

EVIDENCE

Infrastructure Delivery & Past Delivery Experience

The South Warwickshire Local Plan proposes substantial growth at Long Marston Airfield, Stratford-upon-Avon and Bidford-on-Avon, dependent upon major new infrastructure including strategic roads, schools, healthcare, community facilities and public transport.

SHAPE's review examines whether the area's previous experience provides evidence that infrastructure commitments can fail to keep pace with housing delivery — and whether the current Plan contains sufficiently robust mechanisms to prevent this from happening again.

At a glance

The issue considered by this review is not simply whether infrastructure has been identified in the Plan or in an Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The relevant question is whether there is a credible and enforceable mechanism to ensure that infrastructure is actually delivered at the point

at which it is required to support occupied development.

Three strands of evidence are particularly relevant:

- the previous **South Western Relief Road**, which was supported by detailed evidence and a promoter commitment to fund and deliver it, but was ultimately not delivered;
- **Long Marston / Shackleton Village**, where the trigger for delivery of the Community Hub was moved further into the housing build-out; and
- **Bidford**, where evidence from Alcester Academy raises questions about whether developer contributions had translated into education infrastructure capacity where it was required.

1. The previous South Western Relief Road was not delivered

The history of the South Western Relief Road (SWRR) is particularly relevant because the current SWLP is once again proposing substantial growth south and west of Stratford-upon-Avon which depends upon strategic relief-road infrastructure.

Under the **2016 Core Strategy**, Long Marston Airfield was allocated approximately **3,500 homes**, including 2,100 by 2031. The SWRR formed part of the infrastructure strategy for the allocation and the Core Strategy required the road to be completed before more than **400 dwellings** at LMA could be occupied, subject to subsequent transport assessment.

The road was not simply an aspirational concept. Evidence presented at the Core Strategy Examination included route viability and feasibility work, land safeguarding and a commitment from the Long Marston Airfield promoters to fund and deliver the road. The Council subsequently recorded that the Inspector found the allocation and associated SWRR sound having regard to this evidence and promoter commitment.

Key finding

A major infrastructure commitment which had been examined as part of the soundness of the growth strategy, supported by evidence of viability and backed by a promoter commitment to fund and deliver the road, was nevertheless not delivered.

A planning application for the SWRR was submitted in 2018, but the planning process was not completed. In 2019 the Council sought Housing Infrastructure Fund support from Homes England, but the bid was unsuccessful. The Council has subsequently moved towards a new relief-road proposition, with the **W3 Western Corridor** identified as the preferred approach.

The current proposal is therefore not the delivery of an already secured piece of infrastructure. It is a new infrastructure proposition which remains dependent upon further funding, technical work, land acquisition, approvals and implementation.

The key question for the Inspector

If the previous relief road was supported by route evidence, land safeguarding, feasibility work and an explicit promoter commitment to

fund and deliver it, what has materially changed to demonstrate that the current relief-road proposition is sufficiently funded, secured and enforceable to support the substantially larger scale of growth now proposed?

2016 Core Strategy vs 2026 Regulation 19 SWLP

The comparison below illustrates how the infrastructure position supporting growth at Long Marston Airfield has changed between the adopted 2016 Core Strategy and the Regulation 19 SWLP.

Housing growth to be supported

2016 CORE STRATEGY

LMA allocated for approximately **3,500 dwellings**, including 2,100 by 2031.

2026 REGULATION 19 SWLP

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

2016 CORE STRATEGY

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.

2026 REGULATION 19 SWLP

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.

Strategic role of road

2016 CORE STRATEGY

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.

2026 REGULATION 19 SWLP

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 remains dependent upon the SWRR.

Route definition and safeguarding

2016 CORE STRATEGY

More advanced. The route was identified and safeguarded through adopted Policy CS.26. The scheme subsequently progressed to a defined planning application.

2026 REGULATION 19 SWLP

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

2016 CORE STRATEGY

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.

2026 REGULATION 19 SWLP

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

2016 CORE STRATEGY

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.

2026 REGULATION 19 SWLP

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

2016 CORE STRATEGY

Approximately £180m at 2026 prices (original 2018 estimate: £135m).

2026 REGULATION 19 SWLP

£170m–£630m, depending on design option and assumed opening year.

Funding proposition at Examination

2016 CORE STRATEGY

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.

2026 REGULATION 19 SWLP

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

2016 CORE STRATEGY

More clearly committed. The LMA promoters had committed to fund and deliver the road.

2026 REGULATION 19 SWLP

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.

Why this comparison matters

The comparison suggests that the current SWLP is proposing substantially greater housing growth while relying on a relief road whose

route, land requirements, funding and delivery arrangements remain less advanced than those supporting the previous strategy.

Most significantly, the previous Core Strategy contained a clear 400-home restriction linked to delivery of the SWRR. No equivalent restriction has been identified in the current strategy, despite the current trajectory allowing substantially more housing to be delivered before the road is expected to become operational.

2. The infrastructure trigger at Long Marston was 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 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.

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**.

ORIGINAL TRIGGER**300**

dwellings

DEVELOPER APPLICATION**390**

dwellings

APPROVED TRIGGER**365**

dwellings

Key finding

The original infrastructure trigger was moved from 300 to 365 dwellings. This allowed the development to progress through a further **65 dwellings** beyond the original trigger before the Community Hub was required to be provided.

The significance is not necessarily that the development lacked an infrastructure obligation. Rather, it demonstrates that a mechanism intended to ensure infrastructure kept pace with housing delivery can subsequently be changed as development progresses.

Why this matters for the SWLP

The current Plan again relies heavily upon phasing, infrastructure triggers and developer contributions. The Long Marston experience raises the question of whether those mechanisms are sufficiently robust to prevent housing occupation from progressing ahead of the infrastructure intended to support it.

3. Bidford: contributions do not necessarily mean capacity is delivered

Bidford provides a different but complementary example. The issue is not simply whether individual planning applications contain Section 106 obligations or other developer contributions. The relevant question is whether those contributions translate into infrastructure capacity being available where and when the resulting demand occurs.

Evidence submitted by **Alcester Academy** in support of its 2025 CIL application reported significant recent development in the Alcester and Bidford area alongside an existing shortfall in school places. The Academy reported that it was oversubscribed, operating with a waiting list and requiring pupils to be admitted beyond capacity.

The Academy also stated that it was **not aware of Section 106 or Section 278 contributions** from recent developments being allocated to education, other than a small amount directed towards a nursery school.

Key finding

The evidence raises a question about the gap between infrastructure obligations being secured through the planning system and the actual availability of infrastructure capacity at the facilities experiencing the resulting demand.

The Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement also identifies **Alcester Academy Top Field Renovation** as an infrastructure project requiring CIL funding. The Academy had previously been unsuccessful in obtaining CIL funding and did not have sufficient reserves to undertake the project itself.

The question for the current Plan

If substantial development is permitted on the basis that its infrastructure impacts will be addressed through developer contributions, what evidence demonstrates that the required infrastructure capacity will actually be available when the development generates demand?

Overall issue

Taken together, these examples demonstrate different forms of infrastructure delivery risk within the area.

- The **SWRR** demonstrates that even a major infrastructure

commitment supported by detailed evidence and promoter commitment may ultimately fail to be delivered.

- **Long Marston / Shackleton Village** demonstrates that infrastructure delivery triggers can be moved further into the housing build-out.
- **Bidford** demonstrates that developer contributions do not automatically mean that the infrastructure capacity required by development is available where it is needed.

These are important precedents because the Regulation 19 SWLP again relies substantially upon future infrastructure delivery, phasing and developer contributions to support major housing growth.

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 model of housing delivery followed by future infrastructure provision?

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.

Read the full technical review

This page summarises the principal findings from SHAPE's review of infrastructure delivery and past delivery experience. The full report contains the detailed chronology, evidence and analysis supporting these potential matters for examination.

[Download the full report \(PDF\)](#)