

South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP): Infrastructure Delivery and Past Delivery Experience

Potential Matters for Examination in Public

Draft Technical Review prepared for Trinity Mead Residents Group (SHAPE)–
version 1

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1. Context & Statutory Framework

The South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) proposes substantial levels of growth at a number of strategic locations, including Long Marston Airfield (LMA), East/South-East Stratford-upon-Avon and Bidford-on-Avon.

The delivery of this growth is dependent upon the provision of substantial new infrastructure. Depending upon the location, this includes strategic highways and river crossings, schools, healthcare facilities, public transport, active travel infrastructure, community facilities and employment land.

The Plan itself recognises the importance of infrastructure being delivered alongside housing. For New Settlements and Strategic Growth Locations, the Regulation 19 Plan states that the timing and phasing of development and infrastructure should ensure that new communities are supported by facilities as development progresses. It specifically expects the **early delivery of infrastructure, including roads, healthcare facilities, utilities and schools, prior to or alongside occupation**, together with clear trigger points for key infrastructure.

This is important because the soundness of a housing allocation cannot depend simply upon infrastructure being identified in a masterplan or Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The relevant question for examination is whether there is sufficient evidence that the infrastructure will actually be delivered **at the point at which it is required to support the planned level of occupied development**.

This evidence review therefore considers the relevance of **past infrastructure delivery experience** to the deliverability of the current SWLP.

The purpose is to identify whether the area's actual experience provides evidence of risks which the Inspector should take into account when assessing whether the current Plan is sufficiently **justified and effective**.

Two core lines of inquiry are considered:

1. **The previous South Western Relief Road:** a major strategic infrastructure commitment was previously relied upon as part of the justification for allowing substantial development at Long Marston Airfield. The Core Strategy Inspector found the allocation and associated relief road sound, in part because of the evidence of viability and the clear commitment from the site promoters to fund and deliver the road. The road was subsequently not delivered as anticipated.
2. **Actual infrastructure delivery alongside housing:** the experience of major developments at Long Marston Airfield and Bidford-on-Avon can be examined to determine whether infrastructure commitments have historically been delivered at the same pace as housing, or whether there is evidence of housing occupation preceding the delivery of associated facilities and infrastructure.

2. Core Lines of Inquiry

2.1 The South Western Relief Road: a previous infrastructure-led growth strategy did not deliver the infrastructure on which it depended

Technical Critique: The South Western Relief Road (SWRR) has been a proposed solution to Stratford-upon-Avon's highway constraints for more than a decade.

It is important to understand the history because the current South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) is not proposing a wholly new transport problem or a wholly new infrastructure solution. The Council has previously sought to enable substantial growth south of Stratford through a relief-road-led strategy. **That strategy was examined, found sound and incorporated into the adopted Core Strategy. The relief road was then not delivered as anticipated.**

The current SWLP once again relies upon a relief road to enable substantial growth at Long Marston Airfield (LMA) and elsewhere south and west of Stratford.

The issue for the Examination is therefore: **What happened to the previous relief-road strategy, why did it fail to deliver the anticipated infrastructure, and what evidence demonstrates that the current strategy will not repeat the same experience?**

Table 1 sets out the chronology of the SWRR.

Table 1: Chronology of the South Western Relief Road

Date	What happened	Significance
2016	Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy adopted	LMA allocated for approximately 3,500 homes. SWRR identified as necessary infrastructure and land safeguarded.
2016	Core Strategy required SWRR before more than 400 LMA homes could be occupied, subject to subsequent transport assessment	The road was therefore treated as a critical infrastructure constraint, not an optional enhancement.
2016	Core Strategy Examination	Evidence was presented to the Inspector regarding the viability and deliverability of the SWRR, including a promoter commitment to fund and deliver it.
2016	Inspector found the LMA allocation and associated SWRR sound	The growth strategy was accepted on the evidence available at that time.
2017	SWRR Evidence Report produced	Further work confirmed the SWRR as a vital part of the highway mitigation for LMA and Stratford.
2017–18	LMA progressed as a Garden Village; Framework Masterplan SPD adopted in February 2018	Development strategy continued to depend upon strategic transport infrastructure.
2018	Full planning application submitted for SWRR (18/01883/FUL)	A concrete attempt was made to move from policy commitment to delivery.
2018–19	Planning process not completed	The proposed road did not progress through to implementation.
2019	Council applied to Homes England for HIF funding for the SWRR	External funding was required to progress the scheme.
2019	HIF bid unsuccessful	A major potential funding route failed.
2020s	Focus shifted towards enabling the first phases of LMA rather than delivering the SWRR	The strategic road remained undelivered.
2023–26	Fernleigh Park/first phase progressed	Housing could progress at the limited level permitted without the strategic road, while the wider LMA remained constrained.
2025–26	Council commissioned new work on longer-term highway solutions	The previous SWRR solution was effectively being reconsidered.
2026	W3 Western Corridor identified as preferred approach	A new/current relief-road strategy is now being developed.
2026	Current cost estimated at approximately £170m–£630m depending on specification and opening year	The scale of the infrastructure challenge is now considerably greater.
2026	No committed funding package identified	Delivery still depends on future funding, technical work, business-case development and other approvals.
2035/36	Indicative opening date for current scheme	The current strategy therefore depends upon successful delivery of a major future infrastructure project over the coming decade.

The 2016 Growth Strategy

The adopted Core Strategy allocated approximately 3,500 dwellings at LMA, including 2,100 by 2031. The SWRR formed part of the infrastructure strategy for the allocation.

The relationship between housing delivery and the road was explicit. The Core Strategy required the SWRR to be completed before more than 400 dwellings at LMA could be occupied, unless subsequent transport assessment justified an increase in this threshold. Land for the route was also safeguarded.

The SWRR was therefore treated as **critical enabling infrastructure for the wider allocation**.

At the 2016 Examination, evidence presented to the Inspector included:

- a viable and deliverable route;
- land options sufficient to demonstrate route safeguarding;
- initial feasibility work;
- a commitment from the LMA promoters to fund and deliver the infrastructure; and
- confirmation of that commitment through a Statement of Common Ground.

The Council subsequently recorded that the Inspector found the LMA allocation and associated SWRR sound having regard to this evidence and the promoter commitment.

The subsequent failure to deliver the road is therefore directly relevant to the weight that can reasonably be placed on similar infrastructure commitments in the current Plan.

2017-2019: From policy commitment to attempted delivery

Following adoption of the Core Strategy, the Council and Warwickshire County Council undertook further work on the SWRR. The 2017 SWRR Evidence Report continued to identify the road as a vital part of the highway mitigation for LMA and Stratford. It was intended to address congestion around Clopton Bridge, the town centre, Evesham Place Roundabout and the Grove Road corridor.

A full planning application for the SWRR was subsequently submitted in June 2018 (18/01883/FUL). The strategy did not progress through the planning process to construction. The Council's current Delivery Strategy records that the planning process was not completed.

In 2019, SDC subsequently sought HIF funding from Homes England for the SWRR. The bid was unsuccessful.

Housing delivery in the absence of the SWRR

The failure to deliver the SWRR did not result in all development at LMA stopping. Instead, development progressed through infrastructure capable of supporting the initial phase.

In February 2023, £13.4m of HIF funding was secured for enabling works associated with a 400-home phase. These works included land remediation, ordnance removal, treatment of an underground high-pressure gas main and local road improvements.

The first phase, Fernleigh Park, subsequently progressed and is now largely complete, with homes occupied or reserved. The funding and infrastructure associated with this phase did **not** resolve the strategic road requirement. The current Delivery Strategy confirms that further development at LMA remains conditional upon provision of the SWRR or a suitable alternative.

The current proposal: a new relief-road strategy

The current SWLP does not simply carry forward the 2016 SWRR as an established piece of infrastructure.

In 2025–26, the Council assessed 35 potential highway improvement corridors. The W3 Western Corridor emerged as the preferred approach.

The Council's current Growth Strategy expressly acknowledges that the SWRR identified in the 2016 Core Strategy “**has not been delivered in the current plan period**” and that demonstrating a credible and deliverable relief-road route is now a key component of the spatial strategy.

The current proposal therefore represents a **renewed infrastructure proposition**, rather than delivery of infrastructure already secured through the previous Plan.

The current Delivery Strategy identifies securing funding as a key programme risk and states that delivery requires early decisions, continuous progress and clear commitment from SDC and funding providers.

Table 2: Comparison of the 2016 and 2026 SWRR bids

Criterion	2016 Core Strategy	2026 Regulation 19 SWLP
Housing growth to be supported	LMA allocated for approximately 3,500 dwellings , including 2,100 by 2031.	Regulation 19 LMA allocation proposes approximately 4,500 dwellings . The Council's evidence also identifies capacity for approximately 9,850 dwellings, although this is not the current allocation.
Housing before relief road operational	Concrete 400-home delivery trigger. The Core Strategy required the SWRR to be completed before more than 400 LMA dwellings could be occupied, subject to subsequent transport assessment.	No equivalent requirement identified. The current housing trajectory anticipates approximately 2,400 dwellings across LMA, STR.2, STR.1, STR.3, BID.1 and WEL.1 before the SWRR is expected to become operational in 2035/36. The strategy instead relies on phasing, interim mitigation and delivery of the SWRR.
Strategic role of road	Critical. The SWRR was identified as critical highway mitigation for LMA and the wider Stratford network, including relief to Clopton Bridge, the town centre and routes to the west.	Critical. W3 is identified as critical infrastructure underpinning the SWLP growth strategy. The Council's evidence states that delivery of the scale of growth proposed in the SWLP remains dependent upon the SWRR.
Route definition and safeguarding	More advanced. The route was identified and safeguarded through adopted Policy CS.26. The scheme subsequently progressed to a defined planning application.	Less advanced. A preferred W3 corridor has been identified following assessment of 35 potential corridors, but the scheme remains at an earlier design stage and the final alignment and design remain to be developed.
Land position	More advanced. Land options had been considered and formed part of the evidence supporting deliverability. The subsequent planning application defined the land required for the proposed scheme.	Less advanced. Potential land requirements have been quantified at 32.2–54.6 ha , depending on the design option, but the final land requirement remains to be determined. Land acquisition, potentially including CPO, remains outstanding.
Technical evidence at Plan Examination	More mature in terms of scheme definition. Evidence of route viability, feasibility and deliverability was available through the Core Strategy process and subsequent SWRR Evidence Report. The route subsequently progressed to a defined planning application, and the Council records that the Inspector found the LMA allocation and associated SWRR sound.	More extensive, but less mature in terms of scheme definition. Technical assessment has included consideration of 35 potential corridors, environmental appraisal, engineering assessment, SuAWA modelling and three W3 concept-design scenarios. However, further modelling, design, environmental assessment and route development remain required.
Estimated cost	Approximately £180m at 2026 prices (original 2018 estimate: £135m).	£170m–£630m , depending on design option and assumed opening year.
Funding proposition at Examination	More committed. LMA promoters had committed to fund and deliver the infrastructure; this commitment was recorded in a Statement of Common Ground and formed part of the evidence considered at the Core Strategy Examination.	Less committed. No equivalent committed funding package is identified. Potential sources include Homes England, DfT, future strategic/unitary authority funding and developer contributions, but further funding is required.
Delivery responsibility	More clearly committed. The LMA promoters had committed to fund and deliver the road.	Less clearly committed. Delivery is dependent on a combination of public-sector funding and developer contributions, with potential involvement from Homes England and other funding sources.

Conclusion: A previous infrastructure commitment was found sound, but was not delivered

The history of the South Western Relief Road is directly relevant to the question of infrastructure deliverability in the current SWLP.

In 2016, the Core Strategy Inspector accepted the Long Marston Airfield allocation and the associated SWRR as sound. This was not based on a purely aspirational infrastructure proposal. The evidence before the Examination included a viable and deliverable route, land safeguarding, initial feasibility work and, critically, a clear commitment from the LMA promoters that they would fund and deliver the road. That commitment was confirmed through a Statement of Common Ground. The Council's subsequent SWRR Evidence Report records that the Inspector found the allocation and associated road sound in light of the information provided and the promoters' commitment to viable delivery.

The Core Strategy also recognised the road as critical enabling infrastructure: more than 400 LMA dwellings were not to be occupied unless the SWRR had been completed, subject to subsequent transport assessment.

Yet the SWRR was not delivered. A planning application was submitted in 2018 but did not progress to construction; a subsequent Housing Infrastructure Fund bid for the road was unsuccessful; and the Council has now moved to a new relief-road proposition, with the W3 Western Corridor identified as the preferred approach.

The significance is not simply that a previous road scheme failed. It is that **the previous scheme had already passed through the planning system with evidence of viability, route definition and an explicit promoter commitment to fund and deliver it — and that was still insufficient to secure delivery.**

The current SWLP therefore presents the Inspector with a materially important question of institutional and evidential credibility.

If a relief road that was previously examined, found sound, supported by detailed evidence and backed by an explicit commitment from the site promoters to fund and deliver it was not delivered, what has materially changed to demonstrate that the current relief-road proposition is sufficiently funded, secured and enforceable to support the much larger scale of growth now proposed?

In particular, is it reasonable to treat a future commitment to deliver critical infrastructure as sufficient evidence of deliverability when the area's most directly comparable previous commitment did not translate into delivery?

2.2 Historic evidence of housing delivery preceding infrastructure delivery

Shackleton Village / Long Marston: infrastructure commitments moved behind housing delivery

The Long Marston Airfield development was promoted as a new Garden Village rather than simply a housing estate. Its infrastructure package included community facilities, employment space and schools alongside the housing.

The first phase was granted permission for 400 homes together with employment and community facilities. The Community and Employment Hub was subsequently approved in 2022. However, the delivery mechanism for the Community Hub was subsequently changed.

The original requirement was that the Community Hub should be provided **before occupation of the 300th dwelling**. In 2023 the developer applied to move this trigger to the **390th dwelling**. The Council ultimately approved a revised trigger of **365 dwellings**.

This means that the development was permitted to progress through a further 65 dwellings beyond the original infrastructure trigger before the Community Hub was required to be provided.

The significance is straightforward: The housing could continue to be occupied while the point at which the associated community infrastructure had to be delivered was moved further into the development.

The Council has also subsequently acknowledged the wider historical problem. In July 2026, when asked about lessons from Meon Vale and Long Marston Airfield, the **Council acknowledged that the earlier approach had 'failed to ensure that infrastructure had been provided'**.

Bidford: housing growth and infrastructure contributions failing to translate into adequate education provision

Bidford provides a different but complementary example. The issue here is not simply whether individual planning applications contained S106 obligations. It is whether the infrastructure generated by cumulative development was actually reaching the facilities experiencing the resulting demand.

This is particularly stark in the evidence submitted by **Alcester Academy** in support of its 2025 CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) application.

The Academy reported that:

- Alcester and Bidford had experienced **significant recent development**;
- the area already had a **shortfall in school places**;
- Alcester Academy was **oversubscribed and operating with a waiting list**;
- schools were being required to admit pupils beyond their capacity; and
- despite the recent development, the Academy was **“not aware of any Section 106 or Section 278 contributions from these developments being allocated to education, aside from a small amount directed to a nursery school.”**

If development is permitted on the basis that its infrastructure impacts will be mitigated through developer contributions, but the local school experiencing the resulting capacity pressure says it is not aware of those contributions being allocated to education, then the existence of a S106 obligation cannot, by itself, be treated as evidence that the infrastructure consequences of development have actually been addressed.

The Council's own Infrastructure Funding Statement provides further context. It identifies Alcester Academy Top Field Renovation as an infrastructure project requiring CIL funding. The Academy stated that it had previously been unsuccessful in obtaining CIL funding and did not have sufficient reserves to undertake the project itself.

Why these two examples matter

The two locations demonstrate **different manifestations of the same problem**.

At **Shackleton Village/Long Marston**, the problem is **timing**: a community facility associated with the housing was subject to a defined trigger, but that trigger was subsequently pushed further into the housing build-out.

At **Bidford**, the problem is **translation of contributions into infrastructure**: substantial development occurred, yet a local secondary school reported that it was not aware of S106/S278 contributions from the development being allocated to education, while the school was already experiencing capacity pressures.

These are important precedents because the Regulation 19 SWLP once again relies heavily on developer contributions and future infrastructure delivery.

For BID.1 alone, the Plan proposes **at least 2,225 homes**, alongside primary-school provision, land for a secondary school, early-years provision, a local centre, health provision and transport infrastructure.

The question is whether the Plan has learnt from the local experience of infrastructure commitments failing to keep pace with development.

Conclusion

South Warwickshire already has a documented history of infrastructure failing to keep pace with housing development clearly demonstrating that **the existence of an infrastructure commitment is not the same thing as the delivery of infrastructure**.

The experience at Shackleton Village demonstrates how delivery triggers can be moved as housing progresses. The experience around Bidford demonstrates that even where developer contributions form part of the planning framework, those contributions do not necessarily translate into infrastructure capacity being available where and when it is needed.

The current SWLP proposes to repeat this model on a substantially greater scale.

Question for the Inspector

Given this documented local history, what evidence demonstrates that the Regulation 19 SWLP has actually changed the mechanism by which infrastructure will be delivered, rather than simply repeating the same promise that

infrastructure will be provided through future development and developer contributions?

The test should not be whether infrastructure is promised. The test should be whether there is a credible mechanism that prevents the housing from arriving first.