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SMETHWICK PLAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

10-YEAR REGENERATION PLAN

Together, we can achieve more.

November 2025

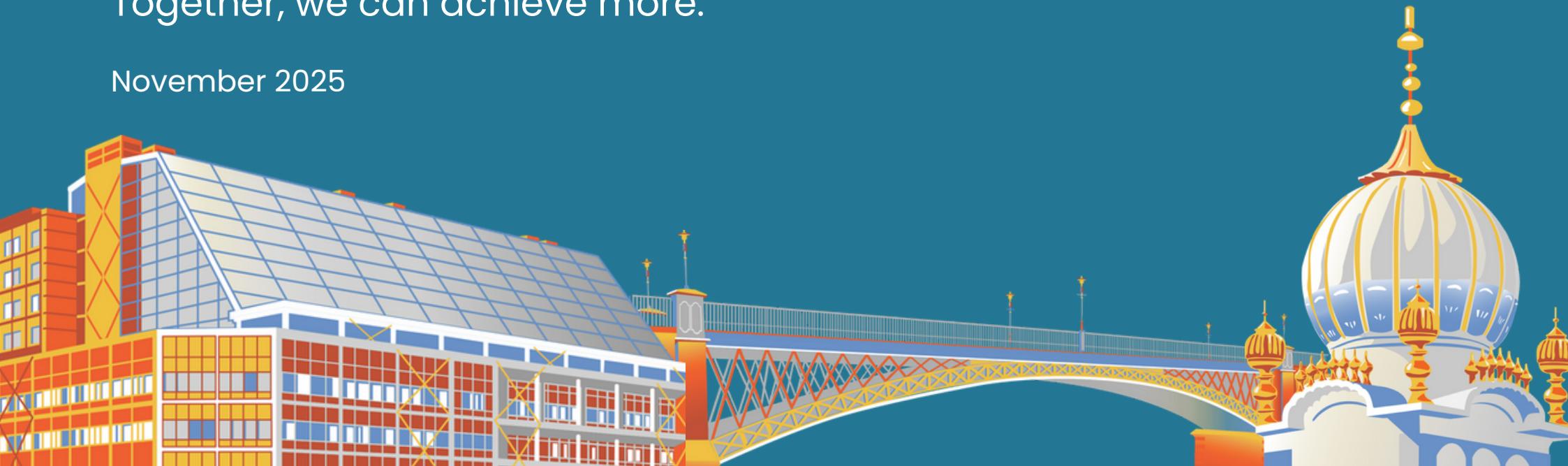
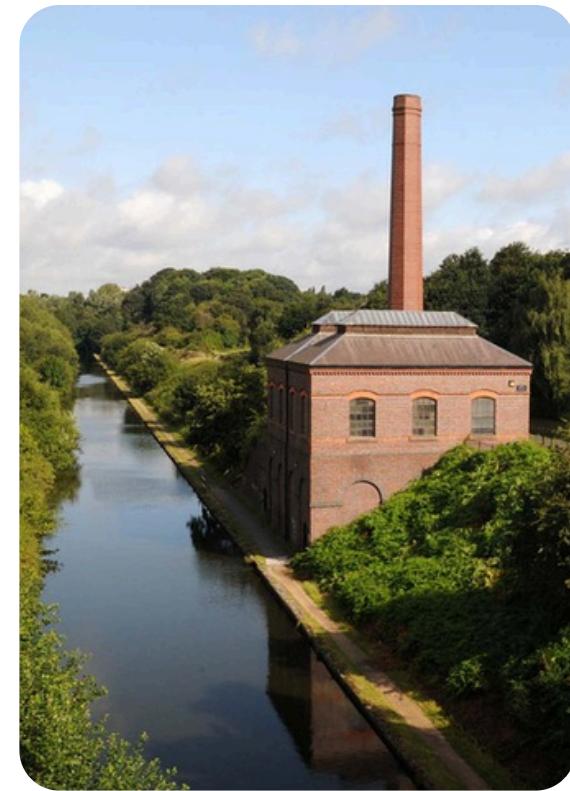


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www.sandwell.gov.uk/SmethwickPFN



Galton Bridge, Smethwick

Introduction

We are proud to introduce the ten-year **Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods - a bold regeneration vision shaped by and for the people of Smethwick.**

This marks a major milestone in our collective journey to create stronger, more resilient neighbourhoods through meaningful collaboration, long-term investment, and shared ambition.

For generations, Smethwick has been known for its resilience, diversity, and strong community spirit. Yet, like many towns, it has also faced complex social, economic, and structural challenges. This plan represents a fresh opportunity to address those challenges head-on and to shape a better, fairer future for everyone who lives and works here.

At the heart of this work is the **Smethwick Partnership Board** – a diverse and committed group of community leaders, local organisations, and public agencies.

Our Board plays a central role in guiding the plan's delivery, helping ensure it reflects the needs and priorities of our residents while building on the strengths already within our communities.

Our belief is simple yet powerful:

Together, we can achieve more.

By bringing together local community and voluntary groups, faith organisations, youth voices, businesses, schools, and public agencies, we are creating a powerful platform for collaboration – one that enables shared ideas, combined resources, and innovative, locally driven solutions. Each partner brings unique insight, experience, and energy to the table, ensuring that the plan is grounded in real needs and lived experiences.

A Plan Owned by the Community

The Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods belongs to the people of Smethwick. It has been shaped by the community and is intended to be delivered with and by them, rooted in the aims and ambitions of local people, organisations, and leaders.

Later in this document, we set out how community input, guidance, and feedback have informed its development, and how the community will remain central to its delivery every step of the way.

This is not just a plan for today - it's a commitment to the future of Smethwick, building a legacy of opportunity, equity, and pride for generations to come.



Thanks and Acknowledgements

The Smethwick Partnership Board extends its sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the development of the Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods, including local residents, community organisations, businesses, and public sector partners who have shared their insights, experiences, and aspirations for the future.

We are especially grateful to those who took part in engagement sessions, workshops, and consultations. Your voices have played a vital role in shaping the direction and priorities of this Plan.

We also acknowledge the commitment and support of Sandwell Council, both as the Accountable Body and as a valued partner. This collaboration has been instrumental in developing a shared vision for Smethwick's future.



Alan Taylor
Smethwick Partnership Board Chair



Councillor Kerrie Carmichael
Leader of Sandwell Council



Local context

The Black Country

The Black Country is a distinctive sub-region on the western side of the West Midlands conurbation, where it borders Birmingham to the east. It is made up of four boroughs: Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton. To the north, west and south, it borders districts within Staffordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire, including centres such as Cannock and Bromsgrove.

The Black Country is characterised by its dense urban form and network of closely connected towns and neighbourhoods. It has a unique economic history, settlement form and topography and is very much shaped by its industrial past. This legacy continues to influence the character of places like Smethwick today, defined by diverse communities, a strong sense of local identity and a built environment shaped by its manufacturing and engineering heritage.

Woodlands Street, Smethwick

Sandwell

Sandwell, home to Smethwick, is located in the heart of the West Midlands. Sandwell is a multi-centred and highly urbanised borough made up of six historic former boroughs:

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

With a 2021 Census population of approximately 341,900, **Sandwell has experienced significant growth - a rise of 11% since 2011, outpacing the 6.3% seen across England and Wales.** This makes Sandwell the fastest growing area in the West Midlands Metropolitan County, ahead of Coventry, which recorded an 8.9% rise.

Ranked 27th in population out of 309 English local authorities in 2021, Sandwell has risen six places in just ten years. The borough's population is projected to continue growing faster than both the wider West Midlands and national averages, with an expected increase of 30,000 residents between 2016 and 2030.



Source: LSH, adapted from <https://zerocarbonhubs.co.uk/regional-strategy.html>

Smethwick

Smethwick is in the south-east of the borough, directly bordering Birmingham, and sits approximately four miles west of Birmingham city centre. The town is predominantly urban, with a proud industrial heritage rooted in its role as a centre of innovation and manufacturing during the Industrial Revolution.

Nationally significant sites such as the Soho Foundry, the Grade I listed Galton Bridge and the Smethwick Engine highlight its engineering legacy, while the canal network remains a defining feature of the landscape. This has helped define and shape the character of the town in terms of its built heritage and provision for its residents.

Over the decades, Smethwick has welcomed successive waves of migration, shaping it into a vibrant, multicultural community with a rich mix of languages, cultures, and faiths. **68.5% of Smethwick residents identify as belonging to an ethnic minority group, making diversity one of Smethwick's defining strengths.** This compares to the national average of 19%.

Despite its many strengths, Smethwick faces persistent socio-economic challenges, including high levels of deprivation, unemployment, health inequalities and housing pressures. Smethwick's economy is in transition with traditional industries in decline and a growing need for access to new employment opportunities, skills, and digital infrastructure. **The unemployment rate stands at 5.3%. All four wards in Smethwick have higher unemployment rates compared to the national average of 2.9%. In Sandwell, the unemployment rate is 4.5%.**

However, Smethwick's location presents real opportunities. It is located at the heart of the West Midlands conurbation, with excellent access to the country's key transportation networks and thus to business opportunities both in Britain and abroad. The town **demonstrates strong local activity, with a footfall index of 119.0, which is above the England average of 100**, reflecting its role as a vibrant hub for services, and daily life.

Smethwick is a diverse area comprising residential, commercial, educational, healthcare, and industrial uses. The area benefits from strong connectivity to Birmingham, supported by collaborative planning initiatives like the [Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework](#). This framework outlines a shared vision for high-quality housing, accessible green spaces, improved transport, and a sustainable, healthy community.

Smethwick's story is one of resilience and community pride. Its past is rooted in industry and innovation, while its present reflects diversity, cultural richness and a determination to build a prosperous future. This regeneration plan marks a new chapter, shaped by local character and driven by the people who live and work here.

Spatial targeting

Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods Investment Boundary

The Plan for Neighbourhoods investment boundary area encompasses Smethwick's four wards in their entirety: Bearwood, Smethwick, Soho and Victoria and St Paul's,¹ along with a small section of Oldbury.²

Bearwood Ward

Bearwood Ward is a residential area with strong local identity, centred around historic neighbourhoods. Key green assets include Warley Woods (a Green Flag award site and Grade II registered historic park) and Lightwoods Park and House (Grade II listed), providing recreation, events, and heritage value. Bearwood is home to several Grade II listed assets, including the Church of St Mary, the Abbey Public House and the Bearwood War Memorial.

St Paul's Ward

St Paul's is a largely residential ward with a diverse community and strong neighbourhood identity with commercial areas.

Its principal green asset is West Smethwick Park (a Green Flag award site), recently restored with modern leisure and community facilities. A network of smaller parks and play spaces provide everyday recreation though many require investment.

Heritage of St Paul's Ward is rich and varied, reflecting Smethwick's industrial, civic and cultural history. This includes the Chance Glassworks site, home to several Grade II listed buildings (and an at risk scheduled monument), the Smethwick New Pumping House (Grade II) and the Engine House adjoining Top Lock of Oldbury Locks (Grade II).

Smethwick Ward

Smethwick Ward combines residential areas with historic buildings and industrial heritage, including Galton Bridge (Grade I); Smethwick Old Church (Grade II*), the oldest surviving building in the town with its origins in the 18th century; the Church of Holy Trinity (Grade II); the Old Chapel Inn (Grade II); Thimblemill Library (Grade II) and Smethwick Council House (Grade II).

Communities are diverse, with local halls, libraries, and sports clubs supporting cultural and social life.

Soho and Victoria Ward

Soho and Victoria Ward covers residential and commercial areas. Victoria Park (a Green Flag award site) and smaller green spaces such as Unett Street greenspace, provide recreation and leisure, while industrial heritage, such as Soho Foundry (Grade II*), is prominent. Heritage assets include the former Waterloo Hotel (Grade II*) and the War Memorial at Victoria Park (Grade II). The ward has an active, diverse community supported by grassroots organisations.

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) have undertaken a review of the boundaries of several wards in Sandwell, including Smethwick. The Investment Boundary Area for Plan for Neighbourhoods Programme has adopted this boundary, which is subject to parliament approval in December 2025, therefore the data refers to Bearwood, currently known as the Abbey ward.

² A small section of Oldbury is included in the investment boundary as it formed part of the originally defined area. While we are permitted to add locations to the initial investment boundary to align with Smethwick ward boundaries, we are not able to remove areas initially included.

Our Smethwick Partnership Board is committed to ensuring that the programme delivers positive outcomes across all four wards, in line with local priorities and evidence of need. Each ward within Smethwick has its own distinct character, strengths and challenges. Therefore interventions will be tailored to address the specific needs and opportunities within Soho and Victoria, St Paul's, Smethwick and Bearwood wards, guided by local data, community engagement and strategic insight.

Recent engagement activities highlighted that safety and security is a key priority for interventions in St Paul's and Smethwick wards, while regeneration, high streets and heritage is a key priority for interventions in Bearwood and Soho and Victoria wards. Continued and meaningful engagement with communities will be essential throughout the duration of the programme, to ensure that the plan remains responsive to evolving needs and is shaped by the voices of local residents.

The benefits of regeneration will extend beyond formal ward boundaries. Residents and businesses outside these boundaries are still expected to experience significant positive impacts from the programme. Given the character of Smethwick's closely connected neighbourhoods, the forthcoming improvements to infrastructure, local services, shared public spaces and economic activity are very likely to generate ripple effects, stimulating additional positive change across nearby areas.





Plant sale, Warley Woods
Community Trust

Vision for the future

Smethwick 2036

A connected, thriving community

Smethwick is envisioned as a secure and resilient community, where residents, businesses, and communities can thrive. Our town is vibrant, rich in culture and community pride, with green spaces and a proud history that create a unique place to live.

Smethwick is a town where every community can thrive – a place that is safer, fairer, and more connected. Building on the pride and resilience of its people, renewal is shaped by those who live and work here, creating neighbourhoods that are cleaner, greener, and full of opportunity.

Investment in regeneration, education, and health goes hand in hand with strengthening community ties. Revitalised high streets and well-maintained public spaces bring people together, supporting local businesses and celebrating Smethwick's unique heritage.

Stronger connections between neighbours help build trust, improve safety, and nurture a shared sense of belonging. Collaboration and engagement create a healthier, more confident Smethwick – a town where young people achieve their potential, everyone feels safe and valued, and community spirit drives lasting change.

By 2036, Smethwick is a town that continues to grow steadily, improving opportunities and quality of life while building on the strengths of its people and neighbourhoods.

This vision imagines change not only in the physical landscape but also in the character of community life, aspiring to a brighter and more inclusive future for all generations. It envisions a community where people feel valued, safe, and inspired to contribute to its continuing growth.



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

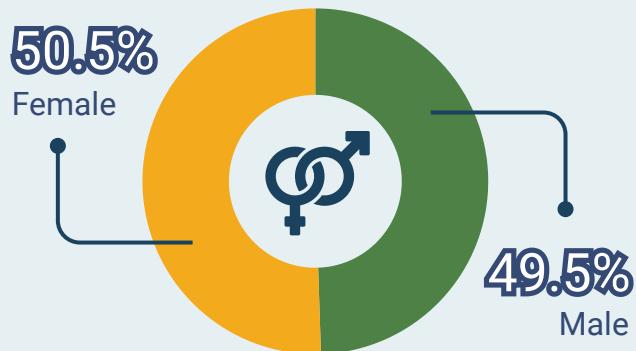
With thriving high streets, modern transport, green spaces, and world-class learning and job opportunities, it's a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live, grow and belong.”

Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods Vision Statement

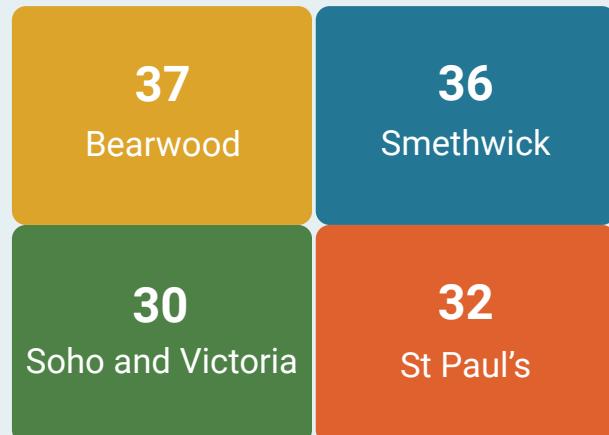


60,034
Population

Bearwood: 14,406
Smethwick: 14,803
Soho and Victoria: 15,942
St Paul's: 14,883



Median Age by Ward



Strategic case for change

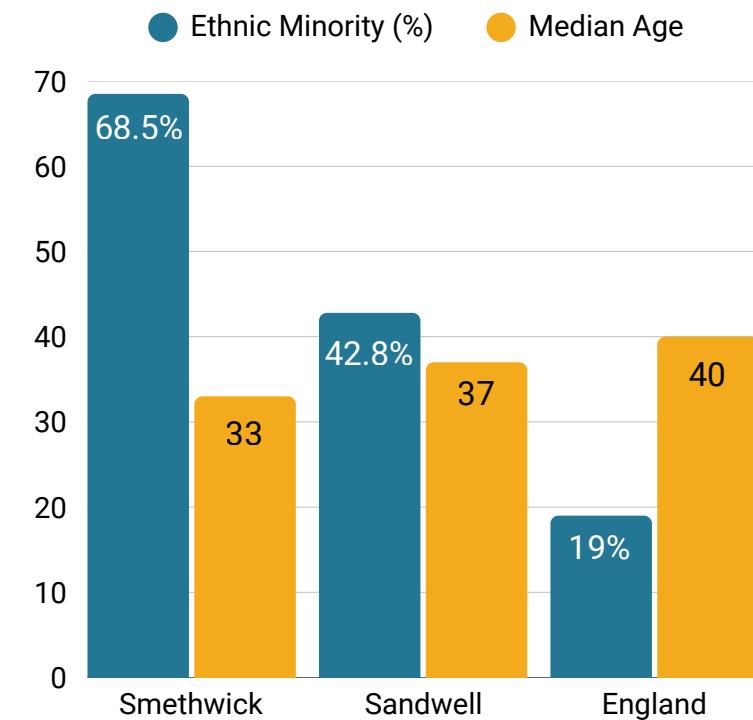
Smethwick as a whole is marked by deep deprivation and inequality, though conditions vary significantly between wards.

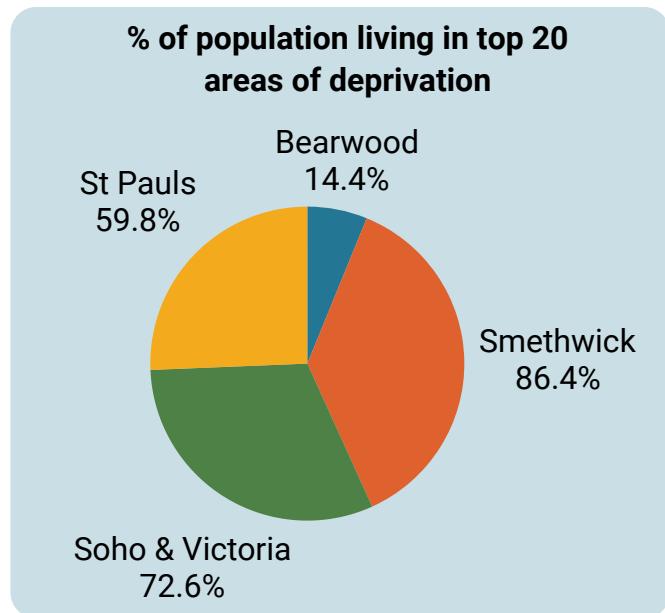
Across the town, 68.5% of residents are from ethnic minority backgrounds and the median age is 33, reflecting a younger and more diverse community than both Sandwell (42.8%; 37 median age) and England (19%; 40 median age).

The scale of deprivation is striking: 57.5% of the population live in the most deprived areas nationally, with 45% of children living in poverty.

Within the town, Smethwick and Soho and Victoria wards are the most disadvantaged. In Smethwick ward, 86% of residents live in the top 20% most deprived areas, child poverty affects 46% of households. Soho and Victoria faces similar challenges, with 73% of residents in deprived areas, very high overcrowding, and elevated long-term unemployment (4.3% vs 1.9% nationally).

Both wards experience poor health outcomes and some of the highest crime levels in the Borough, including violent and sexual offences. Social trust is also very low, at -31% compared to -3% nationally.





St Paul's ward faces a slightly different profile: deprivation is still severe (60% of residents in the most deprived areas), but jobs density is stronger. Yet health inequalities remain marked, with high child obesity, fuel poverty, and low rates of childhood and adult physical activity, while educational outcomes are below average.

Bearwood, in contrast, stands out for relatively stronger indicators. Only 14% of residents live in the most deprived areas, and child poverty (37%) is lower than in neighbouring wards. Economic activity is stronger, with more businesses per head and a higher household

income (£21,035 Gross Disposable Housing Income vs £15,306 in Sandwell borough). However, Bearwood still experiences challenges, including fuel poverty (25%), lower skills and educational outcomes, and overcrowding pressures.

At the aggregated town level, Gross Value Added stands shy of £1bn, and jobs density is just 0.5 compared to 0.8 nationally. Fuel poverty is also acute (23.8% vs 11.4% England), and health, housing, and education outcomes remain consistently worse than national benchmarks. Social trust is low, coming in at -19%.

In summary, Smethwick and Soho and Victoria drive Smethwick's acute deprivation, with high poverty, weak economic performance, and poor health and safety outcomes. St Paul's is moderately better on economy but still disadvantaged, while Bearwood is an outlier with comparatively stronger socio-economic conditions. This unevenness highlights the need for both area-wide investment in connectivity, health, and skills, and targeted interventions for the most deprived wards where disadvantage is most entrenched.

Full data analysis of Smethwick can be viewed here: [Plan for Neighbourhoods Story Map](#).

The data highlights how Smethwick's challenges align with the plan's investment themes. High levels of deprivation and child poverty, particularly in Smethwick and Soho and Victoria wards, emphasise the need to invest in families, children, and health and wellbeing services. Weak jobs density, high unemployment, and low skills across the town point to the importance of strengthening pathways into employment, training, and enterprise.

Meanwhile, persistently low levels of social trust, coupled with high crime in the most deprived wards, reinforce the need for safer, more connected neighbourhoods where residents feel supported and included.

By linking these challenges to investment priorities, the data provides a clear rationale for both targeted interventions in the most disadvantaged wards and broader measures to lift outcomes across the whole town.



Priorities for change

Smethwick's regeneration journey is rooted in the voices of its people. Our strategic case for change is shaped by extensive community engagement and local analysis, ensuring that the priorities outlined in this plan reflect both national investment themes and the lived experiences of Smethwick residents.



The priorities for change as identified through our community engagement were extremely clear. We pinpointed what matters most to the people who live and work in Smethwick by using several approaches, including a short online survey open to all and explicit about the potential priorities for the plan. This survey received 1,641 responses.

We also held community workshops involving 150 community representatives, organisers, businesses, stakeholders and service providers. Round table discussions and a mapping helped highlight locations for quick wins and their associated priorities. We also provided a "postcard" opportunity giving people a chance to share what was most important to them.

The feedback was clear and consistent. People want safer, more vibrant high streets that feel welcoming and inclusive. They called for better access to jobs, training, and career pathways, especially for young people.



Health and wellbeing emerged as a major concern, with strong support for improved parks, sports facilities, and local services. Community cohesion was also a recurring theme, with calls for more youth hubs, cultural spaces, and opportunities to connect across backgrounds.

The initial engagement have identified the following priorities:



Our Smethwick Partnership Board will review and adapt priorities as they may evolve over the lifetime of the programme. Ongoing engagement will help identify the most important priorities for each investment period across all eight investment themes.

Regeneration, high streets and heritage (*Thriving Places*)

Regeneration, high streets and heritage emerged as a leading priority through the engagement process. It was identified as the first priority for 33% of respondents to the survey, with 63% of all respondents including it within their top three priorities for intervention. Similarly, it featured in 33% of all responses to the mapping exercise and was a recurring theme in roundtable discussions.

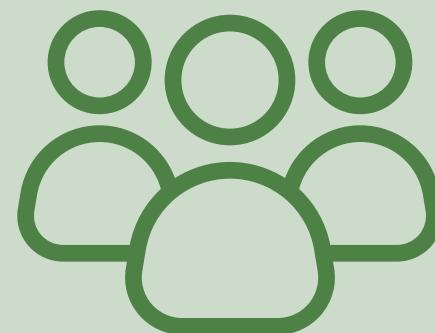
This focus on regeneration, high streets and heritage aligns strongly with the *Thriving Places* objective. Enhancing the quality and character of our physical surroundings – through measures such as pavement repairs, public space improvements, street cleaning, and investment in existing or new parks – will help create vibrant, attractive neighbourhoods.

By ensuring that our high streets are active and welcoming, residents and visitors alike can benefit from good local amenities, well-maintained public spaces, and high-quality physical infrastructure that contribute to a sense of pride and place.

Community cohesion (*Stronger Communities*)

Community cohesion was identified as a significant priority through the engagement process. It was ranked as the first priority by 13% of respondents, with 48% of all respondents including it within their top three priorities for intervention. It also featured prominently in roundtable discussions and postcard comments.

This focus on community cohesion aligns with the *Stronger Communities* objective. Engagement feedback highlighted a strong desire to build relationships and create opportunities for social mixing. By bringing people together and fostering mutual trust, we can enhance community safety, social connection, and neighbourhood pride, helping to strengthen the fabric of our local communities.



Health and wellbeing (*Thriving Places, Stronger Communities*)

Health and wellbeing emerged as an important theme throughout the engagement. It was identified as the first priority by 9% of respondents, with 44% of all respondents including it within their top three priorities for intervention. The theme was also a consistent thread in roundtable discussions and postcard comments.

This focus on health and wellbeing aligns closely with the *Thriving Places* objective, reflecting the need for accessible and responsive public services, including healthcare provision. It also supports the *Stronger Communities* objective, as engagement feedback demonstrated a clear demand for community-based health initiatives and integrated wellbeing services within Smethwick.

By improving access to health and wellbeing support, we can help ensure that residents lead healthier, more active, and more connected lives.



West Smethwick Park, Smethwick

Safety and Security (*Taking Back Control, Thriving Places*)

Safety and security emerged as a key priority throughout the engagement process. It was identified as the first priority by 17% of respondents, with 43% of all respondents including it within their top three priorities for intervention. The theme featured in 30% of all responses to the mapping exercise and was a recurring topic in roundtable discussions.

This focus on safety and security aligns with both the *Taking Back Control* and *Thriving Places* objectives. Addressing issues such as anti-social behaviour and crime, alongside taking proactive steps to prevent problems before they arise, will help ensure that communities can grow and thrive from a position of confidence, trust, and pride.



Education and opportunity (*Thriving Places*)

Education and opportunity was identified as a key theme throughout the engagement. It was ranked as the first priority by 12% of respondents, with 37% of all respondents including it within their top three priorities for intervention. The theme was also a strong focus in roundtable discussions and postcard comments.

This priority aligns closely with the *Thriving Places* objective. Participants highlighted the importance of accessible and responsive public services, particularly education and youth provision. There was a clear desire to support children and young people – both in terms of their wellbeing and mental health – and to provide targeted activities and opportunities that help them achieve their potential.

By investing in education and youth support, the community can help foster a generation that is confident, skilled, and resilient, contributing to the long-term success of the area.

Alignment between evidence and community priorities

The case for change in Smethwick highlights inequalities across the town, with significant differences between its wards. These challenges closely reflect what communities told us through community engagement.

Regeneration, high streets and heritage

emerged as the top priority, with nearly two-thirds of survey respondents including it within their top three issues. This reflects a strong desire for cleaner, safer and more attractive neighbourhoods, with active local high streets and well-maintained public spaces. These ambitions align directly with the evidence showing Smethwick's low jobs density, high deprivation, and need for revitalised physical and economic infrastructure. Investment in regeneration will therefore be central to creating vibrant, thriving places that stimulate economic activity and community pride.

Community cohesion also featured prominently, with almost half of respondents identifying it as a key concern. This emphasis resonates with the data on extremely low social trust in Smethwick, particularly in the most deprived wards.

There is a desire to see stronger connections between communities, opportunities for social mixing, and greater mutual understanding. Building cohesion will be essential for tackling isolation, improving perceptions of safety, and strengthening the overall resilience of local neighbourhoods.

Health and wellbeing was another recurrent theme throughout the engagement, reflecting concern about poor health outcomes and access to support. This aligns closely with evidence of high levels of child obesity and low physical activity rates in several wards. Respondents highlighted the importance of accessible, local health and wellbeing services that are community-based and preventive in focus. Addressing these issues will help reduce inequalities, improve quality of life, and ensure that residents and communities can lead healthier, more active lives.

Education and opportunity was also identified as key priority, particularly around supporting children and young people to achieve their potential. With 37% of respondents ranking this theme among their top three, there is a clear community mandate for improving education, skills, and employment pathways.

This aligns strongly with the evidence of low skills levels, below-average educational outcomes, and weak job density. Investment in education and training will therefore be critical to creating opportunity, boosting aspiration, and driving long-term economic resilience.

Safety and security was another key priority, featuring in over 40% of responses. This emphasis reflects both lived experience and the statistical reality of high crime levels, particularly violent and sexual offences in the most deprived wards. Respondents expressed a strong desire to see safer streets, more visible policing, and proactive measures to prevent anti-social behaviour. Tackling safety concerns will be key to rebuilding confidence, fostering trust, and enabling communities to thrive from a position of stability and pride.

These themes demonstrate a strong alignment between the evidence-based case for change and the priorities identified by communities. Both highlight the need for targeted investment in the most deprived areas, alongside broader improvements across the town that enhance connectivity, wellbeing, and opportunities.



Unett Street Open Space, Smethwick

Intended use of powers

To support the Smethwick Partnership Board, Sandwell Council will systematically review and make recommendations to deploy the statutory powers at its disposal to support the delivery of neighbourhood interventions. Any deployment of powers will have resource implications and is expected to be funded by the programme.

Where appropriate, these powers will be used not only to enable positive change, such as unlocking regeneration, protecting heritage, or improving public spaces, but also to enforce action where neglect, disrepair, or non-compliance threaten community wellbeing.

The council currently draws on a range of statutory powers, including but not limited to:

- **Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990** to require owners to improve the condition of land or buildings that are unsightly or harmful to the local area.
- **Compulsory Purchase Power Section 226** to acquire land or property compulsorily where it is in the public interest.

- **Section 26 of the Highways Act 1980** to create public footpaths, where it would add to the convenience or enjoyment of a substantial section of the public or of local residents.
- The council currently uses **Duty to preserve and enhance conservation area** to manage and preserve the character and appearance of designated areas of special architectural and historic interest.
- The council also use the **Local Listing** powers to identify and recognise buildings, structures or sites that contribute to the area's local character and heritage, but do not meet the criteria for national listing.
- To address environmental and public health concerns, the council enforces against fly tipping under the **The Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990**.
- The council is currently developing a **Design Code** to guide the quality, appearance and character of new developments across the Borough. Once adopted, the design code will ensure that new developments meet clear standards that enhance the local environment and compliment existing heritage and community assets.



The Waterloo Hotel, Smethwick - a Grade II* listed building



Fly tipping, Smethwick



Feedback from the Design Code consultation (Extract)



Long-term outcomes and ambitions

During the consultation, 91% of respondents to the survey agreed with the vision of Smethwick in 2036:

"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."

The focus is on revitalising previously neglected high streets and ensuring estates and town centres meet the evolving needs of residents. Through a mixture of smaller scale and large projects, local people are directly involved in the design and development of improved facilities.

Local leaders are supported to rebuild relationships between residents, creating safer and more connected communities, with positive impact on areas such as education, security and the economy.

Smethwick's children have the same opportunities for a good future as those anywhere else, feeling valued and cherished due to the range of impactful educational and leisure activities and support services available to them.

Smethwick's adults have the ability to live the life they want, gaining the skills they need for new jobs and to grow in their careers.

A thriving local economy goes hand in hand with healthier and happier lives for the people who call Smethwick home.

Regeneration, high streets and heritage

- Revitalised high streets, greener spaces, and sustained investment in cultural and heritage assets.

Community cohesion

- Inclusive public spaces and stronger partnerships fostering trust, pride, and active participation.

Health and wellbeing

- Reduced inequalities through better healthcare access, active lifestyles, and investment in sports facilities.

Education and opportunity

- Improved access to high-quality education, family support, and adult skills training driving long-term prosperity.

Work, skills and productivity

- Initiatives to support a stronger, fairer local economy with better access to jobs, skills, and business growth.

Transport

- Accessible transport with improved bus and rail stops/stations, passenger information with safer pedestrian routes and upgraded roads.

Housing

- Support to reduce homelessness and energy-efficient housing initiatives for vulnerable residents.



Gambian Islamic Community Centre - Litter Watch event

Safety and security

- Well-designed environments and shared responsibility creating safer streets and stronger community confidence.



Ideal for All - Shakespeare Folio Event



Alignment with other programmes and investment

Smethwick is currently the focus of a coordinated programme of regeneration, supported by a diverse range of public investment. Funding from local, regional and national programmes is helping to transform the town's economy, housing, infrastructure and public spaces. These investments form the foundations for inclusive growth and are shaping Smethwick as a place where people want to live, work and thrive.

Smethwick's location within the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area positions it well to benefit from region wide investment opportunities. Alongside targeted programmes like the Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund Round 3, Smethwick's inclusion within the WMCA area enables access to a number of strategic funding programmes that support its regeneration goals. Sandwell Council works closely with the WMCA to identify and access critical support to unlock complex brownfield

sites and bring forward new housing and employment opportunities.

Smethwick also benefits from devolved transport funding via the WMCA. Through this, Smethwick is receiving funding towards delivering:

- M5 Junction 1 Improvements
- Smethwick Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package
- Cross City Bus Package 3 (Dudley to Druids Heath via Oldbury, Smethwick and Birmingham)
- A457 Cycle Route (Oldbury Town Centre to Galton Bridge Station)
- Sandwell SCWIP Cycle Route 11: Black Patch to Cape Hill via MMUH
- Sandwell SCWIP Cycle Route 5: Langley Green to Bearwood via Smethwick Aquatic Centre
- West Midlands LCWIP Cycle Route: Roebuck Lane to Smethwick Galton Bridge

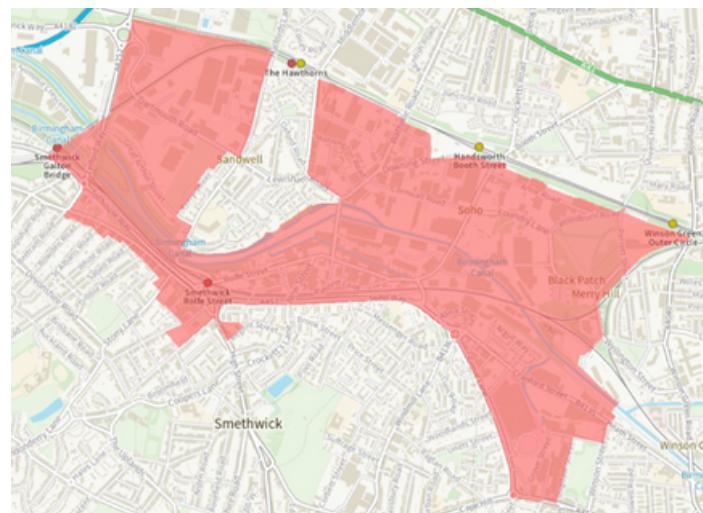
Sandwell Local Plan

The Sandwell Local Plan³ sets out a strategy for providing new housing and employment sites to help meet Sandwell's development needs to 2041. It identifies suitable sites for development and provides policies to help officers come to decisions on all planning proposals.

The Sandwell Local Plan identifies four regeneration areas, of which one falls partially in Smethwick town. A Regeneration Area is a specific neighbourhood or area that has been chosen for focused investment and development to improve economic, social and environmental conditions. They are priority places where councils (often with partners) plan to support growth and renewal through targeting funding, using focused planning policies, and improve or deliver new infrastructure.

Once the Sandwell Local Plan is adopted (early 2026), the regeneration areas, along with the strategic centre of West Bromwich, will be the focus for new development, regeneration, and public and private investment in the borough.

Proposals will be subject to development plan policies, and the form and location of regeneration will be guided by masterplans and/or design briefs, which will be prepared by the council in partnership with developers, promoters and other stakeholders.



Regeneration boundary area identified in The Sandwell Local Plan.



The Sandwell Local Plan (Sept 2024)

³ Currently (Autumn 2025) at examination prior to being adopted in 2026.



Grove Lane Illustrative Masterplan

Grove Lane Masterplan and Regeneration

A major focus for Smethwick's long-term regeneration is the Grove Lane Masterplan, which sits at the heart of the wider Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor – a historic canal district, stretching from The Roundhouse just west of Brindley Place, Birmingham to Galton Bridge in Smethwick. It is the historic link between Birmingham and the Black Country and the cradle of the Industrial Revolution. Today the corridor is one of the most significant areas of brownfield urban renewal in Europe.

At the heart of this corridor is the Grove Lane area, home to the £700m Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH), which opened in October 2024. With the surrounding land, it is one of the major intervention sites in Sandwell. The Grove Lane area, which includes land between Grove Lane, Cranford Street, Heath Street, and the Main Line Canal, has also been awarded Housing Zone status.

The Grove Lane Masterplan demonstrates how agreed objectives can be translated into an environment that:

- encourages walking and cycling through delivering compact development forms and attractive street environments that prioritise people, such as mews streets;
- provides access to green space and nature;
- provides a variety of different housing typologies, enabling the creation of mixed communities;
- while meeting local standards, allows future flexibility should the anticipated modal shift towards less car usage be achieved.

As set out in the Masterplan, this area has capacity to deliver approximately 800 new homes across 18ha of brownfield land, alongside new public spaces and supporting infrastructure. The regeneration of this corridor is driven by the vision for:

"a place that people want to live in now and into the future, a place that is aspirational, where people feel proud to live, work, visit and be educated, that is well connected and provides sustainable transport choices, where access to the area's heritage and natural beauty is maximised and a place that forms and bolsters new and existing communities"

Rolfe Street Masterplan

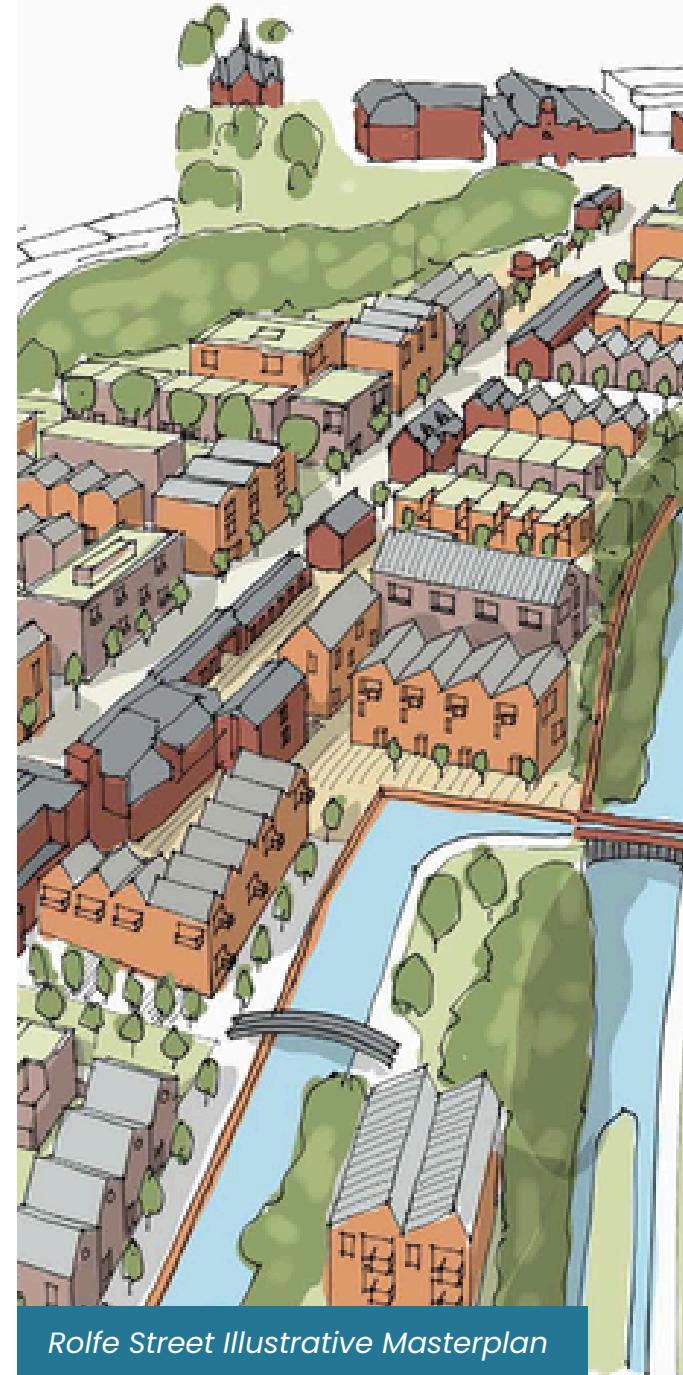
Rolfe Street is located at the western end of the Smethwick to Birmingham corridor. Adjacent to Smethwick High Street, it benefits from a well-connected railway station with a six-minute journey time to Birmingham; the station has seen recent investment including the provision of lift access. It is 15 minutes' walk from the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, and one mile from the new Aquatics Centre (delivered as part of the 2022 Commonwealth Games).

Due to the industrial nature of the area, piecemeal development for residential development is not considered suitable, with a more comprehensive approach seen as the most efficient means to deliver a high-quality residential community. Fragmented ownerships make this difficult to provide, hence the need for a strong Masterplan that will guide delivery and support a cohesive development.

The Rolfe Street masterplan demonstrates how the agreed objectives can be translated into an environment that:

- encourages active travel such as walking and cycling;
- provides access to green space and nature;
- builds on the nationally important history of the site, following the success of recent development at Port Loop and Galton Locks, and the successful Towns Fund bid for enabling works at the Enterprise Centre;
- offers local employment opportunities, improved accessibility and affordable homes;
- addresses issues around climate change and net zero by employing solutions such as consideration of orientation and shading, shared heat pumps and Passivhaus principles.

The Rolfe Street Masterplan envisages a distinctive, well-designed community being created in this well connected and attractive location.



Rolfe Street Illustrative Masterplan

Levelling Up Fund Round 3

Sandwell Council has been awarded a grant of just over £18m from the Government as part of Round 3 of the Levelling Up Fund. Together with match funding from Sandwell Council, the aim of the proposed project is to acquire various sites or leasehold interests at Cranford Street, Abberley Street, Grove Street and Halberton Street in Smethwick. The site assembly and remediation is expected to be completed by 2028.

The proposed development will complement the investment made by the NHS Trust in the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital and the Towns Fund Midland Met Learning Campus by bringing forward transformational regeneration of the adjacent area.

The change from industrial uses to residential will be in line with the allocation in the Sandwell Local Plan and aims to deliver the vision as set out in the approved Grove Lane Masterplan, creating new sustainable communities and providing much needed family housing and open space links within this strategic regeneration corridor.

Smethwick Town Investment Plan

In 2021, Smethwick was awarded £23.5m through the Government's Towns Fund programme to help with the regeneration of the town through targeted investments set out in the Smethwick Town Investment Plan.

The Towns Fund is delivering five projects across Smethwick, all of which align to the Town Investment Plan's vision of:

“connecting our residents to skills and training facilities and by improving our environment with major urban regeneration and connectivity upgrades. Smethwick’s young, diverse, and growing population is our most valuable economic asset, and helping the people who grow up here live fulfilling and rich lives here will transform the town for the better.”⁴

The Town Investment Plan's projects will lay the foundations for long-term prosperity. By investing in the people of Smethwick and its places, we will tackle the persistent problems which limit Smethwick residents.

Ron Davis Centre Expansion

The £360k Towns Fund investment enabled the Ron Davis Centre to expand the skills and training offer for Smethwick residents in a multipurpose education and skills facility in the heart of Smethwick.

Run by Sandwell Adult Family Learning, the centre provides a rich and varied range of learning activities for residents, including:

- adult learning,
- family learning,
- active targeting of careers advice to at risk groups, and
- support for apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience and internships.

Investment has created two new classrooms - expanding the quality and quantity of the courses, one full time equivalent job and supporting 1,100 new learners over the academic years 2023-2026.

⁴ Smethwick Town Investment Plan Vision, 2020

Midland Met Learning Campus

A major new £18.5m skills resource next to the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital will provide training in healthcare and related positions from entry level to Level 7 skills.

This is a collaborative proposal between Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, Sandwell Council, Sandwell College, Aston University and the University of Wolverhampton, with co-funding from West Midlands Combined Authority and Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust.

By concentrating health education around a major anchor institution, a new Higher Education university campus will be created in Sandwell. It will bring together the Learning Works, a Nursing and Midwifery School, development of an Advanced Clinical Practitioner programme, a satellite School of Pharmacy and a Regional Centre of Excellence for Health Professions within a new 6,000 sqm education space, able to accommodate 1,280 students.

Rolfe Street Canalside Regeneration

The £2m investment is assisting in the regeneration of the Smethwick Enterprise Centre site at Rolfe Street, a council-owned business facility that fell into disrepair. The site is being brought forward for housing that will support the wider regeneration of the town and link to the opportunities around the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital.

Grove Lane Regeneration

The £4.35m investment proposal is to acquire and remediate a 2 hectare site within the Grove Lane area, enabling the development of around 100 new homes and a commercial unit. This forms a strategic first step in delivering the Grove Lane vision.

Smethwick Connected

The £3.87m programme of active travel improvements is an extensive network of new and upgraded walking and cycling routes connecting Rolfe Street and Galton Bridge train stations to the town centre and to the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. This will provide safe, accessible access for workers, visitors, and future students at the Midland Met Learning Campus.



Construction of the new Midland Met Learning Campus



New classrooms at the Ron Davis Centre in Smethwick

Midland Metropolitan University Hospital

The Midland Metropolitan University Hospital opened in October 2024, bringing together expertise from every corner of the NHS. It is establishing itself as a central hub for acute and emergency care that serves our vibrant and diverse communities.

Sandwell Aquatics Centre

The Sandwell Aquatics Centre opened its doors to the public in July 2023 as part of a £92m investment for the Commonwealth Games.

The aquatics centre offers a 50-metre Olympic-sized swimming pool as well as a 25-metre diving pool, community swimming pool, and seats for up to 1,000 spectators.

Other facilities include three activity studios, two 4-court sports halls, a 108-station fitness suite with 25-station ladies-only gym, dry diving facilities, an indoor cycling studio, a new football pitch, a cafe, and changing facilities including a sauna and steam room. Externally, a new urban park features a children's play area.

Windsor Olympus Academy

Windsor Olympus Academy is a brand-new secondary school in Winson Green, in the Black Patch area of Smethwick. The £20m investment was delivered by the Department for Education and is now operated by Windsor Academy Trust. The school has been designed to provide children with the right environment and facilities to allow them to get creative in dance and music studios, experiment in science labs, and become more active through the huge range of sports and fitness facilities that are available.

West Smethwick Park Restoration

West Smethwick Park recently benefited from a £5.1m restoration and improvement project funded by a National Lottery Heritage Funding Parks for People grant and support from Sandwell Council. So far, the project has:

- employed a Community Engagement Coordinator, who is working to engage community groups and residents in activities.
- restored the memorial to James Chance, the airmen's memorial, and drinking fountain.

- built the new West Smethwick Park Pavilion and a new outdoor events area.

The Park also includes a new boathouse feature, an upgraded multi-use games area with tennis courts, and an outdoor gym. Nature conservation improvements have also been undertaken including woodland, grassland, and wetland works.

The new pavilion forms the centerpiece of the restoration, and the building has toilets, a café, seating area, and community areas that are used for events and activities.

In July 2025, the park was awarded Green Flag status.

Potential Heat Network

Sandwell Council is currently exploring the opportunity for a heat network within the Grove Lane area as an opportunity for expansion of a potential scheme serving West Bromwich town centre. The network could provide both the MMUH and new housing developments with low-carbon heat, along with any suitable existing buildings.

Pride in Place Impact Fund

In September 2025, the Government announced that Sandwell is set to receive £1.5 million in capital funding through the Pride in Place Impact Fund. This funding will support three key objectives: enhancing community spaces, improving public spaces, and revitalising high streets and town centres. There is an opportunity to align this funding to complement Plan for Neighbourhoods outcomes, strengthening the collective impact of regeneration activity across Smethwick.

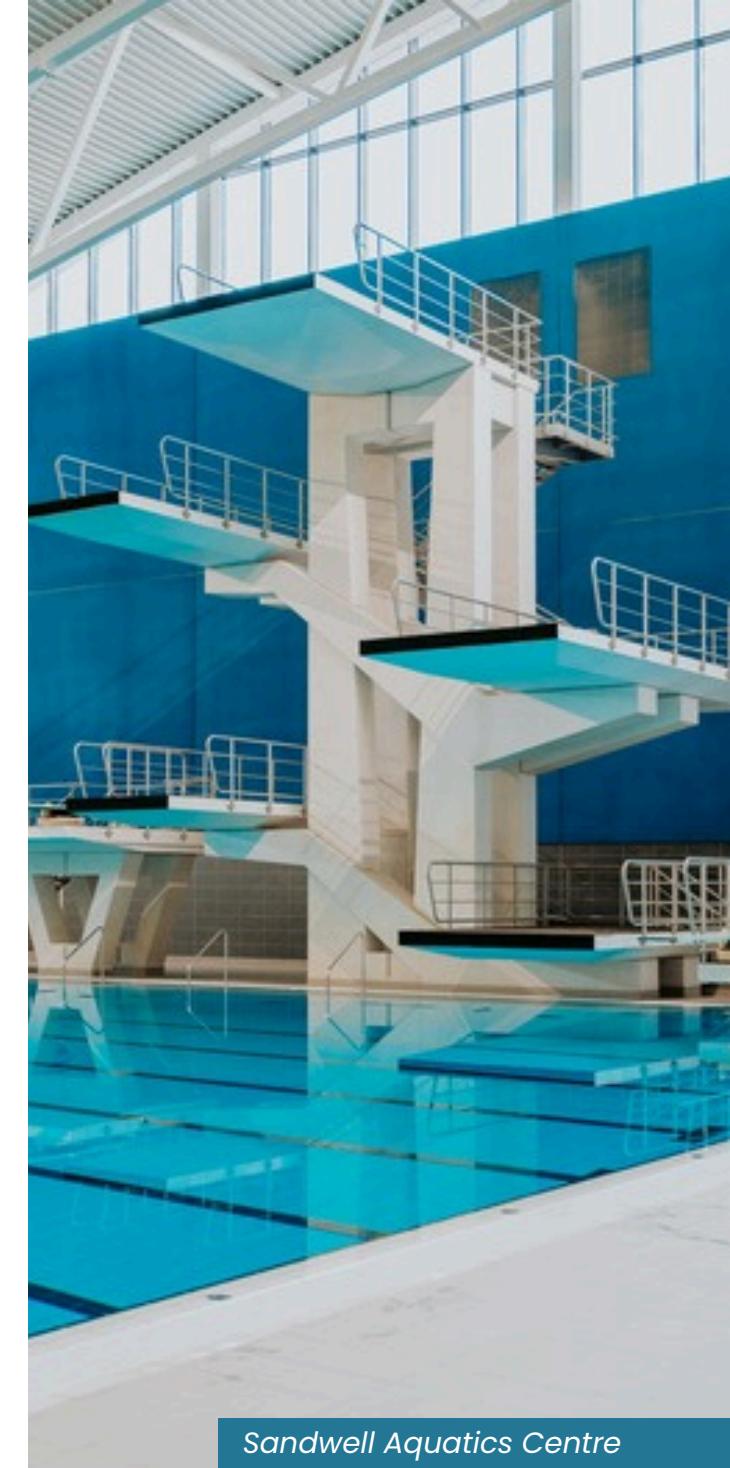
In addition to these programmes, Smethwick has benefited in recent years from other ongoing initiatives supported by funding from local programmes within the town. These have included support from West Midlands Police community safety schemes and voluntary and community sector-led projects. Local partnerships have helped channel resources into areas such as crime prevention, youth engagement, health and wellbeing initiatives, skills development and neighbourhood improvements.

Further contributions have come through schemes funded by SCVO (Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations) and the Sandwell Council Voluntary Sector Support Team.

These programmes have provided both capital and revenue funding, helping to strengthen local community groups, enable capacity building, and sustain ongoing community activity across Smethwick. This support has ensured that smaller voluntary and community sector organisations can continue delivering vital local services, develop new initiatives, and access the expertise and resources needed to grow and collaborate effectively.

These initiatives have laid a strong foundation for local partnership working and community engagement. However, emerging findings have highlighted areas for improvement such as cross-sector collaboration to maximise opportunities.

Emerging findings throughout the programme will assist our Board to synchronise timelines, funding opportunities, and areas of focus, enabling the Plan for Neighbourhoods to serve as a bridge, connecting grassroots aspirations with larger-scale interventions and resources, thereby complimenting projects, maximising impact and avoiding duplication of efforts. Our Board will work with partners to forward plan investment opportunities and work collaboratively to deliver co-ordinated outcomes for the benefit of Smethwick.



Sandwell Aquatics Centre



Match funding and leveraged investment

Smethwick has already shown how powerful it can be to bring outside funding to support local ambitions. From national grants, lottery support, regional investment and council-led match funding, the town has secured millions of pounds resources to transform local facilities, green spaces, and community opportunities.

At present, there is no committed match funding secured against this programme. This gives our Board an opportunity to shape a new approach, building on Smethwick's track record of attracting outside investment and ensuring future funding is secured in a strategic and coordinated way.

To achieve this, our Smethwick Partnership Board will take an active role in discussions with potential funders, including public, private and voluntary sector, making sure Smethwick's priorities are heard and understood. It will also encourage applicants and partners to think about where funding can come from – asking them to explore multiple sources and match funding opportunities.

Our Smethwick Partnership Board has identified an initial list of potential funding sources, from major national programmes such as National Lottery, Sports England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, to regional programmes led by West Midlands Combined Authority, Sustainability West Midlands, West Midlands Police and Sandwell Council. By keeping this list up to date, our Board can share this with applicants to act quickly when new opportunities arise. Where applicable, private investment from businesses, developers, and philanthropic investors can co-fund initiatives aligned with the programme's themes.

Throughout the ten-year programme, our Board aims to strengthen the approach by aligning projects with the town's priorities. For example, to increase physical activities, our Board may encourage applications with match funding from Sandwell Leisure Trust, Active Black Country, or Sport England. For heritage and culture, applications with match funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council programmes.



“ Our Board is determined to maximise this opportunity and ensure that every decision we make delivers long-term value. We see the potential to turn £20 million over ten years into something far greater – not just in financial terms, but in the scale of what we can achieve for our partners, our people, and the communities we serve. ”

- Smethwick Partnership Board



Community and stakeholder engagement

The Smethwick Regeneration Plan is informed by engagement with local communities and stakeholders from July to August 2025. But this is only the beginning.

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

The Smethwick Partnership Board membership and leadership

Our Smethwick Partnership Board is a diverse and committed group of community leaders, local organisations, and public agencies. It is chaired by Alan Taylor, Sandwell Business Ambassador and a local business representative from MiGlass Limited in Smethwick. Alan helps guide the Board's work and keeps members focused on community priorities.

All Board members are volunteers who bring their time, experience, and local knowledge to the table. Members are required to sign up to a formal Code of Conduct, Declarations of Interest, and agreed Terms of Reference. This ensures transparency, accountability, and ethical governance in all Board activities.

Details of the Smethwick Partnership Board membership can be viewed in the Governance section of this Plan and the supporting appendix.

Our Board provides strategic leadership and oversight of the Regeneration Plan, supported by Sandwell Council as the Accountable Body. This partnership ensures that decisions remain community-focused and responsive to local priorities. By bringing together diverse knowledge, skills, and lived experience, our Board ensures that engagement continues to reflect community needs over time.

Ways of working

Our Smethwick Partnership Board operates as an independent, community-led body, with a clear distinction from the local authority while maintaining close collaboration to align with wider strategic priorities. This independence ensures that decisions are shaped by the needs and aspirations of local residents, communities and businesses.

Regular meetings are held on a quarterly basis at a minimum, with agendas and minutes published to maintain openness and public accountability.

While Sandwell Council acts as the Accountable Body, providing administrative support, access to data, and guidance on statutory requirements, our Board maintains control over setting priorities, shaping projects and approving expenditure within the Regeneration Plan.

By maintaining transparency, open communication, and structured opportunities for input, our Board ensures that community involvement is continuous, meaningful, and embedded in every aspect of the Regeneration Plan over the 10-year period.

Smethwick Youth Shadow Forum

As part of our commitment to inclusive and community-led regeneration, a new Youth Shadow Forum has been established to ensure that young people play an active and influential role in shaping the future of Smethwick.

The Youth Shadow Forum will form a key mechanism for embedding meaningful youth engagement across all aspects of the regeneration programme. Members will contribute to strategic discussions, influence project priorities, and ensure that the perspectives and aspirations of young people are represented throughout the planning and delivery of regeneration activity.

Working in partnership with local organisations, schools, community groups, and Sandwell Council's youth services, the Youth Shadow Forum will also lead initiatives to strengthen youth engagement across Smethwick, with support from the Smethwick Partnership Board. This will include mapping existing youth provision, identifying local needs and opportunities, and supporting events and collaborations that connect young people with wider regeneration efforts.

The creation of the Youth Shadow Forum builds on our ongoing engagement with young people across Smethwick and reinforces our commitment to ensuring that regeneration is co-produced with the community. Through this initiative, young residents will not only be consulted but will play a central role in influencing decisions, driving change, and helping to realise a shared vision for the future of Smethwick.

Through their involvement, members of the Youth Shadow Forum will also have opportunities to develop valuable personal and professional skills. This experience will help them build confidence, leadership, and a deeper understanding of governance and decision-making processes. In doing so, they will be well-placed to become the next generation of community leaders – future Board members, youth advocates, and champions for positive change across Smethwick.

Engaging stakeholders

Our Board recognises that successful regeneration requires strong collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including local businesses, community organisations and strategic partners.

Our engagement strategy is designed to ensure we engage early, listen, respond, and provide regular feedback to stakeholders and our community about the progress that is made to develop and deliver the programme.

We want to maximise the benefits of a digital approach to engagement and the use of social media to engage with people who would not usually participate in traditional consultation activities. At the same time, we are very mindful that not everyone in our community is digitally active or fluent in English and so wherever possible we will ensure that offline opportunities for direct engagement with our communities are available.

We also want to explore using established engagement channels and networks wherever we can. This approach could reduce costs, maximising the amount of money available

for delivering projects, and may help to overcome barriers to participation. Key elements of our Board's approach include:

- **Open and transparent:** we will clearly show how community feedback informs the development and delivery of the Plan and explain how stakeholders can influence future decisions.
- **Inclusive:** we will ensure that a wide range of local stakeholders have the opportunity to participate.
- **Proactive:** we will reach out to communities, making it easier for people to engage rather than waiting for them to approach us.
- **Accessible:** engagement will be digital-first while also providing in-person alternatives for those who prefer offline participation.
- **Evolving:** Methods of engagement are continuously reviewed and adapted in response to participation levels and community feedback, ensuring the approach remains effective and relevant.
- **Independent oversight:** the Board can make decisions that are entirely driven by local priorities, while still maintaining strong lines of communication and collaboration with Sandwell Council to align on shared goals and avoid duplication.

Delivery of interventions

Engagement will continue in phases throughout the 10-year funding period and a broad range of techniques will be used to drive awareness of the Plan and encourage participation in its delivery. The engagement techniques used will evolve as we learn which ones have a beneficial impact on our community.

We anticipate using the following engagement techniques throughout the lifetime of the Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods programme:

- Digital communications and engagement platforms that allow people to participate at a time and place that suits them.
- Social media that drives awareness and captures feedback from people with limited time or interest.
- Community workshops delivered face to face or digitally to discuss the specific themes of the Plan for Neighbourhoods and explore possible projects and/ or interventions.

- **Use of informal community networks** created by established community groups, charities, community centres, cultural societies, religious organisations, sports clubs, and others to raise awareness and provide opportunities for in-person engagement beyond dedicated workshops or events.
- **Drop-in consultation events** held in high-footfall venues to discuss the Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods and capture feedback.
- **Established communication channels** such as the Sandwell Herald, to drive awareness and signpost people to where they can access more information and submit their views.
- **Targeted awareness raising and engagement sessions** at non-Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods-related community events to generate interest from people who would not ordinarily engage with such activity.
- **Plan for Neighbourhoods mailing list** comprised of people who have asked to be kept informed about the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme

Upcoming engagement activities

Starting October to December 2025

- To ensure ongoing consultation with residents on issues that affect them, a review could be conducted to gather recurring complaints raised during workshops to the Local Authority, such as highway concerns and litter hotspots.
- Schools and education facilities were highlighted as a key gap in our summer engagement activities. Engagement with these institutions will commence as soon as possible, with initial visits already completed at two primary schools that have expressed interest in participating in the programme.
- The Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods mailing list database and engagement trackers, developed during the engagement period, have proven invaluable. They will be regularly maintained and updated to ensure a consistent communication loop and maximise the involvement of stakeholders.

Starting January 2026 to April 2026

- Our engagement so far has shown that businesses, faith groups, and community organisations benefit from differentiated, targeted engagement. Tailored approaches can be highly effective, helping to reach “hard-to-reach” groups and supporting strategic planning for interventions. These groups will continue to be engaged through bespoke methods, such as business breakfasts that encourage networking and explore match funding opportunities. Initial engagement with businesses will be followed by further activities once relationships are established.
- Faith groups have distinct priorities and concerns compared with community organisations, and specific workshops for faith institutions, such as connecting them with business partners to discuss match funding, are currently in the early planning stages.

Welcome to Smethwick Ward



Community workshop at Victoria Park Skills Centre, Smethwick

Upcoming engagement activities

From April 2026

- The Smethwick Partnership Board website, social media channels including Facebook, X, TikTok, and any platforms that gain prominence over the next decade will be used to keep communities informed about the Plan's progress and provide opportunities to get involved in projects and initiatives.
- A regular newsletter will document and celebrate project successes, ensuring engagement with those who may not access social media updates.
- Community workshops will continue to provide residents with opportunities to give detailed feedback on projects, progress, and emerging priorities.
- Feedback forums will offer stakeholders a chance to provide targeted input and guidance on current and future projects.
- Additional resident surveys will be conducted and analysed as needed to inform decision-making.
- A consistent feedback loop, including a "You Said, We Did" segment across all communication channels, will ensure residents can see how their input has influenced the Plan.
- Community Open Days will showcase delivered projects, celebrate successes, and provide guidance for new applicants. This aligns with the "Taking Back Control" objective, empowering Smethwick residents and communities to lead, promote, and actively participate in the Plan's initiatives.



Community workshop mapping exercise, Smethwick Library



Governance

Governance and oversight are delivered through the Smethwick Partnership Board and Sandwell Council, acting as the Accountable Body. These arrangements are aligned with Government requirements and Sandwell Council's corporate governance framework, ensuring rigorous standards of integrity, compliance and performance are applied throughout the programme's design and delivery.

The Smethwick Partnership Board

To manage both the Smethwick Towns Fund and Plan for Neighbourhoods programmes effectively, the Smethwick Partnership Board, formally known as the Smethwick Town Deal Board, was refreshed in April 2024. The Board structure incorporates statutory members as required under the Government's "Plan for Neighbourhoods guidance - March 2025", alongside community and sectoral representatives, ensuring a broad, balanced and accountable leadership group.

A recruitment and selection process was undertaken that included a public call for

Expressions of Interest from local community representatives, to ensure broad and inclusive community representation on the Board.

Applications were reviewed and shortlisted by a panel comprising the Board Chair, Town Lead Elected Member, the Sandwell Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Infrastructure, the Independent Chair of the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board, and a representative from Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). This ensured a fair, impartial and representative selection process.

As part of the annual review of Board membership, several vacancies were identified in April 2025. To maintain strong governance and community representation, a new call for Expressions of Interest was launched in June 2025. Applications were reviewed by a panel comprising the Chair of the Smethwick Partnership Board, the Local MP, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Infrastructure, the Smethwick Town Lead Member, the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and an independent representative.

Links to our Governance Documents

- [Smethwick Partnership Board Membership](#)
- [Terms of Reference](#)
- [Code of Conduct Form](#)
- [Declarations of Interests Form](#)

To maintain political accountability and transparency, regular updates on the Plan for Neighbourhood's progress are also shared with Smethwick Ward Members during existing Ward meetings via the Town Lead Member.

Smethwick Partnership Board members are tasked with ensuring that the views and needs of the Smethwick community are reflected appropriately in programme delivery. Community engagement and representation are embedded within the Board's decision-making processes and a formal engagement plan ensures local input is sought and included.

Subgroups

To widen participation beyond the core Board membership, the governance model allows for the creation of Board subgroups.

These subgroups will provide structured opportunities for broader community, stakeholder and business engagement.

Acting as advisory and working groups, they will help shape project development and ensure alignment with the vision for Smethwick and the investment priorities of the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme.

Accountable Body

In addition to supporting the Smethwick Partnership Board, as the designated Accountable Body, Sandwell Council reports regularly to Sandwell Cabinet, the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board and the Regeneration Programme Board. In addition, quarterly updates are provided to Ward Member meetings.

Sandwell Council upholds the Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles) and ensures robust governance by maintaining ethical standards, transparent and independent decision-making, adherence to legal and regulatory requirements, and compliance with the Assurance Framework as set out in the Smethwick Partnership Board Terms of Reference.



Assurance



Sandwell Council serves as the Accountable Body for several major government-funded initiatives, including the Towns Fund, Levelling Up Partnership and the Plan for Neighbourhoods Programme.

To ensure strong governance, transparency, and effective oversight across all programmes, Sandwell Council has established a comprehensive Assurance Framework. Originally developed for the Towns Fund Programme and aligned with the Levelling Up Assurance Framework, it now provides a consistent and robust approach to managing, monitoring, and governing all related initiatives.

The framework outlines clear roles for the Council's Section 151 Officer, audit and scrutiny functions, grant processes, contract management, procurement, subsidy control and risk management. It is structured around a four-lines of defence model, providing strong assurance to the Sandwell Town Deal Boards, Levelling Up Partnership Board and our Smethwick Partnership Board.

Core Objectives

- **Accountable Decision Making:** Ensuring that all decisions are made transparently and with accountability to the public and stakeholders.
- **Responsible Use of Public Money:** Ensuring that funds are used effectively and that all expenditures provide value for money.
- **Effective Monitoring and Evaluation:** Setting up robust mechanisms to monitor progress and evaluate the impact of funded projects to ensure goals are being met.
- **Collaborative Governance:** Joint ownership between Sandwell Council and the Boards, ensuring shared responsibility and oversight.

Implementation Components

- **Terms of Reference:** Define the roles and responsibilities of the Boards and Sandwell Council, ensuring everyone understands their duties.
- **Policies and Procedures:** Standardise processes to maintain consistency and transparency in decision-making.

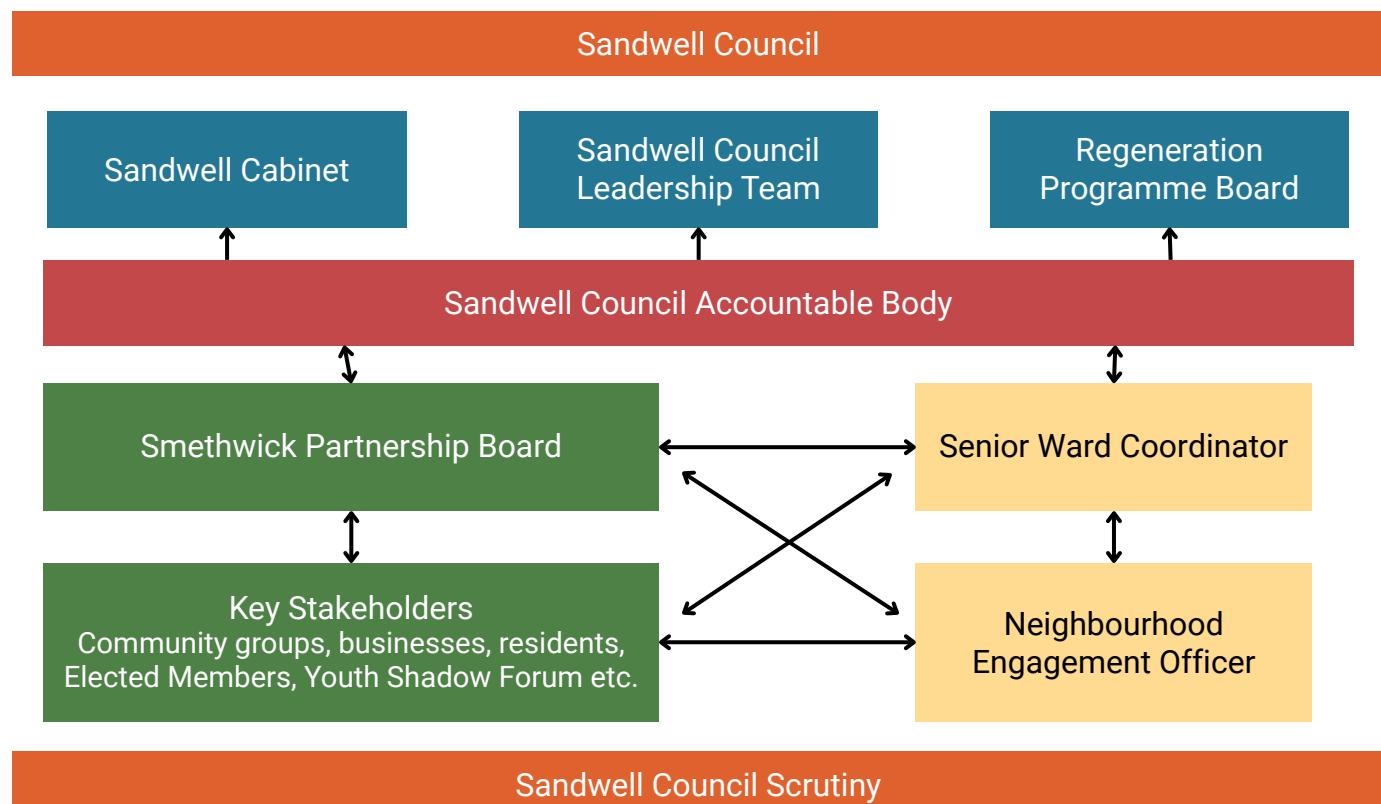
- **Structure and Roles:** Clearly outlines the organisational structure and the specific roles partners will play in managing the funding programmes.
- **Decision-Making Processes:** Establishes guidelines to ensure decisions are made efficiently and responsibly, adhering to established policies and procedures.

Framework Ownership and Review:

- **Joint Ownership:** The framework is a collaborative effort between the Sandwell Towns Deal Boards, Smethwick Partnership Board, with Sandwell Council acting as the Accountable Body.
- The framework is designed to be flexible, with annual reviews to adapt to any new challenges or changes in circumstances. This ensures that the framework remains relevant and effective.
- In-year changes to the framework are facilitated to ensure timely updates and responsiveness to new information or changing conditions, implemented within one calendar month or at the next meeting of the relevant bodies.

On behalf of the Accountable Body, the Regeneration Programme Management Office will be responsible for day-to-day programme management throughout the lifetime of the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme. This includes providing secretary support to the Smethwick Partnership Board including scheduling board meetings, collating and publishing board papers online. This also includes support for subgroups established by the Smethwick Partnership Board.

Once projects are in the delivery phase, regular reporting will include information at project and programme level on risk, finance, milestones and outputs/ outcomes, social value, procurement, with further information where required.



Together, we can achieve more.

The Smethwick Partnership Board looks forward to continuing to work with and for our communities to deliver the ambitions set out in this Regeneration Plan.

Through strong partnerships, open dialogue, and shared responsibility, we will ensure that regeneration in Smethwick reflects the voices, priorities, and aspirations of local people.

Together, we are committed to creating lasting positive change – building a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable future for everyone who lives and works in Smethwick.

Part of the Sandwell Story

Made 50 years ago from six proud towns – Wednesbury, Tipton, West Bromwich, Smethwick, Oldbury and Rowley Regis, Sandwell is a place built on making things happen. It's where industry met innovation, and where strong communities still shape the future.

The Sandwell Story is a campaign and programme of work to celebrate the people, places and partnerships that make Sandwell a great place to live, work, learn and visit.

Find out more, visit www.sandwellstory.com

