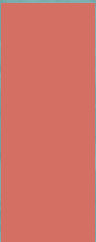


# Road surface defects

Mini guide



Highways Service  
2024/25

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## Introduction

Many of the roads in Milton Keynes are in good condition but high traffic levels and the effects of increasingly extreme weather conditions all take their toll.

All roads have an eventual 'end of life'. This is when the structure finally deteriorates to a point where it must be replaced completely. This is an expensive process and as we have over 1300km to maintain, so we look at all options to try and prolong the life of the road.

Continuous patching of road defects such as pothole repairs is not a long term solution. If potholes or other defects are appearing then the structure of the road is beginning to deteriorate. Potholes will continue to appear as the conditions will always be in place for them to do so i.e., cold, wet weather and volumes of traffic.

Investing in preventative surface treatments is the best way to preserve roads and offers value for money. For more information read our Road Surface Treatments Mini Guide.

We are also always looking at new, innovative techniques and materials that may be applied in MK. Recently we have purchased a 'Roadmender' machine that uses a heated mixture including up to 75% of recycled material including old tyres to quickly repair potholes.

This technique is not suitable for every road so we also use other methods including plane and patch, Gripfibre and surface dressing. All these methods are explained in more detail in the Mini Guide too.

Our highways budget is very limited so we use a process of inspection, analysis and asset management to keep the roads safe and maintain them as much as possible.

For more information about how we manage our assets including roads, redways and footways, visit our Highways section on the website, [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk)



# Potholes

Potholes form when water seeps into the road surface and gradually weakens it. In cold weather this water freezes and thaws causing existing holes and cracks to worsen. This is why potholes tend to appear mostly after and during the winter months which is also the worst time of year to carry out any repairs.

Once the pothole has started to appear, larger chunks of the road surface will break off as vehicles move over it.

All potholes reported to us are inspected by our qualified Highways Inspectors. If you want to know more about the inspections process, have a look at our Mini Guide on Highways Inspections on our website.

We decide if a pothole will be repaired based on the criteria in our Codes of Practice introduced in October 2018. The Code of Practice was commissioned by the Department of Transport to provide guidance for local highways authorities.

It helps local authorities to maintain their highway infrastructure and keep it safe based on local needs, priorities and budget.

We can't fix every pothole reported to us but we do prioritise those that need to be done to keep the network safe.



Example of a 'deep pothole'. It has a sharp-edged hole in the top road surface layer.



Example of a 'shallow pothole'. It is much lower in depth.

## Cracks and crazing

Potholes are the most widely known type of road defect however the road surface can also be damaged in other ways.

Cracks may appear in the road surface which could indicate part or total deterioration of the road surface layers. Cracks do not usually pose a safety risk however if left untreated, surface water could seep in and this could lead to potholes forming.

Crazing is also a sign that the road surface layers are either partially or completely failing. Crazing looks like a series of shapes in one section of the road surface, sometimes it is referred to as 'alligator cracking' as the shapes look like alligator skin patterns.

There may also be cracks on footways and redway where tree roots have pushed up the surface over time.



A crack in the road surface. This will allow water to seep in easily down to the other road surface layers and increase the chance of a pothole forming.



An example of crazing on a road surface. The cracking resembles 'alligator skin' and is in a geometric pattern in one section of the road surface.



# Haunching

Haunching or edge failure tends to happen mainly on rural roads where there is no kerb. The edge of the road is right next to the verge and is called the haunch.

It is the weakest part of the road as it is unprotected by any kerb so if vehicles move across it, the surface can be damaged.

This can happen often on certain sections of the road where vehicles, especially large or heavy vehicles, may need to pass by each other and there is limited room.



A rural road with no kerb at either side. The area between the road and the verge is called the 'haunch'.



An example where the land has eroded at the edge and caused the road surface layers to break up.

## Contact details

### How to report problems with road defects

**Please note: our resources are limited so we prioritise all work reported to us based on safety.**

If you do need to report an issue to us, please provide the location including the street name and postcode and a description of the problem. Photos are great too if you can provide them.

#### Phone

01908 252353

Monday to Friday 9am to 5:15pm.

#### Email

customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk

#### Online

Use the Report It section on [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk)

## Emergencies

If you consider the road defect to be an emergency safety issue, please phone us on. 01908 252353  
Monday to Friday between 9am - 5:15pm.

Outside these hours, call 01908 226699.

Any life threatening emergency should be reported to the Police immediately on 999.