

4 Sandwell, Great Bridge – Local Priorities

Three local priorities have been identified and approved by the Great Bridge Panel:

- **Support for Youth Activities, including the provision for after school homework clubs.**
- **Reduce the concerns about Anti-Social behaviour, Drug Abuse, Crime & Community Safety**
- **To support activities which promote health & wellbeing for all residents**

Identified needs

- High levels of deprivation
- Poor health
- Anti-social behaviour
- Lack of facilities for young people & limited revenue support for youth activities
- Limited term funding for community groups
- Drug abuse
- Crime & safety – including: road safety, lighting, & police presence
- The need to tidy up & improve shopping area, including safety

Background information on the Great Bridge Ward of Sandwell

Predominantly residential but with some industrial areas in the east and south. Home to Jubilee Park, Farley Park and the Sheepwash Nature Reserve and community centres at Jubilee Park and Farley Park Lodge.

- Population – predominantly white (89% compared to 79.7% in Sandwell) with a similar age profile to Sandwell as a whole. It does however suffer from higher levels of limiting long term illness and general poor health than the Borough – 8.5% compared to 7.3%.
- Housing – low proportion of owner occupied housing at 52.8% compared to Sandwells 60.3%, which reflects the areas high proportion of local authority homes.
- Access – low level of access to private transport, heavy reliance on public provision. The indices for access utilised in SNS (Sandwell Neighbourhood Strategy) demonstrate low level of accessibility in Glebefields and Toll End. Rail network provides links to Wolverhampton and Birmingham via Dudley Port Station.
- Town Centre offers a good range of shops, including major retail park and Asda Supermarket. The UDP (Unitary Development Plan) designation as a town centre identifies that it should provide a range of shops offering a good local choice, facilities and services. The need for vacant sites to be developed to raise the profile of the centre is recognised. It has an active Traders Association.
- Library – includes a Learning Centre, free Internet access and a twice-weekly homework club. It suffers from low usage and is affected by its location, which is removed from the

- High Street.
- Parks
 - Farley identified as a Neighbourhood Park within the Green Spaces Improvement Strategy it provides bowling facilities, a multi use games area for young people and was recently upgraded to allow disability access. Within the park, Farley Lodge is home to Great Bridge Community Forum.
 - Sheepwash, designated site of Importance for Nature Conservation and a Local Nature Reserve. Sheepwash Urban Park provides a significant resource for local people.
 - Jubilee, provides play facilities etc and houses the Community Centre, a central resource offering a wide range of community and youth activities.
- Schools – several within its boundary including Alexandra High recently approved as the Full School in Sandwell. This will facilitate the development of wider community involvement and use of their facilities.
- Social Capital – strong community network particularly through the Great Bridge Community Forum, based at Farley Lodge. It provides a community hub for the local area and offers a range of community and youth activities both directly and as an umbrella forum. Jubilee Community Centre is a local authority run facility providing a range of activities for local people.

Issues faced by Great Bridge

- High levels of deprivation particularly in the neighbourhoods of Ocker Hill, Great Bridge and Glebefields. Health is a particular concern. Whilst the social capital is good the groups are generally reliant on short term funding streams making long term planning problematic. Local action planning has highlighted particular concerns related to anti-social behaviour, crime and police response times and housing/environment concerns.
- Sandwell as a Borough was formed by the amalgamation of 6 Black Country Towns.

Great Bridge Ward is made up of 5 neighbourhoods, Great Bridge–Toll End and parts of Horseley Heath–Tibbington & Ocker Hill. Statistics from the 2001 census: total residents, 12,534 – total households, 5,083 – those of working age in work, 5,600 – The % of those unemployed 9.7%. There is a an ethnic minority of 12% of the total population – households with no car 40% – households in flats above ground level, 12% – households without central heating 21% – household deprived in 3+ dimensions 21% & residents with a limiting long term illness 23%. These statistics place Great Bridge in the top half of the most deprived wards within Sandwell. The ward is bordered by 4 wards with similar statistics; these wards have been identified as falling within the most deprived 10% in England.

The majority of households in Great Bridge live in Council Accommodation and almost 50% consisted of one person, the ‘Great Bridge’ neighbourhood had the highest level of poor health 33%, (Sandwell average 22%). Sandwell has the highest proportion of residents with no educational qualifications (46%) in England (average 29%); the average is over 60% in the Great Bridge & Tibbington Neighbourhoods.

As has been mentioned in the summary above the Great Bridge Ward, unlike Alumwell (Walsall) & St Andrews (Dudley) has a number of community facilities, 2 parks with community centres, Farley & Jubilee, and urban park (Sheepwash), Alexander High School and 4 Primaries – Jubilee Park – Joseph Turner – Great Bridge & Newton, It also has a shopping area with a wide variety of shops, banks & general stores (but no major high street names). With the high levels of council owned property the Ward has 10 distinct estates, these are made up of mixed housing including high rise, semis & terraced, considerable resources have been expended by the Local Authority in modernising these properties, but much still needs to be done.

As is common throughout the Black Country, residents are very territorial and are unwilling to travel or mix with people from other areas, (the other side of the road can be regarded as “Foreign Territory”. The ward shares common problems with many urban areas, anti-social behaviour, drugs, yob culture (drink related) by young people, the fear of crime and poor educational achievements and health. The key issues identified by the LSP in the neighbourhood plan are:

- High levels of deprivation
- Poor health
- Anti-social behaviour *
- Lack of facilities for young people & limited revenue support for youth activities *
- Limited term funding for community groups
- Drug abuse *
- Crime & safety – including: road safety, lighting, & police presence *
- The need to tidy up & improve shopping area, including safety

(* indicates these concerns have been resident identified)

Many of the problems associated with young people are caused by non-residents, who are drawn to Sheepwash Park and Great Bridge town centre from adjoining areas.

The panel has given considerable thought to the best way in tackling the problems affecting the ward and believe that by addressing the list of priorities it will bring benefit to the maximum number of people and encourage residents to come forward with further projects.

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