

Report from Your District Councillors for Parish Council – January 2026

Local Plan

Parish Councillors will recall that we reported that a large number of responses were received to the public consultation which closed in March 2025 (more than 22600 at the final count) and these are available to view on line at [South Warwickshire Local Plan - Preferred Options 2025](#). The high return is one of a number of reasons for a delayed timetable which was agreed in December by the Cabinets of the two Councils. Other reasons for delay come from national pressures to take into account changes in the NPPF published in December 2024. Many other Local Authorities are in the same situation, trying to get their Local Plan submission in by December 2026 (when the system will change) with the government providing monies to assist many of them, creating a peak demand for specialist resources across the country. There are further related matters that have increased the burden on consultancy and staff resources, including dependency on others such as the county and highway authority. The new timing plan intends to see a first draft of the plan (reg 19) sent to the Inspectorate in June/July 26 where it will be tested for 'soundness'. Having considered responses to that, the plan is set to be submitted for independent examination (reg 22) before the last possible submission date of 12 December 26. Councillors have been concerned for some time that the shifting environment has placed timing at risk and the contingency 'slack' that was in the timing plan has been used up.

There is a summary of the responses at [SWLP PO Consultation Statistics.pdf](#) by the various sections, but it must be borne in mind that the current assessment in progress is a technical one that considers the planning merit of the representations - not the number of comments. Reading through some of these, there would appear to be a degree of repetition and targeted campaigning in some cases.

Five Year Housing Land Supply

The recent recalculation of the five year housing land supply by a planning inspector, has, as expected, produced a rash of speculative applications that do not comply with the District's policy, generally because they are in open countryside. Our enquiries with Severn Trent show that Southam, Ladbroke, Stockton, Harbury, Bishops and Long Itchington are all served by the same sewage works at Southam. In a local plan response Severn Trent have indicated a major risk in accommodating increased demand from now and over the next 25 years. There are outline plans in progress for almost 600 dwellings in this area that we know about.

Of immediate concern to Bishops Itchington is a site adjacent to Bishops Hill. We believe that this application should be refused, but at minimum the scheme should be reduced in scale and phased.

Second Homes Council Tax

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has started a consultation on a proposal to introduce a Council Tax 'premium' on second homes across the District. From April 2025, Councils were given powers to charge up to double council tax on second homes. Currently, second homes in the District pay the full Council Tax without any discounts.

Following the consultation, the Council will make the decision on whether to implement the Council Tax premium of up to 100% in February 2026. If approved the extra figure would take effect from 1 April 2027. To provide the required notice owners of second homes would be notified by 31 March 2026.

Report from Your District Councillors for Parish Council – January 2026

The Council is considering how this could work locally. Second homes can reduce the availability of housing for local people, but careful consideration is needed. The views received through this consultation are essential in shaping this decision and deciding the right approach for the District.

The consultation is open now until Monday 2 February. For more information and to take part in the consultation, visit: [Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes Consultation | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)

Police SNT Update

PC Hanna Rankin has been joined by two new community support officers for the Southam beat. They are PCSO Cowley 6007 and PCSO Withers 6013. I am sure we want to welcome them to our parishes where we need as much support as we can get for our rural villages.

Southam Bypass

There will be closures of the Southam bypass 15-23 January week nights 8pm – 6am adjacent to the new Aldi site.

HS2

The new Chief Executive Mark Wilde came and met Councillors at the MP's Forum in December. As you will have seen from the national news, he has a big agenda but at least he took the time to listen to local representatives. Whilst this was a bit of a first and we tried to look for a change to attitude of approach in the whole project and to improved consideration to local communities, specific detailed local commitments were not expected at this senior level. (although we did have a go!) However, as a consequence of that meeting, he did say that community elements would now feature in his regular briefing from contractors.

Cllr Nigel Rock

Cllr Natalie Gist