

# FOCUS

Bishops Itchington  
Chesterton  
Deppers Bridge  
Fenny Compton  
Harbury  
Ladbroke  
Long Itchington  
Napton  
Southam  
Ufton

News from your Liberal Democrat Team



Winter 24-25

## LOCAL PLAN SPECIAL HAVE YOUR SAY!

Stratford and Warwick District Councils have been working together on a joint Local Plan which when implemented will set out planning policy for the period 2027 to 2050. The Plan will set out how both Councils will ensure delivery of the infrastructure, open spaces, employment sites and homes up to 2050. 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 economy, climate change, biodiversity, connectivity, and residents' wellbeing.

As a result of earlier work, it was agreed by Councillors of Stratford and Warwick Districts that we did not want more building added onto our small towns and villages in an uncontrolled way, spread over everywhere and that growth should be planned on a strategic basis led by environmental considerations, whilst supporting economic factors.

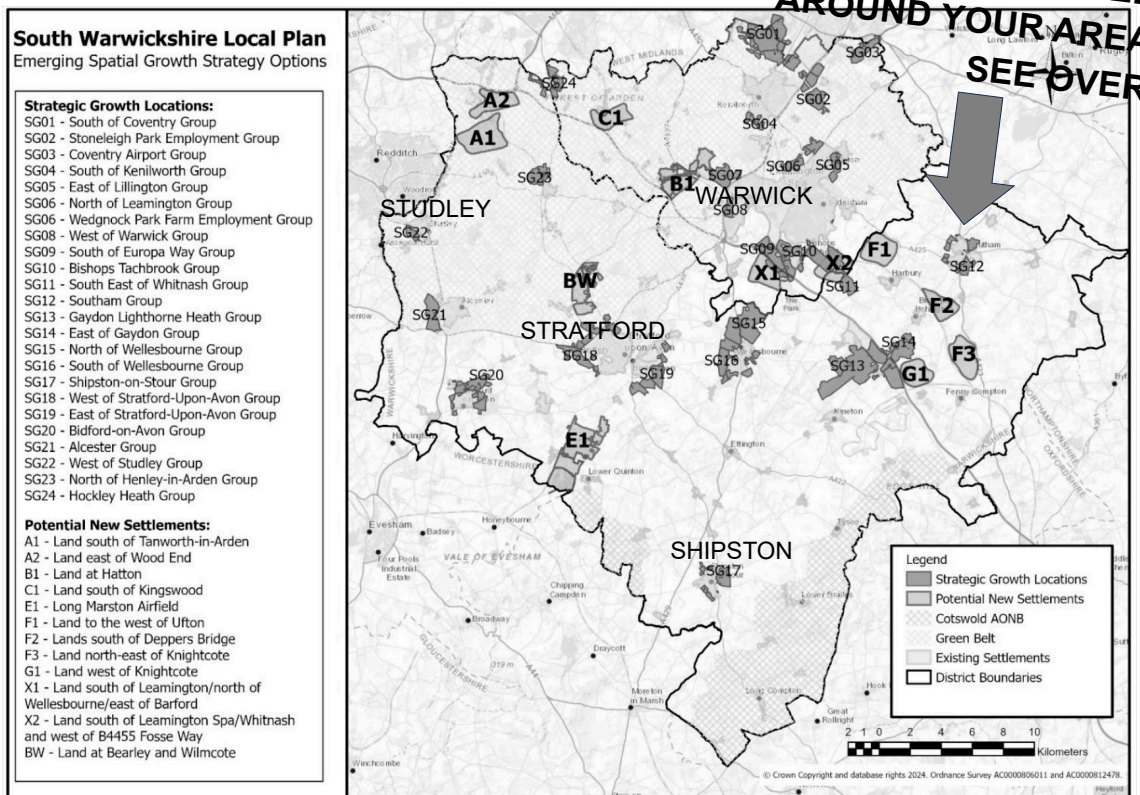
**The latest stage of the plan is now open for public consultation until 7th March 2025. We would urge you to make your views known.**

The Government has recently announced the numbers of homes they are telling planning authorities everywhere to build. For us, this 'Standard Method' calculation will require us to build housing at something like the rate we have had in the last few years. So, if we don't want to add many more new houses and commercial sites on the edges of villages, it will mean building well connected all-new large villages with their own shops, businesses, schools and other infrastructure. The public consultation aims to find where we should put such new settlements and what the 'Preferred Options' should be.

### MORE HOUSES?

The previous Conservative Government said that we must make provision for 1679 houses per year using the 'Standard Method' plus a 'duty to cooperate' with neighbouring authorities (the West Midlands cities) to take development that they could not accommodate within their boundaries. Our District was faced with having to take thousands of extra houses to meet the needs of Birmingham and Coventry.

The Labour Government has increased the number calculated by a new 'standard method' from 1679 to 2188 houses per year for our Districts. Despite both Government's rhetoric about local need, much of the growth is to assimilate 'overspill' from Birmingham and Coventry that cannot be 'internally' provided there. That contributed to Stratford District having the 12<sup>th</sup> largest population growth in England.



Council staff and planning consultants have been looking across Warwick and Stratford District areas at many potential sites for new villages. This has been narrowed down to a list of 12, but to meet the Government's target, **probably only three new settlements are needed**. As well as housing, land owners are being asked again if they want to put sites forward for development (called a 'targeted call for sites'). The consultation also seeks views on locations for Commercial and Community-Led Renewable Energy generation, for Gypsy and Traveller sites, as well as Housing and Employment sites within the 12 potential new settlement locations.

More information is on line with an introductory video on the the web site and where you can respond: [www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp](http://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp)

**What do your councillors say? What might be the long term effects on your area? See over.**

## YOUR LIBERAL DEMOCRAT COUNCILLORS



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Please get in touch if we are able to help you.





# A 25 YEAR LOCAL PLAN

## What is the view of your District Councillors on the Proposals?

Government keeps proclaiming that we must have growth and has promised to build 1.5 million houses, as well as 'deregulating' planning. Stratford and Warwick District Councils are determined that we have a proper local plan to ensure growth happens in a sustainable and sensible way, with any new housing and commercial development accompanied by necessary infrastructure. This must cover roads, schools, medical facilities, flood protection, amenities and open space.

The new local plan will cover the period up to 2050. It will ensure new development serves our communities first and address current difficulties in infrastructure arising from the weakness in the current local plan - the Conservative strategy approved in 2016.

### DO WE NEED A PLAN?

It is essential that we have a Local Plan and get it approved. Stratford District has had a poor experience of a period without a Local Plan in the past and this created a developer led strategy the effects of which are still being felt. This has been reflected in excess development, often given by appeal, in unsuitable locations with inadequate infrastructure. It also cost £2.3m in planning appeals. The distributed growth option was not desirable as it would have put housing around nearly every village with no significant infrastructure.

A long plan period to 2050 has been chosen to maximise our chances of creating new communities with the right infrastructure.

### WHAT IS BEING PUT FORWARD AROUND HERE?

The Councils' staff and consultants have come up with possible sites locally, included within the twelve, for new villages - see map including: 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.

There are a cluster of possible sites suggested for strategic growth including business: to the south of Southam. (SG12-14) and around the M40 Junction. Sites X2 and SG11 are next to the Fosse Way.

### WRONG PLACE

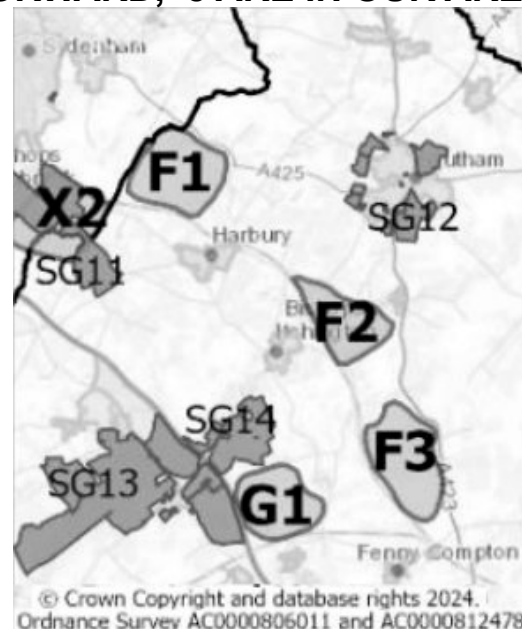
We are surprised to see these sites suggested because it is our view that these sites do not meet the overarching strategy initially set out of an environmentally led approach. All of these sites would be mainly car dependent, unlike some others, which we do not see as the way forward for the future. The prioritisation of the sites is still being worked on, but some of the ranking seems odd to us. The sites around Southam are at odds with the strategy of avoiding expanding towns without infrastructure. This would rule out SG12 (also X2 SG11) which are also against the principle of expanding existing towns. We will be resisting these sites as they are unsuitable on a number of grounds.

### WE THINK

New villages should be where there is a good possibility of usable railway stations to serve the West Midlands where the demand is coming from. Although sites F1, F2, and F3 are near the railway, we don't believe new railway stations between Banbury and Leamington are likely, viable, economic, practical or realistic. The effect of these sites would be to generate unacceptable road traffic towards the M40 junction.

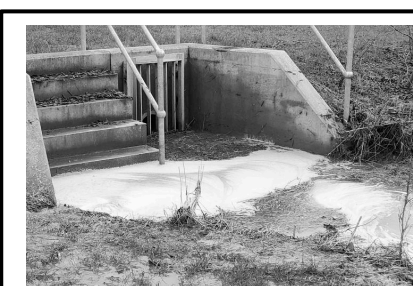
The sites should be free from flood risk and river contamination history. The Southam area has already had excessive housing growth and the road network is poor. The Gaydon M40 Junction has pulled far too much traffic from local roads towards a junction never intended to serve those areas calling into question SG13, SG14 and G1. Any commercial development should be true employment land and not large warehousing for imported goods. We want to benefit the local economy, not bring imported goods and traffic for distribution hubs - a provision which is already established in the northern part of south Warwickshire.

## OF THE 36 POSSIBLE SITES IN SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE PUT FORWARD, 8 ARE IN OUR AREA



The consultation and all the information is on-line.  
[www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp](http://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp)  
You can scan this code for a shortcut.

More housing for local people must not mean more pressure on the environment and local services. The new local plan should make sure schools, medical services, and transportation are provided before and alongside building and not as an after thought - or has been the case in the past - not at all.



Extra development can overload the sewage network. Spills in our area have been among the worst in the country with Deppers Bridge and Napton appearing in national press and TV.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION



In December the Labour Government said they would reorganise local government in England. The main thrust of the idea is to have Mayoral Authorities across England wherever possible, but many rural areas, including ours, do not fit easily with this approach. Local government in Warwickshire currently has three tiers: of the County Council (education, social care, highways etc) and District Councils (benefits, planning, refuse collection etc), plus we have a third tier of Parish and Town Councils across south Warwickshire.

The 'English Devolution White Paper' is supposed to improve local accountability. It proposes the abolition of District Councils and the formation of 'unitary authorities' ten times the population size of Stratford District or two and half times that of Warwickshire. Liberal Democrats have always believed in local accountability close to local people and it is difficult to see how this idea improves local democracy.

**The proposals would see District Councils abolished - but the Government say District Councils' Local Plans must still go ahead full steam!**

### County Council Elections due in May - Controversy

The Labour Government have said there will be no public consultation on these proposals, but have not worked out the details. The Conservative Leader of the County Council - with minimal consultation, (even with her own Conservative Councillors) has asked to have next May's elections cancelled and is pushing for Warwickshire to be a single Unitary authority. Liberal Democrats in Stratford are concerned that the Conservative proposals do nothing to protect the interests

of South Warwickshire. Stratford District has financial reserves and these might be hijacked to bale out other council areas, including Warwickshire County Council itself which has seriously deteriorating finances.

There are currently a number of versions of local government arrangements being discussed. We will be doing our utmost to protect the valuable assets and finances raised by and for the people of Stratford District to be kept and used by, for and in Stratford District.

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