

## **Lighthorne Parish Council DC Report – January 2025**

Happy New Year to you all for what promises to be an interesting one from a local government perspective!

### **Saxon House, Mountford Rise**

Following contact from the applicant for Saxon House, I have written and chased a response from the planning officer to explain why both the PC's and Ward Member's updated response to the planning application was ignored despite there being a three week gap to receiving the decision notice. It is my view that the application should have been triggered to planning committee in view of our confirmed support.

### **Devolution and Impact on Stratford-on-Avon District Council**

The government published a White Paper just before Christmas about its plans to introduce devolution in England which will take powers from central government to the regions. This was part of the Labour manifesto, however the timing and the speed with which it is being introduced will put additional pressures on the district council, their staff and councillors.

In a nutshell, Warwickshire is likely to become a Foundation Strategic Authority which will include Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils, North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth and Rugby Borough Councils.

Stratford and Warwick District Council will still need to push ahead with its South Warwickshire Local Plan as a priority, but there will be no statutory public consultation with regard to devolution and there is a possibility that the county council elections in May 2025 will be postponed to 2026. However, we will be advised by government within the next two months whether the county council elections are going ahead or not.

There will be three tiers/types of Strategic Authorities formed which will be dictated by the population size and area – Foundation Strategic Authorities – over 500,000 population with no mayor (Warwickshire 617k), Mayoral Strategic Authorities 1.5m population (with more power) and Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities (with even more power) – e.g. West Midlands Combined Authority.

Essentially this means there will be one authority handling all the aspects that our county council and district council provide and it is estimated that overall this is likely to introduce substantial savings.

All district and borough councils will be working closely with Warwickshire County Council to ensure the transition is successfully completed and services will continue as normal, this of course means that I am one of the last district councillors at SDC.

The new unitary authorities across England are expected to be delivered in 2027 and 2028. WCC informed the government on 10<sup>th</sup> January that it wishes to defer the county council elections to 2026 and if this is the case it means that SDC could be abolished in 2027 or later in 2028.

It appears that town and parish councils will not be impacted by the current situation. However, more information is needed regarding this matter. I am concerned about the government's expedited process and the lack of public consultation.

It is therefore essential that representatives from HLPC attend the briefing for parish and town councils planned in the near future, when greater clarity is known about the situation and the way forward.

### **SWLP Public Consultation**

An eight-week public consultation has commenced from 10<sup>h</sup> January – 7<sup>th</sup> March in respect of the preferred options for sites in the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) for the combined areas of both Stratford and Warwick District Councils for the next 25 years.

Comments can be made online, via email and post. Please click onto the link below:

[South Warwickshire Local Plan](#)

The Preferred Options consultation will provide a third opportunity for residents to have their say on the emerging Local Plan, following feedback from the previous Scoping and Call for Sites (2021) and Issues and Options and second Call for Sites (2023) consultations. It is informed by a wide range of evidence that is now available to view on the South Warwickshire Local Plan website.

Once adopted, the Plan will set out how both Councils intend to deliver the housing and employment and infrastructure development required to meet our needs up to 2050 whilst also protecting our open spaces, green belt and countryside from unplanned development.

The Plan will be the basis upon which all planning applications will be determined in a way that supports those needs and how we address the pressing issues around climate change, biodiversity, connectivity, and resident wellbeing.

It will include the identification of 36 emerging housing and employment growth location options (12 potential new settlement and 24 strategic growth location options)

across South Warwickshire which are considered to be potentially suitable growth locations.

Key sites which have been identified and potentially impact on residents within the Wellesbourne North and Rural Ward include:

### **Potential New Settlements**

Land South of Leamington and North of Wellesbourne (J14 M40 area)

### **Strategic Growth Areas**

North of Wellesbourne

South of Wellesbourne

Gaydon Lighthorne Heath

Bishops Tachbrook

As part of the consultation, a targeted call for sites exercise will be held specifically for the following:

- Gypsy and Traveller sites
- Commercial and Community-Led Renewable Energy generation sites
- Housing and Employment sites within the 12 potential new settlement locations

The document has been informed by a significant amount of evidence and expert opinion and you can find out more information about the South Warwickshire Local Plan at: [www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp](http://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp)

My recommendation is to be selective on reviewing the document and allocate time to comment on those sites which have an immediate impact on the village and residents. A separate meeting to discuss this is recommended.

**Anne Parry**

Ward Member for Wellesbourne North and Rural