

Highway Maintenance Transparency Report 2026/27

Core Report

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Foreword from our Executive Member

The Our Manchester Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for the next decade, shaped by the aspirations of Manchester residents. A key ambition is to create a healthier, greener, and more sustainable city, with reliable transport that enables people to travel quickly, affordably, safely and cleanly.

Manchester's highway network plays a vital role in connecting people, places, and opportunities, while supporting economic growth, public health, and social inclusion. High-quality roads, pavements, and cycleways encourage walking and cycling, helping to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality and promote healthier lifestyles.

Sustained investment since 2017 has delivered significant improvements in the condition of Manchester's highway network, guided by the Highway Asset Management Policy & Strategy and delivery plans. The Council utilises a proactive whole-life costing approach to maintenance that combines innovative, low-carbon materials with cost-effective preventative treatments to seal and protect large areas of the network early.

This report highlights the investment we have made in the last few years, what treatments and processes we are using to mitigate deterioration of our highway network and how residents can report defects to us.

Councillor Mandie Shilton-Godwin
Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport

1. What we are responsible for maintaining

Manchester's highway network is essential to the city's daily life and future growth. Keeping roads well maintained and efficient helps reduce congestion, improve journey times, and support sustainable development. It also strengthens the local economy, encourages investment, and enhances the quality of life for residents.

The Council is responsible for managing and maintaining a wide range of highway assets across the city, including roads (carriageways), pavements (footways), drainage systems, bridges and street lighting. The Council works to ensure these assets remain safe, functional, and fit for purpose, making the best possible use of available funding and resources.

Manchester's highway network includes:

- **Roads:** Total length over 1,400 km
- **Pavements:** Total length over 2,600 km
- **Cycleways:** Total length over 250 km
- **Bridges & Structures:** More than 350
- **Drainage (Gullies):** Over 120,000
- **Lighting Columns:** Over 50,000

Looking after a highway network of this size is a big task. There are many different types of assets to maintain and keeping them all safe and working properly takes ongoing care and investment. Much of the network is ageing, which means it needs more frequent repairs. Busy roads, especially those used by heavy vehicles, wear out more quickly.

Weather conditions, such as heavy rainfall and temperature fluctuations, can also damage road surfaces and drainage systems. At the same time, funding is limited, so work must be carefully prioritised to make sure the most important parts of the network are kept in good condition.

2. Road conditions in Manchester

Councils use highway condition surveys to assess the state of their roads and pavements. We carry out annual condition surveys capturing about 50% of our total network each year (all road classes). This means that all roads are surveyed within a 2-year period. This is done by our survey contractor using video assessments and, if needed, on-foot data collection.

The highways investment programme work has succeeded in significantly improving the condition of our roads since 2017.

Collected road and pavement condition data is subdivided into five condition categories, with details shown in **Appendix 1**.

For national reporting, these results are converted into three condition bandings:

- **Green** – the road is in good condition and no further investigation or treatment is required
- **Amber** – the road may need maintenance soon
- **Red** – the road is in poor condition and should be considered for maintenance

The published [official statistics for road condition](#) include more detail about the methodology, timing and coverage of this data.

The tables below show the percentage of these condition bandings for the different road classes in Manchester since 2023.

Percentage of A roads & Motorways in each condition category

Year	Percentage of A roads in red category	Percentage of A roads in amber category	Percentage of A roads in green category
2023	8%	16%	76%
2024	6%	15%	79%
2025	6%	16%	78%

Percentage of B & C roads in each condition category

Year	Percentage of B & C roads in red category	Percentage of B & C roads in amber category	Percentage of B & C roads in green category
2023	9%	17%	74%
2024	7%	16%	77%
2025	6%	19%	75%

Percentage of U roads in each condition category

Year	Percentage of U roads in red category	Percentage of U roads in amber category	Percentage of U roads in green category
2023	16%	18%	66%
2024	14%	18%	68%
2025	15%	18%	67%

The 2025 figures show the published results for financial year 2024/25.

Additional information on road condition

From 2026, national road condition reporting across England will change from a three-grade system to a more detailed five-grade system. This means that future results may not be directly comparable with older data. As we already assess our roads using five condition grades, the new national standard will make it easier to compare our network with other authorities and provide a clearer and more consistent picture of road condition.

3. What we are doing about potholes and other road defects

What is a pothole?

Whilst there is no official national definition, a pothole can be regarded as a damaged area on a road, pavement, or cycle path where the surface has broken away, creating a sudden dip. Potholes can form quickly, especially during bad weather such as heavy rain or freezing and thawing conditions in winter. The level of risk depends on their size, depth, and location.

Manchester City Council uses a risk-based approach to assess and prioritise repairs, in line with national guidance ([Code of Practice | CIHT](#)).

We generally consider a defect to be a pothole if it meets the following guidelines:

- **Roads (carriageways):**

At least 40 mm deep and generally over 250 mm wide, with a noticeable drop in surface level.

- **Pavements and cycle paths:**

At least 25 mm deep and generally over 100 mm wide, with a noticeable drop in surface level.

Not all potholes will require the same level of response. Each is assessed based on the potential risk to the public.

What are we doing to tackle potholes?

The Council uses a balanced approach to tackling potholes, combining preventative maintenance with reactive repairs:

1/ Our highways capital investment has allowed us to place a strong emphasis on carrying out planned, preventative maintenance to stop potholes forming in the first place. This includes:

- Resurfacing roads and applying surface treatments to extend lifespan
- Improving drainage to prevent water damage (a key cause of potholes)
- Regular condition surveys to identify deterioration early

The aim is to intervene at the right time to avoid more costly and frequent pothole repairs later. This forward-planning has enabled the significant improvements in network condition.

2/ All defects are assessed using a risk-based system, ensuring that the most dangerous issues are prioritised first.

In 2025/26 the Council filled 7,028 carriageway potholes and 2,955 pavement potholes, with over 90% of these within the required timescales.

The Council also monitors utility company roadworks and street works, inspecting completed works and requiring utility companies to return to site and correct any defects that do not meet required standards.

3/ Where possible, the Council prioritises permanent defect repairs such as structural treatments. These are more durable and help avoid repeat visits to the same location. However, not all defects can be permanently fixed immediately, and temporary repairs may be used first where necessary. This is due to several practical considerations:

- **Safety:** Dangerous defects must be made safe quickly
- **Traffic management:** Permanent repairs require road closures and careful scheduling
- **Efficiency:** It is often better to repair whole sections of road in one programme
- **Weather and materials:** Permanent works need suitable conditions to be effective

How members of the public can report potholes and other highway defects

Members of the public can report potholes and other highway defects to Manchester City Council through several clear channels:

- Online reporting – the quickest and preferred method is via the Council's website:

- Go to [report pothole road pavement damage](#) where details can be entered on an online form. This is usually the fastest way to get issues resolved.
- Phone or general contact – if you cannot use the online form, staff can log the issue and direct it to the highways team using:
 - Main switchboard: 0161 234 5000
 - General enquiries/contact centre: 0161 234 5004
 - Email: contact@manchester.gov.uk
- Third-party reporting tools - defects can be reported using platforms that forward issues to the Council, such as [FixMyStreet](#).

What happens after a pothole is reported?

The Council records reported defects via our CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system and arranges an inspection of the location. Defects are prioritised based on risk (urgent vs routine) and any repairs are scheduled accordingly within designated timescales.

We are currently taking a more proactive approach by responding more quickly to residents' reports of defects. Where possible, repairs may be prioritised and carried out earlier than planned, even when issues have not yet reached standard intervention levels.

Our criteria for investigating, assessing, prioritising and fixing defects is detailed in the 'GM Framework for Highway Safety Inspections', endorsed by the 10 GM Highway Authorities, as well as the Council's own underlying Safety Inspection Policy.

4. What we spend to maintain the highway network and where the funding comes from

Highway maintenance spending can be generally split into 2 elements:

- Capital Investment: Money for projects that create or improve assets like roads, bridges, and drainage systems. This helps them to last longer. Capital funding is provided by both central government grants and the Council's own borrowing / investment.
- Revenue expenditure: Money for everyday maintenance and reactive repairs, such as fixing potholes, clearing snow, replacing road markings and minor drainage repairs. Revenue funding comes from Council Tax and other sources like business rates, transport levies and grants.

Appendix 2 shows a breakdown of the Council's expenditure on highway maintenance for both elements over the last 3 years and where this funding has come from.

Since 2017, the Council's internal borrowing capital investment programme has allowed us to spend over £165 million on maintaining and improving roads, footpaths, bridges and drainage systems. This has been a big increase in spending with the aim of making our highways better.

The money spent in recent years has helped us to improve the condition of our highway network significantly. It also supports longer-term planning which has benefits such as:

- Encouraging walking and cycling: Helps people stay healthy and eases pressure on roads and public transport.
- Reducing disruption from reactive repairs.
- Lowering carbon emissions, as cars use less fuel on smooth, well-maintained roads.

Most of the capital investment has been spent on resurfacing and preventative maintenance on roads and pavements. These works include:

- Resurfacing, replacing the worn-out surface with a new one, and
- Overlay treatments, applying a thin layer to the surface, which smooths it and stops water penetration.

5. Our maintenance plans for this year

Our plans for highway maintenance for 2026-27

For 2026/27, the Council is continuing to provide additional investment for highway maintenance to sustain the improvements already made to Manchester's network. This investment will allow an increased priority for local road & pavement improvements to support active travel, whilst also preserving the condition of our strategic road network.

The Council's highway asset management policy & strategy ([Policies and strategies - Highways asset management policy and strategy | Manchester City Council](#)) details our approach to maintaining our highway assets. It aims to deliver a longer-term programme of preventative treatments at the right time before roads or pavements deteriorate too much.

Maintenance works will be planned alongside other capital improvement projects in Manchester where possible. This will save costs, reduce disruption for road users, and enhance the project's value.

For 2026/27, we plan to carry out the following:

- Road resurfacing – 28 km
- Large patching – 32,000 m²
- Preventative road surface treatments – 34 km
- Pavement treatments – 85 km

The planned highways work programme for 2026/27 represents an increase compared with the volume of works completed in 2025/26.

Full list of planned carriageway and pavement works

A list of the planned carriageway and pavement schemes earmarked for works in 2026/27, split by the work type planned and by geographical ward is shown at the following link:

[Highways proposed work programmes 2026/27 | Manchester City Council](#)

This link also shows these schemes on an interactive map view.

How decisions are made on our maintenance plans

The Council uses an asset management approach to highway maintenance, ensuring decisions are based on road condition, risk, safety, network importance and value for money, rather than simply responding to defects as they occur.

Regular highway inspections, condition surveys, skid resistance testing and asset data are used to identify roads and pavements that are deteriorating, allowing timely intervention before more extensive and expensive repairs are required.

We utilise strategic asset management software from our provider to help prioritisation and assessment of our maintenance programmes.

Community engagement also plays an important role in developing programmes. The Council:

- Consults with neighbourhood teams, ward members, local communities and stakeholders when developing schemes, to capture local priorities.
- Participates in the annual National Highways and Transportation (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey to better understand residents' views and inform service priorities.
- Works closely with internal and external partners to align highway maintenance investment with wider strategic growth and regeneration projects and objectives.

Appendix 1

Road condition

Our collected highway condition survey data is subdivided into 5 condition grades, shown below. The indicative maintenance treatments required at each condition grade are also shown:

Road and pavement condition grades:

- **Grade 1: Damage Free (As new)**
 - Maintenance: None required
- **Grade 2: Signs of Wear (Good)**
 - Maintenance: Minor maintenance may be needed
- **Grade 3: Serviceable (Fair)**
 - Maintenance: Some patching and preventative treatment may be needed
- **Grade 4: Functionally Impaired (Poor)**
 - Maintenance: Major patching, preventative treatment, or resurfacing required
- **Grade 5: Structurally Impaired (Very Poor)**
 - Maintenance: Resurfacing or full reconstruction required

The highways investment programme work has succeeded in significantly improving the condition of our roads in Manchester. The table below shows the percentage of all our roads and pavements at grade 4 or grade 5 (poor / very poor) condition since 2017.

Year	Roads	Pavements
2017	25%	16%
2018	24%	14%
2019	20%	11%
2020	17%	12%
2021	16%	12%
2022	14%	14%
2023	13%	14%
2024	12%	14%
2025	11%	14%

In 2017, 25% of all our roads were in poor or very poor condition, but this has now reduced to about 11% in 2025.

Most of the investment has focused on roads. This is why pavement conditions have generally not improved. Now, pavements are a priority in upcoming maintenance plans, along with local and neighbourhood roads.

Appendix 2

Spending on highways maintenance

Category	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27 (projected)
Total spend on highways maintenance	£32,917,870	£32,631,200	£36,297,984
Carriageways	£15,572,431	£15,465,706	£18,097,797
Pavements	£9,345,351	£8,987,738	£9,101,004
Structures (for example bridges or tunnels)	£1,789,595	£1,022,489	£1,600,815
Drainage	£3,241,368	£4,078,135	£4,230,307
Street lighting	£352,246	£142,876	£378,886
Other assets	£2,616,878	£2,934,256	£2,889,175

Where our funding for highways maintenance comes from:

Funding sources for highways maintenance	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27 (projected)
Capital highway maintenance allocations received through the Department for Transport	£8,044,000	£9,838,000	£8,557,000
Additional capital highways maintenance funding provided by the Council or third parties	£13,989,907	£11,168,499	£15,495,191
Revenue funding from various sources	£10,883,963	£11,624,701	£12,245,793
Total	£32,917,870	£32,631,200	£36,297,984

Unlike most standalone councils, Greater Manchester's councils receive highway maintenance funding through Greater Manchester Combined Authority's devolved funding arrangements, rather than directly from the Department for Transport (DfT).