

District Council Report December 2024/January 2025

1. Ellen Badger – Rehabilitation Beds – Consultation

There are two potential options that are being consulted on to ensure these beds remain accessible, effective and sustainable. The options are:

Option A – Three sites: Distribute all 35 beds across **three** sites: Ellen Badger Hospital, Leamington Spa Hospital, and Stratford Hospital.

This would reduce the number of beds currently at Stratford Hospital and Leamington Spa Hospital and return up to 12 beds to the Ellen Badger site.

Option B – Two sites: Provide all 35 beds at **two** sites, Leamington Spa Hospital and Stratford Hospital.

The wards would remain the same current size at Leamington Spa Hospital and Stratford Hospital and there would no longer be any beds at the Ellen Badger site.

The Trust prefers the second option, i.e. NOT having beds at the Ellen Badger.

SDC have reserved some £1.5M to support the project that included the provision of a GP practice and the Rehab beds. Neither provision is certain. At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting prior to Christmas 2024 I asked the Portfolio Holder for Development if planning permission was granted for a site for beds, would the lack of such provision require a change of use and as SDC had supported the project for beds and new GP facilities and if neither provision was to be implemented then would any grant funding be withdrawn and he assured me that it would.

The original proposal was that rehabilitation beds would be a 'halfway house' for those in Shipston and area before returning to self-sufficiency so easing the bed shortage in the acute care sector and would also provide care in the community. Removing this facility from Ellen Badger not only flies in the proposal but would particularly impact on local families having to travel from the Shipston area to either Stratford upon Avon or Leamington Rehabilitation hospital an almost impossible return journey by public transport.

I therefore urge Parish Councils to advertise the Consultation and help as many as possible to participate.

<https://www.happyhealthylives.uk/integrated-care-board/your-voice/current-consultations/south-warwickshire-community-hospital-rehabilitation-bed-consultation/consultation-document/>

The survey can be accessed here:

<https://surveys.garesearch.co.uk/WebProd/Interview/8U3338DPK0TGSHSQ8U300ASAWPOCJOYK>

2. South Warwickshire Local Plan

Central Government have issued a draft revised National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF]. This coincides with the development of the South Warwickshire Local Plan [SWLP] which has been in development as a replacement of the current Core Strategy for SDC but includes Warwick District Council as well and has therefore been developed jointly between the two Councils.

The consultation period for the SWLP commenced on the 10th January 2025 details of which can be viewed at;

<https://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/>

I urge all Parish Councils to comment within the consultation period and to encourage residents to do the same as this plan will impact them locally going towards 2050; this is a plan for a generation and will shape the environment in which we live and cherish.

The NPPF focus is on delivering affordable housing and that includes new settlements, traveller sites, and the status of green belt as well as 'green' power generation projects such as solar and wind farms.

In addition, the government has determined that District Councils will be abolished within this Parliament. That makes the design of the SWLP most critical for local democracy and protection of our countryside, because decisions on planning will become more remote from communities by definition.

3. Devolution

As mentioned above, in December 2024 the government issued an English Devolution White Paper. Warwickshire was already designated as a Tier Two devolved Council but retaining the two tier political system of District and County Councils. The white paper would remove the District Council tier but retain Parish Councils. It is likely therefore that Warwickshire will be in the van of implementation which might happen as soon as 2027 [see page 32 of the English Devolution White Paper]. There is therefore an argument to delay WCC elections due in May 2025. District elections are due in May 2027 but would no longer be required with the abolishment of the Councils. It costs around £1,000,000 to run the WCC election and having to repeat the election some 24 months later does not seem a good use of public money but others may take a different view.

In any case, the requirement for a non-mayoral Unitary Authority [Foundation level] is to have a population of 500,000 or more. Warwickshire has around 650,000. A mayoral authority would require a population of 1.5M and to achieve that Warwickshire would need to join with another authority such as Worcestershire or as some District/Borough Council Leaders have suggested, the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Mayor of the West

Midlands has appeared to have ruled that option out but the Northern Boroughs seem to be in favour as does the Leader of SDC.

If Warwickshire moves in the van of authorities to a non-mayoral Unitary Authority, it can design its own destiny rather than have won imposed that does not have the priorities of residents at its heart.