



# Sustainability Appraisal of Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan

October 2017

# Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

## Sustainability Appraisal of Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan

A report by **CAG Consultants**

October 2017

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# Summary

This is a sustainability appraisal report produced to accompany the consultation on the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan (APNP or “the Plan”). A sustainability appraisal (SA) is a structured process which provides information on the social, economic and environmental effects of a plan, and where relevant suggests how it can be changed to be more sustainable.

In the SA a set of sustainability objectives was developed to test the Plan against. These objectives are summarised in the table below.

**Table 1: Summary of sustainability objectives**

|   |
|---|
| <b>Social Objectives</b>  |
| 1) Provide decent housing that is affordable for all  |
| 2) Improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health.   |
| 3) Improve the quality of and equitable access to local services and facilities   |
| 4) Reduce need to travel and move towards more sustainable travel patterns.   |
| 5) Provide opportunities for residents to participate and contribute to decisions that affect their neighbourhood and quality of life |
| <b>Environmental Objectives</b>   |
| 6) Preserve, enhance and recreate the District’s biodiversity and geodiversity.   |
| 7) Ensure efficient use of land and protect land with high environmental and amenity value  |
| 8) Protect, enhance and manage the character of the landscape and townscape   |
| 9) Preserve and enhance the historic environment  |
| 10) Use natural resources efficiently   |
| 11) Protect and enhance the quality of water, soil and air quality.   |
| 12) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the parish’s ability to adapt to climate change                                       |
| <b>Economic Objectives</b>  |
| 13) Develop the rural economy   |
| 14) Improve the vitality of local centres   |

The SA tested the key aims of the Plan and found that they were compatible with these objectives. More information on this can be found in section 3.

For each of the objectives, the SA looked at existing data and identified key issues for the subject. The SA then tested the Plan policies and found that overall the Plan is likely to have a significant positive effect on each of these objectives. It found a few instances where there is uncertainty about the effects of the Plan and made a few recommendations for changing policies to improve the Plan’s positive effects. These can be found in section 5.2.

# 1 Introduction and methodology

## 1.1 What is this report for?

This is a sustainability appraisal report produced to accompany the consultation on the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan (APNP or “the Plan”). A sustainability appraisal (SA) is a structured process which provides information on the social, economic and environmental effects of a plan, and where relevant suggests how it can be changed to be more sustainable.

The purpose of this SA is to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are considered throughout the plan-making process and that the final Neighbourhood Plan has considered all aspects of economic, social and environmental sustainability in its production.

This report describes the SA which has been undertaken and outlines its effects on sustainable development.

In the rest of section one it outlines the legal requirements, gives an overview of the Plan, and describes the methodology used.

In section two it gives an overview of the policy context and key sustainability issues. It then outlines the sustainability objectives which are used to test the sustainability of the Plan. Finally it gives more detail on the current situation, key policy and issues relating to each of the sustainability objectives.

In section three it outlines the effect of each policy in the Plan on these objectives and makes recommendations for improving the Plan’s sustainability.

## 1.2 Legal requirements

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)<sup>1</sup> says there is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to have a sustainability appraisal. However, it notes that a sustainability appraisal may be a useful way of demonstrating how the plan will contribute to achieving sustainable development.

NPPG also notes that in some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment (SEA). A Strategic Environmental Assessment is a review of the effects of the plan on a range of environmental criteria and on human health.

NPPG notes that there is a requirement to check whether a SEA is needed. It is also necessary to assess whether the plan would have potential significant effects on European wildlife sites.

The SEA check is done by “screening” the plan against the legal requirements outlined in the regulations.<sup>2</sup> There is a legal requirement to consult with the relevant environmental bodies<sup>3</sup> about this screening.

---

<sup>1</sup> Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 11-026-20140306

<sup>2</sup> The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

<sup>3</sup> the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage

An initial screening was done by Bromsgrove District Council on behalf of the Steering Group in February 2013. At this stage the emerging proposals for the plan included plans to allocate sites for housing. The statutory consultees responded by advising an SEA would be necessary.

However, as the draft plan preparations progressed, the priorities changed, and it was decided not to include site allocations in the plan. It was therefore necessary to re-screen the Plan to check if an SEA was still necessary. This was done in September 2015, and the need for an assessment of the effects on European wildlife sites was also considered at the same time<sup>4</sup>. The screening results showed that there was no legal requirement to undertake a SEA of the Plan and no requirement to assess its effects on European wildlife sites. The Council consulted with the relevant environmental bodies who agreed with this conclusion.

Nevertheless, the Steering Group have decided to undertake a sustainability appraisal to demonstrate that the plan contributes to sustainable development.

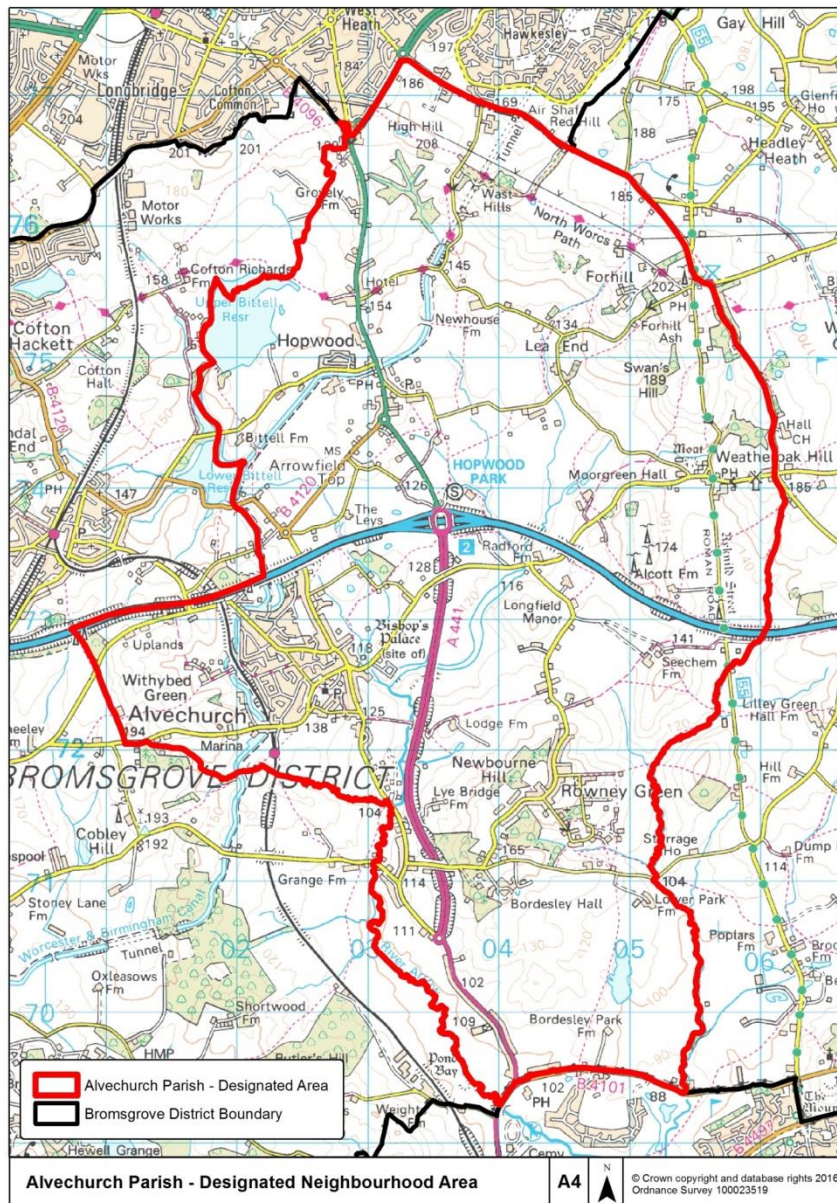
### 1.3 About the Plan

The Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan covers the whole of Alvechurch Parish. The Designated Neighbourhood Area is outlined in red on the map on the following page.

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<sup>4</sup> Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening Determination September 2015

Figure 1: Alvechurch Neighbourhood Area



A Neighbourhood Plan relates to the use and development of land. Its primary purpose is to help in determining planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area. The Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan covers the period 2017- 2030. It describes its aim as follows:

*The aim of this Neighbourhood Plan is to retain and enhance the traditional values of a rural parish. Development which promotes, protects and makes 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.*



## 1.4 How we undertook this Sustainability Appraisal

In producing this SA we have broadly followed the process laid out in the regulations, in Government guidance<sup>5</sup> and in other guidance<sup>6</sup>. However, as there is no legal requirement for this SA to meet the requirements of the regulations, some elements have been omitted to ensure that the approach is proportionate. For example, we did not consult on the scope of the SA, and we did not appraise different options.

The steps we took in the SA are shown in the table below.

Table 2: SA steps

| Timescale   | SA stage   | Detail  | Who was involved  |
|---|--|---|---|
| Initial meeting Nov 2012<br>Work updated a number of times and finalised September 2017 | Policy context   | Review other national and local policy , including NPPF and the Local Plan  | Steering Group and CAG Consultants                                    |
| Initial meeting Nov 2012<br>Work updated a number of times and finalised September 2017 | Social, economic and environmental conditions                        | Research information about the area, and find out about particular environmental issues   | Steering Group  |
| Initial work November – December 2012<br>Updated Feb 2017                               | Appraisal framework  | Agree list of sustainability objectives to assess the plan against  | Steering Group and CAG Consultants                                    |
| September 2012- September 2016  | Identify plan topics and alternatives                                | Consult public on topics and alternatives, including through questionnaires in 2012 and in March 2014 and September 2016. Process was extended as it was decided to wait for the completion of the Bromsgrove Local Plan. | Steering Group and local residents who responded to the consultations |
| May 2017  | Testing the impact of the preferred alternatives and detailed policy | Options for provision of new housing on the green belt which were originally consulted on were discarded as not reasonable in 2015 a result of discussion with a  | CAG Consultants   |

<sup>5</sup> In National Planning Practice Guidance and in *A Practical Guide on the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive*<sup>5</sup>, published in 2005

<sup>6</sup> We are grateful for the advice included in *'DIY SA': Sustainability Appraisal of Neighbourhood Plans*, Levett-Therivel and URS/Scott Wilson 2011



|  |                                      |  |                 |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------|
|  |                                      | planning consultant and with Bromsgrove DC. The remaining options were all brought forward as policies, and these have been tested by this SA. |                 |
|  | Fine tuning plan to minimise impacts | Reviewing any changes to the plan<br>Identify ways of avoiding or mitigating impact  | CAG Consultants |
|  | SA report                            | This report  | CAG Consultants |

## 2 Context and sustainability objectives

### 2.1 Planning policy overview

Neighbourhood Plans must conform to national planning policy and the local authority's planning policy, in this case the Bromsgrove District Plan. National Planning Policy is outlined in the Government's statement of planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

#### National Planning Policy

The NPPF underlies that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The meaning of sustainability development in a planning context is summarised in paragraph 7, shown in the box below. More detail on the meaning of sustainable development is outlined in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy *Securing the Future*.

Table 3 Meaning of sustainable development

*There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:*

- an economic role - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*
- a social role - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- an environmental role - contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.*

More detail about NPPF policies relating to sustainable development is given in section 2.6 below.

#### Bromsgrove District Plan 2011-2030

The Bromsgrove District Plan (BDP) was adopted in January 2017. BDP's strategy promotes economic and job growth in the District and provides for new housing to meet the District's needs, as well as land for other activities including retail, sport and leisure. The strategy aims to conserve and improve the character and quality of the environment which is an important component of the District's attractiveness to investment and success

The Neighbourhood Plan is required to be in conformity with BDP. The NPPF says<sup>7</sup> that:

*Neighbourhoods should:*

- develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development;*

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<sup>7</sup> Para 16

- *plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan;*

More detail about relevant BDP policies is given in section 2.6 below.

## 2.2 About the area

The Parish of Alvechurch consists of three electoral wards Alvechurch Ward, Bordesley & Rowney Green Ward and Hopwood Ward. Alvechurch ward comprises the village of Alvechurch and Withybed Green; the Hopwood ward includes the north half of Weatheroak, whilst the southern half is contained within the Rowney Green ward that also encompasses the Holloway and Grange Lane, and is now combined with the Bordesley ward which borders Alvechurch Village ward along Station road.

Sited within the Worcestershire 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 and Redditch new-town and is therefore a vital part of the West Midlands Green Belt that serves as a buffer between conurbations. The only part of the parish that is not covered by the Green Belt classification is the built-up area of Alvechurch village itself. The resultant restrictions on new building development in the Green Belt mean demand for new housing in the parish is always high.

Information about specific aspects of the Parish is included in section 2.6 below.

## 2.3 Key sustainability issues

In order to identify key issues in the Parish, a SWOT analysis was undertaken (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). The SWOT was done for social, economic and environmental issues. The SWOT analysis was used to develop policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and guide the testing process in the SA.

More detail about specific issues is included in section 2.6 below.

Table 4 Environmental Issues

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Many areas of good woodland and other trees</p> <p>Extensive recent tree planning</p> <p>Small-scale mixed farming encouraging biodiversity</p> <p>Canal, river and reservoirs</p> <p>Higher land giving extensive views</p> <p>Green space for leisure</p> <p>Good well-maintained footpaths and bridleways</p> <p>Designated wildlife and landscape protection areas</p>  | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Lack of access to woods and reservoirs</p> <p>Road verges and hedges not maintained for wildlife</p> <p>Little disability access in countryside</p> <p>Some canal towpath not well managed</p> <p>Little contribution to renewable energy</p> <p>High level of car ownership</p> <p>Light and noise pollution</p>   |
| <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Improvement of playing spaces</p> <p>Development of canal for leisure and wildlife</p> <p>Improved management of verges, hedges, small woodlands and copses</p> <p>Some level-access paths for disability</p> <p>Use of farming stewardship schemes Encouragement of small-scale energy production and energy saving</p> <p>Reducing light at night</p> <p>Local vegetable and fruit growing</p> <p>Better public transport linkages.</p> | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <p><i>(Items in italics are those which it is considered the Plan could influence)</i></p> <p>Loss of “ordinary” habitat through gradual removal of hedges and trees</p> <p>Increased intensification of farming</p> <p>Over-emphasis on tidiness at the expense of wildlife</p> <p><i>Unsympathetic siting of new developments here and in adjoining parishes</i></p> <p><i>Loss of local facilities leading to over-use of cars</i></p> |

Table 5 Social issues

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Range of local shops and services, including doctor's surgery, recreational grounds, library and 2 schools</p> <p>Good range of community activities and facilities including clubs and societies</p> <p>Reasonable spread of housing types</p> <p>Reasonable rail service</p> <p>Some bus services</p> <p>Good road network</p> <p>Above county average level of good health</p>  | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Difficulty in getting appointments at the Medical Centre due to rising population</p> <p>Not all local children having access to local school</p> <p>Affordability of housing</p> <p>Not the right mix of housing for the population: not enough 2/3 bed properties and limited intermediate and sheltered housing.</p> <p>Transport not integrated</p> <p>Poor traffic management on some roads</p> <p>Poor coverage by public transport</p> <p>Lack of footways and poor cycle provision between settlements</p> <p>Respiratory issues in Alvechurch</p> |
| <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Influence development, ensure this includes relevant infrastructure</p> <p>Encourage further small retail outlets</p> <p>Extend doctor's surgery by adding other health facilities</p> <p>Build sustainable housing</p> <p>Encourage and investigate housing provision which is affordable for local people</p> <p>Improve transport integration</p> <p>Community Infrastructure Levy</p> <p>Encourage cycle pathway provision</p> | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <p><i>(Items in italics are those which it is considered the Plan could influence)</i></p> <p>Loss of facilities at Alexandra Hospital</p> <p><i>Loss of community facilities, e.g. PO, chemist, library</i></p> <p>Increased car usage</p> <p><i>Encroachment of neighbouring conurbations</i></p> <p><i>Inappropriate mix of housing in future development</i></p> <p><i>Local authority cutbacks on traffic management and sustainable transport</i></p> <p><i>Insufficient services for growing number of elderly people</i></p>                             |

Table 6 Economic issues

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Strengths</b><br>Accessible employment<br>Reasonable transport network<br>Central in UK<br>Improved train service<br>High numbers of home workers<br>Longbridge development<br>Employment in care homes<br>Local facilities at Alvechurch<br>Farming businesses<br>Relatively affluent  | <b>Weaknesses</b><br>Not enough local employment<br>Location near to large conurbations means local services not well used<br>Mix of employment limited<br>Some land not farmed viably<br>Poor mix of services<br>Insufficient, outdated and inflexible stock of business premises<br>Poor broadband  |
| <b>Opportunities</b><br>Improve broadband<br>Encourage appropriate farm diversification<br>Encourage the development of tourism<br>Enhance and market local facilities<br>New housing will bring more customers for local facilities<br>Encourage modernisation and development of Bordesley Hall business park<br>Promote a business development plan for Alvechurch village centre | <b>Threats</b><br>(Items in italics are those which it is considered the Plan could influence)<br><br><i>Inappropriate farm diversification</i><br><i>Employment moving away from Parish</i><br><i>Loss of bus service</i><br><i>Local services moving away</i><br>Canal River Trust not being able to maintain all canal towpaths', meaning reduced use<br>Infrastructure support not being adequate<br><i>Insufficient services for higher number of elderly people</i> |

## 2.4 What influence does the Plan have?

The Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have the following positive effects:

- More sympathetic siting of new developments
- Retention of local facilities More appropriate mix of housing in future development
- Provision of appropriate additional school and medical facilities for new development
- Support for more local authority investment in traffic management and sustainable transport
- Support for improved services for growing number of elderly people
- Reduction in inappropriate farm diversification
- Retention of employment within the Parish
- Support for retention of bus services.

## 2.5 Sustainability objectives

A recognised way of considering the effects of a plan is to develop a set of sustainability objectives. These objectives are called an appraisal framework. This was used to test the sustainability of the draft Plan.

An appraisal framework has been developed for the SA of the Plan, drawing on:

- A review of key policy objectives, particularly those in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Social, economic and environmental conditions and key issues
- Other appraisal frameworks, for example those used by Bromsgrove District Council.

This framework is shown in the table below.

**Table 7: Appraisal Framework**

| <b>Objective</b>  | <b>Sub objectives</b>   |
|---|---|
| <b>Social Objectives</b>  |   |
| 1) Provide decent housing that is affordable for all  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide affordable access to a range of housing tenures and sizes to meet local needs</li> <li>• Provide housing in a clean, safe and pleasant local environment</li> <li>• Provide high quality well designed residential environments</li> </ul>   |
| 2) Improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to health facilities</li> <li>• Improve the quality of life for local residents</li> <li>• Promote healthier lifestyles</li> <li>• Reduce the impacts of ambient noise and light pollution</li> <li>• Reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>  |
| 3) Improve the quality of and equitable access to local services and facilities   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, socio economic status or educational attainment</li> <li>• Retain rural services</li> <li>• Deliver the social, recreational, educational and cultural facilities the countryside needs</li> </ul>  |
| 4) Reduce need to travel and move towards more sustainable travel patterns.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve public transport</li> <li>• Avoid exacerbating traffic congestion</li> </ul>   |
| 5) Provide opportunities for residents to participate and contribute to decisions that affect their neighbourhood and quality of life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for local residents to comment on the plan</li> <li>• Promote wider community engagement and civic responsibility</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Environmental Objectives</b>   |   |
| 6) Preserve, enhance and recreate the District's biodiversity and geodiversity.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect habitats and species, especially those designated as being of importance</li> <li>• Avoid habitat fragmentation, and provide habitat linkages</li> </ul>   |
| 7) Ensure efficient use of land and protect land with high environmental and amenity value  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguard mineral resources</li> <li>• Safeguard the best and most versatile agricultural land</li> <li>• Safeguard land of green belt value</li> <li>• Maximise use of previously developed land and reuse of vacant buildings where this is not detrimental to open space, biodiversity or historic interest</li> <li>• Protect the countryside, green spaces, and green belt</li> </ul> |
| 8) Protect, enhance and manage the character of the landscape and townscape   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and strengthen local distinctiveness and sense of place.</li> </ul>   |
| 9) Preserve and enhance the historic environment  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve and enhance sites, features, areas and settings of archaeological, architectural, historical and cultural heritage importance.</li> </ul>   |
| 10) Use natural resources efficiently   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy</li> <li>• Protect water resource availability and promote water efficiency</li> </ul>   |
| 11) Protect and enhance the quality of water, soil and air  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect groundwater resources</li> </ul>   |
| 12) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the parish's ability to adapt to climate change                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure inappropriate development does not occur in high risk flood prone areas and does not adversely contribute to fluvial flood risk or contribute to surface water flooding in all the areas.</li> </ul>  |



|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote energy efficiency and energy generated from renewable energy and low carbon sources.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Economic Objectives</b>                |   |
| 13) Develop the rural economy             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote rural businesses including tourism and appropriate farm diversification</li> <li>Promote locally generated employment</li> <li>Promote local food production</li> <li>Support the development of electronic communications networks</li> </ul> |
| 14) Improve the vitality of local centres | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and develop Alvechurch's role as a local centre</li> </ul>   |






























Section 4 gives an overview of the policy objectives, data and specific issues relating to each objective. More detail on specific aspects is included in the AVNP itself and in the Evidence Base for the Plan.



### 3 Compatibility of the Plan aims with the sustainability objectives

The table below summarises the compatibility of the Plan key aims with the sustainability objectives listed above. It shows that all the key aims are compatible with the sustainability objectives. It also shows that all the sustainability objectives are addressed by key aims, apart from the public participation objective.

| Key                 |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Compatible          |  |
| None or minor links |  |

| SA Objectives (abbreviated)<br>AVNP Key Aims (abbreviated)               | 1 Housing   | 2 Health  | 3 Access to services  | 4 Travel  | 5 Participation | 6 Biodiversity  | 7 Land use   | 8 Landscape/townscape   | 9 Heritage  | 10 Natural resources  | 11 Water, soil & air  | 12 Climate change   | 13 Rural economy  | 14 Local centres  |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----------------|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Development that meets current and future needs of all age groups...  |  |  |   |   |                 |   |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. Development within the Alvechurch Village boundary...                 |   |   |  |  |                 |   |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. Developing services, facilities and amenities...                      |   |  |  |  |                 |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 4. Maintaining a mix of local businesses...                              |   |   |   |   |                 |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 5. Encouraging varieties of leisure, cultural and sporting facilities... |   |  |  |   |                 |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6. Promoting both integrated public transport...                         |   |  |  |  |                 |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7. To maintain and enhance the historic and natural environment...       |   |   |   |   |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |
| 8. Promotion of safe, sustainable developments...                        |   |  |   |   |                 |   |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |   |

The following potential improvement to the key aims was identified:

Add an additional aim reflecting the objective of providing opportunities for participation

**APNP response:** now addressed in APNP Key aim 2

# 4 Impacts of the plan on each of the sustainability objectives

## 4.1 Introduction

This section describes the likely effects the plan will have on each of the sustainability objectives. For each objective, it gives a brief overview of relevant policy objectives, data and specific issues relating to the objective.

## 4.2 Housing

### Relevant policy objectives

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes it clear that one of the roles of planning is to provide the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future<sup>8</sup>

A strategic objective of Bromsgrove District Plan (BDP) is to:

*Provide a range of housing types and tenures to meet the needs of the local population for example the special needs of the elderly and the provision of affordable housing<sup>9</sup>.*

The following BDP policies are relevant:

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| BDP 3  | Future Housing and Employment Development |
| BDP 5B | Other Development Sites                   |
| BDP 7  | Housing Mix and Density                   |
| BDP 8  | Affordable Housing                        |
| BDP 9  | Rural Exception Sites                     |
| BDP 10 | Homes for the Elderly                     |

Part of the evidence base for BDP is the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Appendix 2, which covers Bromsgrove, draws out the following policy issues:

- There will be a sustained need for new housing. In total the SHMA suggests that there will be a requirement for between 6,800 and 7,000 dwellings between 2011/12 and 2029/30 to meet the demands generated by new household formation.
- Over the next five years there will be a high demand for affordable housing.
- There will be a high demand for smaller properties able to meet the needs of older person households.

### Current conditions and key issues

The Neighbourhood Plan notes that *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*

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<sup>8</sup> para 7

<sup>9</sup> SO4

number of our residents, who have indicated that affordable housing for young people and families is hard to find in Alvechurch.

The situation is similarly challenging for our more elderly neighbours. As it appears many of the new building developments are larger, more expensive homes; do we really have the houses appropriate for older people?

The table below shows the population and number of households<sup>10</sup>.

Table 8: Parish Statistics

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

A review of available housing data<sup>11</sup> shows that, in Alvechurch, there is:

- a high level of home ownership (80.122%) and correspondingly low proportions of social and private rented housing
- a choice of properties by type with the exception of affordable homes for young families, single people and the age
- and at the same time, a higher supply of 1 and 2 bed properties 29% compared to BDC of 26% as a whole

## Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|   |
|---|
| 2. Locations for new housing development      |
| 3. Housing for Hopwood & Rowney Green         |
| 4. Affordable housing – rural exception sites |
| 7. Providing a mix of housing types and sizes |

## 4.3 Health

### Relevant policy objectives

Relevant NPPF policy is shown in the box below.

- *Creating safe, accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Creating safe and accessible developments, containing clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas<sup>12</sup>;*
- *Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities<sup>13</sup>;*

<sup>10</sup> Source: Office of National Statistics Census 2011

<sup>11</sup> APNP Evidence base

<sup>12</sup> both para 69

<sup>13</sup> para 73

- *Avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development.*<sup>14</sup>

A strategic objective of BDP is to:

*Improve quality of life, sense of well-being, reduce fear of crime, promote community safety and enable active, healthy lifestyles for example, by providing safe and accessible services and facilities to meet the needs of Bromsgrove's residents*<sup>15</sup>.

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| BDP 1 | Sustainable Development Principles |
| BDP 6 | Infrastructure Contributions       |
| BDP12 | Sustainable Communities            |
| BDP16 | Sustainable Transport              |
| BDP24 | Green Infrastructure               |
| BDP25 | Health and Well being              |

## Current conditions and key issues

Current health facilities include:

- A general practitioner- run medical centre formally designated as a branch of the Northwood Medical Practice in Birmingham
- A dental practice that caters for both private and National Health patients
- A private cosmetic treatment centre
- A private chiropractic clinic
- 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.

A key issue noted in the plan is that *existing medical facilities are already stretched and further development is likely to make this situation worse.*

The most recent data on the health of Parish residents comes from the 2012 Health Acorn within Alvechurch 61.7% of the population are classified as 'Healthy' (37.6% in Worcestershire). The proportion of the population in Alvechurch with 'Existing Problems' is 11.7% and 0.0% of the population is classified as having 'Future Problems'.

**Table 9: Health of the Population**

|   | <b>Alvechurch</b> | <b>Worcestershire Bromsgrove</b> |      |
|---|-------------------|----------------------------------|------|
| <b>Population classified as 'Healthy' % (2012)</b>                  | 61.7              | 37.6                             | 32.8 |
| <b>Population classified as 'Possible Future Concerns' % (2012)</b> | 26.6              | 40.4                             | 52.6 |

<sup>14</sup> para 123

<sup>15</sup> SO7

|  | <i>Alvechurch</i> | <i>Worcestershire</i> | <i>Bromsgrove</i> |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Population classified as 'Future Problems' % (2012)</b>   | 0.0               | 10.0                  | 3.2               |
| <b>Population classified as 'Existing Problems' % (2012)</b> | 11.7              | 11.0                  | 9.8               |

**Source: Health ACORN, CACI**

The Parish suffers noise pollution from the M42, and light pollution from the combined effects of Birmingham, Redditch and the main road/motorway system.

### Impacts of the Plan on this objective

The following plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|   |
|---|
| 5. Housing design principles                        |
| 6. Sustainable development - design                 |
| 13. Access to the countryside                       |
| 15. Healthcare facilities – provision & improvement |
| 18. Sport, leisure and recreation facilities        |
| 22. New business developments                       |
| 26. Getting around                                  |
| 27. Provision of adequate parking                   |
| 28. Road safety and traffic management              |

## 4.4 Access to services and facilities

### Relevant policy objectives

Relevant NPPF policies are shown in the box below.

To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should<sup>16</sup>:

- plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
- ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and
- ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

<sup>16</sup> para 70

To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should<sup>17</sup>:

- 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

As noted above a strategic objective of BDP is to:

*Improve quality of life, sense of well-being, reduce fear of crime, promote community safety and enable active, healthy lifestyles for example, by providing safe and accessible services and facilities to meet the needs of Bromsgrove's residents<sup>18</sup>.*

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                              |
|-------|------------------------------|
| BDP 6 | Infrastructure Contributions |
| BDP12 | Sustainable Communities      |
| BDP15 | Rural Renaissance            |

## Current conditions and key issues

In terms of local facilities, the Plan notes that there are two schools in the Parish: Crown Meadow First School and Nursery and Alvechurch Church of England Middle School.

*It comments that in 2017 school places for local children are not always available, with some having to take places outside of the parish due to lack of places. As the Parish population grows over the Neighbourhood Plan period and beyond, it is vital that our schools are able to offer sufficient places to cater for that growth.*

The issue about pressure on health facilities was discussed in the previous section.

The Plan includes a list of valued open spaces and recreational facilities in the Parish. It comments that *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 to play spaces for the more energetically minded members of the community.*

## Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|   |
|---|
| 2. Locations for new housing development            |
| 5. Housing design principles                        |
| 8. New housing, improved services                   |
| 13. Access to the countryside                       |
| 15. Healthcare facilities – provision & improvement |
| 16. Protection of local green spaces                |
| 17. Improvement and protection - open spaces        |
| 18. Sport, leisure and recreation facilities        |
| 19. Local shops                                     |
| 23. Communications infrastructure                   |
| 27. Provision of adequate parking                   |

<sup>17</sup> para 28

<sup>18</sup> SO7

## 4.5 Travel

### Relevant policy objectives

The NPPF notes that transport policies need to take account of policies on the needs of rural areas. Relevant NPPF policies<sup>19</sup> are shown in the box below.

Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore, developments should be located and designed where practical to

- accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies;
- give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities;
- create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter and where appropriate establishing home zones;
- incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles; and
- consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.

A strategic objective of BDP is to:

*Encourage more sustainable modes of travel and a modal shift in transport, for example encouraging walking and cycling and promoting a more integrated, sustainable and reliable public transport network across the District<sup>20</sup>.*

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| BDP 1 | Sustainable Development Principles |
| BDP12 | Sustainable Communities            |
| BDP16 | Sustainable Transport              |

Worcestershire County Council Local Transport Plan 3 includes the following cycling policy:

- 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.

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<sup>19</sup> para 35

<sup>20</sup> SO6



## Current conditions and key issues

The Plan notes that:

- Alvechurch is a fairly large semi-rural area with over 27 miles of Public Rights of Way (PROW) criss-crossing the Parish.
- Alvechurch has a rail link to Birmingham and Redditch, with track upgrades allowing the timetable to be improved from 2 to 3 trains per hour in each direction.
- The number of bus routes is limited in the Parish.
- 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.
- The Worcestershire-Birmingham Canal is the final piece of the local transport infrastructure, which runs north-south through the Parish.



Alvechurch new Rail Station completed 2015

The Plan comments that *the current economic climate means there is further pressure to reduce these general public bus services, which are especially valuable to older people.*

It goes on to say: *encouraging people to travel by bicycle over other sustainable 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.*

## Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|  |
|--|
| 5. Housing design principles                 |
| 18. Sport, leisure and recreation facilities |
| 20. Alvechurch village centre                |
| 26. Getting around                           |
| 27. Provision of adequate parking            |

## 4.6 Participation

### Relevant policy objectives

Relevant NPPF policies<sup>21</sup> are shown in the box below.

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<sup>21</sup> para 69

The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Local planning authorities should create a shared vision with communities of the residential environment and facilities they wish to see. To support this, local planning authorities should aim to involve all sections of the community in the development of Local Plans and in planning decisions, and should facilitate neighbourhood planning.

A strategic objective of BDP is to:

*Foster local community pride, cohesion and involvement in plan making process<sup>22</sup>*

## Current conditions and key issues

The Plan notes that:

*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.*

## Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policy is likely to have a significant positive effect:

### 1. Involving local people in the planning process

In addition, there is potential for improving the impact of the Plan on this objective by amending policy 4 as follows:

Although policy 1 would ensure that there is a formal pre-application consultation process on any sites planned for development, policy 4 on rural exception sites would be strengthened if it ensures that local people are informed and given an opportunity at an early stage, prior to the development of a formal planning application. It is recommended that this be included in Community Action 1.

**APNP response:** *the following has been added to policy 4: 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.*

## 4.7 Biodiversity

### Relevant policy objectives

The NPPF states that<sup>23</sup>:

*The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment including by; minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.*

A strategic objective of BDP is to:

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<sup>22</sup> SO12

<sup>23</sup> para 109

*Protect and enhance the unique character, quality and appearance of the historic and natural environment, biodiversity and Green Infrastructure throughout the District<sup>24</sup>.*

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| BDP 1 | Sustainable Development Principles |
| BDP21 | Natural Environment                |
| BDP24 | Green Infrastructure               |

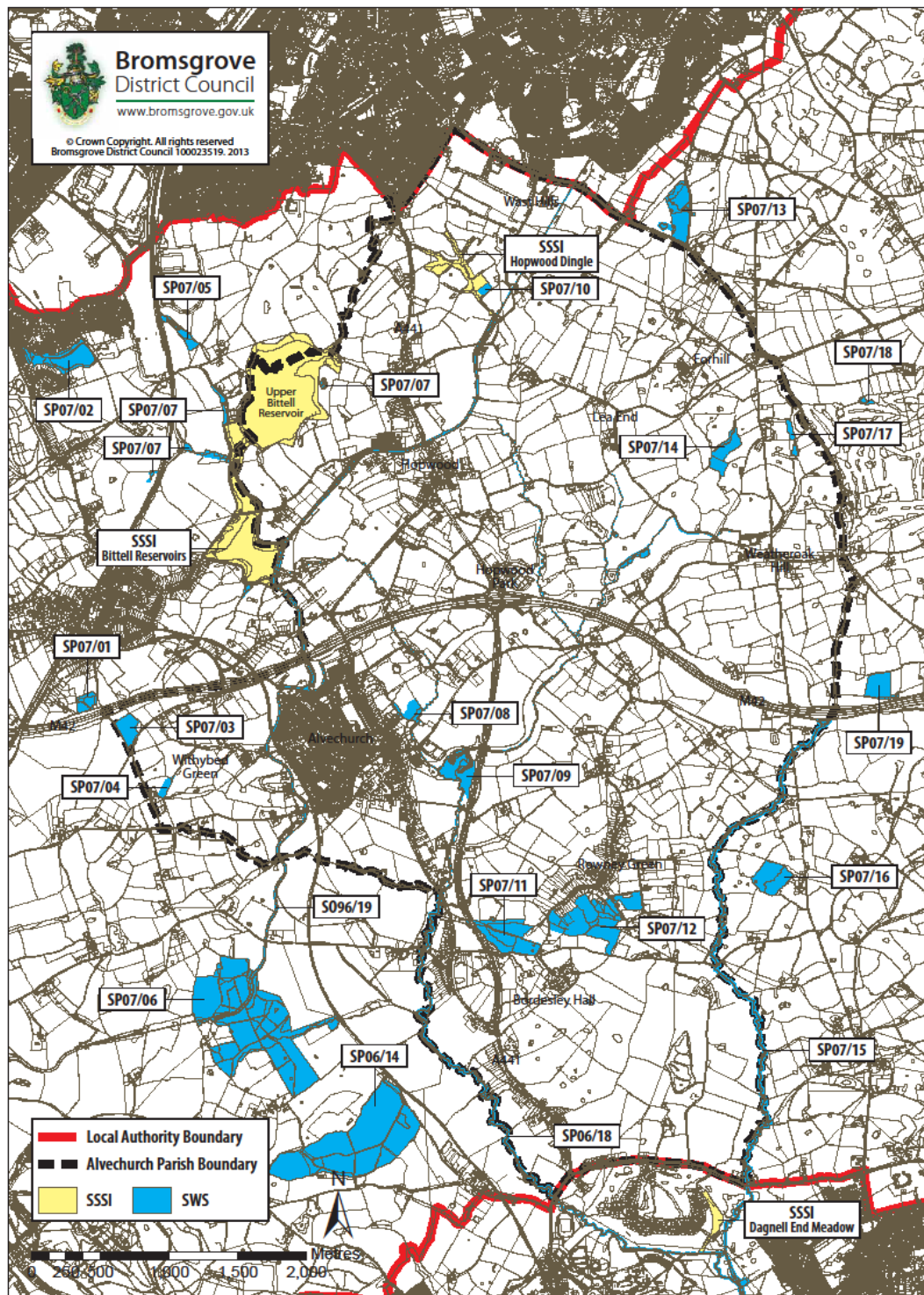
### Current conditions and key issues

There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Hopwood/Grovely Dingle, with old native woodland and ground, and the north shore of Upper Bittell reservoir, with rare shoreline plants. Newbourne Wood is a local nature reserve owned by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Special Wildlife Sites include Bittell reservoirs, a meadow near Foxhill, The Meadows and old fish ponds in Alvechurch, Peck Wood and Rowney Green. There is also a private nature reserve at Hopwood Service Station. The designated sites are shown in the map below.

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<sup>24</sup> SO8

Figure 2: Designated biodiversity sites



The Parish is particularly well provided with trees, in woods, dingles and individual specimens. Larger woods include Peck Wood, Newbourne wood and Grovely Dingle (sometimes called Hopwood Dingle which requires a permit to visit), all nature reserves, and there are substantial new woods and plantings including Withybed Wood, Mick's Wood, and new trees in Peck Wood. Public access to woodland is limited.

The Plan notes that:

*During community consultations there was overwhelming support for keeping the countryside wildlife-friendly, with a high proportion “strongly agreeing”.*

It also comments that:

*The once common hedgehog is now under threat from development and 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. (Source: The Wildlife Trust).*

## Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|   |
|---|
| 6. Sustainable development - design           |
| 10. Local distinctiveness                     |
| 11. Alvechurch Parish Design Statement        |
| 14. Protection of the natural environment     |
| 17. Improvement and protection of open spaces |

There is an opportunity to improve the impact of the Plan on this objective by amending policy 2 as follows:

Criteria (f) refers to the environment; it would more clearly promote protection of biodiversity if this was changed to “natural environment”

**APNP response:** Policy 2 now includes (f.) It would not have an adverse impact on the local landscape, natural environment or heritage assets

There are also some uncertainties about the impact of the Plan on this objective relating to policy 4 on rural exception sites:

Impacts on biodiversity and historic environment are uncertain as no specific sites are identified for rural exception sites under policy 4. These impacts would be mitigated by other policies in this plan and the Local Plan. If sites are identified in the future the requirements for an assessment of environmental impacts would need to be determined.

## 4.8 Land Use

### Relevant policy objectives

The NPPF states that<sup>25</sup>:

*Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value.*

It also allows for the designation of Local Green Space<sup>26</sup>:

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<sup>25</sup> para 111

<sup>26</sup> para 76 & 77



*Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.*

*The 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, for example because of its beauty, historic 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.*

Strategic objectives of BDP are to:

*Protect and enhance the unique character, quality and appearance of the historic and natural environment, biodiversity and Green Infrastructure throughout the District<sup>27</sup>*

*Safeguard and enhance the District's natural resources such as soil, water and air quality; minimise waste and increase recycling including re-use of land, buildings and building materials<sup>28</sup>.*

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| BDP 1 | Sustainable Development Principles |
| BDP4  | Green Belt                         |
| BDP21 | Natural Environment                |
| BDP24 | Green Infrastructure               |

## Current conditions and key issues

The Parish is well-provided with green space, including 23 hectares of outdoor playing space (sports pitches at Alvechurch, Hopwood, and Rowney Green, children's playgrounds at Alvechurch, Hopwood and Rowney Green, the MUGA in Alvechurch Crown Meadow). The Meadows provide wildlife-rich space for walking and leisure.

The Plan has identified four green spaces that are worthy of Local Green Space designation. These green spaces are shown in the table below.

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<sup>27</sup> SO8

<sup>28</sup> SO 9

Table 10: Proposed Local Green Space designations

| Name and Location                            | Distance from Local Community   | Special Qualities / Local Significance  |
|--|---|---|
| Wiggin Field<br>Centre of Alvechurch Village | At the heart of Alvechurch Village, 2 minute walk from the centre   | Left to the community in memory of a son lost in the First World War.<br>Provides local walks via a Public Right of Way (PROW)<br>Is a peaceful place with Wildlife Site designation<br>Principal children's play area with modern play equipment and a Sport England standard junior football pitch. |
| Rowney Green Parish Council playing fields   | 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 2 tennis courts free to parishioners and is the only source for social recreation within Rowney Green   |
| The Hopwood Community Playing Field          | In the heart of the small Hopwood hamlet and 1.6 miles from the centre of Alvechurch Village.                         | The field is used for local Alvechurch youth football and has a community hall available for the community to hire at preferential rates  |
| Alvechurch Village 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   |

Most farmland is Grade 3 agricultural land - moderately good: mostly heavy clay, with different soils round Rowney Green, mostly small pastoral farms with sheep and some cattle & horses. Employment in farming is above average for the area. There are patches of uncultivated and un-grazed land in hilly areas.

### Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|   |
|---|
| 2. Locations for new housing development              |
| 3. Housing for Hopwood and Rowney Green               |
| 12. Protecting landscape and open views               |
| 14. Protection of the natural environment             |
| 15. Healthcare facilities – provision and improvement |
| 16. Protection of local green spaces                  |
| 17. Improvement and protection of open spaces         |
| 18. Sport, leisure and recreation facilities          |
| 22. New business development                          |

There are also some uncertainties about the impact of the Plan on this objective relating to policy 4 on rural exception sites:

|  |
|--|
| Impacts of the rural exceptions sites policy on land use are also uncertain, as while the policy says brownfield sites will take priority, no sites have been identified, so there could be an impact on the countryside and green belt. |
|--|



## 4.9 Landscape and townscape

### Relevant policy objectives

The NPPF states that<sup>29</sup>:

*The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils.*

Protecting townscape and landscape is also about safeguarding local distinctiveness, and the NPPF has clear policies on this, shown in the box below.

*Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:*

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;*
- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation*

As noted above, a strategic objective of BDP is to:

*Protect and enhance the unique character, quality and appearance of the historic and natural environment, biodiversity and Green Infrastructure throughout the District<sup>30</sup>*

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| BDP 1 | Sustainable Development Principles |
| BDP20 | Managing the Historic Environment  |
| BDP21 | Natural Environment                |

Section 1 of the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement and the character area statements in the Alvechurch Historic Environment Research Assessment produced by Worcestershire County Council

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<sup>29</sup> para 109

<sup>30</sup> SO8

(AHERA) are relevant to this objective. They establish the relationship between local settings, the built and natural environment that in turn creates the local distinctiveness of Alvechurch Parish.

### Current conditions and key issues

The Parish is mainly all Green Belt apart from the area within the curtilage of Alvechurch Village itself, which is classified as a rural urban area.

Landscape Character Assessment classifies it mainly as Principal Timbered Farmlands, with some Wooded Estate lands & Wooded Hills. This means it has small fields and mixed farming, winding lanes and scattered settlements, large and small woods, copses and hedgerows, and remnants of old hunting estates (Alvechurch and Bordesley Parks).

The uplands around the edges of the Parish were formerly characterised as areas of special landscape protection, and are much valued for views and landscape. Other features include the River Arrow and its lowlands and feeder brooks, Bittell reservoirs and the Birmingham and Worcester canal.

The high quality of the special architectural and historic character and appearance of the Neighbourhood Plan area, especially within the Conservation Area, are described in the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement and Bromsgrove District Council's Conservation Area designation report.

The Plan comments that:

*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 saying that house building in Alvechurch is spoiling the traditional aura of the village and its rural character.*

### Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|   |
|---|
| 2. Locations for new housing development          |
| 3. Housing for Hopwood and Rowney Green           |
| 4. Affordable housing – rural exception sites     |
| 5. Housing design principles                      |
| 9. Built heritage and local character             |
| 10. Local distinctiveness                         |
| 11. Alvechurch Parish Design Statement            |
| 12. Protecting landscape and open views           |
| 14. Protection of the natural environment         |
| 17. Improvement and protection of open spaces     |
| 20. Alvechurch village centre                     |
| 22. Assessing design in Alvechurch village centre |

## 4.10 Historic environment

### Relevant policy objectives

The NPPF states that a core planning principle is to<sup>31</sup>:

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<sup>31</sup> para 109

*Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations*

The policies on design and local distinctiveness, as well as the BDP policies referenced in the previous objective are also relevant here.

Historic Environment Action Plans (HEAPs) have been produced by the County Council, with two covering part of the Parish<sup>32</sup>, and leading to the making of the Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment, with 37 character areas of Alvechurch highlighted. The HEAP gives more information on the historic environment resource and historic landscape characteristics, and includes strategic actions. The actions from Alv A3 are shown in the table below.

**Table 11: Historic Environment Action Plan strategic objectives**

|  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secure greater levels of protection and representation for locally significant historic environment assets and historic landscape character</li><li>• Improve awareness of the distinctiveness and significance of post medieval rural land use, landscape character and rural buildings.</li><li>• Promote sensitive and sustainable development and conservation of historic farmsteads</li><li>• Improve awareness, understanding and conservation of the distinctiveness and significance of the medieval parkland landscape</li><li>• Promote holistic approaches to local landscape and environmental management, highlighting opportunities presented by historic environmental features</li><li>• Gain a greater understanding and knowledge of the presence, provenance, and condition of belowground archaeological deposits</li></ul> |
|--|

In addition, Alvechurch has been selected a case study as part of a Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service pilot project, funded by English Heritage.<sup>33</sup> The aim of the Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment (AHERA) is *to ensure that the character and quality of Alvechurch's historic environment is fully appreciated in terms of its townscape, landscapes, historic buildings, urban form, and archaeology. Further, 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*<sup>34</sup>.

## Current conditions and key issues

Alvechurch Parish contains a wide range of historic and characterful buildings and monuments. The parish also has a Conservation Area, the Bishops 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.

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<sup>32</sup> Alv\_A1 and Alv\_A3 which cover Alvechurch and Withybed Green, and Rowney Green respectively. These were created as *examples* within a project intended to develop a methodology for assessing historic landscapes

<sup>33</sup> See [Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment](#)

<sup>34</sup> AHERA, page 3

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 Plan comments that *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 and if not managed correctly this could lead to the loss of existing heritage, amenity and character.*

There are 37 distinctive character areas or historic local environments identified in AHERA. 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.

## Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|   |
|---|
| 2. Locations for new housing development          |
| 3. Housing for Hopwood and Rowney Green           |
| 5. Housing design principles                      |
| 9. Built heritage and local character             |
| 10. Local distinctiveness                         |
| 11. Alvechurch Parish Design Statement            |
| 14. Protection of the natural environment         |
| 20. Alvechurch village centre                     |
| 22. Assessing design in Alvechurch village centre |

There are also some uncertainties about the impact of the Plan on this objective relating to policy 4 on rural exception sites:

Impacts on biodiversity and historic environment are uncertain as no specific sites are identified for rural exception sites under policy 4. These impacts would be mitigated by other policies in this plan and the Local Plan. If sites are identified in the future the requirements for an assessment of environmental impacts would need to be determined.

## 4.11 Natural resources

### Relevant policy objectives

The NPPF states that one of the environmental roles of the planning system is to:<sup>35</sup>

*Use natural resources prudently, minimise waste*

A strategic objective of BDP<sup>36</sup> is to:

*Safeguard and enhance the District's natural resources such as soil, water and air quality; minimise waste and increase recycling including re-use of land, buildings and building materials*

<sup>35</sup> para 109

<sup>36</sup> SO9

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| BDP 1 | Sustainable Development Principles |
| BDP22 | Climate Change                     |
| BDP23 | Water Management                   |

The Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy 2012- 2027<sup>37</sup> guides waste management in the County and makes provision for waste management and recycling sites. One of its objectives is:

*'Make driving waste, up the waste hierarchy, the basis for waste management in Worcestershire'<sup>38</sup>*

This means promoting waste reduction and recycling.

### Current conditions and key issues

Bromsgrove falls within the Severn River Basin District and assessment of the main water resources in the River Basin Management Plan indicates that the main aquifers have poor quantitative status and no change in status is forecast for by 2015. The existing abstraction has also led to negative environmental impacts in several areas in the District (such as the Hewell Grange SSSI and the Battlefield Brook) which could further impact on Severn Trent Water's projected baseline negative balances of supply. The climate change projections (UKCP09) also indicate that by 2080s, there will be a projected change in average summer rainfall volumes ranging from a decrease of about 60% to an increase of about 10%<sup>39</sup>.

This points to likely future shortfalls in water resources and the need to reduce water use in current and new properties.

### Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| 5. Housing design principles        |
| 6. Sustainable development - design |

An opportunity has also been identified to improve the impacts of the Plan on this objective by modifying policies 6 and 22 as follows:

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Policy 6  | The policy would be strengthened by including the following elements in the required sustainability statement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minimising water use and requiring waste water management</li><li>• Identifying the risk of surface water flooding specifically, and if necessary developing a surface water management plan.</li></ul>   |
| Policy 22 | At the moment the policy refers to development being sustainable, but this is not defined. Therefore this policy would be strengthened if criteria were added requiring that proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify and take account of flood risk, including that from surface water flooding.</li><li>• Promote where feasible waste water management, including the use of SuDs.</li></ul> |

<sup>37</sup> Worcestershire County Council Nov 2012

<sup>38</sup> WO3 – this includes a target of 78% of municipal solid waste (mainly household waste) to be reused, recycled, or processed by other recovery methods by 2020

<sup>39</sup> The information in this paragraph is taken from BDP para 8.229

- Maximise the opportunities for renewable or low carbon energy provided by the particular site.

**APNP response:** changes now included in policy 6 and 22

## 4.12 Water, soil and air quality

### Relevant policy objectives

The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to:

*preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.*<sup>40</sup>

As noted above, a strategic objective of BDP<sup>41</sup> is to:

*Safeguard and enhance the District's natural resources such as soil, water and air quality*

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| BDP 1 | Sustainable Development Principles |
| BDP23 | Water Management                   |

### Current conditions and key issues

River Arrow in the Parish is among the watercourses receiving water from the Sewage Treatment Works at Lye Bridge. With the exception of River Tame which is only assessed for its dissolved oxygen, all watercourses in the District fail to meet at least one of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives and standards. The poor quality is suspected to be due to a combination of point source inputs (that is sewage discharges) and diffuse inputs (that is urban run-off, agricultural and land use management). The Council has a duty under the WFD to take into account the River Basin Management Plan and help deliver the WFD objectives.

This has implications for new development, the most relevant for Alvechurch being the need to ensure that water runoff is managed sustainably, including through the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS).

### Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| 5. Housing design principles        |
| 6. Sustainable development - design |

As with the previous objective, an opportunity has also been identified to improve the impacts of the Plan on this objective by modifying policies 6 and 22 as follows:

<sup>40</sup> para 109

<sup>41</sup> SO9

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Policy 6  | The policy would be strengthened by including the following elements in the required sustainability statement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimising water use and requiring waste water management</li> <li>• Identifying the risk of surface water flooding specifically, and if necessary developing a surface water management plan.</li> </ul>   |
| Policy 22 | At the moment the policy refers to development being sustainable, but this is not defined. Therefore this policy would be strengthened if criteria were added requiring that proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and take account of flood risk, including that from surface water flooding.</li> <li>• Promote where feasible waste water management, including the use of SuDs.</li> <li>• Maximise the opportunities for renewable or low carbon energy provided by the particular site.</li> </ul> |

**APNP response:** changes now included in policy 6 and 22

## 4.13 Climate change

### Relevant policy objectives

The NPPF states that<sup>42</sup>

*Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.*

A strategic objective of BDP<sup>43</sup> is to:

*Ensure the District is equipped to mitigate the causes of and adapt to the impacts of climate change, for example, by managing and reducing flood risk, by ensuring water and energy efficiency and by encouraging new developments to be low or zero carbon.*

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| BDP 1 | Sustainable Development Principles |
| BDP22 | Climate Change                     |
| BDP23 | Water Management                   |

### Current conditions and key issues

Worcestershire has already felt the impacts of extreme weather events in recent years and will continue to be vulnerable in the future as climate changes. Climate projections for the County indicate that the average daily maximum summer temperature could increase by 7.5°C by 2050s. Rainfall is also likely to be affected, with a potential increase of up to 33% in summer by 2050s<sup>44</sup>.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment that covers the District<sup>45</sup> notes that the main issue is surface water and sewer flooding which is much more widespread and rapid than 'main river' flooding. This

<sup>42</sup> para 93

<sup>43</sup> SO10

<sup>44</sup> Taken from BDP para 8.215

<sup>45</sup> Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Jan 2009



results in the direct flooding of property and roads or the overtopping of the smaller ordinary watercourses. This is assisted by the topography, geology, farming practices, lack of maintenance and the urbanisation of the catchments.

For Alvechurch Parish, the nature of the slowly permeable loamy and clayey soils has generally protected it from excessive flooding. Very many gravel and marl extraction pits are scattered across the parish, particularly on the slopes of Newbourne Hill, some of which form natural ponds. All the pits contribute significantly to the area's biodiversity and hydrological profile and should be considered as significant Green Infrastructural assets. However where small ponds, and brooks are taken through culverts when they reach roads, they make areas prone to flash-flooding in very heavy rain.

BDP<sup>46</sup> notes the importance of both planning for the effects of climate change and reducing energy use. It comments:

*The Climate Change Act 2008 introduced a statutory target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 34% below 1990 levels by 2020 and seeks an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050. To achieve the 2050 target, analysis by the Committee on Climate Change shows that it will require a step change in the pace of emissions reduction across all sectors, including buildings energy efficiency measures, surface transport, waste and renewable projects, which is where local authorities have most scope to influence emission reductions.*

## Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| 5. Housing design principles        |
| 6. Sustainable development - design |

As with the previous two objectives, an opportunity has also been identified to improve the impacts of the Plan on this objective by modifying policies 6 and 22 as follows:

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Policy 6  | <p>The policy would be strengthened by including the following elements in the required sustainability statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimising water use and requiring waste water management</li> <li>• Identifying the risk of surface water flooding specifically, and if necessary developing a surface water management plan.</li> </ul>   |
| Policy 22 | <p>At the moment the policy refers to development being sustainable, but this is not defined. Therefore this policy would be strengthened if criteria were added requiring that proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and take account of flood risk, including that from surface water flooding.</li> <li>• Promote where feasible waste water management, including the use of SuDs.</li> <li>• Maximise the opportunities for renewable or low carbon energy provided by the particular site.</li> </ul> |

**APNP response:** changes now included in policy 6 and 22

<sup>46</sup> para 8.216

## 4.14 The rural economy

### Relevant policy objectives

NPPF policy<sup>47</sup> on supporting a prosperous rural economy is shown in the box below.

Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;
- promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and
- 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.

A strategic objective of BDP<sup>48</sup> is to:

*Provide support and encouragement for economic growth of existing and new businesses for example, in knowledge based industries and high tech manufacturing, whilst also supporting farming and rural diversification and investing in lifelong education and learning skills.*

Relevant BDP policy includes:

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| BDP 1 | Sustainable Development Principles |
| BDP14 | Designated Employment              |
| BDP15 | Rural Renaissance                  |

### Current conditions and key issues

Alvechurch Parish is generally an affluent area. More than 40% of residents are employed in managerial or professional occupations (England and Wales 28.2%). There were 265 people claiming out of work benefits (November 2011), representing 6.8% of the population aged between 16 - 64 years.

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. About 7.0 % of people in Alvechurch work mainly from

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<sup>47</sup> para 28

<sup>48</sup> SO5

home. This compares with 2.98% in the West Midlands. 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.

Initial consultation work with the Alvechurch population suggests there is no desire for a larger scale business to be located in the Parish and no great wish for green belt land to be given up for business purposes.

However, Alvechurch does have a substantial rural hinterland which could be part of a “rural renaissance.” This recognises the continued relevance of farming and related agricultural work along with businesses providing sport and leisure activities like horse riding and ‘canal cruising’ which take advantage of an area’s rural features. For the additional business opportunities they provide and for the recreational value the latter can also offer to the resident population and to visitors, they deserve continuing support in terms of current and future land use in Alvechurch Parish.

Within the parish, there are small businesses (including retail, home and garden services, care, motor vehicle, leisure) and public employment (including schools, medical centres.) The main clusters of employment are in Alvechurch village centre and Bordesley Hall Business Park at Rowney Green, with smaller clusters including Hopwood service area. While not formally a designated business park the Hall and its associated outbuildings have a long history as a centre for offices and for research and light industrial use.

This mix of mostly small- scale business activity, including home workers, puts the emphasis mainly on local retail and service activity catering for our local population. There may also be too limited employment opportunities to cater for the Parish’s young people wishing to work locally. Given the high levels of commuting there is a danger of the Parish becoming simply a commuter area for Redditch and Birmingham. Local businesses and associated employment opportunities should be monitored and developed within the constraints of a rural community.

### Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|  |
|--|
| 13. Access to the countryside                |
| 18. Sport, leisure and recreation facilities |
| 19. Local shops                              |
| 20. Alvechurch village centre                |
| 21. Safeguarding existing businesses         |
| 22. New business development                 |
| 23. Communications infrastructure            |
| 25. Bordesley Hall employment area           |

## 4.15 Alvechurch’s role as a local centre

### Relevant policy objectives

As noted above, one element of NPPF policy on the rural economy is to *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*<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> para 28

A strategic objective of BDP<sup>50</sup> is to:

*Support the vitality and viability of local centres and villages across the District.*

Alvechurch is defined as a Large Settlement in the BDP settlement hierarchy. This means it provides for some development sites in the village.

Relevant BDP policies include:

|         |                         |
|---------|-------------------------|
| BDP 2   | Settlement Hierarchy    |
| BDP5 B) | Other Development Sites |
| BDP12   | Sustainable Communities |
| BDP15   | Rural Renaissance       |
| BDP18   | Local Centres           |

### Current conditions and key issues

The village is a large, compact settlement centred on a small group of local facilities, including a range of shops. It is located on the cross-city railway line (Redditch-Lichfield), and has a station located on the southern side of the village. The settlement is bounded by the M42 to the north, the railway line to the west and the Alvechurch by-pass to the east.

Alvechurch represents a potentially suitable and sustainable location for some very limited development should the need arise in the future. The strengths and weaknesses of the village are shown in the table below.<sup>51</sup>

#### Strengths

- The village has most of the facilities and amenities needed for residential life including a Medical Centre and Dentist surgery, an opticians and a chemist.
- It has good access to the countryside via well maintained PROWs and has reasonable transport links.
- It has a range of social and community facilities, including a Village Hall, several public houses, and an Indian and Chinese takeaway.
- It has a good education base including a Library,
- The parish Council is a strong and active council working for the community.
- There is a strong sense of local identity
- The architectural character of individual buildings varies from street to street and also within a street
- Includes a village recreation ground and open space associated to the schools
- A variety of uses, such as primary and middle schools, community facilities, church and different types of housing, such as sheltered housing, as well as general housing
- Mature trees around open spaces
- It has the opportunity to be improved, e.g. some pedestrianisation, around The Shopping Precinct area.

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<sup>50</sup> SO3

<sup>51</sup> APNP Evidence Base

## Weaknesses

- Limited future spaces at schools and at the Medical centre.
- Overspill parking from village centre car parks into streets especially at school times
- Poor bus service with non on a Sunday, and access to railway station having a poorly maintained car park
- Lack of designated cycle routes
- Economic future of The Social club is under threat so is the car park, which is essential to village parking.
- Dated mid-20<sup>th</sup> century shopping precinct area that needs improving
- No crossing point near Medical Centre
- Crossing point across Redditch road does not access precinct
- Poor separation of shoppers and other pedestrians from moving traffic
- Lack of public seating
- Lack of green infrastructure in Village Centre

## Impacts of the plan on this objective

The following Plan policies are likely to have a significant positive effect:

|                                      |
|--------------------------------------|
| 19. Local shops                      |
| 20. Alvechurch village centre        |
| 21. Safeguarding existing businesses |
| 22. New business development         |
| 23. Communications infrastructure    |

[illegible]

| SA Objectives<br>(abbreviated) →                    | 15 Local centres | 13 Rural economy | 12 Climate change | 11 Water, soil & air | 10 Natural resources | 9 Heritage | 8 Landscape/townscape | 7 Land use | 6 Biodiversity | 5 Participation | 4 Travel | 3 Access to services | 2 Health | 1 Housing | AVNP policies (names abbreviated in some cases)<br>↓ |
|---|------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|----------|----------------------|----------|-----------|--|
| 13. Access to the countryside                       |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 14. Protection of natural environment               |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 15. Healthcare facilities – provision & improvement |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 16. Protection of local green spaces                |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 17. Improvement and protection - open spaces        |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 18. Sport, leisure and recreation facilities        |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 19. Local shops                                     |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 20. Alvechurch village centre                       |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 21. Safeguarding existing businesses                |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 22. New business developments                       |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 23. Communications infrastructure                   |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 24. Assessing design in Alvechurch village centre   |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 25. Bordesley Hall employment area                  |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 26. Getting around                                  |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 27. Provision of adequate parking                   |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |
| 28. Road safety and traffic management              |                  |                  |                   |                      |                      |            |                       |            |                |                 |          |                      |          |           |  |

## 5.2 Specific comments on policies

| Policy no | Comment on Policy:   |
|-----------|--|
| 2         | Criteria (e) refers to the environment; it would more clearly promote protection of biodiversity if this was changed to “natural environment”  |
| 4         | Impacts on biodiversity and historic environment are uncertain as no specific sites are identified. These impacts would be mitigated by other policies in this plan and the Local Plan. If sites are identified in the future the requirements for an assessment of environmental impacts would need to be determined. Impacts on land use are also uncertain, as while the policy says brownfield sites will take priority, no sites have been identified, so there could be an impact on the countryside and green belt. |

|    |   |
|----|---|
|    | Although policy 1 would ensure that there is a formal pre-application consultation process on any sites planned for development, policy 4 would be strengthened if it ensures that local people are informed and given an opportunity at an early stage, prior to the development of a formal planning application. It is recommended that this be included in Community Action 1.  |
| 6. | The policy would be strengthened by including the following elements in the required sustainability statement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimising water use and requiring waste water management</li> <li>• Identifying the risk of surface water flooding specifically, and if necessary developing a surface water management plan.</li> </ul>   |
| 22 | At the moment the policy refers to development being sustainable, but this is not defined. Therefore this policy would be strengthened if criteria were added requiring that proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and take account of flood risk, including that from surface water flooding.</li> <li>• Promote where feasible waste water management, including the use of SuDs.</li> <li>• Maximise the opportunities for renewable or low carbon energy provided by the particular site.</li> </ul> |

**APNP response:** changes now included in policy 2,4 6 and 22