

Urban Design & Building Services

Issue 2

NEWSLETTER

D E S I G N A N D M A I N T E N A N C E

Welcome to the latest issue of the Urban Design and Building Services Newsletter

The UDBS team is continuing at pace in delivering projects across Sandwell.

This newsletter casts a spotlight on works being carried out by our design team. It contains examples of how Sandwell Council is investing in the future of our borough – not only by building new sustainable facilities but also by updating and improving existing sites for the people who live here.

We're delighted to share details of the works at West Smethwick Park, led by our landscape architects. Nearing completion, this £5.2m development project has been boosted by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Big Lottery Fund.

There is further good news about residents moving into Willow Gardens Extra Care Home in Rowley Regis.

Meanwhile, refurbishment works at The Lakes in Oldbury will start soon and another high rise block, Darley House in Oldbury, is due to have an extensive retro-fit.

It goes without saying that UDBS continues striving to deliver a high-quality service. We are delighted to have retained Customer Service Excellence accreditation, with 'compliance plus' status in three criteria.

Chris Hilton

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*Strategic Lead
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The Lakes



Our Design Team will soon start external works to five low-rise blocks in Oldbury.

Known collectively as 'The Lakes', the five housing blocks – Rydal, Ullswater, Derwent, Coniston and Windermere will have new windows, doors and cladding to improve their energy efficiency and aesthetics – plus a new third floor comprising of four new flats to each block.

In addition to this, the 'shop block' on Hartlebury Road will receive an external uplift of new cladding, windows and doors along with a new roof covering.

For further information please contact:
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Harvest View



Harvest View is a new integrated social care and health centre in Rowley Regis, due for completion this summer.



The facility will provide respite care and rehabilitation for residents during their transition between leaving hospital and returning home.

Eighty single en-suite bedrooms will be available for residents who will also have the use of extensive communal areas for dining, socialising and physiotherapy and other treatments.

Our designers have placed an emphasis on connection to the outdoors and maximisation of natural light. A particularly delightful feature of the scheme will be the 'wandering loop' garden design.

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Willow Gardens



Residents have moved into Sandwell Council's newest extra care home: Willow Gardens in Rowley Regis.

Willow Gardens offers 90 one- and two-bedroom apartments for people aged 55 and over with warden control and care if required.

Residents also have use of communal spaces that include a dining room, lounge areas, an

on-site hairdressing salon and a dementia-friendly courtyard garden.

The sloping site and its location on an infilled quarry presented the design team with interesting challenges that were resolved with impressive results.

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West Smethwick Park

The £4.8 million Lottery Fund restoration of West Smethwick Park is almost complete.

At the heart of the development is a new split-level pavilion, with panoramic views across the park. The building features an elegantly curving staircase, with large doors seamlessly linking the ground floor to an external paved area with terraced turf amphitheatre, suitable for gatherings and outdoor events.

To improve access, we have resurfaced every footpath around the park, installing a boardwalk installed through the wetland area. The main walkways now have lighting, to allow safe routes to events in the pavilion after dark. We have restored heritage features, including the grade II listed James Chance Memorial, the historic entrances at Victoria Road and West Park Road and Chance Drinking Fountain.

The boating lake has brand new edgings and a landing stage allowing for future boating activities.

We have redesigned the whole park to improve biodiversity. Newly planted areas include tree-lined avenues and ornamental park planting in the original style of the park, including recreation of the fernery on the island in the picturesque upper pool. We have thinned woodland areas to improve their health, and seeded the newly cleared glades. The wetland meadow has been re-established and marginal planting added to the edge of the boating pool.

The scheme will be completed with new signage, bins, benches & picnic areas, and a circuit of new gym equipment.

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M&E Planned Works



We have undertaken planned mechanical and electrical maintenance works at various sites around Sandwell – with more due to start soon.

UDBS' recent mechanical and engineering work includes planned maintenance at three schools: changing boilers from oil to gas, and replacing failing distribution pipework.

We have started the replacement of oil-fired boilers with gas at another primary school and a PRU (pupil referral unit), with a further possible PRU project due to start around Christmas. This work is predominantly grant funded.

We are just starting new works to reduce carbon emissions at Sandwell Council House in Oldbury – including the installation of heat pumps and PV panels.

We are looking at further works to replace failing hot and cold water pipework at the residential arts centre Ingestre Hall; replacing air conditioning and improving ventilation at the council's Wellman Building; changing failed plant at West Bromwich Dartmouth Cricket Club and Jubilee Park; and improving the existing boilers at Tipton College Nursery.

We have also recently upgraded fire alarms at a couple of sites, and we are planning lift refurbishments at Sandwell Council House and Highfields House Register Office.

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Sandwell Aquatics Centre



Construction at the Sandwell Aquatics Centre has been completed 100 days before the start of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

With 100 days to go until the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games begin, Paralympic swimmers and an Olympic diver tested out the facilities at the newly completed Sandwell Aquatics Centre.

The brand-new, state-of-the-art venue has been constructed in time for this summer's major multi-sport event, where it will be in operation for all 11 days of sporting action. Once the Games is over it will be converted to a community leisure facility, so local club swimmers also joined Tuesday's celebrations, to test out the main 50m pool.

Birmingham 2022, organisers of the Games which will see around 4,500 athletes from 72 nations and territories compete in 19 different sports and eight Para sports, also marked the 100-day milestone with a final major release of tickets, with seats for every single sport back on sale.

The construction of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre, which is located in Smethwick, has been overseen by Sandwell Council and

Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth said: "We are very proud to celebrate the completion of the state-of-the-art Sandwell Aquatics Centre in Smethwick.

"We are incredibly excited to be part of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, which will be a once in a lifetime opportunity to celebrate Sandwell on a global stage as the proud host venue for the swimming, Para swimming and diving events for the Games.

"We want the whole community in Sandwell and beyond to benefit from the world-class swimming and diving facilities at this fantastic new facility. More than that, the new Aquatics Centre is supporting our vision to boost the health and wellbeing of our communities, driving economic growth and regeneration, and improving transport links."

Now that the Sandwell Aquatics Centre has been completed, the facility will stage a couple of events ahead of the Games. In April a community swimming gala will be overseen at the venue by Sandwell Council and then from 20 May to 22 May Birmingham 2022 will stage a series of test events including swimming and diving training sessions, and a swimming competition where tickets will be allocated to local residents and the swimming community.

www.celebratesandwell.com

Darley House



We look forward to enhancing Darley House in Oldbury with an extensive retro-fit.

Our scheduled improvements to the high-rise block include new insulated rain-screen cladding and windows as well as remodelled balconies and roof.

The neighbourhood's look and feeling of wellbeing will be enhanced with a comprehensive landscaping scheme that improves pedestrian linkages and parking.

Darley House, together with the adjacent low-rise blocks of Alston House, Radnall House, Birchley House, Century House and Selby House, are to be modified so that heating and hot water are provided by a new energy- and carbon-saving district heating system.

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Canalside Cemetery



We are developing a site near Powke Lane Cemetery to meet the need for burial provision – with biodiversity and accessibility considered at every step.

With limited space currently available for burial provision in the Rowley Regis area, Sandwell Council made an urgent site search. After a thorough review, 'Canalside Cemetery' was identified as the preferred site, given its proximity to the existing Powke Lane Cemetery, and therefore the ability to share resources.

We began work in autumn 2021, and Canalside Cemetery will be completed by the summer of 2022.

From the outset, it has been of paramount importance to protect and enhance the new site's natural landscape and surrounding open space - while ensuring its functionality as a new cemetery.

We have developed two-way vehicle access off Powke Lane, to the north east of the site, with widening enabled by the construction of a sheet-piled retaining wall. This leads to a new car park for 30 cars, including two accessible bays and two electricity charging points.

A new office has been built next to the car park, as a satellite from the main office situated at the existing Powke Lane Cemetery. This will operate during normal opening times for the cemetery and provide a base for office staff and welfare facilities for office and public to use while on site.

There is also full pedestrian access from the car park to graves and memorials, along a circuit of footpaths throughout the site. Visitors will be able to use new bench seating, bins and watering points.

Paladin mesh fencing, gates and barriers enclose the site, preventing unauthorised entrance to the cemetery out of normal working hours. Appropriate lighting and CCTV have been installed for additional security.

The cemetery provides a tranquil setting for visitors, with a woodland backdrop and landscaped areas of ornamental trees, shrubs and wildflower meadows.

As part of the development, the open space beyond the cemetery boundary (part of the Waterfall Lane 'Site of Interest for Nature Conservation') has been enhanced, with an ongoing commitment to maintaining and managing these areas for nature conservation and biodiversity.

Our work has included selective thinning and coppicing of the existing woodland; planting new native trees and shrubs; planting ground flora and bulbs to glades and woodland edges; constructing a new canal-side pond to manage water runoff and drainage while nurturing a new habitat for a range of wetland plants and animals; creating new wildflower meadows in existing grass areas and improving footpaths and installing interpretation signage.

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