



Wootton Wawen Ward District Cllr. Ian Shenton

Proud to represent Bearley, Mappleborough Green, Ullenhall, Wootton Wawen

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District Councillor's report for Bearley Parish Council 17th November 2025

If you need to contact me, please email me as I aim to respond within 24 hours otherwise leave a message on my mobile phone. I am here to help you.

District Issues – I am concentrating this report on the

- Unitary – one or two unitaries for Warwickshire
- South Warwickshire Local Plan
- 5-year housing Land supply (5YHLS)
- Funding Opportunities

Unitary Decision is today 17/11/2025 – Stratford District Council will decide today whether to submit its preference to HM Government for a single unitary or two unitary councils (a North Warwickshire and a South Warwickshire unitary). For my party (the Conservative Party) it is a free vote. The issue of one or two unitaries and either creating a new strategic authority or joining the West Midlands Combined Authority is being imposed upon us and is effectively making local government more distant, weakening democracy at a local level so, as you may gather I have big reservations about this.

There are positives and negatives for both options and potential savings to be made, if you take the various reports that have been produced at face value. Unfortunately, my feeling is that mergers (and whichever option is taken it will be a merger of district or borough councils) are fraught with problems in the short to medium term and rarely go well in the private world. Local government being structured the way it is, is more complex and to be blunt I do not believe that the projected savings put forward for a single or dual unitary are realistic. So, what will I make my decision based on, as a decision must be made.

In the first place I have to say that it makes no difference which way I vote on this as the SDC Cabinet has already decided that they want a two unitary solution whilst the County Council Cabinet have decided they want single unitary solution. It is about the submission document itself. In any case it will be the government who will make the final decision based on the submissions received from SDC (and the other districts and boroughs) and the County Council. Unless there is a major tectonic shift in the mood of SDC councillors from other parties, the submission will be for a two unitary option and will be endorsed today.

My decision will be based on what is likely to be less destructive, disruptive and produce a better outcome in the years ahead because this will take years to unravel and rebuild whichever option is taken, so I will listen to today's debate and hope that something comes out of this that makes me think that that option would be the best because again, in my opinion, democracy is lessened by whichever option is chosen because as I said right at the beginning, this is being imposed upon us.

South Warwickshire Local Plan – The current position is that I have attended three meetings with the SWLP team. There cover the following sites.

- Bearley/ Wilmcote – 5,100 dwellings
- Henley – (golf course) 2,600 dwellings
- Settlements around Tanworth in Arden that border Ullenhall ward.

Bearley/Wilmcote – This is the favoured site and further land has been identified and promoted by landowners that could push this number up over the 6,100. This would include new schools, health care, shops etc. and a public open space that nominally separates Wilmcote from Bearley. The issue for



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me on this site

is that the separation from Stratford is potentially small as the edge of the development.

is likely to be close to a ridge and immediately on the other side of the ridge down to the A46 is being earmarked as employment land. The number of dwellings being proposed is more than double the size of the existing population of the villages of Bearley and Wilmcote. Effectively this urbanises the stretch from Stratford upon Avon to Salters Lane.

Most of the replies to the SWLP came from residents of these two villages saying they do not agree with and do not want the development and I support them in this.

Henley in Arden – In principle both the district councillor and I agree that this is a possible good site to develop as it would bring a school, employment site, flood alleviation and possibly a visitor centre for the Mount.

The downside of this is that a relief road would be built from the site onto the Henley Rd to Ullenhall close to the A4189 (Henley to Mappleborough Green Rd). This would increase traffic on what is a narrow road with Ullenhall used as “rat run” to the M40 motorway at Portway and increase traffic at the traffic lights at Henley. The County are saying that these lights are at full capacity with no way of alleviating the problem. This could force significantly more traffic down Mayswood Rd and through Wootton Wawen.

The Blackford Mill site (also known as Blackford Mill Mac Mic) would offer up to three hundred houses with an access on to both A4189 and the A3400 Stratford Rd. This could also figure in the debacle to find sites to boost the 5YHLS figures as this could be delivered within the next 5 years.

I am not going into detail on the 3rd site mentioned above as I don’t have the full details on that yet but it should be remembered that overlaid on top of the Bearley/Wilmcote and Henley developments a number of parcels of land in Wootton Wawen are also being promoted. The gap between Wootton Wawen and Henley is also under attack as the development by the training ground progresses and an application for a development near to the Blackford Mill on the fields directly between the school playing fields and the tennis courts and behind is being promoted. In addition, the third site I mention above will impact on Ullenhall in some way as I have been invited to the meeting along with the district councillors from Tanworth and Henley. I would not have received this invite if it had no impact on Ullenhall and my ward.

There are also a number of other sites that are being put forward around the edge of Henley so we could see further urbanisation of land between Wootton Wawen and Henley and beyond to the north of Bearley that will have major impacts on Bearley and Wilmcote.

North of Henley sites have also come forward with Hockley Heath itself targeted by both SDC and Solihull MBC as potential expansion sites.

What does this all mean you may ask. On their own the two sites at Bearley/Wilmcote and Henley represent a challenge to infrastructure and road capacity but also because there are a number of smaller sites between Bearley all the way to Hockley Heath. These could be developed quickly with no compulsion to build infrastructure such as schools, health centres, shops and which could be delivered within 5 years. These may find favour with the planning department to deal with the 5YHLS which needs around 2,500 dwellings to satisfy the 5YHLS calculation and head off developers who may want to build on the green belt before the SWLP is approved in late 2027/early 2028.

Development along the A3400 is preferred because of the rail connections to Stratford, Leamington and Birmingham, the M40 and M42 plus the A46 Trunk Road but this does mean that the SWLP



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coupled with the more immediate issue of the 5YHLS may change the landscape forever with an urbanised corridor from Stratford all the way to Birmingham, some 21 miles.

It is by no means certain that this will happen but we have a unique mix of being in breach of the 5YHLS and needing to build at least 1,100 dwellings a year for the next 25 years in Stratford on Avon district so some quick wins are necessary to avoid us falling behind the target and the government forcing us to approve what would be unacceptable development at any other time.

One of the other issues I have raised at briefings is that of affordable housing because in theory to achieve a level of building that we have not seen for many years will mean encouraging developers to get on with the process of building their approved plans. However, developers are currently in a strong position due to the 5YHLS issue and may be able to build less affordable housing than the current 35 to 40% and 50% under the government's new targets. This then puts more 3 and 4 bedroomed dwellings on to market which first time buyers will not be able to afford and could reduce overall house prices which would be a good thing in principle for new buyers but bad for existing homeowners and reduced profits for developers.

I question whether developers will increase housing supply for reduced profits. To add to this think about the following:

- Can our brick manufacturers meet this elevated demand?
- Raw material prices have gone up by far more than the rate of general inflation so overall build costs are now higher than in previous years.
- Do we have enough skilled tradesmen to build, if not then they will be able to command higher wages for their scarce skills?
- Will the government stick to the affordable houses mix of at least 50%?
- How do we deal with the issue of first-time buyers if the numbers of 1 or 2 bedroomed properties built each year is allowed to fall further?
- Will developers make land available just because the government want them to?

It promises to be an interesting time over the next few years as the above issues play.

If you are interested in hearing more about the issue then watch the panorama program from a few weeks back on BBC iPlayer.

[Panorama - The Race to Build 1.5 million Homes - BBC iPlayer](#)

At 1 hour long it really does bring home the challenges faced to deliver 1.5m houses over the next 5 years in England.

The following is an edited version of what I wrote in last month's report.

Planning news – Stratford district Council's 5-year housing supply falls to less than the statutory 5 years to 2.74 years. - This has implications for Stratford residents generally as developers could find it easier to build on green belt land going forward.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has expressed its disappointment following the outcome of a recent planning appeal which has granted outline permission for up to 130 homes on land adjacent to Chutneys, Bordon Hill, Stratford-upon-Avon. The appeal, brought by Gladman Developments Ltd, was allowed by the Planning Inspectorate despite the Council's strong opposition on grounds of landscape impact, heritage concerns, and conflict with local planning policies.

[The decision](#), issued on 3 September 2025, reflects the growing pressure on local authorities to approve housing developments owing to significant increases in housing numbers. In particular, the revised National Planning Policy



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Framework (NPPF) introduced in December 2024 has significantly altered how housing land supply is calculated with Stratford-on-Avon District's number increasing by some 52%.

To put this into perspective,

- Original number of dwellings target 750 p.a
- New Target 1,112 dwellings p.a
- Developers are building at around 750 dwellings per year but there is evidence of a slowdown in sales so the numbers build could fall in future years, outing greater pressure on SDC.

The Head of Service comment was that we must approve more applications which can only mean a relaxation in the conditions imposed at the planning stage. This does not bode well.

The District Council is now investigating urgent steps to address the deficit and regain control over local planning decisions. As well as continuing to progress the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) to ensure the Council has an up-to-date Local Plan, such steps could include:

- Exploring the use of empty homes across the district to contribute to housing supply.
- Evaluating policy changes to require developers to begin construction within 12-18 months of receiving planning permission, to discourage land banking and ensure timely delivery.

Funding Opportunities

Community Climate Change and Nature Fund Round Three is open for applications! - In April this year, Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Cabinet approved a further £150,000 to be allocated from the Climate Change Reserve to the Community Climate and Nature Fund (CCNF), for the next round of funding.

The fund will provide opportunities for the following groups to apply for grant funding:

- Town and parish councils
- Properly constituted community and charity groups
- Sports clubs

To apply, organisations must be operating within the Stratford-on-Avon District area.

The fund is now open for applications!

Following feedback from the last two rounds, there will be no deadline for applications. Instead, the fund will remain open for a year, meaning applicants can submit their applications at any point until April 2026.

If you have any queries, please get in contact with us via email: climate.emergency@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Cabinet approves £350,000 Community Grant Scheme

Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Cabinet has today, Monday 6 October, approved a new £350,000 Community Grant Scheme aimed at enhancing community infrastructure across the district.

The scheme, developed in collaboration with local and regional partners, will support capital projects that improve accessibility, resilience, and diversity in community spaces.

The grant programme is designed to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE and VJ Days, with a vision to transform community spaces into living memorials that honour the sacrifice and spirit of past generations. It will also promote unity, remembrance, and community cohesion.

Key features of the scheme:

- **Funding allocation:** £50,000 for small grants (£5,000 - £20,000) and £300,000 for large grants (£20,001 - £100,000).
- **Eligible applicants:** Town and Parish Councils, registered charities, PTAs, community interest companies (CICs), and similar non-profit entities.



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- **Project types:** Structural repairs, accessibility improvements, facility upgrades, outdoor space enhancements, and new community asset creation.

Eligible projects may include:

- External structural repairs to community buildings.
- Refurbishment or installation of kitchen and bathroom facilities.
- Building extensions to improve internal space.
- Accessibility improvements such as wheelchair access, handrails, and raised flower beds.
- Enhancements to play areas, recreation grounds, allotments, orchards, and leisure facilities.
- Creation of new community assets.

The District Council will host workshops to guide potential applicants through the process, with support from Warwickshire CAVA and other partners. Projects will be assessed by a dedicated panel using a robust scoring system that prioritises community impact, deliverability, and location of the project.

For more information, including eligibility criteria and application guidance, please visit the [Community Grant Scheme 2025 | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#) or contact the Communities and Social Inclusion Team on socialinclusion@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Application timeline:

Launch: Late October to 11 November 2025

Briefing sessions: Mid-November 2025

Application deadlines: 31 January 2026 (small grants), 27 February 2026 (large grants)

Awards announced: May to June 2026, aligned with Armed Forces Day

Project delivery: April 2026 to March 2027