

Urban Design & Building Services

Issue 3

NEWSLETTER

D E S I G N A N D M A I N T E N A N C E

Welcome to our latest newsletter

I am pleased to share with you updates on projects underway or recently completed by our multi-disciplinary team here at Urban Design and Building Services (UDBS).

In the following pages you will find details of our input into high-profile developments that include the Richard Nugent Centre in Wednesbury and the acclaimed Sandwell Urban Bike Park in Sandwell Valley.

We also go behind the scenes to celebrate the quiet but vital work of our mechanical and electrical engineering services team. They work hard across the region, year-round, to keep buildings warm and comfortable while boosting their energy efficiency.

In showcasing UDBS' skills and achievements I thank everyone in our team for upholding our commitment to delivering great service.

Independent validation of this commitment came in the form of our latest Customer Service Excellence assessment recently, when UDBS secured the CSE standard for a further three years.

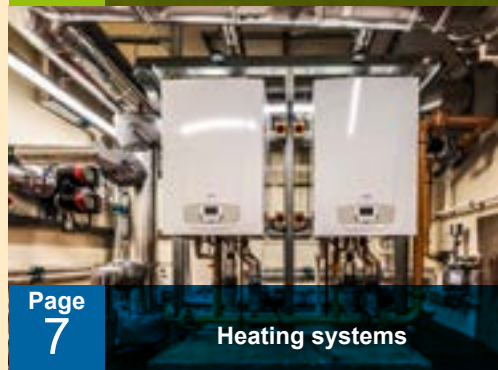
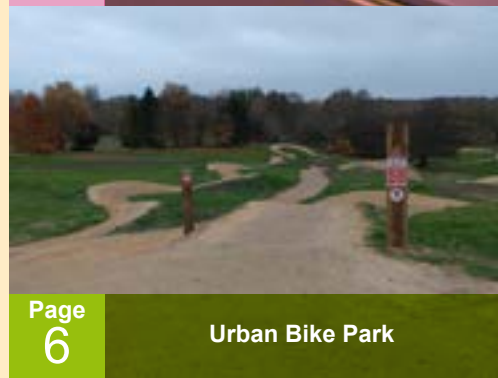
The CSE assessor told us in written feedback that achieving Fully Compliant status means an organisation is "going the extra mile" for customers. However, we scored Compliance Plus in two categories, which means UDBS is "going above and beyond" that already high standard of service provision.

I am very proud of this outcome – and proud of our team.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of UDBS.

Luke Dove

Assistant Director – Property, Strategic Assets & Land



Customer service



Customer Service Excellence for three more years

We are delighted to have secured the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard for three more years, achieving 'Compliance Plus' recognition in the categories of customer insight and information and access.

CSE is a national accreditation, giving organisations a way to measure and continually raise their levels of customer focus.

A CSE standard lasts for three years, but the organisation holding it must undergo a stringent independent assessment every twelve months.

UDBS has held CSE since 2015. Among the assessor's feedback in our latest assessment was praise for "strong leadership" from UDBS' senior management, and "determination to provide a quality service to all their customers". They also noted "real focus on customers by staff".

We are delighted to have retained this independent validation of UDBS' customer focus and thank our brilliant team members for their caring approach.

For further information please contact: UDBS_customercontact@sandwell.gov.uk

**CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE[®]**



Thorn Close



New and refurbished apartments for Thorn Close, Wednesbury

Work is underway on Thorn Close in Wednesbury, on the refurbishment of 28 apartments and the construction of four new apartments.

We are providing architecture and landscape architecture services, quantity surveying and structural engineering support to the project.

As well as creating four new affordable homes for Sandwell, the work is transforming the existing buildings. The external walls of the blocks will receive insulated, full-height rainscreen cladding – improving the look of the buildings while boosting energy efficiency and helping to lower tenants' fuel bills.

The buildings will also benefit from new entrance porches, a new pitched roof,

replacement windows and external doors, and improvements to balconies. Inside, there will be improvements to communal areas and staircases.

Outside, the area around the buildings will be modernised to provide much-needed car parking spaces and a more aesthetically pleasing environment. Hard and soft landscaping works will include planting, and the addition of cycle and bin stores.

Sandwell Council's Neighbourhood Services department is our client and SWG Construction Build & Renovate is the main contractor.

For further information please contact: UDBS_customercontact@sandwell.gov.uk.

M&E planned works



Mechanical and electrical engineering work in schools

During school holidays, when stairways are silent, corridors are clean, canteens are quiet, and whiteboards are wiped ... we are hard at work!

School holidays are some of the busiest times for our mechanical and electrical engineering team, as they take the opportunity to maintain, refurbish or replace schools' heating systems while staff and students have a break.

We prioritise work according to the age and condition of existing systems, assessing the effects of a possible failure. Our overall aim is to give Sandwell's schools resilience against nuisance breakdowns and to reduce the likelihood

of school closures during term time.

Where existing boilers are oil-fired, we upgrade them to gas. Technology has advanced in recent years, so gas-fired boilers are more efficient. Their impact on the environment has reduced and they are more economical to run.

We work closely with colleagues in Sandwell Council's Energy Team in our mutual goal to reduce emissions. We design replacement works with this in mind.

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Church Hill Street



Twenty new homes on Church Hill Street, Smethwick

On Church Hill Street in Smethwick, we worked with building contractor Harper Construction to develop twenty new homes. These comprise fifteen traditionally built houses and five bungalows, all for affordable rent. Two of the properties are fully wheelchair compliant.

UDBS had a significant role in bringing the homes to completion, with our architects, landscape architects, quantity surveyors and structural engineers all involved in the project.

Our design approach included

incorporating a mix of red and grey bricks, along with stone-effect windowsills and heads, in keeping with the character of properties in nearby Vicarage Road.

The Housing Partnerships Team at Sandwell Council was our client and the development was funded through government Retained Right to Buy receipts.

These two- and four-bedroom homes are now fully occupied.

For further information please contact: UDBS_customercontact@sandwell.gov.uk



Urban Bike Park



The opening of Sandwell Urban Bike Park

We are delighted to have had an instrumental role in the delivery of a new bike park for Sandwell.

Close to the Swan Pool area of Sandwell Valley, the Sandwell Urban Bike Park incorporates facilities for young people and families with children, as well as challenging downhill trails for seasoned mountain bikers.

Our client was the Sport and Leisure Team at Sandwell Council, who appointed us to support the park's construction. UDDBS' services included procuring specialist consultants, tender, procurement and contract management, on-site supervision, CDM management, quality control, and payments.

Back on Track Mountain Bike Solutions Ltd was the main contractor. Sport England funded the majority of the project through the Places to Ride programme, with Birmingham City Council and Sandwell Council providing the rest.

"The Bike Park is now open to the public and has been exceptionally well received by cyclists of all abilities. The facility is enabling Sandwell residents to get active and exercise through the sport of cycling. The facility is attracting cyclists from across the region who are keen to enjoy a high-class resource" – **Robert Marlow, Senior Lead Officer from Sandwell Council's Sports and Leisure Team.**

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Heating systems

Heating system upgrades in high-profile buildings

Like the work we do in schools (see page 4), many of our projects are quiet and unseen – but they benefit people every day.

In 2023 UDBS's mechanical and electrical engineering team oversaw the planned replacement of inefficient gas-fired boilers and the associated heating plant at Highfields House (Sandwell Register Office).

We carried out similar upgrades at the Frank Chapman Outdoor Centre in Bewdley, Worcestershire.

In both cases, we removed existing oil-fired boilers and associated heating plants and replaced them with gas-fired, efficient modulating condensing boilers. This means the buildings no longer use fuel oil, and are already benefiting from reduced heating costs and emissions.

New optimiser/ compensation controllers sense changes in outside temperature, further enhancing the buildings' energy efficiency and boosting comfort levels indoors. Dodd Group Ltd was our contractor for both projects, under a direct access framework arrangement with Sandwell Council.

“The benefits are not only financial with the conversion from oil to gas, but environmentally and aesthetically pleasing. We have found the heating is on for considerably less time, due to instantaneous heat and hot water. And we never run out of hot water! Which is a blessing when there are 40 young people all requiring a shower within the same hour” - Debbie Heritage, Frank Chapman Outdoor Education Centre.

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Richard Nugent Centre



The opening of the Richard Nugent Centre, Wednesbury



A new health centre has opened in Wednesbury – and we are proud to have project-managed its development.

The Richard Nugent Centre has been built on a brownfield site next to Wednesbury Leisure Centre. Spacious and light-filled, the building is significantly larger than the healthcare facilities it replaces. It includes a suite of consulting, treatment and meeting rooms, plus 32 on-site car parking spaces and an ambulance drop-off area.

Interclass was our construction contractor, having been awarded the work through the Constructing West Midlands framework. Sandwell Council fully financed and delivered the health centre on behalf of the NHS, which is now leasing the building from the council.

The Richard Nugent Centre forms part of a wider project in Wednesbury, including the construction of five new affordable homes on King Street. UDDBS' input for the houses included conducting feasibility studies, design, procurement, delivery and contract administration.

For further information contact:
UDDBS_customercontact@sandwell.gov.uk



Social value



Recognising suppliers who give back to Sandwell

One of Sandwell Council's seven economic priorities is 'Social Value in Sandwell'. As a council team, we recognise that when we buy goods and services, there is potential for our investment to go beyond the business transaction and bring added benefits to local people, communities and the environment.

Ideally, we seek to work with suppliers who support our commitment to social value and are happy, when they can, to do some corporate giving to worthwhile local projects.

On our website you'll find stories about social value from UDBS partners who have gone the extra mile for our Sandwell communities.

There are several featuring our mechanical and electrical engineering contracting partner Dodd Group. Among other kindnesses, Dodd Group has got behind its local foodbank (at Murray Hall Community Trust), donated funds to ensure Grove Vale Primary School could re-open its swimming pool, and built an interactive 'water wall' for the nursery children at Abbey Infant School.

We recently also celebrated big-hearted contractors who voluntarily renovated the garden of Tipton Children's Centre. A huge thank you to GRAHAM and partnering subcontractors CP Nevin, Liam Lloyd Construction and BAT Holdings.

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The near future

We look forward to making further improvements and impact in Sandwell

This newsletter gives just a flavour of the projects we undertake in Sandwell and beyond. UDBS is both a multi-disciplinary and expert team, covering:

Design

Architecture and landscaping
Quantity surveying and project management
Interior design
Engineering design – structural and civil engineering
Site surveying and quality inspection
Demolition
Geotechnical

Repairs and maintenance

Strategic maintenance planning
Statutory inspections and cyclical maintenance
Managing water hygiene

Management of asbestos
Fire risk assessments
Glazing risk assessments
Energy management.

We look forward to bringing you updates on other projects we are currently involved in, in future issues, which include:

- The refurbishment of West Bromwich Town Hall
- The new leisure centre at Haden Hill, Cradley Heath
- New affordable housing projects.

For further information please contact:
UDBS_customercontact@sandwell.gov.uk





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