

Wyburns Area Residents — Meeting Minutes

Meeting Overview

Date: 6 October 2026

Purpose: To review developments affecting the local plan and Bellway planning application, coordinate evidence and professional advice, discuss flooding, drainage, highways, biodiversity and trees, and formalise the residents' group's governance and funding arrangements.

Headline outcomes:

- The group will continue strengthening its Green Belt and planning evidence while the local plan remains on hold.
- A planning consultant is expected to provide a fixed-price proposal covering the application and related Green Belt issues.
- The group supported establishing a fundraising page and a bank account for future professional costs.
- Committee roles were agreed in principle, with banking requirements to be confirmed.
- Further written evidence will be sought on flooding, sewage capacity, highways, archaeology, biodiversity and affected trees.

1. Local Plan and Government Intervention

Current position

- The local plan remains on hold while discussions continue with the Government.
- A meeting with Government representatives was expected on 7 October. The council was understood to be assembling evidence to justify retaining certain sites outside the plan.
- Strategic sites appear to be receiving particular attention because the supporting evidence for them may be less developed.

- The group noted that the six-week consultation has not started. It is unclear whether the timetable or consultation process will change if the Government intervenes.

Green Belt evidence

- The Green Belt evidence report for the RA50/RA51 area will be retained and strengthened until there is a clear submission route.
- Members are continuing to test the report's arguments, including whether the brook should be treated as a defensible physical boundary.
- The group agreed that professional review is now important because an expert opinion is likely to carry more weight than a residents-only submission.
- The report should address both the immediate proposal and the longer-term objective of protecting the land from future development.

2. Bellway Planning Application and Technical Evidence

Application status

- No significant new application documents had appeared since 29 September.
- The stated decision date was understood to be 10 November, although members considered a delay likely because of council backlogs and outstanding consultation material.
- Applications can continue to progress even while the local plan is paused.

Archaeology

- Archaeological material has reportedly been identified on or near the site, including a possible worked flint and other finds.
- Place Services had not, as of the information discussed, arranged a further field investigation.
- Previous archaeological advice indicated that further investigation should take place before development proceeds. Members understood that this may be imposed as a pre-commencement condition rather than preventing permission in principle.

- An HER submission has been received and is awaiting addition to the historic environment record.
- Maps showing the HER polygon, find locations and nearby historic features should be shared with the archaeological adviser and planning consultant.

Biodiversity and ecology

- A draft objection compares the council's biodiversity policies and evidence with the applicant's proposals.
- The document should be reviewed to distinguish clearly between points relevant to the local plan and points that should be submitted against the planning application.
- Members noted that outstanding protected-species surveys and ecological evidence may be important, but the consultant should identify which points are legally or technically strongest.

Highways and access

- The group awaits the formal highways consultation response and supporting basis for any conclusion that the proposal is "compliant".
- Particular concerns include the proposed junction, visibility works, the A127 connection, traffic on Daws Heath Road and whether older evidence already classed the junction as substandard.
- Once published, the highways response should be checked for the date, methodology, site inspection details, accident data and treatment of flooding and cumulative traffic.

3. Flooding, Drainage and Sewage

Flooding complaint

- A complaint to Essex County Council had not received a response within the expected 20 days.
- Following a telephone escalation, the complaints team confirmed receipt, opened a further complaint and indicated that a response and new reference should follow within 10 days.

- The complaint includes photographic evidence of historic garden flooding and explains the wider risk to Daws Heath, nearby roads and the school.
- The council's substantive report or response on the development should be requested and shared with the group.

Brook and surface-water management

- Members stressed that controlled release and ongoing maintenance of water infrastructure are essential. The concern is not limited to one property; increased runoff could affect the brook, its banks, the school and downstream homes.
- Responsibility for the brook remains unclear. Anglian Water reportedly deals with drainage and sewage, while channel clearance and flood-risk responsibilities may sit elsewhere.
- The cumulative effect of this and other proposed developments should be assessed, particularly where runoff would flow downhill towards the brook.

Sewage capacity

- The application appears not to resolve whether a sewer connection would cross above or below the brook.
- Members questioned the practical and environmental implications of either option and whether existing pumping and treatment capacity is already constrained.
- Written evidence should be sought from Anglian Water and the Environment Agency, including current capacity, overflow risk, relevant monitoring and whether the proposed connection is deliverable.
- Where discussions take place by telephone, the group should request a written record or confirmation.

4. Trees, Hedgerows and Landscape

- Members reviewed plans suggesting that approximately 19 trees or tree groups may be removed or affected, although the precise trees and treatment remain unclear.
- The principal concern extends beyond direct removal: excavation, road widening, visibility works and changes in ground level may encroach into root-protection areas and damage retained trees.

- The roadside hawthorn should be described accurately as a mature hedgerow where appropriate, rather than assessed only as individual trees.
- Potential effects on hornbeams, oaks and the wider woodland edge should also be considered, including the loss of screening and noise attenuation.
- The arboricultural officer has asked for the location and condition of the trees being raised by residents. The response should include a clear map, verified photographs, Woodland Trust correspondence and any evidence that a tree may be veteran.
- Before responding in detail, the group should cross-reference the applicant's arboricultural schedule and plans so that each affected tree can be identified by its official reference.

5. Planning Consultant and Funding

Consultant proposal

- The proposed consultant has previously advised other local residents' groups and works on both resident and developer cases.
- He is expected to provide a fixed-price package after reviewing the application, the group's reports and the Green Belt evidence.
- The likely initial cost discussed was £1,500 plus VAT (£1,800 total).
- The initial cost will be privately covered so the group can assess the value of the service before requesting wider contributions.
- The consultant may recommend concentrating on a smaller number of strong, defensible objections rather than submitting numerous weaker points.
- Any formal objection will need to be commissioned for a named individual so that responsibility and instructions are clear.

Future costs and fundraising

- Later stages may include committee representation, a committee speech or appeal-related support, estimated at roughly £1,000 or more.
- The group supported creating a fundraising page, with a simple link or QR code, once the purpose and accountability arrangements are clear.

- Communications should explain the work already completed and costs already met by members, then show how new donations will support defined future stages.
- Any unused balance should remain available for related group expenses, subject to transparent records and the group's constitution.

6. Council Delegation Process and Wider Campaign

Delegation proposals

- Members attended a council committee discussion on proposed changes to planning delegation and referral arrangements.
- The concern was that a triage process could allow officer decisions to prevent applications reaching committee, even where there was substantial public concern.
- The draft report was criticised for errors, copied terminology and internal inconsistencies. Members reported that 31 amendments were identified.
- The committee unanimously rejected the proposal in its current form. A revised version is expected to go to a councillor briefing before the full council meeting on 21 October.
- Residents' groups will seek a larger venue, potentially Mill Hall, and coordinate attendance to demonstrate public concern.

Outstanding questions and complaints

- The group will compile unanswered questions and pursue responses from the relevant officers and monitoring officer.
- Separate concerns about councillor conduct and complaint handling remain under formal processes. These should be documented factually and kept distinct from the substantive planning objections.

Wider coordination

- The group will continue working with other local residents' groups where interests align.

- A meeting with the local MP may be revisited if a specific objective emerges. For now, members considered it more useful to keep the contact available rather than arrange another general meeting.
- Members discussed the possibility of councils coordinating a judicial review of housing requirements if the Government maintains what they consider to be unsustainable targets. No decision was taken, and the next step depends on the outcome of ongoing council–government discussions.

7. Group Governance and Banking

- The group agreed that a formal bank account is needed to receive donations and pay professional expenses.
- Potential providers discussed included Santander, HSBC, NatWest, Metro Bank and the Co-operative Bank. Eligibility, branch access, monthly fees and signatory requirements must be checked directly.
- A residents' association account may require the constitution and recent minutes confirming the appointment of officers and authority to hold a bank account.
- The draft constitution should state that the association may hold funds, appoint a treasurer and nominate authorised signatories.
- Committee roles were agreed in principle: **Chair — Peter; Treasurer — Nick; Secretary — Hobby.**
- Additional signatories may be appointed if the chosen bank requires three or four authorised people or two unrelated approvers for transactions.
- The working name should be confirmed consistently as **Wyburns Area Residents** before the account is opened.

Decision: The committee appointments and authority to investigate and open a suitable residents' association bank account were carried unanimously.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting date was not confirmed. The group will reconvene after key updates are available, including the consultant's proposal, the 7 October council–government discussion, the highways response and progress on the flooding complaint.