

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Council
2026**

21st January

The Neighbourhood Plan for Wythall Parish ('Wythall Neighbourhood Plan')

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Kit Taylor, Cabinet Member for Planning, WRS and Strategic Housing
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Assistant Director		Ruth Bamford, Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services
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Wards Affected	Drakes Cross, Hollywood, Wythall East and Wythall West	
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Yes	
Relevant Council Priority	All Council priorities	
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to RESOLVE that:

- 1) the letter at Appendix 2 is sent to Wythall Parish Council as the District Council's response to the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan submission version;**
- 2) a six-week statutory ('Regulation 16') representation period on the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan is held by the District Council;**
- 3) delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to make minor modifications, as necessary, to the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents with consent of Wythall Parish Council;**
- 4) delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to appoint an independent examiner to undertake examination of the Wythall**

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Neighbourhood Plan following the statutory representation period; and

5) delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to arrange a referendum on the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the recommendations set out in the examiner's report.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan for Wythall Parish ('Wythall Neighbourhood Plan'), attached at Appendix 1, was re-submitted to the District Council on 9th January 2026. The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the District Council's response, attached at Appendix 2, to Wythall Parish Council ('the qualifying body'), on their submission under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

2.2 This report also seeks the approval of Council for the District Council to publish the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan for a statutory six-week representation period in line with Regulation 16 of the above Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

2.3 Finally, the report seeks delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to make any necessary minor modifications to the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents with consent of Wythall Parish Council; to appoint an independent examiner to carry out an examination of the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan, including consideration of representations received by the District Council during the representation period; and to proceed to a referendum should the examiner's report recommend this course of action.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

3.1 Despite responsibility for the production of the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan belonging to the qualifying body (Wythall Parish Council), the District Council has worked closely with the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in the preparation of the plan, since designation of the neighbourhood area in September 2020.

3.2 During this time, considerable officer resource has been spent advising and supporting members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Officers have advised on matters concerning planning legislation and regulations, alignment with the District Council's statutory planning

framework, and provided information to help comply with other legal requirements such as strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and habitat regulation assessment (HRA).

3.3 The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan includes an overall vision and objectives for the plan up to 2040, as well as planning policies set out within the following topic areas:

- Community Infrastructure, Assets and Services
- Housing Requirements
- Design and Development Form
- Local Heritage
- Green Infrastructure
- Sustainable Travel

3.4 A series of supporting documents are also submitted alongside the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan. These are listed under the background papers section at the end of this report. Amongst these documents is a Basic Conditions Statement submitted by the Parish Council to outline how they consider the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions it will be examined upon before it can proceed to referendum.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The District Council should be eligible to claim funding of £20,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) once a date has been set for the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan referendum. One window to secure funding exists per financial year, which usually opens for applications in November/December. The next available opportunity for BDC to apply for grant funding to support the work involved will be dependent on the progression to referendum of the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan.

4.2 BDC officers have worked to assist Wythall Parish Council in preparing the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan since designation of the Wythall Parish neighbourhood area in September 2020. This officer time has been subsumed into previous and existing departmental budgets and workloads for the Strategic Planning and Conservation team. Securing the MHCLG neighbourhood planning grant will allow the Council to recoup departmental costs as well as contribute to examination and referendum costs.

4.3 Officer time from the Council's Elections Service will also be required to organise the referendum.

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5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Following submission of the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan to the District Council originally in March 2025 and the latest revised submission in January 2026, officers have reviewed all the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan submission documents and are satisfied that the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan is able to proceed to the Regulation 16 statutory representation period and subsequent independent examination.

5.2 It is the view of officers that the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan has been produced in accordance with the relevant neighbourhood planning regulations arising from the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

5.3 Subject to Council approval, the Council will be responsible for publicising the Regulation 16 statutory representation period and arranging for the independent examination and local referendum to take place. The Council is required to publicise the submission of the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan for a minimum six-week period and invite representations, which will then be forwarded on to an independent examiner for their consideration.

5.4 The requirement that the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan is subject to an independent examination is to ensure and verify that the neighbourhood plan meets the 'basic conditions', as defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), before it can proceed to a referendum. This report seeks approval from Council that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to appoint an independent examiner to undertake this task.

5.5 Should delegated authority be given, and once an independent examination has been carried out on the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan, the Council will receive an examiner's report making one of three recommendations:

- The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions and can proceed to referendum;
- The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan can meet the basic conditions subject to suggested modifications to the plan, and subject to these modifications being made can proceed to referendum; or
- The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan does not meet the basic conditions and should not proceed to referendum.

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- 5.6 Should the examiner's report recommend the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan can proceed to referendum, and should the Council be satisfied with the examiner's recommendations¹, delegated authority is sought for the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to organise a referendum² on the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.7 The referendum would pose the question of whether those eligible to vote (those eligible to vote in the designated neighbourhood area of Wythall Parish) would want Bromsgrove District Council to use the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
- 5.8 Should a referendum result in a 'Yes' vote that the neighbourhood plan be 'made', the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan is proposed to be reported back to Council to approve the adoption of the neighbourhood plan.
- 5.9 In terms of anticipated timescales, the Regulation 16 six-week representation period would commence shortly after the Council meeting, if approved. Following the conclusion of the representation period, the Council will appoint an independent examiner, in consultation with Wythall Parish Council, to examine the Neighbourhood Plan. Depending on what arises during the examination process, the Council should receive the independent examiner's report approximately two months after the examination begins, projected to be late spring/summer 2026. The Council will then consider the examiner's report, any necessary modifications will be made to the Neighbourhood Plan, and a decision will be made whether to send the Neighbourhood Plan to referendum. The referendum is anticipated to be held in autumn 2026 with a decision to 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan at a Council meeting likely to be in winter 2026.
- 5.10 As Members will be aware, work on the emerging Bromsgrove District Local Plan is in its early stages. The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan is separate from this process and the Neighbourhood Plan can be developed ahead of the adoption of the emerging Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the adopted development plan. This requirement will be assessed during independent examination to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions.

¹ The Council has 5 weeks from the date of the examiner's report to publish its decision on whether the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan will proceed to referendum.

² The relevant documents advertising that a referendum will take place must be published not less than 28 working days before the referendum date.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

6.1 On the 3rd June 2025, the then Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution on behalf of the MHCLG made a statement which included the following:

"I am also aware that developing proposals could distract councils from their essential day-to-day activities. However, residents and businesses depend on councils to provide vital services and continue the work necessary for creating successful new unitary councils. This is especially true for progressing local plans, to allocate land for the new homes we so desperately need. Accordingly, as stated in my invitation letters, I continue to expect local planning authorities to work towards the adoption of an up-to-date local plan as soon as possible. Local Government Reorganisation should not hinder this essential work; and neither should the introduction of the new legal framework for local plan-making later this year, or our strategic planning reforms. Significant financial assistance has already been provided to eligible authorities to support plan-making and I urge authorities to make the most of other support available through the Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service. Together, we can ensure that our reorganisation efforts are successful and deliver the high-quality public services our residents deserve."

6.2 Although the Government's expectations only explicitly stated that Local Government Reorganisation should not hinder work towards the adoption of an up-to-date local plan, neighbourhood plans form part of the Council's statutory development plan and form part of the Council's day-to-day activities.

Relevant Council Priority

6.3 The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan, being a plan for the development and use of land, supports the following Council priorities:

- Economic Development – the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy on the protection of community facilities which support the day-to-day lives of local residents and creates employment opportunities (Wythall 1 – Local Community Facilities).
- Housing – the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy on affordable housing provision (Wythall 2 – Affordable Housing

Tenure) and housing mix (Wythall 3 – Housing Types and Sizes in Wythall).

- Environment – the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy supporting measures to reduce carbon emissions from building operations (Wythall 5 – Environmental Performance of Buildings), protection of designated Local Green Space (Wythall 7 – Local Green Space Sites) and securing biodiversity net gain from eligible new developments (Wythall 8 – Biodiversity Gains from new development in Wythall Parish).
- Infrastructure – the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy which supports developments that contribute to new community infrastructure within the Parish (Wythall 1 – Local Community Facilities). Additionally, the Neighbourhood Plan supports developments that contribute to bus service improvements (Wythall 9 – Support for Bus Services), rail service and station improvements (Wythall 10 – Support for Rail Services and Station improvements) and walking and cycling route improvements (Wythall 11 – Support for improvements to priority walking and cycling routes).

Climate Change Implications

6.4 A green thread runs through the Council Plan, the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan and the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan. The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan supports measures to reduce carbon emissions from building operations (Wythall 5 – Environmental Performance of Buildings), protection of designated Local Green Space (Wythall 7 – Local Green Space Sites) and securing biodiversity net gain from eligible new developments (Wythall 8 – Biodiversity Gains from new development in Wythall Parish).

6.5 Additionally, the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan includes policies supporting public transport and active travel improvements (Wythall 9 – Support for Bus Services, Wythall 10 – Support for Rail Services and Station improvements and Wythall 11 – Support for improvements to priority walking and cycling routes).

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.6 The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to numerous Parish Council led events and public meetings to publicise the preparation of the plan and inform its development. A pre-submission (Regulation 14) public consultation was undertaken to enable further community

engagement and allow changes to the plan to be made prior to its submission to the District Council. Details of the various forms of engagement and consultation to date can be found within the Consultation Report prepared by Wythall Parish Council listed within the background papers section at the end of this report.

6.7 The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges that engagement with the local community is essential in developing a vision and objectives for the future development of neighbourhoods and to provide the detailed information to support non-strategic policies that can make a difference to localities.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The Wythall Neighbourhood Plan is not a plan produced directly by the District Council, however if 'made' it will become part of the statutory development plan for decisions made by the local planning authority within Wythall Parish (the designated neighbourhood area).

7.2 The District Council has a duty to support the progression of the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan, including publicising the statutory representation period and arranging independent examination and referendum, where the plan is deemed to meet the basic conditions.

7.3 The recommendations in this report are made in the context of the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan being deemed to be likely to meet the basic conditions at examination and being able to proceed to referendum.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – The Neighbourhood Plan for Wythall Parish, Regulation 15 Draft (Version of 09 January 2026: APL.Wyth.100.D)
- Appendix 2 – BDC Regulation 15 response to Wythall Parish Council

Background papers

The following supporting documents can be accessed on the Council's website – <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/policy/planning-policies-and-other-information/neighbourhood-plans/wythall-neighbourhood-plan/>

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- Appendix A – Wythall Parish Local Heritage Sites
- Appendix B – Local Green Space Sites Assessment
- Wythall Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map –
<https://shared.xmap.cloud/?map=b3b11e60-9d4b-4090-88d7-7b702a139a53>
- Wythall Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2021-2040 – Basic Conditions Statement (January 2025)
- The Neighbourhood Plan for Wythall Parish – Consultation Report (January 2025)
- Wythall Housing Needs Assessment (October 2022)
- Wythall Design Guidelines & Design Codes (October 2023)
- Wythall Audit of Community Facilities and Infrastructure (July 2024)
- Wythall Parish Neighbourhood Plan – Habitats, Nature Networks and Agricultural Land (January 2024)
- Historic Environment Record Search (November 2022)
- Assessment of existing housing developments in Wythall – Good design and development form in relation to achieved housing densities (2024)
- Local Bus Services
- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulation Assessment (July 2024)
- National Trust 8 Hills Regional Park Spatial Framework (June 2023)