

SMETHWICK PLAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

2025 Engagement Report

November 2025



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Introduction

Smethwick is one of 75 towns across the UK identified to receive up to £20 million of Government funding over the next 10-years, through the Plan for Neighbourhoods Programme.

This long-term funding is a real opportunity for change but more importantly, **it puts power where it belongs - in our hands as a community.** This programme is designed to ensure that we, the people who live and work in Smethwick, lead the way in setting priorities and shaping projects for our town.

Our Smethwick Partnership Board, working closely with Sandwell Council as the Accountable Body, will ensure local voices are at the very heart of every decision. We are committed to ensuring that this investment delivers on the things that matter most to our community.

Our belief is simple yet powerful:

Together, we can achieve more.

Together, we will create a 10-year Regeneration Plan and an initial 4-year Investment Plan, setting out activities and projects that will be pursued to achieve the three objectives set by the Government:

- Thriving Places
- Stronger Communities
- Taking Back Control

The plans will be submitted to the Government by 28 November 2025 and will focus on the pre-approved intervention themes¹ set by the Government, which reflect the things many of us already care about:

- Regeneration, high streets and heritage
- Education and opportunity
- Work, productivity and skills
- Safety and Security
- Housing
- Cohesion
- Health and wellbeing
- Transport

¹ The wording of these priorities was refined during the engagement process to improve clarity and ensure residents and other stakeholders fully understood the focus and scope of each priority.

Engagement objectives and methodology

Staying connected with our community is a top priority. We want to make sure that everyone in Smethwick - individuals, groups, businesses and local organisations - has the chance to get involved and share their ideas.

The Government has said that they do not expect project delivery to start until April 2026, which gives us time to plan carefully and make sure the process for identifying projects is fair, inclusive and shaped by what you tell us matters most.

Engagement methodology

On 15 May 2025, the Smethwick Partnership Board Subgroup - responsible for organising the programme's initial engagement activities - reiterated a strong message: the plan must be shaped by, and for, Smethwick communities.

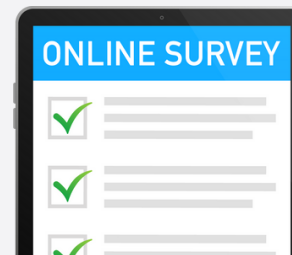
Therefore, a short online survey was created to understand what matters most to the people who live and work in Smethwick. Feedback from the survey will help shape the Smethwick Plan for

Neighbourhoods, identify key priorities for the town and guide how funding is used to deliver improvements across Smethwick. The survey launched on 1 July 2025 and closed on 22 August 2025.

Our Board also held community workshops across the town during this initial engagement period, where businesses, community and faith leaders met Board Smethwick Partnership Board members and identified issues, shared ideas and suggested how funding should be spent.

Have your say on Smethwick's future

Take the short survey to help set priorities and guide funding for improvements in Smethwick.



Victoria Park, Smethwick



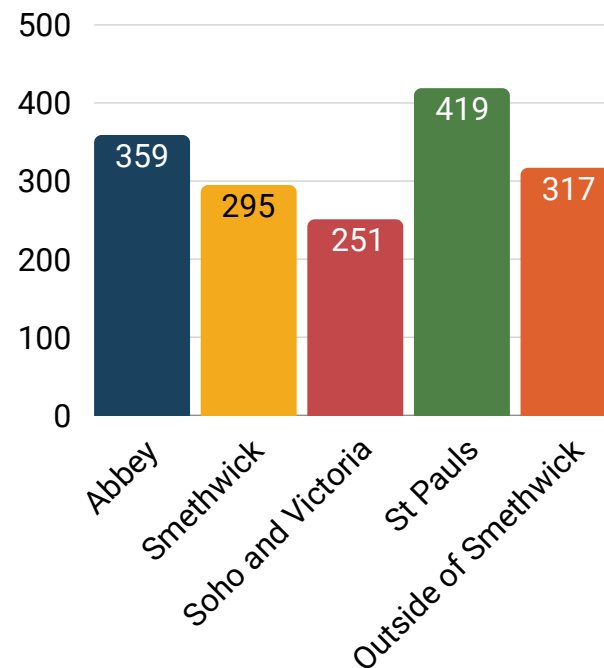
Map exercise at community workshops

Engagement

The engagement data is based on current ward boundaries prior to confirmation of the new ward boundaries under the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review.

Online survey

A total of 1,641 surveys responses were submitted by midnight 22 August 2025.



Community workshops

Eight community workshops were held across Smethwick from 28 July to 22 August 2025. The workshops were attended by 150 people, where 60 community groups and organisations were represented.

Sandwell Council officers were tasked to contact groups/ organisations on the Plan for Neighbourhoods Mailing List to promote the community workshops, to promote and encourage completion of the online survey and arrange a visit to discuss the programme in more detail.



Workshop at West Smethwick Park Pavilion

Community organisations by Ward ²	No. of groups contacted via email or phone	No. of groups visited in person	No. of groups represented at workshops
Abbey (8)	5	4	4
Smethwick (18)	17	12	9
Soho and Victoria (21)	19	15	17
St Pauls (15)	15	13	11
Smethwick Total (62)	56	44	41
Borough-wide (delivering in Smethwick)	10	9	6
Total	66	53	47

Places of worship in Smethick ³	No. of groups contacted via email or phone	No. of groups visited in person	No. of groups represented at workshops
Church (23)	17	18	5
Gurdwara (4)	4	3	2
Mosque (4)	4	3	1
Temple (2)	2	0	0
Other (1)	0	1	0
Total	27	25	8

² It was not possible to visit or contact every organisation, and not all those reached chose to attend workshops. Some organisations participated despite not having direct contact or a visit from a Sandwell Council officer.

³ See note above.



Map exercise at community workshops

Businesses by Ward	No. contacted by email or phone	No. visited in person
Abbey	2	37
Smethwick	35	35
Soho and Victoria	24	30
St Pauls	22	37
Total	83	139

Our engagement plan

Preparation for the engagement tasks and activities carried out by the Smethwick Partnership Board Subgroup and Sandwell Council officers began in June 2025 and ran through July and August 2025. Subgroup members and Sandwell Council officers met regularly to monitor results as they developed, and to adapt actions as necessary to ensure as much engagement as possible within the engagement window.

June 2025 - Week 1

- Planning for engagement commenced
- Smethwick Partnership Board website launched
- Promotional material drafted
- Social media initial promotions

June 2025 - Week 2

- Community groups identified and database created to be shared with the Board for additions and checking
- Initial survey targets set (400 spread across Smethwick).

June 2025 - Weeks 3 and 4

- Workshop planning with Sandwell Council officers commenced
- Templates/ materials created for Sandwell Council officers to use when contacting mailing list members/ local groups and organisations

July 2025 - Week 1

- Online survey launched 1 July 2025
- 4 tablets ordered for carrying out surveys with communities across the town
- Spreadsheet tracker created to monitor Sandwell Council officers calls and follow-ups with groups
- Targeted emails sent out e.g. key partners, schools, etc.
- Social media promotion round 2
- Initial calls to groups from database
- Visits began with groups to encourage survey sharing and completion

July 2025 - Week 2

- Eventbrite workshop booking link went live on 7 July and shared with database and promoted online
- All venues for workshops visited, paid for and logistics of events planned.
- A reminder was sent to 37 partners/ representatives of services to share workshop invites (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch, Tenants and Leaseholders Group)
- Smethwick Elected Members meeting held to formally launch the programme and to rehearse the suggested format of the workshops and trial potential activities
- Multiple visits were made to groups, contacts and institutions, occasionally coinciding with Safer 6 Smethwick week
- Promotion included in Sandwell Herald Summer 2025 edition.

July 2025 - Week 3 and 4

- Direct contact made with businesses on Bearwood High Street
- West Midlands Police officers and PCSO's briefed to share and complete surveys as part of rounds
- Posters with QR codes shared to complete surveys and book tickets to community workshops.

July 2025 - Week 5

- First workshop held led to small adjustments in format and organisation
- All Safe Spaces on Bearwood High Street targeted with ASB officer
- Folders created to record notes from workshop activities

August 2025 - Week 1

- Latest statistics analysed by Ward Coordinator
- Focus on businesses - model email created to target businesses and a tracker to monitor responses
- Care homes and GP services contacted

August 2025 - Week 2

- Focus on faith groups - visits to gurdwaras and mosques arranged
- Focus on young people - Sandwell Council officers attended events and with Youth Detached Teams in Smethwick parks
- Large institutions such as Sandwell Aquatics Centre and Midland Met Hospital contacted to promote surveys with staff and users
- Councillors prompted to share survey/ workshop dates with residents at walkabouts and surgeries

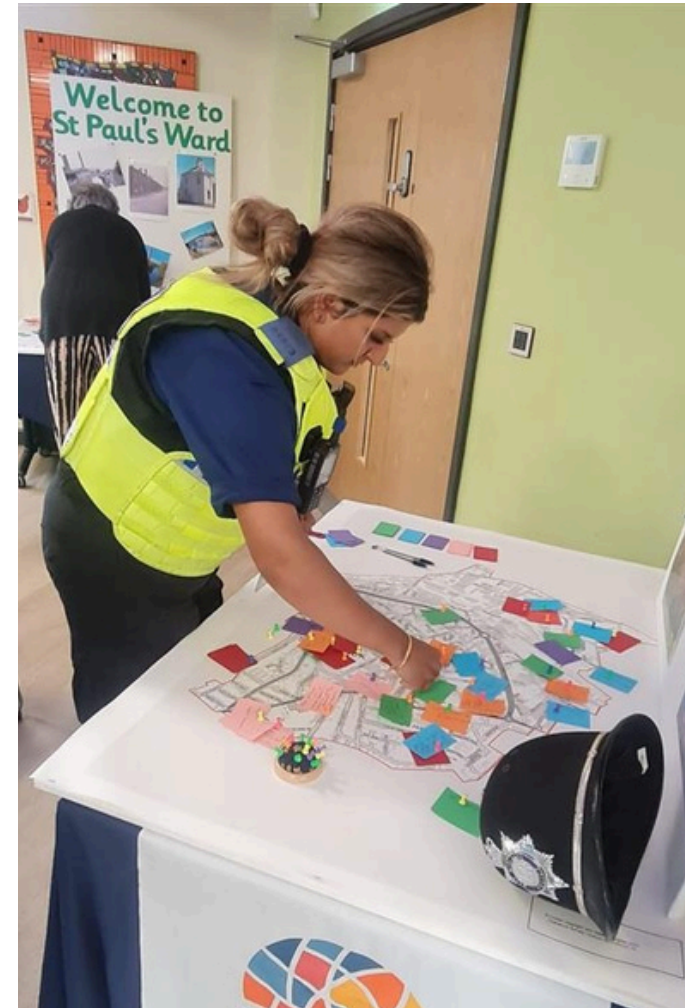
August 2025 - Week 3

- Timetable of drop-in locations with a target of 10 surveys completed at each e.g. Smethwick Library, Warley Woods, Council One Stop Shop
- Housing officers asked to complete surveys as part of their housing checks
- Public health prompted to share and encourage survey completion with users and contacts
- Sandwell Council Press Office asked to push surveys again to all council staff who live/ work in Smethwick
- A video introducing the Smethwick Partnership Board and programme produced and shared online
- Re-focus on churches - tracker created and all establishments contacted and/ or visited again
- Sandwell Council contact centre asked to send survey information again to all staff and to prompt/ direct users to surveys

August 2025 - Week 4

- Over the weekend of 16 and 17 August, the milestone of 1,000 surveys completed was achieved
- Meeting held to reform various trackers and consolidate data (new faith tracker and separate business tracker)

- Attendance at the Smethwick job centre staff meeting to reinforce the purpose of the survey and answer any questions
- Final workshop held on 22 August and final surveys encouraged before midnight deadline



Map exercise at community workshops

At the start of the engagement period in June 2025, our mailing list included 142 contacts representing 112 Smethwick community groups and organisations, along with 43 contacts from other groups across the borough delivering services or activities in Smethwick.

By the end of the engagement period in August 2025, the mailing list had grown to 204 contacts for 133 Smethwick-based groups and 73 contacts for borough-wide organisations active in Smethwick.

During this time, 412 members of the public also requested to join the mailing list.

Many groups valued the opportunity to build stronger links with the Smethwick Partnership Board and Sandwell Council, and to learn more about the Sandwell Council Neighbourhood Services Team through the engagement process.

Community workshops format

At each workshop, Smethwick Partnership Board (the Board) members greeted attendees and introduced themselves and their roles before the Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods video was shown.



Attendees were then asked to participate in round table discussions with fellow community representatives and organisers, businesses, stakeholders and service providers.

Next, a mapping exercise focused attendees on potential locations of quick wins and the priorities therein. Finally, attendees had the chance to leave a 'postcard' comment with their vision of long-term outcomes for interventions across the 10-years.

These workshops offered excellent opportunities for the community to question Board members about the plan and to influence the thinking of the Board, for example the community workshops led to the appointment of youth representative members.

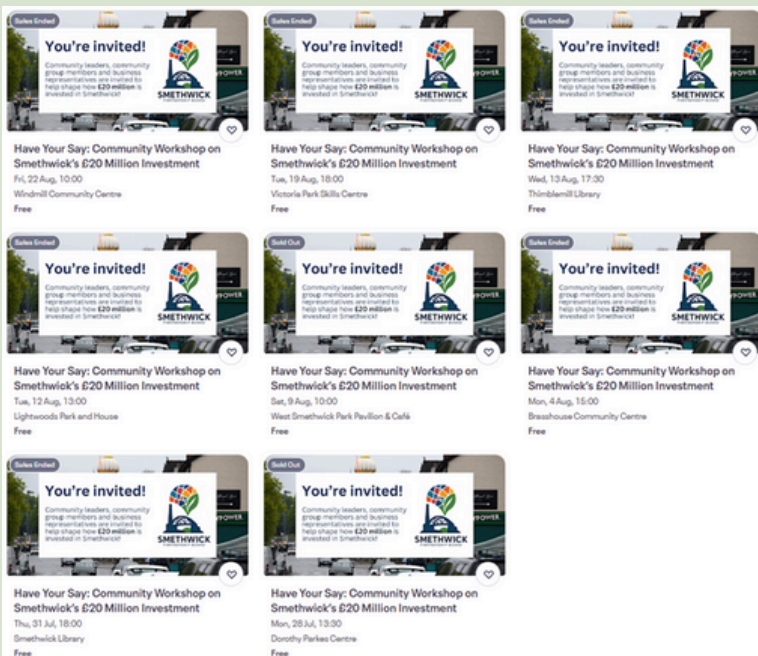
From the workshop welcome script:

"The purpose of this workshop is to bring people together – local leaders, organisations and businesses, to talk honestly about the issues, challenges and opportunities in Smethwick.

If you have any questions about the Board, please come and talk to us – we will be around throughout the session and will be joining in the workshop today.

The ward maps provide opportunity to get more specific – mapping out locations where change is needed and identifying projects that have the potential to be delivered quickly and would make a difference to your communities."

Workshops were often oversubscribed and frequently extended beyond their scheduled finish time, demonstrating the strong appetite of the attendees to engage in the engagement process.



Eventbrite – Community workshops promotion

Smethwick's £20 Million Investment



We were proud to be one of the venues selected to host a recent community workshop as part of Smethwick's exciting £20 million investment initiative.

Organised by the Smethwick Partnership Board, these workshops are a vital part of the Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods Programme, which aims to empower local communities to shape the future of their area.

The session held at the Dorothy Parkes Centre brought together local residents, community leaders, and business representatives to discuss key issues, share ideas, and explore potential projects that

could benefit Smethwick over the next decade.

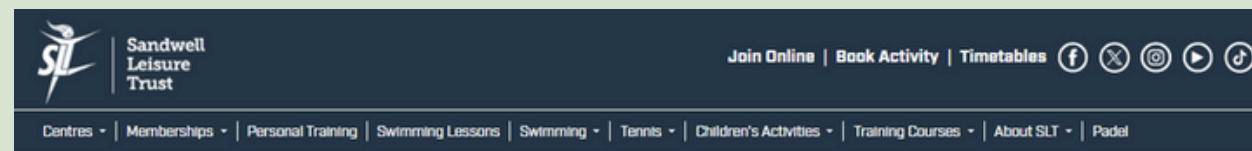
Attendees had the opportunity to meet members of the Smethwick Partnership Board and contribute directly to shaping the town's long-term regeneration and investment plans.

We're delighted to have played a role in this important initiative and look forward to seeing the positive impact this funding will have on our community.

For more information about the programme and upcoming workshops, visit the [Smethwick LTP website](#).

Published: 6th August, 2025

Promotion of online survey by Dorothy Parkes Centre



Have your say to help shape the future of Smethwick

07/07/2025

Residents, community groups and businesses in Smethwick are being urged to take part in an important online survey to help shape the town's future.

Smethwick is set to receive up to £20million in government funding through the Plan for Neighbourhoods – a 10-year investment programme that will support local communities and drive positive change across the town.

The Smethwick Partnership Board, which is overseeing the delivery of this ambitious programme, has launched a short survey to understand what matters most to local people. Feedback from the survey will help identify key priorities for the town and guide how funding is used to deliver improvements across Smethwick.

The survey invites individuals and organisations in Smethwick to share their views on eight key themes:

- Regeneration, high streets and heritage
- Housing
- Work, productivity and skills
- Community cohesion
- Health and wellbeing
- Transport
- Safety and security
- Education and opportunity

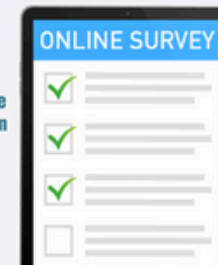
Whether you're a resident, a local business or a community group, your voice is vital. Completing the survey takes just a few minutes and your input could help shape the town for years to come.

[Take the short survey and help create a better Smethwick for everyone.](#)

The survey closes on Friday 22 August 2025.

Have your say on Smethwick's future

Take the short survey to help set priorities and guide funding for improvements in Smethwick.

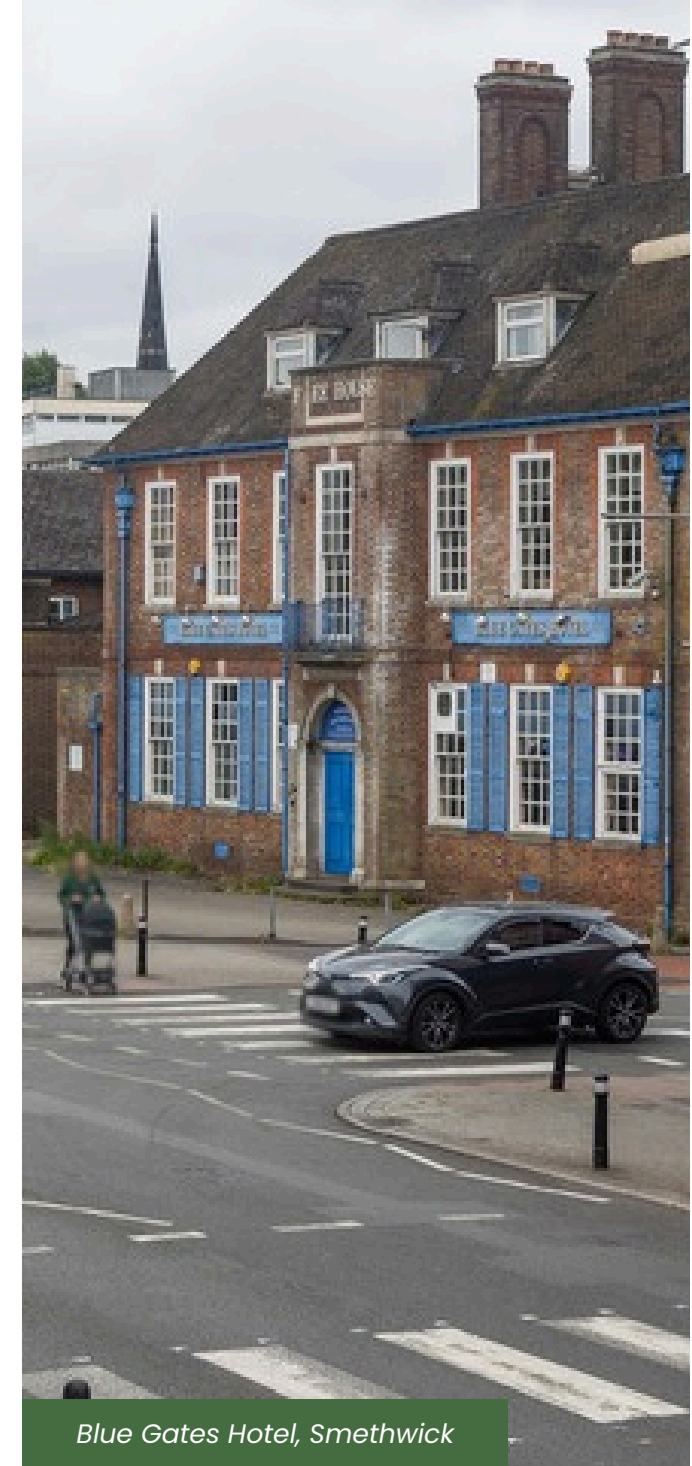


Promotion of online survey by Sandwell Leisure Trust

Challenges

- The data shows only 50% of respondents to the survey were already aware of the Plan for Neighbourhoods which might suggest a lack of cut-through in terms of general promotion in the town.
- The timing of this initial engagement over the summer posed some challenges:
- As schools and groups working with children were about to close by the middle of July, the potential power of the youth voice was inhibited over the summer holidays.
- The end of term also caused the closure or reduction during the consultation period of a range of institutions and their activities; for instance, St John's Methodist Church and the New Hope Christian Centre were unavailable, Smethwick Library Coffee Mates had ended. Many key contacts were on leave for some or all of the consultation period.
- Attempting to counteract this, Sandwell Council officers sought out groups and individuals working with young people; they also contacted institutions and leaders directly to ask them to share surveys via their own networks. Closer synchronicity with the earlier SHAPE survey and schools themselves may have helped if there had been time. It's acknowledged that there are gaps in the consultation we will fill as a matter of urgency now the academic year has begun.
- Many of the initial emails sent to partners, key contacts, and mailing lists at the start of the engagement period either ended up in junk folders or were not actioned by recipients. To address this, Sandwell Council officers contacted as many recipients as possible directly by phone, providing an opportunity to resend the information or guide them to the emails as needed.
- Members of the public were generally unwilling to complete surveys when approached "cold" or in public settings. Anticipating this, Sandwell Council officers targeted specific groups, allowing community leaders to introduce the survey and support their members in completing it within a more positive and conducive environment. While incentives or rewards might have encouraged higher response rates, there was concern that these could also lead to bad-faith responses or attempts to game the system.
- Few businesses representatives attended the community workshops. To address this, a dedicated business breakfast was held on 31 October 2025.
- An issue arose where community groups could not add their postcodes to the survey, so their responses were not included in the official count of Smethwick responses. However, their responses were still recorded and feature as part of the engagement data.

- Access, digital, and literacy barriers prevented some community members from completing surveys. For example, those without suitable devices, those with limited literacy, or those with visual impairments. To address this, Sandwell Council officers engaged directly with residents in the community, enabling surveys to be completed verbally by those who would otherwise have been unable to participate.
- Many respondents commented that they would have preferred a plainer-English version of the survey, particularly given the high levels of English as an Additional Language in the town. Sandwell Council Officers were later able to provide translations online and in print, for example, in Punjabi, but a smoother translation process or survey copies in multiple community languages might have been beneficial. This highlights why the team had planned to involve community leaders to support engagement and accessibility.
- Several young people suggested that the Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods missed an opportunity to run a high-profile social media campaign involving West Bromwich Albion, local celebrities, or influencers, potentially linking the survey to a viral trend. In response, Sandwell Council officers emailed the Director of Communications and Fan Engagement and the Managing Director of the club, requesting they share the survey links and posters with the fanbase.



Blue Gates Hotel, Smethwick

Engagement findings

Online survey

A total of 1,641 survey responses had been received, with 1,324 respondents providing a Smethwick postcode.

Statistical modelling indicates that the results are representative of the population's views with 99% confidence and a confidence interval of 3.5.

The following tables presents the total number of respondents who provided a Smethwick postcode and indicates their reported Ward of residence and personal status at the time of completing the survey.

St Pauls Ward showed a higher-than-expected response rate compared to its share of residents, which may be due to strong support from the survey from large faith and community institutions in the Ward.

Abbey Ward had a response rate above what would be expected based on its proportion of the Town's population, possibly because residents faced fewer digital or linguistic barriers to completing the survey than those in other Wards.

The majority of respondents providing a Smethwick postcode were residents.

Responders self identification (Ward)	Smethwick Business owner/ employee	Community group/ organisation representative	Resident of Smethwick	Other	Total Responses by Ward	% of respondents by Ward	Ward population ⁷	Ward population as a %
Abbey	11	4	335	9	359	27%	14,406	24%
Smethwick	33	2	250	10	295	22%	14,802	25%
Soho and Victoria	27	10	204	10	251	19%	15,942	26%
St Pauls	13	6	392	8	419	32%	14,883	25%
Smethwick Total	84	22	1,181	37	1,324	-	60,034	-
% of survey respondents	6%	2%	89%	3%	-	-	-	-

⁷ Figures for the Ward/ Town-level population have been provided by the Economic Intelligence Unit, aligning the data set with the investment boundary.

Demographic information

Respondents themselves chose from the descriptors offered within the survey to deliver this demographic information. The tables demonstrate the heterogeneity of the residents engaged in the consultation survey.

The table on the right presents respondents’ demographic characteristics to provide context for the engagement findings. Respondents selected from the demographic descriptors provided in the survey. The tables highlight the diversity of residents who participated in the engagement.

The majority of survey respondents identified as female, at a slightly higher proportion (53%) than the percentage identifying as female in the town during the 2021 Census (50.5%). This suggests that women responded at a somewhat higher rate than expected.

A key issue identified during the process (as outlined in the “Challenges” section) was the significant under-representation of younger people among respondents. Young people (under 18) made up only 5% of the survey sample, compared with 28.3% of the town’s population. However, it is recognised that many within this age group are children too young to understand and complete the survey or to provide informed consent.

Responders self identification (Ward)	Female	Male	Non-binary/ Non-conforming	Prefer not to say	Total
Abbey	235	115	3	5	359
Smethwick	138	148	2	7	295
Soho and Victoria	131	106	1	13	251
St Pauls	198	206	6	9	419
Smethwick Total	702	575	12	35	1,324
% of survey respondents	53%	43%	1%	3%	-
Smethwick Town (%) ⁸	50.5%	49.5%	-	-	-

Responders self identification (Ward)	Under 18	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 or over	Prefer not to say	Total
Abbey	9	11	31	78	71	81	74	4	359
Smethwick	19	23	43	48	50	69	41	2	295
Soho and Victoria	26	27	40	56	32	30	30	10	251
St Pauls	17	28	70	117	92	55	34	6	419
Smethwick Total	71	69	184	299	245	235	179	22	1,324
Smethwick Town (%) ⁹	27%	63%					10%	-	-

8 2021 Census of gender demographic aligned to the Plan for Neighbourhoods investment boundary

9 2022 Data of Age demographic aligned to the Plan for Neighbourhoods Investment Boundary.

The Asian demographic accounted for a slightly higher share of responses than its proportion in the overall population, potentially due to strong support from community and faith institutions encouraging members to take part in the survey.

The White population made up a notably larger proportion of respondents than their share of the town's population, possibly reflecting fewer linguistic barriers to participation or a lower response rate among more transient or recently arrived migrant groups who may feel less connected to Smethwick's long-term civic developments.

Responders self identification (Ward)	Asian or Asian British	Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	Other ethnic group	White	Prefer not to say	Total
Abbey	32	18	7	9	276	17	359
Smethwick	176	40	7	5	58	9	295
Soho and Victoria	113	66	6	3	43	20	251
St Pauls	308	34	10	5	47	15	419
Smethwick Total	629	158	30	22	424	61	1,324
% of survey respondents	48%	12%	2%	2%	32%	4%	-
Smethwick Town (%) ¹⁰	43.5%	14.5%	11.4%	6.2%	24.4%	-	-

The survey also explored respondents' financial wellbeing to provide context on the socioeconomic background of participants.

A third of respondents stated they were "coping ok financially", and 11% that they were "comfortable financially". Only 11% stated they were "struggling financially". However, according to the Smethwick data profile on gov.uk, a significant proportion of Smethwick's Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) fall within the top 20% most deprived areas in England.

Financial Status	Number of respondents ¹¹	% of respondents
Struggling	185	11%
Just about managing	359	22%
Coping okay	527	32%
Comfortable	180	11%
Prefer not to say	404	24%

In 2022-23, 47.9% of children under 16 years in Smethwick lived in relative low-income families, which is considerably higher than the England average of 21.3%. This disparity suggests that our respondents may not accurately represent the broader community.

Furthermore, 24% of participants selected "prefer not to say," and the ambiguity of these terms, combined with the self-reported nature of the data, may have contributed to this discrepancy.

¹⁰ 2021 Census of ethnicity demographics from the Smethwick Town Profile, Sandwell Trends.

¹¹ Figures for this table refer to all 1,641 survey responses.



31%

of respondents asked to be added to our mailing list

to be informed about the longer-term project of Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods



39%

of respondents asked to be included in future surveys

Have your say on Smethwick's future

Smethwick is set to receive up to **£20 million** in government funding over 10 years through the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme, aimed at supporting local communities and driving positive change.

Please share your views in our short online survey



- Tell us what your priorities are
- Share your ideas for projects
- Help influence decisions

Take part in the survey, visit
www.sandwell.gov.uk/SmethwickSurvey



Plan for Neighbourhoods Survey 2025 Poster

Priorities

In the main part of the survey, respondents were asked to select their top three themes in order of importance from the eight provided. If a respondent felt particularly strongly about a theme, they were allowed to assign it more than one priority ranking. The following sections summarise the priorities identified by participants who provided a Smethwick postcode.

Investment Theme	Total Citations
Regeneration, high streets and heritage	63%
Community cohesion	48%
Health and wellbeing	44%
Safety and security	43%
Education and opportunity	37%
Work, skills and productivity	24%
Transport	24%
Housing	18%

Nearly two-thirds of respondents cited **Regeneration, high streets, and heritage** as a top-three priority, indicating it is the issue of greatest concern to the community.

Priority 1

33%	Regeneration, high streets and heritage	6%	Work, skills and productivity
17%	Safety and security	5%	Housing
13%	Community cohesion	5%	Transport
12%	Education and opportunity		
9%	Health and wellbeing		

Priority 2

21%	Community cohesion	9%	Work, skills and productivity
17%	Regeneration, high streets and heritage	7%	Transport
15%	Safety and security	6%	Housing
13%	Education and opportunity		
13%	Health and wellbeing		

Priority 3

22%	Health and wellbeing	11%	Safety and security
14%	Community cohesion	9%	Work, skills and productivity
13%	Regeneration, high streets and heritage	7%	Housing
12%	Education and opportunity		
12%	Transport		

Subcategories within priorities

Each priority was divided into a set of sub-priorities, and respondents were asked to identify which they felt were most important. Comparing these top choices with the issues and solutions raised in the workshops shows a strong alignment, for example, concerns about uneven pavement on Smethwick High Street

Regeneration, high streets and heritage	Response (%)
Improving high street and town centres: pavement repairs, painting public spaces, street cleaning, public toilets, and better disabled access.	47%
Parks and green spaces improvements: improvements to existing or new parks, community gardens, and tree planting.	25%
Supporting arts, culture, history and creative activities in the community: funds for libraries, museums, and youth centres.	25%
Helping local shops and businesses save energy: grants for energy upgrades.	3%

Community cohesion	Response (%)
Improve community cohesion across different groups and faiths: bring people together, build relationships, and create social mixing opportunities.	45%
Renovate and develop community spaces: libraries, youth centres and town halls.	37%
Funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects: support volunteer groups, such as youth charities and carer groups.	18%

Housing	Response (%)
Providing support for voluntary sector homelessness services and accommodation.	66%
Modernisation and energy efficiency improvements in social housing: double glazing, new boilers, and wall and loft insulation.	25%
Community energy groups: advise on how to reduce fuel bills and keep warm.	9%

Safety and security	Response (%)
Tackling anti-social behaviour, crime and reoffending: sports initiatives, mentoring, CCTV, and a police-led model for young offenders.	56%
Policing interventions to target crime prevention: community and town wardens, and hotspot policing.	26%
Initiatives to reduce burglary: neighbourhood watch, crime prevention guide, enhanced property security and installation of alley gates.	12%
Co-locating crime reduction services and improving town centres: crime reduction hubs and plans to manage nightlife and night transport.	5%

Education and opportunity	Response (%)
School based programmes for youth development: support children and young people with wellbeing and mental health and provide activities.	29%
Support for families and young children: breakfast club provision, childcare, and additional support for family hubs.	24%
Support to reduce child poverty: help to increase income, vouchers for travel, school holiday food vouchers, and discounted food shops.	24%
Community based learning: life skills, essentials in Maths and English, digital training and community group leader training to empower communities.	23%

Health and wellbeing	Response (%)
Support for community health and integrating wellbeing services: mental health hubs, healthy eating schemes, and more health centres.	56%
Funding local sports and recreational activities: refurbish existing and create new sports facilities and fund community sports leagues.	24%
Providing drug and alcohol support for rough sleepers and the homeless: help services provide additional support and therapeutic activities.	13%
Funding to support preventative public health initiatives: stop smoking service, family nutrition and physical activity.	7%

Work, skills and productivity	Response (%)
Improving awareness and access to employment and skills development: support for unemployed people, disabled people and work experience.	58%
Support small businesses and social enterprises: open air markets, support for small business and entrepreneurs.	24%
Community wealth building: business rates relief for Living Wage Accredited businesses, community bank for mortgages, and business loans.	13%
Promoting local tourism and visitors' economy: grants to develop, promote, and upkeep local tourist attractions.	5%

Transport	Response (%)
Funding for local bus services: improvements to bus stops, stations, lanes, punctuality and information.	29%
Funding to improve rail connections: new stations along existing lines, and improved access and journey quality.	26%
Supporting active travel and local transport improvements: improve existing footways and create new footways and upgrade junctions and crossings.	23%
Funding for new road networks or improvement to existing local road networks: repair potholes and improve road safety and congestion.	21%
Reduce vehicle emissions: funding for electric vehicle charge facilities, and funds for zero emission buses.	5%



Galton Bridge, Smethwick

“Quick Wins”

The online survey asked respondents to identify specific locations for “quick wins” - places where a smaller project would have a rapid impact. Several locations came up consistently, as shown below.

Location	No.	%
Bearwood High Street	322	20%
Cape Hill	259	15%
Smethwick High Street	241	15%
Victoria Park	210	12%
Warley Woods	98	6%
Thimblemill Area	86	4%
Lightwoods Park	81	4%

Our vision

91% of respondents agreed with the Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods vision:

“A connected, green and thriving community

In 10 years, Smethwick will be a vibrant, inclusive town powered by opportunity, innovation and community pride.

With thriving high streets, modern transport, green spaces, and world-class learning and job opportunities, it will be a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live, grow and belong.”

Respondents who did not agree with this vision provided the following reasons:

- A lot of work to do and need to get ALL on board
- Hard to achieve due to constant movement of people
- Not enough money for such a radical transformation
- Not realistic in the current economic climate
- Unless rates reduce, shops will remain empty

- Learning and job opportunities are limited
- Heard it all before
- We heard this 10-years ago and no change
- Not convinced Sandwell Council can deliver
- More info on how this is going to happen
- I'm a cynic but hope things change
- Needs to be something achievable
- People will not change their ways
- I will believe it when it happens

Several key themes emerge from these quotations. Many respondents express concern about current financial pressures and economic constraints, while others convey doubt about the potential for meaningful change - often shaped by past experiences or perceived shortcomings. Collectively, these concerns highlight the need for clearer information and ongoing communication, for example to avoid misconceptions about the council's role in the Plan.

Respondents providing a non-Smethwick Postcode

The priorities of the 317 respondents who did not identify as residents, community group members, or workers in Smethwick aligned closely with those identified within Smethwick, although in a slightly different order: Community Cohesion, Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage, Education and opportunity, Health and Wellbeing, and Safety and Security.



Painting completed as part of 'The Walls of Light' initiative

Welcome to Soho and Victoria Ward



Community workshop map exercise

Community workshops feedback

The workshops were designed as interactive, inclusive spaces to:

- Introduce the Smethwick Partnership Board and the Plan for Neighbourhoods
- Facilitate honest dialogue about local issues, opportunities, and aspirations
- Identify quick-win projects and long-term priorities through mapping and visioning exercises

Each session followed a structured format:

- Welcome and introductions by Board members present
- Screening of the Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods video
- Roundtable discussions among residents, community leaders, businesses, and service providers
- Mapping exercise to pinpoint priority locations and potential interventions
- “Postcard” activity inviting attendees to articulate their long-term vision for Smethwick

Attendance and representation

- **150 attendees** across workshops
- **60 groups represented**, including community, faith and informal organisations
- **Attendees self-identified** as residents, business owners and group representatives
- Some **workshops were over-subscribed** and ran overtime, indicating strong community appetite for participation

The minutes from all eight workshops were subsequently collated and analysed to identify recurring themes and issues. The following tables summarise the key findings, highlighting the common priorities and areas for improvement that emerged from across the discussions.

Regeneration, high streets and heritage

Issues

- **Cleanliness and waste management:** Persistent problems with fly-tipping, trade waste, litter, and unemptied bins, particularly around Rood End and other local areas.
- **Public spaces and pathways:** Uneven, slippery, and poorly maintained pathways and canal towpaths, with shops encroaching on pavements and a shortage of benches along the High Street.
- **Flooding and maintenance:** Recurrent flooding at Londonderry Lane allotments and general maintenance issues across public spaces.
- **Regeneration and heritage:** Support for the regeneration of derelict buildings, particularly through the Chance Heritage Trust initiative.
- **Community facilities:** The Warley Woods community hub is viewed as outdated and in need of improvement.
- **Connectivity and infrastructure:** Calls for better pedestrian and cycle connections, including a new or improved bridge over Tollhouse Way into Brasshouse Lane, and attention to the condition of Victoria Park.

Potential Solutions

- **Public realm and infrastructure:** Better street lighting, re-laid pathways, additional benches, and improved provision of public toilet hubs.
- **Cleanliness and waste management:** More litter bins, clearer communication about bulky waste collections, increased skip and bulky waste collection points, and incentives or reduced costs for low-income households.
- **Recycling and sustainability:** Introduction of new recycling schemes and greater flexibility in waste disposal options, including extended or booking-free opening hours at the local tip.
- **Greening and community initiatives:** Installation of planters and flower beds on the High Street, encouragement for local groups to “adopt” unused green spaces for community gardens, and support for community litter picks and an “adopt a street” programme.

Education and opportunity

Issues

- **Limited engagement:** Many young people are not participating in available activities and may be drawn into risky or negative behaviour as a result.
- **Skills development:** A perceived lack of communication and essential life skills among young people, limiting confidence and future opportunities.
- **Activity provision:** Youth activities are often limited in scope and timing, often only offered on Friday evenings (6–8 p.m.), reducing accessibility and sustained involvement.

Potential Solutions

- **Community facilities:** Re-staffing local libraries and establishing drop-in centres to provide safe, informal spaces for young people to socialise.
- **Skills and employment:** Developing work experience opportunities in partnership with local businesses to build practical skills and confidence.
- **Play and recreation:** Upgrading play areas and equipment to enhance provision for children.
- **Activity coordination:** Improving coordination between organisations to spread activities across different times and days, ensuring more consistent availability.

Work, productivity and skills

Issues

- **Language and education barriers:** Language barriers limiting access to education and training, with high demand for ESOL provision that cannot currently be met.
- **Digital exclusion:** Certain groups are unable to access online services or resources due to lack of digital skills or technology.
- **Exploitation and unsafe practices:** Concerns about the proliferation of unscrupulous businesses, along with risks of exploitation and people trafficking.

Potential Solutions

- **Youth involvement:** Engaging young people in regeneration projects arising from SPfN initiatives.
- **Education and skills development:** Increased funding for ESOL and Functional Skills classes, and partnerships with local universities to expand learning opportunities.
- **Employment support:** Incentives for employers to support vulnerable or disabled job seekers.
- **Community coordination:** Collaboration between community groups and faith organisations to provide translation services and improve accessibility.

Safety and security

Issues

- **Crime and violence:** Fears of knife crime and violent incidents, along with drug dealing in local areas.
- **Anti-social behaviour (ASB):** Aggressive begging, break-ins (notably at Londonderry Lane allotments), and ASB hotspots such as Bearwood Road and Cape Hill.
- **Traffic and parking concerns:** Speeding, poor parking practices, and specific issues on Cheshire Road and Scribbans Close.
- **Perceptions of enforcement:** A lack of visible, timely, or effective consequences for criminal or anti-social behaviour, contributing to community concern.
- **Public space issues:** Safety and maintenance concerns in parks, including Victoria Park and West Smethwick Park.

Potential Solutions

- **Surveillance and enforcement:** Increased CCTV coverage, better lighting, drone monitoring, and consistent, immediate enforcement of rules.
- **Police and community presence:** Greater visibility of Police/PCSOs, patrolling wardens, and promotion of Neighbourhood Watch schemes.
- **Traffic management and pedestrian safety:** Improved pedestrian crossings, traffic calming measures such as speed bumps and chicanes, and better signage for existing parking.
- **Learning from others:** Consulting with areas that have successfully addressed similar issues.
- **Support for vulnerable populations:** Promotion and support of homelessness services, such as The Gables.

Housing

Issues

- **Homelessness:** Presence of rough sleepers in the area.
- **Housing conditions:** A high number of unsuitable or poorly managed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- **Energy efficiency:** Poor insulation and low energy ratings in existing housing stock.

Potential Solutions

- **Building reuse:** Re-purposing commercial and derelict buildings to meet community needs.
- **Housing oversight:** Closer scrutiny and monitoring of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- **Community facilities:** Transforming under-utilised spaces (e.g., The Gables) into hubs providing washing, clothing, feeding, and advice services.
- **Skills development:** Training young people in property insulation and energy efficiency improvements.

Transport¹²

Issues

- **Public transport reliability:** Unreliable bus services, particularly on route 87.
- **Connectivity gaps:** Limited connections between key areas such as Smethwick, Bearwood, Soho Road, and West Bromwich.
- **Road safety and parking:** Concerns over poor driving behaviour and inadequate parking arrangements.

Potential Solutions

- **Specialist services:** Expansion of the Ring and Ride service.
- **Improved connections:** Introduction of a link bus between Smethwick and Bearwood.
- **Community transport:** A town minibus service to support community groups.
- **Parking solutions:** Provision of proper parking facilities for faith groups at larger institutions.

¹² Many comments referred to parking and road safety, but these were grouped under the Safety and Security theme rather than being classified under Transport as a priority to align with Government pre-approved intervention definitions.

Community cohesion

Issues

- **Social isolation:** Many people experience loneliness and limited social contact.
- **Underutilised facilities:** Community spaces and resources are not being fully used.
- **Awareness and promotion:** Existing activities and services are poorly promoted, with little sharing of success stories or positive examples.
- **Coordination gaps:** Limited collaboration and communication between existing groups and service providers.
- **Access to services:** Closure or online-only transition of banks and other essential services on High Streets, reducing accessibility for residents.

Solutions

- **Resource sharing:** Creation of a “bank” of community resources (e.g., minibuses, equipment, gazebos, teachers) available for a small holding fee; sharing expertise and facilities to encourage joined-up thinking.
- **Information and communication:** Development of a Smethwick app for activities and facilities, interactive information boards, better promotion of existing activities, translation of communications, and a directory of local groups, facilities, and hubs.
- **Community spaces:** Renovation of existing centres (e.g., BIC) for accessibility, use of retail space for events or activities, discounted rental or use of spaces for community groups, and improved signposting to centres.
- **Community initiatives:** Quarterly community forums, a town volunteering system connecting young and older residents (“Community champions”), and community banking hubs.
- **Celebrating success:** Sharing positive news stories and successes to encourage engagement and participation.

Health and wellbeing

Issues

- **Facilities and accessibility:** A shortage of public toilets and disabled changing rooms, limited access for disabled residents, and a lack of drop-in centres to support independent living.
- **Health concerns:** High prevalence of diabetes, particularly within the Asian community.

Solutions

- **Community health services:** Provision of health care checks within local community spaces, such as churches, gurdwaras, and mosques.
- **Recreational facilities:** Addition of indoor facilities and more play equipment in parks.
- **Community support:** Reinstatement of a drop-in centre in the Ideal for All building.
- **Accessibility improvements:** Conducting a disability audit of the town and key buildings to ensure inclusive access.



Lightwoods Park House, Smethwick

Key issues and locations from workshop mapping exercise

In the second workshop activity, participants were invited to map their concerns and proposed solutions directly onto large-scale maps of each Ward. The information gathered was later recorded in a spreadsheet to allow analysis of recurring keywords and locations. The results were visualised as word clouds for each Ward and further categorised into priority themes.

Abbey Ward

Investment Theme	Total Citations
Regeneration, high streets and heritage	38%
Safety and security	29%
Community cohesion	18%
Health and wellbeing	9%
Work, skills and productivity	4%
Education and opportunity	2%
Housing	0%
Transport	0%



31% of comments focused on Bearwood High Street and 13% of comments focused on Warley Woods Park.¹³

¹³ The remaining 56% of places mentioned were split across a wide range of other locations.

Smethwick Ward

Investment Theme	Total Citations
Safety and security	36%
Regeneration, high streets and heritage	29%
Community cohesion	16%
Health and wellbeing	10%
Transport	4%
Housing	3%
Work, skills and productivity	2%
Education and opportunity	0%

26% of comments focused on Smethwick High Street.¹⁴



¹⁴ The remaining 74% of places mentioned were split across a wide range of other locations.

Soho and Victoria Ward

Investment Theme	Total Citations
Regeneration, high streets and heritage	36%
Safety and security ¹⁵	27%
Transport	19%
Community cohesion	11%
Health and wellbeing	3%
Education and opportunity	2%
Work, skills and productivity	1%
Housing	1%

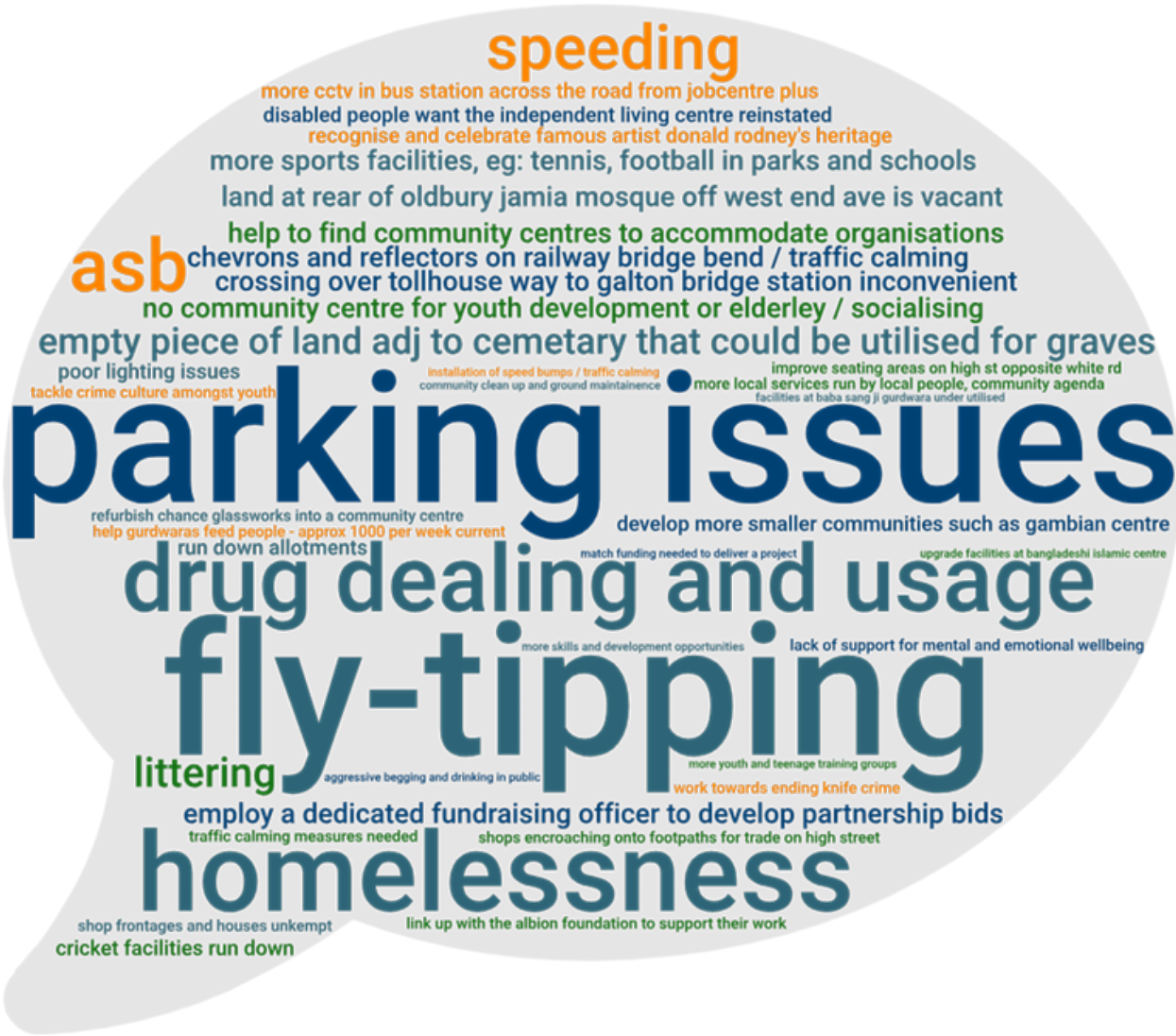
44% of comments focused on Victoria Park and 11% of comments focused on Hadley Stadium.¹⁵



15 The remaining 45% of places mentioned were split across a wide range of other locations.

St Pauls Ward

Investment Theme	Total Citations
Safety and security	31%
Regeneration, high streets and heritage	28%
Transport	21%
Education and opportunity	8%
Community cohesion	5%
Housing	3%
Health and wellbeing	3%
Work, skills and productivity	0%



10% of comments focused on West Smethwick Park.¹⁶

16 The remaining 90% of places mentioned were split across a wide range of other locations.



Overall priorities identified during community workshops

The priorities identified through the mapping exercise closely aligned with those highlighted in the concurrent survey consultation (see earlier tables).

Priority Area	Response (%)
Regeneration, high streets and heritage	33%
Safety and security	30%
Community cohesion	13%
Transport	11%
Health and wellbeing	6%
Education and opportunity	4%
Housing	1.5%
Work, skills and productivity	1.5%

Smethwick High Street

Common Threads from the “Smethwick in 10-Years” comment cards

Before leaving the workshop, attendees were invited to complete “postcards” sharing their hopes for Smethwick in ten years’ time. All comments were recorded, and recurring ideas are presented below, grouped according to priority.

Regeneration, high streets and heritage

- Paving repairs on Smethwick High Street.
- Reduction of fly-tipping and litter.
- Tidying of overgrown areas and green spaces.
- Better parking options and behaviours.
- Renovation and re-purposing of derelict buildings.

Education and opportunity

- Support for existing youth provision.
- Life skills support and work experience for young people.

Safety and security

- Reduction in ASB and crime (especially drug-dealing) – increased CCTV and lighting.
- Traffic calming measures to reduce speeding and poor parking.

Work, skills and productivity

- ESOL and functional skills courses.
- Mentorship programmes.

Housing

- Reduction in rough sleeping – increased support for the homeless.

Community cohesion

- Clear communication and cooperation between community organisations, faith institutions and other providers of facilities and services.
- Events to celebrate diversity and boost local pride.
- Greater accessibility along pathways and in facilities.

Health and wellbeing

- Mental health support reaching all communities – a hub?
- Increased sports and leisure facilities.
- Domestic violence shelter.

Transport

- Better behaviour on the roads and when parking.



www.sandwell.gov.uk/SmethwickPFN

If we've truly succeeded in 10 years time, what will have changed in Smethwick?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Vision Postcard Template

Overall priorities identified from survey and workshops

The priorities for change as identified through our community engagement were:



Regeneration, high streets and heritage was the first priority for 33% of respondents to the survey, and 63% of all respondents cited this as a target for intervention within their top three priorities. It came up in 33% of all responses to the mapping exercise and was a key thread in round table discussions.

Community cohesion was the first priority for 13% of respondents to the survey, but 48% of all respondents cited this as a target for intervention within their top three priorities. It was a key thread in round table discussions and postcard comments.

Health and wellbeing was the first priority for 9% of respondents to the survey, but 44% of all respondents cited this as a target for intervention within their top three priorities. It was a key thread in round table discussions and postcard comments.

Bearwood High Street, Smethwick

Safety and security¹⁷ was the first priority for 17% of respondents to the survey, and 43% of all respondents cited this as a target for intervention within their top three priorities. It came up in 30% of all responses to the mapping exercise and was a key thread in round table discussions.

Education and opportunity was the first priority for 12% of respondents to the survey, and 37% of all respondents cited this as a target for intervention within their top three priorities. It was a key thread in round table discussions and postcard comments.

How do these priorities align with the Plan for Neighbourhoods strategic objectives?

Taking Back Control has been at the heart of our consultation, as the Plan has been guided entirely by the community. The engagement process has drawn out the priorities tailored to our local needs and aspirations.

Regeneration, high streets and heritage aligns with the Thriving Places objective. Enhancement of aspects of our physical surroundings as specified in the consultation process, such as pavement repairs, painting public spaces, street cleaning and improvements to existing or new parks, will

create vibrant neighbourhoods by ensuring our high streets are busy, and that residents and visitors can benefit from good local amenities and high-quality physical infrastructure

Health and wellbeing aligns with Thriving Places objective since this theme highlights the need for accessible and responsive public services, such as healthcare. **It also aligns with Stronger Communities**, as there is a clear demand for community health and integrated wellbeing services within Smethwick demonstrated by our engagement.

Safety and Security aligns with Taking Back Control and Thriving Places objectives. Addressing anti-social behaviour and crime, as well as working to prevent issues before they arise, means that the community can grow and develop from a position of confidence and pride.

Education and opportunity aligns with Thriving Places. Developing accessible and responsive public services, such as education and youth services, was cited frequently during our consultation, with the community wishing to support children and young people with their wellbeing and mental health and to provide them with targeted activities.



Warley Woods Community Trust Plant Sale

¹⁷ As noted previously, "parking" was frequently raised as a concern in both the workshops and surveys. It was, however, considered within the themes of Safety and Security and Regeneration, high streets and heritage, as parking issues were viewed as hindering both development and public enjoyment of the high streets.

Collective “Quick wins”

A variety of “quick wins” were repeatedly suggested via the survey and range of workshop activities.

Abbey Ward

- The ability to offer more street radios on Bearwood Road.
- Additional cameras on Bearwood Road.
- The development of an Enforcement Officer role to enforce the policies around commercial and domestic waste and fly-tipping, as well as to improve parking provision and monitor and enforce parking infringements.
- Additional lighting in Lightwoods Park.
- Improving the aesthetics of Bearwood Road to include flower boxes.

Soho and Victoria Ward

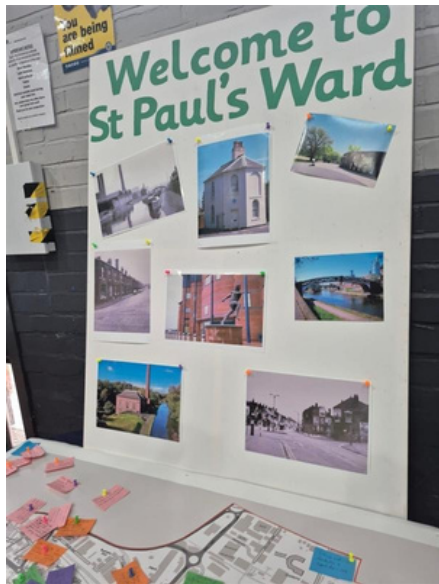
- Improved lighting in Victoria Park.
- CCTV cameras in Victoria Park.
- A refurbishment and refresh of the exercise area in Victoria Park.
- An increase in provision for Youth Engagement around Victoria Park.
- The development of an Enforcement Officer role to enforce the policies around commercial and domestic waste and fly-tipping, as well as to improve parking provision and monitor and enforce parking infringements.
- CCTV cameras in Black Patch Park.

Smethwick Ward

- The development of an Enforcement Officer role to enforce the policies around commercial and domestic waste and fly-tipping, as well as to improve parking provision and monitor and enforce parking infringements.
- CCTV cameras to be installed on Smethwick High Street.
- Improved footway along the High Street from Guru Nanak Gurdwara to the Baba Sang Ji Gurdwara.
- An increase in provision for Youth Engagement around the Sandwell Aquatic Centre.
- Increase services offered at faith and community organisations with under-utilised facilities

St Pauls Ward

- Improved lighting around the Sons of Rest building in West Smethwick Park.
- CCTV cameras in West Smethwick Park.
- An increase in provision for Youth Engagement around West Smethwick Park.
- The development of an Enforcement Officer role to enforce the policies around commercial and domestic waste and fly-tipping, as well as to improve parking provision and monitor and enforce parking infringements.
- Increase services offered at faith and community organisations with under-utilised facilities.



A high-level pinpoint map of potential locations for projects

Moving forward

Following discussions with the Smethwick Partnership Board Engagement Subgroup (consisting of Smethwick Partnership Board members), a number of ideas and strategies for further engagement and consultation were suggested. These will enable the Smethwick Partnership Board to be flexible and responsive, tailoring the Plan and projects to the needs of the local community.

- A review will be carried out of key areas of the public environment to identify potential improvements. This will include a review of the state of footpaths, and highways; the state of trees in residential roads; litter picking around Smethwick.
- A review could be carried out to collate items of persistent complaint to the Local Authority, so as to enable further consultation with residents.
- Feedback forums will present stakeholders with the chance to give targeted responses and guidance as regards current and future projects.
- Utilisation of social media channels such as websites, Facebook, X, TikTok and any others which rise to prominence over the course of the 10 years. This will enable as many residents and stakeholders as possible to stay informed about the progress of the Plan and to understand how they themselves might become involved in projects and initiatives.
- The creation of a regular newsletter to ensure that information about the Plan and the success of projects is recorded and celebrated and will reach those who may not have access to social media updates.
- Community workshops will be established and give a broad range of Smethwick's community the opportunity to feedback promptly and in detail about projects and progress as well as raise new issues and priorities.
- Further resident surveys will be run and analysed as and when required.
- There will be a carefully maintained feedback loop: "you said, we did" will be a regular segment in all our communication channels.
- The Smethwick contacts database and trackers developed by Sandwell Council during the consultation proved invaluable, therefore will be frequently monitored and updated to ensure a constant communication loop and involvement of as many stakeholders as possible.
- Schools and education centres were the big gaps in our consultation over the summer. Therefore, we will commence engagement and consultation with these establishments as soon as possible. For instance, initial visits have been made to two primary schools who have requested to be part of the consultation for the Plan.

- As we have learnt from our initial engagement activities, businesses, faith groups and community groups require differentiated and targeted engagement, but this can then have really a profound impact in terms of supporting engagement with “hard to reach” groups as well as supporting strategic planning for interventions. Such groups will continue to be approached with bespoke engagement methods, such as through a business breakfast to support networking and the provision of match funding. This is the start of our in-depth engagement with businesses, and once relationships have been built, further engagement will follow. Faith groups have differing needs, focuses and concerns compared to community groups, for instance. Specific workshops for faith institutions, for example connecting faith groups with business partners to discuss match funding, are in initial planning stages.

- Community Open Days will allow groups who are running or have run projects as part of the Plan to share their success, promote the opportunities offered by the Plan and support others in the application process. This links into the Objective of taking Back Control – the Plan is ultimately for the benefit of the people of Smethwick, so who better than the people of Smethwick themselves to showcase the Plan and encourage others to join in?



Illustration by Annabel Evans, commissioned as part of the first co-designing Bearwood Community Hub workshops.

Thanks and acknowledgments

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who took the time to participate in the online survey and community workshops. Your contributions have been invaluable in shaping the vision and priorities of the 10-year Regeneration Plan.

The ideas, experiences, and perspectives you shared have provided deep insight into what matters most to local residents, businesses, and community organisations. Your input has helped to ensure that this Plan truly reflects the aspirations, challenges, and opportunities within our community, and that regeneration is guided by the voices of those who live and work here every day.

We are also grateful to the officers at Sandwell Council for their ongoing support throughout the process. Their assistance in organising, facilitating, and promoting the engagement activities was instrumental in reaching a broad and diverse audience.

Together, your collective input and commitment have helped shape a Regeneration Plan that is rooted in shared values, local knowledge, and a vision for a better future for all.

The Smethwick Partnership Board

