

# Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan

**COVERS THE PERIOD 2011-2030**

**QUALIFYING BODY**

**ALVECHURCH PARISH COUNCIL**

**Draft NP with Accepted Examiners modifications**

**November 2018**

Alvechurch Village Green



## Foreword:

When you read this draft plan you see it has a different look and feel to that of a regular planning document – that’s because it *is* different! Our Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is a new way of planning for the future of our Neighbourhood Area, the historic parish of Alvechurch.

At consultations we heard how you would like to see Alvechurch Parish develop in the future. Those comments have helped form a ‘vision’ for 2011-2030. The Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan (APNP) has been put together by a group of committed local volunteers and led by Alvechurch Parish Council. When formally adopted by our community at referendum, the NP will form a legal part of the process when Bromsgrove District Council determines planning applications in our parish.

The APNP gives a unique opportunity to influence the development of the parish. The vision for the parish is to remain a pleasant place to live by encouraging ample facilities, good work opportunities, and improved transport links including support for cycle routes. More activities are wanted for people to do, especially in the evenings. Importantly, there is a strong desire to protect our natural and built heritage assets indeed, a NP can prove beneficial towards the protection of what is good about and maintain our parish as a place where everyone feels comfortable and proud to live.

The APNP has developed policies to;

- Maintain the openness of the Green Belt from uncontrolled, large scale, or poorly placed development
- Support Bromsgrove District Council’s development plan by encouraging sustainable development around the edge of Alvechurch Village and not spread out into the countryside
- Ensure that development is sympathetic and has regard for; conservation, improvement and maintenance of the look, feel and sense of place of the parish and Alvechurch Village itself through reference to well-thought-out design guidance
- Take steps to give the younger and older members of the community preferred access to many of the new local homes
- Influence Local Highway Authorities to improve road safety, encourage the use of more integrated and sustainable methods of transport including provision for cycling; and
- Identify additional actions to improve Alvechurch’s’ facilities, services and local environment.

Unlike an old book our NP won’t rest on a shelf gathering dust, it will be used as a ‘prospectus’ to further encourage future investment in the parish thus contributing to the quality of life of all of us who live and work in the area..

Alvechurch Parish Council will use the APNP through local feedback to ensure that the community gets its fair share of investment from any development in the parish, including through any Community Infrastructure Levy (if such a CIL policy is adopted by the District Council) and any New Homes Bonus applicable to the parish.

Our Neighbourhood Plan is a long term proposition (2011-2030). It’s unrealistic to expect everything to happen overnight. That’s why we’ve included a series of plan policies, to ensure the plan’s momentum is maintained whenever new development comes along. The NP will be revisited on a five-yearly basis to make sure it’s up to date or to coincide with any prior review of the Local District Plan.

An electronic copy of the NP, together with the Basic Conditions Statement and the Consultation Statement can be found online at the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan website [APNP web site](#)

On behalf of the parish of Alvechurch, I would like to thank the steering team immensely for all their hard work and dedication, and other members for their contributions. This has been no small task and without you we would not be near to completing this important document.

I would also like to thank all the residents, businesses and others who have commented and contributed to the development of the APNP over the past five years. We look forward to receiving your views on this Draft Neighbourhood Plan to help shape the future of our parish.

**Adrian H Smith: Chair, Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan**

(Representing the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members)

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# THE ALVECHURCH PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### Sections of the Neighbourhood Plan

<b>SECTION 1:</b>	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
<b>SECTION 2:</b>	ALVECHURCH PARISH TODAY AND KEY ISSUES
<b>SECTION 3:</b>	VISION, KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
<b>SECTION 4:</b>	THE POLICIES OF THE APNP
<b>SECTION 5:</b>	FUTURE GROWTH IN THE PARISH
<b>SECTION 6:</b>	DELIVERY PLAN-MONITORING & REVIEW
<b>SECTION 7:</b>	GLOSSARY
<b>SECTION 8:</b>	LIST OF POLICIES
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	A, B, C and D are to be found in the Evidence Base Document
	HOW TO COMMENT ON THIS DOCUMENT

Fig 1. *How the NP is laid out*

1.1 This Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2011-2030) hereafter referred to as the (APNP) is organised into a number of sections as summarised in the table above. It has been led by the Alvechurch Parish Council (APC) to help the parish community have a say in shaping how the Neighbourhood Area will develop for future generations.

1.2 The Parish Council arranged a presentation in November 2011 to discuss Neighbourhood Plans (NPs). Residents used this opportunity to demonstrate they wanted to have a say in where new housing should go, what type was required and which members of the community housing should be aimed at. Residents would prefer not to leave this decision to potential developers and Bromsgrove District Council (BDC).

1.3 The 70-plus people who attended that first public meeting completed a questionnaire about aspects of life in the parish. There was a very clear vote for what people “valued most about Alvechurch Parish”. The three elements most chosen were “access to the countryside, green belt and open spaces”, “community services and facilities” and “appearance or feel of the area.” There was less agreement about what people “most wanted to improve.” However, the main ones were public transport, leisure services and facilities, traffic and parking, youth facilities, range and quality of shops, appearance or feel of the area, and opportunities for new business. There was also agreement on the need for more affordable housing.

1.4 Following that meeting, APC met and resolved to form a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group that comprised elected members of the Parish Council and members of the local community. One of the Steering Group's first steps was the creation of a unique logo for advertising and promoting purposes.



1.5 The majority of the community when first asked about future housing responded: “We don’t want any more new homes in Alvechurch Parish, as more will put undue pressure on school places and medical services– and we like it just as it is”.

1.6 However, as one of the larger settlements in the Bromsgrove District area as stated in the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan 2011-2030, Alvechurch Village will be required to take a proportion of the district's future housing numbers. Consequently we can be sure that new housing is coming to Alvechurch Parish eventually.

1.7 The challenge then is not to find a way to stop development, but rather to manage change in the best way possible for the Neighbourhood Area. During our consultations you told us among various issues, those of most importance to you were:

- adequate provision of school places
- GP surgery capabilities
- The retention of green space and openness between our settlements by supporting and linking our APNP policies to County and District Green Infrastructure principles and policies
- Conserving local character and the local distinctiveness of our rural parish and settlements
- Improvements to overall highway safety and access plus additional crossing points
- Pedestrian-friendly improvements around the Alvechurch Village centre.

1.8 In order to maintain community access to our local schools and healthcare facilities, the Parish Council will work with local education and healthcare providers to ensure sufficient numbers of places are maintained. Developer contributions will be used to support these services.

1.9 The Parish Council will also work very closely with Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) when they soon undertake a review of the Green Belt as part of a review of the Local District Plan. Alvechurch parish has only Green Belt land available now for any significant future development. The Green Belt review is to release land around the settlement boundaries for future housing and employment. The larger settlements in the district, (Alvechurch Village being one) are expected to support BDC's future housing numbers.

## **What Area Does the Plan Cover?**

### **1.10 Designation of the Neighbourhood Plan Area**

The Parish Council applied to Bromsgrove District Council in 2012 for the whole of Alvechurch Parish to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area. (See map on page 8). In accordance with part 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning General Regulations 2012<sup>1</sup>, BDC publicised the application from APC for a six-week consultation. The application for designation was approved in January 2013 by BDC in accordance with 2012 Regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/637/contents/made> NP regulations 2012



As a result, Alvechurch Parish is designated as a Neighbourhood Area. Further details can be found on the Parish Council's website: <http://www.alvechurch.gov.uk/>

### 1.11 Alvechurch Parish Council confirms that this:

Neighbourhood Development Plan will cover the period 2011-2030 and the APNP relates only to the Parish of Alvechurch and to no other Neighbourhood Areas

APNP is the only Neighbourhood Development Plan in the designated area and that no other Neighbourhood Development Plan exists nor is in development for part or all of the designated area

The Designated Neighbourhood Area is outlined in red on the map below.

Our Statement of Basic Conditions sets out further information on this. This document can be viewed on the [APNP website](#)



Fig 2. Map of The designated Neighbourhood Area



## The Purpose of Neighbourhood Plans

1.12 The APNP relates to the use and development of land. Its primary purpose is to help in determining planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area (for our plan this is Alvechurch Parish). The Localism Act 2011<sup>2</sup> introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development in their community by preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). This document is a NDP as defined in the Act. For further information about NPs you can visit the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) website by following this link:

### 1.13 Submitting Body

Our APNP is submitted by Alvechurch Parish Council (APC), which is a qualifying body as defined by the Localism Act 2011.

### 1.14 How has our Neighbourhood Plan been prepared?

Delivery of the NP will be dependent of a number of key steps. These key steps are summarised in the following table:

step	Date	Task
1	2012	Initial presentation followed by further presentations and questionnaires to gather community comments.
2	2012-13	Steering Group formed and theme groups developed to work on community responses.
3	2014-15	Further presentations and surveys completed for business, schools, health care, local organisations and thoughts on future housing needed. A Vision and Key Aims were established to lead to Policies
4	2015-16	A draft NP document commenced and policies beginning to be formulated helped by Bromsgrove Planning Officers. The draft plan advertised by a publicity leaflet delivered to each of the 2300 parish dwellings
5	2016	Steering Group meetings increase from monthly to bi-monthly and Bromsgrove planning officers helping to check conformity with their emerging District Plan
6	2017	2017 Pre-submission publicity and consultation Submission of a neighbourhood plan or order proposal to the local planning authority Independent Examination

Fig 3. *The steps of Neighbourhood Plans*

## Who has been consulted?

1.15 **The Steering Group (SG) has met on over 60 occasions and a large number of local residents and businesses have contributed their ideas and opinions.** It's from this insight the APNP has derived its key aims and policies to make a true community plan. From the outset the SG was determined that residents should be kept informed and given every opportunity to tell this Group what they wanted for our parish.

1.16 Communication and consultations, in various forms, have played a major role in formulating the NP. The SG and Parish Council have organised consultative workshops, discussions, presentations, piggy-back events with the

<sup>2</sup> The Localism Act 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>

annual 'Picnic in the Park' party, questionnaires, quarterly parish council newsletters, in the monthly Village Magazine, and in summer 2016 a fifteen page publicity booklet featuring latest NP news was delivered to every household<sup>3</sup>.

1.17 The SG has prepared and published web-based information on the NP's website.

<http://www.alvechurchparishplan.org>

1.18 Residents' Associations have held their own meetings to look at particular aspects of the NP. Interested developers have contributed their ideas at a public 'developer day' and house builders/developers have attended SG meetings on more than one occasion to present their proposals to the NP Steering Group.

1.19 All of the ideas and proposals in the NP have come from feedback gathered at meetings, presentations and consultations to build upon the suggestions already published in the former Alvechurch Parish Plan 2005. In addition to the NP, the Village Design Statement (2005) has been updated and made an essential part of this Neighbourhood Plan( APNP Policy HDNE 3)and renamed: **'The Alvechurch Parish Design Statement' (APDS)**<sup>4</sup>

### 1.20 Conversations have revolved around:

- Complying with the new housing requirements specified in the recently adopted Bromsgrove District Plan (2011-2030).
- The parish's employment needs
- The infrastructure required to ensure the economic vibrancy and sustainability of the parish
- Improving amenities, whilst protecting history and heritage
- The effective use of land and the preservation of the Green Belt and green space (have been central to many of the discussions)
- Quality of the environment and the desire to vary housing density, size and design (have been regular topics of debate)
- Sensible balances of affordable and executive homes, housing in clusters rather than in large estates and the wish to retain a rural perspective (have been prominent issues raised throughout our consultations)



The SG has consulted with as many people as possible including the Alvechurch Middle School children.

Fig 4. *Alvechurch Middle School questionnaire leaflet*

1.21 Every household in the parish and every accessible business have had a number of newsletters, brochures or leaflet either, inviting them to participate, or comment on proposals. There has been dialogue with the governors of Alvechurch Middle School and regular monthly updates provided at APC meetings. In addition to talking to the community, the SG has also benefitted from advice and support given by a wide range of external agencies, Worcestershire County Council (WCC), and BDC planning officers.

1.22 More information about the time-line of and further issues identified by the community from later consultations can be found in the separate Consultation Statement document, a copy of which can be found on the APNP website, in the library section.

<sup>3</sup> [15 page update Booklet 2016](#)

<sup>4</sup> 'The Alvechurch Parish Design Statement' copies are held in the Parish Council office or can be viewed on the [NP website](#)

1.23 As the qualifying body under Neighbourhood Planning legislation, APC is legally responsible for producing the NP, which must be approved in a public referendum of the parish's registered voters. Prior to the public referendum, the NP will have been subject to an examination by an independent external examiner.

1.24 The Plan was subject to a pre-submission consultation for six weeks and amended in the light of 91 responses from the local community and local businesses. When the Plan is formally submitted to BDC, it will be further subjected to a six- week public Statutory Consultation before sending the NP to an independent external examiner.

1.25 The cost of preparing the NP has been subsidised by a small Local Community grant and through small periodic funding from APC. The majority of the work has been undertaken by unpaid volunteers who live in and care for the parish. Some primary consultancy work has been undertaken by Kirkwell's and GAC Consultants (to get the Draft NP underway and produce a Sustainability Appraisal).

1.26 The Plan includes APNP policies and proposals for future Community Actions. The APNP policies will be used when assessing planning applications in the neighbourhood area if the NP becomes formally 'made' following a successful examination and community referendum.

1.27 From the findings of the various consultation exercises and local evidence base<sup>5</sup>, the SG formed a vision and objectives that were later refined into 'Key Aims'. The NP policies have been split into five topic themes, which identify local issues for each topic and the proposed actions to address them through; the 'Key Aims', policies and community actions.

## COMMUNITY ACTIONS

**1.28 Community Actions are non-statutory projects, that stand apart from the policies in this APNP .They are for the Parish Council to address aspirations brought forward from consultations by the community that can't be structured as a land use policy in this NP. For that reason they stand alone, separated from the land use policies at the very end of each Policy Topic section to which they relate and are written in a font of this colour.**

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<sup>5</sup> More detailed information on this extensive evidence base, including reports on the village consultations and workshops, can be found in the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan supplementary documents on the Neighbourhood Plan website (<http://www.alvechurchparishplan.org>)

## SECTION 2: ALVECHURCH – TODAY

### ALVECHURCH PARISH

2.1) The parish of Alvechurch lies within the hillsides surrounding the upper Arrow Valley. It has many natural and historic rural assets including remnant features of the ‘dis-parked’ Alvechurch and Bordesley medieval deer parks, a network of public footpaths, bridleways, narrow lanes and ancient woodland. There are a number of medieval half-timbered buildings, as well as a large number of Georgian, Edwardian and Victorian buildings.

2.2) The Civil Parish of Alvechurch consists of three electoral parish wards: Alvechurch Village Ward, Alvechurch Hopwood Ward and Alvechurch South Rowney Green and Bordesley Ward. The Alvechurch Ward also comprises the village of Alvechurch and the small area of Witybed Green. The Hopwood Ward includes the north half of Weatheroak whilst the southern half of Weatheroak is contained within the Alvechurch Rowney Green and Bordesley Ward that also includes Holloway and Grange lanes.

### Places of Worship

2.3) The church of St Laurence dates back to 1239 and is situated on high ground, and was probably the site of an earlier Mercian church, although nothing remains of the earlier wooden building.

2.4) Much of the church was rebuilt between 1858 and 1861 by William Butterfield. There is a 1,348-pipe organ. The tower has a peal of eight bells, rung regularly by the North Worcestershire and District Change Ringing Association. The Ark, a £1m extension to the church was built in 2005.



Fig 5. *St Laurence's Church and the Ark*

2.5) The parish is well served for places of worship including the following: St Laurence C of E, St Mary Alvechurch – Catholic Church, Alvechurch Baptist Church and Rowney Green Shared Church - Methodist and C.E. Most of these places of worship also support other community uses.

### Relationship to other parishes and authorities

2.6) Situated within Worcestershire and the district of Bromsgrove, Alvechurch is one of Bromsgrove's 19 parishes and shares boundaries with Beoley, Wythall, Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett and Tutnall & Cobley Parishes. The parish also borders both the city of Birmingham to the North, Redditch Borough to the South and forms a vital part of the West Midlands Green Belt, which ‘prevents unrestricted sprawl of large, built up areas and neighbouring towns or cities merging into one another (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 80)’.

## GREEN BELT AND ITS STATUS

2.7) Green Belt is one of the most significant (though restrictive in impact) planning policies intended to keep land permanently open. The current restrictions on new building in the Green Belt mean options for future development in Alvechurch parish are limited due to the lack of available development land. For further development to take place Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) will need to review the district's Green Belt boundaries. This Neighbourhood Plan would need to be reviewed at that time to reflect any changes made in the Local Plan that may affect the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan Area. Other constraints are to do with Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSIs) and Local Wildlife and Heritage sites and assets. All of these constraints are touched on in later sections of this APNP.





Fig 6. Map of the Green Belt area

2.8) Alvechurch parish, with the exception of the built-up area of Alvechurch Village itself, is washed over by the West Midlands Green Belt, (as seen in the map fig 6 above). Further information about the Green Belt can be found in Appendix C of the Evidence Base Summary document which can be viewed online on the Library page of the [APNP website](#).

2.9) The smaller settlements of the parish, including; Bordesley, Hopwood, Rowney Green and Weatheroak are all within the Green Belt as shown in figure 6. Hopwood and Rowney Green have village envelope status in the adopted Bromsgrove District Local Plan (2011-2030) Policies Map.

2.10) The Government attaches great importance to the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF paragraph 79) states that: “The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”

**The Green Belt serves five purposes (NPPF paragraph 80).**

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

2.11) As a larger settlement Alvechurch Village can be expected to support some of the future strategic housing need of Bromsgrove District. Whilst the APNP cannot change the Green Belt boundary in the parish, we think it is important that local people are given the opportunity to influence when and if the need arises, where any Green Belt boundary changes that affect Alvechurch Village should be made. We will do this by working jointly and cooperating with BDC planning officers. This future exercise was explained to the Alvechurch community at two open day presentations in July 2014 at the Alvechurch Village Hall and can be seen in the Consultation Statement. Those results will be re-visited together with up to date community feedback at the time. This will provide an indication of local preference for Green Belt development locations to help inform the Green Belt and the Bromsgrove District Plan review process.

2.12) The Bromsgrove District Council Local Plan allocates enough land up to 2023 for Bromsgrove's related housing needs without using land in the Green Belt. Therefore if we are to support the needed housing for the district after that it will have to be on land taken out of the Green Belt land via a Bromsgrove District Plan review.

2.13) Our last ADR (Area of Development Restraint site as allocated in the old BDC District Plan 2004); on the corner Old Rectory Lane, has now been completed in 2016. If Alvechurch Village is to have more sustainable and affordable housing after 2023 for our young people and some for elderly people to downsize to, then land around the edge of the Alvechurch Village will need to be released. The Parish Council will work with BDC to ensure any release of land through a local authority led Green Belt review in line with a BDC Local Plan review is in the most sustainable locations. Community consultation will form a key part of this process.

## IMPORTANT PARISH ASSETS

2.14) These assets include; landscape Character Areas (noted in the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment and the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan), Local Wildlife Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Monuments and a Conservation Area including medieval and post medieval buildings. There are two Scheduled Monuments in Alvechurch; Historic England list entry number, 1017527, a moated site 130m north east of Moorgreen Farm, and entry number 1018334, the moated site and fishponds at the Bishop's Palace. Many of the Parish's historical assets are listed buildings, structures and historical monuments some of which originate from the 15th century. A list of assets can be found in Appendix B in the Evidence Base Summary document, (this can be viewed on the [APNP website](#)), and more information can be found from: [The Historic Environment Record \(the HER\) at Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service](#).

2.15) Many of our important buildings can be seen in the Conservation Area: Figure 8 shows one of our two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Bittell Reservoirs, used and maintained by Barnt Green waters and used weekly by the Barnt Green Sailing and fishing clubs. The other SSSI is the Hopwood Dingle site, owned by the National Trust. All protected sites can be seen on the map (Figure 9) which shows the constraints of the parish.

2.16) By March 1797, the 2726 yard (2493 m) Wast Hills Tunnel was open and the Worcester Birmingham Canal<sup>6</sup> was trading through to [Hopwood](#). In 1807 the canal reached Tardebigge passing through Alvechurch without the use of locks. The canal now provides a route that links Lea End, Hopwood, Withybed Green and Alvechurch communities through walking, cycling and provides recreational opportunities of boating and fishing for local people. Throughout the parish the canal has many Victorian bridges and structures still treasured by the community.

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<sup>6</sup> [Worcester Birmingham Canal](#)

Fig 7. *The Worcester Birmingham canal at Withybed Green*

2.17) There are a number of Local Wildlife Sites and heritage assets including the church of St Laurence, which stands on high ground between School Lane and Bear Hill. On Bear Hill between the church and the main part of the village, there is a fine 16th century half-timbered house, now divided in two. There is some good half-timber work in the main Alvechurch Village centre. The majority of parish houses, apart from some farm related outlying buildings are of brick and of a comparatively recent date.



2.18) On an elevated plateau to the east of the village is the site of the former moated site and fishponds at the Bishops of Worcester Palace. The buildings have disappeared, but the important historic system of moats remains intact, inclosing a large rectangular area, subdivided by a cross moat. All but the trench on the north side are still filled with water. Just by the cross-road is an old water-mill (now a beauty clinic) worked by the River Arrow, which flows down the valley in which Alvechurch Village lies.

## CONSTRAINTS ON DEVELOPMENT



Fig 8. *Bittell reservoirs SSSI*

2.19) Other constraints on development apart from those mentioned within the parish are the SSSI's which are located in Hopwood (Bittell Reservoirs and The Hopwood Dingle). Local Wildlife and historical heritage sites and assets are also located within the parish area; all of these constraints are touched on in later sections of this APNP. A key to the constraints map (*fig.9*) seen on the next page can be viewed on the NP website, in the document *APPENDIX C: GREEN BELT & CONSTRAINTS*.



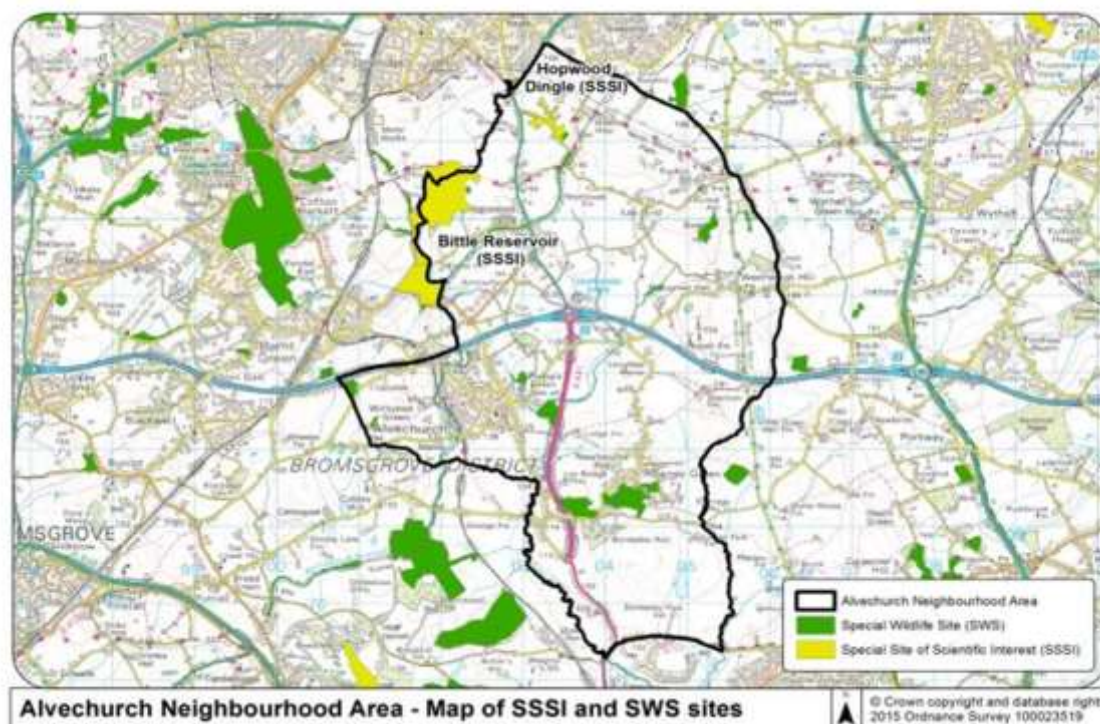


Fig 9. Map showing Parish Constraints

## LOCATION AND AMENITIES

2.20) Alvechurch is the main village within Alvechurch Parish and forms part of Bromsgrove District, in the northeast of the county of Worcestershire. Lying in the valley of the River Arrow, the nearest city is Birmingham, 17 km / 11 miles to the north, with the closest towns being Redditch, 8 km / 5 miles to the south and Bromsgrove, 9.5 km / 6 miles to the west. The parish is host to good transport links of all types including the north/south A441, the east/west M42, the Redditch/Lichfield cross-city rail service, and the Worcester Birmingham Canal. The River Arrow flows from its source in the nearby Lickey Hills through the parish and out towards Alcester. The village of Alvechurch lies in a valley surrounded by Hob, Scarfield, Coopers, Hopwood, Wast, Weatheroak, and Newbourne Hills



Fig 10. Map showing the Neighbourhood Area and the transport network

2.21) Some employment in the parish is related to transport services, such as the Hopwood Park M42 motorway services, the Alvechurch canal marina, the County Council highway's depot at Lye Bridge and Bordesley Hall, which provides units for small businesses. The impact of the closure of the major parts of the car manufacturing factory at Longbridge (located outside the parish to the North West) with the resulting changes to work patterns, social health and prosperity, has yet to be assessed.

[Ctrl and left click on the map for a larger version on the NP website or click this link](#)



2.22) Alvechurch railway station was built in 1859 and upgraded in 2015/2016. There are also many newer residential buildings and a First and Middle school with library. In 2008 a new first and middle school were built north-east of the village, the old school has since been demolished and the new housing estate has road names commemorating the house names of the school and previous rectors of St Laurence Church.

## 2.23) KEY ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

2.24) A wide range of issues impacting on the future have been identified during the production of the APNP. These relate to each of those five topic themes mentioned earlier. A more in-depth summary of responses and community feedback is available in the Evidence Base Summary and Consultation Statement and appendices that accompany the NP.

2.25) Large retail, educational, care-homes and other businesses plus housing development at Longbridge, is under way and may well have an added effect on the Parish, with extra traffic making use of the access through Hopwood to Junction 2 of the M42. This will likely lead to further increases to the already high volume of traffic and speed issues recorded for Hopwood. Travel to school and places of employment, is made more difficult due to the extreme difficulty in crossing the A441 at 'rush hour' times, as result of having no pedestrian crossing points across the A441 for local people to access public transport stopping points.



Fig 11. Public highway footpath, too narrow and too close to the main highway

2.26) The NP will rely heavily on its design principles for development that takes place within the existing settlement boundaries to preserve the "distinctiveness" of this rural parish and its historic village centre of Alvechurch.

2.27) High quality design plays an important part in many of the APNP policies not only housing developments, but all types of development that relate to, conservation, heritage preservation, environmental promotion, supporting business

and improvements that aid getting around.

2.28) Consequently the APNP emphasises an intention to see parish development as being better because of attention to quality design.

2.29) Along with the suite of policies in this NP, key documents to assist development proposals in maintaining the rural distinctiveness of Alvechurch Parish are;

- the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement (APDS),
- the [Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment \(AHERA\)](#)

2.30) Copies of both of these documents will be kept in the Alvechurch Parish Council (APC) offices, and can be accessed electronically through the APC website <http://www.alvechurch.gov.uk/>

## A selection of Key Issues gathered during some of our community consultations

*“Current medical facilities in the parish are restrictive, including a lack of meeting rooms or any space for expansion”*

*“The need for better walking and cycling network to encourage increased levels of physical exercise”...*

*“Extra social and community infrastructure will be needed if there is a significant increase to housing up to 2030”.*

*“Pedestrian crossings needed in Hopwood!” (Picnic in the park)*

*“Traffic calming needed” (picnic in park)*

*“No building in green belt” (Hopwood Consultation)*

*“A mix of housing is better” (The Baptist Church consultation)*

*“Village needs to be more suitable for young couples - otherwise village will become elderly population”*

*“More housing for elderly - i.e. Bungalows”*

*“Integrated transport including effective linkages between rail and bus and improved routes for pushchair / disabled”*

*“New house building should include objectives for all houses to incorporate energy saving devices, solar energy, grey water retention and insulation”*

*“New housing should be close to existing public transport” – Alvechurch comment*

*“Focus should be on Alvechurch as even with large developments in the hamlets there wouldn't be enough leverage to provide significant infrastructure”*

*“No infrastructure to support further development”*

*“Block road to precinct from Birmingham Road”*

*“Biodiversity projects are always good for a small community something I think the village could prosper from”*

*“Improve access = improved exposure of countryside and its value/beauty/issues - essential if we are going to inspire a new generation to care and take an interest in wildlife and the countryside”*

*“If business development is unavoidable, ecotourism/farming/outdoor leisure would fit better with our Parish's character than selling out to yet more shops and offices which often have little character these days”*

## SECTION 3 - THE VISION AND THE KEY AIMS

### THE VISION STATEMENT

**“Alvechurch 2030 - where managed change and celebration of its rural character combine in a community made better by design”**

3.1) The aim of this NP is to retain and enhance the traditional values of a rural parish. Development which promote, protects and make improvements to the main historic village of Alvechurch and its outlying settlements, rural businesses, the built and natural environment and that which reflects the community’s needs and aspirations by incorporating new technology and sustainable building methods where appropriate is encouraged. The built environment should be compatible with local and national policies, but above all should enable all sections of the community to enjoy a sustainable way of life.

3.2) By pursuing this vision we can make the parish an even better place through development, a place led better by design.

- a. To promote and encourage good design to create healthy and attractive places where people genuinely want to live and work. A place that is sustainable for the needs of the community of ‘today’ and for our future generations.
- b. To secure sustainable development and amenities that will stand the test of time
- c. To support the local economy
- d. To provide high quality accommodation for all of our community
- e. To respect the individual character of the parish, and protect our historic and natural environment through better design and making sure development is located in the right places.
- f. The neighbourhood will be safe and enjoyable to move around on foot and bike and will be well connected to the rest of the parish and beyond by public transport.
- g. The APNP will give us a stronger voice in future local development when planning proposals are submitted to BDC.

3.3) We recognise the need for change but that change should be managed in such a way that the parish’s traditional character and sense of place is conserved and enhanced for the better.

## THE KEY AIMS:

### 3.4) How the visions will be delivered

3.5) To help achieve and deliver the Vision for Alvechurch Parish by 2030 the community have consulted on and identified a number of KEY AIMS for the APNP. These are:

KEY AIM 1:	Development that meets current and future needs of all age groups in a changing and growing Alvechurch parish community, whilst embracing high quality design.
KEY AIM 2:	Through providing opportunities of community participation, development within the Alvechurch Village boundary focused on well-designed house building within walkable locations of key facilities
KEY AIM 3:	Developing services, facilities and amenities especially around Alvechurch Village centre that will help to improve quality of life, create a sense of well-being, promote community safety and enable active and healthy lifestyles for the parish as a whole.
KEY AIM 4:	Maintaining a mix of local businesses appropriate to the character of Alvechurch Parish whilst serving the needs of local people and with the inclusion of sympathetic rural diversification contributing to the wider economy.
KEY AIM 5:	Encouraging varieties of leisure, cultural and sporting facilities and activities to enable opportunities for all, particularly youngsters and older people.
KEY AIM 6:	Promoting both integrated public transport (with associated pedestrian walkways, cycle routes and adequate parking) and safer roads (through effective traffic management) in order to serve the growing and changing Alvechurch community and increase access to the local countryside.
KEY AIM 7:	To maintain and enhance the built historic and the natural environment for present and future generations whilst promoting new development that enhances local character
KEY AIM 8:	Promotion of safe, sustainable developments that are designed to meet the latest energy efficiency standards and make the best use of existing resources whilst promoting the use of renewable energy for new developments in the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

## POLICY LAYOUT

3.6) A number of inter-related themes have emerged from our initial objectives that were refined into the Key Aims as shown above. These have been used as a basis to structure the policies under theme names or topics. The Steering Group members were assigned to a topic and dealt with the main community issues raised for that topic. There will inevitably be some overlap between the policies and the topics they sit within, i.e. in some cases a policy could apply to more than one topic area. **That is why it is important that this NP is used as a whole.**



### 3.7) THE NP POLICIES SIT WITHIN THE FOLLOWING TOPIC SECTIONS:

#### A GENERAL POLICY (G)

FOLLOWED BY POLICIES IN BOXES OF THESE COLOURS RELATED TO THEIR TOPIC AREA:

Topic 1 Housing (H)

Topic 2 Heritage, Design and the Natural Environment (HDNE)

Topic 3 Leisure, Health and Well-Being (LHW)

Topic 4 Business, Shops and Services (BSS)

Topic 5 Getting Around and Transport (GAT)

### 3.8) POLICIES SECTIONS ARE SET OUT AS BELOW

- An introduction to each Topic Section
  - The Key Aims associated with all the policies in the topic section.
  - An introduction to each numbered policy
  - *The 'Policy Aim': what the policy is trying to achieve*
  - Followed by: 'Background / Justification' of the policy
- 

### NON – STATUTORY COMMUNITY ACTIONS RELATING TO THE SECTION ARE SHOWN AT THE END OF THE POLICY TOPIC SECTIONS AND ARE LAID OUT AS FOLLOWS

Not all issues and aims are associated with land use and therefore cannot be included as a policy. Where that happens in this APNP, community projects are included as non-statutory 'Community Actions' and seen as a way for Alvechurch Parish Council to further an action in cooperation with the appropriate local authority or relevant body.





**COMMUNITY ACTIONS: ARE IN THIS COLOUR FONT AND BOX. And can be found at the end of each relevant topic section.**

Within this NP there are also projects titled Community Actions. There are many issues important to residents of the area which cannot be dealt with through the Neighbourhood Planning process under the 'umbrella of legislative planning'. As such, those issues will be dealt with as "Community Actions" to be progressed by the Parish Council through cooperation and discussions with the relevant local authority (LA), other public bodies and developers.

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## OTHER DOCUMENTS INCLUDED AND TO BE USED WITH THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Access to these documents can be found on the Alvechurch Parish Council [website through this link](#)

	<p><b>THE ALVECHURCH PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT (APDS)</b> is rooted in a careful analysis of the Alvechurch Parish area and the characteristics that make it work and make it special. The APDS is an integral part of this Neighbourhood Plan Document (Policy HNDNE 3). It considers the evolution of the rural landscape, built, historic and natural environment. It sets out guidance for its repair, reinvention and regeneration according to; building form, public realm, massing, activity, sustainability and design. Key features of the parish’s heritage are considered including views, materials, landmark buildings and their embellishments.</p> <p>A copy of the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement (APDS) can be found on the Alvechurch Parish Council <a href="#">website at this link</a></p>
	<p><b>ALVECHURCH HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RESOURCE ASSESSMENT (AHERA)</b> contains the products of a Worcestershire County Council (WCC) intensive urban and landscape characterisation exercise undertaken within the settlement of Alvechurch. The project aimed to; develop a method of 'historic townscape characterisation' for Worcestershire's rural urban areas, identify means through which to support local communities in the promotion of local distinctiveness and character, and generate evidence bases to inform locally responsive design and planning. This document can also be accessed on the Alvechurch Parish Council <a href="#">website at this link</a>. Many documents have been used to create this AHERA document such as pilot plans like the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Historical Environmental Action Pilot plans: access to that <a href="#">pdf file can be found by using this link</a></p>
	<p><b>THE EVIDENCE BASE:</b> the 'Key Aims, Policies and Community Actions' in this NP have drawn from a variety of sources. More detailed information on this extensive evidence base, including reports on all settlement presentations, consultations and workshops, can be found in the Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base document : on the NP website <a href="http://www.alvechurchparishplan.org">http://www.alvechurchparishplan.org</a></p>
	<p><b>THE CONSULTATION STATEMENT</b> – contains details of the persons and bodies that were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan. It explains how they were consulted, summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted, and describes how these issues and concerns have been considered. Where relevant these will be addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.</p> <p>Copies of the Consultation Statement are available on the APNP website or at the Parish Council Office.</p>

3.10) You: as a member / resident of our parish by a majority vote at a referendum. Firstly the NP will be examined by an independent examiner to determine if the Plan meets the Basic Conditions as laid out in Paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. It will then be the local community that decides whether to adopt the plan or not in a community referendum if approved by a majority vote of the local community, the NP will then form part of the Statutory Development Plan for the area. This means it will be used by the local planning authority when assessing planning applications in the neighbourhood area. Our APNP will only come in to force if it gains your support, the residents of Alvechurch Parish at a community referendum undertaken by BDC.

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## SECTION 4 - THE POLICIES OF THE APNP



Fig 12. The old brick works a brownfield site in the Green Belt

## TOPIC THEMES AND INTRODUCTION TO POLICIES

- 4.1. As mentioned our Policies and Community Actions have been developed to sit under five topic headings to address the main community issues that have been identified.
- 4.2. A neighbourhood plan can be used to address the development and use of land. Neighbourhood planning can inspire local people and businesses to consider other ways to improve their neighbourhood than through the development and use of land. They may identify specific action or policies to deliver these improvements. Wider community aspirations than those relating to development and use of land can be included in a neighbourhood plan, but actions dealing with non-land use matters should be clearly identifiable.
- 4.3. Each topic will have a set of land use policies relevant to that topic. There may also be some non-land use aspirations called '**Community Actions**' which consider local issues raised at community consultation that cannot be addressed by land use policies. The five topics and the policies that sit within them reflect the results from the local community and key stakeholder consultations, and have been developed using a wide range of available evidence (see separate Evidence Base document available from the APNP website [www.alvechurchparishplan.org](http://www.alvechurchparishplan.org))
- 4.4. The policies in this NP relate to land use and will be used when determining planning applications within the NP area. The five topics contain the key aims (which will help to achieve the overall vision of the Plan), and the policies that relate to that particular topic.
- 4.5. **THE APNP MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AS A WHOLE.**

### 4.6. GENERAL POLICY 1: ACTIVELY INVOLVING LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

#### INFORMING THE COMMUNITY ABOUT PLANNING

- 4.7. Active involvement of both the Parish Council and the local community at the earliest stages of a development proposal is important to both improving the quality of the resultant scheme and in reducing potential delays. Pre-application discussions give local communities the opportunity to ensure that new development meets their aspirations and is likely to allay negative reactions to development in general.



4.8. The involvement of communities is usually seen as critical to the success of development and its passage way through planning in a positive manner. This is reinforced in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where it states at paragraph 66:

4.9. *“Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably”.*

4.10. The Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group seek to encourage applicants to undertake pre-application consultations with local communities and stakeholders for all major development proposals. The aim of pre-application consultation is to encourage discussion before a formal planning application is submitted. This will enable interested parties, including communities, to have the opportunity to discuss with developers the proposals being put forward, and to express any concerns they may have before the proposals are submitted for planning approval. This is seen as a positive step in making the planning process more easily acceptable.

#### **KEY AIMS RELEVANT TO THE GENERAL POLICY**

KEY AIM 1: Development that meets current and future needs of all age groups in a changing and growing Alvechurch Parish community, whilst embracing high quality design.

KEY AIM 2: Through providing opportunities of community participation, development within the Alvechurch Village boundary focused on well-designed house building within walkable locations of key facilities

KEY AIM 3: Developing services, facilities and amenities especially around Alvechurch Village centre that will help to improve quality of life, create a sense of well-being, promote community safety and enable active and healthy lifestyles for the Parish as a whole.

**The full list of ‘Key Aims’ and their contents can be found on page 20.**

**POLICY AIM:** *To make sure the community is involved with parish planning by providing a sense of ownership*

## **GENERAL POLICY 1: ACTIVELY INVOLVING LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS**

**Proposals for Major Developments that are accompanied by a Community Involvement Statement explaining how the pre-application process has actively engaged the local community, the Parish Council, and key stakeholders will be encouraged.**

**The Community Involvement Statement should include:**

- a. An explanation of how the consultation was designed to reach a broad cross-section of local people;
- b. A demonstration that a range of means was used to engage local people, – for example, a variety of publicity and a range of ways of providing input (including the opportunity to provide web-based comments as well as attending events in person);
- c. A record of the views expressed by local people;
- d. An explanation of how the proposals have responded to local people’s views, and intend to address any shortfalls to education or health facilities that arise from their proposal.

#### **Background / Justification**

4.11. The definition of Major Development in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 is:

4.12. For dwellings, a major development is one where the number of residential units to be constructed is 10 or more. Where the number of residential units to be constructed is not given in the application, a site area of 0.5 hectares or more should be used as the definition of a major development. (See glossary for full description).

4.13. At pre-application stage, community involvement can help to inform improvements, address local concerns and overcome or mitigate objections at a later stage. As well as consulting the local community and key stakeholders, the applicant will also be expected to consult with the Parish Council and the relevant ward councillors in such community engagement.

4.14. When people are engaged in determining how the area in which they live evolves for the future and believe they've made a contribution to the planning process used to achieve their aims, it gives a positive feeling and a sense of ownership of their local environment. To that end this policy ensures local communities will be involved at the earliest stage in any major development proposal that may affect their locality.

## TOPIC 1- POLICIES FOR HOUSING

### KEY AIMS RELEVANT TO THE GROUP OF POLICES IN THE HOUSING TOPIC SECTION

KEY AIM 1: KEY AIM 2: KEY AIM 3: KEY AIM 5: KEY AIM 6 and KEY AIM 7:

The full list of 'Key Aims' and their contents can be found on page 20.

### Introduction and Background

4.15. Alvechurch Parish is a place lived in by 5,611 people (source: 2011 Census). It's an area with 2,364 homes, 1,704 of them in Alvechurch Village boundary itself. Alvechurch Parish is a Neighbourhood Area that covers Withybed Green, Bordesley, Hopwood, Rowney Green, Weatheroak and Alvechurch. The parish's population has a high percentage of elderly residents: 29% of our residents are aged over 60 (it's 23% more broadly in England and Wales). Nevertheless it's also an area associated with families, often with young children too.

4.16. Age is of real significance when you consider the parish population. Although we enjoy a high level of home ownership, we have a lower number of one and two bedroom properties than our neighbours in Bromsgrove town. This is a concern for a number of our residents, who have indicated that affordable housing for young people and families is hard to find in Alvechurch.

4.17. The situation is similarly challenging for our more elderly neighbours. As it appears many of the new building developments are larger, more expensive homes; we have to consider if we have the houses appropriate for older people. Whether we have the young or old in mind, it's important to think about what housing we need for Alvechurch to thrive. We know that there's limited land available to build upon, meaning there is only room for relatively small-scale development. Large-scale development only becomes achievable if current Green Belt boundaries are reviewed. If there is new housing, it should be environmentally friendly to protect Alvechurch's natural beauty and ensure running costs are kept low. For some of you, the question is simply 'Can we cope with any more housing?'

Parish Statistics	Alvechurch Parish	Bromsgrove
All Ages Population (2011)	5,611	93,637
Household total dwellings (2011)	2,364	39,374

Total Cars or vans(2011)	3,742	60,054
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Fig 13. Parish Statistics National Census 2011

4.18. With this as the background, there are lots of issues for us to work on if we are to achieve the right mix of properties for our people. Most, if not all, of the information and statistics are gathered from the 2011 census, the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) parish profile and the Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) evidence base.

**4.19. Introduction**

4.20. There is community support and need to provide a more balanced housing stock with smaller houses.

**4.21. Some community comments**

- More affordable housing should be provided.
- Housing suitable for older people should be provided.
- Housing should be provided at a scale which is appropriate to the character of the village and will enable new residents to integrate easily into village life.
- There should be provision for those with a strong local connection to have preferential access to housing.
- New development must be integrated into the community rather than creating communities within the community.

4.22. For any substantial future development to take place, the Alvechurch Village boundary would need to be enlarged through the release of land from the surrounding Green Belt through a local authority-led Green Belt and Bromsgrove District Plan review. This comes as a direct result of all previous future sites set aside for future housing, in the superseded Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004-20011, having now all been developed as of 2017.

4.23. At several community consultations and from results from the whole parish questionnaire, (delivered through the Village magazine), the community responses to all options on each topic were recorded.

4.24. **To the Question:** “Where should we build future housing”? Out of the four options in the housing section, results favoured ‘Option One’.

4.25. ‘Option One’ stated: “We should build first on existing agreed sites and should accept long-term growth on Green Belt only adjacent to current houses”. The results showed that; 72% were in agreement, 15% disagreed and 13% neither agreed nor disagreed.

4.26. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) <sup>7</sup> has a presumption in favour of sustainable development as does the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan 2011-2030, which highlights that new development should be located in Alvechurch Village as it is a sustainable location.

4.27. The adopted Bromsgrove District Plan sets the strategy for growth within Alvechurch Village to 2030. The District Plan classes Alvechurch Village as being “A Larger Settlement” and a strategic service centre in its settlement hierarchy (Bromsgrove District Plan Policy BDP 2 Settlement Hierarchy).

4.28. Alvechurch Parish, through the APNP, is looking to plan positively to meet such future sustainable housing growth and support district housing numbers as stated in the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2011-2030, and will respond positively to the need for new homes when that time arises.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>



Fig 14. [Map of Sustainable modes of transport walking distances](#)

4.29. [Double click on map for a larger version or open its hyperlink](#)

4.30. Until more modern times, most villages, including those in this parish, have developed through incremental growth that harmonises with the existing character of their setting and buildings. It is essential that this continues to be the case. A good example can be seen with the recent Mill Court development within the Alvechurch Village Conservation Area (see photo on page 51).

4.31. However the Crown Meadow development shows typical influences of 20th century housing design, which has removed all trace of the historic enclosures and field boundaries that once would have dominated this area. This is referred to in the AHERA document.

4.32. [The Alvechurch Parish Design Statement \(APDS\)](#) and the [Worcestershire County Council Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment \(AHERA\)](#) need to be considered early on in the application process. The AHERA document is one of two villages Historic and Environmental Resource Assessments made by the archive department of Worcestershire County Council and, together with the APDS, should steer developers in designing high quality schemes for this neighbourhood area.

4.33. The APDS and AHERA set out clear design expectations and provide greater certainty for applicants about the sort of design, which is likely to be acceptable in this neighbourhood area. The recently published Housing White Paper (Feb 2017) states that *“good design is fundamental to creating healthy and attractive places where people genuinely want to live, and which can cater for all members of the community, young or old.”*

4.34. **Locations for housing**

**Introduction to Housing Policy 1**



[Ctrl and left click map for a larger on line version or click here](#)

Fig 15. [Map of Alvechurch Village boundary](#)

4.35. The supply of new homes in Alvechurch Village and the wider parish must be realised in accordance with the distinctive features, scale and grain of the local area whilst also having regard to community wishes. Housing developments must be carefully considered and will only be acceptable where they reflect these principles and are consistent with the NP taken as a whole. New development for sustainability reasons should be located in Alvechurch

Village, with some small-scale development in the smaller settlements if and when a local need is proven. Development should primarily make use of brownfield sites, and complement the existing built environment whilst protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

4.36. Elderly people are a growing proportion of Alvechurch population. Population projections suggest that this trend is likely to continue and become more pronounced. For the NP area to remain as a reasonably balanced community, more needs to be done to also attract younger families.

4.37. A large proportion of our residents have lived in the parish for many years, arriving with children and remaining here long after their children have left home. Some of these residents would like to downsize to smaller



dwellings within easy walking distance of Alvechurch Village centre along with its service facilities. However opportunities are limited and recent developments have tended to provide larger family homes on sites close to the village centre. This is considered to have been a missed opportunity to help meet our recognised need for suitably located smaller homes with more elderly people in mind. Increased provision generally, but particularly on small sites close to the centre of Alvechurch Village, would help meet this need in a sustainable way and also potentially free up under-occupied 'family homes' for young families.

4.38. Support will be given to well-designed new housing development located on brownfield sites within Alvechurch Village settlement boundary. In the long term post 2023 it is possible that the village settlement area could well change if land is released from the Green Belt, following a local authority Green Belt and Local Plan review. However, until such time, short term development for housing will be concentrated within the Alvechurch Village settlement boundary as this is the most sustainable location and it is not located in the Green Belt. If it is decided in the future that land should be released from the Green Belt, then there will be a revision of the APNP to deal with any necessary changes.

**POLICY AIM:** *Aims to support development for new housing within the Alvechurch Village settlement boundary on suitable brownfield sites, as Alvechurch Village is the most sustainable location in the parish*

## **POLICY H1: LOCATIONS FOR NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

**Proposals for new housing development will need to show consideration to the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement and the Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment and will be supported in principal if they meet the following criteria;**

- a. It is located within the designated Alvechurch Village settlement boundary.**
- b. The redevelopment of brownfield land will be prioritised**
- c. It would not adversely impact on the existing residential amenity of adjoining occupiers**
- d. The Neighbourhood Plan should be used as a whole.**

**Apart from Alvechurch Village itself, the neighbourhood area is designated as Green Belt. Inappropriate development will not be supported in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated (as set out in the NPPF, paragraphs 87 to 89).**

### **Background / Justification**

4.39. Policy H1 aligns with the aims of the NPPF and the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan 2011-2030, as it seeks to secure housing supply that meets local needs in the most sustainable locations. The neighbourhood area, apart from that within the Alvechurch Village settlement boundary, is designated as Green Belt. Therefore land outside of the Alvechurch Village boundary will be restricted by national Green Belt policy.

4.40. The Alvechurch Village settlement boundary is that which is shown on the adopted District Plan (2011-30) Policies Map as 'Residential Area'. At community consultations a number of respondents said; *"either that they don't want more housing or that they want further housing to be in appropriate and small-scale developments that won't change the feel of the parish"*.

4.41. Many people do not accept the premise that some Green Belt land may have to be released and just repeat that it should be preserved. Some do not realise we only have a limited number of brownfield sites and those are in the Green Belt. However, there is some indication that limited development around settlements may be acceptable through a Green Belt and Local Plan review. There is strong support for this to be small inexpensive houses (except

at Hopwood where affordable housing has been provided in 2012). There were several comments in other sessions about smaller housing for the elderly.

4.42. Consultation responses from customers at The Lounge in Alvechurch Village had a wide spread of views about housing, but many supported building smaller houses. The Baptist Church consultation responses are similar, and specifically mention housing for the elderly. There was one response that thought house building in Alvechurch is spoiling the traditional aura of the village, especially affordable housing and the people who live there. Another says the national housing shortage needs action.

4.43. From the ‘five venue’ consultations carried out around the parish area, the community gave clear support for locating any further housing in line with ‘Housing Option 1’: with 83 % of people agreeing as opposed to 10.2 % that disagreed. This option supports the aims of APNP Policy H1 and H2.

4.44. **Option 1** Development first on existing ADRs –further growth after 2023 immediately adjacent to existing settlements

**RESULTS from the ‘5 venues’**

No opinion	0
Strongly agree	26
Disagree	6
Neither	4
Agree	31
Strongly disagree	1
Total replies	68

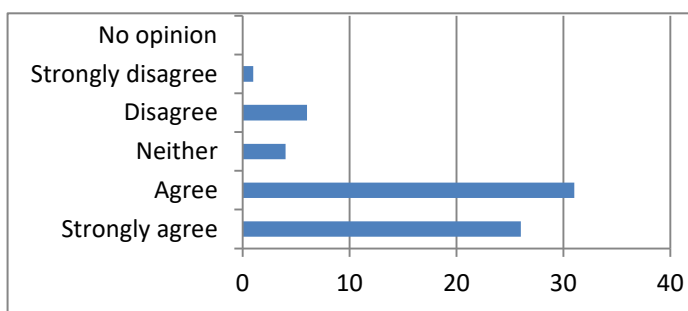


Fig 16. Table showing result of one of the housing options

**4.45. Housing for Hopwood and Rowney Green**

4.46. See Fig 18 on page 32 – Hopwood & Rowney Green village envelope status areas. Note Alvechurch village area (Fig 15) is not in the Green Belt however Hopwood and Rowney Green are completely washed over by the Green Belt.

**4.47. Introduction to Policy H2**

4.48. Hopwood and Rowney Green are classed in the Bromsgrove District Plan (2011-2030) as smaller settlements with limited opportunities for growth and the District Council will work with neighbourhoods and consider Green Belt land around all identified settlements in the settlement hierarchy and potential sites in Neighbourhood Plans. This may lead to alterations to some settlement boundaries and some village envelopes where suitable sites for development are identified.



Fig 17. Existing Affordable Housing in Hopwood built in 2012

## POLICY H2: HOUSING FOR HOPWOOD AND ROWNEY GREEN

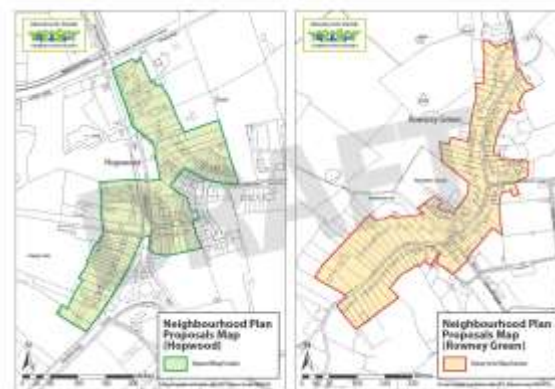
Proposals for new housing development that are well designed for Hopwood and Rowney Green will be supported if they show consideration for the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement and are subject to meeting the relevant requirements set out in other policies within this Neighbourhood Plan and the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan and where such development:

- a. Is limited to small residential infill development and maintains the continuity of existing frontage buildings, or is on brownfield land within the built-up area of the village where the site is closely surrounded by existing buildings
- b. Is not considered to be back garden development
- c. Is consistent with the character of the locality as outlined in the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement on its pages 29-32
- d. Provides at least one small home with two or fewer bedrooms for every one large dwelling with three or more bedrooms
- e. Is in suitable locations, on small infill plots giving opportunities for some well-designed self-build homes
- f. Is within the built up area and does not involve the outward extension of the village envelope as shown on the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan policies map

### Background / Justification

4.49. In the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan (2011-2030), the main area of growth is stated as Bromsgrove Town with Alvechurch Village listed as one of several larger settlements for sustainable growth.

Fig 18. Map of Hopwood & Rowney Green envelope areas



[Double click on map to enlarge or click here to open a larger on line version](#)

4.50. Hopwood and Rowney Green are listed as small settlements with village envelopes washed over by the Green Belt and “limited to suitable infill plots”, (Policy BDP2 Settlement Hierarchy), or for small rural exception sites when local people, shown by a local housing needs assessment, cannot afford a market value home (Policy BDP 9 Rural Exception Sites).

4.51. The APNP supports the policy approach of Bromsgrove District Plan Policies BDP 2 and 9, and adds to it the use of the APDS (POLICY HDNE3) to strengthen local policy and to help preserve the character of these two small settlements. Small infill plots in suitable locations could also provide opportunities for some well-designed self-build homes. The Neighbourhood Area has an open rural character with open land between settlements that make an important contribution to the rural character. Local residents expressed their strong support of maintaining this

openness by the protection of the Green Belt. It is important that infill development does not destroy this essential openness and does not adversely affect the natural beauty and landscape character of the area.

4.52. The Neighbourhood Area already has a higher than average proportion of larger properties (70% of total dwellings are 3 bedrooms or more, ONS 2011), which will tend to limit the opportunities for downsizing. At consultations and through resulting community feedback there was a general consensus for smaller housing for those accessing a home for the first time and for elderly residents wishing to downsize. Hence, the policy requests a provision is made for smaller homes.

#### 4.53. Affordable homes for local people

#### 4.54. Introduction to Policy H3

4.55. At the time of writing (March 2018) affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the open market. Subject to proven local need, a limited amount of affordable housing could be provided within the Parish on small rural exception sites, where proposals for housing would not normally be permitted.

4.56. However the Government is proposing to amend the national planning policy definition of affordable housing so it encompasses a fuller range of products that can support people to access home ownership (The Housing and Planning Act 2016 received Royal Assent on 12th May 2016 and is now an Act of Parliament).<sup>8</sup>

4.57. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)<sup>9</sup> stated: “We propose that the definition will continue to include a range of affordable products for rent and for ownership for households whose needs are not met by the market, but without being unnecessarily constrained by the parameters of products that have been used in the past which risk stifling innovation” .

4.58. Development should also follow the guidelines set out in the NPPF paragraphs 88 to 90 and 54 to 55 and be subject to meeting the relevant requirements set out in the other policies within this Neighbourhood Plan. Development should also be compliant with the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan 2011-2030.

4.59. Affordable housing according to CPRE<sup>10</sup> is “that which is provided to eligible households whose needs cannot be met by the open market. Eligibility is determined by local incomes and local house prices. Tenants renting accommodation from a housing association, local authority or landowner can expect to pay between 40% and 80% of the open market price”.



Fig 19. National Average earnings ONS 2011

4.60. The need for affordable housing is more acute in rural areas than in many urban areas due to the lower average wages of rural dwellers, as well as the reduced affordable housing stock, as the charts on this page demonstrate (numbers are the most recent available).

4.61. The lack of affordable housing in rural towns and villages has led to an increase in the average age of residents; leading communities to become the preserve of wealthy commuters and retirees. Between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, the median age of the rural population of England and Wales rose from 42 to 45, while the equivalent in urban areas rose from 36 to 37.2

<sup>8</sup> [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#)

<sup>9</sup> [The Department of Communities and Local Government \(DCLG\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [CPRE Campaign to Protect Rural England](#)



4.62. Rural exception sites arise where a specific local housing need has been demonstrated, and a landowner is willing to provide some land at significantly less cost than on the open housing market. This would be on condition that the homes built will remain affordable and available to local people in need, in perpetuity. This would be brought forward in conjunction with Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and an appropriate housing association.

4.63. Impacts on biodiversity and historic environment are uncertain as no specific sites are identified at the moment in July 2017. These impacts would be mitigated by other policies in this NP and the Bromsgrove District Plan. If sites are then identified in the future the requirements for an assessment of environmental impacts would likely need to be determined. Impacts on land use are also uncertain, as while the policy says brownfield sites will take priority, no sites as yet have been identified, so there could be an impact on the countryside and Green Belt.

4.64. Although GENERAL POLICY 1 would ensure that there is a formal pre-application consultation process on any major sites planned for development, Policy H3 is strengthened by ensuring local people are informed and given an opportunity to consult at an early stage, prior to the development of a formal planning application.

**POLICY AIM:** *to provide small scale affordable housing developments on rural exception sites for those with a local connection as identified through specific local needs surveys and through the Home Choice Plus scheme in consultation with the community*

## **POLICY H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON RURAL EXCEPTION SITES IN THE GREEN BELT**

**When suitable rural exception sites have been identified for small scale affordable housing through cooperation with the local community, land owners, Alvechurch Parish Council and Bromsgrove District Council (see Community Action 1); proposals for small-scale affordable housing developments on the identified sites will be supported in principle, subject to the following criteria:**

- a. Ensuring that local people are informed and given an opportunity for consultation at an early stage, prior to the development of a formal planning application
- b. Redevelopment of brownfield land will take priority as sites are identified
- c. Proposals that cannot easily access local services and public transport will not be supported unless sufficient infrastructure can be provided to make the scheme sustainable
- d. They comprise no more dwellings than a local need survey identifies
- e. The proposal contributes to meeting the affordable housing needs of people with a very local connection as identified by BDC and the preferred housing association
- f. The development is appropriate in terms of its scale, character and location to the settlement to which it is associated and complies with the design principles outlined in the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement
- g. The development should be a complete scheme identified through a local needs survey
- h. Development will be encouraged if it includes a proportion of well-designed dwellings that meet the needs of elderly people and those with disabilities

**Open market housing will only be supported where such development can be demonstrated to be essential to ensure delivery of affordable housing as part of the same development proposal that should comprise no more than 10 dwellings in total (unless a proven need dictates a larger number). The affordable homes should not be visibly distinguishable in build or character from any on-site market value homes that may be required for the viability of the development.**

## Background / Justification to policy H3

4.65. The community have expressed a desire for affordable housing for young people with local connections that cannot afford to buy a house in the parish of Alvechurch.

4.66. The 2011 national census revealed that the Neighbourhood Area has an ageing population. To ensure the sustainability of the area it was considered by a number of people at consultations that a good age range including young families and older people is necessary. Consequently affordable homes to house this age range will be required.

4.67. Any new housing development in the Neighbourhood Area will be limited because of the Green Belt policy constraint. There is no site of any real size left that is not subject to Green Belt policy and given that the reserved building plots set aside for future development have been or are in the process of being developed, no substantial site is available for further development post 2023.

4.68. Although policy APNP General Policy 1 ensures there is a formal pre-application consultation process on sites planned for development together with APNP Policy H3 this ensures that local people are informed and given an opportunity to consult at an early stage on rural site locations.

### 4.69. Housing Design Principles

#### 4.70. Introduction

4.71. Policies in Alvechurch Parish will encourage the provision of new housing in order to meet Local District Plan targets. Necessary infrastructure will need to accompany future housing, be sited in the most suitable and sustainable location, and developed in a sustainable manner through quality design.

4.72. Development is encouraged to improve movement into, and around the Alvechurch Village centre, by promoting cycling, walking and ease of access for those with restricted mobility. See CWIS cycling and walking strategy<sup>11</sup> on pages 76 to 78 of the Evidence Base Summary document, and the footnote below.

4.73. Proposals should also encourage development that strengthens sport, recreation, play and culture, by providing well-designed housing that protects and enhances the parish's heritage and environment.

4.74. As mentioned in "key Issues for the future" (on page 17), quality design plays a significant role in our policies leading to a better Alvechurch Parish. At public consultations, the community preference shown was for housing to be limited to developments with a majority of properties being for one, two and three bedrooms aimed especially for those accessing housing for the first time and for some properties for elderly residents wishing to downsize.

4.75. Alvechurch is a beautiful parish with many fine buildings. The Alvechurch Village community has strong views that the NP should ensure future development reflects its heritage and sense of place, and that any new development in the wider parish area should also acknowledge the character of the countryside, and show sensitivity to its environment. The Parish Council acknowledges the duty this puts upon it, and the expectation of quality and sustainability in any new build.

4.76. Previous consultations with developers have revealed that there is joint benefit if the NP sets out community expectations. Policy APNP H4 establishes a framework to guide all future housing developments. Individual site design and access statements will be required from every developer proposing to build any major development of 10 or more houses on sites located within this Neighbourhood Plan Area. Policy APNP H4 on Housing Design Principles is the foundation upon which these should be based.

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<sup>11</sup> [Cycling and walking investment strategy - GOV.UK](#)

4.77. The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, as stated in the NPPF: “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.” (NPPF, paragraph 56) ; “It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.” (NPPF, paragraph 57)

4.78. Some of the newer housing from the 1960’s onward in Alvechurch is architecturally undistinguished and not in keeping with the rural locality and does not reflect the character of many villages in the surrounding area. For future development proposals, there is an opportunity to enhance the built environment and improve the quality of the design aesthetic within Alvechurch Village.

4.79. The APNP will use the role of design to deliver sustainable development and improve the quality of place for our communities. Importantly for neighbourhood planning, design also inspires and encourages people to participate in the planning process.

4.80. The Design Council believes that “good design is fundamental to successful neighbourhood planning. Good design makes neighbourhoods more sustainable, adaptable and resilient and creates places where people want to live and work”.



Fig 20. Example of sympathetic rural design

4.81. The Alvechurch Parish Design Statement (APDS) and the latest Worcestershire County Council (AHERA) documents provide detailed evidence that should be used by developers when they consider the design details for their proposals. Evidence of their use will be encouraged at planning application stage (further information on these resources can be found in topic 2: Heritage, Design and the Natural Environment).

**POLICY AIM:** to provide housing designed to be special, even ambitious while having regard to the surrounds

## POLICY H4: HOUSING DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 1** Development proposals within the Neighbourhood Area that demonstrates high quality design will be encouraged. This means responding to and integrating with local surroundings and landscape context as well as the existing built environment. Proposals must also be in accordance with BDP Policy 19 ‘High Quality Design’.
- 2** Proposals should respond to and reflect the identity of the local setting by way of height, scale, spacing, layout, design and materials of building except where the surrounding local built character would be appropriate for more innovative buildings.
- 3** Proposals are encouraged to use locally sourced indigenous materials (including Alvechurch red brick, where appropriate), and incorporate suitable local detailing regarding the local building style to enhance the sense of place as indicated in the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement (APDS) and the Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment (AHERA).
- 4** Development, which proposes innovative design, will be expected to respect and take account of local heritage and character.
- 5** Development that fails to take the opportunities available for enhancing the local character and quality of the area and the way it functions will not be supported.
- 6** On schemes of more than 10 dwellings large areas of uniform type and size will not be acceptable.

**7 Planning proposals for new housing development will be expected to consider and take account of the following:**

- I. They respect the traditional character of a place and take into consideration its history, geology, transportation links and natural landscape
- II. They respect prevailing size, layout and access of existing nearby properties and development pattern that is in keeping with the Alvechurch rural locality.
- III. They respect and follow established building lines and street scene arrangements for front gardens; walls; railings; hedges and gateways, as suggested in the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement (APDS)
- IV. Garden sizes should reflect local character and be proportionate to meet the amenity requirements commensurate to the size of dwelling and number of bedrooms
- V. Driveways and entrances that reflect the surrounding street scene and respect local character
- VI. New housing development is designed to meet the requirements of 'Secured by Design'<sup>12</sup> to minimise the likelihood of crime and/or fear of crime
- VII. New housing developments will be encouraged to achieve the highest standard of Building for Life<sup>13</sup> to secure better design in the neighbourhood area
- VIII. Extensions to properties should be of a subordinate scale to the original building
- IX. Any necessary street and external lighting is positioned and directed to minimise adverse impact on amenity of neighbouring residents and should comply with the current guidelines recommended by 'The Institution of Lighting Professionals' (ILP)<sup>14</sup>, (see background information in justification below).

**8 Where a Design and Access Statement is required it should give a clear vision of the type of place that could be created by considering the local character and needs of the Neighbourhood Area and showing how the development will:**

- a. Use local building materials that are wherever possible, indigenous, have a natural harmony with the landscape, and which are selected with care to ensure they complement existing surrounding dwellings
- b. Promote, where feasible, waste water management both in respect of sustainable drainage and water capture (for use in activities such as gardening or vehicle washing)
- c. Maximise the use of renewable energy opportunities offered by a particular site
- d. Where feasible installing solar panels on new build and retrofitting renewable energy solutions to existing developments and structures
- e. Reducing the risk of fuel poverty by improving thermal efficiency
- f. Integrate new homes into the existing built environment and design a pedestrian and cycle friendly neighbourhood
- g. Provide access to local facilities and public transport links via convenient, direct paths with dropped kerbs suitable for children's pushchairs, wheelchair users, walking with a stick or walking frame, or using a mobility scooter
- h. Design streets in a way that encourages low vehicle speeds and allows them to function as shared spaces where appropriate

CONT.

<sup>12</sup> The official UK Police flagship initiative combining the principles of 'designing out crime' with physical security

<sup>13</sup> Building for Life 12 (BFL 12) is the industry standard for the design of new housing developments.

<sup>14</sup> [The Institution of Lighting Professionals' \(ILP\)](#)



- i. Design streets that accommodate some on-street parking to prevent anti-social parking on footways, and allow for trees and planting to reduce the visual impact of parked vehicles whilst having regard for 'secured by design' principles
- j. Provide garages set back from the street frontage and designed to reflect the architectural style of the house they serve
- k. Where appropriate provide parking spaces located in between houses (rather than in front) so that vehicles do not dominate the street scene
- l. Provide appropriate areas of children's play space and green landscaping.

**9 The WCC ALVECHURCH HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RESOURCE ASSESSMENT and The ALVECHURCH PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT documents should be used in conjunction with policy APNP Policy H4 to ensure the character and quality of the Parish's historic environment is fully appreciated. They are important Neighbourhood Plan documents that should be used by developers as design guidance when they are considering how to design development for the Neighbourhood Area. Evidence of their use will be expected at planning application stage.**

### Background/Justification

4.82. It is important to achieve a balance of allowing new design and innovation whilst protecting the existing distinctive character of the surrounding built environment and the parish's rural landscape. We already have a rich variety of architectural styles in the Neighbourhood Area and, apart from one block of maisonette affordable housing and a couple of three storeys early 19th century listed farm buildings; the majority of buildings comprise two storey residential properties.

4.83. Our policies are not designed to unduly restrict development. Instead they challenge developers to deliver innovative development of high quality design that responds to the surroundings as stated in the AHERA document and the APDS, and is appropriate for future parish residents. The APDS and the AHERA set out clear design expectations for the neighbourhood area. APNP Policy H4 encourages developers to use these design guides when designing schemes for the neighbourhood area, as the documents will give greater certainty to developers about the sort of design that is likely to be acceptable.

4.84. In response to the recently published Housing White Paper (Feb 2017), the use of the widely accepted design standard 'Building for Life' will be encouraged when designing new housing developments to secure better design in the neighbourhood area.<sup>15</sup> (Fixing our broken housing market, White Paper published Feb 2017, page 30, and paragraph 1.46). NPPF paragraph 125 states: "*By encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation*".

4.85. Alvechurch is a rural parish and many residents at consultations expressed a desire to maintain the rural nature of its main village and smaller settlements and, where possible, prevent light pollution and increasing urbanisation. Information for lighting in rural setting can be found on the website of The Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP)<sup>16</sup> "*Man's invention of artificial light has done much to safeguard and enhance our night-time environment but, if not properly controlled, obtrusive light (sometimes referred to as light pollution) can present serious physiological and ecological problems*" (ILP).

4.86. Policy APNP H4 will be used in conjunction with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan when assessing proposals for housing development. In particular, development proposals will also need to be in accordance with policies set out in Topic 2 'Heritage, Design and the Natural Environment', and any other relevant planning policies.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market>

<sup>16</sup> [The Institution of Lighting Professionals \(ILP\)](#)

### 4.87. Introduction



4.88. Sustainability of an area should mean planning positively for the future that makes things better for residents and visitors alike, it is to encourage improvement and not add to any existing deficiencies. To achieve this, policies within the APNP will encourage development that not only meets District Plan targets but ensures the necessary infrastructure and community facilities are provided to support it. This ensures that decisions taken today do not have unreasonably negative effects on our future generations.

**POLICY AIM:** To encourage sustainable development that improves and enhances the existing way of life, and provides for a better future in the parish and, promotes zero carbon methods over the life time of the APNP

## POLICY H5: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DESIGN

- A. Developers will be encouraged to demonstrate how their proposal will achieve a high level of environmental sustainability in terms of design and construction. Proposals of 10 or more dwellings will be required to submit a 'Sustainability Statement' at planning application stage.
- B. Proposals should identify the risk of surface water flooding specifically, and if necessary developing a surface water management plan.
- C. New developments should minimise water use and incorporate waste water management and Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS)<sup>17</sup>.
- D. Low or zero carbon emission schemes will be encouraged.
- E. To limit visual impact and support the diversion of food and water waste the following items should also be encouraged early in the design process and integrated into the overall scheme sympathetically:
- Bin stores and recycling facilities
  - Cycle store
  - Rainwater storage butts and compost bins to encourage green lifestyles
  - Compost bin
  - Flues and ventilation ducts must be minimised through good design
- F. External lighting - inappropriate and badly designed external lighting of development that masks views of the night sky or negatively impacts on sites of biodiversity will be discouraged. Light glare and spillage must be minimised through good design.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/suds/>

## Background / Justification

4.89. Sustainable design is covered by national standards. In Alvechurch Parish we want to encourage developers to go beyond the national standard and build exemplary sustainable homes and other types of buildings. Building new homes that meet the design standards of Lifetime Homes will be supported, see the standards website is provided for more clarity on this matter. [link to the Lifetime Homes website](#)

4.90. On major sites, a sustainability statement should be used to outline the proposed strategy for meeting energy and sustainability requirements as set out by Bromsgrove District Council, including:

- a. Proposals that reflect high quality development through improving design quality for its rural setting
- b. Minimising waste;
- c. Enhance or increase biodiversity
- d. Reduce the risk of flooding where necessary
- e. Pollution and air quality
- f. Building lifetime homes

4.91. Energy use in buildings accounts for almost half of all CO2 emissions. There is an opportunity for new dwellings to be designed to reduce energy use and, where possible, generate some energy from renewable sources. There is also an opportunity to improve the sustainability of the parish as a whole, not just in terms of energy use but also in the broader sense - including things such as walking and cycling.

4.92. When commenting on development proposals the Parish Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Parish Council will work proactively with applicants to find joint solutions to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the parish area.

## A MIX OF HOUSING

### Introduction to Policy H6

4.93. There was negative feedback expressed in community consultations about the number of “executive” or large houses continually being built in our area over the years. These have been to the detriment of delivering a mix of housing that is affordable to the local community.

4.94. The Bromsgrove’s District Plan highlights this point in paragraph 8.67; *“However, it is important to note that Bromsgrove has a high proportion of large 4 and 5 bedroom homes. In order to help redress the balance between large homes currently available and the ageing population there needs to be a significant change in building patterns across the District”* and Policy BDP7.1 Housing Mix and Density requires: *“Proposals for housing must take account of identified housing needs in terms of the size and type of dwellings. To ensure mixed and vibrant communities are created development proposals need to focus on delivering 2 and 3 bedroom properties. On schemes of 10 or more dwellings it is accepted that a wider mix of dwelling types may be required”*.

4.95. Our prescription for housing mix is informed by application of the Bromsgrove District Plan policies to our Parish housing situation and what our parishioners have said in our consultation sessions. We will allow at the time of a review of our NP a change in the mix if future conditions in the parish point to it. We do not take the view that leaving the market to determine the mix necessarily ensures the desired outcome, as evidenced by the excess of larger housing types proposed or built in the district in recent years.

4.96. APNP Policy H6 will help to ensure that future housing development delivers a better balanced mix of property types, sizes and tenures to meet the housing needs specific to Alvechurch Parish in the future, considering market requirements at that time.

4.97. **POLICY AIM:** *To encourage sustainable development of a more suitable mix of property and tenures as supported by the community including an element of affordable housing. The policy aims to help those accessing the market for the first time and to also provide housing for older residents wishing to downsize from their current homes and free up larger houses for growing families.*

## **POLICY H6: PROVIDING A MIX OF HOUSING TYPES AND SIZES**

- 1. Developments of 10 or more dwellings shall provide a mix of house types and garden space that is proportionate to the dwelling. New housing shall be well designed in scale, form and character to meet the needs of current and future households in the Neighbourhood Area.**
- 2. Development of 11 or more dwellings will be required to include an element of affordable housing in accordance with the NPPF and the adopted BDP 2011-2030 Policy BDP8 Affordable Housing where viable. Affordable dwellings should not be visibly distinguishable in build or character from any on-site market value dwelling.**
- 3. Proposals for developments of 10 or more dwellings should seek to achieve the following mix unless viability, market requirements at that time or other material considerations show a robust justification for a different mix:**
  - a. Overall up to 10% of new dwellings should aim to have 1 bedroom**
  - b. 40% should aim to have 2 bedrooms with an element of ground floor single level dwellings to meet the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities**
  - c. 40% should aim to have 3 bedrooms**
  - d. Up to 10% should aim to have 4 or more bedrooms.**
- 4. The mix will be informed by the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment and / or local documents and evidence, for example, Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Surveys, Parish Plans, Local Authority plans and developers' assessments.**

### **Background / Justification**

4.98. The Neighbourhood Area already has a higher than average proportion of larger properties, which will tend to limit the opportunities for downsizing (see the introductory paragraphs of this Topic 1). There was also a general consensus for smaller housing for those accessing a home for the first time and for elderly residents wishing to downsize.

4.99. The community shows a desire for smaller, more reasonably priced homes. In 2012, "the lower quartile house price to earnings ratio was 8.89 in Bromsgrove District; significantly greater than the national ratio at 6.45 and the Worcestershire ratio of 7.43. It is clear that Bromsgrove is far in excess of the national ratio and it highlights a significant constraint on peoples' ability to access housing in Bromsgrove District, with house price increases far outstripping earnings increases".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> [Amion Housing Needs Assessment – Report in response to Inspector's Interim Conclusions -29th August 2014](#)



4.100. The 'Amion Housing Needs Assessment – Report in response to Inspector's Interim Conclusions, 29th August 2014', makes it clear that in Bromsgrove house price increases far outstrip earning increases. It is evident that with an average (median) gross annual income of £23,364<sup>19</sup>, many young residents wanting to buy a property in Alvechurch on their own will struggle to access anything other than affordable rented (2 bed dwelling) and social rented properties without considerable deposits.

Affordability Benchmark	Annual Income required in Bromsgrove
To Purchase LQ house (10% deposit)	£38,375
To Privately Rent LQ 2 bed dwelling (25% income)	£27,034
Privately Rent 3 bed dwelling (25% income)	£33,142
To access a 2 bed Affordable Rent (80% of market value) dwelling (25% income)	£21,627
To access a 3 bed Affordable Rent (80% of market value) dwelling (25% income)	£26,513
To access a Social Rent dwelling (25% income)	£16,628

**Table 3.1: Affordability benchmarks – Annual Income required**

Fig 21. *Affordability benchmarks-annual income required*

4.101. Figure 21 above is from the Amion Housing Needs Assessment – Report in response to Inspector's Interim Conclusions -29th August 2014 see footnote 18 on page 41 for details of the report.

4.102. The adopted Bromsgrove District Plan identifies a need for two and three bed roomed properties in the district. The APNP seeks, based on the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2012 and the Amion Housing Needs Assessment report 2014, a proportion of smaller housing for first-time occupiers and single story dwellings with some outdoor space for older residents. Throughout consultations, affordable housing was one of the key issues identified by local residents for the parish, with the view that development should consist of an element of small and affordable homes.

4.103. **The Worcestershire Strategic Market Housing Assessment 2012/13 (SMHA 2012/13) in the penultimate paragraph on page 106 states:** *“The demographic trends in household formation, particularly a large proportion of one person households, are one factor that will have an impact on the types and sizes of properties required (other factors will include income and availability of loan capital). This coupled with the expectations and aspirations of households means getting the right mix of housing is of great importance. The 2011 Census data has allowed us to explore the latest changes of demographics very closely and compare to past trends”.*

4.104. *Considering the changing nature of household composition implied under these two 'Preferred Scenarios' illustrates that the County, and each of the component Local Authorities, are likely to see a continued growth in single person and couple households, with a relatively small increase in family households.*<sup>20</sup>

**At community presentations the option shown below was well supported:**

4.105. **Consultation questionnaire Option:**

4.106. **Where should future housing be? Additional housing limited to small inexpensive houses if Green Belt has to be used?**

<sup>19</sup> [http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pub.housing.org.uk/Home\\_Truths\\_2017\\_West\\_Midlands.pdf](http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pub.housing.org.uk/Home_Truths_2017_West_Midlands.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> [February 2012\\_gva.co.uk](http://www.gva.co.uk) page 171.

4.107. From those community consultations: the results for the above option showed 67% agreed and 22% were against, 11 % neither agreed nor disagreed. APNP Policy H6 conforms to higher authority policies by encouraging future housing development of a suitable mix of dwellings that will meet the needs of the Alvechurch Parish community as a whole. APNP H6 will help to deliver more small and medium houses in the area – houses that families and younger people want and could afford, and some for our elderly residents as the community mentioned to members of the Steering group at several community consultations. Several participants at the Baptist Church sessions stressed “the need for more housing for the elderly”.

4.108. **The 2012 Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)** identifies that the proportion of older person households (those over the current working age) is forecast to grow from 21.4% to around 33% of the total population. This analysis suggests that there will be high demand for smaller properties suitable for meeting the needs of older person households.

4.109. Delivering a wide choice of homes by type and of good quality is essential to support sustainable mixed and inclusive communities. In Alvechurch this will underpin a well-balanced population that is vital to the ongoing viability of local services and the prosperity of the parish, particularly in light of the community’s increasingly ageing population.

4.110. If any development opportunities should arise, evidence from the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment, community consultations and the Amion Housing Needs Assessment – Report in response to Inspector’s Interim Conclusions , 29th August 2014 support the view that accommodation should be one or a combination of the following smaller types:

- a. **Affordable housing for rental or shared ownership only by those with a local connection**
- b. **Properties aimed at those elderly residents downsizing, young families or first-time buyers, with an emphasis on smaller houses of the two to three bedroom variety**
- c. **Properties built to the new technical standards, with a proportion of ground floor single-storey dwellings located close to key facilities suitable for more elderly residents.**

4.111. There is a requirement in the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan to provide up to 40% affordable units on Greenfield sites or any site accommodating 200 or more dwellings. The District Council will seek to negotiate the mix of affordable housing tenures on individual schemes taking into account local needs, the housing mix in the local area and the impact on viability (Policy BDP8 Affordable Housing). Affordable units will be provided for those individuals in housing need as agreed by the BDC Choice based Letting Scheme or updated evidence.

4.112. Comments received from local residents at various consultations throughout 2012-2014 and in the parish questionnaire, included concerns that housing should be for local people. Those considered priority included first time buyers, young families, the disabled, and provision made to include some housing suited to older people.

#### 4.113. **New housing, improved services and facilities**

##### 4.114. **Introduction**



4.115. *Map of Indoor community facilities & parking*

[Double click on the map or Ctrl click here for a larger version of the map](#)

4.116. There are two schools in the parish: Crown Meadow First School and Nursery, and Alvechurch Church of England Middle School.

4.117. In 2017, school places for local children have not always been available, with some having to take places outside of the parish due to lack of places. As the parish population grows over the NP period and beyond, it is vital that our schools are able to offer sufficient places to cater for that growth. There may be circumstances leading to a need for building expansion on-site or even relocation to be considered to meet the required growth in pupil numbers.

4.118. It is understood by the community that population growth resulting from future major development post-2023, will put even more pressure on education, medical care and allied services already near to capacity in 2017. The Parish Council through the NP will work with the relevant health and education bodies and local authorities to mitigate any such shortfalls. This will include the use of developer contributions through Section 106 and CIL (if a CIL policy has been implemented and adopted by Bromsgrove District Council at that time).

#### 4.119. A NEW APPROACH TO DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

4.120. [A REPORT BY THE CIL REVIEW TEAM SUBMITTED OCTOBER 2016](#) (website link) (SUBMITTED OCTOBER 2016): “Our report also seeks to make the delivery of infrastructure at a neighbourhood level more certain and better directed to the items of infrastructure that really matter. By re-affirming the role of Section 106 contributions, we enhance the opportunity for local people to engage with developers over the community benefits that might be gained from development when the proposals are being devised”.

4.121. The community has shown a wish to retain the small number of retail premises in Alvechurch Village centre yet desires to improve the look and type of those establishments. It is hoped Alvechurch’s centre will be improved through the Parish Council working with developers and the local authorities, using good design principles and policies to enhance the vitality and viability of Alvechurch Village.

4.122.

**POLICY AIM:** To encourage safe, accessible, adequate and sustainable community services and facilities especially around Alvechurch Village centre to meet the future needs of parish residents. Developers will be encouraged to lessen any negative impact on health or educational services and facilities.

## POLICY H7: NEW HOUSING, IMPROVED SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- A. Where the need is identified, proposals for housing developments, that make provision for new or improved services and facilities, will be considered favourably.
- B. Contributions will be required as appropriate from each developer to fund any identified additional need for healthcare, education, leisure facilities, green infrastructure, highways and transportation. The upgraded, or additional, local facilities or services to be considered include:
  - a. Middle School expansion
  - b. Primary School expansion
  - c. Health care measures
  - d. Village centre traffic management improvements and related public realm upgrades
  - e. Support for public transport services
  - f. Additional car parking capacity
  - g. Allotment provision
  - h. More recreational public open space
  - i. Conservation of the natural environment, and
  - j. The creation and maintenance of riverside, canal-side and countryside public footpaths.

(No priority is implied by this list, which will vary over time)

CONT.

**C. Measures to mitigate the adverse impact of the development will be provided and /or secured by planning obligations where remedying these impacts is necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms; where the remedy is directly related to the development and where it is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. Such obligations should also be in accordance with Policy BDP 6, Infrastructure Provision.**

**D. Development that would have an unacceptable impact will not be supported.**

### **Background / Justification**

4.123. As mentioned, community have concern regarding negative effects extra housing could have on school places, medical services and added to an increase in traffic related issues.

4.124. Through discussions with the schools and medical centre there is evidence of current pressure on education and health facilities; this will increase as upcoming major housing developments are built and occupied. In addition, as explained in the commentary on policies for the local economy there is a wish to locally retain and create more jobs. This means making improvements to better support local businesses, including attracting more visitors and tourists. Adding the listed requirements will support both parts of the above objective.

- Proposals for new housing in Alvechurch must ensure that the new homes are well integrated with the existing village. This integration could be achieved by a number of means including:
- Better provision of high speed broadband and improvements to electronic connectivity for the outlying areas of the parish.
- Encouraging joined up and integrated transport systems through cooperation with Worcestershire County Council and service providers. This should include safe, direct routes for pedestrians and cyclists to the rest of the village and its centre in particular.
- Encouraging new facilities that can be shared with the whole community including the smaller settlements e.g. improved open spaces or better retail, sporting and social outlets connecting new and old together via sustainable transport methods, extensions provided to existing schools and medical facilities or the provision of new schools or new medical centres.

4.125. The NP cannot propose land-use policies on the Green Belt at this time to resolve these important local issues but it does recognise the urgent need to support the schools and plan for their future. Alvechurch Parish Council will begin this consultation at the earliest possible opportunity with a view to formally advancing proposals relating to healthcare and educational use of land in the village, particularly land in the vicinity of the Birmingham Road, to the appropriate authorities as additions to the APNP.

4.126. Not all of these improvements can be addressed by land use policy. However the NP proposes to achieve some if not all of these aspirations through discussions and cooperation between Alvechurch Parish Council, local authorities, education and healthcare providers, and the applicant at pre-application stage.

4.127. This must be carried out through projects or '**Community Actions**'. For the Housing Topic, these non-statutory Community Actions follow in this next section and on the following page.

**4.128. A typical community comment summed this up:**

**4.129. "Extra housing would put a strain on health and education facilities of the parish".**

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## NON STATUTORY COMMUNITY ACTIONS FOR THE HOUSING TOPIC

### Community Projects identified in the Draft Plan

Delivering the vision and key aims – Community Actions

Through the process of developing the Neighbourhood Plan some areas of community concerns cannot be covered by planning policy however as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process they can become 'Community Actions'/projects supported by Alvechurch Parish Council. These proposals can also be delivered in conjunction with other local organisations. Eight Community Actions have been identified as part of the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan, these are described at the end of each Topic Policy section to which they relate.

A list of community priorities has been created through the consultation process and the development of the draft policies. These cannot be addressed through land use policies nor can they be delivered by the Neighbourhood Plan Group. Local Organisations are invited to get involved with delivering these Projects. These Community Actions are found after the policy topic sections to which they relate.

**COMMUNITY ACTION 1**, AIM: *To bring community views and wishes to Bromsgrove District council if particular local needs arise for small scale affordable housing in rural areas.*

### COMMUNITY ACTION 1: RURAL EXCEPTION SITES

The Parish Council will work positively and proactively with the local community and Bromsgrove District Council to identify suitable rural exception sites for small-scale affordable housing development when there is a proven local need.

If sites are identified through community and local authority cooperation in the future, the requirements for an assessment of environmental impacts would need to be determined to consider the impact on biodiversity and historic environment

**COMMUNITY ACTION 2**, AIM: *To secure funding to maintain, enhance and add the essential infrastructure and community facilities to meet the needs of parish residents, support local businesses, and the needs of those from the wider catchment area dependent on Alvechurch's Village's infrastructure and facilities*

### COMMUNITY ACTION 2: PLANNING FUTURE EDUCATION

The Parish Council will work with the associated trust/academy boards and the local authority to ensure that there are sufficient school places, and that admission policies are such that the schools will accommodate:

- a. Pupils from within the NP area as a priority



**b. Those who wish to attend but live outside the NP areas that are either already within the system or have siblings already in the system.**



*Fig 22. The new school facade*

- Creating a sustainable well designed community
- Encouraging more play and open spaces
- Protection and enhancement of important community facilities; like the school and medical services; infrastructure; environmental and historical assets
- The parish will become an area that is attractive for people to live in, work in and visit for current and future generations

## TOPIC 2- POLICES FOR HERITAGE, DESIGN AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### Introduction:

#### KEY AIMS ASSOCIATED WITH POLICES IN TOPIC 2:

KEY AIM 1: KEY AIM 4: KEY AIM 6: KEY AIM 7: KEY AIM 8:

4.130. The full list of 'Key Aims' and their contents can be found on page 20.



4.131. People associated with Alvechurch Parish are privileged to enjoy a quality of life that mixes the benefits of pleasant villages and hamlets surrounded by attractive countryside, rich in native animal and plant life. This mix is enhanced by a wide range of historic and characterful buildings and monuments.

*Fig 23. Old houses Red Lion Street*

4.132. The parish also has a Conservation Area, the Bishop's Palace and Alvechurch (Allchurch) Deer Park as well as Bordesley Park, which was associated with the close-by former Bordesley Abbey. They include ancient green amenity spaces and farmland.

4.133. The parish is well served by traditional farmsteads, which contribute to local distinctiveness and the varied character of our parish's countryside by reflecting not only local geology and building traditions but also varied farming practices. The future of the majority of historic farm buildings however is now increasingly dependent on diversification and new roles outside mainstream agricultural use. The popularity of the area and its setting has brought with it the threat of over-development. If it's not managed correctly, this could lead to the loss of our existing heritage, amenity and character.

4.134. From our consultation work there is overwhelming support for keeping the countryside wildlife friendly, with a high proportion "strongly agreeing" that access to the countryside should be improved, and that the use of green technology and energy conservation should be encouraged and increased within the parish. Within the context of enabling sustainable growth, the NP seeks to preserve the environment of the parish and Alvechurch Village (including its Conservation Area).

4.135. Development will be directed away from environmental resources of value and will be expected to minimise its impact on landscape, biodiversity and heritage. The issue of flooding will have to be appropriately mitigated by development. The area surrounding Alvechurch is mainly agricultural land that plays a contributory role in the rearing, growing and cultivation of food, both for the country's food supplies and for the economy.

4.136. This will be achieved by:

- Protecting agricultural land used in the process of food production;
- Protecting and maintaining existing green spaces of value to the community;
- Protecting natural habitats;
- Protecting the existing quality of landscape and encourage local biodiversity;
- Maintaining the village Conservation Area, listed buildings and all other non-designated heritage assets

- Minimising the risk of fluvial and surface water flooding

4.137. As well as planning for the future it is important to consider how the area's historic past and the natural environment defines Alvechurch. By including heritage and the natural environment in our plan, the community can really get to know the place in which they live. They can ensure it keeps its vitality, sense of identity, individuality and distinctiveness. Through this APNP we can choose the best ways for it to develop and grow. We can pass it on as a place to be proud of.

## Heritage

4.138. Alvechurch Village and Withybed Green were privileged to be one of only two settlements in Worcestershire to have a detailed Historic Environment Resource Assessments (AHERA). Two Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPs) for Alvechurch Village and Withybed Green (ALV\_A1) and Rowney Green, Bordesley and Alvechurch Park (ALV\_A3) have been produced by WCC for Alvechurch Parish.

4.139. These documents together with the APDS are useful resources to be used by applicants when submitting their proposals. HEAP documents identify risks and deficiencies affecting the sustainability of all aspects that contribute towards a particular area or environment, promoting the character and special qualities of the environment in the context of managing change across the landscape, concentrating on Alvechurch Village area and its immediate environs.

## The Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment (AHERA)

4.140. The aim of the AHERA is "to ensure that the character and quality of Alvechurch Village and its immediate historic environment is fully appreciated in terms of its townscape, landscapes, historic buildings, urban form, and archaeology. Furthermore, that it is capitalised upon to its best advantage through locally responsive conservation and development initiatives, which recognise them as amongst the area's most significant assets." (AHERA, page 3)

4.141. There are 37 distinctive character areas or historic local environments identified around Alvechurch Village in the WCC's AHERA document that should be given equal consideration to aid design in addition to the use of the APDS, which is a parish wide design statement. Each of the character area statements describe the historic urban morphology, landscape context, built form, and inherited characteristics. The AHERA also includes over one-hundred historic buildings and archaeological monuments identified and recorded.

4.142. The NP recognises the historic environment is one of the important factors in making Alvechurch Parish unique and is a source of local identity and pride. It is therefore vitally important that this is reflected in our approach to the future management of our historic assets and that it is given sufficient weight in development decisions. Not all the parish's buildings or areas enjoy statutory protection and therefore consideration will be given to putting forward currently unlisted buildings for inclusion on the Statutory List

4.143. Design impacts on how people interact with places. Although design is only part of the planning process it can influence a range of economic, social and environmental objectives. New developments within Alvechurch Parish should seek to ensure through better design, that they have regard for not just for the short term but over the lifetime of this NP.

## The Alvechurch Village Conservation Area

4.144. The Conservation Area makes one of the most significant contributions to the character of Alvechurch as a whole. It still retains much of the original twelfth-century planned form. Alvechurch Parish council lists 46 buildings, and most of them are within the Conservation Area. Understanding the Conservation Area and the historic character of the parish will play a major role in designing new development. The AHERA document that was undertaken by WCC in 2014 provides a unique insight into the historic character of the parish area through a character assessment.

Developers will be expected to use this important resource together with the APDS when designing new development schemes in the NP area.

4.145. In addition, any development must make provision for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and the area's heritage assets. Development within or adjacent to the Conservation Area or a listed building must make sure it conserves and enhances these important areas and features of heritage value.



4.146. Development proposals in areas outside the Conservation Area will still need to take account of any historic features that may be present and design new development in a way that enhances and conserves the traditional local character of the neighbourhood area.

Fig 24. *The Alvechurch Village Conservation Area*

For more information and a clearer map [click here](#)

### History of the parish including the Conservation Area

4.147. Alvechurch means the church of the Lady Aelfgyth, possibly a relative of King Athelstan. King Offa gave the land forming the parish to the local church in the late eighth century. There is little doubt that there was a church here in Saxon times because information about Alvechurch in the Domesday Book mentioned the presence of a priest. Nothing is known about Aelfgiva, the Saxon lady who is presumed to have founded the church and so given the village the name it has held for over a thousand years.

4.148. Alvechurch and Wast Hills were Domesday Manors, Weatheroak and Hopwood were medieval hamlets and there are sites of deserted medieval hamlets at Radford, Pyria, Forhill, Alcott, Bittell and Red Hill. For some distance the parish boundary follows the Dagnell Brook, the waters draining from Weatheroak Hill to the River Arrow and south to the River Severn. Not far away water drains to the River Cole and north to the River Trent.

4.149. The pattern of settlement and land use that was established in medieval times can be discerned in the landscape today. In the 12th century the Bishop of Worcester, who was Lord of the Manor, enclosed land across the side of Newbourne Hill to hunt deer and built a palace with a moat, gardens and fish ponds. Many bishops, down to the 16th century, lived here and conducted their offices from the palace.

4.150. In 1239, perhaps because of the frequent presence of the bishop and his court, Alvechurch was granted a weekly market, an annual fair and later, the status of a borough. The annual fair was to be held "on the vigil, the day and the morrow of Saint Laurence", to which saint Alvechurch Parish Church is dedicated.

4.151. Alvechurch Park (written as Allchurch Park on the map by James Fish and held by Worcestershire County Council at the Hive) is still in existence with most of the boundary ditch and bank of the deer park pale still visible. It was, however, disparted before 1700 with enclosures changing the land use to farmland. The Bishop's Palace was pulled down in the 17th century but parts of the moat and a yew tree, which formerly stood in the palace grounds, still remain in the garden of the Moat House in Radford Road.

4.152. From the 19th century to the mid-20th Century there was a brick factory in the hamlet of Withybed on the edge of the village. Other local industries included nail and needle making. Dellow Cars were made in Alvechurch between 1949 and 1956.

#### 4.153. BUILT HERITAGE AND CHARACTER

##### 4.154. Introduction

4.155. The openness of the parish and its location set between Birmingham and Redditch and its countryside feel are greatly valued by all who live in Alvechurch Parish. Residents wish to preserve the rural look and feel of not only Alvechurch Village but also its outlying settlements.



Fig 25. In character rural housing at Mill Court in Alvechurch Village

4.156. Protection of traditional buildings of architectural and historic interest, and their settings, is paramount in preserving the traditional character of the neighbourhood area. Preservation and enhancement through management of sustainable growth is at the core of the APNP.

4.157. The historic core of Alvechurch Village, set within the Conservation Area, is considered a fundamental part of the APNP. The Conservation Area together with non-built, *non-designated* heritage assets of the parish, from park and field boundaries, marl pits, fishponds to canal bridges etc., seeks to maintain the parish historic and built distinctiveness. It also seeks to add to its quality by bringing well designed and planned integrity to future development in Alvechurch Parish



## **POLICY HDNE 1: BUILT HERITAGE AND LOCAL CHARACTER**

- 1. All development proposals for Alvechurch Parish (including alterations, extensions as well as a change of use) should continue to maintain, conserve and enhance the designated built heritage assets of the parish and their settings. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.**
- 2. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the buildings and structures in the list in Appendix B as local heritage assets for the purpose of supporting BDP 20 of the Local Plan.**
- 3. Proposals that would contribute to the long term management of heritage assets will be encouraged.**
- 4. Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:**
  - a. Development, including that within or adjacent to the Conservation Area, should respond to the distinctive local built character and its particular surroundings, and sensitively contribute to creating quality design appropriate to its rural setting.
  - b. Developments should be enhanced by landscaping and planting with existing trees and hedges preserved whenever possible and the avoidance of introducing inappropriate bunds or embankments;
  - c. Any new development adjacent to a heritage asset, listed building or building of historic interest and/or open space as defined in Section 3 should be sensitively designed to conserve and enhance the setting, form and character of the heritage asset, building and/or space;
  - d. The density of any new development should be in character with the local surrounding area, respect the semi-rural nature of the parish and be designed to give an impression of spaciousness with uniform houses and plots being avoided.
- 5. This policy requires developers to take full account the Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment, the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement and the Alvechurch Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP) documents when preparing proposals for development. This awareness will need to be demonstrated at the planning application stage.**

### **Background / Justification**

4.158. The three documents mentioned in POLICY HDNE 1, will assist in bringing forward development that conforms to the wishes of the parish community.

4.159. The introduction to the HEAP explains the concept as strategic level documents that identify risks and deficiencies affecting the sustainability of all aspects that contribute towards a particular area or environment. HEAPs promote the character and special qualities of the environment in the context of managing change across the landscape. In order to achieve this, HEAPs assign priorities that can, through partnership working, deliver effective environmental conservation or enhancement through strategic planning policy and other frameworks that affect land management, conservation and enhancement.

4.160. In determining applications within the Conservation Area, or adjacent to listed buildings or any other heritage or environmental asset, the APNP will support planning applications that preserve, enhance or sustain the asset, its role in contributing to a sustainable community and the positive contribution new development can make

to local character when designed sympathetically and with quality materials as favoured by the community in their responses.

4.161. The APNP Policies turn some of the principles in the APDS and the AHERA documents into planning policy. Proposals will be assessed against the criteria in all APNP policies. In doing so, consideration of proposal's wider benefits, the views of the community and localised heritage and conservation issues, will be taken on board. Regard should also be taken of the communities indicated list of buildings and sites that are of archaeological and architectural significance, local distinctiveness, character and historic importance: as shown in Appendix B, References to the historic heritage of the parish can be viewed in the pdf documents on the "library page" of the [NP website](#)

4.162. The NP considers heritage assets that are valued by the local community will help to make sure that potential new development is properly integrated with what is already there and ensure that new development does not result in the loss of locally valued heritage assets. Addressing how best to integrate new development into an existing place can encourage people to be innovative. Taking into account what is special about a place often demonstrates that off-the-shelf design and construction might not be appropriate. It encourages sensitive development that respects historic buildings and their setting and place, thus invigorating an area, stimulating investment, entrepreneurship, tourism and employment.

4.163. Many of the buildings and features of historic interest in the parish that are valued by the local community are listed in APPENDIX B, Fig 35. TABLE OF NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS in the Evidence Base document. In parallel with this policy, the Parish Council proposes that these buildings and structures are considered by Bromsgrove District Council for inclusion in the Local List (See Community Action 3 at the end of this Topic section).

**4.164. However, the inclusion of any building or structure on the Local List is not necessary for the application of this policy. Clearly there may be a considerable elapse of time before this happens and it is made clear that policy HDNE1 applies whether or not the Council move to formally adopt the assets onto their Local List.**

#### 4.165. DESIGN and LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

4.166. Section 1 of the APDS, and the character area statements in the AHERA document, establish the relationship between local settings, the built and natural environment that in turn creates the local distinctiveness of Alvechurch Parish.

4.167. Policy HDNE 2 expects new development to respond positively to the local distinctiveness of its environment and to demonstrate high quality design and a good standard of amenity space.

4.168. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) guidance, states, "*it attaches great importance to the design and quality of the built environment and that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development*" (Paragraph 56).

4.169. The high quality of the special architectural and historic character and appearance of the NP area, especially within the Conservation Area, are described in the APDS and BDC's Conservation Area designation report; demonstrating why the area warrants special attention in managing proposals, to ensure they preserve or enhance its characteristics.

4.170. The picture below shows some of the local characteristics that create the parish's sense of distinctiveness. The parish features dispersed unique buildings, using detailing such as; Alvechurch Red bricks in different pattern bonds; prominent hedgerows and verges; stone or brick formed gateways; no kerbing to lanes; plenty of trees;

windows and doors set within sandstone surrounds; steep and distinctive patterned embellished wooden gable ends setting off decorative ridge tiles and chimney stacks.



*Fig 26. Some Alvechurch buildings with local distinctive features*



**POLICY AIM:** To consider favourably development that retains the character and distinctiveness of the parish as mentioned in the APDS and the WCC's AHERA.

## **POLICY HDNE 2: LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS**

- 1. Proposals for new development (including alterations, change of use and extensions) will be supported that are in keeping with their surroundings and preserve, promote and enhance the locally distinctive characteristics of the parish to maintain its historic identity and rural character, in conjunction with APNP Policy H4.**
- 2. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how proposed development takes full account of the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement (refer to Policy HDNE 3), the Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment and the Alvechurch Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP).**
- 3. Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:**
  - a. New development within, or adjacent to, or directly affecting an area of public open space, should be sensitively designed to conserve and enhance the setting, form, character and sense of place.
  - b. Development proposals will be supported that enable the protection and enhancement of the key landscape features of the parish, including traditional orchards, farmland, woodlands, hedges, wetlands, wildlife corridors and other natural heritage sites.
  - c. Development that damages or results in the loss of ancient trees or trees of good arboricultural and amenity value will not normally be permitted. Proposals should be designed to retain ancient trees or trees of arboricultural and amenity value. Proposals should be accompanied by a tree survey that establishes the health and longevity of any affected trees.
  - d. All trees providing visual or acoustic screening from the M42, other noisy highways or business establishments throughout the Parish should be preserved wherever possible
  - e. Any development of the parish's traditional farmsteads should be informed by the Worcestershire Farmstead Assessment Framework.
- 4. Development proposals should seek to maintain and enhance local area distinctiveness through the built environment, in terms of buildings and public spaces and enhance the relationships and linkages between the built and natural environment.**

### **Background / Justification to Policy HDNE2**

4.171. The Neighbourhood Area has a rich historic built environment and landscape. A full description of this is set out in the APDS and other core evidenced documents (such as the AHERA) plus a catalogue of listed buildings and local assets (Appendix B, in the Evidence Base).

4.172. The positive features of a Neighbourhood Area contribute to the distinctive character and sense of identity. The most successful places tend to be those that are memorable with character that people can appreciate easily. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted. The current design codes for guidance relate to a broad range of issues, although criteria relating to character form a significant part of the assessment.

4.173. Historic farmsteads and their buildings contribute to local distinctiveness and the varied character of our countryside by reflecting local geology, building traditions and farming practices. Worcestershire County Council has been involved with a series of projects aimed at enhancing understanding of farmstead character and survival within Worcestershire, developing conservation guidance that can be used to inform the sustainable development or re-

development of historic farmsteads and their landscapes. The County Council have produced a **Farmstead Assessment Framework** to be used when considering the development or re-development of a traditional farmstead or farm building.

4.174. **The Farmstead Assessment Framework (FAF)**<sup>21</sup> and the work undertaken in producing it, forms a part in the evidence base for this NP. Any development of the parishes' traditional farmsteads should therefore be informed by the Worcestershire FAF. This framework is a key document to consider when formulating development proposals. Further information can be found on the WCC webpage here.

4.175. Community responses in this section gave overwhelming support for keeping the countryside as it is, with a high proportion "strongly agreeing", though some people confuse the environment and landscape character with the Green Belt.

**Amongst the community consultation comments, it was stated:**

4.176. **"We should ensure that any new housing developments are made to preserve existing hedgerows and mature trees and plant new trees"**

## THE ALVECHURCH PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT

### 4.177. Introduction

4.178. Following the formal adoption of this APNP the APDS (version 1.4) will replace the previous Alvechurch Village Design Statement SPD (version 1.3), and will form an integral part of the APNP when assessing planning applications located in the parish.

4.179. All those involved in the design of development in Alvechurch Parish are encouraged to use the design statement, which was produced through close collaboration between planners, highway officers, environment and landscape officers, urban designers, development officers, rural housing enablers and the local community.

**POLICY AIM:** *To make the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement an integral part of the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan*

## POLICY HDNE 3: THE ALVECHURCH PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT (APDS)

**The character and setting of the Neighbourhood Area will be protected and enhanced through the positive use of the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement (August 2017). This Design Statement forms an integral part of the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan. It will ensure any new development proposal complements and enhances the existing Alvechurch Village and all of the outlying parish settlements and parish areas. It also ensures new development adheres to its design guidelines and principles.**

**Development proposals will be expected to have regard to the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement. Evidence of its use will be encouraged at planning application stage.**

<sup>21</sup> [Worcestershire Farmstead Assessment Framework](#)





## Background / Justification

Fig 27. [The Alvechurch parish Design Statement](#)

4.180. In 2005 a large number of volunteers from the local community of Alvechurch Parish worked together with the Parish Council to make what was then the Alvechurch Village Design Statement (version 1.3). The Alvechurch Village Design Statement as it was first known was adopted by Bromsgrove District Council as a supplementary planning document to the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004

4.181. This design statement document has now been updated and renamed the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement (APDS) by the APNP Steering Group and forms a key design document to be used as part of this NP.

4.182. The community told us through the consultations that they had concerns relating to housing development, which overdevelops or is not in keeping with the Neighbourhood Area. Some comments said that house building in Alvechurch is spoiling the traditional aura of the village and its rural character. There is overwhelming support for protecting and conserving the countryside wildlife and encouraging an environmentally friendly parish.

4.183. All those involved in the design and development of rural housing are encouraged to use this design statement, produced through close collaboration between planners, highway officers, environment and landscape officers, urban designers, development officers and rural housing enablers.

4.184. Developments in rural areas like ours must be particularly sensitive to their surroundings and reflect relationships between buildings, spaces, the landscape and other features that are locally distinctive. This APDS will provide a useful design guide to enable developers to achieve suitable developments for our parish.

### 4.185. Landscape and open views

#### 4.186. Introduction

4.187. Green areas within Alvechurch Village and the surrounding settlements are essential to the rural character of the parish area. Many walking groups including the Ramblers Association make use of Alvechurch's 28 miles or so of Public Rights of Ways (PROW), which are well maintained by the Alvechurch Village Society footpath volunteers who, in turn are supported by WCC Country Services.

4.188. Walkers, locally and from outside of the region, comment on the fine views from Alvechurch to the surrounding ridgeways and vice versa. The open gaps and views between the main areas of settlement and the smaller parish settlements are well cherished and valued, and make sure that one settlement does not 'run into' the next and each retain their own identity.

4.189. The layout of Alvechurch Village nestling in a valley surrounded by ridge lines and punctuated by open spaces was identified in the original village design statement as one of its most precious features. These open spaces connect the community with the landscape beyond. Green spaces are an essential feature, separating the elements of the main village, but also help unite them as a distinctive whole. It is the existence of these open spaces and views within the natural environment, which the local community placed at the top of their list of "likes" of the parish, and gives Alvechurch Parish its unique character.

Fig 28. Some of the parish landscape views



Dagnell end to Bordesley



Roberts corner to Hopwood



Station Rd south to Redditch



Station Rd toward Peck Wood Rowney Green



Redditch Rd (from School Lane) Newbourne Hill



View down Weatheroak Hill



From Pestilence Lane to Rowney Green

**POLICY AIM:** To encourage development that conserves the openness and existing character of the parish

## **POLICY HDNE 4: PROTECTING LANDSCAPE AND OPEN VIEWS**

New development should preferably be located on land of lesser environmental value and respect and seek to protect high-value agricultural land, important views, landmarks and local points of interest in the neighbourhood area, whilst having regard to the other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. New development, where possible, should maximise opportunities to create new views.

Some of the views considered to be important are listed below.

Cont.

- A. From Clare and For-hills, Hopwood and its environs across open country towards Alvechurch & Rowney Green and vice versa.
- B. From Perry Croft/Grovely farm looking southwest towards Upper Bittell Reservoir and the Lickey escarpment and vice versa.
- C. From east of Alvechurch towards Newbourne Hill (Rowney Green) across Lye Meadows and vice versa.
- D. From Foxhill down across fields to Withybed Green and Alvechurch, and vice versa.
- E. From Dagnell End Road up to and across the old Bordesley Park and Bordesley Hall estate and vice versa.
- F. From the ridgeline along Rowney Green, eastward towards Icknield Street and north to Wast Hills and Weatheroak Hill and vice versa.
- G. From Station Road and the Salt Way footpath across fields southwards to Peck Wood and Shortwood.
- H. From the high ground near St Laurence church across towards Callow Hill, the canal towpath area, Oak Tree Close and the M42 adjacent to Altheastan Close.

### **Background / Justification**

4.190. The landscapes and open views were recorded during a walk around Alvechurch Village boundary and a drive around the parish area by members of the APNP Steering Group and by volunteers from the local community. From the observations and comments gathered from this exercise and from walkers from the local community and the parish questionnaire, Policy HDNE 4 was formed. The policy attempts to identify views and valued gaps, which are considered to be precious and give Alvechurch Parish its distinctiveness. The landscape of the parish is characterised by a relatively low-lying off-centre main village (Alvechurch), on the River Arrow, surrounded by hills, ridge lines and three smaller villages.

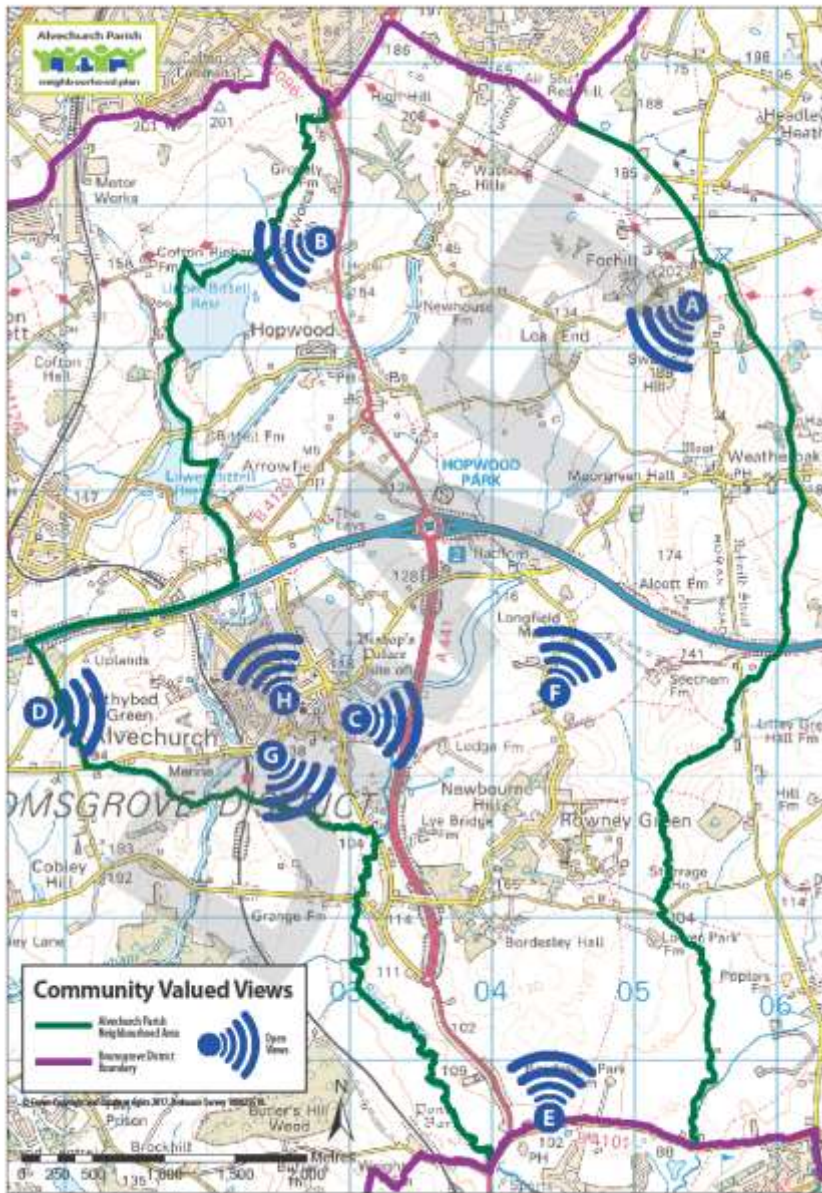
4.191. Part of the conception for this policy originated from community comments received and logged from the parish questionnaire, particularly the question for Option 2 as shown below:

#### **Some community comments**

*Need to limit otherwise there will be no green belt left eventually*

*Green belt should be last option*





*Need green belt between Alvechurch and Redditch and Barnt Green*

*Housing should follow roads between settlements but should be spaced to maintain rural character*

*Recognition of our unique space between Birmingham and Redditch*

*To minimise urban spread + leave clearly defined areas of green belt would prevent it looking like one large urban sprawl*

*The highest oak trees towards the north of the village are visible from appreciable distances, and the coppice of which they are a part to the rear of Oak Tree Close also helps to reduce noise from the M-way for local houses.*

*I wondered if enough attention had been paid to the importance of trees in Alvechurch's landscape.*

Fig 29. *Parish protected views*

[Double click the map or use this link for a larger view the map](#)

## Access to the countryside

### 4.192. Introduction

4.193. Access to the countryside on well-designed footpaths and cycle-ways will encourage their use by local residents for recreational purposes. Walking is already an important recreational activity in the parish with Alvechurch Village Society not only leading monthly walks but also assisting Worcestershire County Council in maintaining over 28 miles of parish Public Rights of Way (PRoW), which criss-cross the parish's landscape. By protecting and enhancing the appearance of the natural environment, the quality of the landscape will be maintained, wildlife will be protected, and there will be benefits for the health of the local and wider community.



Fig 30. Alvechurch Village Society walkers accessing the countryside

**POLICY AIM:** To encourage proposals that protect, improve and conserve Alvechurch's rural environment whilst encouraging access to the countryside for all.

## **POLICY HDNE 5: ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE**

- A. Development proposals are encouraged to make every opportunity to contribute to and connect to green networks and improve linkages between green spaces and increase public access to the countryside. In particular, proposals for new development should:**
- B. Design new and improved footpaths, cycle-ways and bridleways to connect new development to the countryside, including accessibility provision for people with disabilities**

- C. Where possible, provide connections to key places such as; the Meadows, Worcester & Birmingham Canal, the River Arrow and parish woodlands that are open to the public.**

### **4.194. Background / Justification**

4.195. Whatever the activity or pattern of use, visiting, protecting and enhancing the countryside and natural environment has distinct benefits in the following ways:

- For the individual in terms of their health and well-being
- For the local economy through spending on local goods and services
- For conserving and enhancing natural habitats for the benefit of local wildlife

4.196. Results from the community consultations showed that 80% of respondents considered access to nature and the countryside to be good or very good in their local area, compared to just 3% who considered it to be poor. This 3% could be from those unable to access the countryside for one reason or another, being disabled was one.

4.197. Results from the community questionnaire that took place earlier in the APNP process, "Option 2 in the Environment four options" set of questions, and latest consultation comments, show a majority agreement that local people value access to the countryside.

4.198. [The Worcestershire Access and Informal Recreation Strategy 2009-2019](#) aims to ensure that local people and visitors are informed, provided for and welcomed to the countryside. Young people have their own particular needs, and for those too young to access transport independently, there is a need to ensure provision is available locally. One of the principles and values underpinning the Worcestershire Play Strategy<sup>22</sup> is to ensure that children and young people have safe and easy access to a range of play opportunities within a reasonable distance of their homes.

<sup>22</sup> [Worcestershire Play Strategy 2007-2010](#)



4.199. The strategy also asserts that children’s favourite place to play is outdoors, and access and recreation providers can help to ensure that children's' needs are taken into account in planning and maintaining sites.

Fig 31. *The boardwalk in the Wiggin (the Meadows recreation field)*

## Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment

### 4.200. Introduction

- The NP aims to improve the quality of our natural environment across our parish.
- We aim to counteract negative impacts on habitats and species and any damage that development may cause to the landscape.
- We will protect priority habitats such as the wildlife corridors of our natural river courses, canal and woodlands.
- We will support natural systems that protect our countryside such as reed beds, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)<sup>23</sup> and biodiversity.



Fig 32. *The boardwalk at the Meadows*

- We will achieve this through joined-up cooperation at local authority and developer level discussions to create an ecological parish, which is resilient regardless of needed future development.

4.201. Alvechurch Parish, Green Infrastructure (GI) is supported by ‘Bromsgrove District Plan Policy BDP 24’. This policy, which requires development to have regard to the emerging Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy, any local GI Strategy, and where available the GI Concept Plans aligns with APNP Key Aim 7.

## The Natural Environment

### 4.202. Introduction

Fig 33. *A Wellingtonia tree at the Social Club*

4.203. The APNP expects all new development in the Neighbourhood Area to show sensitivity to the natural environment, which includes all plants and animals, the habitats where they are found and the underlying rocks, soils, landforms and local views.

4.204. The Bromsgrove District Plan (2011-2030) describes how new development should respect the natural environment. The APNP policies apply to development of all sizes from alterations to private houses to large scale developments.

4.205. The high wildlife value of the countryside is evident by the wide variety of bird species, which live in the parish.



<sup>23</sup> A sustainable drainage system (SuDS) is designed to reduce the potential impact of new and existing developments with respect to surface water drainage discharges

4.206. The River Arrow and its tributaries flow through the parish. The APNP will look to conserve local biodiversity assets and promote the enhancement of biodiversity in accordance with priorities specified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).

4.207. There are two SSSI's (Sites of Special Scientific Interest): Grovely Dingle (an example of old native woodland trees and ground flora), and the Bittell reservoirs (see figures 8 and 9). The north shore of Upper Bittell reservoir having rare shoreline plants.

Fig 34. Muntjac deer near Foxhill

4.208. Newbourne Wood is a local nature reserve owned by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Dagnell Brook is home to native freshwater crayfish (*Astacus pallipes*). See the map on page 16, which shows SSSIs and District, designated Local Wildlife Sites ((LWS).



**Some of which are listed here:**

- Meadow near Foxhill farm above Withybed Green,
- The Meadows (The Wiggin Field) in Alvechurch
- The old fish ponds in Alvechurch
- Peck Wood and Rowney Green (formerly known as Rowney Green Bog)
- Private nature reserve at Hopwood Service Station

4.209. Older pastures have interesting meadow flowers, bees and butterflies. Some woodland has ancient woodland flora. The Meadows in Alvechurch has a rich wildlife. Gardens in the traditional settlements are good wildlife havens. Nevertheless biodiversity is hampered by the over-mowing and over-cutting of grass verges and hedgerows, which have a negative impact on the wildlife that use these important green corridors.

4.210. The Neighbourhood Area is set in a pleasant rural landscape that is highly valued by the community. Oak, ash, beech and chestnut trees grow well around the village. Wellingtonia trees were planted within the village boundary to celebrate Wellington's victory at Waterloo.

4.211. Hedgerows are principally made up of blackthorn, hawthorn and hazel and often contain mature tree species including alder and willow. The hedgerows often also support elder, bramble, briar and ivy. These hedgerows are havens for some of the parish's wildlife, including birds, voles, field and door mice and gives cover to badgers, muntjac deer, roe deer, brown hare, stoat, weasel, meadow brown butterfly, marbled white butterfly, skylark, barn owl and kestrel.

4.212. In fact, hedgerows are so good for wildlife that 130 UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP) priority species are associated with them (The Wildlife Trust). This is why this NP seeks to protect the hedgerows in the parish.

4.213. Many of the fields in the parish have been enlarged by the destruction of hedgerows so the APNP encourages development that promotes new tree and hedgerow planting whilst conserving existing hedgerows and trees.

**POLICY AIM:** To protect and enhance the Natural environment and biodiversity in the Parish area

# POLICY HDNE 6: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 1 New development proposals should contribute to protecting and enhancing the Natural Environment. The quality of soft landscaping will be of significant consideration when assessing the merits of any scheme. In particular, new developments should:**
  - a. Safeguard, create and connect wildlife corridors including new grassland / meadows, ditches and ponds and the canal to maximise biodiversity gain
  - b. Use planting schemes that encourages wildlife
  - c. Encourage, where possible, the protection, reconnection and extension of existing hedgerows, the establishment of new native hedges is encouraged;
  - d. Retain mature and established trees and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) throughout the parish especially in green isolated coppices such as at Woodpecker Close in Hopwood and the coppice to the rear of Oak Tree Close in Alvechurch.
  - e. Where appropriate include a tree planting scheme incorporating native species to soften and screen the development, and connect to areas of existing tree cover.
  - f. New housing development should ensure that garden boundaries include at least a 125mm<sub>2</sub> (5 inch<sub>2</sub>) hole in garden fences and walls to allow access for wildlife, such as hedgehogs, frogs and toads. The use of hedgehog shelters, bird nesting boxes, bat boxes and bug hotels on buildings and fence posts, to provide food and nesting opportunities is encouraged.
- 2 In addition to the above, the following will be expected:**
  - Proposed development of poly-tunnels and glasshouses should take account of the visual impact on the landscape of the parish and its residents.
  - Locally valued habitats and wildlife corridors (particularly those relating to Peck Wood, Newbourne Wood the River Arrow and the canal area) should be protected and enhanced.
- 3 Development that adversely affects the natural environment, biodiversity assets and ecological networks of the parish will be strongly resisted. Applications for new development must demonstrate that there will not be harmful effects on the natural environment, and that biodiversity enhancement has been provided in line with national guidance.**

## Background / Justification

4.214. A healthy natural environment, where farmland is producing food using sustainable farming systems that enable wildlife to thrive and flourish and our woodlands, wetlands and wildlife sites are protected and enhanced will be encouraged. The soils have slightly impeded drainage, which protect areas downstream from excessive flooding. Therefore development proposals that adversely affect the natural environment will be strongly resisted. The appearance of the natural environment of the disparked medieval Bordesley and Alvechurch Parks should be especially protected, the latter being a very good example of the “recently-recognised concept of medieval ‘aesthetically-modified’ landscapes”.

4.215. The many historic clay, marl and gravel extraction pits contribute significantly to biodiversity while the parish is an important area for wet and dry acid grassland and for wet valley side alder woodland, both rare habitats in the county. Development well away from these areas could change the water systems in the hills and so damage ancient woodland, ancient wood pasture and unimproved grassland.

4.216. The River Arrow with its tributary streams, the canal and riverside and canal side meadows form an important wildlife corridor. Its value is enhanced by the Bittell reservoirs, the fishery and by hedges and veteran trees, which line the narrow Roman road, the boundaries of the disparked medieval parks and the other historic route ways.

4.217. Where it is safe to do so, the sides or top of hedges should be cut only once every three years to provide more food for wildlife and save money for owners. The badger tunnel under the Alvechurch bypass into Peck Wood should be kept free from blockages so that badgers can roam safely over their territory.

*Fig 35. A preformed hedgehog-hole in fencing*

4.218. The once common hedgehog is now under threat from development, habitat loss caused by the reduction of hedgerows and an increase in the intensification of our agricultural landscapes. In the last 10 years, the hedgehog population has declined by 30%; there are thought to be less than one million left in the UK's (Source: The Wildlife Trust) gardens, hedgerows, woodlands, grasslands.



4.219. Parkland and cemeteries are all important hedgehog habitats. Adult hedgehogs travel between 1-2 km per night and over home ranges between 10-20 hectares in size. In suburban areas, this means they range over entire housing estates and neighbourhoods.

4.220. Therefore, this NP encourages the creation of hedgehog highways because hedgehogs need to be able to roam far and wide in search of food, mates and nesting sites. By cutting a 125mm<sub>2</sub> (5 inch<sub>2</sub>) hole in fences and boundary treatments or digging channels beneath garden boundaries to connect gardens up will create the much needed hedgehog highways.

4.221. During community consultations there was overwhelming support for keeping the countryside wildlife-friendly, with a high proportion “strongly agreeing”. Generally people support farming and other appropriate use, improving access to the countryside, and more use of green technology and energy conservation. Most people support more use of green technology and using the countryside productively.

4.222. For more information on Alvechurch’s natural environment relating to this policy, see an expanded background and justification to APNP Policy HDNE 6 written by Dorothy Snaddon (Steering Group member). This can be found in the Environment Section of the APNP Evidence Base Summary on pages 46 to 48, and in the Library section of the APNP website [www.alvechurchparishplan.org](http://www.alvechurchparishplan.org)

4.223. During community consultations there was overwhelming support.

#### **Some community comments:**

*“We should ensure that any new housing developments are made to preserve existing hedgerows and mature trees and plant new trees.”*

*“Trees have the ability to block noise and pollution from highways and motorways”.*

*“Being able to access our beautiful countryside so easily is fantastic but what makes it so special is that it feels natural with lots of plants and animal variety - areas should be protected to ensure that this is maintained.”*

*“Publishing information about local biodiversity as well as services provided by local ecosystems would improve the way people value nature.”*

*“Very little done at present - wildlife friendly untidiness needs explanation to gain acceptance - interpretive boards etc.”*

*“Local farmers are the best custodians of the landscape - this should be mixed with good footpaths.”*

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## NON STATUTORY COMMUNITY ACTIONS FOR HERITAGE, DESIGN AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT TOPIC

### Community Projects identified in the Draft Plan

Delivering the vision and key aims – Community Actions

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines a heritage asset as follows:

*“A building, monument, site, place or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interests. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the Local Planning Authority (including local listing)” (NPPF Annex 2: Glossary)*

The Parish Council will work with Bromsgrove District Council to compile a local heritage list for the Parish, using this information already collected and the criteria set out in the District Council’s Local Heritage List Strategy (adopted 2016). This community action is detailed below.

**COMMUNITY ACTION 3**, AIM: *To encourage Bromsgrove District Council to compile a Local Heritage List for Alvechurch*

## COMMUNITY ACTION 3: LOCAL HERITAGE LIST FOR ALVECHURCH PARISH

The Parish Council will work with the Conservation Officer at Bromsgrove District Council to compile a Local Heritage List for Alvechurch Parish. Local heritage lists identify heritage assets, which are valued by local communities and contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of an area.

The criteria set out in the District Council’s Local Heritage List Strategy (adopted 2016) will be used for assessing whether a non-designated heritage asset should be included on the local heritage list. The decision will be down to the District Council, but the Parish Council will do all that it can to help the District Council with this decision. Further information on the strategy can be viewed here: [BDC Local Heritage List Strategy](#)



## TOPIC 3 - POLICIES FOR LEISURE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

### Introduction

#### KEY AIMS ASSOCIATED WITH POLICES IN TOPIC 3:

KEY AIMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GROUP OF POLICIES IN THIS TOPIC: KEY AIM 1: KEY AIM 3: KEY AIM 5: KEY AIM 6:

The full list of 'Key Aims' and their contents can be found on page 19.

4.224. The built and natural environments both have a significant impact on the health and well-being of local residents. For example the way we plan a new development and the way houses within it are designed and configured influence a person's living and working life.

4.225. Provision and any expansion of health and education facilities should also reflect Alvechurch's demography, which has a slightly higher percentage of older people than the surrounding neighbourhood. In Alvechurch 21.7% of the total population are aged over 65, compared with 20.4% in Bromsgrove, 19.5% in Worcestershire and 16.4% in England (Census 2011).

4.226. The percentages of 15 year olds and under (17.07%) residing in the parish is slightly lower than the percentage for Bromsgrove District and Worcestershire County (Census 2011). Housing, healthcare and education development in the parish should respond to this distribution in a growing population.

4.227. A King's Fund report observes that increasing access to parks and open spaces could reduce NHS costs of treating obesity by more than £2 billion and reduce mental health admissions as well, resulting in further savings for the NHS. However, research by the Woodland Trust shows that less than 17% of the population of England has access to local woodland within 500m of their home. In Worcestershire generally this figure is lower at 15%. Providing more accessible woods and green space can provide a critical link to healthier lives in Worcestershire (Source: Planning for Health in Worcestershire Technical Research Paper March 2015).

#### 4.228. HEALTH CARE PROVISION WITHIN THE PARISH

4.229. Currently this includes; the Alvechurch village centre GP surgery being a branch of the Northwood Medical Practice based in Birmingham which has approximately 4800 registered patients from Alvechurch, a dental practice that caters for private and NHS patients, a private cosmetic treatment centre, a private chiropractic clinic and a private optician's practice. Parish residents use health services commissioned by both the Birmingham South Central and the Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Groups according to the GP practice with which they are registered.

4.230. **The key issues as seen by local people**, and indicated from our consultations with the community who make greater use of the Alvechurch medical practice (not all Alvechurch residents are patients at the Alvechurch Village centre GP practice) include:

- a. "Perceived current long waiting times for health care appointments"
- b. "Population growth at a certain point possibly needing extra practitioner"
- c. "Restricted medical facilities in the current leased building including lack of meeting rooms or any space for expansion"
- d. "Enhancement of facilities likely needed to meet any growth"
- e. "Existing facilities being remote from the other parts of the parish"
- f. "Encouraging better public transport provision"
- g. "Anomaly created by attachment of medical practice in Worcestershire to the South Central Birmingham CCG"

Fig 36. Alvechurch medical centre



**POLICY AIM:** To ensure a good provision of healthcare for parish residents by encouraging development schemes that actively contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of the neighbourhood area.

## **POLICY LHW 1: HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS AND HEALTH CARE FACILITIES**

**1. Development will be supported that contribute to improving health and wellbeing within the Neighbourhood Area including the provision of age and dementia friendly outdoor environments through:**

- a. Providing a healthy living environment through good design and inclusion of green spaces;
- b. Provision of accessible open spaces and walkable neighbourhoods
- c. Provision of safe, well-lit and well-maintained routes and places
- d. Provision of pathways in strategic places containing seating located under street trees to allow shading during hot weather areas to help people rest and gather their thoughts.
- e. Segregated walking and cycling paths
- f. Promoting and enabling healthy lifestyles by creating environments that support walking and cycling and access to green open spaces;
- g. Providing good access to health facilities and health care services;

**2. To support major developments, in line with Worcestershire County Council, a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will be required where the proposal is likely to have a significant impact on health and wellbeing. The HIA will need to be submitted alongside planning applications to demonstrate that the potential impacts on health and well-being have been considered at the planning and design stage. In particular, the HIA will need to assess what impact the proposed development will have on demand for and access to healthcare services. The HIA should be undertaken as early as possible, it is recommended that this is during the pre-application stage.**

**3. Where significant impacts are identified, measures to mitigate the adverse impact of the development will be provided and/or secured by planning obligations in accordance with “Policy BDP6 Infrastructure Contributions”.**

**4. Development that would have an unacceptable impact on health and wellbeing within the Neighbourhood Area will not be supported.**

### **Background / Justification**

4.231. The definition of Major Development in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 is: For dwellings, a major development is one where the number of residential units to be constructed is 10 or more. Where the number of residential units to be constructed is not given in the application, a site area of 0.5 hectares or more should be used as the definition of a major development. For all other uses, a major development is one where the floor space to be built is 1,000 square metres or more, or where the site area is 1 hectare or more.

4.232. Health Impact Assessments (HIA) is used to judge the effects a proposed development may have on the health and well-being of different groups of people. The findings of HIAs are used to make recommendations to

decision makers as to how any positive health impacts of a particular scheme may be increased and any negative impacts reduced.

4.233. A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a process which ensures that the effect of development on both health and health inequalities are considered and responded to during the planning process. Worcestershire County Council has produced a [HIA toolkit, Health Impact Assessments in Planning Toolkit for Worcestershire](#) which applicants are encouraged to use when preparing their HIA's for this Neighbourhood Area. This Health Impact Assessment in Planning Toolkit is intended to support the creation of healthy communities through health-promoting planning policies and development management in Worcestershire.

4.234. [The Toolkit will support our Neighbourhood Plan and help embed health impact considerations into the Plan.](#)

4.235. It is expected that the HIA of a planning proposal would be undertaken by the applicant and should be undertaken as early as possible, i.e. at pre-application stage. The applicant will be expected to undertake the HIA screening to demonstrate whether and to what extent, their proposal will have an impact (both positive and negative) on the local residents and future site users. This would vary depending on the type, scale and location of the proposal. The applicant would also be expected to undertake a stakeholder consultation as part of the HIA process, which should include consulting with local healthcare service providers.

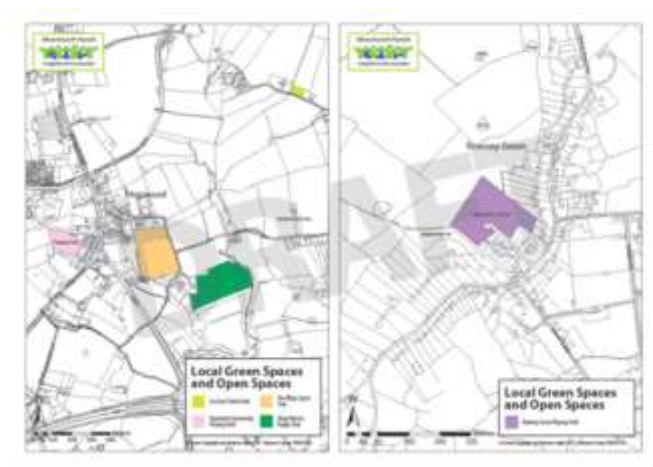
4.236. The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) recognises that, in relation to planning applications, HIA may be a useful tool to identify where significant impacts on the health of local people are expected.

#### 4.237. **OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION: THE MAIN FACILITIES FOR SPORT, LEISURE AND RECREATION FOUND IN THE PARISH ARE LISTED BELOW:**

Alvechurch Parish Council owns and administers four recreation areas:

1. The Wiggin Memorial Playing Field (The Meadows)
2. The Hopwood Playing Field and Community Centre, which includes a small, play area, two football pitches and a community building
3. The Rowney Green Playing field which includes a play area, pavilion and two tennis courts
4. The Alvechurch Village memorial green used for memorials services

Fig 37. [Map of Hopwood and Rowney green open spaces](#)



[Ctrl and left click on map for larger version on the APNP website or click here](#)

In addition, the following facilities are located in the parish:-

5. A BDC owned informal recreation site with play area located in the middle of Alvechurch's residential area at the George Road playing field.
6. A BDC owned field at Swans Length in Alvechurch Village that includes a play area and a MUGA (Multi-User Games Area) facility.
7. A Parish Council run allotment site on a 10 year lease from the land owner at Old Rectory Lane

**RECREATIONAL AND OPEN SPACES RUN BY PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS INCLUDE:** (see maps figs 35 and 36)

8. The Alvechurch Football Ground (AFC) and club house
9. Kings Norton Rugby Club at Hopwood

10. Five Ways Sports Club at Hopwood
11. Alvechurch & Hopwood Cricket Club (having two grounds, one in Alvechurch and one in Hopwood)
12. Alvechurch Fisheries
13. Peck Wood (run by the district Methodist Church)

### Issues relating to Open Space, Sport and Recreation

The key issues as seen by local people and drawn from our consultation with the community (not ranked in any particular order) are:

- a. The need for better walking and cycling networks to encourage increase levels of physical exercise.
- b. Access to Alvechurch Village centre from the smaller settlements being a significant barrier to improving wellbeing
- c. Better public transport and cycling provision
- d. The lack of facilities and opportunities for young people within the village
- e. Need for more outdoor and indoor leisure facilities in a central location
- f. Opening up of usage of the school facilities in evenings and at weekend for the community at a sensible price
- g. Need for more facilities and services for the ageing population
- h. Tennis /bowls/ IT training
- i. The Parish Council should look to produce a “Sports Development Plan”

### 4.238. LOCAL GREEN SPACES

#### 4.239. Introduction

4.240. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) enables local communities through the preparation of a NP to identify green areas and open spaces that are of particular importance to the community and designate them as Local Green Spaces to give them special protection. The NPPF (para 76) states that *“by designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances.”*

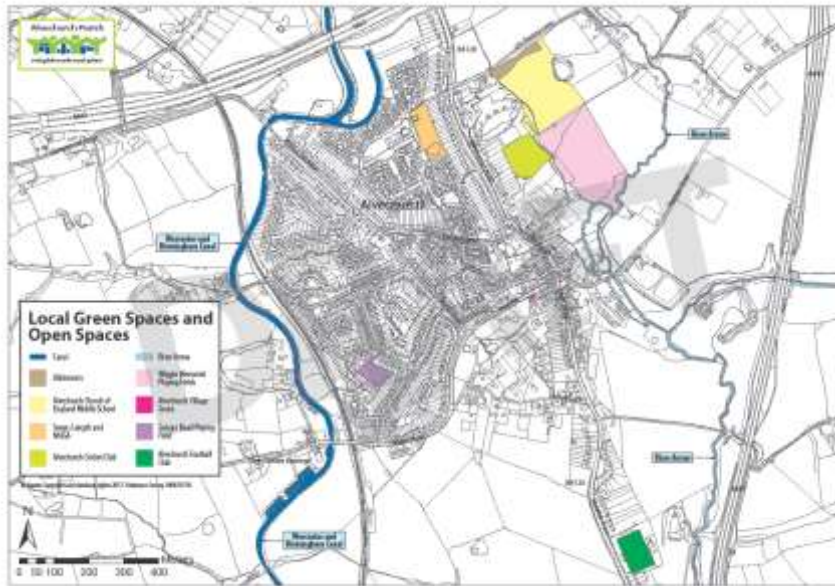
4.241. **Paragraph 77 of the NPPF** advises that *“Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:*

- *Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- *Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
- *Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.”*

4.242. **Paragraph 78 of the NPPF states:** *“Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts”.*

4.243. This NP has identified four green spaces that are worthy of Local Green Space designation. These green spaces are shown in Fig 37 and Table 3 (fig 39) below. The table sets out how each of the proposed Local Green Spaces meets the criteria in NPPF paragraph 77.

4.244. Although these areas are located within the Green Belt and therefore already have Green Belt policy protection, it was considered necessary as part of this NP to designate them as Local Green Spaces due to the Green Belt Review that will be taking place in the future by the BDC. At this stage we do not know what land could be released from the Green Belt as part of the Green Belt Review and the review of the Local Plan, so it seemed sensible to designate land that we felt worthy of Local Green Space protection to ensure its future long-term special protection.



*Fig 38. Map of open green spaces in Alvechurch Village*

[Double click map for a larger version or click here for a larger online map](#)

## Local Green Space

Name and Location	Ownership	Distance from Local Community	Special Qualities / Local Significance	Extensive Tract of Land
Wiggin Field Centre of Alvechurch Village	Owned and maintained by the Parish Council	At the heart of Alvechurch Village  2minute walk from the centre	Left to the community in memory of a son lost in the First World War.  Provides local walks via a Public Right of Way (PROW)  Is a peaceful place with Wild Life Site designation	Large open field with a main football pitch and smaller training pitch and recently updated children’s play area
Rowney Green Parish Council playing fields	Parish Council owned open fields providing facilities for football and tennis and open green space	To the rear of the village hall and within the main residential area of Rowney Green 2.4 miles from Alvechurch centre	Along with the village hall the fields provides two tennis courts free to parishioners and is the only source for social recreation within Rowney Green	Large playing field used for youth football, a pavilion building available to hire for community use
The Hopwood Community Playing Field	Parish Council owned field of two football pitches and small playground area	In the heart of the small Hopwood hamlet and 1.6 miles from the centre	The field is used for local Alvechurch youth football and has a community hall	A large playing field area providing 2 pitches and areas for



	with a community hall.	of Alvechurch Village.	available for the community to hire at preferential rates	children play and training. A hall is available for community use
Alvechurch Village Green	Parish Council owned. A small triangular memorial green	In Bear Hill adjacent to the village square	Used at war memorial services, and provides a little green space in the main village square	A small green area of land used for memorial services and flag raising

Fig 39. Table 3: Local Green Space – NPPF criteria

**POLICY AIM:** To identify and protect designated Local Green Space that is special to the local community whilst encouraging its use for healthy activities.

## POLICY LHW 2: PROTECTION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES

In accordance with NPPF paragraphs 76 and 77, green spaces as identified on Figures 37 and 38 are designated as Local Green Spaces. The identified Local Green Spaces are:

- a. The Wiggin/Meadows Village Field
- b. Rowney Green Parish Council playing fields
- c. The Hopwood Community playing field
- d. The Alvechurch Memorial Green

**Development that would harm the openness or special character of a Local Green Space, or its significance and value to the local community, will not be supported unless there are very special circumstances, which outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space.**

### Background / Justification

4.245. National policy makes provision for local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to those communities, where development will not be permitted except in very special circumstances. These Local Green Spaces can be designated through the local plan or through neighbourhood plans. The sites listed in Fig 39, Table 3 above have been proposed as Local Green Spaces through the APNP consultation process. These are open spaces used for youth play, sporting activities, community recreation and in the case of the Alvechurch Village Green, for memorial services.

4.246. **Some community comments received:**

*“We should ensure that any new housing developments are made to preserve existing hedgerows... plant new trees”*

*“Being able to access our beautiful countryside ... is fantastic... should be protected” ...*

*“Must conserve and enhance this asset”*

#### 4.247. OPEN SPACES

4.248. The Parish Council own and maintain several playing areas throughout the parish, which should be protected for continued use by the community and to encourage healthy activities for young and old alike. An ambition of this NP is not only to maintain those parish owned grounds, but also to preserve several privately owned facilities such as football and cricket grounds.

4.249. The areas alongside the banks of the River Arrow and canal towpath, accessed from many public rights of way, are also viewed as special by the local community. A number of open spaces valued by the community are listed in table 4. They are valued by the community because they provide sport, recreation and play opportunities and in the case of the River Arrow, there are opportunities to improve the local walking and recreation linkages, and also to enhance and preserve the biodiversity in wildlife.



Fig 40. Images from the Wiggin Field known locally as "The Meadows"

**POLICY AIM:** To identify and protect the network of open spaces in the parish that is special to the local community whilst encouraging its use for healthy activities

### **POLICY LHW 3: IMPROVEMENT TO, AND PROTECTION OF, OPEN SPACES**



Over the lifetime of the NP, the broad scale and network of open spaces throughout the Neighbourhood Area will be protected and enhanced. Development that would result in any loss of the open space or would cause harm to the character, setting, appearance, general quality or accessibility will not be supported unless the community will gain equivalent benefit from open space improvements or the provision of replacement open space.

Open spaces that are particularly valued by the local community include:

- a. The school playing fields
- b. The two Alvechurch Cricket Club Grounds (one being at Lea End in Hopwood)

CONT.

- c. BDC- owned George Road Play area (the only one not in the Green Belt)
- d. Along the course and curtilage of the River Arrow wildlife corridor
- e. Along the course of the Worcester Birmingham Canal and towpath
- f. The allotments
- g. Swans Length playing field including a play area & MUGA
- h. Five Ways Cricket and Rugby Club (Hopwood)
- i. Kings Norton Rugby Club (Hopwood)
- j. Alvechurch FC football ground at Lye Bridge Alvechurch.

The Parish Council will be supportive of development proposals that make improvements to the quality of these and other open spaces throughout the Neighbourhood Area. Priorities will be the protection and/or enhancement of their local wildlife and biodiversity, improving access linkages for both cyclists and pedestrians, especially alongside the River Arrow and canal towpath and connecting Public Rights of Way to open spaces. These improvements will be funded from a combination of developer contributions and a range of other funding sources.

**Background / Justification**

4.250. The above open spaces are either privately owned areas or as with George Road and Swans Length playing areas are owned by BDC. All these areas are valued by the local community for their leisure use and in providing youth sport facilities. The privately owned allotments are on a short lease to the Parish Council and provide the only allotments in the parish. There is much speculation about proposed development on land that borders the River Arrow corridor, and the community have expressed a wish to protect wildlife and biodiversity areas.

4.251. This also applies to the Worcester Birmingham canal curtilage and the Alvechurch FC football club, which is in the process of re-siting to the Hayes field located on the northern boundary of the Parish in the Hopwood Parish Ward. Double click on map for larger version

4.252. Any proposals in the River Arrow area should keep a significant open barrier between development and the river wildlife curtilage. Neighbourhood consultations have shown a desire to maintain and enhance the parish’s landscape and green character areas – they also indicated support for future development to do the same in order to provide varied leisure and recreational opportunities as highlighted in APNP Policies LHW 2 and 3.

**4.253. OTHER OPEN SPACES VALUED BY THE COMMUNITY**

Name and Location	Ownership	Importance	Character	Extent and Nature
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THESE AREAS LISTED BELOW ARE SOME OF THE OPEN SPACES THAT ARE VALUED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY (Note: this is not an exhaustive list of open spaces)

Two cricket grounds  One in Alvechurch Village, one at Lea End, Hopwood	Privately owned	One in Alvechurch Village is within a four minute-walk of the centre. The other is In open Green Belt land close to Hopwood Dingle (SSSI).	Typical rural open rural cricket grounds.	Large parcels of Green Belt open countryside  In Alvechurch Village and Hopwood
George Rd, Alvechurch playground	BDC owned. Within the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century urban Tranter Avenue character area of Alvechurch	Only open green space that alludes to the once open field parcels.	Provides openness to join 20 <sup>th</sup> century character areas together.	Small Bromsgrove local authority owned field. Needed to retain a sense of rural connectivity. Informal/formal recreation
School playing fields, Alvechurch	To the rear of the first and middle schools	Used for sport and recreation. Some community hire use.	Within the village maintaining openness to the adjoining Green Belt to the east.	Large playing facility
Kings Norton Rugby & Five Ways Cricket + Rugby Club Hopwood	Privately owned clubs with fields in Ash Lane, Hopwood	Integrate well with the surrounding open farmland	Merge well with the rural landscape	Both significant hireable open sized spaces blending into the Hopwood community including PROW's. Well used by a wide community.
Swans Length, Alvechurch. Play area and field including multi-use games area (MUGA)	BDC owned	A green space within a densely built-up area	Provides an area of green separation from Birmingham Road	A significant playing area for this character area of Alvechurch
The Allotments Old Rectory Lane, Alvechurch	A small area leased from a private land owner	The only allotments in the parish	Part of the greater West Midland's Green Belt	Small area on a short lease 10 year lease
Alvechurch Football Club. Lye Meadow, Alvechurch	A small area leased from a private land owner	FA. Football played at a high standard. Entry is by small fee. Club house available for hire	Part of the greater West Midland's Green Belt, open visually important green space on entering the village	Accessible for a local fan base following: important facility reasonable walking distance of the Village Centre
The Worcester Birmingham canal and towpath	Controlled by the Canal and River Trust	Used for walking, cycling, fishing, canoeing, barging and as an access	A local wild life site and part of the Green Infrastructure of	Runs from north to south west through the parish.



		between settlements and a transport route.	Alvechurch Parish	
The curtilage of the River Arrow	Passes through various differently owned land	Public Rights of Way often meet the banks of the river in the parish	It is a Special Wildlife Site/Local Wildlife Site in the parish SP06/18	Cherished for its wildlife corridor and peaceful walks and views.

Fig 41. Table 4: Other open spaces in Alvechurch Parish

## 4.254. Sports and recreational facilities

### 4.255. Introduction

4.256. Future reviews of this NP will incorporate all recommendations made following continued consultation. The community expressed wishes to; “improve sports areas”, and that “ecotourism / farming /outdoor leisure would fit better with our Parish character”. The following policy and community actions are designed to address those points together with Parish Council joint working with local authorities, to generally improve sport and recreational facilities throughout Alvechurch Parish.



Fig 42. Alvechurch Juniors training at Rowney Green

Fig 43. The existing play areas at Swans Length





**POLICY AIM:** To improve facilities for all ages in providing leisure and recreational opportunities suitable for a growing and diverse community.

## **POLICY LHW 4: SPORT, LEISURE AND RECREATION FACILITIES**

1. Development proposals, which make a contribution to the improvement of sports and recreational facilities or create new facilities that meet the requirements of the local community and are in accordance with, BDP25 Health and Well-being will be considered favourably
2. Priority will be given to the provision of the following:
  - a. Improvement to riverside walks along the River Arrow and linkages to green spaces
  - b. Toilet/changing facilities at the Wiggin playing field
  - c. New sports facilities, such as tennis courts, bowling green etc., in locations close to existing residential areas, being funded by any future development or from community grants
  - d. Initiatives for local food-growing, such as allotments

Proposals for new residential development of 10 homes or more will be encouraged to:

- e. Contribute towards the provision of new (and improvement of existing) public open space, sport and recreation facilities- this is provided new proposals do not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
  - f. Make available accessible open space, sport and recreation facilities to all members of the local community.
3. Development proposals that help to increase or improve pedestrian and cycle access to open space, sport and recreation facilities will be considered favourably.
  4. Where it is appropriate, new development should contribute to ensuring that all people in Alvechurch have safe access to quality secure, well designed and stimulating recreation space.

### **Background / Justification**



Fig 44. The new play equipment being installed at the Wiggin Field in 2015

4.257. To enable all residents (especially children and young people) to live healthy and active lives they should be able to participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age. This ranges from safe routes for active walking in the countryside, outdoor facilities for the older generation and play spaces for the more energetically minded members of the community.

4.258. Policy LHW 3 and LHW 4 together will help to increase and improve recreational opportunities for all residents. Developers should take account of these policies when designing their proposals.

## NON STATUTORY COMMUNITY ACTIONS FOR LEISURE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING TOPIC

Support will be offered through the NP and Parish Council to the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group to deliver sufficient and appropriate locally based health care provision in the parish. Whilst at this time no requirement has been formally established, current patients and wider community views acknowledge that additional facilities could be required over the lifetime of the Plan due to future development. The Parish Council will encourage actively the provision of adequate healthcare facilities to meet the needs of the local resident population.

Alvechurch village's health facilities are important to the parish and its neighbours, and the Parish Council is committed to helping these facilities stay in the village and - if possible - expand their services. With healthcare provision currently being in a state of change there is little opportunity for this NP to directly impact on future parish healthcare facilities. However, it is important that this NP makes clear its support for ongoing provision of these facilities in our neighbourhood area.

It is understood by the community that population growth resulting from future major development post 2023, will put even more pressure on medical care and allied services already near to capacity in 2017. The Parish Council through the NP will work with the relevant health bodies and local authorities to mitigate any such shortfalls. This will include the use of developer contributions through Section 106 and CIL (if a CIL policy has been implemented and adopted by BDC at that time).

*COMMUNITY ACTION 4, AIM: to maintain adequate facilities for a growing community*

### COMMUNITY ACTION 4: PLANNING FUTURE HEALTH CARE PROVISION

- a. Parish Council support will be offered to the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group and principal local authority to deliver adequate and locally based health care facilities located in close proximity to Alvechurch Village centre:
- b. By indicating sites or alternative available buildings suitable for appropriate change of use to a medical facility;
- c. In any assessment for a purpose built medical centre within proposed development sites; or
- d. Working in combination with neighbouring parishes with a view of sharing a new centre that includes extra clinical services e.g. minor surgery, phlebotomy procedures, and routine scanning procedures. The Parish Council will strive to ensure that there are adequate medical facilities within the Neighbourhood Area to serve the growing Alvechurch Parish population.
- e. The parish is currently served mainly but not exclusively by a medical centre in The Square, Alvechurch. The commissioning of this centre's health care services is currently the responsibility of a Birmingham based Clinical Commissioning Group. More and extended clinical and related support facilities may be required over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan. Through Community Action 4, the Parish Council will continue its support of the provision of adequate, accessible healthcare facilities to meet the needs (changing and growing) of the local resident population

#### Background / Justification

Whilst, at this stage, no requirement for additional facilities has been identified, it is acknowledged that existing medical facilities are already stretched and further development is likely to make this situation worse. An NHS dentistry service at the village practice is not always available to everyone.

Proposals to improve such facilities will be encouraged. The first preference of development will be to fully explore the potential for the extension, upgrading or re-location of existing facilities within the village centre. If this is not practical or feasible, then land will be sought within any significant new development site large enough to accept such a facility with its associated car parking.

The funding for a proposed medical centre if necessary (either as an enhancement of existing facilities or provision of new) will be sought through developer contributions where relevant, and other sources, to ensure that medical facilities remain sustainable and near to the centre of the existing village. These should be convenient and accessible enough to meet the needs of local people.

[A typical community comment summed this up:](#)

*“Community facilities within Alvechurch Village are most valued but there is concern “extra housing would put a strain on health and education facilities of the parish”.*

Many people have expressed a desire for additional and improved leisure and sport facilities within the parish. Though this does not fall under statutory planning policy in a neighbourhood plan, it is seen as an aspiration that can be furthered as a ‘Community Action’ for the Parish Council and local authorities to explore.

There is already much support offered to the area from a number of organisations mostly associated with local churches or the village centres. ‘Picnic in the Park’ organised by the Parish Council gathers a good response every year. Local organisations, such as sports clubs, schools and libraries will be encouraged to offer their facilities for suitable meetings and organisations, to make full use of their potential.

Various Neighbourhood Watch schemes are in existence and these will be encouraged to grow to reduce the instances of crime making the parish a safer place to live.

Work on a Sports Development Strategy for Alvechurch will be co-ordinated by Alvechurch Parish Council, and involve local sports clubs such as Alvechurch Cricket Club, Alvechurch Football Club and Alvechurch Lions Youth Football. It will also include community groups, residents’ associations, senior citizens’ groups, and Women’s Institutes. The strategy will be agreed and adopted by Alvechurch Parish Council over the NP period.

**COMMUNITY ACTION, 5 AIM:** *To produce a sport and recreational strategy for the local community*

## **COMMUNITY ACTION 5: PROMOTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

The Parish Council will produce a ‘Sports and Recreational Development Strategy’, which will strive to identify and deliver future improvement to sports, recreation and leisure facilities within the parish. Consultation with the local community will be undertaken in producing this strategy.

# TOPIC 4- POLICIES FOR BUSINESS, SHOPS AND SERVICES

## Introduction

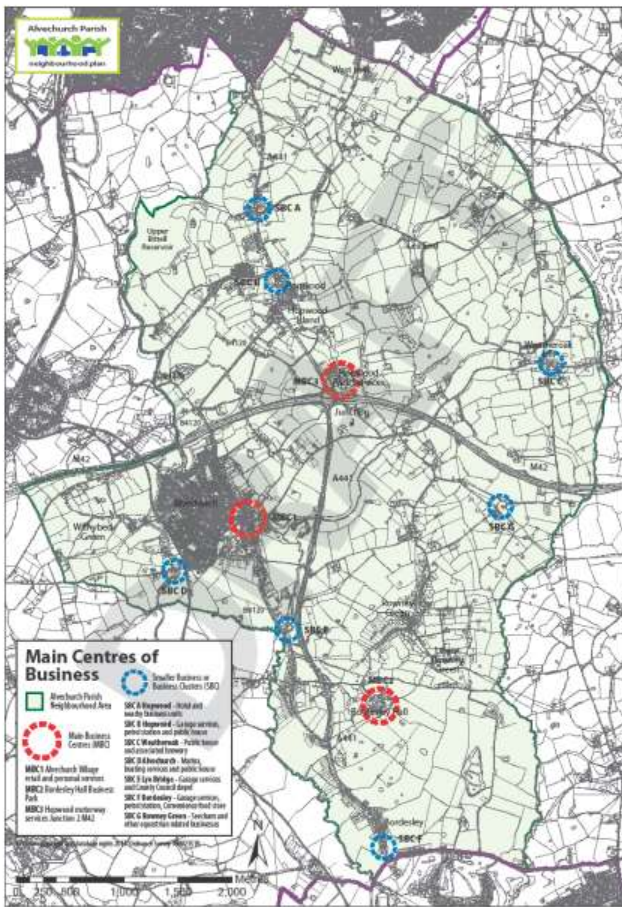
### KEY AIMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TOPIC 4 GROUP'S OF POLICIES:

KEY AIM 1: KEY AIM 2: KEY AIM 3: KEY AIM 4: KEY AIM 5: KEY AIM 6: KEY AIM 7: KEY AIM 8.

The full list of 'Key Aims' and their contents can be found on page 19.

4.259. Alvechurch Village is identified in the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan (2011 – 2030) as a large settlement. The Bromsgrove District Plan focusses economic growth primarily in Bromsgrove Town and Longbridge. Sustainable economic development in settlements, such as Alvechurch will be permitted when it achieves a

better balance between housing and employment, has the potential to reduce commuting and conforms to Green Belt policy set out within the NPPF.



4.260. The smaller settlements such as Hopwood and Rowney Green are seen as suitable for some small-scale rural employment opportunities through appropriate farm diversification and essential local amenities. The APNP seeks to promote a suitable mix of local businesses appropriate to the character of the parish.

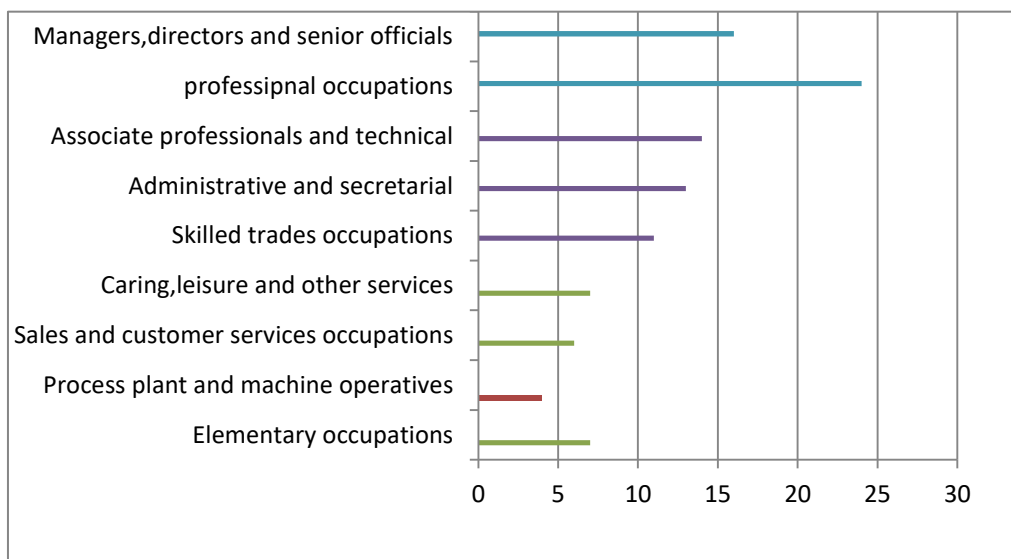
4.261. The parish wants businesses that particularly serve the needs of local people but will also contribute to the wider district economy. Such businesses and the local employment opportunities they bring will include; small retail provision, office businesses, health and wellbeing provision, leisure and tourism and other services linked to everyday community needs. These would live alongside agricultural related businesses that support the wider rural economy.

[Double click map for larger version or open this hyperlink](#)

Fig 45. Map of Parish centres of business

4.262. In terms of tourism, Alvechurch Parish has much to offer. There are around 28 miles of rural public footpaths, historic woodlands, two Scheduled Monuments, Bittell sailing lake, the Birmingham and Worcester Canal with Alvechurch Marina, and many historic buildings within the Conservation Area. Visitors will also find local shops, pubs, restaurants, a country house hotel and the Hopwood Park Motorway Services (at Jct 2 of the M42). The Parish Council recognises the need to encourage employment opportunities in recreation and tourism in order to attract more visitors to the parish, so supporting the vitality and viability of these local businesses and services.

Fig 46. Residents' occupations ONS Census 2011



4.264. Alvechurch Parish is generally an affluent area. More than 40% of residents are employed in managerial or professional occupations (England and Wales 28.2%).

4.265. Whilst many people (15% of those in work) in the parish work from home; 63% of residents in employment work more than five kilometres from home. About 7% of people in Alvechurch work mainly from home. This

compares with 2.98% in the West Midlands. There were 265 people claiming out of work benefits (November 2011), representing 6.8% of the population aged between 16 - 64 years.

4.266. There are high levels of commuting out from Alvechurch. From the 2011 Census, 66.5% of people in Alvechurch drive a car or van to work compared with averages of 64.4% for the whole of Worcestershire, and 54.9% across England. 66.5% of people in Alvechurch drive a car or van to work compared with averages of 64.4% for Worcestershire, and 54.9% for England.

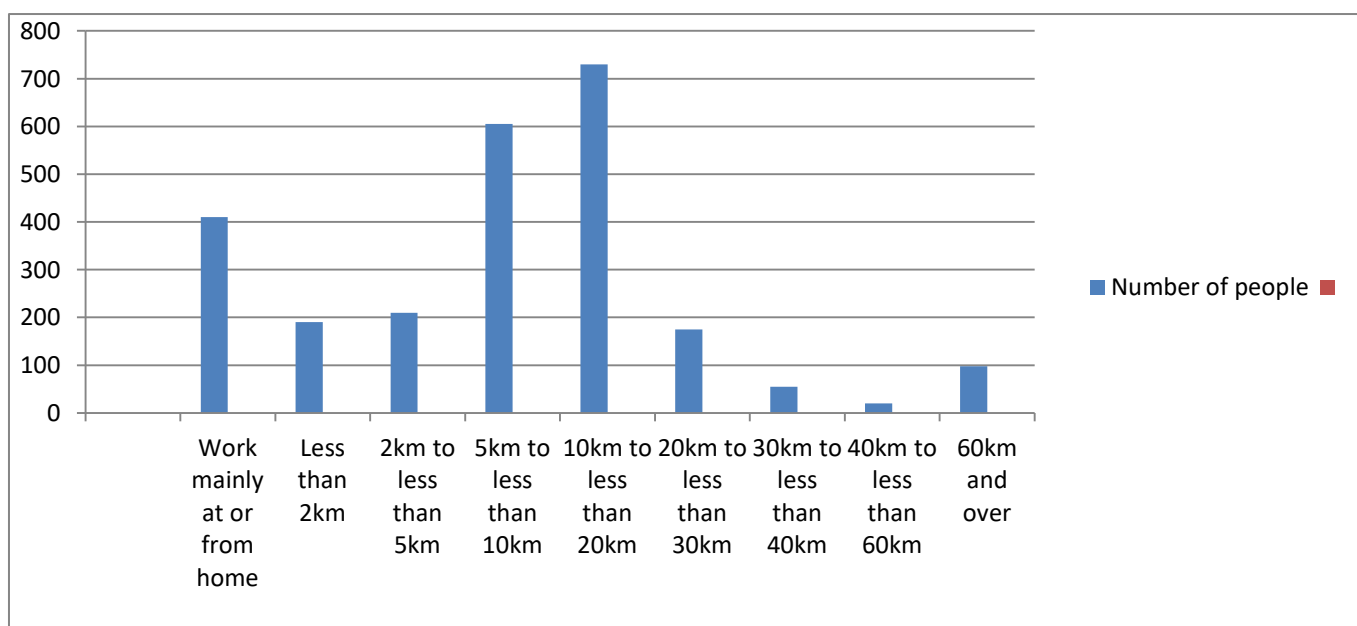


Fig 47. Distances residents travelled to work (Source: NOMIS, 2011)



## Results from community consultations relating to businesses:

4.267. Community consultations for the NP took place across the parish in the period from September 2012 to June 2017. Most of these sessions were timed to coincide with public events taking place and through attending various community group meetings. A great number of consultation responses were received, some of which revealed the following:

- There is some support for increasing local business even in small settlements. However there is no agreement that any Green Belt land should be used.
- There were positive comments about business development generally, especially in rural settlements, but results showed a spread of public opinion.
- The Baptist Hall consultation group in particular showed a reluctance to give up Green Belt land for business expansion or growth.

4.268. The comments submitted as part of the community consultations have helped to shape the policies in this topic on 'Local Businesses, Shops and Services'. Further to these community comments, the neighbourhood plan will particularly encourage small scale development, which supports existing businesses and boosts investment in future employment opportunities within the neighbourhood area. It is not expected that any growth of local business activity will mean more substantial numbers of the working population being employed within the parish.

## 4.269. LOCAL SHOPS

### 4.270. Introduction

4.271. It's not hard to see the attraction of Alvechurch Village centre and its retail offer. Nestled on the outskirts of both Redditch and Birmingham it caters well for the needs of local residents and commuters with a healthy mix of independent shops, cafes and restaurants. In more detail the village centre's retail businesses include butchers, an optician, a greengrocery / flower shop, hairdressers, insurance brokers, post office, beauticians, estate agents, and a mortician.

4.272. Of the village centre pubs, the Red Lion caters for the dining end of the market; The Swan is the more traditional 'drinking' and bar food type of pub. Real ale lovers however may decide to go up to the Canal Marina area to visit The Weighbridge, and if the choice is for a further short stroll out of the village and into the country side then The Crown at Withybed is close by. Travelling a couple of miles outside of Alvechurch Village is the micro-brewery pub, the Coach and Horses at Weatheroak. At Hopwood to the north is the Hopwood House Inn located on the canal-side, which offers an array of ales and family dining.

4.273. Fast-food and dining needs are met by, a fish and chip shop, a Chinese takeaway, Café Morso, the Lounge internet café / youth club, and the well frequented Dilshad restaurant, all taking advantage of being located in the Conservation Area at the heart of the village.

4.274. New retailers arrived in The Precinct and Square areas in 2017. These additions and the improvements being made to shop frontages in The Precinct area together with the projects highlighted in COMMUNITY ACTION 6, ALVECHURCH VILLAGE CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLAN, are examples of how Alvechurch Village centre has begun to be improved into a better fit within the Conservation Area. At the same time it is showing initial signs of becoming a more pedestrian friendly area. This is a good start but more work needs to be carried out to satisfy the policies in this section.

## **POLICY BSS 1: LOCAL SHOPS**

**1. The local shopping facilities (A1 Use Class) in the Parish will be protected and enhanced. This will be achieved by:**

- a. Supporting the retention of existing shopping facilities;
- b. Supporting proposals for extensions to existing shopping facilities appropriate in scale to meet local needs, subject to Policy BDP 18 'Local Centres'.
- c. Supporting proposals for new small scale shopping facilities when appropriately located, subject to Policy BDP18 Local Centres

**2. Proposals that would result in the loss of existing local shopping facilities through change of use or redevelopment will be resisted unless there is alternative provision nearby, there is no reasonable prospect of continued use of the building or facility for similar community use, or there are permitted development rights.**

**3. Small shops within the settlement boundaries of Hopwood and Rowney Green that provide for very local essential everyday need and that encourage less frequent use of the motor vehicles will be supported.**

**4. Although Alvechurch is a growing parish, large scale (1500sq metres plus, floor space) retail units (supermarkets) (within Class-A Uses) would be out of keeping with the parish area and will not be supported.**

**5. The Parish Council recognises that if the Parish is faced with losing a valued facility it may use the Community Right to Bid to nominate it as an Asset of Community Value, and if designated giving the community a chance to buy and run the asset.**

### **BACKGROUND / JUSTIFICATION TO POLICY BSS 1**

4.275. The range of local shopping facilities located within the neighbourhood is vitally important to its local communities. ANP Policy BSS 1 aims to support the continued viability of retail and personal services provision in the Alvechurch Village central area with its ease of access for village residents and for those visiting from the other settlements within the parish. This policy also allows for the retention of (and any increase in) smaller shopping facilities within the settlement boundaries of Hopwood and Rowney Green where they provide for very local, essential everyday need.

4.276. The policy is also in line with NPPF paragraph 28, which states that for a strong rural economy, neighbourhood plans should: *"promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship"*.

Some community responses include:

- "Preserve the village centre"
- "With a good range of shops"
- "Should be spread to minimise impact in the community and protecting the village centre"
- "Keep the village a village"

## ALVECHURCH VILLAGE RETAIL CENTRE

Fig 48. *The Alvechurch 1950's shopping precinct before recent upgrading within The Conservation Area*



### 4.277. Introduction

4.278. Looking to the near future with the possibility of more housing in the parish, the local community were consulted on whether Alvechurch Village centre would benefit from its own business development plan. This would include exploring the potential for some pedestrianisation and corresponding road changes around The Square and The Precinct. The issue here is responding positively to the likely increase in the numbers of people using village centre facilities and the close contact they have with both passing and parking traffic



Fig 49. *The centre of Alvechurch Village entering from the south*

**POLICY AIM:** To enhance Alvechurch Village centre's role as a hub for shopping, tourism, social and leisure activity and to diminish the harmful effects of traffic whilst providing an appropriate level of car parking.

## **POLICY BSS 2: ALVECHURCH VILLAGE CENTRE**

**1. Within the shopping area of Alvechurch (as defined on the adopted BDP Policies Map), proposals for the change of use or redevelopment of existing ground floor shopping facilities to non-A1 uses will be supported where:**

- a. There are permitted development rights that allow the change
- b. The premises has been empty and actively marketed for a period of at least 12 months at an appropriate market price with a view to securing a new retail use
- c. The existing retail use is no longer needed within the parish or is not viable for an alternative retail use.

**2. Outside the defined shopping area, the development of a variety of residential, office/commercial, cafes/bars/restaurants, leisure and cultural uses will be encouraged. However, there should be no significant adverse impacts on residential amenity in terms of traffic disturbance, noise, odours, litter or hours of operation as a result of the proposal. Proposals will also need to show sensitivity to the Conservation Area.**

**3. Proposals to improve and enhance the vitality, historic character, appearance of the public realm and accessibility of the village centre will be supported. The priorities are:**

- d. Improving pedestrian and cycle access and an enhanced public realm
- e. Enhancing public transport accessibility
- f. Encouraging a greater mix of local independent retailers
- g. Promoting the village centre's role as a hub for shopping, tourism, social and leisure activity
- h. Preserving and enhancing the character and historic interest of the village centre and its designated Conservation Area
- i. Diminishing the harmful effects of traffic around the village centre whilst providing for an appropriate level of parking.

### **Background / Justification**

**4.279.** The local shops and small businesses in the village centre are valued, but some people consider they should be increased in number and variety. On 19th September 2016 a contributor to the Alvechurch Village Society Facebook page posted an item announcing the expected arrival in the village centre of a new store selling among other things fresh fruit and vegetables. This prompted replies from 60 other Facebook users. The main points in those exchanges (listed below as mentioned and not in rank order) were about:

- Where new stores might be based

- Some lease restrictions in the Precinct area on what stores might sell so preventing competition. Whereas competition and keen prices are desirable
- Car parking issues around the shops - number of spaces and position alongside moving traffic
- More shops needed as housing numbers grow but then where will cars park
- Current road /pavement arrangements should be changed for safer shopping
- Three new housing estates in the last 5 years in the village. Any more housing growth needs to be related to additional village centre shops and parking
- More shopping and recreation activities needed in the evening

4.280. APNP Policy BSS 2 addresses these issues. Additionally while the emphasis is on adding to the retail and leisure offers within the village centre, market forces may indicate that business use of shop or office premises is no longer viable. The policy recognises this and prepares for change of use.

#### 4.281. SAFEGUARDING EXISTING BUSINESS

##### 4.282. Introduction

4.283. Market forces often provide an economic incentive to local shop and pub owners to apply for planning permission to enable them to convert premises into dwellings, resulting in a loss of the facility to the local community. Paragraph 70 of the NPPF supports the preservation and enhancement of valued local services and facilities, and Policy BDP14, Designated Employment (para. BDP14.4) of the Bromsgrove District Plan reinforce this by resisting their change of use without overriding justification.

4.284. There is broad community support for a local economy that encourages those relatively few, non-retail local businesses within the parish and promotes new business start-ups or expansion where appropriate (usually brownfield) sites can be found for this purpose The parish needs to both retain existing and attract new enterprises to boost the local economy.

4.285. From our extensive community consultations, there is no desire for larger scale business units than those existing to be located in the parish, and certainly no wish for green belt land to be given up generally for business purposes. With the motorway access point in the parish (Junction 2, M42), major A roads travelling towards Birmingham, Redditch and Bromsgrove, and improved rail services, residents in large will be working elsewhere. This does mean the location of large-scale business (and the associated employment opportunities) in the parish is likely to be neither missed nor desired. (See Evidence Base paragraph 8.2)

4.286. Our community consultations explored whether small scale rural employment should be encouraged particularly in or near the small settlements in the parish stressing that business and buildings must be appropriate to the area. It is clear through the consultation evidence there is overwhelming support to encourage appropriate small businesses, some agri-related and including the craft industry and creative sectors.

4.287. Our policies for sustaining and expanding suitable local businesses in well-designed premises aim to support the local economy through business opportunities suitable to a parish like ours, centred mainly on Alvechurch Village whilst encouraging some opportunities for other diverse businesses within the wider, more rural area.

**POLICY AIM:** *To promote, protect and encourage sustainable use of parish based business assets whilst seeking to safeguard existing business uses.*



## POLICY BSS 3: SAFEGUARDING EXISTING BUSINESSES

Existing businesses in the parish will be protected and enhanced. This will be achieved by:

- a. Safeguarding existing businesses, subject to BDP Policy BDP14 Designated Employment
- b. Supporting the expansion of existing businesses where additional jobs will be created, subject to the sustainability of the scale and impact of the proposal and its consistency with requirements of BDP Policy 15 'Rural Renaissance'.
- c. Supporting the more effective use of existing business sites, particularly the Bordesley Hall site (see APNP Policy BSS7).

**The loss of business in the parish will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable, the business is relocating to alternative premises within the parish, or there are permitted development rights. Existing business premises should be retained wherever possible when it is in a sustainable location and does not impact negatively on neighbouring properties**

### Background / Justification

4.289 Alvechurch parish is predominantly a residential area within Bromsgrove district. It is not viewed in the District Plan as a centre for new, substantial business activity and its location means access is good for residents to commute within in the larger West Midlands area. However, the existing (and probably increasing) population will need local shopping and leisure opportunities. Additionally the retention of non-retail business activity in agriculture and related industries, in small business units of the type found at Bordesley Hall (see policy APNP Policy BSS 7), and in provision of various personal and community services together ensure an area that is economically and socially sustainable.

### Community comments on business include:

- a. Good mix of shops is needed; If they can be accommodated within village; What we have in building stock is sufficient
- b. Depends on type of business - more shops on existing Alvechurch site ok but not using green belt for industrial sites
- c. Most of us would probably prefer to keep the character of the Parish as it is and commute outside for work
- d. There is already a feeling of the village being alive with the existing businesses and community groups
- e. Green belt land should not be used - it is bad enough that we have to sacrifice it for housing

## NEW BUSINESS IN THE PARISH

### Introduction

4.290 To promote sustainable economic growth and, to increase local job opportunities a blend of new business developments will be supported within the parish, providing they comply with policies set out in the Bromsgrove District Plan (2011-2030). With the primary focus on Alvechurch Village settlement, there will also be

encouragement for other small scale business developments including agribusiness-related, subject to availability of land in other parts of the parish and national green belt policy.

4.291 Proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that they will not adversely impact on existing residential amenity, highway infrastructure or service uses. Proposals must also consider the character and appearance of the locality, and its natural environment.

4.292 Alvechurch Village's nature makes it inappropriate to use the village centre for large new business units or extra outlets, although there are opportunities to extend existing shops and to increase the amount of retail floor-space by change of residential use to A1 use. This will be supported unless it will lead to unacceptable amalgamation of existing plots to the detriment of the Conservation Area.

4.293 Where possible and to support Alvechurch's main shopping area, new retail development should take place in the village centre and the emphasis should be on planning for people to live and work nearer to Alvechurch Village and its centre. More rural employment located close to the village and residential uses, especially above shops will support this.



Fig 50. A new business in the retail Precinct

**POLICY AIM:-** To encourage a range of smaller scale businesses including rural enterprise in keeping with the conservation and character aspects of Alvechurch Parish, with particular reference to the village centre.

## POLICY BSS 4: NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PARISH

- 1** **Proposals for new business development within the parish that strengthens the local economy through; investment in small and medium enterprises and start-up businesses will be supported providing the development is not inappropriate in the Green Belt and is subject to the following criteria:**
  - a. Proposals should be sustainable and respect the character of its surroundings by way of building scale and design, impact on the surrounding landscape, safeguarding residential amenity and road safety whilst also having regard to:
    - Identifying and taking account of flood risk, including that from surface water flooding
    - Promoting where feasible waste water management, including the use of SuDS Systems<sup>24</sup>
    - Maximising the opportunities for renewable or low carbon energy provided by the particular site
  - b. Brownfield sites are primarily used especially those in sustainable locations close to the railway station
  - c. Proposals likely to generate unacceptable noise, fumes, odour or other disturbance to neighbouring residential properties will not be supported
  - d. The proposed business development will lead to a likely increase in the number and quality of local job opportunities
  - e. Proposals for farm diversification must be sustainable and make use of the conversion of existing agricultural buildings
  - f. New or expanded sustainable rural tourism or leisure facilities having respect for the historic character and the surrounding countryside, (e.g. canal related or small craft enterprises that bring benefits to the local community)
  - g. Landscape schemes should be used to provide effective screening of the development from the surrounding countryside. Where possible, effective screening should include trees or woodland planting along the boundaries of the site
  - h. Proposals include provision for safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes
  - i. There is adequate off-street parking and vehicle storage space on site
  - j. The proposal is in accordance with other relevant policies within this NP.
- 2** **The change of use beyond the original purpose of non-permanent and insubstantial buildings such as sheds, out houses, chicken houses, glasshouses or isolated stables will not be supported. The removal of such buildings and the return to open use of the land on which they were located will be supported.**
- 3** **Any proposal requiring planning permission to change the use of land in the Parish to General Industrial use (B2) or distribution and storage uses (B8), or other uses which would generate heavy goods traffic, must demonstrate with the assistance of a Transport Statement that the proposal will not have unacceptable traffic impacts within the Parish**

### Background / Justification

4.294 This policy builds on the community view that supports new small-scale business ventures in Alvechurch Parish to cater for both local employment, and to meet the everyday needs of the resident population. The policy promotes appropriate new business ventures especially in agricultural-related forms and in leisure and tourism while paying attention to both benefits and constraints of building new business in rural locations.

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<sup>24</sup> SuDS sustainable drainage Systems

4.295 The Parish Council recognises and encourages the important role of visitors to the parish in terms of supporting local businesses such as shops, pubs, visitor attractions and overnight accommodation, including at, bed and breakfast and the Westmead Hotel located in Hopwood. In addition the Parish Council will work to support local initiatives such as farmers' markets, festivals or similar public events to increase visitor numbers.

#### Some community responses on new businesses:

- "A good mix of shops is needed"
- "It is acceptable to be a pretty commuter village"
- "Only round new station"
- "Try to focus on existing sites"
- "Some small planned businesses, but nothing larger."

## Communications infrastructure

### Introduction

4.296 The provision of good telecommunications is no less important in rural areas to support rural enterprise and the small but growing number of residents who work from home (currently 5% as indicated by the 2011 National Census). Currently fibre optic connections are the most robust and future-proof method of delivering high performance connectivity: this should be the aim for all new business and residential developments within Alvechurch Parish. Communication providers will be supported that provide unobtrusive connection hotspots throughout the parish.



Fig 51. Connectivity challenges in a rural community

**Policy Aim:** New communications developments that will deliver high performance and improved connectivity

## POLICY BSS 5: COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1. Proposals will be supported which incorporate the expansion and enhancement of electronic communication networks and high speed broadband, along with improvements to connectivity, such as the inclusion of "hotspots".**
- 2. Proposals for radio and telecommunication masts should be suitably camouflaged, kept to a minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network and designed to minimise adverse visual impacts on the environment, residential amenity, character and appearance of the Alvechurch Parish area.**
- 3. Proposals for major residential development must contain a 'Connectivity Statement'. The statement should demonstrate how the proposal takes communications connectivity into account.**
- 4. Where possible, developers should provide suitable ducting for use by more than one service provider to make future connections to individual properties from connection points located on the public highway, or through some alternative connection point available to different service providers.**

## Background / Justification to policy BSS5:

4.297 For existing rural business and new enterprise to thrive modern technology is essential. Yet apart from Alvechurch Village centre and certain small sections within the parish, rural broadband connection service is slow and unreliable with comparatively low download and uploads speeds. There is a need to recognise the increasing numbers of people conducting their businesses from home and that this will grow due to changing economic pressures affecting travel and jobs. The NP reflects this in its proposals to provide more housing and to encourage the provision of local business premises, together with some retail facilities possibly with accommodation situated above, all of which will expect to be 'well connected'.

4.298 Slow broadband internet connections affect both the ability of residents to access information and the performance of businesses that rely on broadband as a key means of communication in a rural area. High-speed broadband will help to address these issues and brings with it a range of new opportunities, such as;

- Better remote and home working
- Access to more on-line applications and services at a time when the internet and digital media is continuing to grow as an important means of communication
- Attract new businesses into the parish and improving the wellbeing of its residents.
- Subject to NPPF 173, providing suitable ducting that can accept fibre on new developments, either to the nearest access point to existing internet providers or to a local access network; or another location that can be justified through a proposal connectivity statement.

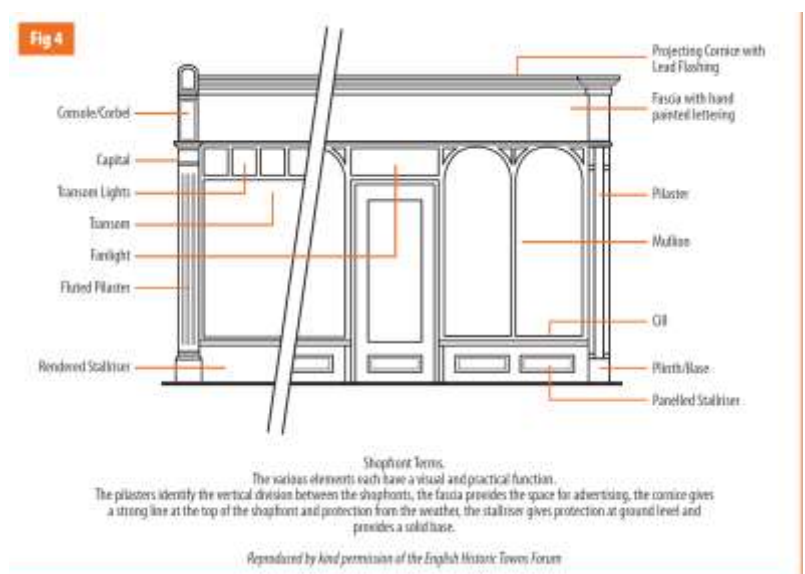
4.299 The world of telecommunications and connectivity is a changing environment with new technological advances occurring all the time. The provision of fibre optic connections is the most robust and future-proof method of delivering connectivity and this should be the aim for all developments. Other technologies may provide interim solutions.

## DESIGN IN ALVECHURCH VILLAGE CENTRE

### 4.300 Introduction:

4.301 Design principles should support the positive role that Neighbourhood Plans have in promoting vibrant diversified and localised retail development. This requires a new approach to understanding the needs of small and medium sized retailers and combating the continued loss of such businesses. In order to do this, increased restriction of new out-of-centre retail developments must combine with measures to increase the attractiveness of existing village centres both to shoppers, visitors, retailers and developers.

Fig 52. Shop Front design example:





Reproduced with kind permission of the English Historic Town Forum, part of (BDC SPG2shopfront design). See page 35 of the BDC emerging Draft High Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) being consulted on in 2018.

4.302 The strengths of existing shopping centres include a wide range of service and leisure facilities as well as shops, and should give good access to public transport services. Their weaknesses as often perceived by shoppers include being inconvenient, cluttered, dirty, traffic congested, unsafe and not adapting to the changing needs of shoppers and retailers. Further perceptions are of a lack of pedestrian facilities.

4.303 For village centres such as Alvechurch to achieve their full potential and continually improve as retail destinations, County, District and Parish Councils need to work together with developers using good design principles and policies to enhance the vitality and viability of their centre(s).

4.304 The statutory provisions for control over outdoor advertisements are quite detailed in England with present regulations set out in the [Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) Regulations 2007](#). The Department for Community and Local Government (DCLG) booklet, 'Outdoor Advertisements and Signs - A Guide for Advertisers' is intended to help local planning authorities, people proposing to display advertisements and the general public understand how the control system works.



Fig 53. Source BDC SPG2 (Shopfront Design)

4.305 'A' Boards can be a particular problem. It should be noted that they are permitted on private property. However, the displaying of 'A' boards on public highways or footpaths is not permitted by present legislation. Consent to display an advertisement is required from Bromsgrove District Council.



## ASSESSING DESIGN IN ALVECHURCH VILLAGE CENTRE

**POLICY AIM:** - To maintain and conserve the historic and distinctive traditional character of Alvechurch Village centre through sympathetic design

## **POLICY BSS 6: ASSESSING DESIGN IN ALVECHURCH VILLAGE CENTRE**

**1. Within the Alvechurch Village centre, which is wholly located within the Conservation Area, planning proposals will be supported where the following criteria are satisfied:**

### **2. for shop frontages:**

- a. Traditional shop frontages are conserved, using traditional elements carefully related to the building, its age and its surroundings. Replacement of existing inappropriate shopfronts are preferred and encouraged rather than the use of additional unsuitable materials
- b. Existing original features traditional to shopfronts such as pilasters, fasciae, old ironmongery and original signs where possible, are encouraged and retained
- c. New shopfronts must both relate to the building of which it is to be an integral part and respect the proportions and architectural detailing of the building
- d. In the Conservation Area plate glass should not be used in buildings that originally had small windows and fasciae should have minimal projecting signage and suitable lighting appropriate to the age and proportion of the building
- e. Shop and business frontage changes including design, signs and outside lighting should have regard to the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement. Inappropriate shop or business frontage not in keeping with the locality, including outside displays will not be permitted

### **3. Business signage and advertising:**

- f. Advertising signs should be limited in number, small in scale, and reflect District and Parish policy objectives in terms of impact on and appropriateness in the rural and Conservation Areas
- g. Signage is constructed of traditional or appropriate materials designed to a high standard, with traditionally hand painted signage or raised metal letters preferred. It should be appropriately located on the premises and in keeping with the street scene. Fascia boards should be of a scale and design in keeping with the proportions of the building as a whole, and must conform to the local planning authority guidance
- h. Advertising should be adapted to fit buildings and the streetscape, particularly on listed buildings and in the Conservation Area
- i. Advertisements should not cause visual clutter in the street scene, or have adverse impact on the appearance of any building on which they are displayed due to size, design, construction or materials
- j. Street furniture and signage should be practical, of modest scale and in keeping with local surroundings
- k. Advertising is consistent in number, size, design and appearance with the rural and historic setting of Alvechurch Village
- l. Signs should not present a distraction to motorists
- m. Internally illuminated shop signs will not be permitted in the Conservation Area.

## Background / Justification to Policy BSS6

4.306 The appeal and vitality of Alvechurch Village centre is influenced by its primary retail frontages and so it is important that these are maintained to a high standard. Public consultations show broad community support for a range of improvements to the main shopping and business centre located around the central square area of Alvechurch Village. Additional responses included agreement for the control of unsightly or temporary advertising signs in the parish.

4.307 Resident complaints about ad hoc unapproved (and typically, unsightly) sign and street advertisements are also received by the Parish Council on a regular basis. These responses together provide further evidence for introducing control measures within this NP.

4.308 These measures will include protecting the setting and landscape of the parish from clutter especially in the Conservation Area. The intention is to limit signs and advertisements in the village (and as appropriate into the countryside including our smaller settlements and landscape beyond) to those necessary and in keeping with a rural and ancient parish and for businesses to operate. Policy BSS 6: contains necessary detail to support this.

### Some community responses on the further development of the Village centre:

- “Would love a shared space, ideally from Red Lion Garage to The Swan - this would be a long term aim”
- “Block road to precinct from Birmingham Road”
- “Would make village more welcoming”
- “The Square is dangerous for parking, entering/exiting parking spaces and for pedestrians - both of our cars been damaged on the square”
- “As the village expands, consideration is needed for managing this in the Centre”

## TOWARDS A VILLAGE CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

### 4.309 Introduction

4.310 Alvechurch Village centre is a place that provides for the immediate village community and also serves the wider parish area and its smaller settlement population. It is a place where people of all ages go for shopping, health care, other services and recreation as well. It is a sociable place during the day and evenings but further improvement to pathways and the road system is needed, particularly to benefit pedestrians and people of limited mobility.

4.311 Drawing on community consultations and presentations the majority, approximately 59 % have showed a preference for some “pedestrian friendly improvements” around the centre of Alvechurch Village. Approximately 25% were not in favour and a small number of people did not give a view. The village centre business community views will be sought in a survey organised by Bromsgrove DC officers during autumn 2017.

4.312 To plan for such improvements the Parish Council will work with Worcestershire County Council Highway officers, Bromsgrove Centres Manager and the Precinct land owner to explore the possibilities for some improved road layout, parking arrangements as well as improvements for the precinct itself through the non-statutory ‘Community Action 6’ following this section.

4.313 At the Bromsgrove DC cabinet meeting in November 2017 a cover paper about the Centres strategy as agreed, highlights a strategy albeit briefly for what is in prospect for main centres including Alvechurch Village.

4.314 The proposed strategy can be seen as a complimentary fit with the NP Community Action 6 on the Village centre improvement plan<sup>25</sup>. See Evidence Base Summary and the foot note below.

## BORDESLEY HALL AS A PARISH BUSINESS ASSET

### 4.315 Introduction

4.316 Bordesley Hall is a country house originally constructed in the 1830's. Since then parts of the large park estate surrounding the Hall has been sold. The Patrick family in the early 1900's became owners of the Hall and the associated nearby parkland. In 1942 the Hall's ownership changed to become the centre for the offices and research laboratories of the British Cast Iron Research Association.

4.317 In the period between 1950 and 1970 additional building took place around the Hall to provide office and industrial accommodation, totalling five office blocks and three industrial workshop buildings on a site of 16 acres. During the 1990's with the changing role of the Research Association more of the Hall itself and its outbuildings were let to a variety of tenants.

4.318 Situated about 1 mile from Alvechurch Village and with good access to junction 2 of the M42, Bordesley Hall's role today (as described by its current owners) is that of business park providing office and industrial accommodation.

4.319 Any new build on the brownfield site should not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby residents.

Fig 54. Bordesley hall Business venue



<sup>25</sup> [BDC Centres Strategy](#), also see ;Evidence Base Summary, appendix B.+ page 58 and page 65

**POLICY AIM:** - To support Bordesley Hall's continued use as a significant site for parish based business activity and so providing local employment opportunities that together bring associated social and environmental benefits.

## **POLICY BSS 7: BORDESLEY HALL EMPLOYMENT AREA**

The continuation of Bordesley Hall as one of the few business centres within the parish will be supported (currently for B1, B2 and B8, [classes of use](#)) and efforts made to maintain employment opportunities for local people.

New business development on the Brownfield Site area of Bordesley Hall will be encouraged which may make use of existing buildings or require new build in whole or in part.

- 1 Any such changes should ensure no undue adverse impacts on the amenities of surrounding residential or recreational uses.
- 2 Any visual impacts arising from changes to the site must be addressed through building design and site layout and landscaping
- 3 The change of use of Bordesley Hall for general housing purposes will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable.

### **4.320 Background/Justification:**

4.321 The Bordesley Hall business area continues as an important source of local enterprise and employment. . In late 2016, there were 31 companies and approximately 155 people working at the Hall location. This compares with 2014 when in total 48 companies and 294 people were based there. At present in 2017 there are 26 companies and 70 people based at the site (Harris Lamb letting agent figures). According to these agents, while the site is attractive to some new businesses, it is perceived to be in a relatively remote location by other potential occupiers and does need significant modernisation.

### **4.322 Types of Companies recently found there vary vastly as follows:-**

4.323 Exhibition specialists, international flower preservationists, telecoms, air conditioning for large scale car manufacturing, handmade glass producer, commercial and retail plumbers, fishing tackle warehouse, child protection (charity), advertising, marketing, printing all materials, health and fitness training for schools, personal training, asbestos investigation and removal, jewellery for manufacturer, boat-sails maker, repair of cargo and steel fabrication, data centre, exhibition set up - large scale commercial, classic and vintage car specialists and renovators, environmental housing surveyors, architect, security and surveillance, electrical Installations, specialist sports surfacing, and bespoke software.

4.324 Although Alvechurch is mainly a parish with a primary residential purpose, a suitable blend of economic activity adds to community sustainability. That blend should include retail and personal service businesses and could include general industrial, warehousing and agri-related enterprise. The Bordesley Hall site continuing its use in the future for business purposes and bringing employment for local people helpfully adds to securing this blend.

4.325 However it is appreciated that changes or even their replacement may be needed at the Hall site to the current buildings in whole or in part to ensure continued and cost effective use of the site for business purposes. Where changes to the current buildings or site are being proposed, then consideration must be given to ensuring there are no undue adverse impacts on the nearby residents on the Holloway, in Rowney Green, and on the Peck Wood centre site in providing its residential, recreational and other purposes.



4.326 We have acknowledged that the users of the business park at Bordesley Hall are reducing in number. So we can see that change of business uses and/ or changes to the existing buildings and/ or their removal and subsequent new build may be among the future new business-focussed scenarios for this location.

4.327 With its still commanding position overlooking Bordesley Park, important both for its landscape features and as a vital part of the Green Belt between Redditch and Alvechurch Village, any changes to the Hall itself or to its outbuildings will require their visual impact to be managed through building design and site layout and landscaping considerations.

#### 4.328 A few relevant community comments

- “Priority should be given to businesses, which use local resources/labour and provide services which respond to needs of the local community - industrial symbiosis could be considered on a local level”
- “Bordesley already has a commercial centre which can be enlarged”
- “No more at the Old Hall in Rowney Green unless the Holloway is widened and footpaths are put in”
- “How sustainable/viable is this in reality? Businesses need amenities for their workers so development of both goes hand in hand”

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## NON STATUTORY COMMUNITY ACTION FOR BUSINESS, SHOPS AND SERVICES TOPIC SECTION

### Community Project as identified in the Draft Plan

#### Delivering the vision and key aims – Community Actions

Through the process of developing the Neighbourhood Plan some areas of community concerns cannot be covered by planning policy however as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process they can become ‘Community Actions’/projects supported by Alvechurch Parish Council. These proposals can also be delivered in conjunction with other local organisations.

#### Background / Justification:

An Improvement Plan could provide a safer, more pleasing village environment for pedestrians to use and meet socially whilst encouraging increased use of the village centre businesses for the community’s everyday shopping and service requirements.

To promote on-going prosperity and encourage local spending it is essential that Alvechurch Village Centre provides improved local services that sustain the vitality of communities across the entire parish. Receipts received from Community Infrastructure Levy (when and if set by BDC) will be used to deliver new community infrastructure and where necessary, BDC led planning obligations will be used to address any negative impacts resulting from new development.

Occasionally, development will offer substantial opportunities to enhance existing infrastructure, such as distributing high speed broadband to parts of the village that are currently on basic provision. Where such improvements are made as part of new development proposals, especially having village centre impact, this will be seen as a positive benefit.

Additional character development will be encouraged if it contributes to this village plan through public safe parking provision and improved traffic management. Encouragement will also be given for enterprises and additional amenities that enhance rural character signage and advertising.

The APNP will guide the Parish Council to carry out improvement projects throughout the plan's life using builder contributions and future CIL funding (when adopted by BDC). This village centre improvement plan is one example and it will be carried forward by a multi-agency management group.

**COMMUNITY ACTION 6: aim:** *Through the adoption of the Village Centre Improvement Plan to work with public bodies and private developers on the remodelling and improvement of the village centre that gives priority to pedestrian use of retail and business services, while providing for safe movement of vehicles passing through the centre or parking in designated spaces*

## **COMMUNITY ACTION 6: ALVECHURCH VILLAGE CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

- a. A Village Centre Improvement Plan will be prepared with advice from Worcestershire County Council and Bromsgrove District Council, including that of the Centres Manger, taking into account permitted development rights
- b. The Village Centre Improvement Plan will be used to improve and enhance the principal shopping and service area of Alvechurch Village, having particular regard to the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement for use of materials and design character
- c. New development schemes close to the Alvechurch village centre will be encouraged to make contributions and cooperate with the principal Local Authorities in taking forward this community improvement scheme
- d. The village centre, even though The Precinct is of the 20th century, is part of the Conservation Area. It is intended therefore to keep signage in the village centre to simple design elements that blend in with the overall historic setting of the Conservation Area
- e. The character of Alvechurch Village should not be harmed by inappropriate street signage and lighting or excessive street furniture or business advertising
- f. Some provision should be made for landscaping including the additions of greenery and trees
- g. Better pedestrian access and pathways will be sought including appropriate provision for disabled people, in particular a crossing point between the medical centre and the Square area
- h. Improvements that include improved access for cyclists and storage for bicycles will be sought at key village locations such as at, the village Precinct, The Square and at the railway station
- i. Measures that help improve existing parking in and near the village centre for its immediate residents and for centre users will be explored in conjunction with WCC Highways and local businesses.

# TOPIC 5: POLICIES FOR GETTING AROUND-TRANSPORT

## Introduction

### KEY AIMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TOPIC 5's GROUP OF POLICIES:

KEY AIM 1: KEY AIM 2: KEY AIM 3: KEY AIM 6: KEY AIM 8.

The full list of 'Key Aims' and their contents can be found on page 20.



4.329 The local road network allows relatively easy commuting to neighbouring towns and the city of Birmingham, though traffic volumes at peak times lead to some congestion. The key road elements are the M42, running east-west through the parish with an intersection at Hopwood and the A441, which runs north-south through the parish linking Birmingham to Redditch.

4.330 The A441 used to run through Alvechurch Village itself, but now forms a by-pass to the east of the village. The previous Worcestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP3) suggests traffic volumes fell slightly in 2009/11; these volumes are likely to have risen again as economic growth has started to return and the Longbridge development continues to expand. LTP4 (2017) does not quantify any traffic growth

[Double click map for larger version or open this hyperlink](#)

Fig 55. *Map of transport routes of Alvechurch parish*

4.331 Current traffic volumes are far higher than some major routes (such as the A441) were ever engineered for. Local roads connecting different parts of the parish and residential streets are generally good and few parts of the parish are isolated. Some of these smaller roads suffer from speeding problems.

4.332 A key element of traffic management in the parish is the influence of out-of-parish developments (in south Birmingham and Redditch) which generate additional traffic volumes and safety issues as vehicles travel into the parish to join the M42. This safety aspect is especially true on the A441 down Hopwood Hill where large volumes of traffic including HGVs are travelling through a residential area on a single carriageway road without any pedestrian crossings.

Fig 56. *A441 traffic during the day at Hopwood, even busier in rush hour*



4.333 Public parking facilities in the parish are concentrated in Alvechurch Village centre (13 spaces around The Square). The Tanyard Lane longer stay car park (45 spaces) is supplemented by 47 spaces at the Alvechurch Sports and Social Club in Radford Road (available to the public during the daytime under a shared-use agreement giving 2 hours maximum parking) and approximately 25 spaces of designated and short term on-street parking. There are 6 designated spaces (three within the Tanyard Lane car park) for drivers with disabilities.

4.334 All of this parking is free and is well used by residents and visitors to shops and services. Dedicated parking provision for the Alvechurch schools and library complex is relatively poor, leading to a significant amount of inconsiderate on-street car parking along Birmingham Road at peak times in the school day.

#### 4.335 **MOVING AROUND**

4.336 Pedestrian movement is aided by the many intersecting roads in Alvechurch, which are supplemented by a number of alleyways. This makes the village centre very accessible for pedestrians. Alvechurch Village is a compact settlement and few village properties are more than 15 minutes' walk from the village centre. The walk to the railway station is the most significant undulation in what is largely a flat settlement.

4.337 Alvechurch is a fairly large semi-rural area with over 27 miles of Public Rights of Way (PROW) criss-crossing the parish. These PROWs comprise footpaths and bridleways, many of which are well used by the local community and rambler groups from Birmingham and elsewhere.



Fig 57. Alvechurch new rail station completed 2015

4.338 **Alvechurch has a rail link**, to Birmingham and Redditch, on what is locally known as the Cross-City line. Services are well used for commuting and leisure. From the village a section of the line has been upgraded to improve the facilities at Alvechurch railway station and an additional three mile section of dual track has been added between Alvechurch and Redditch to facilitate a timetable upgrade from two to three trains per hour in each direction

4.339 **The number of bus routes**, is limited in the parish. The hourly 146 service runs to Birmingham and Redditch during week days and every hour on a Saturday, with the last bus returning from Birmingham at 6.40pm. A less frequent out and return during the week service connect the rest of the parish with Redditch and Bromsgrove, passing the railway station. Some school services operate to and from the high schools in Bromsgrove (approximately five). The current limited amount of funding coming from Government means there is further pressure to reduce these general public bus services, which are especially valuable to older people.

4.340 The APNP will encourage the Parish Council to work with local authorities to seek to secure contributions to develop enhanced Community Transport services in the area, as this can be a really positive, locally focussed way to support enhanced public transport services where bus provision is uneconomic. Community Transport is seen as a way of replacing scheduled bus services as a more cost-effective means of ensuring accessibility to services for those who cannot access a car for a variety of reasons. See <http://www.communitytravel.org.uk> for details.

4.341 **The Worcester-Birmingham Canal** is the final piece of the local transport infrastructure, which runs north-south through the parish. Its towpath (recently upgraded in parts) is as well used as any footpath in the area to connect small settlements, by both walkers and cyclists alike.

4.342 The canal forms a community, social and recreational outlet for many people (both residents and visitors); through boating, walking, cycling and fishing. The canal is also seen as being able to have a positive effect on the local economy through the encouragement of tourism, centred on holidaying and canal boat trips, which can be hired from the local Alvechurch Marina.

4.343 New development will create additional use of the existing parish Green Infrastructure (GI) possibly resulting in its degradation. New development should therefore be required to fund improvements to the GI asset to ensure it remains fit for purpose for both existing and new users as recognised and supported by the NPPF.

#### 4.344 WALKABILITY

4.345 Alvechurch Parish is well known throughout various rambling clubs for its well-maintained country footpaths (PROWs). Alvechurch Village Society (AVS) volunteers maintain these footpaths that connect various areas of the parish via the rural landscape. These are well used by the community and AVS promotes these paths as a “Gateway to the Countryside”.

4.346 If Alvechurch Parish is to maintain its character as a rural landscape area, it must continue to be seen as ‘compact’ and connected to the countryside around it. This means that Alvechurch Village itself should be a place where people can easily walk to the facilities they need, the village centre in particular, and to surrounding settlements. Various studies (such as those carried out by the Institute of Highways and Transportation in 2000) suggest that the average time for which people will leisurely walk rather than get in their cars is about 15 minutes.



4.347 For our parish to remain sustainable, new development therefore should ideally be within 15 minutes and no more than a 20 minutes’ comfortable walk to the village centre.

4.348 Walking should be encouraged because it is the most energy efficient and the only fully sustainable mode of travel. Yet walking as a mode of travel seems to be declining throughout the country. The 2010 National Travel Survey results make for disappointing reading for those who attempt to encourage sustainable travel. For example the results for travel mode journey distances of 0 – 1.6km, show a 2% decrease in the number of people walking (77.1%) and a 1.7% increase in the number of people travelling by car (19.9%) compared to the 2009 results (2010 National Travel Survey (The NTS).

Fig 58. *Map of Sustainable walking distances*

[You can double click on the map or open this hyperlink to see a larger map](#)

#### Improved walking conditions can:

- Increase the proportion of travel made on foot
- Enable greater use of public transport
- Improve personal health
- Help those who have least travel choices
- Benefit the environment
- Encourage trade and competitiveness for local services
- Increase land and property values
- Mean less use of cars to counteract our overcrowded roads and to lessen the effects of declining rural public bus services.



4.349 Many journeys by car are short and could transfer to walking by making walking a more pleasant activity. By providing key facilities and services within reasonable walking distances of households and attractive and safe walking routes to access them, then people will be encouraged to walk or cycle instead of using their cars.

4.350 To address the lack of greener transport options, housing and business developments, which encourage integrated systems and include the provision of footpath and cycle routes, will be looked at favourably by the NP.

#### 4.351 CYCLING

4.352 Cycling is as sustainable a method of getting around as walking and also promotes good health. Alvechurch Parish, with its network of footpaths, is very suitable for cycling but there are no dedicated off-road cycle routes in the parish and very little encouragement to get people cycling e.g. by provision for storage/parking of bikes at the railway station, and the village centre and footways incorporating cycle tracks.

4.353 Elsewhere in the country, cycle routes have too often been designed in a piecemeal fashion, or cyclists have been an afterthought in highway design. We have learnt from best practice areas (Plymouth, Norwich and Dudley to name a few), thinking bike at the beginning of a design and planning process can reap dividends for other road users as well as cyclists.

4.354 Cycling is a convenient and practical mode of transport for many journeys. Encouraging people to take up cycling for more trips helps achieve several transport aims and wider environmental and health objectives. The majority of roads in the Neighbourhood Area are available to cyclists; however the speed and volume of traffic on some makes cycling on them unattractive. This is particularly the case for new, less confident or occasional cyclists.



Fig 59. The road junction at Alvechurch Village Square

4.355 Encouraging people to travel by bicycle over other unsustainable transport modes can start to tackle congestion, particularly for relatively short distance journeys (up to 10 miles). Carbon emissions can be reduced and some health problems like obesity can be addressed.

4.356 These factors are highlighted in the third [Worcestershire County Council Local Transport Plan 3](#) (LTP3) and Worcestershire's new Local Transport Plan (LTP4)

4.357 (WCCLTP4), where specific objectives for their cycling policy will be to:

- Enable more people to choose to cycle, more safely and more often
- Create a culture and environment, which makes cycling a realistic and attractive travel option
- Promote cycling as an enjoyable, every day and healthy activity
- Reduce cycling casualties
- Promote integrated and effective land use and transport planning such that new developments are located and designed to maximise accessibility by cycling

#### 4.358 Promoting cycling can deliver;

- economic benefits by increasing the accessibility and viability of village centre facilities;

- environmental benefits, as an energy efficient method of travel
- social benefits, as a cheap and healthy mode of travel

4.359 Applied across communities, cycling can ease access to all local facilities, including health, employment, leisure, education, retail and transport services. Most cyclists are happy using public roads, but less-confident and more vulnerable people (including children); need to have routes segregated from other vehicles, especially to schools and village centres with routes wide enough for children to be accompanied.

4.360 The NP encourages the WCC LTP3 and LTP4 transport policy and supports the parliamentary initiative [CYCLING AND WALKING INVESTMENT STRATEGY \(CWIS\)](#), which recommends a statutory requirement that the needs of cyclists and pedestrians are considered at an early, stage of all new development schemes.

## GETTING AROUND AND TRANSPORT POLICIES

### 4.361 Introduction

4.362 The policies in this section are guided by the WCC LTP 3 and LTP4 (recently adopted), which embody national and regional transport policies and trends. The Local Transport Plan is in place to complement District Plans (as in Bromsgrove) and Neighbourhood Plans like this one.

4.363 The following policies aim to improve the safe and efficient movement of people around the parish. They have been framed by analyses of current transport arrangements in the parish e.g. traffic surveys (summarised in the Evidence Base) and by consultations with the local community. Much of that consultation has been explicitly part of the Neighbourhood Plan development process but the policies and community actions also relate to community needs identified separately over the last 2/3 years.

#### The policies are intended to:

4.364 Improve settlement connectivity within the parish i.e. better footways (pavements), provision of dedicated cycle routes and better planned bus scheduling. The evidence base shows that, compared to other places in Worcestershire, bus services and access to them is relatively poor.

4.365 The Bromsgrove Advertiser 12 Jan 2015 stated-*“BUS services in Worcestershire have been revealed as among the worst-hit in the entire country today - with angry campaigners saying the cuts are more than twice as bad as other rural areas. The Campaign for Better Transport has named the county among six parts of the UK where cuts have been the deepest”*.

#### Improve highway safety

4.366 Make the primary link road to the M42 and on other parish roads safe for all road users, not just for motor vehicles. There have been many complaints to the Parish Council about the lack of pedestrian crossing points, speeding and poorly maintained footways on the A441 at Hopwood and Bordesley.

#### Improve the accessibility to rail services;

4.367 The railway station currently has a poorly-surfaced and badly-drained car park reducing available spaces below the published number of 50. A key piece of work to inform future rail use at Alvechurch is for the Parish Council to work with WCC and transport operators for them to produce a fit for use station and car-park through a “Station Travel Plan”.

#### In the short term;

4.368 Alvechurch Parish Council, supported by WCC will lobby the incumbent Train Operating Company to pursue the development of a robust Station Travel Plan for Alvechurch Railway Station, which will aim to improve access to and from the station by all modes of transport (in particular pedestrians, cyclists and buses, where services are provided).

**POLICY AIM:** to promote more sustainable and easily accessed methods of travel that reduces the need for vehicle use

## **POLICY GAT 1: GETTING AROUND**

**1. Proposals for development should identify the realistic levels of traffic they are likely to generate and must assess the potential impact on the local community. Development that would give rise to unacceptable traffic conditions will not be supported.**

**2. Proposals must be designed to integrate well into the existing community and those that also contribute to the attractiveness of walking, cycling and use of public transport, will be considered favourably.**

**3. Using the APNP, Alvechurch Parish Council will work with the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) as the Local Highway Authority, public transport providers, local schools, the Canal and River Trust and developers to produce a long term sustainable traffic management strategy for improvements to the highway network in the parish to reduce community impact from development.**

**Consideration should be given to the following:**

- a. Opportunities to connect the parish's smaller settlements to the Alvechurch Village service centre by promoting improved and well maintained canal towpaths, footways and where possible provide a shared space between pedestrians and cyclists, ideally with the physical separation of such space from road traffic where appropriate
- b. Promoting the development of enhanced public transport provision. Developers will be expected to engage with local bus operators and community transport operators to explore and identify opportunities to enhance access by public transport, supported by a suitable business case to ensure long-term financial sustainability
- c. Provision of designated safer routes to Alvechurch schools (Sustrans)<sup>26</sup> to improve the safe delivery of pupils to the Crown Meadow First and Alvechurch Middle School's site on foot, by bicycle, and public transport
- d. Provision of pedestrian crossing points on main roads near bus stops
- e. Requiring developer financial contributions for local infrastructure enhancement where adverse impacts are identified
- f. Provision for sustainable transport by encouraging the use of electric cars and consideration should be given to the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure within new developments.

### **Background / Justification**

4.369 This policy is required to make getting around the Parish easier and in more sustainable ways. Community consultations tell us this is what local people want and show for example that if easier walking routes are provided to key facilities like schools, then people will use the walking routes instead of using their car. See footnote <sup>22</sup> below Safer Routes to School Scheme See Appendix, Glossary

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<sup>26</sup> [Safe Routes to Schools](#)

4.370 Cycling is an ever more popular leisure activity and should be encouraged, partly for health reasons, but also to improve the connectivity between Parish settlements.

4.371 Almost all bus services in the County are now operated commercially (i.e. without any intervention by Worcestershire County Council), so the County Council has very limited influence over the way these services are provided. Encouraging more use of Community Travel and transport opportunities could be a way of overcoming limited access to public transport. See <http://www.communitytravel.org.uk>

## PARKING IN ALVECHURCH

### Introduction

4.372 Alvechurch Village centre provides public parking in the Tanyard Lane and Alvechurch Sports and Social Club car parks. Indiscriminate parking on the Birmingham Road whilst dropping off children for school causes problems for residents on the Birmingham Road during the twice daily school run. Many children arrive from surrounding areas and a significant number of parents will drop their children off on the way to work.

4.373 There are some concerns about the financial position of the Sports and Social Club and a worry about losing its public car park provision in the centre of the village. This would impact on traffic in the village centre and the availability of parking spaces for shoppers.

4.374 This map of facilities also shows areas of parking in Alvechurch Village.



Fig 60. Map showing Alvechurch Village parking areas

[You can Ctrl click on the map or open this hyperlink to see a larger version of the map.](#)



Fig 61. Tanyard lane BDC owned car park

**POLICY AIM:** To make community areas of the parish more accessible and pedestrian friendly by providing alternatives to vehicle use, and by ensuring safe and adequate parking at key parish locations for the parking of all categories of vehicles and for unloading by delivery vehicles.

## **POLICY GAT 2: PROVISION OF ADEQUATE PARKING**

**1. To manage the impact of motorised vehicles by ensuring there are adequate parish-wide parking and disabled parking spaces. The Parish Council will work with Worcestershire County highways and transport providers to achieve development proposals that, where appropriate, provide contributions in accordance with WCC (Local Highway Authority) standards and current Local Transport Plan policies for:**

- g.** The provision of adequate spaces at key parish facilities e.g. the Alvechurch Village retail centre, the schools, the railway station and all parish community used buildings; for parking by all categories of vehicle drivers and for loading and unloading by delivery vehicles at village centre commercial premises
- h.** Including secure and safe cycle storage at key parish facilities, e.g. schools, medical practices, the village retail area and at the railway station taking into account changes in travel patterns. This will contribute towards cycling becoming a more convenient travel option than single-occupancy car use for short trips
- i.** Providing measures that discourage pavement and similarly unsafe parking near to schools and Alvechurch Village centre, by installation of bollards, on-street payment charges or other engineering methods suitable and in keeping with a rural environment;

**2. Current public parking sites shown below should be protected and retained**

- Alvechurch Sports & Social Club (listed as a community asset)
- Tanyard Lane public car park (owned by Bromsgrove District Council)

**3. Development at these sites will only be supported when it can be clearly demonstrated there is no longer a need for the parking facility, or equivalent public parking space is provided elsewhere within comfortable walking distance of the Alvechurch Village essential services and in easy access for people with disabilities.**

### **Background / Justification**

4.375 Alvechurch Village centre has a number of parking issues. Public parking is provided in the Tanyard Lane and Alvechurch Sports and Social Club car parks but there is also on-street parking in Bear Hill, Swan Street and along the Birmingham Road and its service road, some of it on pavements. This can make access unsafe for pedestrians and those with children or disabilities. Indiscriminate parking while dropping off or picking up children near the schools causes problems for residents on Birmingham Road.

4.376 Previous concerns about the financial viability of the Sports and Social Club mean the use of its car park may not have long term security. This would impact on traffic in the village centre and the availability of parking spaces. To negate this, the Parish Council has nominated the Sports and Social Club to the local authority as an Asset of Community Value for a 'Community Right to Bid' that is a community-focused, locally-led action by providing an important tool to help communities looking to take over and run local assets.



4.377 Vehicles are an integral part of most of our daily lives. Often this comes at a cost: congestion, ambient air pollution, noise, deteriorated public safety and nuisance. To limit these impacts in our rural environment this policy will seek to ensure the impact of motor vehicle journeys' generated by new development is minimised.

4.378 At some time in the future it may be feasible for the Parish Council to take over the management of the Tanyard Lane public car park from BDC. Existing village centre parking is well located to serve the village centre facilities and is essential to the commercial and community uses which contribute to the vitality and viability of the centre. The NP through Alvechurch Parish Council seeks to retain the parking facilities at the Sports and Social Club and Tanyard Lane for this purpose and for the plan period.

4.379 One of the best ways to support Alvechurch's shops and retail outlets is to encourage people living and working in the area to use existing shops and services. The provision of good parking facilities along with much improved footway and cycle access will ensure this objective and encourage more sustainable modes of travel and footfall into Alvechurch Village centre. Meeting this objective also requires encouragement from potential development sites within the village boundary to be suitably developed to support a more attractive and better functioning Alvechurch Village centre.

### Community response to parking questionnaire

#### Transport option 2: Car parking in Alvechurch Village centre needs review; the results of all 5 venues

Strongly agree 17 Agree 27 Neither 16 Disagree 3 Strongly disagree 0 No opinion 0 from a total of 64.

## IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY

### 4.380 Introduction

4.381 The main A441 forms the backbone of the parish, leading traffic from Birmingham and Redditch towards the M42 motorway at Junction 2 through the residential area of Hopwood. Due to the volume and speed of traffic along this road it is a major concern for residents especially in Hopwood and Bordesley as there are no light controlled crossings. The A441 at Hopwood and Bordesley is in need of safer management and traffic calming measures to improve safety for all road users.

4.382 There is also concern about the congestion on Birmingham Road outside the school twice a day as residents' park along the length of this road to drop and pick up children. The community has expressed a wish for this area to be included in a 20mph scheme to run throughout the main Alvechurch Village area from Old Rectory Lane to School Lane. This together with discouraging parking along this road near the school would go a long way to promoting a safer walk to school route.

4.383 The NP through Alvechurch Parish Council will encourage WCC, The West Mercia Police Safer Roads Partnership and where appropriate BDC to help provide traffic calming measures. These should include landscape engineering, which better define settlements and influence driver behaviour that will improve safety in Alvechurch parish through improved highway and footway maintenance. Development would be made in accordance with the recommended standards of WCC and its Local Transport Plans.

4.384 **Community Action 7** and **Policies GAT 1, 2 and 3**, work in tandem to address wished for traffic management improvements and residents aspirations concerning modes of travel and road safety issues.

4.385 Community response to APNP questionnaires, West Mercia Police Safer Roads Partnership meetings, and a residential petition show there is evidence that engineering measures are needed and requested as stated in APNP Policy GAT 3 to improve road safety through the provision of the suggested pedestrian safety measures.

4.386 Parish footpaths next to highways often lack the regular maintenance necessary to keep them of a standard that's required to allow comfortable walking for all users. Community Action 7 addresses this need for improvement. (See fig.60). Verges along our main highways are wide enough for footways/highway footpaths to be able to include some provision for cyclists as and when they are renewed through regular maintenance schemes.



Fig 62. *A poorly maintained footpath alongside the A44 1 at Hopwood*

4.387 The Parish Council suggests an ongoing project to better manage parish transport systems and road safety, as set out in Community Action 7.

4.388 Traffic and congestion is a key issue to emerge from our consultations. Policy GAT 3 identifies particular problem areas. However, through Community Action 7 below, the Parish Council will look for solutions by working with WCC to influence driver behaviour, in reducing speeding and encouraging safer driving habits. The NP cannot include

highway matters as part of its 'land use'<sup>27</sup> policies. (It is important to remember that only policies dealing with land use can form part of a neighbourhood plan)

4.389 Only the local highways authority can induce safer driving habits through highway engineering solutions, in our case that's WCC.



Fig 63. *Results of Large Goods Vehicles parking on highway footways, A441*

<sup>27</sup> [NP polices must relate to the development and use of land.](#)

**POLICY AIM:** To secure both reductions in traffic speed through the designation of 20mph residential areas, and the installation of more safe crossing points for pedestrians

## **POLICY GAT 3: IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

**1. The APNP supports development proposals that promote traffic calming measures to improve highway safety in Alvechurch Parish.**

Alvechurch Parish Council working with Worcestershire County Council, The West Mercia Police Safer Roads Partnership and, where appropriate Bromsgrove District Council, will seek to promote traffic calming measures through developer contributions and use of any future adopted Community Infrastructure Levy receipts. These will be aimed at roads with expected significant increase in traffic volumes or on routes where there are known highway safety issues.

**2. They will provide:**

- a. Highway engineering, which better defines entrances to residential settlements and villages, for example, pinch-points, gateways, reducing road widths and centreline road markings to reduce vehicle speeds
- b. Road surface markings that better influence driver behaviour together with improved highway and footway design and maintenance in accordance with the recommended standards of Worcestershire County Council and their current Local Transport Plan (LTP) including

**Appropriate crossing points are required:**

- Across the A441 at Hopwood and Bordesley (pelican crossing, puffin crossing, zebra crossing, or refuges etc.) where there are bus stops
  - From the Medical Centre to The Square in Alvechurch Village
- c. Improvements to safety and visibility at the No Right Turn junction of Ash Lane, and along the A441 in the Hopwood residential area through contributions from any proposed development accessing or egressing either of these roads
  - d. 20mph zones in the more populated areas of the parish where appropriate and especially between Old Rectory Lane and School Lane in Alvechurch Village

**3. Development proposals for new or expanded business growth, including farm diversification, will be required to assess and mitigate the impacts that Large Goods Vehicles (LGV) using minor roads and lanes will have on; verges, road surfaces and the quality of life of nearby residents.**

**4. Development proposals likely to have a severe residual impact on road safety, and / or congestion on the highway network will not be supported unless such impacts can be adequately mitigated.**

**5. Development from outside the parish that is seen to have a significant traffic impact on the Neighbourhood Plan Area roads should have joint authority mitigation measures to negate such impact. To achieve this Alvechurch Parish Council will work with the WCC Local Highway Authority in achieving measures to mitigate such impact via developer contributions agreed with the relevant highway authority.**

**6. Traffic impact includes effects of adverse road and footways safety, congestion and pollution on main and side roads and rural lanes.**

**4.390** The main A441 forms the backbone of the Parish, leading traffic from Birmingham and Redditch towards the M42 motorway at Junction 2. Due to the volume and speed of traffic along this road it is a major concern for residents especially in Hopwood and Bordesley. It is in need of safer management and traffic calming measures. (See also non- statutory Community Action 7 below).At community consultations in Hopwood the single most raised issue is the lack of any safe crossing points along the A441 especially near to bus stops and community centres. This issue is closely followed by the poor condition of footpaths linking Hopwood to the service centre of Alvechurch Village.

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## NON STATUTORY COMMUNITY ACTION FOR THE GETTING AROUND AND TRANSPORT TOPIC SECTION

*Community Action Aim: The Parish Council will continue to encourage reductions in speed, the provision of safe crossing points and better maintained footpaths for pedestrians. It will also work with relevant agencies to improve public transport and its integration through this non-policy aim.*

## COMMUNITY ACTION 7: BETTER TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

- a. **Transport-related services and facilities such as the following projects will be supported by the Parish Council where it can be evidenced that they conform to all relevant Local Transport Authority and national transport objectives and standards.**
- b. **The Parish Council also wishes to promote and encourage more sustainable and environmentally sensitive transport choices, with the desired outcomes of reducing demand to travel by car in Alvechurch Parish, favouring walking and cycling for shorter, more local journeys.**
- c. **The Parish Council will also work with Worcestershire County Council (the Local Highway Authority) to: Consider the traffic demand impacts on Alvechurch Parish from out of parish development, generated by neighbouring local authorities; in particular on the A441. Traffic impacts include congestion and associated environmental deterioration and reduced user safety. Measures will be sought to mitigate such impacts via developer contributions, which will be agreed with the Local Highways Authority.**
- d. **Work with the Local Highway Authority and other relevant organisations to develop proposals and plans for the following community projects:**
- e. *Remove unnecessary and poorly maintained signage to prevent street clutter.*
- f. *Establish an Alvechurch Village centre redevelopment plan, a project to support business and other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan by improving the safety around and accessibility to village centre facilities and services. This may include pedestrianisation options, road surfacing changes and a 20mph speed control zone.*
- g. *Produce a pedestrian crossing proposal for the A441 at Hopwood plus other possible engineering modifications to the highway and footways to improve road and pedestrian safety*
- h. *Promote, in co-operation with the Cross-City line franchise holder for Alvechurch railway station, "Phase 2, car park surfacing, marking out, provision of facilities for disabled drivers and with the bus operators, clearer integration of bus to rail services.*

- i. *Provide at Redditch Road, south of Alvechurch....additional traffic calming facilities in an area prone to minor accidents, including potential pinch points and other engineering modifications to reduce vehicle speeds and improve road safety.*
- j. *Encourage provision of Alvechurch – Hopwood cycleway improvement...a segregated cycleway / footway between the 2 settlements.*
- k. *Encourage and support Worcestershire County Council to provide cycle infrastructure, aligned to better maintained footpaths throughout the parish particularly as part of scheduled maintenance of the public highway and its footways*
- l. *Provide needed signage at key visitor points (e.g. The Marina and canal tow-paths) indicating routes to the village centre.*
- m. *Install community accessible electric vehicle charging point/s....Alvechurch Parish Council to work with other stakeholders to assess the opportunities and benefits of a community charging point or points within the parish.*
- n. *Explore the possibility of neighbouring parishes funding and sharing a community bus pilot scheme.*

### **Background / Justification Community Action 7**

Alvechurch Parish Council will work with the appropriate agencies to provide traffic calming measures. These should include features that influence driver behaviour, improve safety and are in line with Local Transport Plan standards.

The opening paragraphs on page 106, community response to APNP questionnaires show clear evidence, that engineering measures are needed and requested as stated in Policy GAT 3, to improve road safety through the provision of suggested pedestrian safety measures.

Traffic and congestion is a key issue to emerge from our consultations. Policy GAT3 identifies particular problem areas. However, through the implementation of Community Action 7, the Parish Council will look for solutions by working with WCC to influence driver behaviour in reducing speeding and encouraging safer driving, as mentioned on page 105 in the introduction to the section on **‘Improving road safety’**.

## **SECTION 5- FUTURE GROWTH IN THE PARISH**

### **Introduction**

#### **Key Aims associated with future growth in the parish**

KEY AIM 1: KEY AIM 3: KEY AIM 5: KEY AIM 6: KEY AIM 7: KEY AIM 8:

The full list of ‘Key Aims’ and their contents can be found on page 20.

4.391 This following section deals with how future development might be addressed in Alvechurch Parish neighbourhood area as a large area of the parish is covered by Green Belt policy. Alvechurch Village itself is located outside of the Green Belt, but there is a limited amount of land available that is of a suitable size for new housing development.

4.392 Therefore in order to accommodate housing that’s needed for the future a BDC Green Belt review would have to take place and our local community should be given a say in where that should be when the time comes.



**COMMUNITY ACTION 8**, AIM: Please note the following section is purely seen as a possible way to give our local community a say in any future Local Authority instigated Green Belt review, and to allow at the appropriate time some future development in Alvechurch Parish to 2030

## COMMUNITY ACTION 8: FUTURE GROWTH FOR THE PARISH

- a. Alvechurch Parish Council will work pro-actively with Bromsgrove District Council on matters affecting the designated neighbourhood area of Alvechurch Parish as the Bromsgrove District Plan Review is progressed
- b. The NP can then be reviewed to remain in conformity with the adopted Local Plan in use at that time.
- c. This is seen as a useful partnership approach in establishing areas of land that could support future housing numbers that Bromsgrove District Council allocates to Alvechurch, being one of the six larger settlements indicated in the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan 2011-2030.

### Background information

Community Action 8 provides a steer at the appropriate time as to where future development in Alvechurch Parish should be located.

The adopted Bromsgrove District Plan (2011-2030) identifies Alvechurch as one of six larger settlements within the district that is expected to take some of the future housing growth from 2023-2030. To accept this future housing growth from 2023-2030, the NP needs to be able to plan positively for the future.

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that Green Belt reviews are matters only for local planning authorities such as BDC and not for Neighbourhood Plans. In the interest of the Localism Act (2011) however, whilst the NP cannot revise the Green Belt boundary through its own policies, the Parish Council believe that it is extremely important that local residents should have a substantial say in where such future local authority led changes for Alvechurch might be. The Parish Council will therefore engage with the local community and work proactively with BDC when establishing where future growth is to be located within our parish

Until such time, Green Belt land in our parish continues to be protected by both national and local policy. The Parish Council will continue to object to any inappropriate planning applications that may come forward for development in our Green Belt.

The community gave their views on broad areas of land around Alvechurch in July 2014 at a community consultation event for the NP. These views will be used by the Parish Council when putting forward the community's wishes. We will also hold future consultation events to enable everyone to have a say, including those that missed out last time and any new residents that have moved into the parish since July 2014. The results of the July 2014 community consultation can be found in our Evidence Base document. See our website for further details:

<http://alvechurchparishplan.org/>

## SECTION 6- MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE PLAN

### Who will ensure the Neighbourhood Plan is followed

4.393 Alvechurch Parish Council will ensure the NP is followed and regularly reviewed.

### Review periods.

4.394 To ensure that the NP is actively managed between its adoption and the end date of 2030 and to take into account possible changes in national or local planning policies, the following review periods will be adopted:

4.395 After the NP's implementation, the Parish Council will prepare an annual report. The annual report will monitor progress of the NP in the previous year and details as to whether policies in the plan have been effective when determining planning applications for the neighbourhood area. This process will involve the monitoring of planning applications for the neighbourhood area. The Annual Report will be made available on the Parish Council's website and in hardcopy at the Parish Council Office and the local library.

4.396 The NP will be reviewed at least every five years. The first review is likely to take place in 2022/23, followed by a second review in 2027/28. The purpose of these reviews will be to revise and update the plan as changes happen in our Parish. 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 recruited to assist with the review and evidence gathering for any updates to the plan.

4.397 During the review in 2027/28 the Parish Council will consider the need for a subsequent NP, and if so desired, to set up a project plan to undertake the work. In terms of the key areas of action the following summarises the Parish Councils approach to delivery and implementation.

### Housing growth:

4.398 The Parish Council will work with developers and the local authorities to deliver incremental growth over the lifetime of the NP.

### Local character:

4.399 The Parish Council will work with residents, owners of land and buildings and other stakeholders to redevelop brownfield sites, such as the old brick works site, and bring back into use any vacant properties, especially those that make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

### Local facilities:

4.400 The Parish Council will work with local organisations and local authorities to improve facilities and services for local people.

### Local economy:

4.401 The Parish Council will encourage businesses to improve local employment opportunities. The creation of more individual retail units within the parish will be encouraged.

### Transport and communication:

4.402 The Parish Council Community Safety Group will work to find ways to improve road safety and address speed and parking issues. Investigate with stakeholders the possibility of integrating the bus service with the railway station. High speed broadband in Alvechurch Parish must also be a priority.

## Landscape and environment:

4.403 The Parish Council will work with Environmental Wildlife Groups to ensure that wildlife and the countryside within Alvechurch Parish is protected.

## THE END

**ALL OTHER APPENDICES CAN BE FOUND AT THE END OF THE EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY DOCUMENT**

## SECTION 7-GLOSSARY

**ADR:** Area of Development Restraint. Is land removed from the Green Belt and set aside by Local Authorities for development in the future to meet the Strategic housing figures of the Local Authority.

### **Affordable Housing:**

From April 2012 affordable housing is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework

(Prior to this the definitions in Planning Policy Statement 3 apply).

Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at 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 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.

### **Local people & affordable housing**

Criteria and Allocations Policy for the Letting and Allocation of Rural Affordable Housing Developed under 'Exception Site' Policy Affordable Social housing

All applicants wishing to be considered for Rented Housing within the proposed scheme must be registered on the Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) Home Choice Plus, choice based lettings scheme.

1. The District Council will also nominate applicants registered on Home Choice Plus for consideration for Shared Ownership or Fixed Equity units where applicants have expressed a wish to be considered by placing a bid on Home Choice Plus.

2. The following Local Connection Eligibility Criteria will be applied: (The –first phase of eligibility will be considered initially, and only if insufficient applicants are eligible will the other phases be considered in order.)

The first phase of eligibility will be restricted to:

1) Local residents within the parish, with a minimum term of residence who want to remain in the locality but cannot afford to do so

2) Those who have previously resided in the parish for a number of years and who need to return to the parish but cannot afford to do so and who qualify as one or more of the following:

More information can be found at this link; <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/definitions-of-general-housing-terms>

**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.

**Alvechurch Parish Council (APC):** the first tier of local government in Alvechurch

**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'.

**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 undertaking 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, neighbourhood plans and the London Plan, and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. (Regional strategies remain part of the development plan until they are abolished by Order using powers taken in the Localism Act. It is the government's clear policy intention to revoke the regional strategies outside of London, subject to the outcome of the environmental assessments that are currently being undertaken.)

**Drumlin:** A drumlin, from the Irish word droimnín ("littlest ridge"), first recorded in 1833, and in the classical sense is an elongated hill in the shape of an inverted spoon or half-buried egg formed by glacial ice acting on underlying unconsolidated till or ground moraine. (Used in heritage documents and mentioned in the Evidence Base)

**Dispark** : To throw open (a private park); especially : to convert (a park) to something else than a private park Henry VIII decided to dispark the Duchy parks and turn them more profitably into pasture — A. L. Rowse

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

**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 local listing).

**Historic environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

**Inclusive design:** Designing the built environment, including buildings and their surrounding spaces, to ensure that they can be accessed and used by everyone.

**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 Enterprise Partnership (LEP):** A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area.

**Local planning authority (LPA):** The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority apply to the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority and the Greater London Authority, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.

**Local Green Space:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduced a new concept of a Local Green Space designation (1). 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 (2).

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 (3).

**Local Plan:** The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community in our case, Bromsgrove District Council. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current core strategies, or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be development plan documents, form part of the Local Plan. The term includes old policies, which have been saved under the 2004 Act.

**Local Wild Life sites:** Local Wildlife Sites are identified and selected locally using robust, scientifically-determined criteria and detailed ecological surveys. As a result, these special and often secret spaces have a huge part to play in the natural green fabric of our towns and countryside. These sites are named differently across the UK. In England, they are Local Wildlife Sites.

**Major Development:** The Town and Country Planning Order 2015, (Development Management Procedure) (England): "Major development", means development involving any one or more of the following— (a) the winning



and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits; (b) waste development; (c) the provision of dwelling houses where— (i) the number of dwelling houses to be provided is 10 or more; or (ii) the development is to be carried out on a site having an area of 0.5 hectares or more and it is not known whether the development falls within sub-paragraph (c)(i); (d) the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more; or (e) development carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more; “mining operations” means the winning and working of minerals in, on or under land, whether by surface or underground working”

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

**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).

**Older people:** People over retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly, whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing for those looking to downsize from family housing and the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs. Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act 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.

**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 energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

**Rural exception sites:** Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority’s discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding. Rural Exceptions Site to reflect Local Plan Policy APNP H3:

“A small site adjacent to the settlement boundary used to deliver affordable housing for local people in accordance with emerging District Local Plan Policy BDP9. These are sites that would not normally be considered suitable for housing development. Local people are people who meet the Settlement Connection criteria.”

**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:** Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**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 the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on 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 modes:** 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.

**Syncline:** A syncline is a concave geological fold, with layers that dip downward toward the centre of the structure. This arrangement is opposite to that of an arching anticline. (Used in the evidence Base)

**Transport Assessment:** A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a 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 the transport issues arising out of development proposals are limited and 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.

**Wildlife corridor:** Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

**Windfall sites:** Sites, which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.

## How to comment on this document

You can comment by email or writing to

Clerk to Alvechurch Parish Council  
Ground Floor, 1A George Road, Alvechurch, B48 7PB  
0121 447 8016  
[clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk)  
[www.alvechurch.gov.uk](http://www.alvechurch.gov.uk)

Pre-Submission documents can be viewed online at the web site above or as hard copies from the Parish Council Offices, at the address above.

**FURTHER APPENDICES CAN BE VIEW IN THE EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENT AND ON THE NP WEBSITE.**

**APPENDIX A: EVIDENCE BASE, HYPERLINKS & DOCUMENTS BY TOPIC**

**APPENDIX B: ASSETS OF ALVECHURCH PARISH**

**APPENDIX C: GREEN BELT & CONSTRAINTS**