



# Highway Inspection Policy

## 2025

## Document Control

Version	Description	Date	Officer	Role	Approval
1.0	Minor general updates (As part of HIAMP)	August 2016	DCR	Asset Management Engineer	Cabinet
1.1	Minor general updates (As part of HIAMP)	June 2019	DCR	Asset Management Engineer	Cabinet
1.0*	Transferred to standalone document	May 2025	AS, AC	Senior Highway Inspector, Asset Management Engineer	Strategic Lead for Highway Operations & Delivery

\*Reverted to 1.0 as document is now standalone

## **1. Introduction to Highway Safety Inspections**

Coventry City Council is responsible for over 880km of roads and over 1400km of footways. Every section of adopted highway is inspected at least annually with increased frequency for areas of higher traffic and/or footfall.

Safety inspections identify defects which may present imminent dangers or hazards to users of the highway, in accordance with the requirements of the Highways Act (1980). Defects are raised on a priority basis dependent on risk posed which is a combination of severity, potential impact and likelihood of an incident occurring.

The inspection process forms part of our defence against claims against the council related highway outlined in Section 58 of the Highways Act. Including using competent inspectors, setting reasonable inspection frequencies, and reasonable defect response as well as implementation and adherence to this policy.

This document details the procedures undertaken when inspecting the highway. The document does not cover planned maintenance programmes (resurfacing, reconstruction etc.) but inspector input does contribute towards these programmes.

## **2. Risk Based Approach (RBA)**

As recommended by the code of practise (Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice, 2016) a risk-based approach has been adopted in relation to highway safety inspections. This has been implemented both in regards to inspection frequencies and defect identification and response times. For example: inspecting higher usage roads and pavements more frequently and having increased defect response on defects that pose a significantly higher risk; e.g. a pothole on a 60mph stretch of heavily used A road is likely to have a much higher safety impact than a similar sized pothole on a residential cul-de-sac.

Although intervention levels (ILs) are still used on key assets (carriageway/footways) (see Section 4), all other council maintained assets within the adopted highway are subject completely to a RBA.

## **3. Inspection Frequencies & Methods**

Inspection frequencies on Coventry's highway network range from monthly to annually depending on risk factors. The resource required to inspect the entire network monthly or even biannually would be unfeasible for any highway authority in the country so therefore inspection frequencies have been derived based upon the 'character of the highway'; i.e. traffic levels, footfall etc., these are primarily derived from geographic data sources (school locations, main routes, shopping areas etc.). Carriageways and footways in Coventry have been assigned a 'hierarchy' based upon these factors using national standards as a baseline.

### 3.1. Road Inspection Frequencies

Roads are split into five hierarchies. A named road may have differing hierarchies along its extent (e.g. 'Birmingham Road' comprises of a main high speed, high usage section and lower speed usage sections off it. The below table outlines road hierarchies and inspection frequency:

Hierarchy / Category	Coventry Example	Inspection Frequency (ever x month(s))
2 - Strategic Route (High speed, high traffic road)	A444 - Stivichall Bypass	1 Month
3(a) – Main Distributor (High traffic links between strategic routes)	B4107 – Four Pounds Avenue	1 Month
3(b) – Secondary Distributor (Similar to above but generally lower traffic and/or speed)	B4115 – Howes Lane	1 Month
4(a) - Link Road (Generally unclassified roads with much higher than average traffic levels)	Unclassified – Blackberry Lane	3 Months
4(b) – Local Access Road (Roads primarily used by residential traffic)	All cul-de-sacs	12 Months

Additionally, any cycleway that forms part of the carriageway will be inspected alongside the carriageway is inspected at the same time based on the road hierarchy.

### 3.2. Footway Inspection Frequencies

As with roads, footways may have differing frequencies along the extent of a named road (e.g. a road with a school on it would have significantly higher footfall around the immediate vicinity of the school). The below table outlines footway hierarchies and inspection frequency:

Hierarchy / Category	Coventry Example	Inspection Frequency (ever x month(s))
1a – Prestige Walking Area (Very high footfall areas)	City Centre Shopping Areas	1 Month
1 – Primary Walking Route (High footfall areas, locally important shopping areas)	Earlsdon Street	1 Month
2 – Secondary Walking Route (Areas of high footfall but less than 1a/1 hierarchies)	Jardine Crescent (near shops)	3 Months
3 – Link Footway (Generally residential areas that link to higher hierarchy routes)	Broad Street	6 Months
4 – Local Access Footways	Majority of residential streets	12 Months

Additionally, any cycleway that is off carriageway (not on the road), will be inspected based on the above frequencies.

### 3.3. Inspection Flexibilities

The defined inspection frequencies should be maintained where possible however adding in an element of flexibility will enable the effects of unforeseen weather conditions and resourcing issues to be managed effectively. The following table outlines the flexibility for all inspection frequencies:

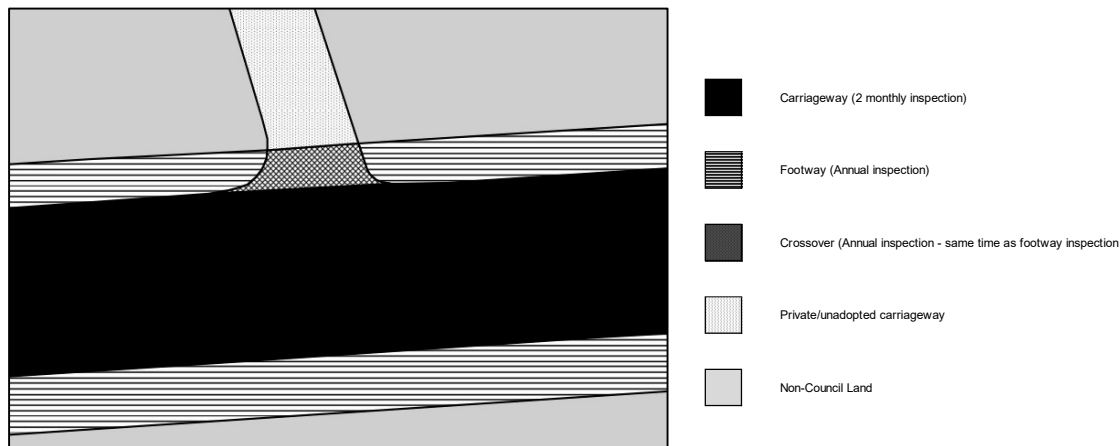
Inspection Frequency	Flexibility (Working Days)
1 Monthly	3
3 Monthly	5
6 Monthly	7
12 Monthly	10

### 3.4. Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, for example continued heavy rainfall, snow, or road works, it may not be possible to undertake inspections. In these circumstances safety inspections will be rescheduled. Once inspections resume the streets that are awaiting inspection will be inspected at their next due date.

### 3.5. Mixed Frequency Streets

On occasion a road will have a high-usage/hierarchy carriageway but lower usage/hierarchy footway. In these cases, the main carriageway asset is classed as that between the boundary of the two footways/kerbs. Any crossovers/access to lower frequency carriageways are therefore inspected as part of the walked footway process on the lower frequency. The following diagram explains this visually:



### 3.6. Inspection Methods & Data Recorded

The majority of inspections are collected digitally on mobile devices and inspection results and defects identified are sent to our electronic system. There are some cases where this is not possible, these are generally where a small section of a street requires frequent inspections and the rest of the street is inspected annually. In these instances the paper records are securely stored along with numbers of jobs raised (in the electronic system).

We undertake both walked and driven inspections.

#### 3.6.1. Walked Inspections

Walked inspections are undertaken on all footways. Carriageway defects are also picked up where the carriageway is visible from the footway and can be safely inspected. Where footway is present on both sides of the carriageway each direction is walked by the inspector. Carriageways that can not be walked safely (e.g. high speed routes with no associated footway) are covered by driven inspections.

#### 3.6.2. Driven Inspections

High frequency (more than annually) carriageway inspections are carried out in a driven manner by one inspector and a driver. The driver will not be expected to be actively involved in identifying and recording defects but will concentrate on ensuring the safe passage of the vehicle. The CCC liveried survey vehicle is equipped with high intensity roof-mounted flashing beacons and high visibility reflective markings.

#### 3.6.3. Data Recorder During Inspections

The minimum data associated with a single inspection is:

- Date/time of inspection and inspector name
- Any jobs raised/actional defects raised as part of the inspection

Additionally, the general condition of the road may be passed to the technical team for consideration when scoring planned maintenance schemes.

All adopted highway assets are assessed during inspections (including but not limited to verges, gullies and kerbs). When an immediate hazard is identified that is not the responsibility of The Council the appropriate asset owner is informed (utility companies, street lighting PFI operator etc.)

Every defect is not recorded during the inspection, only those pose enough of a hazard to warrant a reactive job (see section 4 for more information). It would be unfeasible for an inspector to record every single defect and would greatly increase the time and resource necessary to inspect the network. The primary role of safety inspections is to identify hazards, not provide condition information on the street as a whole. We have benchmarked this with other local authorities who adopt a very similar approach.

### **3.7. Ad-hoc Inspections**

In addition to routine safety inspections ad-hoc inspections may be carried out based on stakeholder reports of defects/hazards. A report must include clear details of a perceived hazard to be addressed; for example "Road is in poor condition" does not refer to any specific hazard and would be treated more as a service request for resurfacing than trigger an ad-hoc inspection.

### **3.8. Review of Inspections Frequencies**

Inspection frequencies/hierarchies are reviewed when any changes to the 'character' of a road/footway emerge. This could include raising frequencies (when a previously little used footway has had a cycleway implemented) or (less commonly) lowering frequencies when footfall or traffic on a route has reduced due to the presence of a new/alternative route.

An exercise is also undertaken annually based on reactive work history. Streets with a high hierarchy/frequency may be lowered if there is supporting evidence of a low number of defects identified and vice versa, streets with infrequent inspections but high numbers of reactive jobs may also have their frequency increased.

## **4. Defect Identification and Response**

During the inspection process, jobs are raised for any defects/issues that pose a hazard to users of the highway network. Inspectors assess the potential impact/severity and probability of occurrence a defect poses. Based on this a decision is made to raise a reactive work job. The degree of risk a defect poses is not purely determined by depth of a defect but also other factors such as size and location. E.g. a defect outside the generally walked area (such as under a bench) would have a much lower probability of posing a hazard.

### **4.1. Intervention Levels**

Intervention levels (ILs) have been set for both carriageway and footway defects. These levels have been determined to balance risk to the highway user, inspector resource and consistency with other local authorities.

We acknowledge that intervention levels are no longer strictly required under the RBA, however having a minimum level of service around reactive defects assists in reducing overall risk to the authority and can preserve asset condition between planned maintenance schemes.

Intervention levels (ILs) on carriageways are  $\geq 40\text{mm}$  and on footways this is  $\geq 20\text{mm}$ . Footway. Defects of this size will always have a job raised, but response times will differ under the RBA depending on the level of risk identified by the inspector.

A defect not being at IL does not necessarily mean action will not be taken, non-IL defects will have jobs raised if determined by the inspector to pose risk (as per section 4.3).

All non-carriageway and footway assets with potential hazards present are assessed under a purely risk based approach (outlined in section 4.3).



## 4.2. Defect Categories

At Coventry we have five categories of defect:

Category	Description	Response Time (Working Days unless Specified)
Emergency Defect	Any defect in which its nature/severity/location represent an immediate hazard or very serious risk to users of the network	2 Hours
P1 - Priority 1 Defect (Standard Priority)	Defects at or above IL requiring priority attention but less severe than an emergency response	5
P1L - Priority 1 Defect (Lower Priority)	Defects that have been identified to be above IL but pose a lower level of risk due to location/hierarchy etc.	20
P2H - Priority 2 (Higher Priority)	Defects under IL but still have been determined to have potential risk implications	20
P2 - Priority 2 (Standard Priority)	Defects under IL but with a lower level of risk associated that do not require high priority action	40

Defect categories and response times as determined by the safety inspector based upon the level of risk posed by the defect.

## 4.3. Risk Identification

The risk posed by defects is determined by trained, competent highway inspectors. When identifying the risk the inspector considers both impact/severity of a defect and the likelihood/probability of damage to persons or property caused by it while also considering the 'character' of the location including geographical factors (such as gradient).

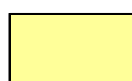


		Impact			
		Negligible (1)	Low (2)	Medium (3)	High (4)
Likelihood	Negligible (1)	1 N/A	2 40 Days*	3 40 Days*	4 40 Days*
	Low (2)	2 40 Days*	4 40 Days*	6 20 Days*	8 5 Days*
	Medium (3)	3 40 Days*	6 20 Days*	9 5 Days*	12 2 Hours
	High (4)	4 40 Days*	8 5 Days*	12 2 Hours	16 2 Hours

\*days refers to working days as per section 4.2. 'Days' used to increase table visible legibility



Negligible impact and likelihood. Defect would not be logged / have a job raised



Defect has potentially to affect users of the asset but low likelihood / severity



Defect has potentially to affect users of the asset but with moderate likelihood / severity



Defect likely to impact users of the asset but no imminent danger likely



Defect likely to have severe impact on users of the asset, response needed ASAP

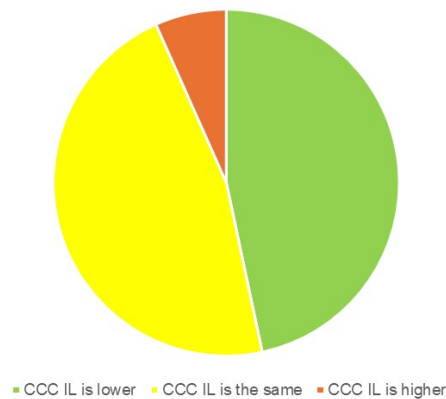
The score assigned to a defect is reflected in whether a job is raised or not. A defect scoring both negligible likelihood and impact would not be recorded with a score of '1', but will score '1' by not being recorded (as stated in section 3.6.3).

For any defect that does have a job raised, the risk scored posed by the job is reflected in the job response time.

#### 4.4. Benchmarking & Consistency with other Councils

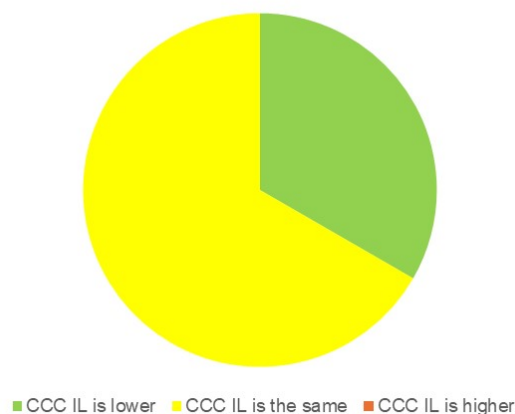
Our responses have been benchmarked with other local authorities. The following table outlines other local authorities (LA) ILs when compared to Coventry. Where Coventry has the lower IL it means we raise less severe defects than other LAs (e.g. we raise 20mm footway ILs and an other authority may use a minimum of 25mm) and visa versa.

CCC Footway ILs vs 15 other LAs



Only 1/15 of the LAs sampled had a lower IL on footways than Coventry, 7 had the same ILs and 7 had higher ILs

CCC Carriageway ILs vs 15 other LAs



For carriageways, no other LA had a lower IL than Coventry (40mm), 10 were the same and 5 had higher ILs.

A detailed breakdown of the other LA ILs looked at can be found in Appendix 1.1 (footways) and 1.2 (carriageways)

#### 4.4.1. Boundary Inspections

We have also benchmarked our inspection frequency with neighbouring authorities (Solihull and Warwickshire). In all instances a Coventry maintained road/footway adjoins with a neighbouring local authority our inspection frequencies are either the same (Solihull) or a mixture of the same/more frequent (Warwickshire).

#### 4.4.2. Benchmarking Opportunities

In addition to a review of other LAs inspection policies Coventry are also a member of MHA+ (Midlands Highway Alliance) and chair the West Midlands PAM (Pavement Asset Management) group. These are valuable occurrences to benchmark and discuss highway inspections, share good practise and learn lessons from other LAs both regionally and nationally.

## **5. Competency and Training**

All safety inspectors gain on-the-job training by shadowing and learning from more experienced colleagues. In addition, all inspectors complete LANTRA (LAnd and TRaining) Highway Safety Inspector training which is refreshed every five years. All inspectors are familiarised with the Inspection Policy and as with all council staff subject to annual development and performance reviews.

Additionally, periodic audits are undertaken on a sample of inspections. These are undertaken by the senior inspector.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. – Coventry Footway Intervention Levels Benchmarked vs other LAs

Asset	Coventry IL	Benchmark IL	LA	LA Type	Comments
Footway	20mm (All)	20mm (hierarchy 1)	1	County	CCC IL is lower
		40mm (all others)			
		25mm (all)	2	Rural - Unitary	CCC IL is lower
		25mm (all)	3	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is lower
		25mm (all)	4	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is lower
		20mm (hierarchy 1 & 2)	5	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is lower in most instances
		25mm (all others)			
		20mm (all)	6	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		20mm (all)	7	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		25mm (all)	8	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is lower
		20mm (all)	9	County	CCC IL is the same
		20mm (all)	10	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		15mm (all)	11	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is higher
		20mm (all)	12	London Borough	CCC IL is the same
		25mm (all)	13	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is lower
		15mm (hierarchy 1)	14	London Borough	CCC higher for very small proportion, lower for majority of network
		20mm (hierarchy 2&3)			
		25mm (all others)			
		25mm (all)	15	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same

## Appendix 2. – Coventry Carriageway Intervention Levels Benchmarked vs other LAs

Asset	Coventry IL	Benchmark IL	LA	LA Type	Comments
Carriageway	40mm (All)	50mm (all)	1	County	CCC IL is lower
		40mm (higher hierarchies)	2	Rural - Unitary	CCC IL is lower in most instances
		50mm (lower hierarchies)			
		50mm (all)	3	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is lower
		50mm (all)	4	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is lower
		40mm (all)	5	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		40mm (all)	6	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		40mm (all)	7	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		40mm (all)	8	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		40mm (all)	9	County	CCC IL is the same
		40mm (all)	10	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		40mm (all)	11	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		40mm (all)	12	London Borough	CCC IL is the same
		40mm (all)	13	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same
		40mm - 75mm	14	London Borough	CCC IL ranging from the same to much lower
		40mm (all)	15	Urban - unitary	CCC IL is the same