



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2021

AT 6.00 P.M.

MICROSOFT TEAMS - VIRTUAL

MEMBERS: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), A. D. Kent (Deputy Leader), G. N. Denaro, M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas and S. A. Webb

AGENDA

1. To receive apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13th January 2021 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 11th January 2021 (Pages 9 - 20)
 - (a) To receive and note the minutes
 - (b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes
 - (c) Any recommendations made following the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 15th February 2021 will be tabled at the meeting.
5. Motion on Notice - Referred to Cabinet (Pages 21 - 22)

Councillor S Colella will be invited to present his motion and Cabinet will respond.

6. Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan (Pages 23 - 126)
7. Final Council Tax Support Scheme (Pages 127 - 142)

This item is to be pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 15th February 2021 therefore any recommendations arising from that meeting will be tabled for Cabinet's consideration.

8. Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 - 2024/25 including Capital Programme (Pages 143 - 168)

This item is to be pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 15th February 2021 therefore any recommendations arising from that meeting will be tabled for Cabinet's consideration.

9. Pay Policy Statement (Pages 169 - 180)

10. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

9th February 2021

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
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GUIDANCE ON VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Bromsgrove District Council will be holding this meeting in accordance with the relevant legislative arrangements for remote meetings of a local authority. For more information please refer to the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police Crime Panels meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Please note that this is a public meeting conducted remotely by Microsoft Teams conferencing between invited participants and live streamed for general access via the Council's YouTube channel.

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If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

Notes:

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- Meeting Minutes
- The Council’s Constitution

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

13TH JANUARY 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), A. D. Kent (Deputy Leader),
G. N. Denaro, M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas and S. A. Webb

Observers: Councillor M. Thompson

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Mrs. C. Felton, Ms J. Willis,
Mr C. Forrester, Mr. M. Dunphy, Ms. A. Delahunty and
Ms. A. Scarce

51/20 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

52/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

53/20 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 25th November 2020 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 25th November 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.

54/20 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2020**

Officers confirmed that there were no recommendations from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 23rd November 2020.

It was noted that the Board had pre-scrutinised the report in respect of Homelessness Grant and Flexible Homelessness Support Grant Allocation for 2021/22 at its meeting held on 11th January 2021 and had made no recommendations at that meeting.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 23rd November 2020 be noted.

The Leader thanked Councillor M Thompson, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for attending.

With the agreement of the Leader Councillor Thompson asked if he could make a short statement.

Councillor Thompson advised Cabinet that he was resigning as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and also from the Independent Alliance. He proposed to join the Conservative Group with immediate effect. He thanked officers who supported the Overview and Scrutiny Board for their hard work whilst he had been Chairman and also Councillor J Till and the other Members on the Board.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed to Councillor Thompson that officers would be in touch with him and the Leader to complete the necessary paperwork in order to action this.

The Leader and Cabinet thanked Councillor Thompson and welcomed him their Group and looked forward to working with him.

55/20

WORCESTER AND BIRMINGHAM CANAL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services began by encouraging all Cabinet Members and Members watching to share the document as he believed it was a stunning document which was an advert for the Worcestershire Countryside and what this Council had in Bromsgrove in particular.

The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager presented the report and credited his Team for all their hard work in preparing it. It was explained that this version was similar to that brought before Cabinet some 18 months ago and that whilst this Council did not own the conservation area it would continue to work with those who do. The purpose of the report was to report back on the initial consultation carried out. Responses were limited due to there not being many residents within the area. The relevant parish councils had also been spoken to, but as detailed in appendix 2 to the report. The majority of responses were from the Canals and Rivers Trust and the Canal Society and were therefore quite technical. However, a number of events, pre Covid-19, were held and the responses from these were also included in the report.

All comments had been taken onboard and included within the final document before Members this evening. The process going forward was for the document to become a material planning consideration at Planning Committee, so carried some weight and would be used for any planning applications which arose in and around the conservation area. It also provided a position in terms of the planning review going forward, in relation to the conservation area setting and likely impact of that. It was highlighted that significant amounts of land had been put forward

for development in the surrounding area and this provided an evidence base to move forward in assessing those.

It was suggested that the level of evidence in the report was something which should be used in the promotion of the District and a leaflet was being prepared to promote the tourism aspect, which would sit alongside this document without the more technical areas being included so it could be used as a marketing tool. This would be circulated in due course and prepared in time for when the current restrictions begin to ease.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services praised the document and again reiterated that it was a testament to what was available in the countryside and asked the Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager to provide all Councillors with a link to the document as it was really important to recognise the huge amount of work which had gone into its preparation. There was some really useful information within it, including key points of interest.

The Leader agreed that it was a marketing opportunity to promote the best of the District and reiterated the thanks to officers for an excellent piece of work. This was supported by all Cabinet Members.

RESOLVED that the Worcester and Birmingham Canal Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and its contents be endorsed and approved as a material consideration for planning purposes.

56/20

BROMSGROVE HOMELESSNESS GRANT AND FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT GRANT ALLOCATION FOR 2021/22

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being presented the report and explained that this was brought to Members annual and had previously included the flexible homelessness support grant and the homelessness reduction grant, which had now been combined. The report requested approval of the allocation of grants which provided a variety of services and initiatives which helped to prevent homelessness or support for those actually experiencing homelessness. Its allocation was detailed in paragraph 3.7 of the report and these services provided an important role in assisting people experiencing adversity and provided pathways to help them deal with the effects of being homeless and assist the statutory service in the prevention of homelessness.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being highlighted a mis-calculation in the table at 3.5 of the report due to the inclusion of crash-pad income in the draft report that has now been removed due to the notification of the final grant award which had been uplifted to cover all grant funding for 2021/22. The report stated in the table that homelessness grant including young persons' pathway worker grant of £127,200 and this should be £123,200 which gave a total of £281,794.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being thanked officers for all their hard work and the prevention work they carried out alongside the service provider.

The Leader highlighted the importance of the grants particularly at the current time and in light of the pandemic and the Head of Community Services also welcomed the support of the voluntary sector in supporting this really vulnerable group in these very challenging times.

RESOLVED that

- a) the initiatives in 3.7 of the report receive allocation of funding 2021/22 be approved; and
- b) delegated authority to the Head of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to use any unallocated Grant during the year or make further adjustments as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Grants for 2021/22 in support of existing or new schemes be approved.

57/20

COUNCIL TAX BASE CALCULATION 2021/22

The Head of Finance and Customer Services presented the report and explained that it was a technical document which sets out the detail of the accounting calculation of the District's tax base, for Council Tax setting purposes. The suggestion was that the Council Tax Bases for 2021/22 be set at £37,186.55. This included a provision of non-collection of 1% of the tax base that was being set. This also took into account the potential impact of Covid-19 in the bad debt provision. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the parish precept and had been informed of these, responses were awaited in order for the Council Tax to be set for the year.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources commented that this was the first time in his memory that this figure had gone down.

The Leader thanked the Head of Finance and Customer Services and his team for all their hard work at this difficult time and in particular in respect of the grant payments being made.

RESOLVED that the amount calculated by Bromsgrove District Council as the Council Tax Base for the whole area for 2021/22 at £37,186.55 as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, to include individual parish elements, be approved.

58/20

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021/22 - 2024/25 - UPDATE PRESENTATION

The Head of Finance and Customer Services gave a presentation which provided an update in respect of the Medium Term Finance Plan

2020/21 to 2023/24. The presentation has been included as an appendix to these minutes. It was explained that this was a work in progress which showed the current position with further work being undertaken over the coming days. The following areas were highlighted:

- Improvements to budget position (including additional New Homes Bonus for one year only and a new Lower Tier Service Grant, again for one year only). It was noted that these grants had not been expected.
- Additional costs which were against the Council's budget position (the Government had capped the maximum Council Tax percentage increase the Council could make).
- The third slide showed the position in respect of the General Fund Revenue and changes to the budget gap which had taken place. It was highlighted that there was a small use of reserves planned. It was further noted that the Council Tax based had actually shrunk for this year and it was understood this was due to the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme coming into place and Covid-19 driven issues.
- Medium Term Budget Gap currently stood at £79k climbing to £1,153k in 2022/23 and final £1,482 in 2023/24.
- Further detail was provided in respect of the funds planned to be released from reserves and the difference that the Lower Tier Services Grant had made this year. It was noted that the unavoidable pressures included areas such as the lost car parking income due to Covid-19 projected losses from income due to Covid-19. The grants received in respect of Covid-19 had not as yet been factored into the calculations as there continued to be a shortfall from these.
- It was noted that the capital programme was being further revised which would reduce the MRP principal and interest payable. There would also be a reduction in the investment income which was predicated on investing in assets. It was hoped that the market would stabilise over the next 12 months which would hopefully be a safe position for the Council to invest in and receive good value.
- It was noted that there was much work to be done in future year as the gap was significant, this was being worked on at the moment.
- Details were provided in respect of savings being made to date – a significant number of which were from Environmental Services. Other areas continued to review these to see what other savings could be made.
- There were a number of pressures for 2021/22 including the car parking income. It was noted that there was an error in the original business case for Commercial Waste. The service was not underperforming, this was merely a correction.
- There were a number of bids for 2021/22 in respect of ICT support and the Corporate GIS.

Following the presentation the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources commented that the Council was in an excellent position so far taking into consideration that it still had £800k of grants to allocate. It was for Cabinet to decide how this would be used. He thanked officers for bringing the deficit down to a very manageable position. The Leader echoed these comments and thanked officers.

Officers responded to a query in respect of what Polygonisation of BLPU's referred to, it was believed to be in respect of work that was being done in calculating the areas of buildings, but further clarification would be provided outside of the meeting.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to highlight the difficulties in preparing a budget let alone in the current circumstances with everyone working remotely and also having to allocate the amount of grants that had been made available and thanked the Head of Finance and Customer Service. It was noted that officers were under an immense amount of pressure and all the work from the team was very much appreciated.

The Chief Executive took the opportunity to thank the Deputy Leader for highlighting this and he reiterated the myriad of grants that the Head of Finance and Customer Services team had had to deal with together with a very challenging audit in these difficult times. Special thanks were given to Kate Goldey, Senior Business Support Accounting Technician who it was noted had gone the extra mile on numerous occasions. He further commented that this was the most difficult time he had known to pull a budget together. This was currently a work in progress but it was hoped that with further work the gaps in years two and three would be reduced, albeit an ongoing piece of work. The Chief Executive also thanked the Head of Finance and Customer Services for stepping up to the role of Section 151 Officer in these difficult and challenging times.

The Leader thanked all those involved and noted the ongoing work that was being done to meet the challenges that everyone was facing and commented that whilst the building was closed the Council certainly was not closed for business, with the productivity levels the highest they had ever been with people working from home.

59/20

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES -
RECOMMENDATIONS BUDGET 2021/22

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services presented these recommendations and reminded Members that some of these had been considered at the previous meeting and agreed at full Council, with the base budget being in place at that time. However, there had been a number of areas which he had asked for clarification on before being agreed. For completeness, all recommendations were being considered at this meeting.

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Clarification had been sought, together with a full report, in respect of the accommodation and ICT charges, as detailed at minute No 23/20 of the Worcestershire Regulatory Board's meeting held on 19th November 2020 (pages 4/5 of the additional papers pack).

The remaining recommendations were detailed at minute No 26 (pages 12/13 of the additional papers pack).

RECOMMENDED that

- a) the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to the increase in accommodation charges and ICT hosting from Wyre Forest District Council be approved as follows;

Bromsgrove District Council	£2k
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- b) partner authorities approve the following 2020/21:

- 1.1 the 2021/22 gross expenditure budget of £3,739k as shown in appendix 1 of the report;
- 1.2 the 2021/22 income budget of £529k as shown in appendix 1 of the report;
- 1.3 the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2021/22 onwards –

	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	468	14.59

- 1.4 the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure –

Bromsgrove District Council	£9k
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- 1.5 the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to three technical officers.

	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	6	-

60/20

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to be discussed.

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The meeting closed at 6.40 p.m.

Chairman

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

11TH JANUARY 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. Thompson (Chairman), J. Till (Vice-Chairman), A. J. B. Beaumont, R. J. Deeming, S. P. Douglas, M. Glass, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Hunter, A. D. Kriss and P. M. McDonald

Observers: Councillor P. L. Thomas as Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety
Councillor S. A. Webb as Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Ms J. Willis, Mr. M. Bough and Ms. A. Delahunty, Mrs J. Gresham and Ms. K. Somers

59/20

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Spencer and Councillor S. Colella with Councillor S. Douglas as named substitute.

60/20

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor R. Hunter declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 5, Homelessness, Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants 2020/2 due to his position within a not-for-profit housing organisation. It was decided that Councillor R. Hunter would not need to be exempt from the discussion (see item 5).

There were no other declarations of interest nor of any whipping arrangements.

61/20

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 23rd November 2020 were submitted for Members' consideration.

Councillor C. Hotham requested an amendment be made at item 5 - Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services to respond to Questions from Members in Respect of the Process and Policy for Third Party Events. He suggested that 'with' replace between in the following sentence: 'There was concern from some Members that there seemed to be very little communication **between** Ward Members and Parish Councils prior to some particular events taking place.

The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to make the amendment.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 23rd November 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

62/20

SAFER ROADS PARTNERSHIP - PRESENTATION

The Chairman invited Councillor R. Hunter to introduce the item and explain to the Board the background behind his request for the West Mercia Police Road Safety Team being invited to the meeting. In doing so he explained that he felt it was an important area for the Board to consider as speeding was a frequent topic of concern from residents. He reported to Members that he would like to understand more fully the criteria for speed prevention equipment being installed in various sites around the district and the role that Members could play in communicating the process of tackling speeding to residents in the District.

The officers from West Mercia Police Road Safety Team introduced themselves and confirmed to Members that they were no longer part of the Safer Roads Partnership and although partnership working was still undertaken it was no longer as a member of the Safer Roads Partnership. Members were informed that the team was funded entirely through speed awareness courses.

During presentation of the item the following was highlighted to Members:

- In addition to covering enforcement the team dealt with various other areas of road safety including, campaigns, education, traffic management consultations. The work was carried out across various partnerships however most of the work was done on behalf of local authorities. It was clarified to Members that funding for the team was no longer received from local authorities but

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solely through speed awareness courses and that all funding from speeding fines was returned to the Treasury.

- A dedicated Collision Analyst and Business Data Analyst were responsible for looking at data and deciding on where the work by the team was carried out based on data collected. The number of fatalities and injuries were reported to Members and that there had been a slight decline in numbers over the last five years which was encouraging.
- Education, engineering and enforcement were the main approaches adopted by the team when dealing with road safety issues. Enforcement was the last resort of the three and a large part of the work was carried out in education. It was explained to Members that frequent campaigns were carried out with local communities, although it had been more difficult to undertake these in light of Covid-19 and that social media campaigns had played an important part in the education programmes. Engineering was the responsibility of the Traffic Management Advisors within the team and they provided a link between the team and the Local Authority. Members were informed that the vehicle activation signs, and speed limits were the sole responsibility of Worcestershire County Council as the Local Highways Authority. It was explained to Members that the enforcement approach was always data led, and the key priority was always to reduce the numbers injured or killed on the roads.
- Residents were encouraged to contact Parish Councils in the first instance if they had concerns about speeding in their area. This resulted in a more collective approach to tackling the issue. The team explained that The Road Safety: Community Toolkit was a guide that provided other options to communities rather than enforcement. It was agreed that this guide would be circulated to Members.

After the presentation Members were invited to ask questions of the West Mercia Police Road safety Team. In particular, there was interest from Members regarding the community programmes that were available and the process that needed to be undertaken by resident to embark on these projects. It was reiterated to Members that the preferred way for residents with concerns to contact the team was through the Parish Council or District Council, data would then be collected at the site that had been identified as an issue. If the data collected indicated the need for enforcement (or other methods) then action would be taken. The criteria for the Community Speed Watch programme was explained to Members and this included

numbers of required volunteers and necessary safety measures in place.

The Operation Snap initiative was explained in detail to Members in order for them to fully understand the procedure for residents to report incidents and upload dashcam footage. This had proved to be a successful initiative and had resulted in fines and driving points being issued.

Members were informed that all incidents where there had been a serious injury or fatality would be investigated by the Traffic Management Advisors and liaison would take place with Worcestershire County Council and appropriate measures taken. It was reported to Members that the level speeds were enforced within the National Police Chief's Council Guidelines at 10% plus 2 and the 85th percentile was considered.

There was concern from some Members that the low numbers of Police speed detector vans in the District and that the number of speeding tickets issued was low in comparison to the number of residents in the District.

Members were advised that if they needed further information, they could contact the team who would be happy to help.

The Chairman thanked the West Mercia Police Road Safety Team for their presentation.

RESOLVED that the presentation by the West Mercia Police Road Safety Team be noted.

63/20

HOMELESSNESS, FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT AND HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION GRANTS 2020/21

The Strategic Housing Officer was welcomed to the meeting in order to present the report for Homelessness, Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants 2020/21. During the presentation the following was highlighted to Members:

- The allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant report was brought before Members annually. In previous years, the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and the Homelessness Reduction Act Grant had been awarded to the Council. It was clarified to Members that these had been uplifted and combined and were

now known as Homelessness Prevention Grant. Members were advised that this award was in addition to the Homelessness Prevention grant budget set by the Council.

- The report requested approval of the allocation of grants and outlined the services, organisations and initiatives to help prevent homelessness and assist those who had become homeless. In addition to this the report requested delegated authority to the Head of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to use any unallocated Grant during the year or make further adjustments as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Grants for 2021/22 in support of existing or new schemes be approved. The new Homelessness Prevention Grant was ring-fenced and funds were to be used to meet the three priorities set out by Government.
- The total allocation for funding was £285,794. The report proposed that £247,171 be allocated to a variety of projects and initiatives that included projects for young people, the funding of a Young Persons Pathway Worker, furniture provision for ex-offenders, Rapid Response Winter Weather Workers and the management of temporary accommodation costs for Bromsgrove District Housing. The Board were advised that the remainder of the funding of £38,623 had not been allocated, as this year's grant award had been uplifted on the 21st December 2020 and there had not been time to consider how it might be best utilised. It was planned that the Countywide Homelessness Strategy would be considered in order to identify any gaps in provision that would benefit from assistance.

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being to comment on the report and she explained that it was important to continue providing funding to these providers and thanked officers for all of their hard work in the prevention of Homelessness in the District.

Members questioned the figures that were presented in the report and it was agreed that there had been a miscalculation and that it would be amended to reflect the correct figures.

There was detailed discussion regarding the access to information in respect of rough sleeping and homelessness and it was requested that information be more readily available throughout the District for those who needed to access services, particularly outside of office hours. It was clarified to Members that information was available online, however

it was suggested by some Members that those who were in need of services might not have access to digital equipment.

Some Members queried, in respect of the CCP Rough Sleeper Outreach and Support Service who it was proposed would receive funding, how many Bromsgrove homeless or rough sleepers would benefit from this funding. It was clarified that approximately 10 people had been assisted over the previous year by this service in addition to responding Streetlink requests. Some Members requested the data in respect of the numbers of homeless and rough sleepers in Bromsgrove and the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being explained that Portfolio Holders across the County did meet to discuss this particular area and undertook to provide the Board with this information. It was suggested that Homelessness be added to the Board's Work Programme for future consideration.

RESOLVED that the Homelessness, Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants 2020/21 be noted.

64/20

NOTICE OF MOTIONS - REQUEST TO INVESTIGATE

1) Notice of Motion - Encouraging responsible use of fireworks – Councillor R. Hunter

The Chairman invited Councillor R. Hunter to introduce the item in respect of the Notice of Motion which had been referred from Full Council.

During the presentation, the following was highlighted to Members:

- That the purpose of the motion was to highlight the distress that the use of fireworks could cause to vulnerable people and animals and practical measures, if any, could be taken by the Council.
- That this was a complex issue given the powers that were given to a Local Authority in this area.

There was detailed discussion with Members regarding the legislation that was already in place in respect of the use of fireworks and that it was important to understand what powers if any, could be taken by the Council to make changes in this area. Councillor R. Hunter confirmed that this Motion was not necessarily involved in seeing what could take place within the

legislation but more the practical steps that might be made by the Council to mitigate the impact on residents.

Councillor P. Thomas, as Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety was invited to comment on the report and in doing so noted to Members that a balance view needed to be taken and that further information from officers might be useful for members in order to make an informed decision.

Councillor R. Hunter proposed recommendation 'that the request is included on the work programme and the Board undertakes the investigation, discuss broad terms of reference and sets a time scale for completion of the investigation' this was seconded by Councillor P. McDonald. On being put to the vote this recommendation was lost.

Councillor A. Kriss proposed the following 'recommendation that further information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation is required', this was seconded by Councillor S. Douglas. On being put to the vote this recommendation was carried.

Democratic Services Officers undertook to put the item on the Board's Work Programme for future consideration by the Board.

2) Notice of Motion - Encouraging responsible use of fireworks – Councillor P. McDonald

The Chairman invited Councillor P. McDonald to introduce the item in respect of the Notice of Motion which had been referred from Full Council. It was clarified to Members that investigation into the amount of mileage expenses that had been claimed during previous years and during (Covid-19).

Councillor P. McDonald proposed recommendation that the request is included on the work programme and the Board undertakes the investigation, discuss broad terms of reference and sets a time scale for completion of the investigation' this was seconded by Councillor R. Hunter.

Councillor A. Kriss proposed the following 'recommendation that further information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation is required', this was

seconded by Councillor S. Douglas. On being put to the vote this recommendation was carried.

In respect of Councillor R. Hunter's Motion:

RESOLVED that

- a) further information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation was required.

In respect of Councillor P. McDonald's Motion:

- b) further information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation was required.

65/20

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Finance and Budget Working Group update in his role as Chairman of the Group. He explained that the Working Group met on 16th December 2020 and had looked at the following areas in detail:

- Councillor Hunter's Notice of Motion
- Update on the impact of Covid-19
- Budget Setting Process and Timescales

The Chairman reported that Councillor R. Hunter had been invited to the meeting to discuss his notice of motion which had been referred to the group from the Full Council meeting held on 21st October 2020. The possibility of enforcing existing legislation to increase the collection of Council Tax rates for empty properties in the District was discussed in detail. However, a number of considerations were made in respect of this item particularly in light of the current pandemic and the time it would take to implement. It was agreed that this item be added to the Work Programme for future discussion. Councillor R. Hunter was also invited to be a part of the Finance and Budget Working Group and agreed to consider joining the group in the future.

Members were informed by the Chairman that the Senior Accounting Technician had provided a presentation outlining the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances and of grants received by the Council during lockdown. It was agreed that these areas would be monitored closely by the Group in the coming months.

It was reported to the Board that officers had carried out Budget Setting Workshops for Heads of Service and senior officers. The training had been arranged to try to improve the accuracy of budget setting in the future. This was welcomed by the group as there had been concerns raised by Members concerning the accuracy of budget setting in previous years.

The Work Programme was discussed by the Working Group and a clear programme of work was agreed for future consideration.

As the Working Group continues its scrutiny it will, as always, report back to the main Board and if necessary, suggest that reports are also brought forward for all of you to consider.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Budget Working Group update be noted.

66/20

TASK GROUP UPDATES

a) Equalities Task Group – Chairman, Councillor P. McDonald

Councillor P. McDonald presented this update and informed Members that a report had been prepared for the investigation and would be presented at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting that was due to take place in February 2021.

b) Impact of Review of Library Services Task Group – Chairman, Councillor S. Colella

The Democratic Services Officer presented the update in the absence of Councillor S. Colella. In doing so she reported to Members that there had been one meeting of the Task Group since the previous Board meeting. Councillor L. Hodgson Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities at Worcestershire County Council (WCC) had been in attendance at this meeting to provide further context of the new countywide Library Strategy.

c) Impact of Flooding in the District Task Group – Chairman, Councillor R. Hunter

Councillor R. Hunter updated the Board regarding the Task Group and informed Members that he had given his apologies for the last Task Group meeting but that Councillor S. Colella taken the role of Chairman for the meeting. He reported to Members that

some draft recommendations had been presented to the group and would be discussed at the next meeting which was due to be held on 25th January 2021. Members were advised that there would be a number of officers in attendance for that meeting to discuss the potential recommendations.

RESOLVED that the verbal updates in respect of the Task Groups be noted.

67/20

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor J. Till presented the update from the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and advised Members that there had been no meeting since the last Board meeting was held.

Councillor J. Till undertook to circulate to the Board any information or minutes received.

RESOLVED that the verbal update in respect of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

68/20

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Officer presented the Cabinet Work Programme and drew Members' attention to the following items which were already included on the Board's Work Programme:

- Final Council Tax Support Scheme

It was agreed that the following items would be included in the Board's Work Programme for consideration at future meetings:

- Green Homes Funding
- Notice of Motion - Encouraging responsible use of fireworks
- Notice of Motion - Travel Expenses
- Homelessness
- Recreation Road Car Parking

RESOLVED that subject to the preamble above the Cabinet Work Programme be noted and that the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme for 2020-21, be updated to include the items discussed and agreed during the course of the meeting.

Agenda Item 4

Overview and Scrutiny Board
11th January 2021

69/20

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

This item was discussed as part of the previous item.

The meeting closed at 8.01 p.m.

Chairman

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NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion has been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 by Councillor S Colella.

Bromsgrove Tree for Life

Bromsgrove District Council shows its environmental credentials by [calling on the Cabinet to consider the reallocation](#) £25,000 from the Environmental Service General Materials Budget to [enable the introduction of](#) a 'Tree for Life' planting scheme across the district. The initiative will run over this coming winter between October and March next year (2021).

The tree planting scheme will focus on the district's public open spaces, parks, grassed verges and other areas where trees will add value and enhance the environmental values, offer a replacement for dead or dying trees, create new natural habitats, create shade or just enhance the aesthetics' of street scenes and vistas in the district.

Trees not only support a host of health and wellbeing qualities they can be important pollinators and offer screening to remove particulate matter in areas of poor air quality.

The project will be managed by the Environmental Service's 'Place Teams' in consultation with the ward councillors and Parish Councils where applicable.

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Cabinet
2021

10th February

Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Neighbourhood Plan (CNMNP)

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor A. Kent, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford, Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services
Report Author	Matt Stanczyszyn Job Title: Senior Planning Officer Contact email: matt.stanczyszyn@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 587010
Wards Affected	Catshill North, Catshill South, Marlbrook
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Yes
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run and Grow a Successful Business • Affordable and Sustainable Homes • Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained and Green • The Green Thread runs through the Council Plan

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet RESOLVE that:

- 1) the letter at Appendix 2 is sent to Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council as the District Council's response to the CNMNP submission version;
- 2) a six-week statutory ('Regulation 16') representation period on the CNMNP is held by the District Council;
- 3) delegated authority is given to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services to appoint an independent examiner to undertake examination of the CNMNP following the statutory representation period; and
- 4) delegated authority is given to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services to arrange a referendum on the CNMNP, subject to the recommendations set out in the examiner's report

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan (CNMNP), attached at Appendix 1, was submitted to the District Council on the

8th January 2021. The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the District Council's response (attached at Appendix 2) to Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council ('the qualifying body'), on their submission under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

- 2.2 This report also seeks Cabinet approval for the District Council to publish the CNMNP for a statutory six-week representation period in line with Regulation 16 of the above neighbourhood planning regulations.
- 2.3 Finally, the report seeks delegated authority to the Head of Service to appoint an independent examiner to carry out an examination of the CNMNP, including consideration of representations received by the District Council during the representation period, and to proceed to a referendum should the examiner's report recommend this course of action.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The District Council will be eligible to claim funding of £20,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) once a date has been set for the CNMNP neighbourhood plan referendum. Two opportunities to secure funding exist per financial year, which are usually open for applications in November and March. The next available opportunity for BDC to apply for grant funding to support the work involved will be dependent on the progression to referendum of the CNMNP.
- 3.2 BDC officers have worked to assist Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council in preparing the CNMNP since designation of the Catshill and North Marlbrook neighbourhood area in October 2016. This officer time has been subsumed in to previous and existing departmental budgets and workloads for the Strategic Planning and Conservation team. Securing the MHCLG neighbourhood planning grant will allow the Council to recoup departmental costs as well as contribute to examination and referendum costs.
- 3.3 Officer time from the Council's Elections Service will also be required to organise the referendum.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Following submission of the CNMNP to the District Council in January 2021, officers have reviewed all CNMNP submission documents and are satisfied that the CNMNP is able to proceed to the Regulation 16

statutory representation period and subsequent independent examination.

- 4.2 It is the view of officers that the CNMNP has been produced in accordance with the relevant neighbourhood planning regulations arising from the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 4.3 Subject to Cabinet approval, the Council will be responsible for publicising the Regulation 16 statutory representation period and arranging for the independent examination and local referendum to take place. The Council is required to publicise the submission of the CNMNP for a minimum six-week period and invite representations, which will then be forwarded on to an independent examiner for their consideration.
- 4.4 The requirement that the CNMNP is subject to an independent examination is to ensure and verify that the neighbourhood plan meets the 'basic conditions', as defined in the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act, before it can proceed to a referendum. This report seeks approval from Cabinet that authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration to appoint an independent examiner to undertake this task.
- 4.5 Should delegated authority be given, and once an independent examination has been carried out on the CNMNP, the Council will receive an examiner's report making one of three recommendations:
- The CNMNP meets the basic conditions and can proceed to referendum
 - The CNMNP can meet the basic conditions subject to suggested modifications to the plan, and subject to these modifications being made can proceed to referendum
 - The CNMNP does not meet the basic conditions and should not proceed to referendum.
- 4.6 Should the examiner's report recommend the CNMNP can proceed to referendum, and should the Council be satisfied with the examiner's recommendations¹, delegated authority is sought for the Head of Planning and Regeneration to organise a referendum² on the CNMNP.

¹ The Council has 5 weeks from the date of the examiner's report to publish its decision on whether the CNMNP will proceed to referendum.

² The relevant documents advertising that a referendum will take place must be published not less than 28 working days before the referendum date.

- 4.7 The referendum would pose the question of whether those eligible to vote (those eligible to vote in the designated neighbourhood area of Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish) would want Bromsgrove District Council to use the CNMNP to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
- 4.8 Should a referendum result in a 'Yes' vote that the neighbourhood plan be 'made', the CNMNP is proposed to be reported back to meetings of both Bromsgrove District Cabinet and Full Council to approve the adoption of the neighbourhood plan.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The CNMNP, being a plan for the development and use of land, supports the following District Council strategic purposes:
- *Run and Grow a Successful Business* – the neighbourhood plan includes planning policies within the topic area of 'commerce and community'. Objectives of these policies include supporting local businesses and retail outlets by improving shopfront appearances (Policies COM2 and COM3) and supporting local employment opportunities through business start-ups and home working (Policies COM4 and COM5).
 - *Affordable and Sustainable Homes* – the neighbourhood plan includes planning policies within the topic area of 'housing and infrastructure'. Objectives of these policies include providing housing which meets the needs of local residents and ensuring priority is given to affordable homes, the elderly and homes for first time buyers (Policy H2).
 - *Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained and Green* - the neighbourhood plan includes planning policies within the topic area of 'environment', and specifically the protection and enhancement of the local green infrastructure network. Objectives of these policies include developing a green infrastructure plan for the parish (Policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV3) and protecting existing formal open spaces and newly designated local green spaces from encroachment (Policies ENV4 and ENV5).

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 A green thread runs through the Bromsgrove District Council Plan. The CNMNP supports this green thread with the neighbourhood plan's environment topic area objective to "promote and support measures to

assist in combatting climate change". It seeks to do this specifically through policies on sustainable design and construction (H3 and ENV8), sustainable drainage systems for major developments (ENV9) and the need for permeable surfacing where parking proposals are made at the front of properties (ENV10) to reduce the risk of flooding from surface water runoff.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The CNMNP has been subject to numerous Parish Council led events and public meetings to publicise the preparation of the plan and inform its development. One of the stated aims of the Parish Council's consultation process was, "To engage with as wide a range of people as possible, using a variety of approaches, communication and consultation methodologies".
- 6.2 A pre-submission (Regulation 14) public consultation was also undertaken to enable further community engagement and allow changes to the plan to be made prior to its submission to the District Council. Further detail of all engagement can be found in the CNMNP Consultation Statement listed within the background papers section at the end of this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.3 Despite responsibility for the production of the CNMNP belonging to the qualifying body (Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council), the District Council has worked closely with the neighbourhood plan steering group in the preparation of the plan, since designation of the neighbourhood area in October 2016.
- 6.4 During this time, considerable officer resource has been spent advising and supporting members of the neighbourhood plan steering group. Officers have advised on matters concerning planning legislation and regulations, alignment with the District Council's statutory planning framework, and provided information to help comply with other legal requirements such as strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and habitat regulation assessment (HRA).
- 6.5 The CNMNP includes an overall vision for the plan, as well as planning policies set out within the following topic areas:
- Housing and Infrastructure Policies

- Commerce and Community Policies
- Environment Policies
- Community Actions (not formal policies, but projects which fall outside the remit of policies concerning the use of land)

6.6 A series of supporting documents are also submitted alongside the CNMNP. These are listed under the background papers section at the end of this report. Amongst these documents is a Basic Conditions Statement submitted by the Parish Council to outline how they consider the CNMNP meets the basic conditions it will be examined upon before it can proceed to referendum.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The CNMNP is not a plan produced directly by the District Council, however if 'made' it will become part of the statutory development plan for decisions made by the local planning authority within Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish (the designated neighbourhood area).

7.2 The District Council has a duty to support the progression of the CNMNP, including publicising the statutory representation period and arranging independent examination and referendum, where the plan is deemed to meet the basic conditions.

7.3 The recommendations in this report are made in the context of the CNMNP being deemed to be likely to meet the basic conditions at examination and being able to proceed to referendum.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

Appendix 1 - CNMNP submission version, January 2021

Appendix 2 - BDC response to Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council

Background Papers

CNMNP Basic Conditions Statement, December 2020


CNMNP Consultation Statement, December 2020

CNMNP – Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulation Assessment - Screening Assessment, July 2020

Cabinet
2021

10th February

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Lead Director / Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	<i>Consulted</i>	13/01/21
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		19/01/21

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Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan



Submission version January 2021

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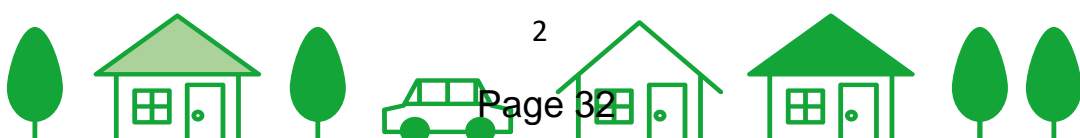
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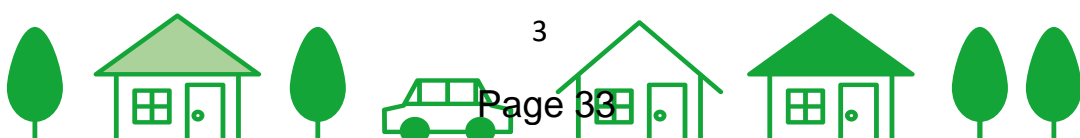
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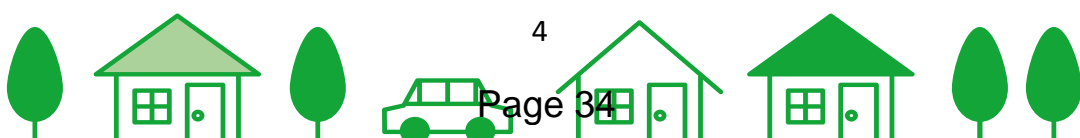


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SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND



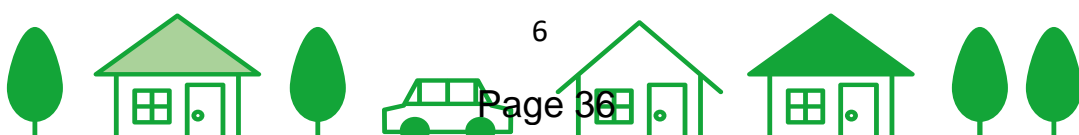
1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is a community-led document which forms part of the planning regime that was introduced by the Government in 2012 under the 'Localism Act'. A NP provides an opportunity for local people to influence how matters should be determined by the local planning authority and planning inspectors when decisions are made on land use issues that, in this instance, affect the Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish (Parish) area.
- 1.2 This Plan sets out policies promoting and regulating how land will be used in the Parish. These have been arrived at following consultation with residents and local businesses between 2017 and 2020 through questionnaires, workshops and interviews. The consultation process forms part of the NP process and further details can be found on the Neighbourhood Plan website: www.catshillandnorthmarlbrookplan.org.uk
- 1.3 Work commenced on the Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan in September 2016, when a Steering Group was formed consisting of both parish councillors and residents of the Parish.
- 1.4 Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) actively supports the development of NPs as the following paragraph from its Local Plan indicates:

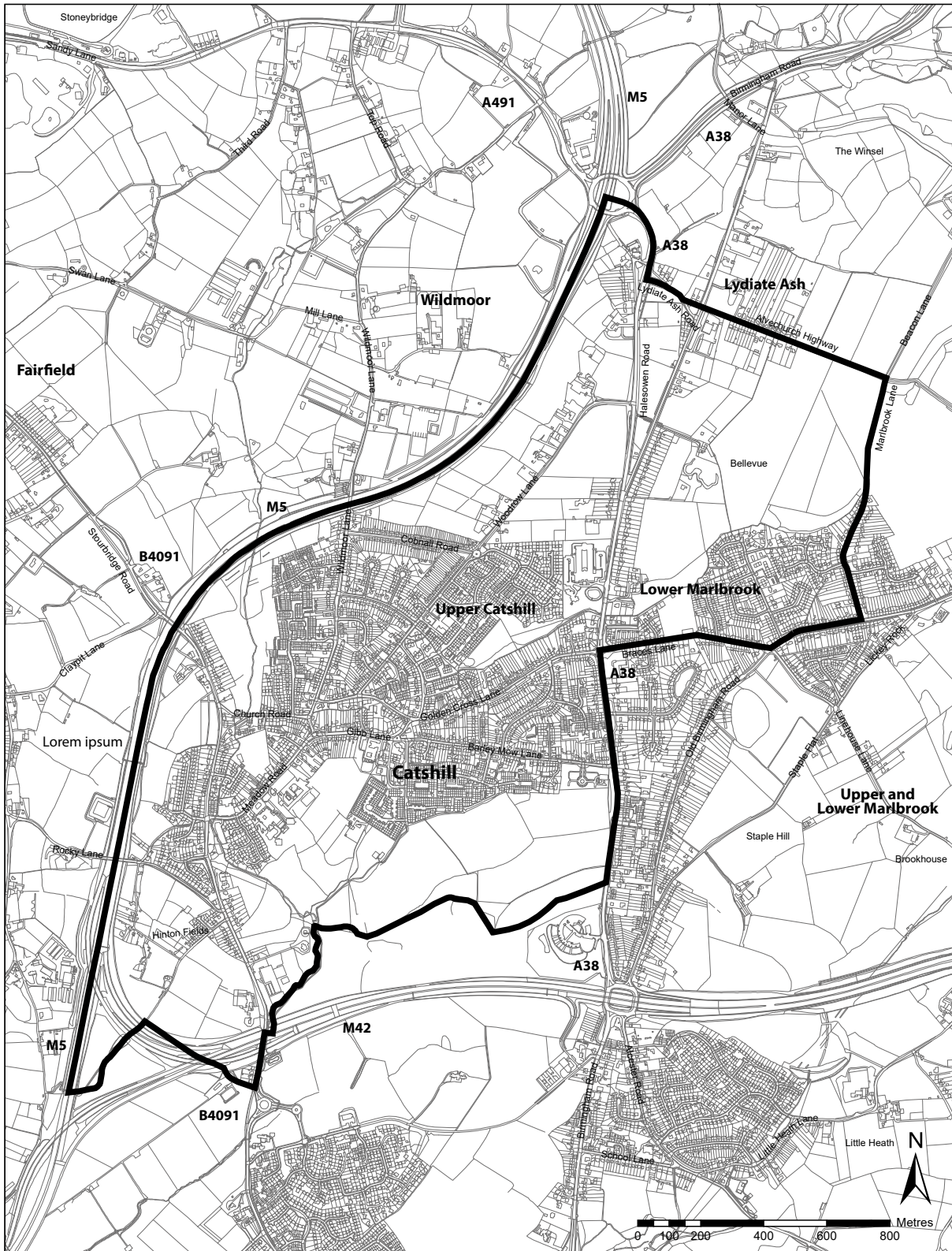
"The local people of Bromsgrove will be more actively involved in decision making for their communities and neighbourhood plans will have an increased role to play in planning the future of these communities."

Source: BDP (2017) paragraph 4.11

- 1.5 Bromsgrove District Council approved the designation of the Parish as a neighbourhood area in October 2016. This was in accordance with "The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)". The map of the agreed neighbourhood area is shown on the following page.
- 1.6 It is intended that this document will provide the planning framework for the Parish to 2030. However, should conditions change it may be necessary to update parts of the Plan to reflect new circumstances.
- 1.7 The District Council is, for instance, undertaking a series of investigations as part of its review of the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan (BDP). This includes district-wide reviews of Green Belt coverage, flood risk and transport issues. A housing needs study is also in progress and site assessment work will commence in due course. The outcome of this work will show how it intends to meet its housing requirements to 2030 (and potentially beyond to 2040). This includes accommodating some of the development needs of the conurbation authorities. The outcome of this work could have implications for this Neighbourhood Plan or its successor.



CATSHILL AND NORTH MARLBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan
Neighbourhood Plan Area

 Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan Area



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Fig 1. The Neighbourhood Plan area

2. Neighbourhood Plans and the Planning System

- 2.1 In providing local policy a NP must be consistent with other planning documents. Of particular relevance is national policy which is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ and, in Bromsgrove District, the Council's Local Plan (BDP) adopted in January 2017².
- 2.2 The BDP provides strategic direction for new development in the District as well as detailed policies intended to control the form and type of development. In the period to 2030 Bromsgrove District Council has to provide sufficient land in order to deliver 7,000 new homes. To date, 4,700 have either been developed, committed or allocated. In addition, a total of 19.9 hectares of employment land will be required across the District.
- 2.3 Approximately 90% of Bromsgrove District is designated Green Belt which has enabled the District Council to limit inappropriate development, particularly outside the larger built-up areas. Unfortunately, the tightly drawn Green Belt boundaries are now a major constraint because there are insufficient sites in urban areas or ones which have previously been used ('brownfield sites') to meet future needs. To enable the District Council to satisfy its remaining housing targets a study of the area covered by the green belt is being undertaken as part of District Council's revisions to its Local Plan³.

"It is clear that a full Green Belt Review will be required following the adoption of this Plan to ensure that land can be identified and allocated via a Local Plan Review to ensure that the remaining 2,300 homes can be delivered and additional sites then allocated in a Local Plan Review."

Source: BLP paragraph 8.15



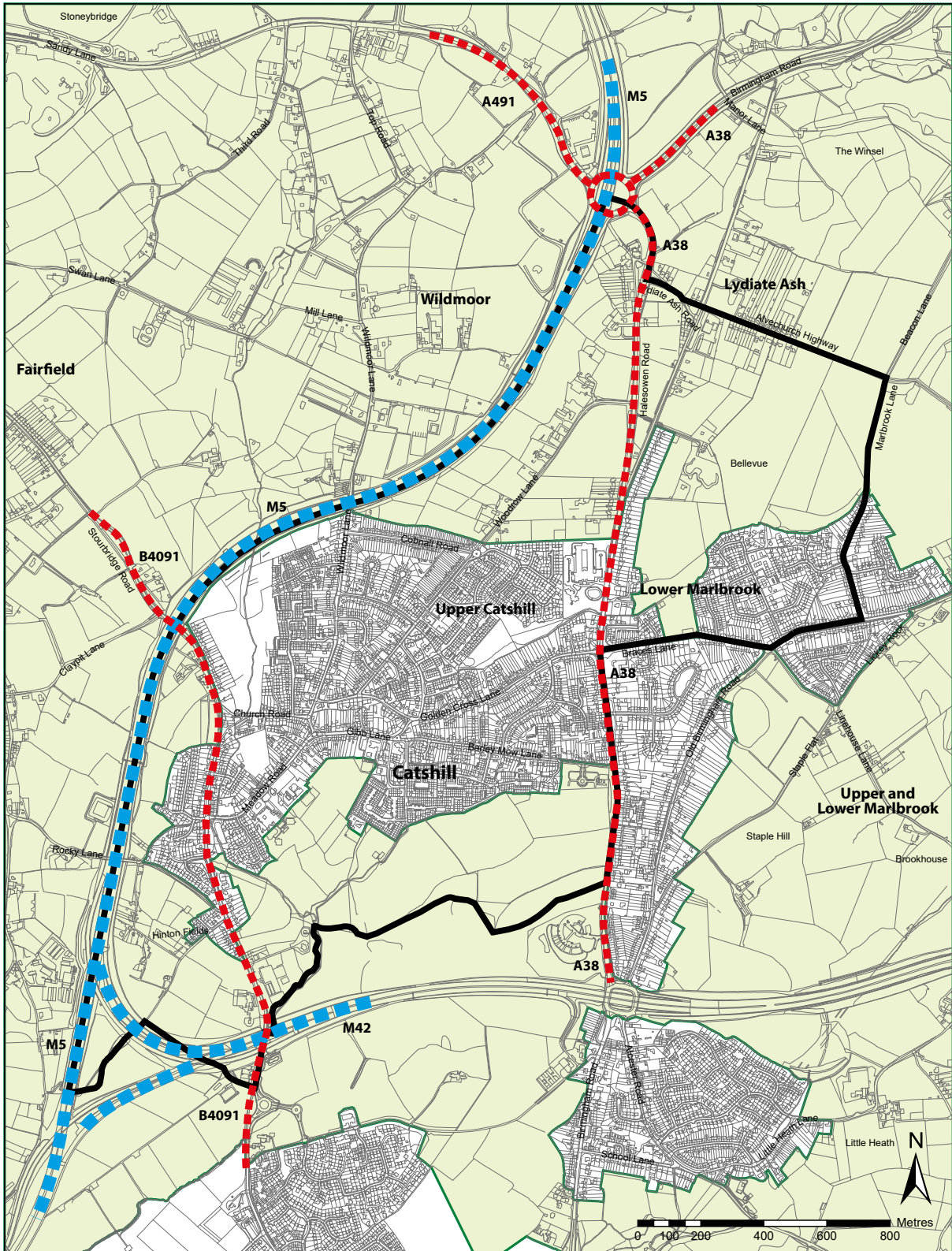
The Meadow

¹ Bromsgrove District Council Green Belt Purposes Assessment: Part 1 August 2019

² National Planning Policy Framework February 2019





³ Adopted Bromsgrove District Plan 2011 - 2030 on January 2017

CATSHILL AND NORTH MARLBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan
Green Belt in the Parish

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	Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan Area		Large Volume Traffic Motorways
	Green Belt		Large Volume Traffic A and B Roads




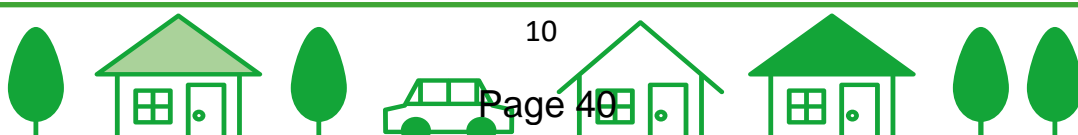
Fig 2. The Green Belt in the Parish

- 2.4 Remaining land allocations in the BDP, such as those on the edge of Bromsgrove Town, will need to be augmented through the identification of further sites. The majority of these are expected to be found in or adjacent to large settlements (Policy BDP2.1). Catshill is one of six identified 'large' settlements where the District Council says further housing will be required after 2023.
- 2.5 Currently a target of 2,300 dwellings would need to be built in Bromsgrove District by 2030, the majority of these likely to be allocated to the six 'large settlements' excluding Bromsgrove Town. This requires the identification and use of land currently in the green belt land as this is the only source left which is capable of providing the amount of housing needed elsewhere in the District including this Parish.
- 2.6 In the absence of a NP, the District Council would make decisions regarding the amount, type and location of further development with limited opportunity for local residents to influence the process. Through the adoption of a NP, however, it is possible for the local community to have a more significant input into the planning process by influencing where further housing might go and setting out how other matters should be addressed. These include, for instance, the local environment and wildlife. Where appropriate, assessments have been carried out to develop policies from issues raised by local people through the questionnaires and workshops which have taken place. Copies of these studies can be found on the NP website. (Appendices 1,2 and 5)
- 2.7 It should be recognised that all policy provisions in this NP must reflect sustainability principles and other requirements in relevant legislation. Similarly, it is important to understand that while it is possible for a NP to provide more than the required amount of housing it cannot provide for less. However, BDC has not set a precise housing target for the Parish to accommodate or an indicative housing figure which has been requested by the Parish Council and is a requirement under paragraph 66 of the NPPF. It is however undertaking a number of studies (see para. 1.7) to provide the evidence to support a future strategy.

3. The Scope of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.1 Deciding where new housing should go is a key component of the NP but opportunities exist to shape other aspects of the local area. For this reason, the NP has addressed a wide range of issues in response to the views expressed by residents and businesses at workshops and through responses to questionnaires which formed the basis of the consultation process. The results and analysis of these questionnaires are contained in Appendices 1, 2 and 5. Among the matters raised were:

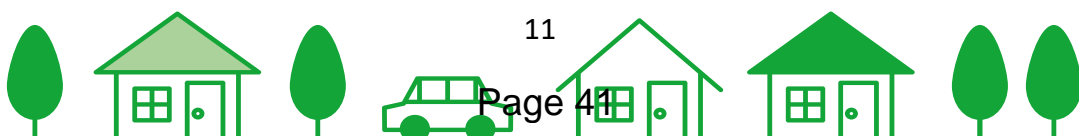
- Protecting the environment;
- A requirement for community facilities to meet the needs of both young and old people;
- Improvements to walking and cycling routes;
- Improvements to parking facilities;
- Provision of new open/green space;
- The need to address traffic congestion, speed and flows at key junctions;
- Safeguarding and improving the existing shopping area;
- Improving bus services, especially in North Marlbrook;
- Improving local employment prospects.



4. The Local Environment

- 4.1 The earliest record of Catshill dates from the 13th century. During the industrial revolution the village became a centre for nail-making which developed as a cottage industry. By the end of the 19th century it was in decline, yet nails continued to be produced until the end of the Second World War.
- 4.2 The current parish of Catshill and North Marlbrook is formed of the entire Catshill settlement west of the A38 and includes part of Marlbrook to the east and north of the junction between the A38 and Braces Lane; the latter largely consists of post war residential development.
- 4.3 The parish population increased steadily during the second half of the 20th century with 6,858 residents recorded in the 2011 Census. With the exception of 0.9% living in communal establishments, the remaining 99.1% were in households. The average (mean) age of residents was 41.3 years. The Census also showed that out of 5,022 residents (aged 16 to 74), 3,614 were economically active⁴. A local business survey in 2017 found there were approximately 250 jobs available in the Parish. The majority of businesses employ less than 5 full time staff and 1-2 part time staff with the biggest employers being the Essential Marketing offices located in Golden Cross Lane, the Bromsgrove Hotel and Spa adjacent to the A38 (see Appendix 2).
- 4.4 The increase in population has affected the local environment. In particular, the prevalence for people to travel greater distances for employment, social and leisure purposes and the proximity of the Parish to the motorway system means there is considerable out-commuting and large numbers of vehicles passing through the area to reach motorway junctions or other locations.
- 4.5 The Parish has three schools ('First', 'Middle' and 'Special Education'), a doctors' and dentists' surgery, five churches, several public houses, shops and offices. The main shopping area is located along Golden Cross Lane, with a small public car park situated at its western end and limited frontage parking. The post office is based in the Spar shop and the pharmacy shop is located by the public car park. More recently a small supermarket has replaced a public house opposite the Baptist Church in Barley Mow Lane and is attracting custom and traffic. There are a few shops and offices at the A38 intersection with Golden Cross Lane and a small supermarket is located in North Marlbrook at the junction between Braces Lane and Old Birmingham Road.
- 4.6 There are a number of commercial uses and activities with direct access onto Stourbridge Road and Meadow Road. Both of these roads are part of the main highway network through Catshill. The former contains a garden centre, greengrocer, farm/abattoir, retail shop (carpets), water pumping station, residential care home and public house. The latter has three schools, coach operators and a boutique all of which have limited parking. At the top of Woodrow Lane there is a modest commercial area hosting a garage, black smithy making gates and fences and two landscape/gardening businesses.

⁴ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04010279>





Dental Surgery



Catshill Middle School

- 4.7 Community activities take place in the village hall, local churches of which Catshill Baptist Church has recently added an extension providing ground and first floor facilities and the Catshill Social Club. These activities cater for both young and older age groups. The library has been relocated to a building attached to the 'Middle' school. This periodically provides activities to assist reading and learning.
- 4.8 Catshill is linked by bus services to Birmingham, Worcester, Halesowen and Stourbridge as well as some local destinations. The nearest railway stations are at Bromsgrove, Barnt Green and Longbridge. In contrast North Marlbrook has a single convenience store and a more limited bus service and fewer bus stops.
- 4.9 Two small streams or brooks (Battlefield and Marl) meet in Catshill and are tributaries of the River Salwarpe, the latter ultimately joining the River Severn north of Worcester. The area is generally free draining and water abstraction from the underlying aquifer has led to reduced flows in the brooks. There have been no reports of groundwater flooding.
- 4.10 The Spadesbourne and Battlefield Brook watercourses are important habitats for both flora and fauna; in particular, the water vole, which is an endangered species and nationally protected. It has known habitats along the Battlefield Brook in Catshill which provides a migration route while the Marlbrook also has the potential as water vole habitat.

CATSHILL AND NORTH MARLBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

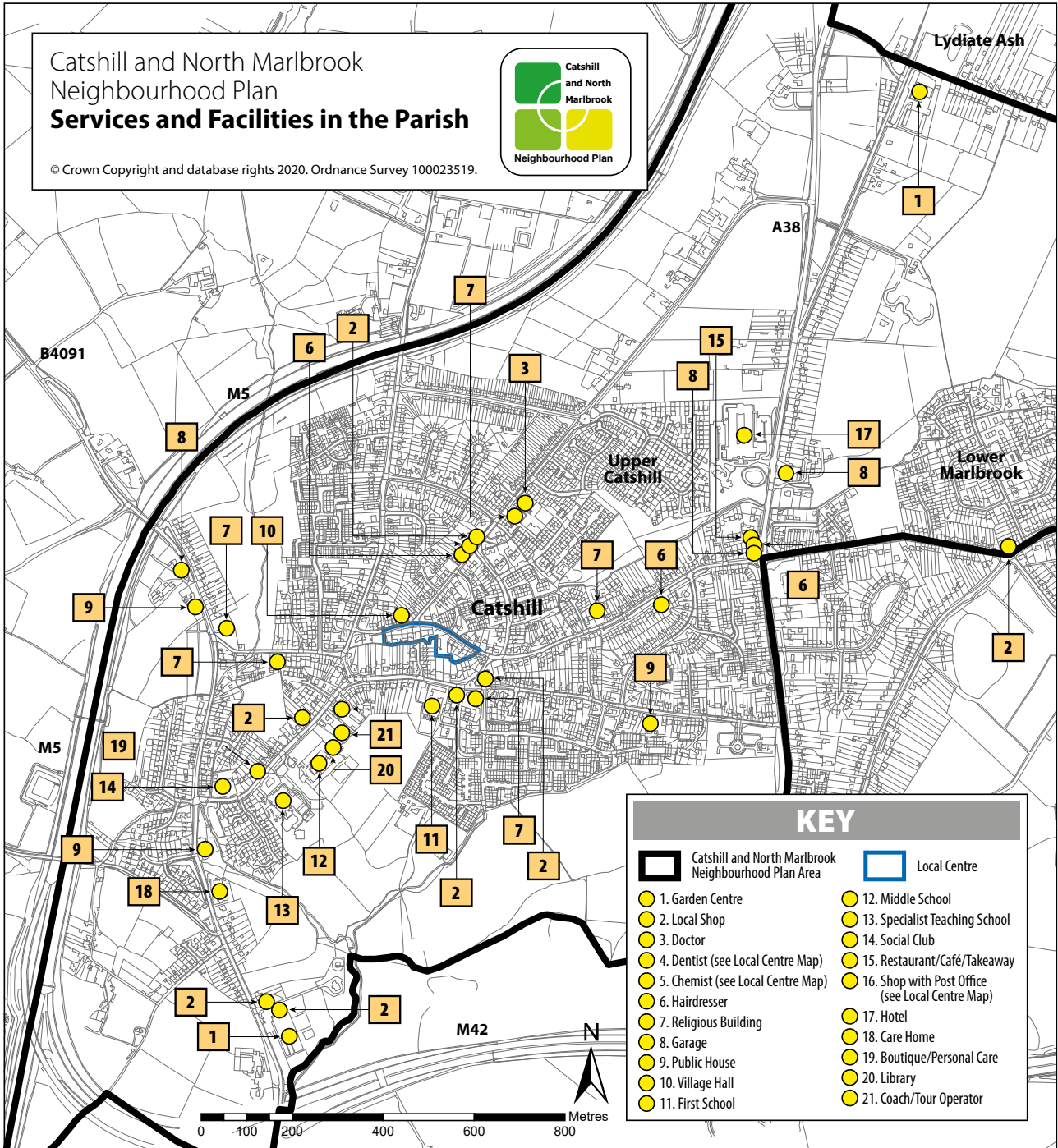


Fig 3a. Catshill and North Marlbrook Services and Facilities

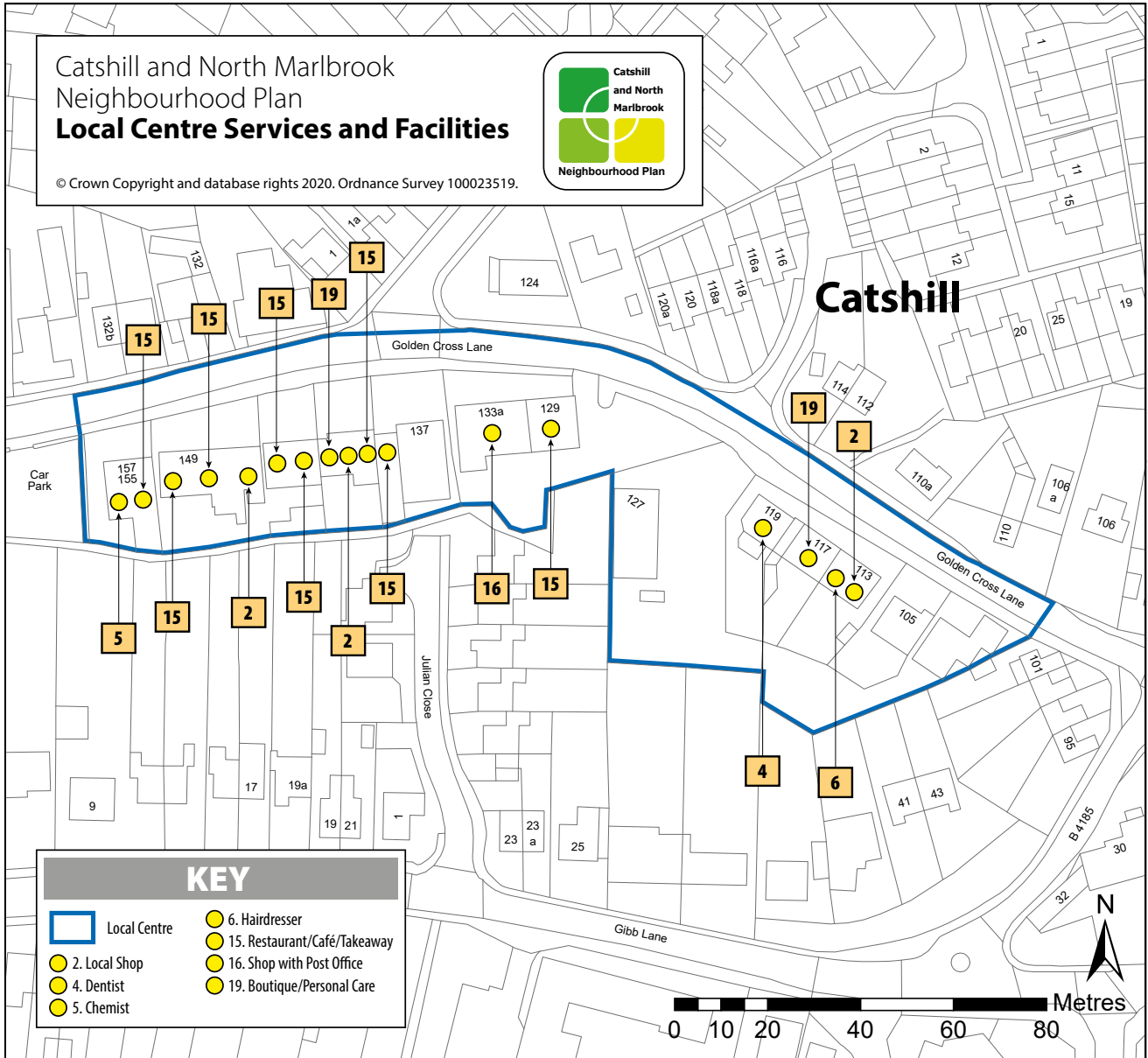


Fig 3b. Catshill and North Marlbrook Local Centre Services and Facilities



Battlefield Brook



Local Green Spaces

- 4.11 Catshill and Marlbrook have suffered from flooding which is usually associated with run-off from short-duration, high intensity storms. This has occurred along much of the stream courses in both parts of the Parish with the most recent flooding events occurring in 1998/99, 2007 and 2012. The District Council attributes high run-off problems to the adjacent motorways and developments in the catchment and has constructed a large detention pond to provide greater flood protection to residents close to the Marlbrook. Further details on the local hydrology can be found in the evidence supporting the NP (Appendix 4).
- 4.12 There are four grade II listed buildings - Christ Church, Lydiate House, Gate Piers east of No.61 and the War Memorial, in the Parish, as well as other non-designated buildings and landscape.



Christ Church



Lydiate House

SECTION 2 - THE VISION



5. Initial Consultation (Phase 1) and Vision Statement

5.1 Consultation Phase 1 lasted from October 2016 to September 2017. The main aims of the initial phase of the Neighbourhood Plan were to:

- Communicate and raise awareness across the Parish concerning NP;
- Carry out an Initial collection of data for the evidence base;
- Review and analyse evidence collected;
- Identify the main issues and decide how to follow up with further work;
- Set up working groups;
- Draft initial objectives;
- Reflect these objections in a Vision Statement for the Neighbourhood Plan.

The dates of the main activities were:

Prepare presentation media	October 2016 - March 2017
Consultation with public and businesses	April 2017 - June 2017
- Workshops	Held in May and June 2017
- Level 1 questionnaire for residents and business questionnaire	
Analyse results (in Appendices) and set up Working Groups	July/August 2017
Present results to Steering Group and sign off	September 2017

5.2 As part of the first phase of consultation, workshops were organised to explain the purpose and process behind NPs. These were held in May and June 2017 to coincide with the release of a questionnaire and leaflets which were distributed to all households in the Parish. The aim was to gauge both resident and business attitudes and perception of issues and concerns that affected them whether in living or working in the Parish. The questionnaire was also made available online via the Parish Council’s Neighbourhood Plan website (www.catshillandnorthmarlbrookplan.org.uk).



Workshop May 2017



Workshop June 2017

5.3 A total of 263 completed questionnaires were received and analysed. These showed that people were seriously concerned by traffic problems, particularly peak hour volumes where drivers use Catshill as a 'rat-run' to connect with the A38, the motorway network and routes to the south and west of Bromsgrove. In combination with school traffic and local trips this results in high numbers of vehicles passing through the Parish.

5.4 In addition to traffic-related issues other matters were identified. The main points to emerge are summarised below⁵.

- the impact of traffic on the local environment;
- the shortage of parking provision, particularly acute in the shopping area and parents on school runs;
- the discrepancy in the number of shops and businesses in Catshill and North Marlbrook;
- a need for improvements to public transport, lighting and parking;
- the value of 'wildlife' and protection of the Green Belt as key features of the local environment;
- issues arising from anti-social behaviour and crime;
- the need for community and recreational facilities;
- fears associated with further housing provision in Bromsgrove and the Parish, both seen as likely to exacerbate existing traffic problems and locally impacting on services and facilities;
- the positive value placed on 'community spirit' which was the main reason why people liked living in the parish.

5.5 The results of this consultation process then formed the basis for the following vision statement:

“By 2030 the Parish will have sustained and strengthened its community feel through good quality development and community amenities whilst maintaining its distinctive character and environment.”

Catshill and North Marlbrook Vision Statement

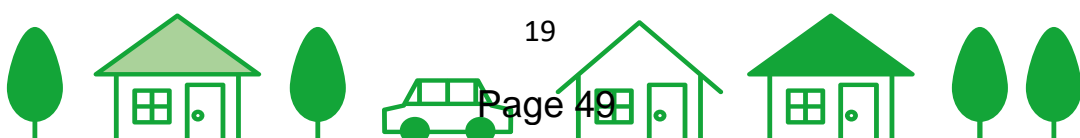
⁵ Full results and analysis can be found in Appendix 1



6. Consultation Phase 2 - Developing the Plan

6.1 Consultation Phase 2 lasted from October 2017 to December 2019. The main aims of the second phase of the Neighbourhood Plan were to:

- refine objectives and policy options in the working groups based on the agreed Vision Statement;
- obtain grant money and conduct a Landscape Character Assessment Study using independent consultants;
- identify land parcels that had the potential for housing use;
- develop criteria for housing site selection using available evidence including Local Character Assessment Study, Flood Risk and Hydrology Study and Ecology Assessment;
- obtain grant money to design, publish and distribute a detailed questionnaire;
- develop a detailed questionnaire incorporating the findings of the Working Groups and potential housing sites derived from the housing sustainability assessment;
- consult with all the residents of the Parish, using the detailed household questionnaire, on the Vision Statement, Plan Objectives and Preferred Policy Options, together with consideration of preferred housing sites for development;
- analyse the results of the questionnaires and identify the objectives and policies which were supported;
- undertake a 'Call for Sites' exercise with landowners and developers;
- review site assessments taking into account the results of the questionnaire and the impact on traffic volumes from proposed developments at Whitford Road and Perryfields, both in Bromsgrove;
- obtain technical support packages provided by independent consultants through Locality to provide a site assessment review, housing needs assessment and building design codes;
- identify preferred sites for housing development based on results of the questionnaires, the detailed site assessment study and the site assessment review;
- undertake a study to gauge public support for green spaces in the village;
- make full use of the evidence base to generate and provide support for the policy base.



The dates of the main activities were:

Working groups develop objectives and policies	October 2017 to March 2018
Undertake Landscape Character Assessment Study	November 2017 to February 2018
Undertake site appraisals for land development	October 2017 to March 2018
Design, publish and distribute level 2 questionnaire	April to July 2018
Collate and analyse results of questionnaires and produce findings. Present results to Steering Group and sign off	August to September 2018
Undertake Call for Sites and analyse comments and feedback received	October to December 2018
Review site assessments	January to June 2019
Progress technical studies	June to December 2019
Undertake local green spaces study	October to December 2019
Draft policies and review	September to December 2019

6.2 The outcomes of the initial consultation (phase 1) helped three working groups to identify the main objectives for each of the topic areas. These objectives were:

Housing and Infrastructure⁶

- Ensure sufficient new housing is provided in the most sustainable locations to prevent speculative residential development for the rest of the plan period;
- Provide housing which meets the needs of local residents;
- Prioritise affordable housing, homes for first time buyers and for the elderly;
- Ensure the design of new development is compatible with the character of the Parish.

Commerce and Community⁷

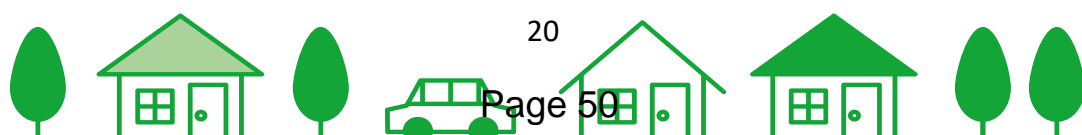
- Support local businesses and retail outlets in the Local Centre,
- Support local employment opportunities through business start-ups and home working;
- Protect and enhance, where possible, facilities for all local people in order that the community can take advantage of a full social and active lifestyle;

Environment

- Protect the Green Belt and minimise further reduction in its area;
- Protect existing green spaces against encroachment;
- Develop a coherent Green Infrastructure Plan for the Parish;
- Protect wildlife and habitats;
- Promote and support measures to assist in combating climate change.

⁶ Originally called Housing

⁷ Originally called Infrastructure and Commerce



- 6.3 The policies included in the NP have also had regard to the constraints affecting the Parish. Principal amongst these is that of Green Belt designation which covers all land outside the built-up parts of the settlement. This has prevented coalescence between Catshill and Bromsgrove town, but the modest gap between these settlements has become increasingly vulnerable because of recent and planned developments on the northern and western edges of Bromsgrove⁸.
- 6.4 High quality agricultural land can be found across much of the Parish while open land in North Marlbrook forms part of the backdrop to the Lickey Hills. This area, together with the gap between Catshill and Bromsgrove, is potentially sensitive to change because of its visibility in the wider landscape.



Lydiate Ash

- 6.5 There are few buildings of architectural or historic interest and little in the way of a discernible building style. Future development provides an opportunity to create a more distinctive appearance. To this end a study was commissioned of urban form and design by AECOM and provides the basis for securing improvements in the built environment. The few areas of designated open space are locations where development should be resisted and have been included as important features in a Green Infrastructure Network Study.⁹
- 6.6 In formulating policies to address the objectives set out above and to influence the way in which land is used in the Parish a number of key principles were established. These formed the basis against which policy initiatives were tested. The principles are as follows:
1. Avoid changes to Green Belt boundaries that are likely to have an adverse impact on the purposes of Green Belt designation as set out in the NPPF;
 2. In particular, seek to maintain existing boundaries where development would seriously erode important gaps between adjacent settlements or small outlying collections of buildings within the Parish;
 3. Avoid reliance on a single large site for housing purposes to limit the physical impact of new housing, particularly in relation to the landscape, flood risk and traffic generation;
 4. Avoid the use of sites which are distant from the widest range of services and facilities;
 5. Support new housing where the effect on traffic movements and congestion (major issue from questionnaire responses) would be least pronounced;

⁸ Land at Norton Farm, Perryfields Road and Whitford Road, Bromsgrove

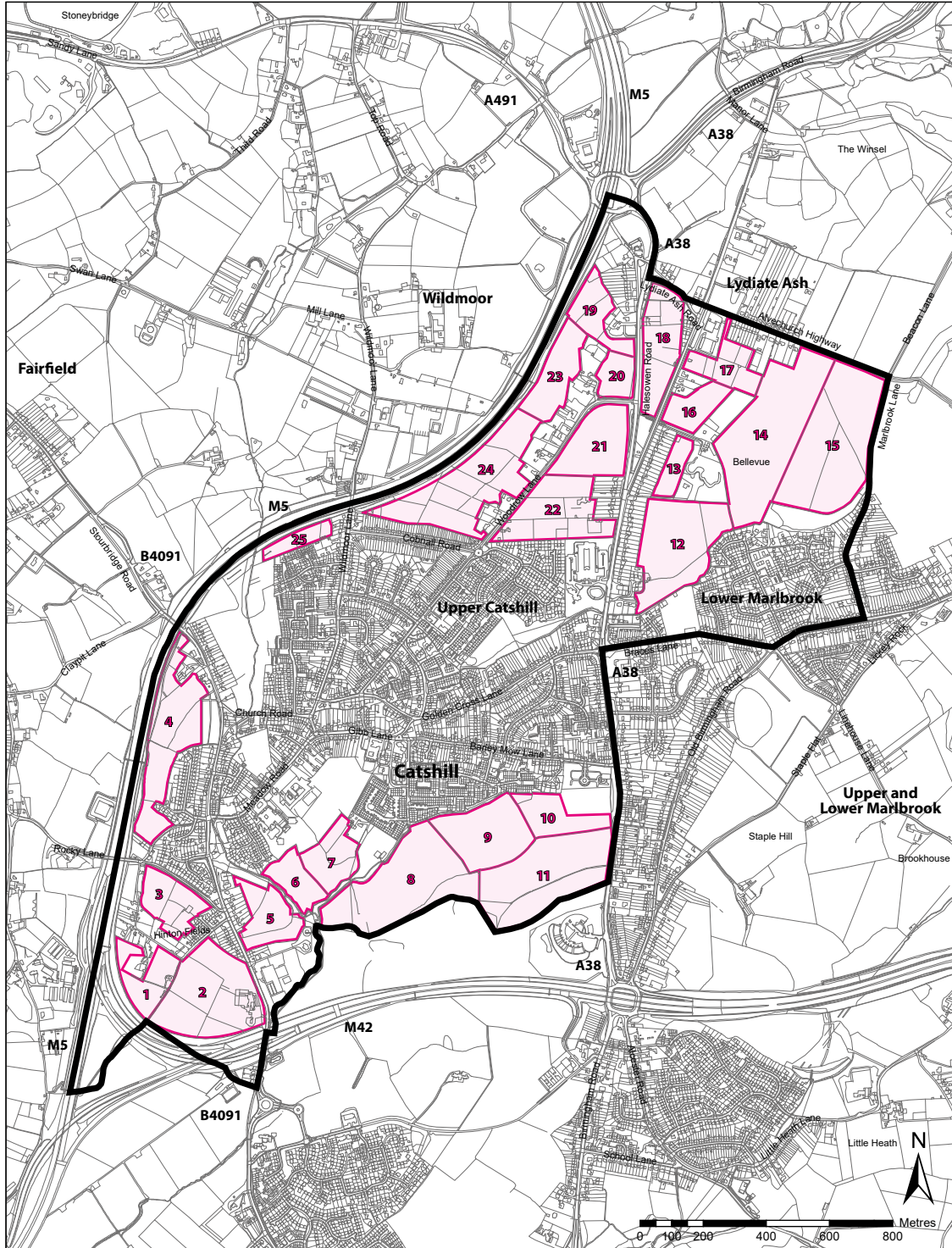
⁹ AECOM Design Guide Study Appendix 13

6. Generally, avoid housing where access to the main road system would exacerbate congestion and be likely to adversely affect highway safety;
 7. Have due regard to the outcome of the Landscape Character Assessment study (Appendix 3) and the local topography in relation to all development proposals;
 8. Seek improvements to bus services, particularly in North Marlbrook and encourage alterations to routes and additional or relocated bus stops to better serve the community;
 9. Encourage measures by the Highway Authority to reduce traffic flows through the Parish by more appropriate signage, speed restrictions, weight limits and similar measures;
 10. Ensure protection and enhancement, wherever possible, of existing green spaces;
 11. Promote measures to protect and support wildlife, including green corridor linkages, throughout the Parish;
 12. Ensure development does not add to known flooding risks in the Parish;
 13. Secure adequate provision of community facilities and services for youths and elderly people.
- 6.7 A series of policies were drafted and tested against these principles through the three working groups covering housing, commerce and the environment.
- 6.8 To examine the scope and potential suitability of housing sites an initial exercise identified all areas of open land. These were subsequently amalgamated into twenty-five sites of varying sizes where development was considered possible. An assessment of each site was then undertaken taking into account the purposes of green belt designation, highway and access considerations, proximity to services and facilities, open space and the impact on wildlife (Appendix 7). Two sites off Woodrow Lane are shown below.



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6.9 Seven sites of varying sizes across the Parish were chosen as initial locations for further consideration (sites 3, 5, 16, 18, 21, 22 and 24). These were seen as capable of delivering in excess of any likely housing requirement finally determined by BDC (based on a simple division of housing between the six settlements). The range of sites reflected consultation findings that residents did not favour a single large site.



Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan

Potential Housing Sites

-  Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  Potential Housing Sites



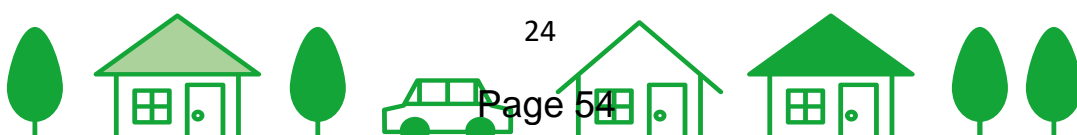
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Fig 4. Potential Land Parcels for Housing Development

- 6.10 Policies were drafted in accordance with other Plan objectives insofar that they were reasonable and deliverable. Measures were included to encourage highway improvements, where possible, safeguard existing employment areas and prevent the proliferation of further 'fast-food outlets'. Steps to increase open space and wildlife habitats were included to develop a Green Infrastructure Network. Following this process, a series of policies were tested through a second round of consultation.
- 6.11 A more detailed level 2 questionnaire was sent to all households in the Parish in June 2018 asking for views on the proposed Vision Statement, objectives and draft policies. Reaction to the seven possible housing sites was also sought.
- 6.12 A total of 432 completed questionnaires were received from the 2865 households in the Parish. Statistically this means that the results have confidence intervals of better than + or - 5% at 95% confidence levels.
- 6.13 Detailed information on the results of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 5. In summary, there was strong support for the Vision Statement (13.9% disagreeing with the statement), objectives and policies on housing, infrastructure and the environment.
- 6.14 Providing new housing was the most contentious issue although 83.1% acknowledged that more dwellings would need to be accommodated in the Parish. There was less consensus regarding site preferences. A number of respondents advocated the use of 'brownfield' land (22.2%) with almost 39% opposed to any housing development.
- 6.15 The seven housing sites were seen to have strengths and weaknesses but there was no clear preference for any particular site. BDC, informally, were also of the view that site identification was premature especially as it was undertaking a review into the function and purposes of Green Belt land. The NP Group therefore decided that further work was necessary to refine its stance. A 'Call for Sites' invitation was issued to enable interested landowners or developers to explain the merits of a site and to ensure that no location had been ignored. Landowners were also identified through Land Registry searches and asked to provide information about their land. All parties were invited to make a presentation to NP Steering members. Two such presentation days were held in October and November 2018 and attended by several developers and landowners. Further details regarding the 'Call for Sites' initiative is provided in Appendix 6.
- 6.16 The following table sets out information on each of the land parcels identified in the NP. This shows where landowners and/or developers have expressed interest through both the NP 'Call for Sites' exercise and one subsequently carried out by BDC in Autumn 2019. It should be noted that there are differences between the two studies. The later BDC exercise resulted in more sites being identified. In some cases, there were also variations in site areas between the two studies although generally, these were small. The table also shows sites previously assessed by BDC in its strategic housing land assessment (SHLAA) for the Local Plan¹⁰ and which were subsequently updated via an Addendum in 2018.¹¹

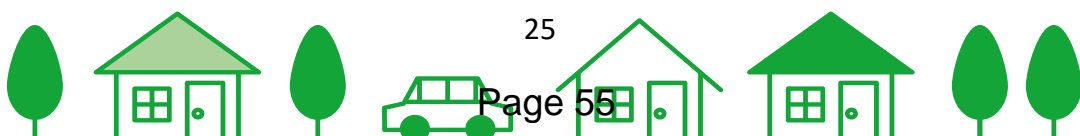
¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/media/2025049/SHLAA-low-res-07-06-16.pdf>

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/media/3922661/shlaa-addendum-low-res-21-09-18.pdf>



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Site Ref.	Site Address	Identification	SHLAA Ref.	Site Area (ha)	Proposed Use
1	Land at southwestern end of Hinton Fields N.B. Smaller part of this site identified in BDC 'Call for Sites' study	NP Group BDC Call for Sites	-	2.49 BDC Call for Sites shows 0.42 ha. Is available	Residential
2	Land at southwestern end of Hinton Fields N.B. Also identified in the BDC 'Call for Sites' study	NP Group (call for sites) BDC Call for Sites	-	7.52	Residential
3	Land at Hinton Fields	NP Group BDC Call for Sites	BDC1 and BDC94	2.86	Residential
4	Land to rear of Westfields N.B. Also identified in BDC 'Call for Sites' study	NP Group (call for sites)	BDC96 and BDC275	6.51 BDC Call for Sites study identifies slightly smaller area of 5.44ha.	Residential
5	Land north of garden centre, Stourbridge Road N.B. One part of the larger site 5 was identified in the BDC 'Call for Sites' study	NP Group BDC Call for Sites	BDC142	3 BDC Call for Sites study identified 1.22ha. was available	Residential
6	Land at southern end of Woodbank Drive	NP Group	-	1.95	Residential
7	Land to south of Middle School playing fields	NP Group	-	2.67	Residential
8	Land at southern end of Milton Road N.B. BDC 'Call for Sites' study identifies sites 8, 9 & 10 as one	NP Group	BDC249	8.77 BDC Call for Sites study shows combined sites 8, 9 & 10 amount to 14.2 ha	Residential
9	Land to south and east of Milton Road	NP Group	BDC249	4.86	Residential
10	Land adjacent to Cemetery	NP Group	BDC249	2.55	Residential
11	Land south of Catshill and west of A38 N.B. This site is identified as part of a larger area in the BDC 'Call for Sites' study but majority of larger area lies outside the Parish	NP Group BDC Call for Sites	BDC249	8.26	Residential



Site Ref.	Site Address	Identification	SHLAA Ref.	Site Area (ha)	Proposed Use
12	Land to north of Braces Lane, Marlbrook N.B. Also identified in BDC 'Call for Sites' study	NP Group (call for sites) BDC Call for Sites	BDC210	7.29	Residential
13	Land east of housing on Old Birmingham Road	NP Group	BDC7A	1.35	Residential
14	Land adjacent to Marlbrook Lane (Land adjacent to 32 Alvechurch Highway)	NP Group BDC Call for Sites	-	10.75	Residential
15	Land adjacent to Marlbrook Lane	NP Group	-	10.1	Residential
16	Land to east of Old Birmingham Road, Marlbrook	NP Group	BDC7B	2	Residential
17	Land south of housing on Alvechurch Highway	NP Group	BDC193	2.71	Residential
18	Land to south of Lydiate Ash Road N.B. BDC 'Call for Sites' study shows this site split into two separate sites	NP Group (call for sites but only part of the site) BDC Call for Sites	-	4.42	Residential
19	Adjacent to M5 at Lydiate Ash (South & rear of 29 & 31 Halesowen Road)	NP Group (call for sites) BDC Call for Sites	BDC32 and BDC277	2.55	Residential
20	North side of Woodrow Lane	NP Group (call for sites) BDC Call for Sites	-	1.51	Residential
21	Land north and east of Woodrow Lane N.B. This site and part of site 22 below identified in BDC 'Call for Sites' study	NP Group BDC Call for Sites	BDC128	4.32	Residential
22	Land to east of Woodrow Lane N.B. One part of the larger site 22 was identified in the BDC 'Call for Sites' study	NP Group (call for sites) BDC Call for Sites	BDC244	5.45	Residential



Site Ref.	Site Address	Identification	SHLAA Ref.	Site Area (ha)	Proposed Use
23	Land west of Woodrow Lane (northern section)	NP Group (call for sites)	-	3.40	Residential
24	Land west of Woodrow Lane (southern section)	NP Group (call for sites but only part of the site)	-	8.52	Residential
	N.B. Three parts of the larger site 24 were identified in the BDC 'Call for Sites' study	BDC Call for Sites		BDC Call for Sites study identified 4.19ha. were available on the three sites	
25	Land west of Wildmoor Lane adjacent to M5	NP Group BDC Call for Sites	-	1.47	Residential
26#	Willowbrook Garden Centre, Stourbridge Rd	BDC Call for Sites		2.55	
27#	Land adjacent 46 Hinton Fields	BDC Call for Sites		0.14	
28#	Land at junction of Rocky Lane & Hinton Fields			0.45	
29#	Land adjacent 222 Stourbridge Road	BDC Call for Sites		0.31	

Sites 26 – 29 were sites identified in Bromsgrove District's 'Call for Sites' initiative not previously identified in the Neighbourhood Plan

6.17 The continued absence of a housing target for the Parish or any information on local housing needs led NP members to conclude that further work was needed to improve its evidence base. This was regarded as essential given that the District Council was engaged in an extensive Green Belt review to identify land capable of meeting its outstanding housing requirements and needs beyond 2030. Its task was complicated by changes to the government's housing methodology, a requirement for it to accommodate some of the housing needs of the conurbation authorities and for housing needs evidence at a district/parish level.

6.18 The NP Steering Group therefore took advantage of technical support packages to commission three studies using consultants (AECOM)¹².

- independently assess potential housing sites;
- examine housing needs and numbers;
- examine design characteristics in the parish.

6.19 A further study was undertaken by the Steering Group to garner support for the designation of local green spaces as part of a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Parish. Information on each of these studies can be found in the next chapter with full details provided in the Appendices 8, 9, 12 and 13.

¹² <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/technical-support/>



7. Consultation Phase 3 - Finalise the Plan

7.1 The third Phase of Consultation lasted from January 2020 to February 2021. The main aims of the third phase of the Neighbourhood Plan were to:

1. Finalise the draft report and submit to the Parish Council for approval;
2. Prepare for 'regulation 14' six week consultation;
3. Undertake a 6 week consultation with workshops and events;
4. Collate responses and feedback;
5. Review policies and all documentation;
6. Finalise NP Report and other required documentation;
7. Submit statutory documentation to the District Council.

The dates of the main activities were:

Finalise draft NP report and submit for approval to Parish Council	January 2020 - April 2020
Prepare for 'Regulation 14' six week consultation	May 2020 - August 2020
Undertake 6 week consultation with workshop and events	21st September 2020 - 2nd November 2020
Collate responses and feedback - Review policies and all documentation - Finalise NP report and other required documentation	December 2020
Submit statutory documentation to Parish Council	January 2021
Parish Council submit statutory documentation to BDC	February 2021

7.2 The 'Regulation 14' six week consultation period was held between 21st September and 2nd November 2020. Three exhibition events were held during this period in the local village hall under Covid conditions. They were attended in total by over 50 residents of Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish. The pre-submission NP Report, together with the evidence base (13 Appendices), was made available for scrutiny during these events and on the NP website. Responses were received on a comments form. Statutory consultees and interest groups were also asked for responses during the consultation period.



- 7.3 In total, 62 responses were received. As a result of these, mostly minor revisions were made to the pre-submission NP report. However, policies H2 and H3, together with the supporting justification to each, were modified to provide more explanation of the factors to be considered in any development.
- 7.4 Many of the comments received were influenced by the Covid pandemic and the increased need for the protection of the environment, particularly green and open spaces. Support was also shown for the Neighbourhood Plan and the people involved in producing the Plan.

“Excellent plans for the environment”

“Vitaly important to protect green spaces as illustrated by covid-19 pandemic”

“ NP is very competent and wide-ranging. Green Spaces will be in greater need in future as illustrated by ‘lockdown”

“Wholeheartedly approve of policies to protect the environment. Covid has shown the importance of ENV6”

“NP is crucial to protect Catshill from uncontrolled development which would devastate the village both environmentally and socio-economically”

“Reassured by the conversations with NP representatives and welcome its unaltered course through all processes it faces”

“Parish Council answered many of my questions (as best they could) regarding future development”

“Representatives seemed well-informed and very helpful”

- 7.5 The statutory documentation for ‘regulation 15’ was finalised, including this submission Neighbourhood Plan report, consultation statement, basic conditions statement and a map identifying the area to which this neighbourhood plan applies. The consultation statement included the 62 consultation responses from the ‘regulation 14’ consultation. After the Neighbourhood Plan report was adopted by the Parish Council it was sent to Bromsgrove District Council for ‘regulation 16’ consultation.



SECTION 3 - NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES



8. Housing and Infrastructure

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 New housing in the Parish can contribute towards the dwellings that Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) requires to satisfy its outstanding needs following the examination of the District Plan in 2016¹³. The NP has an important role in influencing where such housing is located and what types and sizes of properties are most suitable to meet the needs of existing and future residents.
- 8.1.2 The amount of housing to be provided is unclear. Difficulties have been compounded by changes to the government’s housing methodology, demands on BDC to find land to meet some of the housing needs of the conurbation authorities and for evidence on housing needs at District/Parish level. BDC is reviewing its BDP to take these matters into account.
- 8.1.3 In these circumstances BDC has been unable to provide a figure or an estimate of the number of dwellings the Parish may be required to accommodate.
- 8.1.4 A number of studies have been undertaken for the NP in order to obtain sufficient evidence to identify and justify a basic level of housing provision. From this work it has been possible to consider where land for this amount of housing could be found for the current Plan period to 2030. This end date adheres to that for the adopted BDP. In the absence of any known strategy or level of growth, extending the lifespan of the NP is not possible.
- 8.1.5 Furthermore, it is apparent that traffic is an issue which has and will continue to have a significant effect on the Parish. Concerns have been heightened because of planned developments on the western periphery of Bromsgrove Town. These schemes are likely to generate large number of vehicular movements with many residents from these developments adding to those already using Catshill as a through route to the M5 motorway.

8.2 Local Plan Review

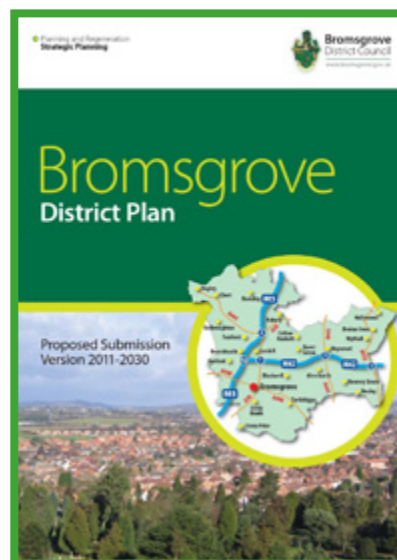
- 8.2.1 BDC commenced a review of its Local Plan in 2019. The draft timetable shows BDC expects to adopt the revised Plan in 2023 and that its original end date of 2030 will be extended to 2040. This is consistent with national policy (NPPF para. 22) which says that plans should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from the date of adoption. To date the minimum housing requirement for the district, from 2023 to 2040, is 6443 new homes based on the methodology used. This is likely to be adjusted upwards to align with ambitions for economic growth and to meet the need for specialist accommodation (minimum of 379 homes per year)¹⁴.

¹³ Inspectors Report 16th December 2016.

¹⁴ The Bromsgrove Development Plan Review Update and Further Consultation (September 2019)
[https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/policy-and-strategy/planning-policies/bromsgrove-district-plan-review/plan-review-update-and-further-consultation-\(2019\).aspx](https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/policy-and-strategy/planning-policies/bromsgrove-district-plan-review/plan-review-update-and-further-consultation-(2019).aspx)



- 8.2.2 The Birmingham Development Plan (January 2017) found that 37,900 homes were required in the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area (which covers adjacent authorities, including Bromsgrove) to meet the shortfall in the city¹⁵. It requires neighbouring Councils to work together to contribute towards Birmingham's housing needs. The District Council has a duty to co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries.
- 8.2.3 Bromsgrove District Council consulted on a range of issues and options in 2018 as part of its preparatory work for reviewing the Local Plan¹⁶. The responses to the Issues and Options identified made clear that extensions to existing settlements were favoured over large scale interventions such as new settlements. The delivery of a new settlement (of some 10,000 - 15,000 dwellings) and its associated infrastructure by 2040 was considered to be unrealistic. There was also little support for a new settlement. Instead, it is the intention that the BDP Review will focus on a range of sites which can be delivered within the plan period. The final distribution will be determined using the evidence gained from a number of studies (see para. 1.7), including a 'Call for Sites' exercise¹⁷. The latter was undertaken in 2019 and resulted in 23 sites being identified in Catshill and North Marlbrook. These cover 101.29 acres, the majority of Green Belt land in the Parish.
- 8.2.4 It is evident that land has to be released from the Green Belt to meet the District's housing targets because there are few other options, including a lack of 'brownfield' sites. When reviewing Green Belt boundaries national planning policy (NPPF para.139) requires local planning authorities to consider the need to safeguard land between the urban area and the Green Belt in order to meet development needs beyond the plan period. Complying with this requirement would mean that additional land would need to be taken out of the Green Belt for the post 2040 period.



¹⁵ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20054/planning_strategies_and_policies/78/birmingham_development_plan

¹⁶ <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/policy-and-strategy/planning-policies/bromsgrove-district-plan-review/issues-and-options-consultation.aspx>

¹⁷ N.B. This is a separate 'Call for Sites' exercise than the one undertaken by the Parish Council for the Neighbourhood Plan

8.2.5 Consequently, BDC has undertaken an assessment of all Green Belt areas through a two-stage process¹⁸. Part 1 examined 60 strategic areas of the Green Belt; Part 2 will assess individual sites. Both elements of the study will have regard to the role and purposes of the Green Belt as defined in the NPPF (para. 134). Three strategic parcels of Green Belt land are relevant to this Parish; parcel C1 (North of Catshill, East of M5); part of parcel C2 (South of A38, Lydiate Ash) and parcel C12 (South of Catshill, north of M42). The following diagram shows these parcels of land:

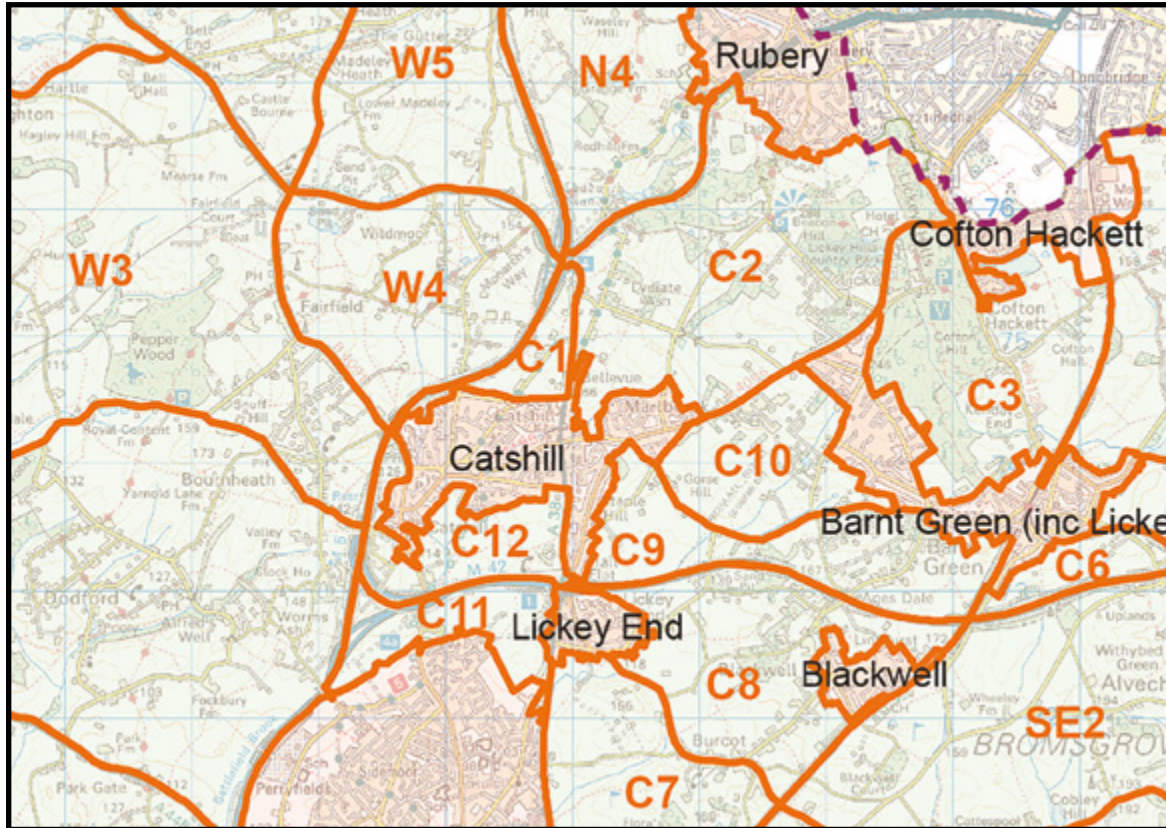


Fig 5. Strategic Parcels of Land around Catshill and North Marlbrook (taken from BDC Study)

Strategic Parcel Ref. C1

	Purpose	Comments	Strength of Contribution
1	To check the sprawl of large built-up areas	Parcel does not play a role in preventing sprawl.	No Contribution
2	To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	The parcel is not pivotal in providing a gap between Catshill and Rubery.	Weak
3	To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The parcel has a limited rural sense.	Weak

¹⁸ <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/policy-and-strategy/planning-policies/bromsgrove-district-plan-review/evidence-base/green-belt-purposes-assessment.aspx>

Strategic Parcel Ref. C2

	Purpose	Comments	Strength of Contribution
1	To check the sprawl of large built-up areas	Parcel plays a significant role in preventing the uncontrolled spread of Rubery.	Moderate
2	To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	Parcel plays a strategic role in retaining the separation between the settlements of Catshill and Rubery and Barnt Green.	Strong
3	To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Parts of the parcel have countryside characteristics and there is a rural sense mainly in the areas from Marlbrook towards Monument Lane/Lickey Hills and the back of Lydiate Ash.	Moderate

Strategic Parcel Ref. C12

	Purpose	Comments	Strength of Contribution
1	To check the sprawl of large built-up areas	Parcel does not play a role in preventing sprawl	No contribution
2	To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	The parcel constitutes the majority of the gap between Catshill and Bromsgrove Town.	Strong
3	To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The parcel has a rural sense and exhibits countryside characteristics, but there are some urbanising features.	Moderate

- 8.2.6 BDC's assessment shows that parcel C1 makes a limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, whereas both parcels C2 and C12 make more significant contributions, particularly in preventing neighbouring towns merging with Catshill.
- 8.2.7 When altering Green Belt boundaries to identify land for housing purposes it is estimated that a minimum of 379 new homes per year will be required to 2040, a figure derived using the Government's standard methodology. As noted above (para. 8.2.3) the District Council favours extensions to existing settlements. This would enable development to be focused on more sustainable locations such as transport corridors and places with good transport links, rather than large scale new settlements¹⁹.
- 8.2.8 To investigate the range and feasibility of potential housing sites BDC has undertaken a 'Call for Sites' exercise²⁰ This led to 23 sites in Catshill and North Marlbrook being submitted covering 101.29 acres of land, a figure representing the majority of Green Belt land across the Parish.

¹⁹ <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/policy-and-strategy/planning-policies/bromsgrove-district-plan-review/issues-and-options-consultation.aspx>

²⁰ Bromsgrove District Council 'Call for Sites' Exercise, Autumn 2019



8.3 Addressing Housing Requirements

- 8.3.1 The current 'settlement hierarchy' (BDP2) in the BDP identifies Catshill as one of six large settlements which will be allocated a proportion of housing development after 2023. Bromsgrove Town sites have already been allocated and few housing schemes will be permitted in smaller, more rural settlements. It is therefore anticipated that the majority of the 2,300 remaining dwellings (for the current plan period to 2030) will be allocated to the six large settlements.
- 8.3.2 The distribution of these homes to the six settlements is not detailed in the District Plan, which explains that “at this stage it is not considered appropriate to apportion a particular number or percentage of dwellings to tiers within the settlement hierarchy or individual settlements. Instead, it is more important to focus on identifying the most suitable and sustainable sites for growth” (para 8.20).
- 8.3.3 In the absence of a figure for the Parish, a number of studies were undertaken by and on behalf of the Parish Council to ascertain the amount and type of dwellings that could be justified. A Site Assessment Study was carried out by the Neighbourhood Plan Group to examine the suitability of all potential sites in the Parish. Following the identification of an initial seven sites with some potential (see para. 6.15) additional work was carried out. This included a ‘Call for Sites’ exercise by the NP Group, an independent Site Assessment Study, Housing Needs Study and a Design Study, the latter three all undertaken by AECOM Consultants.

8.4 Housing Need Figure

- 8.4.1 To calculate the number of new dwellings that could potentially be required in the Parish, AECOM examined the population and the sustainability of the six settlements. Evidence on sustainability came from a District Council background paper based on the availability of local services and facilities²¹. The Parish came out as the lowest of the six settlements, due to its lack of rail services, limited employment opportunities and absence of a secondary school although it has the second highest population of the six settlements (6850) after Wythall (11,678 people).
- 8.4.2 The share of the 2,300 new homes the Parish could potentially plan for was derived from the overall housing need figure (HNF) of 399 dwellings between 2011 and 2030 and deducting 142 dwelling completions in the Parish up to 2018. This gave a residual HNF of 257 dwellings for the remainder of the plan period to 2030 equating to 23 (rounded) dwellings per year. Projecting this average through to 2040 means an additional 230 houses would be required. Full details of the calculations are contained in chapter 4 of the HNA report²² (Appendix 8).

²¹ Bromsgrove District Plan: Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper, September 2012
https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/media/751592/CD_61_Settlement_-_Hierarchy.pdf

²² Catshill and North Marlbrook Housing Needs Assessment, September 2019 AECOM



8.5 Housing Site Assessments

- 8.5.1 It is important that the NP identifies those criteria that will enable future housing in the Parish to be located in the most favourable locations. In three consultation events residents were strongly of the opinion that housing development should be carefully controlled to avoid ad-hoc development and ensure the semi-rural character and feel of the village was maintained. Respondents also favoured housing being spread across a number of small sites across the Parish. Unfortunately, such an approach would limit developer contributions and significantly reduce the provision of affordable homes and also conflict with residents' desires for improvements to infrastructure and services.
- 8.5.2 To gain an understanding of locations likely to perform better in Green Belt and sustainability assessments, a site assessment exercise was undertaken by the NP Steering Group. Twenty-five areas of undeveloped land were assessed (Appendix 7 and see table in para. 6.16) covering all the available Green Belt in the Parish. Sites were designated as 'suitable' (green), 'potential subject to mitigation' (amber) or unsuitable (red). The assessments took into account a variety of factors including the effect of development on the purposes of the Green Belt, the impact on traffic, landscape and distance from services and facilities.
- 8.5.3 A separate study was commissioned using AECOM Consultants. This followed a similar approach (Appendix 9). AECOM did not, however, fully take into account the effect of site development on the role and purpose of the Green Belt. In their opinion land to be released from the Green Belt would be decided through the District Council's Review. Additionally, the impact of site development on traffic was not considered.

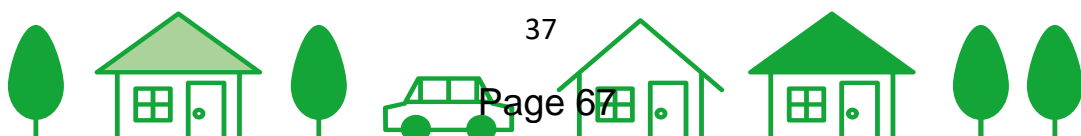


Golden Cross Drive – Infill Development

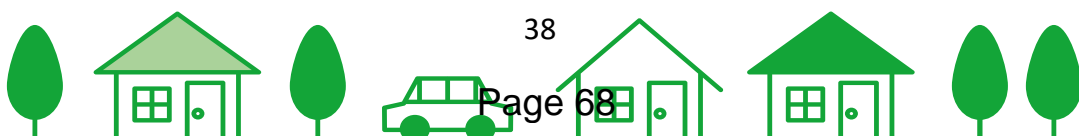
8.5.4 A comparison study was undertaken of the suitability of sites in the Parish between the two assessments as shown in the table below:

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Area (ha)	AECOM Suitability	NP Group Suitability
1	Land at southwestern end of Hinton Fields	2.49	Red	Red
2	Land at southwestern end of Hinton Fields	7.61	Yellow	Red
3	Land at Hinton Fields	3.1	Green	Red
4	Land to rear of Westfields	6.51	Yellow	Yellow
5	Land north of garden centre, Stourbridge Rd	3	Green	Red
6	Land at southern end of Woodbank Drive	1.95	Red	Red
7	Land south of Middle School playing fields	2.67	Red	Red
8	Land at southern end of Milton Road	8.77	Red	Red
9	Land to south and east of Milton Road	4.86	Red	Red
10	Land adjacent to Cemetery	2.55	Red	Red
11	Land south of Catshill and west of A38	8.26	Red	Red
12	Land north of Braces Lane, Marlbrook	7.11	Red	Red
13	Land east of housing on Old Birmingham Rd	1.35	Yellow	Red
14	Land adjacent to Marlbrook Lane	10.5	Red	Red
15	Land adjacent to Marlbrook Lane	10.1	Red	Red
16	Land east of Old Birmingham Rd, Marlbrook	2	Yellow	Red
17	Land south Alvechurch Highway properties	2.71	Red	Red
18	Land to south of Lydiate Ash Road	4.42	Red	Red
19	Adjacent to M5 at Lydiate Ash	2.55	Red	Red
20	North side of Woodrow Lane	1.60	Red	Red
21	Land north and east of Woodrow Lane	4.32	Red	Yellow
22	Land to east of Woodrow Lane	5.45	Green	Green
23	Land west of Woodrow Lane (north section)	3.40	Red	Yellow
24	Land west of Woodrow Lane (south section)	8.52	Yellow	Yellow
25	Land west of Wildmoor Lane adjacent to M5	1.24	Yellow	Yellow

Fig 6. Comparison of Site Suitability
(N.B. For colour key refer to para. 8.5.2)



- 8.5.5 AECOM concluded that some sites could not be allocated if there was no information to suggest they were available for development. The outcome of the BDC 'Call for Sites' exercise means that this could have led AECOM to take a different view. However, it is also apparent that constraints on many of the sites means it less likely that its overall assessment would have changed significantly. The differences between the two studies mainly arise because of Green Belt and traffic factors, neither of which were fully considered by AECOM. Further information comparing the two studies can be found in Appendix 10.
- 8.5.6 The above comparison shows that 18 of 25 sites come within the same category. The reasons why the NP Group reached different conclusions on the seven remaining sites are outlined in the following paragraphs.
- 8.5.7 Sites 2, 3 and 5 were regarded as less suitable because accesses to all three sites would be onto Stourbridge Road. Access to this road from existing properties and businesses has become more difficult as traffic has increased, particularly at peak periods. Further development would add to present levels of congestion and pollution, the matter of most concern for residents (see also para. 8.10.9). Site 2 also has an important role in preventing Catshill merging with Bromsgrove, of added importance given the planned development off Perryfields Road to the south. It lies within strategic parcel C12 which "constitutes the majority of the gap between Catshill and Bromsgrove Town".
- 8.5.8 Sites 13 and 16 were seen as unsuitable and damaging to Green Belt purposes. They would reinforce ribbon development to the north of North Marlbrook by helping to consolidate existing pockets of housing while reducing the gap with Lydiate Ash. Furthermore, they present a longer-term threat to the Green Belt by making other land parcels more vulnerable to development.
- 8.5.9 Sites 21 and 23 could have some potential for development, albeit in the longer term. These sites make a limited contribution to the Green Belt (see analysis of strategic parcel C1) and would have less impact on traffic flows through the village because of their proximity to the A38 and M5.
- 8.5.10 Both the NP and AECOM Site Assessments found four sites fell within the same categories. Of these, site 22 was identified as the most suitable site for residential use. The loss of open land in this location would have limited impact on Green Belt purposes and avoid traffic from the development requiring access directly onto the A38. Instead, an improved junction between Woodrow Lane and the A38 could enable vehicular journeys to junction 4 (M5) and towards J1 (M42) and Bromsgrove to be made without needing to travel through core areas of Catshill.
- 8.5.11 Site 24 was considered to have similar advantages. It was thought unlikely that the full site would be needed during the plan period and mitigation measures would be necessary given the proximity of parts of the site to the M5.
- 8.5.12 Site 4 was initially thought to have access problems but it was subsequently shown that these could be overcome. This site would mean traffic had direct access to Stourbridge Road but an indicative layout illustrated how this could be provided at a point to the north of the junction with Meadow Road meaning that traffic from the site would not add directly to the high volumes coming from the south. Mitigation measures would be needed to address the proximity of the site to the M5.
- 8.5.13 Site 25 is a modest area of land next to the M5 and adjacent to recent development off Church Road. Providing access issues can be overcome this site could provide an opportunity for a small development and allow the completion of a linkage in the Green Infrastructure Network.



8.5.14 The main conclusion of the site assessment exercises was that a small number of potential sites could be identified, based on the chosen criteria, although it was considered unlikely that all of these sites would be required for housing purposes by 2030. The majority of sites considered were deemed unsuitable for development as shown in figure 6. However, the District Council has not yet completed its Green Belt Review. This will be central to the Council's approach in developing an updated land use planning strategy for the District. The absence of such a strategy currently means it is uncertain what housing targets will be proposed for different parts of the District. In these circumstances it is not realistic to identify specific sites within the NP. Instead, policy H1 sets out an approach, based on the criteria developed in the site assessment studies, that would minimise the impact of further housing development in the Parish. It is proposed that this approach should be adopted when assessing future housing schemes.

8.6 Housing Needs Assessment

- 8.6.1 The 2012 Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) found the proportion of older person households (those over the current working age) in the county was forecast to grow from 21.4% to around 33% of the total population²³. This suggests that there will be high demand for smaller properties suited to meeting the needs of older person households. In the Parish 30% of the population is aged over 60 (Census 2011).
- 8.6.2 As development opportunities arise, evidence from the Worcestershire SHMA, community consultations and the Amion Housing Needs Assessment²⁴ supports the view that accommodation should be one or a combination of the following smaller types:
- Affordable housing for rental or shared ownership only by those with a local connection;
 - Properties aimed at those elderly residents downsizing, young families or first-time buyers, with an emphasis on smaller houses of the two to three bedrooms;
 - Properties built to the latest technical standards, with a proportion of ground floor single-storey dwellings located close to key facilities, suitable for more elderly residents.
- 8.6.3 The adopted Bromsgrove District Plan requires provision of up to 40% affordable dwellings on greenfield sites or any site accommodating 200 or more dwellings (policy BDP8). The policy says the focus should be on smaller units because of the existing high proportion of 4 and 5 bedroom homes. This is reinforced in policy BDP7 (Housing Mix and Density) which highlights the need to deliver more 2 and 3 bedroom properties in order to help create mixed and vibrant communities.
- 8.6.4 These findings and policy position in the local plan were echoed by local residents in the initial consultation who felt that the 'balance of housing types' and the 'mix of housing sizes' were equally important housing matters to be addressed. The provision of 'affordable homes' was a further significant response, including the need for homes for 'first time buyers'. The second round of consultation also elicited a high number of comments regarding the type of housing needed. This suggested affordable homes, homes for the elderly and social housing should be the first priority when developing a housing strategy²⁵.

²³ <https://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/?page id=3602>

²⁴ Amion Housing Needs Assessment – Report in response to Inspector's Interim Conclusions -29th August 2014

²⁵ <http://catshillandnorthmarlbrookplan.org.uk/results-of-level-2-questionnaire-survey/>



8.6.5 In order to understand local conditions, a Housing Needs Assessment was carried out by AECOM to determine whether the SHMA and Local Plan policies were relevant for the Parish (Appendix 8). The intention was that this study would provide the evidence needed to ensure the correct housing types, sizes, tenure and affordability were identified to meet the needs of the local community.

8.7 Type and Size of housing

8.7.1 The composition of Catshill and North Marlbrook households reflects its stock of medium-to-large housing; more than half of the dwellings in Catshill have three-bedrooms. Although there has been an increase in the number of very large homes in the area, families with dependent children have fallen, and with home owners between the ages of 25 and 44.

8.7.2 Between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, the number of young people in Catshill and North Marlbrook declined much faster than those in Bromsgrove but there was an increase in the older population. It is reasonable to expect the ageing population of the Parish will be even more marked than that of Bromsgrove.

Age group	Catshill and North Marlbrook	Bromsgrove	England
0-15	-12.3%	-2.6%	1.2%
16 -24	10.4%	20.5%	17.2%
25-44	-12.3%	-8.2%	1.4%
45-64	4.9%	10.9%	15.2%
65-84	27.2%	23.4%	9.1%
85 and over	55.2%	46.9%	23.7%

Fig 7. Rate of change in the age structure in the Parish population, 2001-2011

8.7.3 The main demographic challenge for the Parish is the significant loss of younger people and the growth in the elderly population. As noted in the tenure section below, affordability has hindered many who are looking for a home. The decline in young people could be attributed to the lack of a sufficient supply of affordable dwellings and, if so, this shortfall should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Alternatively, younger age groups may move away for other reasons and the stock of housing should be rebalanced to suit the growing retirement-age cohort. In either case, an increase in the number of smaller dwellings should be sought.

8.7.4 The AECOM report concludes that the unmet demand for more affordable dwellings, such as flats, should be addressed. To meet needs, it recommends that 7.2% of new dwellings should have one bedroom and 39.5% should have two bedrooms. There is no requirement for 3-bedroom houses during the remainder of the plan period. Conversely, a need does exist for larger dwelling sizes, of four or more dwellings, where there is currently underprovision. It is also suggested that bungalows should be built, if possible, to meet the needs of an ageing population and because other smaller dwelling types, such as flats, may not in practice be popular market propositions in Catshill and North Marlbrook.



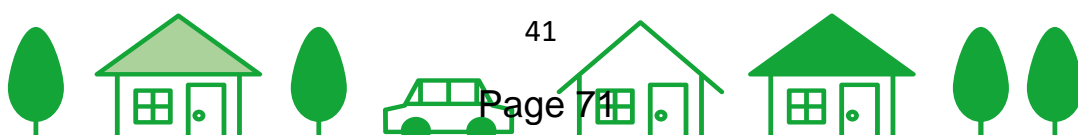
8.8 Tenure and Affordability

8.8.1 Housing tenure is broadly split between two categories, affordable and market housing. The mix of tenures in Catshill and North Marlbrook is shown in the following table:

Tenure	Catshill and North Marlbrook	Bromsgrove	England
Owned; total	73.5%	79.5%	63.3%
Shared ownership	1.5%	0.6%	0.8%
Social rented; total	16.5%	10.0%	17.7%
Private rented; total	7.5%	8.8%	16.8%

Fig 8. Housing Tenure (households) in the Parish, 2011

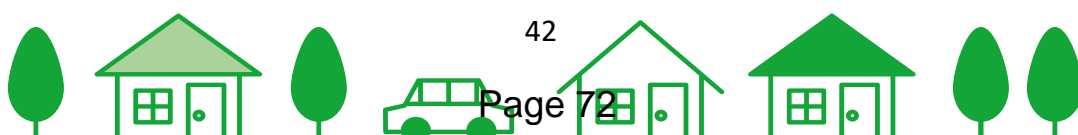
- 8.8.2 Catshill and North Marlbrook has a higher proportion of those who own their own home than the national average, and a corresponding lack of affordable dwellings for rent. The proportion of those in social rented accommodation is higher than that of the District, while private rented accommodation remains lower.
- 8.8.3 The rates of private renting and shared ownership across Bromsgrove suggest that these tenures are becoming more common tenures for those priced out of market housing. The latter is not close to being affordable for most people on average incomes, although 25% shared ownership and social rent are feasible for these households. Those whose earnings are in the lower quartile bracket are unable to afford any of the tenures described, pointing to an overwhelming issue of affordability in the area.
- 8.8.4 Emphasis should therefore be placed on maximising the provision of affordable homes while ensuring that development sites are viable. More affordable houses for market sale and market rent would also reduce affordability pressures on these tenures and expand the options available to households at all income levels.
- 8.8.5 AECOM estimates that 73 households in Catshill and North Marlbrook are currently unable to access housing that meets their needs, and that a further 38 households will be in need of affordable homes over the plan period.
- 8.8.6 Providing new development in the parish is compliant with local plan policy (i.e. 40% affordable home provision), and sufficient sites come forward above the minimum size threshold for affordable housing delivery (10 dwellings), this should be sufficient to meet the needs of the community, which amounts to 111 dwellings.
- 8.8.7 A move away from the high proportion of owner-occupation to achieve a more balanced housing profile for the Parish is desirable if the housing needs of both younger and elderly households is to be met. More emphasis should be placed on building properties that are generally smaller and are affordable to most households (such as Social and Affordable Rent). Achieving or exceeding Bromsgrove's target of 40% affordable homes on greenfield developments of 10 units or more should therefore be encouraged wherever possible.
- 8.8.8 Policy H2 requires new housing development to provide a mix of size, type and tenure consistent with the findings of the AECOM Housing Need Assessment summarised above.



8.9 Quality Design

- 8.9.1 The first round of consultation (2017) on the NP process found that the 'character of properties' was important to many residents and that it should be taken into account in new house design, along with the need for developments to be sustainable. Good design standards were also mentioned in a significant proportion of the comments received in a second round of consultation the following year (2018). Consequently, the NP Vision Statement is underpinned by a presumption that development should be of good quality which helps retain the character of the village.
- 8.9.2 National planning policy encourages local communities to participate in the process of developing design policies which reflect local aspirations and are grounded on an understanding of each area's defining characteristics (NPPF para.125). Neighbourhood plans therefore have an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in new development through their policy content (NPPF para.29). This is reinforced by the direction that planning permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions (NPPF. Para 130).
- 8.9.3 Similarly, the supporting text to BDC Policy BDP19 (High Quality Design). para. 8.189, explains that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development which can help to create well-built and connected places where design contributes to a robustness that will last well beyond the construction of any particular building. Local distinctiveness (para. 8.191) can be enhanced by local features including street pattern, green spaces, building layout and architectural styles. Details such as building materials, trees and boundary treatments also play an important role in defining the character of an area.
- 8.9.4 AECOM was commissioned to provide design guidelines having regard for the existing character and context of the Parish in line with NPPF and BDC's good design principles. These guidelines advocate character-led design by employing ten design codes which are intended to respond to the existing pattern and form of development. These cover various aspects of the built and natural environment including the style, form and appearance of new buildings, the space around them and their connections to footpaths, cycle routes and the road network. The Design Guide (Appendix 13) also addresses more detailed matters such as building materials, architectural details and how energy efficient technologies can be incorporated into buildings.²⁶
- 8.9.5 Policies H3, H4 and H5 require new housing development and extensions to existing houses to be designed and planned with regard to the existing character and context of the Parish consistent with the findings of the AECOM Design Guide summarised above.

²⁶ Catshill and North Marlbrook Design Guide, March 2020 AECOM



8.10 Traffic and Infrastructure

8.10.1 Consultation events in 2017 and 2018 found that traffic was the most significant source of concern for residents. Traffic volumes, congestion and pollution figured prominently in responses while parking difficulties were mentioned because the number of vehicles exceeded the capacity of the present infrastructure. The diagram (**Fig.9**) on the following page, from the initial consultation in 2017, shows the dominance of traffic as the most contentious issue in the Parish.

8.10.2 Residents identified 'traffic volume', 'speeding traffic' and 'traffic noise' as the top reason that 'detracted from living in the village'. Numerous comments supported this view:

"Horrendous traffic congestion - Catshill is a cut through"
"Increasing traffic through village, gridlock"
"High volume of traffic along Stourbridge Road"

8.10.3 Stourbridge Road, Meadow Road, Gibb Road, Golden Cross Lane and Woodrow Lane are under most pressure. Traffic and parking issues are compounded on Meadow Road, which has three schools and two coach services, and Golden Cross Lane where the majority of shops are located. In Meadow Road parking close to the schools created difficulties because of inadequate parking facilities, leading to blocked pavements. Road and pavement maintenance is also considered to be poor. Resident's frustrations can be summarised in these views:

"Parking around local schools - safety issue"
"Traffic speed and noise on Golden Cross Lane"
"Problems parking during school hours"



Catshill First School on Meadow Road

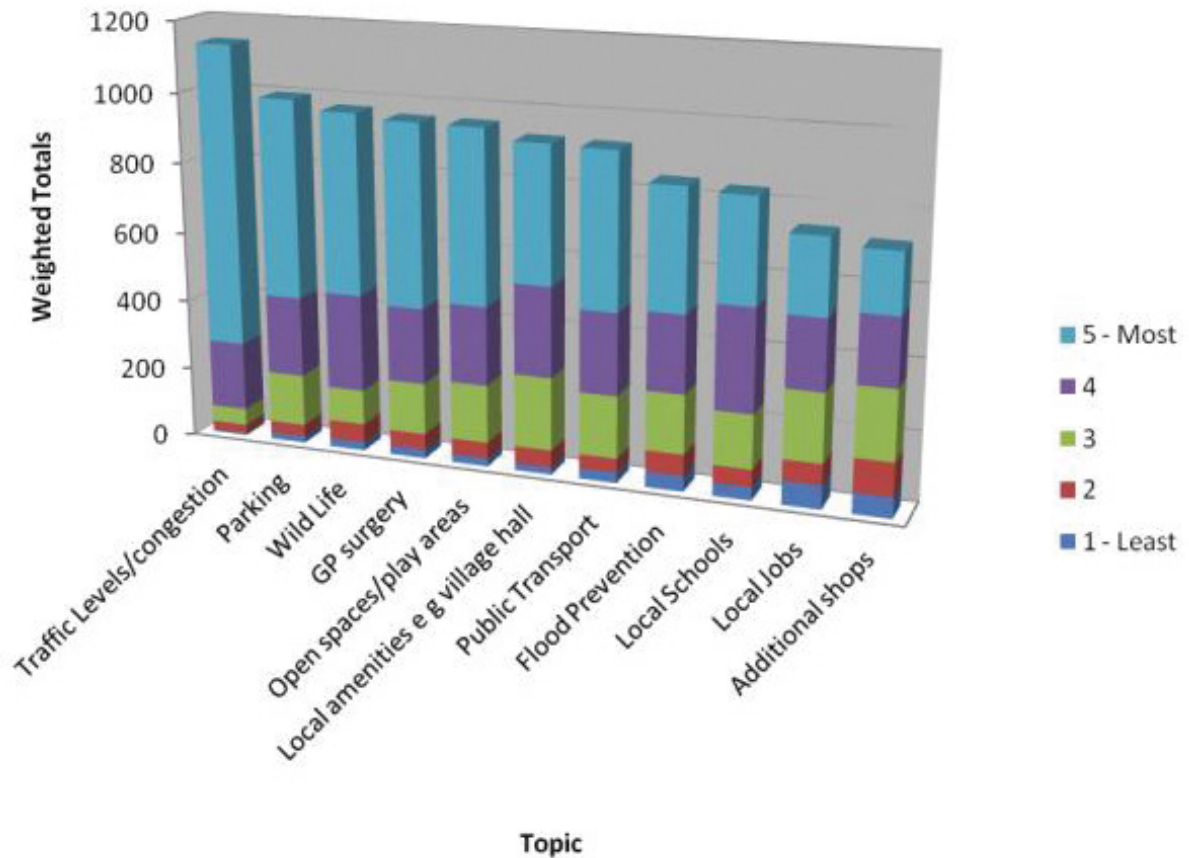
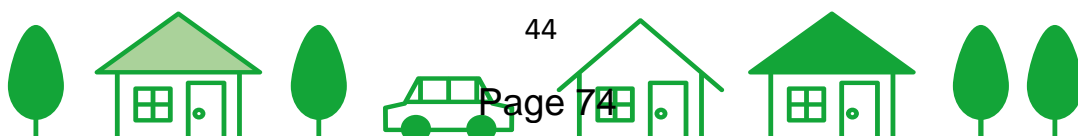


Fig 9. Most important topics

8.10.4 The proximity of the Parish to the motorway network has been a 'double edged sword' leading to a high volume of traffic through Catshill at peak times. Many residents in the District commute to work in and around Birmingham. (para.2.8 - Bromsgrove Adopted Plan Jan 2017). Catshill lies on an obvious route from the west and south of Bromsgrove to the M5 (junction 4) so that motorists use the village as the most direct route to the motorway.



Intersection of Stourbridge Road and Meadow Road



8.10.5 It is inevitable that the pressure on the local road network will increase once three sites identified on the western and northern edge of Bromsgrove Town are completed. These sites will provide more than half of the District Council’s planned delivery of 4700 dwellings by 2023 and are included in its local plan (policy BDP5). One of these sites at Norton Farm, Birmingham Road (BROM1) is under construction and expected to provide 316 houses. This will increase traffic primarily on the A38. Two other sites at Perryfields Road (BROM2) and Whitford Road (BROM3) are the subject of planning applications and expected to provide approximately 1800 dwellings. These urban extensions can be seen on the following diagram:

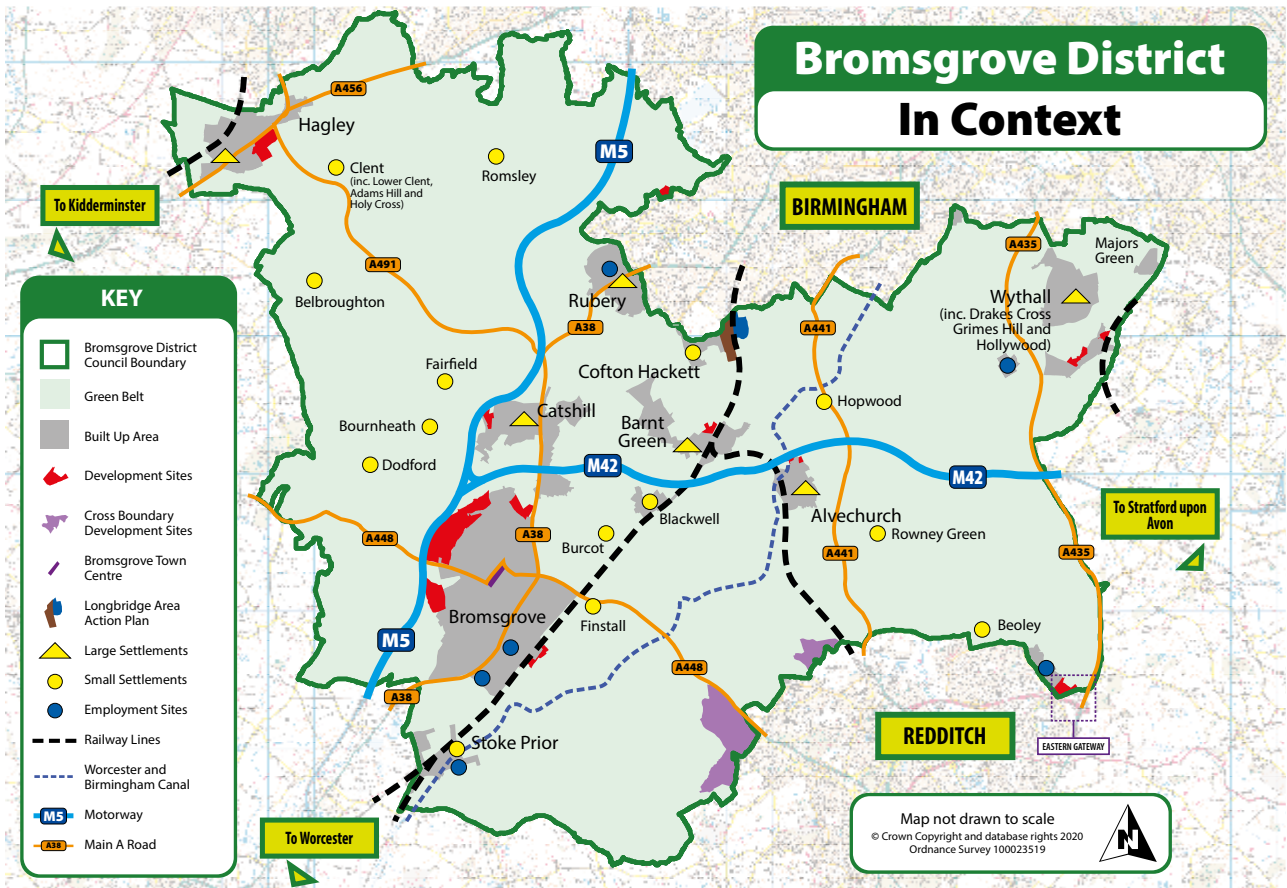


Fig 10. Bromsgrove Local Plan Development Sites 2004

8.10.6 Applications for BROM2 and BROM3 are subject to strong opposition from local residents and action groups like 'Whitford Vale Voice' and 'Perryfields New Development' who are concerned that the existing road network cannot cope with the traffic expected to be generated by these schemes. Both developments will also have implications for traffic through Catshill as they will reinforce the cross-town movement of vehicles heading towards the motorway (M5, junction 4).

8.10.7 A technical note published by Whitford Vale Voice on likely traffic flows from the Whitford Road and Perryfields sites says in connection with the applicant's figures:

"With regards to the impact of development in Catshill, the Applicant assigns 33.2% of Whitford Road residential development vehicle trips plus 32.6% of residential and 28.4% of employment development vehicle trips from Perryfields to the Catshill Area."

"Concerned about impact of development vehicle trips at the Perryfields Road / Stourbridge Road and Stourbridge Road / Barnsley Hall Road junctions on the grounds that development at the Whitford Road site will introduce in excess of 100 additional vehicle trips at these locations." ²⁷

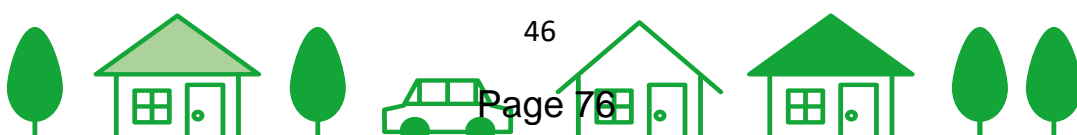
8.10.8 Traffic flowing north from both sites (1800 dwellings) towards the motorway will travel via Perryfields Road to Stourbridge Road, before turning into Meadow Road in Lower Catshill on towards the A38 via Gibb Lane or Woodrow Lane. While work is proposed by the developers at the appropriate junctions to mitigate the impact of extra traffic this will not increase road capacity. Improvements are also planned by the County Council to the main junctions along the A38 corridor from Lydiate Ash (M5, Junction 4) to Hanbury Turn (junction with B4091 Hanbury Road)²⁸. However, it is unlikely that these will provide a satisfactory solution to Bromsgrove's road infrastructure problems and there have been consistent calls for the building of a Western Distributor Road.

8.10.9 Whatever mitigation measures are taken to enhance junctions and reduce congestion it is evident that traffic volumes and pollution will increase in Catshill once the Bromsgrove Town expansion sites are built-out. Traffic has a serious impact on local residents and it must be a guiding principle that housing development in the village should minimise its contribution to traffic volumes and pollution. This is particularly so for Stourbridge Road as far as its junction with Meadow Road, which is the principal route for traffic from the south entering the village. The results from the second questionnaire (2018), showed that opposition to future housing was in part a response to the expectation that traffic problems would get worse if more housing was permitted.

²⁷ Technical Note WVV BDC 45 Planning Application 16/1132

Site A Land off Whitford Road Traffic Study Area Review June 2019

²⁸ Worcestershire County Council's 4th Transport Plan and <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/ltp4>
<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/a38improvements>



- 8.10.10 Residents also saw 'public transport', as an area which required improvement. Improvements sought included direct connections to Bromsgrove rail station, more frequent buses to Bromsgrove, more frequent trains to Birmingham and bus services to the hospitals. An improved bus service was also needed to serve residents living in North Marlbrook. Among comments received were:

***"Better public transport for North Marlbrook.
It seems adequate for Catshill"
Younger people want bus services to run later in the
evening, especially from Birmingham;
"Bus services that run later than 10pm during the week"***

- 8.10.11 Poor public transport was one of the reasons that 'detract from living in the parish' according to consultation responses. The lack of evening buses and poor services for North Marlbrook were highlighted once again. One respondent commented that public transport was poor after 5pm while another complained about the disrepair of bus shelters:

***"Some bus shelters on the A38 are in need of cleaning or mending as they
are covered in algae and shabby when I walk past"***

- 8.10.12 Improvements to public transport have the potential to reduce the use of cars by local residents and it is one of the BDC's objectives to encourage more sustainable modes of travel including a more reliable public transport network across the District²⁹. However, the most strategic bus service (No. 144) passing through the Parish and linking Birmingham and Worcester has been reduced in frequency from two to one bus per hour in each direction discouraging, for example, those who might use the service to get to work³⁰.

- 8.10.13 Community Action CA2 looks to work with the relevant authorities to encourage reductions in speed through the Parish and better management of traffic. Community Action CA3 seeks to improve local bus service provision and connectivity, particularly for North Marlbrook residents and for improvements in services in the evenings and on Sundays.

²⁹ Bromsgrove District Local Plan Strategic Objective 6

³⁰ <https://www.bromsgrovestandard.co.uk/news/bromsgrove-to-birmingham-your-phenomenal-response-to-144-bus-cuts/>



8.11 Relevant Bromsgrove Local Plan Policies

BDP2 Settlement Hierarchy: explains there are ‘four facets to the delivery of housing’ within the district, including ‘Development sites in or adjacent to large settlements’ which identifies Catshill as one of six large settlements.

BDP3 Future Housing and Employment Growth: confirms 4,700 homes are to be provided outside of the Green Belt and 2,300 homes within the Green Belt following a Green Belt Review.

BDP4 Green Belt: states that a Green Belt Review will be carried out before 2023 to find sufficient land to accommodate 2,300 dwellings. The review will take into account up to date evidence and any proposals in Neighbourhood Plans. The policy sets out the criteria for which development would be acceptable within the Green Belt.

BDP5 Other Development Sites: includes a site allocated for 80 dwellings in Catshill which has been completed.

BDP7 Housing Mix and Density: requires housing proposals to take account of identified housing needs in terms of size and types of dwellings. On schemes of 10 or more dwellings a wider mix of dwelling types may be required. The density of new housing will make the most efficient use of land whilst maintaining character and local distinctiveness.

BDP8 Affordable Housing: Affordable housing will be required on sites providing a net increase of 11 or more dwellings: On greenfield sites up to 40% affordable housing will be required or on any site accommodating 200 or more dwellings. For brownfield sites affordable requirements are for up to 30% where there would be less than 200 dwellings.

BDP10 Homes for the Elderly: the District Council will encourage the provision of housing for the elderly and for people with special needs, where appropriate.

BDP16 Sustainable Transport: development should comply with Worcestershire County Council’s policies, design guide and car parking standards, incorporate safe and convenient access and be well related to the wider transport network.

BDP19 High Quality Design: provides a set of principles to safeguard the local distinctiveness of the District and ensure a high quality, safe and distinctive design throughout the development.



8.12 Housing and Infrastructure Objectives and Policies

HOUSING OBJECTIVES	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO OBJECTIVE	BROMSGROVE LOCAL PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO OBJECTIVE
Ensure sufficient new housing is provided in the most sustainable locations to prevent speculative residential development for the rest of the plan period.	H1	BDP2
Provide housing which meets the needs of local residents.	H2	BDP7
Priority should be given to affordable homes, the elderly and dwellings for first time buyers.	H2	BDP7 BDP8 BDP10
Ensure the design of new development is compatible with the character of the Parish.	H3 H4 H5	BDP19

H1. Major new residential development of ten or more dwellings will be acceptable on sites that meet at least one of the following criteria:

- 1. The site is released from the Green Belt as part of the Green Belt and District Plan Review by Bromsgrove District Council; or,**
- 2. The site involves the redevelopment/reuse of previously developed land within the existing (i.e. non-green belt) urban areas of the Parish;**

Proposals for major residential development should demonstrate that they accord with all other policies of the Neighbourhood Plan and, in particular, they should satisfy the following criteria:

- a) Ensure that revised Green Belt boundaries are defensible in the longer-term, especially the maintenance of existing gaps between:

 - i. Catshill and Bromsgrove Town**
 - ii. North Marlbrook and Lydiate Ash****
- b) Ensure housing is not located where it would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe;**
- c) Development is located to provide sustainable access to the local shopping centre on Golden Cross Lane;**
- d) Development endeavours to minimise its visual impact in the wider topography and has appropriate regard on the capacity of the landscape to accept change;**
- e) Ensure suitable landscaping is provided on-site and, wherever possible, provide linkages to the Green Infrastructure Network.**

Continued on next page



Justification

Policy provisions in the BDP means it is likely that the Parish will be required to accommodate further housing to meet a proportion of the District Council's outstanding requirements during the remainder of the Plan period to 2030. Policy H1 therefore acknowledges that some changes to Green Belt boundaries will be made. Proposals for re-use of sites within existing urban parts of the Parish may also come forward and suitable schemes will be supported.

In the absence of a precise or indicative figure for the housing need a number of studies have been undertaken for the NP. These have sought to identify the possible scale of future housing, local housing needs and the least damaging locations where development will have minimal long-term impact, both on the Green Belt and the local community.

This work has led to a number of factors being identified which should be taken into account in either the allocation of sites (by Bromsgrove District Council) or in response to planning applications. Detailed information on the studies informing these criteria can be found in the appendices (3, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 11). It is intended that this information informs the District Council's review of the Bromsgrove District Plan and assists in determining the scale of development, the number and size of sites and housing needs in the Parish.

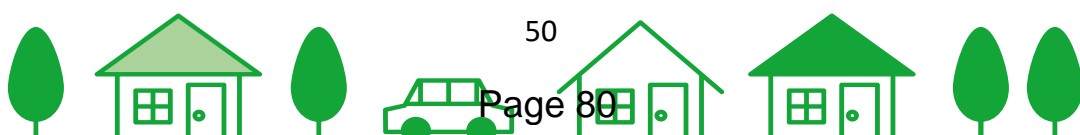
In accordance with NPPF para. 109, development should not be located where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. This is most likely to arise on core parts of the main road network. Schemes should also avoid locations which are distant from local services and facilities because this is more likely to encourage the use of motor vehicles.

H2. New residential development in the Parish of more than 10 dwellings will be supported where it provides a mix of housing types, tenures and sizes consistent with the findings of the AECOM Housing Need Assessment or subsequent studies. In particular, schemes should provide:

- a) smaller dwellings of one and two bedrooms;**
- b) properties suitable for the elderly;**
- c) a mix of housing tenures including social and affordable rent and shared ownership;**
- d) sufficient affordable housing to achieve the BDC target for affordable housing specified in the adopted local plan.**

Justification

The release of land for housing development before 2030 will contribute to the District Council's overall housing target. The AECOM Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix 8) found that the limited supply of smaller homes was leading to a steady decline in young adults, including those with families, and that there was a need for smaller homes in preference to larger properties. New housing should address these issues by providing a mix of accommodation including different types of social housing tenure and homes for the elderly. Phased development will be supported, particularly where this leads to more variety in the built form. Should subsequent housing need studies be completed, such as that being undertaken by District Council, development proposals should reflect any revisions to the amount, mix and housing tenure types that are required.



- H3. New housing should be designed to meet relevant energy and construction standards and have regard to the design principles set out in the Catshill and North Marlbrook Design Guide. Development proposals should demonstrate that they have considered and applied the following design principles:**
- a) they harmonise with and enhance the existing settlement in terms of physical form, pattern and movement;**
 - b) they relate to the local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long distance views;**
 - c) they enhance the established pattern of streets and other public spaces;**
 - d) they integrate with existing vehicular and pedestrian routes and linkages;**
 - e) they respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;**
 - f) they make suitable provision for sustainable waste management, including collection points, without having an adverse impact on the streetscene;**
 - g) they integrate energy efficient technologies as part of the design process;**
 - h) they promote social inclusion by ensuring social housing is fully integrated with the overall design;**
 - i) through design they minimise the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour.**

Justification

There is little in the way of a coherent building style in the Parish. However, there is the potential to better reflect features and elements of the local architectural environment with new development by reference to the Design Codes contained in the AECOM Design Guide for Catshill and North Marlbrook (Appendix 13), the District Council's High Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document (2019) and 'Secured by Design' Development Guides. Doing so would assist in integrating new buildings with their surroundings and help to maintain a sense of place and crime-free space for the community and visitors.

- H4. Proposals for windfall development will be supported providing they do not detract from the existing street scene, result in cramped building forms, have an unacceptable visual impact or adversely affect the living conditions of neighbouring residents.**

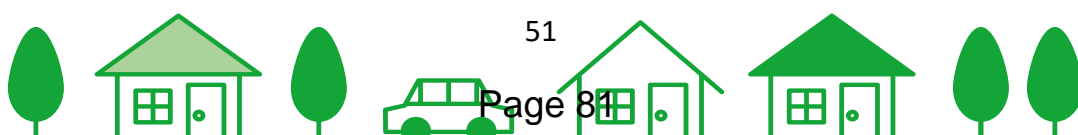
Justification

Proposals for small-scale housing developments in the urban part of the Parish will be treated positively providing they respect the existing character of the area and comply with design and layout requirements as set out in the District Council's 'High Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document (2019)' and the AECOM Design Guide.

- H5. Proposals for extensions and alterations should take into account the character, size and scale of the existing building to ensure they complement and enhance the building and its setting.**

Justification

Depending on circumstances, it is possible to carry out extensions and alterations to existing properties without the need for planning permission (Permitted Development). Where permission is required it is important that the proposals do not detract from the fundamental form or appearance of the original building.



9. Commerce and Community Policies

9.1 Retail

9.1.1 Consultation with businesses and residents showed that local shops and amenities were valued (Appendices 1 & 2). Nevertheless, there was a widely held view that the shopping area suffered many shortcomings, including inadequate parking, lighting and signage and there was poor access to premises. A need for more quality, independent shops and businesses was highlighted such as vets, delicatessens, fruit and vegetable and flower shops. The prevalence of fast food outlets was another matter that needed to be addressed given that seven takeaways and two restaurants dominate the local centre.

"Too many takeaways/fast food outlets"

Consultation comment

9.1.2 A business survey (Appendix 2) reinforced this view pointing out the inadequacies of the shopping area, the loss of independent shops in recent years and a corresponding decrease in footfall during traditional working hours as fast food outlets have replaced them.



Catshill local centre

- 9.1.3 Most residents valued the availability and accessibility of local services and facilities such as the schools, churches, the pharmacy and GP surgery. Residents in North Marlbrook were less fortunate with only a mini supermarket within easy access of those living in this part of the Parish.
- 9.1.4 Despite support for local shops an analysis of those using local services showed that the majority of respondents 'never or 'infrequently' used the butchers, the dentist, hairdressers, the fast food outlets in Golden Cross Lane or the coach services in Meadow Road. Instead the most frequently used services were the mini supermarkets, a Spar and Co-op store, and corner shops, closely followed by the pharmacy. This pattern of usage may also contribute to the increased traffic and pressure for parking coming from those living outside the village.
- 9.1.5 Policy COM1 discourages any more takeaways being proposed in the village's local centre while policy COM2 promotes initiatives to improve the shopfronts and forecourts to these premises reflecting advice in the AECOM Design Guide.

9.2 Commercial and Employment

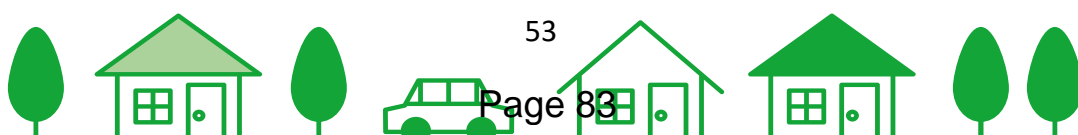
- 9.2.1 The business survey (Appendix 2) confirmed that commerce in Catshill is mostly based in shops and offices, providing retail, personal and professional services. Each business employs 6 staff on average (including full time and part time staff) with the highest number of employees at the Essential Marketeer (Golden Cross Lane) with 21 staff and the Garden Centre (Stourbridge Road) with 18 staff. Approximately 160 jobs were identified in the survey suggesting that the total number of jobs in the village is likely to be less than 200 (although businesses immediately adjacent to the Parish at the Marlbrook crossroads means this may increase the total to the 250 jobs identified in the business survey in 2017 (Appendix 2).
- 9.2.2 Most businesses did not expect to expand, move to new premises or leave the Parish in the next five years although the two main employers said they would be providing new job opportunities during this period. Retaining businesses within Catshill and North Marlbrook is important for the well-being of the village and the community spirit which is evident from the consultation results.
- 9.2.3 Policy COM3 supports and protects local businesses and retail units from change of use.
- 9.2.4 New sources of employment should be encouraged particularly where local jobs lead to a reduction in car usage by encouraging sustainable economic development. Home working is the most likely way of achieving this and has the potential to reduce traffic movements in the Parish. Initiatives that encourage people to live and work will therefore be supported. This approach would reflect the increase in home working reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) during the last 20 years.³¹
- 9.2.5 Policies COM4 and COM5 support new business and home start-ups.

9.3 Community Facilities

9.3.1 The neighbourhood area has a number of community facilities which are highly valued by local residents. Local community facilities are shown on fig 3 and these provide a range of events and classes covering all age groups and include:

- **Catshill Village Hall** regular events covering, fitness classes for both adults and children, dance classes, social group for elderly people, ante and prenatal classes for mothers, and Women's' Institute meetings;
- **Catshill Baptist Church** food bank, 'PULSE' youth club, craft group, coffee mornings, cinema with latest films (free of charge) and regular coffee mornings;
- **Catshill Evangelical Church** baby and toddlers group, coffee morning, activities for children over 7;
- **Catshill Methodist Church** youth club, toddlers club, social group, men's group, carers group;
- **Catshill Social Club** regular dancing classes for children;
- **St Luke's Church Centre** pre school classes for children aged 2 to 5, and the hall is open for hire.

³¹ Characteristics of Home Workers, ONS, June 2014





Village Hall

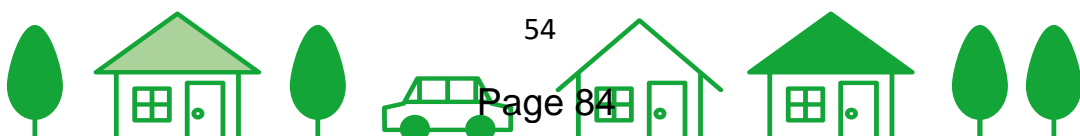


Baptist Church

- 9.3.2 The need for a community centre was expressed in both rounds of consultation (Appendices 1 & 5) partly because older people felt that youth clubs or groups based in a centre would help to reduce anti-social behaviour and the threat imposed by groups of youths hanging around on street corners. Recently Catshill Baptist Church has built a well-appointed extension to the church expressly for the needs of the community. Since this facility has been open the PULSE youth club has been meeting regularly and a cinema showing the latest films is now available on alternate Sundays.
- 9.3.3 The improved facilities at Catshill Baptist Church together with other venues means there are sufficient community facilities for all age groups. This removes the need for another community centre although the focus on providing more organised youth activities must not be lost.
- 9.3.4 Policies COM6 and COM7 are intended to protect existing community facilities and support improvements to enhance the health and well-being of local residents. Community action CA1 looks to provide an overall strategy detailing the facilities available and of benefit to all age groups.

“We need to maintain local facilities, particularly a good range of shops, cafés and restaurants”.

Consultation response



9.4 Relevant Bromsgrove Local Plan Policies

BDP12 Sustainable Communities will ensure provision is made for services and facilities to meet the needs of the community. It will also seek to retain existing services and facilities that meet a local need or ensure adequate replacement is provided. New developments that individually or cumulatively add to requirements for infrastructure and services will be expected to contribute to the provision of necessary improvements in accordance with BDP6.

BDP13 New Employment Development Sustainable economic development in rural areas through proportionate extensions to existing business or conversion of rural buildings taking into account the potential impact on the openness and the purposes of including the land in Green Belt. Proposals that can demonstrate significant benefits to the local economy and/or community will be considered favourably.

BDP14 Designated Employment The regeneration of the District will continue through maintaining and promoting existing employment provision in sustainable, accessible and appropriate locations.

BDP15 Rural Renaissance The Council will support proposals that satisfy the social and economic needs of rural communities by encouraging: g) Rural diversification schemes, as well as the provision of live-work units and the principle of home working.

BDP18 Local Centres The District Council recognises the important function of retail facilities and their contribution to community life across all settlements within the District. In order to maintain the concentration of shopping facilities in the large settlements, the District Council has identified the area where the majority of retail and related uses are located. Where new retail uses are proposed in this area, the District Council will expect the schemes to be compatible with the scale and form of the original buildings to which they apply. The loss of retail units within the shopping frontages may jeopardise the strength of the shopping area as a whole. The District Council will be keen to retain these facilities wherever possible.

BDP25 Health and Well Being Bromsgrove District Council will support proposals and activities that protect, retain or enhance existing sport, recreational and amenity assets, lead to the provision of additional assets, or improve access to facilities, particularly by non-car modes of transport. This will include maintaining greater access to and enjoyment of the countryside.



9.5 Commerce and Community Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVES	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO OBJECTIVE	BROMSGROVE LOCAL PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO OBJECTIVE
Support local businesses and retail outlets and encourage initiatives to improve the appearance of shopfronts in the local centre.	COM1 COM2 COM3	BDP14 BDP18 BDP19 BDP25
Support local employment opportunities through business start-ups and home working.	COM4 COM5	BDP12 BDP13
Protect and enhance, where possible, facilities for all local people in order that the community can take advantage of a full social and active lifestyle.	COM6 COM7	BDP25

COM1. The local centre on Golden Cross Lane contains a number of fast food outlets and restaurants (A5 Use Class). Proposals for further ones will not be supported unless a new outlet replaces an existing one.

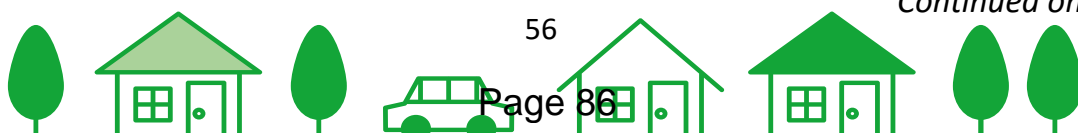
Justification

The local centre in Catshill is subject to the provisions of policy BDP18 of the Bromsgrove Local Plan. Policy BDP25.6 which refers to A5 hot-food takeaways is also relevant. Over 50% of the units in the Catshill local centre comprise fast-food units and restaurants. Additional outlets of this type will not be supported because they would further reduce the variety of shops, limit daytime footfall, thereby affecting other traders and make journeys to other centres more likely. Marlbrook, by contrast, has very limited retail provision. In the absence of a recognised centre it is not possible to identify a suitable location in this area which could serve the wider community.

COM2. Proposals for new or replacement shopfronts in the local centre in Golden Cross Lane should accord with the principles outlined in the Catshill and North Marlbrook Design Guide. In particular shopfront frontages should:

- a) be in keeping with the whole building façade and reflect the character of the immediate area;
- b) where possible, introduce vertical emphasis in the shopfront (for instance through the use of pilasters and mullions);
- c) use signage that is proportionate to the scale of the overall shopfront and the building in which it is set;
- d) use quality materials that relate well to the building;
- e) where necessary for security purposes, use transparent shutters in preference to solid ones to avoid the creation of ‘dead’ frontages;
- f) provide suitable access for people with disabilities;
- g) include provision for refuse storage away from the public realm.

Continued on next page



In addition, proposals to unify and improve the service/parking/operational areas in front of the shops will be supported. Modest improvements to provide a more consistent appearance by, for instance, removing stub walls, providing a single level with marked parking spaces and minimising the range of materials used would contribute significantly to the appearance of the streetscene and make the area more useable for customers.

Justification

There is little consistency in the style and appearance of shopfronts in the main shopping area in Catshill. Where new shopfronts or replacements of existing ones are being proposed retailers should have regard to the design principles outlined above and those found in the Catshill and North Marlbrook Design Guide. Adopting these principles would lead to a more harmonious appearance for the shopping area and the immediate environment. In particular, improving the open areas in front of the shopfronts would help considerably to unify its overall appearance while making it easier for customers to use.

COM3. Business uses, including those involving retail outlets, will be supported, enhanced and, as far as possible, protected from alternative uses, subject to changes to the Use Class Order 2020, unless it can be demonstrated that there is no demand to retain the existing use (consistent with policy BDP14 of the BDP). An alternative use should not detract or adversely impact on neighbouring occupants or activities.

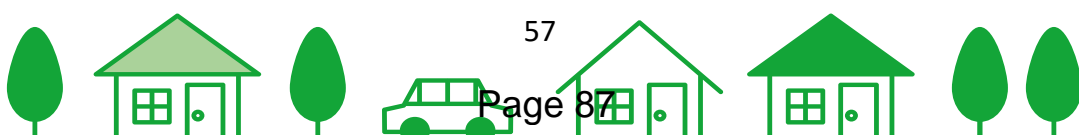
Justification

Catshill has a modest range of retail units and small businesses providing a number of services and jobs. These will be supported particularly where new jobs are likely to be created. A broader range, particularly of shops, would be welcomed consistent with the objectives of paragraph 28 of the NPPF. It is recognized, however, that economic factors and social trends will influence the introduction of new or alternative facilities.

COM4. Proposals for new start-up businesses will be supported within the existing urban area where this does not adversely affect the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers or compromises highway safety.

Justification

To encourage more sustainable lifestyles and reduce the need for residents to travel outside the parish for work, new business uses will be supported. This may involve, for instance, making better use of available space where there are other business activities or through the re-use or redevelopment of old premises. It will be necessary to ensure the proposed activity does not adversely affect neighbouring or nearby residents. Problems can arise because of the parking requirements for customers and delivery vehicles, noise generated by the activity and general disturbance.



COM5. Proposals involving home working i.e. from domestic properties, will be supported providing the activity is subordinate to the primary use of the building for residential purposes and will not affect the living conditions of neighbouring residents.

Justification

The opportunity for starting a business by working from home has increased with improvements in technology. It can contribute to more sustainable lifestyles and bring more people into work. Where planning consent is required schemes will be supported providing the activity would not adversely affect neighbouring residents because of parking requirements, the delivery of materials, noise, pollution or other forms of disturbance.

COM6. Existing community facilities should be retained, subject to changes to the Use Class Order 2020, unless it can be demonstrated that a facility is no longer economically viable or that an equivalent or enhanced facility will be provided on the same site or in a more appropriate location.

COM7. Proposals to enhance community facilities will be supported providing there is sufficient space on the existing site to avoid a cramped development and that the scheme would not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area or on the living conditions of nearby residents.

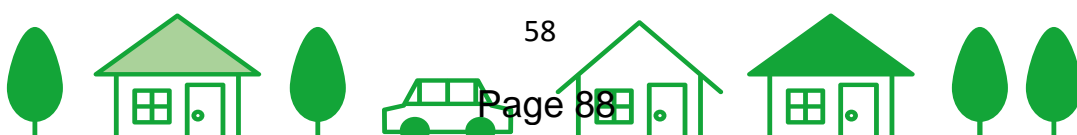
Justification

There are a number of community facilities across the Parish. These provide meeting rooms and host a range of activities. Wherever possible these should be retained, unless alternative provision can be provided in a suitable location. Proposals to enhance existing facilities will be supported providing they do not have a detrimental impact on the surrounding area.

“Generally well-maintained facilities”

“Good local amenities I use the Village Hall a lot”

“Need to find places for our youth so they feel involved”



10. Environment Policies

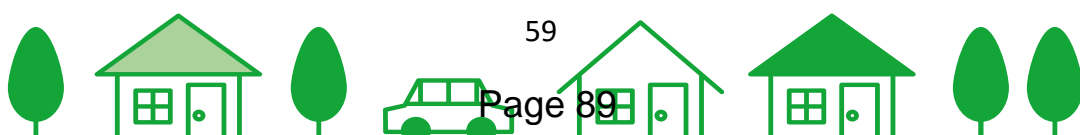
10.1 Green Infrastructure

- 10.1.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) is the term used to describe a network of green spaces, both in urban and rural areas, which have the potential to provide a wide range of environmental benefits and improve the quality of life and health for local communities. GI covers the landscape, green spaces, informal and formal areas for recreation as well as historic and water environments and is vital in maintaining and improving habitats for wildlife.
- 10.1.2 The contribution of GI is recognised in national planning guidance and it is an important element in addressing climate change (NPPF para. 150). The key to understanding the concept of GI is that green spaces can (and should) perform multiple functions. GI can therefore help to mitigate climate change by providing routes for walking and cycling, thereby encouraging less reliance on vehicles. It also a source for recreational use and is crucial in providing habitats for local wildlife.
- 10.1.3 GI also underpins sustainable development. For instance, it can help manage flood risk arising from new development, provide new green spaces for residents and wildlife and offset the impacts of climate change using planting for cooling and shading. The Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Partnership has produced a GI Strategy for the County which sets out principles to enable a coherent approach to delivery across a range of initiatives.³²

10.2 Local Green Infrastructure

- 10.2.1 Approximately half of the Parish lies within the Green Belt which extends around most of the Parish. Two small, but important stream/brook courses, 'the Battlefield Brook' and 'The Marl Brook', meet in Lower Catshill near to Church Road and provide both habitats and natural corridors for wildlife.
- 10.2.2 The village has an extensive network of public rights of way which could provide better access for cycling, walking-to-school, dog walking and similar community activities. They also connect to the open countryside beyond the parish boundary. A number of these footpaths are either unknown, underused or unsuitable because they are poorly maintained, unsuitably surfaced and may be regarded as potentially unsafe (refer Appendix 11).
- 10.2.3 The most used of these important community assets is the popular Milton Road cycle path noted as FP 515(C) and 516(C) between Stourbridge Road and Milton Road. This is wide, often tree lined, has an all-weather surface, is illuminated and in many places affords pleasant open views to the surrounding countryside. Footpath 523(B), which starts near the War Memorial in Lower Catshill, also links to a major Worcestershire County Council (WCC) county network of footpaths known as the Royal Hunters Walks, a set of three routes that start in Sanders Park, Bromsgrove. These are known as the 'Hedgelayner Walk', the 'Chartists Walk' and the 'Foresters Walk' and were created several years ago in partnership with WCC. There are, however, many other, more localised footpaths/blue/green corridors which could be improved to provide more accessible and safer pedestrian/cycle routes for the benefit of residents and wildlife.

³² http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20015/planning_policy_and_strategy/1002/planning_for_green_infrastructure





Showing good integration of houses, open green spaces and cycle ways/footpaths.



Showing cycle way/footpath with good security and natural boundaries.

10.2.4 Wildlife ranked highly in community responses (First Phase Consultation 2017 – see fig. 9), together with protection of the green belt and open spaces. Residents said that these were important reasons why the parish is an attractive place to live. The creation of more green spaces and improvements and the protection of existing ones and the wider green belt were regarded as important considerations in developing planning policies, particularly as there was a strong feeling that these spaces should be protected against future housing development.

Typical responses were:

“Preserve green space and plant more trees, encouraging more wildflowers”

“Feel really strongly about open and green spaces being developed for housing”

consultation responses

10.2.5 A Green Infrastructure Survey of parishioners in November 2019 found that many respondents highlighted the poor conditions of footpaths (Appendix 11). It was felt that footpaths should not only be maintained but also enhanced and new footpaths and cycle routes developed.

Typical responses were as follows:

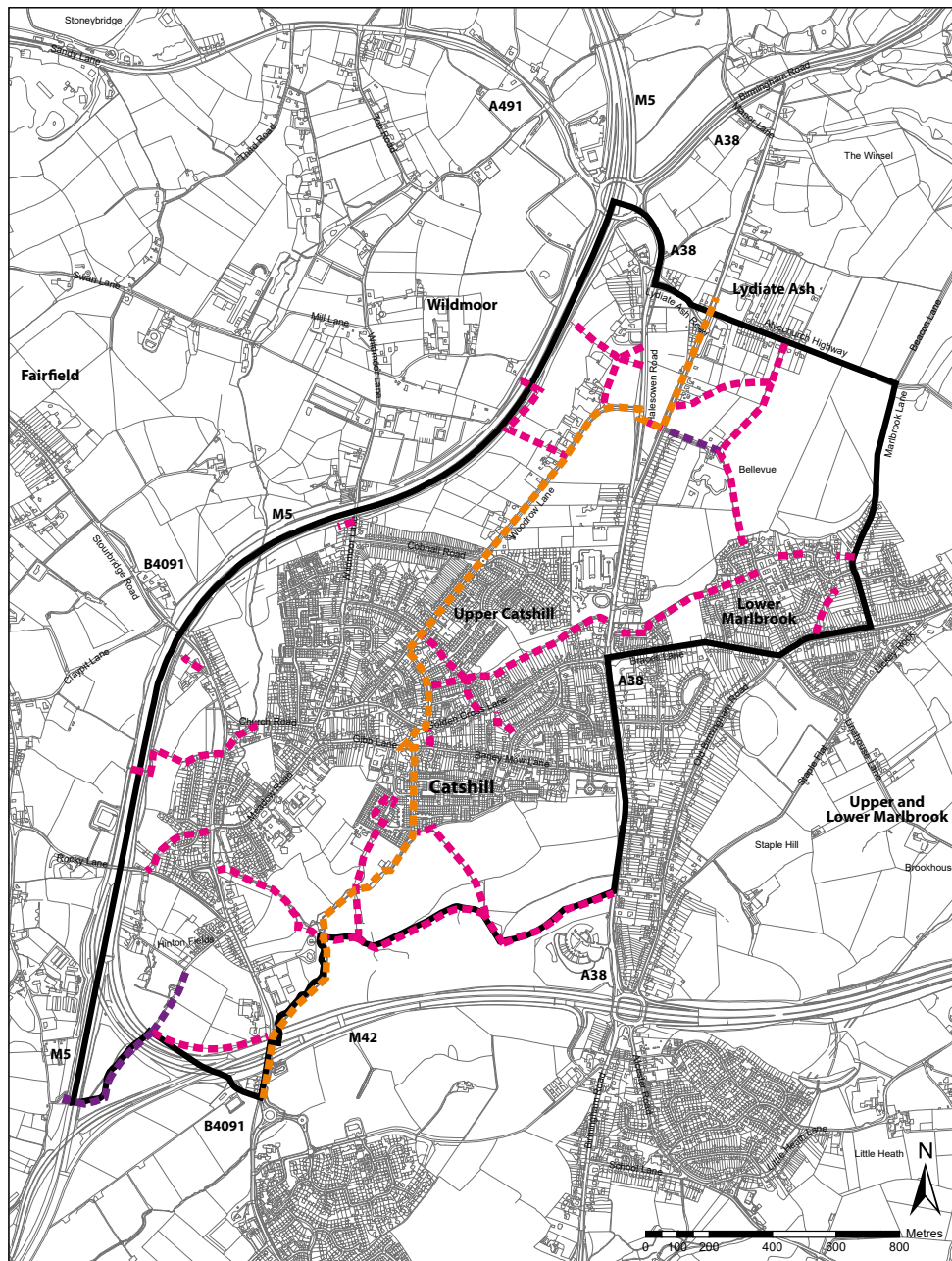
“Some of the footpaths are uneven and overgrown and don't make for pleasant walking.”

“Footpaths are important to maintain to encourage people to walk to shops and amenities and not use their cars on our overused roads.”

“Need connecting cycle path to get to Bromsgrove. Don't feel safe cycling to Bromsgrove from Marlbrook on the road.”



CATSHILL AND NORTH MARLBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan
Footpaths, Bridlepaths and Cycle Routes

Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan Area
- - - Footpaths
- - - Bridlepaths
- - - Cycle Routes



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Fig 11. Current Parish footpaths

10.2.6 New and improved footpaths and cycle routes are therefore seen as an essential part of a Green Infrastructure plan the Parish wishes to develop. The Parish Council has an important role in taking responsibility for the Green Infrastructure Strategy, in particular the funding and support for the public footpaths and cycle routes as described in Community Action CA 4.

10.2.7 Policy ENV1 requires new housing proposals to show how they will integrate within the footpaths and cycle links in the network as described in Appendix 11. Policy ENV2 ensures that housing development enhances the character and distinctiveness of the local green infrastructure and natural environment, incorporating tree planting and soft landscaping connecting to existing tree cover for the benefit of future residents and local wildlife.

10.3 Blue/Green Corridors

- 10.3.1 Green infrastructure is vital for the resilience of wildlife, which is under increasing stress from habitat loss. Blue/green corridors linking fragmented green spaces allows for the movement of wildlife through the landscape. Supporting wildlife is essential in maintaining and enhancing its ability to provide the wealth of ecosystem services that we rely on – air purification, water retention and climate regulation.
- 10.3.2 Policy ENV3 seeks to enhance blue/green corridors which are identified on the Policies Map, through development proposals which ensure the connectivity and function of these corridors.

10.4 Health and Well Being

- 10.4.1 Ensuring the health of communities across the District is a major priority for Bromsgrove District Council (BDP25) and a key aim of national planning guidance (NPPF para. 8). It is essential that land use policies are put in place that enable healthy lifestyles to be maintained and improved. It is the responsibility of planners, developers and policy makers to ensure that our communities have access to homes, environments, facilities and amenities that will enable them to lead healthy and productive lives.
- 10.4.2 An important component of health and wellbeing is open space, sport and recreation provision (BDP25). High quality, accessible open space, sport and recreation facilities in the right areas can have significant benefits in relation to health, community cohesion and general well-being.

10.5 Designation of Local Green Spaces

- 10.5.1 There is growing evidence that green spaces are vital to people's physical and mental health. Research has shown that lower levels of mental distress and higher degrees of life satisfaction are associated with those living in greener areas.³³ Similarly asthma rates among children aged four and five fell by a quarter for every extra 343 trees per km² while street trees were linked to a 29% reduction in early childhood asthma.³⁴ Better access to woods and green spaces therefore features in achieving healthier lives in Worcestershire.³⁵
- 10.5.2 The NPPF acknowledges that neighbourhood plans allow local communities to identify green areas and open spaces that are of particular importance and to designate them as Local Green Spaces to give them greater protection (para. 99). Paragraph 101 of the NPPF also goes on to confirm that "policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts".
- 10.5.3 Following consultation events at workshops, held in May and June 2017, and a Landscape Character Assessment Study (January 2018) six local green spaces were identified which exemplified 'the distinctive character and environment' of the Parish - an important requirement of the NP Vision Statement. They also protect and enhance the blue/green corridors identified in the Green Infrastructure Plan and provide 'stepping-stones' for wildlife and plants.

³³ Mark Kinver BBC News (2013), www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-24806994

³⁴ GS Lovasi, JW Quinn, KM Neckerman, Ms Perzanowski, and A.Rundle, Children Living In Areas With More Street Trees Have Lower Asthma Prevalence (2008)

³⁵ Planning for Health in Worcestershire Technical Research Paper, March 2015.



10.5.4 The identified green spaces passed the initial assessment of whether they were 'Local in Character' i.e. a space that is a local facility and not part of open countryside; and an extensive tract of land in 'Close Proximity' i.e. a reasonable walking distance, from the centre of the village (on Golden Cross Lane).

10.5.5 Detailed information for each green space can be found in Appendix 12 while in summary the areas are as follows:

Local Green Spaces

 <p>1</p> <p><i>Natural area near Cottage Lane, North Marlbrook at the side of the Marl Brook.</i></p>	 <p>2</p> <p><i>Natural ground to the north of Braces Lane sports ground.</i></p>
 <p>3</p> <p><i>Open area to the north of Lingfield Walk sports ground and balancing pond.</i></p>	 <p>4</p> <p><i>Small area of woodland adjacent to the M5 near Woodrow Lane.</i></p>
 <p>5</p> <p><i>Wooded area to the rear of Cowslip Close off Church Road near M5.</i></p>	 <p>6</p> <p><i>Wooded area to the south east of M5, near 'The Piggeries' to the rear of the cemetery.</i></p>

- 10.5.6 The proposed green spaces were endorsed by a majority of respondents to a Green Infrastructure Survey undertaken in November 2019 as 'demonstrably special' in accordance with NPPF guidance (See Appendix 12 for the detailed survey results).
- 10.5.7 There was enthusiastic support for these local green spaces with the following comments typical of those received:

“The green areas connect everyone together, gives a space to breathe when the world gets too much.”

“The biodiversity of our green spaces is so important now and for future generations.”

“Regularly use all green spaces and green corridors identified. Need to encourage people to get out and walk or cycle to be fitter and healthier.”

“Need as many green spaces as we can for our children and grandchildren to experience the outdoors.”

“I run, walk and cycle a lot so all of the local open spaces are important to me.”

“Woodland areas crucial to wildlife and acts as a barrier to noise and pollution in the area.”

“Green spaces are a great value to the community and a meeting place for people to meet when walking dogs.”

“We have seen badgers, deer, foxes, owls, buzzards, green and great spotted woodpeckers and bats in our local green spaces. It is imperative that everything is done.”

- 10.5.8 Policy ENV 4 seeks to designate identified sites as Local Green Spaces in accordance with the requirements set out in the NPPF. (para. 100)

10.6 Formal open spaces

- 10.6.1 The premise behind the Worcestershire Access and Informal Recreation Strategy 2009-2019 is to ensure that local people and visitors are informed, provided for and welcomed to the countryside. Young people have their own needs, and for those without transport local provision should be available. Similarly, one of the principles and values underpinning the Worcestershire Play Strategy³⁶ is to make certain that children and young people have safe and easy access to a range of outdoor play opportunities within a reasonable distance of their homes. This means that children's' needs should be taken into account in planning and maintaining sites.

- 10.6.2 It has also been suggested that better access to parks and open spaces could reduce NHS costs of treating obesity by more than £2 billion while reducing mental health admissions securing further savings for the NHS³⁷.

³⁶ Worcestershire Play Strategy 2007 2010

³⁷ <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/improving-publics-health/access-green-and-open-spaces-and-role-leisure-services>



10.6.3 The Environment Working Group highlighted the well-used and formal open spaces in the Parish. Bromsgrove District Council identifies them as 'parks and playgrounds' on their webpage.³⁸ The descriptions and utility of these open spaces can be summarised in the following table:

CATSHILL & NORTH MARLBROOK GREEN SPACES - FORMAL OPEN SPACES				
LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	QUALITY OF FACILITY	DESIGNATION	COMMUNITY VALUE
1. Lower Marlbrook Play Area & Recreation Ground, Braces Lane	Open, flat area of formal grasses for football and similar use. There is a children's play area to the north of the ground which is bordered by the Marl Brook and Braces Lane to the south. This has on-site parking facilities.	Generally well maintained open managed grass area.	Recreation Ground - Bromsgrove District Council	Medium
2. Lingfield Walk Recreation Ground	Recreation Ground and play area. Used for a variety of community sports, events, play and leisure activities.	Well managed general sports field and children's playground with relatively new equipment.	Recreation Ground - Bromsgrove District Council	Medium
3. The Meadow Recreation Ground, Meadow Road (George Wagstaff Memorial Meadow)	Approximately 1.5 ha. of recreational sports field. Children's play area, changing facilities and pathways for recreational walking, etc. The Meadow is an area of recreation and leisure and provides a more diverse selection of activities for all residents of Catshill. Bounded by houses to all sides and is delineated to the west by the Battlefield Brook and the Marl Brook to the north.	Well managed and maintained grassland with some planting areas. Has small surfaced parking to the front and sports changing facilities. Good security.	The Meadow is entrusted to the North West Ward Association (NWWA), a charity that brought the land in 1951 and who represent the residents of Catshill.	High
4. School Sports Fields to rear of Catshill First and Middle Schools	Private, managed open grassland areas to the rears of Catshill Middle School and Catshill First School and Nursery. Used for school sports and a local football team.	Well maintained sports field and recreational area.	School Sports fields - Worcestershire County Council	High
5. Play Area/ Recreation Ground to the rear of Shelley Close on Milton Road cycle path.	Recreation ground and children's play area. Open managed grass area. Leads on to open countryside and good surfaced cycle route to Stourbridge Road.	Generally well maintained play area and informal football/sports field.	Recreation Ground - Bromsgrove District Council	Medium

³⁸ <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/things-to-do/parks-and-outdoors/parks-and-play-areas/catshill,-marlbrook,-lickey-end-and-nearby.aspx>



10.6.4 In addition there are other formal open spaces associated with burial grounds and graveyards. These are:

- Christ Church, Churchyard and Cemetery, Stourbridge Road/Church Road.
- Municipal burial ground, Barley Mow Lane.
- Churchyard and Cemetery, Catshill Baptist Church, Barley Mow Lane.

Detailed information on each site showing the precise boundaries of each identified formal open space can be found in Appendix 12.

10.6.5 A Green Infrastructure Survey was undertaken in November 2019 and overwhelming support was recorded for each of the formal open spaces. A number of comments were received. (See below and Appendix 12 for detailed survey results).

“Sports field off Braces lane is essential open space for our community in Marlbrook and is heavily used by local families as only park within walking distance.”

“Must never see development on the Meadow - it is a peaceful area used by children, the elderly and dog walkers who meet for a daily chat. I love walking around the Meadow by myself or with my grandchildren.”

“Local spaces to meet our friends in the fresh air”

10.6.6 Policy ENV5 seeks to protect the identified formal open spaces from development unless equivalent or better provision is provided.

10.6.7 Policy ENV6 expects that developers make adequate provision of open and/or recreational space either on the development site or as close as possible to the site.



10.7 Significant Views

10.7.1 The Landscape Character Assessment Study (see Appendix 3) found that two significant views were valued by residents, footpath users and dog walkers. Both were identified in the Study to be of high sensitivity and susceptibility to change. These views are:



Local Landscape Area 1 - Looking south and west from Alvechurch Highway

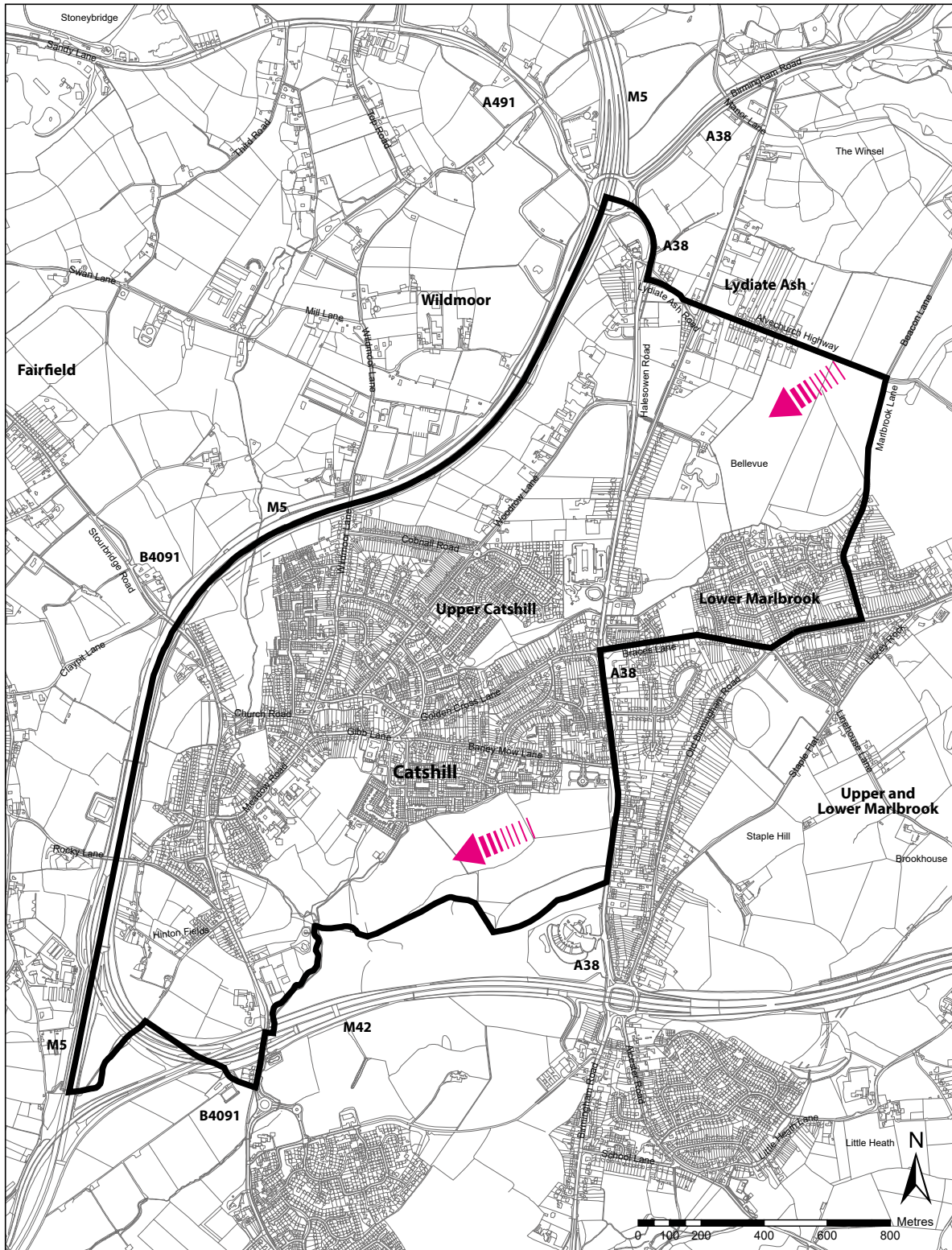
10.7.2 The Alvechurch Highway is the highest area in the Parish from where there are open views looking south over Marlbrook. There is good inter-visibility with the landscape beyond. Partial screening occurs because of the undulating land form and the hedgerows defining field boundaries. Open views of this area are possible from public right ways (PRoW). The landscape is of high local value albeit undesignated and is reasonably quiet with few detracting features. The footpath is well used by local walkers and is an area where development would have a significant impact.



Local Landscape Area 27 - Land on the southern fringes of Catshill

10.7.3 The elevated nature of much of this land makes it visible from a wide area including the M42 to the south as well as the countryside beyond the motorway. The fields to the east are prominent from existing development along the A38 although the residential area immediately to the north is screened by mature hedgerows and the landform. Distant views of the Malvern Hills can be seen to the southwest. Vegetation on the south side of the M42 provides partial screening to the countryside beyond. There are clear views of the Topaz Business Park to the south east. The PRoW and the permissive footpaths crossing the area together with the residents overlooking it to the east means it is highly sensitive and susceptible to change.

CATSHILL AND NORTH MARLBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan
Significant Views

 Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan Area
 Significant Views



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Fig 12. Significant Views

10.7.4 Guidance in the NPPF para.170, requires the planning system to contribute to and enhance valued landscapes which is reflected in BDC's Local Plan. The latter looks to secure better management of Bromsgrove's natural environment by expecting developments to protect and enhance the distinctive landscape of the District taking into account the landscape character assessments carried out by WCC.

10.7.5 Through policy ENV7 the NP therefore seeks to protect locally significant views by requiring development proposals to demonstrate how, through good design, these views will be protected.

10.8 Climate Change and Water Management

10.8.1 Climate projections for Worcestershire suggest that the average daily maximum summer temperature could increase by 7.5°C by 2050. Rainfall is also likely to be affected, with a potential increase of up to 33% over the same period.³⁹ People need to find ways to mitigate the impact of a changing climate while, at the same time, adapt to the changes which occur.⁴⁰

10.8.2 In order to support climate change objectives and improve energy and resource efficiency, developments should promote sustainable design. Suitable measures could include the following:

- Natural ventilation to reduce the power requirement for mechanical ventilation;
- Green roofs to slow rainwater run-off during intense periods of rainfall and reduce the risk of flooding;
- Wide gutters with emergency overflow points to provide for periods of sudden intense rainfall;
- Outdoor shading to improve liveability in hot weather and flexible shading to windows to regulate internal temperatures.

10.8.3 Policy ENV8 seeks to promote energy efficiency measures. Development proposals for new housing should include suitable energy efficiency measures and employ low carbon technologies in order to contribute towards affordable heating, health and wellbeing, and wider climate change objectives.

10.9 Sustainable Drainage Systems

10.9.1 Appropriate flood alleviation measures vary depending on the source(s) of flooding. For example, some risks can be minimised by designing in flood storage, infrastructure upgrades and some simply through regular maintenance. The District Council expects sufficient land is set-aside in new developments to accommodate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and improve the river environment by adopting measures that work with natural processes (BDP23). This includes restoring watercourses, removing culverts, where possible, and ensuring that an appropriate buffer zone is provided between watercourses and any development.⁴¹

³⁹ Worcestershire County Council (2014) "Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy 2012-2020". Projections is based on medium emissions scenario for 2020s using 90% probability level. http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20235/sustainability/1092/county_strategies

⁴⁰ Committee on Climate Change (2012) "How local authorities can reduce emissions and manage climate risk". Committee on Climate Change

⁴¹ A minimum of 8 metres of public space is normally required but could be more if it helps deliver the multiple benefits of green infrastructure



10.9.2 SuDS should be designed as an integral part of green infrastructure proposals, so that it is a positive feature of a development. The system should effectively mitigate any adverse effects from ground water and surface water run-off and flooding on people, property and wildlife. A surface water sewer should be a last resort and surface water must not enter the public foul sewage network.

10.9.3 Policy ENV9 seeks to minimise the risk of surface water flooding particularly in susceptible areas as identified in the Flooding and Hydrology Survey (Appendix 4).

10.10 Permeable hard surfaces

10.10.1 The primary role of permeable pavements is to let water filter through to the underlying soil. In design terms they should also:

- Respect the material palette;
- Help to frame the building;
- Create an arrival statement;
- Be in harmony with the landscape treatment of the property;
- Help define the property boundary.⁴²

Where planning permission is required to install hard surfacing these principles should be taken into account.

10.10.2 Policy ENV10 advocates the use of permeable materials in any driveway/ paving development to stop adverse effects on the environment including surface water flooding.

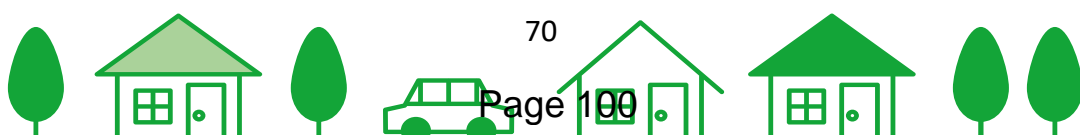
10.11 Conclusions

10.11.1 Climate change and the threat to the environment is of increasing concern but steps can be taken at a local level to mitigate its impact. This is particularly relevant when new development is proposed. Policies in this Plan therefore seek to:

- Encourage sustainable design and energy efficient construction (H3 and ENV8);
- Improve existing and provide new footpath and cycle routes (ENV1, ENV3);
- Address the threat from flooding events through the use of sustainable drainage systems (ENV9) and permeable paving materials (ENV10).

10.11.2 These measures can improve the home environment for residents while encouraging better connections which reduce the need to use vehicles for local journeys. Incorporating adequate flood alleviation systems into new schemes is important to help reduce the frequency of flooding events which have occurred more regularly since the beginning of the century. In addition, developers should have regard to other issues, such as air quality, where environmental legislation has effect. Air quality has particular relevance for the local community given the proximity of three major roads (M5, M42 and A38) and the high volume of traffic passing through the Parish to access these routes.

⁴² AECOM Design Guide



10.12 Relevant Bromsgrove Local Plan Policies

BDP 19 High Quality Design: encourages the use of sustainable construction methods and materials, protecting and enhancing important local and longer-distance visual corridors and ensuring permeable, safe and easy to navigate street layouts.

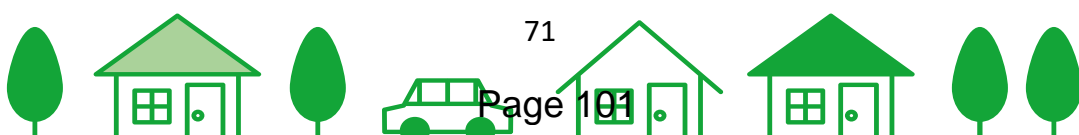
BDP21 Natural Environment: expects development to protect and enhance core areas of high nature conservation value, protect and create corridors and 'stepping stones'.

BDP 22 Climate Change: delivers viable low carbon climate resilient developments.

BDP23 Water Management: delivers safe developments with low environmental impact, requires developments to set aside land for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and this includes maximising opportunities for restoring watercourses, deculverting, delivering multiple benefits in line with BDC24 Green Infrastructure and ensuring that an appropriate buffer zone is provided between the watercourse and any development.

BDP24 Green Infrastructure: delivers a high quality multi-functional Green Infrastructure network by ensuring developments adopt a holistic approach to deliver the multiple benefits and vital services of Green Infrastructure, with priorities determined by local circumstances.

BDP25 Health and Well Being: supports proposals and activities that protect, retain or enhance existing sport, recreational and amenity assets, lead to the provision of additional assets, or improve access to facilities, particularly by non-car modes of transport. This will include maintaining greater access to and enjoyment of the countryside.



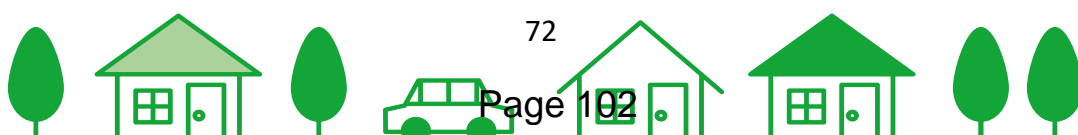
10.13 Environment Objectives and Policies

ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO OBJECTIVE	BROMSGROVE LOCAL PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO OBJECTIVE
Develop a coherent Green Infrastructure Plan for the Parish.	ENV1 ENV2 ENV3	BDP16 BDP19 BDP21 BDP24
Protect wildlife and habitats.	ENV1 ENV2 ENV3	BDP21 BDP24 BDP25
Protect existing local green spaces and formal open spaces against encroachment.	ENV4 ENV5	BDP21 BDP24 BDP25
Support the health and well being of the community.	ENV6 ENV7	BDP21 BDP24 BDP25
Promote and support measures to assist in combating climate change.	ENV8 ENV9 ENV10	BDP19 BDP21 BDP22 BDP23

ENV1. A Green Infrastructure Network for the Parish is shown on the Policies Map. Development proposals that are immediately adjacent to or would directly affect it must demonstrate how they maintain and/or enhance its integrity and value such as the incorporation of internal footpath/cycle links to the Network.

Justification

The Green Infrastructure Network shown on the Policies Map and detailed in Appendix 11 identifies a variety of natural assets in the Parish. These should be protected and improved or, in some instances created. This collection of open spaces, recreational areas, sports pitches and amenity land can be accessed by footpaths and cycle routes; woodland and water bodies provide important corridors allowing wildlife to move throughout the Parish. It is crucial that any development proposals within, or immediately adjacent to the network complement it by providing new linkages including, where appropriate, cycle links to that part of the existing national cycle route (Sustran) which passes through Catshill.



ENV2. Comprehensive landscaping proposals, including arrangements for long-term loss replacement, should accompany all major development schemes of 10 or more dwellings, promoting wherever possible ‘soft’ boundary edges using native trees, hedgerows and shrubs while preserving existing trees and hedgerows.

Justification

Design Code 7 highlights the importance of open space and how front gardens can add to the quality of the environment⁴³. The provision of well-designed landscaping schemes as part of a development is therefore of significant benefit both for local residents and wildlife. The predominant use of native plants in such schemes will be important as a source of food and habitat for wildlife and can help to improve or create new wildlife corridors. If any tree or shrub forming part of a landscape scheme should die or become seriously distressed in the first five years after planting it must be replaced by an equivalent tree or shrub no later than the next planting season.

ENV3. Development proposals should seek to enhance the connectivity and function of all blue/green corridors shown on the Policies Map. There are a number of areas of locally significant ecological importance in the Parish:

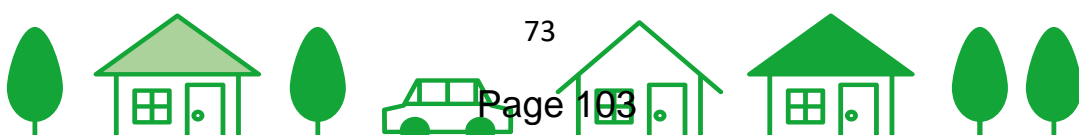
- **Battlefield Brook Corridor;**
- **Marl Brook Corridor;**
- **Wooded land to the west of Mayfield Close and the M5 motorway.**

Development schemes must clearly demonstrate how they have incorporated appropriate measures to secure the connectivity of the corridor and the freedom of movement of species.

Justification

Development proposals should not compromise the movement of wildlife but instead seek to protect and enhance areas of ecological importance/potential in accordance with the objectives of policy BDP25 of the BDP. This includes water course corridors where appropriate measures should be taken to improve and ensure connectivity with adjacent ‘blue/green corridors’ to help enhance drainage, leisure opportunities and wildlife habitats. Where there are clear advantages that justify the loss of an existing corridor, alternative provision will be required. Replacement corridors will need to fully replace the original corridor and be provided within an agreed time period as part of the proposed development.

⁴³ Catshill and North Marlbrook Design Guide, March 2020 AECOM



ENV4. Areas have been designated as Local Green Spaces will be protected from development because of their local significance and/or community value. These locations are:

- 1. Natural area near Cottage Lane, Marlbrook ;**
- 2. Natural area immediately north of Braces Lane Sports Ground, Marlbrook ;**
- 3. Open land to the north of Lingfield Walk Sports Ground ;**
- 4. Area of woodland adjacent to the M5 ;**
- 5. Wooded area to the rear of Cowslip Close ;**
- 6. Wooded area to the south-east of the M5 near ‘The Piggeries’.**

Development that would detract from the openness or special character of a Local Green Space will not be supported unless a proposal can demonstrate that the contribution of the scheme would outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space.

Justification

Green spaces are an important part of a vibrant and healthy community and contribute to the character and identity of a place through their visual amenity, recreational value, richness of wildlife and tranquillity. The NPPF (para. 99) confirms that neighbourhood plans can designate areas of Local Green Space (LGS) for special protection, meaning development can be resisted unless there are sound reasons not to do so..This could for instance, include the development of flood resilience schemes within local green spaces. A survey of residents showed a majority of residents identified two or more factors that made each of the green spaces identified above as special to the community and are locations which should be protected. (See Appendix 12 for the survey results).

ENV5. Existing areas of formal open space, sports and recreational land include:

- A. Braces Lane Recreational Grounds;**
- B. Lingfield Walk play and recreational area;**
- C. The Catshill Meadow;**
- D. First and Middle School Playing Fields;**
- E. Milton Road Playground/sports field.**

These should be maintained free of any development unless there are exceptional reasons justifying any change. In these circumstances the area of formal open space must be replaced by equivalent or better provision (both in quantity and quality) in a suitable location as close as possible to the existing facilities.

Justification

NPPF (para. 96) says that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution of the health and well-being of communities. Survey work undertaken for the NP confirmed there was overwhelming support for formal areas of open space which were regarded as ‘highly valued and important to the community’⁴⁴. These areas should be protected in accordance with the provisions in para. 97 of the NPPF.

⁴⁴ Green Infrastructure Questionnaire Parish wide survey, October November 2019



ENV6. Major new residential schemes must provide adequate open and recreational space in accordance with policy BDP25 or future standards adopted by the District Council. Wherever possible, provision should be on site unless there are valid physical or technical reasons not to do so. In these circumstances, alternative provision should be provided as close to the new site as possible or an adequate financial contribution should be made to improve nearby existing facilities to cater for increased demand.

Justification

Generally, there is limited formal provision of open space and recreation land in the Parish. Policy BDP25 provides the framework for such provision in new residential schemes. For proposals involving 10 or more dwellings sufficient provision should be made within the development unless there are sound and compelling reasons not to do so. In such circumstances, alternative arrangements will need to be agreed and facilities provided to avoid further deficiencies in open space provision.

ENV7. New development should not compromise the outlook and features that contribute to significant views in the Parish. These are shown on the Policies Map. Development adversely affecting such views will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is well-sited and has been carefully designed to have regard to such views.

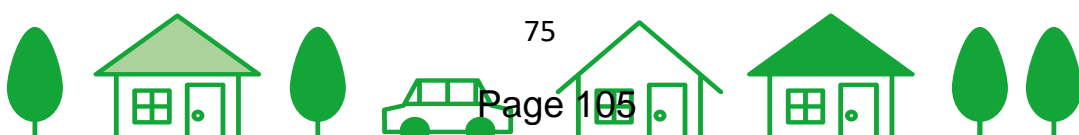
Justification

Significant views within, across and out from the Parish which are important to the character of the area should be protected. These views are part of the valued landscapes in the Parish where protection is justified in the wider public interest as set out in the NPPF para. 170. The views can be appreciated from public footpaths, rights of way, roadsides or other land accessible to the public.

ENV8. New development should deliver a high level of sustainable design and construction being optimised for energy efficiency to achieve zero or very low carbon emissions.

Justification

Considerable importance is attached to the design and construction of new development in the NPPF (see Section 12). It is important that developments should, as a minimum satisfy national standards and, ideally, seek to achieve as close as possible, zero carbon emissions.



ENV9. Development proposals should include the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to minimise the risk of surface water flooding and contribute to the provision of green infrastructure. Provision should be made within the boundaries of the site unless alternative measures are agreed with relevant organisations.

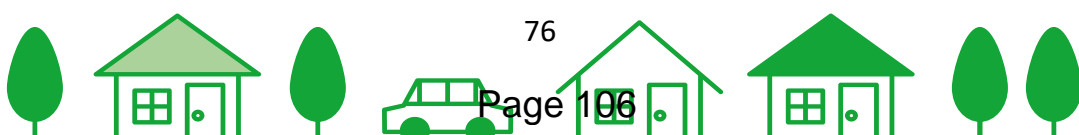
Justification

Major development proposals must provide appropriate drainage to negate surface water flooding, particularly in identified flood risk areas in accordance with the NPPF (para. 165) and BDP23. This will normally be achieved through SuDS unless it can be clearly demonstrated that a SuD is not technically viable, that alternative means of mitigation would be effective and that there would be no adverse impact on drainage capacity downstream of the development. Surface water drainage detention/balancing ponds associated with any planned development should also be capable of being colonised by local fauna and flora while maintaining their primary design purpose. Management and maintenance arrangements must be put in place for the lifetime of the SuD.

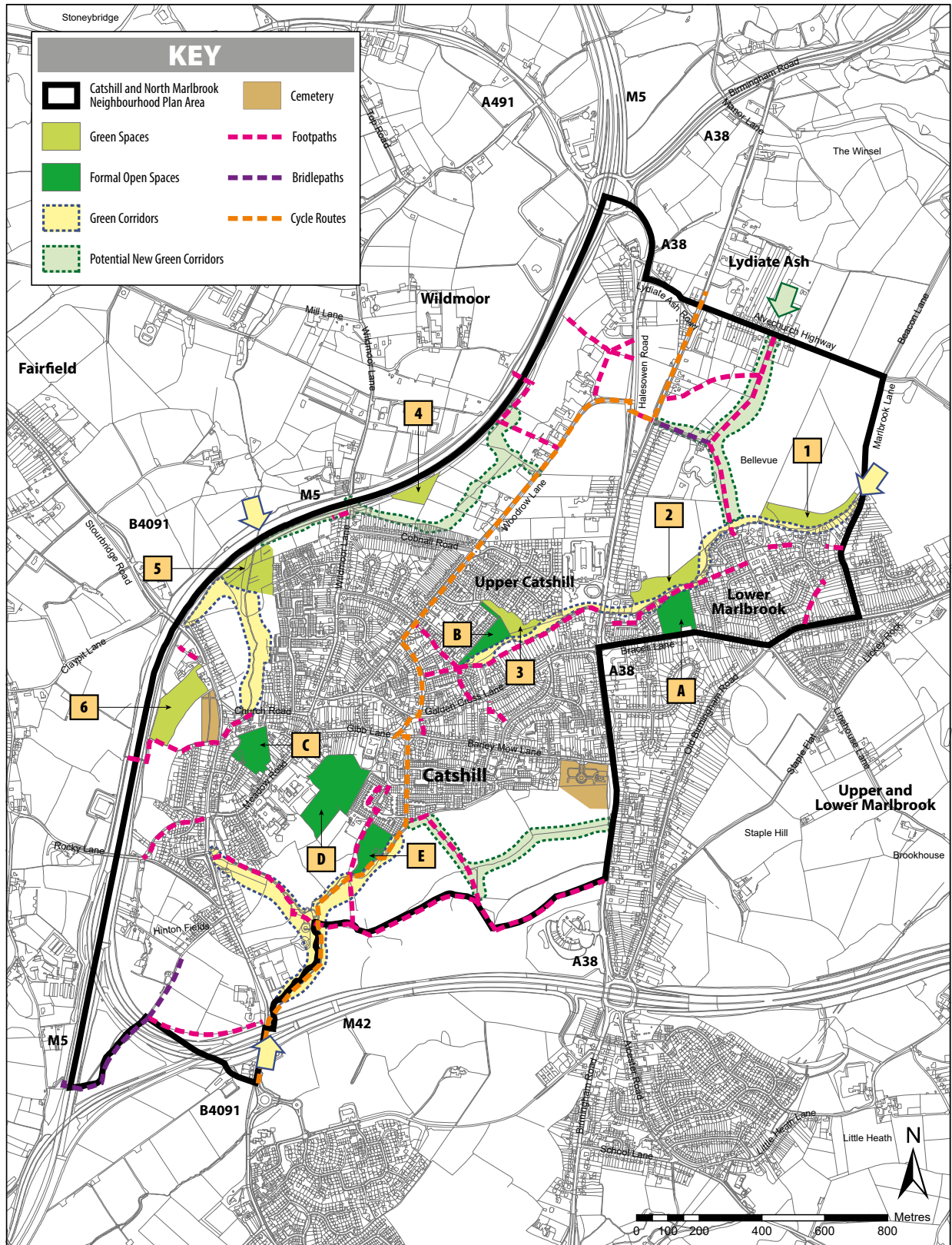
ENV10. The introduction of hard surfacing to the front of properties should avoid the use of materials which are not permeable in order to reduce the risk of flooding through surface water runoff.

Justification

Where householders introduce hard surfaces to provide improved/additional parking space in front of their property the use of non-permeable materials should be avoided. This applies for areas of more than five square metres which requires planning permission. The purpose of this measure is to reduce the likelihood of flooding and prevent oil, petrol and other substances polluting the environment.



CATSHILL AND NORTH MARLBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



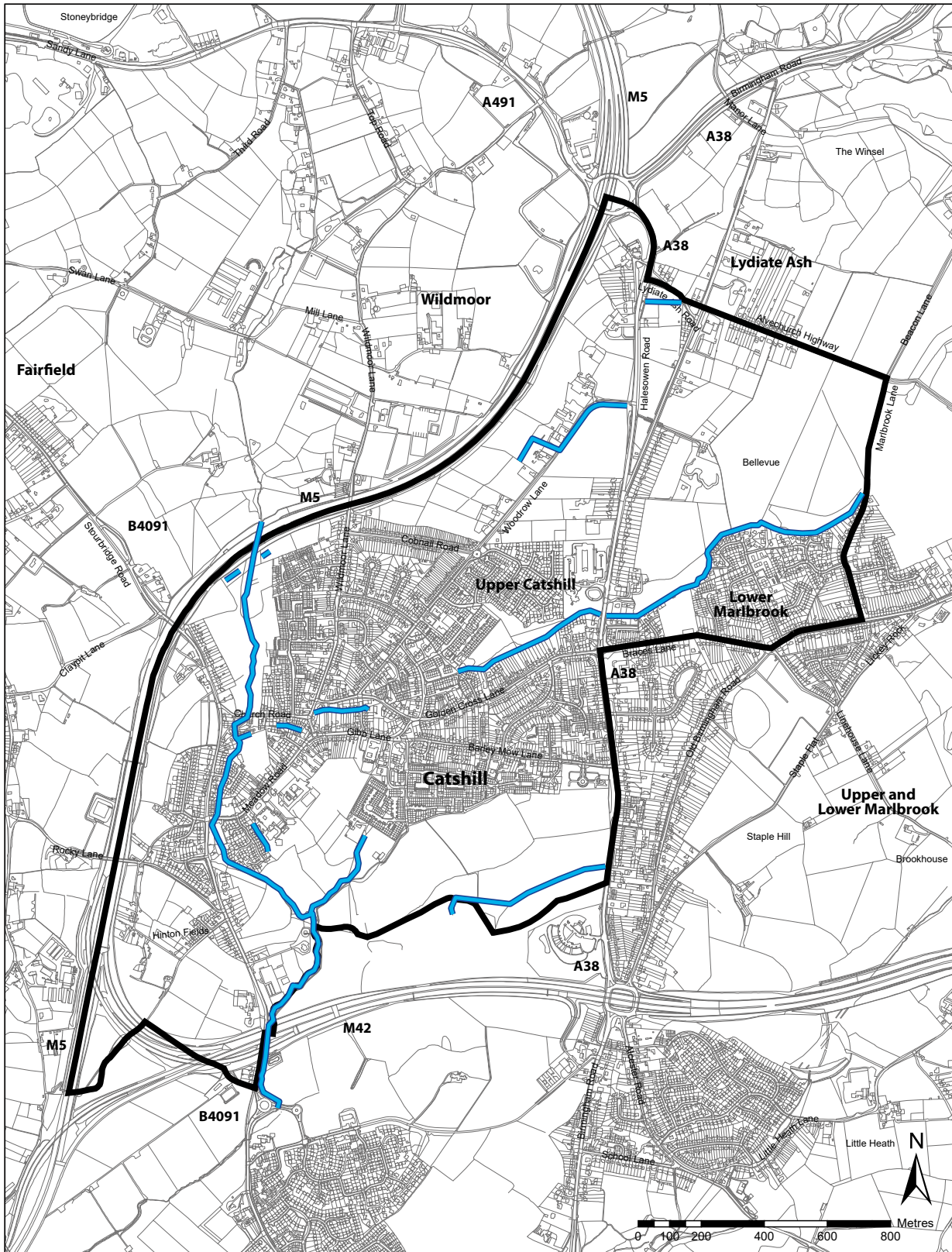
Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan
Green Infrastructure



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Fig 13a. Green Infrastructure

CATSHILL AND NORTH MARLBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan
Water Courses

 Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan Area
 Water Courses



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Fig 13b. Water Courses

11. Community Actions

11.1 There are areas of community concern which fall outside the focus of a Neighbourhood Plan on land use matters. However, it is feasible to identify 'Community Actions/projects' in the NP which can be supported by Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council. These proposals can also be delivered in conjunction with other local organisations. Four Community Actions have emerged through the preparatory work undertaken for this NP and are set out below.

CA1. A recreation and community strategy should be developed for the Parish in order to maintain and improve existing facilities and to provide a focus for coordinating and advertising local events and services.

Justification

A coordinated approach should be developed so that residents are made aware of the range of facilities and types of activities that are available at the various venues in the local area.

CA2. The introduction of speed restrictions and traffic calming measures will be supported, particularly on all main roads through Catshill and North Marlbrook.

Justification

Traffic-related issues were the most common matters raised during consultation events for the NP. Congestion, speeding vehicles and 'rat-running' were regarded as the most serious problems. Measures to reduce such concerns should be pursued wherever possible including the use of developer contributions to fund appropriate works.

CA3. The Parish Council will support improvements in local bus service to provide more sustainable travel to meet the needs of local residents.

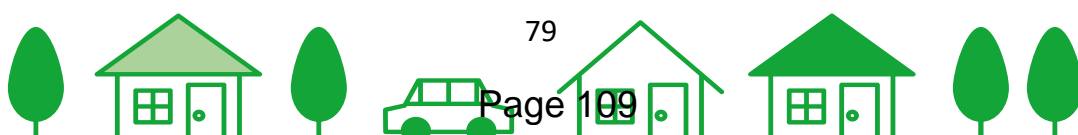
Justification

To assist in combating climate change and to promote more sustainable and environmental travel the Parish Council will encourage and support improvements to bus services including those serving Marlbrook. These could include better connections to local railway stations, health facilities and retail centres. The introduction of new bus stops or changes to existing ones should be reviewed when new housing development takes place. Bus operators will also be encouraged to improve service provision during evenings and Sundays.

CA4. The Parish Council will endeavour to further the Green Infrastructure Network by raising and providing funds to maintain and improve existing footpaths, develop new ones, enhance blue/green corridors and promote better linkages between green spaces.

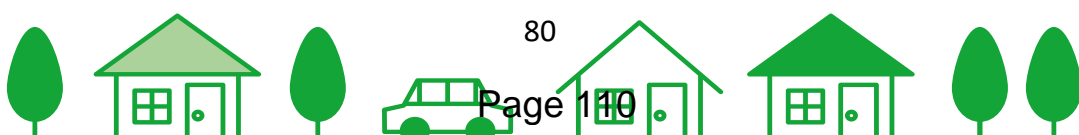
Justification

To enable a coherent network of footpaths, cycleways, blue/green corridors and recreational areas are available for the benefit of the community the Parish Council will endeavour to secure funding to improve existing features and enable gaps in the network to be completed.



12. Implementation, Monitoring, Review and Revision of NP

- 12.1 Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council will ensure there is compliance with the NP and that it is regularly reviewed. In order that the NP is actively managed the Parish Council will carry out an annual review which, on completion, will be placed on the Parish Council's website and made available as a hard copy version at the Parish Council Office and the local library.
- 12.2 The annual report will monitor progress of the NP and outcomes in the previous year and include:
- details on planning applications for the neighbourhood area;
 - the effectiveness of NP plan policies in the determination of these applications;
 - outcomes of discussions with developers in producing and agreeing design briefs for preferred sites prior to planning submissions;
 - implementing the Green Infrastructure Network and monitoring results;
 - implementing Community Action Projects and monitoring results.
 - effect of changes to national and District Council planning policies on the NP.
- 12.3 A full review of the NP will be undertaken every 5 years (or sooner if circumstances warrant). The first review is likely to take place in 2023/24, and a second review in 2028/29 unless these timings are affected by the review of the current Bromsgrove District Plan. Notwithstanding this the purpose of these reviews will be to:
- engage with the public to gather evidence about local opinion to ensure the plan remains relevant to community aspirations;
 - gauge the effectiveness of NP policies in reaching desired, social, economic and environmental outcomes;
 - consider whether if, in light of the above, the NP needs to be revised.
- 12.4 The reviews will be undertaken by a steering group who will be members of the Parish Council. Volunteers from the local community will also be invited to participate in the review process including evidence gathering for updates to the plan. Depending on the extent of revisions to the plan a further referendum may be necessary.
- 12.5 No later than the review in 2028/29 the Parish Council will consider the need for a subsequent NP, and if so desired, establish the means for undertaking the work.

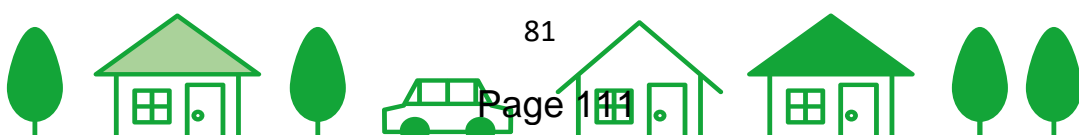


13. List of Policies

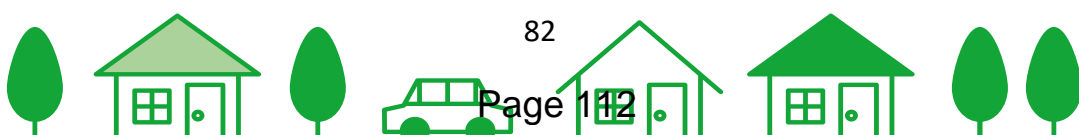
Housing

- H1. Major new residential development of ten or more dwellings will be acceptable on sites that meet at least one of the following criteria:**
- 1. The site is released from the Green Belt as part of the Green Belt and District Plan Review by Bromsgrove District Council; or,**
 - 2. The site involves the redevelopment/reuse of previously developed land within the existing (i.e. non-green belt) urban areas of the Parish;**
- Proposals for major residential development should demonstrate that they accord with all other policies of the Neighbourhood Plan and, in particular, they should satisfy the following criteria:**
- a) Ensure that revised Green Belt boundaries are defensible in the longer-term, especially the maintenance of existing gaps between:

 - i. Catshill and Bromsgrove Town**
 - ii. North Marlbrook and Lydiate Ash****
 - b) Ensure housing is not located where it would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe;**
 - c) Development is located to provide sustainable access to the local shopping centre on Golden Cross Lane;**
 - d) Development endeavours to minimise its visual impact in the wider topography and has appropriate regard on the capacity of the landscape to accept change;**
 - e) Ensure suitable landscaping is provided on-site and, wherever possible, provide linkages to the Green Infrastructure Network.**
- H2. New residential development in the Parish of more than 10 dwellings will be supported where it provides a mix of housing types, tenures and sizes consistent with the findings of the AECOM Housing Need Assessment or subsequent studies. In particular, schemes should provide:**
- a) smaller dwellings of one and two bedrooms;**
 - b) properties suitable for the elderly;**
 - c) a mix of housing tenures including social and affordable rent and shared ownership;**
 - d) sufficient affordable housing to achieve the BDC target for affordable housing specified in the adopted local plan.**



- H3. New housing should be designed to meet relevant energy and construction standards and have regard to the design principles set out in the Catshill and North Marlbrook Design Guide. Development proposals should demonstrate that they have considered and applied the following design principles:**
- a) they harmonise with and enhance the existing settlement in terms of physical form, pattern and movement;
 - b) they relate to the local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long distance views;
 - c) they enhance the established pattern of streets and other public spaces;
 - d) they integrate with existing vehicular and pedestrian routes and linkages;
 - e) they respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
 - f) they make suitable provision for sustainable waste management, including collection points, without having an adverse impact on the streetscene;
 - g) they integrate energy efficient technologies as part of the design process;
 - h) they promote social inclusion by ensuring social housing is fully integrated with the overall design;
 - i) through design they minimise the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour.
- H4. Proposals for windfall development will be supported providing they do not detract from the existing street scene, result in cramped building forms, have an unacceptable visual impact or adversely affect the living conditions of neighbouring residents.**
- H5. Proposals for extensions and alterations should take into account the character, size and scale of the existing building to ensure they complement and enhance the building and its setting.**



Commerce and Community

COM1. The main retail centre on Golden Cross Lane contains a number of fast food outlets and restaurants. Proposals for further ones will not be supported unless a new outlet replaces an existing one.

COM2. Proposals for new or replacement shopfronts in the local shopping centre in Golden Cross Lane should accord with the principles outlined in the Catshill and North Marlbrook Design Guide. In particular shopfront frontages should:

- a) be in keeping with the whole building façade and reflect the character of the immediate area;
- b) where possible, introduce vertical emphasis in the shopfront (for instance through the use of pilasters and mullions);
- c) use signage that is proportionate to the scale of the overall shopfront and the building in which it is set;
- d) use quality materials that relate well to the building;
- e) where necessary for security purposes, use transparent shutters in preference to solid ones to avoid the creation of 'dead' frontages;
- f) provide suitable access for people with disabilities;
- g) include provision for refuse storage away from the public realm.

In addition, proposals to unify and improve the service/parking/operational areas in front of the shops will be supported. Modest improvements to provide a more consistent appearance by, for instance, removing stub walls, providing a single level with marked parking spaces and minimising the range of materials used would contribute significantly to the appearance of the streetscene and make the area more useable for customers.

COM3. Business uses, including those involving retail outlets, will be supported, enhanced and, as far as possible, protected from alternative uses, subject to changes to the Use Class Order 2020, unless it can be demonstrated that there is no demand to retain the existing use (consistent with policy BDP14 of the BDP). An alternative use should not detract or adversely impact on neighbouring occupants or activities.

COM4. Proposals for new start-up businesses will be supported within the existing urban area where this does not adversely affect the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers or compromises highway safety.

COM5. Proposals involving home working i.e. from domestic properties, will be supported providing the activity is subordinate to the primary use of the building for residential purposes and will not affect the living conditions of neighbouring residents.

COM6. Existing community facilities should be retained, subject to changes to the Use Class Order 2020, unless it can be demonstrated that a facility is no longer economically viable or that an equivalent or enhanced facility will be provided on the same site or in a more appropriate location.

COM7. Proposals to enhance community facilities will be supported providing there is sufficient space on the existing site to avoid a cramped development and that the scheme would not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area or on the living conditions of nearby residents.



Environment

- ENV1. A Green Infrastructure Network for the Parish is shown on the Policies Map. Development proposals that are immediately adjoining or close to the Network must demonstrate how they maintain and/or enhance its integrity and value such as the incorporation of internal footpath/cycle links to the Network.**
- ENV2. Comprehensive landscaping proposals, including arrangements for long-term loss replacement, should accompany all major development schemes promoting wherever possible 'soft' boundary edges using native trees, hedgerows and shrubs while preserving existing trees and hedgerows.**
- ENV3. Development proposals should seek to enhance the connectivity and function of all blue/green corridors shown on the Policies Map. There are a number of areas of locally significant ecological importance in the Parish:**
- **Battlefield Brook Corridor;**
 - **Marl Brook Corridor;**
 - **Wooded land to the west of Mayfield Close and the M5 motorway.**

Development schemes must clearly demonstrate how they have incorporated appropriate measures to secure the connectivity of the corridor and the freedom of movement of species.

- ENV4. Areas have been designated as Local Green Spaces will be protected from development because of their local significance and/or community value. These locations are:**
- 7. Natural area near Cottage Lane, Marlbrook ;**
 - 8. Natural area immediately north of Braces Lane Sports Ground, Marlbrook ;**
 - 9. Open land to the north of Lingfield Walk Sports Ground ;**
 - 10. Area of woodland adjacent to the M5 ;**
 - 11. Wooded area to the rear of Cowslip Close ;**
 - 12. Wooded area to the south-east of the M5 near 'The Piggeries'.**

Development that would detract from the openness or special character of a Local Green Space will not be supported unless a proposal can demonstrate that the contribution of the scheme would outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space.

- ENV5. Existing areas of formal open space, sports and recreational land include:**
- A. Braces Lane Recreational Grounds;**
 - B. Lingfield Walk play and recreational area;**
 - C. The Catshill Meadow;**
 - D. First and Middle School Playing Fields;**
 - E. Milton Road Playground/sports field.**

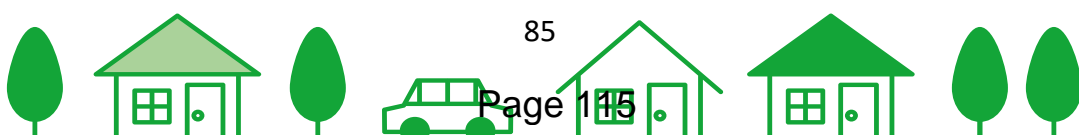
These should be maintained free of any development unless there are exceptional reasons justifying any change. In these circumstances the area of formal open space must be replaced by equivalent or better provision (both in quantity and quality) in a suitable location as close as possible to the existing facilities.



- ENV6.** Residential schemes must provide adequate open and recreational space. Wherever possible, this should be on site unless there are valid physical or technical reasons not to do so. In these circumstances, alternative provision should be provided as close to the new site as possible or an adequate financial contribution should be made to improve nearby existing facilities to cater for increased demand.
- ENV7.** New development should not compromise the outlook and features that contribute to significant views in the Parish. These are shown on the Policies Map. Development adversely affecting such views will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is well-sited and has been carefully designed to have regard to such views.
- ENV8.** New development should deliver a high level of sustainable design and construction being optimised for energy efficiency to achieve zero or very low carbon emissions.
- ENV9.** Development proposals should include the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to minimise the risk of surface water flooding and contribute to the provision of green infrastructure. Provision should be made within the boundaries of the site unless alternative measures are agreed with relevant organisations.
- ENV10.** The introduction of hard surfacing to the front of properties should avoid the use of materials which are not permeable in order to reduce the risk of flooding through surface water runoff.

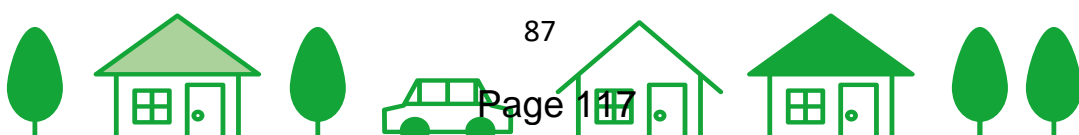
Community Actions

- CA1.** A recreation and community strategy should be developed for the Parish in order to maintain and improve existing facilities and to provide a focus for coordinating and advertising local events and services.
- CA2.** The introduction of speed restrictions and traffic calming measures will be supported, particularly on all main roads through Catshill and North Marlbrook.
- CA3.** The Parish Council will support improvements in local bus service to provide more sustainable travel to meet the needs of local residents.
- CA4.** The Parish Council will endeavour to further the Green Infrastructure Network by raising and providing funds to maintain and improve existing footpaths, develop new ones, enhance blue/green corridors and promote better linkages between green spaces.



Appendices

1. Level 1 Questionnaire – Results and Analysis
2. Business Questionnaire Results
3. Landscape Character Assessment Study
4. Flooding and Hydrology Survey
5. Level 2 Questionnaire – Results and Analysis
6. Call for Sites Exercise by NP Group
7. Site Assessment Study by NP Group
8. AECOM Housing Needs Assessment
9. AECOM Site Assessment Study
10. Comparison of Site Assessment Studies
11. Green Infrastructure Network Report
12. Local Green Space/Formal Open Spaces Study
13. AECOM Design Guide Study



Glossary

ADR Area of Development Restraint. Is land removed from the Green Belt and set aside by local authorities for possible development in the future to meet the housing requirements beyond the end of a current plan period.

Affordable Housing: Housing provided to meet the housing needs of those who cannot afford full market ownership or rent costs. Can include provisions to retain an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

Intermediate housing is homes for sale and/or rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels, subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low-cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing. Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as 'low cost market' housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

Ancient woodland: An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD.

Archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

Biodiversity: The term 'biodiversity' is commonly used to describe the number, variety and variability of living organisms. This very broad usage, embracing many different parameters, is essentially a synonym of 'Life on Earth'.

Blue/Green Corridor: A narrow area of land that provides sufficient natural cover to support and allow the movement of wildlife. These are typically but not exclusively found in urban environments and may follow the line of watercourses (blue corridors) or not (green corridors). Examples of blue/green corridors include railway embankments, river banks, streams, ditch courses and roadside grass verges.

Brownfield Land: (previously developed land) Land which has previously been occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although development of the whole of the curtilage may not necessarily be allowed). Sites can be large or small.



Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council (the Parish): The first tier of local government in Catshill and North Marlbrook.

Conservation (for heritage policy): The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

Community Infrastructure Levy: (CIL) A levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners or developers of land when they undertake new building projects in their area.

Community Right to Build Order: An Order made by the local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a site-specific development proposal or classes of development.

CPRE: The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England.

Designated Heritage Asset: Is a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

Development Plan: This includes adopted local plans and neighbourhood plans as defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Green Belt: Green belts are a buffer usually around larger towns and cities. Green Belt designation is a planning tool that has five purposes and generally aims to prevent urban sprawl, maintain the separation between settlements and provide areas of countryside close to urban areas.

Green Infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, in both urban and rural areas, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental benefits and enhancing the quality of life for local communities.

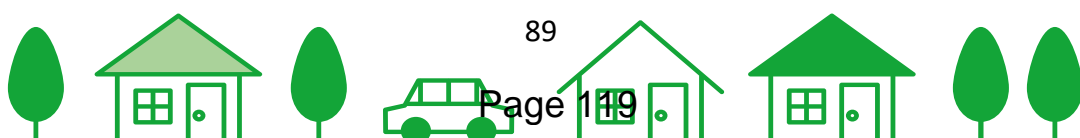
Greenfield Land: Greenfield land is land which has not previously been used for development. It can comprise farmland, open countryside, woodland or areas otherwise not built-on. Greenfield land is often confused with Green Belt. The latter is normally greenfield land but greenfield land is not necessarily Green Belt.

Heritage Asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including listings of buildings of local significance – local listing).

Historic environment: An environment which has evolved over time from the interaction between people and places. This includes surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, historic landscapes and planted or managed flora.

Inclusive design: Design in the built environment, including buildings and their surrounding spaces, to ensure they can be accessed and used.

Local Development Order: An Order made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.



Local planning authority (LPA): The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. References to local planning authorities apply to district/borough councils, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authorities, the Mayor of London and a development corporation, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.

Local Green Space: The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduced the concept of a Local Green Space designation (para. 99). This is a discretionary designation to be made by inclusion within a local development plan or neighbourhood development plan. The designation should only be used where the land is not extensive, is local in character and reasonably close to the community; and, where it is demonstrably special, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife (para.100). Policies within the local development plan or neighbourhood development plan for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with the policies protecting green belts within the NPPF (para.101).

Local Plan: A plan setting out policies for the future development and control of development in the local authority area in consultation with the community. These are produced by local planning authorities e.g. Bromsgrove District Council. In law this is a development plan document adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Core strategies, and other planning policies (such as Supplementary Planning Documents), can be considered to be development plan documents providing they conform to regulatory requirements. The term includes old policies, which have been saved under the 2004 Act. The current Local Plan for BDC was approved in January 2017.

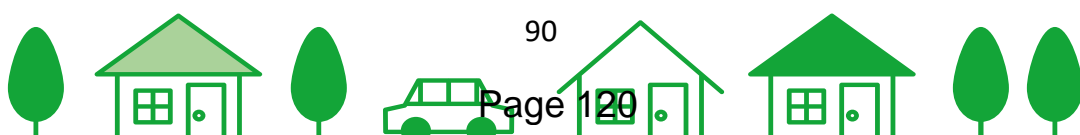
Local Wildlife Sites: Local Wildlife Sites are identified and selected locally using robust, scientifically-determined criteria and detailed ecological surveys. They are important in contributing to the natural green fabric of our towns and countryside.

Major Development: For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Massing: The combined effect of the height, bulk and outline of a building or group of buildings.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): The NPPF was most recently updated in February 2019 and sets out the Government's planning framework covering economic, environmental and social aspects of land use planning for England. The framework also applies to the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and to decisions on planning applications.

Neighbourhood Development Order: An Order made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) through which parish councils and neighbourhood forums can grant planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.



Neighbourhood Plan (NP): A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004). A **Neighbourhood Plan** (sometimes called a **Neighbourhood Development Plan**) is a means for local communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live and work.

Older people: Generally refers to people of retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly.

Open space: Includes areas of open space covering land, water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which are usually of public value, and provide opportunities for sport, recreation and value as a visual amenity.

Original building: A building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.

People with disabilities: People have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These persons include, but are not limited to, people with ambulatory difficulties, blindness, learning difficulties, autism and mental health needs.

Planning condition: A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order which requires a landowner/developer to undertake specific actions/measures.

Planning obligation: A legally enforceable obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

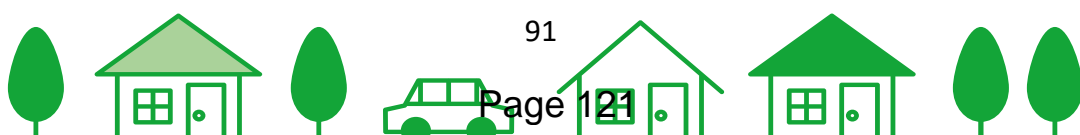
Renewable and low carbon energy: Includes sources of natural energy from the earth (geothermal) wind, sun, water or oceans. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to the conventional use of fossil fuels).

Safer routes to school scheme (SRTS): Safe Routes to Schools aim to enable more young people to walk and cycle to school. They usually involve a series of highway measures supported by other community and school projects making roads safer and providing the infrastructure and skills to make walking and cycling a popular choice.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Stepping stones: Pockets of habitat that, while not necessarily connected, allow the movement of species between larger patches of habitat.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Supplementary planning document (SPD): Documents, which add further detail to the policies in local plans. They can provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or cover particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.



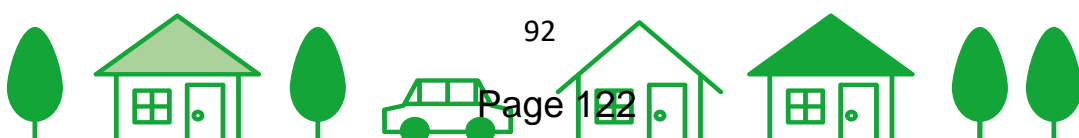
Sustainable transport: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

Transport Assessment: A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out the transport impact of proposed development. It identifies what measures will be required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport and what measures will need to be taken to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.

Transport statement: A simplified version of a transport assessment where it is agreed that transport issues arising from development proposals are limited and that a full transport assessment is not required.

Travel plan: A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives through action and is articulated in a document that is regularly reviewed.

Windfall sites: Normally small housing sites, which have not been specifically identified in a local plan. Examples include development in the rear of large gardens, houses in gaps between other properties and small sites which become available e.g. previously-developed land that has become available.





Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council
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B61 0JZ

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Worcestershire, B61 8DA

Main switchboard: (01527) 881288

Email: strategicplanning@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

SENT BY EMAIL

Dear Carol,

Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Neighbourhood Plan (CNMNP) Submission

I write further to your submission of the CNMNP to Bromsgrove District Council on the 8th January 2021.

The District Council have considered the submitted documents and are satisfied that all of the requirements under Regulation 15(1) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) have been met. This letter represents the formal view of the Council in advance of its duties under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

As you will be aware, District Council officers have worked with members of the neighbourhood plan steering group during preparation of the neighbourhood plan and have provided previous comments on draft versions of the neighbourhood plan leading up to the Parish Council's pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation.

Please see the following points as brief feedback on the plan as submitted:

- The neighbourhood plan's acknowledgement that Bromsgrove District Council is gathering a range of evidence to inform a review of the Bromsgrove District Plan, and that this work could have implications for the neighbourhood plan, is noted and welcomed.
- It is noted that the CNMNP vision is formed as a result of thorough consultation with the local community during the early stages of plan preparation. The scope of the plan and its vision are recognised as appropriate for the sustainable development of Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish over the plan period.

Agenda Item 6

- The CNMNP policies are regarded as offering clear policy guidance for the consideration and determination of development proposals located in Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish. The range of topics covered by the policies are considered to be suitable for the local issues faced in the neighbourhood area based on the evidence supporting the plan, including evidence arising from extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders.
- The community actions as set out in Chapter 11, despite not constituting statutory policies, are acknowledged as valuable projects to be pursued by the Parish Council and other local organisations on behalf of local communities.

A report will be considered by the District Council's Cabinet on 17th February 2021. This report seeks approval from Cabinet that the CNMNP proceed to a statutory representation period for six weeks in line with Regulation 16 of the neighbourhood planning regulations.

Delegated authority is sought from Cabinet to the District Council's Head of Planning and Regeneration that an independent examiner be appointed to conduct an examination of the CNMNP, its supporting documents, and relevant representations made on the plan. The examiner will recommend whether the CNMNP is considered to meet the 'basic conditions' as set out in the regulations.

Finally, should the examiner's report recommend the CNMNP be deemed to meet the basic conditions, delegated authority is also sought that the plan proceeds to a public referendum. The referendum will ask eligible voters whether they want Bromsgrove District Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleague Matt Stanczyszyn.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Dunphy
Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager

cc. Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Agenda Item 6

cc. Ward Councillors: Cllr Till (Catshill North), Cllr Webb (Catshill South); Cllr Jones (Marlbrook)

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CABINET

Date 17 February 2021

CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME WITH EFFECT FROM 1ST APRIL 2021

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Cllr Geoff Denaro
Relevant Head of Service	Chris Forrester
Ward(s) Affected	All wards
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	
Key Decision /	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Each year the council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with the requirements of the schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.
- 1.2 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced from 1 April 2013 when it replaced the central government funded Council Tax Benefit regime. From its inception, the funding available to the council from government has reduced year on year.
- 1.3 As with the majority of authorities within England, the council has changed its scheme each year to for a number of reasons including:
 - Adjust the level of support in line with the funding available from central government; and
 - To aid administration.
- 1.4 This report details the changes and makes recommendation to members for the 2021/22 scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND** the introduction a new income banded / grid scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1st April 2021 to implement a modern, future proofed scheme and reduce the administrative burden placed on the council by the introduction of Universal Credit

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The current Council Tax Reduction scheme costs approximately £4.469m which is borne by the Council's Collection Fund. Costs are shared between the Council and the Major Precepting Authorities in proportion to the share of Council Tax.
- 3.2 The approach and 'shape' of the scheme is changing, and the overall approach will be to provide additional support to those households on the very lowest incomes. There is no intention to reduce the level of support available to other households. Based on current modelling, were the new scheme to be in place at the current time, the costs would be £4.605m.
- 3.3 Financial modelling has been undertaken and will continue to be undertaken throughout the project and this will be particularly important given the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on the incomes of households within the District Council's area.
- 3.4 Whilst the expected costs of the scheme for 2021/22 are slightly higher, the overall level of Council Tax Reduction as a proportion to Council Tax Base has reduced significantly year on year since 2013 as shown below. The overall proposed costs level for 2021/22 is considerably lower in terms of the percentage of the taxbase than when Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013.

Tax Year	Maximum % Reduction	Gross Council Tax £000s	Total CTR awarded £000s	CTR as % Gross CTax
2013/14	100	56,471	4,564	8.08
2014/15	100	58,103	4,441	7.64
2015/16	80	59,662	3,896	6.53
2016/17	80	62,371	3,878	6.22
2017/18	80	64,566	3,808	5.90
2018/19	80	68,110	3,831	5.62
2019/20	85	71,847	4,035	5.62
2020/21	85	74,910	4,469	5.97

Legal Implications

3.5 Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states:

Before making a scheme, the authority must:

- (a) consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
- (b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
- (c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

3.6 In addition, in order to set a new scheme, the Council is obliged to make a resolution by 11th March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.

3.7 The purpose of this report is to recommend that the new scheme be implemented with effect from 1st April 2021

Background / Service Implications

3.8 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government:

- Placed the duty to create a local scheme for **Working Age** applicants with billing authorities.
- Reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
- Prescribed that persons of **Pension age** would be dealt with under regulations set by Central Government and not the authorities' local scheme.

3.9 Since that time, funding for the Council Tax Reduction scheme has been amalgamated into other Central Government grants paid to Local Authorities and also within the Business Rates Retention regime. It is now generally accepted that it is not possible to identify the amount of funding actually provided from Central Government sources.

3.10 The current Council Tax Reduction scheme administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, with pension age applicants receiving support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.

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- 3.11 Pensioners, subject to their income, can receive up to 100 per cent support towards their council tax. The Council has no power to change the level of support provided to pensioners and therefore any changes to the level of CTR can only be made to the working age scheme.
- 3.12 When Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013, for working age applicants, the Council broadly adopted the previous means tested Council Tax Benefit scheme as the basis of awarding support. Due to the reduction in funding from Central Government, the Council also required all working age applicants, even those on the lowest income, to pay a minimum payment of 20%.
- 3.13 Since that time the minimum payment required has reduced to 15% and other slight changes have been made to bring the scheme into line with either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

The main issues with the current scheme

- 3.14 There are a number of issues with the current scheme that will need addressing if the system is to continue to provide effective support to low income taxpayers and also if the Council is able to provide the service in an efficient manner. The main issues are as follows:
- The need to assist low income households and assist in the collection of Council Tax
 - The introduction of Universal Credit for working age applicants; and
 - The need for a simplification of the scheme;
- 3.15 Each of the above are examined in detail below.

The need to assist low income households and assist in the collection of Council Tax

- 3.16 Since 2013, the introduction of Council Tax Reduction, the majority of authorities, including the District Council have required all working age applicants to pay a minimum payment. Under the previous scheme (Council Tax Benefit) almost 75% of working age applicants would not have been required to pay any Council Tax and would have received full (100%) support.
- 3.17 As with a large number of authorities, there is a strong view that there should be an increase in the level of support to those households on the lowest of incomes. This view has gained momentum over the past few years but has been reinforced since the COVID-19 crisis which has had a major effect on incomes generally.
- 3.18 Whilst the principle of all working age households paying 'something' was initially thought to be an approach that would be central to the design of Council Tax Reduction, the reality is that, since it's introduction, low income taxpayers, the poorest households, have been unable to pay the balance leading to additional

costs, court and enforcement action and, in some cases, the amounts demanded have been written off as uncollectable. For information, in 2019 Council Tax of approximately £694,000 has been demanded from working age Council Tax claimants and an amount of £234,000, 33% of the amount demanded is outstanding.

- 3.19 The costs of administration of these cases by the District Council has increased significantly over the years. These costs are borne solely by the District Council. With the difficulties experienced, the relatively low level of payment and the high administration costs incurred, it no longer makes the amounts economically viable to collect. Notwithstanding the negative effects to those poorest households.

Council Tax Reduction and the roll out of Universal Credit

- 3.20 The introduction of Universal Credit within the area has, as experienced in all other areas, brought a number of significant challenges to both the administration of Council Tax Reduction and also the collection of Council Tax generally. All Councils have experienced the following:

- The reluctance of Universal Credit claimants to make a prompt claim for Council Tax Reduction leading to a loss in entitlement;
- A high number of changes to Universal Credit cases are received from the Department for Work and Pensions requiring a change to Council Tax Reduction entitlement. On average 40% of Universal Credit claimants have between eight and twelve changes in entitlement per annum. These changes result in amendments to Council Tax liability, the re-calculation of instalments, delays and the demonstrable loss in collection; and
- The increased costs of administration through multiple changes with significant additional staff and staff time being needed.

- 3.21 It is clear that the existing means tested Council Tax Reduction scheme, which is too reactive to change, will not be viable in the longer term now that Universal Credit has been rolled out fully within the area and with the massive increase in Universal Credit claimants due to the COVID-19 crisis. The move to a new more efficient scheme from 2021 is now imperative.

The need for a simplified approach to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

- 3.22 The existing scheme is based on an 'old fashioned;' means tested benefit scheme. It has major defects namely:
- It is complex for customers to understand and is based on a complex calculation of entitlement;
 - The administration for staff is complex, with staff having to request significant amounts of information from applicants;
 - Staff have to undergo significant training to be proficient in processing claims;
 - The timescales for processing applications is lengthy, mainly due to the complexity and evidence required to support the applications; and
 - The administration of the scheme is costly when compared to other discounts for Council Tax.
- 3.23 Clearly there is a need now to simplify the scheme, not only to mitigate the effects of Universal Credit, but also make it easier for customers to make a claim and to significantly reduce the costs of administration.

The recommended approach for the 2021/22 Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- 3.24 In view of the problems being experienced with the current scheme, it is proposed that an alternative approach be taken from 2021/22. The approach has been to fundamentally redesign the scheme to address all of the issues with the current scheme and in particular;
- (a) The level of support available to the poorest households;
 - (b) The problems with the introduction of full-service Universal Credit; and
 - (c) The significant increase in administration costs due to the high level of changes received in respect of Universal Credit;
- 3.25 Work has been ongoing throughout this year on a new scheme which is now complete. Consultation now needs to be undertaken with the public and the precepting authorities. If accepted by the Council, the new scheme will take effect from 1st April 2021.
- 3.26 The proposed new scheme has a number of features as follows:
- More support shall be given to those households on the lowest of incomes than in the current scheme ;
 - The changes can **only be made to the working age schemes** as the current schemes for pensioners is prescribed by Central Government;
 - The current means - tested schemes will be replaced by a simple income grid model as shown below:

Discount Band	Discount	Single Person	Single person with one child	Single person with two or more children	Couple	Couple with one child	Couple with two or more children
Income Ranges							
Band 1	100%	£0 to £95.00	£0 to £150.00	£0 to £210.00	£0 to £140.00	£0 to £195.00	£0 to £255.00
Band 2	75%	£95.01 to £115.00	£150.01 to £180.00	£210.01 to £240.00	£140.01 to £160.00	£195.01 to £225.00	£255.01 to £285.00
Band 3	50%	£115.01 to £135.00	£180.01 to £210.00	£240.01 – £270.00	£160.01 to £180.00	£225.01 – £255.00	£285.01 to £315.00
Band 4	25%	£135.01 to £155.00	£210.01 to £240.00	£270.01 – £300.00	£180.01 to £200.00	£255.01 to £285.00	£315.01 to £345.00
	0%	Over £155.00	Over £240.00	Over £300.00	Over £200.00	Over £285.00	Over £345.00

- It is proposed that the highest level of discount will be at a maximum level of liability (100%), Band 1, and all current applicants that are in receipt of a 'passport benefit' such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) receive maximum discount:
- All other discount levels are based on the applicant's (and partner's, where they have one) net income;
- The scheme allows for variation in household size with the levels of income per band increasing where an applicant has a partner, and / or dependants
- There will be no charges made where an applicant had non-dependants living with them. This is a significant change and means that the administration of the scheme will be more straightforward whilst also protecting low income families where adult sons and daughters for example remain at home;
- To encourage work, a standard £25 per week disregard will be provided against all earnings This will take the place of the current standard disregards and additional earnings disregards. Where a family also receives a childcare disregard (for childcare costs not paid for by Central Government schemes), the income levels in the 'grid scheme' are set at a higher rate;
- Disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance will continue to be disregarded;

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- Where any applicant, their partner or dependant child (ren) are disabled, a further disregard of up to £40 will be given, thereby maintaining the current level of support to those with disabilities;
- Carer's Allowance and the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance will be disregarded;
- Child benefit and Child Maintenance will continue to be disregarded;
- The total disregard on war pensions and war disablement pensions will continue;
- Extended payments will be removed;
- Second Adult Reduction will be removed; and
- Removal of the income taper and introduction of a capital limit of £6,000.

How the new scheme will address the problems with the current Council Tax Reduction

3.27 With the simplicity of the proposed new scheme and by taking a more 'Council Tax discount approach', it will address the problems associated with the increased administration caused by failings in the current scheme and Universal Credit as follows:

- **The scheme will require a simplified claiming process.** All applicants will see a significant reduction in the claiming process and, where possible, Council Tax Reduction will be awarded automatically. For Universal Credit applicants any Universal Credit data received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction. Where information is received from DWP, the entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be processed automatically without the need to request further information from the taxpayer. These changes will have the following distinct advantages namely:
 - (a) **Speed of processing** – all claims will be able to be calculated promptly and largely automatically without the need to request further information which inevitably leads to delays;
 - (b) **Maximising entitlement to every applicant.** As there will no requirement for Universal Credit applicants to apply separately for Council Tax Reduction, and for all other applicants, the claiming process will be simplified significantly. Entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be maximised with a reduced risk of loss of discount or the need for backdating;
 - (c) **Maintenance of collection rates** – the new scheme will avoid constant changes in discount, the need for multiple changes in instalments and

therefore assist in maintaining the high collection rates currently achieved. The increased level of discount will assist all those applicants on the lowest levels of income, again improving the overall collection rate;

- **The income bands are sufficiently wide to avoid constant changes in discount.** The current Council Tax Reduction scheme is very reactive and will alter even if the overall change to the person's liability is small. This is leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability, the need to recalculate monthly instalments and the requirement to issue a large number of Council Tax demands. The effect of this is that Council Tax collection is reduced. The new scheme, with its simplified income banding approach will have the following advantages:
 - Only significant changes in income will affect the level of discount awarded;
 - Council Taxpayers who receive Council Tax Reduction will not receive multiple Council Tax demands and adjustments to their instalments; and
 - The new scheme is designed to reflect a more modern approach, where any discount changes it will be effective from the day of the change rather than the Monday of the following week;

Transition to the new scheme and the Exceptional Hardship Scheme

- 3.28 The Council must be mindful that any change in scheme or a transition to a new scheme may have result in a change to the entitlement of certain applicants.
- 3.29 Inevitably, with any change in scheme, there will be some winners and losers although the proposed scheme has been designed to protect the most vulnerable. It is proposed that the new scheme will contain additional provisions to protect individuals who experience exceptional hardship. Where any applicant is likely to experience exceptional hardship, they will be encouraged to apply for an exceptional hardship payment. The Council will consider all applications for exceptional hardship on an individual basis, taking into account available income and essential outgoings. Where appropriate further support will be given to the applicant.
- 3.30 This approach will enable individual applicants to be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. The Exceptional Hardship Scheme will form part of the Council Tax Reduction scheme and fall to be paid through the Collection Fund.

Other Options considered

- 3.31 The alternative to introducing a new scheme for Council Tax Reduction from 2021/22 is to leave the existing scheme in place. This would be a short-term option; lead to increasing costs of administration; and in the longer term, significantly affect the collection of Council Tax and the effectiveness of the scheme to support households within the District Council's area.

Rationale and Impact of Proposed Changes

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- 3.32 In preparation for consultation on the proposals to replace the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme modelling of the changes was completed. The modelling identifies the working age claimants that will be impacted by the changes. It is important to note that only working age applicants will be impacted by the changes as the discount for pensioner claimants will continue to be determined by reference to the national schemes for Council Tax Reduction.
- 3.33 The initial modelling indicated that of the 2,450 working age recipients of Council Tax Reduction 72%, almost 3 quarters, will receive an increase in the amounts of Council Tax reduction that they receive.
- 3.34 Where there is a reduction in the level of support a relative majority of these cases fall within the single person and childless couple client groups. The largest group seeing a reduction in support is the single person household, this is consistent with the general principle that Council Tax Reduction schemes should incentivise work, as this client group is that which is most able to return to employment.
- 3.35 The impact and rationale for each of the changes to the scheme is commented on below:

Increase of maximum support to 100% liability; and further discounts based on the applicant and partner's income.

- 3.36 The modelling of the proposed scheme identified that an increase in support from 85% of Council Tax liability to 100% liability, and the implementation of an income banded scheme would provide additional support to 72% of the CTR recipients.
- 3.37 The claimants seeing a reduction in support will be a minority and these claimants will be within the higher household income groupings.
- 3.38 An exceptional hardship scheme will remain in place, in-line with the current scheme and in appropriate cases the hardship scheme can be utilised to provide a transitional support for these claimants.

Removal of Non-Dependant deductions

- 3.39 Non-Dependant Deductions are applied where there are adult residents – other than the partner or claimant - within a property and they reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction.
- 3.40 The current scheme's requirement to apply Non-Dependant deductions creates an administrative drag on the assessment of Council Tax Reduction. This slows the speed of assessment and prevents the movement to automate the assessment of Council Tax Reduction.
- 3.41 The removal of non-dependent deductions from CTR will increase the speed of assessment for all claimants and allow the automation of the initial award from receipt of the notification of universal credit.

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- 3.42 The data modelling of the new CTR scheme identified 346 of the 2,512 working age claimants had non-dependants resident within the household. The majority of these cases, 236 in total, have no non-dependant deduction applied as a result of the circumstances of the claimant. The removal of the non-dependant deduction for the remaining 110 cases will provide an average £7.06 increase in CTR, and a cost of £770 per week.

Removal of extended payments

- 3.43 Extended payments were a feature of the legacy Council Tax Benefit scheme. The payments were provided when a claimant moves from benefits into employment and were intended to smooth the transition into employment.
- 3.44 The introduction of universal credit and assessment of entitlement on a month to month basis has reduces the requirement to provide extended payments as universal credit is designed to integrate more smoothly with employment and changes to income.
- 3.45 The structure of the proposed banded reduction scheme provides a transparent assessment process for claimants and further reduces the requirement for extended payments to continue. As claimants increase their working hours, or return to employment the impact of their increased earnings on their CTR will be evident.

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Removal of the Income Taper and introduction of a capital limit of £6,000

- 3.46 The current CTR scheme applies a capital limit of £6,000; where a claimant has over £6,000 in capital a tariff income is applied to assume income of £1.00 per week for every £250 in capital up to £16,000 at which point eligibility for CTR is removed.
- 3.47 The use of tariff income requires the service to obtain evidence of a claimants capital and to periodically review the level of capital for these claimants. This creates an administrative drag on the initial assessment of support and a further burden in the requirement to carry out reviews on income.
- 3.48 The removal of tariff income and introduction of £6,000 capital limit will remove the administrative requirement.
- 3.49 Modelling of the scheme identified 25 applicants estimated to be impacted by the reduction in Capital Limits, with an average Council Tax Reduction of £14.00 per week. The scheme will include an exceptional hardship provision and capacity will exist within the fund to provide transitional protection to customers losing support due to the removal of the tariff income and introduction of the £6,000 capital limit.
- 3.50 It is important to note that the changes to the income taper and capital limits will only impact working age claimants. Pensioners who have accrued savings to meet their needs in retirement will continue to have their eligibility for discount determined by national rules.

Retention of disregards for:

- Carer's Allowance and Support Component of Employment Support Allowance
- Disability Benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance
- Child Benefit and Child Maintenance
- War Pensions and War Disablement Pensions

- 3.51 The identified disregards will be maintained within the proposed scheme and maintain the protections that these groups enjoy within the current CTR Scheme

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 3.52 As required by the legislation, the Council has consulted with both major preceptors and also the public. In the case of the public consultation, a full consultation was undertaken until 9th November 2020.

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Major Preceptors

- 3.53 All major preceptors were requested for their views on the recommended new scheme. The Council received the responses shown in Appendix 3

Public Consultation

- 3.54 The public consultation produced 55 responses full details are provided in Appendix 2.

- 3.55 The Council suggested 11 options for changes and the overall responses were as follows:

Option 1 – The introduction of an income banded scheme to replace the current scheme for all applicants of working age

Yes: 47.83%, No: 26.09%, Don't Know: 26.08%

Option 2 - To limit the number of dependant children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two for all applicants

Yes: 60.87%, No: 30.43%, Don't Know: 8.70%

Option 3 – To remove non-dependant deductions from the scheme

Yes: 47.83%, No: 26.09%, Don't Know: 26.08%

Option 4 – Disregarding Carers Allowance, the support component of the Employment and Support Allowance and the housing element of Universal Credit

Yes: 78.26%, No: 17.39%, Don't Know: 4.35%

Option 5 - To reduce the maximum limit of capital from £16,000 to £6,000

Yes: 69.57 %, No: 30.43%, Don't Know: 0%

Option 6 – Removing the current earnings disregards and replacing them with a standard £25 disregard for all working age applicants..

Yes: 56.52%, No: 21.74%, Don't Know: 21.74%

Option 7 - To allow further income disregards where an applicant, their partner or any dependant is in receipt of a disability benefit

Yes: 78.26%, No: 8.70%, Don't Know: 13.04%

Option 8 – Removing the Extended Reduction provision

Yes: 69.57%, No: 21.74%, Don't Know: 8.70%

Option 9 - Removal of Second Adult Reduction from the scheme

Yes: 72.73%, No: 18.18%, Don't Know: 9.09%

Option 10 – Any new claim or change in circumstances which changes Council Tax Reduction entitlement will be made from the date on which the change occurs, (rather than on a weekly basis as at present)

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Yes: 90.48%, No: 9.52%, Don't Know: 0%

Option 11 – Extending the ‘backdating’ provisions within the scheme

Yes: 90.48%, No: 4.76%, Don't Know: 4.76%

- 3.56 It can be seen from the above that the overall response to the changes have been positive and that the consultees largely support the recommended new Council Tax Reduction scheme.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.57 A stage one Equality Impact Assessment is attached within Appendix 1 of this report.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 The following risks are associated with the project:

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Property <i>No risk</i>	N/A	N/A
Community Support <i>Potential Changes to the support of some working age applicants</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where an applicant may receive less Council Tax Reduction, they may apply for additional support under the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund In cases, where applicants have the lowest income, they may receive more support under the proposed scheme. 	There is an opportunity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modernise the current scheme; Enable a scheme that will be fit for purpose; and Reduce administration.
Timescales <i>It will be essential to meet project timescales if the new scheme is to be introduced for the 2021/22 financial year.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The work has already been completed with scheme design and extensive modelling. 	
Project capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources have already been allocated to the project which are sufficient 	
Financial / VfM <i>Changes to the scheme could potentially lead to changes in overall scheme costs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive modelling has been undertaken to estimate the costs of the scheme. This will continue throughout the life of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has indicated that it is not looking to make savings from scheme changes. The Council will provide additional support to those households on the very lowest of incomes
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has been undertaken strictly in 	

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<i>Failure to set the scheme in accordance with the legislation and failure to comply with the legal requirements for developing a new CTR scheme</i>	accordance with legislative requirements	
Innovation <i>Failure to maximise the potential of change and automation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Throughout the implementation, we will look to take advantages of the latest automation of claims and the gathering of data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There will be more opportunity to enhance customer's online experience by receiving immediate decisions of discounts being granted.
Reputation <i>Failure to implement the new scheme on time or failure to deliver a comprehensive and robust scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The project is following previous successful implementations by other Local Authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is an opportunity for the Council to enhance its reputation by developing an up to date an effective Council Tax Reduction scheme

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – First & Second Stage Equality Impact Assessment;

Appendix 2 – Results from the public consultation document

Appendix 3 – Responses from the Major Preceptors

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MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021/22 – 2023/24

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Chris Forrester
Report Author	Name: Kate Goldey Job Title: Senior Business support accounting technician Contact email: k.goldey@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881208
Wards Affected	none
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	n/a
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet RECOMMEND that Full Council: -

1) Approve the Unavoidable costs as attached at Appendix 1:

2021/22 £524k
2022/23 £340k
2023/24 £409k

2) Approve the Revenue Bids as attached at Appendix 2:

2021/22 £65k
2022/23 £48k
2023/24 £25k

3) Approve the Identified Savings as attached at Appendix 3:

2021/22 £426k
2022/23 £474k
2023/24 £405k

- 4) Approve the General Fund Capital Programme bids as attached at Appendix 4:

2021/22 £578k
2022/23 £1.123m
2023/24 £1.018m

- 5) Approve the General Fund capital programme at Appendix 5:

2021/22 £13.323m
2022/23 £4.867m
2023/24 £2.906m

- 6) Approve the net general fund revenue budget.

2021/22 £11.988m
2022/23 £11.673m
2023/24 £11.683m

- 7) Approval the increase of the Council Tax per Band D @ £5 for 2021/22.

- 8) Approve the transfer to Balances of £22k for 2020/21.

2. **BACKGROUND**

To enable members to consider the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the period 2021/22 – 2023/24 to include General Fund Revenue and Capital together with the budget proposals. The report includes recommendations to Council to enable a balanced budget to be set for 2021/22 and the proposed Council Tax for 2021/22. In addition, members are asked to note the position for future years 2022/23-2023/24. The recommendations will then be presented to Council on

22nd February 2021 together with the resolutions once we have received all the precepting bodies Council Tax calculations.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) provides the framework within which the revenue and capital spending decisions can be made. This year a 3-year plan is proposed to 2023/24. The plan addresses how the Council will provide financial funding to the Strategic Purposes and ensure residents receive quality services to meet their needs in the future. The Purposes that drive the financial considerations are:

- Run and grow a successful business
- Work and financial independence
- Living independent, active & healthy lives
- Affordable and sustainable homes
- Communities which are safe, well maintained, and green

3.2 Members and officers have reviewed the services provided by the Council over the last 6 months to consider the levels of funding available to the Council and identified where potential savings can be made or additional income generated.

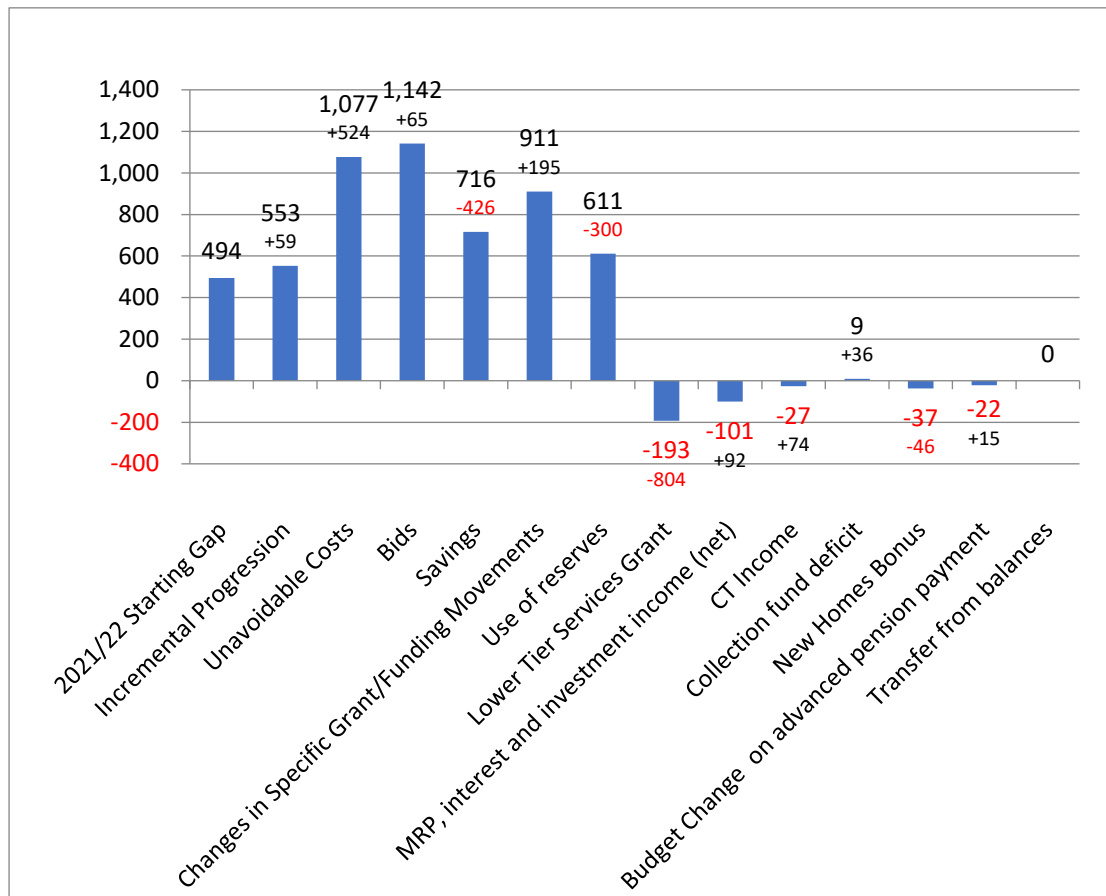
3.3 In addition, a financial framework was approved to enable an overarching strategy to be in place to support the future financial position of the Council. Considering the financial pressures, the Council faces the strategy aims to provide a framework in which the Council can become financially sustainable whilst delivering the priorities to our communities. The key objectives are:

- To ensure resources are directed to the council's strategic purposes
- To set financially sustainable budgets over the 3-year period
- To maintain balances at £2m to ensure funds are available for future projects and to mitigate threats.
- To maximise income opportunities whilst supporting the vulnerable
- Identify and disinvest in non-priority areas

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- To ensure all savings are achievable and developed with robust data
 - To reduce overheads & direct costs over the 3-year period
 - To maximise use of assets and disinvest surplus or non-performing assets
 - To further develop the commercial culture within the Council
 - To consider and adapt to the uncertain future financial climate
 - To work with the public, members and staff to engage and inform partners on the impact of the financial pressures of the Council
- 3.4 When reviewing the budget projections officers consider the impact of demand on service and the costs associated with this demand. This may result in additional costs (associated with maintaining current service delivery) or reductions in anticipated income revenue over the next 3 years.
- 3.5 Over the last 12 months the Finance and Budget working group, as established by the Overview and Scrutiny Board has met on a regular basis to review costs, fees and charges and the capital programme and have made a number of recommendations to Cabinet.
- 3.6 Officers have factored in a number of assumptions into the Medium-Term Financial Plan to update it in line with revised calculations and information from officers and Government.
- 3.7 The table below demonstrates the changes in the financial projections and budget gap for 2021/22 based on the original estimation of a £494k gap as presented in February 2020. Following the table there are explanations of the reasons for the changes resulting in an achieved balanced budget for 2021/22.



Incremental progression (£59k)

- 3.8 One of the pressures to the budget is general inflation on utility costs along with additional costs in relation to pay. The additional costs relating to pay inflation are above that initially forecast. The original budget included 1% pay award however the final agreed pay award was 2.75% for 2020/21 which is therefore included in the estimated future position above.

Unavoidable Costs (£524k)

- 3.9 When proposing the budget officers have also identified several budget pressures that have been deemed “unavoidable”. Unavoidable includes the ongoing effects of pressures identified during 2020/21 together with any issues that have been raised as fundamental to maintaining service provision as part of the budget process. In addition, income

shortfalls that cannot be managed by improved marketing or price increases have been addressed during the budget planning. The pressures and income shortfalls are identified at Appendix 1.

Bids (£65k)

- 3.10 In addition to the unavoidable pressure's revenue bids have been identified and included at Appendix 2. Bids relate to new funding requests made by officers to improve service delivery or to realise future efficiencies.

Identified Savings/additional income (£426k)

- 3.11 Identified savings and additional income are detailed at Appendix 3. These are proposed to ensure that budget pressures can be met and demonstrate the additional income that the Council is generating.

Changes in Specific Grant/Funding Movements (£195k)

- 3.12 An assessment of the council's pension liabilities has seen an increase to the pensions added years payments for this financial year.

3.13 Reserves (£300k)

This figure relates to a number of reserves that are able to be released this financial year as they have been confirmed as no longer being required.

Lower Tier Services Grant (£804k)

- 3.14 The finance settlement in December announced that we are due to receive a new grant called the Lower Tier Services Grant in 2021/22. This grant is intended to compensate those local authorities whose core spending power has not increased as a result of the finance settlement. In Bromsgrove District Councils case the reduction in spending power is due to the expected reduction in New Homes Bonus. Core Spending Power is a measure of the resources available

to local authorities to fund service delivery. It sets out the money that has been made available to local authorities through the Local Government finance settlement.

MRP, interest costs and investment income (net) (£92k)

- 3.15 This change is due to a re-profiling of the capital programme to reflect more accurately planned spend which has moved expenditure into future years. There was also a reduction in budgeted spend at outturn for 2019/20 which has moved MRP and borrowing costs into future years. The investment income has also been revised to take account of the actual spend this financial year, 2020/21

Council Tax (£74k)

- 3.16 As part of the Financial Settlement the Council is allowed to increase Council Tax by up to 2% or £5 whichever is higher without the need for a referendum. This is less than the previous assumptions of 2.99% and therefore there is a projected loss of income for 2021/22 – 2023/24. The current projections include A £5 increase for 2021/22 and the demand on the collection fund to meet the Council's own needs will be £8.640m. The Council Tax relating to the Councils services will rise from £228 to £233 for band D properties.
- 3.17 In addition the Council pay a parish precept estimated at £944k which is funded from Council tax income from the specific parish area. These will form part of the resolutions to Council on 24th February 2020.

New Homes Bonus (NHB) (£46k)

- 3.18 The amount of NHB for 2021/22 has been confirmed as £656k, which is £46k more than anticipated in the MTFP. This is due to the Government funding an additional year of New Homes Bonus. However, the financial settlement stated this would be for one year only and would not attract future legacy payments.

An assumption has been made that the Community Bid scheme will continue at a level of 25% per annum based on the additional New Homes Bonus payable for the year. For 2020/21 this equates to £12k along with a decision to increase to £80k with the use of the Councils general COVID-19 grant which is available.

Council Tax Deficit (£36k)

- 3.19 This is the estimated deficit based on the latest 2020/21 collection fund information

NNDR Income – no change

- 3.20 The Council is currently participating in a pan-Worcestershire Business Rates Pool (WBRP) pilot for the 75% Business Rate Retention for 2020-21 financial year. This one-year arrangement is at no detriment to our financial position in comparison to if we had not entered the pool. As part of the Finance Settlement approval was granted for the Council to be a member of a Worcestershire Pool for 2021-22 that also includes the Fire Authority. Again, there is no detriment to the Council in joining this pool and whilst the position for the Council has been projected at a baseline from the current position for future years it is expected that additional growth may be generated which will be reported in the quarterly financial reports. The position in relation to further appeals and resultant uncertainty due to the impact on performance of the Pool remain a concern; this is being managed by the S151 Officer in conjunction with the other treasurers within the Pool.

Future Years

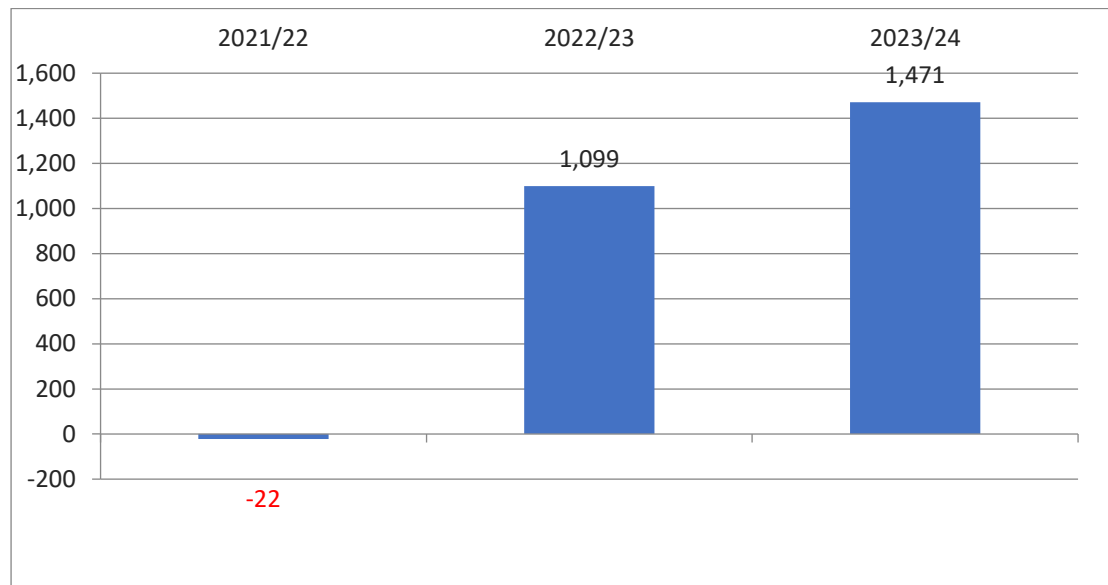
- 3.21 As expected a one-year provisional local government settlement was announced on 17 December 2020 following the October announcement of a one-year Spending Review. The Government will seek to find a new consensus for broader reforms for local government when the post-COVID future is clearer. We can hopefully expect multi-year settlements from 2022-23 but the Government will need to consider the economic circumstances.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council received £1.255m Covid-19 Emergency funding and a further 5th tranche of this grant will be paid in 2021/22 of £411k. Officers are working through how to ensure this is allocated in the coming months and into the new financial year to ensure the Council has a robust action plan of recovery.

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3.22 The medium-term financial gap to 2023/24 is as follows:



3.23 Whilst it is important to see the steep improvement in the budget projections for 2021/22, there remain significant savings to be made over the Financial Planning period. There is a need to consider how these savings can be made and it is proposed that officers consider the following areas to present options available to reduce costs and grow income to Members in the Autumn. The areas to consider include:

- Improving income through commercial activities and income from regeneration investments
- Increase in income and reduction in spend on Environmental Services

General Fund

3.24 The proposed budget is summarised in the table below:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
	£000	£000	£000
Departmental base budget	11,571	11,511	11,325
Incremental Progression/Inflation on Utilities	59	50	74
Unavoidables Pressures	524	340	409
Revenue Bids & Revenue impact of capital bids	65	48	25
Savings and Additional income	-426	-474	-405
Changes in Specific Grant/Funding Movements	195	197	254
Net Revenue Budget Requirement	11,988	11,673	11,682
Financing			
Funding from reserves	-638	-100	0
Lower Tier Services Grant	-804	0	0
Business Rates Net Position	-2,474	-2,510	-2,510
New Homes Bonus	-656	-295	0
Collection Fund Deficit (Council Tax)	36	0	0
Council Tax	-8,665	-8,924	-9,243
Investment Income	-150	-250	-333
Interest Payable	444	527	529
MRP (Principal)	1,025	1,193	1,387
Discount on advanced pension payment	-128	-214	-40
Funding Total	-12,010	-10,573	-10,211
General Balances	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
	£000	£000	£000
Opening Balances 20/21 (projected)	4,284	4,306	3,206
Contribution (from) / to General Balances	22	-1,099	-1,472
Closing Balances	4,306	3,206	1,735

Collection Fund

3.25 The anticipated collection fund deficit is £263k, which will be distributed amongst the major preceptors using the prescribed formulae. This Councils share of the deficit payable as a one-off sum is £36k.

Precepts

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- 3.26 The precepts from Worcestershire County Council, Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority and the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner are due to set their precepts in the week commencing 8th February. This will enable the Council to set the Council Tax on 24th February 2021. The precepting bodies Council Tax requirements will be included in the formal resolutions which will also be presented to Cabinet and Council on 24th February.

Capital Programme

- 3.27 The Capital Programme has been considered to propose any new bids required to deliver services to the community. These are included at Appendix 4 with the proposed complete Capital Programme at Appendix 5. The borrowing costs have been factored into the revenue budget for the financial plan. There are detailed business cases available for all capital projects should members wish to consider them further.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As part of the budget and the Council Tax approval process, the Council is required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to make specific calculations and decisions in approving a balanced budget for the following financial year and setting the Council Tax Level. These will be included in the resolutions and presented to Cabinet and Council on 24th February 2021.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's corporate plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the District and our communities. Our MTFP and strategies are integrated within all of our Strategic Purposes.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. The MTFP has implications on climate change and these will be addressed and reviewed when relevant with the climate change officers to ensure the correct procedures have been followed.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The impact on the customer has been reduced due to the savings being realised by reduction of waste in the services and ensuring that all service that create value to the customer are resourced.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The MTFP will enable services to be maintained and, where achievable, improvements to the community.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 To mitigate the risks associated with the financial pressures facing the Authority regular monitoring reports are presented to both officers and Members to enable proactive action being undertaken to address any areas of concern. Risks include:

- Reductions in government funding leading to a reduction in the level of services delivered to the public
- Reductions in business rates income as a result of appeals or reduction in the rateable value leading to a lower level of income for the Council.
- Identification of sufficient and ongoing revenue savings to deliver a balanced budget.
- Allocation of sufficient resources to meet the needs of service delivery and the Councils priorities.
- Maintain adequate revenue and capital balances as identified in the MTFP to ensure financial stability.

The regular financial monitoring by Officers and Cabinet will provide a framework to mitigate the above risks.

Covid-19

Throughout 2020/21 the Council has received a number of Government grants to manage the impact that the pandemic has had on the District and to offset the additional costs and income shortfalls over the last year as well as the distribution of the local business support grants. These have been provided to give financial support to businesses severely impacted by the loss of trade due to national lockdowns we have faced.

It is certain that we will face a continuation of restrictions going into 2021/22. The Council will endeavour to continue to support local businesses although it is difficult to assess when the economy of the District will be back to pre-pandemic levels. With uncertainties in the level of business rate support and relief that will be given to business over the next 12 months it is important for the Council to ensure sufficient funding is in place to provide appropriate financial support.

Brexit

There are a number of areas in which the Brexit deal may affect local government finances however there is no clarity as to what the associated costs will be. Whilst the Brexit deal mitigates a number of the challenges that may have been faced by the changes in legislation, the current economic crisis continues to obscure the situation and therefore the impact of the Country leaving the EU remains still very uncertain. The impact of Brexit is included in the Council's Corporate Risk Register and whilst the uncertainties remain the Council will support businesses and its communities to meet future challenges.

Other Risks:

Risk Management - Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Opinion on the Estimate Process and Reserve Levels.

Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the CFO to report to the Council when it is making the statutory calculations required to determine its Council Tax or precept.

Government guidance states, '*The authority is required to take the report into account when making the calculations. The report must deal with the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides. What is required is the professional advice of the CFO on these two questions. Both are connected with matters of risk and uncertainty. They are interdependent and need to be considered together.*'

Section 25: Report of the CFO - Robustness of the Estimates

The Chief Financial Officer's opinion is that the estimates are robust, although there are a number of risks and uncertainties as set out below.

Whilst relevant budget holders are responsible for individual budgets and their preparation, all estimates are scrutinised by Financial Services staff and Management Team prior to submission to Members.

The Council's revenue and capital budgets are 'joined up', both for next year's budget and for the longer term. This means that the full cost of the proposed Capital Programme is reflected in the revenue estimates. Both revenue and capital budgets include the funding needs of the Council.

The main risks in the 2021/22 budget relate to:

- The delivery of income and managing the impact of savings proposed. Mitigating actions are in place within departmental risk registers to ensure managers are aware of any variances to budget.
- Business Rate Income – whilst this is essentially part of Central Government funding, the actual income received will vary depending on actual Business Rates income. It is difficult to predict the likely income with accuracy. It will be affected by many variables beyond the Council's control, for example, the level of appeals by ratepayers against their rating assessments. The funding mechanism gives a degree of in year protection against volatility but this only defers the impact of variances to future years.

- Central Government Funding – the MTFP shows income from NHB reducing to zero in 2023/24. The provisional local government finance settlement announced New Homes Bonus Year 11 allocations and legacy payments from Years 8 to 9 giving a total payable to Bromsgrove District Council of £657k in 2021/22. It is expected that a final New Homes Bonus payment will be made the following year in relation to legacy payments for Year 9 and then will cease and this is reflected in the MTFP. There is currently no information about a replacement scheme.

Adequacy of Reserves

- 7.2 The Financial Framework proposed a level of balances at £2m for General Fund activity over the next 3 years. Before the pandemic the Council was in a good financial position with reasonable general fund balances. Since the pandemic the Council has largely been able to mitigate losses through Government funding however the medium- and long-term effect on council tax and business rates is still unknown and it would be prudent to set aside any windfall revenue into reserves to cover any future shortfalls.

The reserves position will allow the Council to be robust and make coordinated plans to address the deficit position.

Taking account of the above, and the level of risk within the budget, the S151 Officer judges that reserves are at an appropriate level throughout the period of the MTFP. This will need to be reviewed if there are any major unplanned calls on reserves, for example, to fund capital expenditure.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Appendix 1 - Unavoidable costs
- Appendix 2 - Revenue Bids
- Appendix 3 - Identified savings
- Appendix 4 - Capital bids
- Appendix 5 - Proposed Capital programme

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Geoff Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling	Various
Lead Director / Head of Service	Chris Forrester, Head of Finance and Customer Services	Various
Financial Services	Chris Forrester, Head of Finance and Customer Services	Various
Legal Services	Claire Felton	Various
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	n/a	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	n/a	

UNAVOIDABLE PRESSURES - BDC

Appendix 1

Department	Strategic Purpose	Description of Pressure	2021-22 £'000	2022-23 £'000	2023-24 £'000
Building Control	Affordable and sustainable Homes	Under acheived income - partly offset with Sales fees & Charges grant	52	0	0
Corporate Services	Enabling Services	New Homes Bonus - Community funding increase due to additional New Homes Bonus being received 21/20	80	0	0
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Increase in fees from WFDC for NWWM SLA	6	6	6
Environmental Services	Run and Grow a successful Business	Reduced numbers of car parking in the town - partly offset with Sales fees & Charges grant	120	0	0
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green & Run & grow a successful business	Correction to Disposal budget on Commercial Waste as highlighted in Business Case September 2020	190	250	310
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green & Run & grow a successful business	Increase of Water budget to reflect increased costs from Severn Trent	45	48	51
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green & Run & grow a successful business	Funding of Joint Role as part of Joint Herefordshire and Worcestershire Waste Strategy to influence and implement changes to services arising from proposed Environment Bill.	8	8	8
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green & Run & grow a successful business	Management Restructure - Linked to Saving	10	10	10
Democratic Services	Enabling Services	Members National Insurance	5	5	5
Regulatory Services - BDC	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	WRS Salary Pressures	8	13	19
TOTAL			524	340	409

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NEW REVENUE BIDS - BDC

Appendix 2

Department	Strategic Purpose	Description of revenue bid	2021-22 £'000	2022-23 £'000	2023-24 £'000
Democratic Services	Enabling Services	Members ICT Training	2	2	2
ICT	Enabling Services	Member Support Officer	22	23	0
ICT	Enabling Services	Corporate GIS support	32	23	23
ICT	Enabling Services	Polygonisation of BLPUs	9	0	0
TOTAL			65	48	25

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SAVINGS & ADDITIONAL INCOME - BDC

Appendix 3

Department	Strategic Purpose	Description of saving	2021-22 £'000	2022-23 £'000	2023-24 £'000
Building Control	Communities which are safe well maintained and green	Car Mileage, print and Professional fees budget savings	-3	0	0
CCTV/Lifeline	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green & Living independent, active & healthy lives.	various amendments overall budgets - reduction of general supplies budgets	-7	-7	-7
Corporate Services	Enabling Services	Grant funding received from MHCLG for loss of sales, fees and charges income due to the pandemic.	-77	0	0
Corporate Services	Enabling Services	Management review savings	0	-125	-125
Corporate Services	Enabling Services	Future Operating Model / Alternative Services Delivery	0	-75	-75
Corporate Services	Enabling Services	New Homes Bonus - Community group funding from General Covid grant received in 2020/21.	-80	0	0
Development Management	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green.	Mileage savings	-1	-1	-1
Elections	Enabling Services	Individual Electoral registrations (IER) Budget savings	-27	-27	-27
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green.	Additional Income within Trade waste services	-10	-10	-10
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green.	Repairs and maintenance of vehicles budget savings	-7	-7	-7
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green.	Fixtures & Fittings budget savings	-2	-2	-2
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green.	Car Mileage, print and stationary budget savings	-4	-4	-4
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green.	Vehicle Hire budget savings	-57	-57	-57
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green.	Garden Waste Income Service Level Agreement	-28	-28	-28
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe , well maintained & green.	New post deferred until 2023/24	-54	-56	0
Equalities	Enabling Services	Reduction in hours on post within the Equalities team	-8	-8	0
Housing GF	Affordable and sustainable home	Various amendments overall budgets - reduction of general supplies budgets	-9	-9	-9
Human Resources	Enabling Services	Salary Savings	-16	-16	-16
Human Resources	Enabling Services	Mileage and Professional fees Savings	-1	-1	-1
ICT	Enabling Services	ICT Savings	-15	-25	-25
Policy	Enabling Services	Savings on payments to other Local Authorities	0	-1	0
Policy	Enabling Services	Reduced hours on post within the policy team	-4	-4	0
Parks and open spaces	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Various amendments on general supplies budgets	-1	-1	-1
Parks Team	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Salary Savings	-3	-3	-3
Sports development	Living independent, active & healthy lives	External funding received to fund part a post in the team	-5	0	0

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Department	Strategic Purpose	Description of saving	2021-22 £'000	2022-23 £'000	2023-24 £'000
Sports development	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Reduction in general expenditure budget	-5	-5	-5
Sports development	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Reduction in car mileage budgets	-1	-1	-1
TOTAL			-426	-474	-405

CAPITAL BIDS - BDC

Department	Strategic Purpose	Description	Funding Source i.e. Grant, Borrowing, Reserve, S106	2021-22 £'000	2022-23 £'000	2023-24 £'000
Strategic Housing	Living independent, active & healthy lives	BDC Home Repairs Assistance Lifetime Loans	Borrowing	0	50	50
Strategic Housing	Living independent, active & healthy lives	BDC Disabled Facilities Grant	Govt Grant	163	913	913
Strategic Housing	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Energy Efficiency Installation (Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency Fund)	Borrowing	0	110	0
Strategic Housing	Communities which are safe, well-maintained and green	BDC 7kW electric vehicle charge-points	Borrowing & grant £40k	120	0	0
Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Purchase of Wheeled Bins for Commercial Waste Service	Borrowing	45	50	55
Planning & Regeneration	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Purchase of New Electric Bus for Town Centre	Borrowing	250	0	0
TOTAL				578	1,123	1,018

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Description	Department	Strategic purposes	Funding detail	2021/22 Total £'000	2022/23 Total £000	2023/24 Total £'000
Home Repairs Assistance	Community & Housing GF Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Long Term Debtors	50	50	50
Energy Efficiency Installation	Community & Housing GF Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Capital Receipts/Borrowing	0	110	0
Funding for DFGs	Community & Housing GF Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Grant income WCC	913	913	913
New Digital Service	Community & Housing GF Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Borrowing	34	34	34
BDC 7Kw electric vehicle charge points	Community & Housing GF Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Borrowing	120	0	0
Burcot Lane	Financial & Customer Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Public works loan board and grant homes england	9,275	0	0
Bus Shelters	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Borrowing	18	18	0
Cemetery Extension infrastructure at at North Bromsgrove Cemetery Phase Two	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Capital Receipts/Borrowing	8	7	0
Fleet Replacement	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Capital Receipts/Borrowing	481	1,591	204
Wheelie Bin Purchase	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Capital Receipts/Borrowing	139	144	55
Regeneration Fund	Financial & Customer Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Borrowing	2,000	2,000	1,650
Sanders Park Play Area - Replacement for Tripod Swing (Health and Safety)	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Borrowing	35	0	0
Electric Bus	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Borrowing	250	0	0
				13,323	4,867	2,906

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Cabinet
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17th February

Pay Policy Statement 2020/21

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	yes
Relevant Head of Service	Chris Forrester
Report Author	Name: Chris Forrester Job Title: Head of Finance and Customer Services Contact email: chris.forrester@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881673
Wards Affected	Not applicable
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Not applicable
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet Committee is asked to RECOMMEND to Full Council that: -

- 1) The Pay policy as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.**

2. BACKGROUND

The Localism Act requires English and Welsh local authorities to produce a Pay Policy statement ('the statement'). The Act requires the statement to be approved by Full Council and to be adopted by 31st March each year for the subsequent financial year. The Pay Policy Statement for the Council is included at Appendix 1.

The Statement must set out policies relating to-

- (a) The remuneration of its chief officers,
- (b) The remuneration of its lowest-paid employees, and
- (c) The relationship between-
 - (i) The remuneration of its chief officers, and
 - (ii) The remuneration of its employees who are not chief officers.

The provisions within the Localism Act bring together the strands of increasing accountability, transparency, and fairness in the setting of local pay.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 All financial implications have already been included as part of the budget setting process and posts are fully budgeted for.

The information provided is based on the current pay structure.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 These are already included in the report.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The pay policy covers all officer's remuneration and therefore includes all strategic purposes of the Council.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no implications in relation to this report.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 There are no implications in relation to this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 There are no implications in relation to this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There are no implications in relation to this report.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Pay Policy 2020/21

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Geoff Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling	Various
Lead Director / Head of Service	Chris Forrester, Head of Finance and Customer Services	Various
Financial Services	Chris Forrester, Head of Finance and Customer Services	Various
Legal Services	Claire Felton	Various
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	n/a	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	n/a	

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Introduction and Purpose

1. Under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the “power to appoint officers on such reasonable terms and conditions as authority thinks fit”. This pay policy statement sets out the Council’s approach to pay policy in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011. It shall apply for the financial year 2020 and each subsequent financial year, until amended. The information provided is based on a proposed model that is still subject to approval and consultation.
2. The purpose of the statement is to provide transparency with regard to the Council’s approach to setting the pay of its employees by identifying;
 - a. the methods by which salaries of all employees are determined;
 - b. the detail and level of remuneration of its most senior staff i.e. ‘chief officers’, as defined by the relevant legislation;
 - c. the Committee(s) responsible for ensuring the provisions set out in this statement are applied consistently throughout the Council and for recommending any amendments to the full Council
3. Once approved by the full Council, this policy statement will come into immediate effect and will be subject to review on a minimum of an annual basis, in accordance with the relevant legislation prevailing at that time.

Legislative Framework

4. In determining the pay and remuneration of all of its employees, the Council will comply with all relevant employment legislation. This includes the Equality Act 2010, Part Time Employment (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000, The Agency Workers Regulations 2010 and where relevant, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Earnings) Regulations. With regard to the equal pay requirements contained within the Equality Act, the Council ensures there is no pay discrimination within its pay structures and that all pay differentials can be objectively justified through the use of equality proofed Job Evaluation mechanisms. These directly relate salaries to the requirements, demands and responsibilities of the role.

Pay Structure

5. The Council’s pay and grading structure comprises grades 1 – 11. These are followed by grades for Managers 1 - 2, Head of Service 1, Head of Service 2, Head of Service 3, Executive Director, Deputy Chief Executive and then Chief Executive; all of which arose following the introduction of shared services with Redditch Borough Council.
6. Within each grade there are a number of salary / pay points. Up to and including grade 11 scale, at spinal column point 43, the Council uses the nationally negotiated pay spine. Salary points above this are locally determined. The Council’s Pay structure is set out below.

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Grade	Spinal Column Points		Nationally determined rates	
			Minimum £	Maximum £
1	1	2	17,842	18,198
2	2	5	18,198	19,312
3	5	9	19,312	20,903
4	9	14	20,903	23,080
5	14	19	23,080	25,481
6	19	24	25,481	28,672
7	25	30	29,577	33,782
8	30	34	33,782	37,890
9	34	37	37,890	40,876
10	37	40	40,876	43,857
11	40	43	43,857	46,845
Manager 1	Hay evaluated	43%	57,284	59,618
Manager 2	Hay evaluated	45%	59,597	62,066
Head of Service 1	Hay evaluated	51%	68,128	70,910
Head of Service 2	Hay evaluated	61%	81,754	85,091
Head Of Service 3	Hay evaluated	68%	91,208	94,546
Executive Director	Hay evaluated	74%	98,994	102,888
Deputy Chief Executive	Hay evaluated	80%	N/A	111,230
Chief Executive	Hay evaluated	100%	N/A	139,038

7. All Council posts are allocated to a grade within this pay structure, based on the application of a Job Evaluation process. Posts at Managers and above are evaluated by an external assessor using the Hay Job Evaluation scheme. Where posts are introduced as part of a shared service, and where these posts are identified as being potentially too 'large' and 'complex' for this majority scheme, they will be double tested under the Hay scheme, and where appropriate, will be taken into the Hay scheme to identify levels of pay. This scheme identifies the salary for these posts based on a percentage of Chief Executive Salary (for ease of presentation these are shown to the nearest whole % in the table above). Posts below this level (which are the majority of employees) are evaluated under the "Gauge" Job Evaluation process..
8. In common with the majority of authorities the Council is committed to the Local Government Employers national pay bargaining framework in respect of the national pay spine and annual cost of living increases negotiated with the trade unions.
9. All other pay related allowances are the subject of either nationally or locally negotiated rates, having been determined from time to time in accordance with collective bargaining machinery and/or as determined by Council policy. In determining its grading structure and setting remuneration levels for all posts, the Council takes account of the need to ensure value for money in respect of the use of public expenditure, balanced against the need to recruit and retain employees who are able to meet the requirements of providing high quality services to the community; delivered effectively and efficiently and at all times those services are required.
10. New appointments will normally be made at the minimum of the relevant grade, although this can be varied where necessary to secure the best candidate. From time to time it may be necessary to take account of the external pay market in order to attract and retain employees with particular experience, skills and capacity. Where necessary, the Council will ensure the requirement for such is objectively justified by reference to clear and transparent evidence of relevant market comparators, using appropriate data sources available from within and outside the local government sector.
11. For staff not on the highest point within the salary scale there is a system of annual progression to the next point on the band.

Senior Management Remuneration

12. For the purposes of this statement, senior management means 'chief officers' as defined within S43 of the Localism Act. The posts falling within the statutory definition are set out below, with details of their basic salary as at 1st April 2020 (assuming no inflationary increase for these posts).
13. Bromsgrove District Council is managed by a senior management team who manage shared services across both Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils. All of the posts listed below have been job evaluated on this basis, with the salary costs for these posts split equally between both Councils.

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Title	% of Chief executive salary	Pay range (minimum) £	Pay range (maximum) £	Incremental points	Cost to Redditch Borough Council
Chief Executive	100%	133,586	139,038	3	50%
Deputy Chief Executive	80%	109,017	111,230	3	50%
Executive Director of Finance and Resources. (Also S151 Officer)	74%	98,994	102,888	3	50%
Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services	68%	91,208	94,546.69	3	<i>This is a shared post across 6 district Authorities</i>
Head of Finance and Customer Support	61%	81,754	85,091	3	50%
Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services	61%	81,754	85,091	3	50%
Head of Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Services	61%	81,754	85,091	3	50%
Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	61%	81,754	85,091	3	50%

Head of Environmental and Housing Services	61%	81,754	85,091	3	50%
Head of Community and Housing Property Services	61%	81,754	85,091	3	50%

Recruitment of Chief Officers

14. The Council's policy and procedures with regard to recruitment of chief officers is set out within the Officer Employment Procedure Rules as set out in the Council's Constitution. When recruiting to all posts the Council will take full and proper account of its own equal opportunities, recruitment and redeployment Policies. The determination of the remuneration to be offered to any newly appointed chief officer will be in accordance with the pay structure and relevant policies in place at the time of recruitment. Where the Council is unable to recruit to a post at the designated grade, it will consider the use of temporary market forces supplements in accordance with its relevant policies.

15. Where the Council remains unable to recruit chief officers under a contract of service, or there is a need for interim support to provide cover for a vacant substantive chief officer post, the Council will, where necessary, consider and utilise engaging individuals under 'contracts for service'. These will be sourced through a relevant procurement process ensuring the council is able to demonstrate the maximum value for money benefits from competition in securing the relevant service. The Council does not currently have any Chief Officers under such arrangements.

Performance-Related Pay and Bonuses – Chief Officers

16. The Council does not apply any bonuses or performance related pay to its chief officers. Any progression through the incremental scale of the relevant grade is subject to satisfactory performance which is assessed on an annual basis.

Additions to Salary of Chief Officers (applicable to all staff)

17. In addition to the basic salary for the post, all staff may be eligible for other payments under the Council's existing policies. Some of these payments are chargeable to UK Income Tax and do not solely constitute reimbursement of expenses incurred in the fulfilment of duties. The list below shows some of the kinds of payments made.
 - a. reimbursement of mileage. At the time of preparation of this statement, the Council pays an allowance of 45p per mile for all staff, with additional or alternative payments for carrying passengers or using a bicycle;

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- b. professional fees. The Council pays for or reimburses the cost of one practicing certificate fee or membership of a professional organisation provided it is relevant to the post that an employee occupies within the Council.
- c. long service awards. The Council pays staff an additional amount if they have completed 25 years of service.
- d. honoraria, in accordance with the Council's policy on salary and grading. Generally, these may be paid only where a member of staff has performed a role at a higher grade;
- e. fees for returning officer and other electoral duties, such as acting as a presiding officer of a polling station. These are fees which are identified and paid separately for local government elections, elections to the UK Parliament and EU Parliament and other electoral processes such as referenda;
- f. pay protection – where a member of staff is placed in a new post and the grade is below that of their previous post, for example as a result of a restructuring, pay protection at the level of their previous post is paid for the first 12 months. In exceptional circumstance pay protection can be applied for greater than 12 months with the prior approval of the Chief Executive.
- g. market forces supplements in addition to basic salary where identified and paid separately;
 - h. salary supplements or additional payments for undertaking additional responsibilities such as shared service provision with another local authority or in respect of joint bodies, where identified and paid separately;
 - i. attendance allowances.

Payments on Termination

- 18. The Council's approach to discretionary payments on termination of employment of chief officers prior to reaching normal retirement age is set out within its policy statement in accordance with Regulations 5 and 6 of the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006 and Regulations 12 and 13 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contribution) Regulations 2007.
- 19. Any other payments falling outside the provisions or the relevant periods of contractual notice shall be subject to a formal decision made by the full Council or relevant elected members, committee or panel of elected members with delegated authority to approve such payments.
- 20. Redundancy payments are based upon an employee's actual weekly salary and, in accordance with the Employee Relations Act 1996, will be up to 30 weeks, depending upon length of service and age.

Publication

- 21. Upon approval by the full Council, this statement will be published on the Council's website. In addition, for posts where the full time equivalent salary is at least £50,000, the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts will include a note on Officers Remuneration setting out the total amount of:
 - a. Salary, fees or allowances paid to or receivable by the person in the current and previous year;

- b. Any bonuses so paid or receivable by the person in the current and previous year;
- c. Any sums payable by way of expenses allowance that are chargeable to UK income tax;
- d. Any compensation for loss of employment and any other payments connected with termination;
- e. Any benefits received that do not fall within the above.

Lowest Paid Employees

- 22. The Council's definition of lowest paid employees is persons employed under a contract of employment with the Council on full time (37 hours) equivalent salaries in accordance with the minimum spinal column point currently in use within the Council's grading structure. As at 1st April 2020 this is £17,842 per annum.
- 23. The Council also employs apprentices (or other such categories of workers) who are not included within the definition of 'lowest paid employees' (as they are employed under a special form of employment contract; which is a contract for training rather than actual employment).
- 24. The relationship between the rate of pay for the lowest paid and chief officers is determined by the processes used for determining pay and grading structures as set out earlier in this policy statement.
- 25. The statutory guidance under the Localism Act recommends the use of pay multiples as a means of measuring the relationship between pay rates across the workforce and that of senior managers, as included within the Hutton 'Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector' (2010). The Hutton report was asked by Government to explore the case for a fixed limit on dispersion of pay through a requirement that no public sector manager can earn more than 20 times the lowest paid person in the organisation. The report concluded that "it would not be fair or wise for the Government to impose a single maximum pay multiple across the public sector". The Council accepts the view that the relationship to median earnings is a more relevant measure and the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Data Transparency recommends the publication of the ratio between highest paid salary and the median average salary of the whole of the authority's workforce.
- 26. As part of its overall and ongoing monitoring of alignment with external pay markets, both within and outside the sector, the Council will use available benchmark information as appropriate.

Accountability and Decision Making

- 28. In accordance with the Constitution of the Council, the Council is responsible for setting the policy relating to the recruitment, pay, terms and conditions and severance arrangements for employees of the Council. Decisions about individual employees are delegated to the Chief Executive.
- 29. The Appointments Committee is responsible for recommending to Council matters relating to the appointment of the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive),

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Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Chief Officers as defined in the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) Regulations 2001 (as amended);

30. For the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer, the Statutory Officers Disciplinary Action Panel considers and decides on matters relating to disciplinary action.