Highway Infrastructure

Asset Management Policy

August 2026

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Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is the Highway Authority responsible for maintaining all highway that is maintainable at public expense within the Borough, except for motorways and trunk roads managed by Highways England. Under the Highways Act 1980, the Council has a statutory duty to maintain the highway network and ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that it remains safe and assessable for all users.

This Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy sets out the Councils commitments that the Council will:

- Manage the highway infrastructure assets using a risk-based asset management approach
- Maintain the highway network in accordance with our statutory duties and adopted levels of service
- Prioritise investment based on need, risk, whole life cost and value for money, with a focus on preventative treatments
- Support economic Growth, accessibility, sustainability and community wellbeing
- Improve network resilience
- Use data and evidence to inform decision making
- Continuously review and improve asset management practices

This Policy not only supports Sandwell's statutory duties it also forms part of a suite of asset management documents that have been developed in in accordance with best practice asset management guidance. It demonstrates Sandwell's commitment to asset management and supports future funding through the DfT Incentive Fund and Transparency Report submission process.

The Department for Transport (DfT) now requires all local highway authorities in England to publish an annual **local highways maintenance transparency report**, which for 2026/27 includes, a **core report**, and a **technical annex** to unlock incentive funding. These public-facing documents explain how councils manage and invest public money to maintain local roads, fix potholes, and plan future repairs.

Sandwell has adopted an Asset Management approach to managing and maintaining its highway infrastructure. This is a systematic and strategic approach that will enable us to make informed, risk-based decisions over what services we aim to provide and what can be achieved within our financial resources, taking account of changing network demands, asset condition and resilience to future risks, including climate change. It enables us to identify the best allocation of our resources for the management, operation, preservation and enhancement of the highway infrastructure to meet the needs of current and future demands.

This policy and the Asset Management Strategy are supported by the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP). The HIAMP is the framework that sets out how we invest in, manage and operate the highway infrastructure to meet our statutory obligations, satisfy public expectations and contribute to the delivery of The Council Plan for 2024 – 2027.

The highway infrastructure is Sandwell's most visible and valuable infrastructure asset. It is used daily by residents, businesses and visitors alike, making an important contribution to economic growth, social inclusion, community safety, education and health. The highway infrastructure under our control comprises of a network consisting of 877km of roads and 1480km of footways. In order for us to achieve cost effective maintenance for the future, the management, development and maintenance of the highway infrastructure assets is key.

The West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) produced the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan (WMSTP), '*Movement for Growth'* in partnership with Sandwell and its neighbouring councils. It sets out the policies, strategies, objectives and targets for improving regional transport. The West Midlands Metropolitan area vision for transport is:

"*We will make great progress for a midlands economic 'Engine for Growth', clean air, improved health and quality of life for the people of the West Midlands. We will do this by creating a transport system befitting a sustainable, attractive and economically vibrant conurbation in the world's sixth largest economy*".

This highway infrastructure asset management policy is aligned to the WMSTP vision and will help deliver its five key challenges:

- Economic growth and economic inclusion
- Population growth and housing development
- Environment
- Public health
- Social well-being

The West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan - Movement for Growth - is still the most relevant overarching policy, the document is currently being refreshed and consultation for the revised document and associated strategies is currently being undertaken.

Sandwell Council Plan 2024-2027

A Council Plan for 2024 – 2027 has been developed, this Plan has been shaped by the consultations that were carried out during 2021 – 2023 inclusive. It reflects the things that people have told us are important to them and it contains clear goals that the council will work towards over the next few years. Based on feedback from our stakeholders this places focus around four strategic themes:

- Growing up in Sandwell
- Living in Sandwell
- Healthy in Sandwell
- Thriving Economy in Sandwell

The HIAMP details how we will deliver on these strategic themes and how we will measure our success. Appendix A highlights how Highways Services and the Asset Management Plan contribute to achieving the goals that have been set.

The highway infrastructure is internally managed by Highway Services, a division within the Directorate of Place. The asset management approach will directly support the key aims of Highway Services:

- Improving the safety of the highway network
- Integrate with developments and to support economic growth
- Reduce congestion, improve access to businesses and improve health
- Ensure that highway infrastructure and the fabric of the highway network is maintained to a functional standard.
- Manage the safe and efficient free flow of traffic on the highway network.

Climate Change, Resilience and Adaptation

The Council recognises that climate change and the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events present risks to the condition, performance and resilience of highway infrastructure. Potential hazards, including flooding and intense rainfall, prolonged high temperatures, drought and severe weather, will therefore be considered as part of the Council's risk-based approach to highway asset management.

The Council will continue to develop its understanding of highway assets to climate-related risks and, where appropriate, use available asset condition, drainage, flood risk and weather-related information to inform maintenance priorities, lifecycle planning and investment decisions. Resilience and adaptation will be considered through measures including preventative maintenance, drainage management, appropriate material and treatment selection and the trial and adoption of innovative technologies and practices.

The Council will also seek opportunities to reduce the carbon impact of highway maintenance through lower-carbon treatments, materials and technologies where these provide appropriate whole-life performance and value.

Recommendations

The adoption of a highway infrastructure asset management framework brings a strategic approach to the management of the highway infrastructure to meet the current and future network demands. In addition, it will ensure that highway infrastructure assets are maintained to support both the local economy and the delivery of services whilst optimising the funding available and sustaining long term performance.

This Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy shall be reviewed every three years, or sooner should legislative, organisational or strategic changes require it. Responsibility for implementation rests with the Executive Director of Place.