



SANDWELL REGENERATION STRATEGY

March 2022-2027

March 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sandwell is growing. Over £1.8bn of investment in the next five years will fund regeneration across the six towns, improving quality of life, providing decent work, and making Sandwell a more sustainable, greener place.

Regeneration brings together the elements needed to build a wealthier and more sustainable Sandwell. It encompasses the different aspects of our built environment: housing; town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods; employment sites; education and skills; transport; digital connectivity; and sustainability. These are important levers for Sandwell which can help to create the environment for inclusive growth.

Alongside the *Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Businesses*, which is an appendix to this strategy, this regeneration strategy presents a clear view of the Sandwell economy and our environment. It will enable Sandwell to shape regeneration plans to meet the needs of local people and business, setting a path towards a higher quality of life here, more well-paid and fulfilling jobs, and, through these, a wealthier Sandwell.

This strategy is based on a review of our evidence and relevant regional and national plans. Officers from across the council, the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP), and the Department for International Trade (DIT) have fed into this work,

establishing the context and refining the priorities. This is a practical plan, and together we have worked up actions that will bring us closer to our vision for Sandwell over the next five years.

This is the right time for this strategy. Major investment programmes are well underway, providing Sandwell with an opportunity to build momentum for further investment. The Black Country Plan is in currently in development, mapping out how land will be used in Sandwell over the next decade and a half. Through this work we have reviewed our regeneration activity and set priorities that are right for our place, scoping opportunities and recognising local constraints. Sandwell has:

- a shortfall for housing and employment delivery targets, and a pressing need to increase supply.
- a shortage of land and a high need for housing, employment space, and education facilities.
- a diverse mixture of towns, each with its own identity, characteristics, and constraints to economic growth.

- an urgent need to address social challenges, climate change, and prepare for the industries of the future, providing good jobs.

Over the last five years we have plotted out a route to sustainable growth across all areas of our economy. We are focused on creating an inclusive economy in Sandwell, building community wealth, and improving quality of life for everyone here. In the refreshed Corporate Plan – Big Plans for a Great Place, we identified the six outcomes needed to create a great borough; the Climate Change Strategy of the same year laid out a plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2041. In 2021, faced with the ongoing disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, we worked closely with local businesses to develop economic growth priorities.

Addressing our constraints and achieving our aims will require consistent activity, the identification of new funding opportunities, and careful preparation to unlock regeneration potential. This will be a living document, to be regularly updated to incorporate new opportunities and projects.

Appended is a pipeline of regeneration projects that will help achieve this strategy in the next five years. This will be regularly reviewed as new opportunities emerge. Over time Sandwell can use this as an investment tool to showcase what good regeneration looks like and serve as a catalyst for additional investment.

As a council we already spend £150m every year with suppliers. Following work in 2020 to understand how much of this is with local suppliers, we are determined to increase our spend with local business by changing how we procure contracts and monitor social value, embedding community wealth building across the

Council. Details of how we will do this are set out in the Appendix: *Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Businesses* under the priority 'Spend in Sandwell'. Increased local spend retains wealth in Sandwell and creates jobs. The positive benefits that the Aquatics Centre construction has brought to the Borough are clear, with new jobs and increased local spend. Significant investments in this £1.8bn pipeline will increase opportunities for local businesses; we will work with the Sandwell Business Ambassadors and the Sandwell Anchor Network to raise awareness of the pipeline and to prepare local suppliers for upcoming opportunities.

This plan is ambitious, but achievable, to be delivered by the Council working in partnership with the private sector and regional and national Government.



2. SANDWELL TODAY



Young & diverse population scheduled to grow faster than regional and UK averages



The third largest borough in the West Midlands



£6.5bn economy



The most productive local authority in the Black Country



Well-connected regionally and nationally



Strong base of small businesses – the supply chain capital of the UK



High rates of business start-up, +15% increase since 2018



Skills levels rising, +20% increase in NVQ4+

Sandwell is a growing economy and complex place, its major and transformative opportunities matched by considerable physical constraints and social challenges. The third largest borough in the West Midlands and on the border of Birmingham, Sandwell is one of the country's oldest industrial economies. Our population is young and growing fast: 40% of residents are under 30 years old and only 15% of residents are over the age of 65. Today, it is a manufacturing and logistics hub, a diverse and busy place shaped by its histories of industry and migration.

Like many post-industrial economies, Sandwell faces significant social challenges. The eighth most deprived local authority in England, high proportions of the local population have underlying health issues. Our borough has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with some of the highest infection rates in the country. Life expectancies are lower: around six years beneath the national average for men and almost five years lower for women. Skills levels are low, with 17% of residents without qualifications, and there is a high concentration of low paid roles across the workforce.

Despite these social and economic challenges, Sandwell is on a growth trajectory. This is the most productive economy in the Black Country, a centre of the UK's manufacturing and logistics industries, home to innovative, exporting businesses. This environment is dynamic and fast-changing economy – since 2018, the number of new businesses starting up in the borough has increased by 15%, 10% higher than the UK average.

Supporting our established local businesses to grow, while nurturing these new businesses are our economic priority, each requiring related but tailored actions:

- We want to become the home of the start-up, building on our proximity to Birmingham City Centre and transport connections to the rest of the conurbation make this an ideal place to start and grow a business.
- We will target our successful established businesses and support them to grow here, unlocking new products, services, and innovations that they can market to the rest of the world.

Together, these will create a more productive and inclusive economy that creates jobs and increases prosperity.

Regeneration and the Economy

Providing the facilities for this growth, an environment that maintains quality of life, and the infrastructure to support sustainability all fall within the remit of regeneration.

Raising quality of life is essential because of the social challenges residents face. Improving the built environment, greening high streets and centres, and reducing traffic, will contribute to better health outcomes for our residents, and increase pride of place. Sandwell is growing within a dynamic conurbation, connecting Birmingham to the Black Country. This growth should bring real benefits to the people who live and work here.

There is high demand for land in Sandwell, from local businesses and via inward enquiries for employment land, and a high housing need driven by a growing population. Our location and affordable housing make this an important residential centre. Housing has and continues to be a priority

for Sandwell, and we have a strong track record in unlocking strategic housing development across the borough.

The reminders of Sandwell's past are woven throughout the place, in monuments, places of worship, canals and factories. But Sandwell's industrial heritage means that brownfield plots often require major remediation. With low land values and low rents, justifying investment, from private or public sources, can be difficult. Demand is high, but constrained regeneration funding prohibits development.

Sandwell Council has set a target of reaching net zero emissions by 2041, nine years ahead of the UK target. The need for this activity is acute. A post-industrial environment, Sandwell is in the top 10% of local authorities for fuel poverty, and the poor overall quality of domestic buildings leads to high emissions. Road travel is second only to residential buildings in the number of emissions it produces – reducing emissions and promoting active travel will help to improve quality of life.



3. PROGRESS SO FAR

In the last few years Sandwell has secured millions of pounds of public and private investment. Successful bids to the Towns Fund for Smethwick, West Bromwich and Rowley Regis will support major capital investment in these three towns, while the Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone has secured funding to revive the town centre in keeping with its history. Across Sandwell, investment via the City Region Sustainability Transport Settlements Fund will unlock strategic transport improvements. The Transforming Cities Fund, and other private and public sector funding streams will help us deliver major development projects in the Borough.

With the arrival of HS2 and the Wednesbury Metro extension, which will open to passengers in 2024, regional and national transport will open new opportunities for investment and regeneration. These will enhance accessibility across the Black Country and the wider conurbation and reduce journey times, while improving air quality and cutting noise.

Preparations for Sandwell's role in the Commonwealth Games are nearing completion, as is the major new regional Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. While many projects are still in development, in the last two years we have successfully provided crucial business support throughout the pandemic, collaborated with partners to increase our housing offer, participated in the regional roll out of 5G acting as the first UK testbed, and much more.

As a council we play an important role in unlocking development, improving our places, and planning for the borough as a whole. We have a nationally recognised planning service which determines 93% of Major Planning Applications on time against the national target of 60%. This shapes our places for the benefit of our residents, and in a coherent and sustainable way. Through convening partners and unlocking investment from regional and national funds we stimulate development where the market fails, helping to overcome the high cost of remediation.



Housing Developments

Sandwell has a strong track record in unlocking strategic housing development across the borough. Using both public and private sector funding, we work with developers and partners to address the housing challenges Sandwell faces.

Recent completed developments include:

The Windmill Eye Neighbourhood regeneration

A home improvement and housebuilding programme in the heart of Smethwick which raised the quality of existing houses, developed neighbourhood amenities, such as play areas and open spaces, and built 228 new homes including 93 affordable homes with a mix of private, rent, shared ownership properties.

The Galton Lock development in Smethwick

180 homes on a challenging brownfield site which required major investment in decontamination, remediation, and site assembly.

Greets Green - Goldfield Court in West Bromwich

Delivered in partnership with Housing 21, 93 extra-care apartments for people aged 55+ with 24/7 on-site care staff.

Harvills Hawthorn in West Bromwich

216 market sale homes and 17 affordable homes



Willow Gardens in Rowley Regis

90 extra Council owned and managed care housing apartments available for affordable rent.

Woods Lane in Cradley Heath, Rowley Regis

A Sandwell-led partnership which has assembled multiple parcels of land to create a viable development zone and new residential area near Cradley Heath, Rowley Regis. This has delivered 135 new affordable homes, with potential to expand further through new sources of funding.

Faced with a high level of housing need, we have focused on increasing the level of affordable housing across the borough. Over the next few years, housing development will improve this further.

- With funding from the West Midlands Combined Authority, development has started at Fountain Lane in Oldbury, preparing the ground for over 200 new homes.
- Through the Towns Fund, we will deliver a £4m regeneration project at Grove Lane in Smethwick next to the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, with the potential for this to be the first phase in the wider development of 800 homes. We will also provide an additional 115 homes at Rolfe Street, through doing so regenerating the canalside in Smethwick.
- In West Bromwich, the regeneration of the town centre will unlock sites for over 1,000 homes. Strategic acquisitions, made possible through the Towns Fund, will enable the diversification and transformation of the centre to build new homes and create new green spaces.
- Through private and public sector funding, we will deliver a new residential community with over 600 sustainable homes in the Friar Park Urban Village through the development of brownfield land.
- In Tipton, repurposing former industrial land has the potential to deliver over 100 homes.



Sandwell COVID-19 business support

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on our businesses, a fifth temporarily closed during the third national lockdown, but Sandwell Council has worked extensively with the private sector to provide the support it needs to survive and thrive.

Over the last two years, we have offered:

- Suspended court action for recovery of business rates
- Negotiated repayments where possible and/or agreeing to a hold in recovery action for a period where businesses are struggling
- Expanded Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief/Nursery Discount for eligible businesses
- COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund for businesses that have not been able to adequately adapt
- Additional Restrictions Grants 3 (ARG3) Scheme providing financial support for businesses severely affected by restrictions
- Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant for businesses in the Hospitality, Leisure and Accommodation sectors



**Local business support
during the global
coronavirus crisis**



Sandwell Aquatics Centre

The Sandwell Aquatics Centre will be at the centre of the Commonwealth Games in Summer 2022. The centre will host the games' swimming and diving events, open every day of the games to audiences from across the UK.

A targeted approach to development means that the investment in the centre has created substantial benefits for the local economy during the construction phase. The centre has drawn on the expertise and efforts of local sub-contractors, SMEs and residents throughout the borough.

These benefits have a substantial economic impact, generating:

- 88,541 days of local labour
- £73,123 in local spending
- 83% engagement with SMEs
- Over 30 apprenticeships

Young people from diverse communities in Sandwell have found opportunities in work and training through the Sandwell Aquatics Centre, ensuring its legacy will last long after the games have closed.



Shireland CBSO School

The Shireland CBSO School in West Bromwich is a new music school in collaboration with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) and Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust. It will be the first music school in the UK established in collaboration with an orchestra, marking a radical new approach to music education. Students will have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, with tuition delivered in partnership with Sandwell Music Service, and participate in choirs and regularly attend CBSO concerts. At the heart of West Bromwich, this will bring new life to the town centre, encouraging the take up of the arts.

West Midlands Cycle Hire

Encouraging the rollout of active travel throughout the borough is a priority for Sandwell. The West Midlands Cycle Hire scheme will help address our challenges of high deprivation and low physical activity, by situating cycle hubs in Oldbury and West Bromwich. More than 60 hire bikes are now available at ten docking stations in the borough, including at Sandwell Hospital, Dartmouth Park, Sandwell College, and Sandwell and Dudley Port Railway Station.

Rollout of full fibre and 5G

Openreach is investing £134m on full fibre rollout to many towns and cities in the West Midlands, which will see hundreds of new roles created in the region and see communities and businesses access full fibre broadband which is ten times faster than the average home broadband connection and five times more reliable. Full fibre coverage in Sandwell has increased at a fast pace, connecting homes and businesses to best-in-class digital infrastructure and unlocking new opportunities for innovation.



4. OUR VISION

Sandwell is growing. Over £1.8bn of investment in the next five years will fund regeneration across the six towns, improving quality of life, providing decent work, and making Sandwell a more sustainable, greener place.

Our vision is to create a wealthier Sandwell, regenerating our place and using the limited amount of new land available to create

- an inviting place to live, with thriving communities and energy efficient housing in well planned neighbourhoods.
- high quality employment space for decent jobs.
- a convenient and reliable public transport and active travel network, which people prefer to private cars.
- exciting, busy, and green centres where people meet throughout the day, with a thriving cultural and night-time economy.

Looking forward to a wealthier Sandwell requires sustained investment in ambitious and transformative projects. Sandwell needs better, energy-efficient housing, improved public transport and active travel connections, and facilities for our growing businesses. We will support all our town centres to become thriving, busy communities and places to live, work and meet. Through this regeneration strategy, we will aim to bring wealth and sustainability to all our towns.

The government's Levelling Up White Paper (February 2022) has created opportunities to push forward our priorities. The West Midlands Combined Authority will be granted new funding to support the

remediation of brownfield sites. We will work with WMCA to create proposals for sites, investing in challenging sites and unlocking new and for development.

We are working to build an inclusive economy in Sandwell, working with residents to improve their places and increase opportunities. The white paper cites the power of local partnerships to transform places, using creative partnerships to find new uses for shared centres and neighbourhoods. We will work with local communities to explore grass-roots regeneration, supporting projects that emerge across the borough.

Our major economic and social challenges cannot be solved by regeneration alone. However, by delivering ambitious, well-suited, and attractive developments, we will go a long way to addressing local needs, improving the borough's profile, and creating the right conditions for growth.

In section six we set out four priorities which guide our regeneration strategy and delivery. This strategy is then divided into seven delivery themes that cover each aspect of regeneration in Sandwell. For each of the areas within regeneration that we hope to act on over the next five years, we have developed a specific ambition, and a set of practical actions to help achieve them:

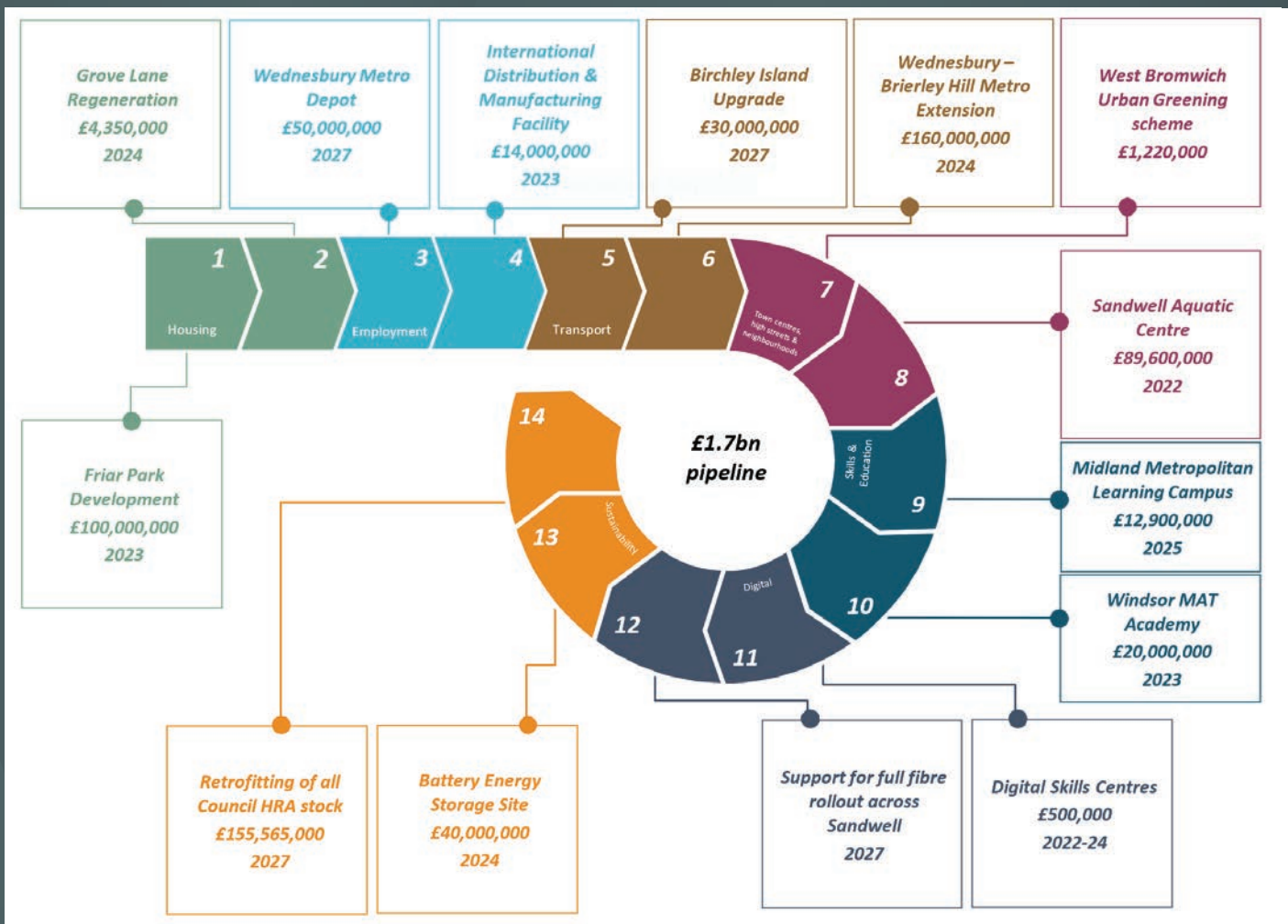
Theme	Our five-year ambition
Housing	Facilitate and deliver more new homes and more affordable housing across the borough, faster
Employment	Support businesses and sectors with space to grow
Placemaking	Work with our communities to transform our town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods in the right way for their place and to their full potential
Education and Skills	Deliver new learning facilities at primary, secondary, and further education levels to improve education and opportunity for people of all ages
Transport	Connect Sandwell's major hubs to the wider region and knit neighbourhoods together with public and active transport
Digital	Support the rollout and take up of full-fibre and 5G across Sandwell
Sustainability	Invest in transformative energy infrastructure to support the transition to net zero

5. THE REGENERATION PIPELINE

The £1.8bn pipeline includes 66 regeneration projects being delivered across Sandwell funded by a range of public and private sector investment, to be delivered in the next five years. Five projects are already expected to be delivered this year. The pipeline will be a 'living document' with regular reviews and updates to ensure it reflects the most up to date regeneration position for Sandwell.

We have highlighted 14 of Sandwell's major development projects that make up this pipeline on page 16. It demonstrates our determination to bring meaningful change to the borough and to improve Sandwell for all residents.

- 15 housing projects to build more affordable and high-quality homes across the borough by 2026.
- Three employment projects to increase the number of high-quality jobs available to local people and increase commercial floorspace for businesses in Sandwell.
- 23 transport projects to improve connectivity in and out of Sandwell, increase highway capacity, and connect our towns via new active travel networks.
- Three town centre projects to improve the public realm and make our towns more attractive to prospective residents and businesses.
- Ten education and skills projects to increase provision in the borough.
- Digital connectivity improvements to support our residents and businesses through the upgrade to Full Fibre Connectivity.
- Five sustainability projects to generate energy in Sandwell and improve the energy efficiency of our homes, helping to achieve carbon neutrality by 2041.



An Extract of Regeneration Projects across each Theme.



Measuring Our Success

Our strategy will fund major regeneration projects across the six towns, improving quality of life, providing decent work, and making Sandwell a more sustainable, greener place.

Delivering £1.8bn of investment in the next 5 years which will achieve:

Over 4,000 new homes (incl. affordable homes)

Over 800,000 sqm of new employment, commercial & educational space created

Thousands of new jobs unlocked in construction and unlocked employment land

Thousands of new learners assisted

250 electric charging points installed

100,000 premises connected to Full Fibre broadband



6. PRIORITIES

To achieve this vision for regeneration in Sandwell, we have identified four priorities to guide our actions over the next five years. This is based on a theory of change rooted in an overall economic understanding of the area and its needs.

Priority One: Accelerate

Deliver new developments across regeneration areas promptly and to a high quality

We want to provide the development Sandwell needs to grow, encompassing quality, sustainable housing for residents and giving businesses room to expand in Sandwell.

There are major constraints to development: we must explore new mechanisms to develop at pace, using creative solutions, partnerships, and persistence. To achieve this, we will hold to the following principles:

- Develop visions for key sites, understanding their potential and planning for ambitious, sustainable, and walkable neighbourhoods.
- Collate project information and key risks and maintain a detailed project pipeline, ready for new funding opportunities.
- Work with landowners to encourage development in line with Sandwell's vision for places, using powers where available to incentivise development or take control. Identify funding opportunities for retrofit, public transport, and net zero transition, working up options for improvement.



Priority Two: Amplify

Develop our key opportunity sites efficiently, making the best and most creative use of the land available

Housing and employment land needs are high in Sandwell. Exploring opportunities for varied housing typologies on residential sites, including denser development where appropriate, will help to improve the places and address our needs. Well-planned, mixed-use developments at the heart of neighbourhoods will help to animate our town centres and ensure that scarce land achieves the maximum benefit. To achieve this, we will hold to the following principles:

- Explore opportunities to densify housing, businesses, and major regeneration schemes where appropriate and promote active / public transport connections to new homes.
- Aim for a range of typologies to appeal different groups, e.g. young professionals in well-connected urban centres such as West Bromwich, and family homes in our more sub-urban neighbourhoods.
- Identify developers capable of delivering dense development near metro stops and other public transport hubs.
- Negotiate with developers for intensive and innovative development on small plots.
- Using planning controls to encourage creative use of plots.



Priority Three: Curate

Develop each site, and each town, to its full potential, promoting clean and green environments

Sandwell has underutilised town centres. The borough is polycentric, with diverse and distinct towns, but which are disconnected. With £67.5m of Towns Fund money to transform the towns of West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis, Sandwell has the investment to diversify these centres. In others, creative solutions and meanwhile uses can use space and attract footfall, unlocking new uses in centres faced with the decline of in-person retail. To achieve this, we will hold to the following principles:

- Use town profiles, case studies, and local agency to continue to update the understanding of each town.
- For employment land, explore new and innovative employment opportunities, covering a variety of different types of job.
- Explore meanwhile uses for complex land yet to come forward, animating centres and reducing vacancies.



Priority Four: Deliver

Use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- High remediation costs and low land values have created acute market failure in Sandwell. Despite high demand, this limits development. In response, the council has an important role to play in attracting funding and in direct development. Using large investments as regeneration anchors, and developing council led partnerships and vehicles will help to kickstart regeneration and establish use-cases for quality development. To achieve this, we will hold to the following principles
- Continue to use planning policy to promote quality development; use council vehicles and schemes to set exemplars.
- Use the council's own delivery capacity creatively to attract match funding, prepare, and deliver development.
- Attract further match funding to existing schemes to kickstart complementary developments.



7. HOUSING

Our five-year ambition is to facilitate and deliver more new homes and more affordable housing across the borough, faster

Sandwell has six towns and nine distinct town centres, and these act as focal points for surrounding neighbourhoods. Unlocking residential and mixed-use development in these centres is an opportunity to revitalise them as places to live and work. This requires investment and creative thinking: in West Bromwich and Smethwick, Towns Fund investment will unlock the potential for major residential-led regeneration, creating new homes in strategic and well-connected areas. In Wednesbury, we are promoting the conversion of high street units into new homes through the High Street Heritage Action Zone. In the next five years, we will target new opportunities across our towns, reviving our centres and reusing vacant space for new homes.

We have already identified a pipeline of £600 million in investment in housing over the next five years.

Our experience in delivering housing across Sandwell and our access to national and regional funding opportunities, puts us in a strong strategic position to drive development. We understand the character of our neighbourhoods and centres, what typologies will work and where we can

innovate with mixed uses. Our priority for the next five years is to increase the pace, unlocking sites and supporting market providers to deliver housing that is right for the place. We aim to improve our existing homes whilst increasing the amount of affordable housing in Sandwell, which includes a mix of private, shared ownership, social rented and affordable rented housing tenures.

Context

Housing need in Sandwell is high, and supply is not keeping up with demand. In the next ten years, Sandwell needs 14,670 homes, but the borough is set to deliver 4,982 homes in this period.¹ As in many places around the country, delivery has consistently trailed need here, and with current projections, Sandwell will have a shortfall of nearly 20,000 homes to 2039.²

However, needs here are particularly acute, and we have the highest local housing need of any Black Country local authority.

Sandwell is a popular place to live, well connected to Birmingham and with thriving communities. Much of our local demand is for affordable homes, and for large family accommodation. Size requirements for owner-

occupied homes will increase by 48% for homes with three bedrooms and 25% for homes with four or more bedrooms.³

Affordable housing needs have increased in recent years along with overall demand. The average monthly two bedroom rent in Sandwell is cheaper than regional or national averages, and housing affordability is lower than both the national and regional averages, but demand continues to rise. In 2021, Sandwell's affordable housing requirement was set at 343 dwellings per annum. We offer more social housing than the national average (28% of the 133,680 houses in Sandwell are social housing, compared to the national average of 17%), but the average wait for a house is 1 year and 9 months and overall social housing stock has declined in the past 30 years.⁴ We aim to do more to provide our residents with access to affordable accommodation.

West Bromwich town centre is a major opportunity for a different kind of development – creating a new mixed-use urban centre for the West Midlands, with excellent connections to the heart of the conurbation. This can provide 1,100 homes in the heart of Sandwell, and a green and family friendly public realm. At Grove Lane,

1. Sandwell Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, 2020.

2. The Black Country & South Staffordshire Housing Market Assessment, 2017

3. Sandwell Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, 2020.

4. South Staffordshire and Black Country Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), 2017.

Smethwick, Sandwell has a major regeneration area next to the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. With potential to provide 800 homes within a wider regeneration corridor to Birmingham, this can be a new, quality residential quarter in Sandwell. Rolfe Street, further into Smethwick, can provide over 100 new homes. Friar Park is a major brownfield site that can provide over 600 homes in Sandwell. With ambitious design principles, this can create a sustainable urban village.

Many of these sites have ambitious masterplans and visions, and developer interest. Each represents an opportunity to create sustainable and pleasant environments for

residents and which attract new people to Sandwell. A mix of typologies and densities on these sites will maximise the number of homes that can be delivered, encourage a mix of residents of different ages and backgrounds, and through it, benefit communities. Multi-storey homes and flats, where appropriate, can mix well with family homes and increase housing delivery.

Managing these developments, and ensuring they fulfil our ambitions will ensure that they do more than deliver housing, and kickstart economic growth for the wider economy.

The council has agency in incentivising development and attracting government funding to de-risk sites for developers. Exploring routes to kickstarting development of unattractive, smaller sites, through the Council House Build programme, portfolio approach, or joint venture, could help to incrementally increase housing across Sandwell.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will deliver new housing developments across regeneration areas promptly and to a high quality.

Early priorities include:

West Bromwich town centre – the comprehensive regeneration of the town centre, an ambitious scheme to remodel the retail core for new housing, modern and dynamic retail, and new workspaces and public realm. This will unlock land for over 1000 homes

Friar Park – a new urban village in Wednesbury, providing over 600 high-quality homes, open spaces and active travel links to the rest of Sandwell

Fountain Lane – unlocking over 600 new homes at the heart of Oldbury

Qualtronic Site, Tipton – over 100 new homes repurposing former industrial land in Tipton

Grove Lane – the regeneration of Grove Lane, Smethwick, creating large scale mixed-use and housing space on the industrial site

Rolfe Street – the regeneration of the Smethwick canalside, unlocking over 100 new homes in the heart of Smethwick

Hall Green Road – 223 homes in West Bromwich, generating 172 construction jobs and 22 jobs long term in the local area

We will develop housing opportunity sites efficiently, making the best and most creative use of the land available.

- Identify key sites for affordable housing and work proactively with Housing Associations and registered social landlords and other stakeholders to bring schemes forward
- Identify areas of high housing demand with potential for a denser urban housing mix
- Consider areas with potential for regeneration schemes for homes in town centres through first floor conversions
- Identify challenging brownfield land for major intervention via the West Midlands Brownfield Housing Fund
- Identify sites for dense development near transport hubs, working up an approach to commercial viability
- Engage the National Brownfield Institute in problem brownfield sites across Sandwell

Use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- Progress the case for a social housing programme to support the delivery of affordable housing
- Explore collaborations between the council and appropriate developers to prepare sites for development
- Target sites for council intervention for co-funding
- Scope and investigate the council's own estate, identifying areas of land where consolidation of council services or existing uses could free up small plots
- Begin housing site assemblies, using council acquisitions to drive development



8. EMPLOYMENT

Our five-year ambition is to support businesses and sectors with space to grow

Sandwell is well located, at the centre of the West Midlands and the UK. We have grown and continue to attract major industries that make high value goods here and distribute to the country and beyond. Emerging strengths in clean energy, health and social care are opportunities to innovate, linking to new anchor institutions, such as the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital in Smethwick, a £650m development and acute care provider for the region.

We have high value, innovative and exporting businesses, which have grown and continue to value our connections and character. These have very different needs, from small and flexible premises in town centres, close to public transport for start-ups, to specialist, high-cost facilities next to the strategic road network for manufacturing and logistics firms.

We have already identified £64m in employment premises investment

Context

Demand for employment land across the whole of the West Midlands is high. The Black Country is the centre of the UK's motorway network, with good connections into Birmingham, and low land costs encourage companies to locate here. Take-up of large 'big-box' space and grade A logistics space is growing rapidly in the West Midlands, increasing by around 65% in 2020 compared to the previous year. Health and social care is already a major employer in Sandwell, but the MMUH redevelopment is an opportunity to develop this further. The health innovation campus will unlock the potential of this anchor to fuel local employment growth, housing new businesses next to healthcare experts and care.

A total of 565ha of new employment land is needed across the Black Country to 2039, but supply projections point to a likely a total shortfall of 211ha. Sandwell is set to provide just a small proportion of this land, 28ha, or 7%, despite being home to the one of the largest business and resident populations in the Black Country.⁵

5. Draft Black Country Plan, 2021.

6. Black Country Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) Update, 2021.

Sandwell has an opportunity to be at the heart of the West Midlands growth offer

Sandwell is constrained by this lack of land. In some areas, land is available but remains undeveloped. Remediation and assembly costs are high – risk averse landlords may wait for public support but maintain unrealistic values.⁶ Without the prospect of large amounts of land becoming available, Sandwell must ensure the employment land it delivers supports good quality jobs.

We recognise that growth of our businesses can be constrained by a lack of readily available land. To unlock economic growth, we need to use the land we have strategically to support our

businesses and organisations to grow. We must understand their land needs, and work with them over the long-term to expand in Sandwell.

This requires more focus on developing smaller sites for existing businesses and target businesses in our growth sectors. Portfolios of smaller sites can be created and put in the pipeline: the Council's One Public Estate work and the Transforming Public Services agenda has demonstrated how land can be made available to new uses. We are working in West Bromwich and Smethwick to ensure that housing comes forward alongside employment and other uses will maximise the chances of making these centres dynamic and bustling

centres that sustain economic growth.

We are exploring the development of a council led employment land vehicle, identifying small, unattractive sites, and preparing them for development. A revolving fund, whereby the council uses a pot of money to acquire 'unviable' sites, prepare them, then resell them back to market developers, could be an effective means to prepare land and spark growth. Strategic use of our CPO powers can unlock development in areas with growth potential and unlock the wider regeneration of areas by encouraging other investors that areas are developing.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

The actions below focus on employment land and are designed to complement the actions in the Appendix, *Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Businesses*.

We will deliver new employment developments across regeneration areas promptly and to a high quality. Early priorities include:

The Wednesbury Metro Depot – a £50m investment in major transport infrastructure, providing new jobs in Sandwell and supporting the connection of our borough to the wider conurbation

The Coneygre site in Tipton – regeneration of former industrial land, providing 230,000 sq ft of commercial space and up to 500 new jobs

The Operational Hub for the West Midlands Ambulance Service in Oldbury – providing space for a vital public service and supporting up to 500 new job

We will develop employment opportunity sites efficiently, making the best and most creative use of the land available

- Target our key businesses and understand their land needs, building on our engagement with businesses over the last few years to develop a wish-list for land requirements
- Work closely with West Midlands Growth Company to secure new investment in employment schemes
- Explore opportunities for mixed uses in major regeneration schemes, identifying plots for potential small-scale employment use, map these, and promote them on council and West Midlands websites

Use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- Investigate the council's own estate, identifying areas of land where consolidation of council services could make land available for new employment uses
- Explore interventions to source funding opportunities and mechanisms to prepare unviable sites for employment use in line with Sandwell's growing sectors
- Identify areas close to transport hubs for enterprise zones or strategic employment sites



9. PLACMAKING

Our five-year ambition is to work with our communities to improve town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods in the right way for their place and to their full potential

Like many parts of the country, the role of our town centres and high streets is changing. This has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the transition to shopping online has threatened the viability of retailers and eroded town centres. The pandemic has altered work and leisure patterns, resulting demands for different types of commercial spaces. Creative approaches to planning will be required to respond to this changing demand, creating sustainable and attractive town centres in a constrained funding environment.

Retail outlets and empty commercial units are commonplace across our six towns, with a limited leisure offer or night-time economy. Town centres serve both an important economic and civic purpose as hubs for local businesses and the source of important services for residents. They are also centres for hosting community and cultural events. Recent surveys indicate that Sandwell's residents are keen to see improvements to town centres to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve pride of place, creating new meeting spaces and shared amenities.⁷

We are preparing for £67.5 million investment in capital projects in Rowley Regis, Smethwick, and West Bromwich through Towns Fund

Over the last few years, we have developed focused plans for growth and won significant investment projects for the borough. This covers a wide range of town centre improvements, including urban greening and cultural infrastructure. Now is the opportunity to go further across all of the borough, working with residents and businesses to co-create the centres they desire.

Context

Each of our urban centres provides an important focal point for the local community. However, there are too many empty commercial units across the nine local centres, with 14% of high street and retail properties vacant.⁸ Yet these challenges also provide opportunities to create more diverse, sustainable and resilient towns and high streets, which in turn deliver economic and health benefits for both businesses and residents. Re-purposing empty units on our high streets to create new space right in the heart of local communities, bringing new sites forward whilst avoiding issues around new land supply and development.

Across our towns, we have strong assets – a rich cultural heritage, strong local identities, a historic canal network and iconic parks and green spaces. 12 of Sandwell's parks have won Green Flag awards, and Sandwell Valley Country Park is one of the largest and most attractive green spaces in the West Midlands, which attracts visitors from across the West Midlands. Work is ongoing to develop a Masterplan for Sandwell Valley alongside the development of a cultural and events programme to further enhance the use of this exceptional green-space.

Sandwell has embarked on a significant programme of replacing aging leisure centres and providing new facilities for residents. The Sandwell Aquatics Centre is nearing completion (replacing the aging facilities at Smethwick and Langley), with new centres already delivered in Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich. Haden Hill Leisure Centre is circa 46 years old and is the last wet facility requiring investment/ replacement as per the Sandwell Sport and Leisure Built Facility Strategy, 2018. These facilities provide opportunities for local-residents to increase participation in exercise and sport and live healthier lifestyles.

7. Sandwell Vision 2030 survey; Smethwick TIP Engagement Survey, 2020.

8. Retail & Leisure Analysis – Full Year 2020. Local Data Company: <https://www.localdatacompany.com/download-report-fy-2020>

Improving the look and sustainability of centres via enhanced public realm and urban greening projects, will create attractive and healthy town centres of the future. Several plans for centres have been developed setting out a place-based approach to how Sandwell will transform different parts of the borough, including the Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework and Grove Lane masterplan, the West Bromwich Masterplan, and the Rowley Regis Town Investment Plan. These approaches can be built on to guide other areas.

Looking forward, the arrival of the 11km metro extension will branch off the current West Midlands Metro line just east of the Wednesbury Great Western Street Metro stop, before heading through Tipton and Dudley on its way to Brierley Hill. There are plans for up to 16 Metro stops, with provision for two additional stops. This will create a new economic corridor, with the potential to attract investment and regeneration around the route and Metro stops.

The ambition for Sandwell to be the home of the start-up – as set out in the Appendix *Economic Recovery Plan for Businesses* - will require flexible and affordable premises across the borough. These could be located in vacant high street units. Re-purposing empty spaces for meanwhile use can be an effective way to counteract the decline of physical retail, diversifying centres and adding vibrancy that kickstarts wider regeneration. We want to explore shared space for enterprises, as part of diverse town centre offer that mixes retail, culture and business which create vibrant and safe day and night time economies.

A recent Sandwell report ranked the borough as 324 out of 325 local authorities in England for cultural engagement. This is something we are looking to change, with the Commonwealth Games in 2022 providing the opportunity to host related events, including the borough-wide Shine a Light Festival and the Live Site at Sandwell Valley. Arts Council England has named Sandwell

a priority area for a share of £75m in investment via the new Levelling Up for Culture Places fund. The West Bromwich Town Deal will catalyse a new cultural quarter in the town, centred around the Town Hall and library. Small, culture-led activity could also be part of the offer, attracting new creative organisations and building on our grassroots cultural and voluntary & community sector activity. Broadening the range of activities within our existing community buildings and increasing the range of activities and events in the Borough is part of the approach to increasing participation in cultural activity.

Whilst Sandwell sees good connectivity to regional and national networks, travel between local towns can be difficult. Congestion Management Plans by Transport for the West Midlands highlights congestion pinch points around Tipton and Oldbury town centres. Improving connectivity between towns can help spread the benefits of existing investment to other parts of the borough, connecting and creating neighbourhoods in new housing developments.

Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will support the regeneration of our town centres, high streets, and neighbourhoods.
Early priorities include:

West Bromwich town centre – major investment in the diversification of West Bromwich's town centre, creating more places for residents and visitors to meet and mix

Urban greening – new and enhance existing greenspace connecting West Bromwich town centre to Sandwell Valley

Soho Foundry and Chance Glassworks – regeneration of unique historic assets in Sandwell, reviving them for modern uses

Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone – in the revival of Wednesbury's clock tower, historic buildings, and public realm

We will develop each site, and each town, to its full potential, promoting clean and green environments

- Work with local partners, including businesses and community groups, to explore ideas for local areas, using co-design and engagement to involve stakeholders and communities in the development of future Council neighbourhood plans, projects and funding bids
- Draw up a provisional programme of events that could be held in various public spaces across the borough
- Identify new and existing public spaces of all sizes – squares, streets, parks, etc. – for enlivenment and day and night-time use

We will develop efficiently, making the most creative use of land available

- Advance a meanwhile use programme for town centres and high streets, seeking guidance on best practice from specialist organisations

Use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- Promote Sandwell's centres as work-live-leisure-study spaces, encouraging new businesses and community organisations to locate on the high street, fostering local clusters and creating jobs
- Identify council owned buildings which could be used for public events

TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN
ROWLEY REGIS
OCTOBER 2020

Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN
WEST BROMWICH
OCTOBER 2020

Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN
SMETHWICK
OCTOBER 2020

Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

10. EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Our five-year ambition is to deliver new learning facilities at primary, secondary and further education levels to improve education and opportunity for people of all ages

Education and skills infrastructure is crucial to sustaining the needs of a growing population. Rising population growth here means demand for school places is high but provision has so far kept pace, as several new schools have been brought forward. However, continued population growth, increased inward migration and the opening of new housing developments in the borough, means demand could exceed pupil place projections quickly in the coming years.

Ten major education and skills facilities are in development, from primary to higher level skills

By enhancing skills infrastructure, Sandwell has an opportunity to build on recent increases in skills levels. This will pave the way to a more prosperous future, preparing residents for future industries, and, in time, bringing good quality and well-paying jobs to the borough.

Regeneration plans look to increase existing skills provision and enhance learning facilities, especially in key sectors, raising skills levels that match local employment opportunities and supporting improvement in performance of schools. The

impact of the net zero transition and increasing automation means skills provision must adapt to respond to new opportunities.

Context

Sandwell has been growing fast, and this is set to continue. The local population is estimated to increase 8% between 2017 & 2030, requiring more school places to meet anticipated demand. Sandwell sees high demand for primary school places in Sandwell, which is currently being met by the increase in provision that has occurred over the past decade. Demand for secondary places is also very high with 828 additional secondary places projected to be needed by 2024.

Regeneration plans for all parts of the borough monitor population and provision rates closely and identify potential news sites, especially around new housing developments. When published the School Organisation Plan will set out the future requirements for school places – this should be closely aligned with our planning and regeneration work, to ensure that there are adequate school places for residents. We will continue to track population growth and migration levels and scope potential sites in areas where additional school provision is likely to be needed.

Educational attainment is low with average scores at Key stage 2, 4 and GCSE all trailing regional and national averages. Sandwell's schools have the lowest Attainment 8 score in the Black Country, while 52% of secondary schools are rated average or below average for Progress 8. This continues for young people and adults. Overall skills levels are still way below national averages - 17% of residents have no formal qualification compared to 11% for England. This can impact on life chances and is reflected in wage levels; Sandwell residents earning around £5,000 less per year compared to national averages and around 25% of residents earning below the Real Living Wage. Low skills contribute to persistent high levels of deprivation and also impact employers, who report skills gaps in their workforces, which hampers long term business growth.

Sandwell has a number of specialisms, in manufacturing, construction, and logistics. There is a growing higher education offer in Sandwell. The University of Wolverhampton already works in partnership with Sandwell College (since 1998) offering foundational degrees to students. Sandwell has an opportunity to build on this and encourage collaboration with other universities in the

West Midlands. Towns Fund investment in Sandwell is set to support high quality skills and training hubs related to key growth sectors and opportunities. This includes the £2.7m Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre, the £12.9m Midland Met Learning Campus in Smethwick and the £9m Rowley Regis Education Hub. These new local facilities will work with business to develop skills for Sandwell's industries of the future. Accelerating the delivery of these and looking to co-locate them with growing businesses will enable Sandwell to maximise the economic benefits of regeneration with skills and jobs growth.

The opening of the Shireland CBSO School in West Bromwich, a High Street Heritage Action Zone in Wednesbury, and a Cultural Action Zone in West Bromwich present opportunities to link cultural regeneration and education and skills infrastructure in Sandwell while addressing the school placement demand. The Shireland pupils will use Sandwell Town Hall's performance space, enabled by One Public Estate work. This represents a new innovative approach to address the decline in the position of the creative arts in many schools, offering access to music education regardless of background in an area where opportunities are

desperately needed. Building on this, Sandwell will continue to explore the co-location and consolidation of services, linking new education facilities to local centres and encouraging the use of communal space by students of all ages.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will deliver new housing developments across regeneration areas promptly and to a high quality. Early priorities include:

The Midland Met Learning Campus – the development of new training facilities next to the major and transformative new hospital development

The Ron Davis Centre – the expansion of our successful adult education centre in Smethwick to cater to new learners

The Digital Den – a new facility to develop digital skills in West Bromwich

The Rowley Regis Education Hub – a new satellite education facility offering tailored courses attuned to local needs and learners of different ages

The Windsor MAT Academy & the CBSO secondary school at Providence Place – two new secondary schools in Smethwick and West Bromwich, providing over 1,000 new school places

The Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre – a new technical campus in West Bromwich delivering opportunities in engineering, advanced manufacturing, construction, and electric vehicle manufacture

We will develop each opportunity to its full potential, promoting clean and green environments

Across Sandwell, we will connect with local teams to encourage interaction between communities and education providers, exploring collaborative and additional community uses of available space

We will use the council's position and powers to unlock sites attractive to investment and to uphold quality

- Identify where connectivity could be enhanced to major education centres active via travel and public transport, ensuring accessibility for all residents



The Midland Met Learning Campus concept



The Rowley Regis Education Hub concept



The Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre concept

11. TRANSPORT

Our five-year ambition is to connect Sandwell's major hubs to the wider region and knit neighbourhoods together with public and active transport

Major internal and external connectivity improvements promise to make travel within the Borough more accessible and more pleasant – building on this by connecting new infrastructure to neighbourhoods via walking and cycling infrastructure will help these improvements to fulfil their promise and improve our places.

Major investment is going to transform the borough's transport offer:

- £5 million CRSTS and TCF investment in the SPRINT strategic bus network phase 1 to be delivered by 2022, and phase 2 by 2027
- £12.5 million Towns Fund investment for transport projects in Rowley Regis, Smethwick, and West Bromwich
- £66.9 million City Region Sustainable Travel Settlements (CRSTS) investment for sustainable transport projects across Sandwell
- £160 million Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) investment for a Wednesbury to Brierley Hill metro extension
- Birchley Island Upgrade, £30m to be completed by 2027

- Rowley Regis Canal Network Connectivity, £2.3m to be completed by 2024
- ULEV Charging Scheme, £1.6m to be completed by 2025

Regional connectivity improvements will also be met by the development of HS2 in Birmingham, providing even better rail access to the rest of the country. Alongside this, enhancements to local rail stations will create public realm gateways to the 2022 Commonwealth Games, which will bring further investment opportunities for the Borough.

This strategy, working in tandem with wider West Midlands strategies and funding, will bring cohesive transport infrastructure to Sandwell and ensure residents will feel the benefits of this major investment.

Context

Sandwell is well-connected regionally and nationally, with good connections to the mainline railway and road networks. The Borough is connected to five motorway junctions, and has twelve railway stations, providing easy access to the wider West Midlands and the rest of England.

Sandwell has particularly knitted to the rest of the Black Country and wider West Midlands, with strong commuting flows in and out of the area.⁹ However, Sandwell is not as well connected internally. Our town centres are disconnected and travelling within the Borough by public transport or active travel is a challenge for too many residents.

Increased car usage across the West Midlands, particularly during the pandemic, has resulted in poor air quality and congestion. 63% of all journeys in the West Midlands are by car and traffic growth in the region is predicted to grow by 46% by 2040.¹⁰ We are focused active travel improvements across the Borough, developing accessible routes and linking neighbourhoods, which have proved popular throughout the pandemic.

Sandwell was declared as an Air Quality Management area in 2005 due to the amount of NO₂ emissions entering the atmosphere, with several locations exceeding the annual mean concentration. While we have achieved significant reductions in emissions per person, transport emissions still remain high, with 98% of emissions produced by road transport.¹¹

9. ONS Census (2011)

10. WMCA Movement for Growth 2016

11. Sandwell Climate Change Strategy 2020 - 2041

12. Sport England, Active Lives Survey May 2017/18

We also face high levels of deprivation. 9% of Year 6 children classed as overweight or obese and 33% of the population classed as 'inactive', compared to 25% nationally.¹² People living in deprived areas are twice as likely to be physically inactive than those living in more prosperous places. To combat this, we have made significant progress to extend active travel provision with the roll out of a cycle hire programme.

We have many opportunities to tackle our challenges. Focusing closely on public and active travel, and convenient alternatives to private car use will help us to connect our towns, improve poor air quality and resident health, and reach its carbon neutrality pledge.

We have already introduced measures to encourage active travel, working with West Midlands Cycle Hire to set up cycle hubs in the region, however, current hubs are concentrated in West Bromwich and Oldbury, meaning the rest of the borough is excluded from accessing the scheme. To reach the target Transport for the West Midlands has set to raise bike journeys in the region to 5% by 2023 (from 2% in 2011), we will need an ambitious strategy to encourage active transport.

The introduction of mini-Holland schemes can help to promote this further, improving connectivity within the Borough and getting residents more

active. The London Boroughs of Enfield, Waltham Forest and Kingston were part of the £90m mini-Holland scheme which aimed to make the boroughs as cycle-friendly as many Dutch cities, where more than 50% of journeys are made by bike. Interventions included segregated cycle lanes, traffic calming measures, redesigned town centres, and cycle hubs. The schemes also tackled challenges with the walking environment by implementing new pedestrian crossings at key locations and creating new public spaces.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will upgrade our transport infrastructure, supporting the growth of our key sectors and making it easier and more convenient for residents and visitors to travel around Sandwell:

Promote and ensure the delivery of major corridor and strategic improvements

The Birchley Island Upgrade – a major infrastructure improvement in Oldbury, increasing highway capacity at the centre of Sandwell

The Wednesbury Metro Extension – an extension to the midland Metro running through Sandwell, bringing high quality public transport to residents across the borough

The A4123 and A461 Multi Modal Corridors –improving capacity and increasing accessibility along our arterial routes

Accelerate Electric Vehicle transition through the Black Country Transport ULEV Strategy

ULEV charging scheme: 250 electric charging points to be delivered across the borough

Explore schemes to expand routes and incentivise active travel, building on the Commonwealth Games legacy and working with anchor institutions to promote routes

Walking and cycling infrastructure – new routes across Sandwell, knitting together neighbourhoods and town centres

Canal network improvements – towpath and accessibility improvements in Rowley Regis to unlock the potential of our urban waterways





12. DIGITAL

Our five-year ambition is to support the rollout and take up of full-fibre and 5G across Sandwell

The increasing digitalisation of our home and work lives means first-class digital infrastructure is vital to Sandwell's economic growth. In addition, the ever-expanding Internet of Things and delivery of public services via digital platforms, including healthcare, means adequate access to digital services, and the skills to use, is becoming increasingly important.

Full fibre connectivity is increasing at pace

We are on track to reach around 90% coverage for Full Fibre to the Premise across Sandwell by 2024/25. Sandwell is part of the multi-million-pound WM5G Pilot and Virgin is launching Gig 2 programme that will roll out full fibre lines to their whole current network. This will mean 85% Virgin cable coverage will be upgraded from cable to full fibre. We are working to ensure that residents and businesses have the skills and infrastructure to access digital infrastructure, through skills investment and connectivity improvements.

Context

With the fast expansion of Full Fibre networks and involvement in the WM5G pilot scheme, we are making good progress on the rollout of super-fast and full fibre digital infrastructure. However, further acceleration of this and efforts to ensure equal access across the whole of the borough are crucial to supporting our large SME business base, which is dependent on reliable digital connectivity. 94% of small business owners rate a reliable broadband connection as critical to business success.

There are also challenges around digital exclusion, which has been heightened during the pandemic, and low digital skills levels, which trail regional averages. 14% of Sandwell's residents have never been online. Sandwell residents' use of basic digital skills is the lowest in the Black Country at only 30%, well below the national average of 50%. Sandwell residents have the requisite digital skills but are not utilising them. Digital exclusion has been exposed by the pandemic

and must be addressed to ensure all residents benefit from a wealthier Sandwell. To do this Sandwell will deliver the West Bromwich Digital Den, providing centrally located, free to use digital facilities that include basic training provisions for residents.

With the delivery of full fibre digital connectivity in the UK being undertaken by market providers, Sandwell is best placed to focus on how it can continue to work with partners to ensure the acceleration and expansion of this infrastructure across the borough. This includes working with Openreach and Virgin to monitor the progress and further expand digital rollouts.

As a public service provider and partner, Sandwell will also consider how it can use digital innovation in delivery of local services to maximum potential. Smart technology and infrastructure innovation could improve service delivery across a range of service areas, including health and social care, education and environment.

Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will support the connection of Sandwell to high-speed networks. New infrastructure will soon connect tens of thousands of premises to full fibre across the borough.

Digital network providers are connecting Sandwell at a fast pace, offering fibre infrastructure across the borough

We will work to ensure the full benefits of this connectivity drives economic growth across the borough, exploring innovative use cases and supporting market providers to continue the rollout of new infrastructure.

Sandwell is part of WM5G, the UK's first region-wide 5G testbed, working to accelerate the rollout of 5G and to test, prove and scale new applications and services

13. SUSTAINABILITY

Our five-year ambition is to invest in to support the transition to net zero

We have set a target to be carbon neutral by 2041, but major investment and action will need to be taken to reach the target, particularly reductions in household and transport emissions. We have many opportunities to tackle the challenges it faces. Major projects and investment can start to improve population health, build climate resilience, and futureproof industries and jobs. Our Climate Change Strategy sets out a clear path towards net zero, with targeted actions to reduce emissions across the borough. The Economic Recovery Plan for Businesses sets out how we will work with business to support their transition to Net Zero. We are building on this, building a new greener Sandwell through our regeneration of our neighbourhoods, the development of new green technologies, and the expansion of our public and active travel network.

Sandwell currently has a £196m pipeline of projects to tackle climate change and reach the carbon neutrality by 2041 goal.

There is a strong relationship between action on climate change and the regeneration opportunities Sandwell faces.

The £115m retrofitting of all relevant Council HRA stock (27,300) by 2027 will see improvements including lost insulation, cavity wall insulation, and double or triple glazing windows, and ultimately deliver green high-quality homes. Beginning with a pilot programme in Smethwick to retrofit 275 homes in high need, this will help households out of fuel poverty, take a strong step towards reaching the carbon neutrality goal, and contribute to local employment and training through modern methods of construction, benefitting jobs at risk of automation or in declining traditional industries.

The investment into clean and local forms of energy generation will mean the Borough is well placed to lead the transition and support the Black Country's ambitious plans to develop a High Value Manufacturing City.

Context

Sandwell currently has high levels of car use, poor air quality and poor health outcomes. In 2018, Sandwell produced 1,448kt of CO₂ emissions, the highest in the Black Country, with the majority of emissions produced by transport. While Sandwell has seen a 32% reduction in CO₂ emissions between 2005 and 2017, with

significant reductions from domestic energy and industrial and commercial sources, there has only been a 5% reduction in transport emissions over the same period.¹³

Tackling the main sources of emissions will be challenging and demand a change in the way we live and work.

- 30% of greenhouse gas emissions are from residential buildings
- 30% of greenhouse gas emissions are from on-road transport
- 18% of greenhouse gas emissions are from institutional buildings and facilities
- 11% of greenhouse gas emissions are from industrial buildings and facilities

Investing in further projects and developments to support the transition to net zero is a priority for our communities to improve health outcomes and quality of life by improving home energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty. This includes the Electric Vehicle charging and active travel proposals set out in the Transport Theme and £40 million investment for a battery energy storage site in West Bromwich. We will complement this with a focus

13. Sandwell Climate Strategy 2020 - 2041

14. State of the Borough Evidence Base, 2020.

15. State of the Borough Evidence Base, 2020.

on energy, tackling fuel poverty and reducing demand on fossil fuels, through the development of the West Bromwich heat network, the exploration of a heat network around Grove Lane in Smethwick. The future investment for a waste to energy plant in West Bromwich will expand energy generation within the borough.

33% of households are low-income households (27% national average)¹⁴ and 17% of households are fuel poor, far higher than the national average of 11%.¹⁵ £155 million investment has been earmarked for Council housing retrofit. Retrofit is a West Midlands Combined Authority priority, with a target of retrofitting

50,000 homes by the end of 2022. Sandwell is preparing to retrofit its own housing stock; via the social housing decarbonisation fund, Sandwell will retrofit 275 homes in Smethwick. Sandwell has also applied to the WMCA Net Zero Neighbourhood Demonstrator to retrofit 304 homes in Tipton.

We are expanding sustainable energy generation in Sandwell, developing a specialism that will create jobs here and allow us to be at the heart of net zero transition in the West Midlands. The Enfinium energy from waste plant in West Bromwich will create 40 new jobs, diverting waste from landfill and transforming this into energy.

This will lead to a net saving in carbon, and via a local heat network provide local premises with sustainable heat.



Actions: How we'll make this happen

We will invest in our net zero transition, retrofitting homes to improve energy efficiency, encouraging sustainability in transport and business, and exploring new opportunities to develop energy generation across the borough. Early priorities include:

Retrofitting housing stock across the borough, improving their energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty, beginning with a pilot of 275 homes in Smethwick

The development of a heat network in West Bromwich and the exploration of a new network in Smethwick, reusing waste energy for heat generation

The development of the Enfinium waste to energy plant in West Bromwich, generating energy from waste for local use

The West Bromwich Battery Energy Storage Site, a £40m investment in cutting edge green technology

We will work to ensure the delivery of retrofit across Sandwell's social housing, working with regional and national authorities on ambitious schemes to reduce fuel poverty and increase sustainability

We will enhance our green spaces, planning strategically to regulate air quality

We will explore the potential for future heat networks on new developments, ensuring new growth is sustainable





14. DELIVERING THE PLAN

This is a shared plan for Sandwell, requiring collaboration between the council and strategic partners in regional government, other public sector organisations, and the private sector. Where regeneration has been most transformative, it has been guided by consistent and concerted strategic place leadership working to a clear vision for an area over a sustained period of time. We will look to do the same working with partners, business, and communities to deliver existing projects, develop future plans and drive additional investment.

Linked to the Appendix *Economic Recovery Plan for Businesses*, we will look to make community wealth building a reality as we deliver this strategy. Significant investments

from the regeneration pipeline will increase tendering opportunities for local businesses. As well as increase our own spend, we want to encourage our businesses to increase theirs by raising awareness of local suppliers.

The West Midlands is home to the largest Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), and Sandwell MBC works with the WMCA and Black Country LEP to deliver results. Coordinating between organisations can unlock opportunities at scale, particularly in transport, connecting to the rest of the West Midlands conurbation, helping people travel in and out of Sandwell. It also requires careful alignment to ensure that developments are delivered in the most effective way possible.

We need to collaborate with our partners in WMCA, the Black Country Consortium, and national departments to prepare land. Working closely to provide proposals for the Brownfield Housing Fund will help us to achieve our shared ambitions for our place. Our location and assets put us in a viable position to grow, which is held back by the costs of bringing land forward. Setting out our ambition and articulating our goals in clear terms will help us to bring partners together to prepare and market our land.

Many of the actions in this strategy require their support – we have identified the role of each in forwarding the actions of this strategy.



Organisation	Role
Sandwell Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify development opportunities • Convene partners and lead vision and masterplan development • Work with partners to identify funding for development • Main delivery body for retrofit of council stock • Directly deliver development via Council House Build programmes / Housing Company and / or revolving fund
Developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver major schemes in line with masterplans and identified visions • Collaborate on visioning for key centres and major development • Work with Sandwell on retrofit schemes
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express business needs clearly to Sandwell and regional partners • Work with Sandwell to identify opportunities to expand or densify premises on existing plots • Explore opportunities for retrofit and sustainable development
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation in placemaking and vision development for major centres and schemes
Regional business organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support identification of employment land opportunities and growth areas within Sandwell • Identify inward inquiries which match Sandwell business profile
Regional government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out regional transport schemes in line with Sandwell local priorities • Reach out with new funding opportunities, making Sandwell aware and supporting bids, e.g., brownfield

Measuring Our Success

This is a live document, and we will monitor it over the next five years to update as projects are delivered and new projects emerge. We will measure progress against clear indicators, which are set out below. Progress will be reported and monitored by Cabinet every six months.

Through delivery against this strategy, by 2027 we will have:

- Increased the number of new homes, including affordable homes
 - Remediated more brown-field land for housing and employment
 - Created new commercial, creative and educational spaces to enliven our centres and create opportunity
 - Create the employment spaces to deliver new jobs and unlock new construction jobs
- Provide new facilities for learners at every level
 - Expand our electric vehicle charging infrastructure
 - Connect premises to high speed connections across the borough

We are already focused on delivery, with the Pipeline anticipated to deliver over 4,000 new homes and circa 100 hectares of remediated land. But we need to do more. Our project pipeline is dynamic and will be regularly updated to reflect new opportunities and changes to our projects. We will regularly assess our projects against the priorities in this plan and continue to focus our resources on the interventions which have the largest effect.

Sandwell is focused on delivering success. At the outset of this strategy, we set out a clear vision for regeneration activity – to create a wealthier Sandwell. Our seven priorities, and the actions needed to achieve these, will move us towards this vision. To ensure we remain focused, we will monitor and track the progress of our actions over time, updating actions in line with our corporate management framework.

This is an exciting moment for Sandwell. The £1.8bn regeneration pipeline will transform the borough, bring new jobs and homes for our residents and creating a wealthier Sandwell.



