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South Warwickshire Local Plan
Stratford on Avon District Council Planning Policy Team

7 March 2025

Dear SWLP Planning Policy team

Re: Consultation response to South Warwickshire Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation

I write to you in response to the South Warwickshire Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation. I would like to highlight several key areas of concern and opportunity, informed by the voices of my constituents. I also would like to ask whether a further extensive public consultation is undertaken pursuant to Regulation 18 with the sites/options that will be brought forward.

Policies

4.5/4.6. Infrastructure First

Communities should not bear the brunt of new developments without the necessary infrastructure—transport, utilities, schools, healthcare, drainage, playing fields and open green spaces, allotments, broadband—being in place from the start. The current system often sees these vital services lagging or not been delivered for years after the houses have been occupied, creating unsustainable strain on local communities. Over recent years, our area has had much house building without the infrastructure to match.

7.9/7.10/7.11. Building Outside Floodplains

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has unanimously passed a resolution to resist building on flood plains. Recent extreme weather events have underscored the risk of flooding, including surface water flooding, and it is vital that planning policy reflects the need for resilience in the face of climate change. I represent many communities vulnerable to flooding. Communities must be protected from the long-term risks of flooding, which not only threatens housing but also damages local economies and increases insurance costs. Future housing must be directed away from high-risk areas and designed to be climate-resilient. Permeable surfaces, high quality multifunctional SUDs and drainage infrastructure must be embedded in any new development.

5. Local Neighbourhood Development Plans and Community-Led Planning

Local neighbourhood development plans are a crucial tool in enabling communities to shape their future. The SWLP must give greater weight to these plans, ensuring that they are respected during decision-making. Planning should involve genuine community engagement from the outset. This is particularly important for delivering affordable housing that meets local needs, in a manner that aligns with the character and aspirations of local residents. Protecting our environment and historical heritage must be central to this process, ensuring sustainable and context-appropriate development.



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5. Affordability and Housing Needs

The prioritisation of affordable housing, particularly social rent, must be strengthened. We must avoid the temptation to let developers meet only minimum standards, which often results in affordability targets being missed and using viability studies to reduce the affordability quota. This is particularly important in areas like Stratford-on-Avon, where housing prices can outstrip wages, creating barriers for young people and key workers. The definition of 'affordable' which can be up to 80% of the market value, must be flexible in areas like my constituency where house prices are high.

11. Environmental Protections, agricultural land and Sustainable Food Production

As we look to tackle the twin challenges of climate change and food security, it is crucial that sustainable land use is adopted. Agricultural land, particularly high-quality land must be safeguarded for sustainable food production to ensure that we can continue to feed our population while reducing our reliance on imports.

8/7.6/7.4. Exceeding Minimum Standards in Housing Development

It is crucial that we raise housing development standards, particularly regarding construction methods, energy efficiency and environmental performance. We must demand that new homes are designed to meet future climate goals, with a focus on high insulation, renewable energy integration, and sustainable materials. To achieve the UK's 2050 net-zero targets, all homes must go beyond basic requirements, aiming to achieve Passivhaus standards. Local authorities should be empowered to demand these higher standards, ensuring that all new housing contributes to national carbon reduction goals and is built for a sustainable future. We need a solar rooftop revolution, where all new houses (and commercial properties including warehouses) have solar panels. We need houses which are well insulated, well built, cheap to heat via renewable energy.

Sites/Growth Areas/Options

Regarding individual sites, residents, resident groups and parish councils have contacted me with regards to the following sites, and I urge policy team to carefully consider the several representations by residents and town and parish councils.

BW Wilmcote/Bearley

The BW new settlement proposal is completely inappropriate and has not considered the serious transport and infrastructure issues that currently exist, especially around the A3400 and the single-track rail line: the current traffic volume on the A3400 and A46 has already led to local village roads being used as shortcuts, posing significant risks. The Henley junction on the A3400, along the route from the planned settlement towards Birmingham, is already at maximum capacity. Both Bearley and Wilmcote Stations are rated within Group D, the lowest rating deemed viable for passenger transport. No assessment has been made of the impact of development on numerous biodiversity and protected species as well as on Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The sites are located within green belt land and the proposed 6700 houses will coalesce two



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distinct historic villages. The proposed housing development poses significant risks due to increased surface water runoff, inadequate natural water absorption, and an overburdened drainage system, thereby making it an unsustainable project for the area. Wilmcote is home to Mary Arden's House, a grade I listed Shakespeare's property. This heritage will be irreparably damaged if it became accessible through a sprawling new settlement. The agricultural land must be protected, and the identity of the two historic villages safeguarded.

E1 - Long Marston Airfield

The site has major transport issues. This area includes the areas at Meon Vale and Long Marston Airfield that have received planning permission and are under construction. However, there are currently restrictions of further development taking place until improvements to the transport infrastructure around Stratford on Avon are carried out. The various studies that have been undertaken have failed to demonstrate how the highway infrastructure can be delivered satisfactorily. Dozens of heavy vehicles use the Clopton bridge each day to make the journey from the M40 to Meon Vale including many vehicle transporters. This will only worsen if more major employment development is allocated here, without any alternative transport solution. Improvements will also be needed to Station Road to provide access to the Rail Innovation Centre and new housing development.

A1 Tanworth in Arden/A2 Wood End

Serious concerns for this proposed settlement were raised regarding sewerage infrastructure, lack of road infrastructure, traffic, especially on adjacent hamlets and villages such as Earlswood, I understand sites are not draining properly and the development is proposed on green belt. Earlswood residents have raised the issue of impact on the lakes, wildlife, biodiversity and recreation.

Stratford upon Avon Strategic Growth Areas

I agree with the Stratford Town Transport Group that as Strategic Growth Areas in Stratford-upon-Avon are separated from the town by major roads, communities do become isolated, and transport connectivity dependent on cars. This also produced urban sprawling. **SG19** would be too remote from any significant employment options, which means residents will be relying on car journeys, contributing to traffic gridlock in the town.

Further **Clopton Quarter SG18** sits within the open countryside and this should be preserved, within the green belt, it also sits within the setting of a number of Listed Buildings, including Clopton House. Most importantly the application site which sits adjacent to the Clopton House Meadow Local Wildlife Site and the Welcombe Hills Local Nature Reserve, an important biodiversity site for the Town of Stratford, is a sensitive landscape area, the SLA 4 special landscape area, within the Avon Character Area, Vale Orchard Belt. The proposed development would fundamentally alter the tranquil and cohesive character of this pastoral landscape, including ancient oak-dominated hedgerows, tranquil pastoral scenes, and traditional settlement features,



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such as nearby church spires and red-brick cottages, are integral to the enjoyment of this area and what makes Stratford special. A development here, affecting the important views and open countryside, would negatively affect the whole of the town itself, its distinct character and outlook. Housing development on this open field would introduce intrusive urban elements that are entirely out of character with this setting, leading to the loss of its rural charm and scenic quality. Flooding and drainage issues as well as the loss of best and most versatile farmland are also important issues that must be taken into consideration. In this growth area, the Bordon Hill landscape is protected in both the Stratford Town and Luddington Parish Councils' design statements and deemed highly sensitive to development in Stratford District Council's own Landscape Sensitivity Assessment in 2011. Development here would be excessively overbearing. Further, there have been reports of increased flooding of Shottery Brook following adjacent development. The agricultural land here is defined as 'best and most versatile', and must be safeguarded. Also of significant concern is the substantial harm to the setting of the Anne's Hathaway Cottage, another grade listed Shakespeare's house and the Shottery Conservation Area.

Studley SG22

Concerns have been raised with regards to the Studley area SG22, in particular Middletown, a rural hamlet, washed over by the green belt. Any additional development would result in a sprawling and coalescence of the hamlet with Studley, losing its distinct identity. The hamlet would lose its high degree of security and privacy and, furthermore, it would be exposed to higher levels of noise and air pollution. The Sambourne Parish Plan 2014 strongly opposes further housing developments within the parish. Further, I understand that water run-off from site SG22 to the south has been a major issue for many years, causing flooding in Middletown Lane. Regarding highway infrastructure, the lanes through Sambourne parish are narrow and significant damage to road edges and verges has been caused by the volume of traffic. The development of site SG22 would further increase the amount of traffic through the roads in Middletown and Sambourne.

Shipston on Stour SG17

The town of Shipston has already been overdeveloped, without corresponding investment in infrastructure or services: no rail station, limited bus services, no sixth form, no road upgrades, no active travel infrastructure, no major employment hub, shortage of medical facilities, including no hospital beds, closure of fire station and closure of last bank branch. This has also increased flooding in the town, and congestion on single track roads. The proposals are therefore unsustainable. SG17 lacks sufficient transport connections and essential infrastructure. A significant portion of SG17 around Fell Mill Lane lies within flood zones 2 and 3. Any development in this area could exacerbate flooding in Shipston on Stour and additional villages downstream. Fell Mill Lane is in an Area of Restraint and within the National Character Area 96. It also sits within the proposed 3km buffer zone of the Cotswold National Landscape (AONB). The town cannot sustain further development.



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Henley-in-Arden SG23

Henley is surrounded by green belt, and the built-up area is now at capacity. I understand from discussions with residents and local councillors that local housing needs during the lifetime of the South Warwickshire Local Plan until 2050 is probably no more than 500 new homes. However the proposed sites will double the size of Henley. Concerns were raised on road and traffic congestion and road safety, infrastructure, drainage and flooding.

Residents also raised serious issues with the following sites:

Alcester SG20

Bidford SG21

Hockley Heath SG24

The main concerns were the size of the proposed developments (overbearing, sprawling villages and town, and coalescing historic villages), the amount and type of infrastructure needed to sustain thousands of new homes, exacerbating pluvial and fluvial flooding, impact on sensitive areas, the permanent loss of important views and landscapes, negative impact on the natural environment, loss of biodiversity and loss of green belt.

Best wishes,

Dr Manuela Perteghella MP

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