Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan
Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

March 2016
1. Introduction

1.1 Sustainable Development is defined as ‘development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. It is about balancing social, economic and environmental considerations in order to achieve a better quality of life for everyone. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) expands upon this by identifying three aspects of sustainable development; these are social, economic and environmental. The NPPF goes on to emphasise the importance of these aspects being considered together rather than in isolation and states that ‘to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system’ (NPPF, p.2).

1.2 In accordance with EU Directive 2001/42/EC Neighbourhood Plans are required to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). It is also considered best practice to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) on Neighbourhood Plans, particularly where they involve site specific land allocations. This SA Scoping Report for the Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan incorporates the SEA requirements, SA requirements and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening requirements.

1.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2001/42/EC requires an environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes, including neighbourhood plans. This requires:
- the preparation of an environmental report;
- carrying out consultation on the draft plan and the accompanying environmental report;
- taking into account the results of consultation and the environmental report in decision-making;
- providing information when the plan or programme is adopted showing how the results of the environmental report have been taken into account.

1.4 SA ensures that the proposals presented in the Plan contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. This involves an assessment of the Plan’s environmental, social and economic effects incorporating the legal requirements of the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (The SEA Directive). It supports the plan making process and the testing of proposals for future development in the Parish.

1.5 HRA is the process that authorities must undertake to consider whether a proposed development or plan is likely to have significant effects on a European site designated for its nature conservation interest. The first stage in the process is to undertake a screening exercise to determine whether or not a full HRA needs to be undertaken. When the Core Strategy was prepared, a HRA Screening Report was undertaken which concluded that it was not necessary to undertake a full HRA. This exercise was repeated for the Site Allocations and Policies Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan. Again the conclusion was that a full HRA was not necessary. Given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to provide
significant levels of development and must be in general conformity with the aforementioned plans no screening exercise is required.

**Neighbourhood Planning**

1.6 Neighbourhood planning was first introduced by the Localism Act 2011, but came into force with neighbourhood planning legislation in April 2012. A neighbourhood plan allows local communities to: choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like, and the ability to grant planning permission for the new buildings that local communities want to see go ahead via Community Right to Build Orders which grant outline planning permission for particular uses on particular pieces of land.

1.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the relationship and conformity between the local plan (in this case the Wyre Forest District Adopted Core Strategy and the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan) and the neighbourhood plan. Paragraphs 184 and 185 summarise the position. The ambition of the neighbourhood plan should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan, and should reflect these policies and plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the local plan or undermine its strategic policies. Outside these strategic elements, neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and direct sustainable development in their area.

1.8 The Wyre Forest District Adopted Core Strategy (2010) sets out the strategic vision for the District up until 2026. It sets out the development strategy which includes the level of growth to be delivered and broad locations for new development. The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan will, once adopted, allocate specific sites for new development and set out more detailed development management policies. Both of these plans underwent detailed SA which incorporated SEA. Additionally, a HRA Screening exercise was undertaken which concluded that a full HRA was not necessary.

1.9 The Wyre Forest District Adopted Core Strategy and the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan provide the context for neighbourhood planning.

**The Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan**

1.10 The Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by a steering group established by, and reporting to, Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council. There are five steps to preparing a neighbourhood plan, which are:

1) Agreeing the Neighbourhood Area.
2) Preparing the plan and undertaking consultations.
3) Independent check by an examiner.
4) Community referendum
5) Making the Neighbourhood Plan

1.11 The Neighbourhood area for Churchill and Blakedown was designated by the District Council on 2nd April 2013. The Neighbourhood area reflects the Parish boundary and
therefore, the neighbourhood plan will cover the whole Parish. Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council are currently undertaking work on stage two, preparing the plan.

1.12 Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council (informed by early stage consultation responses on the draft neighbourhood plan) would like the neighbourhood plan to consider the following possibilities:

The Plan for the villages of Churchill and Blakedown recognises their separate characteristics - Churchill being essentially of a historic rural nature and Blakedown with its larger more diverse but essentially compact community, each valuing and respecting the other.

The Objectives of the Plan are:

- To create a safe community for residents and visitors, giving particular attention to traffic management and parking.
- To create a sustainable environment, with emphasis on maintaining the ancient tree scape, paths and green spaces to a high standard.
- To ensure that new development respects the character and is in keeping with the historic centres of the essentially rural villages.
- To preserve and improve local facilities to serve the needs of our residents and for future generations to enjoy.
- To increase local access to health and wellbeing services.
- To support existing and new local business opportunities, in particular home working and rural enterprises appropriate to the rural area.
- To support small-scale housing developments within the village boundaries that meet identified local needs.

1.13 Once adopted, the neighbourhood plan will form part of the statutory development plan for the area and will therefore be the starting point for determining planning applications.
2. The Sustainability Appraisal Process

2.1 SA is a continuous process. There are a number of stages involved in the SA process:

- **Stage 1**: Scoping, evidence gathering and establishing the SA framework.
- **Stage 2**: Developing and refining options and assessing the significant effects and establishing the mechanism for monitoring the significant effects of the neighbourhood plan
- **Stage 3**: Preparing the SA report which sets out the appraisal process and findings.
- **Stage 4**: Consult with stakeholders on the proposed neighbourhood plan and the SA report.
- **Stage 5**: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the neighbourhood plan once adopted.

2.2 The full SA Report will include the detailed SEA Directive requirements and indicate where they have been met.

2.3 The SA Scoping Report forms stage one of the process. The report sets out baseline data for the Parish of Churchill and Blakedown and highlights sustainability issues and trends for the Parish area. The Scoping Report considers the impact of other relevant plans, policies and programmes on the neighbourhood plan and outlines the sustainability appraisal framework which includes the objectives against which the proposals in the emerging neighbourhood plan will be assessed.

2.4 This Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report is being made available for a five week consultation period between Wednesday 2\textsuperscript{nd} March and Tuesday 5\textsuperscript{th} April 2016. This revised version incorporates amendments made as a result of the consultation responses received.

2.5 Wyre Forest District Council has produced the SA Scoping Report of the Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Development Plan on behalf of Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council.
3. Other Relevant Plans, Policies and Programmes

3.1 The Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan needs to comply with all relevant plans, programmes and policies at an international, national, regional and local level. An extensive scoping exercise was undertaken as part of the Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Policies SA work. The Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with these documents. Therefore, it is only necessary to consider the NPPF and relevant local documents as part of this SA Scoping Report.

3.2 The following plans, programmes and policies are considered to be relevant to the Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan. The table sets out an overview and an explanation of the SA implications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan, Policy or Programme</th>
<th>Sustainability Appraisal Implications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Planning Policy Framework (2012)</td>
<td>The framework sets out the requirements in terms of national planning policy. The Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan will need to be in general conformity with the contents and policies set out within the framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 3 (2011)</td>
<td>This document sets out the transport aspirations for the County and focuses on modal shift. Therefore, an objective should be included to ensure the plan promotes sustainable transport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy (2012)</td>
<td>This document sets out how waste will be dealt with in the County. The document emphasises the importance of the waste hierarchy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan</td>
<td>This document identifies the biodiversity priorities within the County. The SA framework should include an objective to ensure that the plan does not lead to a loss of biodiversity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyre Forest District Adopted Core Strategy (2010)</td>
<td>The Adopted Core Strategy establishes the strategic planning framework for the District including the level of development to be delivered until 2026. The neighbourhood plan must be in conformity with the Adopted Core Strategy and the SA framework should include objectives to help steer this conformity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyre Forest District Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (July 2013)</td>
<td>This document sets out the development management policies to guide the determination of planning applications as well as allocating specific sites for specific types of development. There are no specific land allocations within the parish of Churchill and Blakedown, however, the development management policies still apply and therefore the neighbourhood plan should be in accordance with these. The SA framework should include objectives to guide the conformity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan, Policy or Programme</td>
<td>Sustainability Appraisal Implications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyre Forest District Design Quality Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004)</td>
<td>The Design Quality SPG promotes high quality design within the District. It should be noted that this SPG is currently under review and will be replaced with Supplementary Planning Guidance during 2014.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyre Forest District Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (April 2014)</td>
<td>The Affordable Housing SPD will set out how affordable housing policies within the Adopted Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan will be implemented. A draft has been approved by Cabinet and consultation will commence in April 2014.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churchill and Blakedown Parish Plan Parish Plan (2005)</td>
<td>The Parish Plan will help to inform the content of the neighbourhood plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churchill Conservation Area Character Appraisal</td>
<td>This document highlights the special characteristics of the Conservation Area. The SA framework should include an objective relating to the historic environment.</td>
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</table>
4. Baseline Data

4.1 The baseline data for Churchill and Blakedown Parish is set out in a separate Churchill and Blakedown Sustainability Appraisal Baseline Report. The Baseline data report draws on a number of data sources including the 2011 census and the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). All census data relates directly to the Parish, however, IMD data is not available at Parish level, therefore, this data represents a wider area than the Parish. Further information on the IMD, the indicators it draws on and the area covered by the data is set out within the Baseline Report. The key themes and issues arising from the baseline data collection are as follows:

Social
- The Parish has an older population with the 41-50 years and 71-90 years age groups over-represented and the under-16s under-represented when compared to the District as a whole.
- The residents of the Parish are predominantly white with ethnic minorities under-represented when compared to the District as a whole.
- Levels of health within the Parish are generally higher than within the District as a whole.
- Crime is lower in the Parish than it is within the District as a whole.
- The housing stock within the Parish is skewed towards larger detached properties making average prices higher than in the District as a whole. The Parish has significantly fewer Council Tax band A and B properties than the District as a whole and has considerably more properties in Council Tax bands D, E and F.
- Many of the properties within the Parish are under occupied when the number of residents is compared to the number of bedrooms.
- A greater proportion of properties within the Parish than in the District are owned outright. Proportions of social rented properties are similar but private rental is higher within the Parish.
- Approximately 94 new dwellings have been completed within the Parish since 2002. This equates to around 10 dwellings per year. The most recent development is that of the former Blakedown Nurseries site for a mix of market and affordable dwellings. There have been a number of barn conversions within the parish.
- Churchill and Blakedown Parish perform poorly in terms of barriers to housing and services. It is partially within the most deprived 10% of Lower Super Output Areas nationally and partially within the 21-50% most deprived according to the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This is based on a number of indicators centred on accessibility to services and house prices.

Economic
- The Parish of Churchill and Blakedown has a smaller percentage of unemployed and long-term sick and disabled people than the District as a whole.
- Churchill and Blakedown Parish has a much greater proportion of people who are qualified to level 4 (Certificate of Higher Education or equivalent) and above than the District as a whole and a much lower percentage of people with no qualifications.
- The Parish is partially within the 50-21% least deprived and partly within the 20% least deprived areas in the Country according to the education IMD.
- Levels of car ownership are high in the Parish, with particularly high numbers of multiple car households.
• There is very limited access to bus services within the Parish, however, there is a rail station in Blakedown which provides a good service to Birmingham and Worcester.

• Almost 50% of people commute by private car or van compared with 45% in the District as a whole. More people within the Parish commute by train or work at or mainly from home when compared to the District.

• Incomes are generally higher than average within the Parish.

Environmental

• The Parish lies almost entirely within the West Midlands Green Belt, however, the village of Blakedown has a settlement boundary, taking it outside of the Green Belt.

• The Parish contains a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is based around Hurcott and Podmore Pools.

• The Parish has a series Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) based around the Churchill and Blakedown Valleys.

• There are a number of protected trees within the Parish.

• There are three areas of previous flooding within the Parish which have arisen from overflow of streams and surface water.

• There is one Conservation Area within the Parish and a number of Listed Buildings. The Parish also has a Local Heritage List.

• The Parish falls partially within the 21-50% most deprived areas and partially within the 20% least deprived areas in terms of the living environment according to the IMD. This domain considers social and private housing in poor condition, houses without central heating, air quality and road traffic accidents.
5. The Sustainability Appraisal Framework

5.1 The Sustainability Appraisal Framework is the set of sustainability objectives which are used to assess the sustainability of the sites and policies put forward in the neighbourhood plan. The objectives set out in the framework have been developed from the baseline information gathered and the sustainability issues identified. Each of the objectives includes decision-making criteria to help guide the assessment of the proposals against the objectives. The objectives also include monitoring criteria to help assess the effect of the plan once it has been implemented.

5.2 The table below sets out the proposed Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Framework for assessing the policies within the Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan. These will be within the main SA reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SA Objective</th>
<th>Decision Making Criteria</th>
<th>Draft Indicator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
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| 1. To provide decent housing for all (in particular first time buyers) of the right quality, type and affordability. | • Will it provide affordable access to a range of housing tenures and types?  
• Does it provide opportunities for the construction of sustainable homes?  
• Does it seek to provide high quality, well-designed residential environments? | • % of housing completions by size.  
• % of housing completions by tenure.  
• Number of residential applications refused as a result of poor quality design. |
| 2. To improve accessibility to, and the standard of community facilities and services in the Parish. | • Does it increase access to services within the Parish? (Primary school, GP, Post Office, pub, village hall, convenience store)?  
• Does it provide new community facilities | • Average distance residents live from local services.  
• Number of improved, extended or new local/community facilities. |
<p>| 3. To protect and enhance community spirit and cohesion. | • Does it develop opportunities for community involvement? | • Number of public events |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SA Objective</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
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<td>4. To support sustainable employment opportunities and economic growth within the Parish.</td>
<td>- Does it provide opportunities for new businesses within the Parish?</td>
<td>- Number of new VAT registered businesses within the Parish.</td>
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<td>- Does it support home-working within the Parish?</td>
<td>- Number of existing businesses expanding within the Parish.</td>
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<td>- Does it help sustain the viability of existing businesses within the Parish?</td>
<td>- % of economically active residents operating a business from home or working from home.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Does it help to retain or grow employment opportunities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. To maintain and improve the vitality of Blakedown Local Centre.</td>
<td>- Will it safeguard and improve shops, services and leisure facilities in Blakedown?</td>
<td>- Number of new services provided</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Number of services lost.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. To protect and enhance the Parish’s biodiversity and wildlife.</td>
<td>- Will it protect and enhance Churchill and Blakedown’s sites of ecological and nature conservation importance, and ensure they are resilient to climate change?</td>
<td>- Extent of change in protected habitats (ha +/-).</td>
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<td>- Will it provide opportunities for local habitat and species conservation enhancements?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Protect and improve areas of existing landscape value and open space identified by local communities.</td>
<td>- Will it help to enhance existing green infrastructure?</td>
<td>- Number of landscape enhancement schemes and improved areas of open space.</td>
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<td>- Will it provide new green infrastructure, including publicly accessible open space?</td>
<td>- Hectares of new green infrastructure delivered.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA Objective</td>
<td>Decision Making Criteria</td>
<td>Draft Indicator</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
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</table>
| 8. To conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings. | • Will it ensure the continued protection and enhancement of Churchill and Blakedown’s conservation areas, historic buildings, archaeological remains and their settings?  
• Will it conserve the historic character of the landscape?  
• Will it provide opportunities for enhancing the area’s heritage assets through their sustainable use, repair or management of the heritage asset? | • Number of additional buildings or sites identified for listing.  
• Number of historic buildings lost.  
• Number of locally listed heritage assets.  
• Number of historic buildings repaired and brought back into use.  
• Number of heritage assets identified as at risk. |
| 9. To protect and improve water quality and water resources (for ground and surface waters). | • Will it improve water efficiency?  
• Will it provide SUDS? | • Number of developments which incorporate SUDS.  
• Number of developments achieving CSH level 3/4 for water efficiency up to 2016 and level 5 afterwards. |
| 10. To ensure no increase in flood risk and provide flood risk betterment. | • Will it lead to development within flood zone 2 or 3.  
• Will it further reduce flood risk? | • No of new developments in flood zone 2 or 3.  
• Number of developments which incorporate SUDS |
| 11. Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport and reduce reliance on the private car. | • Does it provide opportunities for sustainable transport? | • Changes in bus services and routes.  
• Length of new pedestrian or cycle paths delivered |
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<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
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</table>
| 12. Ensure any re-use of brownfield land and existing redundant buildings is appropriate to the Green Belt | • Does the proposal represent suitable re-use of a brownfield site?  
• Does the proposal represent a suitable re-use of a redundant building? | • % of new development on brownfield land.  
• % of redundant commercial buildings re-used for commercial purposes. |

## 6. Next Steps

6.1 This document sets out the baseline information for Churchill and Blakedown and provides a brief overview of the plans and policies that will influence the production of the Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan. It also sets out the current sustainability issues facing the Parish and the sustainability objectives which the neighbourhood plan should strive to achieve.

6.2 Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council welcome views and feedback on the Scoping Report. A notification letter, together with details of how to access the Scoping Report, has been sent to all of those organisations outlined in Appendix A. It is also available on the Parish Council’s web-site at: [www.cnbndp.co.uk](http://www.cnbndp.co.uk) and the District Council’s website at [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk).

6.3 The key stages in the proposed timetable for developing and producing the Neighbourhood Plan are set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission to District Council and subsequent six week consultation</td>
<td>April/May 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examination</td>
<td>July/August 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspector’s Report</td>
<td>September 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referendum</td>
<td>October 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan Made</td>
<td>November 2016</td>
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</table>

6.4 Comments made on this Scoping Report will be taken into account when preparing the finalised sustainability appraisal framework which will be used to test the sites and policy options considered as the Neighbourhood Plan is prepared. Where necessary, further assessment of the options will be undertaken, along with any updating of baseline data, plans and policies.

6.5 A Sustainability Appraisal Report will be published alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.
Appendix A: List of Organisations Notified

A.1 The following organisations have been sent a notification letter to advise them of the consultation period for the SA Scoping Report. They are the statutory SA consultees, the County Council, any Parish, District or County Council sharing a border with the Parish and other organisations that represent environment, economic or social interests and have previously expressed an interest in SA or in neighbourhood planning.

- The Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Worcestershire Wildlife Trust
- Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Greater Birmingham and Solihull Enterprise Partnership
- Wyre Forest Clinical Commissioning Group
- Wyre Forest Matters Local Strategic Partnership
- Hagley Parish Council
- Clent Parish Council
- Broome Parish Council
- Stone Parish Council
- Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council
- Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council
- Kinver Parish Council
- Kidderminster Town Council
- South Staffordshire District Council
- Bromsgrove District Council
- Staffordshire County Council
- Worcestershire County Council