

Scrutiny Board	Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board
Report Title	Heritage Assets and Archives Update
Date of Meeting	5 February 2026
Report Author	Andrew Wade
Lead Officer	Luke Dove/Ben Percival
Wards Affected	St Paul's (West Smethwick Park); Hateley Heath (Bromwich Hall); Smethwick/Soho & Victoria (Archives Centre).
Identify exempt information and exemption category	N/A
Appendices (if any)	None.

1. Executive Summary

The Board is asked to consider and comment upon the Heritage Assets and Archives Update.

West Smethwick Park Improvements

- 1.1 The completed works include the full restoration of the Grade II listed James Chance memorial, refurbishment of the entrance gateways with rebuilt walls, piers, gates and railings, and the restoration of the historic drinking fountain, the creation of a new boathouse feature, and upgrades to the multi use games area.
- 1.2 Extensive nature conservation improvements were carried out across woodland, grassland and wetland habitats, alongside the installation of new outdoor gym equipment and the restoration of the 1944 RAF airmen's memorial.
- 1.3 The project also delivered the construction of the new West Smethwick Park Pavilion & Café with its surrounding events area, which is now performing with strong room hire demand, regular party bookings, and a growing community events programme.

Bromwich Hall Conservation

- 1.4 This project started on the 5 January 2026 and will concentrate on the completion of timber repairs, replacement of render panels and roof works to the external fabric and structure of the buildings to prevent further deterioration. All these conservation works are required in the short to medium term.
- 1.5 The conservation works to be funded by Historic England need to be completed by the 31/03/2026 and a longer timescale has been agreed for works funded by Sandwell Council of the 30 June 2026.

Archives Centre

- 1.6 Current Archives Service and store operate from Smethwick Library. The store is located in the basement of the building, has reached storage capacity and is subject to adverse conditions such as cold and damp.
- 1.7 Plans have been drawn up for the service to relocate its customer-facing element and some archives material to Smethwick Council House.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Space at Smethwick Council House is used to store archives material until a new storage facility can be built on the land at the rear of the building. This will be based on structural surveys to ensure safe load bearing in first floor rooms, and that storage conditions (temperature, light and humidity) are suitable.

3. Background and Context

West Smethwick Park

- 3.1 The completed NHLF project at West Smethwick Park delivered £4,493,400 of NLHF investment, supported by £550,000 from Sandwell Council and £28,500 in volunteer contributions.

Bromwich Hall

- 3.2 The Bromwich Hall Museum is owned and managed by Sandwell Council. The Bromwich Hall Museum is a Grade I listed building and is located in the Hateley Heath ward of Sandwell.
- 3.3 Following a site visit completed by Historic England in August 2024 to Bromwich Hall. Due to its deteriorating external condition, the Bromwich Hall Museum was classed as **Vulnerable on the Historic England register**, on the basis without urgent repair or intervention the building would need be

included on the 'Heritage at Risk' register.

Archives Storage

- 3.4 The present storage facility is inadequate in terms of size (overflow is stored at Dudley Archives at a present cost of £16k per year) and also condition – some areas suffer from damp and mould, and other areas are directly underneath water and sewage pipes.
- 3.5 Feasibility for a new Archives centre was conducted in 2022/23 and determined that land at the rear of Smethwick Council House was the best location. The projected cost was £20m.
- 3.6 The Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community visited Dudley Archives (August 2025) to see what a modern centre looks like and how it operates. It was built in 2013 at a cost of £7m. They were accompanied by the Archives team and Urban Design team.
- 3.7 The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community also visited Staffordshire Archives in September 2025 (along with Archives and Urban Design staff), which is a new build costing £9m.
- 3.8 A visit to Canning Town Archives (<https://www.newham.gov.uk/regeneration-1/canning-town-old-library/2>) is planned for Q4 2025-26, as they are building a new centre that closely matches our ambition of a customer-facing service in a heritage building, with storage built on land at the rear. Their project is costing £6.5m.
- 3.9 Cabinet approved plans to relocate Smethwick Library, and the Archives customer-facing service, to Smethwick Council House in 2023-24.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The project is subject to ongoing internal consultation with key stakeholders from finance, legal, property along with Cabinet and ward members. Decision-making governance gateways that require consultation or delegated authority will be obtained in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.

5. Financial Implications

West Smethwick Park

- 5.1 £100,000 is committed to future enhanced management and maintenance.

Bromwich Hall

- 5.2 Sandwell Council has been successful in gaining external funding of £200,000 from Historic England via the Heritage at Risk (HAR) Capital fund and additional match funding of £253,000 has been approved in the councils Capital Programme.
- 5.3 As conservation works progress at Bromwich Hall it is likely that further repair works will be required as additional external timber, panel and roof works will be identified. As following the strip back of the existing external fabric and scaffold access to roof and chimney areas will identify additional essential works.

Archives Centre

- 5.4 £3m capital has been allocated in the council's capital pipeline for the Archives Centre. At this stage, final costs are not known and will be clarified following further design works being undertaken.
- 5.5 External funding may be available via Heritage Lottery Fund, but this may delay the project by 1-2 years and is not guaranteed.
- 5.6 Ongoing mould treatment of materials may cost £60k per year, plus increase in costs for storing treated materials at Dudley Archives (currently paying £16k per annum).

6. Legal and Governance Implications

- 6.1 Decision-making governance gateways that require consultation, Cabinet approval or delegated authority will be obtained in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.

7. Risks

Bromwich Hall

- 7.1 Following the strip back of the existing external fabric and scaffold access to roof and chimney areas. This may identify additional works that may be more cost effective to complete with a heritage contractor on site.

Archives Centre

- 7.2 Incurred costs of storing materials in Dudley Archives.

- 7.3 Mould and other damage to materials currently stored in Smethwick Library basement if not relocated to safe storage.
- 7.4 Risk of no additional external funding being secured requiring the council to consider increasing the projects capital allocation which may have an impact on other proposals.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 8.1 The continued review of the council's asset portfolio, and any associated developments will ensure all vulnerable groups are considered, and that appropriate facilities continue to be provided across the borough in a more targeted manner.

9. Other Relevant Implications

- 9.1 The refurbishment and development of the properties detailed will offer a range of health and wellbeing benefits alongside supporting the regeneration of the borough through improving and developing assets and places for people to go.

10. Background Documents

- 10.1 Cabinet report 18 October 2023 - Update and decisions on the Asset Management Strategy - Income and Savings 2023-2026

11. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

- 11.1 This report will support the delivery of the following Strategic Themes: -
 - Living in Sandwell
 - Thriving Economy in Sandwell
 - Growing Up in Sandwell
- 11.2 The projects identified will contribute to a stronger and more inclusive economy by maximising local asset use. It will also contribute to ensuring strong, healthy and resilient communities by providing modern community facilities enabling residents more opportunities for community-based social activities. It will also ensure the ongoing protection of heritage assets.