been on a downward trajectory since March 2021 when it peaked at 74%; however the latest data shows an increase for the first time since then.	Regeneration
E11b	The number of supported internships	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	NA	NA	NA	This PI is under development.	Assistant Chief Executive
E11c	Number of apprentices (<i>see note 2</i>)	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	51	53	NA - was annual	The number of apprentices has decreased slightly in Q2 compared with Q1.	Assistant Chief Executive
E11d	The number of graduates on the Sandwell Management Graduate Programme (<i>see note 3</i>)	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	1	2	NA - was annual	In October a number of new graduates joined the Council under the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) so performance will improve in Q3.	Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
E1	% of council spend spent locally (Finance PI)	bigger is better	NA	NA	38%	39%	NA	A system is in now place to measure this. There has been a 1% reduction in local spend since Q1.	Finance
E2	Money spent directly with suppliers in Sandwell (TBC)	bigger is better	NA	NA	£38,851,914	£34,624,159	NA	A system is in now place to measure this. There has been a reduction in local spend since Q1.	Finance
A Connected and Accessible Sandwell									
A2d/DSS5	The number of road safety improvement schemes (c)	Bigger is better	5	5%	9 (6 in Q2)	3	N/A - New PI	<p>Schemes completed this quarter include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Londonderry Lane, Smethwick – Traffic Calming and Cycle Infrastructure – Final phase of road safety and sustainable travel improvements to compliment the new Sandwell Aquatics Centre 2. Windmill Lane Puffin Crossing, Smethwick - controlled pedestrian crossing between Trafalgar Road and Ballot Street to aid child and parents walking to and from St Matthews CoFE Primary school and the practitioners at the Jamia Masjid Mosque. 3. Puffin Crossing Manor House Road Wednesbury - controlled pedestrian crossing outside of St Mary's Primary School to aid child and parents walking to and from school following retirement of School Crossing Patrol point. 4. Lightwoods Hill Safety Scheme, Old Warley – Vehicle Activated electronic Speed Signs and new 20mph limit to reduce vehicle speeds and improve safety environment following petition and community concerns. 5. Vehicle Activated Speed Sign (VASS) Project – electronic speed activated warning signs at various location in the borough in response to community concerns over speeding vehicles. Includes Galton Road, Smethwick, Castle Road East, Old Warley, Dial Lane, West Bromwich, Perry Hill Road, Oldbury, St Pauls Road and West Park Road, Smethwick 6. School Street, Ferndale Road, Hamstead – 18 month pilot project of closing off road to vehicle traffic at Ferndale Primary School entrance at school arriving and leaving times to improve safety environment for children and to help encourage walking to school. 	Borough Economy
One Team One Council									

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O1b	Average working days lost per employee due to sickness absence (FTE)	Smaller is better	3.86 days	5%	5.75 days	NA - C	5.29 days	Sickness levels have increased for the last two consecutive years since the coronavirus pandemic began in 2020-21. Average of 5.75 working days were lost per employee due to sickness compared to 5.29 days during the same period last year. Housing achieved a reduction in sickness compared to last year, and a marginal decrease was achieved by Children and Education, and Public Health. All other directorates have seen a marginal increase apart from Adult Social Care and Borough Economy who encountered the highest increase. The most significant increase is for stress related sickness, followed by other problems. There has been a decrease in infections. This is due to the end of the pandemic which resulted in a decrease in coronavirus cases.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1n	Number of formal grievance cases	smaller is better	4 per quarter	5%	5	NA - was Cumulative	NA - was annual	Performance is worse than target. There were 2 grievances in Children and Education, and one in Adult Social Care, Finance and Law and Governance.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8e	Adults Contact Centre Average Wait Measure	Smaller is better	30 seconds	5%	1 min 27 secs	1 min 9 secs	1 min	The average waiting time has increased from 1 minute 9 seconds to 1 minute 27 seconds. There has been a significant increase in the level in new Blue badge enquires (doubled in the recent month) which take a long period of time to complete and we are carrying 4.5 vacancies. Once recruitment is completed we should see this reduce. Through the transformation programme we are looking at our demand and capacity modelling and looking at how we can make improvements and efficiencies in this area.	ASC

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8f	Revs and Bens Contact Centre Abandonment Rate	Smaller is better	8%	5%	8.57%	8.60%	19.93%	Performance has been affected by short term staffing issues in the Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre in July and August; performance significantly improved in September. Across the period there were also days where corporate systems were down so wait times were longer. New staff have been appointed and are undertaking 7 weeks of training. Once this is completed they will be fully operational.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8g	Revs and Bens Contact Centre Average Wait Measure	Smaller is better	3 minutes 30 seconds	5%	6 mins 38 secs	5 mins 28 secs	14 mins 52 secs		Assistant Chief Executive
O8h	Corporate Contact Centre Abandonment Rate	Smaller is better	8%	5%	9.09%	15.32% (revised)	10.52%	A breakdown is as follows: 11.60% - Contact Centre, 21.09% - Rents, 6.49% - Call Out. The cumulative figure so far this year is 12.35%. The AR targets were missed due to continued staff vacancies (28%) and sickness (9.1%) in the Corporate Contact Centre. During Q2, we have carried out 2 recruitment drives, and will continue to undertake a rolling recruitment programme in an attempt to fill all vacancies. We have also continued to support the face to face delivery of services at the OSS (2 advisors daily) and at the Community Hubs Pilot at West Bromwich and Blackheath Library twice weekly each Tuesday and Wednesday (2 advisors each day). Sickness has continued to be managed as per the sickness management procedure.	Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8I	SARs compliance with timescales	Bigger is better	95%	5%	50.00%	70.59%	39%*	<p>The compliance rate for SARs is being massively impacted by the volume of requests for Housing Disrepair claims whereby the documents required to make a HDR claim are being requested through the SAR process. Excluding SARs made for HDR claims the compliance rate would be 68%. SARs for HDR claims make up 33% of all SARs received in Q2 (25 out of 75). A breakdown for HDR claims and for Directorates compliance is as follows:</p> <p>HDR Claims - 3 met, 21 missed, 1 extended timescale, 25 in total = 12.50%</p> <p>Borough Economy - 1 met, 2 missed, 3 in total = 33.33%</p> <p>Adult Social Care - 4 met, 4 missed, 8 in total = 50.00%</p> <p>Children and Education - 4 met, 4 missed, 8 in total = 50.00%</p> <p>Finance - 2 met, 2 missed, 4 in total = 50.00%</p> <p>Housing - 15 met, 3 missed, 2 extended timescale, 20 in total = 83.33%</p> <p>Business Strategy and Change - 4 met, 0 missed, 4 in total = 100%</p> <p>Corporate Enquiries - 1 met, 0 missed, 1 in total = 100%</p> <p>Law and Governance 2 met, 0 missed, 2 in total = 100%</p> <p>* There were system issues when this PI was calculated so it is not accurate; actual performance was higher.</p>	Law and Governance

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8n	FOI compliance with timescales	Bigger is better	95%	5%	83%	80%	70%	<p>Whilst there has been a slight improvement on Q1 compliance from 80% to 83% the final month of Q2 (September) has seen us reach our highest ever rate of compliance at 90% (July - 81%, August - 79%). A breakdown by Directorate is as follows:</p> <p>Adult Social Care - 12 met, 12 missed, 1 extended timescale, 25 in total = 50% Children and Education - 27 met, 12 missed, 39 in total = 69% Housing - 22 met, 7 missed, 29 in total = 76% Finance - 25 met, 7 missed, 1 extended timescale, 33 in total - 78% Public Health - 8 met, 1 missed, 9 in total = 89% Borough Economy - 66 met, 6 missed, 72 in total = 92% Business Strategy and Change - 27 met, 1 missed, 28 in total = 96% Corporate Enquiries - 5 met, 0 missed, 5 in total = 100% Law and Governance - 8 met, 0 missed, 8 in total = 100% Regeneration and Growth - 26 met, 0 missed, 26 in total = 100%</p>	Law and Governance

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8p	% of complaints responded to in 10 working days (also service standard)	Bigger is better	90%	5%	64% (68% excluding ASC)	52.29% (54.05% excluding ASC)	84% (85% excluding ASC)	<p>Performance has improved since last quarter but is still significantly worse than target. Please note that figures are provided for information that do not include ASC because of the different SLA.</p> <p>In Q2 of all Stage 1 complaints received only 64% were responded to within the SLA of 10 working days. The average number of days complaints were responded to in Q2 was 14 days.</p>	Assistant Chief Executive
O8i	Corporate Contact Centre Average Wait Measure	Smaller is better	3 minutes 30 seconds	5%	3 mins, 39 secs	5 mins 41 secs (revised)	4 mins 30 secs	<p>The breakdown is as follows : 4 mins, 50 secs – Contact Centre, 3mins, 1 sec – Rents, 2 mins,25 secs – Call Out. The cumulative figure so far this year is 4 mins, 40 secs. Call wait time has reduced slightly in Q2, but has still missed target which can be attributed to several factors including vacancies, sickness, and assisting the OSS and Community Hubs face to face service.</p>	Assistant Chief Executive
O11a	Variance from budget - General Fund	smaller is better	0%	0.5%	£1.222m overspend	£2.188m overspend	£1.9m overspend	<p>The gross General Fund budget is £733.967m - performance is therefore within target tolerance this quarter.</p>	Finance
O11c	Council Tax Collection (c)	bigger is better	56.16%%	5%	53.49%%	NA	56.16%	<p>Collection was up in August on last year, however we have just carried out a single person review which has removed 2,000 SPD awards and therefore increased our o/s debt. However by doing the SPD review it has increased our council tax base which will help when setting the council tax and with new homes bonus. This additional debt will be collected over the remainder of the year.</p>	Finance

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O11d	Business Rates Collection rates (c)	bigger is better	60.06%	5%	57.21%	NA	60.06%	Performance is down on last year due to the £6m COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) payments added last year, but the gap is closing.	Finance
O4c	Average satisfaction rating from members using the Councillor portal	Bigger is better	4.5 / 5	5%	4.54/5	4.08 / 5	3.59/5	This is based on 35 Cllr ratings. Not all Members that use the portal leave a rating.	Law and Governance
O3	Completion of the Audit and Assessment against the Equality Framework for Local Government.	NA	July completion	NA	Completed	NA	NA	This has now been completed. Further performance measures will be consider and developed as part of the LGA Equalities Framework.	Law and Governance
O1m	Number of formal disciplinary investigations	smaller is better	8 per quarter	5%	3	NA - was cumulative	NA - was annual	Performance is better than target.	Assistant Chief Executive
O4b	Members to undertake a minimum of 10 hours of development annually	Bigger is better	50%	5%	58.72%	34.72%	NA- new	A further 24% of members have completed training this quarter. The year-end target is 90%. The target of 50% takes into account that training sessions are not carried out in August due to main holiday period, although 2 priority (mop up) sessions were added in early August to enable Cllrs to attend a session that had previously taken place.	Law and Governance

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8d	Adults Contact Centre Abandonment Rate	Smaller is better	6%	5%	5.84%	3.52%	3.00%	Target of 6% has not been exceeded, however it has increased from last quarter, due to staffing numbers in this quarter that have remained low throughout due to sickness. Capacity has been reduced to as low as 40% at times, telephone tasks only accounts for 50-60% of activity therefore the service needs to respond to all other modes of contact. Recruitment to vacant posts is in progress. However there has been limited success in recruiting to fixed term temp vacancies. Additional permanent resources are needed in the ASC Contact Centre.	ASC
O11e	Sundry Debt Collection (c)	bigger is better	76.40%	5%	79.13%	NA	76.40%	Performance is better than target and better than last year.	Finance
O11f	Prior year Council Tax collection (c)	bigger is better	93%	5%	94%	NA	94.06%	Performance is better than target and additional debt has been collected.	Finance
O11g	Prior year Business Rates Collection (c)	bigger is better	96%	5%	97%	NA	96.86%	Performance is better than target and has increased since last year.	Finance
O11h/SI66a	Rent collected as a % of rent due (including arrears brought forward)	bigger is better	94.35%	5%	95.34%	94.93%	95.16%	The Q2 outturn of 95.34% has exceeded the profile target of 94.35%. This is an improvement on Q1 this year and also the same period last year at 95.16%. This outturn includes the arrears brought forward from the previous year, if these are excluded the outturn is 99.09%. To maintain performance the service is working closely with internal and external partners to provide information and advice to support tenants affected by the rising costs of living.	Finance
O11i	% of invoices paid on time	bigger is better	95%	5%	98%	97%	78%	Performance is better than target and better than last quarter and this time last year.	Finance
O4e	No. of Standards Complaints	Smaller is better	NA	NA	4	2	N/A	The nature of the complaints are low level. No specific trends emerging.	Law and Governance

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O1c	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are women	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	52.90%	53.60%	NA - was annual	Targets to be developed through a project on EDI workforce actions and data. The percentage of top 5% of earners that are women has decreased this quarter.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1d	The percentage of top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic Communities	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	24.00%	23.60%	NA - was annual	Targets to be developed through a project on EDI workforce actions and data. The percentage of top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic Communities has increased slightly this quarter.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1e	The percentage of top 5% of earners who have a disability	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	1.80%	1.80%	NA - was annual	Targets to be developed through a project on EDI workforce actions and data. The percentage of top 5% of earners who have a disability has remained consistent this quarter.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1g	The percentage Disabled employees	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	4.50%	4.40%	NA - was annual	Targets to be developed through a project on EDI workforce actions and data. The percentage of Disabled employees has increased slightly this quarter.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1h	The percentage Ethnic Minority employees	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	25.60%	25.40%	NA - was annual	Targets to be developed through a project on EDI workforce actions and data. The percentage of Ethnic Minority employees has increased slightly this quarter.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1i	The percentage leavers from Sandwell Council	smaller is better	TBC	5%	5.00%	2.80%	NA - was annual	More people left the Council compared to Q1, however, overall when looking at new starters there is an overall increase in the workforce.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1j	The percentage new starters to Sandwell Council (includes apprentices)	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	6.70%	4.90%	NA - was annual	More people started at the Council compared to Q1.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1o	Employee Engagement Score (overall)	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	NA	The next survey will be run in September and the results will be available by the end of Q3.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1p	I am proud to work for the council	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	NA	The next survey will be run in September and the results will be available by the end of Q3.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1q	I would recommend this council as a good place to work	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	NA	The next survey will be run in September and the results will be available by the end of Q3.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1r	I feel a strong sense of belonging to this council	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	NA	The next survey will be run in September and the results will be available by the end of Q3.	Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O1s	Considering everything, I am satisfied to be working for this council	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	NA	The next survey will be run in September and the results will be available by the end of Q3.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1t	This council motivates me to do more than is normally required in my work	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	NA	The next survey will be run in September and the results will be available by the end of Q3.	Assistant Chief Executive
O4d	Member PDPs completed	Bigger is better	80%	5%	NA	27% (Q4 22/23)	NA	No PDP's were completed in Q1 and Q2. For 2023/24 these will take place October- December and will be included in the Q3 report.	Law and Governance
O5d	Number of surveys conducted through the Sandwell Consultation Hub	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	Bi Annual	47 surveys over 9 directorates	NA	Updates to be provided Q1 & Q3 as this coincides with reporting to Leadership team. Q1 Directorate breakdown: ACE = 15, Children & Education = 10, Housing = 7, Regeneration = 5, Public Health = 4, Borough Economy = 2, Finance = 2, ASC = 1, L&G = 1.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8a	Contact by Channel	NA - awaiting strategy	NA	NA	T: 296,019 (143,869) MS: 421,071 (186,825) F-2-F: 28,702 (14,199) E: 23,542 (11,971)	T: 152,150 MS: 234,246 F2f: 14,503 E: 11,571	T: 150,883 MS: 193,787 F2f: 14,428 E:11,752	No targets have yet been set for these indicators. Contact by telephone and face to face has increased slightly in Q2 compared with Q1 and the use of My Sandwell was decreased by 2%. However, the general longer term trend is that contact by telephone is decreasing and contact by My Sandwell is increasing, with face to face and email contact remaining largely the same.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8b	% Contact by channel	NA - awaiting strategy	NA	NA	T: 38% MS: 55% F-2-F: 4% Email: 3%	T: 37% MS: 57% F2f: 3% E: 3%	T: 40.07% MS: 52.25% F2f: 3.89% E: 3.17%		Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8c	Satisfaction from process submissions (out of 5)	Bigger is better	NA - Establishing baseline	NA	4.58 out of 5 (67,834 ratings) (cumulative)	4.58 out of 5 (37,874 total ratings)	NA	The rating is collected at time of initial submission through MySandwell. The service have developed an end to end satisfaction when request is complete. Performance is consistent with last quarter, however the number of submissions has increased significantly.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8j	Ombudsman Numbers Upheld	Smaller is better	NA	5%	HO: 4 fault cases, LGO: 6 fault cases	HO: 2 fault cases, LGO: 5 fault cases	NA	There is no target set for this indicator.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8k	SARs volumes	Smaller is better	NA	NA	75	56	46	There is no target for the number of SARs received as this can't be controlled.	Law and Governance
O8m	FOI volumes	Smaller is better	NA	NA	274	280	240	There is no target for the number of FOIs received as this can't be controlled.	Law and Governance
O8o	Numbers of complaints received	Smaller is better	NA	NA	892 (Stage 1:841, Stage 2:51)	1,026 (Stage 1: 984, Stage 2: 42) (revised)	904 (Stage 1: 864, Stage 2: 40)	The number of complaints overall is smaller in Q2 compared to Q1 and Q2 last year.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8q	Numbers of stage 1 and stage 2 Complaints upheld	Smaller is better	NA	NA	160 (Stage 1 - 153 & Stage 2 - 7)	271 (Stage 1 - 263 & Stage 2 - 8) (revised)	243 (Stage 1 - 236 & Stage 2 - 7)	Fewer stage 1 complaints have been upheld in Q2 compared to Q1 and Q2 last year.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8r	Number of MP Enquiries received	Smaller is better	NA	NA	584 (1,247 cumulative)	663 (revised)	554	The number of MP Enquiries is down compared to last quarter, but a slight increase on Q2 last year.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8s	Numbers of compliments received	Bigger is better	NA	NA	106 (218 cumulative)	112	68	There are significantly more compliments compared to Q2 last year, although not quite as many as in Q1.	Assistant Chief Executive



CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8t	Satisfaction with Member Enquiries - the average satisfaction rating of a response	Bigger is better	NA - Establishing baseline	NA	4.35	4.84	New KPI	Satisfaction has decreased slightly compared to Q1.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8u	Lessons learnt from Complaints	NA	NA	NA	170 complaints looked into to see what lessons had been learnt	108 complaints looked into to see what lessons had been learnt	NA	This is an ongoing piece of work that is manual because it cannot be done through the system. Resources to undertake this work are limited, but a new system (being progressed through the Customer Transformation Programme) should make this process much easier. For Q2 the team looked at 170 individual complaints and found 24 (14%) that had some evidence of lessons learnt	Assistant Chief Executive
O10	Placeholder - development of further metrics as part of corporate governance plan.	TBC	TBC	TBC	NA	NA	Na	Metrics around decision-making are being developed and will be part of the Phase 2 development of Mod.Gov	Law and Governance
O11b	Variance from budget - Housing Revenue Account	smaller in better	0%	0.5%	TBC	£472k underspend	£1.1m underspend	Information is being collated	Finance

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Summary of the strategic risks updated since the last Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting - as @ October 2023

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous score (Mar 2023)	Movement in risk score	Current risk score (Oct 2023)	Target risk score and date	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk and action date)	Key Sources of Assurance								
<p>27a 09</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 107</p>	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Central Government Funding and Resource Allocation</p> <p>Local Government continues to operate in an uncertain financial environment arising from reducing central government funding, increasing demand for services, and more recently the impact of the high levels of inflation being experienced.</p> <p>If the government does not provide local authorities with clarity over the future plans for health and social care reforms, the Public Health grant, the Better Care Fund, the package of one-off social care grants, business rates reset and retention, and future years funding, and it continues with one year funding settlements then this inhibits local authorities' ability to effectively manage medium term/ three year plans and put in place the necessary processes and actions to manage funding pressures.</p> <p>If the council is unable to plan effectively as a result of funding uncertainty, and is unable to identify sufficient savings and put in place the necessary policies, processes and actions to manage pressures, pay and price inflation and manage its spending plans, then this will impact on the council's financial resilience and its ability to effectively discharge its statutory responsibilities including the setting of a balanced budget for future years. This will impact on the council's ability to deliver sustainable services to the people of Sandwell.</p> <p>Risk Area – All Council Services Risk owner- Director of Finance Objectives impacted: All</p>	<p>8 (amber)</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>* There are a number of factors that underpin the wider risk score for this risk, and the score will continue to remain fluid throughout each 12-month cycle as the council develops its MTFS, generally in-line with the below pattern. However, overall the council is confident that it has processes in place in order to be able to adequately mitigate these risks, and that it will remain able to effectively discharge its statutory responsibilities, including the setting of a balanced budget for future years.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2023/24</th> <th>2024/25</th> <th>2025/26 Onwards</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)</td> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FF0000;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review by CIPFA on the council's financial management and governance arrangements, noted that the council was initially a progressive two-star (out of five) authority. The follow up review subsequently undertaken by CIPFA progressed this to a three-star. The review also looked at financial resilience and concluded that the council is financially stable and in recent years has been able to contribute towards reserves through achieving a balanced budget or an underspend. An underspend was delivered in 2022/23. A fundamental review of the MTFS (in line with the CIPFA recommendations) has been completed, to ensure that the council understands the challenges ahead and to ensure that the MTFP matches the ambitions of the corporate plan and regeneration plans for Sandwell. A balanced budget for 2023/24 was approved by Council on 21st February 2023 and includes savings totalling £21.4m. Monthly monitoring of savings is carried out by Finance Business Partners in year. Savings are RAG rated and reported to Directors monthly through DMT meetings and to LT budget meetings. Budget surgery meetings are held mid-year to review savings rated 'red', with a view to understanding any issues hampering delivery and to unblocking those issues. Budget surgery meetings are attended by the Director of Finance, appropriate Directors and a range of officers from across the organisation. Monitoring of savings includes any savings carried forward from previous years that were not delivered in those years. Star Chambers continue to be used to support budget setting. During August and September 2023, a Star Chamber meeting was held in relation to each Council directorate, focusing on the directorate's financial position, savings delivery within 2023/24, ongoing budget pressures and savings to be delivered in 2024/25. Star Chamber meetings include the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holders as well as the appropriate Director and Finance Business Partners. Star Chamber meetings are used as the initiation process to generate further savings proposals for the following financial year and to test those proposals with elected members. This is the first step in the process towards balancing the budget for the following year. Directorate budget pressures and growth are calculated annually by Finance Business Partners, and for Adult Social Care includes a growth model that extrapolates client numbers and average placement costs forward, building in assumed increases in market rates. A Strategic Finance Manager post has been created, with a view to having a dedicated resource to creating and updating the MTFS model and to ensuring assumptions, eg, pay inflation assumptions, are calculated with consideration and in accordance with wider local authority group assumptions. LG Futures have been commissioned to provide financial benchmarking data, including assumptions on grant income in future years, Regular discussions take place with WMCA over the likelihood of when the business rates reset might transpire, and Sandwell's assumptions in this regard are aligned to the rest of the WMCA group of local authorities. The MTFS position has been reported to Leadership Team on several occasions during the Autumn of 2023, and Directors have been fully engaged in the process of generating savings proposals to balance the budget gap in 2024/25. The draft MTFS for 24/25 reports a deficit (prior to savings) of £13m. Savings proposals have been developed to balance the budget, supported by a business case document for each saving. The draft MTFS will be presented to Cabinet on 15th November. Cabinet workshops were held on 19th September and 25th October to engage Cabinet in the MTFS process and to ensure that elected members are willing to adopt each of the proposed savings. Further iterations of the MTFS will be produced following the provisional and final settlement during Winter 2023/24. <p>Further actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued implementation of the action plan developed following the CIPFA review (as per the improvement plan timetable). Use of benchmarking data to help identify opportunities for efficiencies, savings and service improvements. The council continues to horizon scan and consider the impacts of potential government initiatives and policies on future funding sources and demand for council services. 		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 Onwards	Delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)				<p>Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board External Audit CIPFA financial management review LGA Corporate Peer Review Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review - Follow Up- December 2022 LG Futures benchmarking data Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board Star Chambers Business case templates – Savings Proposals CIPFA</p>
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 Onwards												
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<p>27b 10/21</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 108</p>	<p>Budget Monitoring and Management 2023/24</p> <p>If the council does not put in place effective arrangements to monitor and manage the current year's budget to ensure that planned savings are achieved and efficiencies realised, then it will result in overspends and impact the resilience of the council's finances.</p> <p>Therefore, timely and accurate monthly monitoring of the budget forecast outturn is required to ensure that the revenue and capital expenditure stay within the agreed budget. This applies to the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).</p> <p>Risk Area – Finance and Resources Risk owner- Director of Finance</p> <p>Objectives impacted: All</p>	<p>8 (amber)</p> <p>Monitoring and management</p> <p>12 (red)</p> <p>Budget position</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>* The score will continue to remain fluid throughout each 12-month monitoring cycle, however, overall the council is confident that it has processes in place to be able to forecast the outturn position within a reasonable degree of certainty, and confident that it has the resources in place to be able to mitigate a forecast overspend position in the current year, up to a degree of tolerance of approximately 5%.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th colspan="12">2023/24</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Monitoring Period</th> <th>Apr</th> <th>May</th> <th>Jun</th> <th>Jul</th> <th>Aug</th> <th>Sep</th> <th>Oct</th> <th>Nov</th> <th>Dec</th> <th>Jan</th> <th>Feb</th> <th>Mar</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Revenue Budget Monitoring Position</td> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A budget monitoring timetable is created annually and circulated to all in Finance, so that monthly monitoring deadlines are clearly understood and adhered to. Elements of the monitoring timetable relevant to budget holder involvement are circulated to budget holders. Directors and ADs are asked to sign budget accountability letters at the start of the financial year, which set out the budgets available to each senior officer and provide assurance that the budgets are understood and will be adhered to as far as possible As part of the budget monitoring process, year to date expenditure figures are compared with profiled budgets, and variances to date are used to calculate forecast outturn information, in conjunction with information from budget managers, historic data, trend data and any other relevant information Salaries monitoring is carried out at individual post level, using year to date cost information and information from budget managers on any changes in staffing that will take place in year All budget holders are sent their budget monitoring report monthly, and regular meetings are held between budget holders and Finance Business Partners. Budget holders are asked to provide forecast outturn information monthly. Heads of Finance Business Partnering collate information for all directorates, challenging and checking assumptions with Finance Business Partners Directors take ownership of their directorate's monitoring position, signing off the position for their directorate each month as a true reflection of the position Finance Business Partners attend DMT meetings monthly to present each directorate's monitoring position, to ensure that the position is understood by all ADs and that mitigating actions are proposed to deal with overspends as necessary The monitoring position is presented monthly to Leadership Team, quarterly to Cabinet and quarterly to Budget Management and Corporate Scrutiny Board Monitoring of current year savings (as per the MTFS) is carried out monthly by Finance Business Partners and present to DMT meetings monthly and Leadership Team meetings monthly, so that the impact of any non-delivery or slippage of savings on the Council's outturn position is understood If at any point, management action (for example an in-year spending freeze or recruitment freeze) or corporate action (for example use of reserves) is required in order to improve the forecast outturn position, Leadership Team is made known of this as soon as possible and provided with a list of actions that could be taken to address the forecast position. A menu of spending control options were presented to Leadership Team in August 2023, and spending controls were put in place following the Leadership Team meeting The council reported its Quarter 1 2023/24 budgetary position which showed a forecast outturn position for 2023/24 of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £2.188m projected overspend for the general fund revenue £nil variance for the HRA revenue <p>Further actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Oracle Fusion by 1 April 2024, which will provide each budget manager with 'real time' access to their areas' budget and spend data. Involving budget managers in the budget setting process will ensure that they understand their budget figures and how they have been developed Introduction of Oracle Fusion will lead to budget managers taking ownership of the budget monitoring process for their areas, actively reviewing data and ensuring that outturn projections are completed. Finance Business Partners will be able to ensure that monthly challenge meetings are taking place with ADs and that mitigating actions are proposed and put in place to address overspends 		2023/24												Monitoring Period	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Revenue Budget Monitoring Position													<p>Leadership Team Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board External Audit Annual Internal Audit review- budgetary control</p>
	2023/24																																													
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27c 10/23 Page 109	<p>Statement of Accounts</p> <p>Failure of the Council to produce its outstanding Statements of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 and/or failure to produce a Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 within the required statutory deadline could result in reputational damage to the council and may impact on the council's ability to come out of intervention.</p> <p>Risk Area – Finance and Resources Risk owner- Director of Finance</p> <p>Objectives impacted: All</p>	N/A	N/A	8 (amber)	4 (green) March 2024	<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A team of interim specialist contractors has been put in place to produce the outstanding Statements of Accounts and to address resulting audit queries The audit of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts was completed during Summer 2023, and final accounts have now been published. A Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 is due to be provided to Grant Thornton by 20 November 2023, and the resulting audit is due to be completed by the end of March 2024. A resource plan will be put in place by the Head of Technical Accounting to deal with audit queries during the three/four month audit period, to ensure that officers are available to respond to queries and that there are no delays to the audit timetable. The Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 must be produced by end of March 2024, and further external resources will be procured as required to ensure that this deadline is met. A closedown timetable for 2023/24 will be produced by the Head of Technical Accounting by the end of February 2024, and officer training will be delivered as required in advance of the closure period. A plan will be put in place for knowledge and skill transfer between the interim specialist contractors and the council's permanent Technical Finance team to ensure that permanent staff are able to produce Statements of Accounts in the future in-house. 	External Audit
53 04/18	<p>Oracle Fusion Implementation</p> <p>The project primarily has a risk of missing the April go live date.</p> <p>At this point in time the risks have started to crystallise with HR & Payroll. This stems mainly from previous process and working practice challenges in HR and Payroll operations. The programme has agreed with the project board to a phased plan to resolve this risk through Finance and Procurement remaining to go live in April and HR & Payroll moving back to July.</p> <p>For Finance the new management team are undertaking a review of the design of the Chart of Accounts and approved design which presents a further risk to the go live date for Finance. The programme board have directed that the Finance go live date cannot move back from April 2024.</p> <p>Risk Area – Finance and Resources Risk Owners – Director of Finance</p> <p>Objectives impacted: All</p>	8 (amber)		9 (amber)	4 (green) April 2024	<p>There has been a slight increase in the risk score, as noted in the risk descriptor - at this point in time risks have started to crystallise with HR & Payroll.</p> <p>Mitigations:</p> <p>For HR & Payroll</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SME engagement activities to resources to take on programme role Repeated realignment of relevant resources Additional line manager representation Direct progress reports to relevant Board member Implemented agile way of working with parallel progress Detailed level of governance, and controls, and task prioritisation Phased Plan to move HR & Payroll go-live to July whilst retaining an April Go-Live for all other workstreams Additional resources identified Further analysis taking place on other critical activities <p>For Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working through the gaps in the Chart of Accounts to achieve best practice with minimised impact Exploring rapid implementation of an interface from the existing HR & Payroll system to Oracle Fusion general ledger and budget monitoring All identified changes will be assessed through the Programme change control and governance process Engaging with stakeholders to explain the need to revisit Chart of Accounts Revisiting end to end processes as quickly as possible Added the production of accounting procedure guides to the task list 	<p>Project Board SOCITM Grant Thornton – Value for Money Governance Review 2021 Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review - Follow Up- December 2022 SRO updates to Leadership Team Grant Thornton review of Oracle Implementation</p>
61 10/21	<p>Partner Organisations/Contractors Service Delivery</p> <p>The council works closely with partners and contractors to provide services to its residents and businesses.</p> <p>In the event Partner organisations or contractors do not provide the required level of service to the public this may result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficient / good value for money / high quality services not being delivered Enforcement action Significant financial loss and Reputational damage <p>Risk Area – All Services Risk Owner – Chief Executive and Leadership Team</p> <p>Objectives impacted: All</p>	12 (red)		9 (amber)	4 (green) March 2024	<p>Current Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Team has established a reporting structure for the council's key contracts and partnership arrangements. Arrangements for scrutiny consideration of the council's key contracts is in progress. A deed of variation and extension period has been agreed and signed with SLT to deliver services up to end March 2027. Contract management training has been rolled out across the Council. A lessons learnt session led by key stakeholders in WM police has been completed during September 2023 to ensure that the recent service disruption due to illegal blockading during the period of industrial action is analysed appropriately to inform future incidents. Follow up report to Cabinet has been provided in October for Sandwell Leisure Trust to confirm the position to end March 2027 <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of consistent contract management for both significant capital and service contracts across the Council. Review of the current arrangements in place for each key contractor to ensure they remain fit for purpose and that the partnership objectives are aligned to the refreshed corporate plan. 	<p>Grant Thornton – Value for Money Governance Review 2021 CIPFA Financial Management and Governance Review 2021 LGA Peer Review 2022 Economy, Skills, Transport And Environment Scrutiny Board review of the performance and management of the waste partnership contract Reports to the Improvement Board Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review - Follow Up- December 2022 Leadership Team – quarterly monitoring</p>

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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Child Friendly Sandwell
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education Councillor Simon Hackett
Director:	Director of Children Services' and Education Michael Jarrett
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Sally Giles – Assistant Director – Children's Commissioning, Partnerships and Improvement Samantha Harman - Holiday Activities and Food Programme Manager Sarah Sprung – Senior Lead Officer – Policy and Strategy Jack Whitehouse – Lead Officer – Policy and Strategy

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet approves the preparation and submission of an expression of interest and application for Sandwell to become a UNICEF Child Friendly Borough.
- 1.2 That a Member Working Group is established comprising of members of the Cabinet, scrutiny and the opposition, to oversee both the submission and each of the phases within the application process of the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities programme.



1.3 That lead officers from the following service areas be appointed to sit on the Child Friendly Sandwell Officer Steering Group, to manage both the expression of interest and the application processes for a Child Friendly Sandwell:-

- Communications
- Community Partnerships
- Finance
- Legal and Governance
- Housing
- Regeneration
- Public Health
- Borough Economy
- Strategic Partnership Business Managers

2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 Delivering on the Sandwell Labour Manifesto Pledge, “We will create a child friendly Sandwell”

2.2 A child friendly city is a city that respects and promotes the rights of children and young people and provides them with opportunities to participate in its social, cultural, political and economic life. Developing a child friendly city involves engaging with children and young people as active citizens, ensuring their safety and well-being, and creating inclusive and accessible spaces and services for them. A child friendly city is not only beneficial for children and young people, but also for the whole community, as it fosters social cohesion, diversity, sustainability, and innovation.







2.3 The guiding principles of building a child friendly city mirror the overarching principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The initiative requires adoption of the following principles for good governance:-

- equity and inclusion
- accountability and transparency
- public participation
- adaptability and sustainability



- 2.4 Delivering a child friendly borough would support the Council to deliver its commitments to equality and diversity and key elements of both the Corporate Plan and the Improvement Plan. It will also represent the Council living its values, being ambitious, inclusive, customer focused and accountable.
- 2.5 From the results of the boroughwide representative Budget Consultation run in 2023, we know that the most important area of Council business to residents are the services delivered to Children and Young People.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Working towards and achieving Child Friendly status would impact positively on all strategic objectives and unify the council in the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the wider five board partnership priorities.
	
	
	
	
	

4 Context and Key Issues

Background

- 4.1 A child friendly city is a city, town, community or any system of local governance committed to improving the lives of children within their jurisdiction by realising their rights as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children’s lives.



- 4.2 The challenges for children and young people post-pandemic are greater now than ever. Adopting a child friendly framework puts children centre stage and encourages a conversation about what the future for children and young people living in Sandwell should look like. This requires a commitment to ensuring that every child has the best possible childhood, regardless of where they live, how much their parents earn, their cultural heritage or their complex needs.
- 4.3 Placing children and young people at the heart of the shared public realm is a moral, economic and public health imperative. Only by engaging consistently with children and young people, considering the evidence and highlighting what works, can we begin to influence policy to give these issues the priority they deserve. By doing this we can then take the steps necessary to create genuinely child friendly communities, towns and neighbourhoods, which will deliver benefits felt by the community as a whole. Examples where the child friendly approach has impacted on children's lives include Child Friendly Cov successfully partnering with two major utilities companies to price cap utility bills for care leavers transitioning to independent living and Child Friendly Leeds roll out the Safe Space programme in conjunction with their business ambassadors, training over 200 staff members and creating a network of safe spaces across the city.
- 4.4 Whilst Sandwell does not have child friendly status, we have much to be proud of. Current areas of good practice, some of which have been in place for 10 years, that support Child Friendly status include:-
- SHAPE FORUM
 - Children and Young People Engagement Strategy
 - Sandwell Play Service – Go Play Sandwell
 - Play Sufficiency
 - Universal and targeted youth service offer
 - Just Youth website
 - Poverty Proofing in schools
 - Young Peoples Version of the Corporate plan
 - Corporate Parenting Programme
 - Your Voice – Sandwell Children's Trust
 - Rights Respecting Schools programme in some schools
 - 21st Century Child programme
 - Pilot school streets programme



Research and Development

- 4.5 An officer working group has completed research into a range of models that may be adopted to achieve a Child Friendly Sandwell. Essentially there are two options available: -
1. UNICEF Child Friendly Cities,
 2. Develop our own Sandwell Child Friendly Borough Programme.
- 4.6 Appendix A details the requirements for each of these approaches and the pros and cons for each, together with the financial implications.
- 4.7 Officers have engaged with peers from the London Borough of Lambeth, Cardiff Council and Southampton City Council, Lambeth and Southampton are on their journey to becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City and Cardiff has recently gained the accreditation. These conversations have identified that the strengths of the UNICEF approach are: -
- the expectation that it is a top down, council-wide approach, which holds participating councils to account;
 - the model supports a cultural change in council's decision-making processes;
 - the model includes support, training and scrutiny from UNICEF;
 - UNICEF UK recognition, once achieved, would have a positive impact on a council's reputation and can act as a positive catalyst to leaver in additional income from external sources.
- 4.8 Officers have also engaged with peers from Leeds and Coventry Councils who are implementing their own child friendly approaches. From those conversations it has been determined that: -
- a bespoke framework often but not always delivers a 'bottom up' approach and has limited impact at a boroughwide strategic level;
 - an accountability partner would need to be procured to build in scrutiny to the process, the cost of which would be similar to the cost associated with the UNICEF programme;
 - there would be more flexibility with this option both in terms of the framework and timescales.



Consultation Process and Preferred Option

- 4.9 Following the research phase of the work the two options were taken to Leadership Team on 26 September and then to a Leaders meeting on 11 October 2023.
- 4.10 Due consideration was given to the pros and cons for both approaches, together with the resource requirements to deliver. Consideration was also given as to whether it was the right time for Sandwell to embark on a journey towards being a child friendly borough.
- 4.11 Given that the cost of both approaches was similar, members felt that it would be better to progress with the UNICEF framework for the following reasons: -
- Internationally recognised – has more meaning than a locally designed framework.
 - The training and support offered through UNICEF would have a positive impact on the cultural changes required to deliver a child friendly borough.
- 4.12 Officers attended a meeting of the SHAPE Youth Forum on 30 November to determine whether progressing towards a child friendly borough was something that young people living in Sandwell would support.
- 4.13 Young people present at the SHAPE Youth Forum made the following comments: -
- Lots of officers come to SHAPE to ask our views, with the exception of the Corporate Plan, we never hear back from them.
 - We often feel that adults try to make children act in a more adult way, rather than making the environment more suitable for children.
 - We want to be able to prioritise areas for improvement.
 - Over the last 10 years of the SHAPE survey there have consistently been the same issues and priorities coming forward from children and young people across Sandwell, it feels like nothing has changed. If becoming a Child Friendly Borough would help address this, it is a positive.



- 4.14 A Vision 2030 event was held with partners from the Sandwell Business Ambassadors and the five statutory partnership boards (Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Safeguarding Adults Board, Safer Sandwell Police and Crime Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Corporate Parenting Board) on 30 November 2023. Whilst the main discussion focused on the refresh of the Vision there was reference to the need to retain a focus on children and young people. Partners particularly saw the long-term benefits of focusing and investing in our children and young people.
- 4.15 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board also considered the proposals at its meeting on 8 January 2024. The Board wholeheartedly supported the proposals and will be monitoring progress and supporting the Council on the journey to becoming a child friendly borough.

Next Steps: UNICEF – Child Friendly Cities and Communities Expression of Interest

- 4.16 The expression of interest requires the council to evidence:
- Motivation and readiness – Is this the right time for us?
 - Vision – Do we have a clear vision of what we want to achieve?
 - Commitment to child centred practice – Can we build on existing commitments to child's rights and child centred practice?
 - A meaningful commitment to children and young people's participation- Are we committed to children's ongoing, meaningful participation and involvement in decision making?
 - Commitment to reflective practice and learning – Are we committed to reflective practice, experimentation and ongoing data collection and monitoring?
 - Commitment at all levels and cross-council buy in - Do we have political commitment to the programme, and can we ensure commitment across the wider council?
 - Governance and coordination – Will there be robust, transparent local governance structures in place?
 - Place based approach. Can we take an inclusive, community-wide approach to our delivery of the programme?
 - Costs and resourcing – Can we commit to paying the direct programme fees and ensure adequate resources are available locally for a minimum of three years?



- Commitment to improving local standards and outcomes – Can we detail how the programme will help improve standards and outcomes and identify key performance indicators to help us achieve this?

4.17 To oversee both the expression of interest and subsequent application process it is suggested that this would be best managed through the establishment of a Member Working Group with Cabinet, Scrutiny and Opposition representation. The Group would also be responsible for determining the post accreditation approach so that we maintain and continue to build on best practice.

4.18 We would expect to be able to submit our expression of interest in February 2024. Following which we will be able to identify the key milestones in our journey to becoming a Child Friendly Borough.

Finance, Resourcing and Governance

4.19 The financial cost of progressing with the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities programme is £35,000 per annum. We know from speaking to other local authorities that it will take between three and five years from expression of interest to assessment and award of the status. This would mean the Council would incur maximum costs of £175,000.

4.20 In year 1 – 2024/25 the required £35,000 will be met by redirecting Covid recovery funding. In future years we will seek corporate sponsorship and any additional funding required will be met from the base budget.

4.21 Embarking upon the child friendly borough journey will require commitment and staff resource from all areas of the Council. It is a cultural change model that will benefit the Council as a whole and our wider community, putting children and young people at the heart of all council services, functions and decisions.

4.22 Whilst some co-ordination and project management resource have been identified within Children’s Services and the Assistant Chief Executive’s area there is a need for long term commitment of staff resources across the Council including (but not limited to): -

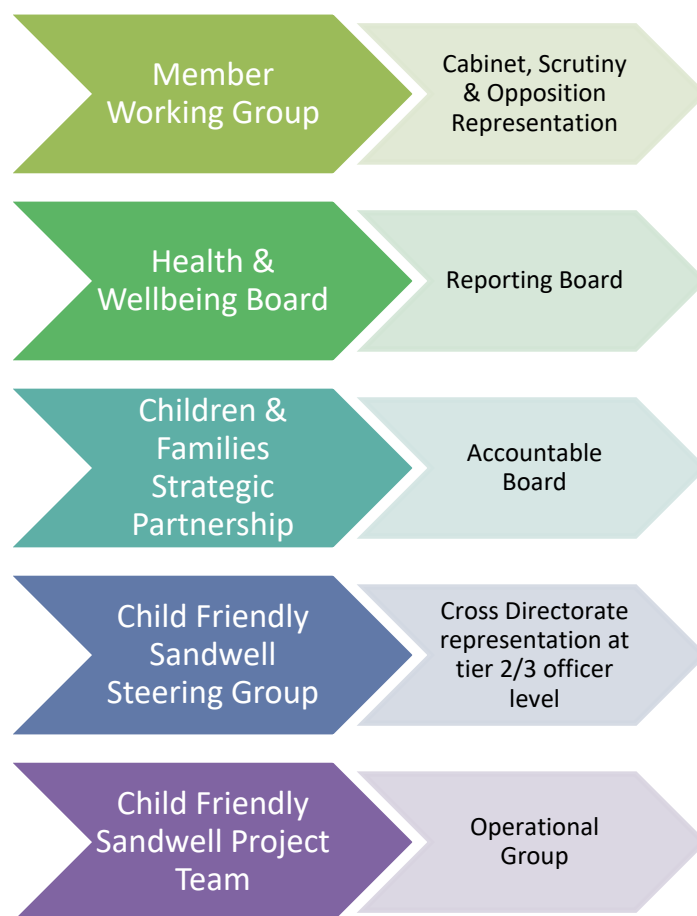
- Communications
- Community Partnerships
- Finance
- Legal and Governance
- Housing



- Regeneration
- Public Health
- Borough Economy
- Strategic Partnership Business Managers

4.23 Council wide commitment will ensure that we can progress with this agenda as one council and equally realise the benefits of working in a child friendly way.

4.24 Whilst the Member Working Group and Officer Steering Group will be paramount to driving the project forward, wider governance is also required to draw in the expertise, intelligence and support from partners. The diagram below sets out the proposed governance arrangements: -



4.25 The Council has recently been successful in its bid to secure Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) funds which will: -

- Enable the Council to become more research active.



- Support evidence-informed decision making to improve wider determinants of health.
- Establish place-based partnerships involving local authority, higher education institutions, voluntary and community sector, NHS and wider health partners.

4.26 The Child Friendly Borough programme will be able to benefit from HDRC activity by means of consultation, engagement, analysis and evaluation.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 Appendix A sets out the alternative option which would be to create a bespoke model by developing a homegrown Sandwell Child Friendly Borough framework. Given that developing and implementing our own model would incur similar costs to the UNICEF framework, without any of the training and mentoring support offered by UNICEF, it is felt that the UNICEF route would be better value for money.

6 Implications

Resources:	<p>The cost to the Council for each year of undertaking the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities programme would be £35,000. Funding has been identified for 2024/25 from redirect of Covid recovery fund in future years it will be sought from corporate sponsorship and any additional built into the base budget as detailed in 4.20.</p> <p>The assignment of a lead officer from each directorate to represent on the Child Friendly Sandwell Officer Working Group, to manage both the EOI, application processes and any subsequent related CFS work programmes moving forward.</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>There are no direct legal implications arising from these recommendations. Robust, transparent governance arrangements will be built into the process.</p>
Risk:	<p>A full risk assessment will be undertaken by the Officer working group as part of the application phase of the activity and be monitored by the Officer's</p>



	<p>working group and reviewed regularly through the Member Working Group.</p> <p>Child Friendly Sandwell is a Labour Manifesto Pledge, not progressing this could have an adverse reputational impact.</p>
Equality:	<p>Progressing towards child friendly status would have a positive impact on equality across the borough. As part of the expression of interest phase of activity a full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to ensure that the process maximises opportunity to address inequality across the borough.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>Children’s capability to generate well-being is shaped through relationships they have with other people and the spatial conditions of their everyday life adopting a child friendly way of working can improve health and wellbeing not only for our younger population but also wider communities and residents.</p>
Social Value:	<p>Sandwell Business Ambassadors were engaged in the consultation as part of the Vision 2030 event. Embarking upon a child friendly journey aligns well with their priority around raising aspirations. CFS will provide opportunities for children and young people to influence procurement processes, policies and cultural change across the Council and wider partners.</p>
Climate Change:	<p>Adopting a child friendly approach requires the council to analyse the impact decisions have on the lived experiences of children and young people in Sandwell which includes the commitment to our climate change targets.</p>
Corporate Parenting:	<p>Embarking upon a journey to being a child friendly borough will require extensive consultation and engagement with children and young people across the borough. This will include our care experienced children and young people.</p>

7 Appendices

Appendix A – Option appraisal for becoming a child friendly borough.



8 Background Papers

[The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[UNICEF Child Friendly Initiative Guidance Note](#)

[UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook](#)

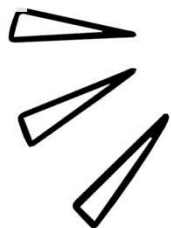




Child Friendly Sandwell

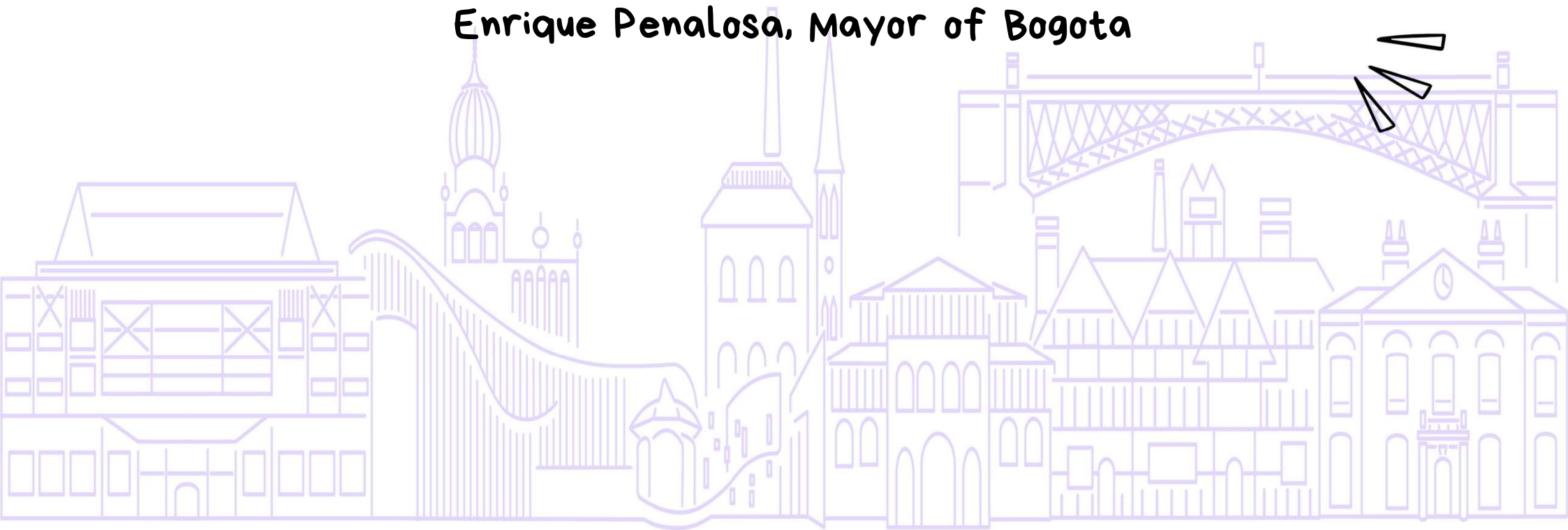


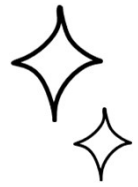
Option Appraisal



Children are a kind of indicator species. If we build a successful city for children, we will have a successful city for all people”

Enrique Penalosa, Mayor of Bogota

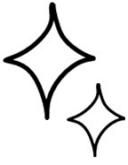




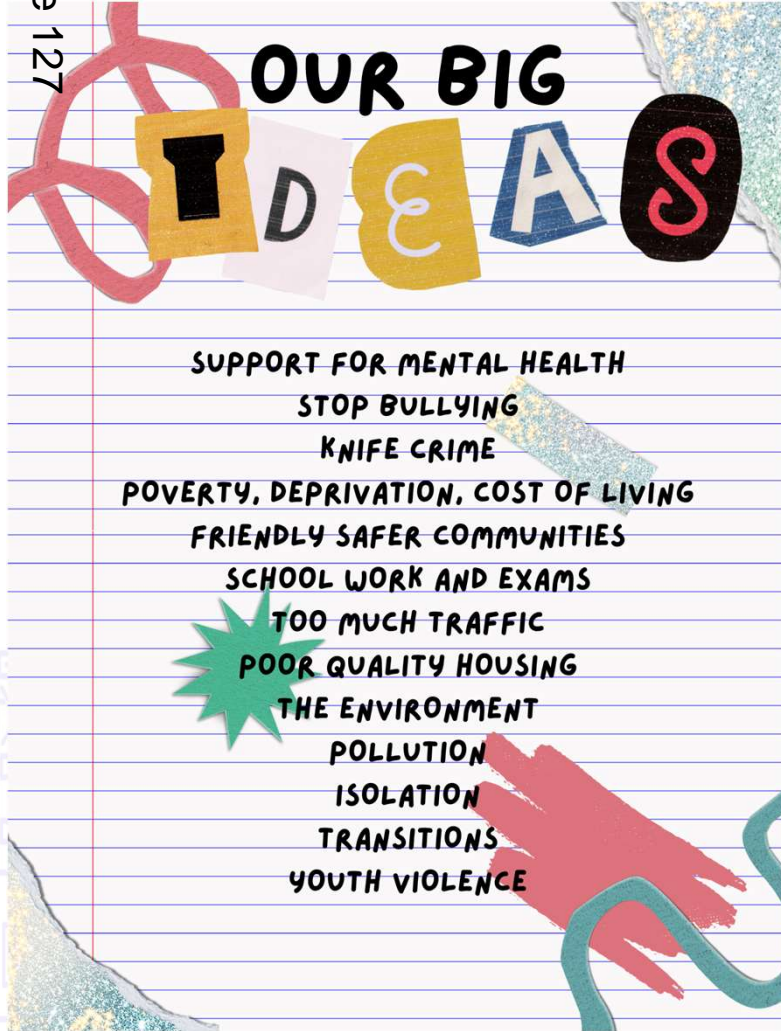
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention says childhood is separate from adulthood, and lasts until 18; it is a special, protected time, in which children must be allowed to grow, learn, play, develop and flourish with dignity. The Convention went on to become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives.





Why become child friendly



Since 2018 children and young people have been telling us what is like to grow up in Sandwell. SHAPE surveys, Make your Mark and Play Sufficiency Assessments all have recurring themes – they may be using different phrases but the messages are the same.

UK research highlights the real difficulties currently faced by children and young people and the impact the wider public realm has on their lived experiences.

[State of the Nation Report 2022](#) – Central Government

[The Good Childhood Report 2023](#) – The Children’s Society

[Mental Health of Children and Young People in England](#) – NHS Digital

[Child Health Inequalities driven by Child Poverty in the UK](#) – RCPCH

[Childhood Obesity is Where You Live Important ?](#) – Nuffield Trust

[Cities Alive – Designing for Urban Childhoods](#) – ARUP

[‘Young People Ditching Ambitions over UK Cost of Living’](#) – The Guardian

[‘Poor housing a growing barrier to school attendance’](#) – The Guardian

Why become child friendly

Child-friendly interventions offer an opportunity to improve a city's level of child-friendliness. The ideas presented here include small actions that can add up to high-impact change as part of a children's infrastructure network.



Intergenerational spaces
can become community hubs that increase interaction and exchange between the young and the old.



Traffic measures
such as colourful crossings or shared spaces redefine use and aid driver awareness of pedestrians and street activities.



Pedestrian priority
removes or calms traffic to create a safe environment for everyday street play and socialising.



Community gardens
provide opportunities for intergenerational activities, socialising, skills development and outdoor physical activity.



Neighbourhood mapping
led by children, provides deeper insights into an area's issues and opportunities.



Play streets
temporarily closed to through traffic allow communities to use the space while reducing air pollution and traffic danger.



Playable spaces
look beyond basic design functions, take a balanced approach to risk and provide facilities for families to spend time together for longer.



Multifunctional green infrastructure
caters for multiple purposes, such as stormwater parks that enable play in both flooded and dry conditions.



Sense of ownership of public space
through co-creation and increased activity can help to decrease vandalism and maintenance costs.



Playful encounters
such as public art or creative bus or tram stop designs invite playful interaction as part of everyday journeys and activities.



Cultural and heritage spaces
can become assets for inclusive and playful city life when combined with sensitive conservation.



Wild spaces
are flexible and adaptable areas that reactivate vacant or underused plots and bring nature back into the community.



Construction sites
can become engaging places and educational assets for the local community, e.g. by hoarding design that makes works visible.

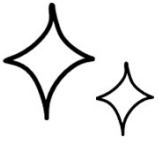


Multi-use community spaces
make smart use of space around schools, and other community facilities and enable out of hours use.

Options

UNICEF Child Friendly Cities
Programme

Go it alone and develop our own bespoke
Child Friendly Borough Programme



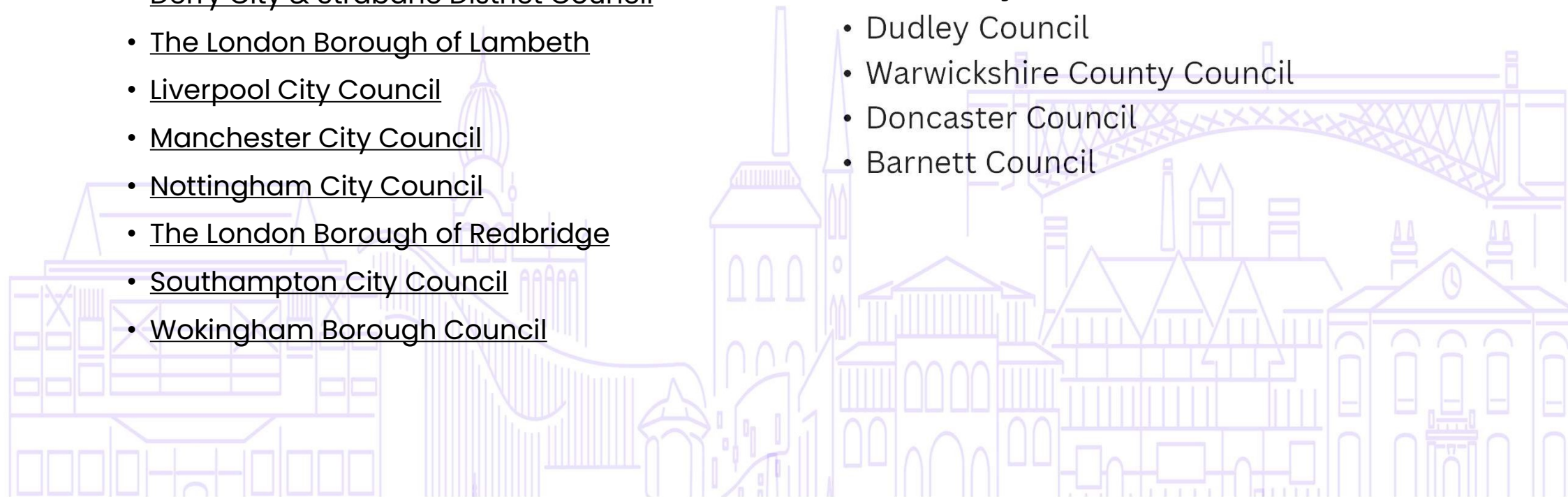
Who can we learn from...

UNICEF Programme

- Cardiff Council
- Derry City & Strabane District Council
- The London Borough of Lambeth
- Liverpool City Council
- Manchester City Council
- Nottingham City Council
- The London Borough of Redbridge
- Southampton City Council
- Wokingham Borough Council

Bespoke Framework

- Coventry City Council
- Leeds City Council
- Dudley Council
- Warwickshire County Council
- Doncaster Council
- Barnett Council



UNICEF Programme



It takes between three to five years for a city or community to be recognised as a UNICEF UK Child Friendly City or Community. The framework is split into four distinctive phases:

1 Discovery

2. Development

3. Delivery

4. Recognition

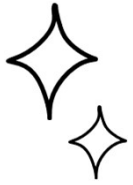


1. Discovery

The Child Friendly Cities and Communities team (at UNICEF) begins to deliver expert training to council staff, politicians and local partners on children's rights and how to use a **child rights based approach** as well as how to meaningfully engage with children and young people.

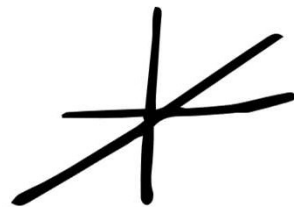
The Council meets with children and young people, as well as local partners to decide which six areas (or badges) to prioritise during their Child Friendly Cities & Communities journey.





2. Development

The Council drafts and presents an Action Plan setting out how it will achieve progress in the borough's six priority areas by using a **child rights based approach** to weave children's rights into policy and practice.



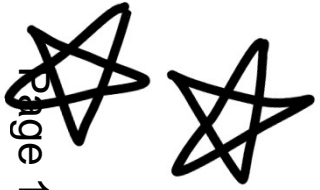
3. Delivery

The Council, local partners and children and young people work together to carry out the Action Plan. The Child Friendly Cities and Communities team (UNICEF) continues to run training and offer support at every step of the way.

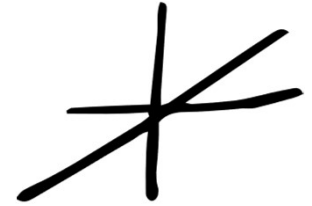
4. Recognition

After a minimum of three years an independent panel of experts on human rights, child wellbeing and public services – as well as local children and young people – decide whether to recognise the borough as a UNICEF UK Child Friendly City or Community. Recognition lasts for up to three years.





UNICEF Recognition



Criteria

- Demonstrated results for children within the scope of several goal areas to ensure a comprehensive child rights approach
- Meaningful and inclusive child and youth participation
- Demonstrated dedication to eliminating discrimination against children in policies and actions by the local government, including in the CFCI

Key Indicators

- Steering committee and coordinating unit established and operational
- Child rights situation analysis/assessment
- Action Plan developed
- Training rolled out
- Child and youth council meet regularly
- Communication strategy developed
- Annual Report

UNICEF Expression of Interest

Evidence

- Motivation and readiness
- Clear vision
- Robust governance and coordination
- Place based approach
- Costs and resourcing

Commitment to:

- Child centred practice
- Meaningful participation
- Reflective practice and learning
- Cross council buy in
- Improving local standards and outcomes

UNICEF Programme



Cost

- £35,000 direct costs to UNICEF pa minimum of 3 years as a council wide commitment.
- Indirect costs associated with the coordination of the programme.

Pros

- Globally recognised
- Structured framework
- Requires a top down approach
- Cabinet Members support for the UNICEF model
- Support and training provided
- Access to other support networks

Resource

- CE or Director to Champion the programme
- Lead Member
- Lead identified in Children's Services
- Establish Local Steering Committee
- Corporate Support Identified
- Project management/support?
- Directorate leads to be identified

Cons

- Limited flexibility within the parameters of the programme
- Cost
- Timescales - defined by UNICEF It could take longer

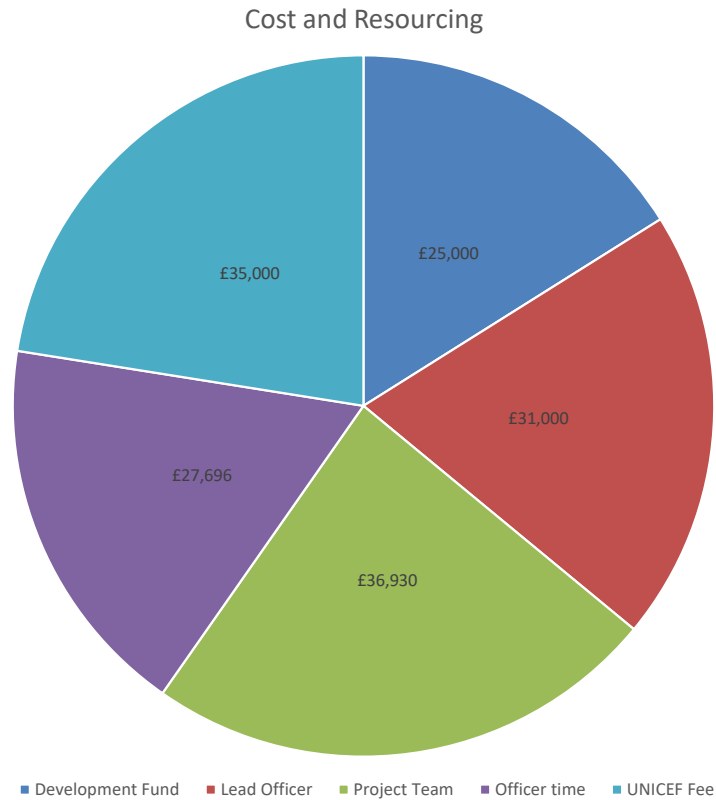


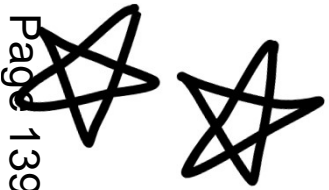
UNICEF Programme



Cost

- Development Fund
- Lead Officer 0.5 post
- Project Team – project officer and corporate support officer.
- Officer time allocation per directorate 0.25 x 3
- UNICEF annual fee
- **TOTAL £155,626**





Case Study - UNICEF Lambeth Council Timeline



March 2021

Partnership Away day to consider UNICEF journey. Questions considered:

- Is this the right journey at this time?
- What are the opportunities in engaging with UNICEF?
- What are we already doing and where are our strengths?
- What are our concerns and challenges that we need to consider?
- How can we best work together as a partnership to support this work?

February – August 2022

- Eight months speaking to over 1500 children and young people aged two - 25
- Children and young people produced a film and a music track called 'Future' which talks about children's rights
- To ensure full buy in, officers delivered over 100 presentation to different stakeholders

November 2021

- Embarked on Child Friendly Lambeth (CFL) journey
- Launched a competition across Lambeth schools to design official logo
- Baseline staff survey to understand colleagues current knowledge and understanding of children's rights

October 2022

- Published Discovery Phase Report providing an overview of engagement exercise and initial findings
- In person launch event
- UNICEF UK facilitated virtual training – training continues throughout the lifetime of the programme

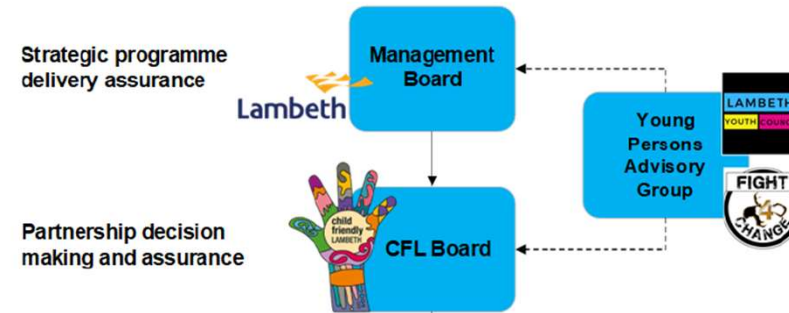
Case Study - UNICEF



Child Friendly Lambeth Governance Structure

Priorities and Action Plan

- Launched co-facilitated Discovery Moments with UNICEF to agree priority 'badges' to focus on based on consultation results.
- The three chosen priority badges, in addition to the compulsory three priorities; Culture, Communication and Co-operation and Leadership formed the foundation of CFL Action Plan.



Source: Lambeth Council, 2022. Child Friendly Lambeth Discovery Phase Report



Bespoke Model

High level commitment to embed a child rights approach

Staff resource to develop framework

Ongoing training and delivery support

Identify external evaluation partner



Bespoke model

Cost

- 35 to 40k pa for the duration of the programme for an evaluation partner as across directorate commitment
- Indirect costs to develop the framework and coordinate the programme
- Training costs

Resource

- CE or Director to Champion the programme
- Lead Member
- Lead identified in Children's Services
- Corporate Support Identified
- Project management/support?
- Directorate leads to be identified

Pros

- Flexibility in the framework design
- Build on existing work
- Timescales

Cons

- Timescales
- Costs
- Identifying how outcomes are evaluated
- Local recognition only
- Potential for the programme to not succeed
- Bottom up approach

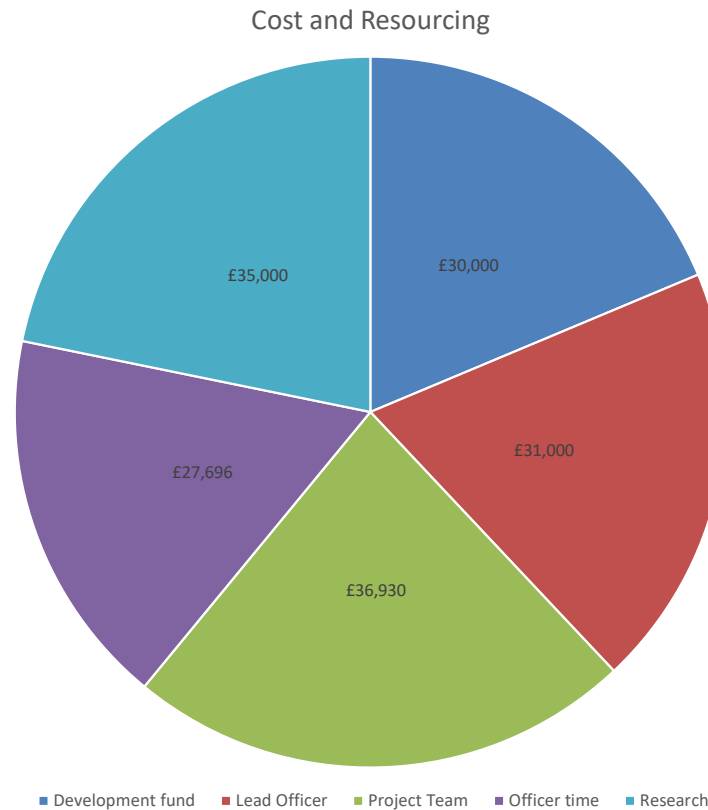
Bespoke Programme



Cost

- Development Fund
- Lead Officer 0.5 post
- Project Team – project officer and corporate support officer.
- Officer time allocation per directorate 0.25 x 3
- Research, evaluation partner

TOTAL £160,626



Case Study - Bespoke model



Doncaster Council

- Local services and organisations can sign up to receive Child Friendly Status, which is awarded by the council. The completion of training and submission of evidence is required to be considered for an award.
- **Initiative is led by Young Advisor Board.** Focus on co-design and co-production.
- Budget to recruit **Young Advisors**, providing paid employment for those aged between 16 to 24 (43k allocated in 2020-2021).
- The Children and Young People's Plan 2022-2025 was developed by Young Advisors. The ambition is to make Doncaster **the most Child Friendly Borough in the Country.**

Benefits to services who sign up: receive a certificate and use of child friendly logo. Service rating is stored on a council database. The council also provides a detailed report reviewing strengths and next steps for improvement.

Council resource: Participation and Engagement Team lead on the delivery of: Young Advisors, Youth Council, Junior Civic Mayor, and Young Commissioners. Exploring Young Ward Members.

Monitoring:

- Audit of implementations by Young Inspectors
- Targets outlined in The Participation Principles
- Outcome included as a key priority in Borough Strategy

Governance:

- Young Advisor Board
- Participation and Engagement sub group of Children's and Families executive board

Governance!

This page tells us who is responsible for making sure we do what we say we will do!

Children & Families Executive Board

The purpose of the Board is to provide Senior Strategic Leadership to the partnership's Children and Families portfolio, to guide, advise and oversee delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan, championing the voice of children and families and to hold the partnership to account for its delivery.

<p>Joint Commissioning Resource Group Manage the Children's Commissioning dashboard. Oversee the Starting Well Joint Commissioning Plan.</p>	<p>Youth Advisors Forum Hold the Children and Families Board to account, coordinate Young People shining a light on specific themes/topics.</p>
<p>Workforce Development & Practice Group Leadership Charter Partnership learning framework.</p>	<p>Adolescents Group Oversee delivery of the Adolescents Strategy.</p>
<p>Joint Strategic Performance & Improvement Group Develop and implement single quality and performance framework. Manage the performance dashboard/compliance of the C&YP Plan. Continuous improvement framework.</p>	<p>Children & Family Cell Partnership response to response and recovery. Oversight of operational challenges and finding solutions.</p>



The Participation Principles!

To make sure Doncaster delivers the Child Friendly Ambitions there are targets we need to hit to make this happen and we call these The Participation Principles. They are looked at every year to make sure we are all doing our best for you and every Child and Young Person in Doncaster!



Inform	Children & Young People are able to make informed decisions with information tailored to them. ✓
Involve	Children & Young People are encouraged to be involved and share their opinions on services. ✓
Include	Children & Young People from all backgrounds and circumstances are made to feel welcome and included. ✓
Inspire	Children & Young People are given opportunities to develop skills, experience and to participate. ✓
Impact	Children & Young People shape services and initiatives and are told about their impact on them. ✓

Managing the Process proposal



Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Determination of Admission Arrangements for Sandwell’s Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2025/26
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Education Councillor Simon Hackett
Director:	Director of Children’s Services and Education, Michael Jarrett
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Donna Williams, Team Lead, School Admissions donna_williams@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations


- 1.1 In accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021 (“the Code”) and School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 (“Regulations”) the Director of Children’s Services and Education be authorised to publish the Local Authority’s Admission Arrangements for 2025/26 academic year for places in all community and voluntary controlled schools as set out in Appendix 1.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Local Authority (LA) must abide by the requirements of the Code and associated Regulations and determine admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools each year. This report relates to the proposed arrangements to apply for the 2025/26 academic year and the LA has fulfilled its obligation to consult as some proposed changes have been made to the Policy since the last consultation was undertaken in October / November 2017. The proposed arrangements are in line with the requirements of the Admissions Code.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people
	The recommendation in this report supports the desire of the council to focus resources on the specific needs and aspirations of the community. This contributes to the Council's Vision 2030 Ambition 1 – Raising aspirations and resilience, Ambition 3 – Young people to have skills for the future, Ambition 4 – Raising the quality of schools.

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Purpose of the Report

- 4.2 The Code published in September 2021 requires the LA (as the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools), to formally agree admission arrangements for those schools every year, even if the arrangements have not changed from previous years. Admission authorities must determine admission arrangements for entry in September 2025 by 28 February 2024.

The Code also requires the LA to consult governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools where it proposes either to increase or keep the same Published Admission Number (PAN). The proposed admission arrangements and PANs are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.



Background and main considerations

- 4.3 The LA last consulted all stakeholders on its admission arrangements in October / November 2017, and Cabinet has continued to agree to publish these arrangements for subsequent years as there have been no material changes. At its meeting on 18 January 2023 Cabinet agreed to publish the arrangements for the 2024/25 academic year (Minute No. 5/23).
- 4.4 The arrangements for 2025/26 are attached in Appendix 1, and have been consulted upon to take account of the proposed changes as detailed in paragraph 4.8.
- 4.5 The consultation included the proposed reduction of the PAN for Ferndale Primary School from 90 to 60 places, and the amended PAN's for both Cape Primary and Uplands Manor Primary Schools following approval by the Schools Adjudicator in July 2023.

4.6 The current position

The LA's oversubscription criteria for the academic year 2025/26 for community and voluntary controlled schools has been consulted on in accordance with the Department for Education's 2021 statutory 'School Admissions Code' guidance and it is recommended that the new policy be adopted / approved.

4.7 Consultation (Customers and other Stakeholders)

- 4.8 The consultation process took place between 30 October 2023 and 11 December 2023 to take account of the following changes:
- Change of PAN at Ferndale Primary School from 90 to 60 places from September 2025.
 - Reintroduction of a waiting list for schools.
 - Changing or adding new preferences for schools will not be possible once an application is submitted online but can still be made by contacting the LA's School Admissions Team.
 - Update to a 'Tie Breaker' from the toss of a coin to a random number generator.



- Update in terminology from ‘midyear admissions’ to ‘in-year admissions’ in line with the School Admissions Code 2021.

4.9 All community and voluntary controlled schools were notified of the consultation, in accordance with the Admissions Code, as the revised policy will include the reduction of PAN for Ferndale Primary School.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 There is no alternative option open to the LA in relation to its responsibilities for agreeing and publishing oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools. The LA must abide with the requirements of the Admissions Code. Further, determining the admission arrangements enables the admission authority, the LA, to meet its duty to provide sufficient school places and to allocate school places within a reasonable distance.

6 Implications

Resources:	No strategic resource implications have been identified.
Legal and Governance:	<p>The School Admissions Code (issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) was published in September 2021 and associated regulations require all admission authorities to determine (formally agree) admission arrangements every year, even if they have not changed from previous years and a consultation has not been required.</p> <p>The Local Authority must also ensure it has consulted on its determined admission arrangements at least every 7 years, or when material changes are proposed to its policy</p> <p>Following determination of arrangements, any objections to those arrangements must be made to the Schools Adjudicator. Objections to admission arrangements must be referred to the Adjudicator by 15 May in the determination year.</p>



<p>Risk:</p>	<p>The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) has been complied with. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to determine admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools in accordance with the Admissions Code and associated regulations. Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that there are no current "red" risks that need to be reported with regards to this proposal.</p> <p>If this report's recommendation to publish the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools is not approved the LA will be in breach of its statutory duty as determined by the Admissions Code.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment initial screening has been undertaken and a full Equality Impact Assessment was completed.</p> <p>The Policy ensures we have a fair and equitable procedure for children needing an admission to Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools</p> <p>It is proposed to reduce the Published Admission Number at Ferndale Primary School from 90 to 60 places. The proposal is in response to a falling roll in the local area and the school will over the course of the next few years make adjustments to its staffing and budget to reflect the reduced pupils on roll.</p> <p>Once complete the reduction in PAN will result in the school capacity reducing from 630 to 420 primary school places</p> <p>The further proposal to retain waiting lists for each school will provide a positive benefit to all children and families as their preference for a particular school will remain on record should any places become available</p>



Health and Wellbeing:	This proposal supports the prioritisation of applications from the local community and gives clarity to parents and carers about how their applications will be considered, including how they will be measured under the distance criterion.
Social Value	In supporting the prioritisation of applications from the local community the proposal will ensure that children will be educated and develop within their residential and social communities.
Climate Change:	No impact on climate change
Corporate Parenting:	Adoption of the proposed Admission Arrangements for 2025/26 will ensure the Local Authority fulfils its Corporate Parenting responsibilities by supporting all children applying for a school place at a community or voluntary controlled school.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in Sandwell for 2025/26.

8. Background Papers

None.



Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in Sandwell for 2025/26

These arrangements relate to the schools listed on pages 8 to 11 of this document.



Admissions priorities for places in oversubscribed community and voluntary controlled primary schools - academic year 2025/2026

1. A 'looked after child' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order including those children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions as defined by section 22 (1) of the Children Act 1989 at the time of making the application for a school place.
2. Children with a particular medical condition. Applications submitted under this criterion must be accompanied by a medical declaration form (ASU75M) signed by the child's general practitioner or consultant confirming the condition, detailing the child's needs and specifying why, in their opinion, the preferred school is the only or most appropriate to meet the child's needs. All applications under this criterion will be assessed by the local authority to decide whether the child's needs can be met most appropriately by the preferred school.
3.
 - (a) Children having a brother or sister attending the preferred school (not nursery) at the time of admission.
 - (b) For admissions to infant schools, children having a brother or sister attending the preferred school or at a linked junior school at the time of admission.
 - (c) For admissions to junior schools, children having a brother or sister attending the preferred school or at a linked infant school (not nursery) at the time of admission.
4. For admissions to junior schools, children attending the linked infant school at the time of admission.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

5. *Children accepted on denominational grounds, supported by the Anglican / Church of England Church.

Applications based on this criterion must be accompanied by a completed declaration form signed by a Vicar or Priest to signify attendance at an Anglican / Church of England Church on at least one occasion per month.

6. Children prioritised by distance measured in a straight line from a child's home** to the centre point of the school site***. In all cases, should the number of applicants exceed the number of places available, places will be allocated based on distance between home and school, as measured in a straight line from home to the centre point on the school site with priority being given to those living closest to the school.

NB. Children with an Education & Health Care Plan (EHCP) (previously known as Statement of Educational Needs), naming a particular school will be admitted before all other applicants.

Note:

* Applicable only to schools that are designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character.

** Measured from the Local Land and Property Gazetteer address base for the property. In all cases, should the number of applicants exceed the number of places available, places will be allocated based on distance between home and school, as measured in a straight line from home to the centre point of the school site with priority being given to those living closest to the preferred school.

*** the centre point of the school site as designated by the Head Teacher.

Additional arrangements for year of entry admissions to community and voluntary controlled schools 2025/2026

The following additional policy statements are included in the local authority admission arrangements for admissions to community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools for 2025/2026.

1. Late applications

Late applications for places will only be considered alongside those received by the closing date under the following circumstances:

- When the applicant has bought, rented or leased a house or flat and has moved into Sandwell after the closing date, but before the allocation of places has been made.
- When the applicant has moved home within Sandwell to an address more than three miles from their previous address but closer to the preferred school after the closing date but before the allocation of places has been made.
- When a child who is in public care (looked after) or was previously in public care moves into Sandwell after the closing date, but before the allocation of places has been made.
- When a sibling has commenced at the preferred school after the closing date but before the allocation of places has been made.
- When the applicant is a single parent and was prevented from submitting their application on time due to long term illness of more than six weeks' duration from the date on which application forms became available.

If your application is received after the closing date and not covered by one of the circumstances above, then it will be processed after consideration of all on time and accepted late applications.

2. Waiting lists

Places will be offered initially to applicants whose forms have been received by the closing date or whose application has been considered as being made on time (under 1 above).

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

Any preferences which cannot be met following the application of the admission priorities, (including late applications), will be put on a waiting list which will be ranked in accordance with the published admission priorities.

Places will only be offered from the waiting list if the number of confirmed offers (including those offered as a result of independent appeals) is less than the published admission number.

3. Further applications in the same academic year

The local authority will only consider more than one application in the same community or voluntary controlled school in the same academic year if one or more of the following significant changes apply:

- (a) The child becomes looked after by the local authority;
- (b) The child has a medical condition which was not present when the previous application was considered;
- (c) The child's brother or sister has been admitted to the school for which the application has been made and was not there at the time of the last application;
- (d) The applicant has changed address since the previous application was considered and the applicant now lives closer to the school for which the application was made;
- (e) A vacancy arises in the relevant year group.

4. Changing or adding new preferences

Once a parent / carer has submitted an application they **will not** be able to amend it online before the closing date. For any changes to be included, parents would need to e-mail the School Admissions Service at:

annual_schooladmissions@sandwell.gov.uk

If the closing date has passed it will not be possible to make a change unless the application meets the criteria to be considered

as a “late” application (in 1 above). Any changes made to an application after the closing date will deem the application “late”.

5. Twins and multiple births

Special conditions will apply if one child from a set of twins or other multiple births does not gain admission to the preferred school through the admissions criteria. The local authority will exceed the admission number for the school concerned to prevent separation of twins or children from multiple births.

6. Tie breaker

If two or more applicants tie for last place during the allocation process the final place shall be decided by a random number generator, independently overseen by the council’s Democratic Services Unit.

7. Deferred entry

Parents may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group – to Reception rather than Year 1.

Sandwell’s policy on deferred entry for community and voluntary controlled schools is available at:

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/205/delayed-entry>

8. In Year Admissions

An application can be made for a school place for a child at any time outside of the normal admissions round. Where school places are available a school place will be offered in accordance with the admission priorities stated above.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

Waiting Lists

Any preferences which cannot be met following the application of the admission priorities, will be placed on a waiting list which will be ranked in accordance with the published admission priorities until the end of the academic year.

Definitions used in admissions administration

1. Brother and sister (Sibling)

The definition of a brother or sister is:

- (a) a brother or sister sharing the same parents*;
- (b) a half-brother or half-sister, where two children share one common parent*;
- (c) a step brother or step sister, where two children are related by a parent's marriage*;
- (d) adopted or fostered children*;
- (e) children of unmarried parents*

*and living at the same address;

It does not include:

- (a) cousins or other family relationships;
- (b) brothers or sisters who, at 1 September in the year of entry will not be registered pupils at the preferred school;
- (c) brothers or sisters who, at 1 September in the year of entry will be in the sixth form at the preferred school.

2. Children in Public Care

A child in public care means a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see section 22 (1) of the Children Act 1989) at the time an application is made.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

An adoption order is an order under Section 46 of the Adoptions and Children Act 2002.

A child arrangement order (previously residence order) is an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989.

Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 defines a special guardianship order as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

3. Home address

The home address of a child is the address at which a parent with parental responsibility lives. It may also be the address at which a child resides (and sleeps) for the majority of the school week (Sunday to Thursday night). In the event of a query on the home address we will require two examples from the following list;

- Council tax bill
- Tenancy agreement
- Solicitor's letter confirming completion of purchase of a residential property

Where parents have shared responsibility for a child, and the child lives with both parents for part of the school week, then the home address will be determined as the address where the child lives for the majority of the school week. Parents will be required to provide documentary evidence to support the address they wish to be considered for allocation purposes. At least one item of proof must demonstrate where the child lives.

4. Armed Forces Children

Sandwell Local Authority understands that families of UK Service personnel often have to move at short notice within the UK and from abroad. If we receive an application along with an official letter declaring a relocation date, then we will be able to arrange a school place in advance of the relocation. Please contact the

School Admissions Service on tel. no. 0121 569 6765 for further information.

5. Linked school

For the purposes of admissions to infant and junior schools, linked schools shall be as follows:

- Abbey Infant School - Abbey Junior School;
- Moat Farm Infant School - Moat Farm Junior School;
- Ocker Hill Infant School - Ocker Hill Academy;
- Silvertrees Academy - Tipton Green Junior School.

Hamstead Infant and Hamstead Junior School are no longer linked following the approved merger from 1 January 2024. The school is now known as Hamstead Primary School

6. Published Admission Number

As part of determining its admission arrangements, as the admission authority the Local Authority must set an admission number for each 'relevant age group' (the age group at which pupils are or will normally be admitted to the school, e.g., Reception or Year 3).

Admission Numbers (Primary) for 2025/26

A. Community and voluntary controlled primary schools

School name (Primary)	Published Admission Number
Abbey Infant School	90
Abbey Junior School	90
Annie Lennard Primary School	30
Bearwood Primary School	60
Blackheath Primary School	60
Bleakhouse Primary School	60
Brandhall Primary School	60
Burnt Tree Primary School	60
Cape Primary School	60
Causeway Green Primary School	60
Crocketts Community Primary School	60
Eaton Valley Primary School	60
Ferndale Primary School	60*
Galton Valley Primary	60
Glebefields Primary School	60
Grace Mary Primary School	30
Great Bridge Primary School	60
Grove Vale Primary School	60
Hall Green Primary School	60
Hamstead Primary School	60
Hanbury Primary School	60

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School name (Primary)	Published Admission Number
Hargate Primary School	60
Highfields Primary School	60
Holy Trinity CE Primary School	60
Joseph Turner Primary School	60
King George V Primary School	30
Langley Primary School	60
Lodge Primary School	60
Lyng Primary School	60
Moat Farm Infant School	120
Oakham Primary School	60
Ocker Hill Infant School	60
Pennyhill Primary	90
Perryfields Primary School	60
Reddal Hill Primary School	60
Rood End Primary School	60
Ryders Green Primary School	60
Sacred Heart Primary School	60
St. James' C.E. Primary School	60
St. Martin's C.E. Primary School	30
St. Mary Magdalene C.E. Primary School	30
The Priory Primary School	60
Tividale Community Primary School	60
Tividale Hall Primary School	60

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

School name (Primary)	Published Admission Number
Uplands Manor Primary School	90
Whitecrest Primary School	30
Yew Tree Primary School	90

* The Published Admission Number for Ferndale Primary School will reduce from 90 to 60 with effect from September 2025.

Equality Impact Assessments Toolkit

EqlA Template



You must consider the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) when completing this template.

The EDI team can provide help and advice on undertaking an EqlA and also provide overview quality assurance checks on completed EqlA documents.

EDI team contact email: edi_team@sandwell.gov.uk

Quality Control	
Title of proposal	Determined Admission Priorities for Sandwell's Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2025/26
Directorate and Service Area	Children's Services and Education
Officer completing EqlA	Donna Williams
Contact Details	Children Services and Education, Sandwell Council House PO Box 16230, Freeth Street, Oldbury West Midlands B69 9EX Tel: 0121 569 8138 Email: donna_williams@sandwell.gov.uk
Other officers involved in completing this EqlA	
Date EqlA completed	07.12.2023
Date EqlA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EqlA	
Date EqlA considered by Cabinet	
Where the EqlA is Published (please include a link to the EqlA and send a copy of the final EqlA to the EDI team)	

Section 1.

The purpose of the project, proposal or decision required

The Admissions Code published in September 2021 requires the Local Authority (as the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools), to formally agree admission arrangements for those schools every year, even if the arrangements have not changed from previous years. Admission authorities must determine admission arrangements for entry in September 2025 by 28 February 2024.

This report recommends the adoption of proposed admission arrangements for 2025/26 which includes the following changes:

- Change of PAN at Ferndale Primary School from 90 to 60 places from September 2025.
- Reintroduction of a waiting list for schools.
- Changing or adding new preferences for schools will not be possible once an application is submitted online but can still be made by contacting the LA's School Admissions Team.
- Update to a 'Tie Breaker' from the toss of a coin to a random number generator.
- Update in terminology from 'midyear admissions' to 'in-year admissions' in line with the School Admissions Code 2021.

Section 2.

Evidence used and considered. Include analysis of any missing data

The recommendation fulfils the requirements of the Admission Code 2021 that the LA must determine the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools by 28 February 2024, for the 2025/26 academic year.

Section 3.

Consultation

There is a statutory requirement under the Admission Code for the LA to consult at least once every 7 years or if there are changes proposed for the admission arrangements. The LA have proposed the changes as set in

section 1, and have consulted with the following, in line with School Admissions Code 2021:

- Parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen
- Other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the LA have an interest in the proposed admissions
- All other admission authorities within the relevant area
- All adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority

Section 4.

Summary assessment of the analysis at section 4a and the likely impact on each of the protected characteristics (if any)

There will be no adverse impact to any group as a result of the recommendation. If agreed, the proposed arrangements will be consistent with the requirements of the Admission Code and are fair, transparent and clear for all applicants for a school place.

Section 4a - What are the potential/actual impacts of the proposal on the protected characteristics?

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Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
Age	Ne			
Disability	Ne			
Gender Reassignment	Ne			
Marriage and civil partnership	Ne			
Pregnancy and maternity	Ne			

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
Race	Ne			
Religion or belief	Ne			
Sex	Ne			
Sexual Orientation	Ne			
Could other socio-economic groups be affected?				
Carer Low income groups Veterans/Armed Forces Community Other	Ne			

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then please move to Sections 6.

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

6. Section 6: Decision or actions proposed

In accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021, the Director of Children's Services and Education be authorised to publish the Local Authority's Admission Arrangements for 2025/26 academic year for places in all community and voluntary controlled schools as set out in Appendix 1.

7. Monitoring arrangements

Section 8 Action planning (if required)

Question no. (ref)	Action required	Lead officer/ person responsible	Target date	Progress

If you have any suggestions for improving this process, please contact EDI_Team@Sandwell.gov.uk

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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Sandwell Residential Education Centres: Charges for the period 1 August 2024-31 July 2025
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education Councillor Simon Hackett
Director:	Director for Children and Education Michael Jarrett
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Christopher Davies, Manager, Sandwell Residential Education Service chris_davies@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet approves the increase in term-time charges of 2% for Sandwell Residential Education Centres for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025 as shown in Appendix A attached.
- 1.2 That the Director of Children and Education be authorised to implement term-time charges for Sandwell Residential Education Centres for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025 as shown in Appendix A attached.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The report proposes charges which seek to make the centres accessible to as many Sandwell children and school groups as possible, whilst generating sufficient income to provide a high-quality service at zero revenue cost to the Council.



2.2 The recommendations will provide an opportunity for the centres to generate sufficient income to operate an efficient high-quality service, with heavily subsidised places for Sandwell children, and continue to make access to the centres more affordable at certain times of the year with consideration given to rising inflation.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>About 7,000 Sandwell children and young people experience residential visits to the centres each year, and 2,000 experience day visits. Sandwell Residential Education Service (SRES) contributes to the Council's ambitions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising aspirations and resilience by introducing participants to new experiences, places and challenges. • Raising the quality of education and learning, by working with schools to enrich the broader curriculum. • Helping young people to have skills for the future, by developing and applying transferable skills, attitudes and values, creativity and adventure, and environmental awareness, through direct experience.
	<p>Helping participants be healthier and happier for longer, by promoting healthy, active, enjoyable lifestyles and activities, and teaching how to identify and manage risk.</p>
	<p>Enhancing Sandwell's reputation for getting things done. Retaining four residential education centres, with a focus on Sandwell priorities providing high value for the community, is increasingly recognised regionally and nationally as a success.</p>
	<p>Lowering crime and anti-social behaviour by promoting good citizenship, positive traits and relationships.</p>



4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Sandwell Residential Education Service’s mission is “to provide sustainable lifelong learning opportunities for all Sandwell children, young people and adults to become healthier, happier and more successful through residential, outdoor and creative arts experiences.” Every visit provides an opportunity to develop resilience, confidence and independence, know how to keep physically and emotionally healthy, become more environmentally aware and support students’ achievement.

Ofsted stated in “Learning Outside the Classroom: how far should you go?”:

- “When planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving students’ personal, social and emotional development.”
- Local authorities should be “better supporting and encouraging schools in enhancing the quality of learning outside the classroom as a means of raising achievement.”

A residential learning experience provides ‘opportunities and benefits/impacts that cannot be achieved in any other context or setting’ (Learning Away Final Evaluation Report 2015)

4.2 The intention is to have centres occupied for as much of the school year as possible, increasing attendance and positive outcomes for Sandwell children, and generating income year-round.

4.3 This report seeks approval to implement the charges attached in Appendix A, in line with the Residential Education Centres’ business plan, to provide a sustainable, accessible service. The proposed charges are an increase of 2% on 2023-24 academic year charges, below the consumer price index as of September 2023, rounded to the nearest pound.

4.4 In the academic year 2022-23, prices increased by 2.4% overall, and were held as inflation quickly rose to over 10%. A pay award was implemented in the same period. In academic year 2023-24 prices were increased by 7%.



- 4.5 It is proposed that the discounted rate for large groups at three of the centres (introduced in 2022-23 with the aim of generating larger group sizes / greater participation) will be reduced from £13pp to £11pp (maintained schools) and from £16pp to £11pp (academies). This will minimise the overall price increase and protect the lowest-cost opportunities for Sandwell schools.
- 4.6 It is proposed that the price for visiting “Orchard Village”, the glamping pods at Frank Chapman Centre, is reduced from 85% of the main course fee to 80% of the main course fee to reflect operational savings made in year. This will protect the lowest cost residential options for Sandwell children and provide opportunities for smaller groups / single form entry schools.
- 4.7 The centres are open to Sandwell maintained schools, Sandwell academy schools, and non-Sandwell schools and groups. The business plan aims to retain Sandwell children participation of 15,000 term-time bed nights, or 4,750 residential pupil visits, per year. The proportion of non-Sandwell schools using the centres has risen in recent years, and this must be protected to generate the subsidy required to reach as many Sandwell children as possible.
- 4.8 The proposed charges (Appendix A) indicate the “commercial” charge to non-Sandwell schools. Sandwell maintained schools receive a 30% discount, and Sandwell academy schools a 20% discount. Sandwell academy schools receive a smaller discount because they have opted to take their share of local government finance to manage directly. These discounts for Sandwell children are financed by the residential education service’s other income streams, including weekend, school holiday, and day visit educational courses and commercial events.
- 4.9 Sandwell Looked After Children will continue to be able to attend the centres free of charge with their schools during term-time.



- 4.10 Demand for Plas Gwynant is high, and it works at high occupancy levels. Operational costs at Plas Gwynant are higher than the other centres because of the adventurous nature of courses there. The proposed charges for 2024-25 reflect this.
- 4.11 During a period of high inflation, increases to cost of living, and pressure on school budgets, many parents and schools face financial challenges. The service will continue to review efficiency and costs where possible to provide best value.
- 4.12 The Residential Education Service operates in a competitive market and has been targeted with a cost-neutral budget since April 2017.
- 4.13 Centres must generate annual income of £2.3 million to cover all revenue costs, including meeting pay awards.
- 4.14 The proposed new charges will be effective from 1 August 2024.
- 4.15 The subsidy for Sandwell maintained schools and academy schools is largely funded by commercial income generated at weekends and during school holidays. The proposal recommends that charges at these times will continue to be set at a rate determined by the Service Manager with Head of Centres and Business Manager.

4.16 The current position

- 4.17 The current charges are competitive, as indicated by the increase of non-Sandwell schools buying into the service. The proposals take account of sector charges where they are available, and seek to ensure year-round competitiveness, especially for Sandwell schools. The sector operates with low margins. There are fewer providers post Covid-19. There is little data yet on sector prices for academic year 2024-25.



- 4.18 An increase of 7% to term time fees & charges for school year 2023-24 was approved in Autumn 2022. The increase was therefore applied to visits from September 2023 and will significantly contribute toward the target of returning a balanced budget in the financial year 2024-25.
- 4.19 Sandwell maintained schools pay approximately 70%, and Sandwell academy schools about 80% of the non-Sandwell schools' rate.
- 4.20 Additional income to subsidise Sandwell charges (approx. £500k p/a) is generated by weekend visits, day visits, holiday-time working, and commercial events, in part made possible by Council investment in the properties. Many of these are bespoke. The service manager obtained cabinet approval (SMBC03/07/2019 point 1.4, 17th July 2019) to set charges for these events to obtain best value for the Council. This revenue is crucial in returning a balanced budget.
- 4.21 SRES outturn was a £167,000 surplus (underspend) in 2022-23. This was applied elsewhere in council budget and not carried forward by SRES in reserve or invested in the centres. This significant surplus was largely comprised of in-year salary savings.
- 4.22 Additional income (commercial activity described in 4.20) must be protected and increased where possible to maintain the subsidy for Sandwell children and to deliver a balanced budget.

4.21 Consultation (customers and other stakeholders)

- 4.22 The Service Manager, Heads of Centre and Business Manager regularly review the market in residential education to ensure that Sandwell's centres are competitive. They also regularly receive feedback and communicate with Sandwell and non-Sandwell school leaders and group leaders, directly and in collective meetings.



4.23 Sustainability of proposals - The proposed charges support the Residential Education Service business plan. The Centres must operate a full cost-recovery revenue budget; all expenditure must be covered by income generation. Income is monitored monthly on a centre by centre and service basis against profiled targets. Attendance figures are also monitored. Projected income models demonstrate that a term-time occupancy level of 75% will return a balanced budget alongside the commercial income described in 4.20.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Increasing charges above inflation risks less uptake of places, reduced overall income, and poorer social value.
- 5.2 Keeping charges at 2023-24 levels risks a shortfall in income and difficulties in balancing the budget when expenditure has risen considerably with inflation and pay awards.

6 Implications

Resources:	<p>The proposed charges support the Residential Education Centres' business plan and sustainable, accessible service provision for a zero-revenue target budget. They also support sustainable positive use of the Council's property assets, capitalising on recent investment.</p> <p>The proposed charges are projected to increase term-time income by 2% - significantly below inflation as of September 2023. The financial position and commercial activity will be closely monitored and action will be taken to reduce costs and/or increase income accordingly.</p> <p>The proposals assume that centres will continue to operate to their full, following Covid-19 closures in 2020-21 and 2021-22. It also assumes that additional (non term-time revenue) will remain at approximately £500k p/a, as demonstrated in the 3 previous financial years.</p>
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	<p>Impact on any council managed property or land - The recommendations support the Residential Education Centres' business plan and the sustainable delivery of service from those Council properties, capitalising on recent investment.</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>Direct provision of this service is not a statutory obligation on the Council. It is provided at the discretion of the Council to enrich the learning, life opportunities and experiences of the Borough's children and young people. There are no legal and governance considerations. The recommendation has no data protection impact.</p>
Risk:	<p>The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) has been complied with – to identify and assess the significant risks associated with this decision/project. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks. The centres make a positive contribution to citizenship. There is at present a lead-in time for courses of approximately ten months, giving time for service review. A protracted period of closure of all four centres would result in financial loss averaging £40,000 per week to the Council, which may be difficult or impossible to recover through schools' insurance, cost-cutting, or additional income generation.</p>
Equality:	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment initial screening has been undertaken.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>The centres all deliver Sandwell's well-being charter, providing experiences beneficial to mental and physical health and well-being. They develop an appreciation of adventure and creativity, citizenship, and high aspirations.</p>
Social Value	<p>The centres work with a range of partners within and outside the Council to deliver projects and programmes of social value. Sandwell Looked After Children visiting the centres with their schools in term time do so free of charge</p>
Climate Change:	<p>There are no climate change implications in this report.</p>



Corporate Parenting:	There are no implications for corporate parenting in this report.
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7. Appendices

Appendix One - Proposed term-time charges for visits to Sandwell Residential Education Centres 2024-25.

8. Background Papers

None.



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Proposed per pupil 2024-25 term-time residential charges for Sandwell Residential Education Centres, rise of 2% on average (below CPI Sept 2023)

Edgmond Hall, Frank Chapman, Ingestre Hall									Plas Gwynant	
Standard rate per student, (£)										
	4 nights				2 nights				4 nights	
Season	2023-24 charge	Proposed 2024-25 charge	2023-24 Large group discount charge	Proposed 2024-25 Large group charge	2023-24 charge	Proposed 2024-25 charge	2023-24 Large group Discount charge	Proposed 2024-25 Large group charge	2023-24 charge (no large group discount)	Proposed 2024-25 charge
low	269	274	249	254	148	148	N/A	N/A	328	335
mid	318	324	298	304	170	172	N/A	N/A	362	369
high	346 (356FC)	353 (363FC)	321 (331FC)	333 (343FC)	186 (196FC)	187 (196FC)	N/A	N/A	405	413
Sandwell academy schools: standard rate -20% discount										
low	215	219	199	208	118	120	N/A	N/A	263	268
mid	255	259	239	249	136	139	N/A	N/A	289	295
high	276 (286FC)	282 (292FC)	256 (266FC)	267 (277FC)	149 (159FC)	152 (162FC)	N/A	N/A	324	330
Sandwell maintained schools: standard rate -30% discount										
low	188	192	175	181	104	106	N/A	N/A	230	235
mid	223	227	209	217	119	123	N/A	N/A	254	259
high	242 (252FC)	247 (257FC)	225 (235FC)	236 (246FC)	131 (141FC)	134 (144FC)	N/A	N/A	285	291

Notes.

1. Large group discounts encourage non-Sandwell schools to bring bigger numbers and more income for 4-night visits. Large numbers: 65+ at Ingestre; 45+ at Frank Chapman and Edgmond. Plas Gwynant works close to maximum numbers, so no large number discount applies.
2. A minimum number requirement applies at all centres. Schools can share to meet minimum numbers, or combine year groups.
3. Sandwell Looked After Children come free of charge with their schools during term-time.
4. 2-night courses are not normally offered at Plas Gwynant; and at Ingestre only at certain times.
5. Low season: the first 2 weeks of the autumn term; 1Dec - 31 Jan;
Mid-season: the third week of autumn term-30 Nov; Feb, March, April (and to SATs week, Plas).
High season: May, June and July (post SATs at Plas Gwynant).
6. Frank Chapman Centre pods are open Easter to October, with prices to be set at 80% of main centre charges, providing a lower-cost residential option.
7. Frank Chapman high season prices reflect the additional operational costs at that time of the year.

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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Housing & Asset Management Procurement Approvals
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Housing and Built Environment, Councillor Laura Rollins
Director:	Interim Director of Housing, Dean Epton
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Philip Deery, Assistant Director Building Safety and Compliance Phil_deery@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Interim Director of Housing be authorised to continue procurement for the HIP Programme based on previous Cabinet Approval with increased funding to a total value of £100million.
- 1.2 That the Interim Director of Housing be authorised to commence the procurement process for the Domestic Gas Appliance contract.
- 1.3 That approval be given to the alterations to the delivery model for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.1, for Sandwell MBC to act as Principal Contractor and procure a range of providers for energy efficiency works
- 1.4 That the Interim Director of Housing be authorised to award contracts as set out in 1.1 to 1.3 above to the successful bidders, following a compliant procurement process that meets Public Contract Regulations 2015 and Sandwell Corporate Procurement Procedures.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 Home Improvement Programme (HIP) Term 2024-2028, Value £100m

2.1.1 Cabinet have previously approved decisions to award contracts for the procurement and contract award of Internal Improvement Works and External Improvement Works as contained in the Cabinet Reports stated in Section 7 of this report

2.1.2 As part of the procurement review and rationalisation of contracts in Housing and Asset Management, opportunities have been identified to amalgamate spend from the following contracts, into a single procurement exercise under a HIP Contract.

2.1.2.1 Internal Improvement Programme

2.1.2.2 External Improvement Programme

2.1.2.3 Windows & Doors

2.1.2.4 Composite Fire Doors

2.1.2.5 Soil Stack Programme

2.1.2.6 Kitchen & Bathroom Replacement

2.1.2.7 Roof Replacement

2.1.3 The benefits to amalgamating the contracts are

2.1.3.1 Improved Social Value outcomes from amalgamated spend

2.1.3.2 Improved efficiency with one Contract to manage

2.1.3.3 Consistency in our approach to Contract Management

2.1.3.4 Consistent Key Performance Indicators that drive required outcomes

2.1.3.5 Create the opportunity to drive improved value and returns from the Contract

2.1.4 The four year term will be split on a 3+1 term, meaning that we have the option to break the Contract at the end of Year 3, after assessing the requirements of the Authority, changes in legislation for Decency and also the external market pressures.



2.1.5 The contract will be accessed through an OJEU compliant framework, saving time and cost, but more importantly, allows forms of contract and KPI's to be used that assist the Contract Management teams to manage the Contractors more robustly.

2.2 Due to time constraints the procurement process has been initiated through a framework, however it is important to note that in the event Cabinet does not approve the uplift we reserve the right to withdraw the Tender at no risk to the Authority and without penalty or risk to reputational damage.

2.3 Domestic Gas Appliances, Term 2024-2027, Value £14.5m

2.4 The current contract for Domestic Gas Appliances expires 31st July 2024.

2.5 A review of the current run rate and requirements for replacement appliances has been undertaken and volumes are identified for each contract year.

2.6 Inflation of 6% has been applied to the current contract and subsequent years in order to allow for external market and economic impacts.

2.7 Whilst we still consider the installation of domestic gas appliances as a significant part of the future asset management strategy, we will be developing the decarbonisation strategy for housing during this contract term which will impact the value of this contract in future years.

2.8 Alternative delivery model for SHDF Wave 2.1

2.9 A report dated 7th June 2023 was approved by Cabinet for the SHDF Wave 2.1 works to be delivered through the External Improvement Partner (once appointed).


2.10 Following a review of the delivery and cost model, an Options Appraisal has been conducted with three options considered:



- 2.10.1 Option 1 - Appointment of a Principal Contractor through a full procurement process
- 2.10.2 Option 2 - Appointment of a Principal Contractor through an existing framework
- 2.10.3 Option 3 – Sandwell MBC to act as Principal Contractor to deliver the works through a number of approved supply chain partners.

2.11 The chosen route was Option 3, as this provided best value to the Authority, improved control of programme, cost and quality, and also gave the opportunity to increase the number of properties that could be delivered with the same value of grant funding available, therefore having a positive impact on the lives of more residents of Sandwell.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods</p> <p>The provision of housing refurbishment, repairs, and maintenance works are key services for the housing department and Council as a whole. The services impact directly on the lives and wellbeing of residents living in over 26,000 Council owned properties. The services will also help to deliver key Council priorities to reduce carbon emissions, meet obligations relating to decent homes standards and ensure continued compliance with a range of essential landlord functions.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Like all local authorities, the Council uses external providers to deliver a wide range of its services and meet its statutory duties to residents and service users. Providers range from global businesses to small and local specialist suppliers.



- 4.2 In each case, the Council must procure services in accordance with its own Contract Standing Orders, which set out the Council's own procurement rules to ensure it acts fairly and obtains best value when spending public money. Contracts which have a contract value in excess of the statutory financial thresholds for works or services/supplies must also be procured in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR2015).
- 4.3 The Council has an overriding duty to achieve best value in the procurement of goods, services and works. This, at minimum is achieved by undertaking a fully planned procurement process, which would usually take 12/18 months including but not limited to assessing demand / need for the services, market analysis and soft market testing, financial analysis and the planned design of the most suitable specification and criteria that would respond to Council's needs and ensure value for money.
- 4.4 To deliver best value, a successful procurement should be followed by effective performance management of the contractor once in place, based on a robust contractual framework. In turn, performance management should inform Council decisions on whether or not a contract should be extended, if the contract allows for this.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative options considered for the procurement and the delivery of the HIP Contract would be to continue with the same procurement routes as we have previously.
- 5.2 This option was discounted based on the previous experiences of procurement in Housing and Asset Management. To amalgamate contracts, improve outcomes and drive increased outcomes is a preferred option for this and future tender opportunities that exist in the pipeline.
- 5.3 The domestic gas appliance contract is mandatory for compliance.



6 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>The £114.5m expenditure over 4 years has been included in the recent review of HRA capital budgets.</p> <p>The procurement approach recommended for these contracts will meet the Council's statutory duty to ensure it achieves best value, and that includes ensuring procurement of services is undertaken in a way that is effective in delivering desired outcomes, including those relating to social value, whilst ensuring value for money is achieved.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>The Council has power to enter into contracts under its powers of general competence under s.1 of the Localism Act 2011 and none of the limitations to this power apply to this decision. The contracts discharge a range of statutory functions imposed or contractual obligations on the Council and the Council may be at risk of legal action if it stops the delivery of those services.</p> <p>Local authorities have numerous statutory duties as a residential landlord including requirements to undertake consultation under s.20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003 and must design the procurement process accordingly.</p> <p>Procurement of works and services through a competitive process, compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR2015) must meet the advertising requirements such as publication of a Contract Notice. PCR2015 applies to all the Council's contracts for services valued above £213,477 and where the object of the procurement is predominantly construction above £5,336,937 (figures inclusive of VAT). An appropriate procedure as set down in PCR2015 needs to be selected. Compliance with PCR2015 will result in a lawful procurement strategy</p>



	and shall meet the requirements of the Councils' Contract and Financial Regulations.
Risk:	<p>There are a range of sector specific challenges currently in relation to increasing building cost inflation, contractors' supply chains, capacity, and the ability to attract appropriately experienced and qualified people are all challenging and present issues at a time when Council HRA and General Fund Budgets are also under pressure.</p> <p>The Council will need to ensure that client-side and procurement functions can manage the services and works the Council procures. The Council will need to manage its internal capacity to deliver and ensure that any new contracts are mobilised efficiently and that expenditure made under new contracts is undertaken wholly in accordance with contract and financial regulations, and only within authorised limits supported by regular ongoing monitoring.</p> <p>Any new contractual arrangements will also need to support the delivery of our Asset Management System and Strategy. This relies on an intelligent data driven approach to decision making and ultimately the delivery of our services.</p>
Equality:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>Housing standards play a significant role in our residents' health and safety and well-being. There will be requirements within the procurement covering policies and procedures contractors will operate to discharge their health and safety duties, including subcontractors if relevant, and to demonstrate how they will eliminate hazards and control risks, explaining the roles and responsibilities of the person responsible for managing health and safety, including procedures for monitoring.</p> <p>Health and safety, compliance and keeping our residents secure will form key aspects of service</p>



	<p>delivery. The Council will need to have regard to current and upcoming regulations and legislation including the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022.</p>
Social Value:	<p>Each contract that is procured includes a Social Value Action Plan. Specific targets related to the contract are agreed to drive economic benefit, improved employment opportunities and align to the Council's Corporate Parenting strategy.</p> <p>Social Value Action Plans are monitored through the contract term to ensure outcomes are achieved.</p>
Climate Change:	<p>There is significant opportunity through the redesign of the requirements for these services to support the delivery of the Council's ambitious targets for carbon reduction.</p> <p>The Council's Climate Action Plan sets a target that all its operations are carbon neutral by 2030 and to be a carbon neutral Borough by 2041. Specifically, this includes energy use in communal areas. This will mean that any future contractor will need to ensure that the outcomes of the proposed delivery of contract conforms and contributes to meeting this target.</p> <p>The sustainability principles around energy efficiency will be embedded within the Contract Specification, bringing broader benefits to residents around energy costs and healthy living.</p> <p>There is further opportunity to review how carbon reductions can be achieved through the contractors fleet and staff travel, opportunity for waste reduction, reuse and repair of materials, potential opportunities to support biodiversity enhancement and broader alignment with behavioural change programmes and other energy efficiency measures offered through other schemes.</p>
Corporate Parenting:	<p>Linked into our Social Value Action Plans, Corporate Parenting can play a key role in ensuring disadvantaged young people are given the</p>



opportunity for a better start in life and support them through their transition into independent living.

An opportunity exists through this re-procurement exercise for Corporate Parenting will be included into future procurement activity, ensuring that outcomes are agreed, monitored, and delivered, improving the lives of people across our Borough.

7 Appendices

No appendices attached

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 Cabinet Paper – Asset Management Investment Programme for Housing 23-24 dated 18th January 2023.
- 8.2 Cabinet Paper – Asset Management Investment Programme for Housing 22-23 dated 18th May 2022.
- 8.3 Cabinet Paper - Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund – Wave 2.1 Funding dated 7th June 2023



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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Allocation of Village Green Status and Park Designation – Goldicroft Playing Fields
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet for Leisure and Tourism, Councillor Charn Singh Padda
Director:	Alice Davey, Director of Borough Economy
Key Decision:	Yes – designation change for site
Contact Officer:	Matthew Huggins Assistant Director, Borough Economy



1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given for the site currently designated as Goldicroft Playing Fields to be amended to a Neighbourhood Level Park.
- 1.2 That the Assistant Director of Borough Economy be authorised to complete voluntarily self-registration under section 15(1) of the Commons Act for Goldicroft Park to be designated as a Village Green.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Friends of Goldicroft Park made a request to the Council to consider voluntary registration under the Commons Act (Section 15.1).

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People Maintaining a green space that is easily accessible for local children and young people, and for future generations.
	People Live Well and Age Well The green space is well used by all ages, and the designation will support the Friends Group and the Council to further develop this green space for healthy activities.



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Goldcroft Playing Fields is a well-used green space by the local community, with an active Friends Group in formal partnership with the Council under the Friends Group's Partnership Agreement.
- 4.2 The Friends Group have developed this space further as a community resource, with community days, informal sport activities, and conservation activities.
- 4.3 The green spaces service have assessed this request and have confirmed that they are satisfied the green space can be designated as a Village Green and as a Neighbourhood Level Park.
- 4.4 Planning policy officers have been consulted and have confirmed there are no objections for this registration to take place.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Do nothing – the green space will remain a green space open to the community, but will not be designated as a Village Green.

6 Implications

Resources:	The Council will still be responsible for the maintenance of the land, which is currently part of the maintenance schedule – officers do not expect an increase in resource requirements.
Legal and Governance:	The application will be submitted under delegated authority through the voluntary registration application form under the Commons Act 2006. This is a Cabinet Level decision because of the change of designation of land.
Risk:	There is a risk of further applications – officers are currently development a policy and process to make this clearer for future applications of this kind.
Equality:	There are no impact on equality, as the site will remain as unrestricted green space.



Health and Wellbeing:	The Village Green Status ensures that the green space is available for future generations to use for physical activity.
Social Value:	The Village Green Status ensures that the green space is available for future generations to use for physical activity.
Climate Change:	Future plans include to increase biodiversity on the green space, to support our climate change objectives.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no implications for corporate parenting.

7. Appendices

Appendix A: Map of Goldcroft Playing Fields

8. Background Papers

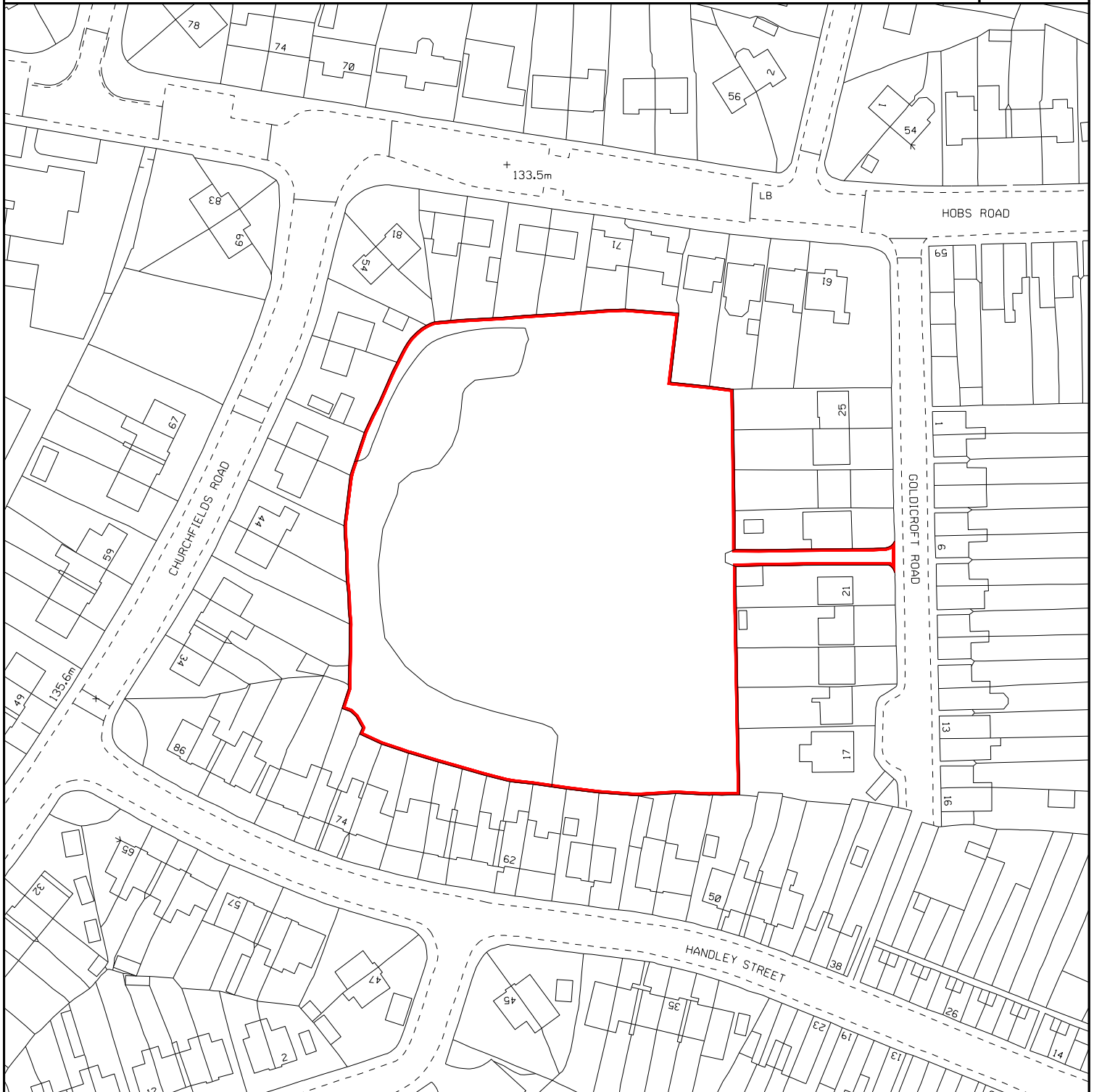
None




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REGENERATION AND PLANNING

STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT



LEGEND	DESCRIPTION	SANDWELL	TERRIER
	GOLDICROFT PARK GOLDICROFT ROAD WEDNESBURY	S09995NW	19
 Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Page 201	AREA	SCALE	CENTROID
	PLAN NUMBER	1:1250	399155/295708
	SAM/19820/004	DRAWN	DATE
		DM	09-OCT-2023
THIS MAP IS BASED UPON ORDNANCE SURVEY MATERIAL WITH THE PERMISSION OF ORDNANCE SURVEY ON BEHALF OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE ©CROWN COPYRIGHT UNAUTHORISED REPRODUCTION INFRINGES CROWN COPYRIGHT AND MAY LEAD TO PROSECUTION OR CIVIL PROCEEDINGS SANDWELL MBC LICENCE NO 100032119 2023			

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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Determining the commencement date of Sandwell’s new boroughwide Smoke Control Area and associated enforcement procedure
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Syeda Khatun Public Health and Communities
Director:	Director of Public Health Liann Brookes-Smith
Key Decision:	Yes This decision is significant in that it effects all communities living and working in all wards of the Borough
Contact Officer:	Air Quality Team Manager Elizabeth Stephens elizabeth_stephens@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

That Cabinet gives approval to:

- 1.1 ‘The Borough of Sandwell Smoke Control Order 2022’ coming into operation on 1st July 2024.
- 1.2 The introduction of an enforcement procedure that includes education, engagement and support, with the option to serve civil financial penalty notices (FPNs) for persistent breaches of the rules, reflecting amendments to the Clean Air Act 1993 brought about by the Environment Act 2021 as set out in Appendix 2.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

Legal Duty

- 2.1 Sandwell Council have already committed to the creation of a boroughwide smoke control area following a unanimous decision by Council members in November 2022. In February 2023 the 'Borough of Sandwell Smoke Control Order 2022' was formally declared. The Order refers to the provision to serve civil financial penalty notices for breach of the Order. A copy of the Order is provided in **Appendix 1**
- 2.2 On 2 August 2023 Thérèse Coffey the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) revoked Sandwell's 52 existing smoke control orders and confirmed the creation of Sandwell's new boroughwide smoke control order (SCO).
- 2.3 There is an expectation from Defra that as a local authority with a Smoke Control Order we will enforce the Order. Defra's 'Air Quality Strategy: Framework for local authority delivery' (August 2023) states the following: *'We expect in most cases, providing information to householders will be sufficient to address smoke emissions in smoke control areas. However, where this is not the case we expect local authorities to enforce the smoke control area. The Environment Act 2021 streamlined enforcement of SCAs by making breaches a civil rather than criminal offence. We have supported these changes with new funding to local authorities over this spending review period. Local authorities with smoke control areas should set a policy stipulating the level of the fine, between £175 and £300. Proceeds from the fine can be used towards enforcement costs'*.
- 2.4 Defra have confirmed in writing to Sandwell's Air Quality team on 9 November 2023, that they are not aware of any other local authority with smoke control areas that will not be implementing this new financial penalty notice enforcement regime. They also reiterated that it *'is important that local authorities use these new powers in order to reduce harmful emissions of PM_{2.5} from solid fuel burning'*.



- 2.5 As a local authority we could face legal action for being in breach of a person's human rights specifically Article 2 'Right to Life' and Article 8: 'Respect for your private and family life'. As a local authority we have a duty to *'protect individuals from harm to their health'* – this includes protecting residents from serious pollution.
- 2.6 As a council we have a duty to investigate complaints about smoke. The power to issue a civil financial penalty notice up to £300, is much lower than the alternative of pursuing a criminal Statutory Nuisance offence which has the potential to result in fines of up to £5,000 and even imprisonment. Pursuing a Statutory Nuisance offence is generally more complex, time consuming and costly than serving a civil financial penalty notice. Statutory nuisance investigations can result in frustration and distress by those individuals who continue to be impacted by harmful smoke emissions, whilst the necessary evidence is gathered for prosecution. The option to pursue a Statutory Nuisance complaint remains but would be limited to use in cases where a person persists on breaching the rules after receipt of education, engagement and subsequent issuing of three or more civil penalty notices in a 12-month period.

Protecting Public Health

- 2.7 Once in operation, Sandwell's boroughwide smoke control area will play an important role in minimising harmful smoke emissions from residential and small-scale combustion plants. This is essential if we want to prevent future deterioration in air quality given the increasing popularity of domestic burning.
- 2.8 There is an overwhelming body of scientific evidence demonstrating that burning unauthorised fuels such as unseasoned wood, house coal or items such as household waste, treated wood, or plastics, results in the release of toxic particles and gases. This includes fine particulate matter PM_{2.5} – particle 2.5 microns or smaller across, tiny enough to enter the bloodstream through the lungs and even penetrate the brain. Depending on what's being burned the smoke can contain carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, carcinogenic compounds like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, and volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. They






may even spit out toxic metals like mercury and arsenic. As a local authority we have a duty to raise awareness of these dangers and to qualify the serious threat to health, with the deterrent of financial penalty.

- 2.9 Domestic burning is one of the main sources of harmful fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in urban areas like Sandwell. The main sources of PM_{2.5} are from indoor burning such as using solid fuel burning stoves and open fireplaces.
- 2.10 According to Defra's official statistics, domestic burning of solid fuel, which includes wood and coal, is responsible for around 25% of all PM_{2.5} pollution in the UK. The other main sources are industrial combustion and processes with solvent use and road transport.
- 2.11 Fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) is an air pollutant that has a significant impact on human health, it can cause coughs, dizziness, inflamed airways and shortness of breath. It can increase the risk of pneumonia, COPD and lung cancer as well as heart disease and stroke leading to early death. It can also impact pregnancy and the prevent normal development of children's lungs. People already suffering from lung and heart problems are more likely to be affected, along with older people, young children, pregnant women their unborn babies. Exposure to PM_{2.5} can also harm the body's respiratory immune response, increasing the risk of respiratory infection – including COVID-19. And in the long-term wood smoke can have carcinogenic effects that go beyond lung cancer, such as increased risk of breast cancer.
- 2.12 The average yearly social-health related cost of heating a household using a wood burning stove in the UK is **£670**, compared with £26.50 for non-condensing gas boiler and £17.50 for a condensing gas boiler. (European Public Health Alliance, 2022).
- 2.13 It is estimated that 8% of households in the UK now have wood burning stoves, making the yearly social-health related costs in Sandwell from wood burning stoves to be circa **£6,978,720**.



2.14 An equality impact assessment provided in **Appendix 8** has been undertaken that demonstrates that the overall impact of enforcing the boroughwide smoke control area is assessed as being net positive. The short and long-term negative costs to population health caused by burning carcinogenic smoky fuels are far greater than any potential negative impacts from its enforcement. The impact on households that are in financial hardship who are currently or likely to use unauthorised, smoky fuels can be mitigated by support with practical information and financial advice and support. As a local authority we have a duty to ensure residents of Sandwell can live well and age well in thriving neighbourhoods. We have a duty to identify and support any household relying on smoky and dangerous fuels to heat their homes, but want to comply with the law, to find a safer and cleaner alternative.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People Young children face a greater risk to their health from ultrafine particulate emissions (PM_{2.5}) which is strongly associated with domestic burning and is the largest source of ultrafine particulate matter in urban areas. Exposure to PM_{2.5} is shown to have both short and long-term impacts, including respiratory illnesses and impaired lung and cognitive development in children.</p>
	<p>People Live Well and Age Well Air pollution is a key threat to the health of our population and a driver of health inequalities. The boroughwide smoke control area and enforcement policy will reduce health inequalities and increase both the perceived and actual position of Sandwell as a cleaner and safer place to live.</p>
	<p>Strong Resilient Communities By reducing air pollution and in particular PM_{2.5} the smoke control area and associated enforcement policy will contribute towards improving the overall health and resilience of our communities.</p>





Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

Bringing the smoke control area into operation will ensure that all neighbourhoods in Sandwell would be afforded the same level of protection from harmful emissions that are created by the burning of solid fuels in domestic properties and businesses.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Borough of Sandwell SCO can be bought into operation no sooner than 6 months from the date of confirmation by Defra. This is to ensure that all persons who may be impacted by the SCO are given sufficient information, opportunity and time to understand the rules and where necessary switch to smokeless fuel.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the ‘Borough of Sandwell Smoke Control Order’ should not come into operation until 1st July 2024. The earliest date that the SCO could come into operation is February 2024 but postponing its introduction until July 2024 would ensure sufficient time to deliver the necessary communications to residents and businesses. There would also be additional summer months post-implementation to prepare for the changes, given that most solid fuel stoves and fireplaces are not used for heating purposes until the autumn.
- 4.3 Sandwell Council already adheres to the ‘Black Country Local Authorities Enforcement Policy’ which overarches are enforcement of environmental health legislation, including the Clean Air Act 1993 and Environment Act 2021. This policy requires our enforcement procedures to be proportionate, accountable, consistent, transparent and targeted. The policy is based the ‘Principles of Good Regulation’ as required when exercising a specified regulatory function, and in accordance with the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006, Part 2.

Sandwell’s ‘Smoke Control Area Enforcement Guide’ is also underpinned by the Council’s four ‘E’s approach to enforcement; Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce. This approach emerged during the pandemic and is designed to encourage high levels of compliance. This approach will ensure that we:



- Engage with those who may or have breached the rules to understand their awareness of the situation and the reason why they might be burning smoky fuels. Deliver appropriate information, education and advice but also provide people with the opportunity to give a response to us and an agreement that we will listen to and consider this response before taking any further action.
- Explain the purpose of the Smoke Control Area, whilst treating people with dignity and respect. To ensure that we explain the health benefits of compliance both to the individual and their family, as well as the wider social impacts, including the impact on their local community
- Encourage people to act reasonably to the request being made. This will require providing a consistent approach and a willingness by officers to explain why compliance is being requested.
- Enforce only as a last resort. Enforcement is necessary to reinforce the good work that has already been done through the engagement, explanation and encouragement processes but is necessary to demonstrate that there are ultimately consequences for committing an offence.

4.4 A draft of Sandwell’s Smoke Control Area Enforcement Guide is provided in **Appendix 2** and confirms:

- Where smoke emission breaches can be enforced, e.g. defines relevant chimneys and moored vessels
- How persons can comply with smoke emission rules
- The level of civil financial penalty that will be imposed for a breach of the rules
- The process for imposing penalty charges on those who break the rules.
- The use of statutory nuisance legislation for serious and or repeat offenders who create smoke emissions that are harmful to health or a nuisance.

4.5 The statutory levels of financial penalty that can be imposed for breaching a smoke control order are set within Schedule 12 of the



Environment Act 2021. The minimum penalty is £175, and the maximum is £300. It is recommended, as laid out in the draft enforcement guide, that the maximum civil penalty of £300 is imposed for all offences with the potential for this to be reduced to £175 for early payment (within 14 days of receipt of the notice). This is to incentivise early payment and reduce the likelihood of non-payment and the time/costs of civil debt recovery.

Publicity of the Borough Wide Smoke Control Area

- 4.1 It is fundamental that we communicate effectively with all persons who may be impacted by the introduction of the boroughwide SCA. Ensuring that the public understand the rules and its purpose, is essential if we want to maximise the level of compliance, reduce unintentional breaches and ultimately protect public health.
- 4.2 A communication plan has been drafted (**see Appendix 3**) which is focused on raising awareness of the boroughwide SCA and will include:
- The date the SCA is going to come into operation
 - Why the SCA is being introduced by highlighting the risks to health from domestic burning and the benefits of reducing smoke.
 - How to comply with the SCA – including information on how to light a fire and minimise smoke emissions. (**see Appendix 4**)
 - FAQs relating to SCA's rules (**see Appendix 5**)
 - Targeted awareness raising for the boating community

The Boating Community

- 4.3 The new boroughwide SCA includes moored boats/vessels. There are currently less than 50 long-term (6 months +) canal moorings in Sandwell, but there are also many itinerant boaters, also known as 'continuous cruisers' on Sandwell's canal network. Most boaters rely on solid fuel e.g. wood or coal for their heating and are therefore the one group in Sandwell most likely to be impacted by the SCA rules.
- 4.4 Although the boating community only make up a tiny proportion of the population of Sandwell, they are the group that is most vulnerable to the health impacts of smoky fuels generated through use of solid fuel for



heating and cooking. Our approach to communicating with boaters will therefore be tailored to ensure effective reach, that they understand the requirements, as well as the health reasons for the SCA and that we provide effective signposting, including where to get support if struggling financially to meet the requirements.

- 4.5 Regard has also been made to Defra's 'Guidance to local authorities on the application of smoke control areas to moored vessels under the Environment Act 2021'. This also includes working with our partners in the Canal and River Trust, including the preparation of joint publicity and information materials, explaining the purpose of a smoke control area, how to burn without creating smoke, as well as tow path signage.

Cost of Living Support

- 4.6 As the cost of living remains high, driven in the main by high fuel prices, we are very aware that this could increase the likelihood of residents resorting to wood and coal burning as alternatives to gas and electricity for home heating. Although using smoky and unauthorised fuels may be cheaper, their use comes with a huge social-health related cost and financial cost. We therefore need to support our residents, some of whom may be in fuel poverty, to find clean and safe ways to heat their homes. Residents will be provided with information about financial assistance, as well as access to often free energy efficiency measures that will provide year on year savings. Supporting those on a low income and in receipt of government benefits is particularly important, for example many residents will be unaware that they are entitled to help towards home insulation and boiler replacement. Examples of information on financial support and information on energy saving is provided in **Appendix 6**.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Sandwell Council have already undertaken a formal public consultation and committed to the introduction of a boroughwide smoke control area by declaring the 'Borough of Sandwell Smoke Control Order 2022'. Defra are awaiting confirmation of the date that the SCO will come into



force. The only alternative options to the ones recommended in this report are:

- Setting an alternative date for the SCO to come into operation – legally this cannot be before 3 February 2024.
- Not using our powers to serve civil financial penalty notices on those breaching the Order. The decision to recommend the option of using civil FPNs has been determined using an options appraisal as provided in **Appendix 9**, which clearly sets out the risks and benefits of both approaches. It is considered that the potential benefits of having the ability to serve civil financial penalties are far greater than any benefits gained from not using them.
- Setting an alternative financial penalty regime for breaches of the smoke control area. For example, creating an incremental penalty scheme as shown below where fines increase incrementally with subsequent offences.

Civil Penalty Bandings for Emitting Smoke in a Smoke Control Area		
Offence	Civil penalty fine	Enforcement Note
1 st offence	£175 (statutory minimum amount)	Penalty to be paid if the liable person(s) has ignored a formal warning, previously issued in line with this policy and have breached the smoke control rules again within 12 months.
2 nd offence	£225	Penalty to be paid if the liable person(s) has breached the smoke control rules for a second time, after an initial formal warning and primary fine, within 12 months of the 1 st Offence
3 rd offence and further offences	£300 (statutory maximum amount)	Penalty to be paid if the person(s) liable has breached the regulations for a third time after a warning, primary and secondary fines within 12



		months of the 2 nd Offence, <u>or</u> they are continuously breaching the regulations despite previous fines.
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6 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>The day to day enforcement of the boroughwide SCA will be undertaken by air quality officers in the Pollution Control Team.</p> <p>To further ensure the best public health outcomes from the introduction of the SCA, a request for a 2-year fixed term post for an ‘Air Quality Education and Enforcement Officer’ is to be submitted. This officer will be tasked with increasing public awareness around the health risks from domestic burning. This will include indoor burning as well as outdoor burning (e.g. bonfires, fire pits, barbeques, garden incinerators) and how to comply with the rules, which are frequently not well understood by residents and can be confusing. The objective is to use this post to maximise the level of compliance with air quality legislation through sustained education and ultimately achieve a better public health outcome for everyone. In addition, by reducing unintentional breaches of legislation, enforcement action will be focused on those who intentionally breach legislation. The costs of this post will be funded through the public health ring-fenced grant and partly by a one-off grant of £11,710 provided by Defra, specifically provided to all local authorities with SCAs to support any additional work arising as a result of the introduction of the Environment Act 2021.</p> <p>The Canal and River Trust have estimated that costs for signage informing boaters that they are entering an SCA, will be approx. £3000.</p>
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	<p>Installation of signage on Sandwell’s canal network is crucial to supporting compliance, as boaters are the ones most likely to be using solid fuel burning stoves. Signs will be required at all entry points into the borough and at the four long-term mooring sites.</p> <p>There will be some additional costs with regards to creating campaign materials and resources, but these costs should not be excessive and should be afforded from the Pollution Control Team’s existing budget.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>Enforcing the boroughwide SCA is strongly aligned with the Government’s Environmental Plan and National Air Quality Strategy 2023, which both place additional responsibilities on local authorities to demonstrate how they are working towards achieving new lower air pollution targets and reduce emissions of fine particulate matter in their areas.</p> <p>Enforcing the SCA also contributes to Sandwell’s Air Quality Action Plan, Sandwell’s Climate Change Strategy and the priorities listed in Sandwell’s Air Quality Annual Status Report.</p> <p>Without the authority to undertake civil financial penalty enforcement the Smoke Control Area would not provide the proposed incentive for compliance and more severe (criminal) enforcement powers would have to be used to redress non-compliance.</p> <p>Enforcement of the new SCA will be undertaken by Council Air Pollution officers with advice and guidance from Sandwell’s legal team as required and will align with Sandwell’s developing integrated enforcement approach as well as being operated in accordance with the Black Country Local Authorities Enforcement Policy.</p>



<p>Risk:</p>	<p>A project risk register was originally compiled in 2021 and has been reviewed and updated. The risk register is monitored by the Pollution Control Team. Based on the information provided it is the officers' opinion that all significant risks have been identified so far and that arrangements are in place are adequate to manage and mitigate these effectively.</p> <p>A risk assessment has been undertaken and no "red" risks were reported.</p> <p>All data collected will be handled and stored in accordance with the departments existing GDPR controls.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>The creation of a boroughwide SCA has created equality by enabling us to take appropriate and proportionate action to reduce the exposure of all of Sandwell's population to harmful pollutants generated by smoky fuel burning as opposed to only 1/5th of the borough as was the case up until 2 August 2023.</p> <p>Any households, including boaters, who use solid fuel as their only means of heating and currently use unauthorised fuels, could find the switch to authorised fuels more expensive, which increases the risk of putting them into fuel poverty (i.e. spending more than 10% of their income on heating their homes). However, authorised fuels do burn more efficiently, will cost them less in long-term maintenance of their stoves and chimneys, reduce the risk of fire and risk of harm including potential for carbon monoxide poisoning.</p> <p>There is financial assistance and grants available for all households on low-incomes and we are able to assist those who need help accessing this information. This may be financial or help with improving home insulation or updating their heating provision to make it cheaper and more efficient to run. Households in this position will</p>



	be signposted to sources of financial help and energy saving advice through a variety of communication channels, including press, social media and Sandwell Council's website.
Health and Wellbeing:	The purpose of the SCA is to take proportionate action to prevent harm caused by air pollution, no matter where people live in Sandwell and to promote health and wellbeing. We know that out of the whole of the West Midlands PM _{2.5} concentrations are the highest in Sandwell, and this pollutant particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions and it is associated with a plethora of adverse health impacts. Air pollution is also recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer, plus recent research has suggested links between air quality and stunted lung development in children, exacerbation of degenerative sight loss in adults and dementia in the elderly.
Social Value:	By being prepared to take proactive action to enforce our Smoke Control Area we can improve local air quality. Enforcing our SCA will have a long-term positive impact by reducing the health-related social costs and subsequent burden on the NHS, who treat and care for those who are exposed both short and long-term to harmful smoke emissions. By enforcing the boroughwide SCA we are reducing existing health inequalities and establishing a long-term health policy that is designed to support longer and healthier lives.
Climate Change:	This proposal contributes to Sandwell's Climate Change Strategy by supporting efforts to reduce the amount of carbon being released into the air. It is a common misconception that wood burning is carbon neutral when it is in fact a much more complex science. Firstly, to be even remotely 'carbon neutral' the carbon released from wood



	<p>burning must be absorbed by new tree growth. Realistically it can take decades or a century for forests to grow to a size that they are able to reabsorb this additional carbon. Meanwhile this means a greater chance of irreversible climate tipping points before any possible benefits are accrued. Furthermore, solid fuel burning stoves are not energy efficient, for the same amount of heat, wood releases more carbon dioxide than either oil or gas.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the boroughwide SCA does not ban solid fuel burning stoves, but it will increase awareness of the health harms associated with burning, discourage those from burning who do not need to and where burning does continue will require the use of fuels that emit less carbon.</p>
<p>Corporate Parenting:</p>	<p>Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution due to their growing and developing lungs. The SCA supports and cares for the health of all children by establishing blanket rules across the borough that will help limit their exposure to excessive levels of air pollution from domestic burning in all homes in Sandwell.</p>

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 The 'Borough of Sandwell Smoke Control Order 2022'



The Borough Council
of Sandwell Smoke Cc

Appendix 2 Draft Sandwell Smoke Control Area Enforcement Guide



SCA Legislation and
Officer Enforcement C

Appendix 3 Draft Sandwell Smoke Control Area Communication Plan





Public Engagement
Plan SCA Draft.docx

Appendix 4



How to Light a Fire to
Reduce Smoke Emissi

Appendix 5 Smoke Control Area FAQ



SCA FAQs mindmap
(2).pdf

Appendix 6 Cost of living information and signposting



Help with Heating
Costs.docx

Appendix 7 Smoke Control Area Risk Register



SCA - Cabinet Report
Risk Register October

Appendix 8 Smoke Control Area Enforcement Equality Impact Assessment



EqIA SCA November
2023 version 1_ES .do

Appendix 9 Options Appraisal – No financial penalty vs civil financial penalty notice for breaches of a Smoke Control Order.



Options Appraisal for
No Penalty vs Penalty

8. Background Papers

The Clean Air Act 1993 – Part III – Smoke Control Areas

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/11/part/III>

The Environment Act 2021 – Schedule 12 – Part 1

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/notes/division/18/index.htm>

Environmental Improvement Plan 2023



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>

Air quality strategy: framework for local authority delivery (updated 25 August 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-air-quality-strategy-for-england/air-quality-strategy-framework-for-local-authority-delivery>

Guidance to local authorities on the application of smoke control areas to moored vessels under the Environment Act 2021

<https://www.bargee-traveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/20220929-Guidance-for-LAs-on-bring-vessels-in-scope-of-smoke-control-areas-V1.pdf>

Sandwell Annual Status Report for Air Quality 2022

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/321/2023-air-quality-annual-status-report>

Sandwell Air Quality Action Plan 2020-2025

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/396/air-quality-action-plan-2020-2025>

The health related social costs of air pollution due to residential heating and cooking - European Public Health Alliance (2022)

<https://cedelft.eu/publications/health-related-social-costs-of-air-pollution-due-to-residential-heating-and-cooking/>

The Black Country Local Authority Enforcement Policy

<https://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s12469/Black%20Country%20enforcement%20policy%20final%20for%20consultation.pdf>

Indoor Wood-Burning Stove and Fireplace Use and Breast Cancer in a Prospective Cohort Study (2017)

<https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP827>



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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Wednesbury Conservation Area Appraisal, Management Plan and boundary review
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Peter Hughes Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA
Director:	Tony McGovern Director of Regeneration & Growth
Key Decision:	Yes Type (c) - an executive decision which is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
Contact Officer:	Mark Stretton, Conservation Officer mark_stretton@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to Wednesbury's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan contained at Appendix A, and that the conservation area's boundaries are extended in accordance with the recommendations contained in the appraisal.




2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are a recognised way of putting in place additional planning guidance and a material consideration in determining planning applications, providing a greater level of protection for heritage. The documents should assist both applicants, when making relevant planning applications, and the Council in determining them.



2.2 The designation of adjacent areas that have been identified as meriting inclusion will promote the conservation of the character and appearance of the area through greater protection for historic features and buildings and resisting inappropriate change/redevelopment.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan

	<p>Strong Resilient Communities Conservation areas afford a greater degree of protection to the character and appearance of places that local people care about.</p>
	<p>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods Conservation Areas promote the protection of buildings and structures that contribute positively to the character and appearance of neighbourhoods.</p>
	<p>A Strong and Inclusive Economy The conservation, use, and re-use of heritage assets exemplifies the fundamental principles of the circular economy.</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act places a duty on local planning authorities to draw up proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and to reappraise them.
- 4.2 Local authorities are expected to ensure that an area justifies designation as a conservation area because of its special architectural or historic interest, so that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.
- 4.3 Appraisal is an objective analysis of the features within the conservation area, which collectively define its special architectural or historic interest. It also identifies negative factors that may detract from the area’s special interest and can make recommendations to encourage the protection and enhancement of its character and appearance
- 4.4 Wednesbury Market Place was designated as a Conservation area in 1980 because of its special architectural and historic interest.



- 4.5 A reappraisal of the area was carried out in 2013. This was updated in 2017 in preparation for a successful application to Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme.
- 4.6 This Conservation Area Appraisal and associated proposals augment heritage-focussed regeneration works carried out as part of the Wednesbury HSHAZ.
- 4.7 Specialist historic environment consultants TDR Heritage have reappraised Wednesbury's existing Conservation Area on behalf of the council against criteria for conservation area status laid down in statute, Historic England guidance and in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.8 As part of these works a technical assessment of the historic character and appearance of adjacent areas was undertaken to evaluate suitability for inclusion of those areas into Wednesbury's Market Place conservation area.

Having established that the existing area continued to merit designation, the appraisal also reviewed the conservation area boundary to consider the following areas for inclusion; Upper High Street; the former Gaumont Cinema; Spring Head; the Holyhead Road and Masonic Lodge; Brunswick Terrace and Squire's Walk.

- 4.9 Of these, it was recommended that the boundary be extended to include; Upper High Street (up to and including the Lamp Tavern); the Gaumont Cinema and Spring Head (nos. 12-15).
- 4.10 Other areas were not considered to naturally fall within the Market Place Conservation Area boundary and some elements are in any event variously designated as listed, locally listed buildings or High Historic Townscape Value.
- 4.11 Further work was also carried out to develop a Conservation Area Management Plan to provide guidance to developers, property owners and policy makers in managing change to ensure significance is retained.



- 4.12 It is good practice when appraising and reviewing conservation areas to consult with interested parties - local communities and owners will also be helpful in providing proactive assistance in identifying the general areas that merit conservation area status and defining the boundaries.
- 4.13 Following endorsement by Cabinet at its meeting on 21/06/23, the Council invited interested parties and the public to comment on the proposals, which were accordingly publicised on the Council's website from 7th November until 19th December.
- 4.14 Two 'in-person' public consultation events were held; in the conservation area on Saturday 11th November (a market stall at the junction of Union Street/Market Place) and again at Wednesbury Town Hall on Thursday 16th November. Hard copy copies of the draft documents have been displayed at Wednesbury's Library and Town Hall and flyers inviting responses to the proposals were delivered by hand to all properties both within the conservation area and within areas recommended for designation in the appraisal.
- 4.15 A total of 15 responses were received from members of the public through the Consultation Hub. The responses were generally very supportive of the Appraisal and Management Plan and universally supportive of the proposed extensions. This reflects feedback from the face-to-face consultations.
- 4.16 Historic England observe that the appraisal "...follows a format that is fully in line with national guidance. There is a clear articulation of the conservation areas special interest and a succinct and insightful analysis as to how this currently contributes to the area's character and appearance. Clear prescriptions for management are suggested". Historic England further consider that the proposed boundary changes suggested have "clearly been arrived at after thoughtful analysis and appear well justified".



4.17 In conclusion, the Appraisal and Management Plan fulfils the duties of the Council to define such areas of special architectural or historic interest and – in this instance – to consider the boundaries of and to preserve or enhance the character and the appearance of Wednesbury’s Market Place conservation area.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 The Council could choose not to adopt the Conservation Area Appraisals or Management Plans. Any relevant planning application would continue to be assessed against existing planning policies (including the existing Wednesbury Conservation Area Appraisal. However, this would not allow the Council to provide additional protection to the proposed extension areas nor give enhanced practical guidance or greater clarity to the approach that should be employed applicants and decision makers.

6 Implications

Resources:	Conservation area status would be a ‘material planning consideration’ when planning consent is sought. This applies irrespective of ownership – including Council-owned assets.
Legal and Governance:	Local Authorities are empowered by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation areas) Act to designate conservation areas and required by the National Planning Policy Framework to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.
Risk:	Erosion of the character of an area risks reputational damage and decline. Conservation area designation mitigates this risk
Equality:	There are no Equality issues arising from the contents of this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no Health and Wellbeing implications arising from the contents of this report.
Social Value:	There are no Social Value issues arising from the contents of this report.



Climate Change:	Conservation of the historic built environment may reduce CO2 emissions through the re-use of 'embodied carbon'.
Corporate Parenting	No Corporate Parenting Implication directly arising as a result of this report.

7. Appendices

Appendix One – Draft Wednesbury Conservation Area Management Plan 2023

Appendix Two - Draft Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal 2023

8. Background Papers

Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management
Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition)



Draft Wednesbury Conservation Area Management Plan 2023



1. Purpose

The successful long-term management of the Market Place conservation area depends on management that respects its special character and helps address known weaknesses and threats to this character. This Conservation Area Management Plan has been developed as a means of bringing together the various tools available to ensure that the special character and quality of the Market Place conservation area is retained and enhanced. It aims to help guide future positive management of the conservation area, both in terms of planning measures and the strategic planning framework, and through the identification of a series of 'Management Principles' for Sandwell Council and stakeholders to help guide future work.

It builds on the conservation area appraisal carried out in 2023 (Section A) which outlines the historic significance, character and heritage values of Wednesbury Market Place, including the various aspects – built, natural, historic and archaeological - which together create a sense of place within the settlement and which combine to justify conservation area designation of the area for its special character and interest. The appraisal also sets out the current key problems and pressures that may impact on the area (Section B) and affect its special qualities.

2. Principles for the Future Management of the Conservation Area

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats outlined in Section B of the conservation area appraisal have been developed into the following overarching principles to help guide the future management of Wednesbury Market Place conservation area in a way which will protect and enhance its special character.

1. Ensure that future development in the area considers the characteristic materials, form, height and scale of the buildings in the town centre, including the siting of buildings within historic plot boundaries.
2. Protect and enhance significant views and vistas through, into and out of the conservation area.
3. Discourage further loss of historic features by encouraging owners and occupiers to understand their importance and incentivising maintenance and good design.
4. Improve the appearance of the townscape through decluttering the public realm and ensuring future repairs/renewal of street furniture, surfacing, lighting and signage is standardised and in-keeping with the look and feel of the Market Place.
5. Enhance urban greening by removing trees and vegetation which have a negative impact and prioritising planting which has a positive impact on character.

3. Tools for future management of the conservation area

3.1 Existing Planning policies

Existing policies effecting the Wednesbury Market Place conservation area are contained within the **Black Country Core Strategy (2011)** and the **Site Allocations Development Plan Document**

(SADDPD) (2012). These documents form part of Sandwell MBC's Local Development Framework and guide planning decisions. Relevant policies are outlined below.

The Black Country Core Strategy

The Black Country Core Strategy was formally adopted in 2011 and sets out the strategic planning policy for the four Black Country Local Authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton), including a vision and objectives to guide future development and growth in the Black Country in the period up to 2026. The Core Strategy seeks to protect and enhance distinctive assets in different centres and makes specific reference to the markets in Wednesbury (Section 4.41).

Policies of particular relevance to the management of the Wednesbury Market Place Conservation area include:

CEN4 Regeneration of Town Centres which states development for retail, office, entertainment and leisure will be permitted, where they are of an appropriate scale that reflects the size and role of the town centre. Of particular importance is to encourage new convenience development and support proposals to extend or refurbish existing stores where they are well integrated and to serve to anchor the centre as a whole. Individual retail developments of up to 650 square metres net for convenience goods and 500 square metres gross for comparison goods will be considered appropriate. The use of upper floors will be encouraged to accommodate relevant town centre uses.

CPS4 Place-Making which requires development to demonstrate a clear understanding of the historic character and local distinctiveness of an area and show how proposals make a positive contribution to place-making and environmental improvement. It requires new design to be influenced by context and heritage in order to enhance local character.

ENV2 Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness which states that all development should aim to protect and promote the special qualities, historic character and local distinctiveness of the Black Country.

TRAN4 Creating Coherent Networks for Cycling and Walking which states that where possible, existing transport links should be enhanced and links extended to serve new development.

Site Allocations Development Delivery Plan Document

At a Borough-wide level, the Site Allocations and Development Delivery Plan Document (SADDPD), adopted in 2012, covers key policies which are in place to protect the distinctive landscape, individual buildings and the archaeology of Sandwell. The SADDPD specifically identifies the historic centre of Wednesbury as an '*Area where local distinctiveness and character should be enhanced and protected*' (13.39).

HE1 (Listed Buildings) safeguards and encourages appropriate enhancement of listed buildings and their settings and resists demolition.

HE2 (Conservation Areas) requires that development affecting conservation areas should preserve or better reveal the positive elements of the conservation area.

HE5 (Archaeology and Development Proposals) recognises the importance of recording, preservation and evaluation of archaeology.

HE3 (Buildings and Structures of Local Historic/Architectural Importance) relates to buildings of local significance which do not meet the criteria for statutory listing. It requires proposals for alteration, extension or change of use to clearly demonstrate positive contribution towards the architectural or historical significance of the building or structure. Demolition is resisted unless it can be demonstrated no viable use can be found or that the proposal has substantial public benefit.

HE 6 (Areas of Townscape Value) requires proposals for change within these areas to firstly identify the significant elements of the area and ensure proposals will make a positive contribution towards these components.

SAD DM2 (Poster Panels) states poster advertising may be appropriate in predominantly business parts of conservation areas and Areas of Townscape Value though care will be needed in how they are accommodated.

SAD Policies DM10 (Shop Front Design) and **DM8 (Design and Installation of Shop Front Roller Shutters)** require that applications for the installation of shop fronts respect the scale and character of shops and the street scene and that historic and good quality elements are retained.

The SADDPD was initially intended to guide development within the Borough until 2021. The Local Authority are currently preparing a new Sandwell Local Plan which is scheduled for adoption in 2025. The Draft Sandwell Local Plan will be published for consultation in Autumn 2023. Until the new Local plan is adopted, the SADDPD, along with the Black Country Core Strategy, continue to be the statutory Local Development Documents.

3.2 Planning Measures

In addition to Local Planning policies, the Planning Acts give powers to Local Planning Authorities to deal with issues affecting the historic environment and its proactive management. The key relevant measures include:

POWER	STATUTORY BASIS	PURPOSE
Amenity of Land Notice	s.215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990	To require an owner or occupier to carry out works to improve the external condition of a building or land if its neglect is adversely affecting the surrounding area.
Urgent Works Notice	For listed Buildings: s.54 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 For unlisted buildings: s.76 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To allow a local authority to directly carry out works that are required urgently to make an unoccupied listed building weather-tight and thus prevent further deterioration. To allow a local authority to directly carry out works that are required urgently to make an unoccupied, unlisted building weather-tight and thus prevent further deterioration.
Repairs Notice	s.48 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To allow a local authority to specify to the owner works it considers reasonably necessary to secure the future of a listed building. If the repairs are not carried out, the power can lead to compulsory purchase of the building.
Compulsory Purchase Order	s.47-48 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	When all other measures fail, to allow the local authority to compulsorily acquire a listed building in order either to repair it itself or sell it on to be restored by a buildings preservation trust or other new owner.
Planning Enforcement Notice	s. 172 Town & Country Planning Act 1990	To remedy a breach of planning control
Listed Building Enforcement Notice	s.9 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To remedy a breach in listed building control

Restriction of Deemed Consents Discontinuance notices	Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England Regulations 2007) Regulation 8	Discontinuance Action is when a local planning authority serves a notice (a discontinuance notice) under Regulation 8 requiring that the displaying of advertisements with deemed consent be discontinued.
Area of Special Advert Control	Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England Regulations 2007) Regulation 20	This is where a local authority defines an Area of Special control in order to have more control over advertisements
Removal of permitted development rights – Article 4 directions	Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) England) Order 2015	Allows local planning authorities to remove certain permitted development rights by issuing an ‘Article 4’ direction. This provision means that a planning application needs to be submitted for work which does not normally need one.

3.3 A Framework for Design & Maintenance Standards

Based on the potential threats identified in Section B of the Conservation Area Appraisal, Sandwell MBC have developed the following framework to support design and maintenance standards in the conservation area.

Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Design Standards

Planning applications will be determined with particular reference to the contents and findings of the Wednesbury Market Place conservation area Appraisal and the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (BCHLC). Accordingly:-

1. New build and development should seek to:

- **Be of good quality design which takes account of its historic context:** Any partial or complete new build is expected to be of good quality design and construction and positively enhance the quality of Wednesbury's historic townscape. Development should use a sympathetic palette of materials and a scale of development that maintains the historic character of the street and particularly the 2-3 storey, narrow fronted buildings that provide the distinctive character of this historic market town.
- **Reinforce and enhance historic street patterns:** Any partial or new build should retain or, where lost, reinstate Wednesbury Market Place's historic street patterns, ensuring street frontages are continuous, and avoiding presenting the backs of buildings and servicing arrangements to established public routes and spaces, retaining or reinstating continuity with the historic streetscape.

2. The retail areas will be expected to have:

- **Good quality shopfronts and signage:** Any changes to shopfronts or signage will be in accordance with policy and ensure that signage, alterations or replacement shopfronts use materials and a scale proportionate to the building. Internally illuminated shop front signage will not generally be considered to be acceptable.
- **Security measures,** where required, should be designed so as to be inconspicuous; retail units be expected to have internal security fittings which are invisible externally and avoid concealing historic details. Shutters should be either grille or punched with a high degree of visibility.

3. Where relevant, proposals for alterations to buildings within the conservation area will be expected to:

- **Retain or, where lost, reinstate architectural detailing:** any new proposals for shopfronts or changes to windows or doors will be expected to restore historic detailing where possible and use traditional materials and techniques for new work and repairs.

4. The positive reuse of historic buildings will be encouraged by:

- **Considering high quality proposals positively:** The sensitive reuse of partially or completely vacant buildings will be encouraged in order to increase usage of buildings and tackle any

underlying character of neglect. In retail and commercial properties, the emphasis will be on retaining, economic activity at street level where viable, but the more effective use of upper floor space will be encouraged. Any wholesale change of use will be expected to retain the character and appearance of the area.

5. Work to the Public Realm will be expected to:

- **Maintain historic and new areas of paving:** ensuring that utilities, repairs and new work in the conservation area reinstate the high-quality new paving on a like for like basis.
- **Support the replacement of unsympathetic paving with traditional paving and designs:** ensuring that any future alterations or updating of the paving scheme/pedestrianised zones in the conservation area reinstate high quality new materials.
- **Consider signage and street furniture:** ensuring that proposals for new or replacement signage and street furniture are sited in locations sympathetic to the historic character and appearance of the area. Any new elements will use the palette of recent work through the HSHAZ and designs established to develop a cohesive appearance and sense of continuity across the conservation area.

Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Maintenance Standards

‘Maintenance’ is work that is necessary to protect the fabric of a building and keep it weatherproof. It does not include any work to put right significant problems, or work needed to bring a building in poor repair back to good condition. Carrying out active annual maintenance prevents the onset of serious structural problems which may need expensive repairs in the future. Some maintenance works will be required annually. Others, such as the clearing of gutters and vegetation, may need to be undertaken several times a year. Typical tasks include:

- regularly inspecting buildings to check their condition and identify any problems that need attention;
- making sure that gutters are free of debris and are in working order
- replacing slipped roofing tiles or slates, to stop rainwater getting in
- repainting timber windows and doors at least every 5 years
- repointing walls and clearing plants growth such as ivy or vegetation from the base of walls.

4. Putting the Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) into Practice

The Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) will be used in conjunction with Sandwell Local Plan Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal and the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (BCHLC) to ensure sensitive interventions to conserve, repair and enhance the historic fabric of Wednesbury Market Place.

The Council will use the CAMP to:

- Provide the basis for the proactive management of the conservation area through informing future Council policy formulation and decision making;

- Act as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, use of planning powers and exercise of the Council's duties under the Planning Acts, as a result of its companion status to the Conservation Area Character Appraisal;
- Fulfil the Council's statutory duty in regard to s.71 and s.72 of the Planning (LB&CA) Act 1990;
- Illustrate the local planning authority's commitment to have regard to government policy for conservation area management
- Promote the protection of the Historic Environment through available planning processes.
- Clearly illustrate the Council's commitment to strong measures and actions for protecting and enhancing Wednesbury Market Place conservation area.

The following table outlines the key actions and responsibilities for putting the CAMP into practice.

CAMP Aim 1: Address known threats to the conservation area		
<i>ACTION</i>	<i>ACHIEVED THROUGH</i>	<i>TIMEFRAME</i>
Ensure consistent decision making across all Council services to ensure special regard is paid to the significance of the town's historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent use of relevant Local Planning Policies and Planning Measures to address known threats 	2023-2033
Secure quality development that respects the character of the Wednesbury Market Place conservation area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) Consistent use of the 'Framework for Design and Maintenance standards' contained within the adopted CAMP at section 3.3 	2023-2033
Actively enforce the reversal of unapproved detrimental actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of statutory powers where available through Planning Measures (see table 1, Section 3.2) 	2023-2025
Tackle the neglect and dereliction of historic buildings and poor presentation of open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of statutory powers available through Planning Measures (see table 1, Section 3.2) 	2023-2033
Improve quality, safety and connectivity of pedestrian routes through the conservation area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of statutory powers available through Planning Measures (see 3.2 above). 	2023-2033
CAMP Aim 2: Support the maintenance, repair and enhancement of the public realm in the conservation area		
<i>ACTION</i>	<i>ACHIEVED THROUGH</i>	<i>TIMEFRAME</i>
Ensure a cohesive approach to future public realm improvements in the conservation area or its setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently use the adopted palette and designs for the HSHAZ in new work; Support the replacement of unsympathetic paving with traditional paving and designs: ensure that any future alterations or updating of the paving scheme/pedestrianised zones in the conservation area reinstate high quality appropriate materials. 	2023-2033
Improve quality and presentation of open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove vegetation which negatively impacts character Encourage urban greening where it enhances the character of the conservation area or its setting 	2023-2033

CAMP Aim 3: Engage the community in managing and promoting the value of Wednesbury's historic environment		
<i>ACTION</i>	<i>ACHIEVED THROUGH</i>	<i>TIMEFRAME</i>
Engage building owners and tenants within any newly adopted conservation area boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write to building owners and tenants informing them of the conservation area, sharing the CAA and CAMP and signposting to available support 	2023-2024
Ensure the Community and local business stakeholders have a role in monitoring and promoting actions that will enhance conservation area management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets Manager and Conservation Officer continue regular dialogue 	2023-2026

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Draft Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal 2023

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Introduction

Background to the appraisal

This draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal has been produced by TDR Heritage on behalf of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. Its aim is to review and further develop the existing appraisal for Wednesbury Market Place (adopted in 2013) in line with current guidance, and to take account of recent change.

Wednesbury Market Place was designated as a Conservation area in 1980 because of its special architectural and historic interest and covers an area of 3.041 hectares (7.514 acres). An appraisal of the area was carried out in 2013 and updated in 2017 in preparation for an application to Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme. The application was successful and this Conservation Area Appraisal was funded by Historic England as part of the HSHAZ.

This document is an assessment of the character and appearance of Wednesbury Market Place and its immediate setting in 2023. It sets out the historical development of the area, identifies and records the elements which contribute to the special interest of the area, and considers the extent of the conservation area in terms of its boundary. It also considers the condition of the area and sets out some principles and actions for its future management, providing material information for decision-makers for future development.

This Appraisal is based on the guidance set out in the first and second editions of Historic England's Conservation Area Appraisal Designation and Management Advice Note 1 (Historic England 2016 & 2019). It takes the form of written text and an appraisal map. In both respects every effort has been made to include or analyse those elements key to the special character of the area however, where buildings, structures or features have not been specifically highlighted, it does not necessarily follow that they are of no visual or historic value to the conservation area. This document is intended to be an overall framework and guide within which decisions can be made on a site-specific basis.

The existing boundary and proposed amendments to the conservation area are shown by the solid green and dotted lines on the Map provided in Section 3.

The planning policy context

National planning policy

At a national level, Sections 69-72 of the **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** require Local Planning Authorities to determine '*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*' and to designate them as conservation areas where appropriate. Having designated the conservation area, the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that those elements that form its particular character or appearance should be preserved or enhanced, especially when considering planning applications. Conservation Area Appraisals therefore define and analyse those qualities or elements that contribute to, or detract from, the special interest of the area and assess how they combine to justify its designation as a conservation area.

Local planning policy

In addition to national planning policy, Sandwell MBC has specific local policies which inform planning decisions and new development within its conservation areas. The most relevant are:

The Black Country Core Strategy (2011) Policy ENV2 ‘Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness’ which requires all development proposals to *preserve and where appropriate enhance* an area’s local character and special historic and townscape qualities and their setting.

The adopted Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2012) Policy SAD HE 2 – Conservation Areas which states that proposals for new build, alteration or extension within Sandwell’s conservation areas should respect their historic buildings characteristics and architectural styles including scale, grouping, materials and fenestration. It also states that proposals which will impact on the setting of the conservation area should demonstrate that they will preserve or better reveal the positive elements of the conservation area.

Summary of the special interest of the area

Wednesbury Market Place conservation area is of special interest for its largely late-medieval street pattern and concentration of 18th and 19th century buildings around a triangular market place. Although potentially with early origins, related to an earlier fortified settlement or ‘*burh*’ to the north of the town, the modern settlement developed between two key communication routes which led to important crossing points over the River Tame that were in use from at least the 13th century. Although the town did not receive a market charter until 1707, in the medieval period Wednesbury evolved as a place of manufacture and commerce, servicing a succession of early extractive industries, and with activities focussed around the triangular market place. Its growth was facilitated by improved communication routes, notably in the late 18th century, when many of the extant buildings were constructed, which is reflected in a high concentration of 18th and 19th century town houses and commercial properties in the town.

The survival of the historic layout of the town, and the survival and adaptation of the buildings and their plot structure, also has special interest for their potential to provide information about the development of the town and the form and use of the buildings over time, as the relationship with the roads and the tight-knit 18th, 19th and early 20th century retail frontages document the evolution of commerce in the town. The Market Place also has historic and communal significance as a site of commercial and civic interaction for hundreds of years.

In addition, Wednesbury has high potential for below ground archaeological remains dating from at least the medieval period, which is particularly rare within the Black Country due to the high level of industrial activity and modern re-development across the region. In particular, previous excavations have shown that, despite the 18th century development of the town, evidence from the Wednesbury pottery industry, which was focussed in the south and south east of the Market Place, and other small scale industries, survive below ground.

General Character, Location and Uses

Location and Setting

Wednesbury is a market town in the West Midlands, approximately 10 miles north west of Birmingham and 6 miles south east of Wolverhampton (Figure 1). It sits around 156m above sea level on a plateau of sandstone and the South Staffordshire Coalfield, firmly within the ‘Black Country’- an area of intense industrial development in the 18th and 19th centuries. Wednesbury is

one of the six towns of Sandwell Metropolitan District, and is located in the north of the Borough, approximately 3 miles north of West Bromwich. The sprawling conurbation of the Black Country, a mixture of commercial, industrial and residential post-war development, define the immediate setting of the area and the town falls within the 'Wednesbury and Hill Top Historic Landscape Character Area' (SD13). Two miles north of the conservation area is junction 9 of the M6 and a regionally important major retail park. The River Tame passes to the north, east and south of the town.

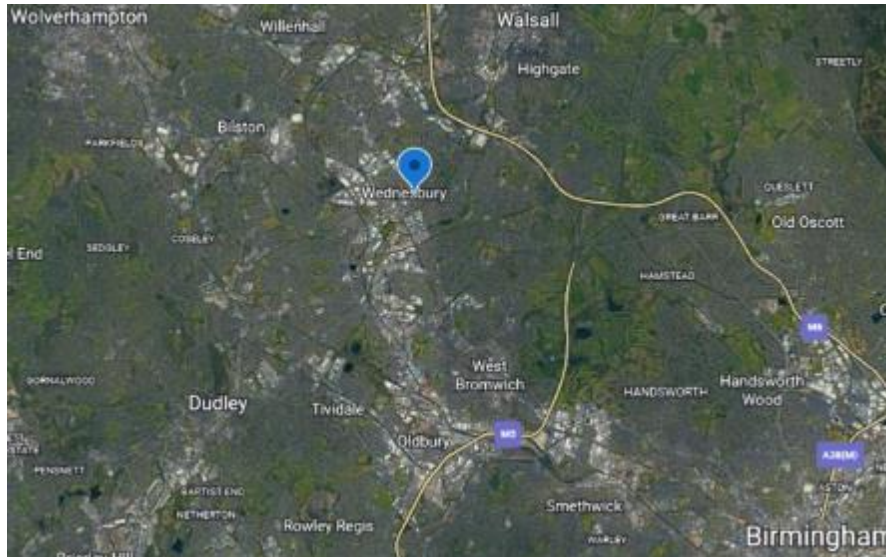


Figure 1 Location Map. Google Earth.

At the heart of the town is the Wednesbury Market Place conservation area, bounded by the A461 Orbital road to the north and west, a major transport route through the Black Country. This road bypasses the town centre and, in the 1960s, separated the modern town from the earliest known settlement at Wednesbury to its north, which seems to have been focussed around a 13th century manor house and the parish church of St Bartholomew's. The southern boundary of the conservation area is defined by late 20th development in the form of a supermarket, carpark and residential development south of Russell Street. The residential streets of Riddings Lane, Wharfdale Street and Addison Terrace form the eastern boundary.

The core of the conservation area is formed by a principally late-medieval street pattern formed by Upper and Lower High Street with a high concentration of 18th and 19th century town houses and commercial properties of local historic and architectural interest. The town itself developed around a triangular market place at the confluence of roads which were of local and national importance for industry and communication from the late medieval period. The town centre is larger than the conservation area and extends approximately 0.5 miles southwest, with a cluster of civic buildings and amenities along the Holyhead Road and a Metro Line station beyond this.

The conservation area includes a mix of retail, commercial and leisure properties with some residential accommodation to the upper floors. The retailers are predominantly independent and there are a number of cafes, pubs, restaurants and take-aways. The area is mainly visited during the day with Tuesday (market day) and Saturday the busiest shopping days. The night-time economy is concentrated around the pubs and a couple of restaurants/take-aways. At the core of the conservation area is the market place which forms the focal point of the town both physically and culturally, including for civic events such as memorial services and the Town's annual Christmas tree.

In terms of forces for change, Wednesbury faces economic challenges typical of many post-industrial towns, which are particularly apparent in the Black Country. These include higher than national average levels of deprivation and a lower economic base which has resulted in higher vacancy rates for retail premises, and a backlog of repair and maintenance on properties in the conservation area. The impact of these factors on the special character of the conservation area is explored further in section 2B: Sensitivity and Capacity for Change.

Historic development and interest

Early occupation

Place name evidence suggests that there was an early settlement in the vicinity of Wednesbury from at least Saxon times, possibly located around Church Hill, a flattish-topped hill lying close to the River Tame and at the meeting point of early routeways. The name 'Wednesbury' is believed to be derived from 'Woden's burh', *Burh* being Old English for a 'stronghold or fortified site', and there has been speculation that the church of St Bartholomew may have been built on the site of a shrine or temple, dedicated to the pagan god Woden.

Although the early settlement has traditionally been associated with Ethelfleda, a member of the Anglo Saxon royal house, who constructed fortresses against the Viking invasion across the midlands, there is no physical evidence for one having been built at Wednesbury. However, several 19th century antiquarian accounts of earthworks around the site of the Church of St Bartholomew and Church Hill suggest that the settlement may be considerably earlier and be prehistoric in origin, and represent an Iron Age hillfort.

Despite its uncertain origins, by 1086, Domesday Book recorded *Wadnesberie* as 'One of the more considerable villages of a thinly populated and economically backwards area' with a population of around 140, with land and one mill.

Medieval development

Archaeological evidence suggests that the settlement of Wednesbury developed along Church Hill, close to the church of St Bartholomew (NHLE 1342678) and the site of its early manor house to its north. Both of these buildings are believed to have been constructed by at least the 13th century, but have now since been either demolished or largely reconstructed.

Communication routes were fundamental to the development of Wednesbury and it is likely that the town continued to develop as a result of its proximity to important crossing points of the River Tame to the south. The primary roads through the town appear to have been established by the 13th and 14th centuries and there was a bridge at Finchpath to the south of Wednesbury by 1225, carrying the main Birmingham - Wolverhampton road over the River Tame. In the 13th century, *Wysti* Bridge, later known as Hydes Bridge, carried a road to West Bromwich, and a route to Walsall also existed by the mid-14th century (Figure 2). The surrounding area was part of the Royal forests of Cannock Chase, the boundary of which is thought to have been close to the present day high street, and ran along Hydes Road to the River Tame.

Despite there being no known medieval market charter, excavations in the market place area indicate that the triangular market place, occupying the space between these key roads, was occupied by the 14th or 15th century with archaeological evidence suggesting that there were medieval yards and buildings fronting onto the market place by this time (MBL2613). By 1421 the

settlement had further expanded to the north east of the market place, with the construction of a manor house known as Oakeswell Hall (which was demolished in the 1960s) (MBL2714).

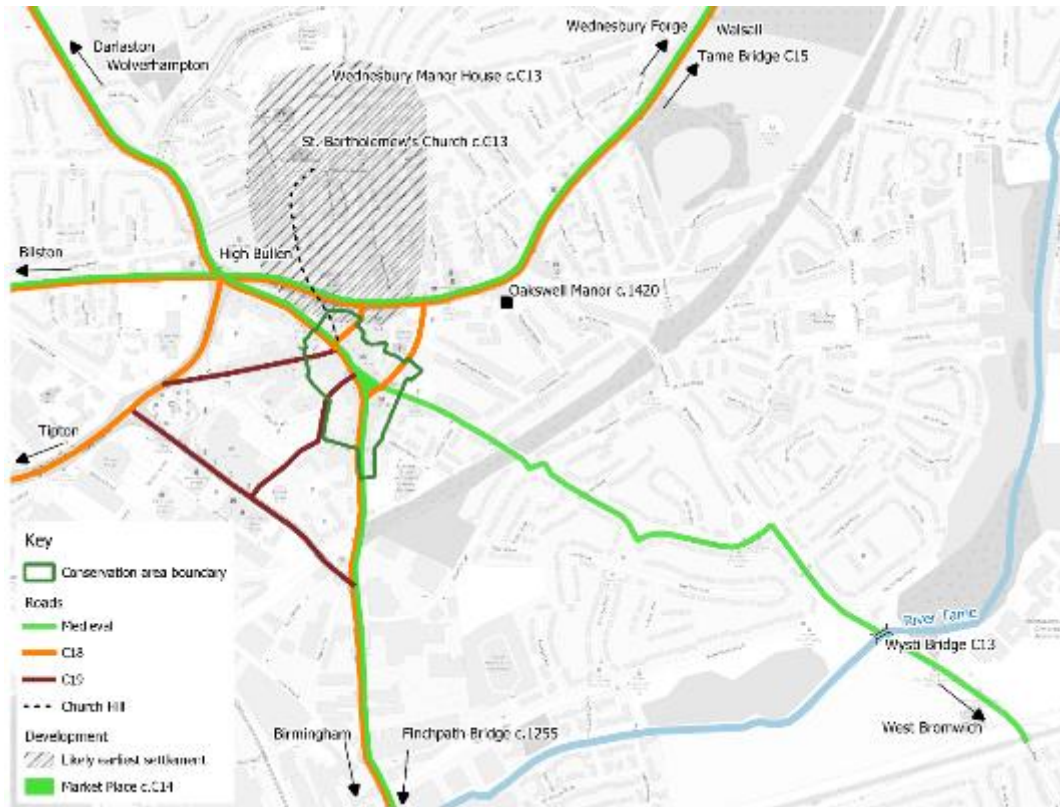


Figure 2 Early road pattern and development of the settlement.

Wednesbury's geology was also a factor in the town's early development. Nearby deposits of clay, sandstone, iron ore and coal meant Wednesbury had some of the earliest industrial activity in the Black Country, with coal pits and ironstone mining recorded in the vicinity of the town by 1315. As industry became established in the area, Wednesbury grew into a modest sized settlement and Subsidy Rolls (taxation records) show that by the 14th century the town had approximately half the number of tax payers of nearby Walsall and was comparable in size to Darlaston and Bentley. Wednesbury also had a pottery industry from the early 14th century which produced 'Wedgebury Ware'. Documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that production was mostly sited in the area to the south and south east of the market place and continued over a relatively long period. To date, only one 17th century kiln has been found - in excavations in the market place (MBL2614) – but other production sites have been identified within the town centre, including to the rear of 48-50 Lower High Street, which were operating from the 15th -17th centuries (ESD838).

Similarly, Manorial water powered mills in the vicinity of Wednesbury had been turned over to iron production by the 16th century and became an important site of industrial activity for the next 400 years. By the late 16th century/ early 17th century, Wednesbury Forge, 2 miles northeast of the town, was a sophisticated operation and an increasing volume of goods was being exported from the site, using the network of established transportation routes through the town.

18th century growth

By the early 18th century Wednesbury was rapidly changing, industrially and economically. Its local, shallow coal pits had been replaced by deeper mines as supply attempted to keep up with growing demand, and a number of collieries had been established close to the town, just outside the

conservation area boundary. Further east, Wednesbury Forge had expanded to become an integrated factory, as substantial enterprise required numerous supporting industries. This had a substantial impact on the development of the town, particularly in terms of its diversification and expansion into manufacturing and industry, and during the 18th century Wednesbury emerged as a centre of saw making, transitioning later in the century to gun-barrel making.

The fortunes of the 18th century town were also impacted by the granting of a formal market charter to Wednesbury in 1707. Although it seems likely that an informal market had been in operation for several centuries, the charter gave the town right to hold two annual fairs and a weekly Friday market. In recognition of this new status, a market house, situated close to the present-day clock tower, was erected in the market place in c1709 and was operational until the early 19th century, by which time it had fallen into disrepair and was demolished.

By the 1720s, the road south from Wednesbury was in a state of disrepair due to the high volume of traffic, particularly due to carrying ironware and coal to Birmingham. In 1727 Lower High Street/Bridge Street was improved and turnpiked, retaining the movement of traffic through the town centre, and encouraging further commercial development of the town.

Later in the century, as industry in the Black Country expanded, transport routes between the key settlements and industries in the area continued to improve. In 1766 the Wednesbury to Bilston road was turnpiked (now A41), increasing the volume of traffic into Wednesbury town centre as coaches travelling to and from Shrewsbury and North Wales began to use this shorter route. Shortly after, in 1769, the first phase of the Birmingham Canal was completed, terminating approximately one mile south of the market place. It linked the Wednesbury coalfields to Birmingham industries, and significantly increased the volume of coal which could be transported out of Wednesbury.

These changes simultaneously increased the prosperity of industrialists and workers in the town, while reducing heavy freight on the roads, and corresponded with further developments in the town's commercial offer, particularly in terms of accommodation and services for passengers travelling through the town by coach. The wealth generated from these developments is reflected in a significant and comprehensive programme of property building in the town throughout the 18th century, although the medieval road pattern of Lower and Upper High Street remained largely unchanged.

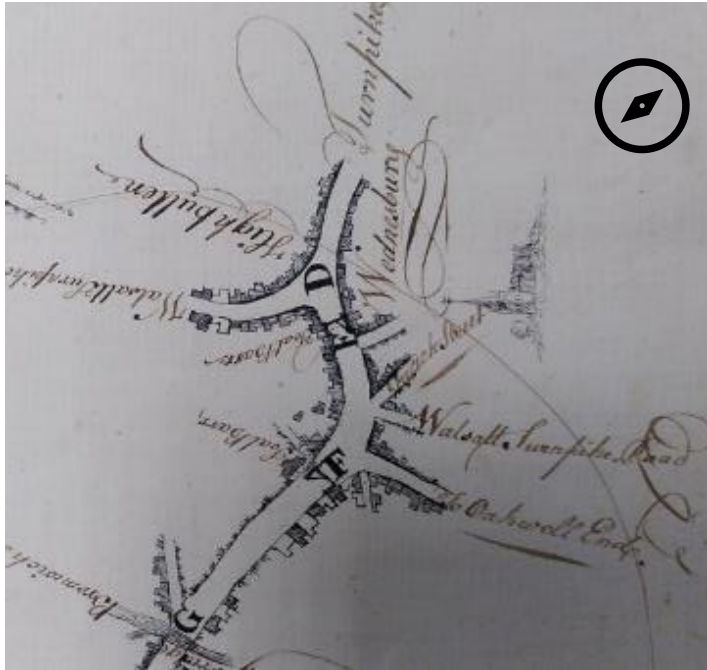


Figure 3 Turnpike map, 1771. Sandwell Archives reference 608107.

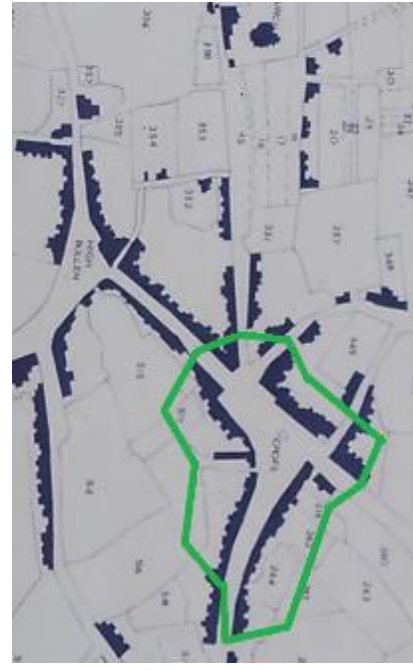


Figure 4 Parish Map 1799. Conservation Area boundary in green. Sandwell Archives MAP/487.

By the end of the 18th century Wednesbury had an established form which is still recognisable in the streetscape today. A parish map of 1799 shows Lower and Upper High Street, Church Hill, Walsall Street, Spring Head and Ridding Lane (see Figures 3 and 4). The Market Place, labelled ‘crops’, suggesting that it was used as a corn market, is shown with a structure, presumably the Market Hall. The plots shown on the 1799 map adjacent to Market Place (see 216 and 262) appear to span several frontages/properties and may have influenced the way larger buildings later developed around Market Place and Lower High Street.

John Wesley’s 1745 pamphlet “Modern Christianity exemplified at Wednesbury” highlighted the dual function of many properties in the town, which residents referred to interchangeably as homes or shops, and generally comprised commercial ground floors and accommodation above.

The 19th century town

A coaching town

From 1808 the main London to Holyhead mail route began to pass through Wednesbury town centre, further increasing demand for coaching inns and hotels as well as trades such as tack and nail makers. ‘Tacker’s Well’ (MBC3111), situated at the foot of Church Street, was an area where nailers were located and the town offered a number of inns and hotels to accommodate and serve food to travellers and those attending markets. The Talbot Hotel occupied a prominent corner plot on the market place - an inn was reportedly here from the 16th century and was rebuilt by wine and spirit merchant John Taylor Duce in the 1870s - and other prominent coaching inns in the early 19th century market place included The Green Dragon (8 Market Place) - from which two coach services a day left for Birmingham in the 1820s; The Turks Head (25-26 Lower High Street) - which had coaches leaving three times a week for Birmingham; The George Hotel (1 Upper High Street); The George and Dragon Hotel (40 Lower High Street) and The Golden Cross, which was licenced as a beer house in 1834. Several of these establishments had 18th origins.

In 1826 a new road, Telford's London to Holyhead Road (the Holyhead Road), was opened to the south of the town, by-passing Wednesbury's town centre. Long distance coaches traversed this route, as did regional coaches from Shropshire and Staffordshire towns, and new commercial premises developed along the new road to service the coaches.

Serving a growing population

During the second half of the 19th century the town centre continued to expand and the character and appearance of the town centre began to change. Until the early 19th century, a number of the commercial buildings in the town centre also accommodated civic functions, with Petty Sessions being held in the Market Cross building before its closure in 1824 and at the Turk's Head Inn. In terms of new development, Union Street was possibly laid out as a new commercial street as early as 1802.

By the mid-19th century the town centre was surrounded by large industrial sites. Old Park ironworks, 1 mile north of the market place employed 3,000 workers and the Patent Shaft and Axletree Company (1836-1980), which became the town's largest employer, operated factories to the south west of the conservation area. As the town developed, drinking establishments in the town centre remained popular, but increasingly served residents and local workers, the scale of this function is reflected in there being four licenced establishments on Upper High Street, four on Lower High Street, five on Market Place and one on Walsall Street by the late 19th century.

At the same time, a number of new places of worship were built within or just beyond the conservation area to serve the growing population. A new parish of St John's was created to the south of the conservation area and a church (with a capacity of 1000) and churchyard were built in 1844-45 (MBL3182). Nonconformist worship had been prevalent amongst the workers of the town since the time of John Wesley and a number of nonconformist chapels were also constructed, including a 250 capacity congregational chapel behind Lower High Street and Russell Street, adjacent to St John's church; a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and school on Spring Head (MBL4958) (now Spring Head car park); and a United Free Methodist chapel and hall on Riddings Lane (MBL4959). With the exception of the United Free, where the brick façade is still standing, many of these were demolished in the 1980s.

Educational needs for the expanding town were also met in the form of the British and Foreign Society School, which opened on Lower High Street in 1820, and moved to Russell Street in 1851. Following the 1870 Education Act, a new Board School was opened to replace it with new premises in Lower High Street. The site was extensive and by 1886 it accommodated 740 pupils, as well as houses for staff.

In the middle of the 19th century, the plots fronting the Market Place, particularly on the north side, were subdivided, rebuilt or refaced, possibly to meet a demand for more shops. Properties developed to the west of the Market Place and Lower High Street, with Russell Street and a smaller passageway (later The Shambles) connecting to the rear of the properties or outbuildings behind (Figure 5).



Figure 5 Tithe map 1846. Sandwell Archives MAP/489.
Conservation Area Boundary shown in green.

From the mid-19th century the construction of the Great Western Railway and Staffordshire Line curtailed development of the town to the south-east of the Market Place (Figure 5) and new building became concentrated to the west, particularly along the Holyhead Road (Figure 6) and around the new the passenger and freight rail stations further south. Links with other Black Country towns were further enhanced in the late 19th century, when cheap travel, in the form of trams, began to pass along the High Street and through Market Place (Figures 6,7 and 8), and enabled an even bigger catchment to visit Wednesbury.

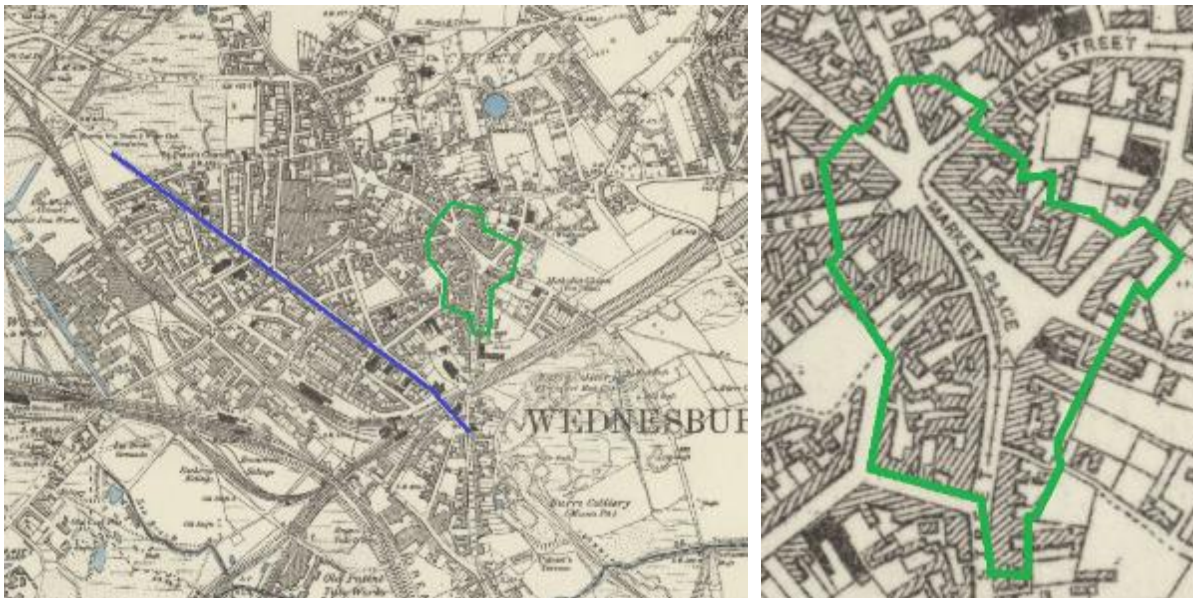


Figure 6 Conservation Area (green) and Holyhead Road (blue). First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1884-1888) Staffordshire Sheet LXVIII.NW. National Library Scotland.

The early 20th century town

Located between clusters of civic buildings and schools around the Holyhead Road and the northern part of Spring Head and Walsall Street, the market place, with its weekly market, remained a focal point and meeting place for the town in the early 20th century. C.W.D. Joynson, Mayor of the Borough, designed and built the commemorative clocktower in 1911 and new public conveniences were opened on the Shambles around this time. From 1918 part of The Talbot was leased by the Wednesbury Labour Exchange.

Wednesbury's extractive industries had been superseded in the late 19th century by heavy industry, particularly tube-making, and its factories were significant in manufacturing artillery during the First World War. The town's resulting economic prosperity in the early 20th century, alongside the development of new and exciting forms of entertainment, is also reflected in developments in the market place. In particular, the buildings around the Market Place began to develop into more recreational uses. The Gaumont Cinema opened on Walsall Street in 1915 and Upper High Street had a cluster of recreational buildings including a cinema and Hippodrome (Figure 9).



Figure 7 Postcard of Market Place, c.1914¹. Sandwell Archives.



Figure 8 Postcard of Market Place, c.1915. Sandwell Archives.

There was also a Picture Theatre on Earp's Lane (between Church Street and High Street) and a public baths on Walsall Street. By the middle of the 20th century there was also a Bowling Green and Billiards Hall on Church Street (Figure 9).

¹ I. Bott, *Wednesbury in Old Photographs*. 1994. Sandwell Archives.



Figure 9 Ordnance Survey 1919 Conservation Area shown in green. Staffordshire LXVIII.1. National Library Scotland.

In the mid-20th century the conservation area continued to have a commercial character and a regular market in the Market Place (Figure 10). The 18th -19th century buildings continued to dominate although new designs such as the Burton's (1937) and Golden Cross pub by W.S. Clements (1949) added a more modern character to the high street.



Figure 10 Market Place, 1950. Bott, *Memories of Wednesbury*, 2004. Sandwell Archives.

Late 20th century regeneration

In the 1960s the town centre was altered to accommodate the rapid increase in motor car use in the post-war period. In particular, Union Street was redeveloped and buildings to the rear of properties on Upper High Street were demolished to create the Shambles Car Park. The George, an 18th century coaching inn on the corner of Upper High Street and Union Street was demolished and replaced with

a modern building (now the William Archer) along with a row of shops on the south side of Upper High Street.

Most significantly, the Northern relief road (A461), which was built in 1969, physically cut off the town centre from its oldest parish church and diverted traffic away from the Market Place. However, although the volume of traffic using the roads changed, it had little impact on the street pattern.

In the 1970s-80s, the prosperity of Wednesbury declined as heavy industry closed and unemployment rose. Land vacated by closing industries was repurposed for commercial development and in the 1970s the market was moved from the market place to an indoor purpose-built site at the west end of the Shambles. The commercial fortunes of the town fell still further as, in the late 1980s/early 1990s, an out-of-town retail park was built beside the M6 and Wednesbury followed a national trend of changing consumer habits that focussed shopping away from town centres to out of town facilities.

Towards the 21st century there was an attempt to reconnect and reanimate the town centre, with the Midland Metro opening in 1999, reconnecting the town to Wolverhampton and Walsall using the old railway line. In 2007 Morrisons supermarket opened to the west of Russell Street, changing the character of the town between the conservation area and the Holyhead Road. The supermarket car park replaced the purpose-built indoor market of the 1970s and the market was relocated to open air stalls at west end of the Shambles before, in 2022, being moved back to a permanent home in the market place.

Map showing the key periods in the area's development



Figure 11 Illustration of the key periods of development and redevelopment which give the conservation area its character. Conservation area boundary is shown in green.

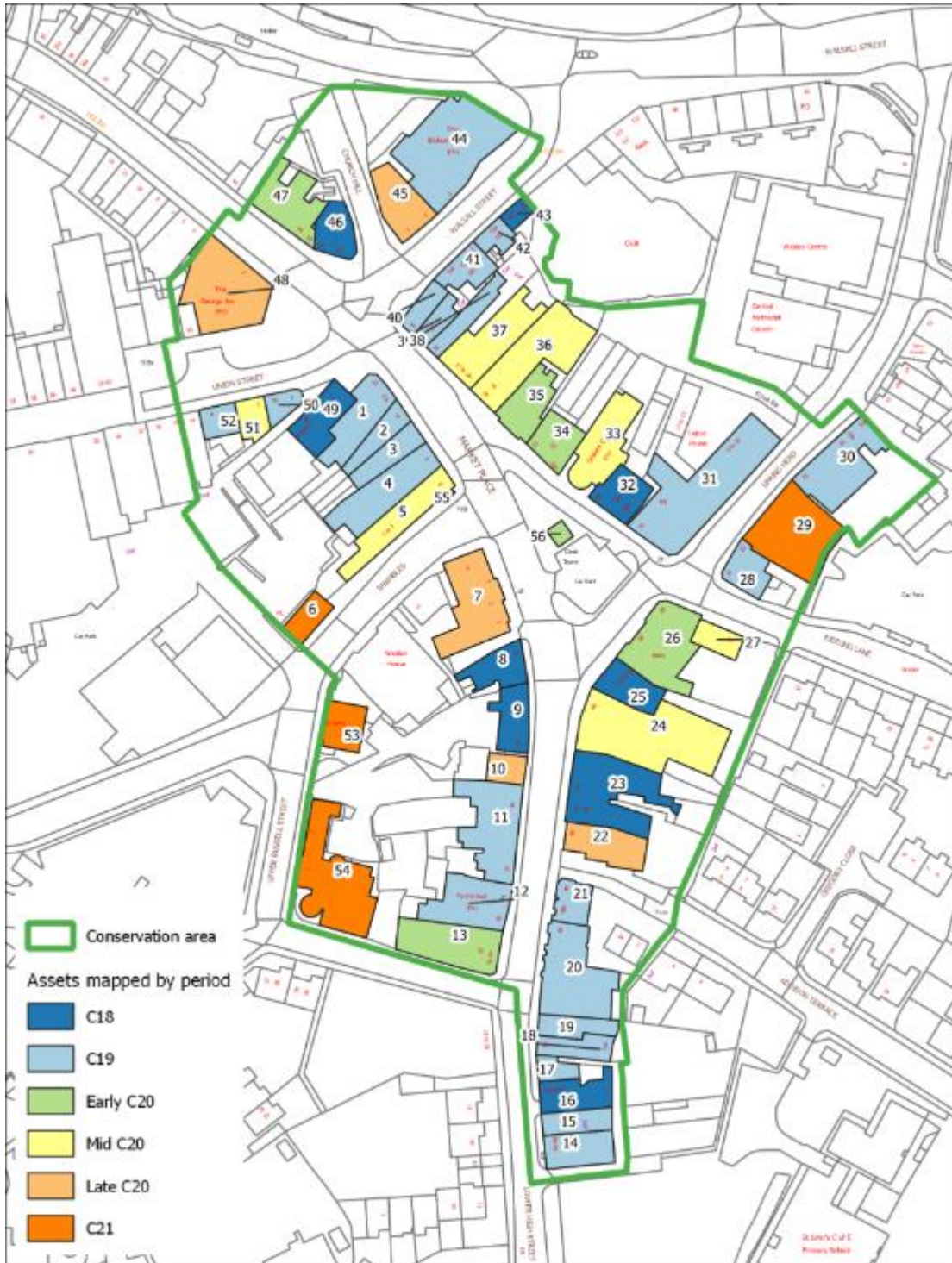


Figure 12 Predominant period of construction of assets in the conservation area. © Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey Licence No 100023119.

Architectural interest and built form

Townscape and form

The Wednesbury Market Place conservation area has a predominantly **commercial character**, of late 18th / early 19th century date. A mix of late 18th, 19th and 20th century buildings front the Market Place and Lower High Street and provide the main architectural interest in the area.

Throughout the conservation area, buildings are predominantly of two and three storeys, and many have frontages onto the street with long one or two storey service ranges behind. They provide a continuous street frontage and contribute to the character and feel of the conservation area, with a height and scale that takes account of the topography of the streets (Figure 13A). On Spring Hill, the street frontage is formed by a former malthouse with inserted shop fronts (Figure 13B) and Market Place, particularly on the north side, is characterised by its variety of 19th and 20th century commercial buildings (Figure 13C).

Corner buildings are significant in the conservation area and communicate a strong relationship between the historic street pattern and the development of properties along key thoroughfares. 28-30 Market Place, The Talbot building, 51-52 Upper High Street, 8 and 13 Market Place and 22-24 Lower High Street all have significant frontages onto two streets.



Figure 13 Built form of historic properties Lower High Street showing the roof line reflecting the topography and incline of the street (A), Spring Head (B), Market Place (C)

Public houses and former inns/hotels are some of the most prominent buildings in the conservation area and are represented by some of its key buildings, including 9 Market Place, which retains the form of an 18th century coaching inn (Figure 14), and the former Talbot Hotel (and outbuildings to the rear) which was rebuilt in the late 19th century as pub and spirits house. The Bellweather on

Walsall Street retains its original use and some of the character of a typical Black Country pub with a central entrance leading to a 'two-room drinker', typical of the early 19th century (Figure 15).



Figure 14 Former George Inn, side elevation viewed from The Shambles.



Figure 15 The Bellweather. Google Streetview.

The conservation area also retains a **civic feel** through 20th century commemorative assets including the Clock Tower and horse troughs and functional structures such as the K6 phone box, police box and post box.

Architectural Styles

The buildings which make the most significant contribution to the special character of the conservation area, are typically late 18th-early 19th century in style, with classical symmetrical façades with parapets and plain windows, originally timber sashes, with typical detailing including stone lintels and keystones (Of which 31-33 Market Place is the best example, Figure 61).

Part of the area's special character also comes from the variety of mid-late 19th to mid-20th century styles which give the area a lively commercial character, more typical of Black Country towns (Figure 16). Styles include fairly plain buildings reliant on decorative brick details for architectural interest (the terrace on Spring Head, chambers on Walsall Street, 12-13 and 14 Market Place) and an Edwardian terrace on Upper High Street reminiscent of the Birmingham Free Style/Gothic Revival with mock-tudor gables. Other visually distinctive styles include the Italianate Gothic Talbot Hotel and the West Bromwich Building Society, as a typical Neo-Georgian Edwardian bank (L in Figure 13C). Notable mid-20th century styles within the townscape include the inter-war pub, The Golden Cross, and the Art-Deco Burton's building (17 Market Place).

There are two earlier, probable **18th century vernacular buildings** (or 19th century rebuilding) which are characterised by low, two or one and a half storey, domestic scale properties. These may have originated as nailers cottages, or represent similar small-scale cottage industries, and serve as a reminder of the development of the settlement (Figure 17).



Figure 16 19th and 20th century styles, Market Place.



Figure 17 Vernacular style, Upper High Street. Google Streetview.

Building Materials

The predominant building material in the conservation area is red or brown brick. Red brick was a dominant building material in the Black Country by the 18th century, reflecting the use of the indigenous red clay of the surrounding landscape and its use for building. Late 18th century buildings probably had brick frontages (such as 31-33 Market Place and 1 Union Street).

By the early 19th century structural brickwork was often rendered, and this characterises Lower High Street particularly. As many of the properties on Lower and Upper High Street date from the late 18th-early 19th century it is likely the area developed with a mix of exposed and other rendered facades. Rear elevations and service extensions remain exposed brick (Figure 18).

Many of the 19th century buildings which form part of the 18th century ranges along the Market Place and High Street are rendered or painted white/cream to fit with the 'Regency era' style of the earlier buildings (Figure 19), and are now an important part of the character of these streets.



Figure 18 Rear of properties along Lower High Street



Figure 19 Rendered and painted brickwork typical of 19th century frontages

19th century brick boundary walls, usually at the rear of properties, are also part of the historic character of the conservation area and an identifiable characteristic of Black Country towns (Figures 20-22).



Figure 20 Wall, North of Shambles Car Park



Figure 21 Hitchin's Croft passageway



Figure 22 Outbuilding, rear of Talbot House, Spring Hill

Roofs

Roofs in the area are predominantly of slate, although many along Lower High Street are not visible behind parapets. Roofs are most visible along the north side of Market Place and Spring Head, and are slate on 19th century and tile on 20th century buildings. Roofs are generally plain with notable exceptions of 19th century gabled properties on Upper High Street and Talbot House which have decorative ridge tiles (Figure 46).

Historic Features

Windows

There are some surviving early to mid-19th century timber sash windows, varying between 2/2 to 8/8 panes, typically with thin glazing bars (Figures 23-28).



Figure 23 8/8 pane sash window, 32 Lower High Street



Figure 24 22-24 Lower High Street



Figure 25 22-24 Lower High Street



Figure 26 26/6 sashes, 12 Market Place.



Figure 27 28-30 Market Place



Figure 28 46 Upper High Street

Other window styles of note include canted bays to upper storeys of buildings on the west side of Market Place, and square timber bay windows to the first floor of 26 Market Place (Figures 29-31).



Figure 29 10-11 Market Place



Figure 30 26 Market Place



Figure 31 13 Market Place

Doors and entrances

There are a few remaining historic doors and entrances in the conservation area which add to its character and interest. 118 Walsall Steet is unusual in retaining a six panel door (fashionable 1740-1810) and decorative consoles and canopy above (Figure 32). 30 Market Place retains a three panel timber door, double fan light above and dripstone with decorative keystone (Figure 33). The former Burton's building (18 Market Place) has its original 1930s entrance, including terrazzo step, wooden door and panelling (Figure 34). Date stones at the base of the pilasters read 'This stone was laid by Arnold James Burton 1937' and is a rare surviving detail.



Figure 32 118 Walsall Street



Figure 33 30 Market Place



Figure 34 Burtons, Market Place

Entrances and gates to side passages are also important reminders of historic access routes to properties behind the street frontage (Figures 35-36). 56 Lower High Street is the only example of a coach entrance in the conservation area, and is a rare survivor of a feature which would have been common in the 18th-19th centuries (Figure 37).



Figure 35 21 Market Place



Figure 36 55 Lower High Street



Figure 37 56 Lower High Street

Architectural Detailing

Many of the buildings in the conservation area retain aspects of their original detailing which contribute to the area's special interest and character.

Some of the 18th century buildings have a brick dentil course under eaves, others have a plain string course below the parapets. 43 Lower High Street has retained an end pilaster, a detail which is missing from the rebuild of number 42, the left hand portion of the building (Figure 39).

A number of the 19th century buildings on Market Place have incorporated heavy quoins (a classical motif)- notably number 23 (Figure 38), which is a small and compact building, in comparison with number 16, which has grander proportions.



Figure 38 23 Market Place



Figure 39 43 Lower High Street

The conservation area also includes limited examples of polychromatic brickwork and glazed panel detailing, typical of later 19th century buildings, and which sometimes bear clues to the original use of the building. 10-12 Market Place has three different decorative brick patterns, incorporating chain motifs (Figure 44), blue brick quoins and glazed white bricks (Figure 40), and number 13 has yellow brick decorative panels (Figure 43). The glazed tile pilasters at the Turks Head (Figure 42) and ceramic red tiles above the fascia of Talbot House (Figure 41) relate to their original use as hostelryes and are a rare survival of a once common decorative feature on Black Country Pubs.



Figure 40 11 Market Place



Figure 41 Former Talbot Hotel



Figure 42 Pilaster, former Turks Head



Figure 43 13 Market Place



Figure 44 10 Market Place



Figure 45 55 Lower High Street



Figure 46 Decorative Ridge tiles, Upper High Street

Shop fronts and signage

The conservation area has very few surviving historic shop fronts: those that do remain are mainly 19th and 20th century in character and are situated on Upper High Street and the western side of Lower High Street. This may reflect the fact that historically Lower High Street had a higher concentration of inns and public houses rather than shops. Most are single or double bay shopfronts with a side entrance, although 38 and 22-24 Lower High Street and 51 Union Street are notable exceptions with double bays and a central entrance. 49 Upper High Street is unusual as the only curved glass shopfront. The most common historic shopfront feature to survive are timber pilasters (Figures 48-49), visible particularly on Upper High Street, the west side of Market Place and Lower High Street. Stallboards are timber or more typically glazed tile, although again there are few survivors.

The only shop front to have an 18th century feel is number 1 Union Street, with bow windows to either side of a central entrance (Figure 47).



Figure 47 1 Union Street.



Figure 48 51 Upper High Street.



Figure 49 22-24 Lower High Street.

There are some relict examples of historic shop signage which adds character to the conservation area. These include a terracotta cartouche above the central first floor window of 25 Lower High Street (Figure 50), a terracotta band with blue painted lettering (Figure 51), a modest, hand painted timber sign to the rear of 1 Union Street (Figure 52) and gold stencilled sign at 1 Union Street (Figure 53).



Figure 50 (Former) Turks Head Hotel 25-26 Lower High Street



Figure 51 Duce & Sons Brewers, 27 Market Place



Figure 52 Chemist, Rear of 1 Union Street



Figure 53 Former Outfitters, 13 Market Place

There is a ghost sign at 28 Market Place (Riddings Lane elevation) which shows the former use of the building as the offices of the regional Express and Star newspaper. Signage such as this is rare in the conservation area but adds considerable character to buildings and views into the conservation area from Spring Head towards the Market Place (Figures 54-55).



Figure 54 Express & Star painted sign, 28 Market Place, 1967. Bott, *Memories of Wednesbury*, 2004. Sandwell Archives.



Figure 55 Ghost sign, 2023.

Positive Contributors

Most of the buildings in the area help shape the character of the conservation area, however the main groups of buildings which make a positive contribution are late 18th century commercial buildings and public houses. Assets which make a strongly positive contribution to its special character are shown in Figure 56. These include two nationally designated and 12 locally listed buildings and structures, which all contribute significantly to the areas historic or architectural interest. Other buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the area include those which maintain their historic form or scale, despite instances of loss to their historic character or integrity.

Where the loss of features or change has affected this character, buildings which have retained the commercial character of the conservation area but without enhancing or negatively impacting on its special interest, have been characterised as making – at best - a neutral contribution to the area. Overall there two properties (8 The Shambles and 1-2 Walsall Street) which have a negative impact on the character of the area. 8 The Shambles is discussed in section B: Sensitivity and Capacity for Change.

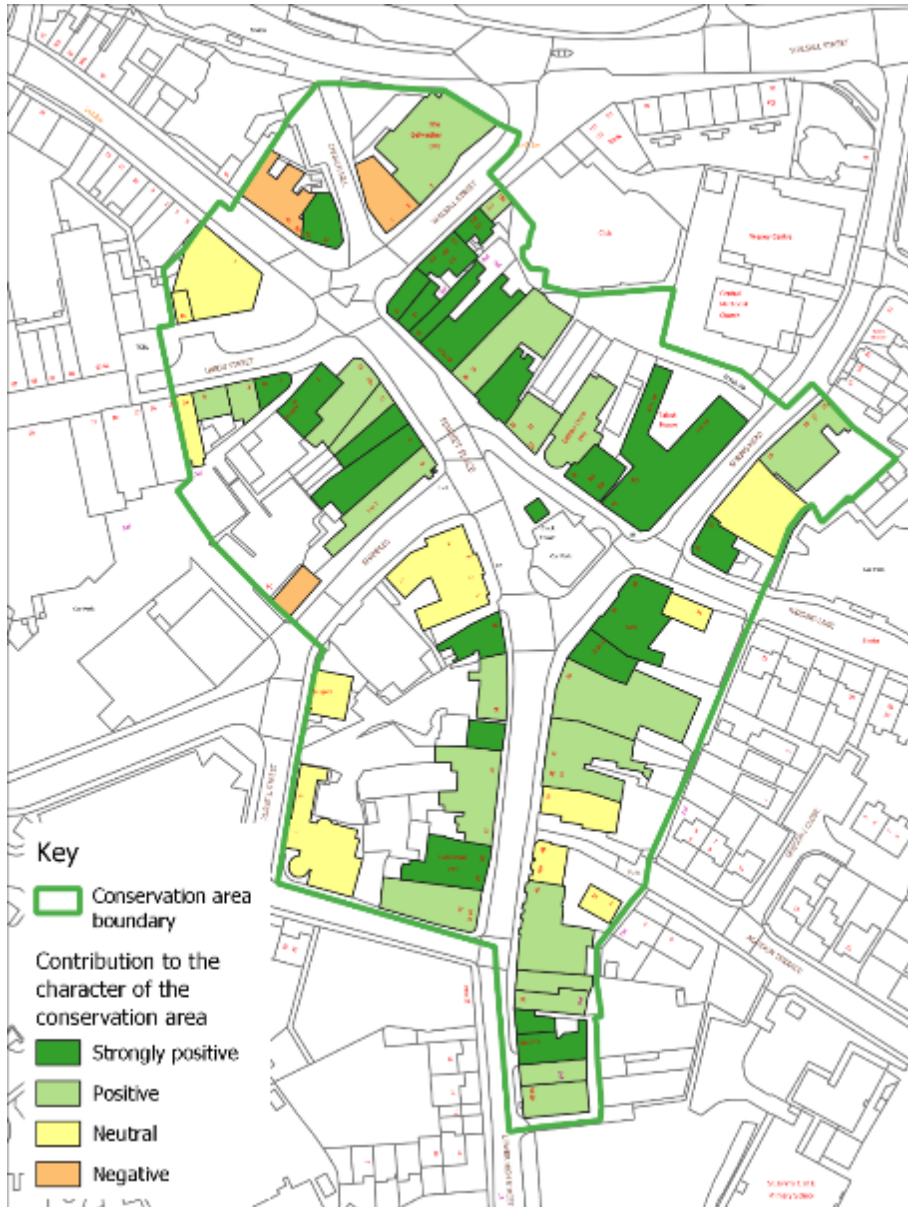


Figure 56 Contribution of buildings to the special character of the conservation area. © Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey Licence No 100023119.

Nationally important buildings in the conservation area

The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) currently includes two buildings within the conservation area which have been nationally designated for their 'special' architectural and historic interest.



Figure 57 Clock Tower. Image Credit: Clinton Felicio.

The Clock Tower (Gr II, NHLE: 1077119) is located in the centre of Wednesbury's Market Place. It was paid for by a public subscription raised to celebrate the coronation of King George V. The tower was designed by local architect Charles William Davies Joynson (1862-1943) who had been mayor of Wednesbury in 1898-1900 and was an Alderman from 1925 and it was built by local contractors. The lower section is red brick laid in Flemish bond and there is a Baroque style upper section in sandstone.

The tower has a strong visual presence in the Market Place and provides an important focal point of civic pride in the town. It contributes positively to the setting of the buildings lining the Market Place and views into and out of the conservation area.



Figure 58 31-33 Market Place

31 - 33 Market Place (Gr II, NHLE: 1287437) fronts the eastern side of Market Place as it turns towards Lower High Street. It is a three storey, four bay late 18th century town house with a modern shop front to the ground floor. It is constructed in brick with stucco dressings and a slate roof. It retains detailing such as 6/6 pane sash windows and stucco lintels with chamfered false voussoirs.

It has architectural interest as a relatively intact survivor of a building type which would have been common around the Market Place and is the best example within the conservation area. It has group value in form and style with adjacent properties and others within the Market Place, and frames views into the Market Place from Lower High Street.



Locally Important Buildings in the conservation area

There are 12 buildings and structures in the conservation area which were recommended for local listing as part of a review of Sandwell’s Local List in 2022 (Figure 59). These buildings were identified for their local historical or architectural interest, as well for their positive contribution to the historic character of the conservation area. Table 1 summarises their contribution to the special character of the area.








Figure 59 Figure 65 Designated assets in the conservation area. © Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey Licence No 100023119.



Table 1

Asset	Local List Description	Contribution to character of the conservation area
1 & 1A Union Street		
	<p>A three storey Georgian townhouse with shop units to the ground floor. The property has two elevations facing into Market Place, a two bay frontage with canted bay windows to the ground floor, and three bays to the other elevation with a 19th century shop front with pilasters and stallrisers.</p> <p>It is constructed in common brick laid in Flemish bond with original 6/6 timber sash windows on the upper floors with bracketed moulds to the first floor.</p>	<p>The building has architectural interest as a good survivor of a classically proportioned C18th townhouse. It has townscape value as a prominent building in the historic commercial centre of Wednesbury, and historic interest as a reminder of the development of the settlement in the C18 following the charter of 1709 which allowed weekly markets in Wednesbury. Combined with its immediate neighbours at 13 Market Place, the property has group value.</p>
2 Union Street		
	<p>A Victorian two storey property with shopfronts to the ground floor and office/storage above, perpendicular to the Market Place.</p> <p>The building is constructed in smooth red brick laid in English garden wall bond with stone banding, below deep dentilated eaves. The upper floor has tripartite timber sash windows. The corner shop front has a chamfered window pane to maintain the street profile, and retains a large, possibly 1960s fascia.</p>	<p>The building has group value as an important building in the Market Place conservation area, and contributes to the mix of 18th and 19th century buildings at the commercial centre of Wednesbury</p>
20, 21 & 22 Spring Head		

	<p>A two storey C19 building of brick construction occupying a prominent corner plot.</p> <p>It has saw toothed courses to both the ground and first floor, dentilated eaves of blue engineering bricks and decoratively carved stonework to either end of the original lintels. In addition, numbers 20 and 22 retain their original 2/2 timber sash windows (these have been subsequently replaced with UPVC to number 21)</p>	<p>The building is of historic interest, serving as a reminder of the development of Spring Head, which 1st edition OS mapping shows was historically occupied by a tight cluster of buildings that have subsequently been demolished. The building is of architectural interest with No's 21 and 23 retaining their original architectural features, including saw tooth string courses marking the ground and first floor, a dentilated string course to the eaves and decoratively carved stone to either end of the lintels.</p>
<p>26, 26a & 26b Market Place</p>		
	<p>A late C18th three storey building constructed in rendered brick with a slate roof.</p> <p>The building has three bays with two shop fronts to the ground floor. The first floor has square bay timber windows which match the timber posts either side of the right hand shop unit.</p>	<p>The building has historical interest as a former Georgian townhouse dating from around 1780 and later subdivided into three units. The right hand shop unit retains large display windows on glazed black tiles and is of interest as a little altered shop front. The building is one of the oldest building in Wednesbury Market Place, and although has lost many original features retains aspects of its character and makes a positive contribution to the historic streetscape.</p>
<p>27/28 Market Place</p>		
	<p>A late C19 two storey building of terracotta brick construction with modern shop fronts to the ground floor. The building retains all of the original timber casement windows to the first floor which are in a Gothic Revival style with pointed brick arches and decorative brick surrounds. Between each window is decorative brickwork arranged in small squares and above them is a terracotta band with the original 'JOHN TAYLOR DUCE & SONS'. There is also decorative terracotta tiling across each elevation.</p>	<p>The building has architectural merit and retains much of its original decorative features and detailing. The architectural detailing and its prominent position on a corner plot give the building a dominating presence and high townscape value. The building has historical associations with a notorious local spirit merchant, John Taylor Duce, who demolished an Elizabethan public house in order to construct this building. The earlier building featured in the colliers and miners riots of August 1824 when a company of regulars from the</p>

		Staffordshire Yeomanry were mounted in the public house yard to control rioters, making the site historically interesting.
30 Market Place		
	An early-mid C19th, 3 storey building of brick construction. It retains all original 2/2 timber sash windows to the first and second floors, all of which have moulded stone architraves. The windows to the ground floor are also original 8/1 timber sashes. The ground floor is stone and has classical architectural detailing including three stone Doric columns.	The building displays an important aspect of the area's social and economic development in that it has been in continuous use as a bank since its construction. In addition, the building has high architectural merit with a largely unaltered principal elevation and classical detailing which make a positive contribution to the largely unaltered streetscape of Market Steet.
34-39 Lower High Street		
	A group of four late C18th , three storey buildings of brick construction. To the ground floor, there are later added late 19th century shop fronts which, as a group, mostly retain their timber console brackets, pilasters and moulded timber stallrisers as well as decorative mullions. To the first and second floor there are original 8/8 timber sashes with painted skewed stone lintels and key stones.	The buildings have architectural interest and merit, being good examples of largely intact historic shop fronts which make a positive contribution to the Market Place conservation area and allow for a better understanding of the area's economic and social history
46, 47, 48 and 49 Upper High Street		
	A row of five late C19th/early 20 th three storey buildings of brick construction with slate roofs and shop units to ground floor. The buildings are in smooth red brick with string courses and original 2/2 timber sliding sash windows. The units alternate between gables with timber panelling and large dormer roof windows with casements. Some of the ground floor shop units are original, but all	The row has architectural interest in terms of its quality of design and the retention of many of its original features, including to the shop fronts. Together the buildings contribute positively to the setting of the streetscape leading into the market place and the appearance of the conservation area.

	have retained their timber pilasters and fascia with console brackets and dentil work	
56 Lower High Street		
	A two storey brick built former house incorporating a former coach entrance to a rear yard. The building has two bays with a central door which has a stucco semi-circular head and key stone. The adjacent coach entrance has a decorative blue brick arch in headers with a stucco keystone and timber double doors. The windows are now boarded but also retain decorative stucco lintels, as does the pediment.	The building is a good example of the C18th-early C19th brick building style and retains many original features. The retention of the coach entrance has historical interest. It also has group value with a number of buildings along Lower High Street which collectively retain much of the medieval street form. Makes a particular contribution to the street scene of the Wednesbury Market Place conservation area.
8 - 13 Market Place		
	A row of C18-19th three storey buildings with shop units to the ground floor, primarily built of brick with contrasting brick finishes to the upper floors including string courses. Numbers 8 and 10 have decorative polychromatic brickwork and bay windows. Number 12 is plain in design but retains 6 over 6 sash windows. The eaves are articulated with brick dentil work and sandstone banding. The shop units at ground floor are predominately timber with some original details such as pilaster and console brackets. Number 13 retains decorative chimney flues.	The row has architectural interest and displays quality materials. The units have group value as a playful, eye-catching part of the streetscape leading to the Market Place. They are likely to retain the original footprint of the medieval settlement and despite some loss of features these properties make a positive contribution to the Wednesbury Market Place conservation area.
The Turks Head, 25 & 26 Lower High Street		

	<p>The Turks Head is a two storey public house of brick construction. It has a steep central gable which has stone banding and coping stones. To the first floor there are three windows which, although modern replacements, retain their decorative terracotta architraves and aprons. Above the central window is a terracotta cartouche which reads 'THE TURKS HEAD HOTEL'. To the ground floor are two pilasters with highly decorative faience tiling which flank a modern frontage.</p>	<p>The buildings use, and retention of the decorative terracotta and faience give the building architectural interest and merit, and it remains one of the most unique buildings on Lower High Street giving it a good townscape value.</p>
<p>K6 Telephone Box, Shambles</p>		
	<p>A rare surviving example of a K6 telephone box designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935-6 and known as 'the Jubilee Box' due its commemoration of the coronation of King George V, which is signified by the crown above the 'TELEPHONE' sign. Bright red in colour, it has a cast iron frame with a teak door, glass panes and concrete base.</p>	<p>The box is one of the last surviving examples of the K6 telephone box in Wednesbury and, although it appears to have lost some of its glass panes, is almost completely intact. The K6 is 'one of Britain's most recognisable pieces of industrial design'. Due to the high numbers of K6 boxes still in existence in the UK a representative number have been nationally designated to reflect their importance and architecturally iconic design.</p>

Other structures of interest

However, other assets which have historic interest and make a significant positive contribution to the character of the conservation area include:

- **32-33 Lower High Street** which is vernacular in scale and possibly of the early 18th century, although two modern shop fronts have been inserted and the roof and windows are modern.
- **48-48a Lower High Street** which, although substantially altered, retains some 18th century character.
- **R&J Discount Warehouse** on the Shambles, dates to 1908 and is the former engine house to Wednesbury Corporation's electricity generating works. Although the building has lost most of its original features, including its fenestration, and sits just outside the conservation area, it adds interest to an otherwise degraded Shambles, providing historic and visual interest to views out of the area.
- The **phone box** on the Shambles, which is a curious mid-20th century brick structure now in use as a bin store. Although in poor condition it retains its original window and door and decorative features (Figures 60-61).
- An **EIRR 1990s pillar post box** which is located outside the Post Office on the corner of Market Place and Spring Head.



Figure 60 Police Box, Shambles.



Figure 61 Police Box, Side Elevation, Shambles.

- **Two early 20th century horse troughs** (now used as planters) on the corner of Union Street and Upper High Street which have historic interest. They were donations to the town from Alderman John Hadley and, although not in their original location (they were moved from outside the urinals on High Bullen when the Northern Orbital road was built), the troughs enhance the streetscape and bring interest to the open space at the junction of Union Street and Upper High Street (Figure 62).
- A metal **Commemorative First World War bench** next to the Clock Tower (Figure 63).

There are no other buildings or assets that may warrant inclusion upon a register of local or national heritage assets.



Figure 62 Horse trough, Union Street



Figure 63 Bench, Market Place

Spatial analysis

The conservation area is formed by a series of tightly knit buildings which form a relatively dense pattern of settlement. Development is focussed around a triangular market place - a classic example of a medieval market place that evolved between the intersection of, and along, key thoroughfares. Despite much change over time, it has retained its overall character of a compact commercial centre. The streets remain closely aligned to the historic routeways (now Lower and Upper High Street and Riddings Lane) which pass through the area. Its buildings are arranged with their frontages facing onto the highway and, although these vary in width and scale, there are relatively few interruptions to the overall streetscape and there is an overall sense of a continuous and coherent late 18th/early 19th century historic commercial area.

Streets and open space, parks and gardens and trees

Historic surfaces

There is a mix of paving throughout the conservation area, with very little surviving historic paving. These include Staffordshire blue diamond paviours (Figure 64) on the east side of Market Place and smooth blue brick pavers adjacent to buildings on Upper High Street. Recent public realm work has reinstated traditional materials which have some historic resonance with the town, without being an accurate reinstatement. Elsewhere, the paving is modern in character and includes areas of red brick herringbone with contrasting blue header bricks.



Figure 64 Blue diamond paving, Market Place

Open Spaces

There are two key areas of open space in the conservation area, formed by the triangular market place and Union Street.

The market place is the largest open space and provides a focal point for this part of the town. It is enclosed by 18th 19th and some 20th century buildings and its wide medieval form is fundamental to the character of the conservation area and adds significantly to their setting of the buildings which surround it. The space has an important relationship with historic routes leading off the market place. The long, gently curved space creates a series of views, rather than a single vista.


At the east end of Union Street, at the junction with Upper High Street, is a modest area of open space in front of the William Archer pub. The early 20th century horse trough planters and several trees are a focal point and overall the space makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. The space provides important views up Walsall Street, and provides opportunities to view the historic buildings on Union Street, Upper High Street and Market Place, particularly corner buildings.

The main contribution of the two car parks in the conservation area is to provide important views of the rear of 18th and 19th century commercial buildings, particularly service ranges and extensions.

Table 2 summarises the contribution of open spaces to the character of the conservation area.

Table 2

Image of open space	Name/location	Contribution to character

	<p>Market Place</p>	<p>Positive. Focal point of conservation area. Shape likely unchanged since medieval period.</p>
	<p>Union Street</p>	<p>Neutral. Open space to view historic buildings surrounding and racking roofline down Market Place. Otherwise modern in character.</p>
	<p>Rear of Lower High Street/south side of Shambles</p>	<p>Positive. Enables views of rear of C18th-19th properties and service buildings on Lower High Street.</p>
	<p>The Shambles car park</p>	<p>Negative. Some important views of rear of C18-19th properties and rare surviving sections of C19th boundary wall, but overall has a modern character and issues which detract from overall character.</p>

Trees and Green Space

With the exception of Union Street, the townscape is devoid of deliberate planting, and although the greenery which is visible is generally positive, it is not a key contributor to the area's character. Table 3 provides an audit of trees and green space and an assessment of their contribution to character.

Trees and green space just outside of the conservation area also have a positive contribution to the area's character. Views north east up Spring Head are enhanced by a small lawn and Magnolia tree on the west side in front of the Central Methodist Church and beyond to mature trees screening Spring Head Carpark, lining Walsall Street and within the Memorial Gardens. They positively frame the significant buildings on this street and provide a more landscaped and municipal feel to elsewhere in the conservation area.



Figure 65 Trees and green space within the conservation area

Table 3

No on map	Image	Location	Comments	Contribution to character
1		North side Shambles	Fairly mature trees abutting pavement and boundary wall of carpark behind	Negative
2		South side Shambles	Deciduous trees on private land set back from the road surrounding car park. Taller than surrounding buildings, screen adjacent health centre.	Neutral
3		East end of Union Street	2 young trees and planters part of public realm	Positive
4		North side of Riddings Lane.	Possibly only visible garden in the conservation area. Enclosed within historic boundary walls. Views of key buildings behind.	Positive

5



Path leading off east side of Lower High Street.

Grass verge to north side of path. Little altered historic route leading towards Addison Terrace visible on the First Ordnance Survey map.

Neutral

Setting and Views

Several views looking into, through and out of the conservation area make an important contribution to its character and appearance and illustrate elements of its historic and architectural interest. Table 4 provides a summary of the key views and their contribution.

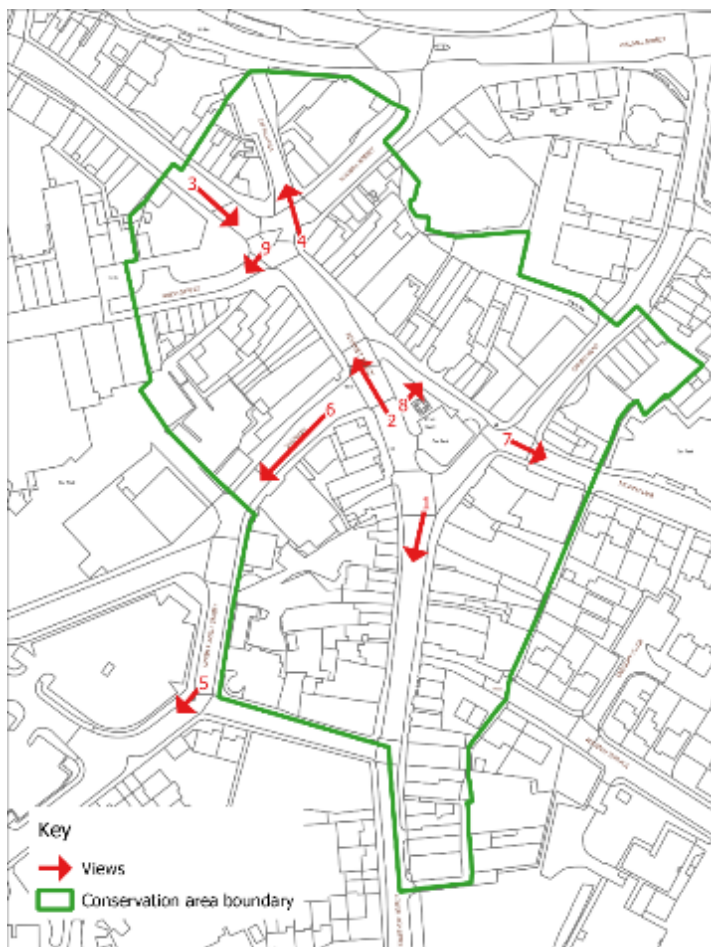


Table 4

Image	Direction Description of contribution to character
	<p>Views out of Market Place: Looking south from Market place down Lower High Street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows buildings maintaining the 18th century street form and roof line • Shows the important topology of the street down towards the Tame Valley
	<p>Views out of Market Place: Looking north along Upper High Street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows the scale and proportion of the 18th century buildings • Underlines the form and character of the space within the town occupied by the central historic market place • Incorporates the Clock Tower as an important visual focal point
	<p>Views into the Market square: Looking south from Upper High Street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows the importance of corner buildings which retain historic features • Provide visible rooflines and architectural detailing which add to the historic character of the streetscape
	<p>Looking north along Church Hill: View of St Bartholomew's Church spire (NHLE 1342678).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows the historic thoroughfare between the town and the parish church - the likely site of the earliest settlement at Wednesbury • Retains a key sight-line between the historic market place and spire



Vistas out of the conservation area:
Looking south west along Russell Street
towards the Holyhead Road.

- View towards cluster of designated assets
- Shows the Holyhead Road, an important spur road which redirected traffic from the conservation area in the 18th century



Vistas out of the conservation area:
View from the top of the Shambles out of
the conservation area across the
Staffordshire plateau.

- Shows the topography of the Black Country and the historic importance of Wednesbury's location on high ground.



Vistas out of the conservation area:
Riddings Lane looking east towards expanse
of green space at Sandwell Valley Country
Park.

- Shows Wednesbury's elevated position.
- Rare view of woodland from a highly urban area.



Groups of buildings:
East side Market Place

- Lively townscape resulting from number of stylistically different 19th and 20th century frontages.
- Retain scale and form of historic shopfronts.



Groups of buildings:
Union Street

- 1 and 1A have group value as 18th and 19th century buildings with a harmony of colour palate, materials and styles, with detailing such as hipped roofs and sash windows.
- Together they frame the entrance to Hitchin's Croft.

Several historic buildings located outside the conservation area boundary also make a positive contribution to its setting and views into and out of the area:

- **St Bartholomew's Church.** NHLE 1342678, Gr II. Important views of spire from within the conservation area serve as a reminder of the development of the settlement.
- **Wednesbury District Library,** Hollies Drive. NHLE 1077099, Gr II. The library frames views looking out of conservation area from Spring Head. (Figure 66)
- **Former Gaumont Cinema,** Walsall Street. Local list. The building adds to the historic character of Walsall Street and frames views into the conservation area from the A461. (Figure 67).
- **Telephone Exchange,** Camp Hill. The rear of the 1936-7 telephone exchange is visible from the Shambles Car Park and adds interest to the view south out of the conservation area. It serves as a reminder of the growth of the town between the Market Place and the Holyhead Road in the 20th century. The building is not currently on the Local List but is likely to meet the criteria- the very similar Telephone Exchange in Tipton has been recommended for inclusion.



Figure 66 Gr II Listed Library viewed from Spring Head.



Figure 67 Locally listed former Gaumont Cinema, Walsall Street.

Archaeological designations

The conservation area is identified as being within an Archaeological Priority Area within The Black Country Historic Landscape Character Assessment with *a road system that had probably largely been established in the medieval period* (Section C.7.68). The APA *has the potential to contain below ground archaeological remains (in less disturbed areas) which could provide insight into the location and development of Wednesbury in the medieval period*. Although it is acknowledged that *The settlement has been subject to significant post-medieval and modern development which is likely to have impacted upon any archaeological remains present* (Section C.7.69).

Nature designations

There are no nature conservation designations in the conservation area or proposed extensions.

Audit of Assets

An audit of the heritage assets in the area, including all buildings, structures and street furniture is presented as a gazetteer in appendix 1.

B. Sensitivity and Capacity for Change

Condition of the area

Wednesbury Market Place conservation area is listed on Historic England's 2022 Heritage At Risk Register. The condition is recorded as 'very bad' but with an improving trend and low vulnerability.

An assessment of the condition of the historic buildings in the conservation area was carried out as part of the production of this appraisal. None of the historic assets were considered to be in *very poor* condition overall however 8 properties were assessed as *poor* (Figure 68). The Gaumont Cinema, which sits just beyond the current boundary, is a prominent vacant building in a very poor state of repair and negatively impacts views into and out of the conservation area in its current condition.

Of the visible roofs only one was considered to be in poor condition. Unsurprisingly buildings of 19th century construction were more likely to have roofs assessed as *fair*. 15% of buildings had *poor* rainwater goods, mostly defective downpipes leading to visible signs of damp brickwork or rendered walls and parapets or gutters blocked with vegetation.

10 properties had doors and windows in poor condition, including decayed timber frames and missing and boarded openings. Of these over half were Locally Listed and the poor condition of doors and windows negatively impacted the special character of the important buildings. Their poor condition also made it more of a risk that historic (mainly sash) windows would be replaced by modern alternatives, further eroding the special character of the area.

A fifth of properties were assessed as having walls in poor condition. This was often related to defective rainwater goods leading to peeling render or brickwork with signs of disrepair. Some parapets were particularly poor and risk being lost or rebuilt, which would further erode the 18th century character of the roofline particularly in Market Place and Lower High Street.

Only 5 properties had shopfronts in *poor* condition however many buildings which make a strongly positive or positive contribution to the special character of the conservation area have shopfronts in 'fair' rather than 'good' condition. Consequently, the overall feel of the retail streetscape is one requiring maintenance and the repair and reinstatement of traditional features.

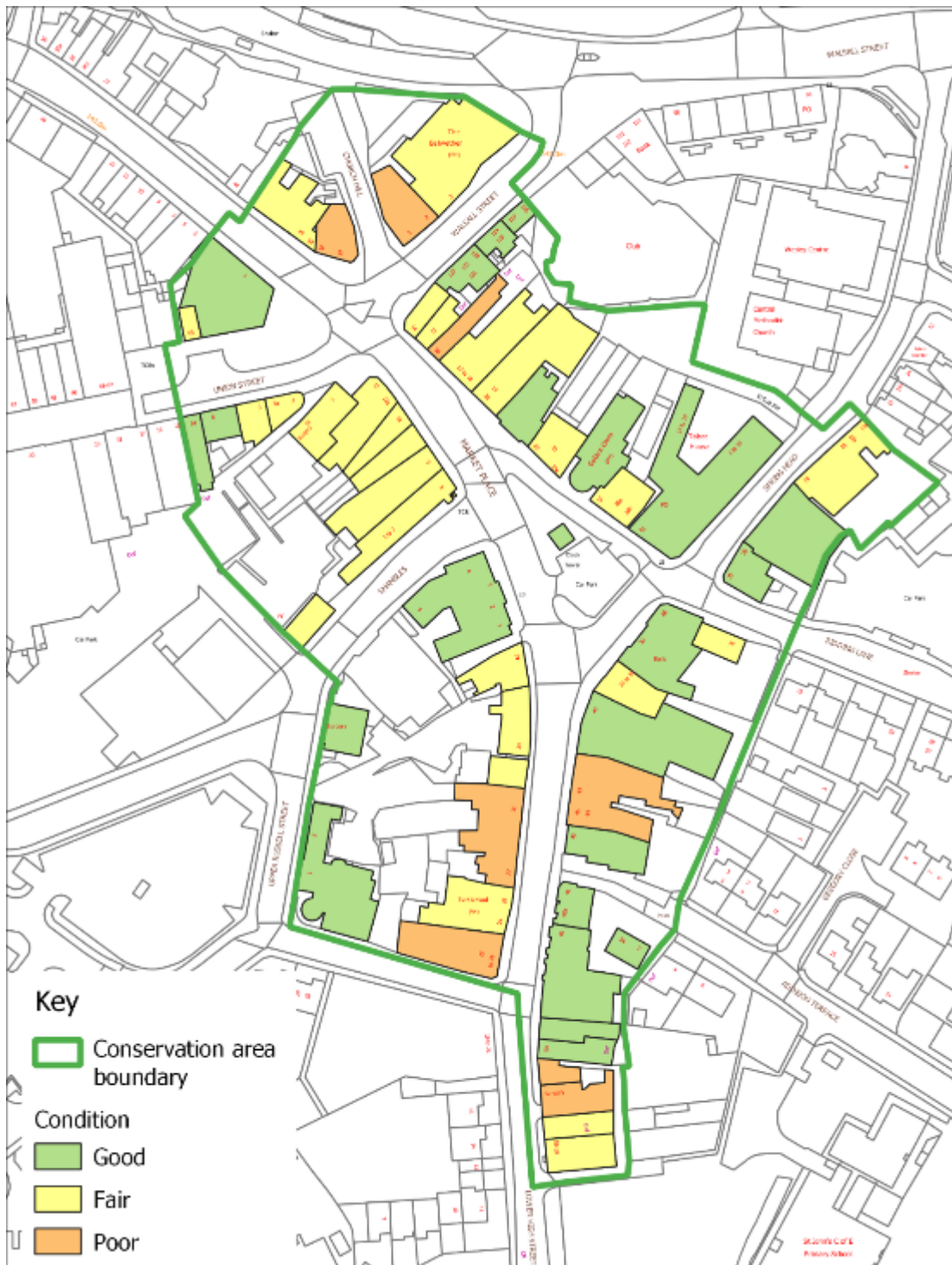


Figure 68 Condition of assets within the conservation area. © Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey Licence No 100023119.

Vacancy and underuse

10 buildings had vacant ground floor premises at the time of assessment (January 2023). Some of these appeared to be short term vacancies which, while temporarily impacting the overall feel of the area, are unlikely to place the buildings at risk. However, there are some examples of long term vacancy or underuse affecting properties which have architectural qualities which contribute to the special character of the area and which are deteriorating, notably 26 Market Place, 2 Union Street and 55 and 56 Lower High Street.

It is harder to assess upper floor vacancy, but most properties appeared to have some upper floor use. At least a third of upper floor use appeared to be residential and 11% commercial. Others appeared to be used for storage or potentially underused. Wednesbury has a low economic base and the current declining trend in use of commercial and office space is likely to continue to place ground floor units and upper floors at risk of vacancy and consequently disrepair.

In insensitive alteration

The overall quality of the area has been eroded by insensitive alteration, with 15% of properties having high levels of alteration and almost half with a medium level of detrimental change. Most of the ground floor shop frontages no longer have historic material and re-fronting to upper floors and facades has also eroded character. There are many examples where inappropriate replacement windows have been introduced, particularly replacing 6/6 or 8/8 paned timber sash windows with 2/2 Upvc frames. Very few historic doors survive, many have been replaced with plastic doors which have a residential rather than commercial character and negatively impact on the look and feel of the area.

Gap sites

There is a gap site between the Jubilee Health centre and 22-24 Lower High Street (which extends into Russell Street) which has a poor appearance and general feel of neglect. It is used mainly for ad hoc off street parking, despite being laid out as with a disabled parking bay and being an access route to the rear premises of Lower High Street (Figure 69).



Figure 69 Gap site Russell Street. Google Streetview.

There is a gap site on the eastern side of Upper High Street (the Grapes Public House until demolition in 1967, Figure 70) which sits just outside the north west boundary of the conservation area. This has a negative impact on views out of and into Upper High Street, detracts from the special character of the area, and breaks the continual line of properties lining the street.



Figure 70 Gap site, Upper High Street

Public realm

Work carried out in 2021-2 has significantly improved the general appearance of the public realm in the market place. However, elsewhere in the conservation area the street surfaces are a mix of materials, textures and colours. Lower High Street looks tired with tarmac and contrasting header bricks both in need of repair and renewal in places (Figures 71-73). Church Hill has a particularly poor appearance. Curb sides are in a poor state of repair in some areas, notably Lower High Street and Russell Street.



Figure 71 Paving Russell Street



Figure 72 Degraded public realm, Lower High Street



Figure 73 Paving Market Place

Open spaces

The Shambles Car Park currently makes a negative contribution to the special character of the area due to its poor visual appearance and visible presence of antisocial behaviour.

Hitchin's Croft has similar problems with fly tipping, graffiti and a poor street surface. This is a key pedestrian route and has some good surviving historic brickwork but is currently let down by its visual appearance (Figures 74-75).

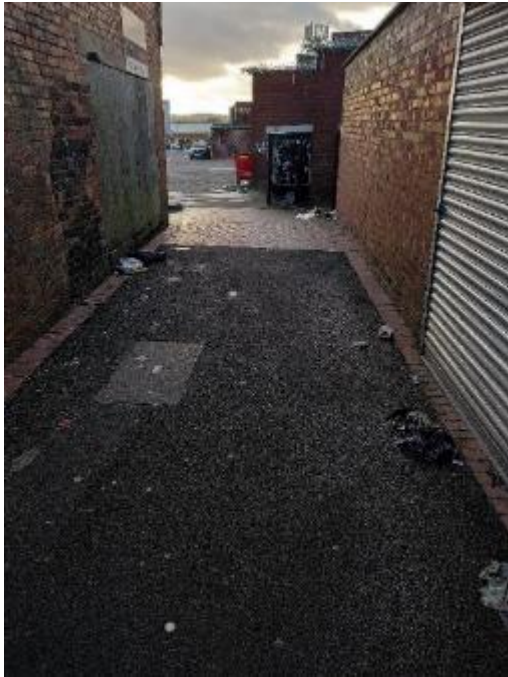


Figure 74 Hitchin's Croft facing south



Figure 75 Hitchin's Croft facing north

Poor or unsuccessful infill

The partially built premises on The Shambles (Figure 76) detracts significantly from the surrounding streetscape, and is a key contributor to the Shambles feeling neglected and underutilised. It is highly visible from both The Shambles and the car park behind, also negatively impacting views into and out of the conservation area. The building replaced early 20th century public conveniences which contained Edwardian detailing or quality of materials.



Figure 76 Left: Unfinished building, The Shambles, 2022 and Right: the Edwardian public conveniences it has replaced, 2011. Google Streetview.

The refronting of the rear of number 8 Market Place (facing on to The Shambles) is visually confusing and also impacts negatively on the feel of the street (Figure 77).



Figure 77 Rear extension of 8 Market Place, facing onto The Shambles.

Traffic and parking

Private car use is the dominant transport method experienced in the conservation area. Due to the Orbital route, the majority of traffic does not pass through the conservation area. However, the Orbital Road provides a clear barrier and adds to a feeling of enclosure particularly on Walsall Street/Church Hill, which is also noisier as a result.

Lower High Street, Market Place and Upper High Street can be busy at peak commuting and school pick up times. This adds a sense of vitality rather than congestion and has a neutral impact on the conservation area. Short stay parking and loading bays are laid out along all streets in the conservation area except Union Street. This adds a sense of constriction and enclosure at times, but is an intrinsic part of the commercial character of the area.

The car parks generally have a negative impact on the character of the conservation area due to their poor visual appearance.

Shopfronts and signage

Numerous properties display unsympathetic and poorly designed fascia and other signage. Common issues are:

- Shopfronts- particularly pilasters and fascias - in a poor state of repair (Figure 79)
- Prevalence of poor-quality materials
- Oversized fascia and lettering, not in keeping with the scale of the building and covering historic detailing
- Little design unity across shopfronts on the same building or with group value
- Inappropriate colour schemes which detract from the colours/detailing of the historic building
- Shopfront windows with an abundance of signage leading to a cluttered feel
- Use of external roller shutters, which creates an atmosphere of abandonment and impacts the areas sense of vitality in the daytime

Signage on buildings just beyond the conservation area boundary also has the potential to impact the look and feel of the area, such as that on Russell Street (Figure 78) which impacts views towards the historic frontages of Lower High Street.



Figure 78 Signage Russell Street



Figure 79 Poor quality signage, Lower High Street.

Minor changes resulting in loss of architectural detailing

Materials and detailing make an important contribution to the historic character of the conservation area and include locally distinctive styles and features, as well as providing evidence for the development and use of the area. Loss of these features through minor changes has affected many areas, often through the insertion and replacement of historic shopfronts and fenestration in the past. At both an individual and wider level, their loss has a significant cumulative negative impact on the conservation area.

Vandalism and antisocial behaviour

Buildings which are vacant or in a poor state of repair have attracted antisocial behaviour including graffiti, fly tipping and uncontrolled postering/advertising. This adds to the run-down character of the conservation area and enhances the feeling of neglect.

Lighting

Whilst most streets in the conservation area have adequate street lamps, Hitchin's Croft, a key pedestrian route between Union Street/High Street and The Shambles Car Park is currently unlit, leading to it feeling neglected and unsafe.

Summary of key issues

The main problems and pressures that have been identified in the conservation area are:

- Erosion of special character through loss of historic features and materials
- Poor presentation of The Shambles due to unsuccessful infill development
- Inappropriate signage detracting from special character
- Poor condition and presentation of many buildings and backlog of maintenance
- Low economic base resulting in higher vacancy rates
- Long term vacancy of some key buildings both within and just outside the conservation area which impact to the area's special character

- Commercial and residential redevelopment in the area between the conservation area and the Holyhead Road (particularly the Town Hall complex of historic buildings) results in the town feeling disjointed and two areas of historic significance disconnected
- Poor presentation of Hitchin's Croft including inadequate lighting
- High volume of traffic at peak times, balancing requirements of pedestrians, businesses and shoppers in a way which enhances the historic environment.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to the Conservation Area

The key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the conservation area have been summarised below. Recommendations for their future management are covered in the Conservation Area Management Plan (Section X).

Strengths

The conservation area has clear links with the past: The buildings and form of the Market Place conservation area have strong physical and documentary associations with the development of the settlement and its overall historic form has avoided significant encroachment from new buildings. This allows the conservation area to continue to be experienced as a historic settlement, and to be 'read' and understood in its landscape, historical and social context.

21st century development has respected the scale and form of the historic buildings: Generally modern development maintains the scale and form of the area, such as 40-41 Market Place, Woden House and 19A -19B Spring Head.

The conservation area maintains a commercial character: The buildings continue to be used for a variety of commercial and retail purposes, reinforcing the understanding of how the settlement developed.

The conservation area retains a local identity: A low number of chains/national businesses and a higher volume of independent businesses gives the Market Place a strong local identity which resonates with the historic character of the town centre.

Wednesbury has benefited from recent investment in the built environment: Public realm improvements, new outdoor market stalls, and active travel infrastructure have renewed the appearance of the town centre.

Weaknesses

Vacancy of some key buildings: Long term vacancy of some key buildings both within and just outside the conservation area negatively impact the area's special character.

Streetscape lacks cohesion: The current streets surfaces are a mixture of materials, textures and colours which means the conservation area feels disjointed and unconnected. Open space at the east end of Union Street is particularly cluttered with street furniture.

Poor presentation of open spaces: Car parks and Hitchin's Croft particularly compromise the special character of the conservation area as they attract anti-social behaviour including fly tipping and graffiti.

Proximity to superstore and out of town retail: There is a large supermarket just outside the conservation area boundary which affects the economic viability of the independent businesses

which struggle to compete with a national retailer. There is also a retail park 1 mile north of the conservation area which draws footfall away from the town centre.

Diversity of commerce: There is a concentration of several business types, particularly hair dressers, barbers and beauticians which total 12 within the conservation area. Although this reflects current demand and changing habits of the high street, it reduces the retail offer and impacts the resilience of the town centre. Although the high incidence of independent retailers is considered positive to the character of the CA, the lack of major retailers is a weakness to the overall health of the town centre.

Lack of understanding of the special qualities of the settlement: There is little information about Wednesbury's historic importance readily available in the town for residents, building owners and visitors. Although many residents and visitors are aware it is a historic town, the Conservation Area status is little known or understood. This has led to some previous work to buildings and boundaries being less than sympathetic to some of the key characteristics of the area.

Threats

Loss of original features: The character of the conservation area continues to erode as key features such as historic windows, shopfronts and facades are replaced and vacant buildings degrade.

Poorly designed development which is out of context: The town centre includes some examples of buildings which were renewed or rebuilt from the late 20th century onwards, some of which are of unexceptional or poor design and construction and pose a threat to the special character of the conservation area. Key issues include the use of an unsympathetic palette of materials, poor choice in the scale of development and a failure to conform with the visual characteristics of the streetscape.

Unfavourable economic conditions: Independent businesses are particularly vulnerable to an economic downturn, declining trends in high street retail and increasing costs of energy and commodities. Wednesbury's high concentration of local retailers means the risk of vacancy and high turnover of premises is increased.

Maintenance backlog: Many buildings and some areas of public realm are in poor condition due to lack of maintenance. Over time this could accelerate decay and loss of historic features and the conservation area's special character.

Opportunities

Increased consumer confidence resulting from recent investment: The town centre improvements to the public realm and relocation of the market place creates a more sustainable hub to the town centre and could boost Wednesbury as a shopping destination and bring renewed interest in development and further investment.

Growing population of the town: Over half of the proposed housing growth areas for Sandwell in terms of the number of dwellings to be provided through the Site Allocation Development Delivery Plan are located around the Wednesbury Town Centre area. This could boost footfall to the town centre and create more demand for retail and services.

Active travel improvements may bring new visitors to the town: New cycle and bus routes could boost visitor numbers to the town centre and provide opportunities for new business and services.

Develop design guidance for owners and developers based on the key characteristics of the settlement: A user-friendly guide outlining the ways in which alterations or new development could retain and enhance this significance should help guide future work.

3: Conservation area boundary

Reviewing the boundary

This conservation area appraisal has found that the existing conservation area boundary covers an area that represents the special historic and architectural interest of the historic town centre. This includes the Medieval core of the town and market place (identifiable through its street pattern) and contains features that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area that are desirable to preserve.

However, it has also considered the extent of the conservation area, and if there are opportunities to amend it. As a result, several potential extensions to the current boundary have been identified and considered, as outlined below (Figure 80).

Reducing the boundary to remove the buildings which have a negative impact on the special character of the CA has been briefly considered. However, the current boundary reflects well the medieval street pattern which is fundamental to this special character and therefore no reduction is recommended. The CAMP may help reduce the negative impact of particular properties and areas within the CA over time.

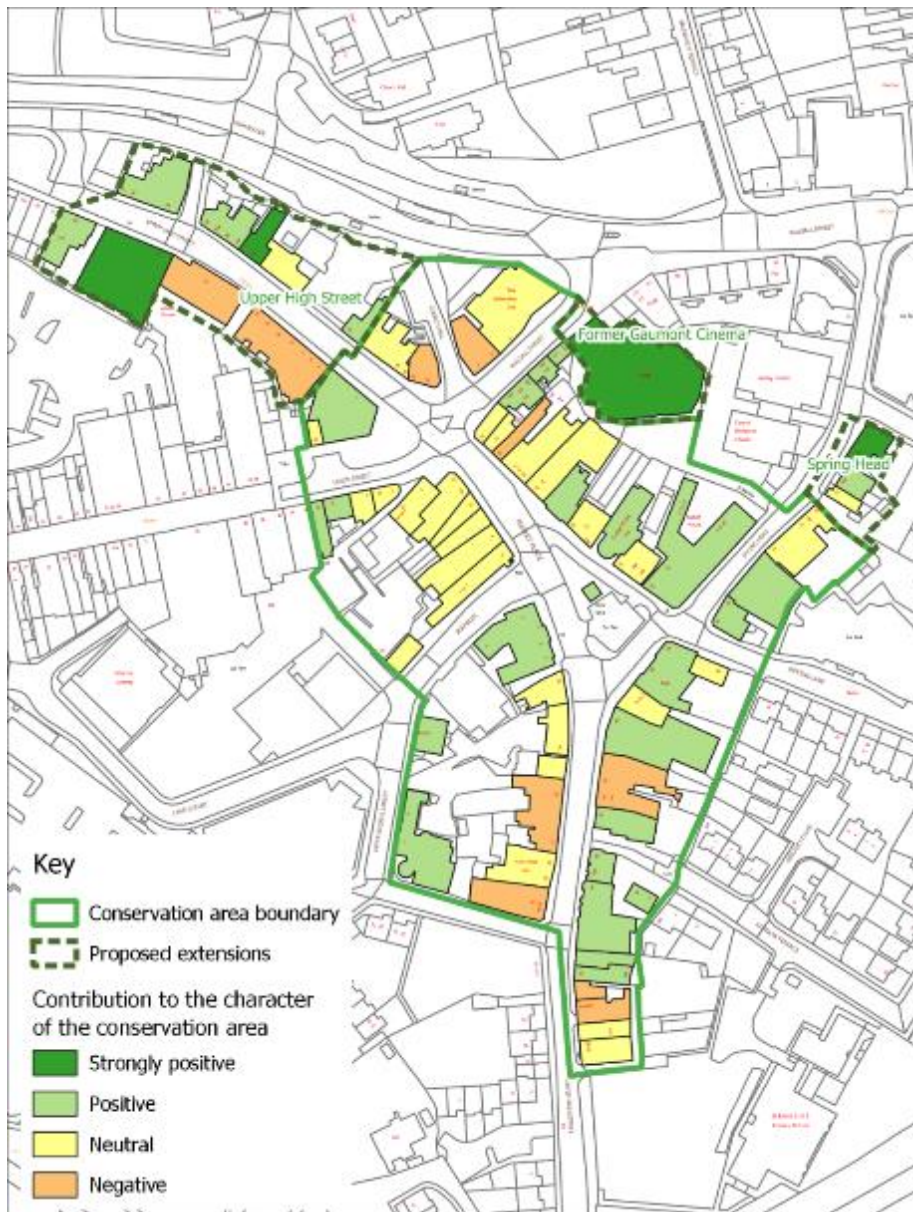


Figure 80 Proposed boundary extensions. © Crown copyright and database rights 2023 Ordnance Survey Licence No 100023119

Extension 1: Upper High Street

The current conservation area boundary stops abruptly at its northern boundary on Upper High Street. This street is an important part of the Medieval layout of Wednesbury with a largely unchanged form as far as High Bullen, where it now ends at the A461 ring road. Despite some late 20th century residential and office infill which dilutes its character, the rest of the street, particularly on the west side, contains a number of historically and architecturally interesting buildings which continue the special character of the conservation area as a dense commercial settlement with a range of 18th-20th century buildings.

Contribution to character

1. Part of the largely unchanged late Medieval street pattern of Wednesbury
2. Continues and enhances views into and out of the conservation area, maintaining scale and roofline (Figure 81)
3. Contains some notable historic buildings including:
 - **Lamp Tavern** (MBL5411)- Mid 19th century pub heavily altered in the early and mid- 20th century and now a restaurant. Retains original cellars and some character features of a Black Country pub and although largely rebuilt, a rare survivor of a once common building type along this street.
 - **31-34-** 20th century buildings with reproduction late 18th/early 19th facades/historic features including quoins, lintels, parapets, roundel, rainwater goods. Early 20th century style timber shopfronts, possibly retaining some original features (Figure 82).
 - **Webbs Funeral Directors-** Historic interest as a local family business trading from the same site in over 100 years. Retains a number of architectural features and an interesting commercial/light industrial character, now rare within the conservation area (Figure 83).
 - **37-** prominent 19th century survivor with some remaining features including chimneys and ridge tiles and reinstated timber shopfront (Figure 84).
 - **35-36-** Early 20th century Art Deco style building in poor condition but retaining original detailing and adds character to the street.
4. Modern infill (44-45) is positive and adds to the character of adjacent buildings. Number 44 (Teddy Grays) has cultural significance as a Black Country retailer.
5. The current use of the buildings reflects its historic role as a commercial centre with a number of independent, locally run grocers, barbers, services and cafes.

Benefits of inclusion

- Encouragement to retain historic features
- Influence over gap site development
- Encouragement of improved signage and general appearance which would enhance the buildings and overall feel of the street
- Discourage inappropriate change of use/redevelopment

Recommendation

The area up to and including the former Lamp Tavern on the west side is **recommended for inclusion** as per the boundary suggestion in Figure 80. This would be an extension of 0.620 hectares (1.532 acres) to the current conservation area.



Figure 81 Views south from Upper High Street towards Market Place



Figure 82 Buildings and shopfronts, Upper High Street



Figure 83 Funeral Directors, Upper High Street



Figure 84 East side Upper High Street

Extension 2: Former Gaumont Cinema

The Gaumont Cinema (MSD5538) opened in 1938 on the site of the 1915 Picture House. It was designed by cinema architects WE Trent, W Sydney Trent & HL Cherry. The cinema was renamed Odeon Cinema in 1964 and then Silver Cinema in 1972. It was closed in 1974 and was converted into Walker's Bingo Club which operated until 2010. The building is recommended for local listing for its historical interest and retention of much of its historic characters and features. It brings considerable interest to Walsall Street and frames views out of and into the conservation area.

Contribution to character

- Key early 20th century building with landmark qualities in the town (Figure 85)
- Demonstrates the community life of Wednesbury which is not currently represented within the conservation area
- Frames views into and out of the conservation area

Benefits of inclusion

- Opportunity to encourage redevelopment which will enhance the conservation area and preserve the special interest of the cinema

- Including public realm on corner of High Bullen is an opportunity to enhance an area of green space in keeping with that at the other end of Walsall Street (Figure 88).

Recommendation

The area up to and including the junction with the High Bullen is **recommended for inclusion** as per the boundary suggestion in Figure 80. This would be an extension of 0.143 hectares (0.353 acres) to the current conservation area.



Figure 85 Former Cinema, Walsall Street.



Figure 86 View into conservation area from top Walsall St. Tower of former cinema on L

Extension 3: Spring Head

A short extension to the current eastern boundary of the conservation area would bring the rest of the south side Spring Head street within the boundary. Numbers 14-15 are modern infill and do not contribute to the special character of the area, but numbers 12 and 13 add to the 19th century character of the street (Figure 87-88).

On the north side of Spring Head, the Central Methodist Chapel (1967) designed by architects Hulme, Upright and Partners, is also a candidate for inclusion as a distinctive mid-20th century addition which enhances views into and out of the conservation area and has communal significance (Figure 89).



Figure 87 Numbers 12, 13, 14 and 15 Spring Head.



Figure 88 Historic features, 12 Spring Head.



Figure 89 Spring Head, Central Methodist Chapel.

Contribution to character

- Continues the historic street pattern from the Market Place towards Walsall Street
- 2 19th century brick buildings with many surviving, good quality architectural features including brick pilasters and parapet (number 13) and sash, dormer and bay windows (number 12).
- Number 12 displays some typical 19th century Black Country decorative features from local materials including blue brick plinth and smooth red brick arches.
- Number 12 is another important corner building, with an impressive frontage turning Wharfedale Street. It is likely a former pub, which serves as a reminder of the prevalence of these buildings in the town centre in the 19th century.
- Sweeping vistas from Wharfedale Street across the Black Country

Benefits of inclusion

- Encouragement to retain historic features
- Encouragement of improved signage and general appearance which would enhance the buildings and overall feel of the street
- Discourage inappropriate change of use/redevelopment

Recommendation

The row from 12-15 Spring Head is **recommended for inclusion** as per the boundary suggestion in Figure 80. This would be an extension of 0.089 hectares (0.219 acres) to the current conservation area.

Extension 4: Holyhead Road and Masonic Lodge

This proposal would greatly increase the size of the conservation area. Part of the identified special character of the current area is the medieval street pattern and dense commercial centre around the market place. The Holyhead Road developed as a later spur road from the 18th century as the turnpike road was built to bypass the town centre. Whilst it is an important part of the history of the town, its later development gives it a different character to the market place conservation area with much wider streets and 19th century civic buildings on a grander scale to those found clustered around the High Street and Market Place. The focal buildings of the Museum and Art Gallery, Town Hall, Adult Education Centre and former Post Office are all nationally or locally designated for their distinctive characteristics and would not necessarily benefit from inclusion in the conservation area. Russell Street, which is proposed as the connecting route between the current boundary and Holyhead Road, has been redeveloped with a large supermarket (east) and residential, including a high rise block (west), which do not contribute to the special character of the area. There is a site line between Russell Street and the Holyhead Road which is captured as a significant view for the conservation area.

Similarly, the Masonic Lodge is locally listed for its special historic and architectural interest as a 19th century chapel of unusual stone construction, atypical of the regional nonconformist style. The Lodge is located within modern development and its setting does not have a visual relationship with the existing conservation area.

Contribution to character

- Charts the development of the town around a significant road in the mid-19th century
- A rare surviving 19th century chapel which serves as a reminder of the importance of non-conformism in the town

Benefits of inclusion

- Opportunity to encourage better links between the Lodge and Holyhead Road and the Market Place – making the town feel more cohesive
- Discourage inappropriate change of use/redevelopment

Recommendation

The historic buildings in this area are already protected through national or local designation, and much of the surrounding character has been lost. Whilst conservation area designation may influence the quality of future development in this area and provide an opportunity to link the Lodge and Holyhead Road to the Market Place in a more cohesive way (preserving and enhancing sight lines for example), including this area would greatly increase the size of the conservation area and may 'dilute' its quality. This area is distinct in character to the current conservation area and if it were to be included it is recommended it form a separate character zone.

On balance the area is **not recommended for inclusion**.

Extension 5: Brunswick Terrace and Squires Walk

Brunswick Terrace runs north from the Orbital Road. It was laid out in the 19th century, appearing on the 1846 tithe map as a field boundary.

Contribution to character

- The topography of the street is pronounced, leading from the conservation area up towards the church via Reservoir Passage.
- Likely part of the early settlement which developed to the south of St Bartholomew's Road, with high potential for below ground archaeology.
- Of most interest is a boundary wall running along Squires Walk. It is locally listed as a rare example of 'Pockstone' walling- a material made in the 18th and 19th centuries during wildfires which reduced parts of the surrounding coal fields to cinders and produced hardened (mainly clay) material, known as 'Pockstone'. The wall has later blue brick capping. This was used extensively for boundary walls and road paving. The wall serves as a reminder of the industrial character of Wednesbury alongside its development as a commercial centre.
- Number 3 is a terrace of 19th century houses similar in style, material and detailing to those found within the conservation area
- Numbers 5-6 Walsall Street, which turn the corner of the Terrace (number 5 is called The Squires) can be considered part of the 19th century character which must have characterised Walsall Street before the development of the Orbital Road. Number 5 unusually retains a front garden and boundary wall.
- Residences at the northern end are grander, early 20th century buildings in a different style and form, with gable ends and canted bays. Few historic features survive.
- A stretch of high boundary wall in red brick with blue hogs back caps is a rare survivor of typical 19th century walling found in the Black Country. It is similar to that found to the rear of The Talbot on Spring Head.
- Views between the conservation area and Brunswick Terrace are obscured by 93-98 Walsall Street, a 20th century three storey retail and office block.

Benefits of inclusion

- Brings a site of likely early settlement with high potential for archaeology into the conservation area
- Encouragement to retain historic features
- Discourage inappropriate change of use/redevelopment

Recommendation

Whilst number 3 and numbers 5-6 and Squires Walk wall in particular may contribute to the historic character Wednesbury, this area is bisected by High Bullen and does not have a visual relationship with the rest of the conservation area. It's residential character is distinct from the commercial character of the Market Place conservation area, however it was not considered to have sufficient interest to merit a separate character zone. Local listing is deemed appropriate for the wall and the topography, which is perhaps the most significant feature relating to the current conservation area, is unlikely to change. These areas should also be considered as areas of High Historic Townscape Value within the Black Country Plan.

On balance, **this area is not recommended for inclusion.**

Future action

There may be merit in exploring whether Brunswick Terrace, Squires Walk, Hollies Drive and the buildings along the north side of Walsall Street between these streets have sufficient interest for designation as a separate conservation area due to the high survival of good quality 19th and early 20th century residential and civic buildings.

4. Conservation Area Management Plan

Purpose

The successful long-term management of the Market Place conservation area depends on management that respects its special character and helps address known weaknesses and threats to this character. This Conservation Area Management Plan has been developed as a means of bringing together the various tools available to ensure that the special character and quality of the Market Place conservation area is retained and enhanced. It aims to help guide future positive management of the conservation area, both in terms of planning measures and the strategic planning framework, and through the identification of a series of 'Management Principles' for Sandwell Council and stakeholders to help guide future work.

It builds on the conservation area appraisal carried out in 2023 (Section A) which outlines the historic significance, character and heritage values of Wednesbury Market Place, including the various aspects – built, natural, historic and archaeological - which together create a sense of place within the settlement and which combine to justify conservation area designation of the area for its special character and interest. The appraisal also sets out the current key problems and pressures that may impact on the area (Section B) and affect its special qualities.

Principles for the Future Management of the Conservation Area

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats outlined in Section B of the conservation area appraisal have been developed into the following overarching principles to help guide the future management of Wednesbury Market Place conservation area in a way which will protect and enhance its special character.

1. Ensure that future development in the area considers the characteristic materials, form, height and scale of the buildings in the town centre, including the siting of buildings within historic plot boundaries.
2. Protect and enhance significant views and vistas through, into and out of the conservation area.
3. Discourage further loss of historic features by encouraging owners and occupiers to understand their importance and incentivising maintenance and good design.
4. Improve the appearance of the townscape through decluttering the public realm and ensuring future repairs/renewal of street furniture, surfacing, lighting and signage is standardised and in-keeping with the look and feel of the Market Place.
5. Enhance urban greening by removing trees and vegetation which have a negative impact and prioritising planting which has a positive impact on character.

Tools for future management of the conservation area

Existing Planning policies

Existing policies effecting the Wednesbury Market Place conservation area are contained within the **Black Country Core Strategy** (2011) and the **Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADDPD)** (2012). These documents form part of Sandwell MBC's Local Development Framework and guide planning decisions. Relevant policies are outlined below.

The Black Country Core Strategy

The Black Country Core Strategy was formally adopted in 2011 and sets out the strategic planning policy for the four Black Country Local Authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton), including a vision and objectives to guide future development and growth in the Black Country in the period up to 2026. The Core Strategy seeks to protect and enhance distinctive assets in different centres and makes specific reference to the markets in Wednesbury (Section 4.41).

Policies of particular relevance to the management of the Wednesbury Market Place Conservation area include:

CEN4 Regeneration of Town Centres which states development for retail, office, entertainment and leisure will be permitted, where they are of an appropriate scale that reflects the size and role of the town centre. Of particular importance is to encourage new convenience development and support proposals to extend or refurbish existing stores where they are well integrated and to serve to anchor the centre as a whole. Individual retail developments of up to 650 square metres net for convenience goods and 500 square metres gross for comparison goods will be considered appropriate. The use of upper floors will be encouraged to accommodate relevant town centre uses.

CPS4 Place-Making which requires development to demonstrate a clear understanding of the historic character and local distinctiveness of an area and show how proposals make a positive contribution to place-making and environmental improvement. It requires new design to be influenced by context and heritage in order to enhance local character.

ENV2 Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness which states that all development should aim to protect and promote the special qualities, historic character and local distinctiveness of the Black Country.

TRAN4 Creating Coherent Networks for Cycling and Walking which states that where possible, existing transport links should be enhanced and links extended to serve new development.

Site Allocations Development Delivery Plan Document

At a Borough-wide level, the Site Allocations and Development Delivery Plan Document (SADDPD), adopted in 2012, covers key policies which are in place to protect the distinctive landscape, individual buildings and the archaeology of Sandwell. The SADDPD specifically identifies the historic centre of Wednesbury as an '*Area where local distinctiveness and character should be enhanced and protected*' (13.39).

HE1 (Listed Buildings) safeguards and encourages appropriate enhancement of listed buildings and their settings and resists demolition.

HE2 (Conservation Areas) requires that development affecting conservation areas should preserve or better reveal the positive elements of the conservation area.

HE5 (Archaeology and Development Proposals) recognises the importance of recording, preservation and evaluation of archaeology.

HE3 (Buildings and Structures of Local Historic/Architectural Importance) relates to buildings of local significance which do not meet the criteria for statutory listing. It requires proposals for alteration, extension or change of use to clearly demonstrate positive contribution towards the architectural or historical significance of the building or structure. Demolition is resisted unless it can be demonstrated no viable use can be found or that the proposal has substantial public benefit.

HE 6 (Areas of Townscape Value) requires proposals for change within these areas to firstly identify the significant elements of the area and ensure proposals will make a positive contribution towards these components.

SAD DM2 (Poster Panels) states poster advertising may be appropriate in predominantly business parts of conservation areas and Areas of Townscape Value though care will be needed in how they are accommodated.

SAD Policies DM10 (Shop Front Design) and **DM8 (Design and Installation of Shop Front Roller Shutters)** require that applications for the installation of shop fronts respect the scale and character of shops and the street scene and that historic and good quality elements are retained.

The SADDPD was initially intended to guide development within the Borough until 2021. The Local Authority are currently preparing a new Sandwell Local Plan which is scheduled for adoption in 2025. The Draft Sandwell Local Plan will be published for consultation in Autumn 2023. Until the new Local plan is adopted, the SADDPD, along with the Black Country Core Strategy, continue to be the statutory Local Development Documents.

Planning Measures

In addition to Local Planning policies, the Planning Acts give powers to Local Planning Authorities to deal with issues affecting the historic environment and its proactive management. The key relevant measures include:

POWER	STATUTORY BASIS	PURPOSE
Amenity of Land Notice	s.215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990	To require an owner or occupier to carry out works to improve the external condition of a building or land if its neglect is adversely affecting the surrounding area.
Urgent Works Notice	For listed Buildings: s.54 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 For unlisted buildings: s.76 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To allow a local authority to directly carry out works that are required urgently to make an unoccupied listed building weather-tight and thus prevent further deterioration. To allow a local authority to directly carry out works that are required urgently to make an unoccupied, unlisted building weather-tight and thus prevent further deterioration.
Repairs Notice	s.48 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To allow a local authority to specify to the owner works it considers reasonably necessary to secure the future of a listed building. If the repairs are not carried out, the power can lead to compulsory purchase of the building.
Compulsory Purchase Order	s.47-48 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	When all other measures fail, to allow the local authority to compulsorily acquire a listed building in order either to repair it itself or sell it on to be restored by a buildings preservation trust or other new owner.
Planning Enforcement Notice	s. 172 Town & Country Planning Act 1990	To remedy a breach of planning control
Listed Building Enforcement Notice	s.9 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To remedy a breach in listed building control

Restriction of Deemed Consents Discontinuance notices	Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England Regulations 2007) Regulation 8	Discontinuance Action is when a local planning authority serves a notice (a discontinuance notice) under Regulation 8 requiring that the displaying of advertisements with deemed consent be discontinued.
Area of Special Advert Control	Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England Regulations 2007) Regulation 20	This is where a local authority defines an Area of Special control in order to have more control over advertisements
Removal of permitted development rights – Article 4 directions	Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015	Allows local planning authorities to remove certain permitted development rights by issuing an ‘Article 4’ direction. This provision means that a planning application needs to be submitted for work which does not normally need one.

A Framework for Design & Maintenance Standards

Based on the potential threats identified in Section B of the Conservation Area Appraisal, Sandwell MBC have developed the following framework to support design and maintenance standards in the conservation area.

Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Design Standards

Planning applications will be determined with particular reference to the contents and findings of the Wednesbury Market Place conservation area Appraisal and the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (BCHLC). Accordingly:-

1. New build and development should seek to:

- **Be of good quality design which takes account of its historic context:** Any partial or complete new build is expected to be of good quality design and construction and positively enhance the quality of Wednesbury's historic townscape. Development should use a sympathetic palette of materials and a scale of development that maintains the historic character of the street and particularly the 2-3 storey, narrow fronted buildings that provide the distinctive character of this historic market town.
- **Reinforce and enhance historic street patterns:** Any partial or new build should retain or, where lost, reinstate Wednesbury Market Place's historic street patterns, ensuring street frontages are continuous, and avoiding presenting the backs of buildings and servicing arrangements to established public routes and spaces, retaining or reinstating continuity with the historic streetscape.

2. The retail areas will be expected to have:

- **Good quality shopfronts and signage:** Any changes to shopfronts or signage will be in accordance with policy and ensure that signage, alterations or replacement shopfronts use materials and a scale proportionate to the building. Internally illuminated shop front signage will not generally be considered to be acceptable.
- **Security measures,** where required, should be designed so as to be inconspicuous; retail units be expected to have internal security fittings which are invisible externally and avoid concealing historic details. Shutters should be either grille or punched with a high degree of visibility.

3. Where relevant, proposals for alterations to buildings within the conservation area will be expected to:

- **Retain or, where lost, reinstate architectural detailing:** any new proposals for shopfronts or changes to windows or doors will be expected to restore historic detailing where possible and use traditional materials and techniques for new work and repairs.

4. The positive reuse of historic buildings will be encouraged by:

- **Considering high quality proposals positively:** The sensitive reuse of partially or completely vacant buildings will be encouraged in order to increase usage of buildings and tackle any underlying character of neglect. In retail and commercial properties, the emphasis will be on

retaining, economic activity at street level where viable, but the more effective use of upper floor space will be encouraged. Any wholesale change of use will be expected to retain the character and appearance of the area.

5. Work to the Public Realm will be expected to:

- **Maintain historic and new areas of paving:** ensuring that utilities, repairs and new work in the conservation area reinstate the high-quality new paving on a like for like basis.
- **Support the replacement of unsympathetic paving with traditional paving and designs:** ensuring that any future alterations or updating of the paving scheme/pedestrianised zones in the conservation area reinstate high quality new materials.
- **Consider signage and street furniture:** ensuring that proposals for new or replacement signage and street furniture are sited in locations sympathetic to the historic character and appearance of the area. Any new elements will use the palette of recent work through the HSHAZ and designs established to develop a cohesive appearance and sense of continuity across the conservation area.

Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Maintenance Standards

‘Maintenance’ is work that is necessary to protect the fabric of a building and keep it weatherproof. It does not include any work to put right significant problems, or work needed to bring a building in poor repair back to good condition. Carrying out active annual maintenance prevents the onset of serious structural problems which may need expensive repairs in the future. Some maintenance works will be required annually. Others, such as the clearing of gutters and vegetation, may need to be undertaken several times a year. Typical tasks include:

- regularly inspecting buildings to check their condition and identify any problems that need attention;
- making sure that gutters are free of debris and are in working order
- replacing slipped roofing tiles or slates, to stop rainwater getting in
- repainting timber windows and doors at least every 5 years
- repointing walls and clearing plants growth such as ivy or vegetation from the base of walls.

Putting the Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) into Practice

The Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) will be used in conjunction with Sandwell Local Plan Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal and the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (BCHLC) to ensure sensitive interventions to conserve, repair and enhance the historic fabric of Wednesbury Market Place.

The Council will use the CAMP to:

- Provide the basis for the proactive management of the conservation area through informing future Council policy formulation and decision making;
- Act as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, use of planning powers and exercise of the Council’s duties under the Planning Acts, as a result of its companion status to the Conservation Area Character Appraisal;

- Fulfil the Council's statutory duty in regard to s.71 and s.72 of the Planning (LB&CA) Act 1990;
- Illustrate the local planning authority's commitment to have regard to government policy for conservation area management
- Promote the protection of the Historic Environment through available planning processes.
- Clearly illustrate the Council's commitment to strong measures and actions for protecting and enhancing Wednesbury Market Place conservation area.

The following table outlines the key actions and responsibilities for putting the CAMP into practice.

CAMP Aim 1: Address known threats to the conservation area		
<i>ACTION</i>	<i>ACHIEVED THROUGH</i>	<i>TIMEFRAME</i>
Ensure consistent decision making across all Council services to ensure special regard is paid to the significance of the town's historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent use of relevant Local Planning Policies and Planning Measures to address known threats 	2023-2033
Secure quality development that respects the character of the Wednesbury Market Place conservation area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) Consistent use of the 'Framework for Design and Maintenance standards' contained within the adopted CAMP at section 3.3 	2023-2033
Actively enforce the reversal of unapproved detrimental actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of statutory powers where available through Planning Measures (see table 1, Section 3.2) 	2023-2025
Tackle the neglect and dereliction of historic buildings and poor presentation of open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of statutory powers available through Planning Measures (see table 1, Section 3.2) 	2023-2033
Improve quality, safety and connectivity of pedestrian routes through the conservation area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of statutory powers available through Planning Measures (see 3.2 above). 	2023-2033
CAMP Aim 2: Support the maintenance, repair and enhancement of the public realm in the conservation area		
<i>ACTION</i>	<i>ACHIEVED THROUGH</i>	<i>TIMEFRAME</i>
Ensure a cohesive approach to future public realm improvements in the conservation area or its setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently use the adopted palette and designs for the HSHAZ in new work; Support the replacement of unsympathetic paving with traditional paving and designs: ensure that any future alterations or updating of the paving scheme/pedestrianised zones in the conservation area reinstate high quality new, materials. 	2023-2033
Improve quality and presentation of open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove vegetation which negatively impacts character Encourage urban greening where it enhances the character of the CA or its setting 	2023-2033

CAMP Aim 3: Engage the community in managing and promoting the value of Wednesbury's historic environment		
<i>ACTION</i>	<i>ACHIEVED THROUGH</i>	<i>TIMEFRAME</i>
Engage building owners and tenants within any newly adopted CA boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write to building owners and tenants informing them of the CA, sharing the CAA and CAMP and signposting to available support 	2023-2024
Ensure the Community and local business stakeholders have a role in monitoring and promoting actions that will enhance conservation area management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Markets Manager and Conservation Officer continue regular dialogue 	2023-2026

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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Dudley Local Plan – proposed response to draft local plan consultation
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA Councillor Peter Hughes
Director:	Director of Regeneration and Growth Tony McGovern
Key Decision:	(c) to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
Contact Officer:	Team Leader Planning Policy – Patricia McCullagh Patricia_mccullagh@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations


- 1.1 That approval be given to Sandwell’s response on the draft local plan consultation for submission to Dudley MBC as set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 That in connection with 1.1 above, the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to amend the responses as necessary.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to consider and agree the council’s response to the Dudley MBC local plan consultation.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods – there is an opportunity for Dudley’s Local Plan to help meet some of Sandwell’s housing land shortfall.
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4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Following the decisions of the four Black Country local authorities to cease work on the Black Country Plan (BCP), each authority is now beginning work on their own local plans.

Sandwell Council are currently consulting on their draft Local Plan and have identified a shortfall of 18,606 homes and 143ha of employment land. The council is therefore reliant on neighbouring authorities to contribute to meeting our needs through the allocation of land in their respective local plans, that is additional to that required to meet their local needs.

Engagement with neighbouring authorities on local plan preparation currently takes place through the Duty to Cooperate (DtC) under the Localism Act 2011. DtC is an ongoing process and officer discussions about our respective plans will be ongoing. The consultation period for the Dudley Local Plan runs from 11th November to 22nd December 2023. As the deadline for the consultation precedes the date of this Cabinet a holding response will be issued followed by a formal response from Cabinet in due course.

The key issue is the impact on the wider housing and employment land supply of Dudley’s decision to remove certain sites from consideration.

Dudley are proposing a reduction in the supply of land for housing in its local plan compared to that proposed in the BCP. This is a result of their intention to not allocate land that is currently in Green Belt.

The BCP proposed that a total of 1,117 net additional homes would be provided in Dudley over the period 2020-39 in the Green Belt. The Dudley local plan proposes 10,876 homes over the period 2023-41 (not including any in the Green Belt). Housing need in Dudley over this period is 11,954 homes (664 homes per year).



The plan states that this will result in a shortfall of 1,078 homes. If the Green Belt sites identified for housing in the BCP were brought forward, this would meet their shortfall and create a surplus of 39 homes. This would therefore negate the need to export the shortfall of 1,078 homes to other authorities in the wider area under the Duty to Co-operate.

In December 2022, the Government consulted on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The changes included an addition to para 142 which would affect the potential future use of the Green Belt for strategic housing;

“Green Belt boundaries are not required to be reviewed and altered if this would be the only means of meeting the objectively assessed need for housing over the plan period.”

If this change was implemented, Dudley would not need to review its Green Belt. However, Dudley’s actions are premature as local authorities are still awaiting the outcome of this consultation. Therefore, until the outcome of the consultation is known Dudley are asked to look to allocate those sites that were previously found suitable and available in the Green Belt to meet their housing need in full.

Furthermore, the proposed changes do not stop adjacent authorities from contributing to their neighbours’ housing and employment land shortfalls.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 If Sandwell did not respond to the consultation this would mean that future discussions on assistance with housing shortfalls may be hindered and the Council would not be able to speak at the Examination in Public to address any issues with Dudley’s Local Plan.



6 Implications

Resources:	There are no financial implications from the course of action recommended in this report.
Legal and Governance:	<p>A 'Duty to Cooperate' is a legal duty created under the 2011 Localism Act, Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The legal duty requires local planning authorities and other bodies (including Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, the Marine Management Organisation, County Councils and infrastructure providers) to engage on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries.</p> <p>The Duty to Cooperate is the means for ensuring that strategic planning issues that are likely to have an impact beyond immediate local plan areas are addressed appropriately with the relevant partners, to maximise the effectiveness of policy and plan-making. Responding to the consultation enables discussions on future assistance with housing shortfalls to take place.</p>
Risk:	The Council's corporate risk management strategy has been complied with, to identify and assess the risks associated with this decision / recommendation. This has identified that there are no significant risks that need to be reported.
Equality:	An EIA has not been carried out. This is a response to another local authority's local plan; each local authority carries out an EIA as part of the plan making process and ensures that any impacts likely to affect local communities/ groups/ individuals can be taken into account when decisions are made on the content and direction of the Local Plan.
Health and Wellbeing:	Delivery of improved habitats and environments through up to date policies in Dudley will support community health and wellbeing in those communities in close proximity to Dudley by creating opportunities for people to connect with nature and undertake group



	activities such activities as walking and exercise together.
Social Value:	Dudley’s Local Plan will play an important part in delivering the spatial and land use aspects including housing, employment and education goals, these could benefit neighbouring councils like Sandwell.
Climate Change:	Having an up to date plan in Dudley will enable the authority to contribute towards climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and meeting net zero targets which will benefit neighbouring authorities including Sandwell.
Corporate Parenting:	Dudley’s policies and proposals in the Plan aim to ensure that the education requirements arising from new development will be delivered and good quality jobs are available once young people leave education, along with a choice of living accommodation that will meet their needs. This could benefit neighbouring authorities like Sandwell.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Dudley Local Plan – proposed response to draft local plan consultation

8. Background Papers

Documents for Dudley Local Plan can be viewed at this link
<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/dudley-local-plan/>



Appendix 1

Dudley Local Plan – Proposed response to draft local plan consultation

The Dudley local plan is a draft plan at Regulation 18 stage. The proposed plan is a ‘hybrid local plan’ which means that it is based on the proposals in the Black Country Plan (BCP) and the consultations carried out for that plan. As with the Sandwell Local Plan, it also contains draft policies from the BCP that have been adapted to be more specific to Dudley. The plan is intended to replace all previous development plan documents covering Dudley Borough including the Black Country Core Strategy and Areas Action Plans for Brierley Hill, Dudley, Halesowen and Stourbridge.

A significant difference compared with the draft BCP however is that a reduction in the supply of land for housing is proposed. This is as a result of the intention not to allocate land that is currently in Green Belt. The BCP proposals for Dudley included the provision of housing slightly in excess of local need to contribute towards the shortfalls in Sandwell, and to a lesser extent Wolverhampton. The draft Dudley local plan however proposes to supply less than enough to meet local needs, which means that this shortfall will need to be exported to neighbouring authorities.

As was the case with the BCP, the Dudley local plan also significantly under-provides sufficient employment land to meet the borough’s needs, although the proposed supply is slightly higher than that in the BCP.

The Spatial Strategy at para 3.11 determines that exceptional circumstances to review the Green Belt boundary have not been triggered as Dudley’s housing and employment shortfalls are not considered significant.

However, para 61 of the NPPF is clear that *“In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.”*

Dudley should take account of the amount of housing to be planned for not just within its own borough, but also the Black Country and wider Greater



Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA). This includes the housing shortfall of 18,606 arising in Sandwell until 2041, identified in the draft Sandwell Local Plan. Considered collectively the housing shortfalls in the GBBCHMA are significant and warrant a review of the Green Belt.

The BCP proposed that a total of 1,117 net additional homes would be provided in Dudley over the period 2020-39 in the Green Belt. The Dudley local plan proposes 10,876 homes over the period 2023-41. Need in Dudley over this period is 11,954 homes (664 homes per year). The plan states that this will result in a shortfall of 1,078 homes. If the Green Belt sites identified for housing in the BCP were brought forward, this would meet their shortfall and have a surplus of 39 homes. This would therefore negate the need to export the shortfall of 1,078 homes to other authorities who are themselves struggling to meet their own needs.

The Viability Appraisals for both authorities suggest that a significantly greater proportion of Dudley's proposed housing allocations are viable or marginal on both brownfield and greenfield sites compared to Sandwell.

The Dudley Viability Appraisal recommends a tiered approach to affordable housing provision similar to Sandwell but with Dudley having higher percentage provision. This could mean that more affordable housing could be delivered for the HMA by releasing greenfield / Green Belt sites within Dudley as a greater percentage of affordable housing could be secured with sites remaining viable or marginal.

Sandwell Council recognises that local concerns have resulted in Dudley being unwilling to consider the use of Green Belt to help meet the need for housing. However, the resulting under-supply will place additional pressures on the housing supply in other authority areas and make it more difficult to demonstrate to authorities outside the Black Country that authorities within the Black Country have sought to maximise their supply before seeking to export some of it.



In December 2022, the Government consulted on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The changes included an addition to para 142 which would affect Green Belt;

“Green Belt boundaries are not required to be reviewed and altered if this would be the only means of meeting the objectively assessed need for housing over the plan period.”

If this change was implemented, Dudley would not need to review its Green Belt. However, Dudley’s actions are premature as councils are still awaiting the outcome of this consultation. Therefore, until the outcome of the consultation is known we would urge Dudley to look to allocate those sites that were previously found suitable and available in the Green Belt to meet their housing need in full.

Furthermore, Para 25 still requires joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies and sets out that they should *“determine where additional infrastructure is necessary, and whether development needs that cannot be met wholly within a particular plan area could be met elsewhere”*.

Para 67 in the consultation paper also states that *“Strategic policy-making authorities should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area, which shows the extent to which their identified housing need (and any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas) can be met over the plan period. The requirement may be higher than the identified housing need, if it includes provision for neighbouring areas, or reflects growth ambitions linked to economic development or infrastructure investment.”*

So even if the proposed changes to para 142 are implemented, there is still scope for neighbouring authorities to seek to help to contribute to neighbouring shortfalls.

The Dudley local plan proposes 25ha of additional employment land compared with the 22ha proposed in the BCP. Both these figures are well below the net need of 72ha. This means that 47ha of employment land to serve Dudley will need to be ‘exported’ to neighbouring authorities in the Black Country and to those adjacent authorities which have a strong economic relationship with the authority. The supply of suitable land for employment development in Dudley is physically constrained, so it is recommended that no concerns are raised on this topic.



The Dudley local plan contains a large number of policies about other topics. Most of these are site-specific or are about development management and are similar to those proposed in the BCP. As such, they raise no direct concerns for Sandwell.

There appears to be a mistake in paragraph 12.1 in which the text explains that the Council has pledged to achieve net zero carbon by 2050. The Council's website suggests this should read 2030.



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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2023

Subject:	Social Value in Sandwell Policy
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA Councillor Peter Hughes
Director:	Regeneration and Growth, Tony McGovern
Key Decision:	Yes - Significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
Contact Officer:	Business Manager Regeneration, Jenna Langford jenna_langford@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet approve the Social Value in Sandwell Policy that will apply to all Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council commissioners, all expenditure made on behalf of the council, for all services, goods, and works contracts, and planning officers determining planning applications that are over 10 residential units or exceed 10,000 sqm.
- 1.2 That Cabinet give approval for a tendering evaluation quality weighting of 10-30% on Social Value for all services, goods and works contracts and Full Council be recommended to approve an update to the existing Contract Procedure Rules to reflect this change, which is currently 5-30%.
- 1.3 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Head of Procurement to determine if and how the Social Value in Sandwell Policy is applied to contracts to ensure proportionality against Social Value weightings and contract value thresholds.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The existing Social Value Policy (2010-2013) for Sandwell is not fit for purpose in that it does not reflect contemporary best practice and does not align with the Social Value in Sandwell priority as set out in the Sandwell Business Growth Plan, approved by Cabinet on the 15 November 2023. The policy currently only applies to services and goods contracts; however, the Social Value in Sandwell Policy proposes to go further and include works contracts.
- 2.2 The current tendering evaluation weighting of 5-30% on Social Value for services and goods contracts is not ambitious enough, considering the contract values of services, goods, and works the council as an anchor organisation commissions, the planning applications it determines, and the investment it levers into the borough. Increasing the minimum weighting to 10% with a maximum of 30% demonstrates the council's commitment to maximising Social Value outcomes that can be derived due to the council's influence as an anchor organisation.
- 2.3 To apply proportionately and prioritise resources to achieve greater social value, a contract type and value matrix has been developed (see Table 1), comprising works, goods, and services, contract types with values ranging from <£200k to £2m> with three levels detailing the extent to which the Social Value in Sandwell Policy would apply. Level 1 is for lower value contracts and requires commissioners to consider, seek, and record social value benefits where practical. Level 2 is for mid value contracts and requires Social Value metrics to be included in the tender evaluation process and a Social Value action plan to be produced covering the contract term. Level 3 is for high value contracts and requires Social Value metrics to be included in the tender evaluation process and a Social Value Delivery Plan to be produced. Recommendation 1.3 of this report requests that Cabinet-delegate authority to the Head of Procurement to determine if and how the Social Value in Sandwell Policy is applied to contracts to ensure proportionality against Social Value weightings and contract value thresholds, to mitigate any potential negative impacts on other quality




evaluation considerations required on particular contract types i.e. Adult Social Care.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Services Contracts	<£200k	£200k to £1m	£1m>
Goods Contracts	<£1m	£1m to £2m	£2m>
Works Contracts	<£1m	£1m to £2m	£2m>
Level 1 – consider, seek, and record social value benefits where practical Level 2 – metrics included in tender evaluation process and action plan for the contract term Level 3 - metrics included in tender evaluation process and Social Value Delivery Plan required			

Table 1 Contract Type and Value Matrix

2.4 The emphasis of the Social Value in Sandwell Policy is to encourage the retainment of wealth within the local economy to ensure economic growth that is inclusive and benefits Sandwell communities. The Social Value in Sandwell Policy defines “Local Employment” and “Buying Locally” as being within Sandwell or the West Midlands Combined Authority Area (WMCAA).

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>A Strong and Inclusive Economy Encouraging Social Value within a local area is a powerful catalyst for local economic growth. It serves as an engine that propels numerous benefits throughout the community and has a ripple effect that contributes to the overall well-being and prosperity of the area.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 In November 2023, Sandwell Council approved the Sandwell Business Growth Plan and the economic priority of ‘Social Value in Sandwell’ making a commitment to develop a Social Value Policy along with a



framework of support for commissioners, Sandwell's anchor organisations, and contractors to employ and buy locally through embedding good social value practice within all contracts. Anchor organisations have an important presence in a locality due to being largescale employers and purchasers of goods and services, controlling large areas of land and/or having relatively fixed assets. Such organisations include Councils, NHS Trusts, Universities and Colleges, Housing Groups, and large strategic companies. With this presence Anchor Organisations have a significant influence in-terms of their potential to build community wealth through an inclusive economy through the jobs they create, employment practices, the physical spaces they occupy, the commissions they manage and the supply chains they use.

- 4.2 In addition on the 12 December 2023 the council signed the Anchor Network Partnership charter, where Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, as an anchor organisation declared to make a long-term commitment to use their influence, resources, and assets to build a strong and inclusive economy for Sandwell. The council agreed to use its influence to build an Inclusive Economy in Sandwell; to understand barriers to local spend and find ways to increase spend of the council within the Sandwell and West Midlands economies, to help build capacity for local suppliers to bid for opportunities through consideration of procurement practices, to understand barriers to Sandwell's workforce accessing employment & skills opportunities and consider accessible pathways to increase local workforce recruitment, and finally to use its influence to support the Borough of Sandwell becoming carbon net zero by 2041.
- 4.3 If approved, the Social Value in Sandwell Policy is the first step in enshrining the council's commitment into the council's procurement practices and applies to all commissioners and planning officers within Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.
- 4.4 Statutory requirements of the Social Value Act 2012 only apply to service contracts (and goods or works contracts where there is a service element) above the appropriate threshold in the Public Contracts Regulations. Through this policy, the council can take this further by embedding Social



Value requirements within all commissioning and procurement activity to include goods, services, and works. The Social Value in Sandwell Policy requires commissioners to think about how they achieve outcomes in a more integrated way at the pre-procurement stage. Rather than thinking about services in isolation or in the short term, this approach requires commissioners to consider long term costs, sustainability and how inclusion of additional social value outcomes can potentially reduce pressures in other areas and provide capacity and funding for improved community benefits.

4.4 The main objectives are for commissioners to consider the additional benefits to the community from a commissioning / procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services, and works. They are to consider more than just the financial transaction, and factor in the benefits of health, happiness, wealth, safe, resilient communities and enables sustainable change and improvement for all. Types of Social Value benefits often accrue value to different people, communities or organisations in different ways and are not always easy to define and measure. The policy provides four pillars of Social Value through which outcomes and benefits can be defined, unlocked, and delivered:

- Employment & Skills
- Local Spend
- Community Benefits
- Environment

4.5 To apply proportionately and prioritise resources to achieve greater social value, a contract type and value matrix has been developed as part of the policy, which indicates the extent to which Social Value in Sandwell Policy would apply (see 2.3). The matrix is informed by the National Social Value Taskforce and is comparable with other Social Value policies within the Black Country. In addition to the matrix, Sandwell Council in its role as Local Planning Authority would continue to embed a Social Value Delivery Plan in all Planning Applications that are over 10 Housing Units, or over a capacity of 10,000 sqm. in commercial developments, schools, hospital builds etc.



- 4.6 The Social Value in Sandwell Policy proposes to increase the weighting within the tender evaluation process to between 10%-30%. The application of weighting would depend on the type and value of the contract. For example, it is expected that Levels 1 & 2 contracts would include a weighting between 10-15%, with Level 3 contracts including a weighting between 15-30%. Where elements of Social Value are essential to the delivery of the project they can be included in the specification and in some instances, a PASS/FAIL weighting could be applied.
- 4.7 The current weighting for Social Value within the tender evaluation process is between 5-30%. The policy proposes to increase the weighting to reflect the value and influence the council has in the local economy, as an anchor organisation. Sandwell's Anchor Network organisations have a combined budget of over £1.5bn, with Sandwell Council alone spending more than £500m on goods, services and works. In addition, Sandwell's Regeneration Pipeline forecasts £2.9b of investment into the borough by 2027. By tapping into this investment and spend power there is opportunity to secure and deliver Social Value outcomes and increasing the weighting of Social Value in the tender evaluation process is considered proportionate to the value of opportunity.
- 4.8 In consultation with Procurement Services, it has been agreed that should the Social Value in Sandwell Policy be approved, the forthcoming revised Procurement Strategy will align to and reference the Social Value in Sandwell Policy.
- 4.9 The policy does however recognise that a framework of support will be required for commissioners, to enable them to strive for and achieve more Social Value in Sandwell. Should the Social Value in Sandwell Policy be approved, a suite of support will be developed, delivered, and published by the Sandwell Business Growth Team and will accompany the launch of the policy. The framework of support will include additional guidance and templates tailored to specified audiences, workshops and webinars for commissioners and prospective tenderers, case studies and examples of best practice.



4.10 To measure the impact of social value outcomes in a reportable way, the Council align their Social Value measures to meet the National Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMS). The framework of support will include examples of TOMS to aid commissioners.

4.11 It is proposed that the Social Value in Sandwell Policy would be reviewed periodically in consultation with stakeholders to consider any changes in priorities, or should adjustments be required to the thresholds or weightings. This would also include the periodic review of the comprehensive framework of guidance and tools accompanying the policy.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 The Council does not adopt the Social Value in Sandwell Policy.

5.2 The Council retains the existing weightings and thresholds.

5.3 The Council considers alternative weightings and thresholds within a Social Value in Sandwell Policy.

6 Implications

Resources:	The implementation of the Social Value will be undertaken through existing resources within council.
Legal and Governance:	The Social Value in Sandwell Policy accords with the Social Value Act 2012 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and will be incorporated within the revised Procurement Strategy.
Risk:	The Social Value in Sandwell Policy has been developed in line with guidance from the National Social Value Taskforce, the Social Value Act 2012, and the Council's procurement team. In addition, the Policy will be periodically reviewed to address any issues that arise from the policy implementation or the increase in weightings from 5%-30% to 10%-30%.



Equality:	Not applicable.
Health and Wellbeing:	Not applicable.
Social Value:	Encouraging Social Value within a local area is a powerful catalyst for local economic growth. It serves as an engine that propels numerous benefits throughout the community and has a ripple effect that contributes to the overall well-being and prosperity of the area.
Climate Change:	Not applicable.
Corporate Parenting:	Not applicable.

7. Appendices

Appendix One - Social Value in Sandwell Policy.

8. Background Papers

Sandwell Business Growth Plan.





Social Value in Sandwell Policy

Unlocking Potential, Growing Shared Prosperity

January 2024



Introduction

In setting out its commitment to Social Value in Sandwell, the council aims to enable our commissioners, contractors and partners to provide employment and skills opportunities for local people, provide local supply chain opportunities for our businesses, and community benefits for our voluntary organisations to create a more inclusive and thriving local community.

Encouraging Social Value within a local area is a powerful catalyst for local economic growth. It serves as an engine that propels numerous benefits throughout the community and has a ripple effect that contributes to the overall well-being and prosperity of the area.

Sandwell's Anchor Network organisations have a combined budget of over £1.5bn, with Sandwell Council alone is spending more than £500M on goods, services and works. In addition, Sandwell's Regeneration Pipeline forecasts £2.9b of investment into the borough by 2027. By tapping into this investment and spending power there is opportunity to secure and deliver Social Value outcomes.

Through this policy, we establish a set of principles to ensure that our procurement activities and those of our partners and businesses, generate positive social, environmental, and economic impacts for our communities. The policy goes beyond profit and financial considerations to maximise the broader well-being of society. The Policy promotes responsible procurement practices, sustainability, and the equitable distribution of benefits, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and resilient Sandwell.

1 Policy Context

- 1.1 In November 2023, Sandwell Council approved the Sandwell Business Growth Plan and the economic priority of 'Social Value in Sandwell' making a commitment to develop a Social Value Policy along with a framework of support for commissioners, Sandwell's anchor organisations, and contractors to employ and buy locally through embedding good social value practice within all contracts. Anchor organisations have an important presence in a locality due to being largescale employers and purchasers of goods and services, controlling large areas of land and/or having relatively fixed assets. Such organisations include Councils, NHS Trusts, Universities and Colleges, Housing Groups, and large strategic companies. With this presence Anchor Organisations have a significant influence in-terms of their potential to build community wealth through an inclusive economy through the jobs they create, employment practices, the physical spaces they occupy, the commissions they manage and the supply chains they use.
- 1.2 For Sandwell this policy defines "Local Employment" and "Buying Locally" as being within Sandwell or the West Midlands Combined Authority Area (WMCAA), preferably within 20 miles of Sandwell.
- 1.3 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 states "for procuring the provision of services, ... goods or the carrying out of works...the authority must consider how what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area and, in conducting the process of procurement, how it might act with a view to securing that improvement."
- 1.4 This policy requires commissioners to think about how they achieve outcomes in a more integrated way at the pre-procurement stage. Rather than thinking about services in isolation or in the short term, this approach requires commissioners to consider long term costs, sustainability and how inclusion of additional social value outcomes can potentially reduce pressures in other areas and provide capacity and funding for improved community benefits.
- 1.5 The policy applies to all Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council commissioners, all expenditure made on behalf of the council, and planning officers determining planning applications that are over 10 residential units or exceed 10,000 sqm.

2 Application of Social Value in Sandwell

- 2.1 For Sandwell, the main objectives are to consider the additional benefits to the community from a commissioning / procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services, and works. It considers more than just the financial transaction, it factors in the benefits of health, happiness, wealth, safe, resilient communities and enables sustainable change and improvement for all. These types of value often accrue to different people, communities or organisations in different ways and are not always easy to define and measure. For Sandwell we have designed the four pillars of Social Value through which outcomes can be defined, unlocked, and delivered (fig.1).

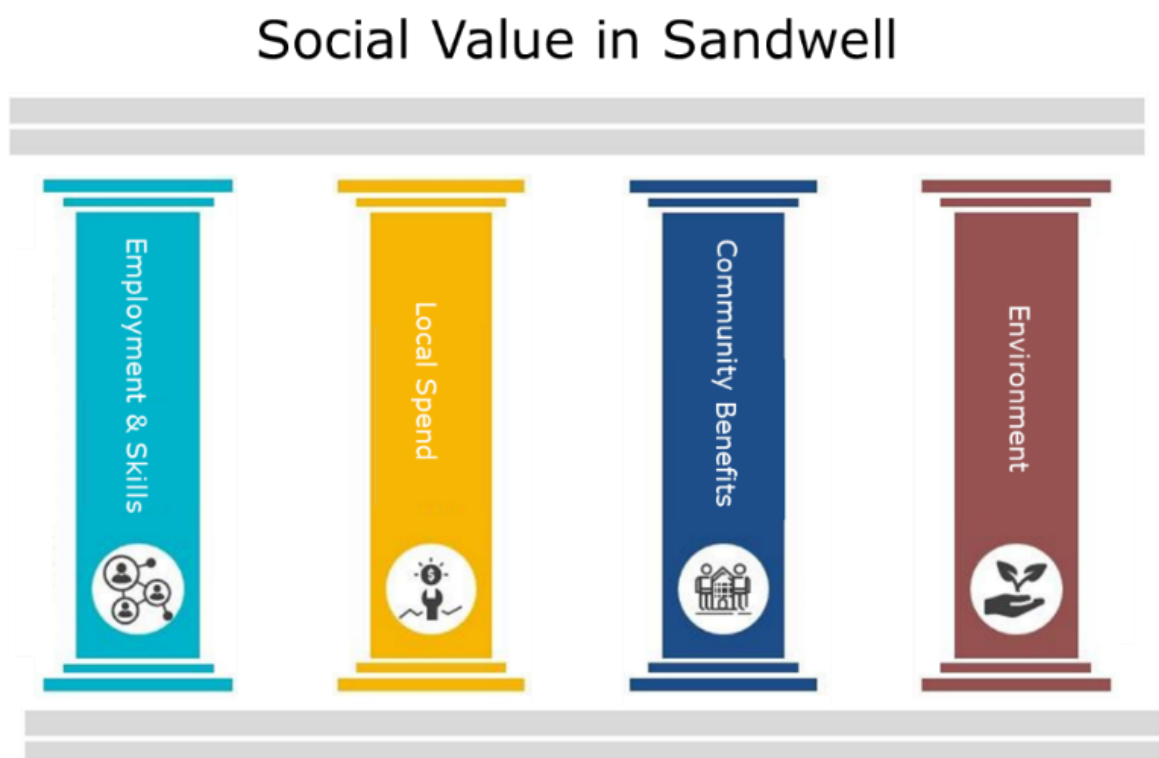


Figure 1 The four pillars of Social Value

2.2 Statutory requirements of the Social Value Act 2012 only apply to service contracts (and goods or works contracts where there is a service element) above the appropriate threshold in the Public Contracts Regulations. For Sandwell, we are taking this further by embedding this policy within all commissioning and procurement activity. To apply proportionately and prioritise resources to achieve greater social value, a contract type and value matrix has been developed, which indicates to what extent the Social Value in Sandwell policy will apply.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Services Contracts	<£200k	£200k to £1m	£1m>
Goods Contracts	<£1m	£1m to £2m	£2m>
Works Contracts	<£1m	£1m to £2m	£2m>
Level 1 – consider, seek, and record social value benefits where practical Level 2 – metrics included in tender evaluation process and action plan for the contract term Level 3 - metrics included in tender evaluation process and Social Value Delivery Plan required			

Figure 2 Contract Type & Value Matrix

2.3 The Council will ensure that social value is embedded in its commissioning and procurement processes according to thresholds in figure 2. When a Social Value Delivery Plan is required it will be used to identify the key performance indicators agreed with the awarded supplier/contractor. This will be monitored during the contract to capture all outcomes.

2.4 It is critical that Social Value outcomes are considered and planned at the earliest stage of a procurement process and that commissioners are specific and clear about Social Value expectations to enable comprehensive tender evaluation. However, it is recognised that a flexible approach for some contracts may be appropriate in identifying outcomes and measures for Social Value and that we are not too prescriptive initially, allowing commissioners to indicate the outcomes and measures that are relevant and proportionate to the contract.

2.5 Planning Officers will embed a Social Value Delivery Plan in all Planning Applications that are over 10 Housing Units, or over a capacity of 10,000 sqm. in commercial developments, schools, hospital builds etc.

- 2.6 The Social Value weighting within the tendering process will be between 10% - 30% of the evaluation. The application of weighting will depend on the type and value of the contract. For example, it is expected that Levels 1 & 2 contracts would include a weighting between 10-15%, with Level 3 contracts including a weighting between 15-30%. Where elements of Social Value are essential to the delivery of the project they can be included in the specification and in some instances, a PASS/FAIL weighting could be applied.
- 2.7 Social Value is to sit within all procurement activity across the council, including the social economy sector's wider remit towards the inclusive growth to support opportunities that will benefit Sandwell residents, communities, and businesses. Therefore, it is important that commissioners are specific and clear about the social value expectations, so that the tender can be evaluated and monitored effectively against those expectations.
- 2.8 Commissioners may need to take a flexible approach for some contracts in identifying outcomes and measures for social value. Allowing outcomes and measures that are relevant and proportionate to the specific contract. Where a contract is unable to achieve enough social value outcomes to warrant an action plan or social value delivery plan as indicated in figure 2 the council will seek alternative social value benefits.
- 2.9 Adopting a council wide approach will ensure consistency and lead to achieving a greater value social value for the local area.

3 Monitoring & Evaluation of Social Value in Sandwell

- 3.1 To measure the impact of social value outcomes in a reportable way, the Council align their Social Value measures to meet the National Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMS) see figure 3.

TOMS What does it stand for?	
Themes	Visionary Social Value areas for consideration.
Outcomes	Positive changes within communities an organisation wants to achieve.
Measures	Quantifiable actions that organisations can take to deliver outcomes.

Figure 3 TOMS

3.2 This Framework for Measuring Social Value has been developed by the National Social Value Taskforce Group, to help commissioners consider the most appropriate outcomes and measures. The following are some examples of objectives and social themes to help achieve Social Value in Sandwell:

- **Growth, Skills and Employment:** promoting growth and development where we operate to ensure that our communities develop new skills and gain meaningful employment.
- **Promoting Local Businesses:** recognising the importance that local businesses play within the community in terms of job creation, working with local supply chains and wealth generation; promoting sustainability of existing businesses to support their growth and income directly linked to their success through their ability to pay business rates.
- **Creating Healthier, Stronger Communities:** with budget cuts and restricted services, we recognise that we need to build stronger and deeper relationships with the voluntary and social enterprise sector within our supply chain; helping build local knowledge and resilience. Helping build local knowledge, resilience, and healthy workforce
- **Protecting and Improving our Environment:** working with local businesses and communities to ensure Sandwell is cleaner, greener, and safer to live.
- **Social Innovation:** recognising opportunities to promote innovation amongst our suppliers and looking to showcase best practice.
- **Planning and Development:** ensuring that consideration of social value sits alongside community benefits within the early stages of project planning and development.
- **Digital Strategy/ Inclusion:** supporting residents, communities, VCSEs and SMEs to have the skills and capability to use the internet as more and more information and services become accessible online.

4 Review & Support

- 4.1 The council will periodically review its Social Value in Sandwell Policy in consultation with stakeholders to consider any changes in priorities.
- 4.2 A comprehensive framework of guidance and tools accompanies this policy and will also be reviewed periodically with stakeholders.
- 4.3 The framework of guidance and tools is available at www.sandwellbusinessgrowth.com
- 4.4 The Sandwell Business Growth Team are also available to provide advice and support business_growth@sandwell.gov.uk
- 4.5 The Procurement team are available to support on all activities >£100K, Guidance and templates can be found here.

Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Sandwell Local Development Scheme 2023
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA Councillor Peter Hughes
Director:	Director of Regeneration and Growth Tony McGovern
Key Decision:	Yes Type (c) - an executive decision that is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough
Contact Officer:	Strategic Planning and Transportation Manager – Andy Miller andy_miller@sandwell.gov.uk Senior Planning Policy Officer – Samantha Holder samantha_holder@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations



- 1.1 That approval be given to the update of the Sandwell Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2022.
- 1.2 That the Director for Regeneration and Growth be authorised to make minor changes to the Local Development Scheme that may be required prior to making it available to the public, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA.







2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the updated Local Development Scheme for the period 2023 - 2026.
- 2.2 The LDS is the Council's three-year project plan that identifies which local plan documents will be produced by the Council, in what order and by when. Any new documents would be subject to Cabinet and Full Council approval at the relevant stages.
- 2.3 The Council needs to review its planning documents at regular intervals to assess whether some or all of them need updating. The LDS therefore also provides information on the timetabling of several existing approved planning documents that need to be reviewed.
- 2.4 Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare their LDS and make it available to the public; there is no longer a requirement to submit or report on them to the Secretary of State.
- 2.5 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out. The LDS is a programme of the documents to be produced over the next three years and does not in itself create policy. Documents within the LDS would be subject to an EIA as part of their preparation.
- 2.6 For these reasons it is recommended that the updated Sandwell LDS be accepted.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people – the LDS helps to set up policies that will contribute to the delivery of facilities, services and opportunities for children and young people through the local plan process.</p>
	<p>People live well and age well - Health and wellbeing is a key theme addressed throughout the documents of the LDS. It will promote healthy living and create opportunities for active lifestyles and healthy transport choices including walking, cycling and outdoor recreation.</p>



	Strong resilient communities - The LDS will build in effective community involvement and will be important to local communities.
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods - The LDS will play an important part in delivering the spatial and land use aspects of the Council's vision 2030, particularly as it relates to housing, employment, transport, environment and education goals.
	A strong and inclusive economy - The BCP and Sandwell Local Plan will provide the regeneration framework for future investments and projects.
	A connected and accessible Sandwell - Sustainability is a key theme addressed throughout the documents of the LDS. The LDS will help to deliver sustainable, prosperous communities, an integrated transport network and reduce the need to travel by car.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The initial LDS was approved by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport on the 1st February 2005 and has subsequently been revised annually. The last LDS review was approved by Cabinet in September 2022 (minute 75/2020 refers). The LDS sets out the documents that will be prepared by the Council as part of the Development Plan for the Borough.
- 4.2 Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare their LDS and make it available to the public; however, there is no longer a requirement to submit a report on them to the Secretary of State.
- 4.3 The NPPF was originally revised in February 2019 and is used in plan-making and the determination of planning applications and appeals. The changes further emphasise the need for authorities to keep their plans up-to-date and to make sure enough housing is built to meet local needs.



4.4 The NPPF was revised further in 2021 and again in 2023. The presumption in favour of sustainable development has been retained, but for plan-making it has now been updated to have a “greener” focus, including new requirements for development to improve the environment and mitigate climate change.

Local Plan Update

4.5 A plan-led system operates in England, involving the preparation of plans by the Local Planning Authority that set out what can be built and where. Under the current planning system, the Council is required to prepare local plan documents that set out how the local area may change over the next few years.

4.6 In Sandwell the Local Plan currently consists of:

- Black Country Core Strategy – adopted 2011
- Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document - adopted 2012
- West Bromwich Area Action Plan – adopted 2012
- Smethwick Area Action Plan – adopted 2008
- Tipton Area Action Plan - adopted 2008

4.7 The existing Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 and provides the framework for various Site Allocation Documents and Area Action Plans, which set out local policies and site allocations for individual authority areas. The existing Strategy has shaped the housing, industrial and retail growth of the area, whilst protecting the environment and greenbelt. It has also been successful in supporting regeneration for the past 12 years.

4.8 The Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document identified sufficient sites and areas to meet the Borough's housing and employment needs, and protects the Borough's historic, built and green infrastructure. The Area Action Plans set out a vision and strategy for the future development of West Bromwich, Smethwick and Tipton and guide future change and development in these areas.

4.9 It is worth noting that the SADD horizon date of 2021 means that the current Local Plan is now partially out of date and is approaching the point where it would be considered wholly out of date due to the age of



other documents and the significant changes to local and national circumstances that have occurred since their adoption.

Sandwell Local Plan

- 4.10 The current second tier of the Local Plan is made up of the Site Allocations & Delivery DPD and the West Bromwich Area Action Plan. Both documents were adopted in December 2012 and cover the period up to 2021 and 2026 respectively. As the Council is committed to reviewing plans every five years, the review of both documents should now be underway. However, given the work undertaken and then later abandoned on the draft Black Country Plan the Sandwell Local Plan review timetable has been disrupted.
- 4.11 It was always the intention to run the Sandwell Local Plan review approximately twelve months behind the strategic plan review. However, the impacts of the loss of the Black Country Plan on the review timetable has created timing and resource challenges in relation to the drafting of the new local plan and the various stages of consultation. The proposed timetable has been amended accordingly:

Issues & Options Consultation	February - March 2023
Draft Plan consultation (Reg 18)	November - December 2023
Plan Publication	Summer 2024
Submission to Secretary of State and Examination in Public	Late 2024 – early 2025
Adoption	Late 2025 – early 2026

- 4.12 Adoption of the Sandwell Local Plan will now take place beyond the date of the current plan period. The Planning Inspectorate have advised that current plans can continue to be given weight in decision-making but from that date they will effectively be treated as being based on out-of-date evidence. Therefore, decisions taken based on the policies in such plans are at increased risk of challenge and, in the case of refusals, being overturned at appeal. This risk increases with time, so it remains important to prepare an up-to-date local plan as soon as possible.



- 4.13 The West Bromwich Area Action Plan (WBAAP) forms part of the Statutory Development Plan; it was adopted in 2012 and expires in 2026.
- 4.14 The proposals in the WBAAP have largely been delivered. Due to changing market conditions, it was felt appropriate to adopt an updated and flexible approach to securing further regeneration in the centre. This was achieved through the production of an Interim Planning Statement and an associated Masterplan, to effectively bridge the gap between the WBAAP and the adoption of its successor document. The interim statement and plan provides certainty for developers bringing forward new schemes.
- 4.15 It is important to note that the Interim Planning Statement and Masterplan for West Bromwich will not be part of the statutory development plan and will not therefore be formally adopted; rather, they are a statement of future intent. Much of the information they contain has been included in the draft Sandwell Local Plan in a new chapter specifically relating to West Bromwich.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Preparation of an LDS is a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. As such there is no alternative to its preparation.

6 Implications

Resources:	The costs of preparing the Local Development Framework for Sandwell, and subsequent Local Development Documents, will be met from existing revenue budgets. The planning policy documents will be produced using existing staff resources within the Planning Policy and Transportation Team in the Spatial Planning and Growth Service Area
Legal and Governance:	In accordance with section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, every local planning authority must prepare planning policy documents and maintain the LDS specifying the documents that will be local development documents, their subject matter and area, and the timetable for their preparation and revision



Risk:	The Council's corporate risk management strategy has been complied with, to identify and assess the risks associated with this decision / recommendation. This has identified that there are no significant risks that need to be reported.
Equality:	An EIA has not been carried out. The LDS is a programme of the documents to be produced over the next three years and does not in itself create policy
Health and Wellbeing:	Health and wellbeing is a key theme addressed throughout the documents of the LDS. It will promote healthy living and create opportunities for active lifestyles and healthy transport choices including walking, cycling and outdoor recreation
Social Value:	The Local Development Scheme will play an important part in delivering the spatial and land use aspects of the Council's vision 2030, particularly as it relates to housing, employment, transport, environment and education goals.
Climate Change:	The recommendations set out in this report support the Council's Net Zero ambitions. Delivery of an up-to-date local plan will contribute towards climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, and meeting net zero targets, through nature-based solutions
Corporate Parenting:	No implications for Corporate Parenting.

7 Appendices

Appendix One: Sandwell MBC Local Development Scheme

Appendix Two: Local Development Scheme Timetable 2023

8 Background Papers

None.



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Sandwell MBC Local Development Scheme



Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

November 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Local Development Scheme (LDS) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and sets out: -
- the Local Development Documents (LDDs), which are to be defined as Development Plan Documents (DPDs);
 - the subject matter and geographical area to which each DPD is to relate;
 - which DPDs are to be prepared jointly with one or more other local planning authority; and
 - the timetable for the preparation and revision of the DPDs
- 1.2 The LDS sets out the timetable for the preparation or revision of any LDDs covering Sandwell for the period 2023-2026 and supersedes all previous versions of the Sandwell LDS.

2 Sandwell Development Plan Documents

- 2.1 The Local Development Documents, which are to be defined as Development Plan Documents, covering the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council local authority area through this LDS are: -
- Black Country Core Strategy – adopted 2011 (subsequently Black Country Plan)
 - Sandwell Site Allocations & Delivery Development Plan Document - adopted 2012
 - West Bromwich Area Action Plan – adopted 2012
 - Smethwick Area Action Plan – adopted 2008
 - Tipton Area Action Plan – adopted 2008
 - Statement of Community Involvement - adopted 2016
- 2.2 The Black Country Core Strategy was a strategic plan prepared jointly by the four Black Country authorities to cover the Black Country area (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) for the period 2006-2026. The Core Strategy addressed strategic priorities for the Black Country, covered all subject areas at a strategic level and indicated broad locations for development on a key diagram. When it was adopted in 2011, the Core Strategy replaced various policies and allocations in the Sandwell Unitary Development Plan (2004).
- 2.3 The Area Action Plans were prepared to set out local policies, allocations and designations for key regeneration areas identified in the Black Country Core Strategy. These Area Action Plans replaced various policies and allocations in the Sandwell Unitary Development Plan when they were adopted.

3 Timetable for Preparation and Revision of Sandwell Development Plan Documents

3.1 The NPPF requires all local planning authorities to complete a review of local plan documents that have been adopted for five or more years and to decide either:

- that their policies do not need revising and publish their reasons for this decision; and / or
- that one or more policies do need revising and update their LDS to set out the timetable for this revision.

3.2 This LDS fulfils the requirements of the NPPF in this regard, as set out below:

DPD	Years since adoption	Need for revision 2023-26?	Current position and way forward
Black Country Core Strategy	12	N/a	Review abandoned. Replacement strategy, the Black Country Plan, was abandoned for political reasons in late 2022.
Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery DPD (Sandwell Local Plan)	11	Yes	Review currently underway and revision timetable included in this LDS. Now known as the Sandwell Local Plan (SLP)
West Bromwich Area Action Plan	11	Yes	In recognition of the levels of cost and time that are needed to pursue a separate Area Action Plan, the inclusion of the revised WBAAP in the new SLP has taken place: the WBAAP forms the basis of a discrete chapter in the SLP. Profiles / insets are also provided for Sandwell's other main town centres as part of the same exercise. The West Bromwich interim planning statement and masterplan have been prepared to provide certainty for developers bringing forward new schemes until the new Local Plan is adopted.
Smethwick Area Action Plan	15	Yes	Profiles / insets of town centres within Smethwick now form part of the emerging SLP, which is at Regulation 18 stage and has been out to public consultation.
Tipton Area Action Plan	15	Yes	Profiles / insets of Tipton town centre now forms part of the emerging SLP, which is at Regulation 18 stage and has been out to public consultation.

- 3.3 From 2016 to 2022, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, with Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall Councils, carried out work on the proposed review of the Black Country Core Strategy. The subject matter scope of the new Black Country Plan was intended to be wider than the existing Core Strategy, including new site allocations and a review of existing allocations, where appropriate. It also included strategic policies for the Black Country, as defined in the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 3.4 The BCP went through a round of public consultation that attracted around 20,000 comments and objections. Around half of these related to sites in the Dudley green belt. Dudley Council eventually withdrew from the BCP review process, and the four Black Country authorities then decided to undertake their own separate local plans. These plans will draw on the evidence base and draft policies drawn up for the BCP but will relate more specifically to the individual local authority.
- 3.5 The Sandwell Local Plan review was brought forward to replace the BCP. Work was undertaken on an initial Issues and Options document, that went out to public consultation during February - March 2023.
- 3.6 Building on the responses to the Issues and Options paper, a draft SLP was produced and went out to consultation between 6th November and 18th December 2023.
- 3.7 The revised timetable for the Sandwell Local Plan is set out below:

Sandwell Local Plan

Issues & Options Consultation	February - March 2023
Draft Plan consultation (Reg 18)	November - December 2023
Plan Publication	Summer 2024
Submission to Secretary of State and Examination in Public	Late 2024 – early 2025
Adoption	Late 2025 – early 2026

Sandwell Local Development Scheme Programme Summary 2023

Year	2022											
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Sandwell Local Plan											C	
SHLAA											SH	

Year	2023											
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Sandwell Local Plan		IO	IO	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP
SHLAA											SH	

Year	2024											
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Sandwell Local Plan	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	P		Co	Co	S	Ex
SHLAA											SH	

Year	2025											
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Sandwell Local Plan	Ex	Ex	Ex	Ex	Ex	Ex	Ex					A
SHLAA											SH	

Year	2026											
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Sandwell Local Plan	A	A	A									
SHLAA											SH	

Key Milestones

A	Adoption	Ex, A	Indicative timescales
C	Commencement	IO	Issues and options
CC	Cabinet Consideration of draft plan	P	Publication of Plan
CfS	Call for sites	S	Submission of Plan
Co	Public Consultation	SH	Annual SHLAA update
DP	Draft Plan		
Ex	Examination		

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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor – Initial scheme approval
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, Councillor Peter Hughes
Director:	Director- Regeneration & Growth, Tony McGovern
Key Decision:	Yes Type (b) - an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure, the making of savings or the generation of income amounting to more than £1m.
Contact Officer:	Andy Miller Strategic Planning & Transportation Manager andy_miller@sandwell.gov.uk Rajpreet Mander Transportation Planning Project Manager rajpreet_mander@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval in principle be given to the proposed sustainable transport and highway improvements that make up the Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transportation Package as shown on Drawing no. 5216493-ATK-HI-ZZ-DR-D-0113 (attached at Appendix A).
- 1.2 That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA be authorised to approve the carrying out of public consultation in connection with 1.1 above.



- 1.3 That any objections received in connection with 1.2 above be considered by the Cabinet Member for Environment & Highways in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA at a future Decision Making Session.
- 1.4 That the Director Regeneration & Growth be authorised to approve the submission an Outline Business Case to the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- 1.5 That approval be given for the Cabinet Member for Environment & Highways to authorise the Assistant Director-Legal & Assurance in conjunction with Assistant Director-Highways to enter into an agreement with Birmingham City Council under section 8 of the Highways Act 1980.
- 1.6 That approval be given for the land coloured red on Drawing No. SBIGC-IMPLINE-001 (attached at Appendix B) as land comprised within the sites of highways which it is proposed should be constructed, improved or altered for the purposes of Schedule 13, paragraph 15 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2 Reasons for Recommendations






- 2.1 The Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transportation Package forms part of the West Midlands City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Programme approved by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board on 14th January 2022. The Sandwell elements of this programme were approved by Cabinet in July 2022.
- 2.2 The project is now at the stage where specific approvals are required to enable it to progress through the WMCA Single Assurance Framework Process, be consulted on with the public and stakeholders, and then be taken to the next stages of design and business case preparation.
- 2.3 The proposed scheme will involve construction on land that currently sits outside of the boundary of the public highway and in some cases not in the ownership of the Council. The precise extent of this land will depend on the detailed design of the proposals. However, in order to safeguard the land from development which might otherwise prevent the proposals from being implemented, it is proposed to impose highway improvement



lines using powers conferred on the Council through the Town & Country Planning Act, 1990.

- 2.4 The project is likely to include works within highways for which Birmingham City Council is the Local Highway Authority (LHA) as well as those within Sandwell’s jurisdiction. An agreement under section 8 of the Highways Act 1980 will enable these works to be carried out by one LHA on behalf of the other. The precise details of these works, and which LHA will carry them out, is dependent on detailed design.
- 2.5 Once detailed design is completed, and the Outline Business Case has been assessed by WMCA, further approvals may be necessary to enable the scheme to proceed to Full Business Case and delivery.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	The Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package includes extensive measures designed to encourage walking and cycling thus contributing to the health benefits of sustainable active travel.
	Successful communities need access to jobs, services and facilities to enable them to remain healthy and vibrant. The transport network is an important enabler of this.
	New and existing residential developments rely on good quality access and links to shops, services and leisure facilities in order for them to be successful. The proposals will make a significant contribution to this objective.
	The provision of a high-quality transport network will reduce journey times and improve journey reliability for Sandwell business who rely on it to connect to their suppliers and customers.
	The provision of a high-quality, sustainable transport network catering for all modes is vital to enable Sandwell residents to access jobs, education and services both within and beyond the Borough’s boundaries.



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Consultants Atkins were commissioned in July 2023 to undertake a design feasibility study and develop a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) looking at options for a highway improvement scheme along the Smethwick to Birmingham A457 corridor. The study area is centred around the B4135 Cranford Street and A457 Grove Lane corridors, leading to the borough boundary with Birmingham and adjacent to the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH).
- 4.2 The A457 is one of the key arterial routes into Birmingham and provides east-west connectivity between Sandwell and Dudley to the west and Birmingham to the east. The B4135 provides wider east-west connectivity between Birmingham to the south-east and the wider local highway network. As a result, at present there are a large number of east-west strategic through trips, linked to the morning and evening commuter peaks. Not only does this cause significant traffic queues, but the highway layout and current environment makes it an unpleasant and unsafe environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Currently there is little or no infrastructure provision for pedestrians and cyclists at this location.
- 4.3 Given the significant regeneration proposals for the area and increase in trips to and from development sites, there is a need to improve traffic flow and infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists to encourage more sustainable methods of travel for short journeys within this area. The aim of the design feasibility study is to look at options for a highway improvement which considers the following:
- A new junction improvement scheme at the A457 Soho Way/Grove Lane and Cranford Street junction which addresses existing capacity and safety issues and considers options for pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.
 - Options for improving capacity and reducing queuing along Cranford Street and addressing issues such as obstructive parking and poor environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - A new junction improvement scheme at the Cranford Street/London Street junction which assists in reducing congestion on surrounding streets and overall network but also addresses capacity issues and provides facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - An overall improvement in congestion within the North Smethwick area.



- All identified improvements will be designed taking into consideration LTN 1/20 cycle design guidance and the National Bus Strategy in addition to standard highway design guidance.
- Consideration of the importance of blue light emergency response times within the designs.
- Consideration of how the scheme ties in with existing and planned highway improvements within the area.
- Consideration of future demand and pressures on the network based on planned regeneration within the study area.

4.4 Atkins has produced a SOBC which looks at options for a two-way, off road segregated cycleway which connects to the cycle route currently being delivered along the A457 Soho Way as part of the Smethwick Town Deal in one direction, and to the cycle route being delivered by Birmingham City Council on the A457 Dudley Road in the opposite direction. This will ultimately deliver a continuous segregated cycle route from the two railway stations in Smethwick and the High Street into Birmingham city centre. Options also include a signalised junction at the Grove Lane and Cranford Street junction as well as Cranford Street's junction with London Street. All the options being considered will require land that currently sits outside of the boundary of the public highway and in some cases not in the ownership of the Council. The precise extent of this land will depend on further detailed design of the proposals. However, to safeguard the land from development which might otherwise prevent the proposals from being implemented, it is proposed to impose highway improvement lines using powers conferred on the Council through the Town & Country Planning Act, 1990.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 The alternative option is to not deliver a highway improvement scheme at this location using the allocated City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement for this project and for this funding to be used for an alternative project which may not necessarily be in Sandwell. There is therefore a risk of losing significant investment for transport infrastructure improvements in Sandwell.



5.2 Considering the current congestion issues, poor active travel provision and the significant amount of development growth that is planned and wider change in movement to, from, through and within the areas as a result of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital opening, the impacts of not making any changes to the A457 Grove Lane and B4135 Cranford Street corridor is likely to result in the following:

- Low walking and cycling use within the area, resulting in lost health, wellbeing and environmental benefits
- Increased road traffic accidents.
- Increased levels of congestion which is likely to increase queues and delays along both corridors in both directions, with negative implications for local air quality.
- Blue light access delays with ambulances caught up in general traffic queueing; and
- Development growth unable to be accommodated due to concerns of the ability of the local highway network to cope with additional demand

6 Implications

Resources:	The project will be funded through devolved allocations to the West Midlands Combined Authority as part of its City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. All fees, including SMBC staff time recharges, are including the estimated scheme cost.
Legal and Governance:	The scheme primarily involves the Council carrying out works in its capacity as Local Highway Authority. Where new cycle routes pass through third-party land which is not part of, or adjacent to, the public highway, this may require planning consent. The delegations described in this report are in accordance with paragraph 1.3 of Part 4 (Executive Procedure Rules) of the Constitution.
Risk:	A full Risk Assessment will accompany the Outline Business Case. This is a precondition of funding.
Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment will accompany the Outline Business Case. This is a precondition of funding.



Health and Wellbeing:	The project includes measures aimed to encourage the use of sustainable, non-car, modes. This will contribute towards improved air quality. In addition, the emphasis on active travel
Social Value:	There are no social value implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report. When the scheme moves to the delivery stage, the appointed contractor(s) will be required to adhere to the Council's Social Value policies.
Climate Change:	Decarbonisation of the transport system is central to the government's aims and objectives for CRSTS. It is also a principle theme within the West Midlands Local Transport Plan. All projects within the programme need to demonstrate how they address climate change and contribute to decarbonisation through their business cases. The project includes measures aimed to encourage the use of sustainable, non-car, modes.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no implications for Corporate Parenting responsibilities arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

7. Appendices

Appendix One - Drg. No. 5216493-ATK-HI-ZZ-DR-D-0113

Appendix Two - Drg. No. SBIGC-IMPLINE-001

8. Background Papers

West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan: Movement for Growth (2016)

Report to WMCA Board 14 January 2022

Report to WMCA Board 18 March 2022

Report to Cabinet 23 March 2022

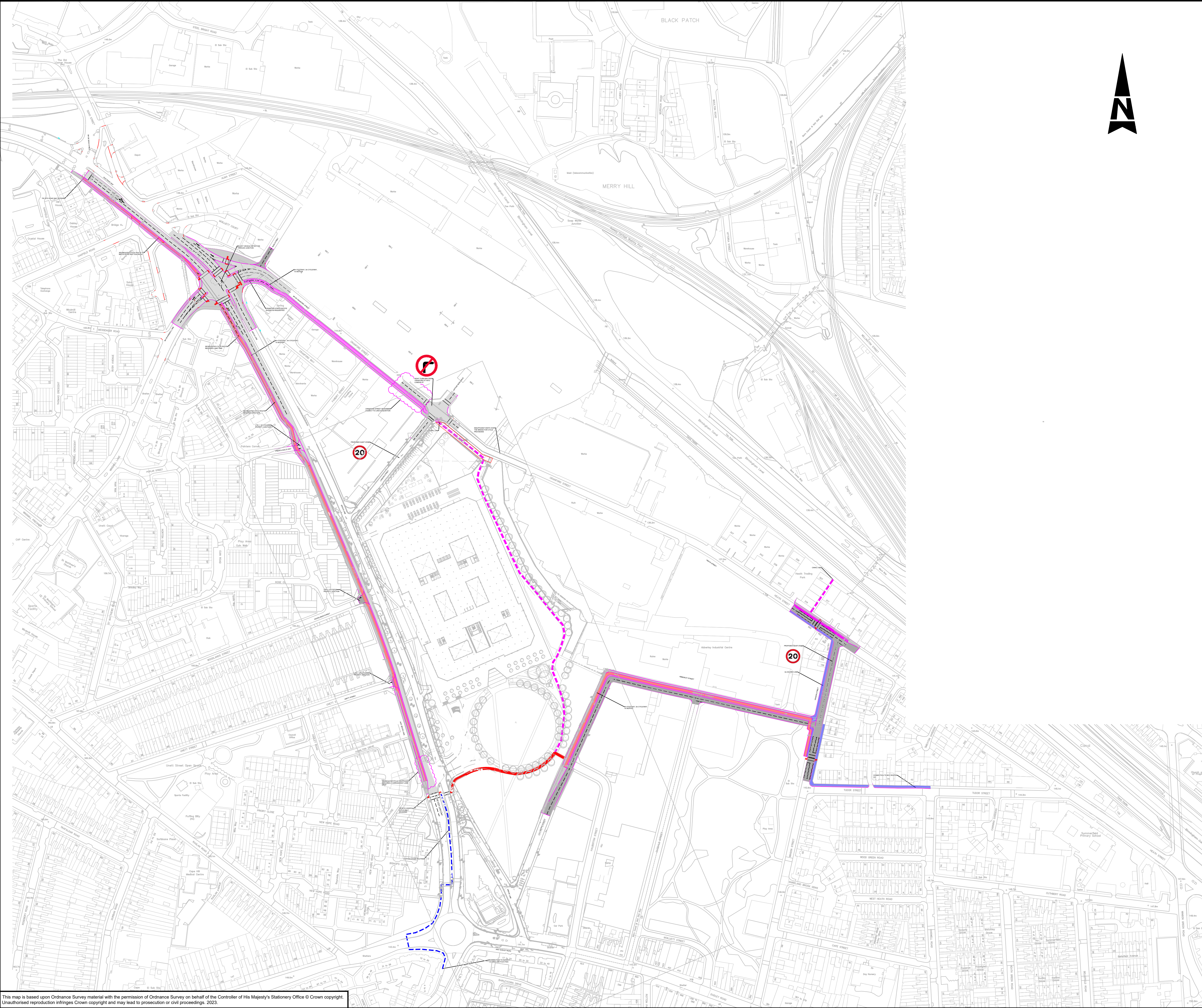
Report to WMCA Board 13 January 2023

Report to Cabinet 15 February 2023



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100
Millimetres
DO NOT SCALE



- Notes:**
- This drawing is a concept highway layout only.
- Key:**
- █ Proposed segregated cycleway
 - █ Proposed footway / buffer
 - █ Proposed carriageway
 - █ Proposed shared use
 - █ Proposed optional links
 - - - Proposed existing link

SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

In addition to the hazards/risks normally associated with the types of work detailed on this drawing, note the following significant residual risks (Reference shall also be made to the design hazard log).

Construction	TBC
Maintenance/ Cleaning	TBC
Use	TBC
Decommissioning / Demolition	TBC

Rev.	Date	First Issue	Description	JS	BM	US

Drawing Status: **FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT** Suitability: **S3**

ATKINS 2 Chamberlain Square
Birmingham
West Midlands
B3 3AX
United Kingdom
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Client: **Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council**

Project Title: **GROVE LANE MULTI MODAL**

Drawing Title: **FULL DO MAX OPTION CONCEPT DESIGN SHEET 5 OF 6**

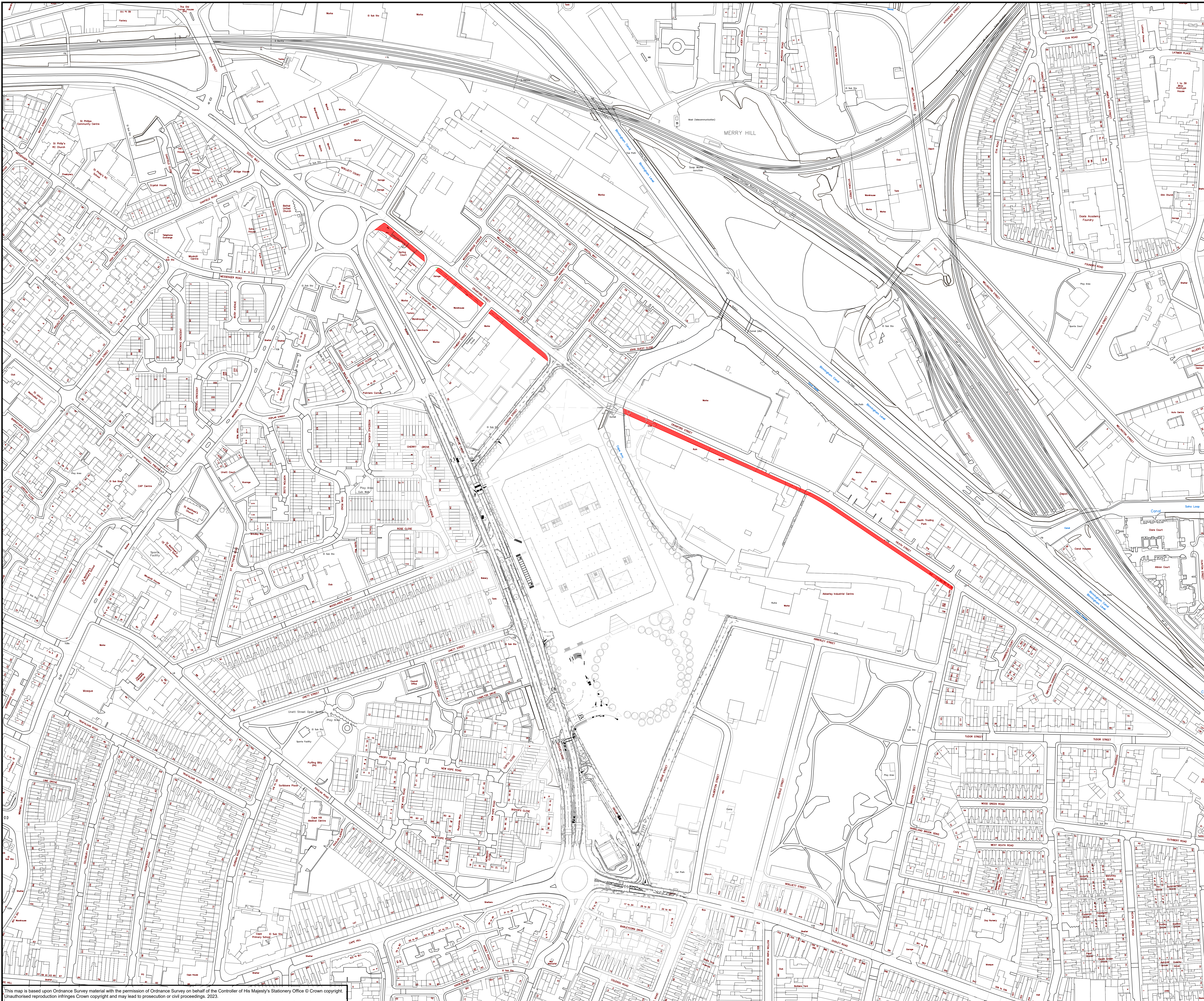
Scale	1:2000	Designed / Drawn	JS	Checked	BM	Approved	US	Authorised	DG
Original Size	A1	Date	27/11/23	Date	27/11/23	Date	27/11/23	Date	27/11/23
Drawing Number	Project		Originator		Volume		Project Ref. No.		
Location	Type		Role		Number		Revision		
									P01

DRAFT


Plotted by: chad_smallman Date: Jan 09, 2024 - 2:03pm

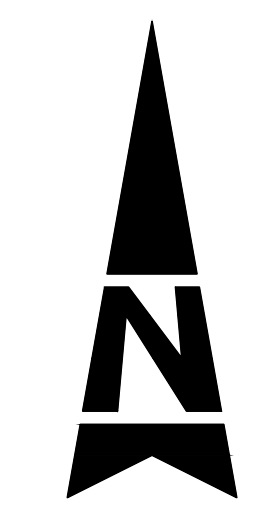
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Notes:
 1. This drawing shows Highway Improvement line only.

Key:
 Highway Improvement Line



SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

In addition to the hazards/risks normally associated with the types of work detailed on this drawing, note the following significant residual risks (Reference shall also be made to the design hazard log).

Construction	TBC
Maintenance/ Cleaning	TBC
Use	TBC
Decommissioning / Demolition	TBC

REV.01	Rev.	Date	Description	By	Chk'd	App'd	Suitability
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Drawing Status: ISSUED



Client: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Project Title: GROVE LANE

Drawing Title: SBIGC-IMPLINE_001

Scale	Designed / Drawn	Checked	Approved	Authorised
Original Size	Date	Date	Date	Date
Drawing Number	Project	Originator	Volume	Project Ref. No.
SMBC_CS:SBIGC-IMPLINE_001				Revision 3
Location	Type	Role	Number	

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Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Single Use Plastics Policy
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA Peter Hughes
Director:	Director of Regeneration & Growth Tony McGovern
Key Decision:	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an executive decision that is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough;
Contact Officer:	Principal Lead Energy & Climate Change Phil_kingston@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

That approval be given to adopt the Single Use Plastic Policy as provided in Appendix 1 in order to meet and exceed our requirements under the Government's Single Use Plastics Ban.





2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 To ensure Sandwell MBC are compliant with the Government [Single Use Plastics Ban](#) (SUP) which came into force on the 1st October 2023
- 2.2 The SUP Ban only addresses some SUPs and many others such as packaging, drinks bottles or plastic lined coffee cups are not included. This policy enables SMBC to exceed the minimum requirements of the ban and take a positive lead in reducing the harmful impact of single use plastics across the city.



2.3 To increase recycling rates within corporate services and reduce the volume, and impact of non-recyclable waste from our operations.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People: Tackling Climate Change in Sandwell takes a positive step towards sustaining our planet for the next generation. Reducing the use of SUPs in Sandwell will help create a resilient Borough, with targets to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C and help safeguard the future for our young people.</p>
	<p>People Live Well and Age Well Reducing pollution and the use of plastics will help mitigate the impacts of climate change and associated impacts on health and wellbeing.</p>
	<p>Strong Resilient Communities The policy provides leadership and direction on the specific environmental issue of reducing plastic waste in Sandwell, contributing to the reduction of litter and waste in our streets</p>
	<p>A Strong and Inclusive Economy The Policy supports the use of local business offering alternatives to SUPs through our procurement procedures</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 According to DEFRA “the UK uses around 2.7 billion items of single use cutlery, mostly plastic, a year, and 721 million single use plates”. Plastic pollution does not break down like other waste and can take decades or even centuries to decompose, leading to a mounting problem that ends up in our streets, waterways, and natural environments. This is causing lasting damage to both human and animal life and there is increasing concern over the volume of microplastics that are present in our water supplies and foods. Coupled with the release of greenhouse gas from their production, manufacture and final disposal, the use of plastic is one of the most significant environmental issues of our time”.

4.2 The Government ban will include single-use plastic plates, trays, bowls, cutlery, balloon sticks, certain types of polystyrene cups and food containers, although there are exemptions outlined in the [Government guidance](#) and there are certain circumstances in which they may still be used.



- 4.3 Many single use plastics such as drinks bottles, packaging and coffee cups with a plastic lining are not included in the ban and could continue to be used unless alternatives options or restrictions are put in place.
- 4.4 Awareness around recycling and alternate options to SUPs can be limited. The policy provides the framework to assess, reduce and monitor our use of plastics.
- 4.5 Reducing the amount of waste within our offices will help reduce disposal costs.
- 4.6 Reducing plastic waste can lead to fewer carbon dioxide emissions, a safer environment for wildlife and better human health.
- 4.7 Implementation of the Single Use Plastics Policy will contribute towards commitments laid out in the Climate Change Strategy.
- 4.8 SMBC needs to lead by example if we are to work with communities and businesses in helping them reduce their use of plastics, increase recycling rates and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- 4.9 The exemptions to the SUP Ban means single use plastics can still be used in some circumstances. For example, you can still supply food or drink in polystyrene containers if it needs further preparation before it is consumed whereby, further preparation could mean:
- adding water
 - microwaving
 - toasting

This policy will help ensure any use of exemptions is minimised or eliminated in SMBC sites.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Rejecting the policy would increase the risk of sites not being compliant with the Single Use Plastic ban and limit compliance with the Climate Change Strategy and our ability to show leadership on this issue.
- 5.2 Aspects of the policy outside the Single Use Plastics Ban could be removed, limiting compliance with the Climate Change Strategy.



6 Implications

Resources:	No additional staff will be required to implement this policy. There may be costs as a result of implementing the Government Ban and switching from single use plastic items.
Legal and Governance:	Compliance with the Single Use Plastics Ban is a requirement from the 1 st October 2023
Risk:	Potential increases in cost through a change of product will need to be factored into procurement.
Equality:	There are no equality implications to this report in relation to those with protected characteristics
Health and Wellbeing:	The proposals within the policy will benefit the health and wellbeing of residents through reducing pollution and mitigating the impacts of climate change.
Social Value:	The proposals will support local businesses to be able to provide alternatives to SUPs through the procurement process.
Climate Change:	The SUP Policy will specifically support commitments made in the Climate Change Strategy.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no specific implications for corporate parenting responsibilities.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Single Use Plastics Policy

8. Background Papers

[Government guidance: Single-use plastics ban: plates, bowls, trays, containers, cutlery and balloon sticks](#)





Single Use Plastics Policy

*A step towards a
sustainable future*

**Sandwell Metropolitan
Borough Council –
November 2023**

**Next Review: November
2024**



**Bostin' People,
Bostin' Place**

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Introduction

This policy document provides the approach that Sandwell MBC will take towards the removal of single use plastics (SUPs) in its operations. Sandwell MBC are strongly committed to reducing the environmental impacts of our operations and reducing our carbon footprint. This policy will support the commitments laid out in our [Climate Change Strategy](#)

Background

Defra has estimated the UK uses around 2.7 billion items of single use cutlery, mostly plastic, a year, and 721 million single use plates. Plastic pollution does not break down like other waste and can take decades or even centuries to decompose, leading to a mounting problem that ends up in our streets, waterways, and natural environments. This is causing lasting damage to both human and animal life and there is increasing concern over the volume of microplastics that are present in our water supplies and foods. Coupled with the release of greenhouse gas from their production, manufacture and final disposal, the use of plastic is one of the most significant environmental issues of our time.

The Government has introduced a ban on a range of SUPs from October 2023. The ban will include single-use plastic plates, trays, bowls, cutlery, balloon sticks, and certain types of polystyrene cups and food containers, although there are exemptions outlined in the [Government guidance](#) and in certain circumstances they may still be used.

What are single use plastics

'Single use plastics' are items that are meant to be used only once for their original purpose and the ban includes all types of single-use plastic, including biodegradable, compostable and recycled. It also includes items wholly or partly made from plastic, including coating or lining.

This can include items such as plastic bags, coffee pods and drinks bottles in addition to the items being restricted under the government regulation.

The law

By law, from 1st October 2023 businesses can no longer supply, sell or offer certain single-use plastic items in England. The council Trading Standards team will be required to enforce the ban. Trading Standards will work with local businesses to ensure they comply with the law and act responsibly. Where advice has been given and is not being adhered to, Trading Standards, in accordance with their enforcement policy may take the necessary enforcement action which could include a fine of £200, or ultimately a criminal prosecution.

The ban covers a wide range of single-use items including plastic cutlery, plates, bowls, balloon sticks and certain styles of polystyrene cup and food containers that are used to supply ready-to-eat food.

The Environmental Protection (Plastic Straws, Cotton Buds and Stirrers) (England) Regulations 2020 prohibit the supply, or offering to supply, of any single-use plastic straw, plastic stemmed cotton bud or plastic drink stirrer in England.

The Environmental Protection (Plastic Plates etc and Polystyrene Containers etc) (England) Regulations 2023 prohibit the supply, or offering to supply, of any single-use plastic plates, bowls, trays, cutlery and balloon sticks, or polystyrene cups, food and drink containers in England.

There are a number of exceptions to the prohibitions. For straws and cotton buds, these exceptions allow for situations where the items may be required due to disability or accessibility issues. Plastic plates, bowls and trays are permitted when supplied to other businesses or where the item is packaging. Polystyrene cups, food and drink containers are permitted where the food is not ready to be consumed and requires further preparation, such as adding water or heating.

The following supplies of single-use plastic straws are permitted:

- From a registered pharmacy, but products must not be displayed or advertised in store.
- From a catering establishment (pubs, clubs, restaurants, canteens, etc) where supplied for immediate consumption of food or drink. They must only be supplied if requested and not made available for customers to help themselves. They cannot be offered either verbally or in writing.
- For use as a medical device or for a medical purpose. This includes preventative medicine, medical diagnosis, research, and care and treatment.
- For use as packaging for a product - for example, certain medicines. This does not exempt drinking straws supplied with drinks cartons.
- For use in care homes, prisons, schools and early years provision, but alternatives should be sought where possible.

The following supplies of plastic cotton buds are permitted:

- For use as a medical device or for a medical purpose. This includes preventative medicine, medical diagnosis, research, and care and treatment.
- For forensic purposes: use by forensic service providers.
- For scientific purposes: diagnostic, education and research.

More information on the ban: <https://www.businesscompanion.info/en/quick-guides/miscellaneous/single-use-plastics>

Our Commitments

In line with our Climate Change Strategy, Sandwell Council has set out a series of actions to help reduce the volume of single use plastic we consume as part of our operations in addition to those required under the Government ban. We will work to embed these actions into our key strategies, policies and plans. In line with this we commit to:

- Ensure all council operations, including maintained schools, are compliant with the government 'single-use plastics ban' on plates, bowls, trays, containers, cutlery and balloon sticks'.
- Identify areas where exemptions to the single use plastics ban apply and use alternate, less harmful options, where available.
- Review what we purchase to identify opportunities to reduce SUP waste
- Prevent the use of plastic drinks bottles where alternate, less damaging options are available.
- Work with staff to achieve the elimination of single use plastics from our offices.
- Relevant procurement exercises will use Government regulation to ensure compliance with the ban on SUPs and also to support locally sourced alternatives to SUPs
- Work with external commercial event organisers to ensure no avoidable SUPs are used on Sandwell Council owned land from November 2023.
- Work with community group event organisers to ensure the likelihood of use of avoidable single use plastics on Council owned land is minimised in 2024 with an aim to completely eradicate their use by 2025.
- Work with external suppliers and concessions at council run events and premises to ensure use of avoidable SUPs is eradicated by November 2023.
- Raise awareness within our schools and communities around best practice and less obvious use of plastics such as coffee cup linings and support them in eliminating the use of plastics in their buildings.
- Improve systems for waste disposal within the corporate estate to support the elimination of all avoidable single use plastics and increase recycling rates.
- Use the Council's website and communications to share information on reducing the use of plastics with our residents, communities and businesses.
- It is acknowledged that staff or students may bring their own single use plastics onto a site. We will work to raise awareness of the harm caused by SUPs and encourage the use of more sustainable options.

Implementation and monitoring

To ensure the effective implementation of the policy and to enable us to monitor progress, identify barriers and learn from best practice we will:

- Benchmark the current use of SUPs in corporate operations and schools that are affected by the ban.

- Identify areas of additional support required in achieving SUP ban compliance. Identify areas within corporate operations, events and schools where exemptions on SUP ban apply.
- Develop cross directorate support and work with the Climate Change champions to identify areas where SUPs are in use, barriers to their removal and alternative options.
- Work with Serco to improve understanding, awareness and monitoring of recycling practices.
- Report progress against delivery of this policy to the Climate Change Programme Board and Climate Change Member Steering Group.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.