

TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

WEST BROMWICH SUMMARY

OCTOBER 2020



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FOREWORD

1. FOREWORD

The Towns Fund represents a pivotal moment for West Bromwich. Through the 6 projects submitted in the TIP, we set out plans to radically transform the trajectory of our town, investing in skills & enterprise infrastructure, urban regeneration, and connectivity. This is crucial for the growth of our town, but it requires public investment to unlock long term sustainable growth.

At the heart of our plan is the Inclusive Economy Deal, published earlier this year. An inclusive economy is where a wide range of people contribute to and benefit from rising prosperity. As new opportunities arise, like the Towns Fund, we must ensure investments directly benefit local people and build community wealth. This has been influential in the TIP prioritisation process, with inclusive economy benefits embedded across each of our projects, driving forward our West Bromwich vision and delivery.

In recent years we have seen our business base grow and a series of investments come to West Bromwich, changing the face of our town. But the economy is not working for local people. Unemployment is high, wages are low, retail is showing signs of decline, and workers and students come in only to work and study before leaving to spend money elsewhere. Young people prefer to leave the town for opportunity, rather than stay and work, and as such we are losing any benefits they might bring. The construction of New Square was a step forward in transforming West Bromwich into a retail and visitor hub, but much of the town's retail offer is tired and outdated. Developing a vibrant, mixed-use town centre is a top priority.

COVID-19 now presents us with another challenge, creating widespread unemployment while threatening to curtail the economic progress of recent years. Our TIP looks to bounce back from COVID-19 by restarting our economy and setting out a path of long-term, sustainable regeneration, helping fulfil our inclusive economy goals and better connect local people and local businesses with new opportunities in West Bromwich.

This is the foundation and context for our TIP, catalysing regeneration, unlocking new sites for development, and transforming our town. It provides a new opportunity to level up West Bromwich, to build on the successes in housing, infrastructure, retail, and education, to complement existing investments and help drive long term sustainable economic growth in the economic centre of Sandwell.



Chris Hinson
Chair of West Bromwich
Local Board



Jude Thompson
Chair of Town Deal Board
(Sandwell Superboard)



Councillor Maria Crompton
Deputy Leader, Sandwell
Council

INTRODUCTION

2. INTRODUCTION

In 2030, Sandwell is a thriving, optimistic and resilient community.

It's where we call home and where we're proud to belong - where we choose to bring up our families, where we feel safe and cared for, enjoying good health, rewarding work, feeling connected and valued in our neighbourhoods and communities, confident in the future, and benefiting fully from a revitalised West Midlands.

Sandwell Vision 2030

West Bromwich is Sandwell's key strategic town and this Towns Fund bid for £24.9m is complemented by the bids for Smethwick and Rowley Regis.

West Bromwich has great opportunities ahead including the work with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) to bring their first academy school to West Bromwich, the Legacy site in Sandwell Valley, and the revitalised town centre being developed in the West Bromwich masterplan.

We are submitting three Town Investment Plans across Sandwell to reflect the distinct identities, characteristics, challenges and opportunities within Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich. Our values and objectives are incredibly important to any decision we make as a place, which is why the projects in this document have been rigorously assessed to ensure they meet the Towns Fund criteria, as well as our Vision 2030 objectives, our Inclusive Economy Deal and our Town Board Priorities.

The TIPs will focus on people and places, creating a step change in our skill levels, connecting more residents into jobs, and investing in our places – creating safe and welcoming town centres with a modern mix of housing, retail and employment.

They will build on some of our best assets, the historic town centres, wealth of natural and blue infrastructure, such as the Sandwell Valley Country Park, local canals and the existing retail and leisure offer.

In West Bromwich, we are investing in the retail core to shrink redundant retail space and provide new homes and new uses within the Town Centre. We are investing in our two markets to ensure that West Bromwich remains the destination of choice for shoppers from the town and across the Black Country, while providing our high street with a new, sustainable aesthetic, linking up with our greenspaces and transforming public realm.

In Smethwick, we are proposing Sandwell's first all skills level health campus, linked to the new Midlands Metropolitan University Hospital, creating a long-term skills pipeline of local residents for this huge new employer.

In Rowley Regis, we are breaking down barriers between communities by strengthening connections to local transport hubs, creating stronger town centres and green spaces for Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Oldbury, and bringing a localised skills offer to Rowley Regis.



INTRODUCTION

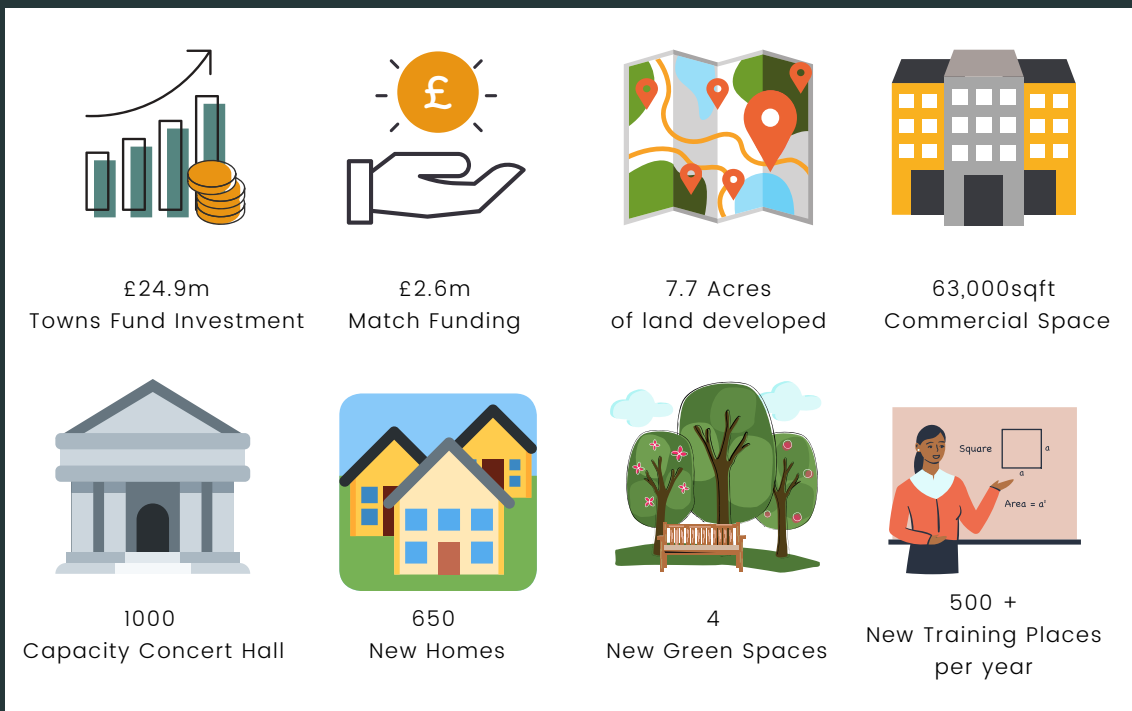
The West Bromwich TIP

The TIP outlines how we will use £25m from the Towns Fund to deliver six projects, each with a clear set of objectives and outcomes aligned to our Vision 2030, Inclusive Economy Deal and the Towns Fund Criteria. Through these projects, we look to kickstart a programme of regeneration of West Bromwich town centre that will provide significant new opportunities for residents and businesses alike.

The Town Investment Plan: Seizing Our Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity



Our Outputs



TOWN VISION

3. TOWN VISION

The vision for West Bromwich

The TIP represents an opportunity to develop a vision, with clear priorities and projects to address the hyper-local challenges and opportunities in West Bromwich. Our Vision 2030, Corporate Plan and Inclusive Economy Deal provide the ambition and foundation for our TIP.

Town Vision

Our vision is for West Bromwich to be a thriving, optimistic and resilient town. West Bromwich is the strategic heart of Sandwell, a destination town, a place where the people of Sandwell and the wider West Midlands come to shop and relax, with things to do for all demographics; it is a gateway into higher education, where students choose to come to study; a landmark of sport through our public spaces and sports clubs; and a safe place where people want to live, with high quality housing available for people of all ages.

By 2030, through our Town Investment Plan, our Vision 2030, and delivery of our pipeline projects, West Bromwich will have: -

- A higher skilled workforce, creating a new talent pool for local businesses to hire and fulfil skills requirements, addressing both national and local skills demands in digital, construction and engineering.
- A consolidated modern retail offer, providing a more consistent and relevant shopping experience to local people, regenerating the town centre.
- High quality public realm, with more high quality greenspace, an improved high street and increased access to Sandwell Valley Country Park, supported by expansive arts and cultural programmes.
- New sustainable walking and cycling infrastructure, complementing existing public transport, better connecting our residents to the town centre, employment opportunities and healthier lives.
- Affordable, sustainable, high quality housing in the town centre.
- Modernised public buildings through a series of urban remediation and regeneration works, bringing areas back into economic and social use.
- A refurbished Town Hall, boasting a new theatre for high profile events and performances.



TOWN VISION

West Bromwich Needs

West Bromwich Economic Assets



A young demographic



An education hub



A retail destination



A strong brand



A well-connected town centre

West Bromwich Economic Challenges



High levels of deprivation and low skills



High unemployment and low wages



Difficulties accessing land for regeneration



Digital Exclusion



Crime and Anti-social behaviour



Declining retail sector

OUR PRIORITIES

4. OUR PRIORITIES

Towns Fund Priorities for West Bromwich

Building on the evidence and a thorough engagement process, the Town and Superboard identified a town vision and four TIP priorities to pave the way for long-term sustainable economic growth. These priorities are a product of considerable engagement with the town board, identifying how our TIP can have the greatest impact over the next five years and how the £24.9m investment can help unlock future regeneration schemes.



1. Reinvigorate the town centre. Reinvigorating the town centre is about creating a mixed-use modern town centre, giving life back to dilapidated sites. Much of the town centre is dated and unappealing to visitors and residents and as a result, high street brands and businesses are not investing in the area. The Towns Fund provides an opportunity for a rethink, to instigate regeneration that works for local people, local businesses and repurposes West Bromwich as a destination town.



2. Unlock land to aid regeneration. A major barrier to regeneration in West Bromwich is inaccessible land, a consequence of complex ownership or sites that need significant work to begin development projects. To deliver substantial regeneration, we must break through these barriers by funding the acquisition, remediation, and re-development of existing town assets.



3. Support good quality jobs. Improving skills and supporting people into jobs is a priority. Unemployment and low wages have long been a driver of deprivation in West Bromwich. Greater investment in job creation and upskilling residents is an important role for the TIP in levelling up the town, generating higher paying jobs, and higher productivity.



4. Stimulate COVID-19 recovery. COVID-19 has hit the local economy hard, increasing already high unemployment and halting the growth seen in recent years. Public realm and greenspaces are now more important than ever before promoting assets like Sandwell Valley and upgrading infrastructure to encourage visitors to return will be key to our recovery. In addition, kickstarting retail and business growth once again with new capital investments will safeguard both jobs and the future of West Bromwich.



OUR PROJECTS

5. OUR PROJECTS

Our total ask of the Towns Fund is £24.97m

Project Location

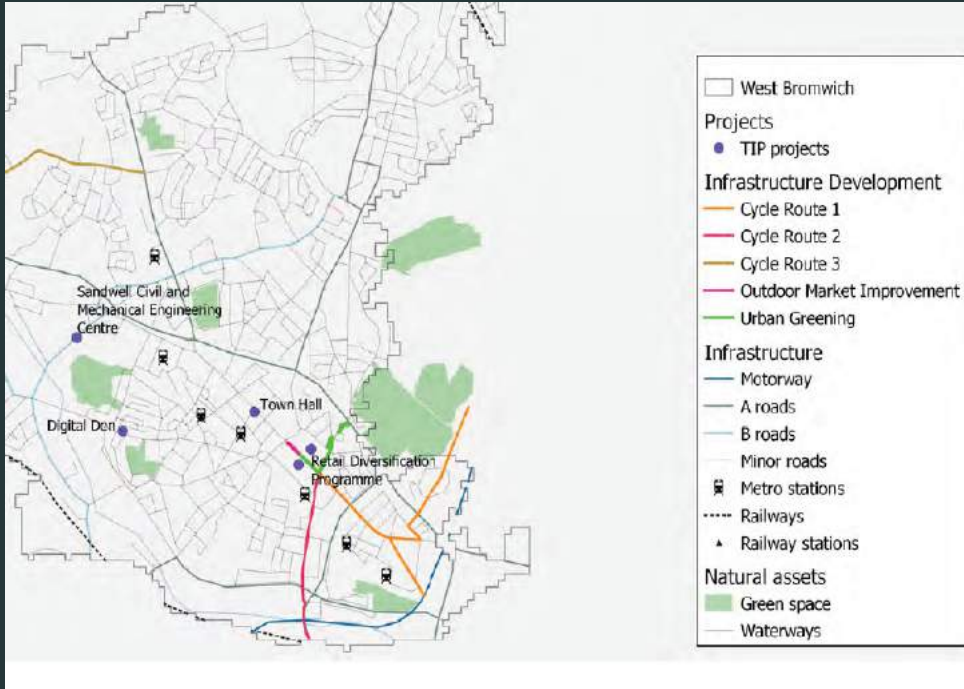


Fig 1. Project Map Overview



Fig 2. Town Centre Focus



OUR PROJECTS

Project Details



Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre

Town Priority: 2, 3 & 4

Funding will enable the growth of West Bromwich's Education Hub and regenerate Sandwell College's vacant Engineering Centre, based in Phoenix Street in West Bromwich. It will deliver a partial rebuild and refurbishment of existing infrastructure to create a Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre of c1,064 sqm, putting back into use a building for education and skills delivery in West Bromwich, regenerating 0.54 acres of brownfield land. It will become the home of 'Sandwell's Construction Gateway', delivering apprenticeships, and training in groundworks, street works, steel fixing and scaffolding (currently not offered locally) to sit alongside traditional wet and dry trades, in a sector experiencing a national skills gap.

Outputs

- 1064 sq. m teaching and learning space via a new Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre.
- Redevelopment of 0.54 acres of brownfield land.
- Delivering new T-Level qualifications in high value sectors.
- Engage and provide training for 50-70 SMEs.

Outcomes

- 150 x Apprenticeships.
- 40 T levels.
- 200 new construction related activities.
- 75% learners classified as job ready
- 90% learners with new qualifications achieved



OUR PROJECTS



Digital Den

Town Priority: 3 & 4

This proposal will help address West Bromwich’s digital skills deficit. It will create a ‘Digital Den’ - a free point of access high-quality facility with internet and computer hardware to enable digitally excluded residents to get online and access digital services. This project invests in the infrastructure to establish affordable digital services for deprived communities and create pathways to opportunities to education and employment via accredited online training courses, careers guidance, and provides children with online educational resources to ensure opportunities for learning are always accessible.

Outputs

- Increase in capacity and accessibility to improved skills facilities.

Outcomes

- 200 beneficiaries annually.
- 70 people completing accredited training annually.
- Over £2m return on investment.



OUR PROJECTS



West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter

Town Priority: 1 & 2

This funding will support the regeneration and mixed purpose development of West Bromwich Town Hall. Selected demolition of outbuildings will allow for a new extension, over 700 sq. m to the existing complex and joining up with the adjacent library. This will transform the area both in terms of physical space, opening the high street and creating a new town hall quarter.

This project will establish a fully restored culture and entertainment offer in the town centre and new space for cross-agency public sector services, community space, and an enterprise hub, combining to reverse the deficit of no night-time economy. This will kickstart wider regeneration in the area by attracting private sector investment to the surrounding area, notably the vacant Gas Showrooms site, and facilitate greater skills and enterprise activity.

Outputs

- Over 700 sq. m expansion to Town Hall and Library.
- Refurbishment of over 4,120 sq. m.
- New performance space.
- Creation of enterprise and community workshops

Outcomes

- An improved Town Hall and Library with c40,000-60,000 visitors
- A concert hall with a capacity of 1,000 anticipated to host c130,000 attendees annually
- Private sector investment into adjacent vacant land



OUR PROJECTS



Retail Diversification Programme

Town Priority: 1, 2, 4

This funding will address the areas of declining retail in the town centre. It will deliver the regeneration and transformation of the West Bromwich retail submarket through major site assembly and demolition, undertaking much-needed works to prepare the sites for mixed use development, including a new indoor market, retail space and is supported by Sandwell College to deliver a new education centre. This will also deliver high quality housing, addressing the increased demand for town centre residential developments. The programme will focus on core retail areas where vacancy rates are high.

Outputs

- Unlocking c4.4 hectares of Town Centre land for regeneration.
- Renovated indoor market.
- Increased high quality commercial floor space.

Outcomes

- 650 new homes
- New skills infrastructure backed by Sandwell College
- Increase night-time economy
- Increased land value and economic output from retail market



OUR PROJECTS



Urban Greening

Town Priority: 1 & 4

This funding will allow the creation of new greenspaces in West Bromwich town centre. It will link the town centre to wider recreational and natural environment opportunities in Dartmouth Park and Sandwell Valley. This will be achieved through a series of linear parks, recreational spaces, and an overhauling of existing, underdeveloped greenspace. Greenspace is vital to complement new residential development in this part of the town including the delivery of Phase 2 of the Outdoor Market redevelopment. The new greenspaces will be enhanced through a programme of co-produced community and artist led activities that will engage young people and the wider community. This programme will offer training and apprenticeships and will encourage sustained community involvement and ownership of the new greenspaces.

Outputs

- 4 new greenspace routes in the town centre forming 1 linear park
- New signage to support way-finding around the town and to other local assets such as Sandwell Valley
- Upgrades to existing greenspaces

Outcomes

- 4 new greenspaces
- 40 volunteers
- 2,759 participants via community activities
- 12 apprenticeships



OUR PROJECTS



Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Provision

Town Priority: 1

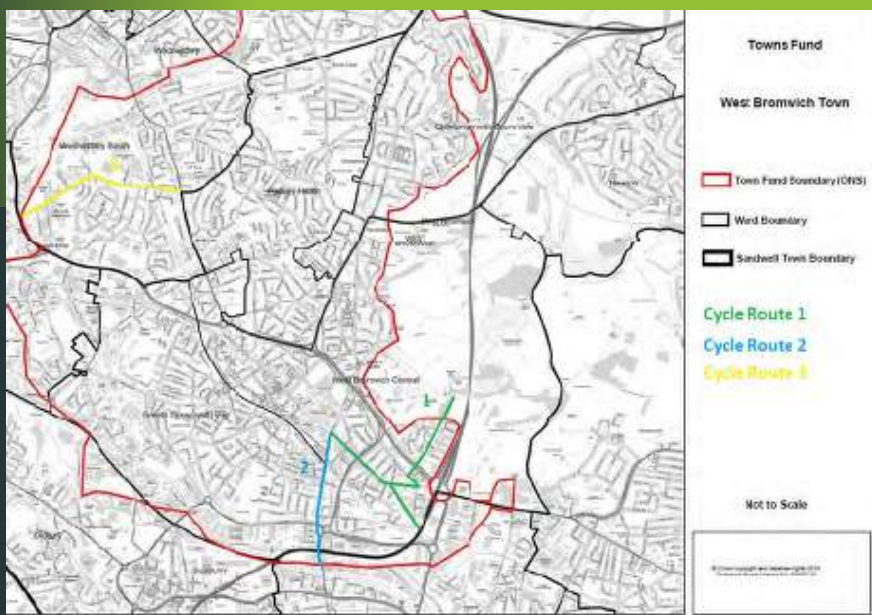
This funding will assist a comprehensive active travel scheme, responding to COVID-19 needs to create long term sustainable travel routes. It will improve access and connectivity across the Town Boundary Area by implementing cycling and walking infrastructure, providing new methods of transport for currently isolated communities. This project will improve connection to Sandwell Valley Park and cycling capacity in line with the Sandwell Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and provide sustainable transportation options for commuters and students. Improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure across West Bromwich will also provide much needed links through to the Commonwealth Games site at Sandwell Valley.

Outputs

- 3 new or upgraded cycle or walking routes.
- 3 new or upgraded road infrastructure.

Outcomes

- Increased number of trips by bike
- Increased number of trips by walking



OUR PROJECTS

Accelerated Funding Projects

Alongside our Town Investment Plan, West Bromwich has been successful in proposals for £750,000 of accelerated funding, which will provide stimulus to the TIP investments.

Outdoor Market Redevelopment:

This project undertakes inventive improvement works to the outdoor market to ensure that they are fit for purpose, no longer detract from the area and are appealing to both visitors and future traders.

Initial improvements to West Bromwich Town Hall:

Funding towards completion of the refurbishment of the Tower of the Town Hall. Refurbishing this local landmark is the initial part of a much wider renovation and will symbolise the beginning of substantial improvement works.



ENGAGEMENT

6. ENGAGEMENT

Our Town Investment Plan builds on the engagement carried out with businesses, community organisations and residents across West Bromwich for the Plan, as well as from previous engagement developed during Vision 2030, the Inclusive Economy Deal, and through local community surveys and interviews.

The Local Board and Superboard have been vital in shaping the vision, priorities and projects. The Superboard is chaired by the Chair of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, and Local MPs, the Leader of the Council, businesses and other stakeholders are all members.

The Local Board has been meeting monthly and forms a focal point of our engagement process. Chaired by a member of Sandwell Business Ambassadors, this has provided a business voice and oversight to the process.

In addition, we undertook specific consultation with young people around the Towns Fund priorities and projects and undertook two surveys, and workshops with stakeholders



NEXT STEPS

7. NEXT STEPS

The Town Investment Plan is currently with Government for their consideration of the proposals.

We will expect a response from them early in the new year with regards which projects they are willing to fund and how much the funding offer will be. Once agreed, we will continue to develop the projects further and develop full business cases that will enable the projects to be progressed to delivery stage.

