

Annual Report from Cllr Anne Parry, ward member for Wellesbourne North and Rural

Lighthorne Parish Council Annual Report

Planning and the Local Plan

The South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) and planning matters have dominated my workload in respect of being the ward member for Wellesbourne North and Rural over the last year and this is set to increase with the development of the SWLP for submission to the planning inspectorate at the end of this year.

Whilst I am in support of the principle of the SWLP, the proposed plan and its development has been plagued by delays by the current administration and is now including last minute changes which did not have the benefit of going through the extensive public consultation process last year. This is of great concern to me.

I am also concerned that whilst being developed in conjunction with Warwick District Council, the so called joined-up approach is lacking in the delivery and there is a possibility of a few thousand homes being planned in Bishops Tachbrook with a potential new M40 junction which will have a major impact on villagers in Moreton Morrell, Ashorne, Newbold Pacey and Wellesbourne, which is lacking in infrastructure and public transport services.

I am therefore struggling to be in a position to support the proposed plan and urge the parish council to attend one of the briefings at SDC w/c 18th May.

The lack of a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) continues to be a high priority at SDC and is now being monitored every six months rather than annually. Planning applications now exceed 10,000 new houses either in the planning system or known about to be forthcoming, it is hoped that a 5YHLS may be secured next year prior to the SWLP being adopted. SDC is also recruiting additional planning officers to cope with the influx of applications and also focus on the emerging SWLP.

An extraordinary council meeting to debate the proposed new settlements and strategic growth areas is being held on Monday 8th June when I plan to submit my petition to SDC on putting a stop to new housing developments in and around Wellesbourne and the surrounding villages without the inclusion of proper infrastructure requirements. My thanks to all villagers who have signed this via www.nomorehouses.co.uk

New government plans aimed at fast-tracking the planning system are also being considered with proposed changes to the role of planning committees. This is likely to result in applications for small developments of up to nine dwellings, minor commercial and household developments being delegated to officers, without the opportunity for robust scrutiny by parish councils, ward members and council planning committees. This means we could see more Planning in Principle (PIP) applications come forward for developments of up to nine dwellings and will be challenging as far as small villages are concerned.

The jury is still out on these new reforms, despite requests for a mechanism to refer such applications to the planning committee, when a case may have a significant local impact, raise complex planning issues, or generate substantial public interest.

As someone who sits on planning committee these new planning committee reforms represent an erosion of local democracy!

Local Government Reorganisation

Plans in respect of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) have been progressing over the last 12 months and the results of the government's consultation are anticipated in July on whether Warwickshire is to form a single or two unitary council. However, it is encouraging to note that the government has recently announced multiple, smaller unitary councils in four out of their six 'devolution priority' areas, which could signal a potentially positive move in favour of a two unitary council for South and North Warwickshire.

I am in favour of a two unitary council against the county council preference for a single unitary council and I thank everyone who took the time to vote and express their views.

Housing Matters

Over the last year I have been liaising with both the SDC Housing and Orbit teams in respect of housing queries from residents and their families and it is always one of the most satisfying achievements, as part of my role as ward member, to help villagers with their respective housing issues.

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Lighthorne and Moreton Morrell Solar Farm

This proved a contentious planning application impacting the character of the landscape in both villages and also the amenities of various villagers, and this took up a considerable amount of time over the last year objecting to the application on behalf of both the parish council and local residents which was granted at planning committee. It is understood that construction of the solar farm will be commencing shortly and both Lighthorne and Moreton Morrell will at least benefit from an annual financial community payment.

Anne Parry

anne.parry@stratford-district.gov.uk

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