

Council's Opening Statement
Wyre Forest Site Allocations & Policies and Kidderminster Central Area
Action Plan Examination Hearings

Tuesday 29th January 2013

I would like to welcome you Madam, all of the participants around the table and members of the public observing today, to the Examination in Public and I hope that you will find the location comfortable and the forthcoming discussions both interesting and proactive.

The District Council is very pleased to be here today, to take the next major step towards having an up to date planning framework in place for our District. This follows our Adoption of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy in December 2010.

We believe that the Council has consistently demonstrated a strong track record of delivery through positive planning for the District. For example,

- 1996: Wyre Forest District Local Plan Adopted
- 2001: Wyre Forest District Local Plan Review Commenced
- 2004: Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan
- 2006: Issues and Options Consultation on the Core Strategy
- 2010: Adoption of the Core Strategy
- May 2011: Preferred Options Consultation on the Site Allocations & Policies and Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan DPDs
- July 2012: Adoption of the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park Local Development Order
- October 2012: Submission of the Site Allocations and KCAAP Plans

The Site Allocations and Policies Plan will allocate and designate areas of land within the District for particular uses in order to meet the development requirements as set out in the District's Adopted Core Strategy. It also contains important development management policies which will apply across the whole of the District and will be used for determining planning applications.

The Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (or as we know it the KCAAP), as the name suggests provides a targeted approach to development within the central area of Kidderminster. It allocates sites and sets out policies for the specific area contained within the boundaries of the action plan area.

Today we are here to start the public hearing sessions into the soundness of the submitted Site Allocations & Policies Plan, with the hearing sessions relating to the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan taking place on Friday. It is the Council's firm opinion that these two plans set out specific policies that will deliver the overarching strategy and development requirements as set out within our Adopted Core Strategy.

The key ambition of both the Council's Officers and its Members is to deliver regeneration and housing to meet the needs of the District in a timely fashion.

In terms of delivery, there is a full and proactive programme designed to deliver development and regeneration in the district. This next stage of the statutory Development Plan process plays an essential role in pulling these initiatives together.

During the discussions you will hear how the Council strongly believes it has presented both sound and above all positively prepared Plans, which place a strong emphasis on deliverability, to you Madam for examination.

The Council considers that the policies contained in both plans have been fully informed by the production of a robust and comprehensive evidence base. Key elements of this include a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment; Strategic Housing Market Assessment; Employment Land Review; Viability Assessment; Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; Retail and Commercial Leisure Study; extensive consultation into Potential Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Pitch Provision (October 2011); Green Infrastructure Strategy and Community Facilities Audit.

It is important to state that Sustainability Appraisal was central to the process of the consideration of alternatives, option selection and policy formulation. It was undertaken by the District Council in house at each stage of the development of both Plans. In addition, consultants were appointed to undertake an independent quality check of the Council's SA work in 2012, prior to the finalisation of the Sustainability Appraisal Report.

The Plans are the culmination of a number of years work and positive engagement with key stakeholders, local business representatives and local communities. The Council considers that the relatively low level of objections received at the publication stage of the plans, is a testament to this proactive frontloading. Overall a high level of support is demonstrated for our Plans and their strong focus on delivery and regeneration.

Finally, following the pre-submission publication stage, the District Council has engaged positively with a number of key stakeholders on Statements of Common Ground. These include the Environment Agency, English Heritage, Worcestershire County Council, Churchill & Blakedown Parish Council, West Mercia Constabulary and the Homes and Communities Agency. In most cases we have been able to identify and agree on Proposed Modifications to the submitted Plans, which have been presented to you Madam for your consideration. This reflects the Council's desire to bring forward collaborative plans that focus on delivery, whilst also being mindful of the significant planning constraints such as Green Belt and flood risk that exist within our District.

It is for these reasons Madam that the Council wishes to commend the Plans to you for your consideration.

Rebecca Mayman
Planning Policy Manager

Wyre Forest District Council