

Name of Applicant	Proposal	Expiry Date	Plan Ref.
Mr Stuart Field	Development of up to 9 dwellings with associated infrastructure Land south of Callow Hill Road, Alvechurch	26.06.2026	26/00610/PIP

Councillor R Bailes has requested that this application be considered by Planning Committee rather than being determined under Delegated Powers.

RECOMMENDATION: That the planning in principle stage be **GRANTED**

Consultations

Worcestershire Highways - Bromsgrove

- No objection.
- It is noted that the application for the proposed residential development of up to 9 no. dwellings, has been made in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2018 (amended) and accordingly, at the 'in principle' stage, the scope of the considerations is limited to location, land use and the amount of development.
- All other matters including access, are considered as part of a subsequent technical details consent application, should permission in principle be granted.
- Given the application is for up to 9 dwellings, the access will need to be built to adoptable standards to be addressed at the Technical Details consent stage.

North Worcestershire Water Management

- No objection
- The proposed development site is situated in the catchment of the River Arrow. The site comprises an area of 0.99 hectares, with current land use noted as undeveloped grassland. The site falls within Flood Zone 1 and it is not considered that there is any significant fluvial flood risk to the site. The EA's flood mapping indicates that there is some surface water flood risk to the east of the site, as well as a significant risk of surface water flooding along Callow Hill Road, which may affect the development site.
- While in principle I have no issues with the proposed development from a flood risk perspective, no drainage details have been provided with this application. Ensuring there are appropriate means to drain the site is critical in understanding if the development should proceed.
- Therefore, I strongly advise that the applicant undertakes drainage investigations, and that a Flood Risk Assessment and comprehensive drainage strategy, including ground investigations, is submitted at the technical matters stage of application. The strategy should be in the form of a drainage plan and should detail how surface water from all proposed impermeable surfaces will be disposed of, and set out what criteria will be used for the design of the proposed scheme. Where possible, driveway and parking bays should be comprised of a porous material to limit the amount of hardstanding on site.

Canals And River Trust

- No objection

Worcestershire Regulatory Services - Noise

- Road Traffic, Rail and Commercial Noise: Before any decision is made, the applicant should demonstrate that external amenity area noise levels can be adequately mitigated so as not to exceed the BS8233:2014 recommended upper daytime limit of 55dB.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services - Contaminated Land

- Due to close proximity to a land fill site with a known history of gassing, a railway line, a number of historic ponds that may contain unknown landfill, and the agricultural nature of the area, WRS recommend the following pre commencement conditions are applied should any permission be granted to the development to ensure PCL issues on site are appropriately addressed.
- Conditions - Tired Investigation (Full)

Mineral Consultation Area

Consulted 29.05.2026: views awaited

Arboricultural Officer

Consulted 29.05.2026: views awaited

Conservation Officer

- The site is located on the edge of Alvechurch and is bounded by the railway line to the west, Callow Hill Road to the north-east and a stretch of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal (W&B Canal) to the east.
- There would be no objection from a conservation perspective to the development of this site in principle, but we would expect to see this green boundary between the site and the Canal to be maintained to preserve the western setting of the Canal.
- We would expect details of the landscaping at the technical stage, and complementary planting on the eastern edge of the site to hopefully reinforce the existing greenery outside of the site, or to at least preserve this setting if the trees and hedgerow adjacent to the Canal were removed.

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeological Service

- The proposed development area is nestled between the West Midlands Railway Line, to the west, and Callow Hill Road and the Worcester and Birmingham Canal (HER ref. WSM12000), to the east. Wharf Cottages, located on the eastern side of Callow Hill Road, directly opposite the proposed development area, are recorded as the former stables to Callow Hill Wharf, which operated as a coal yard until around the 1920s. Locally Listed, their mid-19th century construction is noted as displaying rare use of stone; very unusual for a low-status building of this age. They are also noted as making a positive contribution to the canal corridor, marking intersection of travel modes (HER ref. WSM82540, LL ref. ALV013).
- There are no recorded or identifiable heritage assets within the area of proposed development itself. The ground is expected to have sustained a level of disturbance as a consequence of the development of both the railway and canal, therefore in terms of potential impact to below ground archaeology of significance there would be no objection to the proposed scheme.

- However, the historic landscape and setting of the canal, including the area of proposed development, is considered to have moderate to high sensitivity to change, which does not appropriately reflect the area's historic environment, or fragmentation. This should be carefully considered in any future proposals.

Network Rail

- No objection

Alvechurch Parish Council

- We have significant concerns about noise and air pollution due to the proximity of the M42 to this site.
- As well as access issues with regards to conforming with required visibility splays in light of nearby canal and railway bridges.
- In addition, there are no pavements along this stretch of Callow Hill Road which results in pedestrian access to site being considered as being hazardous.
- Finally, this site is known to be sensitive regarding ecological benefits.
- All of these combined, are to be of concern which may not be overcome at the technical application stage.

Publicity

22 letters sent 2.06.2026 (expired 19.06.2026)

Site Notice displayed 29.05.2026 (expired 15.06.2026)

11 representations received in objection to the proposal raising matters relating to:

- Pressure on existing infrastructure within village of Alvechurch
- Impact of proposal on wildlife and biodiversity
- Viability of canal bridge
- Flooding and drainage
- Impact on existing Amenity of neighbouring properties (noise and light pollution)
- Impact on character of area with removal of vegetation along boundary
- Landscape character impact
- Highways safety
- Green belt
- Precedent for further development in area
- Unsustainable location

Councillor R Bailes

Has called in the application for the following reasons:

- Conflict with Site Selection Methodology and Landscape Sensitivity
- Unsafe and Substandard Access Arrangements
- Lack of Pedestrian and Cycle Infrastructure
- Unsustainable Location
- Not Grey Belt

Relevant Policies

Bromsgrove District Plan

BDP1 Sustainable Development Principles

BDP2 Settlement Hierarchy

BDP4 Green Belt

BDP12 Sustainable Communities

BDP16 Sustainable Transport

Others

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan

National Planning Practice Guidance

Assessment of Proposal

The Site

The site comprises part of an uncultivated agricultural field measuring approximately 0.99 hectares which is designated as Green Belt. The site is located between 21 to 50 metres from the defined settlement of Alvechurch as set out on the Bromsgrove District Plan Policies Map.

The site is situated between the railway line to the West, the canal to the east and south and Callow Hill Road to the north and East. To the north of the site and Callow Hill Road is the M42 motorway.

Alvechurch Village is situated to the south-east of the site on the opposite side of the canal. Callow Hill Road runs along the northern and eastern edge of the site and crosses the canal via a single-track humpback bridge into the village of Alvechurch.

The site has a vegetated boundary along its road frontage, and there is an existing gateway from the site on to Callow Hill Road.

Proposal

The application relates to a Permission in Principle for up to 9 no. dwellings.

Permission in Principle (PIP) is a specific planning consent route in England designed primarily for small-scale, housing-led developments. It separates the consideration of whether a site is suitable for development in principle from the technical details of the proposed buildings.

The (PIP) process is an alternative to the traditional outline planning application route and involves two stages:

1. **Permission in Principle (PIP) Stage:** The Local Planning Authority assesses the site's suitability based only on three core factors:
 - Location;
 - Land Use
 - Amount of development (e.g. number of dwellings)
2. **Technical Details Consent (TDC) Stage:** The second stage where the detailed development proposals are assessed. The new process was introduced in June 2018 and was intended to speed up and simplify the planning process for small housing developments.

If a PIP is granted, a subsequent application for Technical Details Consent must be submitted and approved before any development can begin. This stage involves the detailed design aspects, such as appearance, layout, landscaping, and access, and requires full architectural plans and supporting technical documents. The TDC stage is similar to a Reserved Matters application or a full planning application.

Assessment of Proposal

The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, proposed land use and the amount of development as highlighted above.

5 Year Land Supply Position

The Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) and therefore regard should be had to paragraph 11(d) and footnote 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which together state that for applications providing housing, where the Council cannot demonstrate a 5YHLS, the policies which are most important for determining the application are considered out-of-date and planning permission should be granted unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

Location and land use

In respect of Green Belt policy, it has been established through case law that the list of exceptions for 'appropriate development' set out in Policy BDP4 of the Bromsgrove District Plan (BDP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) amounts to a closed list. Thereby, proposals not included on the list are regarded as 'prima facie' inappropriate development. The Framework states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

The site is located within the Green Belt, at the edge of Alvechurch which is considered a village. The site lies within the Green Belt, and the proposal does not comprise one of the closed lists of exceptions at paragraph 154 of the NPPF and Policy BDP4 of the Bromsgrove District Plan.

Further exceptions to inappropriate development are set out in paragraph 155 of the Framework, where homes, commercial and other development should also not be regarded as inappropriate where it would utilise grey belt, subject to specific criteria.

Paragraph 155 of the Framework states that: the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all of the following apply:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157.

Grey Belt is defined within Annex 2 of the NPPF as follows:

Grey Belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

Paragraph 143 of the NPPF sets out that the Green Belt serves five purposes which are listed below:

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

It is noted that the applicant has referenced the Bromsgrove Part 1 and 2 Green Belt reviews dated 2019 and 2022 respectively in their submission. Whilst these reports contain detailed information about the Green Belt within the District in relation to the purposes set out in paragraph 143 of the NPPF. These reports are part of the evidence base for the local plan review, so have reviewed the Green Belt on a wider basis than an individual application. Therefore, whilst this application site does form part of the wider sites the reports review, the assessment is not just of the site on its own it is of a wider parcel of land. It is therefore not considered appropriate for us to base our assessment of this application on the findings from these reports.

Does Green Belt land on the site strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes a), b) or d)?

- a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

The proposal does not strongly contribute to the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (LBUA), as Alvechurch is a village, and not a LBUA, and the proposal site has some physical features in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. Its contribution is considered therefore to be none.

- b) To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;

The site does not strongly or moderately contribute to preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another because it is not located near to any towns. The site is

situated at the boundary of Alvechurch which is a village. Its contribution is considered therefore to be none.

d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;

The site is not within the setting of a historic town. As such the site makes no contribution to purpose d).

Would the application of non-Green Belt NPPF footnote 7 policies provide a strong reason for refusing development?

Footnote 7 states "The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change."

Given the characteristics of the site, it is not considered that there are any strong reasons to believe that the application of NPPF footnote 7 policies would provide a strong reason for refusing development.

Having assessed the site against purposes a), b) and d) of the Green Belt as set out at paragraph 143 of the NPPF it is considered that the site does not strongly contribute to any of these purposes and therefore the application site can fall within the definition of Grey Belt.

As such the development would not be inappropriate development subject to satisfying the remaining criteria as set out in Paragraph 155 of the NPPF:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.

Would the proposed development on grey belt fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan?

Purposes a, b and d have already been assessed above. Regard however must be made to purposes c) and e).

c) Safeguard the countryside from encroachment;

The development would introduce new development to the northwestern side of the canal. Whilst there is some sporadic development to the northern side of the canal, the designated village of Alvechurch is located to the southern side of the canal. The site is however contained within physical features such as the railway line, and Callow Hill Road and the M42 which would restrict and contain the development on this site.

It is also noted that there is a significant amount of open and undeveloped space between all edges of the settlement and the nearest other built-up area. This would remain to be the case were the proposed development to be implemented.

Policy BDP4 states that approximately ninety percent of Bromsgrove District is designated as Green Belt. It indicates that some land will be released from the Green Belt following a Green Belt Review or Local Plan Review. Even if there is a slight reduction as is referred to in BDP4, due to the site occupying a very small part of the Green Belt in the context of the significant amount in the overall plan area, together with its strong visual barriers which would naturally limit the extent of the development, encroachment on the countryside would be so limited that it would have a very limited effect on the remaining Green Belt across the plan area.

Given this, it is not considered that the proposed development of this site would fundamentally undermine purpose c) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

e) Assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land;

Whilst the site is an agricultural field, given the scale of the development it is not considered that it would fundamentally undermine purpose e) of the Green Belt.

Is there a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed?

The Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year land supply of housing having regards to the Government's targets. There is therefore an considered to be a demonstrable unmet need for housing within the District.

Would the development in the Grey Belt be in a sustainable location?

Alvechurch is identified as a large settlement within policy BDP2, which offers a range of services, facilities and public transport including a train station and bus stops. The centre square of the village is situated approximately 1km from the site or a 15 minutes walk.

The site is not within the defined settlement boundary of Alvechurch. The route to and from the village would be along Callow Hill Road via a humpback bridge that goes over the canal. There is no pavement or street lighting along this stretch of Road. The pavement starts approximately 110 metres from the site on Callow Hill Road. Once on the pavement on Callow Hill Road, the route to the centre of Alvechurch is on lit pedestrian footpaths. There is also an access from the bridge onto the canal towpath, which would give future occupiers an alternative route into the village and to the railway station.

A similar nearby site on Withybed Lane was recently allowed at appeal for the development of up to 8 dwellings (Application Reference: 25/01151/PIP). This site was considered a sustainable location albeit being located outside of the defined village of Alvechurch and being accessed along a relatively short section of road which has no pavements or street lighting.

As such and notwithstanding the above, it is considered that this site is located at an acceptable distance from essential services, job opportunities and public transport and as such having particular regard to paragraph. 110 and 115 of the NPPF is considered to be sustainable.

Does the proposal include major development involving housing?

The proposals would not need to meet the 'Golden Rules' requirements because the application would not be categorised as 'major' development having regard to the definition of 'major development' set out in Annex 2: Glossary on page 75 of the NPPF.

Conclusion on Green Belt Matters

In conclusion, it is considered that the site is Grey Belt and would meet the Paragraph 155 requirements and thus the proposal should not be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework.

Neighbour Plan Policy H1

It is noted that the area is within Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan. The neighbourhood plan is a material planning consideration. Policy H1 sets out that proposals for new housing will be supported in principal if they meet certain criteria. One of which is that the development should be located within the designated Alvechurch village settlement boundary. The background justification for this is set out as being that: *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.*

However subject to certain criterion Paragraph 155 does allow for some housing development within the Green Belt. In this case, the proposal as is noted above has been found to be appropriate development in the Green Belt under paragraph 155. Therefore, whilst the proposal is within the Green Belt and outside of the designated village of Alvechurch it is considered to be appropriate development.

Character and Appearance

The site comprises a field situated between the railway line, the canal and Callow Hill Road. There are trees and shrubs along the site boundary to Callow Hill Road and to the canal. Overall, the open field together with the trees and shrubs contribute positively to a rural and verdant character at the edge of Alvechurch.

There are houses near to the site's entrance on Callow Hill Road, and on the opposite side of the canal from the site. Consequently, the site is not visually isolated from other developments in the area. Furthermore, in terms of its visibility, the trees and shrubs along the site's boundary do provide some screening of the site.

The Bromsgrove District Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Study (LVSS) outlines the natural and cultural heritage and the landscape character of the study area. The site is within an area identified as parcel no. A04. The LVSS suggests that this area is sensitive to housing due to the restricted scale of the corridor and the associated pastures and

grassland, its strong tree cover, its recreational use and its biodiversity value. It states that the visual susceptibility lies in views from the canal towpath, public right of way and adjacent rural dwellings.

The LVSS has been used as an evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, it is not part of the current Development plan and it is unclear at this stage how it would translate to policy in the emerging plan given that the plan area is significantly constrained by Green Belt land as well as the Council's lack of a five-year housing land supply.

If the LVSS was given significant weight, it is noted that the site does not have a strong tree cover which would be compromised by the development. It is also noted that there is little to suggest at this stage that the trees and shrubs along the boundaries of the site could not be incorporated into the site layout at the technical details stage. Similarly, although the natural features of the site contribute to its biodiversity value, the effect of the development on such matters would need to be explored at the technical details stage. In terms of the site's recreational use, the site does not appear to be publicly accessible to the extent that it provides a significant recreational use to the local community beyond its visual aspects

The Withybed lane site (Planning Application Reference: 25/01151/PIP) which was recently allowed at appeal (Appeal reference: APP/P1805/W/25/3376795) falls within the same LVSS parcel of land as this site. Whilst the inspector who determined that appeal did consider the LVSS, he did not appear to give it significant weight.

The Inspector concluded that the principle of houses on the site would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, including in terms of the sites cultural heritage, natural heritage and landscape character. Noting that matters such as layout, design and landscape character of the development would be considered at the technical details stage, it is at this stage where the Council and third parties would have the opportunity to consider such impacts.

The Council's Conservation Officer (CO) has raised no objection from a conservation perspective to the development of this site in principle. The CO has set out that they would expect to see the green boundary between the site and the Canal to be maintained to preserve the western setting of the Canal and have set out that they would expect details of the landscaping at the technical stage, and complementary planting on the eastern edge of the site to hopefully reinforce the existing greenery outside of the site, or to at least preserve this setting if the trees and hedgerow adjacent to the Canal were removed.

Having regard to the above, I would also conclude that the principle of houses on this site could be acceptable, noting that such matters as layout, design and landscape character of the development would need to be considered at the technical details stage.

A copy of the Appeal decision relating to the Withybed Lane appeal (Planning Application 25/01151/PIP and Appeal Reference: APP/P1805/W/25/3376795) can be found at Appendix 1 of this report.

Amount

The amount of development (up to 9 dwellings) is considered acceptable given the area of land shown within the red line boundary on the location plan.

Other Matters

Access to the site, matters of pedestrian and highway safety including risks to children and the elderly, parking and traffic generation, ecology, protected species and wildlife, trees and hedgerows, drainage and flooding, as well as the impact on the canal, the historic environment and the historic landscape are matters that would be addressed at the technical details stage. As would the effect of any design on the living conditions of residents by virtue of noise, disturbance, traffic, outlook, light, privacy and light pollution.

As the development would be of a minor scale with a maximum of 9 dwellings at the site, any additional pressure on local services is not considered to be abrupt or significant to the extent that permission in principle should be withheld.

Highways:

Worcestershire County Council has raised no objection to the proposal. They note that the application for the proposed residential development of up to 9 no. dwellings, has been made in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2018 (amended) and accordingly, at the 'in principle' stage, the scope of the considerations is limited to location, land use and the amount of development. All other matters including access, would be considered as part of a subsequent technical details consent application, should permission in principle be granted. They have set out that given the application is for up to 9 dwellings, the access would need to be built to adoptable standards to be addressed at the Technical Details consent stage.

Noise

Worcestershire Regulatory Services have set out that the applicant should demonstrate that external amenity area noise levels can be adequately mitigated so as not to exceed the BS8233:2014 recommended upper daytime limit of 55dB. This is a technical matter to be addressed at Technical Details Stage.

Drainage

North Worcestershire Water Management have set out that the proposed development site is situated in the catchment of the River Arrow and falls within Flood Zone 1 and it is not considered that there is any significant fluvial flood risk to the site. They do note that the Environment agencies flood mapping indicates that there is some surface water flood risk to the east of the site, as well as a significant risk of surface water flooding along Callow Hill Road, which may affect the development site.

While an attenuation basin has been outlined on the site plan, no details in relation to any proposed drainage arrangements have been provided. North Worcestershire Water management have therefore provided a statement in their comments on what would be required at the technical details stage.

Archaeology

Worcestershire Archaeology have set out that there are no recorded or identifiable heritage assets within the area of proposed development itself. The ground is expected to have sustained a level of disturbance as a consequence of the development of both the

railway and canal, therefore in terms of potential impact to below ground archaeology of significance there would be no objection to the proposed scheme.

However, the historic landscape and setting of the canal, including the area of proposed development, is considered to have moderate to high sensitivity to change, which does not appropriately reflect the area's historic environment, or fragmentation. This can be carefully considered at the Technical Details consent stage.

Land contamination

Worcestershire Regulatory Services have set that due to the close proximity of the site to a landfill site (to the East) with a known history of gassing, a railway line, a number of historic (possibly former) ponds that may contain unknown infill, and the agriculture nature of the area, they recommend a contamination condition be appended to any permission that is granted for this site. This is to ensure potential contaminated land issues on site are appropriately addressed.

Comments have been received from the Canals and River Trust and Network Rail. These are noted.

Conclusion

The Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) and therefore regard should be had to paragraph 11(d) and footnote 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which together state that for applications providing housing, where the Council cannot demonstrate a 5YHLS, the policies which are most important for determining the application are considered out-of-date and planning permission should be granted unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

Limb i) does not apply.

In view of limb (ii), the proposal would make a contribution of up to 9 dwellings to the Council's housing supply, offering some employment opportunities during construction and post development spend. The site is located within a sustainable location and is of suitable land use and amount.

The PiP process is a two-stage approach, and the Technical Details Consent will consider the detailed development proposals. On this basis, there are no known adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits as set out in limb ii) and it is recommended that Permission in Principle be granted.

Conditions cannot be placed on a Permission in Principle, and such matters will be considered at the Technical Details Consent stage. The Applicant is advised to take into consideration the advice in the consultees comments and report when considering the submission for Technical Details Consent.

RECOMMENDATION: That the planning in principle stage be **GRANTED**

Conditions:

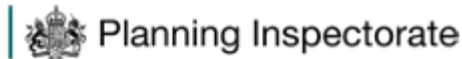
No conditions can be imposed.

Case Officer: Claire Gilbert Tel: 01527 881655
Email: claire.gilbert@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Appeal decision APP/P1805/W/25/3376795

From Planning Application 25/01151/PIP- land off Withybed Lane, Alvechurch



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 March 2026 by T Morris BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 June 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/P1805/W/25/3376795

Land off Withybed Lane, Alvechurch, Easting: 401990 and Northing: 272600

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr C Brain against the decision of Bromsgrove District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/01151/PIP.
 - The development proposed is permission in principle for up to 9 no dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for residential development comprising a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 9 dwellings at Land off Withybed Lane, Alvechurch, Easting: 401990 and Northing: 272600, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/01151/PIP, dated 17 October 2025.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Application for Costs

3. An application for costs has been made by Mr C Brain. This is subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

4. Permission in principle is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The route has 2 stages: the first (permission in principle) stage establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second (technical details consent) stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent application. I have made my recommendation on the appeal accordingly.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are whether the site is suitable for residential development having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development, with particular regard to a) whether the scheme would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt; and b) its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Inappropriate Development

6. Policy BDP4 of the Bromsgrove District Plan 2011-2030 (BDP) (2017) sets out that the development of new buildings in the Green Belt is considered to be inappropriate, except in certain circumstances. These are broadly as they are set out by paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), which also refers to additional exceptions in paragraph 155. The most recent iteration of the Framework came after the adoption of the BDP and is the most up to date expression of national Green Belt policy.
7. Paragraph 155 explains that the development of homes in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where, in regard to minor development, it would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan; there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed and the development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework.
8. The Framework defines grey belt land as comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of the Green Belt purposes a), b), or d) as set out in paragraph 143 of the Framework. In these respects, the appeal site adjoins the edge of Alvechurch. This is a built up area, but a village. Planning Practice Guidance suggests that a village is not a large built up area and neither a town in the historic sense or otherwise. The appeal site does not therefore strongly contribute to purposes a), b) and d) and can thus be identified as grey belt.
9. In appeal 3315385 and purpose c), the Inspector found that the proposal would inevitably result in some encroachment into the countryside. However, they also identified that the canal and the railway line provide strong visual boundaries to the site, features which provide barriers to any future encroachment. The appeal site is contextually very small and less than ten dwellings are proposed. There is a significant amount of open and undeveloped space between all edges of the settlement and the nearest other built up area. This would remain to be the case as a result of the proposals.
10. I am also conscious that the supporting text of Policy BDP4 states that approximately ninety percent of Bromsgrove District is designated as Green Belt. It indicates that some land will be released from the Green Belt around Redditch, but I have not been provided with the details of this, the Green Belt Review or the Local Plan Review to which the policy refers.
11. Even if there is a slight reduction as is referred to in BDP4, due to the site occupying a very small part of the Green Belt in the context of the significant amount in the overall plan area, together with its strong visual barriers which would naturally limit the extent of the development, encroachment on the countryside would be so limited that it would have a very limited effect on the remaining Green Belt across the plan area. The purpose to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment would therefore be upheld. In addition, and given that the site is near to a village rather than a built-up area with a high proportion of urban land, the proposal would not conflict with purpose (e).

12. The Council is currently unable to demonstrate the supply of housing sites required by the Framework. There is thus a demonstrable unmet need for the development of up to nine dwellings. Furthermore, Alvechurch provides local services and public transport connections, including a train station. As part of their decision on the aforementioned appeal, the Inspector took the view that the appeal site was a sustainable location in terms of its accessibility. I see no compelling reasons to come to a different conclusion on this matter.
13. With this and the above in mind, the proposal would utilise land in the Green Belt which can be identified as grey belt and would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Consequently, it is not necessary to consider effects on openness and whether very special circumstances exist. Accordingly, the proposal would not be harmful to the Green Belt. This would comply with the Green Belt protection aims of Policy BDP4 of the BDP and Policy H1 of the Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan (2019) (NP).

Character and Appearance

14. The site comprises a field with a small number of modest buildings near to the entrance off Withybed Lane. It is bound by the railway line and associated embankment on the side adjacent the village and by the canal on the other side. There are trees and shrubs along the site boundary to Withybed Lane and to the canal. Overall, the open field together with the trees and shrubs contribute positively to a rural and verdant character at the edge of Alvechurch.
15. There are houses near to the site's entrance on Withybed Lane, as well as a public house and other buildings on the other side of the canal bridge further away from the village. There are also other buildings along this stretch of the canal including dwellings and some industrial style uses. Consequently, the site is not visually isolated from other developments in the area. Furthermore, in terms of its visibility, the trees and shrubs along the site's boundary particularly to the canal towpath provide some screening of the site when viewed from eye level, so much so that views into the site are mostly limited to glimpses from the canal.
16. The Bromsgrove District Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Study (LVSS) outlines the natural and cultural heritage and the landscape character of the study area. The site is within an area identified as parcel no. A04. The LVSS suggests that this area is sensitive to housing due to the restricted scale of the corridor and the associated pastures and grassland, its strong tree cover, its recreational use and its biodiversity value. It states that the visual susceptibility lies in views from the canal towpath, public right of way and adjacent rural dwellings.
17. Although the Council state that the LVSS has been used as an evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, there are limited details of the status of the emerging plan before me, including its stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections, and the degree of consistency of its policies with the Framework. I am also conscious that the plan area is significantly constrained by Green Belt land as well as the Council's lack of a five-year housing land supply. With these factors in mind, there is insufficient certainty before me that the content of the LVSS will translate to a policy in the emerging plan.
18. If I were to give the LVSS significant weight, the site does not have a strong tree cover which would be compromised by the development. There is little to suggest that the trees and shrubs along the boundaries could not be incorporated into the

site layout at the technical details stage. Similarly, although the natural features of the site contribute to its biodiversity value, the effect of the development on such matters would need to be explored at the technical details stage. In terms of the site's recreational use, on my visit, the site did not appear to be publicly accessible to the extent that it provides a significant recreational use to the local community beyond its visual aspects.

19. Although the Inspector dismissed the aforementioned previous appeal at the site on Green Belt grounds, neither the Inspector, nor the Council, identified any harm to the character and appearance of the area. Whilst that proposal followed a different process as it sought outline permission, it is similar as the end result would have been a housing development of up to nine dwellings at the site, much like the appeal before me.
20. The Council's decision notice for the previous application is 8 August 2022. The LVSS is dated February 2022. Hence, I see no reason why it wasn't available to the Council in the previous decision, but there is no indication it was considered, at least from the evidence before me. I therefore find it difficult to see why the current proposal should be resisted on the basis of the LVSS when it didn't provide a reason to resist a similar housing development on the same site previously.
21. With all of the above factors in mind, the principle of houses on the site would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, including in terms of its cultural heritage, natural heritage and landscape character. Furthermore, matters such as layout, the design of the houses and the landscape character of the development would be considered at the technical details stage, where the Council and third parties would have the opportunity to consider such impacts.
22. I am therefore satisfied that insofar as the principle of the proposal is concerned, a development could be achieved that also respects the rural and verdant character of the site and surrounding area. The proposal would therefore comply with Policies BDP1.4 (d) and BDP19 (e) of the BDP, which require that development proposals have regard to the quality of the natural environment and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local area.

Other Matters

23. Access to the site, matters of pedestrian and highway safety including risks to children and the elderly, parking and traffic generation, ecology, protected species and wildlife, trees and hedgerows, draining and flooding, as well as the impact on the canal, the historic environment and the historic landscape would be addressed at the technical details stage. As would the effect of any design on the living conditions of local residents by virtue of noise, disturbance, traffic, outlook, light, privacy and light pollution.
24. As the development would be of a minor scale and would only result in a maximum of nine dwellings at the site, any additional pressure on local services would be neither immediate, abrupt or significant to the extent that permission in principle should be withheld. In addition, there is no compelling evidence before me which indicates that the Council did not consult correctly on the application. In any case, the number of objections received as well as the breadth of planning matters which were raised by third parties indicates that the community has had sufficient opportunity to comment on the application and the appeal. Any further administrative concerns in this respect are for the Council.

25. Green spaces provide health and wellbeing benefits. From my own observations on site however, it does not appear to be publicly accessible to the extent that it provides a useable space for the community. There are other such places like the canal which provide space for recreational use alongside. In that regard, the way in which the proposal would be experienced from the canal would be considered at the technical details stage.
26. The prioritisation of brownfield or previously developed land does not mean that, following assessment, the development or previously undeveloped land should be resisted. I have considered the appeal on its own merits, having regard to its particular circumstances and site specifics and found it to be acceptable, in principle, for new housing. Any precedent value of such an outcome would not be beyond that.
27. The Council identify that the site is outside of the boundary of Alvechurch and thus does not comply with Policy H1 Part (a) of the NP. This policy states that new housing development should be located within the designated Alvechurch Village settlement boundary. This was not a matter on which the application was refused and, taking my earlier findings into account, see little reason why this should form a reason to resist permission in principle at this stage.

Conclusion and Recommendation

28. The proposed development would comply with the development plan overall and there are no other material considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which would alter this finding. Therefore, I recommend that the appeal should be allowed.

T Morris

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

29. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is allowed. Permission in principle is therefore granted.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR