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OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION

Bridge Farm, Bittell Farm Road, Hopwood B48 7AF

**Demolition of the main house at Bridge Farm and erection of 9 x
one and two bedroomed single storey dwellings**

For Stephen and Martin Hall

PLANNING STATEMENT

AUGUST 2021

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This Statement accompanies an outline application which seeks consent to demolish the main house at Bridge Farm and erect 9 small single storey dwellings to add to the 3 existing dwellings in the grounds, previously converted from farm buildings.
- 1.2 Bridge Farm was in agricultural use until the late 20th C with a large imposing farmhouse located at the junction of the Birmingham Road (A441) and Bittell Farm Road. Whether for road improvement or other reasons. the old farmhouse was demolished and replaced with a large two storey house set back into the site. There followed a series of applications in the 1990s and later to convert some of the old farm buildings into three separate dwellings, which continue to be let out on short term tenancies.
- 1.3 The applicants, who are Stephen and Martin Hall, need to fund the fees for Martin's care home as he suffers from Parkinson's disease. Since he is only 61, the applicants are keen to self-fund for as long as possible to avoid burdening the Local Authority. Stephen Hall would downsize and live in one of the units proposed in this application.

- 1.4 The application proposals stem from a clear understanding derived from research by the Parish Council, who have been in discussion with the applicants, of the increased need for more small affordable housing in the area, and the applicant's view that this would be an ideal site for that form of development, and the desire to see optimal use of the site for the benefit of the community.
- 1.5 The field at the northern end of the Applicant's land is included in the application site and is intended to be a managed, landscaped, or wilding area for the benefit of the residents and biodiversity.

2. CONTEXT

General Location

- 2.1 Hopwood is located on the south side of Birmingham in Bromsgrove and is centred on the Hopwood House pub (formally an hotel) where users of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal would have broken their journey. Most of the settlement is located south of the canal and east of the A441.
- 2.2 The canal is fed by the nearby substantial Bittell Reservoirs - well used for walking, fishing, boating, open water swimming and bird watching. Today the canal is popular for leisure with several nearby narrow boat hire centres and lots of moorings by the pub.
- 2.3 The Hopwood stretch of canal is between the 30 Tardebigge Locks, one of the largest lock flights in Europe, and the Wast Hills Tunnel, at 2726 yards long one of the longest in the country.
- 2.4 Predating the pub on the other side of the main road was an inn for the leggers, who walked the narrow boats through the 1½ miles long tunnel, since there is no towpath, so that they could rest, drink and recuperate while their clothes dried out at the Inn. Prior to the construction of the locks, Hopwood served as a canal terminus where goods would have been loaded and unloaded.

The application site

- 2.5 Bridge Farm itself is situated on the east side of the Birmingham Road (B411) at its junction with Bittell Farm Road, on the north side of that road. The buildings are all located at the southern end of the property, while to the north of the buildings is a large open area. Overall, the property extends to around 0.67 hectares of which the present buildings occupy around just under half the property at 0.35 hectares.

- 2.6 The property comprises a main house occupied by solely by Stephen Hall, along with 3 converted former farm buildings – The Old Forge, The Hayloft and Meadow View – which are all owned by the Applicants but are let out on short term tenancies and are all occupied. An old poorly constructed block of four single storey garages amounting to around 60 sq m in floor area is intended to be demolished to create a harmonious courtyard.
- 2.7 The Old Forge, as a smithy before more recently becoming a small cottage in the grounds of Bridge Farm, served the horses towing the barges using the canal.
- 2.8 A substantial three storey building, Bridge House, once stood on-site at the corner of Bittell Farm Road and the A441 which is likely to have housed many stevedores and/or agricultural workers. A village store was once on the site too. In later years horses were stabled on site and jumps set up in the paddock.

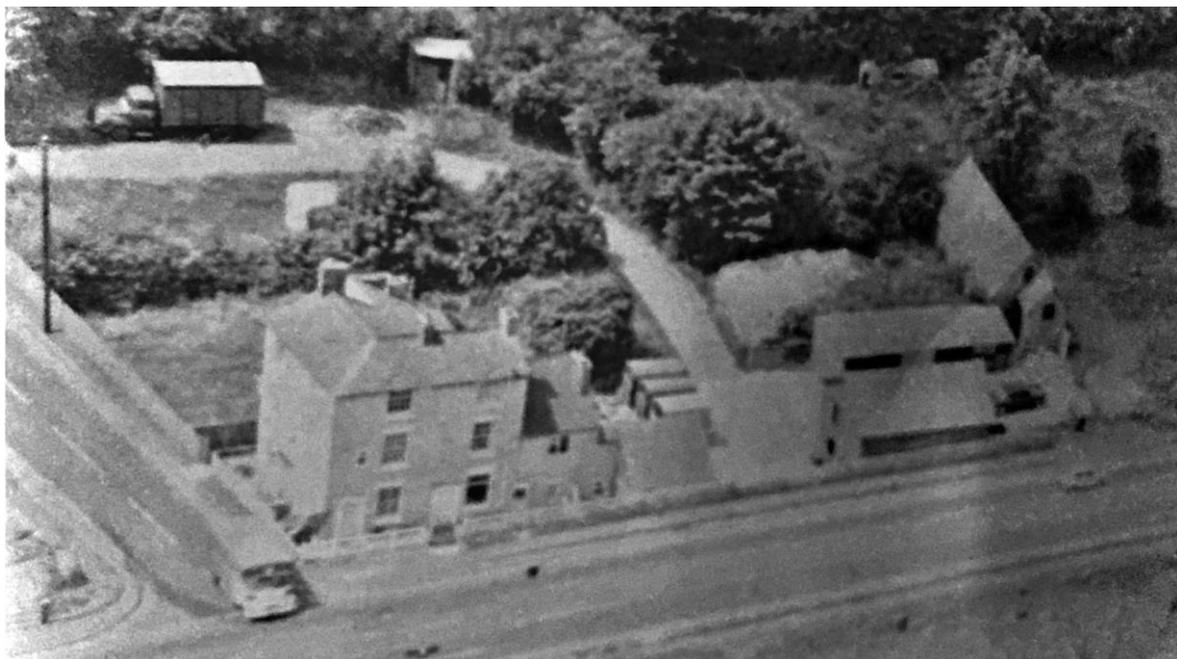


Photo of Bridge Farm, Hopwood C1960

Property and Planning History

- 2.9 The property history is understood to be as follows -
- 26 July 1927 – Freehold property purchased by Mr. Arthur Aich.
 - 21 December 1960 “The Stores” purchased by Melvin Barraclough “1.929 acres or thereabouts and also the messuage shop dwelling house two cottages and outbuildings”.

- 2 November 1970 - 455 square yards freehold land situate at "The Stores" sold by Melvin Barraclough Worcestershire County Council. A narrow strip believed to be for road improvements as a hump-back bridge was replaced and the road raised.
- In about 1972 Bridge House was demolished to be replaced by the large main house at Bridge Farm.
- 20 October 1975 site purchased by Alan and Patricia Bradley.
- 20 March 1984 site purchased by Roy Anthony Hall and Jean Hall late parents of Martin Hall and Stephen Hall - the current owners. The Land Registry stated at the time that the "registration has been completed to exclude the land comprised in the copy Conveyance dated 2 November 1970 to Worcestershire County Council, and to accord with the extent occupied on the ground.

2.10 In terms of subsequent planning history, the following has been obtained from Council records.

- Rebuilding of detached cottage style house, bridge cottage, after demolition of three cottages. Ref. No: ? | Status: GRANT - no other details or documents available.
- Erection of four-bedroomed detached house and garage following demolition of existing cottage. Ref. No: B/1896/1975 | Status: Full Application Refusal - no other details or documents available.
- B/1994/0361 | Change of use of existing barns, storage buildings, garages to village/country store and craft centre - Application withdrawn - no other details or documents available.
- Residential development of 6 detached dwelling houses in paddock. Ref. No: B/14042/1986 | Status: Full Application Refusal - Green Belt

Meadow View

- Conversion of existing barn to residential accommodation (as amended by plans received 19.8.96 and 29.5.97) Planning permission ref B/96/0450 dated 30 May 1996.

The Hayloft

- Refurbishment of existing outbuilding to create a two bedroomed dwelling, as amended by plans and structural report received 08.01.98. Planning permission ref B/97/0405 dated 23 May 1997.

The Old Forge

- Conversion of existing store building into habitable accommodation.- planning permission ref B/8004 dated 27 August 1980.
- Conversion and change of use of outbuilding to dwelling last used as blacksmiths' forge. Planning Permission ref B/2001/1039 dated 29 October 2001.

3. APPLICATION PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The outline application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement which sets out much of the concept detail of the proposals. Apart from layout and access all other matters in the application are reserved for later approval.
- 3.2 The concept in the application is to demolish the existing 4 bed house at Bridge Farm which is two storey with accommodation in the roof space, and in its place to erect 9 x one and two-bedroomed single storey dwellings focused on senior citizens and community housing needs. That mix would include the possibility of also being available for young couples who, within a community such as this, can complement the more elderly residents with assistance, shopping etc.
- 3.3 The proposed aesthetically pleasing ensemble of new dwelling units are intended to have materially less visual impact than the existing large house. The gross internal floor area of the existing dwelling unit amounts to around 421sqm, while the gross internal floor area of the proposed 9 dwelling units amounts to around 489 sqm – each of the 9 units having a gross internal floor area of 54.4 sq m. Each of the new units is 54.33 sqm, which is in excess of the minimum national space standards for this type of dwelling (48 sqm).
- 3.4 The single storey development proposal is designed with a “farmyard” idiom. The current design standards, variation in accommodation was provided to suit demand, i.e., all 2 person units, some of which are 2 single bedrooms and others a single double bedroom. The scheme proposes 4 x two bed 2 person units (type A), 4 x one bed 2 person units (type B) and 1 x one bed 2 person unit (type C).
- 3.5 The majority of the landscaping and access would be dealt with by a communal maintenance scheme with small private patio areas where appropriate. The other three dwellings in the grounds – The Forge, The Hayloft and Meadow View - would be retained as separate dwellings served by the existing access way and each would retain their parking provision.
- 3.6 The application proposals include an improved access to Bittell Farm Road in terms of width and vision splays allowing access to a refuse vehicle. A bin

store for all the units would be located towards the front of the site. Provision would be made for parking including disabled spaces for each of the 9 dwelling units proposed. The parking is designed as an integral part of the development.

- 3.7 The open field area to the north of the buildings would be used as an amenity area for residents and be reserved for any biodiversity offset scheme in accordance with details to be agreed in due course by way of a planning condition. The whole estate would be managed in a sustainable way and available for recreation by the residents in the scheme.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 4.1 For the application to succeed it is necessary to consider whether the proposal accords firstly with the local development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework, and if not whether any very special circumstances exist to override those policies. The normal test for all planning applications is that the determination must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The application site is in the West Midlands Green Belt and the application proposals are for nine one and two bedroomed single storey dwellings replacing the existing two storey house on the site. The most relevant planning policies both at a local development plan level and at a national level in the NPPF in respect of this proposal are those in relation to development in the Green Belt and housing.
- 4.3 The application site comprises two elements – the southern part which contains the main house and three other existing dwellings and the paddock area to the north.

Bromsgrove Local Plan

- 4.4 The Bromsgrove Local Plan 2011-2030 was adopted in January 2017 and replaced the 'saved' policies of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan (Adopted 2004).
- 4.5 The strategic objectives of the Local Plan include focusing new development in sustainable locations in the district (S02), supporting the vitality and viability of local centres and villages (S03), and providing a range of house types and tenures to meet the needs of the local population for example the special needs of the elderly and provision of affordable housing (S04). The strategic objectives also include promoting high quality design of new development (S011).

- 4.6 Local Plan Policy BDP1 sets out Sustainable Development Principles which adopt the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development and provides a more positive and purposeful framework for assessing and determining development proposals in accordance with the Local Plan and any relevant Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.7 The sustainable development principles set out in the Local Plan indicate that the Council will take a positive approach to the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF and will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions to allow schemes to be approved and secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
- 4.8 Local Plan Policy BDP2 sets out the settlement policy for the Borough and states that initially there will be four main facets to the delivery of housing to meet the needs of Bromsgrove District consisting of the following:
- a) Development of previously developed land or buildings within existing settlement boundaries which are not in the designated Green Belt;
 - b) Expansion Sites around Bromsgrove Town (as identified in BDP 5A);
 - c) Development Sites in or adjacent to large settlements (as identified in BDP 5B);
 - d) Exceptionally, affordable housing will be allowed in or on the edge of settlements in the Green Belt where a proven local need has been established through a comprehensive and recent survey and where the choice of site meets relevant planning criteria.
- 4.9 Policy BDP2 – Settlement Hierarchy makes specific reference to the village of Hopwood, stating at BDP2.3 that “the village envelope... will remain unaltered until a review of the Green Belt is undertaken. Within the village envelope appropriate development will be limited to suitable infill plots. This applies to the following villages... Hopwood”.
- 4.10 Meanwhile the Local Plan has allocated a number of sites across the District for housing and other development including two in Alvechurch itself and another in Barnt Green. No sites are allocated in or around Hopwood which remains the nearest small settlement to the application site located to the south and south-east of the canal.
- 4.11 There is a defined settlement boundary to Hopwood where appropriate development will be limited to suitable infill plots only. That does not extend to the application site. A copy of that plan is attached to this Statement as is

an annotated copy of the same plan indicating the other developments around Hopwood that create a more larger mix of development exists in reality outside the settlement boundary.

4.12 General Green Belt policies in the Local Plan (BDP4) follow national guidelines in the NPPF. The Council say in the Local Plan that they will review the Green Belt in the next Local Plan work on which is commencing. Policy BDP4 allows for the replacement of a building providing that the new building is in the same use and should not be materially larger than the building it replaces.

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Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan (APNP)

4.13 After a long period of consultation, an independent examination and then a local referendum, the neighbourhood plan for Alvechurch Parish was made in January 2019 and now forms part of the Bromsgrove District development plan.

4.14 The APNP has developed policies which include to maintain the openness of the Green Belt from uncontrolled, large scale, or poorly placed development, and support Bromsgrove District Council's development plan by encouraging sustainable development around the edge of Alvechurch Village and not spread out into the countryside. It also seeks to ensure that development is sympathetic and has regard for; conservation, improvement and maintenance of the look, feel and sense of place of the parish and Alvechurch Village itself.

4.15 Several housing policies in the APNP are relevant to the application proposals, particularly Policy H1, which deals with locations for new housing development. That policy states that new housing outside of Alvechurch Village is inappropriate development and will not be supported in the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances exist. The onus is therefore on the applicant to demonstrate what the very special circumstances are that would make this proposal acceptable in a Green Belt location, which is not supported by national, local or neighbourhood level policies.

4.16 Within the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan, policy H2 entitled "*Housing for Hopwood and Rowney Green*" sets out the policy specific proposals for housing in the small settlements of Hopwood and Rowney Green. APNP Policy H2 states that proposals for new housing will be supported if they show consideration of the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement and subject to meeting the relevant requirements in the other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, and additionally:

- a) Is limited to small residential infill development and maintains the continuity of existing frontage buildings, or is on brownfield land within

the built-up area of the village where the site is closely surrounded by existing buildings

b) Is not considered to be back garden development

c) Is consistent with the character of the locality as outlined in the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement on its pages 29-32.

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d) Provides at least one small home with two or fewer bedrooms for every one large dwelling with three or more bedrooms

e) Is in suitable locations, on small infill plots giving opportunities for some well-designed self-build homes

f) Is within the built-up area and does not involve the outward extension of the village envelope as shown on the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan policies map.

General National Planning Policy

4.17 The NPPF, which was further revised in July 2021, sets out the Government's economic, environmental, and social planning policies for England. Taken together, these policies articulate the Government's vision of sustainable development, which should be interpreted and applied locally to meet local aspirations.

4.18 The policies in the NPPF are a material consideration which must be considered in development management decisions, where relevant. The development management policies in NPPF can thus be applied directly by the decision-maker when determining whether development should proceed.

4.19 The NPPF sets out that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and for decision takers that means that the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, which includes where the Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land.

4.20 That means granting permission unless the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas, such as Green Belts, or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole

4.21 The NPPF also states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. To achieve sustainable

development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

4.22 The revised NPPF gives particular importance to good design as a key aspect of sustainable development, creating better places in which to live and work and helping make development acceptable to communities.

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4.23 The NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belt, the fundamental aim of which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

4.24 In relation to development within the Green Belt, the revised NPPF Para 149 states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Exceptions to that include: -

- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages;
- limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or – not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

4.25 'Previously developed land' (PDL) is defined in Annex B to the NPPF which sets out that it comprises –

"Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape."

4.26 Case law has been involved in the question of whether residential gardens are always outside the definition of PDL. The Court of Appeal held in the case of *Dartford BC v SoSCLG* (2017) EWCA Civ. 141 - Case No: C1/2016/1664 that in the definition of PDL in the NPPF, "Land in built-up areas" cannot mean land *not* in built-up areas." From that it has therefore been held that land in the curtilage of a dwelling in the Green Belt and outside of any built-up area cannot be excluded from the definition of PDL. It is a brownfield site and development policies apply to it.

Housing Land supply

4.27 The Council's last report on housing land supply in Bromsgrove District was published in April 2020 and included the district's five-year land supply calculation. On 1 April 2020 the Council could only demonstrate 3.18 years supply of deliverable housing land up to 1 April 2025. That figure included making good the shortfall accrued in the Bromsgrove District Plan period since 2011 and the application of a 5% buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market.

4.28 The tilted balance is expressed in the NPPF and makes it clear that policies are out of date in relation to housing applications where the Council cannot demonstrate a five years supply of housing land. Moreover, policies are also out of date where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing is substantially below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years. The HDT figures for 2020 published in January 2021 shows Bromsgrove at 69%.

4.29 The Council have a significant shortfall in housing land supply on a scale of marginal-limited-modest-substantial-severe. As the shortfall is substantial, this has a bearing on the weight attached to the tilted balance. and therefore, the tilted balance should be applied to development proposals. Although that does not necessarily override restrictive policies such as for Green Belt, it is nevertheless relevant to proposals that are on previously developed land in a sustainable location.

4.30 In relation to the tilted balance issue, the Council has to ask itself whether, in the particular circumstance of the case, the harm associated with the development proposed significantly and demonstrably outweighs its benefit, or that there are specific policies in the NPPF which indicate that development should be restricted.

5. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Bearing in mind that this is an outline planning application and having regard to the foregoing the main issues in relation to this application appear to be –
- a) Whether the application proposals amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, or if not,
 - b) Whether there are any very special circumstances to justify the proposals;
 - c) Whether the application proposals would give rise to harm to the Green Belt or any other harm.

Appropriate or inappropriate development?

- 5.2 Both the Local Plan and NPPF are generally aligned on the approach to take with new building in the Green Belt and what is appropriate or inappropriate.
- 5.3 New housing such as that proposed in this application is not normally appropriate development, but the NPPF does allow for the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces; limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land.
- 5.4 In terms of redevelopment of previously developed land such development should not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.
- 5.5 In relation to this case we have set out that in terms of gross internal floor area the proposed 9 smaller dwellings would be approximately the same as the present main house on the site. The application proposals are not materially larger than the gross internal floor area of the present house on the site with the addition of the footprint of the four garages to be removed and would occupy much of the footprint of the present house too.
- 5.6 The ancillary parking and amenity space for the nine units are largely within the residential curtilage of Bridge Farm and the curtilages to the three other

dwellings in the grounds. As such we contend that the application proposals fall within the exceptions set out in the NPPF.

5.7 Moreover, the application site appears to amount to previously developed land within the definition set out in the NPPF and is outside any built-up area. As such it would qualify in our view as a brownfield site where redevelopment would not be inappropriate.

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5.8 The NPPF states that the Green Belt serves five purposes: a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. The application proposals do not conflict with any of those five purposes.

Very Special circumstances

5.9 Should the Council consider that the application proposals are not appropriate development in the Green Belt, the NPPF sets out that when considering any planning application, Councils should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Only very special circumstances can override the presumption against development and those will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

5.10 There can be multiple factors which form very special circumstances. It may be possible to demonstrate multiple benefits which we do in this application and collectively they carry sufficient weight as a very special circumstance to secure approval.

5.11 Local Planning Authorities (LPA) should approach determinations for planning applications located in the Green Belt on the 'Wednesbury Principles', which require a public authority to act 'reasonably' in their determination of a decision.

5.12 What constitutes very special circumstances (VSCs) will depend on the weight of each of the factors put forward and the degree of weight to be accorded to each is a matter for the decision taker, acting within the "Wednesbury Principles".

5.13 This stage will often be divided into two steps. Firstly, to determine whether any individual factor taken by itself outweighs the harm, and secondly to

determine whether some or all of the factors in combination outweigh the harm.

5.14 Case law has established that there may be a number of factors, none of them “very special” when considered in isolation, may when combined together amount to very special circumstances and goes on to say that “there is no reason why a number of factors ordinary in themselves cannot combine to create something very special. The weight to be given to any particular factor will be very much a matter of degree and planning judgement and something for the decision-taker.

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5.15 There is no categoric way of deciding whether any particular factor is a ‘very special circumstance’ and the list is endless, but the case will need to be decided on the planning balance qualitatively rather than quantitatively.

5.16 In relation to this application we cite the following very special circumstances as justification for the grant of planning permission for this site. In short they are –

- a) The site is previously developed land
- b) The site is in a sustainable location
- c) The proposed gross floor area equates to that of the existing main house on the site
- d) The development would not breach any of the purposes the Green Belt
- e) The application proposals are supported by the Parish Council who are keen to support the smaller dwelling units proposed.

5.17 We have set out earlier our view on the matter of the site being previously developed land (a), the equality of the floor areas between existing and proposed (c) and that there would be no breach of the purposes of including the application site in the Green Belt (d). The single storey dwelling units would replace the three storey house to be demolished and have far less visual impact.

5.18 On the other VSCs, the application site is in a sustainable location alongside the A441 Birmingham Road where there are regular bus services to Redditch, Bromsgrove. Alvechurch and Birmingham.

5.19 In terms of support for the small dwellings that are proposed in the application for both young and older people, we understand from discussions the Applicant had with the Parish Council that there is much demand in the local Hopwood area for this form of accommodation. However, no sites have been or are being proposed by the District Council for that, despite the overall aim of the Local Plan to provide a wider choice of housing especially for those two groups as part of wider community needs as suggested by the Parish Council.

5.20 The settlement boundary for Hopwood – attached at Appendix 1 to this Statement - is relatively small and offers no sites for such accommodation. The application site is close to the northern end of the Hopwood settlement, and in our view the application proposals can be closely related to Hopwood and can serve the needs of the community around that settlement. That would provide small dwelling units for young and old in a close-knit community on the Bridge Farm site with extensive amenity space adjacent to it.

5.21 We have shown in Appendix 2 an annotated plan of the Hopwood settlement, which demonstrates the wide variety of peripheral development including the mobile home park in Bittell Farm Road, other housing development in Ash Lane not included in the settlement boundary along with the nursery/garden centre.

5.22 Proposals for a development of three houses next to the nursery /garden centre in Ash Lane was dismissed on appeal in 2019. However, an application (ref 21/00872/FUL) for an infill development of 15 affordable (Discounted Market Sales Housing) dwellings including No. 3 retirement bungalows with associated provision for car parking, open space, landscaping and infrastructure works has recently been submitted for that site.

5.23 If that application is approved that would run counter to the APNP and would support the application proposals for Bridge Farm as a clear precedent.

Effect on the Green Belt and enhancement

5.24 In terms of Green Belt openness the proposed dwelling units would occupy much of the footprint of the existing main dwelling on the site and the buildings and ancillary parking etc are all within the previously developed part of the site. There would be no visual or other intrusion into other parts of the site as the proposal is less dominant from the point of view of height and massing than the existing house which exists.

5.25 The alterations to the access would improve the currently poor visibility on exiting the site onto Bittell Farm Road. Whilst the existing access has poor visibility to the west, the site is immediately within the 40mph zone and traffic will be slowing down for the junction. However, the proposed relocation will improve the safety.

5.26 The proposed development is spatially separated from the other three established/ retained dwellings on the site and no additional noise or disturbance is anticipated to occupiers of those houses.

5.27 The existing open field area to the north of the developed part of Bridge Farm is to be set aside for amenity space and would accommodate any required biodiversity requirements that the ecologists suggest should that be an issue of perceived harm.

5.28 We have identified no possible harm to neighbours or the area around .

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The application proposals follow on from earlier informal discussions between the applicant and his team with representatives of Alvechurch Parish Council . While it is recognised that there are Green Belt limitations it was felt in those discussions that in this case, justification could be shown by the overriding need of Bromsgrove area to relieve shortfall of suitable affordable property for downsizers, elderly before care or first-time couples. In supply of affordable property. Such use would contribute to fulfilling "community use" description.

6.2 We believe that the application proposals would use previously developed land to provide nine small dwellings replacing the existing large house on the site. That development would meet the perceived needs of both young and older people in the wider community of Hopwood and is supported by the Parish Council.

6.3 The carefully considered design of the application proposals would be entirely sympathetic to the context of site, respond well to the site and the natural environment and would meet known community needs which the Local Plan seeks to encourage. The scheme would reduce the impact of built development on the Green Belt and better integrate the three already converted farm buildings with the new proposed development.

6.4 We have set out a number of very special circumstances which taken together amount to sufficient justification to set aside the normal presumption against development on the site and we urge that the proposals be supported.

APPENDICES

1. Copy of adopted Hopwood settlement boundary plan
2. Annotated Hopwood settlement plan showing developments around the periphery of the settlement