

Name of Applicant Type of Certificate	Proposal	Map/Plan Policy	Plan Ref. Expiry Date
<b>Mr. and Mrs. M. Bales 'A'</b>	Provision of 13 Close Care Suites and 16 Assisted Living Units to form a Continuing Care Retirement Community - Burcot Grange Residential Home, Greenhill, Burcot, Bromsgrove, B60 1BJ	Green Belt	<b>10/0334-DK</b> 25.08.2010

**RECOMMENDATION:** that permission be **REFUSED**.

### Consultations

Lickey and Blackwell PC Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received: 13.05.2010.  
Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council have serious concerns about this application. Though we are aware that provision for the elderly is needed, and that Burcot Grange has a high reputation in this area, there are problems specific to this site. The proposed development is in the Green Belt, and though it would not very obvious, visibility is not the only reason for protecting Green Belt. Moreover it is a very large development. We also have concerns about the problems that will arise as regards vehicular access. Greenhill is a narrow, steep road with limited visibility and in several places it is too narrow for two vehicles to pass. There will be extra traffic generated by the development. During the construction period this would be particularly hazardous.

Additional Comments received: 08.06.2010  
These are more detailed objections on behalf of Barnt Green Parish Council to the proposed development at Burcot Grange (Ref: 10/0334).

PPG2 states that there is a presumption against development in the Green Belt. The proposed development at Burcot Grange does not fall within any of the categories listed appropriate in PPG2.

PPG2 states that development deemed inappropriate can only take place if very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Circumstances have to be very special indeed if they are to surmount the very strong presumption against development in the green belt. No such circumstances have been demonstrated.

The Local Plan indicates that Burcot, embedded within the Green Belt, has a village envelope around it that only permits very limited development. Permitted development is limited to infill 'located between existing development, which [is] capable of accommodating no more than two dwellings, in a form which maintains the line and form of the existing buildings' (Bromsgrove District Local Plan, policy DS5). It specifically excludes backland development which is proposed in this application. 'Development extending the settlement into the countryside .... will not be acceptable' (BDLP DS5).

According to the survey commissioned by the applicant, there are 168 trees on the site. The proposal is to remove 55 of these trees. This is an unacceptable loss to the Green Belt.

The application does not allow for the full amount of car parking that would be necessary for occupants of the 29 new units and their visitors. To provide the required parking provision it would be necessary to convert an unacceptable proportion of the site to hard surface.

WH

Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received: 11.06.2010.

Recommends that the permission be deferred for the following reasons:-

The applicant has not demonstrated car parking provision which is proportional to the scale of the proposed development. C2 units require car parking at 1 space per member of staff and then 1 space per 3 units for sheltered accommodation (assisted living units) and 1 space per 4 units for nursing homes (assisted living units).

The applicant has indicated a supplemental 34 car parking spaces over that which presently exists. However, based on an additional 40 staff and bedrooms, the ratio above requires an additional 48 spaces. Therefore the applicant should provide revised details indicating 48 supplemental car parking spaces.

ENG

Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received: 13.05.2010. No objection subject to conditions.

Strategic

Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received: 09.06.2010.

Planning Officer

The above site is located within the Green Belt and therefore PPG2 and policy DS2 of the adopted Bromsgrove District Local Plan are therefore relevant. The application proposes demolition and a substantial new extension within the green belt. According to PPG2 and DS2, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and only new buildings that preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt are appropriate unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. In the Planning Statement the applicant argues that very special circumstances exist for the proposal [points (i) - (vi)]. These relate to the need for increased specialized accommodation for the elderly, absence of alternative sites, the established site at Burcot Grange, the mix of tenure to be provided and release of underutilized housing

Many of the points raised in the Planning Statement have some validity in themselves but do not argue convincingly why such care must be provided exclusively in this particular location, for example:

- The Housing Market Assessment (Housing Vision 2008) identified that Bromsgrove will have a projected growth of 7300 households by 2026. In line with national trends Bromsgrove has an ageing population and the majority of this growth is predicted to be in middle aged (975) and pensioner households (4,800). There is also a requirement for an additional 1575 households for those aged over

85. Therefore the need for accommodation is not in dispute, the main issue is however its location within the green belt.

- The applicant states at 2.40 that "The planning application register reveals that the committed housing site at Perryfields is an application submitted by West Mercia Housing Group and Bromsgrove District Housing for 100% affordable housing. There is no evidence to suggest that this site would be available for a private sector promoted CCRC". However the wider Perryfields ADR occupies some 76 hectares and the aforementioned planning application only covers a fraction of this area. There is no evidence to suggest that any location in the rest of the ADR has been considered. In accordance with PPS1 and DS13 of the BDLP this ADR is located in a sustainable position adjacent to the Town Centre.
- the Planning Statement states that the "proposal does not seek to establish a CCRC in an otherwise undeveloped part of the Green belt. Rather the development is confined to the established curtilage of Burcot Grange established care environment since 1937". It appears from the plans submitted and from aerial photographs that the proposal would in fact be located in an otherwise undeveloped part of the Green Belt. The reference to the definition of Previously Developed Land in PPS3 is misplaced and is in any case likely to become irrelevant under the present Governments stated aims of stopping "garden grabbing". Furthermore, what is not explained is why the successful principles of running a care home could not be applied to an alternative and more sustainable location.
- The mix of tenure and broadening of facilities for the wider community does not amount to a very special circumstance. There is no convincing argument why there is a need for development to be exclusively in this location. Furthermore, there would be no guarantee that existing dwellings in the local community would be freed up.
- The need for increased specialized accommodation for the elderly is not in dispute; it is the location within the Green Belt. The applicant states that "the encroachment of the development into the countryside is of a very limited scale in its impact because the development would be entirely within the established domestic curtilage of Burcot Grange and is well enclosed by enclosing vegetation". However vegetation is neither necessarily a permanent feature nor a constant one, as cover typically varies throughout the year. A significant number of trees would be lost.

Strategic Housing Manager	Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received 16.06.2010. No objection.
WCC Adult and Community Services	Consulted 21.04.2010. No response to date.
West Mercia Police	Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received 30.04.2010. No objection.

Natural England Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received 17.05.2010.

Notwithstanding our response to 10/0337, Natural England objects to this proposed development. We recommend that the Local Planning Authority refuse planning permission on the grounds that the application contains insufficient information to demonstrate whether or not the development would have an adverse effect on legally protected species.

The application does not provide any ecological surveys or indications of either the ecological impacts likely to arise from the development or the mitigation/compensation for these impacts. We note the presence of mature vegetation and a pond on the site. These features are known to provide foraging and commuting habitat for bats, with brown long-eared, Myotis and pipistrelle roosts identified through application 10/0337, running in tandem on this site. These features may of course have other ecological interests.

In order to assess the potential implications on protected species, this and any subsequent planning application should include the following information:

- Description of the proposal
- Survey for protected species
- Impact assessment
- Mitigation strategy
- Delivery mechanisms
- Details of enhancement

The applicant has provided a Great Crested Newt Survey Ref: RT - MME-107107, Received 03.06.2010.

Additional comments were received from NE in respect of this 22.06.2010: No objection.

In respect of bats, the objection received 17.05.2010 (outlined above) stands.

Worcestershire  
Wildlife Trust

Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received 16.06.2010.

We note that the site is well removed from the local SWSs and that the grounds are largely landscaped. We therefore consider that the main issue here concerns bats. Accordingly we wish to lend our support to the comments made by Natural England and we are happy to defer to their opinion on these applications.

Tree Officer

Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received 28.06.2010 as follows:

Object to the proposal as it currently stands. The Tree Protection Plan (AA TPP 02) omits substantial trees to the front of the site. There are areas of additional parking proposed to the front which will have an impact on trees present at this position not identified on the plan.

The mature beech trees on the eastern boundary scheduled for removal are an important screen. These are healthy trees and their removal is unjustified.

Additional Comments to follow.

EDO

Consulted 21.04.2010. No response to date.

EHM

Consulted 21.04.2010. Response received 21.04.2010.

(Commercial)

The premises and business will be required to comply with Health and Safety legislation which is enforced by this Council. The premises will be subject to routine inspection to assess compliance.

EHM

Consulted 08.06.2010. Response received 10.06.2010.

(Contaminated  
Land)

No objection to the proposed development subject to conditions including the carrying out of a preliminary risk assessment, scheme for detailed site investigation and appropriate remediation measures.

Reason:

To ensure that risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors [in accordance with policy ES7 of the adopted Local Plan (January 2004)].

Publicity

Site notice posted on 07.06.2010. (expires: 28.06.2010)

Press Notice posted 29.04.2010 (expires on: 20.05.2010).

3 comments received (26.05.2010) as follows:

- Support the application, Burcot Grange provides really good respite care.
- There is a lack of suitable care facilities in the District and excessive demand on the existing facilities. It is important for the elderly that they do not have to move away and lose out on friends and social contacts. The provision of a transitional facility from independent living and private sector provision is supported.
- The property is in the Green Belt, so that there is a strong presumption against development. The original house is a fine example of the architecture of the late Victorian Arts and Crafts Movement, and perhaps ought to be listed, if it is not already.
- This application involves two elements, which may be described as area B and C (using the references on page 7 of the Design and Access Statement). As garden land, technically Area C is brownfield land, but the use of that term for gardens is a misnomer. Village envelopes have been drawn so that a house and modest garden are within the village envelope (or outside the Green Belt), but a large rear garden is subject to full Green Belt protection. A sort of informal village envelope might be considered to exist along Greenhill. However, Area C certainly lies beyond it. Accordingly we object to the development of area C. Since the application must be granted or refused and cannot be granted in part, it is necessary for us to object to the whole application.

## The site and its surroundings

The application site comprises a large nursing home on the north side of Greenhill which was built in 1890 in Tudor Revival style with many surviving external and internal features. It was designed by Jethro Cousins for Henry Osler as a private house before becoming a hospital in 1937 and finally a care home in 1992. There are later extensions on the east and north east sides. The original building is set in a very attractive timbered setting with substantial mature cedars, chestnuts and oaks in addition to a range of ornamental shrubs. There is a circular access to the front and the attractive façade of the buildings is partly concealed by the trees to the front. There are fields adjoining the property to the east and west and residential properties on Green Hill to the front. There is a large curtilage to the front and rear with the land substantially falling away to the rear of the property. It is the rear of the property which is the subject of this outline application and the gardens are currently used as a recreational facility for residents. The site currently has accommodation for 40 residents. There are 31 bedrooms and 5 x 1 bed close care suites currently on the site. There are also additional communal facilities including a library, IT room and shop.

## Proposal

This is an outline planning application for the erection of 13 Close Care Suites and 16 Assisted Living Units to the rear of Burcot Grange. The proposed siting and configuration of the development is outlined within the Design and Access Statement (pages 7-11) and on the proposed Site Layout (Received 25th May 2010). It comprises 3 sites (A, B and C). Members should note that site A, comprising an extension of the existing facility is the subject of a full planning application (B/2010/0337). Sites B and C are located to the rear (north west) of the existing facility and comprise 4 detached blocks (referred to as D, E, F and G). The total floorspace added within these blocks is 2635m<sup>2</sup>. Block D will contain the 13 Close Care Suites and will be located immediately to the rear of the existing facility. Blocks E, F and G will contain the 16 Assisted Living Units and are proposed on the grounds further to the rear NW from the existing care home. The Close Care Suites will each contain a sitting room, bedrooms and a kitchenette while the Assisted Living Units will contain a similar layout with larger dimensions. A total of 34 additional parking spaces are proposed to serve the development.

The application originally reserved all matters for future consideration apart from access and layout. Since the development is located in the Green Belt and the scale of the impact of the proposal upon openness must be determined, it was considered that the scale of the proposal could not remain a reserved matter. Therefore on 04th May 2010, the Council served the requisite notice under Article 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Procedure) Order 1995 matters relating to scale and appearance are now to be determined at this stage. These details were received on 25th May 2010 and show the layout and scale of the proposal, albeit in the absence of detailed floorplans.

The application is accompanied by a Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, Travel Plan, Landscape Supporting Statement, Arboricultural Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan. These are all available for Members to view on the planning file and on Public Access.

## Relevant Planning History

- B/1995/0616 Two Storey Extension to provide 8 bedrooms and associated amenities  
Granted 09.10.1995
- B/1999/1067 Insertion of dormer windows into rest room roof. Granted 20.12.1999.

## Relevant Policies

- WMSS RE3, PA1, PA14
- WCSP SD2, SD3, SD4, SD8, SD9, D28, D35, D38, D39, T1
- BDLP DS1, DS2, DS3, DS13, S29, ES4, ES5, E9, C17, TR11, TR8
- Others PPS1, PPG2, PPS6, PPS7, PPG13

## Notes:

The main issues in the determination of this application are the following:

- (i) Whether the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
- (ii) If inappropriate, whether there are any very special circumstances to justify the proposal;
- (iii) the potential impact of the proposal in terms of Highway Safety and parking;
- (iv) the effect of the proposal on residential and on the wider public amenity
- (v) the impact on trees and ecology

### (i) Green Belt

The site is located within established Green Belt and therefore Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2), policies D.28 and D.39 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan (WCSP) (1996 - 2011) and Policy DS2 of the adopted Bromsgrove District Local Plan (BDLP) 2004 apply to the development.

Policies D.28 and D.39 of the WCSP and DS2 of the BDLP conform with the advice of PPG2 in defining the types of development which are acceptable in Green Belt locations. The proposal under consideration is clearly not essential for agriculture, outdoor sport or recreation nor does it involve the conversion of existing buildings to alternative uses or their replacement such that Green Belt openness would be retained. Policy D28 specifically states that new buildings for business purposes in the Green Belt will only be allowed in those settlements identified in the BDLP as being acceptable for infilling. The application site at Greenhill does not fall within any such settlement.

It is evident that the proposal is inappropriate and the extent of the harm caused must be considered. PPG2 states that the most important attribute of Green Belts are their openness (paragraph 1.4) and it is clear that the proposal would have a significant impact on the openness of the site and would thereby conflict with the fundamental aims of Green Belt policy. The proposal would have a total floorspace of 2600 square metres, which is more than twice the size of the existing facility. The proposal would essentially add four additional blocks at the rear of the building which would be clearly visible from Greenhill. The provision of these units would have a significant urbanizing effect on the character and visual amenity of the site which would attenuate the harm caused through loss of openness.

The Planning Statement refers to the enclosed nature of the site. However, it is evident that a development of this scale would inevitably result in a loss of openness and urbanization arising from the greater demand for parking and servicing. There are substantial differences in the screening capacity of trees between the summer and winter seasons and trees and boundary treatments may not be permanent features of the landscape. Limited visibility would not, in any event amount to a very special circumstance to justify the proposal. The site is clearly located outside any established settlement boundary and conflicts with policy DS5 and will amount to sporadic development in the Green Belt. Members should note the views of Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council on these points and note the objection raised on this matter.

Since the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it must be considered whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by circumstances which amount to very special circumstances to justify the proposal.

#### (ii) Very Special Circumstances

The requirement for a case for very special circumstances to be provided by the applicant is stated within paragraph 3.4 of PPG2.

"Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In view of the presumption against inappropriate development, the Secretary of State will attach substantial weight to the harm to the Green Belt when considering any planning application or appeal concerning such development".

Members should note the 'very special circumstances' amount to an entirely special and unique occurrence which could not result in a precedent being set for the proposal or analogous proposals elsewhere in the Green Belt. Whilst there is no specific prescription of the circumstances in the context of PPG2 which amount to very special circumstances, Members should seriously consider whether or not the circumstances of this proposal are entirely unique or special.

The advantages of the proposal must be weighed against the significant harm caused to openness, the most important attribute of Green Belts. The applicant's agent has submitted a case for very special circumstances which are included in the Planning Statement presented with the application; the full details of which may be viewed on the planning file or on Public Access. Please note that the case presented for very special circumstances also covers the full application B/2010/0337 for an extension of the existing facility. The case can be summarized as follows:

1. The need for increased specialized accommodation for the elderly,
2. The absence of alternative sites in the urban area to meet the need,
3. The benefits of the established care home at Burcot Grange,
4. The provision of accommodation providing a mix of tenure,
5. Impact upon the existing housing market.

(1) The need for increased specialized accommodation for the elderly

The issue of need has been thoroughly investigated by the applicant and the report details ministerial letters and statements and the Continuing Care Retirement Communities model is strongly advocated. The provision of assisted living alongside the availability of more advanced care to provide for residents of declining health underlies this model. This avoids the need for patients to have to move. The model improves security for residents, enhances access to services, such as transport and leisure. The dementia care facility provides for specialist care and there are a growing number of people with dementia. There has been an increase in demand for respite care for dementia sufferers. The twin bedded accommodation enables couples, where one partner suffers with dementia, to stay together.

The applicant also refers to the Bromsgrove Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2013 and the Bromsgrove District Level Housing Market Assessment (HMA). The applicant considers that the proposals at Burcot Grange will contribute to meeting the objectives of the Community Strategy insofar as they relate to older persons. The HMA points to a substantial increase in the population of older residents with a need to provide 4,800 additional 2 bedroom dwellings and 1575 housing units with care provided for older people to 2026. The applicant considers that the increase in the population of persons aged 65-84 and 85+ requires an 'urgent spatial planning response'. I concur with the views of the applicant that there is a growing older population in the District and the provision of adequate serviced housing is an important corporate priority. However, the applicant has completely failed to mention in this 'very special circumstance' why the additional housing accommodation should be provided in the Green Belt, specifically at Burcot Grange. In terms of the 'spatial' requirement referred to, actually providing the housing for the elderly would be meeting just one spatial requirement. There are substantive other requirements in respect of this type of housing such as the proximity to shops and services such as public transport for persons who may be unable to drive. The proximity of family members of the elderly person is also a critical spatial consideration and it militates against facilities in isolated locations such as the proposal. In the case of a vast majority of older residents of the District, the provision of sheltered housing and additional advanced care facilities would be best provided within and adjoining existing urban areas.

The reference to 'An Older Peoples Strategy for Worcestershire - Independent Living for Older People' does highlight a need for specialist accommodation but stresses the point that most older persons would seek to remain in their own homes, rather than the traditional choices of domiciliary or residential and nursing home care (p26). The report recommends preventative services, telecare, day opportunities as well as specialist domiciliary care. It should be noted that the desire to remain living in ones own home when elderly, will have a significant effect on the future demand for care facilities and this effect has not been quantified.

The HMA specifically referred to Bromsgrove but the trend of an ageing population is a national one. Therefore, the contention of the Applicant that there is a 'local need' for substantial additional housing for older persons in Bromsgrove and that other Districts and regions will not be in the same position defies rational argument. These circumstances are not unique and could easily be replicated in poorly serviced locations throughout the West Midlands Green Belt to the detriment of openness and visual

amenity. Therefore, the need identified by the applicant does not amount to a very special circumstance to justify the development at the location proposed.

It is accepted that there are no specific policies or allocated sites within the BDLP for the provision of specialist housing and care facilities for the elderly. In this context, the Local Planning Authority must rely on the existed adopted policies in relation to such new development, notably policies D.39 of the WCSP and DS2 of the BDLP where there is a clear and strong presumption against development in the Green Belt. The reference to the emerging Core Strategy (specifically Core Policy 12, in respect of addressing local housing need) only considers a single policy and the collective spatial impact of all policies will be to focus housing development on strategically serviced urban areas within the District. Members should note the views of Strategic Planning in respect of the need for additional accommodation for the elderly and the preferred location for such facilities.

In respect of the specific need for the extension of the facility, paragraph 1.6 of the Planning Statement states that 'facilities such as the laundry, dining facilities and other accommodation are now inadequate in terms of their size and that there is a shortage of twin bedded rooms for couples. These are *'inadequate to provide the quality of services sought by the proprietors'*. Members should note that there is no independent report, for example, from the Care Quality Commission which could state unequivocally that the facilities are inadequate and require extensions and updating. As stated above, the development represents the vision of the applicants, rather than necessarily addressing independently verified deficiencies.

(2) The absence of alternative sites in the urban area to meet the need,

In assessing whether there are alternative sites available within the District, the applicant considers that an urban location is not as suitable for the proposed development as the residents will lose out on an attractive outlook to the pleasant environment. I consider that this is within the realms of appropriate urban design and I do not consider that it is a very special circumstance to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There has been no evidence presented to support the assertion that the equivalent care home in Bromsgrove would result in elderly persons losing contact with the rural parts of the District. This is an argument to which no weight can be attached as outlined in point (i) above. In terms of the reference to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, (paragraphs 2.39 - 2.42), it is asserted that the site at Perryfields (Planning Ref: B2008/0758) is committed to affordable housing and there will be no availability of land for the purposes of a care home. Members should note the views of Strategic Planning on this issue: *'the wider Perryfields ADR occupies some 76 hectares and the aforementioned planning application only covers a fraction of this area. There is no evidence to suggest that any location in the rest of the ADR has been considered'*. It is evident that the applicant has selected sites identified in the SHLAA which have recently been the subject of planning applications (such as The Avenue, Rubery and the former Alvechurch 1st and Middle Schools) to assert that there are no alternative locations for the proposal.

### (3) The benefits of the established care home at Burcot Grange

It is stated in paragraph 2.44 of the Planning Statement that the proposed development would be taking place on previously developed land in respect of Annex B of PPS3. Two important points are relevant here. Firstly, Burcot Grange is located well outside the village envelope identified for Burcot on the Proposals Map (in the context of policy DS5) and therefore the site could not be considered a brownfield site in any way. Members should take note of the recent announcement by the government in respect of the consideration of domestic gardens as previously developed land in the context of PPS3. Gardens would not now benefit from brownfield designation, even if the site was not in the Green Belt. The site is clearly not in an accessible location compared with Bromsgrove or other urban areas of the District and it is clear that the development would perform poorly on sustainability criteria.

### (4) The provision of accommodation providing a mix of tenure

It is stated that the tenure arrangements will provide flexibility for prospective purchasers and occupiers and will be restricted to persons over 55 and their partners. These provisions are of benefit to future occupiers in providing choice but there are planning concerns evident. The 13 Close Care Suites and 16 Assisted Living Units could potentially be sold as well as rented. In the case of some of the future occupiers in this context, there may be little binding them to the wider facility and as independent living units. This reduces the argument that they need to be located in the Green Belt. The provision of a range of tenure types does not amount to a very special circumstance.

### (5) Impact upon the existing housing market

It is stated that the development will assist in releasing underutilized housing stock in the District and will thereby improve the maintenance of the existing stock. There are no details or evidence submitted to substantiate this claim. I do not necessarily consider that this is a spatial planning benefit partly as a result of the enormous uncertainty and the fact that relying on individual choice to deliver housing does not represent forward spatial planning of any kind.

Having considered all of the matters raised, I do not consider that very special circumstances exist in this case to outweigh the harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt.

#### (iii) Highway Impact

Members should note the views of Worcestershire Highways. Policy TR11 of the BDLP states that all new development needs to make provision for the safe access and egress from the site as well as adequate parking. There is a requirement for an additional 48 spaces to serve the development. Whilst the parking issue is mentioned in the Design and Access Statement, the provision is clearly insufficient to meet the requirements of the development. These requirements have been passed on to the applicants Agent for a response and Members will be updated on this matter.

#### (iv) Character and Residential Amenity

Burcot Grange is currently has a distinctive Tudor style with complex window detailing and decorative timber work. The provision of 4 additional blocks of development at the side will obviously impact on the character of the existing building and upon the wider amenity of the area. I appreciate that the design proposed would be sympathetic to the character of the existing building. However, the scale of the development and its position would have a significant urbanizing impact on the site and surroundings compared with the present situation. Whilst, there are differences in levels on the site, which offsets some of the impact, the development would result in a site with a greater urban character, unexpected in the Green Belt. In terms of residential amenity, the property to the east is more than 70m from the proposal; the residences to the front are more than 100m away and that to the west is approximately 80m from the curtilage boundary. In the case of this latter property, the boundary is open in this direction (south) and whilst some additional landscaping is proposed on this boundary, the scale of the proposal is such that there would be an impact on the amenity of the property.

#### (v) Tree and Ecological Issues

The application has been accompanied by a Landscape Supporting Statement, an Arboricultural Method Statement and an Initial Bat Survey. Whilst there are a large number of trees on the site of varying amenity value, the arboricultural method statement states that there will be a loss of 43 individual trees and one group and another two groups will be partially removed. The remainder of the 168 trees on the site will be retained and managed in accordance with BS5837 (2005) (Trees in relation to Construction). There is a significant loss of beech trees to the east side of the site. The Landscape Supporting Statement takes the view that the impact on the visual amenity of the Green Belt will be slight but this overlooks the critical issue of openness discussed above. Furthermore, the landscape setting around Burcot Grange will change enormously on a seasonal basis and the trees and hedges may not be permanent features of the landscape. Members should the views of the Tree Officer in relation to the application. In particular, the loss of healthy beech trees to the east side is a concern reducing the screening capacity of the site. There are trees in the front of the property which will be affected by the parking provision. Members should note the views of Worcestershire Highways that additional parking is required and it is difficult that to see where this will be provided without further impact on the trees on the site.

Members should note the views of Natural England who recommend refusal. In the case of bats, a European Protected Species, the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty under Regulation 3(4) to have regard to the requirements of the Habitat Directive in the exercise of its functions. The additional requirements on compensation and mitigation have been submitted to the applicant's Agent and Members will be updated on this matter.

#### Conclusion

The proposal to erect 13 Close Care Suites and 16 Assisted Living Units is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The applicant has not provided any very special circumstances which outweigh the harm caused. The need for additional care facilities and wider housing options for elderly persons has been identified. However, it has not be

coherently demonstrated why the development must necessarily be located in the Green Belt contrary to fundamental planning policy. Furthermore, the fact that such an isolated site performs poorly in respect of sustainability criteria has not been addressed by the applicant. There is a significant loss of trees and other negative ecological impacts arising from the proposal. Thereby, the proposal conflicts with the policies of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan and the Bromsgrove District Local Plan and the advice of PPG2. On the basis of all of the evidence, I recommend that permission is refused.

**RECOMMENDATION** that planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. The proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would cause significant harm to the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt in this location and would conflict with four of the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2. No very special circumstances have been put forward or exist that clearly outweigh the harm caused and therefore the proposal is contrary to policies SD.2, D.28, D.38, and D.39 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan and policies DS2 and DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan and the provisions of PPG2 (Green Belts).
2. There is insufficient parking identified to serve the needs of the development which would potentially result in displacement parking. The proposal would thereby conflict with policy TR11 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan.
3. The proposal would result in a loss of trees and have a detrimental impact on certain existing trees contrary to policies C17 and DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan and the advice of PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation).
4. There is currently insufficient information to demonstrate the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on European Protected Species and thereby the proposal conflicts with policy CTC13 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan, policy DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan and the advice of PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation).
5. The proposal is not in a location which would be accessible to a variety of means of transport and other services contrary to policy SD.4 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan (2001) and policy DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan (2004).