

Sandwell MBC

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Part 1: Infrastructure Needs Assessment

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This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client. It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

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Executive Summary

This Infrastructure Needs Assessment Report is the first of two parts of a new Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) for Sandwell. It has been prepared in the context of the Council's ongoing review of its Local Plan. It is intended to support the overall spatial strategy of the Local Plan by setting out the baseline context of infrastructure provision across the borough as a whole.

This Part 1 report considers 26 infrastructure types across seven infrastructure themes – transport, education, healthcare, emergency services, green and blue infrastructure, community facilities, and utilities and digital. Through a combination of desktop assessment and extensive stakeholder engagement we have sought to set out the current performance and level of constraint for each infrastructure type, existing plans for infrastructure improvement, and conclusions on the likely further implications for future growth. This has been done based on the emerging spatial strategy, with the Local Plan aiming to deliver up to 11,000 new homes and retain a minimum of 1,206 hectares of employment land across the borough up to 2041.

There are no infrastructure types for which our discussions with stakeholders have indicated a fundamental inability to deliver this quantum of growth over the plan period. There are nevertheless a number of infrastructure types where we have identified implications for further growth:

- **Transport** – Sandwell has benefitted from funding for a range of connectivity projects, and a variety of public and active travel opportunities have been identified. This includes the West Midlands Metro extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill, with an integrated transport hub in Dudley Port, committed bus schemes including the A4123 Birchley Island and the A461 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor. The main challenge for the highway network is how to facilitate growth whilst moving away from major highway capacity improvements, with congestion points identified around the motorway and the strategic road network. Nationally, regionally and locally there is an increasing shift in focus towards the delivery of multi-modal solutions to maximise access for all. Co-ordination of land use and transport planning is required to support a reduction in the need to travel and to facilitate a transition towards more sustainable journeys. The quality and level of service provision and the ability of public transport services to be improved should therefore inform final site selection decisions.
- **Education** – Sandwell's education provision is not currently overly constrained after years of investment, with all forms of entry having some capacity. The future trend for school places shows a decline, with projections in capacity showing that over the next five years there will be adequate provision available borough wide to support future growth. There are pockets of over subscription, where some capacity may need to be created. There is over subscription in special education needs and disability sector, with a need to increase provision.
- **Healthcare** – Discussions with stakeholders indicated that Sandwell has seen and benefitted from reasonable levels of investment in healthcare provision in recent years, including the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, meaning that the area is less constrained than some of its neighbours. The forthcoming Black Country Integrated Care Board Primary Care Estates Strategy (2023-2027) will map primary healthcare needs and future plans for each Primary Care Network across the Black Country.
- **Emergency Services** – Based on our research and experience from IDPs elsewhere, it is not anticipated that there will be any significant implications for the Local Plan for Fire and Rescue, and Ambulance Services. Engagement with the West Midlands Police highlighted

the possible implications for demand generated from planned growth, with indicative figures provided for non-building police infrastructure costs.

- **Community Facilities** – Sandwell is served by a range of community facilities, with new development expected to be in close proximity to existing provision. Investment may still be required for facilities to address existing issues with the quality of provision. Over the lifetime of the plan, pressure on burial space will increase, particularly within specific groups whose cultural or religious traditions prefer burial over cremation. A long-term strategy for burial space would support better understanding of future needs, land requirements and support delivery of new facilities in the right locations.
- **Green and Blue Infrastructure** – Sandwell is well-catered for in terms of green and blue infrastructure, with a diverse, high quality, well-maintained and well-used network of open spaces that serve the community. The Council has a clear programme of activity to help ensure that these assets are maintained and enhanced. Demand for provision for all sports is anticipated to grow in line with the population over the lifetime of the plan, while there are existing identified deficits for artificial pitches and youth/adult football pitches.
- **Utilities and Digital** – Whilst the primary electricity substations are not yet saturated, the main difficulties relate to getting power to where it is needed. Sites, particularly strategic developments, will need to be assessed individually to determine the necessary accommodations based on the available options in the area. Further conversations are recommended with National Grid whilst preparing the Part 2 report. In a similar vein, Seven Trent Water require more awareness of strategic developments to understand impacts on its network, with some constraints identified. Sandwell Council is considering strategic projects for district heat networks, as well as smaller-scale interventions to meet its net zero carbon commitments. No significant issues are identified on the gas network, waste management and digital infrastructure. Flood management provision is a priority to address in the Part 2 report.

The implications for future growth identified in this Part 1 report will be addressed by the Local Plan, and in the subsequent Infrastructure Delivery Schedule which will form Part 2 of the IDP. The Infrastructure Delivery Schedule will set out a detailed list of infrastructure schemes in Sandwell, details of the costs of these schemes and potential costs, and a recommended approach for cost apportionment between different development sites given the likelihood of new infrastructure demand arising incrementally. The Part 2 report will also set out a recommended approach to infrastructure prioritisation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Role of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) has commissioned Ove Arup and Partners Limited (Arup) to prepare an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) for the Sandwell Local Planning Authority administrative area.

Infrastructure funding and delivery is complex. Establishing a reliable, concise and flexible IDP is therefore important in ensuring that investment decisions are based on a sound understanding of the capacity of existing infrastructure and how future development affects the infrastructure needs that underpin the development of sustainable communities. Having an up-to-date IDP in place offers greater certainty to service providers, funders and developers about how infrastructure will be delivered, enabling growth and encouraging investment.

The Council's existing development plan is the Black Country Core Strategy (2011), The Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery Plan (2012) and Area Action Plans for West Bromwich, Smethwick and Tipton¹. The Council is now producing a replacement plan (the Sandwell Local Plan), which will cover the period up to 2041. The Regulation 18 Draft Sandwell Local Plan version will be subject to public consultation in late 2023, ahead of further consultation in summer 2024 on the final draft of the plan.

The IDP is split into two parts. This document forms Part 1 of the IDP: The Infrastructure Needs Assessment. It has been produced alongside the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan, ensuring that it reflects an understanding of baseline infrastructure capacity and needs within Sandwell, and that the implications of future growth upon infrastructure are understood. Part 2 of the IDP will include an Infrastructure Delivery Schedule. This will be published alongside the Regulation 19 pre-submission version of the Local Plan in mid-2024 and will set out further detail of infrastructure costs and delivery mechanisms.

IDPs provide a snapshot of a point in time linked to the Local Plan process, however they should be regarded as 'live documents' that are subject to update as development proposals progress and other circumstances across the borough change. This document could therefore form the basis for further updates throughout the Local Plan preparation process, into the examination stage and adoption, and monitoring the progress of development and investment in infrastructure.

1.2 Structure of this document

Whilst this Part 1 Infrastructure Needs Assessment is self-contained, in due course it is intended to be read alongside the Part 2 Infrastructure Delivery Schedule.

The following sections provide an overview of the matters addressed in this report:

- **Chapter 2** sets out the local, regional and national policy context relevant to the production of the IDP;
- **Chapter 3** provides an explanation of the approach taken to the IDP, and sets out the methodology by which the Part 1 Infrastructure Needs Assessment has been produced;
- **Chapter 4** sets out baseline infrastructure provision within Sandwell across seven infrastructure themes, and initial conclusions around implications for future growth.
- **Appendix A** sets out a list of all of the documents considered throughout the production of this report.

¹ [Sandwell MBC – existing planning policy documents](#)

2. Policy Context

2.1 National Policy Context

2.1.1 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023)² states that local planning authorities must prepare a robust and evidence-based Local Plan which seeks to deliver sustainable development. As part of the statutory requirement to produce a Local Plan, national policy places a particular emphasis on the need for local planning authorities to plan for the delivery of various forms of infrastructure required to support future growth.

IDPs are an important part of the evidence base that supports Local Plans, with the purpose of demonstrating that the infrastructure requirements necessary to support the proposed levels of growth can be delivered. IDPs outline the costs of infrastructure delivery, highlighting potential sources of funding and challenges associated with securing these funds. IDPs are therefore an important tool for local planning authorities when negotiating developer contributions through section 106 agreements, developing evidence of need for charging under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and when applying for other sources of grant funding.

Paragraph 16 of the NPPF states that plans should be prepared positively, in a way which is aspirational but deliverable, while contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Specifically, the NPPF states that both strategic (paragraph 20) and non-strategic (paragraph 28) policies should set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for infrastructure, including transport and community facilities (such as health and education infrastructure).

Paragraph 34 of the NPPF states the following:

‘Plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.’

Paragraph 58 of the NPPF places the emphasis on demonstrating development viability at the plan-making stage which seeks to avoid the extent to which viability is challenged by developers on individual planning applications. This means that an early understanding of infrastructure requirements (and their impact on viability) has become an increasingly important part of the plan-making process:

‘Where up-to-date policies have set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable. It is up to the applicant to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment at the application stage.’

2.1.2 Planning Practice Guidance

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Plan-Making³ (paragraph 059, reference 61-059-20190315) explains the role and function of a Local Plan in delivering infrastructure, stating that the Local Plan should identify what infrastructure is required and how it can be funded and delivered.

PPG advises that discussion with infrastructure and service providers should be undertaken to collaboratively at an early stage in the plan making process in order to identify infrastructure deficits and requirements, and opportunities for addressing them. It is expected that local planning authorities should undertake assessments of the quality and capacity of infrastructure, and its ability to meet forecast demands. Local Plan policies

² [National Planning Policy Framework 2023](#)

³ [PPG: Plan-making](#)

should then set out how identified deficiencies will be addressed and take account of strategic infrastructure, including (where relevant) nationally significant infrastructure, within these areas.

The PPG also states that local authorities should ensure that the combined total impact of requests for developer contributions towards infrastructure, and development plan policies more generally, should not threaten the deliverability of the plan.

With regards to CIL, the PPG⁴ (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 25-001-20190901) states that:

'The Community Infrastructure Levy (the 'levy') is a charge which can be levied by local authorities on new development in their area. It is an important tool for local authorities to use to help them deliver the infrastructure needed to support development in their area.'

2.2 Regional Policy Context

2.2.1 Black Country Strategic Economic Plan

The Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets out the vision, objectives, strategy, and actions to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the Black Country, an area with unique assets, challenges, and opportunities. In May 2019 the West Midlands Combined Authority, in partnership with the region's three Local Enterprise Partnerships (Black Country, Coventry and Warwickshire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull), published the West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy⁵, building on local Strategic Economic Plans.

2.2.2 West Midlands Mayoral Combined Authority

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) was set up in 2016 and comprises 18 local authorities, with a population of 4.7 million. The WMCA has a devolution deal with Government, with a remit to deliver conditions for growth through:

- New powers over economic development
- Transport investment
- Housing and land investment
- Pioneering new approaches to regeneration
- Skills
- Working with investors
- Net zero

Building on the vision, objectives and strategy of the SEP, targeted investment in these areas seeks to improve the quality of life for people living and working in the West Midlands and, critically, helping to increase the productivity of the West Midlands.

Announced in the Spring Budget 2023, the WMCA secured a Deeper Devolution Deal⁶ providing a budget windfall in excess of £1.5 billion to level up the region and new significant longer-term funding agreements, including 100% business rates retention for 10 years, worth £450 million.

⁴ [PPG: CIL](#)

⁵ [West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy](#)

⁶ [Deeper Devolution Deal 2023](#)

2.3 Local Policy Context

2.3.1 Infrastructure Funding Statements

Infrastructure Funding Statements⁷ (IFS) are factual reports summarising the amount of developer contributions obtained, allocated and spent in the previous financial year. They also set out future funding priorities. The requirement to produce an IFS was introduced by the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2019⁸, aiming to improve transparency around how developer contributions are spent on infrastructure. The IFS must be updated at least once each year.

Sandwell MBC's IFS focuses upon three types of developer contributions:

1. Section 106 agreements
2. Section 278 agreements
3. Community Infrastructure Levy

The IFS should be considered alongside the IDP and the Local Plan to inform future funding priorities each year. In terms of expenditure priorities, the 2021/22 IFS does not identify specific projects and indicates that CIL spending priorities are under review.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The Council began charging CIL in 2015. Payable CIL rates vary according to the type of development and where it is located within the borough. Rates range from £0, £15, £30, £50, and £60 per square metre (these rates are subject to indexation so change annually). CIL receipts for the reporting year 2021/22 amounted to £941,408.68. The total amount of CIL monies retained at the end of 2021-2022 was £3,337,414.98.

In 2021/22 £79,131.56 of CIL was spent across 30 projects. The 15% of CIL receipts that is allocated to neighbourhoods is determined through a Cabinet approved process. Since Sandwell MBC began charging CIL in 2015 a total of £365,757.05 has been allocated to neighbourhood projects.

The current iteration of the IFS indicates that a review of CIL priority projects will be undertaken in 2023.

Developer Contributions

As of 31 March 2022 the Council held developer contributions to the value of £3,192,477.13, allocated for open space, affordable housing, environmental health and highways. £236,145.35 of income was received by the Council in 2021-2022, although no expenditure was recorded in the IFS.

2.3.2 Draft Sandwell Local Plan

In the context of a Local Plan, the scope of the definition of infrastructure is wide-ranging and includes a broad range of physical and non-physical infrastructure to help support sustainable communities.

The emerging Sandwell Local Plan will replace the Black Country Core Strategy (2011), The Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery Plan (the SAD) and Area Action Plans (AAPs) for West Bromwich, Smethwick and Tipton. It presents an opportunity for the Council to set out a positive vision for the area, but the Plan should also be realistic about what can be achieved and when (including in relation to infrastructure). This means:

- paying careful attention to the supply of land that is available for development;
- the need to protect existing infrastructure;
- safeguarding land accommodating existing infrastructure for future provision;

⁷ [Sandwell Infrastructure Funding Statement](#)

⁸ [The Community Infrastructure Levy \(Amendment\) \(England\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2019](#)

- identifying what infrastructure is required and how it can be funded and brought on stream at the appropriate time; and
- ensuring that the requirements of the Plan as a whole do not prejudice the viability of development.

Until as recently as October 2022 the four local planning authorities in the Black Country had been working together on a joint plan for the area. However, a statement⁹ was issued indicating that the authorities were unable to reach agreement on the approach to planning for future development needs, resulting in the decision to move towards preparation of Local Plans in each area. Consequently, while issues such as housing and employment land needs will now be addressed in separate Local Plans, a substantial body of evidence from the collective efforts of the Black Country Plan remain relevant and will be influential in shaping the Council’s thinking around infrastructure provision and delivery throughout the preparation of the Local Plan.

The draft Local Plan that is being prepared for consultation is a comprehensive document and provides a strong steer for guiding strategic and thematic development issues. The vision conveys a picture of a future Sandwell that harnesses infrastructure effectively to address the challenge of climate change, enhance the quality of the urban environment, capitalise upon its locational and connectivity assets, and maximises opportunities for improved connectivity and creating sustainable communities. Inevitably, details of the priority and timing of key infrastructure needs and projects will be integrated in to the emerging plan as they are identified through the IDP and more detailed understanding of the likely timescale for delivery of housing and employment sites.

2.3.3 Proposed Levels of Housing and Employment Growth

The Sandwell Local Plan aims to deliver up to 11,000 new homes across the borough within the plan period, up to 2041. The indicative annual housing target is understood to be 588 dwellings per year, along with a requirement to retain a minimum of 1,206 hectares of employment land.



Figure 1: Geography of Sandwell

⁹ <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/planning/sandwell-local-plan>

The proposed development strategy for Sandwell looks to prioritise delivering development on brownfield sites in the urban area, protecting the green belt and supporting and enhancing the sustainability of existing communities by focusing growth and regeneration into West Bromwich and other town centres and regeneration areas. The draft plan identifies a need to re-balance the housing stock by delivering homes that are supported by job creation and provision of local services, protecting and enhancing green infrastructure and environmental assets, whilst developing resilience to climate change.

2.3.4 Sandwell MBC Corporate Plan 2021-2025

The Corporate Plan is intended to convey the vision and objectives underlying Council's approach to service delivery in the short to medium term, with the current iteration, running to 2025. The plan targets the essentials for living a good life for residents in Sandwell – feeling safe, a clean neighbourhood, a decent, warm home, good schools for our children, jobs that pay a decent wage and a pride in living and working in Sandwell.

Initially driven by the post-Covid recovery, the Corporate Plan targets six outcomes:

- The best start in life for children and young people
- People live well and age well
- Strong, resilient communities
- Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
- A strong and inclusive economy
- A connected and accessible Sandwell

These aims all feature prominently as cross-cutting features in the context of the emerging Local Plan and the IDP, since all of these will to some degree be supported and achieved by delivering new and enhanced infrastructure.

3. Approach and Methodology

3.1 Study scope

The preceding chapter of the document has set out the contextual issues that have been considered in preparing the IDP. This chapter sets out the approach and methodology that has been taken to reach the initial baseline conclusions on infrastructure capacity in Sandwell and implications for future growth. This analysis is set out within Chapter 4.

The IDP, including this Part 1 Infrastructure Needs Assessment, has been produced for the area of Sandwell for which Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is the local planning authority. As set out on Figure 1 in the previous chapter the borough comprises six geographical sub-areas, based on the six historic former boroughs of:

- Oldbury;
- Rowley Regis (including the town centres of Blackheath and Cradley Heath);
- Smethwick (including the town centres of Bearwood and Cape Hill);
- Tipton (including the town centre of Great Bridge);
- Wednesbury; and
- West Bromwich.

The Infrastructure Needs Assessment is based on the proposed levels of growth for the borough as a whole and, where more detail has been available, in relation to each sub-area. The IDP is presented around seven strategic infrastructure themes, with further sub-categories identified, covering every aspect of the day-to-day needs of the borough's residents, visitors and businesses. These are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Infrastructure Types

Meeting theme	Infrastructure type
Transport	Highways Public transport Active travel
Education	Schools (Primary, secondary, special educational needs) Post-16 Early years provision
Healthcare	Primary healthcare Secondary healthcare Adult social care
Emergency Services	Ambulance services Policing Fire and rescue
Green and Blue infrastructure	Formal parks and gardens Informal open spaces Allotments
Community facilities	Burials and cremation facilities Libraries

	Sports facilities and leisure centres Community centres
Utilities and digital	Electricity Gas District heat network Water supply and sewerage Waste management Flood risk management Digital infrastructure

The process of preparing an IDP needs to be flexible and allow ongoing iteration, incorporating new information as it arises. However, this document has been produced at a particular point in time, while the Council was in the process of preparing the Regulation 18 consultation draft Local Plan. It may therefore be necessary for some aspects of the IDP to be revisited and revised to varying degrees within Part 2. Furthermore, the Council will need to give consideration to maintaining the IDP as a live document and linking to the Infrastructure Funding Statement and/or the monitoring procedures adopted within the Local Plan can also help to ensure that understanding of infrastructure needs remains up-to-date and in relation to development as it comes forward over the lifetime of the Local Plan. Engagement and research should also therefore be relatively continuous.

3.2 Review of existing evidence and strategy

At the outset of the project, a detailed review was undertaken of the national, regional and local policy and strategy context relating to infrastructure provision in Sandwell. This has included:

- The existing adopted development plan for Sandwell.
- Infrastructure evidence produced in support of previous earlier work on the Black Country Local Plan.
- National and sub-regional policy documents, such as those produced by the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- Borough, Black Country and West Midlands-wide evidence on development needs.
- Strategy and policy documents produced by infrastructure providers operating within Sandwell.

A full list of the documents reviewed for the IDP is contained in Appendix A.

This exercise provided an understanding of existing infrastructure gaps and anticipated changes to the baseline levels of provision and performance within Sandwell. This review process identified that highway capacity within the local road network in particular was likely to be an area for significant focus. Overall this sets the focus for the work throughout the subsequent tasks – particularly the interactions with stakeholders.

3.3 Engagement with infrastructure providers

Engagement with infrastructure providers is essential in the course of preparing an IDP. Stakeholder engagement sets the infrastructure baseline/starting point of the Local Plan, providing understanding of capacity, limitations and opportunities, as well as identifying any investment or schemes that are already planned or under development. Furthermore, stakeholder involvement is critical for giving infrastructure providers the opportunity to consider the potential implications that emerging planned levels of growth may have on existing infrastructure and likely requirements that this will generate over the lifetime of the plan.

A number of meetings were held with stakeholders in August and September 2023. A full list of stakeholders that were contacted and engaged throughout the preparation of the IDP are set out in Table 2. Because of the

stage of Local Plan production during preparation of Part 1 of the IDP, it was not possible to share exact location-specific details of growth with infrastructure stakeholders. However, to ensure that infrastructure providers still had a basis upon which to comment on the potential implications of growth, each was provided with a briefing note which set out the emerging regeneration areas of the plan and likely housing growth targets, informed data from current land availability assessments.

Online meetings were held with officers, programme managers and technical specialists as representatives from each stakeholder body, seeking to understand:

- The nature of any infrastructure constraints and/or network performance issues, and their relationship to the locations of planned growth.
- What infrastructure schemes exist or are being developed to address identified needs.
- Any issues which need to be overcome in order to develop schemes, and what actions might be needed to achieve this.
- The costs of identified schemes, and preferred approaches to funding.

Table 2 below sets out the infrastructure providers and other stakeholders who have engaged with the local plan preparation process.

Table 2: Engagement with Infrastructure Providers

Meeting theme	Infrastructure stakeholder
Highways	SMBC, National Highways, West Midlands Combined Authority (TfWM)
Public and active transport	SMBC, West Midlands Combined Authority (TfWM), Black Country Transport, Sustrans
Electricity	National Grid
Gas and Energy	Cadent Gas, SMBC
Water and sewerage	Severn Trent Water, South Staffs Water
Flood risk management	SMBC
Waste management	SMBC
Digital connectivity	West Midlands Combined Authority (WM5G)
Education	SMBC
Healthcare	SMBC, Black Country Integrated Care Board, Sandwell and West Birmingham Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, West Midlands Ambulance Service
Adult social care	SMBC
Policing	West Midlands Police
Sport and leisure	SMBC, Sport England
Green infrastructure	SMBC, Canal and River Trust

The views of all infrastructure providers within the IDP area are noted as valuable to understanding infrastructure delivery, therefore as part of the stakeholder engagement process, all relevant infrastructure providers were contacted via email. Where it was not possible to arrange a meeting prior to the completion of this report we have undertaken analysis of data sources that are available and drawn upon standards and assumptions that are widely used in our IDP work elsewhere in the country. As such, we will continue to pursue discussions with the outstanding bodies (identified below) ahead of the next stage of the IDP, whilst reviewing any comments that may be received during the course of the forthcoming consultation on the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18 consultation).

Outstanding stakeholder engagement subjects/consultees:

- Transport – Network Rail
- Water and sewerage – The Environment Agency
- Emergency services – West Midlands Fire Service
- Healthcare – Sandwell and West Birmingham Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, West Midlands Ambulance Service
- Social care – SMBC Adult Social Care

The outcomes of these discussions are reflected in Chapter 4 of this report.

3.4 Assessment of infrastructure needs

Utilising the outcomes of the review of existing evidence and strategy, and our engagement with infrastructure stakeholders, we have assessed the borough’s current infrastructure capacity. This has allowed us to provide commentary on the resultant implications for future housing and employment growth. We have used established benchmark infrastructure standards to do this wherever possible, or location-specific information provided to us by infrastructure stakeholders. Where qualitative methods have been used to establish infrastructure needs, the specific details of the approach used are set out within Chapter 4.

We have utilised these findings to produce conclusions that will assist the Council in verifying the appropriateness and deliverability of its emerging development strategy. This has included reporting on any existing infrastructure deficits which may need to be addressed, in addition to planned growth. We have set out our overall conclusions of infrastructure needs for each infrastructure theme within Chapter 4.

3.5 Next steps to produce an Infrastructure Delivery Schedule

As set out above, this Part 1 Infrastructure Needs Assessment should be read in conjunction with the Part 2 Infrastructure Delivery Schedule to be produced in due course. The Part 2 report will help the Council to demonstrate for the purposes of the Local Plan Examination that the requirements of national policy have been met. The specific methodology and approach followed for the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule will be set out within that document, but is likely to include:

- **Specific infrastructure schemes and costs** – The likely future infrastructure needs identified within this Part 1 analysis will be investigated further and refined into a schedule of individual infrastructure schemes. Information about the costs of infrastructure required over the lifetime of the Local Plan will be provided to us by infrastructure providers. Where costs are not known estimates will be provided by our cost consultants.
- **Infrastructure prioritisation** – Given the constrained funding environment in which new development operates, it is likely that there will be a funding gap between the total cost of potential infrastructure schemes and the funding mechanisms available to pay for them (including available Government funding). Therefore, drawing on the Council’s methodology for determining infrastructure priorities based on Local Plan policies, the Part 2 document will set out a potential approach to prioritising infrastructure investment, allowing the Council to make development management and funding decisions available to deliver the growth strategy.
- **Apportionment of needs and costs** – Current land availability assessment work underpinning proposals in the emerging plan indicates that development will primarily take place on a large number of relatively small sites. It is therefore anticipated that requirements for new infrastructure will arise somewhat incrementally. Subject to consideration of viability in the later stages of plan preparation, the Part 2 document will consider how the need for and cost of infrastructure schemes could be apportioned between individual sites and developers, providing a fair and proportionate basis on which individual infrastructure schemes could be developed.

4. Future Infrastructure Needs

4.1 Transport

Sandwell occupies a central position within the West Midlands conurbation and benefits from a good quality, affordable bus network, the West Midlands Metro, 12 railway stations, and good connectivity to the M5 and M6 motorways. This section considers the existing multi-modal transport opportunities in Sandwell and the challenges and opportunities it provides in relation to supporting future growth.

4.1.1 Performance of existing infrastructure

General Challenges

The delivery of an improved and locally integrated transport network with regional and national connectivity is fundamental to achieving Sandwell's vision to become a thriving, growing and active borough. Achieving this will require an effective and co-ordinated approach to land use and transport planning; co-locating complementary land uses, reducing the need for travel and ensuring that housing and employment sites have access to attractive, reliable and integrated transport that connects residents and businesses to opportunities within and beyond the borough's boundaries.

Section 9 of the NPPF requires authorities to promote and prioritise sustainable transport by minimising the vehicular traffic impacts of development; maximising the opportunities from both existing and proposed public and sustainable transport infrastructure; and embracing a greater use of technology. Specifically, the NPPF requires development and infrastructure provision to promote sustainable movement, recognise the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure, and to identify and deliver opportunities which avoid and mitigate any adverse effects and realise net environmental gains.

To meet these challenges, the NPPF encourages Councils to actively manage patterns of growth, with significant development to be focused on locations which are (or can be made) sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. Government, through a series of other policy changes, has also placed a stronger focus on decarbonisation of the transport network as a response to the climate emergency. National strategies, including Bus Back Better (2021)¹⁰, Gear Change (2020)¹¹, and the Decarbonising Transport Plan (2021)¹² have raised the ambition for increasing active travel and bus usage in the interests of health, the environment, and the economy.

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), are setting the regional vision and approach to transport delivery to 2041 in the emerging Fifth Local Transport Plan (LTP5) for the West Midlands. The LTP5 Core Strategy proposes a new vision whereby people can thrive without having to own or drive a car based around 6 Big Moves¹³:

- Behavioural change;
- Accessible and inclusive places;
- Safe, efficient and reliable networks;
- Walk, wheel, cycle and scoot;
- Public transport and share mobility; and
- Green transport revolution.

¹⁰ Bus Back Better (2021): National Bus Strategy for England [Bus Back Better \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94444/bus-back-better-national-bus-strategy-for-england.pdf)

¹¹ Gear Change - A bold vision for cycling and walking (2021) [Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94444/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf)

¹² Decarbonising Plan (2021) [Decarbonising Transport – A Better, Greener Britain \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94444/decarbonising-transport-a-better-greener-britain.pdf)

¹³ Reimagining transport in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan Big Moves Summary [big-moves-summary.pdf \(tfwm.org.uk\)](https://www.tfwm.org.uk/big-moves-summary.pdf)

The LTP5 strategy also advocates a *'vision and validate'* approach to plan making based on the principles of:

- Avoiding travel: co-locating land uses, consolidating trips and accessing services online;
- Shifting travel: travelling to accessible places and using non-car modes; and
- Improving travel: by designing out emissions and impacts.

These principles will inform forthcoming area strategies being developed by TfWM, one of which will cover the Black Country, including Sandwell.

At a local level Sandwell presents a unique set of challenges in its transportation network, due to its polycentric nature and the density of the urban area, resulting in substantial demand for travel between Sandwell's town centres and the neighbouring city of Birmingham. The area experiences high demand for car travel while bus travel is the dominant sustainable mode of transport with 10.4% commuter mode share according to the 2021 Census¹⁴. However, buses are susceptible to being caught up in general traffic delays. Targeted investment in the Key Route and Major Route networks remains a key focus to improve journey time reliability alongside development of the public transport network to improve multi-modal connectivity.

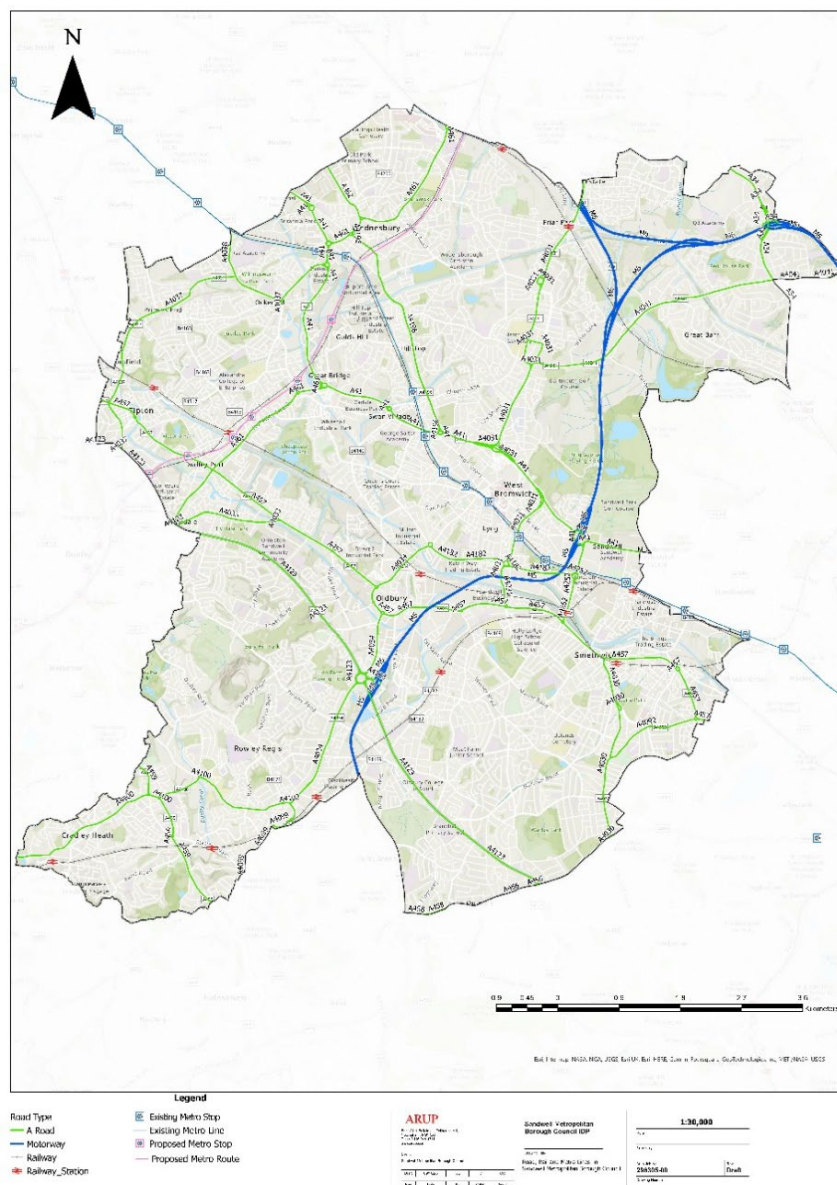


Figure 2: Roads, Rail and Metro Lines in Sandwell

¹⁴ 2021 Census Method used to travel to work - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

While there are numerous transport projects currently being delivered in the borough, funding infrastructure to support and mitigate development growth can present a challenge. There is limited capacity to accommodate increased highway travel and whilst development site proposals are often acceptable individually, they can present problems when considered cumulatively. Additionally, during our discussions with stakeholders, it was identified that some developer contributions are often waived due to viability considerations and to encourage development to come forward. Consequently, the forward strategy needs to seek increased development densities and place a greater emphasis on sustainable travel.

Active Travel Challenges

Walking and cycling mode share is lower in the Black Country than in other areas of the West Midlands. Only 4.6% of adults cycle at least once per month in Sandwell, the lowest percentage of any local authority in the West Midlands compared to an average of 8.7% in the region¹⁵. The same is true for walking with 62.0% of adults walking at least once a month compared to an average of 69.3% in the West Midlands region¹⁶.

The West Midlands LTP sets out the expectation for all communities to have excellent walking, cycling and public transport access to local schools, shops, healthcare facilities and leisure activities so that most local trips are made by sustainable modes of transport. However, achieving this requires significant changes in behaviours and the creation of environments where active travel is the natural choice for short journeys, and improved integration with public transport for longer journeys.

Sandwell benefits from good quality, coherent active modes provision on the canal network but there are often gaps in routes along the main highway corridors and opportunities northwards towards West Bromwich and Walsall are poor. Historically, investment in active travel has been piecemeal and complex, with funding often released on a competitive basis and covering a limited timeframe. This has restricted capacity to make long-term commitments that are necessary to achieve a step-change in behaviour and travel patterns.

The Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans (LCWIPs), prepared for the West Midlands, Black Country and Sandwell; identify priority routes for investment to support cross-region and local movements by active modes to support a reduction in short distance car trips and increased physical activity. It is hoped that the plans will encourage delivery of a more cohesive network and consistent route standard by different parties, including developers. Several projects have already been delivered or are already underway including:

- The West Bromwich Connected project is delivering £1.1m of phased investment from the Towns Fund. A new pedestrian footway along West Bromwich Inner Ringway was completed in April 2023 and new cycle schemes to connect Europa Avenue and West Bromwich town centre, Birmingham Canal to West Bromwich town centre (Route 1) and Hill Top to Walsall Canal and Eagle Lane (Route 14) are due to be completed by March 2026.
- The Rowley Regis Connected project is delivering £1.5m of Towns Fund investment in active travel infrastructure to link bus and rail services to employment hubs in Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Oldbury. The project, which is due to be complete by 2025, will deliver 0.28km of new footways and 2km of segregated cycleways as well as footway resurfacing and widening, traffic calming, improved lighting and signage, and traffic calming measures.
- The Smethwick Connected project is delivering £3.9m of Towns Fund investment to create cycle and pedestrian links from two railway stations to the town centre and hospital. The project will deliver 3.6km of new pedestrian paths, 2.7km of new cycleways and 2.7km of resurfaced / improved road up to March 2026 with a view to increase walking and cycling mode share along the A457 transport corridor and assist in addressing congestion, poor air quality and health inequalities.

¹⁵ Cycling in the West Midlands [Cycling and Walking | Community Engagement \(arcgis.com\)](#)

¹⁶ Walking in the West Midlands [Cycling and Walking | Community Engagement \(arcgis.com\)](#)

These schemes are being complemented by community cycling clubs to encourage physical activity and regular use of local infrastructure as well as improved cycle storage at rail stations and associated measures to combat cycle crime.

Bus Challenges

The West Midlands currently has the largest bus network in England outside of London. Many services operate on a turn-up-and-go level of frequency, although there are gaps in the geographical coverage of the high frequency network especially in the Black Country.

A major challenge for buses in Sandwell is the congestion of the highway network which makes journeys unreliable, lowers the average speed of buses and adversely impacts their ability to offer an attractive alternative to the private car. Large parts of Sandwell's highway network comprise relatively narrow, single-carriageway roads where the available road space is limited and cars, buses, frontage access and on-street parking compete for road space. This means that it is not always possible to reallocate road space for public transport and cycling (or for either in some cases).

National Express is the largest operator in the West Midlands, with almost 90% market share which has resulted in a competitive advantage over its rival operators with regards to season tickets, price differentials and the retail network. Ticketing complexity is a known barrier for bus use. At present bus ticketing does not offer integrated contactless ticketing between operators and only offers metro-bus ticketing options at a premium. Additionally, whilst real-time information is available via smart phone, multi-modal travel information and enhanced network disruption information is still not widely available for passengers.

Bus priority measures and rapid transit corridors could unlock the full potential of buses but are not widely available in Sandwell. The introduction of the Sprint rapid transit service is setting the standard for future bus services in the West Midlands that will offer a similar level of service and comfort to trams.

Rail and Metro Challenges

Sandwell is served by the West Coast Main Line and two regional/commuter railway lines, with 12 railway stations within the borough. The Stafford line which is part of the West Coast Main Line serves stations at Tipton, Dudley Port, Sandwell & Dudley, Smethwick Galton Bridge and Smethwick Rolfe Street; the Snow Hill Line serves The Hawthorns, Smethwick Galton Bridge, Langley Green, Rowley Regis, Old Hill and Cradley Heath; and the Chase Line serves stations at Bescot Stadium and Tame Bridge Parkway. Sandwell is also well connected with the West Midlands Metro with 12 stops on the existing metro line connecting the principal centres of population at Wednesbury and West Bromwich to Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

Many proposals to increase heavy rail service frequency are dependent on the construction of HS2 and proposed supporting infrastructure such as the Rowley Regis turnback siding. If HS2 services are introduced there is an opportunity to recast the service specification on the Birmingham to Wolverhampton rail corridor by utilising the reduced long-distance requirement for fast, long-distance paths. This will potentially open new opportunities for enhanced local provision or additional calls to local train stations. However, these plans and their associated impact appears uncertain and could be downgraded or withdrawn according to the latest Government position.

Sandwell will benefit from the 11km metro extension from Wednesbury to Dudley (Phase 1, 2024/25) and Brierley Hill (Phase 2, 2027). Works have started, although delivery has previously been delayed due to escalating costs and the need to secure increased investment. Once built, the extension will serve up to 14 new stops in areas that currently lack sustainable connections.

The extension will also create a transport hub at Dudley Port which will offer an interchange between the Metro and local train services. Dudley Port is a priority as the station will require infrastructure improvements to accommodate the expected increase in patronage and to enhance the passenger experience which is currently poor and discourages people out of their cars onto public transport. Sustainable access measures will also be important to maximise the benefits arising from the metro corridor and to mitigate against the potential for informal park and ride; however, funding is currently limited and will not cover these long-term ambitions.

Freight Challenges

At a national level the recently published “*Future of Freight: a long-term plan*”¹⁷ (FoF) document sets out the vision for Government / industry collaboration to jointly set direction and strategic priorities for the freight sector. The FoF acknowledges the complexity and the variation of the sector and it is clear that its planning needs are complex and should not be considered in isolation. There is also a need to serve the interests of local communities captured through a call for evidence¹⁸ which is due to be completed in October 2023.

At a regional level, the West Midlands conurbation boasts the second-highest population concentration outside the South East, alongside a thriving manufacturing and distribution sector, resulting in a substantial volumes of freight movement to and through the area. In pursuit of objectives to alleviate congestion and reduce pollution, local authorities in the region have implemented policies to mitigate the adverse impacts of freight transportation. This effort has given rise to the West Midlands Regional Freight Strategy¹⁹, which outlines regional approaches to address freight-related challenges, necessitated by the interconnected nature of the West Midlands conurbation.

The Freight Quality Partnership aims to promote the efficient utilisation of road networks, coordinate cross-boundary distribution and encourage the adoption of alternative transportation modes. These measures are instrumental in achieving the shared priorities articulated in the Local Transport Plan, notably addressing congestion, enhancing road safety and improving air quality.

Parking Challenges

There are approximately 1,457 public car parking bays available across Sandwell’s main town centres with around 8% of short stay parking spaces and 5% of long stay parking spaces designated as blue badge bays. According to the 2020 Black Country Parking Study²⁰ there does not appear to be any electric vehicle charging facilities in Sandwell’s public car parks and no designated coach or freight parking facilities have been identified in the strategic or town centres in Sandwell. However it is understood that EV charging infrastructure will be rolled out from the end of 2023/24.

According to TfWM’s LTP5 Core strategy, the pace and rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure is too slow and a known barrier to more people making the switch. In Sandwell 80.6% of residents are not within a 1km public charging points with the Black Country Councils being the worst performing West Midlands authorities in terms EV uptake. Whilst the Black Country ULEV strategy²¹ records Sandwell having the lowest charging point coverage, it also has the lowest car ownership level (70.8%)²² of all four Black Country Councils. Black Country Transport is leading the roll out of 250 on-street charging points over the next five-year period in locations identified through resident engagement. The purchase of eVs is also being monitored to identify areas of future potential need.

Highways Challenges

Overall, the Strategic Road Network (SRN) in Sandwell is facing significant congestion with junctions between M5 Junction 3 and the M5/M6 Interchange operating close to capacity especially during peak hours. According to National Highway’s *London to Scotland West (South) Route strategy report*²³ these junctions experience morning and evening average peak period delays of over 120 seconds per vehicle per mile (pvpm) which is expected to rise up to 154 seconds pvpm by 2031. The Local Road Network (LRN) also

¹⁷ Future of Freight: a long-term plan [Future of Freight \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

¹⁸ Freight, logistics and the planning system: call for evidence [Freight, logistics and the planning system: call for evidence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

¹⁹ West Midlands Regional Freight Strategy [west-midlands-freight-strategy.pdf \(tfwm.org.uk\)](https://www.tfwm.org.uk)

²⁰ Black Country Parking Study [Transport | Black Country Plan \(dudley.gov.uk\)](https://www.dudley.gov.uk)

²¹ Black Country ULEV strategy [Black Country ULEV Strategy 2020.qxp_Layout 1 \(blackcountrytransport.org.uk\)](https://www.blackcountrytransport.org.uk)

²² 2021 Census [Number of cars or vans - Census Maps, ONS](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

²³ London to Scotland West (South) Route Strategy Initial Overview Report [London to Scotland West \(South\) \(nationalhighways.co.uk\)](https://www.nationalhighways.co.uk)

experiences congestion which can be exacerbated by the diversionary traffic caused by accidents on the SRN.

The main challenge for the highway network is how to facilitate growth whilst moving away from major highway capacity improvements towards behavioural change solutions in line with climate change and net zero commitments set by the Government. Analysis of the current highway network indicates that:

- There is significant congestion and regular peak period delays on the M5, M6 and the Birmingham box with specific junctions and route sections being accident hotspots.
- Urgent action is needed to free up severe congestion at M5 Junction 1 / West Bromwich and M5 Junction 2 / Birchley Island. M6 Junction 8 is also an issue.
- Sandwell regularly faces the unexpected impact of diversionary traffic when there is an incident on the SRN which can displace traffic onto unsuitable local routes.
- Whilst developments are often acceptable in highway terms in isolation, cumulatively they present challenges for the operation of the transport network.

Without appropriate intervention, these safety and congestion issues are expected to worsen as the West Midlands population and conurbation grows. The objective is to make best use of existing assets to enable the network run as safely and reliably as possible, by using technology, effective land use planning and improved public transport with delivery coordinated between stakeholders.

National Highways has recently consulted on its Road Investment Strategy for Road Period 3 (RIS3). The proposed focus is on concluding RIS2 schemes and studies and moving away from reactive infrastructure interventions to influencing proposals at the plan making stage. As such, it is engaged in the development of all of the Black Country Local Plans. National Highways has also engaged in incorporating public transport and active mode infrastructure within its schemes to ensure interventions promote and do not become a barrier to non-car-based travel.

4.1.2 Baseline proposed investment schemes and infrastructure implications of future growth

General Opportunities

TfWM's LTP5 Core Strategy sets out the ambition that the West Midlands should become a place where no matter where you live, not owning a car would not exclude you from everything the region has to offer. However, no single scheme in the form of highway works, additional public transport services or more extensive active travel routes will solve all the issues on the network. Only through delivery of a cohesive package of measures will impacts be mitigated and more sustainable travel patterns created.

There are numerous multi-modal and integrated transport proposals taking place across Sandwell and the wider region that will help accommodate and mitigate the impacts of planned growth. The West Midlands Metro extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill will create a transport hub in Dudley Port within a 2-3 years' time frame which will open opportunities for local development and encourage modal shift towards sustainable alternatives. Longer term, HS2 with its brand-new stations at Curzon Street and the Midlands Rail hub²⁴ with its two new chords will bring faster, better and more frequent connections across the Midlands and as a consequence will positively impact Sandwell too.

There are several initiatives being promoted by stakeholders covering concepts like the 15-minute neighbourhood, integrated ticketing options, demand responsive services, rapid transit and bus priority measures which all bring significant potential to improve the transport offer in the region. A list of schemes has also been identified by TfWM in consultation with Black Country Transport and the Black Country local authorities which are intended to plug the gap between the capital programme and LTP ambitions. This list includes committed schemes which are at varying stages of development for delivery and aspirational schemes which have been identified for longer term delivery to address infrastructure gaps and network

²⁴Midlands Rail Hub [Midlands Connect](#)

challenges. The majority of these schemes are multimodal interventions with a view to improving journeys for all road users.

In October 2023, the Government announced that HS2 Phase 2a and 2b from Birmingham to Manchester would be cancelled, and that funding would instead be directed to the creation of Network North which is a new approach to transport in the Country. Network North is set to include a list of schemes for the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands as well as significant new funding commitments for local authorities. There are a number of schemes relevant to Sandwell in the list, including the commitment to deliver the Midlands Rail Hub and the already funded and committed A413 Birchley Island schemes. Further clarity on these announcements will be addressed in our Part 2 report.

Active Travel Opportunities

Sandwell Council's future plans for walking and cycling are shaped by the three Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) covering the West Midlands, Black Country, and Sandwell which seek to deliver local and regionally important connections to develop a greener travel network. Improved conditions for walking will be created through the delivery of district and town centre public realm improvements, local area enhancements and area wide 20mph speed control. A small part of Sandwell is currently served by the Beryl cycle²⁵ hire scheme which offers bikes and e-bikes for hire from docking stations at eight locations across the borough. To further develop the available infrastructure, there is a recognition that more needs to be done to work with developers and partners to deliver consistent high standard of provision to enable the network to grow further.

Road space reallocation to provide priority for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists would further support modal shift particularly on routes that form part of the approved cycle network and/or the core bus network. However, the Council recognises that full route segregation as promoted by LTN 1/20²⁶ may not be achievable in all locations and focus should be directed towards balancing the needs of different road users and delivering route consistency. National Highways also recognises that the SRN can be a barrier to movement and want to support non-motorised users crossing their network by deliver improvements to accommodate non-motorised users where they can.

Currently committed active travel schemes being promoted in Sandwell include:

- **A461 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor** which is a multi-modal intervention that aims to relieve congestion, provide better infrastructure for walking and cycling, and improve road safety and journey times for public transport. The scheme is currently at the Outline Business Case stage.
- **A4123 Birchley Island, Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor** which is a multi-modal intervention to improve journey time reliability and enhance public transport and walking connectivity to encourage economic development and address poor air quality. Bus priority measures to deliver quality bus routes for X8 and 87 services is a TfWM requirement of the scheme to future proof for the Dudley to Birmingham Sprint corridor.
- **Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension (WBHE) Sustainable Access Measures** which will help to ensure that the benefits from WBHE are maximised. The scheme includes improved access to the Metro line for pedestrians and cyclists to reduce reliance on the private car along this corridor. This is currently at Strategic Outline Business Case stage.
- **Smethwick-- Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package** which is a multi-modal package that will put greater need to increase levels of non-car journeys for the corridor. This is currently at Strategic Outline Business Case stage.
- **West Midlands Cycle Hire Scheme** which is currently operational with plans for expansion and to create a Network of hire bikes and associated docking stations across the region.

²⁵ Beryl cycle hire scheme [New West Midlands e-scooter hire scheme is launched \(wmca.org.uk\)](https://www.wmca.org.uk)

²⁶ [Cycle Infrastructure Design, Local Transport Note 1/20 \(2020\) \(DfT\)](#)

The longer-term aspirations include:

- **Smethwick to West Bromwich to Wednesbury** which includes the provision of new cycle infrastructure in accordance with LTN 1/20 and improvements to pedestrian facilities along the route. This is currently at optioneering stage with a view to connecting to other route sections in Smethwick which have already received funding.
- **West Bromwich to Cradley Heath** with the provision of new cycle infrastructure in accordance with LTN 1/20 and improvements to pedestrian facilities and crossing points to improve user safety and encourage a shift to active sustainable modes.
- **Old Hill, Blackheath to Oldbury and Halesowen (Dudley) corridor** active travel interventions which is still at optioneering stage.
- **Active Travel corridor between Tipton and West Bromwich** which is still at pre-SOBC.

At a local level the Sandwell Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (SCWIP) provides a Sandwell wide review of the cycle network and walking routes across the borough and incorporates the relevant corridors put forward as part of the West Midlands LCWIP. The fifteen cycle routes assessed include:

- Cycle Route 1: A 1km direct link between Birmingham Canal and West Bromwich via Spon Lane.
- Cycle Route 2: A link between National Cycle Network Route 5 and the West Midlands LCWIP network.
- Cycle Route 3: A link between Spon Lane and Black Lake to connect businesses, residential areas and a new school with Great Bridge High Street and Black Lane metro stop.
- Cycle Route 4: A 3.5km direct link between Oldbury and Blackheath town centre.
- Cycle Route 5: A 4km direct link from Lightwoods House and Park, Bearwood towards Langley Green rail station, Oldbury.
- Cycle Route 6: A 2km direct link through a regeneration area to connect Oldbury to Smethwick Galton Bridge rail station.
- Cycle Route 7: A 2km route along Walsall Road to connect Stone Cross and Yew Tree via Tame Bridge Parkway.
- Cycle Route 8: A route connecting residential areas in Tipton to Wednesbury town centre via Wednesbury Parkway and Wednesbury Great Western metro stops.
- Cycle Route 9: A route to connect the community at Tividale to Sheepwash Nature Reserve and Dudley Port rail station.
- Cycle Route 10: A 1.5km route serving Cradley Heath rail station and high street.
- Cycle Route 11: A 2km long route between the residential areas of Cape Hill and Black Patch Park, Smethwick via Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH).
- Cycle Route 12: A 4km long route between Walsall Canal and Birmingham Canal through Tipton via Alexander High School.
- Cycle Route 13: A 3km long route from Old Hill Railway Station to Bumble Hole Nature Reserve via Dudley Canal
- Cycle Route 14: A 1.5km long route consisting of a connector road from Toll End to Hill Top via Harvills Hawthorn.
- Cycle Route 15: A 2km long route from Newton Road to A34 via Wilderness Lane which links to Q3 Academy Great Barr and Grove Vale Primary School.

The SCWIP included a prioritisation matrix of cycle routes which resulted in routes 9, 4 and 8 achieving the highest scores, closely followed by routes 1, 3, 6 and 12. These routes form the current cycling strategy which will be reviewed on a five-year basis with the next review due in 2024.

The SCWIP also assessed six strategically selected core walking zones in Sandwell which include:

- Core Walking Zone 1: Blackheath town centre to Rowley Regis Railway Station
- Core Walking Zone 2: Smethwick Rolfe Street Station to MMUH via Windmill Eye
- Core Walking Zone 3: Langley Green High Street to Langley Green Railway Station
- Core Walking Zone 4: Sandwell and Dudley Railway Station to Bromford Lane Residential Estate
- Core Walking Zone 5: Wednesbury Great Western Street to Wednesbury Town Centre
- Core Walking Zone 6: Friar Park and Yew Tree to Tame Bridge Parkway Railway Station

These routes were not prioritised on the basis that their development and delivery will be influenced by the public realm aspects of the schemes they serve.

Bus Opportunities

At a national level Bus Back Better²⁷ published by the Department of Transport in 2021 sets the strategy for buses in England outside of London, which also comes with a significant amount of funding to level up buses across the country to meet London standards. It also outlines the leading role that it expects Local Transport Authorities to have in order to achieve a truly integrated transport network.

WMCA, as the local transport authority for the West Midlands, has established an Enhanced Partnership (EP) for the region comprising bus operators, local councils, TfWM and community groups. Together it has set some ambitious goals which including the production of Network Development plans across seven areas to develop the bus network as the population grows, land uses change and new developments are built. Sandwell's area specific Network Development Plan is currently under development.

TfWM's Bus Service Improvement plan (BSIP)²⁸ sets out the programme of bus investment in the region and provides a blueprint for how an integrated transport system should work in the Midlands. The BSIP will be supported by a funding ask of £662 million until 2025. The committed bus schemes being promoted in Sandwell include:

- **A461** which is a package of multimodal interventions to includes bus priority, highway capacity and traffic signal improvements at key nodes.
- **A4123 Birchley Island** which is a multi-modal scheme at Strategic Outline Business Case stage to improve journey time reliability and address capacity issues as well as providing quality public transport to serve bus routes X8 and 87 and active transport infrastructure.
- **Cross-city bus priority Package 6W** which is a bus priority scheme to deliver increased bus priority for inbound and outbound journeys between West Bromwich and Birmingham City Centre.
- **Smethwick-- Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package** which is a multi-modal package to address high levels of deprivation, congestion and poor road safety. The new MMUH and extensive new housing development alongside walking, cycling, public transport, and smart mobility improvements will support regeneration of the corridor and an increase in non-car based travel.
- **Sprint A3 (Phase 2) bus corridor** which will link Walsall to Solihull and Birmingham Airport in one continuous route. This will include the delivery of bus priority infrastructure from Pool Street to

²⁷ Bus Back Better (2021) [Bus Back Better \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

²⁸ TfWM Bus Service Improvement Plan (2021) [wmca-bsip-05-november-2021.pdf \(tfwm.org.uk\)](https://www.wmca-bsip-05-november-2021.pdf)

Ablewell Street and from Broadway to Queens Road. Phase 2 of the works are expected to begin in 2024.

In addition to the above schemes, there are aspirations to incorporate multi-modal interventions and bus priority measures at **M5 J1** and **A41 Carter's Green** to ensure that multiple modes can be accommodated at these strategically important junctions and to deliver multi-modal corridor improvements between Five Ways and Wolverhampton Road in support of the **Hagley Road Reimagined** project.

Rail and Metro Opportunities

At a national level, the railway is recognised to have a crucial role to play in successfully levelling up the UK²⁹. This has resulted in significant efforts and investments to improve and modernise the railway network. The Williams-Shapps plan for Rail³⁰ sets the principles for establishing Great British Railways, a new public body which will be integrate the railway network, deliver Government priorities for rail, including the development of a 30-year strategy and 5-year business plans for rail. There are also lots of investment directed to railway projects guided by the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and the Midlands (IRP)³¹.

At a regional level the IRP committed to building HS2 which will act as a catalyst for modal shift by offering improved passenger experience and reducing journey times across several geographies including the West Midlands. The IRP also committed to improve local services and integrate them properly with HS2. The Midlands Rail Hub (MRH) project is one of the main drivers of this in the Midlands. The MRH has the potential to unlock the national rail network's capacity bottleneck in central Birmingham, improve access to HS2 and deliver faster and more frequent connections across the West Midlands and beyond.

According to Network Rail's West Midlands Strategic Advice³² the completion of these two strategic railway schemes will potentially give the opportunity to recast the service specification on rail corridors that serve Sandwell. Along the Birmingham-Wolverhampton corridor, the utilisation of potentially reduced long-distance requirement for fast, long-distance paths by the introduction of HS2 will potentially open new opportunities for enhanced local provision or additional calls to local train stations including those in Sandwell. However, it is acknowledged that this rail corridor is heavily constrained and any aspirations for reduced journey times can only be achieved by removing trains or station calls from this corridor. On the contrary, sending extra trains along the Birmingham to Worcester Corridor towards Rowley Regis in Sandwell would have little benefit. Future provision of a turnback at Rowley Regis would maximise the use of capacity at Snow Hill, enabling faster trains by removing stops from some services and improving Smethwick Galton Bridge position as an interchange for the region. This line will also be impacted by long term proposals for the electrification of the Snow Hill line and the proposed fourth platform at Birmingham Snow Hill Station.

Midlands Connect, through its Strategic Transport Plan for the Midlands³³, has also set a priority to improve the Birmingham – Black Country – Shrewsbury rail corridor. However, any journey time improvements rely on the delivery of HS2 Phases 1 and 2a which will improve reliability, boost local connectivity and strengthen links to Wales.

Heavy and light rail schemes currently being delivered in the West Midlands include the **Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension**, which is under construction with Phase 1 from Wednesbury to Dudley expected to be operational by early 2025 and Phase 2 from Dudley to Brierley Hill due for completion by mid-2027. Additionally, TfWM and WMRE are jointly working with partners at Network Rail, Sandwell and Dudley Councils and West Midlands Trains to determine how current accessibility and safety issues at Dudley Port station can be resolved to deliver **Dudley Port Integrated Transport Hub**. The objective of this scheme is to enhance passenger experience, provide seamless interchange to improve access to the wider

²⁹ Levelling Up the United Kingdom [Levelling Up the United Kingdom: Executive Summary \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

³⁰ Great British Railways The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail [Great British Railways \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

³¹ Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands [Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands \(web version\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

³² West Midlands Strategic Advice (2022) [West Midlands Strategic Advice 2022 \(windows.net\)](#)

³³ Fairer, greener, stronger, A Strategic Transport Plan for the Midlands

region and remove barriers for users with reduced mobility. There is also an aspirational scheme to deliver **Walsall— Stourbridge Rapid Transit** by utilising sections of the disused South Staffordshire heavy rail line, to the north and south of the proposed Wednesbury to Brierley Hill metro corridor. This would create a tram/train solution on this corridor and provide more equitable access to the 30% of borough residents which do not own a car. This scheme is still at pre-SOBC stage but is a political priority for the next 5-10 year period.

Parking Opportunities

Car parking can be used as a car travel demand management tool by influencing availability, pricing and restrictions. Local centres with strong parking controls usually result in higher public transport usage and an increased uptake of active modes, which is important for Sandwell given its polycentric nature and current car orientated road network. In the case of new developments, this might mean a more restrictive approach to car parking to discourage higher car ownership.

The opportunities identified for Sandwell relate to the provision of additional charging infrastructure for electric vehicles in anticipation of a nationwide ban on the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles in 2035. This includes the introduction of Electric Vehicle Charging Area Transit Stations (EVCATS) and West Midlands Community Charging Hubs.

TfWM through its LTP5 Big Moves promotes that new developments should be built with access to charging points and that existing communities, particularly those homes with no access to an off-street parking place, should be able to charge on-street near home.

The Black Country ULEV strategy³⁴ which sets out the ULEV vision for the Black Country focused on residential and destination charging infrastructure. The five-year programme will deliver 1,000 charge points across the Black Country in support of the regional and national net zero agenda. Three locations of potential strategic importance have been identified in Sandwell for EV Hubs including:

- Oldbury which offers two of the largest retail areas and commercial sites within the Black Country. Sites owned and operated by Sandwell Borough Council also present an opportunity for the potential electrification of council fleet vehicles.
- Oldbury Roundabout located at the intersection of the Wolverhampton Road with the M5 motorway. This corridor connects Wolverhampton to Birmingham and could be utilised as a transit hub with several potential retail, commercial and fuel station locations for charging infrastructure.
- Blackheath which is a predominantly employment area at the intersection of several major roads. This is an opportunity area with a potentially high number of EV early adopters who could make use of the infrastructure.

Black Country Transport is leading on EV charging infrastructure on behalf of all the four Black Country authorities. They have appointed a private company to lead on the roll out of all on street charging infrastructure over the next 4 to 5 years which will result in approximately 250 charging locations being delivered in Sandwell. The EV locations selected have largely been identified from feedback and consultation with residents though the lead company also monitors the purchase of EV vehicles³⁵ to identify where there might be a potential need.

Freight Opportunities

At a national level there are radical changes occurring in the freight industry. The continued growth of international trade through ports and airports has put continued pressure on the country's road and rail networks. However, there are several opportunities arising from the introduction of new Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs) and the continuous focus and innovation in the urban logistics and micro-consolidation space.

³⁴ [Black Country Transport - Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Strategy - City of Wolverhampton Council - Citizen Space](#)

³⁵ [Electric Vehicle Charging Point Electric Charging Points \(snapsurveys.com\)](#)

In the West Midlands the established Freight Quality Partnership aims to promote the efficient utilisation of road networks, coordinate cross-boundary distribution and encourage the adoption of alternative transportation modes. There are also several opportunities in the region arising from the West Midlands Freight Strategy³⁶ which provides an integrated framework for guiding investment locally. To deliver this strategy an implementation plan has been prepared which includes exploratory proposals such as:

- Encouraging greater freight use of the M6 Toll which could release capacity from M6 for local traffic and reduced congestion.
- Motorway Junction Access and Motorway Connectivity Enhancements which includes M5 Junction 1, 2 and 3; M6 Junction 8, 9 in Sandwell.
- Exploring the case for the development of a West Midlands Strategic Freight Corridor from Stourbridge through to Lichfield via Walsall. This should be developed in a manner which is compatible with the aspirations for a Metro link between Wednesbury and Brierley Hill and the longer-term proposals for tram/rail solution.
- Providing capacity for rail freight by ensuring that rail freight paths are provided when track capacity is released following the opening of HS2.
- Recognising the need for intermodal transfer terminals and exploring proposal to address the existing spatial gaps in provision especially in the Black Country. Work undertaken identified Bescot Yard in Sandwell as the most suitable location.
- Provision of safe and secure overnight HGV parking and strategic HGV parking sites on the national road network. The document references the West Midlands Regional Lorry Parking Study (2005) which identified M5 from Junction 1 and 2 in Sandwell as areas where more provision is required.
- Developing an HGV route hierarchy to better coordinate HGV movements within and through the West Midlands.
- Alternative/innovative mode use for urban freight shipments like freight tram, cycle, or canal options.

³⁶The West Midlands Freight Strategy <https://corporate.tfwm.org.uk/media/1207/west-midlands-freight-strategy.pdf>

Overall conclusion for transport

The lack of highway capacity at key corridors and junctions has historically been a key factor in determining the quantum of growth that can be accommodated. However, existing highway capacity constraints and the overarching objective of transport stakeholders to encourage and enable a shift to more sustainable transport modes requires an integrated network management approach to make the most of existing assets to facilitate growth.

Nationally, regionally and locally there is an increasing shift in focus towards the delivery of multi-modal solutions to maximise access for all. The short to medium schemes identified comprise measures to improve access for all users (including pedestrians, cycling and public transport passengers) and are founded upon an evidence-led approach; consequently, the authorities recognise that some proposals, particularly which result in the loss of highway space and parking for the private car, may be unpopular. However, they also recognise that the current transport proposals will not be sufficient to bridge the gap to Government targets and that an integrated approach to infrastructure investment and demand management is required to increase the pace of behavioural change.

Co-ordination of land use and transport planning is required to support a reduction in the need to travel and to facilitate a transition towards more sustainable journeys. Development should therefore be focussed around locations with existing public transport provision that can potentially also be improved, or where new public transport provision can be established. Good quality public transport is critical to the delivery of sustainable development and bus and metro services are likely to remain the main forms of public transport connecting developments with key centres and destinations. In several locations, bus, metro or rail connections exist or are proposed. However, poor integration, safety concerns and unreliable travel times can adversely affect their use. The quality and level of service provision and the ability of those services to be improved should therefore inform final site selection decisions.

The availability of active travel provision should also be a key factor informing site selection decisions and when considering infrastructure provision across settlements more widely. The key consideration for the new Local Plan should therefore be to ensure that new development is designed to promote active travel as a genuinely viable alternative to the car, particularly for shorter journeys. This can be achieved through suitable policy in the Local Plan, by securing developer contributions and encouraging consistency in the quality and design of networks to ensure piecemeal delivery can contribute to a coordinated network.

4.2 Education

As a unitary authority, Sandwell Borough Council is the Local Education Authority (LEA) and therefore is responsible for ensuring that there are enough school places available for children and young people within the borough. Recent Government guidance on securing developer contributions for education³⁷ states that it is important that the impacts of development are adequately mitigated, requiring an understanding of:

- The education needs arising from development, based on up-to-date pupil yield factors;
- The capacity of existing schools that will serve development, taking account of pupil migration across planning areas and local authority boundaries;
- Available sources of funding to increase capacity where required; and
- The extent to which developer contributions are required and the degree of certainty that these will be secured at the appropriate time.

This section therefore considers the full spectrum of education provision within Sandwell. The provision of high-quality education infrastructure plays an important role in ensuring the social fabric of the borough, and the location of education infrastructure relative to development and the places in which people live has important interactions with other infrastructure types, given the need to ensure sustainable patterns of movement for education.

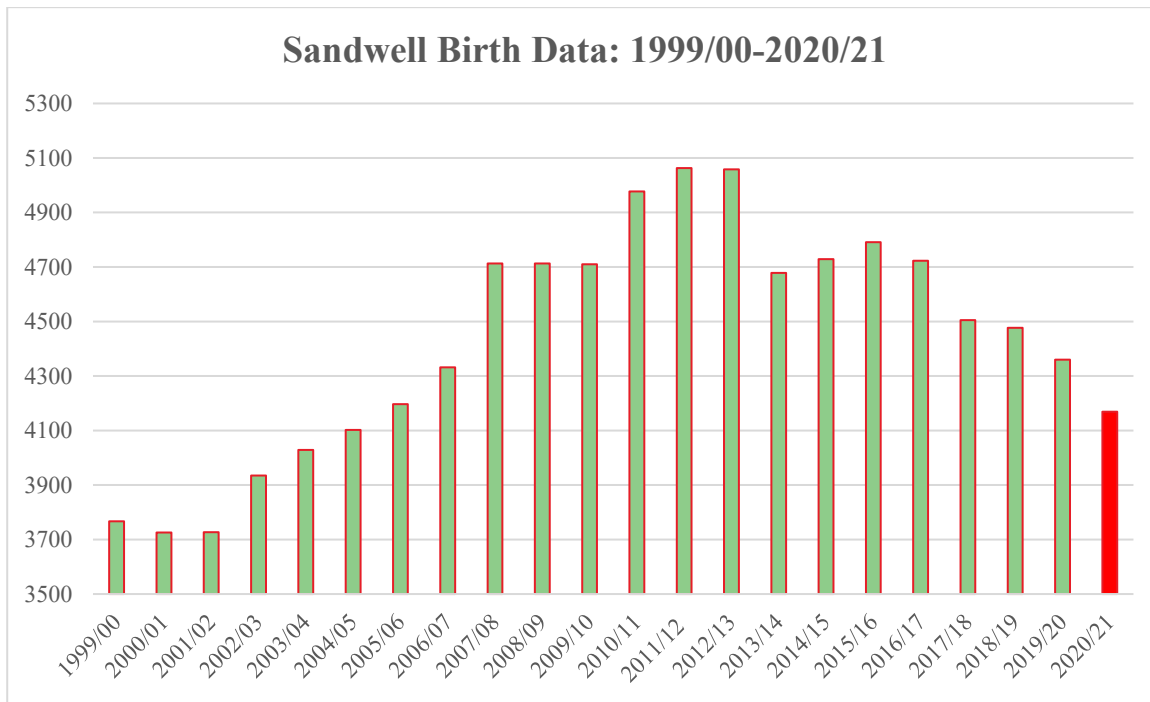


Figure 3: Sandwell Birth Data from 1999/00-2020/21

This section will also look at school planning data and look at the projected need of school places in the borough. When planning for school places the borough utilises a range of variables when forecasting the future needs. The main consideration when planning school places is looking at birth rate trends, then forecasting growth in pupil numbers by estimating future births, along with growth from increased development-related yields. Figure 3 shows the birth rate within Sandwell for the 20-year period up to 2020/21. The recent trend shows a decline in births in the borough. This decline can be seen in the projected pupil numbers in the following section.

³⁷ [Securing developer contributions for education](#), DfE (August 2023)

4.2.1 Performance of existing infrastructure and baseline proposed investment schemes

Early Years Provision

Early years education provision can be delivered by a range of providers, including schools pre-schools and nurseries, all of which can be paid for by Government through the Free Early Education (FEE) funding. There is a range of funding available from two years old with 30 free hours of provision being made available for all children between the ages of three and four, for 38 weeks per year. There is also some provision for children at two years old to receive up to 15 hours of flexible provision per week over 38 weeks of the year. This provision is subject to parents/guardians meeting certain criteria.

Within the borough there are 129 providers. Table 3 provides a list of providers in the borough showing their capacity.

Table 3: Early Years Provision

Provider Name	Provider Address	Provider Postcode	Places
United Kids Childcare Rowley	Rowley Hall Primary School	B65 9HU	74
United Kids	Hateley Heath Primary & Childrens Centre	B71 2RP	79
4 Community Trust Uplands	Uplands Manor Primary School	B67 6HT	30
4 Community Trust Burnt Tree	Burnt Tree Cp School	B69 2LN	25
4 Community Trust	63A Crosswells Road Oldbury	B68 8HH	25
Small World Nursery	81 New Birmingham Road	B69 2JF	44
The Wonder Years Day Nursery	Arundel House	WS10 9DJ	103
Little Academy	Tividale Community Primary School	B69 2HT	40
KaiDrums Childcare	The Brambles	WS5 4EJ	22
St Michael's Nursery	Rear of St Michael's Court	B66 3BX	48
St Michaels Nursery	Windmill Community Centre	B66 3DX	42
Kiddies World	Kiddies World	B68 8NE	41
Community Action Project	C A P Centre	B66 3LX	44
Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust Day Nursery	Lyndon	B71 4HJ	61
Sandwell Young Carers Centre	The Old Vicarage	B70 8SB	0
Workplace Nursery	Council House	B69 3DG	80
Out to Play Victoria Park	Corbett Street	B66 3PX	0
SADWICA Day Nursery	69 Beeches Road	B70 6HQ	52
Smiling Stars Out of School Club	Windmill Community Centre	B66 3DX	20
Lilliput Lodge Children's Day Nursery Ltd	Lilliput Nursery	B67 6NR	50
Tick Tock Day Nursery	134 Halesowen Road	B64 5LS	119

Provider Name	Provider Address	Provider Postcode	Places
Rowley Village Nursery	1A Carlyle Road	B65 9BQ	65
Latchkey Out of School Club	Sundial Lane	B43 6PD	30
Bluebells Day Nursery	25 Bleakhouse Road	B68 9DR	46
The Gap	Hargate Lane	B71 1PH	30
First Steps Nursery Collegiate Academy Trust	Shireland Collegiate Academy	B66 4ND	40
Rowley Owls Nursery	Rowley Hall Primary School	B65 9HU	52
Bright Lights Day Care	Great Valley Children's Centre	B66 1DH	89
Lavender Farm Nursery	Moat Farm Childrens Centre	B68 9QR	86
Breakaway Club	North Smethwick Development Trust	B66 1BA	40
Wonderland Children's Day Nursery (UK) Ltd	57 Holyhead Road	WS10 7DF	100
Smarty Pants Private Day Nursery Ltd	212a Horseley Heath	DY4 7QP	65
The Patch Day Nursery	Old Park Primary School	WS10 9LX	50
Yemeni Community Association	Greets Green Access Centre	B70 9SJ	0
Fairytales Nursery	6 Birmingham Road	B43 6NR	52
St Albans Pre School	St. Albans Community Centre	B67 7NL	40
Little Valers Pre-school Committee	Grove Vale Primary School	B43 6AL	24
The Little Wendy House Day Nursery Ltd	23 Walsall Street	WS10 9EL	74
5 Star Day Nursery Limited	382 Hamstead Road	B43 5EH	42
5 STAR DAY NURSERY LTD	69 Moat Road	B68 8ED	55
Kangaroo Pouch Day Nursery	St. Mary Magdalenes Church	B71 3PJ	32
Kangaroo Pouch Day Nursery	Elm Terrace	B69 1UH	62
Kangaroo Pouch Day Nursery at Hateley Heath	64-66 Clarkes Lane	B71 2BU	52
United Kids	Hateley Heath Primary & Childrens Centre	B71 2RP	8
Kangaroo Pouch at Great Bridge	57 New Road	DY4 7BX	16
Playhouse Out of School Club	Tameside Primary School	WS10 0EZ	45
Tiddlywinks Kiddies Nursery	55 Park Lane West	DY4 8LF	74
Temple Meadow Kids Club	Temple Meadow Primary School	B64 6RH	32
Smethwick Youth and Community Centre (GNG Nursery)	Trinity Point	B67 7AA	62

Provider Name	Provider Address	Provider Postcode	Places
Little Explorers Day Nursery	Little Explorers Day Care Centre	B64 5BS	50
Pitta Patta Daycare	Unit 1	DY4 7JY	33
First Steps Oldbury	Church Hall Edward Street	B68 8RH	63
Little Stars Day Nursery	Ferndale Primary School	B43 5RR	60
Tiny Tots Academy	1 Walsall Street	B70 7NX	80
Daffodils Nursery	58-60 Waterloo Road	B66 4JN	28
Banana Moon Day Nursey WestBrom	Stone Cross	B71 3AR	50
Pitta Patta Pre-School	Within Great Bridge Library	DY4 7JF	25
Humpty Dumpty's Day Nursery	Marlow House	B65 0AY	44
Unicorn Day Nursery	Shelsey Avenue	B69 1BP	73
Unicorn Day Nursery	131 High Street	DY4 9JE	46
Fireflies Nursery	Station House	B66 4SE	96
Tipton Explorers	Tipton Nursery	DY4 7NR	52
Priory Explorers	Priory Family Centre	WS10 0JG	55
Cohort Tuition Wb Limited	Cohort Learning Centre	B70 8BG	0
Cohort Tuition Bh Limited	1 st Floor Premises	B65 0ND	0
Kiddies Playhouse Tipton	76 Union Street	DY4 8QJ	56
Spon Lane Day Nursery	93 Spon Lane	B70 6AB	38
Ileys Community Child Care	VICTORIA PARK SKILL CENTRE	B66 3PU	0
Santos Day Nurseries	100 Birmingham Road	B43 7AB	51
Little Saplings Childcare Centres– Yew Tree	The Bungalow	WS5 4LB	24
Smarty Pants @ Lightwoods House Limited	Lightwoods House	B67 5DP	36
RB Active Care Blackheath	Blackheath Primary School	B65 9NF	10
Fatima Day Nursery	36 Vicarage Road	B68 8HL	35
Conifers Day Nursery	Dorothy Parkes Centre	B67 6EH	24
Dainty Little Hands at St Marys Catholic Primary School	St. Marys Catholic Primary School	WS10 9PN	25
Timbertree Neighbourhood Nursery	78 Valley Road	B64 7LR	50
Rising Stars	466 Bearwood Road	B66 4HA	0
Woody's	The Bethel Christian Fellowship Church	B70 8QL	25
Tipton Nursery	24 Ridgeway Road	DY4 0TB	36
Happy Days Nursery	Wood Lane Community Centre	B70 9PT	20

Provider Name	Provider Address	Provider Postcode	Places
St Hilda's Early Years	St Hildas Church and Vicarage	B67 5NQ	60
Little Legend Pre-School	Friar Park Millennium Centre	WS10 0JS	48
Minee Monkeys	The Old School House	B69 2AS	57
Explore Learning Oldbury	Sainsburys Supermarkets Ltd	B69 3DB	0
Two Steps Pre-School	St. Johns Methodist Church	B66 3QU	24
Tiny Steps Pre-School	Uplands Manor Primary School	B67 6HT	30
Stepping Stones Pre-School	West Smethwick Methodist Church	B66 1EX	30
Little Steppers Pre-School	Smethwick Cape Hill Children's Centre	B66 3PX	20
Whitecrest Playgroup	Whitecrest	B43 6HQ	16
YMCA Black Country Group Nursery	38 Carters Green	B70 9LG	119
YMCA Nursery at Greets Green Children's Centre	Wattle Road	B70 9EZ	52
YMCA Greets Green	GREETS GREEN CHILDRENS CENTRE	B70 9EZ	60
YMCA Carters Green	YMCA	B70 9LG	113
Little Angels Day Nursery	2 Davison Road	B67 6JL	44
A B C Day Nursery & Pre School Ltd	14 Wigorn Road	B67 5HN	50
Lola-Belle's Private Day Nursery Ltd	11 Owen Street	DY4 8EZ	45
Tinywoods Preschool	Lightwoods Primary School	B68 0LP	60
Tinywoods Preschool	Castle Road East	B68 9BG	48
Tiny Toez @ Tividale	Tividale Children's Centre	DY4 7SD	72
Little Learners Ltd.	Little Learners	B66 1NN	52
Tipton Toddlers Day Nursery	Tipton Toddlers	DY4 7TB	68
Reginald Road Day Nursery	Former Neighbourhood Office	B67 5QT	75
Playhouse Day Nursery	The Playhouse	B67 5DG	50
Happy Families@Bleakhouse Junior School	Bleakhouse Road	B68 9DS	36
Stanway Stars Wrap Around Care	St. Mary Magdalene Primary School	B71 1RP	26
The Toddler House	146 Crankhall Lane	WS10 0ED	32
Bookworms Day Care Ltd	The Old Library	B65 8BY	44
Bookworms Daycare Brickhouse	Brickhouse Community Centre	B65 8HS	20

Provider Name	Provider Address	Provider Postcode	Places
Happy Valley Preschool Ltd	West Bromwich Community Centre	B71 1QS	48
St Hubert's Pre-School Playgroup Limited	Warley Baptist Church	B68 9BJ	32
Summerhill's Little Treasures	Upper Church Lane	DY4 9PF	95
Little Academy Nursery	Tipton Sports Academy	DY4 0BS	17
BRANCH	Eaton Valley Primary School	B71 4BU	16
BRANCH	91 Beeches Road	B70 6HG	32
Sunny Skies Nursery	Connor Road	B71 3DJ	51
Catherine House Day Nursery Schools	2 Birchfield Way	WS5 4LG	50
Sandwell Learning Centre	The Old Post Office	B70 8LU	0
Wiggles and Giggles Limited	634 Hagley Road West	B68 0BS	74
Victoria House Neighbourhood Nursery	Corbett Street	B66 3PX	73
Bloxidge House Day Nursery	53 Bloxidge Street	B68 8QH	52
Little Einsteins Pre-School/Nursery	Charlemont Community Centre	B71 3PJ	16
Mac-E-Mooz Daycare	Children's Lodge	DY4 8RN	16
Little Peoples House	97 All Saints Way	B71 1RU	30
Helping Hands	St Margarets C of E Primary School	B43 7AP	40
Helping Hands	Pennyhill Primary School	B71 3BU	40
Helping Hands	Holy Name RC Primary School	B43 6LN	30
Hamstead After School Kids Club	Hamstead Infant School	B43 5AS	30
Great Bridge Parents Support Network	Toll End Youth Centre	DY4 0HP	36
Perryfields Pre-School	Perryfields Primary School	B68 0QY	32

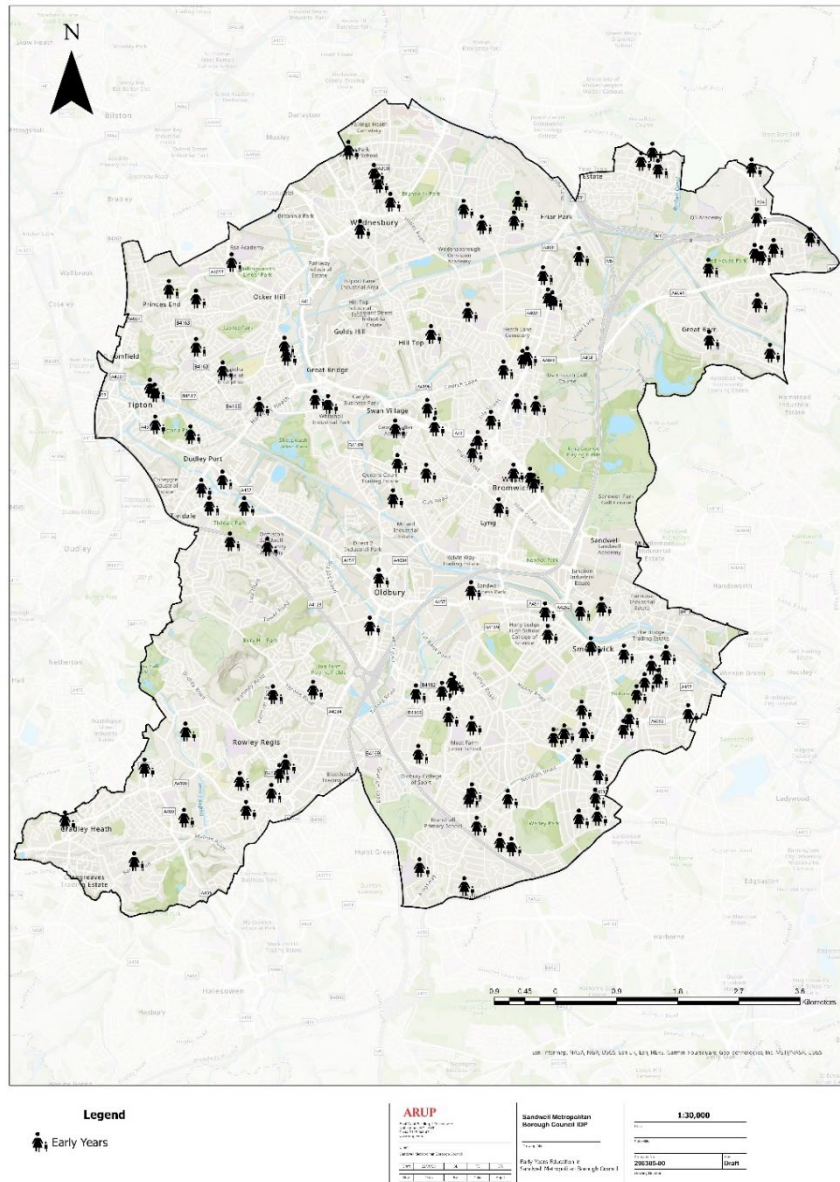


Figure 4: Spatial Distribution of Early Years Provision in Sandwell

Primary Education

Within the borough there are 95 primary schools. Table 4 outlines the utilisation of each school based on the latest figures from the previous academic year (May 2023 census). It shows the schools number on roll and the percentage of unfilled places compared to the capacity of the school in May 2023.

Table 4: Primary Education Provision

School Name	School Type	OFSTED Rating	Date of last OFSTED inspection	Pupils on Roll 22/23	Percentage of unfilled Places 22/23
Abbey Infant School	Community Infant	Good	14/03/2023	262	2.96%
Abbey Junior School	Community Junior	Good	12/12/2019	354	1.67%
Albert Pritchard Infant	Foundation/Trust Infant	Good	14/06/2017	229	15.19%
All Saints Cof E Primary School	Voluntary Aided	Good	16/01/2019	416	0.95%

School Name	School Type	OFSTED Rating	Date of last OFSTED inspection	Pupils on Roll 22/23	Percentage of unfilled Places 22/23
Annie Lennard School	Community	Good	03/07/2019	210	0.00%
Bearwood Primary School	Community	Good	05/05/2023	411	2.14%
Blackheath Primary	Community	Good	20/10/2021	449	-6.90%
Bleakhouse Primary School	Community	Good	03/02/2017	403	4.05%
Brandhall Primary School	Community	Good	24/01/2019	407	3.10%
Brickhouse Primary School	Foundation/Trust	Good	11/01/2023	205	2.38%
Burnt Tree Primary School	Community	Good	30/01/2019	407	3.10%
Cape Primary	Community	Requires Improvement	26/06/2019	528	16.19%
Causeway Green Primary	Community	Requires Improvement	29/03/2023	416	0.95%
Christ Church CofE Primary School	Voluntary Aided	Good	22/03/2018	379	9.76%
Corngreaves Primary	Academy	Good	09/02/2023	209	0.48%
Crocketts Community Primary School	Community	Outstanding	18/09/2014	430	-2.38%
Devonshire Infant Academy	Academy Infant			266	1.48%
Devonshire Junior Academy	Academy Junior	Good	22/09/2022	352	2.22%
Eaton Valley Primary School	Community	Good	09/02/2023	421	-0.24%
Ferndale Primary School	Community	Good	30/06/2022	569	9.68%
Galton Valley Primary School	Community	Good	12/02/2020	426	-1.43%
George Betts	Academy	Good	06/06/2019	393	6.43%
Glebefields Primary School	Community	Requires Improvement	16/11/2022	350	16.67%
Grace Mary Primary School	Community	Outstanding	13/02/2019	224	-6.67%
Great Bridge Primary School	Community	Good	04/12/2018	413	1.67%
Grove Vale Primary	Community	Outstanding	21/03/2013	418	0.48%
Hall Green Primary School	Community	Good	23/03/2023	417	0.71%
Hamstead Infant School	Community Infant	Good	16/01/2019	174	3.33%
Hamstead Junior School	Community Junior	Good	16/09/2021	231	3.75%
Hanbury Primary School	Community	Good	29/03/2017	425	-1.19%
Hargate Primary School	Community	Good	29/03/2017	424	-0.95%
Harvills Hawthorn Primary Sch	Foundation/Trust	Outstanding	17/05/2013	421	-0.24%
Hateley Heath Primary Academy	Academy			378	10.00%
Highfields Primary School	Community	Good	13/03/2019	416	0.95%
Holy Name	Voluntary Aided	Good	17/02/2022	197	6.19%

School Name	School Type	OFSTED Rating	Date of last OFSTED inspection	Pupils on Roll 22/23	Percentage of unfilled Places 22/23
Holy Trinity C.E.	Voluntary Controlled	Good	16/05/2019	417	0.71%
Holyhead Primary Academy	Academy	Good	13/01/2022	192	8.57%
Joseph Turner Primary School	Community	Good	23/05/2018	418	0.48%
Jubilee Park Academy	Academy	Good	09/01/2020	192	8.57%
King George V Primary	Community	Good	16/05/2019	210	0.00%
Langley Primary School	Community	Good	12/10/2022	410	2.38%
Lightwoods J&I School	Academy			419	0.24%
Lodge Primary School	Community	Good	05/02/2020	402	4.29%
Lyng Primary School	Community	Good	12/12/2020	444	-5.71%
Mesty Croft Academy	Academy	Good	09/02/2023	397	5.48%
Moat Farm Infant School	Community Infant	Good	06/02/2019	359	0.28%
Moat Farm Junior Academy	Academy			476	43.33%
Moorlands Primary School	Foundation/Trust	Good	29/06/2022	209	0.48%
Newtown Primary	Academy			208	0.95%
Oakham Primary School	Community	Outstanding	28/06/2013	420	0.00%
Ocker Hill Academy	Academy Junior			256	-6.67%
Ocker Hill Infant School	Community Infant	Outstanding	17/10/2014	179	0.56%
Old Hill Primary School	Foundation/Trust	Good	06/04/2022	188	10.48%
Old Park Primary School	Foundation/Trust	Outstanding	02/05/2013	417	0.71%
Our Lady and St. Hubert's	Academy			418	0.48%
Park Hill Primary School	Foundation/Trust	Good	28/11/2017	204	2.86%
Pennyhill Primary School	Community	Good	16/03/2022	601	4.60%
Perryfields Primary School	Community	Good	06/04/2022	361	14.05%
Reddal Hill Primary School	Community	Good	11/05/2022	403	4.05%
Rood End Primary School	Community	Requires improvement	29/06/2022	467	-11.19%
Rounds Green Primary	Academy			356	15.24%
Rowley Hall Primary	Foundation/Trust	Requires Improvement	25/11/2021	594	5.71%
Ryders Green Primary School	Community	Good	21/11/2017	418	0.48%
Sacred Heart Primary School	Community	Good	31/03/2022	418	0.48%
Shireland Hall Primary Academy	Academy	Outstanding	18/05/2022	623	1.11%
Shireland Technology Primary School	Free school			266	36.67%
Silvertrees Academy	Academy Infant	Good	10/04/2019	261	3.33%

School Name	School Type	OFSTED Rating	Date of last OFSTED inspection	Pupils on Roll 22/23	Percentage of unfilled Places 22/23
Springfield Primary School	Foundation/Trust	Requires Improvement	04/11/2021	420	0.00%
St Francis Xavier School	Academy	Requires improvement	23/03/2022	207	1.43%
St James CE Primary School	Voluntary Controlled	Good	30/03/2022	415	1.19%
St John's CE Primary Academy	Academy	Good	15/02/2023	193	8.10%
St Margaret's C.E. School	Voluntary Aided	Good	15/06/2022	206	1.90%
St Martin's C.E. Primary	Voluntary Controlled	Good	12/10/2022	210	0.00%
St Matthew's C of E Primary School	Voluntary Aided	Good	25/11/2021	391	6.90%
St Philip's Catholic Primary School	Academy	Good	22/05/2018	207	1.43%
St Gregory's R.C. Primary	Academy	Outstanding	06/03/2019	240	-14.29%
St John Bosco Primary	Academy			212	-0.95%
St Mary Magdalene C of E Primary	Voluntary Controlled	Outstanding	23/01/2014	212	-0.95%
St Mary's Catholic Primary School	Academy			209	0.48%
St Paul's C of E Academy	Academy	Good	13/03/2018	204	2.86%
Summerhill Primary Academy	Academy	Good	30/03/2022	760	9.52%
Tameside Primary Academy	Academy	Good	15/02/2023	433	-3.10%
Temple Meadow Primary School	Foundation/Trust	Good	24/01/2018	362	13.81%
The Priory Primary School	Community	Good	10/11/2021	417	0.71%
Timbertree Primary School	Academy	Good	05/02/2020	205	2.38%
Tipton Green Junior	Academy			351	44.29%
Tividale Community Primary	Community	Outstanding	18/10/2012	418	0.48%
Tividale Hall Primary School	Community	Good	05/02/2020	409	2.62%
Uplands Manor Primary School	Community	Good	17/05/2023	782	-24.13%
Victoria Park Academy	Academy	Not Available	Not Available	618	1.90%
Wednesbury Oak Academy	Academy	Good	27/01/2022	419	0.24%
Whitecrest Primary	Community	Good	07/11/2019	206	1.90%
Wood Green Junior School	Foundation/Trust Junior	Good	25/11/2021	347	3.61%
Yew Tree Primary School	Community	Good	20/10/2021	621	1.43%
AL Khair Primary School	Independent*	Inadequate	31/03/2022	Unknown	Unknown

*Independent schools are not featured in the Local Authority's school place planning.

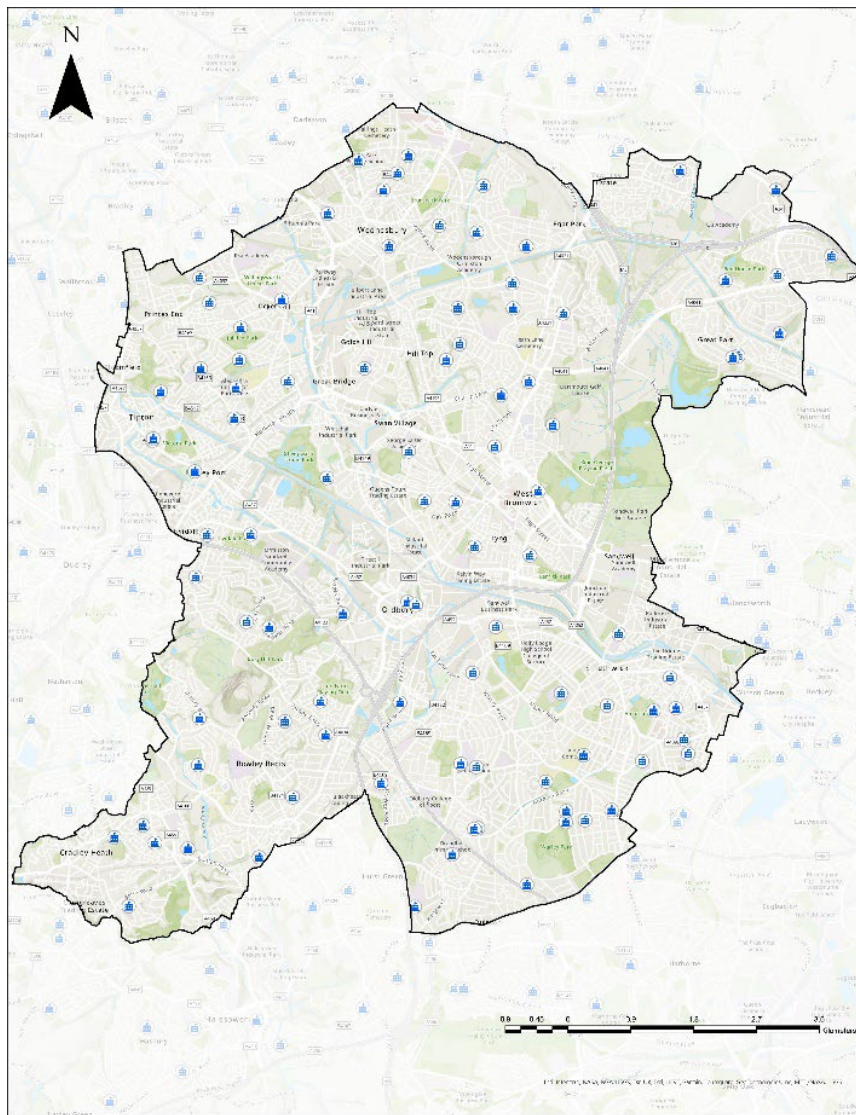


Figure 5: Spatial Distribution of Primary Schools in Sandwell

Based on the data from School Place Planning the overall capacity for the borough is approximately 4% with some primary schools having more capacity than others. Along with current capacity the borough forecasts their need for the next five years.

Primary school places in the borough are planned across six school areas, which correspond with the historic boroughs and form the focal points for future growth within the emerging Local Plan.

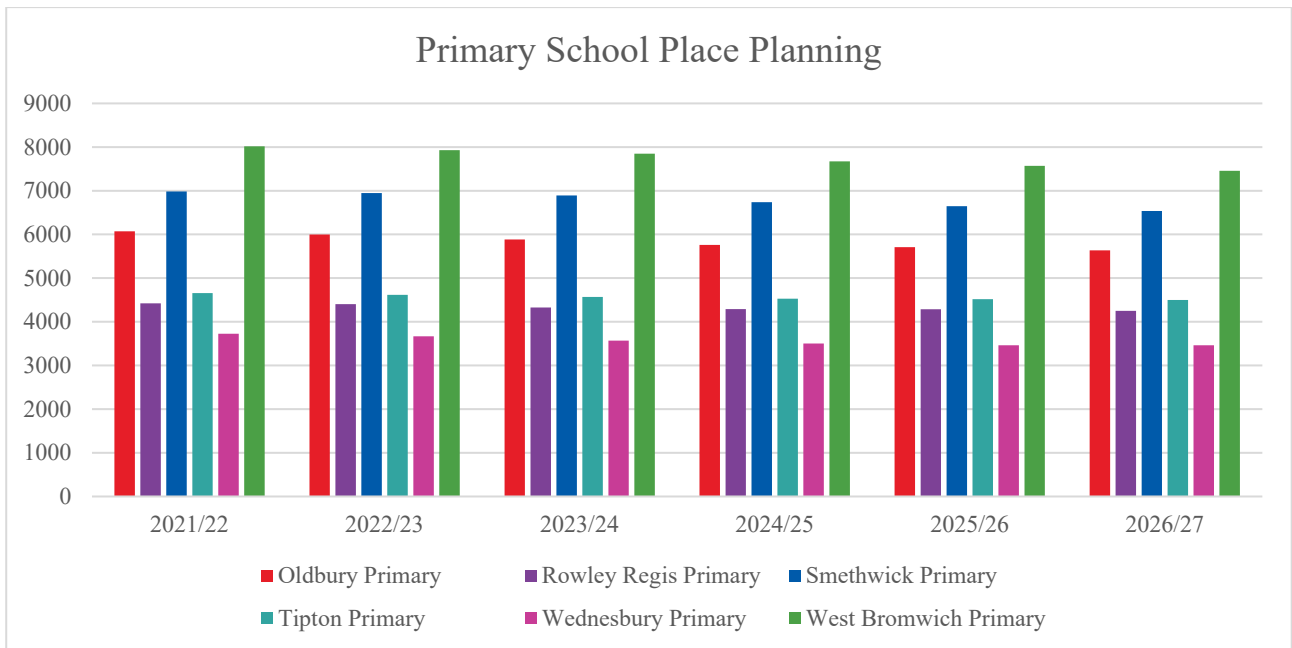


Figure 6: Primary School Place Planning for Sandwell to 2026/27

Figure 6 above shows the data from 2021/22 and projections for the next five years up to the end of the 2026/27 academic year. Sandwell’s primary pupil numbers have increased quickly and significantly since 2012 and have since reduced to the current figure of 34,950 for September 2023³⁸. This offers an overall primary capacity of 35,056 and a projected Reception surplus of 10.26%. The projected overall primary surplus for September 2023 will be 4.66%.

Figure 5 shows the spatial distribution of schools throughout the borough and while there is a relatively even geographical spread, the nature of urban conurbations is such that there is considerable cross-boundary movement which may not be captured within the borough’s data.

Secondary Education

Within the borough there are 22 secondary schools. Two new free schools (Shireland CBSO Academy and Windsor Olympus Academy) opened in September 2023 and are not included in Table 5 which outlines the utilisation of each school based on the latest figures from the previous academic year (May 2023 census). It shows the schools agreed capacity along with the total number of students on roll during the last academic year (May census 2023)³⁹.

Based on data from the School Place Planning Team, the overall capacity for the borough is approximately 10.6% with some secondary schools having more capacity than others, whilst some are over-subscribed. Along with current capacity the borough forecasts their need for the next five years. As with Primary schools, Secondary school places in the borough are planned in school areas of which there are six.

Figure 8 below shows the projected forecast for last year and the next seven years until the end of the 28/29 academic year. The overall current capacity of the borough is 24,294 places with the projections showing that in 27/28 the planned number of secondary school’s place being required being 25,886 places.

³⁸ Sandwell School Census Data May 2023

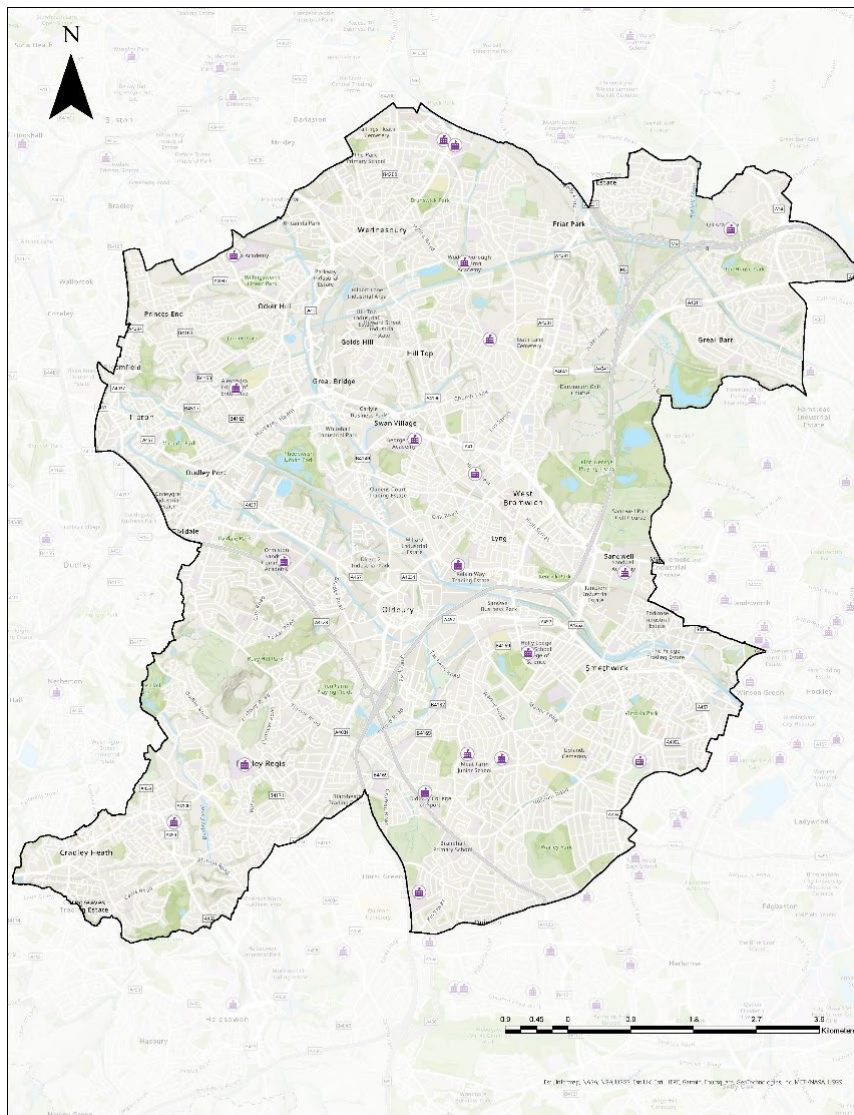
³⁹ Sandwell School Census Data May 2023

Table 5: Secondary Education Provision

School Name	School type	OFSTED Rating	OFSTED Last Inspection	Pupils on Roll 22/23	Percentage of unfilled Places 22/23
Bristnall Hall Academy	Academy	Good	04/11/2021	1052	4.36
George Salter Academy	Academy	Good	23/05/2023	1219	2.48
Gospel Oak School	Academy	Inadequate	11/10/2022	1154	3.83
Holly Lodge High School College of Science	Foundation	Good	03/03/2022	1403	-0.21
Oldbury Academy	Academy	Good	08/12/2021	1357	12.45
Ormiston Forge Academy	Academy	Good	23/10/2019	1506	2.84
Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy	Academy	Good	15/05/2018	1143	-8.86
Perryfields Academy	Academy			978	18.50
Phoenix Collegiate	Foundation	Good	15/02/2023	1702	2.75
Q3 Academy Great Barr	Academy	Good	22/09/2022	1066	-1.52
Q3 Academy Langley	Academy	Good	09/05/2019	1309	12.73
Q3 Academy Tipton	Academy	Requires improvement	07/12/2022	1403	6.47
Sandwell Academy	Academy	Outstanding	17/01/2014	1002	0.20
Sandwell Valley School	Independent**	Outstanding	16/06/2022	Unknown	unknown
Shireland Biomedical UTC*	UTC	Requires improvement	25/02/2020	155	*New school
Shireland Collegiate Academy	Academy	Outstanding	14/03/2013	1287	6.40
St Michael's Church of England High School	Voluntary Aided	Good	18/01/2023	1224	-2.00
Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School	Academy			733	2.27
The British Muslim School	Independent**	Requires improvement	26/05/2022	Unknown	Unknown
West Bromwich Collegiate Academy	Academy			647	13.73
Wodensborough Ormiston Academy	Academy	Good	08/07/2021	1137	1.13
Wood Green Academy	Academy	Good	27/02/2020	1289	0.85

*Shireland Biomedical UTC changed its age range in September 2022 and will gradually increase its NOR on rolls until the school is full. Therefore, its NOR compared to capacity doesn't provide a realistic figure to be included in this table.

**Independent schools are not featured in the Local Authority's school place planning.



Legend
 Secondary School Locations

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 Email: arup@arup.com

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 Infrastructure
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 Tel: +44 (0)121 634 5656
 Fax: +44 (0)121 634 5657
 Email: arup@arup.com

1:750,000
 Date: 2023-08-08
 Scale: 1:750,000
 Datum: ED50
 Projection: UTM
 Units: Meter

Figure 7: Spatial Distribution of Secondary School Provision in Sandwell

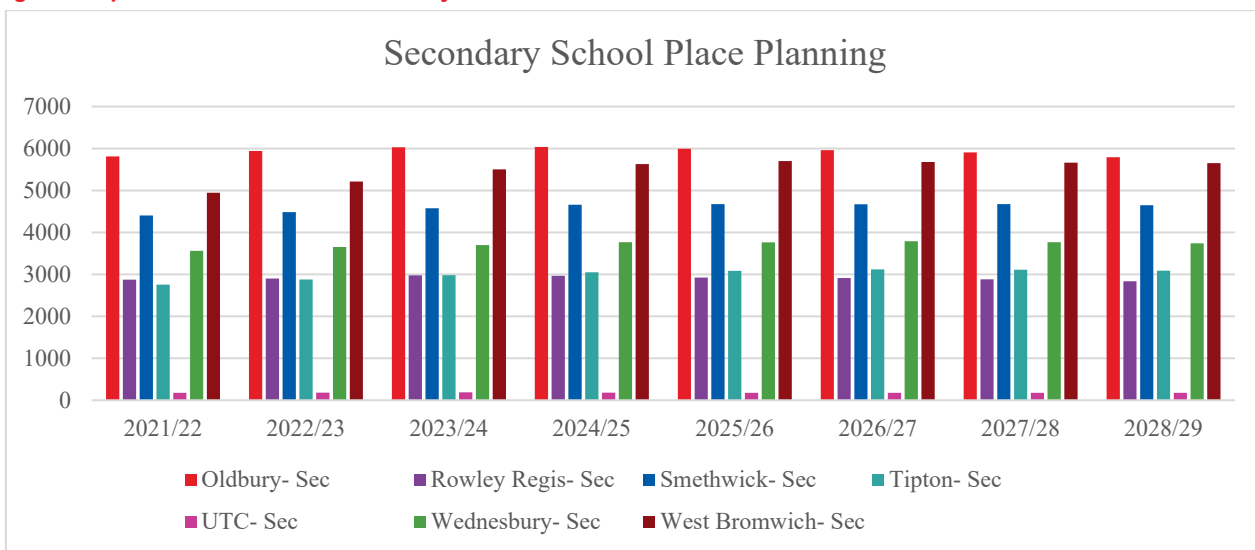


Figure 8: Secondary School Place Planning for Sandwell to 2028/29

Figure 7 shows the spatial distribution of schools throughout the borough and while there is a relatively even geographical spread, the nature of urban conurbations is such that there is considerable cross-boundary movement which may not be captured within the borough's data.

Post 16 provision (Sixth Form and College)

This section considers post 16 study, following the raising of participation age from 16 to 18 LEA's now having to consider the provision of Sixth Form and College places in their school place planning. There is limited data around the numbers of students that are in full time education post 16 as the legal requirement is that students are in full time education or employment.

Within the borough there are 13 secondary schools that provide sixth form facilities and one college. Table 6 outlines the utilisation of each school based on the latest figures from the previous academic year. It shows the schools agreed capacity along with the total number of students on roll during the last academic year. From the data sourced from the Department of Education it is clear that there is a good level of capacity within Sixth Form provision at schools, with other students potentially opting to go to Sandwell College.

Table 6: Post 16 Education Provision

Name	Type	OFSTED Rating	Date of last OFSTED inspection	Reported sixth form / Post 16 places	Sixth form / Post 16 pupils on roll
Wodensborough Ormiston Academy	Academy	Good	08/07/2021	20	13
Ormiston Forge Academy	Academy	Good	23/10/2019	400	157
Shireland Collegiate Academy	Academy	Outstanding	14/03/2013	280	242
Holly Lodge High School College of Science	Maintained school	Good	03/03/2022	121	147
Q3 Academy Langley	Academy	Good	09/05/2019	160	160
Sandwell College	College	Good	14/10/2022	Circa 6600	Circa 6600
Shireland Biomedical Utc	Academy	Requires improvement	26/02/2020	300	80
George Salter Academy	Academy	Good	18/05/2017	300	183
The Phoenix Collegiate	Maintained school	Good	15/02/2023	296	243
Sandwell Academy	Academy	Outstanding	17/01/2014	330	366
Gospel Oak School	Academy	Serious Weaknesses	12/10/2022	200	94
Q3 Academy Tipton	Academy	Requires improvement	07/12/2022	159	107
Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School	Academy			148	164
Wood Green Academy	Academy	Good	27/02/2020	250	251

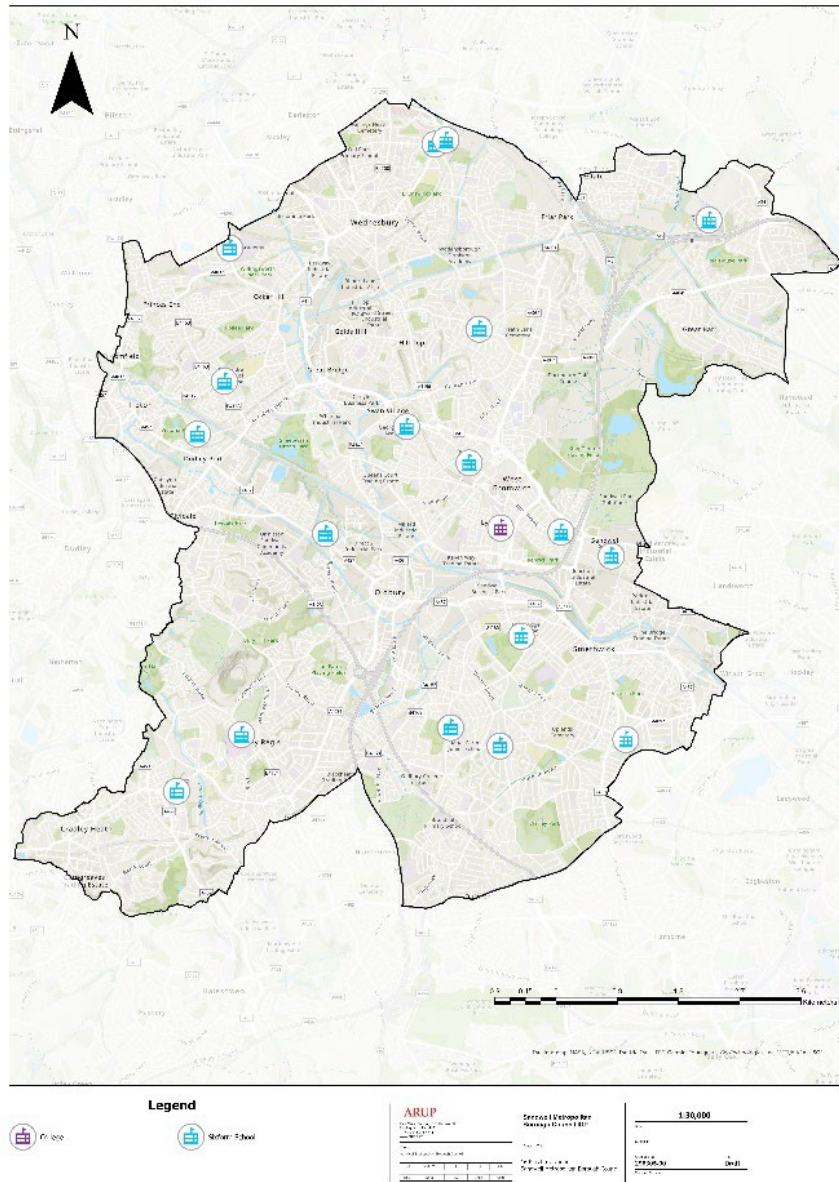


Figure 9: Spatial Distribution of Post 16 Education Provision in Sandwell

SEND

The Children and Families Act 2014 mandates local authorities to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). As the LEA Sandwell must provide sufficient school places for all pupils aged five to eighteen, including those with SEND, by forecasting future needs for Specialist Places based on predicted population and Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) growth.

The borough has seen a significant rise in demand for specialist places, with the population of children and young people with Special Educational Needs requiring additional support through an Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP’s) at 3,258 as of 30th June 2023. If current growth in population continues it is predicted that there could be an estimated 3,600 CYP with an EHC Plan by 2025.

The Authority drafted the ‘Specialist Place Planning Strategy 2022-2027’ to address current trends and needs, proposing expanded provisions for increasing complex needs such as autism spectral disorders (ASD), speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, specific learning disabilities (SLD), and moderate learning difficulties (MLD). In collaboration with the Department for Education, applications for High Point Academy and Elm Tree Primary Academy, both special educational needs schools, were approved and are located in Friar Park, Wednesbury.

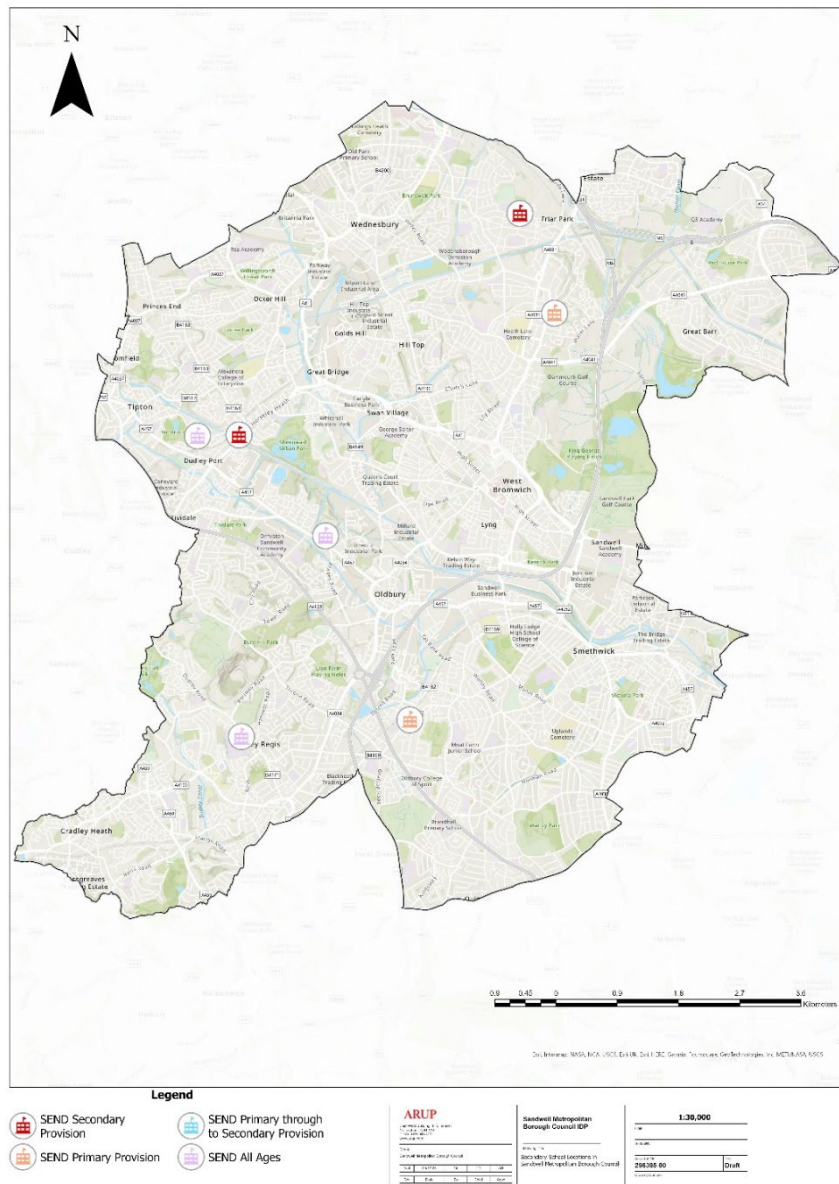


Figure 10: Spatial Distribution of SEND Provision in Sandwell

There are currently eight SEND schools in the borough catering for a range of ages. Table 7 below lists the schools along with the age ranges they provide teaching for. The borough’s challenge is to support and further develop the existing inclusive practice of its mainstream schools whilst commissioning sufficient additional specialist places for those with the most complex needs. The borough has identified the need for an additional SEND school that will likely provide capacity all through but continue to have a focus on keeping students in mainstream schools where possible.

Table 7: SEND Provision

Name	School Type	Age catered to	OFSTED Rating	Number of places available
The Westminster School	Community special school	7-19	Outstanding	241
The Orchard School	Community special school	2-11	Requires improvement	171
The Meadows School	Community special school	11-19	Good	200

Elm Tree Primary Academy	Free schools special	4-11		126
Dudley Port School	Other independent special school	11-16	Good	30
Compass Community School Victoria Park	Other independent special school	6-17	Good	30
High Point Academy	Free schools special	11-16		90
Shenstone Lodge School*	Academy special converter	4-16		95

*Shenstone Lodge School is a split site school. Key Stage 1 is located in Lichfield.

4.2.2 Baseline proposed investment schemes

Following delivery of in excess of £100m capital investment into the school estate since 2012 to expand mainstream capacity across the borough, an initial plateau, and now a slow decline is being experienced in the birth rate, resulting in a reduced intake into the primary sector. Whilst growth continues in the secondary sector, sufficient capacity has been built in to address the projected larger cohort of pupils currently working through Upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

In partnership with the Local Area Partnership for SEND, current provision is under major review across the Local Authority. The transformational programme for the partnership will see all agencies, including schools, work together to co-design and co-deliver a new SEND, Inclusion Eco-System, for all children and young people.

The Inclusion Eco-System has already recognised that, whilst Sandwell has had a long history of investment into inclusion, there is a need to provide additional SEND places across the borough to meet increasing demand. Work on the Inclusion Eco-System will develop small to medium scale schemes to meet local needs. At the time of publication, the need for a new, all-through special school has been identified, with a potential site located in Tipton.

4.2.3 Infrastructure implications for future growth

In the absence of more bespoke data, by drawing upon DfE examples of good practice and pupil yield standards from housing developments⁴⁰ it is possible to predict the number of pupils that may be generated by future development within the borough. There are no equivalent standards for SEND or Post 16 provision.

Education Setting	Number of Bedrooms Per Home* ⁴¹	Estimated Yield per new household
Early Years	1	0.03
	2	0.08
	3	0.10
	4+	0.07
	All	0.08
Primary	1	0.03
	2	0.28

⁴⁰ Pupil yield from housing developments, Reporting year 2022 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

⁴¹ Numbers include all dwelling types inclusive of flats.

	3	0.49
	4+	0.54
	All	0.36
Secondary	1	0.01
	2	0.10
	3	0.26
	4+	0.61
	All	0.18

Depending on the scale and type of growth that occurs there are different scenarios that could come forward during the plan period. Taking the target growth figure of around 588 dwellings per year, this would generate an uplift in need of around 47 places in Early Years, 212 places in Primary Education and around 106 places in Secondary Education per year.

The number of pupil places from individual housing developments may vary due to the nature of housing located on the site. It also assumes that all children moving into the new housing development are new to the area. It is highly likely that a proportion of children moving into housing developments will already reside in the area and may continue in their existing schools or move at the end of a key stage. Any planned development should work closely with School Place Planning to identify the need in the area at any given time based on the estimated pupil yield, current numbers of roll and planned capacity.

From an Early Years perspective, the DfE encourages new provision to be co-located with new schools, to minimise travel and disruption to families. Where such provision cannot be developed on existing or new school sites, or where demand exceeds that which could be met via a school-based solution, then early years provision should be considered for community hubs or similar forms of community infrastructure.

Overall conclusion for education

Education provision within the borough is not currently overly constrained in mainstream section, with all forms of entry having some capacity. The trend for the future need of school places shows a decline in the borough with projections in capacity showing that over the next five years there will be adequate provision available borough wide to support future growth.

It should be noted though that overall, there is capacity in the education provision in the borough. There are also pockets of over subscription at some primary and secondary schools. Due to this there could be the scenario that additional capacity will need to be created in some areas to support future growth.

Due to the current oversubscription across the special and alternative provision sector, the increased need of SEND provision in the borough will require any future development to contribute toward any uplift in SEND pupil numbers to build upon the current levels of provision within the borough. It will be crucial at the stage 2 of the IDP process to further engage with the LEA to get a clearer understanding on the forecasted places for SEND provision in the borough and any associated costs that would come about from future growth.

4.3 Healthcare

This section considers healthcare provision within Sandwell. The provision of the right healthcare infrastructure is crucial to wellbeing and quality of life. In England, the NHS offers a range of care with providers for each with a specific purpose or specialism. Care providers do not operate in isolation, however there are four main groups that make up the system: primary, secondary, tertiary and community care, which operate as a single, integrated care system to allow patients to be transferred between providers.

Primary care is usually a patient’s first point of contact and includes: general practice; community pharmacy; dentistry; and eyecare. Secondary care includes planned or elective care (usually in a hospital); urgent and emergency care, including 999 and 111 services, ambulance services, hospital emergency departments, and out-of-hours GP services; mental health care⁴². The focus of the IDP has been on primary and secondary care, and has not specifically considered or engaged on tertiary care and community health services.

Figure 11 below sets out the location of primary and secondary healthcare facilities within Sandwell.

4.3.1 Performance of existing infrastructure

Sandwell is served by 48 General Practitioner (GP) practices which cover a broad geography of the borough. The borough is also served by two main hospitals and two intermediate care hubs. Sandwell is overseen by the Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB), who are responsible for developing a plan, managing budget and arranging healthcare provision to meet the health needs of 1.26 million people in the Black Country, which includes the Sandwell area. The Black Country ICB has replaced the Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The ICB has responsibility for planning and buying for Primary Medical Services (GPs), however, more recently this remit has expanded to include dental, optometry, and pharmacy services from NHS England⁴³. The Black Country ICB are part of the Black Country Integrated Care System (ICS), known as Healthier Futures, and work to integrate health and social care services to benefit communities⁴⁴.

Overview of Sandwell’s health performance

Table 8 shows that the Black Country suffers from both from lower life expectancy and lower healthy life expectancy amongst its residents than the average for England. This data is consistent for both males and females, with Sandwell performing poorly compared to neighbouring Black Country boroughs.

Table 8: Life and Healthy Life Expectancy Data (Source: draft Black Country Plan Health Evidence Base, August 2021)

	Life expectancy at birth – years (male)	Healthy life expectancy at birth – years (male)	Life expectancy at birth – years (female)	Healthy life expectancy at birth – years (female)
England	79.8	63.4	83.4	63.9
Dudley	79.4	59.4	82.7	60.3
Sandwell	77.0	57.1	81.3	57.9
Walsall	77.8	56.4	82.0	55.7
Wolverhampton	77.3	58.7	81.9	58.0

The above data also shows that within the Black Country, and particularly Sandwell, people generally live shorter lives with more of their life in poor health. This has implications for both the economy and demand for health and other services, placing increased pressures on healthcare infrastructure provision across the borough.

⁴² [The healthcare ecosystem - NHS Digital](#)

⁴³ [About us :: Black Country ICB](#)

⁴⁴ [Our priorities :: Black Country ICS](#)

Socio-economic data for Sandwell (Table 9) shows significantly higher rates of multiple deprivation, children living in poverty, of unemployment and of households living in fuel poverty than the average for England. Within the Black Country, Sandwell has the highest rate of multiple deprivation and second highest rates of children living in poverty, of unemployment and of households living in fuel poverty.

Table 9: Deprivation, Child Poverty, Unemployment, and Fuel Poverty Data (Source: draft Black Country Plan Health Evidence Base, August 2021)

	Index of multiple deprivation	Percentage of children living in poverty	Percentage unemployed	Percentage of households living in fuel poverty
England	21.7	19.9	1.9	10.3
Dudley	24.1	22.0	3.2	10.6
Sandwell	34.9	29.9	3.5	12.0
Walsall	31.6	28.4	2.9	11.8
Wolverhampton	32.1	31.3	4.2	12.7

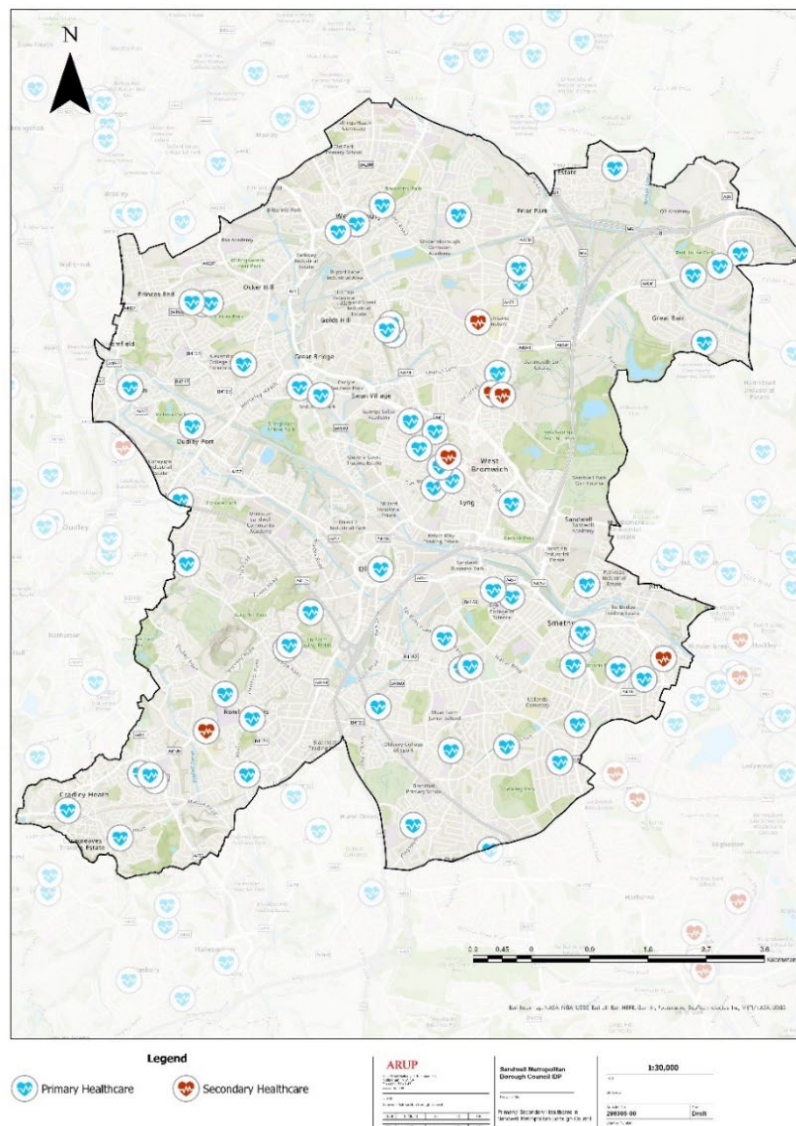


Figure 11: Primary and Secondary Healthcare Facilities in Sandwell

It was noted during engagement with SMBC and the ICB that providing a flexible public health service to respond to local need, delivered across targeted areas, is important. For example, relative deprivation is not equally distributed across the borough, therefore healthcare infrastructure should be planned to account for local nuances throughout the borough.

Higher than national average rates of inequality contribute to poorer health outcomes and put increased pressure on healthcare and other services and associated infrastructure in Sandwell, when compared to other areas. SMBC seeks to create an environment that protects and improves the physical, social and mental health and wellbeing of its residents, employees and visitors, including children, other young people and vulnerable adults, and which reduces health inequalities. This vision aligns with the one set out by the Black Country ICB ‘to improve the health outcomes for local people, making the Black Country a healthier place with healthier people and healthier futures’, with the following 5 priorities:

1. Improving access and quality of services
2. Community where possible – hospital where necessary
3. Preventing ill health and tackling health inequalities
4. Giving people the best start in life
5. Best place to work⁴⁵

The consistent message of aiming to reduce people’s need for healthcare services through encouraging healthier lifestyles was echoed throughout engagement with SMBC Public Health, whilst factors contributing to low healthy life expectancy, such as low rates of participation in physical activity, obesity and smoking amongst adults are all prevalent amongst the population of Sandwell. The data below, taken from Sandwell’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment⁴⁶, provides a snapshot of the borough’s performance against healthy living indicators.

The 2020/2021 data displayed via these graphs show that Sandwell performs worse in these three contributors of ill health compared to the national average. When compared to the West Midlands average, Sandwell also consistently falls behind.

Table 10: Obesity, Inactivity and Smoking Prevalence Data (Source: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Sandwell, 2023)

	Percentage of adults classified as overweight or obese	Percentage of physically inactive adults	Smoking prevalence in adults
England	63.5	23.4	13.0
West Midlands	66.8	25.6	13.8
Sandwell	70.8	31.1	18.1

Stakeholder engagement with SMBC Public Health also acknowledged that Sandwell suffers from poor levels of air pollution in many places, with road transport emissions considered the primary source of pollution in Sandwell.

To address the issue of air quality, the Council, in 2009, developed an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to work towards improving air quality. The action plan sets out a range of measures undertaken or proposed to improve air quality within areas that exceed the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective. The plan also includes a total of 23 site specific actions to reduce NO2 within the areas of exceedance and 30 borough wide actions to improve NO2 concentrations across the region.

⁴⁵ [Our five year Joint Forward Plan :: Black Country ICB](#)

⁴⁶ [JSNA - SANDWELL TRENDS](#)

It was noted during stakeholder engagement with SMBC Public Health team that infrastructure to address levels of air pollution and mitigate impact to health may be increasingly required for new developments, such as mechanical ventilation and unopenable windows beside roads. It was noted that NO² is decreasing in the borough but that PM25 is a growing concern which will not be reduced by the increased use of electric vehicles.

Primary Healthcare

The borough's 48 GP practices are organised into eight Primary Care Networks (PCNs)⁴⁷. Figure 11 (above) spatially defines the locations of GP practices across the borough and Table 11 provides an overview of the performance of each GP practice in Sandwell, using a patient to GP/ Nurse ratio calculation.

Table 11: GP Practices in Sandwell, with Total Patients Registered against GP and Nursing staff.

Practice Name	Total No. Patients	Total No. GP's Full Time Equivalent	Total No. Nurses Full Time Equivalent	Patient to GP Ratio	Patient to Nurse Ratio
Haden Vale Surgery	7267	3.44	1.64	2113	44310
Warley Medical Centre	11655	15.63	0.80	746	14569
Old Hill Medical Centre	2289	0.91	NA	2525	NA
Church View Surgery	6140	3.87	NA	1588	NA
Regis Medical Centre	42595	34.41	28.75	1238	1482
Bearwood Medical Centre	5076	1.41	1.21	3592	4184
Hill Top Medical Centre	9977	7.07	5.37	1412	1857
Bearwood Road Surgery	2904	1.00	0.23	2904	12812
Causeway Green Road Surgery	3029	0.64	0.40	4733	7573
Hawes Lane Surgery	4085	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cape Hill Medical Centre	12322	9.24	5.93	1334	2077
Norvic Family Practice	9493	5.49	1.80	1728	5274
Dog Kennel Lane Surgery	2032	1.25	0.11	1621	19050
Warley Road Surgery	3739	0.85	0.43	4382	8763
Sarephed Medical Centre	4961	5.60	0.77	886	6415
Rood End Medical Practice	5087	0.43	NA	11923	NA

⁴⁷ [General Practice / GPs :: Black Country ICB](#)

Practice Name	Total No. Patients	Total No. GP's Full Time Equivalent	Total No. Nurses Full Time Equivalent	Patient to GP Ratio	Patient to Nurse Ratio
The Smethwick Medical Centre	9099	6.67	3.08	1365	2954
Portway Family Practice	5230	2.56	0.88	2043	5943
Lodge Road Surgery	6422	0.99	1.79	6509	3594
St Paul's Medical Practice	7203	3.25	1.84	2214	3915
Hawthorns Medical Centre	3442	0.85	0.52	4034	6619
Oldbury Health Centre	20995	11.91	4.40	1763	4772
Dr Ui Haque N	3133	1.20	NA	2611	NA
St Pauls Partners	3187	0.64	0.27	4980	11951
Walford Street, Tividale	2057	2.00	NA	1029	NA
Dr Singh M	3332	1.80	0.19	1851	17850
Linkway Medical Practice	13983	12.74	5.73	1098	2439
Dr Arora Rk	10121	4.03	1.85	2509	5461
St Paul's Partnership— Lyng Medical	3307	0.48	0.53	6890	6201
Dr Dewan Vk	2336	0.99	0.43	2368	5475
The Victoria Surgery	3779	2.03	0.48	1865	7873
Horseley Heath Surgery	11336	7.92	1.69	1432	6694
Great Bridge Health Centre	9574	0.55	2.60	17302	3682
Black Country Family Practice	14566	10.47	6.45	1392	2257
Great Bridge Pship for Health	16422	1.81	1.32	9056	12441
Dr Gudi Pv & Partner	5971	1.84	0.96	3245	6220
New Street Surgery	3749	0.80	1.00	4686	3749
Glebefields Surgery	3929	2.16	1.15	1819	3426
Swanpool Medical Centre	8669	5.39	1.21	1607	7166
Clifton Lane Medical Centre	5261	1.39	0.08	3783	65763

Practice Name	Total No. Patients	Total No. GP's Full Time Equivalent	Total No. Nurses Full Time Equivalent	Patient to GP Ratio	Patient to Nurse Ratio
Stone Cross Medical Centre	5249	2.00	1.07	2619	4921
Scott Arms Medical Centre	11236	4.59	1.95	2450	5772
The Spires Health Centre	5232	2.03	0.85	2582	6131
Jubilee Health Centre	3888	1.53	0.93	2536	4166
The Village Medical Centre	10205	3.30	4.63	3095	2206
Tame Valley Medical Centre	5176	4.29	0.48	1206	10783
Oakeswell Health Centre	9561	6.40	1.28	1494	7470

The average fully qualified GP to patient ratio for England in June 2023 (latest data) was 2,301⁴⁸. Table 11 indicates that 23 of the GP practices listed (shown in green) have a GP to patient ratio that is lower than the national average, suggesting more capacity within the practice, and 23 of the GP practices have a GP patient ratio of greater than the national average (shown in red), indicating capacity constraints. From the data available for GPs in Sandwell, it appears that almost half of GP practices are, to some extent, operating over capacity. However, it was indicated by the ICB that, concerning the Primary Care Network, the system is flexible and able to accommodate additional roles within GP practices as staff work to a shared space model. Although areas across the Black Country require investment, it was noted that Sandwell is well placed and the NHS require less of a draw from its development contributions due to likely nature of site allocations being a couple of hundred homes, rather than large extensions to existing municipal areas. Smaller pockets of housing may be more easily absorbed by the existing Primary Care Network, however the cumulative impact on the healthcare system in total may create capacity issues.

The Black Country ICB's Estates team indicated that Sandwell's GP practice provision is sufficient and highlighted well located, existing neighbourhood hubs in the borough, such as Lyng Centre, Lyndon Primary Care Centre, Glebefields Health Centre, Wednesbury Virtual Hub, Great Barr Virtual Hub. It was suggested that amongst these centres, there is enough capacity to absorb development-related population growth. It was however noted that areas to the south of Sandwell are slightly weaker and would most likely be the focus for future development of neighbourhood hubs. It was suggested during engagement that the ICB would welcome expansions/capacity improvements in the form of additional staff or consulting rooms in existing GP practices, rather than entirely new facilities which could not be sustained or justified by one new development.

Engagement with the Black Country ICB confirmed that there has been a lot of investment in healthcare infrastructure in Sandwell within the last 15-20 years, and that the area is well provided for in terms of primary healthcare infrastructure in comparison to neighbouring authorities. Consequently, it was concluded that, concerning primary healthcare, the borough has capacity to the proposed growth accommodate growth.

⁴⁸ [Pressures in general practice data analysis \(bma.org.uk\)](https://www.bma.org.uk/pressures-in-general-practice-data-analysis)

Secondary Healthcare

City Hospital, in Birmingham, and Sandwell General Hospital, in West Bromwich, are the two main hospitals that serve Sandwell. Two intermediate care hubs also serve the borough and are located at Rowley Regis and Leasowes in Smethwick. Community Hospitals are located at Sandwell General Hospital, City Hospital and Rowley Regis which provide a range of outpatient, day care and diagnostic services.

Currently, acute hospital provision, including accident and emergency services, are provided at both City Hospital and Sandwell General Hospital. However, the Trust is set to open a new facility in Smethwick in 2024, the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH), and is expected to have capacity to serve the Sandwell and West Birmingham populations for at least 50 years. The new hospital will combine acute and emergency services from across Sandwell and West Birmingham into a single purpose-built facility. Retained facilities at Sandwell General and City Hospitals will remain under a new care model for the Trust, providing the majority of outpatient appointments, planned diagnostic tests, and rehabilitation wards amongst other services. Additionally, buildings and ward areas at Sandwell General have been retained for future development. Therefore, with the opening of the MMUH facility imminent, it is anticipated that secondary care provision for Sandwell will experience a change over the coming years as the healthcare provision at each hospital in the borough shifts.

Adult Social Care

Figure 12 shows the distribution of adult social care facilities across the borough, which is broadly equally distributed. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to engage with SMBC's Adult Social Care team at this stage of the IDP, although it was suggested during engagement with Public Health that likely challenges include the increasing costs and activity associated with providing care for an ageing population. Constraints are likely to be around operation as a service, rather than physical infrastructure. Engaging directly with Adult Social Care will remain a priority for Phase 2 of the IDP, in order to understand whether any particular infrastructure investment schemes need to be reflected in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule.

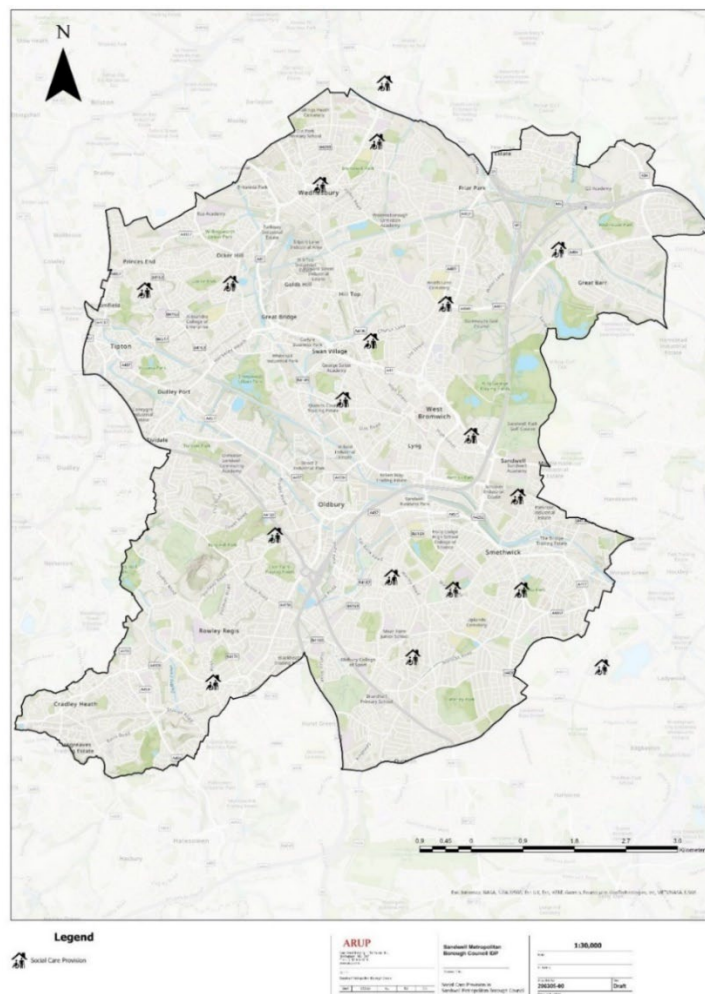


Figure 12: Spatial Distribution of Social Care Facilities in Sandwell

4.3.2 Baseline proposed investment schemes

Primary Healthcare

The ICB is in the process of finalising its Primary Care Estates Strategy (2023-2027) to update the previous Sandwell & West Birmingham CCG Primary Care Estates Strategy (2019-2024). This strategy document is set to provide details of estate provision in Sandwell and need based on robust evidence gathering. It is expected that this document will be published before the next phase of work on the IDP commences.

Secondary Healthcare

Located on a 6.8 hectare brownfield site on Grove Lane in Smethwick, the MMUH, is set to open for patients in Autumn 2024 and aims to bring together all critical and emergency care services that currently take place at City and Sandwell General Hospitals. Once operational, the MMUH will be the main acute healthcare and emergency hospital facility serving Sandwell.

MMUH is planned at seven storeys high to provide approximately 80,600m² of hospital space. It is anticipated that the Midland Metropolitan will provide capacity for approximately 81,455 inpatients and 115,045 outpatients per year, with a total of circa 670 acute inpatient beds⁴⁹.

The new model of care means that outpatient clinics, day case surgery and routine diagnostics will be provided from the Sandwell General and City Hospital sites. Maternity services, emergency care, general surgery (not day case) and medical wards will all take place at MMUH⁵⁰. Services to be provided at the MMUH once operational are as followed.

Emergency/ Elective Surgery/Day Case

- Emergency Department
- 2 Trauma Theatres
- 7 Elective theatres
- 2 Maternity theatres
- 12 Delivery Suites
- Birth Centre
- Medical Daycase Unit/ Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia (SCAT)

Diagnostic

- Endoscopy Unit
- Cardiac Interventional Suite
- Imaging (Plain X-ray, US, Ante-Natal US, MRI, CT, Physics and Nuclear Medicine, IR)
- Medical Illustration (inpatient support)
- Pathology (essential labs)
- Cardiac Diagnostics (main department)
- Respiratory Physiology (inpatient support)
- Neurophysiology (inpatient support)

⁴⁹ [Midland Metropolitan University Hospital | Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust \(swbh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.swbh.nhs.uk)

⁵⁰ [Opening confirmed for Midland Met | Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust \(swbh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.swbh.nhs.uk)

Outpatient services

- Ante-natal care and phlebotomy
- Paediatrics (including audiology test room, orthoptic consulting rooms)
- Urodynamics
- Cardiac rehabilitation

Acute care facilities will include:

- A purpose-built emergency department with co-located imaging and diagnostic services.
- A dedicated children's emergency department and assessment unit.
- Adult and children's wards with 50 per cent en-suite single rooms.
- Operating theatres for both emergency and major planned surgery.
- A midwife led birth unit next to a delivery suite, two maternity wards and an antenatal clinic.
- A neonatal unit.
- Same day emergency care for adults.
- Sickle cell and thalassemia centre.

Under this care model, it is expected that patients will receive:

- A full seven-day service – you can expect the same high standards of care any day of the week.
- Senior doctors leading expert clinical teams.
- Diagnostic tests identified for your care through our diagnostic facilities including x-ray, MRI and CT scans, plus other tests for urgent care.
- An environment that prioritises patients staying mobile and independent. Our Winter Garden and outdoor spaces are designed to help patients stay active⁵¹.

To ensure patients are still able to access specialist care locally, there will continue to be outpatient care, day case surgery and routine diagnostics taking place at the Sandwell General and City Hospital sites after the open of the MMUH. The existing hospitals will also house intermediate care wards and the 24/7 Urgent Treatment Centre at Sandwell, Birmingham Treatment Centre and Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre at City Hospital.

Adult Social Care

Without engagement with SMBC's Adult Social Care team, baseline infrastructure investment it is not known. Obtaining this information through engagement will be priority for Phase 2 of the IDP.

4.3.3 Infrastructure implications of future growth

Primary and Secondary Healthcare

At this stage, engagement with Black Country ICB has indicated that they have no concerns in terms of primary healthcare capacity when considering Sandwell's proposed planned growth. Although the ICB have indicated the primary healthcare in the borough is flexible to accommodate growth, this is subject to the publication of their new Primary Care Estates Strategy (2023-2027), which will provide area specific overview of Sandwell's primary estate, including current capacity and predicted future and development of

⁵¹ [Facilities at Midland Met | Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust \(swbh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.swbh.nhs.uk)

healthcare facilities. From this engagement, it is understood that the Black Country ICB have a set of policies that they wish to maintain and good methods of assessing healthcare infrastructure need across the region. The general direction for the NHS, at least locally, is to engage more proactively in the planning system going forward as traditionally the NHS have taken a more reactive approach to strategic planning.

In light of the extra capacity and facilities which will be provided at the new MMUH once operational, changes to how secondary healthcare is delivered is planned in order to improve the service. Engagement with Black Country ICB Secondary Estates Team has not been possible before the production of Phase 1 of this IDP and will be a priority for Phase 2 in order to understand whether any particular infrastructure investment schemes need to be reflected in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule.

The Black Country ICB’s estates team and SMBC currently work closely and the ICB indicated that they wish to continue to collaborate and input into the early stages of site concept design and master planning for strategic regenerations or housing development in Sandwell. During our discussions with SMBC Public Health team, it was indicated that the Black Country local authorities are looking to produce a joint Healthcare SPD, similar to one which currently exists for Air Quality. This will collate policies from existing SPDs, on air quality across the region, an issue that is considered by the Public Health team to be an important issue in Sandwell.

Additionally, Policy SHW2, Healthcare Infrastructure, proposed in draft Sandwell Local Plan reflects Sandwell’s appetite to ensure principles of good development are captured in the Local Plan to facilitate the design of healthy places and that existing healthcare facilities are safeguarded. It is understood that the ICB have worked closely with SMBC to develop this emerging policy. Policy SHW2 ensures existing primary and secondary healthcare infrastructure and services are, under most circumstances, protected and that proposals for major residential developments would be assessed against the capacity of existing healthcare facilities and/ or services before determining the planning application.

Funding for healthcare infrastructure projects is mostly delivered through mainstream NHS revenue spend and less so developer contributions. A formula, taken from Sandwell’s Draft Local Plan, for calculating developer contributions per development to healthcare (subject to viability) is set out in Table 12.

Table 12: Draft Calculation for Developer Contribution to Healthcare Infrastructure per Development (Source: draft Sandwell Local Plan, 2023)

<p>Primary Care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projected residents per development / number of patients per consulting room = number of consulting rooms required • Number of consulting rooms required x build costs per consulting room = developer contribution
<p>Secondary Care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projected residents per development x cost per head of population = developer contribution

A common theme during stakeholder engagement has been the concern of cumulative impact had by many small-scale allocations which independently would not be a cause for concern, but cumulatively may have implications for future infrastructure capacity. In the context of the healthcare, the calculation for one development might not indicate the need for substantial provision, however when the calculations for all development sites are combined, issues with supplying healthcare provision to meet demand created by these new populations may arise.

Adult Social Care

It has unfortunately not been possible to engage with Adult Social Care throughout the production of this iteration of the IDP. This will remain a priority for Part 2 of the IDP, in order to understand whether any particular infrastructure investment schemes need to be reflected in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule.

Overall conclusion for healthcare

Healthcare provision within the Black Country is constrained in areas, in common with most other localities nationally. However, engagement with the Black Country ICB revealed that Sandwell has seen and benefitted from reasonable levels of investment in recent years meaning that the area is less constrained than some of its neighbours in terms of healthcare provision available to meet demand.

The ICB's forthcoming Black Country Integrated Care Board Primary Care Estates Strategy (2023-2027) will map primary healthcare needs and future plans for each Primary Care Network across the Black Country, allowing the nature of planned improvements to be understood in greater detail. The area will also see changes in secondary care due to the imminent opening of the MMUH, which will have implications for the existing hospitals as acute care will mainly operate from the new facility allowing Sandwell General and City Hospital to provide other secondary care provision.

Overall, Sandwell's planned growth across the plan period did not raise any concerns for the ICB and the NHS in this locality aim to not be an obstacle for growth. Instead, they aim to be proactive in engaging with local authorities and developers alike, partnering in the delivery of schemes to achieve the greatest outcomes for healthcare infrastructure. As such, there are no significant implications for the Local Plan when considering Sandwell's healthcare capacity.

4.4 Emergency Services

4.4.1 Performance of existing infrastructure

This section considers Sandwell’s policing, fire and rescue and ambulance emergency service provision.

Policing

Sandwell is served by West Midlands Police who answer emergency calls and patrol the streets in order to respond to incidents at all times⁵². Local Area Team in Sandwell are based in Oldbury Town, Rowley Town, Smethwick Town, Tipton Town, Wednesbury Town, and West Bromwich Town. Figure 13 below shows the distribution of police stations across the borough.

West Midlands Police Service’s Police and Crime Plan (2021-2025) focuses on the desire to rebuild local policing, with more officers dedicated to work within local communities, and the need to grow the force. During engagement with West Midlands Police (WMP), the drive towards neighbourhood policing was noted as a key agenda for the newly appointed Chief Constable for the West Midlands.

The WMP is managed across Local Policing Areas, of which one covers the Sandwell area. It is led by a Chief Superintendent who focuses on the issues that matter to the local communities in that area, and the associated WMP infrastructure requirements to deliver the service in that area. The local priorities set for different areas within Sandwell are displayed in Table 13 below, based on updates posted in August 2023. Common themes include addressing drug crime, antisocial behaviour, and off-road bikes.

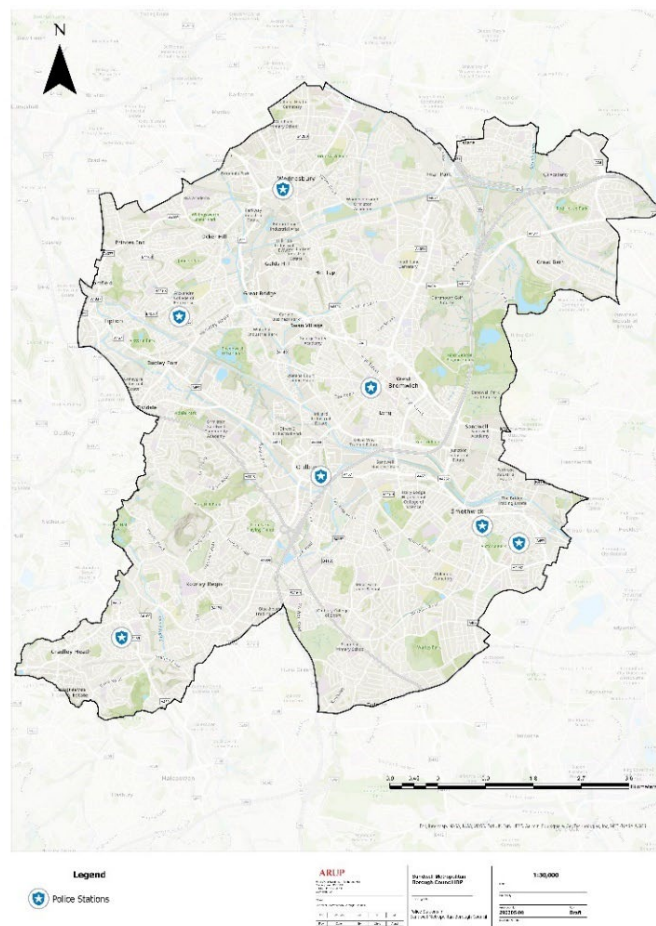


Figure 13: Spatial Distribution of Police Stations in Sandwell

⁵² [Our Force | West Midlands Police \(west-midlands.police.uk\)](https://www.west-midlands.police.uk/)

Table 13: WMP Policing Priorities in Sandwell

Local Priorities Smethwick and Oldbury ⁵³	Local Priorities Rowley and Tipton ⁵⁴	Local Priorities West Bromwich and Wednesbury ⁵⁵
Speeding	Keeping pub staff and drinkers safe, and stopping nuisance behaviour affecting neighbours	Antisocial behaviour involving children and young people
Drug dealing and antisocial behaviour	Off road bikes	Drug dealing in West Bromwich town centre
Serious youth violence	Protecting young people	Off road bikes across Wednesday
Organised crime		Car crime
Violence against women and girls		

Formal feedback from WMP provided details of existing (2023) police force details for the WMP Force Area and Sandwell Area. Table 14 below shows the number of police officers, police staff and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in the borough.

Table 14: WMP Police Resourcing in Sandwell

Type of Staff	WMP Force Area	Sandwell Area
Police Officers	7,839	873
Police Staff	4,199	468
PCSOs	464	52
Total	12,502	1,393

Fire and Rescue

Sandwell is served by West Midlands Fire Service. The West Midlands Fire Service offer a range of services to the communities of the West Midlands to keep people, homes and businesses safe with a vision of making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier⁵⁶. The service operates from 38 buildings in the West Midlands with six in Sandwell as shown in Figure 14.

⁵³ [Update on local priorities in Sandwell - Smethwick and Oldbury - August | West Midlands Police \(west-midlands.police.uk\)](#)

⁵⁴ [Update on local priorities in Rowley and Tipton | West Midlands Police \(west-midlands.police.uk\)](#)

⁵⁵ [West Bromwich and Wednesbury local updates - August | West Midlands Police \(west-midlands.police.uk\)](#)

⁵⁶ [Our Plan - West Midlands Fire Service \(wmfs.net\)](#)



Figure 14: Spatial Distribution of Fire Stations in Sandwell

Ambulance Service

Sandwell is served by West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) University NHS Foundation Trust. The frontline service responds to emergencies across the West Midlands region.

The Trust provides a range of service, including:

- 999 Emergency Response;
- 999 and NHS 111 “non-emergency line” – Integrated Urgent and Emergency Care;
- Non-emergency patient transport services to and from hospital across some parts of the region;
- Specialist Operations to include Hazardous Area Response Teams and critical care infrastructure such as our “Merit Teams” – Critical Care Practitioners and Doctors, attending the most critically injured and unwell;
- Hosting the National Ambulance Resilience Unit – the coordinating body supporting resilience planning, training, incident management delivery across the country;
- In-house student paramedic training program; and
- Research and practice development.

The service operates from 15 fleet preparation hubs throughout the West Midlands region, deploying WMAS up to 450 ambulances per day⁵⁷. There are three ambulance stations in Sandwell, as shown by Figure 15 below.

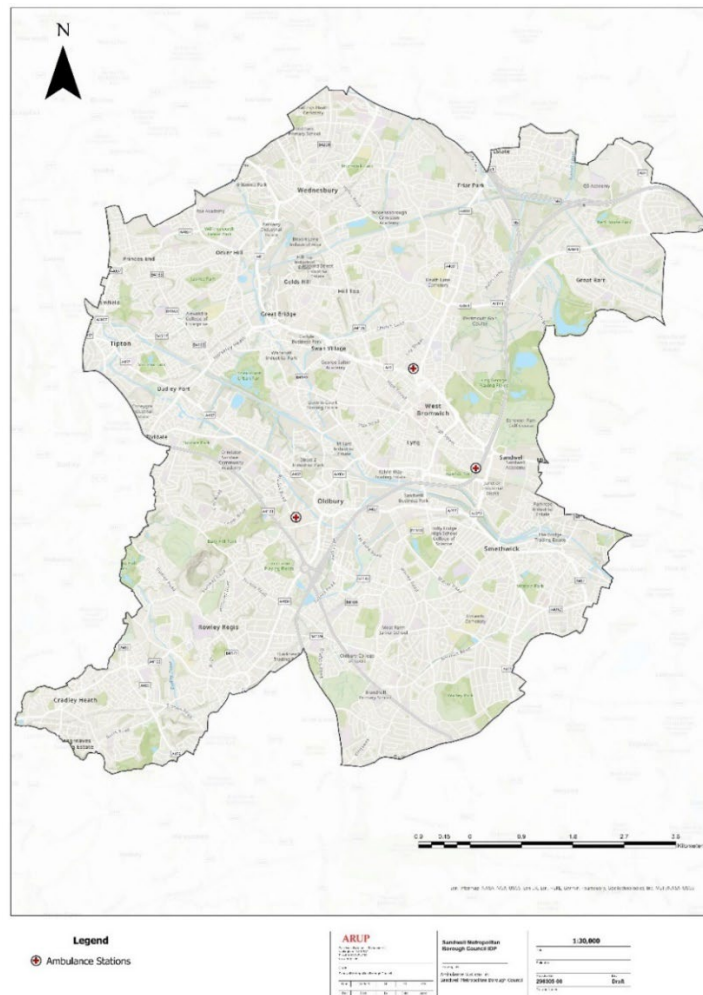


Figure 15: Spatial Distribution of Ambulance Stations in Sandwell

4.4.2 Baseline proposed investment schemes

Policing

WMP receives approximately 80% of its funding directly from Central Government with just 20% coming from Council Tax. The West Midlands is reported to have the second lowest policing Council Tax precept in the country, however the area also has a higher-than-average number of properties in the lower Council Tax bands and a higher average number of people per household. This makes the tax income figure even lower on a per capita basis.

Additional to the day-to-day revenue expenditure required to run WMP force, £150m in capital expenditure will be invested over the next 4 years, focusing on:

- Ensuring police buildings are fit for purpose and cost effective;
- ICT and systems to exploit the operational and organisational benefits of new technology;
- Police vehicles; and

⁵⁷ [What we do – West Midlands Ambulance Service University NHS Foundation Trust \(wmas.nhs.uk\)](http://www.wmas.nhs.uk)

- Grants received through e.g. Community Safety Funding; Active Citizens Funding; Violence Reduction Unit; Victims Services Funding; and General Commissioning⁵⁸.

In recent years WMP have moved away from a “Borough by Borough” service provision and officers themselves are more agile and relevant on mobile infrastructure, being vehicle based and reliant on mobile equipment, rather than being based at individual police stations. During engagement with WMP, it was also acknowledged that this change in service provision and a shift to more flexible working since the Covid-19 pandemic, the service is generally moving away from investing in physical buildings and needs more investment to provide training and equipment for the force.

WMP Service’s Police and Crime Plan (2021-2025) states that the force aim to grow by approximately 1,200 staff to total over 8,000 Police Officers within this period. However, it is noted that even with this growth, the force will be 1,000 officers smaller than it was in 2010. This highlights the strain on the service impacted by cuts in national police funding.

The data in Table 15 indicate WMP’s infrastructure start-up costs per new officer and other police staff.

Table 15: Indicative Policing Infrastructure Costs

Item	Officer	PCSO	Staff
Uniform	£1,112.00	£1,112.00	£150.00
Airwave Radio	£760.00	£760.00	N/A
Mobility Device	£440.00	£440.00	£312.00
Body Worn Camera	£830.00	£830.00	N/A
Mirror Book	N/A	N/A	N/A
Laptop	£1,359.00	£1,359.00	£1,359.00
Training Costs	£9,500.00	£9,500.00	£297.00
Total	£14,001.00	£14,001.00	£2,118.00

Fire and Rescue

Outlined in the Fire Service’s 2022 Plan (carried over to 2023), are the following key projects:

- Risk-based crewing of a blended fleet of vehicles.
- Automatic fire alarms (AFA): looking at how to gather data that shows whether to respond as an emergency.
- Reducing health inequalities: working with partner organisations in prevention.
- Emerging risks: monitor and review risks to identify new trends.
- Dynamic mobilising: responding to emergencies quickly and other issues appropriately, flexible crewing, blended fleet of vehicles.

The West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority spent £2.419m on capital projects in 2022/23, distributed between vehicle replacements (£1.964m), training facility adaption works (£0.192m) and on roof replacements (£0.124m). The service is part funded through Council Tax.

Ambulance Service

A new WMAS facility at Shidas Lane, Oldbury, was consented in 2021 and it is understood that this facility is either operational or very near in completion. This hub is earmarked to be the largest of its kind in England and will support 350 operational ambulance staff and provide a facility for the Hazardous Area Response

⁵⁸ [The-West-Midlands-Police-and-Crime-Plan-2021-25.pdf \(westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk\)](#)

Team (HART). The development will also include fleet maintenance and vehicle preparation areas, the Trust's Education and Training Academy and central stores.

This multi-million-pound facility is predicted to significantly increase ambulance operational capacity, the service's efficiency and its ability to deliver high quality care for the Black Country and Birmingham areas⁵⁹.

4.4.3 Infrastructure implications of future growth

Policing

It was identified during engagement with WMP that Sandwell has seen a 25% increase in recorded crime since 2020. It was noted during engagement with WMP that with significant levels of development growth, the demands placed on the police service increases as the local population increases. This is exacerbated by the major changes in the nature of crime and its consequent demands, particularly regarding cybercrime, child sex exploitation and terrorism.

Based on WMP's crime statistics (2022), it is predicted that an additional 11,000 homes in the Sandwell area would incur an additional 6,016 calls for service and 3,270 offences. This would require the recruitment of 118 staff members in order to respond to increasing crime associated with this level of growth.

Therefore, as Sandwell's population increases, there is a greater need to ensure new development is supported by adequate policing infrastructure in the interest of creating sustainable communities. This highlights the importance of new developments employing secure by design principles to reduce the amount of additional crime generated as the population grows in certain areas.

As only 20% of their funding is received from Council Tax precept, WMP have stressed that increases in local population does not directly lead to an increase in funding for the Police Service from Government. As such, it is necessary to give due consideration to the direct link between the increased demand for policing services and changes in the physical environment due to new housing and economic growth. WMP highlighted the importance of securing CIL and/or S106 contributions towards policing to enable them to maintain the same level of service to residents of new developments, without compromising levels of service for existing communities and frontline services. WMP consider the consequence of no additional funding will lead to existing infrastructure becoming severely stretched and thereby have a severe adverse impact on the quality of the service that is delivered.

Formal feedback from WMP indicates that more specific information is needed with regard to the likely needs and priorities for specific infrastructure within Sandwell, but at present the level of information (i.e. where new homes will be built; at what density; and in what form) limits the scope for further comment. Nonetheless, indicative infrastructure requirements and costs, based upon the agile/centralised model and the circa 11,000 homes supply, are shown below in Table 16.

Table 16: WMP's Indicative Policing Infrastructure Requirements

Based upon the approximate 11,000 housing supply figure:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training costs: £9,500 per Officer/PCSO and £297 for Police Staff = £752,880.• Start-Up costs: £4,501 per Officer/PCSO, (to include Uniform, and itemised equipment) and £1,821 for Police Staff = £423,918.• Patrol vehicles: £17.30 per household (for 5 year of life provision) = £190,300.
Total = £1,367,098, which equates to £124.28 per dwelling. This figure should also be index linked.

⁵⁹ [Work begins on biggest ambulance hub of its kind – West Midlands Ambulance Service University NHS Foundation Trust \(wmas.nhs.uk\)](https://www.wmas.nhs.uk)

WMP indicated that they would be better placed to clarify these figures and to discuss need of particular areas of Sandwell once further information is known about the scale and location of developments when housing developments are determined through Local Plan allocations.

On behalf of WMP, their planning agents noted that they are keen to continue to engage with this IDP as more information becomes available, to ensure that the needs and identified levels of funding are provided, and also share any further information and future changes to WMP infrastructure requirements and priorities.

Fire and Rescue

It has unfortunately not been possible to engage with West Midlands Fire Service throughout the production of this iteration of the IDP. This will remain a priority for Part 2 of the IDP, in order to understand whether any particular infrastructure investment schemes need to be reflected in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule. However, whilst by their nature emergency service is often constrained, this is not expected to be significantly impacted by further growth given the more regional basis on which these services are planned and provided.

Ambulance Service

It has unfortunately not been possible to engage with West Midlands Ambulance Service throughout the production of this iteration of the IDP. This will remain a priority for Part 2 of the IDP, in order to understand whether any particular infrastructure investment schemes need to be reflected in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule. However, whilst by their nature emergency service is often constrained, this is not expected to be significantly impacted by further growth given the more regional basis on which these services are planned and provided.

Overall conclusion for emergency services

Although it was not possible to engage with Fire and Rescue and Ambulance Services, engagement with West Midlands Police provided background information to the current force and possible implications for the demand generated by the future growth planned in Sandwell. Indicative figures have been provided for policing infrastructure cost associated with planned growth, including training costs, start-up costs and vehicle costs needed to support the predicted housing supply of approximately 11,000 across Sandwell's Local Plan period (noting that no need was identified for new buildings / facilities). Securing CIL and/or S106 contributions to enable the service to continue to operate sustainably in light of new housing growth as crime levels increase as Sandwell's population grows was highlighted as an important need.

Whilst we have not yet been able to discuss current capacity and future growth requirements for fire and rescue, and ambulance infrastructure providers, based on our research and experience from IDPs elsewhere, it is not anticipated that there will be any significant implications for the Local Plan. However, engagement with West Midlands Fire and Rescue Trust and West Midlands Ambulance Service University Trust will remain a priority for Phase 2 of this IDP and fruitful discussions with WMP will continue to be pursued.

4.5 Community Facilities

Sandwell is served by a broad range of community facilities that are spread across the geography of the borough. While the typologies assessed in this section are not exhaustive, burial and cremation facilities, libraries, and community centres cover a broad range of community needs, each with their own unique requirements, but all being necessary in helping to shape and maintain vibrant and sustainable communities.

Burials and cremations are the only area in which infrastructure provider engagement was undertaken, meaning that assessment of libraries and community centres has relied upon analysis of information and data available through the SMBC website. While it is apparent that there is a relatively even geographical spread of services, this does not always correlate with areas of greatest need, therefore limiting the conclusions that can be drawn. As such, further engagement will be pursued in the later stages of the IDP.

4.5.1 Performance of existing infrastructure

Burial and Cremation Facilities

Sandwell currently has nine cemeteries, including one that has only just opened (Canalside) in at Rowley Regis. Some of the older cemeteries however are no longer accepting new graves. It is estimated that there is around 24 years in terms of burial capacity.

Specific provision for the Muslim community is more limited at the moment. The Council's main site at Smethwick used up a lot of plots at the height of the pandemic, including a huge influx from Birmingham. However, the new Canalside Cemetery has provided specific capacity, albeit in a different geographical area. The biggest localised pressure for burial space is currently in West Bromwich, where the 150-year-old cemetery is nearing capacity, with approximately two and half years left for adult grave space. The Council is pursuing a new cemetery next to Sandwell Valley Crematorium, but this has encountered some funding challenges, with the existing planning permission set to expire in February. It is understood that officers are discussing with Members options to revisit and explore alternative funding.

In recent years the Government has explored options⁶⁰, including legislative provisions, for the reuse of graves, although timescales for this are unclear with online information dating back to 2017. Key issues for this relate to legislation stating that buried human remains may not be disturbed without specific authority. Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 makes it an offence to remove buried human remains without a licence from the Secretary of State or, in relation to ground consecrated according to the rites of the Church of England, a faculty (permission from the Church). In limited circumstances, London burial authorities already have power to disturb graves older than 75 years for the purpose of deepening the grave to allow further burials to take place. However, in September 2014, the then Justice Minister, Simon Hughes, indicated that the use of the statutory powers by London burial authorities at that time was "almost non-existent". He said that it would be necessary to look at why the powers available to London burial authorities were not being used before considering whether similar powers should be made available in other areas. Graves have, however, been reused in London with Church permission.

In Sandwell there are two crematoria. Current trends show roughly an 80%/20% split between people choosing for their remains to be cremated instead of being buried, with the latter typically being dominated by Catholic, Jewish and Muslim members of the community, with other factors such as historical family traditions of keeping burial sites together.

For crematoria, broadly speaking, there is additional capacity in existing facilities, with around 30% of all cremations coming from outside of Sandwell. If local need became too much, the Council could apply some controls, such as supplementary fees (if needed), but currently recognise the benefits of receiving additional income while capacity is available.

⁶⁰ [Reuse of Graves, UK Government](#)

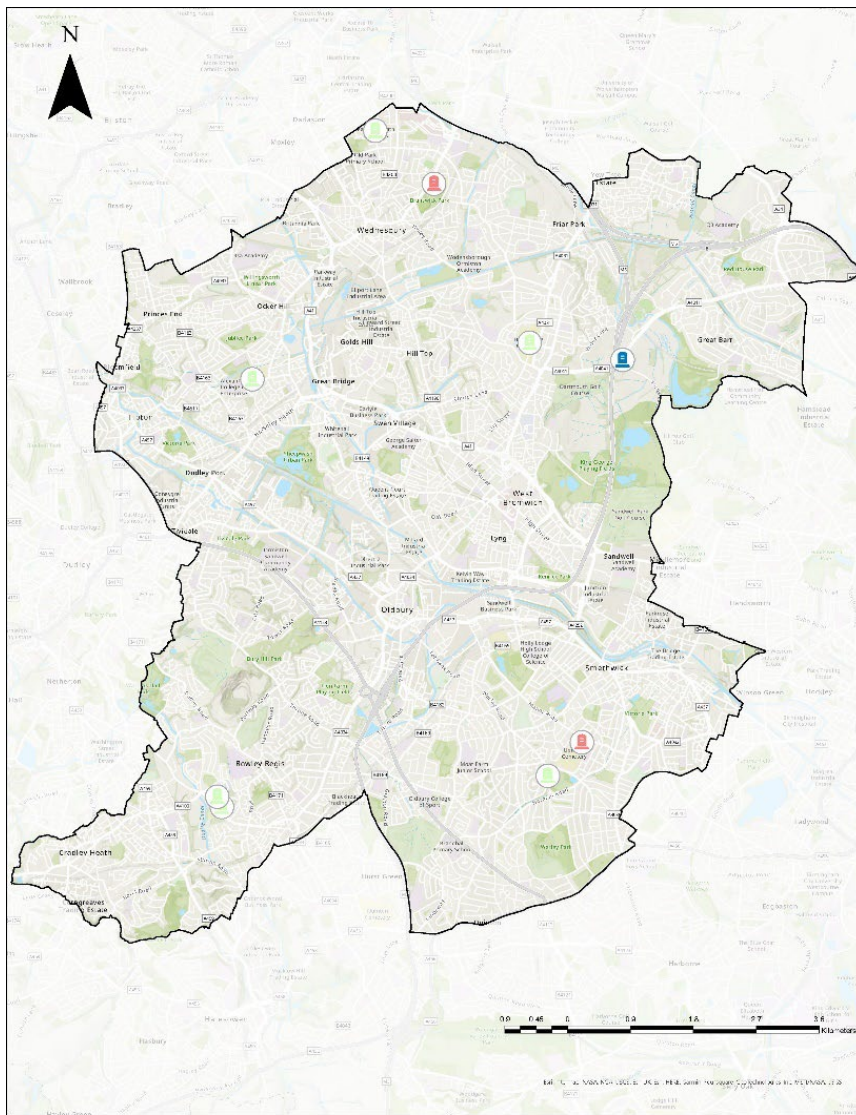


Figure 16: Spatial Distribution of Cemeteries in Sandwell

Table 17: Cemeteries and Crematoria

Name	Location	Grace spaces available (Sep 23)	Anticipated burials per year	Capacity (years)
Canalside Cemetery and Open Space	92 Powke Lane, Rowley Regis, B65 0AQ	797 (initial allocation)	32	25
Fallings Heath Cemetery	Beebee Road, Wednesbury, West Midlands, WS10 9RX	6,642	147	45
Heath Lane Cemetery	Walsall Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands, B71 3HR	198	77	2.5
Oldbury Cemetery*	St Pauls Road, Smethwick, West Midlands, B66 1QT	0	N/A	0

Rowley Regis Cemetery	Powke Lane, Rowley Regis, West Midlands, B65 0AG	1	41	0
Tipton Cemetery	Alexandra Road, Tipton, West Midlands, DY4 7NP	1,059	42	25
Thimblemill Cemetery	Thimblemill Road, Smethwick, West Midlands, B67 6LS	1,047	55	19
Uplands Cemetery*	Manor Road, Smethwick, West Midlands, B67 6SJ	0	N/A	0
Wood Green Cemetery*	Wood Green Road, Wednesbury, West Midlands, WS10 9QS	0	N/A	0
Sandwell Valley Crematorium	Newton Road, West Bromwich B71 3SX	-	-	-
Rowley Regis Crematorium	Newton Road, West Bromwich B71 3SX	-	-	-

* Denotes cemeteries no longer accepting new graves

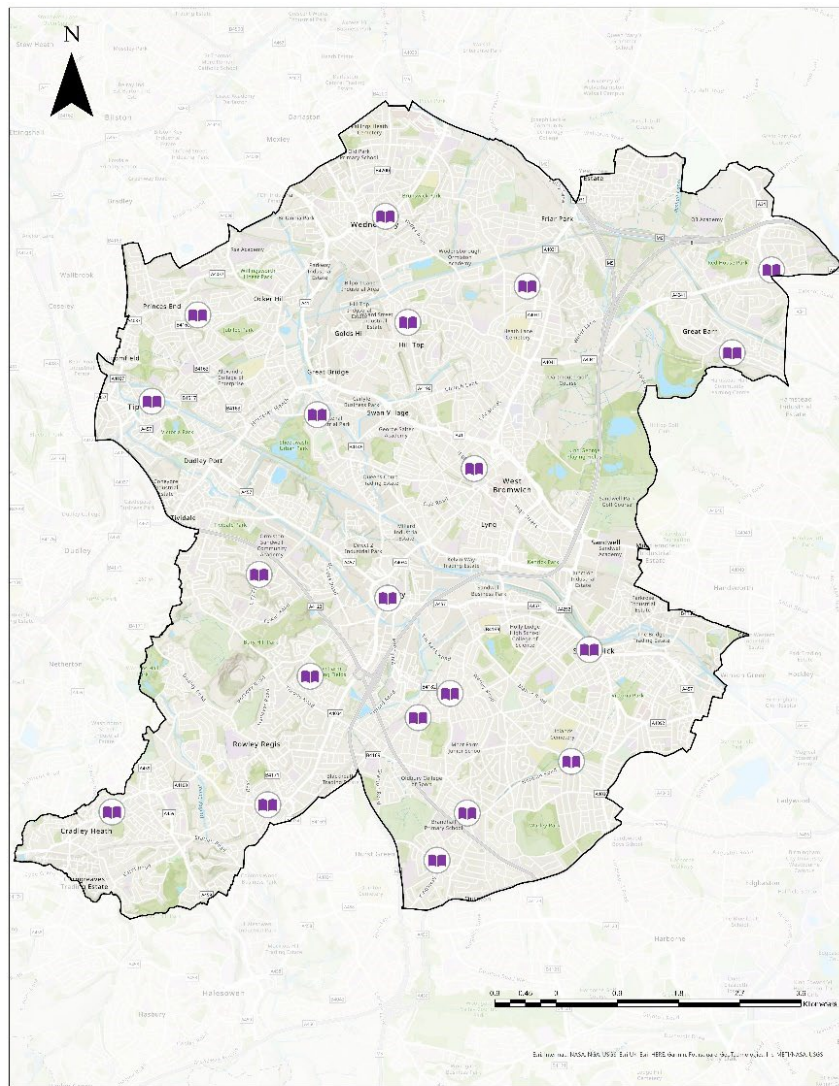
On the whole, the burials and cremations service can be cost-neutral to the Council as any expenditure (including borrowing) is offset by the revenue generated from income from fees and charges. The new Canalside Cemetery cost in the region of £2.2 million.

Mortuary services is contracted to Sandwell General and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust and will be provided in the new MMUH in Autumn 2024. There are freezer capacity issues in the wider region (particularly in Coventry and Warwickshire), resulting in a temporary mortuary being built at Birmingham Airport during the pandemic, although no capacity issues are apparent for Sandwell.

Libraries

There are currently 19 Libraries (Figure 17) within the borough, most of which are open daily, along with an Outreach Library Service providing the Home Library Service and the Mobile Library Service for people unable to access libraries in-person. Some of the libraries host a broader range of cultural activities including live music performance, school holiday activities and local history exhibitions.

In 2022 Sandwell Council welcomed £495,000 of funding from the Government's Cultural Investment Fund (CIF) via the Arts Council England's Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF), aimed at piloting different ways of working for the borough's public libraries.



Legend

Library

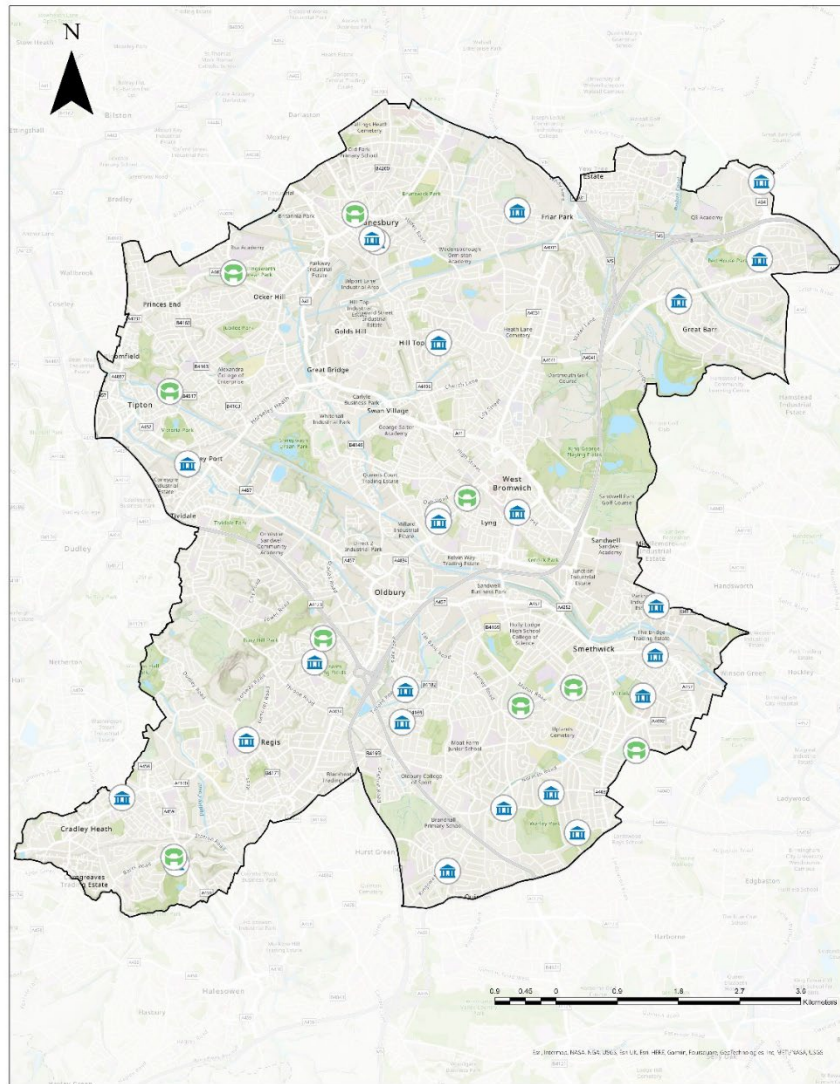
ARUP ARUP Infrastructure Limited 100, Brook Hill Drive Birmingham, B37 7YU, UK Tel: +44 (0)121 717 2000 Fax: +44 (0)121 717 2001 www.arup.com	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 100, Brook Hill Drive Birmingham, B37 7YU, UK Tel: +44 (0)121 717 2000 Fax: +44 (0)121 717 2001 www.arup.com	Scale 1:30,000
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Figure 17: Spatial Distribution of Libraries in Sandwell

Community Centres

There are currently 29 community centre facilities operating within the borough (Figure 18). These are generally spread well across the area. As the names of these centres suggest, there is a mixture of primary uses, with many being associated with charitable organisations. SMBC’s Local Communities Team works in partnership with these bodies to support provision for a wide range of activities and opportunities for local people, including parent and toddler groups, youth and after school clubs, afternoon tea dances, health, fitness and sports clubs, Adult Education and learning opportunities and social clubs.

The importance of maintaining a good supply of space that is available for a range of uses can easily be underestimated but is essential for supporting community wellbeing and cohesion.



Legend

- Community Halls
- Leisure Centres

ARUP
 Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council EIP
 Scale: 1:30,000
 Date: 2023/05/06
 Author: Draft

Figure 18: Spatial Distribution of Community Centres in Sandwell

Table 18: Community Centres

Area	Name of Community Facility
Oldbury	Hurst Road Community Centre
	Langley Lodge Community Centre
	Lion Farm Action Centre
Rowley Regis	Brickhouse Community Centre
	Cradley Heath Community Centre
Smethwick	Bangladeshi Islamic Centre (BIC)
	Brasshouse Lane Community Centre
	Dorothy Parks Centre
	Smethwick Pakistani Muslim Association (SPMA)
	St Alban’s Community Centre

Area	Name of Community Facility
	West Smethwick Enterprise
	Windmill Community Centre
Tipton	Brook Street Community Centre
	Farley Park Community Centre
	Farley Park Lodge Community Centre
	Jubilee Park Community Centre
	St Paul's Community Centre
	Tipton Muslim Community Centre
Wednesbury	Hill Top Voluntary Community Centre
	Friar Park Millennium Centre
	Hill Top Community Centre
West Bromwich	Charlemont Community Centre
	Kenrick Park Community Centre
	Lodge Road Community Centre
	Tanhouse Community Centre
	West Bromwich Community Centre
	Yew Tree Community Centre
	Yew Tree & Tamebridge Community Centre
	Yemeni Community Association in Sandwell

It is noted that in addition to the above range of facilities, there is a number of higher-order recreation-focused facilities in the borough. Sandwell Leisure Trust runs eight leisure centres, including the Sandwell Aquatics Centre, which was used in the 2022 Commonwealth Games, along with West Bromwich Leisure Centre which is run by Places Leisure. Furthermore, in our meeting with Officers to discuss parks and open spaces, we were informed that there is a desire from the Council to enhance and make best use of existing buildings associated with parks and open spaces – something that is reflected in the Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan.

4.5.2 Baseline proposed investment schemes

Burial and Cremation Facilities

At the time of writing SMBC has, during the calendar year, delivered a new cemetery facility within the borough. An additional facility is also being pursued and while this is understood to have an extant planning permission, delivery is subject to securing funding. It is therefore likely that the planning permission will expire before the project has the necessary funding.

Libraries

The recent CIF funding for Sandwell's library service will enable Library+ technology to be piloted at two locations, as a new way for libraries to maintain and extend their opening hours. The community will be able to access library services beyond the current opening hours without staff needing to be present. Library users will need to sign up to an additional agreement and have an induction, then will then be able to enter the library using their card and a personal identification number. The funding will also enable this technology roll-out to ten other libraries within the borough.

The Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF) will enable library services across England to invest in a range of projects to upgrade buildings and technology, so they are better placed to respond to the changing ways people are using them. LIF provides capital expenditure for projects between £50,000 to £499,999.

The criteria for the LIF have been set by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Arts Council England. The grants are administered, awarded, and monitored by Arts Council England. Funding has been provided by DCMS, with the aim of enabling libraries to develop more flexible, commercial spaces, whilst increasing and improving digital access within communities, and connecting libraries to their communities.

Community Centres

While we have not had indication of any significant recent investment in new community centre facilities, it is noted from the 2022 Infrastructure Funding Statement that the neighbourhood allocation of CIL supports a wide range of community facilities across the borough.

4.5.3 Infrastructure implications of future growth

Burial and Cremation Facilities

As a general rule, people want burial and cremated remains sites in close proximity to where they live, meaning that developments close to but outside of the Council's administrative area can have impacts upon site capacity.

Despite SMBC not having a dedicated service area strategy for burials and cremations, this is not considered to be an area requiring significant investment in the short to medium term. Nonetheless, given the land requirements associated with burial space and the land availability issues within the borough, a more evidence-based approach to assessment of future needs would allow this matter to be considered more effectively in the Local Plan preparation process in later years.

Libraries

Whilst engagement with the SMBC Libraries service has not featured as part of this stage of work on the IDP, in light of the recent investment in the service area it is not anticipated that future growth proposals in the area will give rise to any significant library needs.

Community Centres

At present there is no data available to quantify the capacity of existing community facilities and no known plans for the Council to expand facilities linked to future growth. While other providers may choose to provide new facilities on specific sites as a result of community engagement, more commonly, facilities required by established groups are developed or renovated as and when the need arises, subject to the availability of funding.

Overall conclusion for community facilities

The borough is currently served by a range of community facilities. Given the urban nature of the borough and the proposed spatial strategy for growth, focusing around the existing urban centres, there is greater likelihood that new development will be in close proximity to existing communities, therefore not generating significant need for provision of entirely new community facilities. However, investment may still be required in existing facilities to address any existing issues with the quality of provision.

Although there is a good supply of land available for burials at present, over the lifetime of the plan it is inevitable that pressure on burial space will increase, particularly within specific groups whose cultural or religious traditions prefer burial over cremation, such as Catholics, Jews and Muslims. Development of a new long-term strategy for burial space would support better understanding of future needs, land requirements and support delivery of new facilities in the right locations.

4.6 Green and Blue Infrastructure

This section considers all forms of Green Infrastructure (GI) provision within Sandwell. GI is a term used to describe the network of natural spaces and corridors in a given area. GI assets include open spaces such as parks and gardens, allotments, woodlands, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, playing fields, as well as footpaths, cycleways or rivers. These assets perform a variety of different functions beyond their primary functions, offering nature-based solutions, natural water retention measures, ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, and ecosystem-based approaches to climate adaptation and mitigation. As such, it is important that green infrastructure is effectively and comprehensively planned alongside what might traditionally be thought of as ‘grey’ infrastructure, such as roads, utilities and other features within the built environment.

GI is likely to be enjoyed on a frequent basis by residents and visitors, if not to physically use, as a backdrop and visual amenity that frames the location and creates a unique sense of place. This means that diverse and accessible GI is an essential component in effective placemaking.

Blue infrastructure is the term used to describe water infrastructure in urban environments, including canals, ponds, rivers, swales and sometimes sustainable drainage. The use of blue infrastructure is becoming more prevalent when helping cities to adapt to climate change, allowing the natural water cycle to be recreated whilst also providing benefits to communities. Separately to functional uses such as reducing surface water and flooding, blue infrastructure also improves the amenity of an area, creating usable and aesthetic spaces for both local communities and visitors.

The introduction of Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework in 2023⁶¹ brings helpful guidance for local planning authorities and developers to benchmark their aspirations and sets standards, including meeting the requirements of the NPPF to:

- Consider GI in local plans and in new development;
- Supporting better planning for good quality GI; and
- Helping to target the creation or improvement of GI, particularly where existing provision is poorest.

Sandwell is well served by a diverse network of green sites, many of which are of recognised species and habitat value and, in accordance with the overarching principles of GI, serve a multitude of functions for people and the environment. Likewise, the borough contains significant stretches of the wider region’s industrial heritage, in the form of canals. With associated public access that contribute to sustainable travel and a varied mosaic of habitats, these blue infrastructure assets form important GI corridors. The Canal & River Trust highlighted the challenge faced simply in maintaining the structural integrity of the network, before considering the challenges posed by climate change or the effects of new development, therefore requiring an integrated approach across transport, funding, resource commitments at the local level.

Within Sandwell there is generally very low levels of physical activity and participation in sport, resulting in poor health across all ages (see section 4.3). This is reinforced by factors such as the cost-of-living crisis affecting sports/gyms memberships. Subsequently, supporting the development of healthy communities features as one of ten ambitions within the Council’s Corporate Plan⁶², with open spaces being regarded as very important assets for informal play and activity.

From a nature recovery perspective the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust’s strategy⁶³ to 2030 sets three clear objectives that must be acknowledged in the emerging Local Plan and be considered in the development and delivery of new and enhanced infrastructure. These objectives include:

- **Nature is in recovery, with abundant, diverse wildlife across Birmingham and the Black Country:** By 2030 we want to see 30% of Birmingham and the Black Country’s landscape managed

⁶¹ [Green Infrastructure Framework, Natural England \(2023\)](#)

⁶² [Sandwell Corporate Plan 2021-2025](#)

⁶³ [A Wilder Birmingham and Black Country: Our Strategy for 2022-2030](#), Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (202

for the benefit of wildlife. We will work to protect, restore and connect wilder landscapes where wildlife and people can thrive.

- **People are taking action for nature and the climate across Birmingham and the Black Country.** By 2030 we want to see at least 1 in 4 people across Birmingham and the Black Country taking action for nature. We will inspire and engage people to take action for wildlife and enable communities to develop a positive and meaningful connection with their local natural environment.
- **Nature is playing a central and valued role in helping to address local and global problems.** By 2030 we aim for 500 hectares of land to be improved to provide nature-based solutions to the ecological and climate crises. We will help nature to help us by restoring and creating habitats that can draw down carbon from the atmosphere, reduce local flooding and pollution, whilst promoting nature-based solutions to help improve our physical and mental wellbeing.

One of the key challenges affecting all types of GI, identified through stakeholder engagement for both existing provision and in relation future growth, is the difficulty of finding suitable site to accommodate new or alternative provision, primarily as a result of the dense urban nature of the borough. However, delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) associated with new development will also offer new and unprecedented opportunities for GI provision.

4.6.1 Performance of existing infrastructure

Green Space

SMBC's Green Space Strategy broadly follows the seven familiar typologies for open space that reflect standard industry practice⁶⁴ and modified to reflect local circumstances. The typologies are set out in Figure 19, along with details on the quantum of green space in Sandwell.

Examples of these typologies within the borough have been audited to establish the level of accessibility and in order to help understand their position within a hierarchy of spaces that includes local, neighbourhood and borough levels of significance. Alongside the well-established quantitative evaluation of open space by hectares of each typology per 1,000 population, a sample of sites across the borough was scored against a range of quality criteria. This provided a snapshot profile of Sandwell's open space provision, illustrated in Figure 19 below.

Sandwell's green space makes up nearly 24% of the borough's overall land mass, resulting in approximately 3.63 hectares of unrestricted green space per 1000 population⁶⁵. While there are a number of larger-scale parks that have achieved the prestigious Green Flag status, the data indicates the need for investment in local-level infrastructure. Subsequently the strategy's three-year strategy aims to increase average quality scores by 15 points to achieve 'good' average scores by 2030. Achieving this must be aligned with wider holistic ambitions that include improved accessibility, greater use of green spaces for sport and physical activity, reducing health inequalities, improving physical, mental health, and wellbeing, improved security, stakeholder engagement and participation. Open spaces could also be used for BNG and nature-based solutions opportunities.

Engagement with the Council's parks and open space team indicated that the borough is generally considered to be well-catered for in terms of the amount of green space. Qualitative enhancements are the main ambition of the strategy, along with avoiding further loss of existing facilities as it can be difficult to replace them given the nature of the area and land availability.

⁶⁴ Largely based on the withdrawn Planning Policy Guidance [Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17](#)

⁶⁵ Standards for hectares of green space per thousand population for each Ward are being prepared through an ongoing audit process.

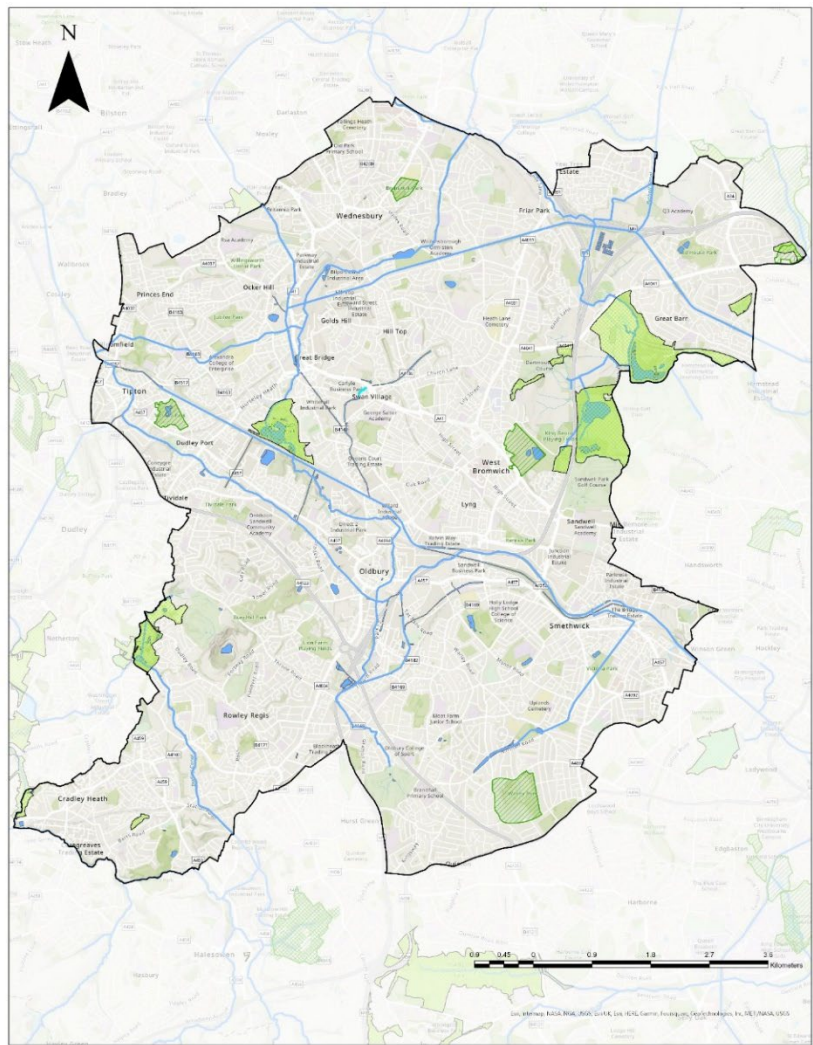


Figure 19: Green and Blue Infrastructure in Sandwell

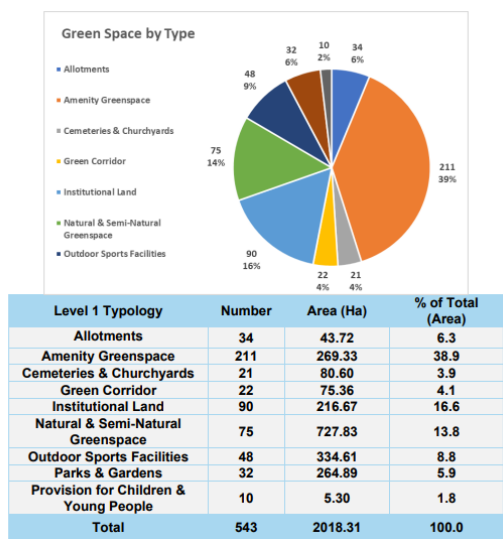


Figure 20: Types of Green Space in Sandwell

Within many of the borough parks there is a variety of outdoor equipment that meets a wide range of needs. This includes over 400 outdoor gym items in use across 40 open spaces; and skate, scooter and BMX provision of varying quality in six locations. Provision of outdoor gyms are an important asset as they are particularly popular amongst females within the South-Asian communities who may not ordinarily use indoor gym facilities.

Play Pitches

The draft Sandwell Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS)⁶⁶ identifies and outlines supply and demand of sports provision and provides a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2039. The strategy identifies potential partners and possible sources of external funding which can assist its delivery through a partnership approach.

Existing play pitches and ancillary facilities in Sandwell (Table 19) are used mostly for local level sport. Some of these are good quality, however managing the frequency of use and the number of games is one of the key challenges affecting the Council’s ability to maintain pitch standards. In comparison to other Black Country boroughs, Sandwell has invested a fair amount into sports pitches in recent years (in terms of maintenance, rather than capital infrastructure) and this is reflected in pitches generally being in adequate condition, and feedback from users is good. Nonetheless, compared to private pitches that benefit from higher levels of investment, when assessed against established quality criteria, pitches are identified as standard/poor quality.

Other issues for existing and future provision identified through engagement with SMBC officers and Sports England include:

- A trend towards fewer adults using sports pitches, but with increased patronage by younger age groups;
- User groups are not constrained to local authority boundaries requiring a strategic/holistic approach;
- Some sports are neglected in terms of provision: Rugby Union only has a couple of sites in Sandwell, while Hockey has no facilities in the borough. The hockey club therefore play outside of the borough in Walsall or further afield;
- Although the Draft PPOSS has found pockets of capacity, this may fluctuate with supply and demand from one season to the next and is susceptible to change if sites are not maintained (e.g. if council budgets were cut); and
- Sandwell is heavily reliant on the education sector to provide sports facilities e.g. the sports hall stock is mainly school-based.

Table 19: Play Pitch and Outdoor Sport Provision in Sandwell (Source: Draft Sandwell Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy 2022)

Activity	Current provision	Current issues	Future issues
Football	171no. grass football pitches across 70 sites 139no. pitches across 48 sites are available, at some level, for community use.	33no. pitches across 15 sites are overplayed by a combined total of 48 match equivalent sessions per week Age group shortfalls: adult, youth 11v11, youth 9v9 and mini 7v7 match equivalent sessions; minimal capacity on mini 5v5 pitches	Future demand, shortfalls are predicted to worsen on adult and youth 11v11 pitches
Rugby Union	7no. sites within Sandwell there are seven sites containing the same number of pitches, all of which are senior (no dedicated junior or mini pitches are provided).	Spare capacity of rugby union pitches amounting to one match equivalent session; A shortfall identified in the Wednesbury Analysis Area,	No future growth is predicted via population growth, although this is impacted upon by no junior or mini teams currently

⁶⁶ Sandwell Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan, (Draft, October 2022)

Activity	Current provision	Current issues	Future issues
	4no. of the pitches are available for community use	with the pitch at Wednesbury Rugby Club overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions 2no. pitches display potential spare capacity (Warley Rugby Club and St John's Recreation Ground).	being fielded (despite demand existing).
Rugby League	0no. Rugby League pitches in Sandwell; nearest provision is provided in Bromsgrove.	No demand for Rugby League has been identified in Sandwell	N/A
Cricket	6no. grass cricket pitches in Sandwell, with all six available for community use. Non-Turf Pitches accompanying grass wickets at one site and 15 standalone Non-Turf Pitches at 14 sites	Zero capacity on grass wickets on Saturdays; 2no. pitches with capacity on Sundays 1no. pitch with midweek capacity for junior cricket. 3no. sites are overplayed; West Bromwich Dartmouth Cricket Club, Wednesbury Sports Union and Smethwick Cricket Club	Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site cricket provision, or if sufficient demand cannot be attracted, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality. Ensure that any developments nearby to existing cricket sites do not prejudice the use of the provision (e.g. through ball-strike issues).
Hockey	2no. full size hockey suitable AGPs in Sandwell; both at schools but available for community use (albeit 1no. is without floodlighting). 7no. smaller sized pitches provided, with 5no. available to the community and 4no. serviced by floodlights.	Requirement for 2no. hockey suitable AGPs to cater for existing demand and demand that is being exported; The pitch at Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy is not currently serving any meaningful purpose, with quality improvements required and hockey access needing to be enabled. If quality improvements are not possible, or if 3G conversion is pursued, an additional full size hockey suitable pitch is required	If imported demand from Dudley returns to the Borough, there may only be a requirement for one pitch within Sandwell, this should not be the pitch at Ormiston Forge Academy due to lack of floodlighting
Artificial grass pitches	6no. full size outdoor 3G pitches in Sandwell	No current Council-owned artificial pitch provision – only via education providers or leisure operators	Priority should be given to creation of new 3G pitches to meet the identified shortfalls for football training demand; this will also help meet grass pitch shortfalls and overcome quality issues Sustain the current pitch stock to ensure that the existing shortfalls are not exacerbated
Tennis	57no. tennis courts in Sandwell across 18 sites; 35no. courts categorised as being available for community use at 12 sites 28no. courts are overmarked by other sports provision, which means that	Majority of courts are operated by schools and only 10 are floodlit	Clubs have scope for increased membership LTA has identified Britannia Park, Brunswick Park, and Redhouse Park as key sites across Sandwell for the development of informal tennis. In order to facilitate this demand, it is

Activity	Current provision	Current issues	Future issues
	<p>there are a comparatively high number of standalone courts</p> <p>Varying quality standards</p>		likely that floodlights would have to be provided, in addition to court improvements
Netball	<p>62no. netball courts identified in Sandwell across 24 sites, with 27 courts at eight sites available for community use.</p> <p>Sandwell is relatively well catered for, with a large number of community available netball courts provided and with a good number of these being dedicated to netball.</p>	Should the Dudley Netball League relocate outside of Sandwell, it is imperative that the Sandwell-based demand remains provided for and that the courts remain sustainable.	<p>Focus should be placed on protecting and sustaining the courts at George Salter Academy and Phoenix Collegiate for continued use by the Dudley Netball League and the Walsall Netball League.</p> <p>For netball demand away from the club and league environment, there is a need to ensure programmes provided by England Netball have suitable provision from which to be ran from and that curricular and extra-curricular needs are being met.</p>
Bowling	18no. crown green bowls greens in Sandwell provided across 17 sites.	<p>Langley BC is operating above the recommended capacity threshold, suggesting that overall supply is sufficient to meet demand.</p> <p>Dartmouth Central BC (with 19 members) is operating below the threshold of the level of membership required to ensure that its green is sustainable</p>	
Cycling	N/A	High demand for cycling is identified within Sandwell LCWIP contributing to addressing local connectivity issues	Protecting and sustaining what is provided at Sandwell Valley Country Park should be seen as particularly key, whilst continued use of Hadley Stadium should be ensured. Implementation of initiatives promoted by British Cycling should also be explored to encourage more people to get into cycling
Athletics	<p>4no. purpose-built athletics tracks in Sandwell, at Hadley Stadium, Phoenix Collegiate, Sandwell Academy and Tipton Sports Academy, with three 400-metre tracks provided.</p> <p>There is also a small 40-metre straight athletics track provided at The Meadows School.</p> <p>Sandwell is very well provided for in relation to athletics</p>	Priority should be placed on protecting the track Tipton Sports Academy and ensuring that is of a sufficient quality to accommodate the levels of demand received	N/A
Water Sports (outdoor)	Through Swan Pool, Sandwell is relatively well provided for	N/A	The venue should be protected for continued use and further opportunities could be explored for extending the activities that are offered

Activity	Current provision	Current issues	Future issues
Golf	5no. golf facilities in Sandwell comprising a mix of 18-hole and 9-hole courses, well-equipped driving range, ensures supply is well placed to meet demand	N/A	N/A
Other grass pitches	No dedicated provision for American Football (1no. overmarked football pitch), Gaelic Football, Baseball or Softball. Isolated provision in nearby authority areas.	Resolution is required to Sandwell Steelers (American Football) existing issues that are derived from it currently needing to use multiple venues	N/A

The PPOSS points to the importance of protecting facilities, improving quality, securing tenure, securing community use at school sites, securing developer contributions.

Allotments

Across Sandwell there are 34 allotment sites, with 1,445 plots⁶⁷. Sites range from very small scale, such as three plots at Meadow Road in Oldbury, through to large sites such as Londonderry (174) at Manor Road in Smethwick. There is high demand for allotment plots with over 500 people currently on the waiting list.

Allotment information on the Council's website indicates that there are some sites with toilet facilities and others with raised beds and improved roads/paths for less able gardeners. Some sites have been set up as Community Agriculture Projects and community allotment pilot projects, and are demonstrating that purpose built and well-run allotment facilities for community food production and shared use, rather than individual plots, can be a successful model.

The Green Space Strategy Implementation and Business plan seeks to prioritise further development of new allotment sites and plots for use as community allotments and community food production, with appropriate facilities and support to develop this further.

4.6.2 Baseline proposed investment schemes

Green Space

The Green Space Strategy Implementation and Business Plan outlines the Council's investment commitments over the next three years, largely based around maintenance and refurbishment works. The plan indicates that works will be funded through a combination of income generation, internal funding (including S106 monies), external grants (such as Towns Fund contributions towards Britannia Park and Black Patch Park Levelling Up Fund Project) and fundraising. The programme of planned works includes the following categories:

- BMX tracks;
- Skateparks;
- Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs);
- Play areas; and
- Parks and Gardens.

Priorities are set out in detail in an annually updated Green Spaces Strategy Programme of Works⁶⁸. To monitor the effects of these interventions an updated Green Spaces Audit is scheduled for 2025.

⁶⁷ According to the Green Space Strategy Implementation and Business Plan

⁶⁸ [Green Spaces Programme of Works 2022/2023](#)

With regard to wider GI projects, the Canal & River Trust focuses its investment primarily in maintenance of existing assets, although has indicated that it is committed to working with other stakeholders to help deliver strategic projects that go beyond the borough boundaries, such as the Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework⁶⁹.

Play Pitches

SMBC has indicated that alongside its own infrastructure investment commitments the borough has benefitted from significant contributions from external agencies such as the Football Foundation, Sport England and as a result of the 2022 Commonwealth Games – the latter being particularly notable in raising Sandwell’s profile for sport, with the borough hosting swimming and diving at the Aquatics Centre.

Much of the Council’s planned investment in play pitches and outdoor sports facilities is incorporated within the programme of works for the Green Spaces Strategy, since many of borough’s parks accommodate this infrastructure. This includes refurbishment of existing Multi-Use Games Areas (widely known as MUGAs) with Football Foundation ‘Play Zones’⁷⁰. The Play Zones programme is the Football Foundation’s new capital investment programme, drawing on investment from the Premier League, the FA and the Government through Sport England. The Play Zones Programme aims to engage with local communities across the country to create outstanding sports and activity spaces in the areas of greatest need, in order to tackle inequalities in participation. Play Zones offer outdoor mini pitches designed for football and other sports and activities that will allowing priority groups to be more active.

Another key project over the short to medium term include the development of the Urban Bike Track at Sandwell Valley Country Park. Funded by Sport England, Sandwell Council, and Birmingham City Council, the Urban Bike Track will offer enhanced facilities for families, children and young people, as well as those with different biking abilities.

Allotments

The starting point for the Council investment in allotments is filling a previously vacant post of Community Development and Allotment Assistant. Improving the resource commitment to this service area will be key to unlocking further potential exhibited in pilot projects and through community engagement. The Green Space Strategy outlines priorities for development of new allotment sites and plots for use as community allotments and community food production.

4.6.3 Infrastructure implications of future growth

Green Space

Acknowledging the challenges associated with delivering new green space within constrained urban environments, the emerging Local Plan must prioritise protection of existing GI assets and seek qualitative enhancement opportunities associated with new development that occurs in close proximity. To some extent, BNG will play a role in this, alongside sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS). Where new development is able to provide new green space or delivering on-site BNG, this must take opportunities to enhance connectivity for people and wildlife. There is a high level of synergy between the aspirations of the Green Spaces Strategy and efforts to reduce car dependency and increase active travel. As such, policy and development schemes should display cognisance of opportunities and make connections that support the development of healthy and active communities.

Play Pitches

The new PPOSS factors in population increases using Sport England’s Playing Pitch Calculator up to 2039, accounting for potential housing growth scenarios, including committed developments. The new strategy

⁶⁹ [Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework](#)

⁷⁰ [Football Foundation Play Zones Programme](#)

Overall conclusion for green and blue infrastructure

Despite the prevailing urban density of the Sandwell area, it is well-catered for in terms of green and blue infrastructure. While the West Midlands is renowned for its historic canal network, creating strong corridors and linear features spanning the Black Country and neighbouring areas, there is a diverse, high quality, well-maintained and well-used network of open spaces that serve the community. The Council has a clear programme of activity to help ensure that these assets are maintained and enhanced. However, these spaces are also at a premium, therefore must be afforded appropriate levels of protection by emerging planning policy so as to avoid further loss, whilst also, seeking to secure qualitative enhancements to ensure that existing spaces are truly multifunctional green infrastructure assets, delivering benefits for people and the environment.

Policies oriented around BNG and provision of SuDS will be key to facilitating green and blue infrastructure enhancement.

Demand for provision for all sports is anticipated to grow in line with the population over the lifetime of the plan, while there are existing identified deficits for artificial pitches and youth/adult football pitches.

accounts for offsite provision and developer contributions. Incorporating the recommendations of this strategy into future policy will therefore ensure that identified future needs are adequately addressed.

There is, however, some concern about a number of developments in the pipeline which will result in the loss of existing football pitches. Whilst it is understood that the planning permission makes provision to support compensation for this loss, the ability to address this is hindered in the short term by the limited availability of suitable sites. Subsequently, this places a strong emphasis on the need for emerging planning policy to safeguard existing pitch provision.

Allotments

In recognition of the high level of demand for allotments within the borough, evidenced by waiting list numbers, and the likelihood of this increasing with population growth arising from new development, there may be need to consider opportunities to include allotments or community gardens within sites where green space provision is feasible. Alternatively, the Council may wish to consider an approach adopted by other local authorities and subdivide existing, larger allotment plots in order to provide more opportunities tenancy within existing provision.

4.7 Utilities and Digital

4.7.1 Performance of existing infrastructure

This section considers main utility services including electricity, gas, water, and heat within Sandwell. The providers of these utility services are listed in Table 20. It should be noted that the analysis presented in this section is based on desktop studies of data and information available in the public domain. Some comments have been raised in accordance with initial engagement with the relevant utility companies⁷¹.

Table 20: Utility Providers Operating in Sandwell

Utility Service	Provider
Electricity (Distribution Network Operator)	National Grid Electricity Distribution
Gas (Gas Network Operator)	Cadent Gas
Water Supply	South Staffs Water
Wastewater / Sewerage	Severn Trent Water

Electricity Distribution Network

National Grid Electricity Distribution (National Grid) is responsible for electricity distribution across the borough, within a wider geography covering the Midlands, Southwest and Wales. Within the borough there is one, 132 KV to 11 KV bulk supply point together with a 11 KV switch house at Bustleholme in the Northeast. Within the borough, primary substations are located at Ocker Hill, Tividale, Oldbury and Birchfield Lane, Smethwick and Black Lake. There are various other primaries located in the surrounding districts, for example Chad Valley near Bearwood, and at Coseley.

Through our discussions with National Grid, it is understood that spare capacity within all parts of the Sandwell's electricity supply network is very limited. In recent years there has been a significant uptake of electric vehicle charging which has put a strain on the network. It appears that most circuits that can be reinforced have been already. There are also spatial challenges facing any need for substation expansions, for example, at Smethwick there is no space for new circuit breakers, which would push new connections towards Black Lake primary.

Small generation leads to certain challenges: the network was not designed for two-way transmission and much equipment will not cope with this additional capacity. Local generation causes a voltage rise, which results in restrictions that need to be assessed by National Grid. A large installation, e.g., greater than 100 KW would require a G99 application to National Grid Transmission. It is preferable to National Grid for household batteries are located on the direct current side of inverters. For developments with an ICP, National Grid do not receive any generated power, instead the demand from their side is reduced.

In general, the primary substations are not saturated yet, but the main difficulties relate to getting power to where it is needed. Certain areas in Sandwell pose challenges in terms of accessibility, with major roads, bridges, canals, and Metro lines obstructing easy access; such areas can become isolated due to these obstacles.

Renewable Energy

SMBC are ambitious about opportunities for strategic growth when considering installing renewable energy infrastructure across the borough, responding to the national drive towards a net zero carbon future, including changes in requirements which SMBC will have to plan for such as changing EPC requirements for social housing. However, they face many general challenges. Sandwell does not currently have a district heat network, although the Council is in the early stages of commercialisation and looking to move forward with an opportunity around West Bromwich on a Joint Venture basis. The Council's recent projects have

⁷¹ We met with stakeholders prior to the Government's announcement which includes changes to previous commitments - see [PM recommits UK to Net Zero by 2050 and pledges a "fairer" path to achieving target to ease the financial burden on British families - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). At this stage, it is not expected to change the overall analysis and views offered by stakeholders, and this will be reconfirmed through the Part 2 report.

involved retrofitting existing properties and installing heat pumps into Sandwell Council House. These projects and quotes, when looking to increase capacity for the installation of heat pumps in schools, has demonstrated a number of restrictions in Sandwell in terms of cost and viability, an issue that has prevented the borough from pursuing past project opportunities in this space.

During engagement with SMBC's Renewable Energy team, it was noted that this space is a complex one to navigate, specifically due to the lack of available data to support projects such as National Grid network capacity or constraints in certain areas. Due to different funding and costing routes, National Grid's role in upgrading their network and future planning can vary and information on available electrical capacity is not always available.

The Council is currently working with the WMCA on Local Area Energy Planning, looking at ways in which energy infrastructure can be better utilised and developed to accommodate future needs and demands.

Gas Distribution Network

Cadent provide gas to the borough, and they own and operate both a Transmission and a Distribution network. Cadent operate and maintain the largest distribution network in the UK and provide gas to properties across northwest England, the West Midlands, the East Midlands, the East of England and North London.

Discussions with Cadent indicated that there are generally no capacity issues with the network in the borough, and that growth can usually be accommodated. They also noted that generally the network operates well; however, there are pinch points within the network and without specific details on development proposals and locations at this time, they are unable to comment further. Cadent also noted that the capacity and performance of their networks are currently under review, and they aim to rectify any faults outside of the winter period, when demand on the network is greater.

Cadent is currently undertaking a gas main replacement programme, with a requirement to replace all ductile or cast-iron pipes to within 30m of the receiving property by 2032.

It is currently proposed that any new properties constructed after 2035 will not require a gas connection. This will impact on gas provision within the borough, and across the Cadent network, however Cadent stated during engagement that specific information will be required on any proposed development, and its location, to allow them to assess the impact further.

Although Cadent are currently trialling alternative energy provision sources, such as hydrogen, in other parts of the country, it was noted that they currently have no such plans for similar trials in Sandwell.

Water and Sewerage

South Staffs Water (SSW) is the potable water supplier for the borough. They operate in an area covering north and west of Birmingham, up to Burton Upon Trent and Uttoxeter. Historically Sandwell was an industrial area which had high demand, and therefore large trunk mains serve the area. There is currently ample spare capacity.

Sewerage within the borough is managed by Severn Trent Water (STW). This includes foul and surface water as well as combined provision. STW is the sewerage undertaker for a wide area covering the Midlands and parts of Wales.

There are two key wastewater treatment works serving the Borough: Ray Hall and Minworth. Minworth, based in Birmingham, is STW's largest wastewater treatment works, serving an equivalent population of around 1.7 million across Birmingham and the Black Country. Based within Sandwell, the Ray Hall catchment is served by the upstream end of the Black Country Trunk Sewer (BCTS) which drains through the catchment to Minworth and serves West Bromwich, Wednesbury, and Tipton, with excess flows continuing to Minworth. Ray Hall extracts flow from the BCTS at a constant rate via a screw pumping station with the remaining flow heading to Minworth.

Roundhill treatment works covers a small area in the south-west of Sandwell, and Lower Gornal treatment works serves a very small part of the Borough.

Regarding sewer flooding, STW has five areas of identified risk currently under investigation:

- Belmont Clost and Doe Bank Road in Tipton;
- New Pool Road in Cradley Heath;
- Throne Road in Rowley Regis; and
- Elm Terrace in Tividale.

Flood Management

Engagement with stakeholders on issues surrounding flood management has up to this stage been very limited. While planning for new development has clear guideline with regard to flood risk, i.e., following a sequential test for site selection and requiring an exception test where development is proposed in an area at risk of flooding, comments from the Council’s highways maintenance manager suggest that localised flood events most commonly occur as a result of surface water runoff. In an urban environment this typically occurs as a result of infrastructure failure elsewhere within the network, resulting in downstream effects. As such, maintenance of gullies and drains is key to minimising these occurrences.

Areas at risk of fluvial flooding within the borough are relatively constrained, as shown in Figure 21. It is expected that further investigation of flooding and surface water drainage issues will come with consultation on the first draft of the Local Plan and in conjunction with further detail emerging on preferred sites and locations for development. Accordingly, this will be captured in the next phase of IDP work.

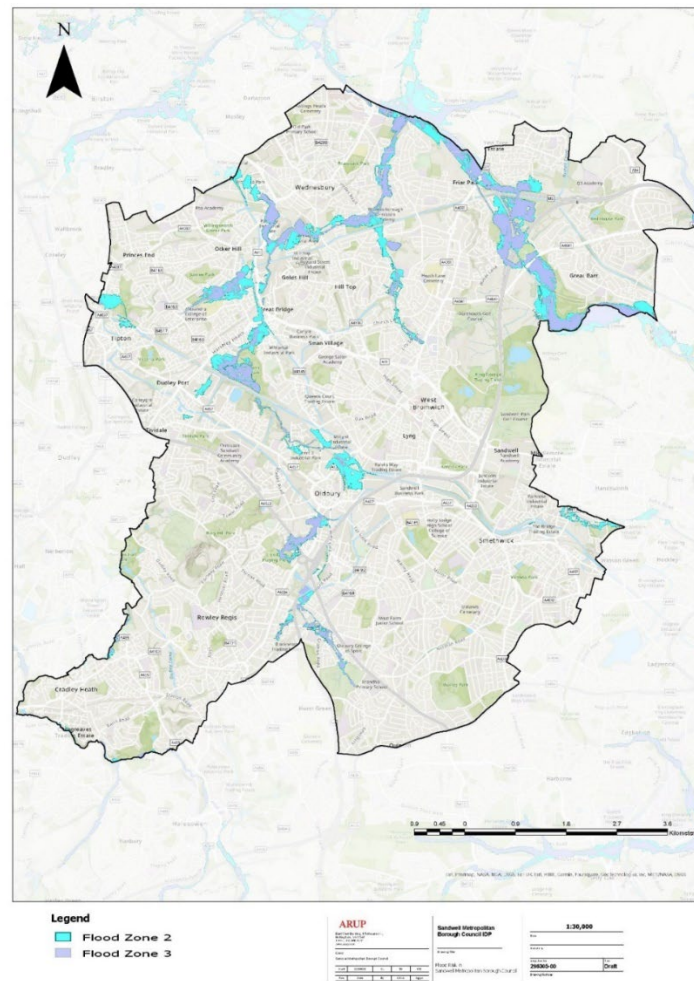


Figure 21: Flood Zones 2 and 3 (fluvial flooding) in Sandwell

Waste Management

SMBC is a waste collection and disposal authority. In terms of service provision the Council is currently halfway through a 25-year contract with Serco (2010 to 2035) who manage waste collection and disposal. It is considered that this arrangement is working reasonably effectively from an infrastructure perspective. In addition to the Councils waste management facilities, there are a number of commercially operated facilities throughout the borough (as shown on Figure 22).

Sandwell is one of the few authorities that maintain weekly collections of recycling and refuse. Waste collection data from the last year present the following headline figures:

- **General Waste** – 68,764 tonnes from kerbside collections; approximately 97% of this was sent to Energy from Waste plants, with the rest landfilled.
- **Recycling (co-mingled)** – 24,544 tonnes from kerbside collections.
- **Green waste** – via a chargeable subscription service green wheeled bin (240 litre), collected fortnightly. This service currently has around 40,000 subscribers.
- **Food waste** – 343 tonnes collected weekly from a caddy via a free subscription service.

It is considered that the current weekly collection arrangements contribute to Sandwell having a lower-than-average rate of recycling (around 32%). Evidence shows that when people have capacity in their main waste bin their tendency is to just put everything in, whereas limiting capacity forces households to recycle. Realistically, the Council is aiming to achieve upwards of 50%, with the best authorities achieving in the region of 60% plus. However, the key to achieving this however is greater source separation, which in itself creates additional storage challenges for individual households.

In Sandwell there is only one Household Recycling Centre located on Shidas Lane in Oldbury. Over the course of the last year this facility processed approximately 7,143 tonnes, with 5,335 tonnes recycled and 555 tonnes composted.

Waste management locations include the waste transfer station at Eagle Lane, Danks Way, Tipton, DY4 7BT and at Shidas Lane, Oldbury B69 2BP.

Between 50,000 and 60,000 tonnes of refuse is sent to Project W2R (Waste to Resources) Residual Waste Treatment Facility run by Veolia in Cannock. Sandwell MBC is a partner in that development, therefore has access to disposal at substantially lower than market rates. That agreement runs until 2035. The new Enfinium Kelvin energy from waste facility in West Bromwich is also under construction. When operational, it will divert 395,000 tonnes of non-recyclable household and business waste from landfill or export overseas, generating 44MW (gross) of renewable baseload energy per annum, equivalent to the needs of more than 95,000 UK homes (noting there is no contract currently in place with Sandwell Council to use this facility).

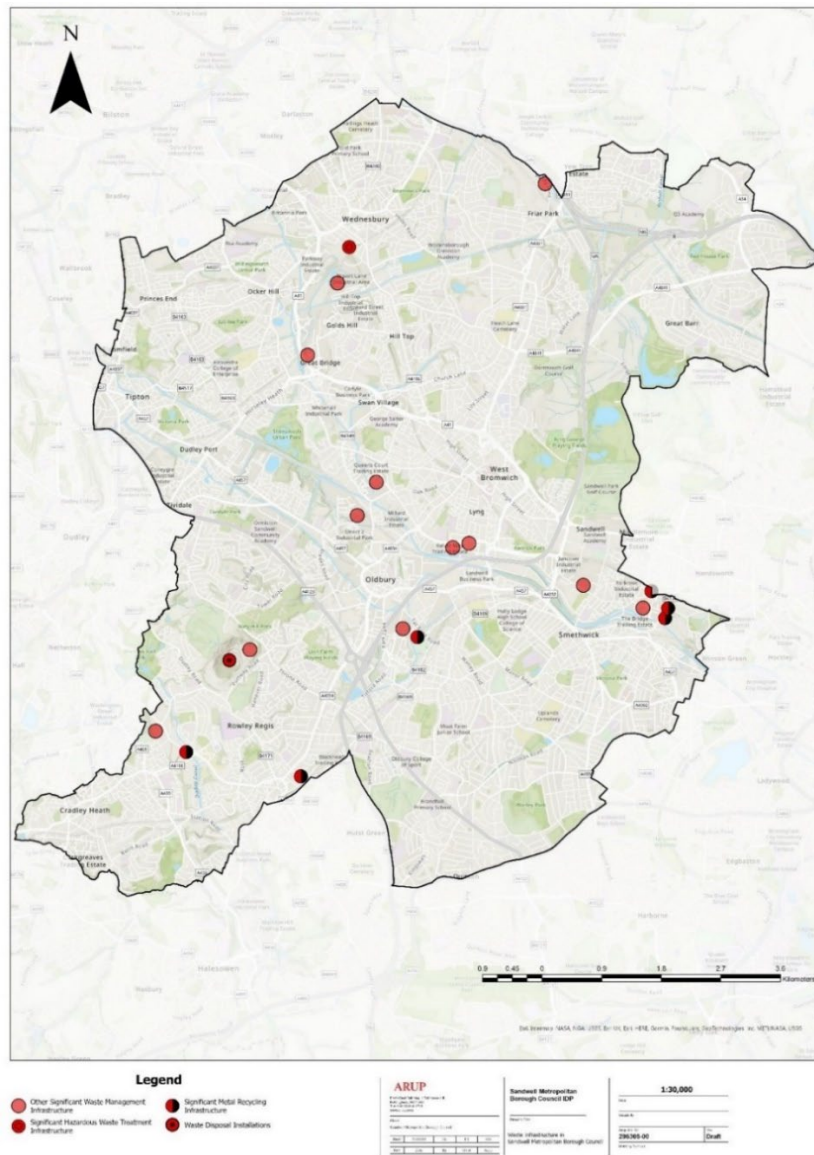
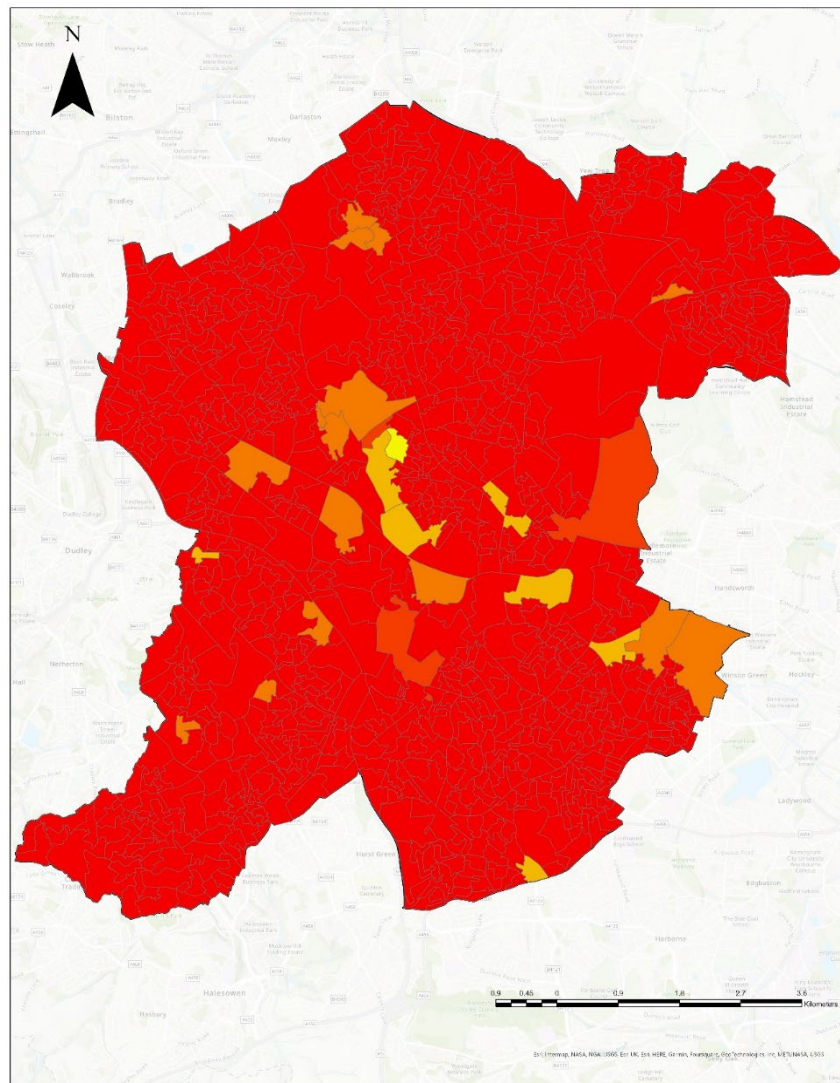


Figure 22: Spatial Distribution of Waste Management and Recycling Facilities in Sandwell

Digital Infrastructure

Digital connectivity is increasingly seen as a basic infrastructure requirement alongside provision of other utilities. Nationally there is an ongoing programme of replacing old copper connections with fibre. The biggest challenge in this space (not necessarily affecting Sandwell) is reaching rural areas, but it is acknowledged that there are also problems reaching some urban areas due to difficulties around securing landowner agreement and other utilities presenting physical obstacles. While many local authorities have taken a lead role in championing and supporting delivery of fibre installations, many are stretched in terms of finances and resources. As such, beyond what the market brings forward itself, funding and strategy are obstacles to further fibre delivery.



Legend

% of area with access to Superfast Broadband

- 35.9 - 50.0
- 50.0 - 83.5
- 83.5 - 90.0
- 90.0 - 94.0

ARUP		Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council		1:30,000	
Project Name: Access to Superfast Broadband in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council		Access to Superfast Broadband in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council		216,905.00	
Scale: 1:30,000		Scale: 1:30,000		Scale: 1:30,000	
Date: 2023		Date: 2023		Date: 2023	
Author: [Name]		Author: [Name]		Author: [Name]	
Reviewer: [Name]		Reviewer: [Name]		Reviewer: [Name]	
Status: Draft		Status: Draft		Status: Draft	

Figure 23: Broadband Connectivity in Sandwell

The Government has set a target for 85% of the UK population to be served by ‘gigabit’ internet connectivity by 2025 – a connection of 1,000 megabits per second. Current coverage within Sandwell is shown in Figure 23. The Government publishes quarterly updates⁷² on progress of this scheme, with September 2023 figures showing a current rate of 77% UK-wide, 75% for England and 86% for the West Midlands. Based on current priorities within Project Gigabit and given the urban nature of Sandwell, there is a strong likelihood that further fibre rollout will be a relatively low priority intervention, especially since the area is seeing accelerated delivery of 5G wireless connectivity.

The headline ambition of the UK’s Wireless Infrastructure Strategy⁷³ (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology) to deliver nationwide coverage of standalone 5G to all populated areas by 2030. To achieve this there is committed investment of £40 million to create 5G Innovation Regions across the UK.

⁷² [Project Gigabit quarterly progress reports](#)

⁷³ [UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy](#)

It is widely expected that wireless connectivity and fibre-based internet provision will co-exist for the foreseeable future, although mobile data usage is growing exponentially year on year. West Midlands 5G (WM5G) has produced a 5G Connected Map case study⁷⁴, mapping out the region's local authority assets that are suitable for mobile network digital infrastructure. Together with existing coverage plans from mobile network operators, WM5G has created a powerful tool to accelerate the deployment of 5G across the region and help close existing 4G coverage gaps.

Engagement with WM5G highlighted key issues for existing infrastructure in Sandwell as including issues around the number of connections provided in new developments. The law states that access to at least one network must be provided in new developments, although this is not always resilient or offer a suitable range of choice for consumers (i.e., in terms of price). More competition is needed within the market amongst providers is required.

5G has a smaller coverage area from mobile masts than previous generations of mobile service. The implications of this are that new development will increasingly need to be served by on-site mobile connectivity infrastructure, rather than being able to rely upon infrastructure located at a distance.

4.7.2 Baseline proposed investment schemes

Electricity Distribution Network

National Grid do not currently have any planned strategic upgrades in this area, and it is a difficult location in which to achieve a unit cost. The projects currently in the pipeline are fuelled by customer demand, and the work is conducted in accordance with capacity constraints as they arise.

New development sites will need to be assessed individually to determine the necessary accommodations based on the available options in the area.

National Grid's 50-year network planning process includes consideration the UK's net zero plans, including provision of heat pumps and more electric vehicles.

Renewable Energy

During engagement, SMBC's Renewable Energy team highlighted the following emerging strategic projects underway or identified as opportunities within the borough.

Sandwell Heat Network, West Bromwich (with potential to extend to Smethwick)

Having completed Detail Project Development and an Outline Business Case, this project is in the early stages of commercialisation. Following completion of a soft market testing exercise, the Council will consider options for partner involvement early, or later during commercialisation. The primary heat consumer would be NHS as one of the main buildings to be connected would be Sandwell General Hospital in West Bromwich. Others include 12 council high rise apartment blocks, the Town Hall in West Bromwich, and other new development sites which come forward on route.

While the main focus of the network is around West Bromwich, there may be potential to extend to the Grove Lane area of Smethwick in order to accommodate proposed new housing development (circa 750 homes) and the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital.

Enfinium Kelvin, West Bromwich

Enfinium Kelvin is a privately owned energy from waste plant currently under construction in West Bromwich, which will burn non-recyclable household waste, using residual waste to generate 44MW (gross) of renewable baseload energy per annum, to make electricity.

⁷⁴ [WM5G: The Connected Map case study](#)

Waste heat from this plant, along with heat diverted from power generation, will feed the heat network. The Council understands that Enfinium are looking to utilise the site for other methods of energy generation such as generating hydrogen and EV charging, although these are only possible opportunities at this stage.

Decarbonisation of homes

SMBC is currently pursuing retrofit schemes across various locations within the borough, taking a fabric first and targeted approach to homes which meet certain criteria such as low EPC rating, low income. This could see improvements such as installing insulation, high-efficiency storage heaters, solar PV, etc. For the private sector, schemes include LAD3, HUG2⁷⁵ and ECO4 LA Flex⁷⁶.

SMBC is also due to commence a Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund supported scheme for a total of 625 social housing properties across Wednesbury, Oldbury and Rowley Regis, to retrofit homes with Energy Performance Certificates rated D or below.

Pilot and exemplar schemes

The Council have recently installed a district heating system at a block of flats and surrounding low-rise blocks, using air-source heat pumps, in Oldbury. It is hoped this pilot scheme can set the precedent for other similar projects. There are currently no heat pumps installed in Sandwell's council homes, although plans are in place to introduce these into new-build Council Homes very soon.

Additionally, it is envisioned that the Brandhall Village, a former golf course site proposed for 190 new homes, could be an exemplar of sustainable development. SMBC suggested possible opportunities for the site could include a battery storage facility/localised heat network and/or wind turbines to supply electricity, however at this early stage these details are not yet determined.

Gas Distribution Network

Cadent do not currently have any planned strategic upgrades in the area. Given the proposed move away from gas provision and the requirement not to provide a gas connection to new houses from 2035, it is not envisaged that the gas network will provide a constraint to future development.

Water and Sewerage

Whilst there are no current supply problems within the borough, SSW acknowledges that water consumption must decrease nationally. There is a need for all locations to reduce consumption alleviate water stressed areas.

STW currently has 118 combined sewer overflows in Sandwell that are under review as part of the WINEP programme in AMP7, ending in 2025. It will be too late for future development to be taken into account for this programme, so it will be important for schemes to use sustainable drainage (SuDS) and minimise surface water discharge to combined sewers as much as possible.

There is a possibility that Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010⁷⁷ may be enacted, which will affect how surface water is managed for developments.

Flood Management

It has unfortunately not been possible to engage with the Environment Agency or Staffordshire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority, however engagement with SMBC highlighted a SMBC Flood Alleviation Scheme, Thimblemill Brook, Smethwick, is a major potential scheme to better protect 255 homes by a series of interventions in or adjacent the Thimblemill Brook in the Warley area. This scheme was

⁷⁵ Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 (LAD3) and Housing Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) are investment schemes, which are funded by the Sustainable Warmth Competition, to help local authorities upgrade the energy inefficiency of low-income households in England.

⁷⁶ Under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) Scheme Phase 4, Local Authority (LA) FLEX allows local authorities to declare certain households in fuel poverty eligible for financial help to become more energy efficient.

⁷⁷ [Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#)

programmed in to be completed and delivered by 2021, however no further information is known at this stage. No other flood investment schemes have been explored at this stage, however engagement with relevant flood authorities will be prioritised during Phase 2 of the IDP.

Waste Management

Household waste management is closely monitored by local authorities, and commercial facilities and investment is very responsive to demand changes driven by the market and economic cycles. Emerging challenges in the waste sector are focused around increasing demand for source separation of recycling. As above, this is as much to do with how the waste market is changing as legislative drivers such as the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy (2018)⁷⁸.

Digital Infrastructure

It is expected that the market will drive delivery of new infrastructure over the coming years, with other interventions filling gaps to help overcome challenges that the market does not/will not address on its own.

4.7.3 Infrastructure implications of future growth

Electricity Distribution Network

One of the key challenges encountered in large infrastructure projects involves the examination of costs associated with civil works. This includes assessing the necessity for extending switch rooms, as well as considering the potentially lengthy lead time of 18-24 months required for equipment procurement and cable installation. Switch room extension can take four to five years to complete.

This is not always considered sufficiently early on as part of housing development, leading to challenges later in the delivery programme. It is likely that this type of capacity creation and investment into infrastructure is needed in Sandwell to accommodate new growth (this will be considered in the next phase of IDP work).

Costs related to the addition of a new connections to the current network include the direct cost of the connection, expenses for reconfiguring the network to accommodate the new connection (which will be charged to the customer), and potential network reinforcement costs, which currently would be borne by National Grid.

Typically, it is expected that schemes will be parcelled smaller packages of 100–200 houses. Each developer would then consult with National Grid to assess spare capacity. It is highly likely that the addition of new breakers will be necessary in housing growth areas. This work often goes to an Independent Connection Provider (ICP) to develop in the intermediate term, then it is adopted by an Independent Distribution Network Operator (IDNO). In considering retaining housing stock, the Council could consider whether the supply is provided in this manner. It is expected that National Grid's infrastructure estimates for projects could be higher compared to those of an ICP, owing to different design approaches.

When considering the Brandhall Golf Course site, National Grid will need to explore the feasibility of laying cables from Birchfield Lane, potentially covering up to 1km. However, there are certain challenges in the Birchfield Lane to Oldbury area due to the presence of assets that are not under Council ownership, such as those owned by the Canal and River Trust as well as Network Rail. Consequently, further discussion about possible routes will be required to address these physical constraints.

Friar Park development is situated in the Wednesbury area, which is generally supplied from either Ocker Hill or Black Lake primary substations. There are certain challenges for laying cables in Wednesbury owing to congested footpaths, roundabouts, and bridges which cannot be crossed. It may be possible to feed this area from Bustleholme asset.

⁷⁸ [Resources and Waste Strategy 2018](#)

If a development is close to the boundary of a National Grid primary substation zone it may be possible to feed from an adjacent location to a limited length. However, there are challenges related to interconnection with substations. Additional information is required to evaluate and explore feasible alternatives.

In light of the above considerations, while no infrastructure requirements are considered prohibitive to future growth, there is a need for ongoing engagement with National Grid by both the Council and developers looking to bring sites forward for residential and commercial schemes.

Renewable Energy

SMBC shared, during engagement, that development sites where the Council has an interest are likely to either have heat pumps or a kind of shared scheme on site, rather than gas supply. Each development would be looked at on its merit and site-specific opportunities explored, however SMBC aim to take a joined-up approach to establish a major network across the borough.

It was noted that there is more will generally from partners and the public to strive towards sustainability targets and that energy efficiency is an important topic due to the current cost of living crisis and Sandwell's viability constraints. Forthcoming changes to building regulations, legislation and Government policy will have a significant impact on the future of energy infrastructure and impact the types of energy networks installed in new-build properties.

However, certain challenges in supplying renewable energy in Sandwell must be considered when planning for future development. Engagement with National Grid revealed that there are network challenges related to demand variation in the day across employment versus housing land uses. For example, electric heating and vehicles lead to heavy use of cables and ultimately derating, as demand continues through the night, preventing cables cooling off as normal.

Electric vehicle charging challenges, particularly in Smethwick, involve difficulties with space, earthing, and community charging installation in the footpath. Current technology is not fully developed to address these challenges, and thus National Grid's assessments are forward-looking estimates in this respect.

Solar photovoltaic systems have better performance during the summer months owing to sunlight availability, but household energy demand tends to be relatively lower during this period. Conversely, during the winter season when energy consumption is higher, the efficiency of generation is reduced. This is a challenge to consider for energy demand offset proposals.

National Grid has are in discussion with the Council about a source of district heating in West Bromwich (mentioned in section 4.7.2 above), where the generation plant is being built to consider energy security in the event that this single source is unavailable. For smaller applications, heat pumps pose minimal challenges; however, larger-scale installations require review with National Grid.

Gas Distribution Network

Given the proposed move away from gas provision and the requirement not to provide a gas connection to new houses from 2035, it is not envisaged that the gas network will provide a constraint to future development.

Water and Sewerage

There are no significant constraints facing the borough related to water supply. The Sandwell area is well-developed, and SSW anticipates that future growth will primarily occur in specific regions of brownfield land, as opposed to vast greenfield areas. This approach allows for incorporation of increased demand within the existing network.

SSW expects there is water supply capacity to accommodate approximately 8,000 homes across the Local Plan period. SSW plans for 4,000 new properties annually (across the wider Midlands region). Friar Park has been assessed by SSW and this development is not constrained.

STW has identified Minworth as being at medium risk for spare capacity up to 2047 and due to its positioning on the network, any increase in flow as a result of new development will be sent to Minworth. Given its large catchment area, it is not straight forward to determine how the smaller part of the Borough

fits in this constraint. With the Smethwick regeneration area for example, the earlier STW can be consulted the better. Ray Hall is currently low risk and takes account of many of the regeneration areas in Sandwell. Roundhill is high risk for capacity in terms of housing numbers.

It is difficult for STW to assess capacity until specifics of proposed developments or allocations are available. Once known, further investigation can be undertaken by STW. There are no major trunk main constraints, but this is dependent on the size and location of future development.

As noted above it is important for future developments to adopt SuDS and avoid discharge to combined sewers where possible. STW should be consulted as early as possible for any development to be located near the five identified sewer flood risk areas. It is preferable to avoid development around older, central areas with combined sewerage so as to avoid exacerbating combined sewer overflows.

Flood Management

It has unfortunately not been possible to engage with the Environment Agency or the Lead Local Flood Authority on flood management throughout the production of this iteration of the IDP. This will remain a priority for Part 2 of the IDP, in order to understand whether any particular infrastructure investment schemes need to be reflected in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule.

Waste Management

Responding to housing growth up to 2035 will principally be a challenge for Serco to contend with through assessing new housing developments as they become occupied in relation to existing collection routes, absorbing accordingly, up to the tipping point of capacity whereupon additional collection capacity (i.e. additional wagons) will be required. The management of the Council's household waste collection services post 2035 is not yet known at this stage, however it is likely to require the existing infrastructure.

As waste collections evolve in relation to source separation of recycling, it is anticipated that bin wagons will increase in size (due to compartmentalisation). Increased width may therefore have potential to exacerbate existing physical challenges of navigating residential estate roads, requiring design and parking considerations to take account of this. Similarly, source separation of waste may have impacts on individual property storage. These considerations should therefore be reflected in design-related policies.

Digital Infrastructure

Emerging policy can play an important role in securing network resilience by supporting provision of ducts for a minimum of two digital providers on new development sites. This can ensure choice for consumers through providers offering more competitive pricing in response to competition. Alongside dedicated fibre connections, consideration should be given to utilising fibre in conjunction with other utility requirements, since lines can also be used to power EV charge points and bus shelters.

The reduced range of 5G transmission compared to older signal variants means that there will need to be more physical infrastructure to ensure the same level of coverage that has been achieved with 4G.

Overall conclusion for utilities

Electricity: In general the primary electricity substations are not saturated yet, but the main difficulties relate to getting power to where it is needed. National Grid do not currently have any planned strategic upgrades in this area. Sites will need to be assessed individually to determine the necessary accommodations based on the available options in the area. Further conversations are recommended with National Grid about strategies for future supply. To successfully execute major infrastructure projects, the support of Councillors is necessary, particularly for expediting traffic management plans. National Grid is willing to engage with the Council.

Renewable Energy: There is no large-scale district heat network within Sandwell at present, but the Council is ambitious in seeking to support more strategic projects where possible e.g. West Bromwich Heat Network (with potential extension to Smethwick). The Council is also pursuing smaller-scale interventions at an individual property/block-scale, including retrofit projects.

Gas: The proposed move away from gas heating in new houses from 2035 means there are no related infrastructure challenges identified as a constraint to future development.

Water and Sewerage: There are no significant constraints facing the borough related to water supply. Development that increases urban density allows for incorporation of increased demand within the existing network. However, there is a national imperative to reduce water demand to provide relief to areas experiencing water scarcity. STW should be consulted as soon as possible regarding specific development proposals and allocations, especially in older central areas, near the five identified sewer flood risk areas. It is important for future developments to adopt SuDS and avoid discharge to combined sewers where possible, and if possible avoid older, central areas.

Flood Management: To be consulted on during IDP Phase 2.

Waste Management: No significant issues identified, although future trends towards increased source separation may require accommodating additional storage.

Digital infrastructure: Future delivery is likely to be market driven, although 5G will require more physical infrastructure (i.e. at site level) to achieve the same coverage achieved for 4G. Policy should aim to support a minimum of 2x fibre connections for new residential properties.

Appendix A

Documents considered whilst producing the Infrastructure Needs Assessment

National Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

National Planning Practice Guidance- Plan-making (2019)

The Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) Regulations (2019)

Regional Policy Context

Black Country Strategic Economic Plan

West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy (2019)

West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal (2023) (DLUHC)

Local Policy Context

Sandwell MBC Corporate Plan 2021-2025

Black Country Core Strategy (2011)

Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document (2012)

West Bromwich Area Action Plan (2012)

Smethwick Area Action Plan (2008)

Tipton Area Action Plan (2008)

Sandwell Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2020) (Mott MacDonald)

Transport

Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy for England (2021) (DfT)

Gear Change – A bold vision for cycling and walking (2021) (DfT)

Decarbonising Transport – A Better, Greener Britain (2021) (DfT)

Reimagining transport in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan Big Moves (2021) (TfWM)

Future of Freight: a long-term plan (2022) (DfT)

Freight, logistics and the planning system: call for evidence (DfT)

West Midlands Regional Freight Strategy (TfWM)

Black Country Parking Study (2021)

Black Country ULEV Strategy (2020)

London to Scotland West (South) Route Strategy Initial Overview Report (2023) (National Highways)

Education

Securing developer contributions for education (2023) (DfE)

Children and Families Act 2014

School Organisation Plan 2021-2026 (Sandwell MBC)

Healthcare

Initial Integrated Care Strategy 2023-2025 (Black Country Integrated Care Partnership)

Black Country Joint Forward Plan 2023-2028 (Black Country Integrated Care Partnership)

Emergency Services

Our Plan 2023-2026 (West Midlands Fire Service)

West Midlands Police and Crime Plan 2021-2025

Trust Strategy 2021-2026 (West Midlands Ambulance Service University NHS Foundation Trust)

Community Facilities

Reuse of Graves, Research Briefing (2017) (House of Commons)

Green and Blue Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure Framework (2023) (Natural England)

A Wilder Birmingham and Black Country: Our Strategy for 2022-2030, Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust

Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17 (2002) (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)

Draft Sandwell Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan, (October 2022)

Sandwell Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan (2022 – 2026) SMBC

Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework (2022) SMBC, BCC, WMCA, Homes England, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, Canal & River Trust

Utilities

UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy (2023) (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology)

Project Gigabit Progress Updates (2023) (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology)

Flood and Water Management Act 2010

Resources and waste strategy for England (2018) (DEFRA)