

Public Pre-Scrutiny Questions and Answers - O&S 17 December 2025

Report Title: Item 3 – South Warwickshire Local Plan – Revised Timetable

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Councillor Milton: There seem to be three possible scenarios:

We proceed as planned and everything lands okay.

We proceed as planned but encounter problems and have to switch to the government's new process.

We make a decision now and switch to the new process.

What are the likely cost (and other) implications of each of those scenarios?

Response: The implications are set out in the report under the Alternative Options section (paragraphs 2.1-2.4).

As directed by members, officers have been focussing on delivering a Local Plan under the current plan-making system and therefore a detailed analysis of the cost implications of transitioning to the new plan-making system (as would be the case in the two alternative scenarios above) has not been undertaken. However, it would be the case that additional costs would be incurred if a decision is taken to pivot to the new plan-making system.

Councillor R Dickson: Looking at the revised Appendix 1 timetable in 2026 for publication of the latest version of the Plan in May 2026, when is it planned in January 2026 that WDC and SDC will announce this new timetable? Keeping residents informed about what is happening and why will help maintain some trust amongst residents.

Response: The OSC meeting papers were made public on the 8th of December 2025. The Joint Committee at its meeting on the 18th of December 2025 will take a decision on whether to agree the proposed timetable in the report. The decision will be public. Officers will liaise with Portfolio Holders on whether it would be beneficial to also issue a press release about the updated timetable. Each local authority will subsequently prepare updated Local Development Schemes to be considered by respective cabinets which will be referenced in the corporate forward plans.

The precise committee dates for consideration of the regulation 19 plan for approval are to be confirmed. Appendix 1 indicates the committee process for Joint Committee approval is proposed during May 2026.

On the Risk Register in Appendix 1 Risk 5 relates to the capacity of staff. The loss of SDOs is noted so it would be reassuring that, as creation of the Plan moves into a critical time-pressured phase alongside other upheaval not least LGR, the capability of their replacement(s) is not considered an undue risk.

Response: One of the 3 site delivery officers has been taken away from much of their substantive site delivery work and it had been expected that they were going to play a bigger role in the SWLP at this stage, in particular relating to the larger potential allocations. This has resulted in a reduction in capacity within the SWLP team, although approval has been given to recruit a replacement for a temporary 12-month period. Recruitment work is actively being undertaken although to date no suitable replacement has been found.

Councillor Kohler: Paragraph 1.3 states that the "Last submission date" is "12 December 2026", but the Summary and paragraphs 1.9, 6.1 and 6.3 refer to 31 December being the deadline. Which date is correct?

Response: 31st December 2026 is the correct deadline. An earlier date had previously been stated by MHCLG but they have recently confirmed that 31st December will be the deadline.

Paragraph 1.8 states "it is proposed the consultation commences no later than Friday 8 June 2026". What are the consequences of not meeting that deadline?

Response: There are no direct consequences. However, members in the past have asked officers to avoid the summer holidays for public consultations where possible and therefore the timetable seeks largely to do this. To push it back would mean either a consultation within the holidays or a consultation after the school holidays which would mean we would have very limited time after the consultation to get approval to submit the plan and to prepare all of the documentation for submission ahead of the 31st December deadline.

Paragraph 1.9 states "It is unfortunate that the timetable provided at Appendix 1 is drafted on the basis of the government deadline to meet the deadline for the end of transitional arrangements for plan making under the current process, rather than being driven on a more logical basis." Is the government being lobbied to ease their deadline and has a response been received?

Response: Officers are not aware of what lobbying may be taking place nationally or locally. The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) have advised officers that they are not aware of any potential change in this cut-off date for plans to be submitted under the current plan-making system.

Paragraph 1.10.2 states "WCC are currently expressing the view that they want longer to do the work":

- What timescales do you need them to meet in order to hit the revised timetable?

Response: We are having positive discussions with WCC and their transport consultants to seek a way forward that agrees a work programme that delivers the key outputs of the study around Easter to feed into the finalisation of other work on viability and final policy preparation in line with the timetable set out in Appendix 1 of this report. In order to deliver on the timetable, it may be necessary to consult at Regulation 19 on some detailed outputs of the transport modelling work without having the finalised Strategic Transport Assessment.

- How much longer are they indicating that they need to complete the work in good order?

Response: An initial programme for everything to be finalised indicated during July but both parties are in discussion about how the programme can be reworked to deliver the key requirements for publishing the reg 19 plan in line with the timetable identified in Appendix 1 of the Joint Committee report.

- How long will National Highways need to complete their work once the modelling is complete?

Response: National Highways are being chased to hold a meeting before Christmas to agree matters with them on an approach which works with the timescales set out in the report and Appendix 1.