

# Collections Development Policy 2021-2026

## Sandwell Museum and Arts Service



**Name of museum:** *Haden Hill House, Wednesbury Museum, Oak House Museum, Bromwich Hall, Bishop Asbury Cottage, Galton Valley Pumping Station – Sandwell Museums and Arts Service*

**Name of governing body:** *Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council*

**Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:**

**Policy review procedure:** *The policy is reviewed every 5 years*

**The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.**

**Date at which this policy is due for review:** *2026*

**Arts Council England/CyMAL:** *will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.*

## **Collections Development Policy Summary.**

- 1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation.**  
Appendix 1 – Sets out Sandwell Museums mission, purpose and governance. It also discusses that Sandwell Museums has a duty of care to look after the objects in its guardianship and follow relevant procedures and ethics
- 2. History of the collections –** Appendix 2 -sets out the history of the collection
- 3. An overview of current collections –** Appendix 3 – explore the main themes of objects we hold and look after
- 4. Themes and priorities for future collecting –** Appendix 4 – Objects collected should be relevant to the stories of the borough and its people, specific project or set dressing to tell the stories of our historic houses
- 5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal-** Appendix 5 – sets out how Sandwell Museums will use its resources to look after and manage its collection via accessioning, inventory and risk assessments
- 6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items-** Appendix 6. Sandwell Museums will adhere to the Museum Association code of ethics
- 7. Collecting policies of other museums** Appendix 7. Sandwell Museums recognises other museums and organisations within Sandwell MBC who have collection. Sandwell Museums will liaise with these organisations where appropriate
- 8. Archival holdings -** Appendix 8. We will work closely with Sandwell community History and Archive service. We will collect archival information relevant to our objects
- 9-16 Acquisition and disposal –** Appendix 9 – Sets out policy and procedures around the acquisition and disposal of items in the collection and recognises elements of ethical practice around human remains, spoliation and repatriation

## **1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation: [Appendix 1](#)**

### **1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:**

Sandwell Museums does not have a separate statement of purpose - our purpose is to contribute to the council's key targets and priorities, therefore our statement of purpose is the same as Sandwell MBCs. Currently this is working towards the Vision 2030 ambitions and ensuring an impact on the day to day lives of the people of Sandwell. As a museum service we can contribute to some but not all of these priorities. Our key area of contribution would be in Ambition 8 but also to a smaller extent ambitions 1, 3, 4 and 5 and 10. Those ambitions that we will look to contribute towards are highlighted below.

## **Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Key Ambitions**

### **Ambition 1**

**Sandwell is a community where our families have high aspirations and where we pride ourselves on equality of opportunity and on our adaptability and resilience.**

### **Ambition 2**

**Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer, and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.**

### **Ambition 3**

**Our workforce and young people are skilled and talented, geared up to respond to changing business needs and to win rewarding jobs in a growing economy.**

### **Ambition 4**

**Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high quality education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.**

### **Ambition 5**

**Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.**

### **Ambition 6**

**We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects us to all local centres and to jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and the wider West Midlands.**

### **Ambition 7**

**We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.**

### **Ambition 8**

**Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.**

## **Ambition 9**

Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.

## **Ambition 10**

**Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.**

- 1.2. The governing body of Sandwell Museums is the Council cabinet. Policies and high level plans are approved at this level. Procedures and the day to day management of the service is undertaken by the Museums Management Team
- 1.3. Sandwell Museums Management Team on behalf of the governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal of accessioned objects are carried out openly and with transparency. Accessioned objects only are covered within the remit of this policy
- 1.4. By definition, our museums have a long-term purpose and are the guardian of collections, historic buildings and stories for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The Museums Management Team on behalf of the governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial and community benefit reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's accessioned collection.
- 1.5. Acquisitions outside the current stated policies will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.6. The museum service recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its accessioned collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.7. The museum service will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the museums management team on behalf of the governing body is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.8. In exceptional cases, disposal of accessioned objects may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not

undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
- the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
- the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
- extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken
- the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established core collection

## **2. History of the collections – Appendix 2**

The collection managed by Sandwell Museums on behalf of Sandwell MBC has developed since the 1890s. Traditionally, the acquisition of objects has been on an ad-hoc basis and there has been a lack of vision or planning concerning the development of object collections in the past: therefore, the collections are diverse and vary in quality, size and significance. Also, historically the sites and collections now part of Sandwell Museums were administered by different local authorities with varying collecting priorities.

Some of the collections have come into existence through the collecting activities of philanthropic personalities during the nineteenth century, through local archaeological excavations, as objects commissioned and acquired by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council as donations from private individuals or the interests of previous curators over the last 130 years. It is now the Museums Management Team which approve acquisitions guided by museums policies and procedures

## **3. An overview of current collections – Appendix 3**

### **Summary of Sandwell Museum Service's Collection**

3.1 The collection managed by Sandwell Museums on behalf of Sandwell MBC has developed since the 1890s. Traditionally, the acquisition of objects has been upon an ad-hoc basis and there has been a lack of vision or planning concerning the development of object collections: therefore, the collections are diverse and vary in quality, size and significance. Also, historically the sites and collections now part of Sandwell Museums were administered by different local authorities with varying collecting priorities.

Some of the collections have come into existence through the collecting activities of philanthropic personalities during the nineteenth century, through local archaeological excavations, as objects commissioned and acquired by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and as donations from private individuals.

The total number of objects held by Sandwell Museum Service is approximately 19 500. However not all the objects have been historically accessioned formally into the collection historically but has been held on an inventory. This has made the process of collections rationalisation a clearer and easier one, as key items are to be or have been accessioned and other items are held on an inventory. The primary accessioned collections held by the service are as follows:

Subject Category & approximate number of specimens

Social History - 8 000

Archaeology - 5 600

Geology - 3 000

Numismatics - 500

There are other distinct object collections that whilst not being primary collections in terms of object size are nonetheless important collections due to their cultural and historical significance. These collections are as follows:

### **3.2 Ruskin Pottery (approximately 350 individual objects)**

The Ruskin pottery collection is believed to be the largest public collection of its type within the United Kingdom. It has a strong local provenance to Sandwell as it was produced in the borough town of Smethwick. The collection has been created through a mixture of donations, purchases by Sandwell Museum Service and fixed term/renewable loans from private collectors.

### **3.3 Helen Caddick Ethnographical Collection (approximately 460 objects) plus other Victorian traveller's collections.**

The nineteenth century pioneering female explorer and anthropologist, Helen Caddick (who resided in West Bromwich) created this collection. The collection contains culturally significant objects from the Indian Sub-Continent, China, Japan, Australasia, Africa, Indonesia, North America and the Middle East. The Collection was removed from permanent display in 2001 and is currently in storage at Wednesbury Museum & Art Gallery.

### **3.4 Fine Art Collection (approximately 310 pieces)**

The major proportion of this collection was bequeathed by the philanthropic Richards' family during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As such the collection reflects the personal tastes of this and political attitudes of the Richards family and is indicative of late nineteenth century bourgeois attitudes towards the use of art for didactic purposes. The collection contains work by artists such as Sir John Everett Millias, James Webb, Eugene Verboeckhoven, Benjamin William Leader, Marcus Stone and Hermanus Koekicoek. The collection also contains a small amount of sculpture, including a commission by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council of a bronze bust of the first female speaker to The House Of Commons and former borough M.P. Baroness Boothroyd.

### **3.5 17th Century Furniture Collection – Oak House Museum**

A regionally significant collection of 17th century furniture is displayed at Oak House Museum. West Bromwich Corporation purchased the collection in 1951 from Queen Mary's furniture advisor. The collection has manual documentation records and items in the collection were formerly part of notable furniture collections.

## **4. Themes and priorities for future collecting – Appendix 4**

Acquisitions should only be made if the Museums Management team is satisfied that the object/ objects will have a meaningful place in the collection in supporting the aims and objectives of Sandwell Museum Service and Sandwell MBC's key priorities.

Objects will have significance to Sandwell or its people, be relevant to displays, projects or exhibitions, be relevant set dressing to our historic houses or support our learning and access programmes. The Collect of objects should enable Sandwell Museums to tell stories.

New collecting areas are identified below.

Sandwell Museums are currently looking to actively collect items which were produced in Sandwell and significant to the story of the borough and its people.

Sandwell Museums are actively looking to collective decorative arts made in Sandwell or produced by people with connections to the borough.

Sandwell Museums are actively looking to collect any Ruskin Pottery pieces not already represented in the collection

## **5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal – Appendix 5**

5.1 The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

Sandwell museums is looking to ensure that it's accessioned collection is a selection of key items as outlined in Appendix 1 which will be managed to accreditation standards. Sandwell Museums recognises that it does not have the capacity or desire to treat all objects within its care to such stringent standards. Therefore, all other objects will not be accessioned but will be entered into an inventory and cared for to a collection management

standard appropriate to these inventory objects. These objects will be subject to the acquisitions procedure where a decision will be made if they are inventory or accessioned objects but will not be subject to the disposals procedure. They will not be subject to the disposals policy

## **6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items.**

### **Appendix 6**

- 6.1 The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

## **7 Collecting policies of other museums – Appendix 7**

- 7.1 The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

- 7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

Sandwell Valley Park Farm, Sandwell Community History and Archive Service.

- 7.3 This Policy is created in consultation with other relevant Sandwell MBC departments and recognises their collecting activities

7.3.1 - Sandwell Museums Service will collect three-dimensional objects that have provenance or relevance to Sandwell and fine art and crafts that are either of local views, inspired by local themes or by local artists/ craftsmen. It will also maintain historical collections that have a wider remit based on past approaches to collecting and museums.

7.3.2 – Sandwell Community History and Archive Service (CHAS) will collect the documentary material relating to the geographical area of Sandwell

7.3.3 - Where there is both documentary material and three-dimensional material within an identified collection of objects CHAS and Sandwell Museum Service will liaise and decide where it is appropriate for objects/ documents to be deposited. If it is deemed that documentary objects support a largely three-dimensional collection, then it is likely to be deemed more appropriate for them to be lodged with Sandwell Museums and visa-versa. This will be discussed on a case by case basis. Any documentary objects held by Sandwell Museums will be treated and documented as museum objects.

7.3.4 - All collections held by the Museums Service and CHAS will ultimately be catalogued on a joint system in order to increase public access and a joined-up service across the borough of Sandwell.

7.3.5 - The Countryside Management and Visitor Attraction Section will collect only those objects or documents that relate directly to buildings or land which is under their management or that are required for specific exhibitions and not already available through the Museums Service or CHAS.

7.3.6 All three services will ensure that their collecting fully reflects the diversity of Sandwell's citizens and Sandwell's heritage.

7.3.7 Sandwell Museum Service will liaise with the relevant Archaeological adviser to ensure that the most appropriate location be found for archaeological material excavated within the borough of Sandwell. Sandwell Museum Service will act as the public depository for excavated material from within the current geographical area administered by Sandwell MBC and associated documentation where appropriate. Sandwell Museum Service reserves the right to refuse archaeological material due to limitation placed upon collecting by insufficient collection care, budget, conservation, storage, lack of documentation and staff resources. Sandwell Museums will accept archaeology only where it is well documented and therefore is able to tell its stories and there is a report written so that museum officers and not just archaeologists can interpret the contents for users and visitors.

7.3.8 Sandwell Museum Service acknowledges the collecting activities of Sandwell Valley Park Farm. Sandwell Museum Service will liaise with this site to ensure that the most appropriate location be found for historical material within the borough of Sandwell.

## **8 Archival holdings - Appendix 8**

Sandwell Museums will collect archival material which is directly relevant to objects we hold and our displays.

We recognise the collection of Sandwell Archives and will always work closely with them to ascertain the most relevant repository for any given archive material.

## **9 Acquisition – Appendix 9**

### **9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:**

All objects for consideration will be put before the museums' management team. The officer proposing the object/s will complete a questionnaire stating the object's relevance to the museum service collecting policies and how the object will be used. The questionnaire will also have details that the object does not contravene the points below. The museums management team will agree to take or reject the object and decide if the

object is to be accessioned in to the collection or placed on the inventory for objects deemed important but not collection items.

- 9.2 The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).
- 9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

## **10 Human remains**

- 10.1 The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

## **11. Biological and geological material**

- 11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

## **12 Archaeological material**

- 12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the management team or governing body has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.
- 12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

## **13 Exceptions**

- 13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

## **14 Spoliation**

- 14.1 The museum will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

## **15 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains**

15.1 The museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

## **16 Disposal**

- 16.1 All disposals of accessioned objects will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal of accessioned objects.
- 16.2 The Museums’ Management Team on behalf of the governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
- 16.3 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

- 16.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.
- 16.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. This does not include non-accessioned items. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.
- 16.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of the museums management team and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7 Once a decision to dispose of accessioned material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.9 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10 Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk

or damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England/CyMAL

- 16.11 The proceeds of a sale of accessioned items will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.12 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

### ***Disposal by exchange***

- 16.13 The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

### ***Disposal by destruction***

- 16.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 16.15 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- 16.16 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.17 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- 16.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.