

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Parish Council Public Meeting on the Bromsgrove District Local Plan held on Tuesday 29th July 2025 at 7.00pm St Andrew's Parish Centre, Barnt Green

Members present: Cllrs R. Cholmondeley (Chair), C. Hotham, P. Perry, S. Tucker, L. Williams, S. Whitehand

In attendance: Executive Officer, Eleanor Choudry

Approximately 150+ members of the public

1. Welcome and Introduction

Cllr Cholmondeley welcomed attendees and introduced members of the Parish Council. He explained the purpose of the meeting: to hear residents' views in order to inform the Parish Council's formal response to the Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) Local Plan consultation.

Residents were encouraged to submit their own responses to BDC, the quantity of individual submissions will carry more weight. Details of how to respond, including QR codes and links, were included in the recent Parish Bulletin. BDC will not accept responses via social media—only through their specified channels (online, email, letter).

A BDC Planning Team drop-in session will be held on Tuesday, 2nd September at the Scout Hut from 9:30am to 8:00pm, where residents can ask questions directly.

2. Context of the Local Plan

Cllr Cholmondeley explained the background:

- Central government requires 12,000 new homes in Bromsgrove District by 2043. Currently, only 3,000 are accounted for.
- Green belt land will inevitably be needed to meet the target. The proposal for one new town was dismissed.

- Barnt Green is considered suitable due to its existing infrastructure, including shops and a train station.
 - The Groveley Lane site (1,300 homes) is not part of this current plan.
 - Three specific sites are under discussion, but only one (Sandhills Farm) lies within Barnt Green parish:
 - **BAR01** Land between Twatling Road and Cherry Hill Road (Lickey & Blackwell parish) 140 homes
 - **BAR02** Land north of Kendal End Road (Cofton Hackett parish) 50 homes
 - **BAR03** Sandhills Farm (Barnt Green) 150 homes
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3. Remarks from Cllr Hotham

Cllr Hotham emphasised the seriousness of the situation, calling it a "fait accompli." Although some mitigation efforts were made, there is essentially only one option available. He encouraged residents to identify more suitable alternatives outside Barnt Green and Alvechurch and state reasons as to why there should be a reduction in the number of houses. Strong, planning-based objections are essential in responses.

He thanked the Chair and Executive Officer for the Bulletin and reiterated that responses must demonstrate valid planning reasons, not general opposition.

4. Public Questions and Comments (in bold)

Is the fact that the GP surgery and school are at capacity serious planning reasons?

Yes. The Parish Council is engaging with the GP surgery to understand long-term plans. The local school is currently full, with only 50% of pupils from the catchment area.

How many residents are there?

There are approximately 850 houses within the parish and 1,600 residents. Cllr Cholmondeley described the boundary in further detail.

It seems a disproportionate amount of people and facilities are full to capacity. Cars are all around Cherry Hill Road and the Social Club - where are all the cars going to go?

Concerns were raised about traffic, especially around Cherry Hill Road, Twatling Road, and Fiery Hill Road. Cllr Hotham acknowledged these are significant issues to raise with BDC.

Lickey School only has 4 places.

The 2-tier education system instead of 3-tier needs to be raised along with concerns over wider issues such as the NHS and A&E capacity. Local infrastructure such as traffic, parking, and walkability were discussed. A steep hill and lack of realistic pedestrian access to the station were mentioned.

340 houses is a 40% increase.

Traffic, village character, and spillover from other nearby developments will affect Barnt Green. Some new housing is needed but should be appropriately placed.

Are the other parishes holding meetings like this?

Yes, Lickey & Blackwell held theirs on the previous Sunday.

Cllr Hotham added that anyone can comment on any of the proposed sites, regardless of where they live.

GP Surgery Impact – Andy Peacock

Andy Peacock from Barnt Green Surgery confirmed:

- Current capacity is 7,000 patients
- Additional housing would mean 1,000 more patients
- Surgery already exceeds building capacity
- While services could be adapted, it would negatively affect accessibility and care quality
- Section 106 funding (developer contributions) comes in stages and wouldn't be sufficient upfront for a new surgery (cost estimate: £1M+)

Will BDC use a compulsory purchase order to demolish the Social Club?

Unlikely, as CPOs are generally used for major infrastructure. The club is consulting members and opposes closure.

The Social Club Chair stated the club is thriving, with 500+ members. Relocating it would be difficult and likely unviable due to the site's topography and timelines.

Cllr Whitehand noted a property owner along Blackwell Road could sell to allow access if the Social Club site is unavailable.

Rebecca Waters has formed an Action Group. She mentioned the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which highlights priorities including green belt protection, flood prevention, and historic conservation. Barnt Green's woodlands and historical significance (e.g. Domesday Book) should be part of the objection. Whether Sandhills Farm has an agricultural tie was also raised.

If I object to the three sites, do the remaining ones still total 9,000 homes?

Cllr Hotham explained that 400+ sites were considered during a BDC call-for-sites process. Each was given a Red-Amber-Green (RAG) rating. Sandhills Farm is rated amber, while some green-rated sites in places like Belbroughton and Fairfield were not selected—raising questions about the rationale.

Druids Heath is rated all green but was not chosen, why? The government has changed the assessment of green belt. It is apparent that within Bromsgrove District there is grey belt. The new government state that only towns cannot coalesce. The villages of Barnt Green, Lickey and Blackwell, Rubery, Alvechurch and Wythall can coalesce. Solihull is planning to rename some of its villages such as Knowle, Dorridge as towns to have their green belt reinstated. Cllr Hotham said that residents need to make their comments in their own way by picking up the details from discussions e.g. flooding, where cars will go, the GP etc.

A local member of the public who was a Planning Manager, managing large developments such as Sainsburys etc. discussed how the cost of the new houses will be increased to pay for the infrastructure. He mentioned the Foxhills site still arguing about the footpath. He stated the only way to have any influence is to go to every meeting and to ALL respond to the consultation. All the sites will go.

The Sandhills Farm site shows no TPOs but there are five trees at the Social Club entrance.

The real access will not be through the Social Club, but a property that backs onto the site that has already been purchased by the Sandhills Farm landowner.

Congratulations to the parish council for treating the 2 sites simultaneously. The focus will be on Barnt Green village, I live in Orchard Croft and at school time parking is a problem. With an extra 340 sites with a bigger school there will be more chaos. Currently there is not any parking at the doctors and the bus struggles to get through the road. There will be 40% more housing, and we are already in crisis.

As the proposed housing is less than 400 homes and BDC need 12000, the impact on the people of Barnt Green, Lickey and Blackwell and Cofton Hackett is incredibly damaging compared to the benefit of minimal housing numbers.

We are already at capacity – 340 homes will make things much worse.

What are the plans for the old library and fire station in Bromsgrove?

Cllr Hotham noted both have been demolished. The fire station land is contaminated but both sites could support town-centre housing in future along with the old Dolphin site. The register of brownfield sites is on the BDC website, and 200 to 300 houses will be ear-marked by Central Government.

Use your MP, Bradley Thomas, who wants to save the green belt. Birmingham's housing requirement is decreasing, and Bromsgrove's has increased. Contact your MP.

What about a large development by Stoke Prior and the motorway junction configuration and new railway.

Cllr Cholmondeley said a new railway station costs £6 million with one platform. Cllr Hotham explained that this will not be for this plan period but for 2042-67, with the motorway junction possible and a bypass for Bromsgrove centre. It would provide a small town but would be very expensive.

If the housing goes ahead what type will it be?

Cllr Cholmondeley said that 2/3 bed housing would be preferable but may lower house prices. Cllr Hotham said that all new developments in green belt have to be 50% affordable housing. Properties will have huge costs with section 106 for new Social Club, GP, school, so houses will become less affordable. The developer won't make money; it will become unviable, and the promised infrastructure will disappear.

Can the Parish Council share a list of green-rated sites on its website?

Yes, these will be published on the Barnt Green website by 11th August.

Will affordable housing include flats for young people? What about hotels or care homes, there is a shortage?

Cars from Sandhills Farm would congest Hewell Lane and Sandhills Lane.

Was the green belt reclassified as grey before or after the RAG assessments?

Initially assessed under old criteria. Post-2024, green belt standards have changed, affecting how sites are judged. If reassessed the high green belt harm may no longer apply. The grey belt in Bromsgrove District is subsequent to change. The site assessments can be used to object.

Will comments about school and GP capacity be dismissed as ‘money follows the pupil/patient’?

Possibly, but these issues are still important to include in objections.

They will play with numbers so Barnt Green school will not be able to build a new classroom.

The school could build up, only 50% of pupils come from the catchment area. The NHS could reduce their catchment area.

If the infrastructure has to be changed for the 340 houses couldn't sites be provided for these homes which already had existing infrastructure?

Cllr Cholmondeley said that infrastructure costs are high. Transport is an important factor. Please make your point in the consultation.

Every road in Barnt Green is a country lane used by cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders and this has to be considered.

If developers start work where are the lorries going to use the roads, what route?

There are weight and height limits on bridges. Cllr Hotham said that it's a long way down the track but once planning permission is granted a Construction Management Plan would contain all the details. We need to respond to the consultation giving reasons, be passionate and speak from the heart. Use some of the information from tonight. Don't just dismiss the sites, we will have to take significant numbers. The numbers are too high for Barnt Green and Alvechurch, put passion in your response.

How significant is the proximity to the SSSI site?

There are different environmental rules that apply regarding the proximity to the boundary.

When the Cala Homes development was built in Fiery Hill Road were any conclusions drawn in respect of an objection for a larger estate?

The previous strategic plan included the site in Cherry Hill Road site but went to the High Court and Cherry Hill Road was removed and Butterwick added. Issues included parking.

Should we accept some housing and focus on controlling density?

Could housing be reallocated to areas with better infrastructure?

Cllrs agreed infrastructure is a key issue, and high costs make some sites unviable.

Why is the Sandhills site so irregular in shape?

The site was scaled back due to concerns over SSSI areas, waste dumping and Cocks Croft Wood. Concerns were raised about potential future expansion.

Why is BAR02 (north of Kendal End Road) so small given the land behind?

Flood risk is a factor. The site is strongly bounded so it doesn't move backwards.

In terms of the parish council I appreciate Cllr Hotham's comments regarding the consultation and to use the views expressed this evening. Barnt Green is likely to have houses, should we say, if we have to choose a site, focus on the density? Or just say no at this stage and research sites across the wider area?

Site BAR02 is only for 50 homes and there are apartments across the road so there could be an increase of numbers there. It is within walking distance of the village so other sites could be scaled back. We are waiting for your views on the online survey and emphasis on the type of housing is important, where could the car park go? Behind the BT site? etc.

Houses are coming no matter how good the reasons for objection are. The map is a planners delight. BAR01/02 are more like infill, we need more people than are at this meeting to protest.

Should residents copy the Parish Council in when submitting responses to BDC?

Complete the parish councils online survey but most importantly submit your responses to BDC via the official channels.

Has the access under the railway bridge (which floods) been considered?

Yes, the Parish Council is aware of the flooding and traffic issues at that junction.

It's been a really helpful meeting and clarified my thoughts. A move from the green belt to the grey belt and a move to a town instead of a village.

Cllr Hotham noted that other areas (e.g. Solihull) have reclassified villages as towns to retain green belt protection. Bromsgrove's green belt reassessment hasn't followed consistent standards.

Rebecca Waters thanked Cllr Hotham for supporting residents. She noted that not all Parish Councils have been as proactive.

Cllr Cholmondeley agreed that a list of the objections would be published on the website along with the list of RAG green sites.

5. Closing

Cllr Cholmondeley thanked attendees for their engagement and urged everyone to encourage family and neighbours to respond to the BDC consultation.

The meeting closed at 8:56pm.