Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

Local Highways Maintenance Transparency Report 2025-26

Annex A

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1. Sandwell's Highway Network

If you live, work or pass through Sandwell on foot, by cycling, using public or personal transport, you will use the Borough's highway network. The Sandwell highway network is over 876 km in length and is divided into various asset types for the purpose of maintenance. These include carriageways, footways, bridges and other structures, traffic signals, traffic signs, highway drainage and street lighting. The whole network has an estimated value of £3.9 billion, which makes it the largest and most visible asset Sandwell Council is responsible for.

Table 1. below provides an overview of the length of the different classes of road in Sandwell.

Table 1. Carriageway and Footway Lengths in Sandwell

Lengths of highway, footways, and cycleways (km)						
A roads	B and C roads	U roads	Total roads	Footways and remote footpaths	Other public rights of way	Cycleways (including on road and off road routes, excludes canal towpaths)
127.3km	94.8km	654.3km	876.4km	1480.2km	106km	10.29km

The Council also maintains other assets associated with the public highway, including:

- 311 traffic signal sites, comprising a mix of pedestrian crossings, signalised junctions, and roundabouts and some 85 zebra crossings.
- Over 30,000 streetlights and around 3000 illuminated signs
- Structures including 117 bridges, 579 retaining walls and 31 culverts
- 41,857 drainage gullies with associated access covers and pipework
- Other assets such as traffic signs, street name plates, bollards, guard rails, road markings and vehicular restraint systems.

2. Highways maintenance spending figures

Table 2. – Highway maintenance spending

Highway maintenance spending						
Year	Capital allocated by Department of Transport (DfT)	Additional Council Capital	Total Capital spend	Revenue spend	Estimate of % spent on preventative maintenance	Estimate of % spent on reactive maintenance
2025/26 (projected)	£8,436,590.41	£2,500,000	£10,936,590.41	£3,902,758	91.9%	8.1%
2024/25	£5,250,300	£2,694,000	£7,944,300.00	£3,820,051	89.5%	10.5%
2023/24	£5,962,300	£4,889,000	£10,851,300.00	£5,703,774	91%	9%
2022/23	£4,741,300	£3,148,000	£7,889,300.00	£5,004,978	90.6%	9.4%
2021/22	£4,006,000	£447,000	£4,453,000.00	£3,622,198	86%	14%
2020/21	£5,413,000	£1,754,000	£7,167,000.00	£3,933,986	89.6%	10.4%

Additional information on spending:

In Sandwell, we consider prevention is better than cure and we work hard to ensure we prevent potholes from forming in our road network.

Potholes typically form when water seeps through cracks in the road surface. When this water freezes, it expands and damages the road surface. This freeze-thaw cycle, combined with traffic, will eventually break up the road surface and create potholes.

Our Highway Maintenance programmes are targeted at preventing water penetrating the road surface and hence prevent potholes.

Sandwell Council uses best practice asset management techniques to identify when to intervene to stop minor defects, such as surface cracks in the road from escalating into more significant ones such as potholes. This approach extends the life of roads, is less expensive in the long term, saving taxpayers money, leads to less congestion and improved health benefits. Typically, 90% highway maintenance spend in Sandwell goes on preventing defects becoming serious issues. It also ensures that, given the length of the road network in Sandwell, we repair relatively few potholes.

About 10% of the funding for highway maintenance is spent on reactive maintenance such as repairing potholes. Last year Sandwell fixed 1287 potholes. Table 3 below shows the number of potholes fixed in each of the last five years.

The data we have collected on the condition of carriageways over many years is used to develop a set of lifecycle modelling and deterioration tools. These tools enable different capital maintenance scenarios to be modelled to determine which one provides the best long-term outcome. Last year Sandwell proactively resurfaced and reconstructed 14.1km (9.5miles) of road and undertook other surface treatments to 35.2km (23.5miles). The programme for this coming year will be similar.

Sandwell have used the data collected on footway condition over many years to develop lifecycle modelling and deterioration tools. We have used this modelling to identify a preventive maintenance programme of £3.31m for the Boroughs footways.

A programme of bridge inspections identifies the maintenance and repairs needed to prolong the life of bridges in the Borough. Bridge inspections have resulted in a c£1.5m preventative bridge maintenance programme in 2025/26 to maintain Borough's bridge stock in good condition. Sandwell has no structures in very poor or red risk condition.

Sandwell has successfully delivered a major bridge refurbishment scheme in each the last three years with Dudley Street Bridge being completed this year. Next year Dudley Port Bridge, which carries the A461 over the Birmingham Canal, is planned to be replaced or strengthened as part of a wider West Midlands improvement plan.

Table 3. Number of carriageway and footway defects repaired

Estimate of number of reactive carriageway potholes filled					
Financial Year	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**	**2023/24**	**2024/25**
Carriageway	1619	1739	1413	1812	1287

3. Condition of local roads

Table 4. Principal A Road Performance Indicators

Year	Percentage of A Class roads in each condition category		
	Red	Amber	Green
2020	2.7%	19.9%	77.4%
2021	2.7%	19.4%	78.0%
2022	2.5%	19.9%	77.6%
2023	2.5%	19.9%	77.6%
2024	2.4%	20.0%	77.6%

Sandwell collect condition data on our A Class Roads using a technique referred to as ‘’Surface Condition Assessment for the National Network of Roads’’ (SCANNER) surveys. The survey collects data on 50% of the network each year and the figures above represent a combination of two years’ worth of data.

As can be seen in Table. 4 the condition of the principal A Class Road network has remained broadly stable over the last 5 years, in good overall condition.

Table 5. B and C Class Road Performance Indicators

Year	Percentage of B and C roads in each condition category		
	Red	Amber	Green
2020/21	2.22%	19.64%	78.14%
2021/22	2.70%	19.55%	77.75%
2022/23	2.62%	21.00%	76.39%
2023/24	2.21%	21.06%	76.73%
2024/25	2.18%	20.87%	76.95%

Sandwell collect condition data on our B and C Class Roads also using SCANNER surveys. As for A Class roads, the survey collects data on 50% of the network each year and the figures above represent a combination of two years’ worth of data.

The condition of the B and C roads in Sandwell has also remained broadly stable over the last five years in good overall condition.

Table 6. Unclassified Carriageway Performance Indicators.

Year	Percentage of U Roads in the Red category
2019-20	15%
2020-21	17%
2021-22	18%
2022-23	19%
2023-24	22%
2024-25	23%

The method Sandwell us to collect condition data on our unclassified carriageway network is different, using Course Visual Inspections or (CVI) surveys. This data is collected over a four-year period and then combined to provide the condition indicators in Table 6 above.

The condition of the unclassified carriageway network in Sandwell has shown a slight deteriorating trend in recent years, although Sandwell has secured additional funding and have plans in place that will address this and maintain the condition of the unclassified carriageway network in a satisfactory state.

Further information relating to the different types of survey used is available online at Section 3: measuring surface condition using manual visual surveys - GOV.UK.

Surface Condition Assessment for the National Network of Roads (SCANNER) Surveys

As referred to above, road condition assessments on the local classified road network in England are currently made predominantly using Surface Condition Assessment for the National Network of Roads (SCANNER) laser-based technology.

A number of parameters measured in these surveys are used to produce a road condition indicator which is categorised into three condition categories:

- Green – No further investigation or treatment required
- Amber – Maintenance may be required soon
- Red – Should be considered for maintenance

From 2026/27 a new methodology will be used based on the BSI PAS2161 standard. Local Highway Authorities will be required to use a supplier that has been accredited against PAS2161 to undertake surveys. This new standard will categorise roads into five categories instead of three to help the government gain a more detailed understanding of road condition in England.

Further details are available at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/road-condition-statistics-data-tables-rdc#condition-of-local-authority-managed-roads-rdc01

4. Plans

Overall strategy

The Council's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) provides the framework for how the highway network is managed Sandwell.

The HIAMP sets out how we:

- Meet our legal and statutory obligations to manage and operate the highway
- Keep the public safe
- Maintain reliable access

And how we do this in an affordable and sustainable manner.

It describes the strategic tools that Sandwell use such as lifecycle modelling for each critical highway asset, financial planning and spending priorities that underpin value for money savings and service benefits for highway users whether they be residents, businesses, or visitors.

In short it describes how the road network is managed in a cost effective and customer focused way.

Key elements of the Council's infrastructure asset management approach set out in this HIAMP include:

- Taking a lifecycle approach to the management of critical infrastructure assets
- Developing cost-effective long-term management strategies
- Providing affordable levels of service and monitoring service performance
- Managing risks associated with highway infrastructure assets
- Sustainable use of physical resources
- Establishing continuous improvement in asset management practices.

The HIAMP is subject to periodic review and approval by Cabinet, the latest being June 2025.

Sandwell Council use a wide range of plant and materials to help deliver highway maintenance programmes and maintain the highway network in a safe and useable condition for all road users.

The Council are always looking at new and innovative products and techniques to drive continuous improvement. Examples of the innovation that have been or are currently being used and assessed include:

- The acquisition of a Multi-Hog machine in 2025. This is an example of how Sandwell are looking to prepare the road surface for repairs much more quickly, reducing the need for temporary repairs to fix a pothole or road defect and ensuring we can fix more potholes ‘’right first time’’.

- The commencement of a trial for asphalt recycling, enabling old asphalt removed from worn out roads to be reused in new road construction. This not only

contributes to sustainability and carbon reduction objectives but also saves taxpayers money.

- Creation of a carbon baseline that both helps the Council to understand where the emissions are coming from (primarily purchased products and services) and enables monitoring progress towards carbon neutrality.

- Participation in the Live Labs 2 – Centre for Excellence for Decarbonised Road (CEDR) Project. Sandwell is focussed on innovations in surface dressing and micro asphalt and have provided trial sites for pothole repairs that have helped refine suitable innovative materials. Sandwell are also involved in knowledge sharing to benefit from trials conducted elsewhere in the West Midlands, such as products that enable safer charging of electric vehicles across pavements. More on this can be found on the climate change, resilience, and adaptation section below.

Specific plans for 2025/26

During 2025/26 Sandwell's preventive maintenance programme aims to:

- Undertake 49 carriageway resurfacing schemes
- 77 carriageway surface treatment schemes
- 30 footway resurfacing schemes
- 150 footway surface treatment schemes
- Continue with the planned and reactive replacement of street lighting columns informed by the structural inspection regime,
- Undertake preventive maintenance and repairs to the Boroughs bridges, informed by the inspection regime,
- The Dudley Port Bridge, Tipton will move into detailed design, with a view to commencing the construction in 2026.
- Maintaining all traffic signals and controlled pedestrian crossings to a high standard to ensure the safety of all road users and the efficient operation of the highway network. Sandwell is also currently transitioning traffic signal illumination to LED lighting.
- Sandwell has commissioned Jacobs to undertake a survey of Sandwell's vehicle restraint systems (VRS) and crash-barriers, with barrier locations being inspected for condition, type, and for compliance to Highways Structures & Bridges Design Requirements for Road Restraint System. A programme of repairing/upgrading has been designed to upgrade the Borough's VRS, phased over a 5-year timescale with a budget of £250,000 per financial year.

Streetworks

Sandwell is a permitting authority, and the Sandwell permit team assess all applications for streetworks submitted by utility companies, paying particular attention to any works that require carriageway incursion or positive traffic management. The Council will impose relevant conditions to permits if disruption is anticipated, such as include the use of automated smart signals, manual control of signals and restricted working hours. The authority has identified that reducing the number of phases installed on temporary signals can dramatically limit traffic disruption.

Emergency works are often the most impactive causing disruption. Sandwell receive many reports throughout the day from Transport for West Midlands. These show current network performance and give advanced notification of emergency works on strategic roads before the utilities have served a permit. This provides an opportunity for the Council to inspect the works before receiving an emergency or urgent permit and to immediately place appropriate conditions on the utility service to minimise congestion.

Sandwell hold required quarterly coordination meetings with the utilities and in-house works promoters. These provide opportunities for collaborative working and enable utilities to undertake planned work prior to the internal promoters works. This practice is designed to not only assist collaboration but also to reduce the damage caused to new infrastructure by utility works.

Sandwell are proactive members of the Joint Authorities Group (JAG), chairing West Midlands JAG and are members of JAG UK, both of which aim to share and promote best practice in streetworks and traffic management.

The Council actively encourage utilities to undertake first time reinstatement as any visit to progress interim reinstatement to permanent reinstatement will require additional disruption on the network.

Sandwell use One.Network extensively to assist in the coordination of streetworks and provide a link on the SMBC internet pages to One.Network for residents and elected representatives to view current and upcoming streetworks. Training has also been provided to Sandwell Councillors.

Other information regarding events/parades/and festivals is also placed on the One.Network map. This information will typically include event timings, proposed traffic management and any parking restrictions. On occasions other documents are added onto One.Network, for example traffic management plans in place for West Bromwich Albion home games.

The information added to One.Network is automatically routed to vehicle Sat Nav systems with the objective in helping reduce congestion.

Climate change, resilience, and adaptation

Sandwell Council is committed to continuous improvement through innovation in both processes and products.

The Council are trialling innovative processes and products within and outside the Live Labs 2 Centre of Excellence for Decarbonising Roads project. Live Labs 2 is a DfT funded project focused on decarbonising highway maintenance. Sandwell are working with Transport for West Midlands on identifying demonstration sites for innovative process and products within the Borough, such as the use of geosynthetics, rejuvenators, preservatives, and innovative pothole repair materials.

Sandwell are also trialling a new micro asphalt material which has fibre enhanced durability, which is designed to extend the life of the treatment, prolong retained texture and provide increased resistance to delamination. The authority also continues to use low-carbon treatment options, such as surface dressing and slurry seal, to prolong the life of carriageways and footways.

Sandwell has contributed to a reduction in carbon emissions through converting the majority of our streetlights and traffic signals to low energy LED.

The adoption of a carbon calculator enables a baseline carbon to be established from which future decisions on decarbonising highway maintenance can be made.

Additional information on plans

Further details of Sandwell structural and preventative maintenance programmes are published annually online.