Birlingham Parish Council unanimously object to the Permission in Principle (PIP) application for the erection of five to nine dwellings on a greenfield site. Whilst PIP applications consider only the matters of location, land use and amount of development, these matters must still be assessed against the statutory development plan and relevant planning legislation, including, but not exclusively, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) adopted 2016. In addition, the Birlingham Village Design Statement (VDS) should also be considered to give context to this application as it was adopted by Wychavon District Council.

We would like to comment as follow:

General comments:

1. Policy within SWDP directs new housing development to sustainable locations within defined settlement boundaries. Birlingham is an established category 4 development; it does not have surplus existing services, has limited public transport, limited to poor access to education or healthcare and limited to negligible access to safe and convenient employment opportunities. The increased dependency on car usage, which would therefore be required, would in turn result in a significant environmental impact. The proposed site, conflicts with SWDP in that the site is not demonstrated to be a sustainable location.
2. Both SWDP policy and the objectives of the NPPF, seek to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and protect it.
3. SWDP seeks to protect and enhance the character of the South Worcestershire landscape. Even at this early PIP stage, the location of this site raises serious concerns regarding harm to local landscape character and visual amenity through the introduction of built form into a sparsely developed rural area.
4. SWDP policies require development to conserve and enhance green infrastructure and biodiversity. Development on greenfield land has the potential to adversely affect habitats and ecological networks. Development on this site risks conflict with these policies before detailed matters are even considered.
5. The development site is currently a productive agricultural asset.

Highway concerns:

Cars travel at great speed along the Eckington Road from its intersection with Bakers Hill, around a sharp blind bend, moving down towards Eckington Bridge. The upper part of the Eckington Road, already contends with the weekday drop off and pick up of children by parents from Busy Bees, which is adjacent to the application site. A further number of access points from new driveways would add to this already congested road which could lead to additional safety issues.

Public Transport/availability of footpaths and or cycle paths:

The application is misleading in several respects, firstly inferring that there are regular buses. From our local knowledge buses run along this road infrequently and irregularly. These stop in an area with no lighting and no footpath (especially problematic in the winter).

Further, during the period 23/24 Eckington Bridge suffered closures totalling c70 days, with the majority of these being due to flooding. When this happens, buses must reroute and do not come near the village. This is also the case with School buses. If they can't get over the bridge from the Bredon direction they have to go through the Combertons, leading to children from the village having to seek alternative ways to get to school.

Overall, this limited and often compromised service would continue the existing pressure on residents to use their own vehicular mode of transport.
There are very limited and in places no public paths or dedicated cycle ways from the subject site along the Eckington Road into Eckington or along Defford Road into Pershore. There are also very limited and in places no public paths or dedicated cycle ways from the subject site along the Eckington Road, Defford Road, with its steep inclines, with dangerous corners/junctions to Defford; the suggestion in the application that young children or even adults will use it on bicycles is absurd.

Lack of Infrastructure support for the application site:
Again, the application is misleading, it states limited but not insignificant local services are available, but Birlingham has no shop or school. Birlingham only has a church with minimal fortnightly services, a small village hall (only opened by appointment) and a small pub.

Alluding to a population infrastructure imbalance, the application suggests that without this development “Birlingham will decline due to its ageing population" without any supporting data. The Parish Council has noted that over the last ten years, but especially since the end of Covid c 5 years ago, there are significantly more children/young families within the existing Birlingham Village.

5-year housing land supply:
The applicate infers to the Local Authority having not proved in public it has a 5-year housing land supply. This does not align with Councillor Paul Middlebrough’s recorded statement at the last Parish Council meeting in January 2026, when Paul stated that as part of the recent but unadopted SWDP, Wychavon would have a sufficient 5-year housing land supply, under the current government

The Birlingham Village Design statement (VDS):
As you will note, Birlingham is a working village, with most uninhabited land farmed by the local farm (including this land) or left as wetlands. The application site is prime agricultural land. If you refer to the VDS, there is a consensus that “in fill” housing comprising one or two units, in appropriate locations, within the village could be supported. Especially if they are smaller units for young family’s starter homes or smaller units to allow older residents in the area to remain after downsizing. There were general concerns that any small-scale infill development should not change the current nature and openness of the village. So, as a Parish Council we are certainly supportive of an evolving village, provided the correct site application and supporting criteria are met.