
Highway maintenance in Southampton

All roads and pavements in the city are regularly inspected to determine their condition and the Council has a long-term contract in place with Balfour Beatty Living Places to provide highway maintenance services. Busier roads are inspected every month and quieter residential roads every 6 months. As part of these inspections any safety issues are identified, including potholes, which are then repaired as routine maintenance. More information on routine maintenance and potholes can be found in the FAQ section. In addition to the inspections, survey machines laser-scan the city's key roads every year.

This means that the Council has up to date information about road and pavement condition, enabling all roads and pavements to be put into a condition category:

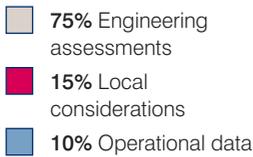
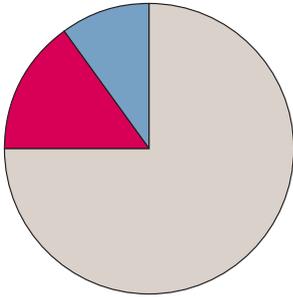
	Green roads: generally in good condition
	Amber roads: Showing signs of deterioration. Maintenance should be considered soon
	Red roads: Generally in poor condition. In need of planned maintenance

	Satisfactory pavements / footpaths: May show minimal signs of damage, but are usable and have no immediate maintenance requirements
	Poor pavements / footpaths: Repeated significant defects, so need to be programmed for resurfacing

Prioritisation for maintenance schemes

Currently the budget available for road maintenance falls short of the amount needed to quickly bring all parts of the highway network up to 'green' condition. Tough decisions therefore need to be made regarding prioritisation. In Southampton, these decisions are weighted as follows:

Road prioritisation

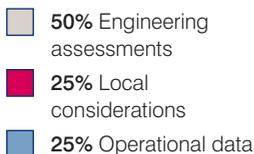
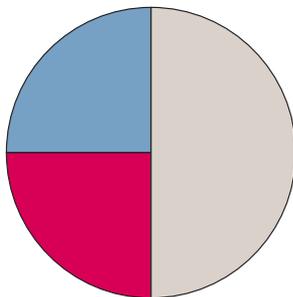


Engineering assessment (approx. 75%). This is a technical assessment of the road condition based on the inspections and laser surveys, as well as routine maintenance records.

Local considerations (approx. 15%). Local community factors such as the use of the road, traffic volumes, accidents, local amenities, as well as levels of complaints from customers and councillors.

Strategic considerations (approx. 10%). How this road supports the economic growth of the City and / or contributes to the City's Local Transport Plan objectives etc.

Pavement prioritisation



Engineering assessment (approx. 50%). This is a technical assessment of the pavement condition based on inspections.

Local considerations (approx. 25%). Local community factors such as how many people use the pavement, if it is part of a key route, does it serve a hospital / surgery, is it within an area of elderly population or with nearby schools, etc.

Operational data (approx. 25%). Factors such as how many complaints and enquiries received, reported accidents, and routine repairs carried out.

Frequently asked questions

1. Why do some potholes not get repaired?

The Council policy is to repair potholes when they reach a certain depth (intervention level) – this is consistent with national good practice. There are insufficient funds available to repair all potholes, so anything less than 20mm deep on a pavement and 40mm deep in a road will be monitored but will not automatically be repaired.

The following table summarises the Council's response to repairs:

Depth of pothole on the road (intervention level)	Depth of pothole on the pavement (intervention level)	Repair priority
7.5cm or more (Deeper than a tennis ball)	4cm or more	24 hours or less
Between 4 and 7.5cm (No deeper than a tennis ball)	Between 2 and 4cm	Up to 6 months, where possible within 28 days
Less than 4cm (No deeper than a golf ball)	Less than 2cm	No action at this time

Some of Southampton's roads comprise a thin layer of tarmac over a concrete foundation. Frost damage and wear can strip off areas of the surface and although this can give a poor appearance or ride quality, it usually won't get any worse or be unsafe. The defects are also usually less than the intervention level. The Council is, however, committed to re-surfacing a small number of these worst roads every year.

2. Wouldn't it be better to do a surfacing scheme rather than come back lots of times to fix potholes?

Yes ideally it would, but there is simply not enough funding to re-surface all roads and we can only repair so many each year without causing unacceptable disruption while the works are done. Pothole repairs are essential to keep our roads and pavements safe and sometimes these have to be revisited. Roads are re-surfaced when they become high priority, when assessed against other roads across the city.

3. Why do some roads get resurfaced that appear in a better condition than others?

Some roads have underlying or structural defects that may not be easily identified from looking at the surface. Inspections and laser surveys identify where urgent attention is required to avoid more costly repairs in the near future.

4. Why do some roads and pavements only have a very thin layer of tarmac added on top of them which doesn't seem to last?

There is insufficient money to rebuild all deteriorating roads back to their original condition, so different solutions are used to maximise road life. 'Thin layer' treatments are widely used in the highway industry and will often add more than 10 years life to a road or pavement. This is best likened to property maintenance where a house owner may have to save up money to replace rotting wooden windows with UPVC, but in the meantime carries out repairs to the frames which will allow them to function for many years to come.

5. Are Southampton's roads worse than in other areas across the UK?

No. As a City, we are very similar to the majority of other highway authorities. Some authorities may have a slightly higher proportion of roads that require maintenance and some less. Some councils have a high number of rural roads which tend to be more susceptible to winter weather damage, whereas Southampton's urban roads with many lorries can often result in potholes forming with little or no warning. All authorities prioritise their road repairs, share best practice, and are always looking to carry out resurfacing at the optimum time to suit each particular road. This way the limited highway funds deliver maximum benefit.

6. Where can I find out which roads/paths are on the forward works programme?

The Council publishes its next year's list of roads on its website – this can be found under the Road Maintenance section of Roads & Parking. We intend to extend the list to include an indicative programme for future years, although longer term plans are subject to change if roads deteriorate faster than expected.