Local Highway Maintenance Transparency Report

July 2025

TOWER HAMLETS

Our Highway Network

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets (Tower Hamlets) has a legal requirement to maintain public highways under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the different highway assets managed by the Council.

Roads	Footways	Cycleways
		
Total: 219.6 km A Roads: 13.8 km B/C Roads: 51.4 km U Roads: 154.4 km	Footways: 454.9 km	Cycleways: 69.7 km
Structures	**Street Lighting**	**Drainage**
		
Highway Structures: 56 no.	Lamp Columns: 10,033 no.	Gullies: 10,848 no.

Figure 1: Our Highway Assets

Principal (A) roads provide strategic connections in and through the borough, connecting Tower Hamlets with central London and the east and Essex. Non-principal classified (B&C) roads provide connectivity throughout Tower Hamlets, and unclassified (U) roads tend to be our quieter, residential roads. We are also responsible for maintaining cycleways to promote alternative transport modes. We also manage bridges and other highway structures, street lighting and street furniture to enhance public amenity, and highway drainage systems including gullies and lateral connections to manage the risk of flooding.

To enable the Council to keep the assets on our highway safe and accessible, we allocate an annual budget for planned, routine and reactive maintenance activities. We have also received additional funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2024/25 & 2025/26. Table 1 provides a breakdown of our historical and projected spend for the current financial year (2025/26).

Table 1: Highway Maintenance Spending Breakdown

Highway Maintenance Spending						
Year	**DfT Capital Allocation**	**Capital Spend**	**Revenue Spend**	**Resurfacing Completed**	**Preventative Maintenance**	**Reactive Maintenance**
	(£,000s)			**(km)**	**(Estimated %)**	
2025/26 (projected)	137	6,900	3,379	11.2	78	22
2024/25	137	7,074	3,467	11.0	78	22
2023/24	0	5,369	3,529	5.8	75	25
2022/23	0	7,804	3,808	9.9	76	24
2021/22	0	10,408	2,973	7.3	86	14
2020/21	0	8,238	2,707	10.1	84	16

Our capital budgets are allocated to planned maintenance programmes to improve our assets for the long term and to keep our residents and businesses connected. Details of the planned maintenance activities include:

- Resurfacing and reconstruction of roads
- Resurfacing and reconstruction of footways
- Replacing street lighting columns

Our revenue budgets are allocated to keeping our highway network safe on a day-to-day basis. This includes planned, routine and reactive maintenance. Details of maintenance activities include:

- Identifying and repairing safety defects or serviceability issues including:
    - Roads defects (includes potholes)
    - Footway defects (including trip and slip risks)
    - Street lighting issues (including outtages and day burners)
- General and structural inspections of bridges, structures and culverts
- Routine gully cleansing and responding to blocked gullies
- Testing street lighting columns and other electrical assets
- Replacing and cleaning traffic signs or other street furniture

A pothole is a depression in the road surface, caused by water and traffic wearing away the surface of the road, requiring a patch on the road to make it safe for road users. We apply a risk-based approach to assess the severity and impact of the pothole, then apply the required response level to prioritise repairs to potholes. Table 2 details the number of potholes which we have fixed over the past four financial years.

Table 2: Estimated number of potholes filled

Estimate Number of Potholes Filled			
2021/22	**2022/23**	**2023/24**	**2024/25**
653	695	777	307

Condition of Local Roads

Road condition assessments in Tower Hamlets are undertaken by two survey methods. They are:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) led surveys, which are undertaken by Transport for London (TfL) on our principal classified road network.
- Walked engineering surveys, which are undertaken by independent consultants on our non-principal classified and unclassified road network.

Our road condition is classified into five categories. They are:

- **Very Good:** no deterioration, no further investigation or treatment required
- **Good**: Minor deterioration, no further investigation or treatment required
- **Fair:** Moderate deterioration, maintenance may be required soon
- **Poor:** Moderate to severe deterioration, maintenance will be required
- **Very Poor**: Severe deterioration, maintenance will be required

It is important to note that the recorded condition of our network is a snapshot in time. The reported condition of a section of road can vary across its length, due to multiple factors like repairs from utility repairs and areas of increased vehicle loading, such as bus stops.

Principal Classified Road Network

Road condition assessments on the principal classified road network (A Roads) in Tower Hamlets are currently undertaken using Artificial Intelligence (AI) led surveys, which are undertaken by Transport for London (TfL) on our Borough Principal Road Network (BPRN). The AI survey detects the condition of a road from video footage and provides an objective, consistent approach to determining the condition across our A road network. This was introduced into use in 2022.

The results of annual A Road surveys are presented in **Error! Reference source not found.**. The average "poor" and "very poor" roads has remained at approximately 20% since 2022, which is lower than the London average of 29%. Note, no condition surveys were undertaken in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

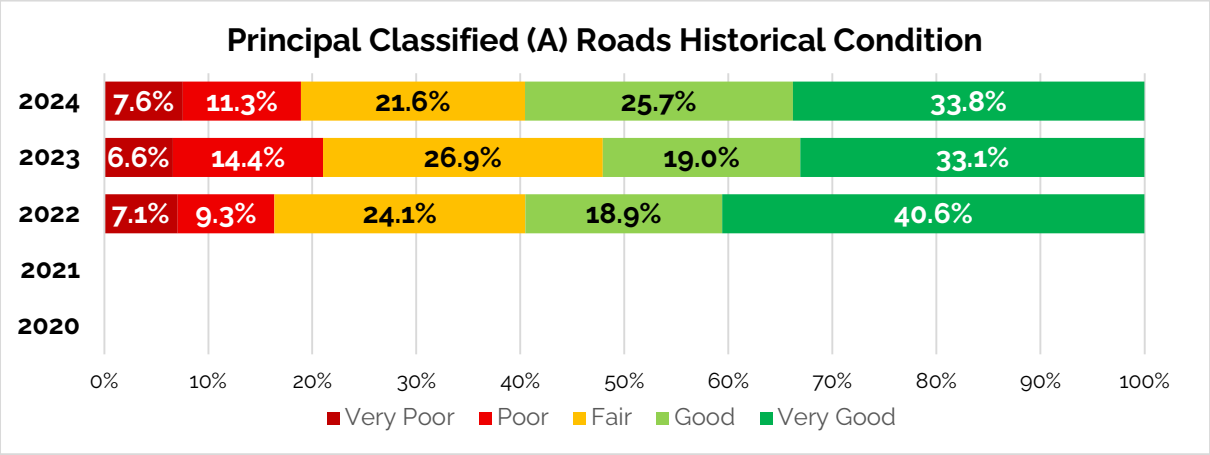

Figure 2: Historical A Road Condition

Non-Principal Classified and Unclassified Road Network

Since 2023, road condition assessments on the local classified non-principal (B&C Roads) and unclassified (U Roads) network are taken every two years by a walked engineering survey. Prior to 2022, these condition surveys were undertaken every four years.

Since 2021, the overall condition of our classified non-principal (Figure 3) and unclassified roads (Figure 4) has declined. This highlights the need for additional highway maintenance to improve the overall condition of our roads.

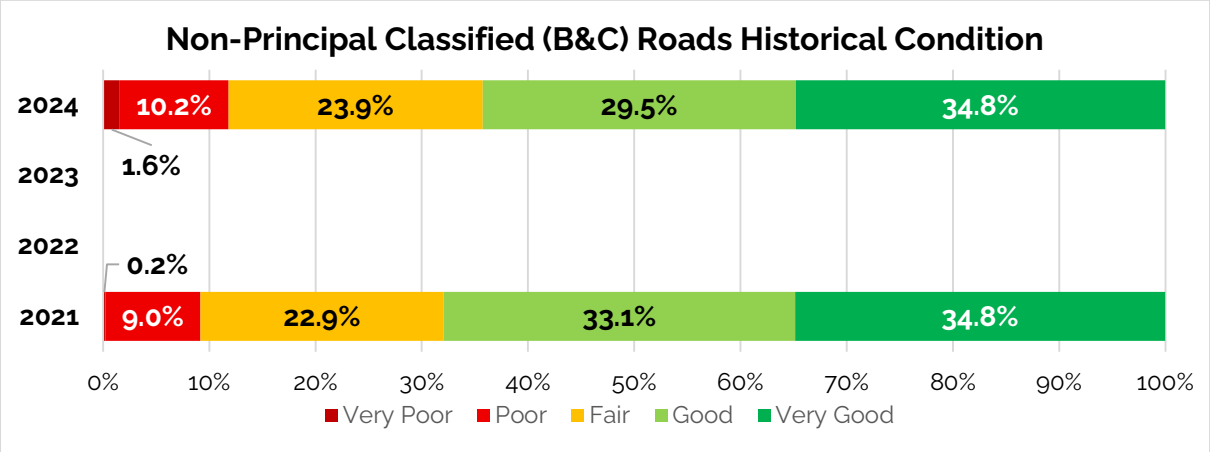

Figure 3: Historical B&C Road Condition

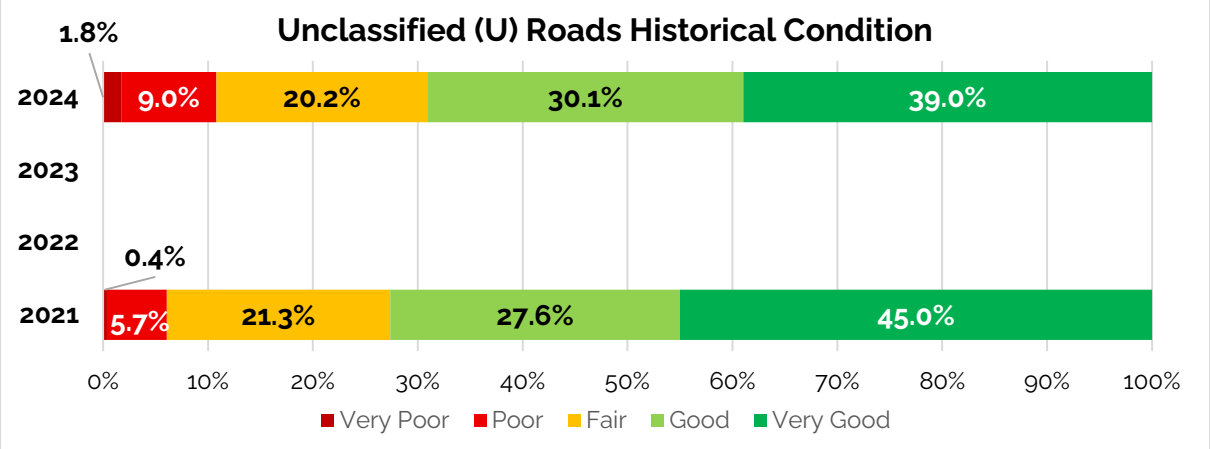

Figure 4: Historical U Road Condition

Our Plans

Overall Strategy

We utilise a risk-based approach to Highway Asset Management in line with the Code of Practice for Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure (the Code) and industry best practice.

Each section on our highway network has an assigned hierarchy risk rating. This hierarchy rating is based on multiple usage and location factors, such as, vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist volumes, transport hub locations, access to emergency services, schools and event venues. We use these hierarchy ratings to identify when to inspect our network and how quickly we respond and fix safety defects (if deemed to pose sufficient risk).

As part of our planning process to identify roads for planned maintenance across the borough, we utilise these hierarchy ratings to prioritise our resurfacing programme. We also consider:

- Condition survey results
- Resilient network and winter gritting routes
- History of reactive defect repairs and associated expenditure
- Resident feedback and third-party insurance claims
- Highway officer judgement

We allocate a priority ranking to every highway section in Tower Hamlets to identify potential schemes and allocate funding to the highest risk streets. Our hierarchical approach ensures that we can keep our network safe and accessible, whilst considering the needs and maximising the benefit to our residents, communities and businesses.

Best Practice, Innovation and Efficiency

We carry out investment modelling for our roads and footways as part of a best practice approach to understand our current and future funding need and condition outcomes. From this, we identify what additional investment is required to deliver service level targets (which could be maintaining a steady state or improving the condition of our network).

We actively participate in forums such as the London Technical Advisers Group (LoTAG) and its subgroups. This allows us to align, benchmark and discuss our approach to Highway Asset Management with our neighbouring boroughs and the wider London area. It enables us to have a consistent approach to Highway Asset Management activities, such as our network hierarchy factors and resilient road networks.

In line with best practice from the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG), we have developed our winter service policy and operational approach. This allows us to plan and deliver our winter service gritting with a consistent approach to other local authorities, enabling us to be more efficient with how we monitor and allocate resources for salt gritting.

We collect feedback from our residents on an annual basis regarding their satisfaction levels of road and pavement maintenance throughout the borough. Since 2021, the

number of residents satisfied with the service has increased by 29%, from 2021 to 67%, demonstrating the positive impacts of sustained highway investment and the visible improvement in roads across the borough.

Our Plans for 2025/26

For this financial year 2025/26, we plan on:

- Resurfacing 11.2 kilometres of roads
- Reconstructing 8.0 kilometres of footways
- Conducting 20 principal and general inspections for bridges and other structures
- Upgrading and replacing 600 street lighting columns

Out of our total highways budget for this financial year, we plan to spend 78% on planned maintenance works, which will contribute to the renewals of our highway assets, uplifting our network and keeping our borough well-connected. While we aim to prioritise capital expenditure, we have a statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the public highway in a safe condition. This means we will have to respond to defects on our network where they pose a risk to the public – the remaining 22% of our budget will be allocated to respond to these defects and deliver our day-to-day activities to keep our network running. We expect to fix approximately 600 potholes this year based on historical trends.

With our planned resurfacing works, we aim to cover as much of the borough as possible, where investment is required. Figure 5 shows the wards that we are completing works in.

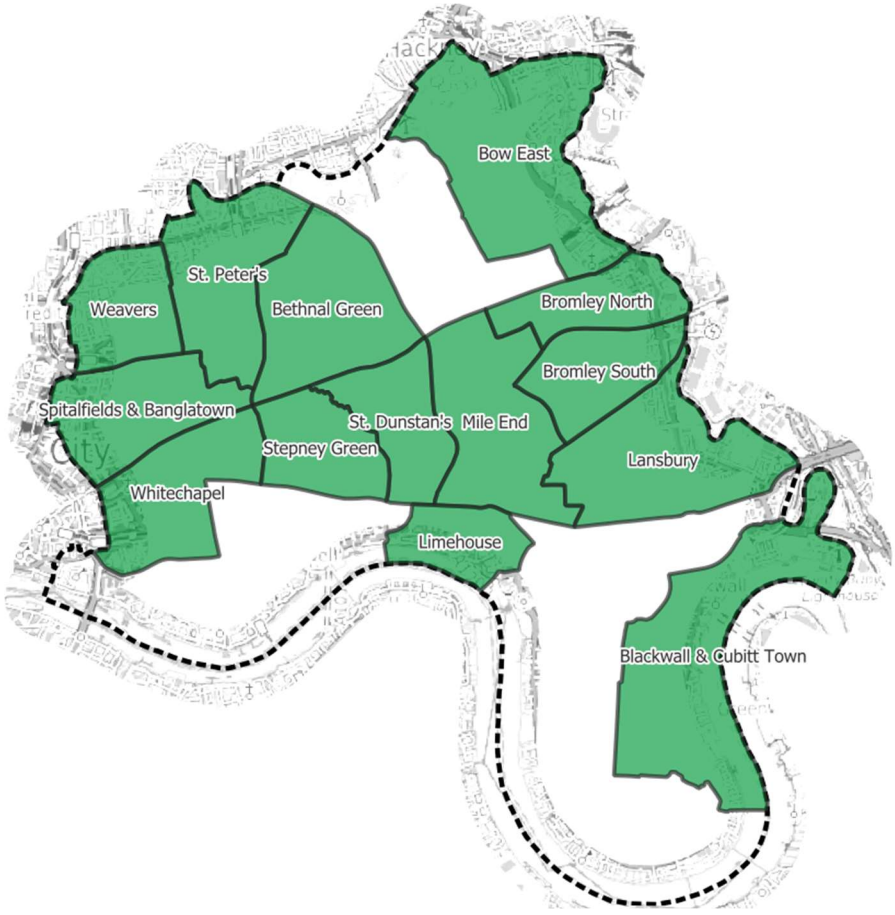

Figure 5: Wards we are completed road resurfacing works

Street Works

We aim to minimise disruption from maintenance works to our residents, members of the public and businesses through multiple methods.

We hold monthly coordination meetings with a range of key stakeholders, including our Network Management team, Statutory Undertakers (e.g. utility companies), highway contractors and private developers. These meetings are crucial for discussing upcoming major projects, maintenance schemes, and local events that may impact the road and footway network. We use a forward works pipeline mapping tool to plan and coordinate activities, considering both new and existing developments, the surrounding area, and the wider impact of road closures on our residents and businesses. From these coordination meetings, resurfacing works may be brought forward or delayed if required.

Details of upcoming works can be found on our website (link), for residents and businesses to see upcoming road closures due to works by Tower Hamlets or third parties.

Climate Change, Resilience and Adaptation

Tower Hamlets has the highest population density out of all the Local Authorities in England. As a result, we face several growing challenges which impact the condition of our highway network, highlighting the need for on-going investment

Climate change is affecting every aspect of our daily lives, including our highway assets. We have declared a climate emergency in 2019 and a commitment to achieve net zero as a Council by 2025 and as a borough by 2045 (link).

To meet our targets, we have completed a carbon baselining exercise to understand what activities are the most carbon intensive across our highway service. Following this exercise, we have developed a Carbon Management Strategy and Plan, which details what actions we will take to achieve becoming a net zero borough by 2045. For example, we have adopted warm mix treatments as our standard road resurfacing treatment – this reduces the energy required to apply the material onto the road surface, decreasing our emissions

We recognise the growing risks posed by climate change to our highway infrastructure. As the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), we are responsible for assessing and managing flood risk, which is increasing due to more intense and frequent rainfall events. To help address these challenges, we are incorporating new sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to better manage surface water on our roads and reduce strain on existing drainage infrastructure and taking a risk-based approach to highway drainage maintenance operations.

Colder weather also puts pressure on our highway network. To keep our roads safe and accessible, we follow our Winter Service Operational Policy and Plan. This guides us on when and what roads to apply winter treatments such as salt on to minimise disruption to road users.

In addition to the changing climate, we face the following challenges on our highway network:

- **Construction & Utility Openings:** 20% of our highway network is currently within 100 metres of on-going construction and development. This causes additional damage on our roads through increased construction traffic and utility openings to connect services.
- **Buses & Electric Vehicles (EVs):** In recent years, there has been a significant increase of the number of electric vehicles and buses. They are significantly heavier than their non-electric equivalents, which puts more stress on road surfaces and substructures.

Additional Information on Plans

We are committed to making our network accessible to all. We have carried out an accessibility audit across our network to identify areas for improvement. We are starting to implement improvements across the borough to install non-flush kerbs with dropped kerbs and replace missing tactile paving at pedestrian crossings. This will allow our residents with limited mobility to travel independently, reducing the risk of trips, slips and injuries and makes walking and public transport options more attractive and inclusive.