Wellesbourne North & Rural District Councillor Report for Lighthorne Parish Council

Firstly apologies for not being able to attend the October PC meeting but I am away in Scotland.

Village Hall Grant Success for £100k!

I was delighted to attend the celebration marking a £100,000 grant from Stratford District Council to demolish and build the proposed extension to Lighthorne Village Hall. Congratulations to everyone involved in preparing such an excellent application, which scored highly and secured the largest grant awarded. This is a major achievement, and I am pleased that such substantial funding has been allocated in my ward.

South Warwickshire Local Plan

The Government issued a revised NPPF on 17 August 2026, leaving the current draft SWLP only partly compliant with its requirements. Of the SWLP's 87 policies, some are consistent with the NPPF, while others need to be revised:

- 41% are compliant
- 20% have no explicit equivalent in the NPPF and will need redrafting (Yellow)
- 22% have minor or partial inconsistencies with the NPPF (Amber)
- 9% are wholly inconsistent with the NPPF (Red)

Policies which are identified as Yellow, Red and Amber require redrafting!

SDC and WDC policy teams are therefore reviewing the large volume of public consultation responses and developing comments for inclusion in the plan.

***R-19 Consultation resulted in 11,324 responses* and the plan has to be submitted by end December 2026.**

- 73.1% Portal
- 3.6% Email Rep Form
- 5.3% Email/Letter
- 18.1% Paper Form
- Petitions from Bidford on Avon [1,800], and Clifford Chambers [260]

- However, the above numbers have subsequently been exceeded by a significant amount

In view of the above the resultant changes will result in a substantially different plan from the one presented to the public during the consultation process but clearly there is no time for this to happen!? SDC is clearly hoping that the Inspector will accept the analysis and grant additional time for consolidation?

Key points and financing

- SDC has written to the MP's stating that funding is not in place to deliver key parts of the plan, including the South Western By-Pass and Bridge, Bidford Road and Bidford Bridge.

West Midlands Strategic Growth Study

- Rejected sites in SWLP by SDC & WDC are now being considered in this latest study.

Neighbourhood Development Funding

Last month SDC finally agreed a process to enable parishes within the District to apply for up to £10,000 each to help support the production of new of revised NDPs, with a total fund of £300,000 available. NDP groups can access this funding once they have:

- A designated Neighbourhood Plan Area;
- A NDP steering or working group and;
- A suitable structure enabling the receipt of funds (e.g. a suitable bank account and legal structure). Funds would be administered by the relevant Parish or Town Council.

Further information on the application process including what information is required to be submitted to support an application, and guidance on what funds can be spent on is available to view here: Neighbourhood Plan Funding | Stratford-on-Avon District Council

The Application Form is available as a word attachment to this email, alternatively an interactive pdf form is available at: NDP Funding Application Form fillable.pdf

Completed Application Forms should be sent to planning.policy@stratford-dc.gov.uk

NDP housing requirement figures

An important aspect of the updated NPPF relating to NDPs is Policy HO2 on housing requirements.

Policy HO2 of the new NPPF sets out how local plans (i.e. the SWLP) should approach establishing the housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plans, including the need for a housing requirement figure to be set for designated neighbourhood plan areas. The Policy advises that this figure should take into account the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area, and the most recently available planning strategy of the local planning authority. The District Council is currently establishing these figures for each designated neighbourhood plan area and will be publishing this information shortly. We will be notified once this information is available.

Whilst there is no obligation to prepare a neighbourhood plan nor to include housing allocations within it, as Policy PM5 of the NPPF acknowledges, 'neighbourhood plans allow local communities to plan positively for their areas by identifying and addressing community priorities that can be met or supported through the planning system'. The new NPPF also restates the presumption in favour of development, including where there is conflict with a neighbourhood plan. Being less than 5 years old and having housing allocations does however give the neighbourhood plan greater weight in decision-taking (see NPPF Policy S2) and for this reason the District Council encourages neighbourhood plans to include housing allocations.

The development of an NDP for Lighthorne will be hugely beneficial and now the steering group can submit a claim for a £10,000 grant. The following info may also be helpful.

Government published Neighbourhood Planning toolkits 2026

The Government has produced a series of practical toolkits to support communities in creating and shaping their places in response to both current and future challenges. Each toolkit sets out, in detail, the processes and activities required to produce a neighbourhood plan, as well as providing best practice guidance.

The toolkits are available to view here: Neighbourhood planning toolkits - GOV.UK

Stratford-on-Avon District Council Rural Housing Enabler appointed

SDC has appointed a new Rural Housing Enabler, Niamh Lenihan. An aspect of Niamh's role will be to support parishes in the preparation of local Housing Needs Surveys, in particular where they support new and revised NDPs. If the parish would like a new or

updated Local Needs Survey then please contact Niamh at: Rural.Housing@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Local Government Reorganisation

SDC has reported that, following the Government's pause of the proposed Warwickshire reorganisation, costs have exceeded £100,000 of taxpayers' money, excluding officer time.

The direct cost of preparing for local government reorganisation across Warwickshire was £930,244.

SDC allocated £3.75 million to the process: £1.75 million for its direct costs and £2 million towards central costs.

The council reported spending £41,603 on preparing the submission documents. SDC supported a model comprising a South Warwickshire Council for Stratford and Warwick districts and a North Warwickshire Council serving Rugby, North Warwickshire, and Nuneaton and Bedworth.

These expenditure figures account for government grant funding.

A further £58,972 was incurred as Stratford's share of collaborative work involving all of Warwickshire's councils. That figure does not include additional costs for August.

A present district council elections are planned to go ahead in May 2027, but of course this could all change!

Cllr Anne Parry

October 2026