

Ward Report – Tysoe Ward.

Including the Parishes of Compton Wynyates, Halford, Honington, Idlicote, Oxhill, Pillerton Persey, Pillerton Priors, Tysoe, and Whatcote.

Overview of May and June

Last month I was able to signpost to health and social support programmes in the District; unfortunately, I am unable to repeat that positive dialogue this month. Since my last report much has become clear with regards to the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) and local Government Reform (LGR) and yet more confused. The SWLP continues to be developed and scrutinised by both District Councils. The Government was in recess over the Easter period and has seemed that the decision regarding the shape and form of LGR for Warwickshire is slipping backwards.

SWLP

Following the Planning Inspectorate advisory meeting (19th May), prior to the Joint Cabinet Meetings of Warwick District (WDC) and Stratford on Avon District (SDC) Councils on the 1st of June, the initial response by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS report) clearly highlighted flaws in the SWLP. The report highlighted issues with site viability due to requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain and Net Zero Carbon requirements that exceed legislative and Government requirements, and consequently the low level of Affordable and Social Housing possible. The Inspector also questioned how realistic the evidence base was regarding the anticipated supply of “windfall” sites within the Housing Land Supply calculations. Neither Authorities can show a Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) currently. SDC has adopted a “stepped trajectory” plan because of the considerable shortfall of site in the first three years. This approach has been criticised by the inspector, and this means a radical change to the plan and its priorities in the short run. The inspector also considered that the amount of “headroom”, or contingency sites was unrealistically low at 6.8% in SDC and 1.4% in WDC. The expected number is around 10%.

Allocation of both Gypsy and Traveller sites and Travelling Showman Yards requires clarification. There remain questions over allocations within the Greenbelt following changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and with regard to affordable housing allocation rates on those sites.

There remain questions over the funding of the Stratford upon Avon western Relief Road that would enable further development of the sites around the Long Marston Airfield developments. Highway funding details must be available before the next stage which is to submit Regulation 19. This is the test of deliverability of the plan and without firm answers to the above issues the SWLP cannot be delivered and therefore found to be unsound.

5YHLS

As mentioned above, the 5YHLS is unmet in both WDC and SDC geographies. This is partially due to the changes to Housing Need calculations imposed by this Government, but also to a level of complacency on behalf of both administrations since 2024. The government did change the calculations, and the current 5HLS calculations have almost doubled the “local need” in Warwickshire and almost halved the need in the suburban areas of Coventry, Solihull, and Birmingham. In my mind this is unsustainable because to move from the urban/suburban centres will require new employment centres in South Warwickshire or an increase in commuting. Considering the lack of transport infrastructure in our districts, this is unsustainable and definitely does not make “Green Sense”. The plan for over 28,000 new homes could mean up to 56,000 new jobs in the period of the plan. The economic development plan alongside the SWLP does not seem to adequately address this question satisfactorily in my opinion.

The 5YHLS is very important. Without meeting the number, the Local Plan (currently the Core Strategy (CS) and possibly soon to be made the SWLP), neither plan could be considered to be up-to-date. This means that the “titled balance” referred to in the current NPPF (paragraph 11) applies and is balanced towards presumed granting of planning application. The current Local Plan is out of date as it relates to housing policies, locations, and numbers because of a lack of a demonstrative 5YHLS. The other policies in the current CS remain up to date and can be relied upon in determining planning applications. With a demonstrable 5YHLS the entire CS would be valid until 2031.

This also has implications for Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) where all but 5 of the ‘made NDP’s are themselves ‘out of date’ The good news is that the TYSO NDP is considered to be ‘up to date’ and can be relied upon. Albeit the ‘tilted balance’ remains a significant issue.

Regardless of which Local Plan is being considered, to avoid a development free for all in our District, we need to secure a demonstrable 5YHLS. This is the critical objective, and one we need to achieve to maintain and protect our part of the County and provide homes, environment, and employment for our children.

Unfortunately, it is not clear to me that all parties involved in these immensely important decisions for a generation have recognised this reality.

As I write, there has been an announcement that another by-election has been triggered by the resignation of the member for Kinwarton Ward. This is the third by-election announced since the middle of March the joint cost of which amounts to something just under £40,000. As a result, the Extraordinary Council Meeting set for the 8th of June has had to be cancelled as the Council is in Purdah and no political decisions can be made during that period. This means that Councillors will not have the opportunity to scrutinise

and debate the merits of the plan until mid-July. I will update you all if and as any significant changes occur.

Malcolm Littlewood

Stratford District Council Tysoe Ward Member