

Hucknall Public Meeting – Ashfield District Council Local Plan

Saturday 16th October 2021

John Godber Centre, Ogle Street, Hucknall

10:30 am

Chair: John Wilkinson

Panel:

- Jonathan Bhushan – Finance Manager OM Surgery
- Jemma Chambers - Hucknall Against Whyburn Farm Development
- Councillor Lauren Mitchell (Hucknall South, Labour)
- Councillor Chris Baron (Hucknall West, Conservative)
- Councillor John Wilmott (Hucknall North, Ashfield Independents)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised that not everyone who had wanted to attend could be let in due to the numbers. The Chair commented that it was a wonderful example of local democracy in action.

Those in attendance stood for a minute's silence in remembrance of Sir David Amess MP who was sadly killed whilst holding his constituency surgery the previous day.

The Chair reminded people that the consultation was open on the Ashfield Local Plan until 16th November 2021 and residents should make their objections and comments known to Ashfield District Council. He also reminded attendees that the plan not only included the development on Whyburn Farm land but also several other developments. A handout was placed on all seats outlining where those developments were and how many further houses were planned to be built in Hucknall in addition to the 3,000 at Whyburn Farm.

For further information see: <https://www.ashfield.gov.uk/planning-building-control/local-plan/emerging-local-plan/>

Councillor Lauren Mitchell

Councillor Mitchell began by assuring those in attendance that both her and her fellow ward councillor Keir Morrison were firmly against this plan. Lauren said that she had lived in Hucknall all her life, was part of the community and was determined to protect Hucknall as a whole from over-development. Lauren said that local representatives must be bold in their opposition to the plan.

Lauren said she is presenting a motion to the next meeting at Ashfield District Council to have the current version of the Local Plan withdrawn and rewritten with less of the burden for development being shouldered by Hucknall. The motion asks for the Kirkby in Ashfield and Sutton in Ashfield to be allocated a fair share of development. Lauren spoke of the problems that residents in her own ward, Hucknall South had faced through the development of the Broomhill Farm estate, where a further 850 houses are planned to be built in the Ashfield Local Plan.

Councillor Chris Baron

Councillor Baron started by reminding those in attendance that a local plan had been drawn up by the previous administration at ADC in 2018. When the current administration took over the council in 2019 that plan was withdrawn as the new leader of the council had said that there was a need to protect the greenbelt and that brownfield sites should be the focus of the local plan. Chris went on to say that the council leader went on to contradict himself by saying that the council wanted to allocate land close to Junction 27 of the M1 to create a hub to welcome 3-4k new households and businesses.

Chris told the meeting that Hucknall has had more than its fair share of housing. He appreciated that as a town we have good public transport links which make it desirable and that is why previously a brownfield site at Rolls Royce had been allocated for housing. Chris said it was now time that Kirkby and Sutton took their fair share of new housing development. Chris also said that a large development of 1,800 houses in the council leader's own ward had been withdrawn from the plan despite interest having been shown by developers in this site.

Councillor John Wilmott

Councillor Wilmott started by saying it was clear from the attendance at the meeting that there were strong feelings in Hucknall about the local plan. John went on to say that ADC are being forced by the government to build new houses who he said have set an arbitrary number of houses to be built in the district. John said that his party stood against these plans but they would be met with government penalties if they did not draw up a plan for where the housing allocation would go.

John went on to say that the council had identified some brownfield sites but the number of houses that could be built on these sites was around 1,000. John said that his party had written to the government and the local MP to ask for the housing allocation for Ashfield to be looked at again and as yet had not had a response.

John thanked the leader of ADC for offering to come to the meeting, although he had not been invited to.

The Chair of the meeting responded that due to limited numbers allowed at the meeting, numbers of politicians had been limited to one per party and it was important that those politicians speaking and attending were those that represented Hucknall.

Jonathan Bhushan

Jonathan spoke about growing up in a mining town in the USA. He said that when a mine caved in, people did not point fingers, but rushed to offer everyone help and comfort. In 2021 the metaphorical mine has collapsed in Hucknall. Jonathan said that since arriving in Hucknall in 2014, the development at Papplewick Lane had been built, the Gedling

developments around Linby and Papplewick were being built, Abbey Fields, Rolls Royce and on top of that a boom in nursing and care homes in the town. All this was putting extraordinary pressure on local GPs and medical infrastructure.

Jonathan spoke about there being fewer full time equivalent GPs in the town than there were 10 years ago. He said that every week, medical colleagues from across the GP surgeries in the town meet online to discuss the pressures and hardships they are facing due to a lack of capacity. Jonathan said there are some great doctors in our town but there are just too few of them to cope with an ever-increasing number of patients and that until the pressure was relieved on local doctors and schools, we should not be building more houses in Hucknall.

Jemma Chambers

Jemma spoke about starting the Facebook group: ***Hucknall Against Whyburn Farm Development*** and how when she started the group she had seen the plans for Whyburn Farm and had a feeling of utter despair in the pit of her stomach. She set up the group to see if others felt the same. Jemma spoke about how people use the area around Whyburn Farm for all kinds of activities including walking, cycling, horse-riding and enjoying the wide and varied wildlife. Jemma spoke about how thrilled she had been by the passion of Hucknall people in opposing the plans to develop on this land.

Jemma went on to speak about how Hucknall children deserve the best education possible. With the stress of an extra 3,000 houses, how could local schools provide this. Jemma also mentioned the traffic around the town and how long it takes currently to get anywhere due to already congested roads. The current infrastructure could not cope with the current number of residents.

Jemma spoke about how beneficial to mental health enjoying green spaces can be and the detrimental effect building on green belt would have on Hucknall peoples' mental health. Jemma said that Hucknall is always being asked to make more space for houses but now we have had enough and other parts of Ashfield now needed to take their fair share of housing allocation.

**The meeting then moved on to questions and comments for those in attendance.
All contributions are summarised for the minutes**

Bryce

When the plan was released it included a red line running through Stubbing Wood Farm. I live at Stubbing Wood Farm and have had no notification from the council that any development was happening. I found out when someone sent me a picture of a planning notice. Would the Ashfield Independent councillor like to comment?

Andrew

The Ashfield Independents have said that they are opposed to these plans. Will they vote against the plans, rather than abstaining or sending their apologies to the meeting?

Nick

This is a 300-page plan which you have had 20 years to do the research for and put together. It is very poorly put together. In the section about CO2 emissions, it says that this plan will cut CO2 emissions because people will not have to travel as far. The plan also says that it will increase biodiversity. The plan needs more research and more thought. The current plan is shoddy.

Sally

I noticed in the plan that there was funding allocated for the regeneration of Kirkby and Sutton. Why not use building housing not part of that regeneration? The plan seems quite weak, confused and disproportionate. A lot of us are very emotional about this. It is not fair on Hucknall. This is a 100,000+ word document, which the council have had three years to work on but it is weak.

Daniel

I was born and raised around Misk Hills. I have suffered with depression since being a teenager. When times were tough, Misk Hills was my peace and my solace. It was a place I could go to help with my anger and depression. I still go there every day, it gives me peace. Bulldozing this area would be like bulldozing a piece of my mind.

The Chair thanked Daniel for his brave and moving contribution.

Resident in pink sweater

The plan mentions viable land for sale. Were the only people willing to sell any land in Hucknall, was their none at all in Kirkby or Sutton?

Resident in blue 1

It is insanity to build on good agricultural land. We don't know what we are going to have to face in the future as the population increases or other issues present themselves.

Brian

People have many reasons why they enjoy this area, all of them are to help their wellbeing. This plan needs to be stopped. Even those who don't have mental health issues now, may develop them in the future and there will be nowhere for them to go.

Resident in green fleece

I may be called a Nimby but there are good reasons to be against further development. The plan talks about extending the tram. Do you think if there was money to extend the tram, they would not be doing it to somewhere like West Bridgford where there was even more money to be made? The flooding section of the plan talks about the River Leen which runs from Papplewick to Bulwell but the source of Hucknall's previous flood issues are the Whyburn Brook and Bakers Brook. The plan proposes the extra water run off goes through those same brooks. The plan talks about a new primary school but the primary school on the Rolls Royce estate has been down sized and families living on that estate are having to send their children to school in Kimberley. I recently visited Holgate Secondary for the 50th anniversary. The place is falling down. The plan only says that the secondary school would be given some money. It needs a full rebuild. The thought of an extra 10,000 cars in the town doesn't even bear thinking about.

Hannah

How has this come to be? We are talking about ripping out an eco-system that has taken hundreds of years to establish and replacing it with more pollution. How can this be when we are living in a time where we are more aware than ever of ecological issues?

Resident in blue 2

Ashfield District Council condemned Gedling council for building on Top Wighay yet it seems all councils are now dumping their houses in and around Hucknall. I take my grandchildren on Mick Hills to see the wildlife.

Amy

Ashfield Independents, you are the majority party. We are not stupid. If you were that bothered you would lead, as other councils are doing. Whilst other councils are talking about increasing biodiversity and re-wilding, you are talking about tarmacking over greenbelt.

The panel were given opportunity to respond to comments and questions so far.

Councillor Baron

There are housing targets, however the local authority decides where those houses will be. Hucknall has had more than its fair share already. Regarding Stubbing Wood Farm, it is interesting you should raise that as the Ashfield Independents went against planning officer recommendations to approve the entrance to the site.

Everyone in Hucknall knows that Watnall Road is an absolute nightmare. I argued at the time of building the Rolls Royce development that there should be a road that goes from the top roundabout through to the Hucknall bypass.

Mark Spencer MP has put a bid into the Towns Fund for Hucknall. Local MPs from Sherwood and Ashfield have offered to work with ADC on the plan.

Councillor Mitchell

The Ashfield Independents threw out the previous local plan claiming that Labour wanted to build on the greenbelt. It is ADC who choose where the houses go. To respond to a comment, this is not about being a NIMBY, we are not protesting about something obscuring a view from a garden, this is a plan which will have a massive impact on the whole town. The Broomhill Farm development will be like a concrete jungle. It has already had a detrimental effect on peoples' health. Thank you to Daniel for your comments, I agree that Misk Hills provides a great escape and a place to get away from it all.

I will be bringing a motion to withdraw the plan to the next Ashfield District Council meeting. The motion is being seconded by Councillor Kevin Rostance so it is a cross party motion.

Councillor Mitchell read the full text of the motion to the meeting

Councillor Wilmott

It is enlightening to hear your suggestions. I must make clear that the Ashfield Independents are against building on greenbelt. We did send a letter to Mark Spencer MP asking him to look again at allocations. The Prime Minister has said that there is to be no building on greenbelt.

The Chair asked Councillor Wilmott whether the Ashfield Independents in Hucknall will vote in favour of the motion to withdraw the plan.

I will vote in favour of it. I can't speak for my colleagues who are not her but I think they will vote in favour of it.

Resident in pink sweater

My question has not been answered, has there been other land identified for sale?

Councillor Wilmott

Every possible piece of land has been looked at. It cannot be looked at if it is not for sale.

Chair asks – are you saying that there was no land at all for sale in Kirkby and Sutton?

Every area has been looked at.

Pete

I'm interested in green issues. There are less than a million hedgehogs left in the wild which is down from 30 million in the 1940s. If we keep building on greenbelt there will be no wildlife left. It has recently been found that soil absorbs even more CO2 than plants. We have got to look at different ways. We need to work with nature. If we don't sort it in our lifetime, there will be no future for our grandchildren.

Frank 1

I have lived in Hucknall all my life. It used to be a stand-alone mining town. Now it is just becoming part of an urban sprawl from Nottingham to Mansfield. Twenty years ago there was a campaign against building on the Wigwam playing fields which was given to the people of Hucknall in perpetuity for play. When is Hucknall going to stop being used as a cash cow for councils and developers?

Pippa

I live in the centre of Hucknall. Everyone in this room is on the same page, irrespective of where we live, across all ages. The whole room is against this plan, so why should we even have to have this discussion?

Pauline

You should listen to Joni Mitchell – *They paved paradise and they put up a parking lot, they took all the trees and put them in a tree museum.* We need to do something now. My grandchildren are saying that they won't have children because of the state of the world they would have to live in.

Kerry

We are fighting for the future generations. My Dad lived over 50 years, and I have grown up on the Lane.

Brendan

Are the plans for Hucknall West to be separated from the rest of Hucknall going ahead?

The Chair clarified that this was probably referring to a submission made to the Boundary Commission about Parliamentary constituency boundaries, where Hucknall West had been included in Ashfield rather than Sherwood. The Chair said he did not believe there were plans to go ahead with this at the current time.

Frank Taylor

What gets me is they're only looking at money, money for developers. I have a picture of my mother on Misk Hills in 1941, no doubt she was worrying about my Dad who was away in the Navy. She taught me about Byron. I am not a fan of his poetry but I like the man. I now

take my grandson up there with his binoculars and teach him about wildlife. This is our land. It should be made into a country park. We don't have a country park around Hucknall, they're all slag heaps. When my grandson digs down on The Ranges, he might find a lump of coal, when he digs down on Misk Hills, he might find a rabbit warren.

The Chair asks the panel if they have any closing comments

Councillor Baron

We have heard all that has been said. Only the Ashfield Independents have the power to change it.

Councillor Wilmott

The Ashfield Independents have listened intently and we will take it back and hopefully make some changes.

Jonathan Bhushan

It all goes back to the community. If this is a true democracy, this should be stopped. My son was born here. I go walking with my neighbour around Misk Hills and Whyburn, I want that to be there in the future for my son.

Jemma Chambers

I have four things that I want you to do

- Get a yellow ribbon to show your support
- Sign the petition either online or on the paper copy
- Please formally oppose by sending your objections to localplan@ashfield.gov.uk
- Please maintain this passion, emotion and momentum

I am so proud to be a part of Hucknall community.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending today and for all the contributions. The Chair said we must keep this genuine, emotional, community-based campaign going beyond the date for submission to ADC, through to the next council meeting where the motion to withdraw will be tabled and for as long as needed to stop this plan.

Meeting closed