

District Councillor Report

Hope you all had a good start to 2025, despite the freezing weather and widespread flooding which have given us some challenges already in the ward and beyond.

English Devolution: Local government

One of the most important issues affecting our local area will be the reorganization of local government. On the 16th December 2024, the government published a White Paper with proposals for a devolution of powers and funding from central government to the regions to secure investment and stimulate economic growth. While these initiatives are welcome, the England Devolution White Paper essentially abolishes district and borough councils and requires large unitary councils, with no role for local public consultation on the reorganisation proposals. In effect it's a top-down approach by Ministers. The emphasis is on creating unprecedentedly large unitary councils with an arbitrary minimum threshold of 500k population and no reference to the size of the geographic area. This would mean that these new unitary authorities become in my view remote organisations with a weak link to local places, especially in rural areas like ours.

The Warwickshire County Council's Leader has written to the Government to cancel the County Council election this May and propose unilaterally a Warwickshire-wide unitary. The leaders of Stratford-on-Avo District Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, and Warwick District Council have in turn urged the Leader of Warwickshire County Council to withhold from requesting the deferral of the May 2025 elections. Instead, they wish her to urgently enter meaningful, collaborative, and constructive discussions with the existing principal authorities within the County of Warwickshire to help properly consider the options that exist.

Creating a single authority would centralize power, leaving rural and southern areas at the mercy of larger urban centres such as Nuneaton. Warwickshire's diverse communities deserve tailored representation, not a one-size-fits-all model that risks higher council taxes and neglects our hamlets and villages. Even more troubling is the possibility of expanding this authority beyond Warwickshire's boundaries. The idea of Coventry or Redditch councillors voting on issues affecting villages like Welford-on-Avon and Clifford Chambers is absurd. Delaying elections to fast-track these plans is an affront to democracy. I urge Warwickshire County Council to engage meaningfully with residents.

Together, we can find solutions that protect South Warwickshire's identity, ensure fair representation, and serve all our communities. At the time of writing we do not know what the Minister decides.

South Warwickshire Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation

The South Warwickshire Local Plan [Preferred Options Consultation](#) is now live and will run for a period of 8 weeks, until **11:59pm on Friday 7th March 2025**. The Preferred Options Consultation is the third stage in the process for preparing the new South Warwickshire Local Plan. Please note comments made after the closing date will not be considered. Residents, parish and town councils, businesses and other stakeholders are now invited to have their say on the Preferred Options version of the South Warwickshire Local Plan (2050) for the combined areas of Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils for the next 25 years.

The consultation document and accompanying materials are all available to view on the [South Warwickshire Local Plan Website](#):
<https://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/preferred-options.cfm>

South Warwickshire Facts and Figures



This Preferred Options Document follows on from the previous two rounds of consultations. A Scoping and Call for sites consultation in 2021, and an Issues and Options consultation in early 2023. This Preferred Options document addresses a number of topics such as housing, economy, climate change environment etc and then presents the preferred approach to addressing them. In this consultation document there are a range of draft policies and draft policy directions. Draft policies contain details of the subject matter and clearly set out the requirements of what the policy would like to achieve. The

draft policy directions are just an indication of the direction of travel the final policy will take and set out the broad aspirations of the future policy.

The Preferred Options document identifies **24 potential Strategic Growth Locations and 12 potential New Settlement locations**, which are an indication of where the 2 councils consider large-scale strategic growth may be best be located. It is important to stress that the growth locations identified would accommodate significantly more than South Warwickshire's identified housing and employment needs, and so it is **not expected** that all these locations will be allocated as a part of the plan making process. The SWLP team will be undertaking further analysis of the Growth Locations and potential New Settlements to conclude which locations, and specific sites will be most suitable locations for the South Warwickshire's growth strategy.

So it is very important for residents to comment. There is also an interactive map where you can zoom and see various layers of proposed sites for development (but also employment and open green spaces) including submitted sites from previous consultations. You can find the map here: <https://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/south-warwickshire.cfm>

The proposed (possible) sites for new settlements.

A total of 12 potential new settlements have been identified by the South Warwickshire Councils in order to support large-scale growth to meet a proportion of the identified housing needs for the Plan period. These sites are just where the new settlements would be able to be accommodated but only a few will make it to the next stage.

The new settlements are expected to be independent of any existing settlements and integrate 20-minute neighbourhood principals into the design and layout of development, with gross areas ranging from 242.7ha to 770.5ha. E28 These 12 new settlements are as follows: • A1: Land South of Tanworth-in-Arden • A2: Land East of Wood End • B1: Land at Hatton • BW: Land and Bearley and Wilmcote • C1: Land South of Kingswood • E1: Long Marston Airfield • F1: Land to the West of Ufton • F2: Land South of Deppers Bridge • F3: Land North East of Knightcote • G1: Land to the West of Knightcote • X1: Land South of Leamington/North of Wellesbourne/East of Barford • X2: Land East of Leamington Spa/Whitnash and west of B445 Fosse Way

Call for Sites

A further targeted Call for Sites is also being run alongside the Preferred Options consultation. This Call for Sites exercise is only for sites that meet at least one of the purposes below:

- A site that falls within or adjacent to one of the 12 proposed New Settlement Locations
- A Gypsy and Traveller / Travelling Showpeople Site
- A site for commercial or community-led renewable energy generation

Personally I am very disappointed that there is not a call for site for biodiversity and open green spaces.

Submissions can be made using the interactive form which is available on the SWLP website. Submissions to the call for sites will be accepted between until 11:59pm Friday 7th March 2025.

Consultation Events

In addition to the consultation material, which includes videos, posters, and an interactive navigation pane, officers will also be hosting a number of consultation events. These events are available both online and in person and are an opportunity to ask questions on the consultation, and to go through how to respond to the consultation. Details on the events available on

<https://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/preferred-options.cfm>

Date	In Person/Online	Location
Thursday 16th January	Online	6pm - 7:30pm [Web link will be available at this time]
Saturday 25th January	In Person	Royal Priors Shopping Centre Leamington Spa 10am - 4pm
Tuesday 28th January	In Person	Shipston Leisure Centre, Shipston-on-Avon 1pm - 7pm
Friday 31st January	Online	2pm - 4pm [Web link will be available at this time]
Saturday 1st February	In Person	Talisman Square, Kenilworth 10am - 4pm
Thursday 6th February	In Person	Newbold Leisure Centre, Leamington Spa

Physical Copies of the documents

Hard copies of the documents are available to view at Libraries across the two districts, and the two District Council Offices.

How to comment

Residents can comment on the online consultation portal, which is the most efficient way for your comments to be processed. Alternative ways to respond are outlined on the <https://southwarwickshire.oc2.uk/document/148>. However, if you are unable to comment using the online form, the council will also accept responses by email or post to either:

The SWLP Team, Stratford -on-Avon District Council Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6HX

Email: swlp@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Police and Crime Commissioner Survey

Warwickshire's Police and Crime Commissioner, Philip Secombe, is inviting local residents to share their views on the funding they contribute towards policing and community safety through a newly launched survey. The call for feedback comes after this week's announcement of the Government's funding settlement for Warwickshire Police for the next financial year. The settlement, outlined in Parliament, indicates a potential overall funding increase of 5.9% (£8.3 million) for the county. However, this is slightly below the national average increase for police forces. Of this amount, just under £5 million comes directly from Government grants, while £3.2 million is dependent on an increase in the Police Precept—the portion of the police budget funded through Council Tax.

The survey is available online now at: <https://www.warwickshire-pcc.gov.uk/budget-2025-26/>

Support for local businesses

The Coventry & Warwickshire Growth Hub is a national and local government supported organisation, which offers one-to-one advice and ongoing support to businesses in the region. They provide a 'front-door' to the vast range of

business support initiatives and programmes on offer locally and nationally can be contacted on Tel 0300 060 3747 or email support@cwgrowthhub.co.uk

For more information go to www.cwgrowthhub.co.uk

The Growth Hub will be able to help you identify and access support either from themselves or from a range of other partners

Community Climate Change Fund Phase Two

Are you a community group or Parish Council with an idea for a green project? Contact us now to discuss your project idea!

Applications for Phase Two will close **on 10th February 2025.**

The following groups will be able to apply for grant funding through the CCNF:

- Town or Parish Councils
- Formally constituted charity and community groups
- Sports clubs

The District Council will fund projects which meet one of the following criteria:

- Projects which result in a direct reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Projects which build resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- Projects which will result in research enabling access to more significant funding applications.
- Projects which will result in the enhancement of biodiversity.

A total of £55,863 will be available to successful applicants.

Please email climate.emergency@stratford-dc.gov.uk for any queries.

Speeding

Warwickshire County Council has let me know that there is now a centralised reporting system to submit evidence of speeding/ speeding data, see link below:

<https://warksspeedconcerns.org/>

Any report made via this system is reviewed by the Warwickshire County Council road safety team who can then direct actions based on risk, impact

etc., which could include immediate prevention activities such as community speed watch, education initiatives or SNT (police) speed checks, enforcement activity and long-term problem-solving initiatives such as road layout changes, changes in speed limits and so forth. So please do report incidents of speeding.

A46 Summit

As your MP I am organising a A46 summit, inviting National Highways to our area, and inviting parishes impacted by the lack of improvements on the A46 (between Stratford and Alcester). I will update you once meeting is firmed up.

Finally, December 2024 marked 130 years since the Local Government Act of 1894 gave women the right to stand as a district councillor. 57 per cent of Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Cabinet members are women. And 39 per cent of the District Council's councillors are women. This year also marks 50 years since the creation of Stratford-on-Avon District Council. However, as observed above, district councils will now be abolished under the government's devolution white paper in favour of super unitary councils and/or mayoral combined authorities.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any issue or query,
Warmest wishes

Manuela

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