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SMETHWICK PLAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

10-YEAR REGENERATION PLAN SUMMARY

Together, we can achieve more.

November 2025

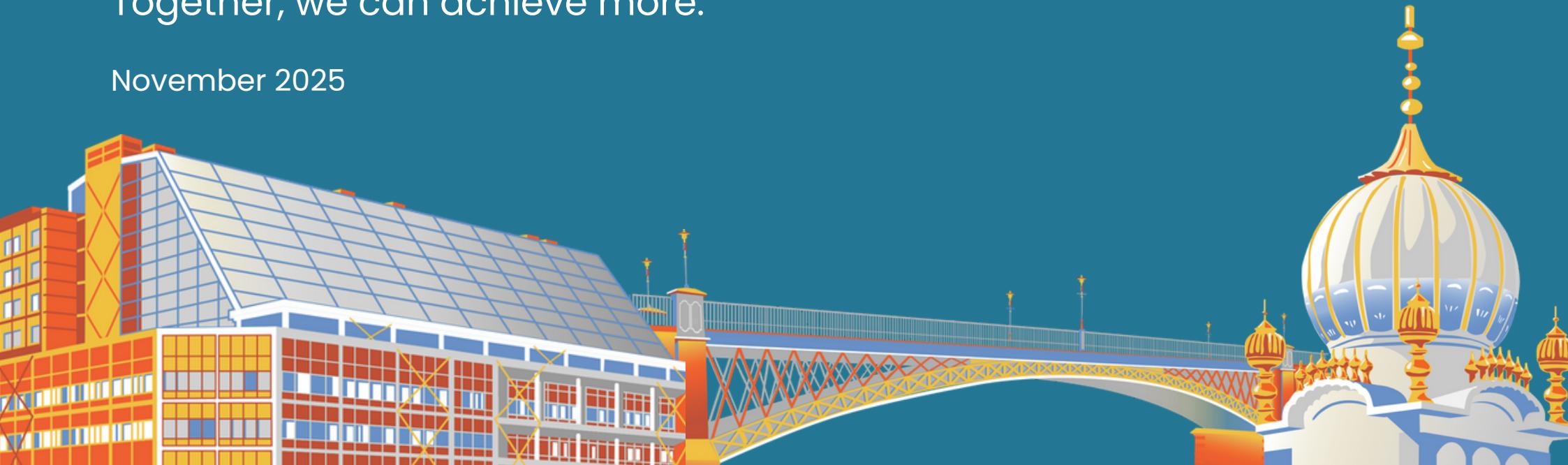


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Introduction

Welcome to the Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods 10-Year Regeneration Plan.

We are excited to share our 10-year plan to make Smethwick a stronger, safer and happier place to live, work and visit. This plan is about working together to improve our communities for everyone.

Why do we need this plan?

Smethwick is known for its resilience, diversity and strong community spirit. But like many towns, we face challenges, such as jobs, housing and local services. This plan is a chance to tackle these challenges and create a fairer future for all.

Who's involved?

At the heart of this work is the **Smethwick Partnership Board** – a group of local community leaders, organisations, schools, businesses, public services and our local MP. Together, we make sure the plan reflects the real needs and ideas of communities.

Working together

We believe that **together, we can achieve more**. By joining forces, local groups, businesses and public agencies can share ideas, resources and solutions to make our neighbourhoods better.

A plan owned by the Community

This plan belongs to the people of Smethwick. It has been shaped by local residents, community group members, organisations and businesses, and will be delivered with their help. Your ideas, feedback and involvement will guide the plan now and in the future.

Thank you

We want to thank everyone who has helped make this plan, including residents, community groups, businesses and Sandwell Council. Your voices and support have been essential in shaping this vision.



Alan Taylor
Smethwick Partnership Board Chair



Councillor Kerrie Carmichael
Leader of Sandwell Council

Our local area and where funding will go

The Black Country

Smethwick is the part of the Black Country that is closest to Birmingham. The Black Country is made up of the four boroughs of Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall, and Wolverhampton.



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

Sandwell

Smethwick is one of the six towns of Sandwell, the others being:

- Oldbury
- Rowley Regis (including Blackheath and Cradley Heath)
- Smethwick (including Bearwood and Cape Hill)
- Tipton (including Great Bridge)
- Wednesbury
- West Bromwich

Sandwell's population is growing fast. In 2021, about 342,000 people lived here, and it is expected to grow even more in the coming years.

Smethwick

Smethwick is just 4 miles from Birmingham City centre. The town has a rich industrial history based around engineering and manufacturing and is home to famous landmarks like the Soho Foundry, Galton Bridge, and the Smethwick Engine.

Smethwick is a vibrant, multicultural town, known for its strong communities and local pride. Around 68% of residents are from ethnic minority groups, much higher than the national average. This diversity is one of its biggest strengths.

Smethwick's challenges

Like many towns, Smethwick faces challenges:

- Unemployment is higher than the national average.
- Some people struggle with health issues and housing pressures.
- Traditional industries are declining, creating a need for new jobs and skills.

Smethwick's Opportunities

Smethwick is well connected to Birmingham, other parts of Sandwell and to the rest of the UK. This gives local businesses and residents access to many opportunities. It is also a busy and vibrant town, with lots of local activity and community life.

Looking forward

Smethwick's proud history, great location, diverse population and community pride all help make it a unique place. This regeneration plan is a chance to build a stronger, healthier, and more prosperous Smethwick, shaped by the people who live and work here.

Where funding will go

The *Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods* will invest in four main areas, based on the four council wards. These are:

- Bearwood¹
- St Paul's
- Smethwick
- Soho & Victoria

A small part of Oldbury is also included.

Tailored investment

Each of these wards has its own character, strengths and challenges, so projects will be tailored to local needs. Investments will also benefit nearby areas outside these four wards.



¹ The national boundary commission has reviewed local ward boundaries in Sandwell, including Smethwick. Our Plan for Neighbourhoods is using these new boundaries, which should be approved by Parliament in December 2025. This means the information in this plan is based on Bearwood, which is currently called the Abbey ward."



Plant sale, Warley Woods
Community Trust

Our vision

Smethwick 2036

A connected, thriving community

By 2036, Smethwick will be a town where:

- **Everyone can thrive** – residents, businesses, and communities feel valued and empowered to reach their full potential and contribute to Smethwick's continuing growth.
- **Neighbourhoods are vibrant and welcoming** – development enhances both the physical landscape and the character of community life, with rich culture, community pride, and improved green spaces creating an attractive and inclusive place to live.
- **Cultural diversity is celebrated** – traditions and differences are actively embraced, forming the cornerstone of the town's identity and economic vitality.
- **Young people are empowered** – the next generation gains the skills, confidence, and opportunities needed to shape a thriving, inclusive community.
- **Safety is prioritised** – communities feel secure, supported, and confident in their surroundings.

This vision looks beyond buildings and streets to the life of the community itself. It aims for a brighter, more inclusive future where everyone feels valued, safe, and encouraged to play a part in making the community stronger for all generations.



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

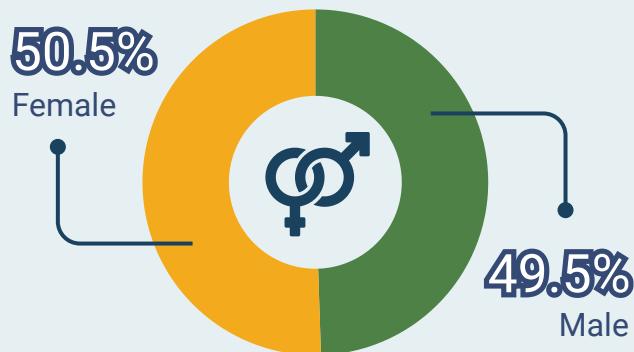
With thriving high streets, modern transport, green spaces, and world-class learning and job opportunities, it's a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live, grow and belong.”

Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods Vision Statement

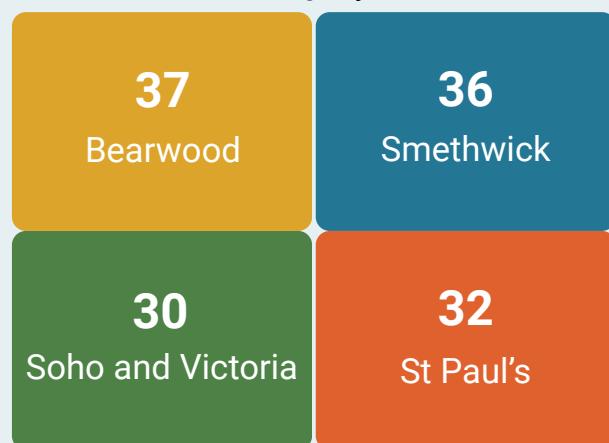


60,034
Population

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



Median Age by Ward



Why Smethwick needs change

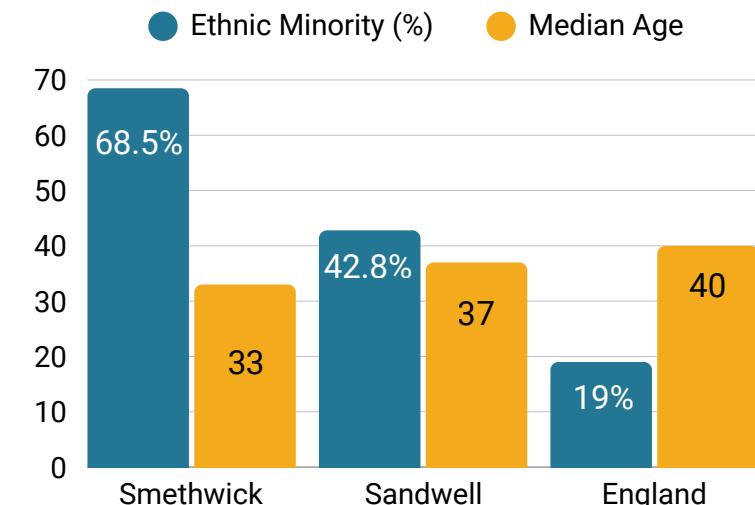
Smethwick is a strong, diverse community, but many people face serious challenges in their daily lives. These challenges affect different areas (wards) in different ways, so the plan needs to support both the whole town and the places that need help most.

A young and diverse community

- Over 68% of residents are from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Smethwick is a younger town, with a median age of 33.
- This diversity is a huge strength but also means services must meet the needs of many different cultures, languages, and family structures.

High levels of Poverty and Inequality across the town

- Over half of Smethwick's residents live in the most deprived areas of the country (57.5%).
- 45% of children live in poverty.
- Many people struggle with low income, high living costs, unemployment and overcrowded housing.



Differences between the four wards

The challenges are not the same everywhere:

Bearwood

Stronger but not without challenges:

- Better economic indicators and fewer residents in the poorest areas.
- Higher household incomes and more local businesses.
- Still faces issues like fuel poverty, lower skills, and housing pressures.

St Paul's

Some strengths but still struggling:

- Serious deprivation, but slightly better access to jobs.
- Ongoing issues with health, child obesity, fuel poverty, and lower educational outcomes.

Smethwick

Most affected:

- Very high levels of deprivation (up to 86% of residents in the poorest areas).
- High child poverty, long-term unemployment, and overcrowding.
- Worse health outcomes and some of the highest crime levels in Sandwell.
- Very low social trust, meaning many residents feel disconnected or unsupported.

Soho & Victoria

Most affected:

- Very high levels of deprivation (up to 73% of residents in the poorest areas).
- High child poverty, long-term unemployment, and overcrowding.
- Worse health outcomes and some of the highest crime levels in Sandwell.
- Very low social trust, meaning many residents feel disconnected or unsupported.

Why this matters for the plan

This data suggests where investment is needed most:



Families, children, and health services, especially in the most deprived wards.

Better access to jobs, training, and skills across the whole town.



Safer, more connected neighbourhoods with stronger community trust.



Targeted support for the areas facing the deepest disadvantage, while improving opportunities for everyone.



Priorities for change

This plan has been shaped by local voices. 1,641 people took part in our online survey and 150 people joined community workshops.

Across all the feedback, the message was clear and consistent - people want safer streets, better high streets, stronger communities, better health and wellbeing and more opportunities for children, young people and adults.

These community priorities match the evidence on local challenges – meaning the things residents care about most are also the things that need the most investment.

The initial engagement has identified the following priorities:



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

What the community said:

- This was the top priority.
- People want cleaner, safer, more attractive neighbourhoods.
- High streets should feel welcoming, active and well looked after.

What this means for the plan:

- Improvements to pavements, lighting, planting, parks and public spaces.
- Investment in buildings and heritage that help bring pride back to local areas.
- Supporting high streets so they become places people want to visit, shop and spend time.

Community Cohesion (Stronger Communities)

What the community said:

- Many people want more chances to meet, connect and celebrate together.
- Communities want to feel stronger and more united.

What this means for the plan:

- More spaces and activities where people from all backgrounds can mix.
- Support for community groups, cultural events and local volunteers.
- Bringing people together to build trust, friendship and shared pride.

Health and wellbeing ((Thriving Places, Stronger Communities)

What the community said:

- Health is a major concern, especially for children.
- People want better local services, parks, sports facilities and places to be active.

What this means for the plan:

- Better access to health and wellbeing support, close to home.
- Activities that help residents stay active, healthy and connected.
- Improvements to parks, green spaces and community facilities.

Safety and Security (Taking Back Control, Thriving Places)

What the community said:

- People want safer neighbourhoods, less anti-social behaviour and more visible help.
- Safety was one of the most common priorities in the mapping exercises.

What this means for the plan:

- Working with police, community groups and services to reduce crime.
- Better lighting, CCTV and safer walking routes.
- Projects that help prevent problems before they happen.

Education and opportunity (Thriving Places)

What the community said:

- Residents want more support for children, young people and adults to learn and grow.
- There is a strong desire for better youth services, skills training and job pathways.

What this means for the plan:

- More support for young people's mental health, confidence and aspirations.
- Access to training, education, work experience and careers guidance.
- Giving residents the tools to build better futures.



West Smethwick Park, Smethwick

Bringing evidence and community voices together

The priorities chosen by communities match what the data shows:

- The wards facing the greatest deprivation need focused support.
- Issues such as child poverty, low skills, poor health, high crime and low trust show exactly why investment is needed.

This means we can be confident that the plan's focus areas are the right ones, because they reflect what residents experience every day and match the evidence on what must change.

Looking ahead

The Smethwick Partnership Board will continue to review priorities, engage with communities and adapt the plan as needs change over time.

Your voices will guide each stage of the programme, ensuring the plan remains relevant, fair and led by local people.

Long-term outcomes and ambitions

When we asked people what they wanted Smethwick to look like in 10 years, 91% agreed with our 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."

What we aim to achieve over the next 10-years

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 creating trust, pride and active participation.

Health and wellbeing

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

Safety and security

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

Education and opportunity

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

Work, skills and productivity

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

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.



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

What else is going on in Smethwick?

There are already a number of investment programmes happening in Smethwick; some local, some regional and others from central government. Together, these are helping to transform the town's economy, bring in new housing, renew vital infrastructure, improve public spaces and create the conditions for long-term growth.

Regional and National alignment

Sandwell Council works closely with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). This brings in added investment in transport, regeneration and housing to places like Smethwick. Complex derelict sites can be assembled, cleaned up and made ready for new development.

Other nearby investment that will support people in Smethwick include improvements to M5 Junction 1, plus major bus and cycling upgrades.

Sandwell Local Plan

In the new Sandwell Local Plan, which we expect will be adopted by law in 2026, Smethwick is a priority regeneration area. This will help the council and its partners plan for new homes, factories and the services they will need.

Strategic Regeneration Masterplans

There are two major masterplans in place to guide long-term development in Smethwick:

- **Grove Lane Masterplan** supports development around the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH). This will bring new housing, training and education and green spaces to the area, plus better roads and public transport
- **Rolfe Street Masterplan** sets out a vision to open up and improve this important canalside, bringing new homes, jobs, and access for walkers and cyclists.

Levelling Up Fund Round 3

Sandwell Council has secured Levelling Up funding to buy and clean up key sites around Grove Lane. This will help turn derelict factories into new housing neighbourhoods, to support the new hospital.

Smethwick Towns Fund Programme

The Towns Fund programme has brought investment into Smethwick on five major projects that support skills, connectivity and regeneration. These included an expansion of the Ron Davis Centre, development of the Midland Met Learning Campus and working towards renewal plans in both Grove Lane and Rolfe Street Canalside.

Other recent and current schemes

Smethwick has seen several major investments in its infrastructure and public services; these include Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH), the Sandwell Aquatics Centre, Windsor Olympus Academy and the restoration of West Smethwick Park.

Further opportunities, such as the potential Grove Lane Heat Network, continue to be explored to support sustainability and net-zero ambitions.

Working together with local community groups

Local investment is supported by ongoing help for community-led projects run by SCVO, the Council's Voluntary Sector Support Team, West Midlands Police, and other partners. These programmes help build stronger community groups and improve our neighbourhoods, safety, health and wellbeing, and activities for young people.

Bringing it all together

Together, these examples show the scale of investment that continues to flow into Smethwick, creating a strong platform for the town's long-term regeneration. The *Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods* will reflect and build on these successes and will place the people of Smethwick at the heart of future investment decisions, to ensure the greatest positive impacts on people's lives.

Right now, there is no confirmed match funding for this programme. This gives the Smethwick Partnership Board a chance to create way of bringing in new money to support local projects. Our Board will:



Talk to different funders, including public organisations, charities, businesses and community groups.



Make sure funders understand Smethwick's priorities and needs.



Encourage project leaders to look for funding from more than one place, including match funding.

“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





Who is involved

Listening to the community

This 10-Year Regeneration Plan is based on conversations with local people and organisations in summer 2025 – and this is only the start.

The Smethwick Partnership Board, working with Sandwell Council, will make sure community voices shape every decision. Our aim is simple: the investment must deliver what matters most to Smethwick residents.

The Smethwick Partnership Board

Our Board is made up of local volunteers, community representatives, organisations, public services and our local MP.

Learn more about the Smethwick Partnership Board:

- [Meet our Board Members](#)
- [How the Board works](#)

Smethwick Youth Shadow Forum

Young people will play a central role in shaping the future of Smethwick. A new Youth Shadow Forum has been created to:

- Make sure young people influence decisions and project priorities.
- Work with local schools, community groups and youth services.
- Map what support already exists for young people and identify gaps.
- Help connect young people with regeneration opportunities and events.

Youth representatives will also gain new skills in leadership, confidence and decision-making, helping develop Smethwick's next generation of community leaders.

How we will engage with the community

Over the 10-year programme, we will use a mix of digital and in-person activities, including:



Online platforms and social media updates



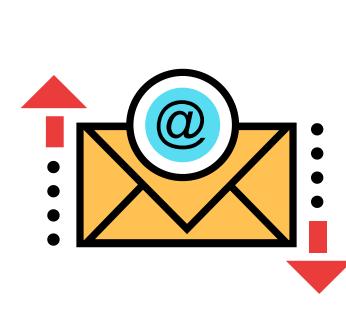
Community workshops across the town



Working with community centres, charities, faith groups and sport clubs



Updates through newsletters



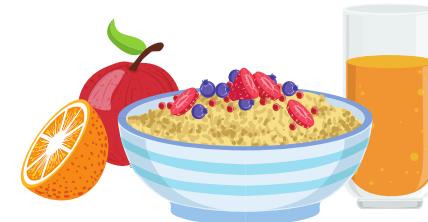
Emails to mailing list members



Targeted sessions with faith groups and community organisations



Targeted sessions with schools



Business breakfasts and partnership opportunities

How it is managed

Who oversees the Smethwick 10-Year Regeneration Plan?

The Smethwick 10-Year Regeneration Plan is managed by:

- The Smethwick Partnership Board
- Sandwell Council - acting as the Accountable Body to make sure rules are followed and the programme runs properly.

These arrangements meet government standards and ensure that decisions are fair, open and accountable.

The Smethwick Partnership Board

Our Board:

- Guides the delivery of the Smethwick Towns Fund and Plan for Neighbourhoods programmes.

- Includes community representatives, statutory members, and sector experts to provide broad and balanced leadership.
- Was refreshed in April 2024 to include more local voices.
- Fills vacancies through open calls for Expressions of Interest.
- Shares progress updates with local Councillors to maintain political accountability.

Board members make sure community views are included in decisions and programme delivery. They follow a formal engagement plan so local input is sought and considered.

Subgroups

Our Board can create smaller subgroups who are tasked to focus on particular areas of work. Subgroup members are made up of Partnership Board members.

These groups are advisory, meaning they help guide decisions but do not make final approvals, which remain with the main Board.

Role of Sandwell Council (Accountable Body)

Sandwell Council supports the Board by:

- Reporting to Cabinet, Scrutiny Boards, and the council's Regeneration Programme Board.
- Providing updates to local Ward Members.
- Making sure governance follows legal, ethical, and public standards (Nolan Principles).
- Maintaining transparency and accountability in all decisions.

This ensures the Smethwick 10-Year Regeneration Plan is delivered ethically, responsibly and in line with community priorities.

How decisions are made

What assurance means

Sandwell Council acts as the Accountable Body for major government-funded programmes like this. Assurance means making sure everything is done properly, fairly, and openly.

This covers:

- How decisions are made
- How money is spent
- How projects are monitored (making sure they do what they say they would do)
- Day-to day management

Sandwell Council's Regeneration Programme Management Office's job is to support our Board and manage the programme daily.

Want to find out more?

Here are some links to useful information and documentation

The Smethwick Partnership Board

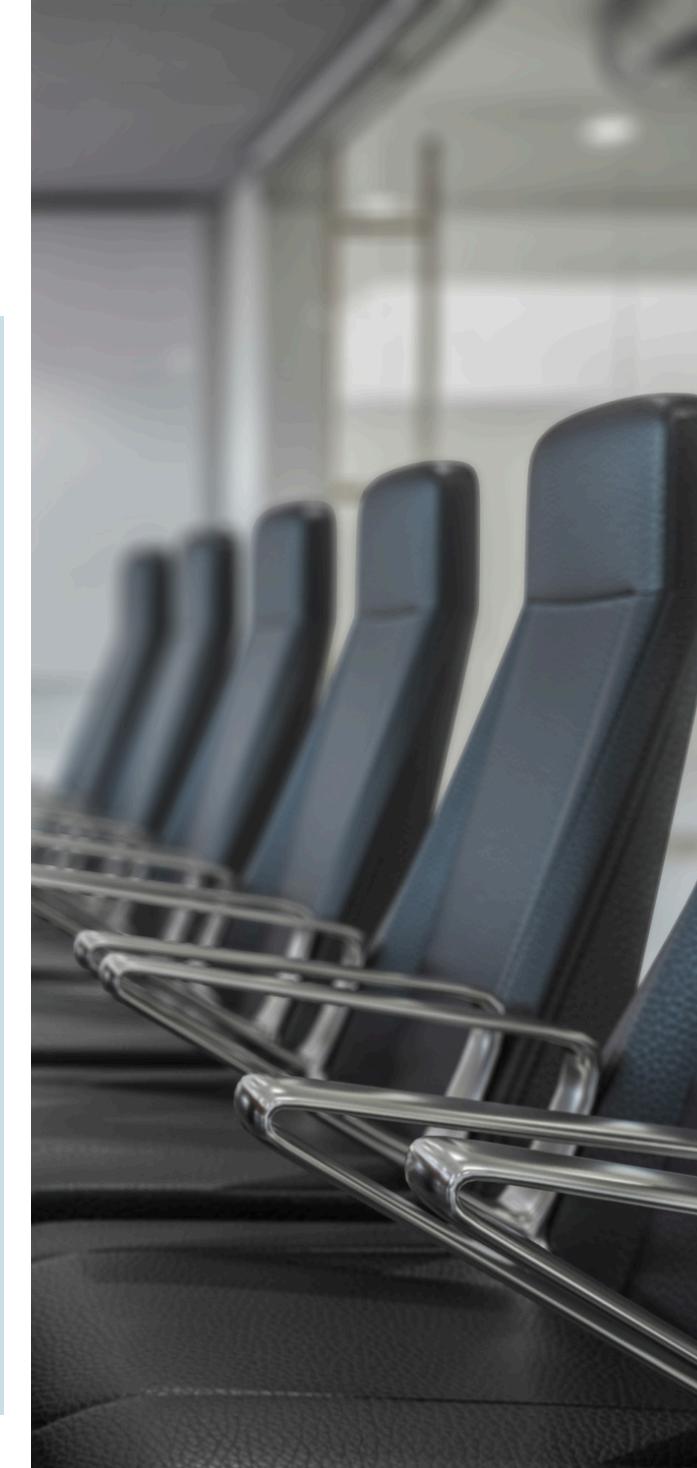
- [Smethwick Partnership Board Membership](#)
- [How the Board works](#)
- [Board meeting papers](#)

Funding Programmes

- [About Plan for Neighbourhoods Programme](#)
- [About the Towns Fund Programme](#)

Plan for Neighbourhoods documents

- [Investment Boundary map](#)
- [Government guidance documents](#)
- [Full Engagement Report 2025](#)
- [Summary Engagement Report 2025](#)



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.

This is a summary of the 10-Year Regeneration Plan for Smethwick. You can view the full Plan submitted to Government in November 2025 [here](#).

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

