**Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**What is a ‘masterplan’?**

A masterplan is a document that guides how places will change over a period of time and helps with decision-making about how that will happen.

Sandwell Council want to ensure that Wednesbury town centre town centre thrives, grows and is ready to meet the challenges faced by climate, economic and behavioural changes in the future.

Having a masterplan is a useful tool that will help access funding for improvements and regeneration in the town from the UK government and elsewhere.

**Why is a masterplan needed for Wednesbury town centre?**

The masterplan addresses current and future challenges such as economic growth, sustainability, and community needs. It aims to revitalise the area, attract investment, and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.

**How will the masterplan benefit the community?**

The masterplan proposes range of changes to the town centre including more housing which will increase footfall to assist economic growth and job creation, improved public spaces and transport links, and an enhanced community and leisure offer. The goal is to create a vibrant, sustainable, and attractive town centre which is available to all in the day and evening.

**How can I view the final version of the masterplan?**

The final version of the Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan can be downloaded here: [Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan](https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/3166/wednesbury-town-centre-masterplan-august-2024)

**How has the masterplan been developed and who was involved?**

The masterplan was developed by Sandwell Council with support from Mott MacDonald and Aspinall Verdi.

The engagement and public consultation events throughout the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership programme have been instrumental in shaping the final masterplan document. Sandwell Council’s Resident Engagement Survey played a crucial role in shaping the masterplan, capturing local feeling about the town. For example, many Wednesbury residents expressed a significant fear of crime and discomfort being in the town both day and night, highlighting a key area that the masterplan needed to address.

Safer Six Campaign – Town Centre Priorities Survey (November 2023) - The responses in this survey and speaking to visitors of the town centre on the ground helped to form the masterplan vision and aims.

Consultation activities included:

* Sandwell Consultation Hub – online survey
* Paper survey provided at Wednesbury Library
* In-person presence in the town centre to discuss priorities

Public Realm and Urban Greening Consultation (January – March 2024) - The responses from this consultation informed the public realm and urban greening strategy in the masterplan. Many comments referenced issues outside of public realm and urban greening which were considered in the draft masterplan document.

Consultation activities included:

* Sandwell Consultation Hub – online survey
* Paper survey provided at Wednesbury Library
* Leaflet drop in town centre
* Two in-person public consultation events (Union St and Morrisons)
* Community group workshops – Sons of Rest Wellbeing Group, Agewell UK, HAF – Millenium Centre, Youth Group – Millenium Centre

Draft Masterplan Consultation (May – June 2024) - These responses informed the final version of the document.

Consultation activities included:

* Sandwell Consultation Hub – online survey
* Paper survey provided at Wednesbury Library
* Leaflet drop in town centre and key buildings in wider town as advised by WLUP Board
* Wednesbury Library drop-in event
* Community group workshops – Sons of Rest Wellbeing Group, Walking Group - Hill Top Community Centre, Knit and Natter Group – Millenium Centre, Coffee Morning Groups - Leabrook & St Francis Church, Craft Groups – South Staffs Water Hub & Wednesbury Library, Dance Group – Old Post Office, Wood Green Sixth Form

**Who funded the masterplan?**

The development of the masterplan was funded by UK Government as part of the [Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership](https://regeneratingsandwell.co.uk/about/wednesbury-levelling-up-partnership/) programme which will help Sandwell Council deliver much-needed new homes, help tackle crime and antisocial behaviour, improve green spaces and Wednesbury town centre, and expand the Millennium Centre so that more can be done to give people the skills they need to secure better jobs.

**Could this money be used in other ways?**

The money for the masterplan has been given to the council for a specific purpose and comes with conditions. A masterplan has been created for Wednesbury Town Centre to provide a guide to shape the town centre over the next 10 years.

Other projects in Wednesbury are taking place as part of the Wednesbury Partnership Programme. You can find out more on the website: [Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership - Regenerating Sandwell](https://regeneratingsandwell.co.uk/sandwell_projects/wednesbury-levelling-up-partnership/)

**What are the key elements of the masterplan?**

* Promote development of long-standing derelict sites to introduce a mix of land uses, increase footfall and improve the quality of the built environment
* Facilitating a Community High Street liaison group to bring key partners and stakeholders together including, businesses, market traders and
* Create a new leisure and social destination or cluster of destinations at the site of the former Gaumont Cinema to expand the evening economy and create a destination for families and groups who don’t usually visit the town centre
* Create and maintain an events and animation programme to utilise existing spaces such as Market Place, and Union Street
* Transform the former outdoor market site into a temporary cultural destination which helps to catalyse the regeneration of the town centre in the short term, promote an evening economy and attract a new demographic range of visitors including families
* Enhance the public realm along the key town centre routes such as Union Street to create a consistent, attractive and inclusive pedestrian environment which compliments the recent investment in Market Place
* Reconfigure the highway layout to reduce prevalence of ‘rat running’ through the town centre streets and encourage traffic to use surrounding roads, in order to improve the attractiveness and safety of the town centre for pedestrians

**How will the masterplan be delivered?**

The final chapter of the masterplan sets the delivery strategy to deliver the proposals in the document. Delivery will occur in phases over several years, depending on funding and project complexity. It involves coordination between the council, developers, and other stakeholders. Progress will be monitored by Sandwell Council to ensure alignment with the Masterplan’s objectives.

**How will the masterplan address Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

The masterplan proposes the creation of new homes in the town centre but does not create a policy on HMOs, as this is an issue which is usually addressed in a Local Plan.

The draft Sandwell Local Plan provides a policy on HMOs which aims to manage the number and location of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Sandwell, addressing concerns raised by increased HMO applications and their impact on communities.

This policy ensures that HMOs provide affordable accommodation for low-income individuals, students, and commuters while maintaining community cohesion and mitigating issues such as anti-social behaviour, noise, and parking problems.

Please note that this policy has not yet been adopted as there are a number of different stages involved in the preparation of a Local Plan. For further information on this process please visit the link below:

[Sandwell Local Plan | Sandwell Council](https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/planning/sandwell-local-plan)

**Will the masterplan increase the variety of shops in the town centre?**

A key aim of the masterplan is to enhance the town centre by introducing a diverse range of shops, increasing the presence of independent businesses, and expanding the evening, cultural, community, and leisure offerings to attract families and children.

The proposals set out in the masterplan e.g. leisure and social hub, public realm improvements, infill developments will help to improve the appearance of the town centre and increase footfall. An improved town centre will boost confidence to among businesses, encouraging investment and growth.

An annual survey of the town centre’s uses will be conducted to monitor changes throughout the masterplan period (next 10 years).