

Name of Applicant Type of Certificate	Proposal	Map/Plan Policy	Plan Ref. Expiry Date
<b>Betel of Britain 'B'</b>	Retrospective fenced car park area - Windmill House, Weatheroak Hill, Alvechurch	GB LPA AGLV	B/2007/0482 24.09.2007

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- (a) that planning permission be **REFUSED**;
- (b) that enforcement action be authorised to secure the removal of hardstanding area and that authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Environment Services, in consultation with the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, to select the most appropriate course of action.

### Consultations

WCC (HP)	Notified 30.07.2007 expires 20.08.2007: No response received to date.
Alvechurch PC	Notified 31.07.2007 expires 21.08.2007: No response received to date.
Wythall PC	Notified 08.08.2007 expires 29.08.2007: No response received to date.
Publicity	Site Notice posted 02.08.2007; expires 24.08.2007 One letter of objection received regarding the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a Green Belt area.</li> <li>• The ground has already been prepared with hardcore where at least eight 3.5 tonne vans are parked there each night / weekend.</li> <li>• During winter months these vehicles will be plainly visible from the adjoining property.</li> <li>• Proposal represents unwarranted intrusion / loss of amenity.</li> </ul>

### The site and its surroundings

The application site relates to a field located south of the main site buildings on the western side of Watery Lane. The boundary fronting Watery Lane is a dense, mature native hedgerow mixed with semi-mature and mature trees. The site is accessed from an existing field gate leading off Watery Lane. The locality is predominately rural and the site is within the recognised Green Belt, a designated Landscape Protection Area and an Area of Great Landscape Value.

### Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the retention of an existing hardstanding area for the parking of vans / tippers / mini-buses used in relation to Betel of Britain. The hardstanding measures some 50 metres long by 18 metres wide and is constructed of largely crushed bricks with some wood-chip surfacing to the north of the hardstanding. The site is served by an existing field access off Watery Lane.

In a supporting letter, the applicant states that Windmill House is occupied by Betel of Britain, a registered charity that provides residential accommodation for disadvantaged members of the community. The house offers accommodation for up to 60 residents and training facilities in furniture restoration, car maintenance and other related skills. In order to run and maintain the centre, a number of small commercial vehicles are required,

which include four 3.5 tonne 'Transit' type vans, three 3.5 tonne tippers and three mini-buses. The vehicles are not in constant use and unused during the daytime between approximately 11.00 hrs. and 16.00 hrs.. The applicant notes that the combination of staff cars and commercial vehicles has made it increasingly difficult to park and safely manoeuvre on the existing car park, hence the application.

### Relevant Policies

WMSS	QE3
WCSP	CTC.1, CTC.4, D38, D39
BDLP	DS2, DS13, C1, C4
Others	PPS1, PPG2, PPS7

### Relevant Planning History

B/2004/1277   Erection of temporary modular building for use as workshop; granted 07.02.2005  
B/1996/0846   Erection of concrete sectional garage; granted 06.12.1996

### Notes

I consider the main issues with this application to be whether the proposals may be considered as appropriate development within the Green Belt / AGLV / LPA and, if not, whether there are any very special circumstances, which would override the harm caused.

#### Green Belt / Streetscene:

Policy DS2 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan and policy D.39 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan outline types of development that is considered to be appropriate within the Green Belt, which largely reflects national guidance in PPG2. Both policy DS2 and D.39 state that there will be a presumption against allowing inappropriate development, which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt.

The most important attribute of the Green Belt is its openness. Incremental additions, even those that are on land that is screened from public view, increase coverage of land by built development and thereby reduce openness. While I note that the proposal relates to hard standing rather than buildings, this is still considered to have an urbanising effect, encroaching upon the Green Belt's openness. Furthermore, the intended use of this hardstanding area to park large commercial vehicles will exacerbate the visual impact upon openness. The proposal is therefore considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and contrary to the fundamental aims of Green Belt policy.

While I am in no doubt of the merits of the charity work that is carried out on site and the resulting social benefits, I am mindful that applicant's personal requirements for a commercial parking area does not amount to a very special circumstance to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the general presumption against development.

The application site is also within a designated Landscape Protection Area and an Area of Great Landscape Value. Policy DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan requires

development to protect the areas essential character and main environmental assets, including the open and undeveloped nature of the countryside and the Green Belt. Policy C4 states that development will not be permitted where it would have a materially detrimental effect upon the landscape, especially within LPA's. Policy CTC.4 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan states that within Areas of Great Landscape Value priority will be given the conservation and protection of the key landscape characteristics, which comprise these areas, in particular visual sensitivity.

To create the hardstanding area, the ground has been poorly laid with crushed bricks, which appear uneven and unattractive. Although the site is fairly well screened from the west, there are limited views of the site through the vehicle access gap in the hedge. The applicant notes that the close boarded fence running along the eastern edge of the hardstanding has been erected (under permitted development) to obscure the view of parked vehicles from a distance. I consider that the fence appears out of context with the rural landscape and is largely superfluous to its intended use given that it fails to screen higher vans. The parking area is also relatively isolated from the main cluster of buildings and established parking area creating unnecessary encroachment of the site to the south. The proposal is therefore considered to have a negative impact upon the streetscene and sensitive AGLV and LPA contrary to policies DS13 and C4 of the BDLP and policies CTC.1 and CTC.4 of the WCSP.

Neighbours' Amenity:

I note the adjoining neighbours comments regarding views of the parked vehicles, particularly during winter months when foliage is limited. I do not consider that the limited views of these parked vehicles will be overbearing or cause any significant loss of amenity to the adjoining neighbour. The entrance is some 40 metres from the dwellinghouse, which sits beyond a mature field boundary. I do not therefore consider that the vehicle movements to and from the site would be so significant as to warrant refusal of the application based on neighbours' amenity.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

(a) that planning permission be **REFUSED**;

Reasons:

1. The proposal is considered to constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not accord with Green Belt Policy and the purposes of including land within it. No very special circumstances are considered to exist or have been have been put forward to outweigh the harm that would be caused. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies DS2 and DS13 of the adopted Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004, Policy D.39 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001 and to the provisions of PPG2.
2. The proposal is considered to have a negative impact upon the streetscene and the sensitive Landscape Protection Area and Area of Great Landscape Value it sits within contrary to Policies DS13 and C4 of the adopted Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004, Policies CTC.1 and CTC.4 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001 and to the provisions of PPS1.

- (b) that enforcement action be authorised to secure the removal of hardstanding area and that authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Environment Services, in consultation with the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, to select the most appropriate course of action.