SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE LOCAL PLAN

An Update from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Warwickshire Branch, July 2025

The South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) is to cover the Districts of Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon, about half of Warwickshire. When completed and adopted, intended to be in 2027, it will replace the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy adopted in 2016 and the Warwick District Local Plan of 2017.

The SWLP is not connected to the proposed and abandoned merger of the two Districts of a few years ago. It is being prepared under planning law dating from 2004 which allows Local Plans to be prepared jointly by two (or more) local planning authorities.

The Plan is being progressed under the present local government structure. It is not waiting for local government reorganisation. How Warwickshire's local government is to be changed is uncertain. Some advocate a unitary 'South Warwickshire Council' comprising the two Districts, similar to recent changes in Northants, but decisions have yet to be made.

The official website of the South Warwickshire Local Plan is at https://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/

The SWLP is being prepared by the planning policy staff of the two Councils jointly, and governance is by a Joint Cabinet Committee of members from both. The composition of this Committee is shown at https://democracy.stratford.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=776

A detailed set of 'Frequently asked questions' which provides much information on the procedures, timetable and explanation of terms used in the plan is at: https://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/faqs.cfm

There is a detailed Interactive Map, easy to use on-line, which shows designations of land and in particular the locations of the consultation draft proposals for Strategic Growth Locations and for New Settlements: https://soadc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5a3b9976bd7749a3bff44b2a1016ffc4

Key features of the SWLP as so far published for consultation

The consultation draft Strategic Growth Locations and New Settlements are the most

controversial part of the SWLP and whichever of these is chosen for inclusion in the final Plan, they would have the largest effect on the area.

Extending existing towns, in some cases substantially, or creating wholly new urban areas, on the scale that the current housing targets imply, would be likely to transform South Warwickshire, or large parts of it, from a predominantly rural part of England into a semi-urban pattern with blocks of housing in place of open countryside.

The Interactive Map shows that potential locations of the Strategic Growth Locations and the New Settlements would create:

- urbanisation of the M40 Motorway corridor from the Oxfordshire boundary to the edge of the Birmingham conurbation
- further urbanisation of the A46 corridor between Stratford and Coventry
- urban sprawl around Wellesbourne
- expanding urban development south-west of Coventry between Warwick University and the HS2 route.

While there are no proposed locations in or close to the part of the Cotswolds AONB (now called 'National Landscape') in Stratford District, there are a large number put forward in what is now Green Belt in both Districts. Clicking for these designations on the Interactive Map shows the conflict between Green Belt and the SWLP proposals clearly.

Why is this scale of development proposed?

The driving force in current planning is, regrettably, housing targets – currently based on the government's policy for 1.5 million new houses to be built in England in the five years of the current Parliament (2024-2029). The government's changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) made in December 2024 and more recently are aimed at dividing up this number between planning authorities.

The targets set for individual Districts are not related to their needs; they apply a formula combining an increase in housing opf 0.8% each year, and an 'affordability factor' on the principle that if more houses are built, house prices will fall. This is used despite evidence over many years that the relationship does not exist. House prices do not fall in an area if more housing is built.

The formula used has doubled the annual housing target for Stratford District and increased that for Warwick District by 60%.

Housing target issued by Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (houses per year):

	Pre-2024 methodology	*New (Dec 2024) methodology*	
Stratford District	553	1,126	
Warwick District	653	1,062	
SWLP area total:	1,206	2,188	Change: +982

'Housing delivered' can be houses or flats, new-build or conversions of existing buildings, and (by a factoring formula) new places in residential care homes.

The SWLP is projected to run until 2050, and at present is applying this annual housing target to the whole period. The planners this at present suggest that no less than 54,000 new houses will need to be planned for. This shows the extent of the threat to our towns, villages and countryside if current policy is extended unchanged for 25 years,

Is the housing target justified?

The 2024 housing target for Warwick and Stratford Districts was greatly increased, but at the same time that for Coventry was cut by 55%.

	Pre-2024 methodology	*New (Dec 2024) methodology*	
Coventry City	3,082	1,388	Change -1,694

Coventry has spare housing land as a result of this reduction in the target. A solution to the pressure on Warwick and Stratford Districts is for a significant percentage of the annual number issued for each District to be allocated instead to Coventry.

Is the population growth projected for South Warwickshire large enough to justify the scale of new housing?

The Office on National Statistics (ONS) has issued (in June 2025) the first projections of population by local authority area (Sub-National Population Projections or 'SNPP') since the 2021 Census. The following are the key figures from the ONS website:

Population change in Warwick District 2022-2032

The population in Warwick is projected to increase from **151,233** people in 2022 to **165,009** people in 2032.
But deaths are projected to exceed births slightly by 151)
he biggest factor in this population change is **net internal migration**, which will increase the population by **10,424** people.
Net international migration is projected to increase the population by **3,825**

Population change in Stratford-on-Avon in 2032

The population in Stratford-on-Avon is projected to increase from **138,573** people in 2022 to **162,678** people in 2032.
But deaths are projected to exceed births significantly, by 4,482
The biggest factor in this population change is **net internal migration**, which will increase the population by **27,187** people
Net international migration is projected to increase the population by 1,836.

These figures demonstrate that it is the provision of new housing in South Warwickshire which has been driving the population increase, not natural growth of the population. Without inward migration population of both Districts would fall.

International inward migration is an element, but the great majority of the projected population growth is movement into the area from other parts of England. The provision of housing is not meeting a need, but enabling more people to migrate into South Warwickshire.

CPRE Warwickshire will be be challenging the need for the huge scale of housing that the SWLP is proposing:

- **The new annual housing targets result is a greater reduction for Coventry compared to those previously in use than is the increased target for Warwick and Stratford Districts combined. The target should be revised to allocate these increases in annual housing numbers to Coventry.**

- **The new ONS population projections confirm that all population growth in Warwick and Stratford Districts is now by net inward migration. Without the projected inward migration, the populations of both Districts would fall. Not building new housing will reduce this inward migration.**

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The official SWLP Timetable is at https://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/
The recent consultation period (January-March 2025) was the 'Regulation 18' consultation on 'Preferred Options'.

The Preferred Options consultation shows a very large number of potential housing sites, which the SWLP planners say they will pare down to the number needed to provide for the housing requirement.

The official timetable shows the next stage as being publication of the full 'Regulation 19' draft Local Plan, for formal responses, between December 2025 and February 2026. But submission to the Government's Inspectorate would not be until September 2026, and Examination of the Plan running until March 2027.

In CPRE's view, the Councils should reconsult on the Plan after sieving out most of the housing sites. There are 24 possible 'Strategic Growth Areas' and 12 'Potential New Settlements' shown on the current consultation plan (see the scan of this plan on our website). There should be a second round of consultation under the 'Regulation 18' stage before the Councils move to preparation of the final 'Regulation 19' plan.

A second round of consultation under the 'Preferred Options' stage has been undertaken by some other planning authorities and this has been found to make the subsequent 'Regulation 19' plan go through its procedures more smoothly.

The only deadline for the SWLP to be carried through all stages under current planning law is t hat the Final Plan must be submitted to the Inspectorate for Examination by the end of December 2026.

CPRE Warwickshire believes that a second consultation on the Preferred Options and the six-week statutory consultation on the Regulation 19 Plan can be completed by that date and the SWLP can still be submitted by December 2026.