

Council/Committee:	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Application Reference	DC/26/71442
Application Description	Proposed 26 No. residential dwellings, 5 No. apartment blocks consisting of 74 No. self-contained apartments, 1 No. commercial unit, parking, landscaping and associated works.
Application Received	10 February 2026
Application Address	Former GKN Buildings South Side Cranford Street Smethwick
Report Author	Andrew Dean andrew_dean@sandwell.gov.uk
Lead Officer	Tammy Stokes
Ward	Soho & Victoria
Appendices (if any)	1. Location Plan - 00-XX-AE(04)01 2. Site plan - 00-XX-AP(04)01 REV P7 3. Streetscene - XX-00-AP(05)01 REV P1 (A0)

1. Application Summary

- 1.1 The application is being reported to Planning Committee because the applicant is the council.
- 1.2 To assist members with site context, a link to Google Maps is provided below:

[Cranford Street, Smethwick](#)

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions relating to:
- i) Means of compliance to secure affordable housing;
 - ii) External materials;
 - iii) Contamination;
 - iv) Finished floor levels;
 - v) Boundary treatments;
 - vi) Landscaping;

- vii) Foul drainage
- viii) Surface water drainage;
- ix) Cycle storage;
- x) Waste storage and management plan;
- xi) Noise and mitigation measures;
- xii) Energy Statement;
- xiii) Employment and Skills Plan;
- xiv) Lighting;
- xv) Parking retention;
- xvi) Construction Environmental Management Plan including canal protection measures etc;
- xvii) Adoption of submitted Travel Plan
- xviii) Permitted development right removal;
- xix) Ecology;
- xx) Biodiversity net gain to include monitoring;
- xxi) Canopies to apartment entrances;
- xxii) Submission of window and louvres designs;
- xxiii) Archaeology;
- xxiv) Swift nesting bricks;
- xxv) Commercial unit to be use for class E purposes only; and
- xxvi) No amalgamation, sub-division or mezzanine floors to be added to the commercial unit.

3. Reasons for the recommendation and conditions

The application proposes an appropriate reuse of brownfield land which would deliver a much-needed mix of new housing for the borough.

4. Key Considerations

- 4.1 The site is allocated for housing in the development plan.
- 4.2 Material planning considerations (MPCs) are matters that can and should be taken into account when making planning decisions. By law, planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless MPCs indicate otherwise. This means that if enough MPCs weigh in favour of a development, it should be approved even if it conflicts with a local planning policy.
- 4.3 The material planning considerations which are relevant to this application are:
 - Government policy (NPPF);
 - Proposals in the development plan;
 - Design and appearance;
 - Amenity concerns – overlooking/loss of privacy, loss of light and/or outlook and overshadowing;
 - Highways considerations - traffic generation, access, highway safety, parking and servicing;

- Environmental concerns;

4. The Application Site

5.1 The application site comprises a collection of industrial buildings and areas of vacant land situated on the southern side of Cranford Street, Smethwick. The surrounding context is characterised by a mix of uses, including the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, established industrial operations, and residential neighbourhoods located within close proximity to the site. The Cape Arm of the Birmingham Canal forms a physical boundary between the site and the hospital as well as being a wildlife corridor.

5.2 Planning History

Planning permission was granted for the change of use of part of the industrial building for a karting facility. The site was also included in the screening opinion for the new acute hospital but did form part of the planning application site. A full list of the planning history is provided below:

DC/13/55825	Request for a screening opinion - proposed new acute hospital.	Screening opinion - EIA not required. 09.05.2013
DC/05/43819	Use of part of an industrial building for a karting facility.	Grant Permission subject to conditions. 16.03.2005

5. Application Details

6.1 The application is seeking approval for a residential scheme for 26 No. residential dwellings, 5 No. apartment blocks consisting of 74 No. self-contained apartments, 1 No. commercial unit, parking, landscaping and associated works.

6.2 The design of the dwellings contains a mixture of apartments, detached and terraced dwellings. This includes 6 No. 2 bed, 4 person houses, 10 No. 3 bed, 5 person houses, 10 No. 4 bed, 7 person houses and 74 1 and 2 bed apartments. The apartment blocks range between 3 and 5 storeys in height.

6.3 The commercial unit would have a floor area of 180m².

6.4 It should be noted that, although the applicant is the council, the site remains in private ownership and is currently subject to a compulsory purchase order.

6. Publicity

The application has been publicised by seven neighbour notification letters and by site and press notice. No objections have been received.

7. Consultee Responses

8.1 Planning Policy

Following receipt of additional information justifying the proposed commercial unit in an out of centre location, planning policy have raised no objections to the application subject to conditions contained within the recommendation.

The application site is allocated for residential development in the Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan document and a longstanding allocation for mixed-use development in the Smethwick Area Action Plan.

8.2 Highways

Following receipt of amended plans to increase the size of the garages and parallel parking bays to adopted sizes, highways have raised no objections to the application.

8.3 Public Health (Contaminated land)

No objection subject to the contaminated land condition contained within the recommendation.

8.4 Public Health (Noise)

No objection subject to a condition for a revised noise assessment to include mitigation measures be submitted and approved. Further conditions relating to any plant being installed to serve the commercial unit being approved, the submission of a construction and environmental management plan and an external lighting scheme.

8.5 Public Health (Air Quality)

No objection subject to a condition for construction and environmental management plan and the adoption of the submitted travel plan.

8.6 Lead Local Flood Authority

Matters relating to a surface water drainage strategy have been included as a condition in the recommendation. This includes drainage method, hydraulic calculations, exceedance, maintenance, a surface water construction and environment management plan and finished floor levels.

8.7 Ecology Officer

No objection. The 10% bio-diversity net gain will be provided entirely within the application site. Relevant conditions have been included in the recommendation.

8.8 Urban Design

No objection. The proposal demonstrates a modern aesthetic appropriate to the contemporary hospital setting while also drawing on the existing character of the industrial premises, including material choices, building heights, and roof forms. The properties comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards and the Revised Residential Design Guide SPD. The levels of amenity space provided are satisfactory throughout the development and delivered in a variety of forms, including above the decked car park, balconies, traditional rear gardens, terraced gardens, and communal spaces.

Some properties do not have traditional rear gardens but instead provide roof terraces. Given the significant amount of landscaping included within the proposals, this will also function as additional communal amenity space, which Urban Design considers sufficient to compensate for any shortfall in private amenity provision.

Suggested conditions relating to window details, entrance canopies for the apartment buildings, hard and soft landscaping, boundary treatments, bin storage, and a refuse strategy have been included within the recommendation.

8.10 Canal and River Trust

The Trust notes that the proposal does not, in its view, maximise the benefits of the waterside location or its connectivity to the wider area. Concerns have been raised regarding the design and use of land adjacent to the canal, including the failure to fully take advantage of the setting, drainage matters, structural integrity and potential contamination, canal protection measures, boundary treatments, and landscaping.

In response to the Canal and River Trust's comments, it is noted that the majority of the land directly fronting the canal lies outside the application red-line boundary. Urban Design has recommended that, as part of the hard and soft landscaping condition, the area to the rear of the apartment block fronting the canal should be treated as a shared surface with an element of block paving. This would improve the outlook for residents and create a more communal space. It is also noted that this side of the canal does not benefit from direct towpath access to the mainline canal, whereas the opposite side

has undergone improvement works associated with the construction of the new hospital, which is the dominant building in the area.

The buildings have been carefully designed to draw on key design cues from the historic industrial character of the area, and Urban Design has raised no objections to the proposal. Suggested conditions relating to canal protection measures during construction are included within the recommendation.

8. Relevant Planning Policy Considerations

9.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

Design

The framework refers to development adding to the overall quality of the area by achieving high quality design, achieving good architecture and layout. Taking into account the views of the council's Urban Design Officer, I am of the opinion that the scheme is of a good design and would assimilate into the overall form and layout of the site surroundings; in accordance with the design principles of the NPPF.

Highway safety

The framework promotes sustainable transport options for development proposal and states that developments should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

9.2 Development Plan Policy

The following policies of the council's development plan are relevant:

Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS)

CSP4 – Place Making – The development is appropriate in scale proportions, design and materials to the local vernacular.

DEL1 – Infrastructure Provision – The development is liable for the community infrastructure levy which will support infrastructure and community projects in the borough.

HOU1 - Delivering Sustainable Housing Growth – This policy identifies land for the purpose of delivering new housing, the site is allocated for this purpose. The grant of permission would support the delivery of homes in Sandwell.

HOU2 – Housing Density, Type and Accessibility - relates to housing type and density, a mix of which the development is proposing.

HOU3 - Delivering Affordable Housing – the required for 25% of the units proposed will be affordable. A condition has been included within the recommendation to confirm how these will be delivered on site.

TRAN4 - Creating Coherent Networks for Cycling and for Walking – The scheme as designed will support this and cycle provision within the development can be secured by condition.

ENV1 – Nature Conservation - seeks to ensure that development within the Black Country safeguards nature conservation, including that linear habitats (such as wildlife corridors) are not impeded by development. New planting next to the canal basin as recommended by the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal can be secured via the soft landscaping condition.

ENV2 – Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness. This policy states that all development should aim to protect and promote the special qualities, historic character, and local distinctiveness of the Black Country in order to maintain its cultural identity and strong sense of place. The application site does not fall within a conservation area, and none of the buildings are listed. The majority of the site has been cleared and now comprises a concrete slab. The design of the proposed buildings, including the choice of materials, building heights, and roof forms, reflects the character of the surrounding industrial premises.

ENV3 – Design Quality - refers to well-designed schemes that provide quality living environments. The proposed layout and design are considered to be acceptable with no concerns being raised from the Urban Design team.

ENV4 – Canals – The proposal seeks to protect and enhance the canal network. Protection of the Cape Arm can be secured by condition. Although only a small section of the site is physically adjacent to the canal, soft landscaping and amenity space for the apartments are proposed in this area. In addition, Apartment Block 04 faces onto the arm, with habitable-room windows to the rear increasing natural surveillance.

ENV5 – Flood Risk, Sustainable Drainage Systems / Urban Heat Island – this policy seeks the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems to assist with reducing the impact of flooding and surface water run-off. A condition for a surface water drainage strategy/scheme has been included within the recommendation.

ENV7 – Renewable Energy - As the development will be for over 10 dwellings BCCS policy ENV7 will be applicable. The guidance under this policy states all residential developments of 10 or more units must incorporate the generation of energy from renewable sources sufficient to off-set at least 10% of the estimated residual energy demand. This can be secured by condition.

ENV8 – Air Quality - The proposed development would have to give regard to the guidance contained in BCCS policy ENV8 and the Air Quality SPD which in this instance would require implementation of the submitted travel plan and a construction management plan to include dust control measures.

Policies CEN6 – Meeting Local Needs for Shopping and Services and CEN7 – Controlling Out-of-Centre Development seek to manage out-of-centre proposals, with a clear presumption in favour of focusing commercial development within established centres. Justification for the commercial unit in this location has been provided, highlighting that more than 800 new homes are expected within the Grove Lane Masterplan area, alongside the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital and the recently opened Midland Met Learning Campus.

The unit is approximately 180m², which falls within the 200m² maximum permitted by CEN6. It will be capable of meeting day-to-day needs and supporting residents of this site as well as future occupants of nearby residential developments. The facility will be within easy walking distance of residents and hospital/campus visitors, thereby encouraging sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling. Its location will also introduce activity along the canal frontage and ensure the unit is visible and easily accessible from the hospital.

Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document – (SADD)

SAD H3 – Affordable Housing – The development provides affordable provision which is compliant with policy.

SAD HE 5 - Archaeology & Development Proposals – a condition for a desk top based archaeological survey has been included in the recommendation.

SAD EOS 9 - Urban Design Principles – The proposal is appropriate to the location in terms of scale and design.

SAD DC 6 - Contaminants, Ground Instability, Mining Legacy - Land contamination issues can be addressed by the imposition of suitably worded conditions requiring further intrusive investigation, reporting of any unpredicted contamination and submission of a validation certificate following any required mitigation.

SAD EMP4 - relationship between industry and sensitive uses. Public Health have reviewed the proposal and raised no objection subject to the submission of a revised noise assessment including mitigation measures.

SAD EOS4 – community open space and SAD EOS5 – environmental infrastructure - The creation of a new area of open space in accordance with the aspirations of the Grove Lane Masterplan is supported

9. Material Considerations

10.1 Proposals in the development plan

The proposal seeks to deliver residential properties on land allocated for housing in the development plan. It would provide much-needed homes in Sandwell and contribute to the range of accommodation types and sizes available within the Borough. In addition, 25% of the units would be designated as affordable housing which is secured by condition.

10.2 Design and appearance;

The Urban Design Officer has raised no objections to the application, noting that the proposal presents a modern aesthetic appropriate to the contemporary hospital building, while also drawing on the established character of the surrounding industrial premises through its material choices, building heights, and roof forms. The properties comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards and the Revised Residential Design Guide SPD in relation to internal amenity space. The levels of external amenity space provided are satisfactory across the development and are delivered in a variety of forms, including above-decked car parking areas, balconies, traditional rear gardens, terraced gardens, and communal spaces. In addition, the proposal would introduce a high level of soft landscaping, delivering new green infrastructure within the area.

10.3 Amenity concerns

Taking into consideration the location of the proposed development—bounded by the hospital to the west and industrial properties to the south and east, with the nearest residential properties situated to the north-west on the opposite side of the canal and Cranford Street—the proposal would not result in a loss of privacy, light, or outlook for nearby residents.

10.4 Highways considerations

Highways have reviewed the application and have raised no objections. The development provides adequate parking provision, and with the hospital in close proximity to the site, there is good access to sustainable transport links.

10.5 Environmental Concerns

The proposed residential development would deliver a significant enhancement to the local environment through the incorporation of extensive soft landscaping and communal public spaces. Soft landscaping would be secured via planning conditions and Biodiversity net gain.

10.6 Presumption and the 'tilted balance'

The 'tilted balance' is similar to the normal planning balance, but it is only engaged in exceptional circumstances. As the council has less than a five-year housing land supply, relevant local policies are out-of-date. In the most basic sense, the tilted balance is a version of the planning balance that is already tilted in an applicant's favour. If the tilted balance applies, planning permission should normally be granted unless the negative impacts 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the positive impacts.

11. Conclusion

11.1 All decisions on planning applications should be based on an objective balancing exercise. This is known as applying the 'planning balance'. To summarise: the proposal should be approved unless any adverse impacts of granting the permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against development plan policies or, where those policies are out of date, the NPPF as a whole. Where National Policy takes precedence over the development plan, this has been highlighted in paragraph 9 (National Planning Policy Framework).

11.2 With the above in mind, the council cannot currently meet its five-year housing need as it has a shortfall of deliverable housing sites. With reference to the NPPF, this means that all local policies concerned with the supply and location of new housing must be considered out-of-date and the 'tilted balance' is engaged. If the tilted balance applies, planning permission should normally be granted unless the negative impacts 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the positive impacts.

11.3 On balance the proposal accords with the provisions of relevant development plan policies and there are no significant material considerations which warrant refusal that could not be controlled by conditions.

12. Legal and Governance Implications

The Planning Committee has delegated powers to determine planning applications within current Council policy. Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 gives applicants a right to appeal when they disagree with

the local authority's decision on their application, or where the local authority has failed to determine the application within the statutory timeframe.

13. Other Relevant Implications

- **Climate change** – *Implications for climate change outcomes and any potential impact on the environment (for example, impact on emissions, resource use, or the natural environment.)*
- **Social Value** – *Implications for social value and how the proposals are meeting this (for example, employment of local traders/young people.*

14. Background Documents

None.

15. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

- a. The development will provide good homes that are well connected and will contribute towards improving the local environment with a focus on cleanliness, ensuring that the community takes pride in its surroundings. (new residential accommodation)
- b. Encourage a positive environment where businesses and our community and voluntary organisations are supported to grow; and investment into the borough is maximised, creating job opportunities for local residents. (employment uses)