

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,  
KIDDERMINSTER

26TH APRIL 2022 (6PM)

---

**Present:**

Councillors: J Aston (Chairman), P Dyke (Vice-Chairman), G W Ballinger, C J Barnett, J F Byng, V Caulfield, S J Chambers, A Coleman, R H Coleman, B S Dawes, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, C Edginton-White, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart, K Henderson, L J Jones, A L L'Huillier, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, S E N Rook, D Ross, D R Sheppard, J W R Thomas, A Totty, L Whitehouse and P W M Young.

**C.83 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**C.84 Declarations of Interests by Members**

Councillor C Edginton-White declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in respect of agenda item 4 - Adoption of the Wyre Forest District Local Plan 2016-2036, as she has a financial and family interest in one of the brownfield sites allocated for housing in the plan. She advised that she would not remain in the council chamber for the debate or take part in any vote.

Councillor A L'Huillier declared, in respect of agenda item 4 - Adoption of the Wyre Forest District Local Plan 2016-2036, that as Ward Councillor for Franche and Habberley North she had publicly and internally repeatedly declared her opposition to the removal of the land at Habberley Road from the green belt. She could neither deny nor debate that this meant she did not attend the meeting with an open mind. She said she agreed with many members of the public from her Ward who challenge the Council on this matter this evening. She said she hoped that all remaining members who were attending with no predisposed position listened and truly heard all arguments for and against prior to their final decision.

**C.85 Public Participation**

In accordance with the Council's scheme for public participation at meetings of Full Council, the following members of the public addressed the meeting at this point.

**Oliver Swain – Wyre Forest resident**

## **Agenda Item No. 10**

Mr Swain had previously submitted a petition to the Council asking for the decision to be paused and the plan reformed. He spoke about his opposition of building on the green belt; infrastructure and service gaps across the district and said that the green belt should not be removed unless for exceptional circumstances; which was not the case here given that there were still brownfield sites available.

### **Nicholas Mayman – Wyre Forest resident**

Mr Mayman said his statement was threefold: to challenge the Local Plan's proposed loss of green belt in general and in particular as it relates to the Bewdley Housing target; to demonstrate that site no. WA/BE/1 (Stourport Road Triangle) was inappropriate for the number of dwellings and lastly to question why WFDC had apparently failed to secure any compensatory improvement for green belt status removal from this site.

### **Mark Turner, Solicitor, instructed by Dr Merlyn Wilcox – Wyre Forest resident and member of Stop the Habberley Road Development Public Group**

Mr Turner's statement included the public opposition to green belt release and raised points in relation to; NPPF 141(a): As Much Use as Possible of Brownfield and Under-Utilised Land; NPPF 141 and 68: Headroom; and NPPF 137-142: Contribution to Green Belt. He said the solution was to vote against adoption of the Local Plan and to start again.

The Leader of the Council thanked the public speakers for their participation, and for the many letters and emails that Councillors had received prior to the meeting. She said that the Council welcomed community engagement on subjects like this one.

In response to a comment from a public speaker suggesting that the Council had already got a plan in place to 2026, the Leader explained that was the end date on the Council's adopted plan; it did not mean that the plan was now up-to date. She said that it predated the national planning policy framework (NPPF) and was considered to have been out of date by the time the Council commenced the preparation of the new plan in 2015. She added that the Council needed an up-to date plan if it was going to continue to be able to exercise effective control over where development happened.

Councillors C Edginton-White and A L'Huillier left the meeting at this point, (6.13pm).

## **C.86 Adoption of the Wyre Forest District Local Plan 2016-2036**

The Council considered the recommendations of the Cabinet on 26 April 2022.

The Leader presented the recommendations that had been circulated prior to the meeting. She said that adoption of the Wyre Forest District Local Plan 2016-2036 was one of the most important decisions that the Council

had to make for the area and its residents.

She explained that the compilation of the plan had not been a quick process and had started as far back as 2015. She said the political spectrum of the Council at that time was very different with the Conservative Group being the administration. By the time the Progressive Alliance became the administration in 2019, much of the public consultation and groundwork had been undertaken. She said that she mentioned the distinction to highlight that in the process of putting a local plan together it was possible that it would have passed through several administrations and had input from more than one political party. She said she felt positive that every member of the Council wanted the best for the Wards they represented. However as the title of District Councillor underlines, members must consider what is best for the whole district of Wyre Forest too.

The Leader thanked the members of the public that had taken part in the Local Plan consultation during the 7-year period from 2015. She said there had been approximately 3,000 respondents making 7,000 representations along with 2 petitions.

The Leader further explained that the Local Plan would be used for the purposes of determining planning applications. The plan would give developers and landowners clear guidance where developments should take place and to what standards. She added that developers would be reluctant to submit applications which are contrary to the Local Plan. Without a plan in place the authority would be unprotected against “hostile” planning applications from developers across the district including on green belt land.

In response to concern from residents relating to the loss of any amount of green belt and doubt that the Council had explored the use of every possible brownfield site, the Leader explained that the Council carried out a call for sites in 2014 and again in 2017. She said the brownfield sites in the plan that have willing landowners account for just under 50% of all allocated sites. She added that the Council cannot compel owners of sites to put them forward for development if they do not want to.

The Leader said, although the Government had made comments about changes concerning the green belt in their 2019 manifesto, no legislation had been published in draft or brought forward to Parliament. She added that the Local Plan would require 2.1% of green belt. However, without a Local Plan in place more of the green belt could be at risk of planning applications due to the Council not having a 5-year land supply.

In conclusion, she said that the Cabinet were aware that some aspects of the proposed Local Plan would not be popular with all Councillors or residents, but the alternative was to leave the district without planning protection and possibly the lack of democratic control over the Council's planning procedures. She formally moved the recommendations for approval and asked Council to support the plan and vote in favour of it.

## **Agenda Item No. 10**

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety seconded the proposals.

A discussion ensued. Several Councillors spoke against the proposals. Councillors M Hart, I Hardiman, F Oborski MBE, D Ross, C Rogers, S Miah, L Jones and N Desmond outlined their reasons for not supporting the adoption of the Local Plan.

A number of Councillors spoke in favour of the proposals. Councillors N Martin, M Rayner and G Ballinger spoke about the importance of having a sound, adopted Local Plan.

In response to a point of order raised by Councillor S Rook, the Solicitor to the Council advised that it was the personal responsibility of individual members to use their integrity and decide if they should declare the existence of any interests. She said that confidential advice was available to all members prior to any meetings. She confirmed that every decision made by the Council was vulnerable to challenge.

The Leader agreed to a call for a named vote from Councillor F Oborski MBE.

**A named vote on the proposals was recorded as follows and was agreed:**

For (14)

Councillors: J Aston, G Ballinger, C Barnett, V Caulfield, A Coleman, R Coleman, H Dyke, P Dyke, N Martin, M Rayner, S Rook, D Sheppard, J Thomas and P Young.

Against (13)

Councillors: J Byng, B Dawes, N Desmond, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M Hart, K Henderson, L Jones, S Miah, F Oborski MBE, C Rogers, D Ross and A Totty.

Abstained (4)

Councillors: S Chambers, N Gale, T Onslow and L Whitehouse.

**Decision: Council;**

- (a) adopted the Wyre Forest District Local Plan (2016-2036) as set out in Appendix C;**
- (b) approved the adoption statement set out in Appendix D, which will be published and made available in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004;**

**Agenda Item No. 10**

- (c) delegated to the Head of Strategic Growth in consultation with the Leader of the Council any minor amendments, typographical and grammar corrections to the documents prior to publication.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.01pm.

The full meeting is available for viewing on the Council's website  
<https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees-and-meetings/council-meetings/>