

Chapter 1: Introduction

- 1.1 This is the adopted version of the Warwick District Local Plan (1996-2011), referred to as the Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Local Plan is a land use plan which controls the location and nature of new development within the District. The plan contains policies, designations and allocations which will be used to determine planning applications and applications for conservation area consent, listed building consent and consent for works to protected trees.
- 1.3 The Local Plan has been prepared under Part II of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Although this Act has now been superseded by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Government put in place transitional arrangements in 2004 to ensure that local plans then in production (including this Local Plan) could complete all relevant legal stages and become adopted as part of the statutory development plan. The final stages of the Warwick District Local Plan took place in accordance with these transitional arrangements. More details of this are contained in the section “the local plan process” later in this chapter.

The Objectives of the Local Plan

- 1.4 The overriding objective of the Local Plan is to contribute towards the achievement of the joint vision for Warwick District taken from the Community Plan 2001-2003. The vision is –

“We want Warwick District to be Safe, Healthy, Fair and Prosperous, Now and into the Future”
- 1.5 The Core Strategy describes how the Local Plan will contribute towards delivering this vision in an integrated manner with reference to the four main aims of sustainable development. These are:-
 - to maintain high and stable levels of economic growth;
 - effective protection of the environment;
 - prudent use of natural resources; and
 - social progress which recognises the needs of everyone.
- 1.6 Sustainable development is the basis for land use planning nationally and another important objective of the Local Plan will be to assist in its achievement. Together, therefore, the policies of the Local Plan will provide for the needs of the community whilst protecting and enhancing the high quality environment.
- 1.7 In addition, the Local Plan will provide a framework for planning decisions that gives certainty to local people, businesses, service providers and the development industry.

How to use the Local Plan

- 1.8 The Local Plan comprises this Written Statement and the attached Proposals Map (including inset plans). The Written Statement is divided into chapters containing policies which guide the location and nature of development, including land use designations and allocations. The Proposals Map and Inset Plans define where these policies, designations and allocations will be applicable.
- 1.9 Applicants proposing development on a particular site or area are encouraged to begin by looking at the Proposals Map to establish which policies of the Written Statement are relevant to the consideration of their development proposal.
- 1.10 The Proposals Map divides the District into **Urban Areas, Town Centres** and **Rural Areas** and there is a chapter relevant to each area. It also identifies whether the site is the subject of a designation (see **Designated Areas Policies** chapter) and whether there is a specific policy for the site (see **Site Specific Policies** chapter).
- 1.11 Applicants are then encouraged to consider the detail of their proposal against the District-Wide policies within the **Development Policies** and **Sustaining Communities** chapters.
- 1.12 Each chapter, with the exception of the **Core Strategy**, contains policies followed by a brief explanation and advice on how the policy will be used. Each policy is given a unique reference and is in bold text.
- 1.13 Warwick District Council, referred to as the Council, have tried to make the text as concise and ‘user friendly’ as possible. The use of planning jargon has been minimised although some planning terminology is necessary for legal and statutory reasons. The Local Plan therefore includes a **Glossary** to help explain such terminology and also a **User Guide** to expand on the advice given here.

The Context for the Local Plan

- 1.14 There are a variety of factors that influence the content of the Local Plan.

The District

- 1.15 Warwick District lies within the heart of Warwickshire and due south of the city of Coventry. It covers an area of 28,226 hectares, comprising the four towns of Royal Leamington Spa, Warwick, Kenilworth and Whitnash set within attractive countryside. Its population was 125,931 at 2001 (Source: National Census).
- 1.16 Warwick District has a high quality environment with attractive, historic towns surrounded by a pleasant rural area. It benefits from good road and rail links with the major conurbations of the West Midlands and London. It also has a strong local economy, containing a number of major employers and attractions including Warwick Castle, Kenilworth Castle, the Royal Pump Rooms and Stoneleigh Park (National Agricultural Centre). These attributes make Warwick District a popular

place to live, work and visit which creates considerable development pressure. This pressure needs to be managed in such a way that maintains and directs growth to areas in need whilst protecting the very qualities which make the District a desirable place to live and work. This represents the challenge for the Local Plan.

The Community

- 1.17 The Council, in partnership with other public and voluntary service providers, has produced a Community Plan. The Community Plan (2001-2003) identified the aspirations, needs and priorities of the local community. It therefore has been subject to a range of community planning events and informed by the views of a panel of 1,000 local residents. The Community Plan identifies ten key priorities; Transport, Social Inclusion, Affordable Housing, Community Involvement, Community Safety, Leisure, Health, Education, the Environment and the Economy. Each priority includes aims and actions. The Local Plan can make a significant contribution to each of these key priorities and will assist in the achievement of the Community Plan's vision (see Core Strategy). The Community Plan can be viewed on the District Council website at www.warwickdc.gov.uk.
- 1.18 As a signatory of the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change the Council has set out its commitment to work with other key providers within the local community to contribute at a local level to the delivery of the UK Climate Change Programme.

National Planning Legislation and Guidance

- 1.19 In preparing the Local Plan, the Council is required to have regard to current national policies and guidance issued by the Government. Since 1988, national planning guidance has been issued in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's). There are currently twenty five PPG's providing guidance on a broad range of development types and locations. These are now gradually being replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPS's). A full list of PPG's and PPS's can be viewed on the Planning Portal website at www.planningportal.gov.uk. The brief explanation to each policy found within this Local Plan contains reference to Government guidance where appropriate.
- 1.20 In May 2004 Royal assent was given to the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act. This Act introduces widespread changes to the planning system and will see the gradual replacement of structure plans, local plans and unitary development plans with "Local Development Frameworks".
- 1.21 This local plan will therefore be the last prepared by Warwick District Council. Although the Government is encouraging local planning authorities to begin preparation of Local Development Frameworks, it is keen that authorities such as Warwick District Council that were, in 2004, still currently preparing local plans under the old regulations should continue to do so. Accordingly, it put in place transitional arrangements to enable this local plan to complete all of its legal stages through to adoption. In order to ensure that remaining local plans were adopted as quickly as possible, these transitional arrangements made some

changes to the formal procedures by which the local plan was adopted. These are set out in the section “The Local Plan Process” later in this chapter.

Regional Planning Guidance

- 1.22 Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the West Midlands was issued by the Secretary of State in June 2004. This guidance sets out broad strategic policies for land use and development for the period up to 2021. Under provisions within the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act this document now has the status of Regional Spatial Strategy and is a formal part of the development plan. This document can be viewed on the website of the West Midlands Regional Assembly at www.wmra.gov.uk
- 1.23 This RPG replaces RPG issued in April 1998 against which the Warwickshire Structure Plan (see below) was prepared. Whilst the Structure Plan has been the main strategic planning document against which this local plan has been prepared, the local plan must now have regard to the policies in the new RPG. In the event of a conflict between the new RPG and the adopted Structure Plan, it is the Council’s understanding that the RPG should carry the greater weight.

Warwickshire Structure Plan 1996-2011

- 1.24 The Warwickshire Structure Plan 1996-2011 (WASP) was adopted by Warwickshire County Council in August 2001. Alongside the Local Plan, and now the Regional Planning Guidance in its role as Regional Spatial Strategy (see above), it forms part of the statutory development plan against which planning decisions should primarily be considered. The WASP contains key strategic policies and provides a framework for local plans at the County level. The policies contain figures for additional housing and employment requirements to 2011. They also define areas where new development should be located and areas which should be protected. The WASP also provides important linkages with the Local Transport Plan (see below) and the Minerals and Waste Local Plans. The WASP can be viewed on the County Council website at www.warwickshire.gov.uk.
- 1.25 The WASP has a significant impact on the nature and content of this Local Plan and the County Council is required to ensure that it is in ‘general conformity’ with the policies of the Structure Plan and the Regional Planning Guidance.

Warwickshire Local Transport Plan 2000

- 1.26 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is the transport strategy for Warwickshire prepared by the County Council. It describes how an integrated transport system is to be delivered at the local level. The Local Plan will need to address any land use issues arising from the implementation of this Plan. The County Council has now prepared a new LTP 2006. Details of this and the 2000 LTP can be viewed on the County Council website.

Warwick District Local Plan 1989-2001

- 1.27 The Council adopted its first district-wide local plan, the Warwick District Local Plan 1989-2001, in 1995. This was written in accordance with the previous Warwickshire Structure Plan Alterations No.1 and therefore is now no longer in conformity with the latest Structure Plan and is not up-to-date. However, many of the policies and designations in the old Local Plan have been rolled forward into this Local Plan.
- 1.28 The previous Local Plan also set a planning framework for delivering 9,000 new homes and 125 hectares of employment land. This included the allocation of green field sites for approximately 2,800 new homes on the edge of the urban area and the allocation of a 'rural growth point' of 650 homes at the former Hatton Hospital site. It also allocated 50 hectares of green field employment land around the District. In the period since 1995, most of this development has now taken place with significant progress being made on the major allocations.

Warwick District Corporate Strategy and Other Strategies

- 1.29 The Council published its Corporate Strategy in 2003. The Strategy sets a number of priorities for the Council which are of relevance to the Local Plan; including the achievement of sustainable development, supporting the vitality of town centres and increasing the amount of affordable housing. Long term targets are set in relation to the development of previously developed land, performance of the town centres and numbers of affordable housing completed.
- 1.30 The Council has also published a number of other strategies and action plans with partner organisations that have guided the content of the Local Plan. The Council is committed to developing further strategies over the next four years. The Local Plan has a key role to play in delivering and informing some of these strategies: including the Housing Strategy, Crime and Disorder Strategy, Economic Development Strategy, Action Plans for each of the Town Centres, Leisure and Recreation Strategy, Tourism Action Plan, Trees & Woodlands Strategy and Open Space Assessment and Audit.

Background Reports to the Local Plan

- 1.31 There are a number of pieces of research which have to be undertaken to inform the policies and designations of this Local Plan. Work began on these in late 2000 and to date has involved a direct input from officers of the Council, District Councillors, the general public and a wide range of other stakeholders, statutory consultees and interested parties. The main background reports underpinning the Local Plan are as follows:-

Report of Public Consultation (Local Plan Pre-Deposit Consultation) – September 2002

- 1.32 In April 2001, the Council undertook a public consultation on the key planning issues facing the District for the period to 2011. This consultation involved a number of activities including the production and distribution of a 'Key Issues

Report' sent to over 300 consultees, a questionnaire leaflet distributed to households across the District and a series of public exhibitions, meetings with local groups and themed 'forums' with a range of stakeholders and interested parties. The results of this consultation have informed the policies of the Local Plan and are available to view on the District Council website.

Urban Capacity Study – July 2002

- 1.33 The Council undertook an Urban Capacity Study in 2002. This was a comprehensive study exploring how much additional housing and employment could be accommodated within the four towns. This has included a detailed analysis of a range of development sites and an estimate of the potential from other less definable sources of urban capacity. This work has influenced the housing and employment policies/allocations within the Local Plan. The Urban Capacity Study can be viewed on the District Council website.

Land Use Monitoring

- 1.34 The Council annually monitors housing and employment development within the District. The results of this exercise have helped to inform the policies/allocations within this Local Plan and measure our progress towards achieving the targets within the Structure Plan. The Housing Monitoring Report – 2005 has been used as the 'base date' for this Local Plan and can be viewed on the District Council website.

Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report

- 1.35 One of the requirements of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act is that all planning authorities prepare Annual Monitoring Reports. These become a statutory requirement in 2005, however the Council prepared its first Annual Monitoring Report in December 2004 to measure the effectiveness of the policies within the Local Plan. A copy of the most up-to-date and previous Annual Monitoring Reports can be viewed on the Council's website.

Warwick Retail Studies – May 2002, May 2004 and February 2005

- 1.36 The Council commissioned retail consultants to take a fresh look at a wide range of issues surrounding retailing and the vitality of the District's town centres in 2002. This work has influenced the retail policies within the Town Centres chapter of the Local Plan. Further work was commissioned in 2004 and 2005 to give the Council a better understanding of the need for further retail floorspace within the district.

Habitat Biodiversity Audit/SINC Study

- 1.37 For several years, the Council has worked alongside other authorities within Warwickshire and the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to undertake a habitat biodiversity audit of the County. In particular, this has sought to identify Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). This work has also informed the Urban Capacity Study.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.38 The Council has undertaken a Sustainability Appraisal as part of the process of preparing the Local Plan. This Appraisal, carried out by the Council advised by consultants, has sought to comply with the requirements of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act and the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessments. The purpose of the appraisal was to ensure that the economic, environmental and social impacts of policies had been taken into account. It has therefore influenced and enhanced the content of the Local Plan in order to achieve the objective of sustainable development. The Sustainability Appraisal and its methodology can be viewed on the District Council website.

The Local Plan Process

- 1.39 This Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Development Plan Regulations 1999 (as amended by transitional arrangements put in place by Government in 2003) which sets out the prescribed procedure which the Council must follow before the local plan can be adopted. The timetable for this work is set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme which can be viewed on the Council's website.
- 1.40 The key stages that this Local Plan followed are set out below.

First Deposit Version

- 1.41 The Council approved the First Deposit Version of the Local Plan in October 2003 and placed this "on deposit" for formal objections and representations in support between December 2003 and January 2004. Following the deposit period, the Council considered all the comments received.

Revised Deposit Version

- 1.42 The Council approved the Revised Deposit Version of the Local Plan in May 2005 and "re-deposited" the Local Plan for formal objections and representations in support between July and August 2005. This document made changes to the First Deposit Version some of which arose in response to objections received during the first deposit period.

Public Local Inquiry

- 1.43 In view of the objections made to the local plan, the Council asked the Planning Inspectorate to hold a Public Local Inquiry to consider these objections. This took place between April and September 2006 and was chaired by Planning Inspector Mr. Clive Richardson. Mr. Richardson issued his report to the Council in June 2007. It should be noted that this report was binding on the Council in accordance with transitional regulations.

Adopting the Local Plan

- 1.44 Following receipt of the Inspector's report, the Council proceeded to adopt the Local Plan in September 2007.

Building on the Policies of the Local Plan

- 1.45 The policies, allocations and designations within this Local Plan will, where appropriate, be amplified and expanded upon by the Council through the use of Supplementary Planning Documents. The Council's programme for preparing these is set out in its Local Development Scheme which can be viewed on the Council's website.