



South Warwickshire *Together*

Joint Cabinet Committee

Notice of Meeting

Thursday 18 December 2025

6.00 p.m.

**Town Hall
Parade
Royal Leamington Spa
CV32 4AT**

Note: Joint Cabinet Committee meetings are live streamed on the [South Warwickshire Local Plan - YouTube Channel](#)

Members of the Committee are requested to attend

Chair: To be appointed at each meeting

Councillors:

Stratford-on-Avon

Warwick

L Coles

I Davison

G Cowcher

C King

S Juned

L Williams

Observers:

Chair of Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Crump

Chair of Warwick District Council Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Milton

Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Conservative Group

Councillor Pemberton

Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Green Party

Councillor Passingham

Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Reform UK Group

Councillor Whalley-Hoggins

Leader of Warwick District Council Liberal
Democrat Group

Councillor Boad

Leader of Warwick District Council Conservative
Group

Councillor Day

Leader of Warwick District Council Labour
Group

Councillor Melrose

Leader of Warwick District Council WRA Group
Leader of Warwick District Council Independent
Group

Councillor Falp

Councillor Wightman

Joint Cabinet Committee

18 December 2025

Agenda

1. Appointment of Chair

To appoint a Chair for each meeting from the members of the Council that is hosting the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Disclosures of Interest

Members are reminded of the need to:

- 1) Declare the existence of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI), Other Registerable Interest (ORI) or Non-Registerable Interest (NRI) for any agenda item;
- 2) Confirm the nature of the interest by explaining the connection between the interest and the agenda item; and
- 3) State what action (if any) they will take in relation to the interest when the agenda item is discussed*

*In the case of a DPI the obligation is to not participate in any discussion or vote and to leave the meeting room, unless the member has a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

If the existence and nature of any interest only becomes apparent later in the meeting it must be disclosed immediately. If a DPI or ORI is not already registered, members must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days.

Members are also reminded of the need to declare predetermination on any matter.

If members are unsure about whether or not they have an interest, or about its nature, they are strongly advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 1 - 6)

To confirm and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2024.

5. Revised timetable for preparation of the South Warwickshire Local Plan (Pages 7 - 22)

To consider the revised timetable for the preparation of the South Warwickshire Local Plan.

6. Exclusion of the Public

The Chairman to move

"That, pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the remaining business of the meeting in view of the fact that the nature of the proceedings will be such that, if the public were present, there would likely be disclosure to them of exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the said Act (as amended)".

7. Exempt Appendix

(Pages 23 - 26)

8. Urgent Business

To consider any business which, in the opinion of the Chair, is urgent in accordance with the provisions of Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

CHIEF EXECUTIVES Stratford-on Avon and Warwick District Councils

David Buckland
Chief Executive
(Head of Paid Service)
Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Elizabeth House
Church Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 6HX

Chris Elliott
Chief Executive
(Head of Paid Service)
Warwick District Council
Town Hall
Parade
Royal Leamington Spa
CV32 4AT

General Enquiries: Please contact either:

Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Elizabeth House, Church Street
Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6HX
Telephone 01789 260245
Email committeemanagers@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Warwick District Council, Town Hall, Parade,
Royal Leamington Spa CV32 4AT
Telephone: 01926 456114
Email: committee@warwickdc.gov.uk

For enquiries about specific reports, please contact the officers named in the reports

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Joint Cabinet Committee

12 December 2024

Minutes

*Held at Council Chamber, Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon
Meeting commenced: 6.06 p.m. Meeting ended: 7.44 p.m.*

Present: Councillor Susan Juned (Chair) Councillors L Coles, G Cowcher, I Davison, C King and L Williams

Also in attendance: Councillor Crump (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Observer)
Councillor Day (Conservative Group Leader Warwick District Council, Observer)
Councillor Passingham (Green Party Group Leader Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Observer)
Councillor Rock (Joint Chair of the South Warwickshire Plan Advisory Group – at the invitation of the Chair)

Apologies: Councillors J Falp, A Milton and S Whalley-Hoggins

14. Appointment of Chair

In the absence of a Chair, the Head of Development (Stratford-on-Avon District Council) opened the meeting and called for nominations for Chair.

Accordingly, it was proposed by Councillor Davison and seconded by Councillor Coles, that Councillor Juned be appointed as Chair for the meeting.

There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Juned be appointed as Chair up to the next meeting.

Councillor Juned then took the chair.

15. Apologies for Absence

See above.

16. Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest received.

17. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2024 were confirmed and signed.

18. South Warwickshire Local Plan - Preferred Options version

Councillor Cowcher (Deputy Leader - Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor King (Place Portfolio Warwick District Council)

In line with the Joint Cabinet Committee Terms of Reference, and at the invitation of the Chair, Mr George Martin addressed the Committee and raised points around the need for the NPPF to go further on Climate Change.

Members were invited to raise questions, which the Planning Policy and Major Sites Delivery Manager (Warwick District Council) responded to.

Note: Councillor Williams arrived during the representation from the above speaker.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Planning Policy and Major Sites Delivery Manager introduced the report, and drew members' attention to the proposed amended wording to the Vision Statement, to read as follows:

'By 2050 South Warwickshire will be a flourishing, healthy and vibrant place where people will continue to want to live, work and visit.

The vision is to meet South Warwickshire's sustainable development needs and strengthen local communities, while responding to the climate emergency.

The plan will provide homes and jobs, boost and diversify the local economy, and provide appropriate infrastructure, in suitable locations, at the right time.'

The joint Chairs of the South Warwickshire Plan Advisory Group were then invited to address the meeting and made reference to the numbers of Boat Dwellers within the Gypsies and Travellers document as incorrect and required revisiting, which officers had agreed to do, and suggested that the wording 'battery storage' be amended to read 'energy storage' in order to future proof all technologies, which was agreed. The Chairs also requested that thanks to all officers be recorded, for their work on the Plan to date.

The Chair of Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) gave feedback from the OSC meeting held on 29 November 2024. He advised that members had recommended that more clarity be provided on local housing and employment needs.

Members also queried the disparity between the housing land supply between the two districts, the robustness of the evidence and the impacts of past performance. Engagement with residents, including the proposed FAQ's, was also noted, and the requirement for regard to infrastructure.

The Chair then opened the floor to the Group Leaders from both Councils, the feedback from which was heavily focussed around the requirement to have infrastructure in place prior to any housing development commencing, particularly in rural areas. In addition, the density and housing mix of any development was raised as important factors for consideration. All Group Leaders also wished to thank officers, for their work on the Plan and in providing briefing sessions for all Councillors.

At this juncture, in the absence of the Chair of Warwick District Council (WDC) OSC, the Chief Executive for Stratford-on-Avon District Council presented feedback from the OSC meeting held on 12 December 2024. He advised that the Committee recommended to the Joint Cabinet Committee that there be a significant amount of face-to-face consultation that created dialogue with residents. In response to further points raised, officers confirmed that there would be work carried out prior to the consultation to make the documents easier for residents to access them.

At this point, an amendment to include an additional consultation question regarding the Plan end date was proposed by Councillor Davison and seconded by Councillor Williams. Following an extensive debate on this proposal a vote was taken, and by 2 votes in favour to 4 votes against, this recommendation fell.

The Committee then deliberated the recommendation from WDC OSC. The Chair of SDC OSC expressed support, recommending that consultation be promoted within local areas by all councillors across both districts. Members were advised that it was officers' intention to conduct as much face-to-face consultation as possible.

Thereafter, it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

That there be a significant amount of face-to-face consultation that created dialogue with residents.

Discussion was then held on the revisions to the Vision Statement and to Recommendations (1) and (7), and the comments from Councillor Davison in line with Recommendation (7), that the consultation emphasised that the housing numbers were mandated and not by choice, which was agreed.

Following which, it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the regulatory framework and oversight that Central Government set for the formation of a local plan be noted, including the approach for identifying housing and employment need, and noted in particular that the Government had mandated a new standard method for housing numbers in its revised NPPF published 12 December 2024;
- (2) That the importance of a sound, in date Local Plan, in order to prevent the uncoordinated delivery of potentially less favourable sites for development, be noted;
- (3) That the extensive work that had been undertaken to date to inform the preparation of the South Warwickshire Local Plan be noted, including the decision of the Joint Cabinet Committee on 1 August 2024, in relation to required levels of housing growth;
- (4) That the level of employment growth/need across the Local Plan period be noted and the provision levels set out in Table 2 of paragraph 1.32 of the agenda report be endorsed;
- (5) That the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal (attached at Appendix 2 to the agenda report) that accompanied and informed the South Warwickshire Local Plan Preferred Options consultation be noted;
- (6) That the South Warwickshire Local Plan Preferred Options document (attached at Appendix 1 to the agenda report) be endorsed for consultation, commencing in January 2025 for a period of eight weeks, noting that not all the sites put forward were required to be allocated in order to meet the overall requirements for housing and employment growth;
- (7) That the Head of Development (Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC)) and Head of Place, Arts & Economy (Warwick District Council (WDC)) be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Planning and Economic Development (SDC) and Place (WDC), to make any final editorial and presentational amendments to Appendix 1 of the agenda report, including acknowledging changes arising from the revised NPPF, prior to commencement of the consultation; and
- (8) That the updated South Warwickshire Local Plan timetable (attached at Appendix 3 to the agenda report) be approved and its inclusion in both Council's future Local Development Scheme (LDS) updates be supported.

Note: This item is subject to call-in to the OSC

19. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

CHAIR

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Agenda Item No 5
Joint Cabinet Committee
18 December 2025

Title: South Warwickshire Local Plan – Revised Timetable
Lead Officer: John Careford – Head of Development at Stratford-on-Avon District Council (01789 260801), and Philip Clarke – Head of Place, Arts & Economy at Warwick District Council (01926 456518)
Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Cowcher and Councillor C King
Wards of the District directly affected: All wards across Warwick District Council and Stratford on Avon District Council

Summary

The purpose of this report is for Members to consider and approve revisions to the currently published timetable for preparing the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) as contained at **Appendix 1**. The timetable can then inform a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) for each district, which will then be published by each authority. It is a government requirement that Local Authorities publish and keep up to date the Local Development Schemes (LDSs) for the Local Plan area. The report sets out that the timescale for the publication of the regulation 19 stage of the SWLP has had to be extended from the timetable provided to Joint Committee in December 2024 to assimilate key evidence being prepared.

The report sets out that despite this delay in getting the plan to the regulation 19 publication stage, it is considered that the SWLP can be submitted to the Government's Planning Inspectorate (PINS) by 31 December 2026 and therefore be considered through the existing plan making arrangements. The report sets out measures to be put in place to ensure the document is submission ready and actions being taken to mitigate the possibility of further timetable delays. Nonetheless, the timetable does contain risks which if realised, will push the timetable back.

Recommendations

- (1) That the Joint Committee agree to the revised timetable for the preparation of the South Warwickshire Local Plan as set out in **Appendix 1**.
 - (2) That the Joint Committee notes the Local Plan risk register attached at **Appendix 2** and the confidential **Appendix 3** and the mitigations in respect of the principal risks as set out in paragraphs 110.1 to 1.10.4 of this report.
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1 Background/Information

- 1.1 Members of the Joint Cabinet Committee will recall the report of 12 December 2024 which included an estimated timetable for the next stages of the SWLP preparation. At the time it was written, it had been anticipated that the timetable for preparation of the SWLP would be as follows:

South Warwickshire Local Plan preparation timetable – Stages to complete:

Preferred Options consultation: 10th January – 7th March 2025

Publication (Regulation 19) consultation: December 2025 – February 2026

Submission (Regulation 22): September 2026

Examination (Regulation 24): October 2026 – March 2027

Consultation on Proposed Modifications: July – August 2027

Adoption (Regulation 26): December 2027

1.2 The intention had been that the Joint Committee would consider the regulation 19 publication version in December 2025 so that the plan would go into the public domain at that time, with the aim of then launching the actual formal regulation 19 publication consultation during January through to February of 2026.

1.3 Unfortunately, since the report was written, several 'head winds' have caused delay to the SWLP programme. The updated timetable is now shown below:

Stage in SWLP Preparation	Timetable
Publication version (Regulation 19) consultation	June -July 2026 * (Cllr approval during May 2026 dates tbc)
Submission Version (regulation 22)	December 2026 **
Examination in Public (EIP) Regulation 24	January 2027 – October 2027
Proposed Modifications consultation Regulation 25	November 2027 – December 2027
Adoption Regulation 26	March 2028

*Summer school Holidays start Monday 20 July 2026

**Last submission date 12 December 2026

1.4 The delays have largely been due to the following reasons:

- Soft market testing with the expert consultancies through the procurement processes in the spring and summer of 2025 have indicated longer time periods would be required by them to undertake the work than had originally been envisaged. Estimating of timescales in the last report was challenging as the work covers two districts as opposed to one and so to a degree covers relatively uncharted working. In addition, it was only with input from the 'experts' that further clarity was obtained on timescales and their resource availability.
- Companies undertaking studies for the SWLP have fed back to us that, with the government providing monies to Local Authorities to assist in submission by December 2026 and, to take into account of changes in the NPPF published in December 2024, they have been inundated with work. In response, the companies have prioritised the contracts they have already entered into and are not willing or able to scale up their resources as the additional work demands will end after December 2026. This has made procuring of the Landscape Sensitivity study particularly challenging for example, although it is now being undertaken. In addition, those companies already with contracts with us and other authorities have needed to programme their work they are contracted to do having regard to the resources they have available.

- Programming of work timelines with some existing consultants already contracted has needed to be revised to take account of NPPF changes and then subsequent technical information on the approach to the revisions being drip fed from the government in subsequent months. For example, further work has had to be commissioned in respect of what should be considered as “grey belt” within Green Belt to take account of changes in the NPPF. The government has funded this work; however, it has put additional pressure on consultants who were already working to challenging deadlines to deliver the Green Belt study for the SWLP.
- Whilst it was anticipated that the level of response to the Preferred Options consultation would be high, particularly as the plan presented several development options not all of which would be taken forward, the level of response was unprecedented when compared to previous consultation period responses. The volume of response has required the Councils to investigate the procurement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support officers analysing the responses and this has taken time to get established to ensure the use of AI will assist and to manage any risks from its use.
- Whilst most respondents used the consultation portal on the SWLP web page during the preferred options consultation, a significant number of respondents used other approaches such as by email for submission which introduced an additional step in processing the representations. Again, the volume of responses in this format has provided the additional challenge.
- Input is needed from other key stakeholders and statutory bodies who are under pressure themselves on work streams with the resources they have available and may be working to different more broader priorities which impacts on their ability to meet our timescales. For example, the work being undertaken on the Strategic Transport Assessment with input from Warwickshire County Council and National Highways. Whilst this to a degree has been estimated, some aspects are therefore beyond our easy control.
- The timetable set out in December 2024 was a challenging timetable because it left some ‘wiggle room’ should it be needed. That is, it showed submission in September 2026 when the actual requirement for submission for the plan to be considered under the existing plan making regulations was December 2026.

1.5 Whilst some delay has become inevitable due to the above headwinds, it is considered the steps are now in place to respond to these challenges and to move forward on progressing the plan. Consultancies supporting the work are in place, their anticipated timelines are known and mechanisms for regular dialogue and progress with key consultees are also in place. Furthermore, the Preferred Options representations have now all been summarised and published.

1.6 The purpose of this report is to therefore set out a revised timetable for preparation of the SWLP for the Joint Committee to consider and to then agree on a timetable. The timetable can then inform a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) for each district which will then be published. It is a government requirement that Local Authorities keep an up to date LDS for both districts. The Local Plan should be submitted at a time consistent with the relevant LDS

for the area. The timetable as above with more detail than just the key milestones can be found in Gantt chart form at **Appendix 1**.

- 1.7 The SWLP Advisory Group has also been kept informed on how the assimilation of evidence is progressing and how the evidence will be used to inform the preparation of the Local Plan. It is considered the timetable provides a challenging but realistic timetable that results in submission of a plan in time to make use of the transitional arrangements for plan preparation, whilst also providing sufficient time for evidence collection and representation analysis. It should be noted that once the SWLP is submitted, the time the plan takes is largely out of the hands of the two councils. As there are many councils planning to submit their Plans for examination ahead of the December 2026 deadline, there is greater uncertainty around the examination timeframes than is usual as the Planning Inspectorate anticipate receiving an unprecedented number of Plans to examine. Nevertheless, estimated timescales for those steps are included for completeness.
- 1.8 Finally, it should be noted that **Appendix 1** identifies that the summer school holidays in Warwickshire commence on 20 July 2026. To avoid the publication version consultation clashing with these holidays, it is proposed the consultation commences no later than Friday 8 June 2026 for the formal 6 weeks required in regulations with the time period between Committee / Full Council approval being brought forward if at all possible. The consultation would then end no later than Friday 17 July 2026.
- 1.9 It is unfortunate that the timetable provided at **Appendix 1** is drafted on the basis of the government deadline to meet the deadline for the end of transitional arrangements for plan making under the current process, rather than being driven on a more logical basis. Despite this situation, and as a consequence, the above proposed changes in timescale for evidence to be completed resulting in the period for processing representations after the regulation 19 version has been published being shortened significantly, officers consider that whilst challenging, the SWLP can be submitted by 31 December 2026. This is due to the different way in which the representations need to be dealt with for submission to the Planning Inspectorate when compared to the work previously needed at the regulation 18 stage. It is also because steps are in place to avoid further delays as set out below including through efforts being made to have ongoing dialogue with key consultees during the preparation process.

1.10 **Mitigation Steps**

- 1.10.1 The Local Authorities have engaged an experienced Barrister so that a careful review of procedural and legal matters has been covered off to date and to ensure the next steps in the plan are undertaken appropriately but do not cause unnecessary delay. The Barrister's extensive experience of getting plans through Examination is also to be used to help mentor and support officers in preparing the plan for submission and then dealing with the Examination.
- 1.10.2 It is recognised that we do need to have the active engagement and involvement of several key consultees, without which the risks of proceeding to a Reg 19 consultation would be significant. In particular, we need National Highways and WCC on board. WCC are currently expressing the view that they want longer to do the work and National Highways are saying they need to see that work before commenting further. Supported by both Chief Executives, we

are following up on these positions by requesting further urgent meetings at which the aim is to find a way forward that fits with the timetable we have provided which seeks to take into account key dependencies such as the viability work that will be informed by the traffic mitigation solutions that will flow from the detailed modelling work in the timescales indicated in appendix 1 of the draft paper for the Joint Committee.

1.10.3 Officers are actively engaged with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) who informally have indicated that based on their experience of discussions with other local authorities across the country we are well advanced with the work that needs to be done for submission. PAS are also offering additional advice and support workshops to assist in helping us deliver to the timetable now set out at **Appendix 1** and we are also exploring the potential for further support from PAS, where it will help our operational matters in delivering the plan to the proposed timetable.

1.10.4 We will also be undertaking an informal critical friend review offered by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), again to ensure the plan is submission ready.

2 Alternative Options available to the Joint Committee

- 2.1 The Local Authorities could look to pivot preparing the SWLP through the new plan making arrangements which are expected to come into force from 1 January 2026, though at the time of writing secondary legislation is yet to be enacted. However, negatives to this approach are that it is envisaged that the plan will be expected to start at stage 1 of the new process. As a result, it is anticipated that whilst much evidence would have been readied, there would be an estimated delay of 2 to 3 years, based on informal discussions with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) whilst the plan moves through the new process. This would heighten concerns in respect of time expiry of the current adopted plans at a time when neither of the Local Authorities are able to demonstrate delivery of a 5-year housing land supply. In addition, the new system will not be tried and tested and therefore there is potential for further delays to ensue as Local Authorities and the Planning Inspectorate navigate the new system. Finally, the delays could result in significant monies being wasted on the plan to date and it is considered that costs could increase by pivoting to the new system as delays may require the evidence to be updated.
- 2.2 The Local Authorities have looked to see whether we could publish a Local Plan earlier than is proposed and the timetable as set out reflects this assessment. It is considered that based on feedback from the consultants undertaking the preparation of studies for the plan, that if done any earlier the work would not be sufficiently complete. The timetable therefore is considered to provide the appropriate balance between doing things quicker and the risk of failing at Examination. Getting approval for the plan is also key to moving forward with addressing the 5-year land supply issues now identified within both districts.
- 2.3 If the committee does not agree a timetable, it is assumed officers would nevertheless continue to work on preparing the plan, but the Local Authorities would not be in a position to update and adopt the LDSs for each district. The approach would not be in accordance with government requirements with unknown consequences for how the government might intervene. Nor would it allow: the public; the wider councillor membership; key bodies; developers; land promoters; or the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) to be informed of the likely

timescales for plan preparation for the SWLP area and to manage their resources accordingly to respond when required to do so.

- 2.4 Finally, the local authorities stop preparing a Local Plan for the area. Such an approach would significantly increase the risk of government intervention and reduce the ability of the Local Authorities to be able to manage development within their own area. The housing requirement set by the government would still be required to be met, but proposals would likely come forward in an unplanned and uncoordinated way based on speculative applications significantly increasing the risk that a planned and coordinated approach to the delivery of significant infrastructure improvements would be lost. Monies spent to date on the SWLP would also have been wasted whilst costs might be expected to continue to increase in defending any appeals without a plan being in place. For reference, Recommendation 2 of the December 2024 Joint Cabinet Committee Report on the SWLP Preferred Options and specifically paragraphs 1.11-1.13 set out comprehensively the importance of having an up to date and 'sound' Local Plan.

3 Consultation and Member's comments

- 3.1 The two Portfolio Holders with responsibility for the SWLP (Councillor Cowcher for Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Councillor King for Warwick District Council) have been fully involved throughout this process. The SWLP Member Advisory Group which includes a number of Ward Councillors meets regularly and has fully considered the proposed revised timetable. In addition, workshops and a briefing have been held during the Autumn period of 2025 to provide updates and engagement opportunities for all councillors.

4 Implications of the proposal

4.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications

- 4.1.1 The SWLP is a Development Plan document and therefore, when adopted, will form part of the statutory Development Plan for both districts. As such, its preparation must comply with a number of statutory requirements including public consultation; regard to national policy; the achievement of sustainable development; and fulfilment of the Duty to Co-operate. As a Development Plan document, it will be subject to independent scrutiny through an examination in public to ensure that it is 'sound' (fit for purpose) and satisfies all necessary legal requirements. This includes ensuring that residents and stakeholders can engage meaningfully in the process.

4.2 Financial

- 4.2.1 The estimated cost of producing and getting the SWLP in place is £2.2m, excluding staff costs. This cost is to be shared equally between Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) and Warwick District Council (WDC). SDC has £1.3m in place within the Core Strategy Funding Reserve to fund its share. WDC currently has set aside £1m. In addition to this, the government has contributed £454k (£227k to each authority) to support Local Plan preparation and a further £70k each specifically to enable further work to be undertaken to support Green Belt assessments, particularly in the light of the changes made to the NPPF in December 2024.

4.3 Council Plan

- 4.3.1 As a Development Plan document, the SWLP will help SDC meet some of its six thematic aims. These include striving to deliver affordable well built and maintained homes; creating a larger, stronger, greener and more inclusive

economy; leading the fight against climate change; and ensuring that health and wellbeing is at the heart of decisions made.

4.3.2 In respect of WDC's Corporate Strategy, preparation of the SWLP will help the Council achieve its stated objectives of: -

- prioritising housing development on brownfield sites.
- minimising use of greenfield sites where possible.
- promoting new developments using 20-minute neighbourhood/settlement designs.
- ensuring convenient access to services and shop.
- protecting existing community identities.
- ensuring the provision of appropriate infrastructure is available to support new and existing development.

4.3.3 Through the Local Plan, positive consideration will be given to the extent to which increasing housing densities in new developments could contribute to delivering the above.

4.4 **Environmental/Climate Change Implications**

4.4.1 Tackling climate change and responding to the Climate Emergencies that both Councils have declared is at the heart of the SWLP. In order to maximise opportunities for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and to meet net carbon zero targets, it is critical that the evolving Plan is informed by assessments on its impact on climate change. As such, consultants have been appointed to prepare these assessments and ensure that all aspects of climate change are considered as part of the SWLP.

4.5 **Analysis of the effects on Equality**

4.5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is required for the Local Plan and will be undertaken at various stages of the SWLP to ensure that strategies and policies contribute towards eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relations. An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken for the Preferred Options document, and this can be viewed on the SWLP website. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken in due course to support the Regulation 19 version of the plan.

4.6 **Data Protection**

4.6.1 Both Councils will ensure that all data protection requirements are adhered to. This will particularly be the case in respect of personal or commercially sensitive information that is provided to the councils through public consultations. The councils have prepared a joint Privacy Statement on the SWLP website.

4.7 **Health and Wellbeing**

4.7.1 A Health Impact Assessment is required for the Local Plan and will be undertaken at various stages of the SWLP to ensure that strategies and policies contribute towards eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relations. A Health Impact Assessment was undertaken for the Preferred Options document, and this can be viewed on the SWLP website. A Health Impact Assessment will be undertaken in due course to support the Regulation 19 version of the plan.

5 **Risk Assessment**

5.1 There are many risks associated with undertaking a Local Plan review. These

are financial, reputational and legal. All Local Authorities are required to prepare Local Plans and both councils are experienced in managing these risks. All stages of the Local Plan are subject to councillor advice, scrutiny and approval and so there is plenty of opportunity for councillors to have proper oversight of the technical work and procedures that are being undertaken.

- 5.2 There are additional risks in undertaking a joint Local Plan review with another local authority as is being undertaken here. These are largely political and relate to the willingness of both councils to continue to work together to approve the document.
- 5.3 There remain risks in relation to completing the evidence base within the timelines required for submission and to ensure the submission version of the plan is examination ready. As referenced earlier in the report, key areas of evidence including for example the Strategic Transport Assessment rely on input from key consultees with their own wider priorities and resource challenges and therefore are not easily within the control of WDC and SDC in preparing the plan. Such operational matters along with the risks referenced in this section and other operational risks are covered by the risk register presented at **Appendix 2 and Appendix 3**. The mitigation comments made in section 1.10 set out how it is considered these risks are being addressed.
- 5.4 Ultimately, as local planning authorities, both councils are obliged to prepare and keep up to date a Development Plan for their area. The SDC Core Strategy was adopted in 2016 and the WDC Local Plan in 2017. Both plans are now more than five years old, and in accordance with government advice it is prudent to start planning for the period post 2031/2029 when those plans expire.
- 5.5 It is also recognised that there are risks associated with preparing a Local Plan due to the timing of elections in the future. Whilst it is anticipated decisions would be made by the current administrations of both councils and by the current Joint Cabinet Committee based on the timetable at **Appendix 1**, as the May 2027 elections are not anticipated to proceed due to the Local Government Review proposals set out by the government, there is the potential for unanticipated by-elections to impact. Furthermore, it should be noted that the new indicated date for adoption of the SWLP (March 2028) is only just before the proposed date for when a new council comes into being to cover South Warwickshire under the government's Local Government Review timetable. Therefore, if there is any slippage in the plan preparation timetable which is not within the control of the authorities once the plan is submitted, the final decision to adopt the SWLP would be made by the new council under the Local Government Review proposals.
- 5.6 There are also significant risks of not preparing a Local Plan. Having an up to date plan in place keeps the councils in control of planning decisions and enables us to ensure we get the right homes in the right places supported by the right infrastructure. Not having a plan will not reduce the demand for new homes in South Warwickshire but would result in unsustainable homes delivered by planning by appeal which can result in expensive costs if appeals are lost.

6 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation

- 6.1 The report sets out revisions to the currently published timetable for preparing the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) as contained at **Appendix 1** and in paragraph 1.3 of this report. The timetable will inform updated Local Development Schemes (LDSs) for both authorities which are required to be kept up to date by the Government in relation to Local Plan preparation. The report

sets out the intention to commence consultation on the regulation 19 Publication version by no later than the 8th June 2026 at paragraph 1.8 of the report so the formal consultation can be undertaken before the school summer holidays, and to bring the date forward where the possibility to do so arises. The timetable shows the intention to submit the plan to the Planning Inspectorate by 31st December 2026 to avoid significant delay in plan preparation by having to switch to the new plan making procedures which come into force after that date for any plans not submitted by then.

- 6.2 The report sets out the reasons why the timetable has had to be extended for evidence collection purposes before the publication version regulation 19 consultation can commence. Primarily the revisions to the timetable are due to feedback on soft market testing from consultants that could undertake the studies needed, consultants not being able to resource a surge in demand from Local Authorities needing support in preparation of the plan evidence base, a very high level of representations received to the Preferred Options version of the plan which have needed to be processed, revisions to national guidance which have required the updating of study work done in respect of the Green Belt, and the need to engage with and gain support from key consultees to meet the timetable with their own resource pressures and priorities.
- 6.3 The report sets out the risks identified in achieving the timetable in the report and in **Appendices 2 and 3**, and the mitigation being undertaken to address the risks. This includes undertaking due diligence via support from an experienced Barrister, taking up the offer of support from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to prepare a submission ready plan by the 31st December 2026, undertaking critical friend review work with the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) and high-level management engagement with key consultees providing input on the plan to work with the timetable proposed at **Appendix 1**.
- 6.4 The report assesses the alternatives to the two proposed recommendations contained in the report. That is to pivot to preparing the plan under the new plan making procedures and to accept there would be lengthy delay and associated higher costs and abortive costs to date; to undertake the regulation 19 consultation stage sooner but recognizing the significantly increased risk that the plan may not be supported by a proportional and sound evidence base; or to stop preparing the plan with the potential reputational damage, government intervention, loss of control of a local development strategy for the area and the potential for increased speculative development without planned infrastructure of the scale that may be required and the potential higher appeal costs associated should the local authorities choose to refuse the speculative development without a 5 year housing land supply. This analysis helps inform the recommendations therefore as set out at the start of the report.

Background papers:

[Joint Cabinet Committee Preferred Options report Thursday 12 December 2024](#)

Supporting documents:

Appendix 1 South Warwickshire Local Plan Revised Timetable

Appendix 2 Local Plan Risk Register

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Appendix 1 – South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) Revised Timetable

Stage	2025												2026											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3. Preferred Options	PC	PC	PC	RA EA EC	RA EA EC	RA EA EC	RA EA EC	RA EA EC	RA EA EC	RA EA EC	RA EA EC	RA EA EC	RA EC	RA EC	EC	EC								
4. Publication (reg 19)																		P	PC	PC				
5. Submission (reg 22)																				RA	RA	RA	RA	P
6. Examination																								
7. Proposed Modifications																								
8. Adoption																								

NB – Summer School Holidays start 20th July 2026

Stage	2027												2028											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3. Preferred Options																								
4. Publication (reg 19)																								
5. Submission (reg 22)																								
6. Examination	EIP	EIP	EIP	EIP	EIP	EIP	EIP	EIP	EIP	IR														
7. Proposed Modifications										P	PC	PC	RA	RA										
8. Adoption															A									

NB – Pre-election period shown in Grey - start & end dates tbc from late March to early May 2027 and potentially again in 2028 following Local Government Review.

Key

PC = Public Consultation

EIP = Examination in Public

RA = Rep Analysis

A = Adopt

Appendix 1 – South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) Revised Timetable

P = Publish **IR** = Inspector’s Report published **EC** = Evidence Collection

South Warwickshire Local Plan Risk Register (OPEN)

REF	RISK OWNER	RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONFIDENTIAL	RISK EXPOSURE	RAW RISK RATING	RISK CONTROL MEASURES	EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROL MEASURES	RISK CONTROL ACTIONEE(S)	CURRENT RISK RATING	PROGRESS/COMMENTS	NEGATIVE OR OPPORTUNITY RISK	RISK SOURCE	REVIEW	RISK RESPONSE	RISK STATUS	NOTES
1	HoS / SWLP Policy Managers	Likelihood of not having a sound local plan	If the SWLP is not found sound at Examination, this will require more work which will delay the completion of the Plan.	Strategic	No	Financial, reputational	3 5 15	All the measures outlined in this Risk Register are aiming to reduce the likelihood of this occurring. In particular the following should be noted: (1) resources made available to employ staff to fund the work on the SWLP, (2) members have prioritised the SWLP including through making appropriate governance arrangements, (3) specialist technical evidence has been procured to support decision making, (4) specialist legal advice has been procured and taken to advise on risks and maximise the chances of a sound LP, (5) regular engagement with PWS prior to submission.	Partially Effective	Hos / SWLP Policy Managers / SWLP Team Leader	2 5 10	Negative	Other	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	
2	Hos / SWLP Policy Managers	Likelihood of not meeting the December 2025 deadline for submission	If it is not possible to submit the SWLP in time for the December 2025 deadline, this will require a new programme meaning delays in getting the SWLP adopted.	Strategic	No	Financial, reputational	4 5 20	(1) Revise timetable and prepare plan for quick turnaround of reps to PWS between reg 19 publication version and reg 22 submission of plan. (2) continue and enhance member engagement to secure better understanding of SWLP. (3) Continue dialogue with consultants to minimise delays in completing evidence. (4) Take legal advice to ensure that delays on production of reg 19 document, and process to submission is minimised.	Partially Effective	Hos / SWLP Policy Managers / SWLP Team Leader	2 5 10	Negative	Capacity	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	
3	Hos / SWLP Policy Managers	Political support	If there is a loss of political support, or a divergence in political views regarding key decisions on the SWLP, this will impact both the timetable and the prospect of the Plan getting formal approval from both councils.	Strategic	No	Financial, reputational	3 4 12	Phase 1 of Growth group work presented to PH&L and SWLPAG 27/03/25. Further updates have been provided at subsequent SWLP AG meetings in April, June and July 2025 and to PH&L meetings to gain 'buy in' to approach in the plan. Officers holding ward cllr engagement sessions on potential sites. Site visits set up for New Settlements review and all cllr staff briefing set up for 21/10/25 to update all cllrs.	Full Effective	Hos / SWLP Policy Managers / SWLP Team Leader	2 4 8	Negative	Capacity	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	
5	SWLP Policy Managers	Officer capacity	If there is insufficient officer capacity owing to sickness, staff turnover and failure to recruit new staff, then this will impact the ability to undertake tasks and meet other key deadlines for the SWLP	operational	No	Financial, reputational	4 3 12	Work with officers around leave requests / Ring fence vacant posts / bring in temporary staff. Since risk register for reg 19 developed Feb 2025 - TW left end of July 2025 - lead on Growth theme and SOC policy manager. SS & JC covering loss until reg 19 consultation. Subsequent resource to be identified. Government monies have been accessed to obtain a senior policy officer at WDC on a 3 year contract. WDC SDOs taken off SWLP work to cover other corporate projects - agreement to bring in a contractor for 12 months.	Fully Effective	SWLP Policy Managers	3 3 9	Negative	Financial	30/01/26	Accept	Open	/
6	SWLP Policy Managers / SWLP Team Leader	Officer capacity (pinch points)	If there are unforeseen or external workload pressures, officers will become over committed leading to risks to the delivery of key elements of the SWLP.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	4 3 12	Seek additional officer support from elsewhere eg additional contractors.	Full Effective	SWLP Policy Managers	3 3 9	Negative	Financial	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	Formal Planning Appeals at SOC on 5 year housing land supply have resulted in delay, particularly in non strategic site identification work. Detailed project plan put in place by Growth Theme lead in July 2025 to try to bring work back on track following two officers of the non-strategic Growth strand having to be moved to support the 5 year land supply appeal. Cost of delay estimated to be 2 months approx. Delay in the non strategic growth work remains a challenge. Additional resource has been brought to the work via a contractor (Hedli) assisting alongside their non SWLP work. Contractor Graham now helping with SFRA level 2 procurement to cover that pinch point too. All officers and managers seem to be at capacity.
7	CEOs	Local Government Review	If LGR takes place, and if adoption of the SWLP may be after any projected vesting date for a new Council, then this may require additional steps and work to be taken which may further impact on the programme.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	5 2 10	Transition plan devised by SMTs at WDC and SOC. Implications not likely to impact until after reg 19 plan published.	Full Effective	CEOs	5 1 5	Opportunity	Contractor	30/01/26	Exploit	Open	Watching brief continues
8	SWLP Policy Managers and SWLP Team leader	Government announcements (non LGR-related)	If government makes announcements which change any of the assumptions on which the SWLP is being prepared (eg: changes to national planning policy) this will impact on the work and timetable of the SWLP. Also, government may announce new opportunities, including sources of funding, which may assist the SWLP.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	4 3 12	Pick up in evidence updates. Monies were successfully applied for to resource Green Belt review work particularly with ref to Grey Belt. Spending monies on consultant support a challenge due to consultants capacity to do work.	Full Effective	SWLP Policy Managers	4 2 8	Negative	Legislative	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	In late August 2025 it was recognised that revisions to the Green Belt Methodology by the consultants would be necessary as Warwick, Leamington and Witnash were now considered to be a larger urban area and so Arup were required to do further work before the outcomes can be fed into site selection. It is anticipated this updating may take around 8 weeks longer than anticipated.
9	SWLP team leader	Procurement	If there are delays in being able to procure services or technical work, this will impact on the ability to meet the SWLP timetable.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	4 3 12	use SOC procurement process where appropriate to share workload across procurement teams and to use quickest route based on thresholds and high off processes	Full Effective	SWLP Team leader	2 3 6	Negative	Contractor	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	There have been some significant delays in relation to this risk. There have been relatively modest delays due to officers needing to do more work than expected in drafting briefs, and completing 'paperwork' to comply with internal procurement processes. However, the biggest delays have come from a lack of bids following received EOs for Landscape sensitivity work which has required prolonged efforts to then gain a consultant, the lead officer contact for SFRA being over stretched (as lead for consultation theme group and procuring AI support through a rigorous vetting process which has only recently been overcome). However, the SFRA pressure has now been mitigated against by securing a contractor (Graham Nelson) who has helped to progress the procurement process. A key additional challenge not predicted is that with additional monies being provided by the government to progress local plans, there are too few consultants available to undertake the work required by many local authorities for plan submission by December 2026. Consultants do not want to scale up resource for only 18 months of work and so they have prioritised the work they are contracted to do first. This problem is part of the contributing factors for some work not being able to come in with the timescales originally envisaged. Eg on Landscape Character Assessment etc.
	SWLP team leader / Theme leads	Data provision for consultants	If officers are unable to meet consultants requirements for data provision, then this may delay completion of the evidence base.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	3 4 12	Feed into their project planning / need extra support from team members / those in other teams plus additional contractor support from Hedli & Graham	Full Effective	SWLP Team leader / theme leads	2 4 8	Negative	Contractor	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	There has been some modest delays as only at inception meetings do theme leads and lead consultant contacts in discussion with consultants establish what further information is initially required from officers which may or may not be readily available to the Local Authorities.
11	SWLP team leader / Theme leads	Poor quality consultancy input	If consultants fail to meet project milestones or work is substandard, this will impact on the SWLP timetable.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	4 4 16	Withhold payments, weekly / 2 weekly meetings with consultant. Early flagging of changes in approach / additional work required	Full Effective	SWLP Team leader / Theme leads	3 4 12	Negative	Contractor	20/01/26	Reduce	Open	To date there has not been a requirement to delay payments re evidence being collected at reg 19. There have been some delays but this has mostly related to either modest delays in procurement process, adding in of additional sites to be reviewed by consultants or changes in methodology due to changes in government guidance eg on Green Belt - role of Grey Belt. There has been the need for revisions and modest delay to address concerns by managers that consultants have not picked up everything they need to have done.
12	SWLP Policy Managers	Other (non-SWLP) work pressures	If other pressures on planning staff at either council require them to prioritise other workload issues, this may impact on the timetable and key milestones for the SWLP.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	4 3 12	Overtime offered for additional work to be done focused on rep inputting into JDI system from emails received.	Full Effective	SWLP Policy Managers	3 3 9	Negative	Financial	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	This problem has been particularly difficult when 2 of the non-strategic growth strand officers (Michael + Gemma) were required to be lead officers to defend formal appeals at public inquiry into 5 year housing land supply at SOC. Its considered this has caused approx 2 month delay to the non-strategic sites strand work. Short term contractors are now being used to assist where possible.
13	SWLP Policy Managers / SWLP team leader	High number of representations made to Preferred Options document-time implications	Given the high number of representations received, if resources (including through the use of AI tools) are not available in a timely way, this will delay other elements of the work programme.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	4 4 16	Seek support from JDI and Artificial Intelligence if possible plus use of non-SWLP officers through additional overtime measures put in place during spring and early summer.	Full Effective	SWLP Policy Managers	3 4 12	Negative	Capacity	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	This work has taken some time to progress. The sheer scale of responses to the preferred Options particularly responses via email and in writing rather than using the JDI portal which have then had to be processed has been significantly higher than envisaged. Additional overtime and help from non-SWLP officers elsewhere in the planning services has assisted, but the detailed analysis of reps remains a challenge. AI procurement significantly delayed whilst vetting of its ability was checked at request of SMT at WDC. It is anticipated that AI via Future Fox will be set up very soon. The AI solution whilst helpful and needed is not the silver bullet anticipated (flagged by vetting checklist) so more work is required by officers than expected in sense checking the AI work by reviewing full reps responses.
13a	SWLP team leader / Principals	High number of representations made to Preferred Options document-cost implications	Given the high number of representations, if resources (including through the use of AI tools) are not available in a timely way, this will have additional cost for the SWLP.	operational	No	Financial / reputational	3 3 9	Devise plan for different tasks within the team to alleviate overloading of anyone officer	Full Effective	SWLP Team leader	2 3 6	Negative	Financial	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	Summary review work has progressed on time and identifying site specialists has worked well. It has flagged that a significant number of developer and promoter submissions lacked information required to properly assess their suitability. In order to ensure sufficient sites can be identified to meet housing requirements a request for further information has had to be made. The deadline for this of 19th Sept 25 and has delayed progress on more detailed assessment. The site specialists are expected to assimilate this information for site selection refinement work planned for mid November 2025.
14	Hos / Planning / SWLP Policy Managers / SWLP team leader	Advisory Group agenda management	If the AG is unable to function effectively with the volume of work it is being asked to consider, then this may impact on its effectiveness or the SWLP timetable.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	5 3 15	Take paper to SWLP AG to reduce number of studies to be reported to AG etc	Full Effective	Hos / Planning / SWLP Policy Managers / SWLP Team Leader	2 3 6	Negative	Financial	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	It is felt a review of how the SWLP AG review the anticipated work may be required to make the level of work for cllrs and officers manageable and to better meet the publication deadline in light of the increase of evidence work being completed towards the back end of the study period.
15	Hos / SWLP Policy Managers	Wider councillor involvement	If other councillors do not feel that they have been fully engaged in the SWLP, this may impact upon their support for it and therefore its likelihood of being approved.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	3 3 9	Ward Cllr Engagement sessions, Cabinet cllrs invited to Ward meetings, Site visits set up with key cllrs, eg leaders & PH plus AG cllrs	Full Effective	Hos / SWLP Policy Managers	2 3 6	Negative	Financial	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	Ward Cllr Engagement sessions set up. Proposed in revised ToR for joint cabinet cllrs to be observers on AG.
16	SWLP Policy managers	Development of new CL scheme	If the CL examination is programmed to take place at the same time as the SWLP Examination, there is a risk this may not be achievable in view of staffing resources required.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	3 4 12	Identify extra resourcing to run EIP work in tandem	Full Effective	SWLP Policy Managers	2 4 8	Negative	Financial	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	New concerns so precise needs thinking through and planning for in good time for the planned CL EIP.
17	SWLP Team Leader	Programme extensions due to consultant feedback on Specification / Brief	If feedback from consultants (both at soft market or at tender stage) requires the scope of briefs to be changed, this will delay the programme.	operational	No	Financial, reputational	4 3 12	Build time into procurement programme to allow for this, (links to risk 9 above)	Partially Effective	SWLP Team Leader / Theme leads	3 3 9	Negative	Contractor	30/01/26	Reduce	Open	

Impact	5	Catastrophic	5	10	15	20	25
	4	Major	4	8	12	16	20
	3	Moderate	3	6	9	12	15
	2	Minor	2	4	6	8	10
	1	Negligible	1	2	3	4	5
Score			Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Very Likely
			1	2	3	4	5
			Likelihood				

Response	Description
Reduce the risk.	This option chooses definite action now to change the probability and/or impact of the risk. The term mitigate is relevant when discussing reduction
Accept the risk.	The Accept option means that WDC 'takes a chance' that the risk will occur, with its full impact if it did
Transfer the risk to a third party.	Transfer the risk is an option that aims to pass part of the responsibility to a third party. Insurance is the classic form of transfer.
Avoid the risk.	Avoid a threat is about making the uncertain situation certain by removing the risk. This can be achieving by removing the cause of a threat.
Prepare a contingent plan.	This option involves preparing contingent plans now, but not taking action now. Accept but make a plan for what we will do if situation changes
Share the risk.	Share is different to transfer as it seeks for multiple partners to share the risk on a pain /gain basis.
Enhance the risk.	Making the opportunity more likely to occur.
Exploit the risk.	Exploit an opportunity to gain positive impacts from the risk.

Risk owner	SDC	WDC
CEOs	CEO	CEO
HoS	Head of Development	Head of Place, Arts & Economy
SWLP Policy managers	[Jo B]	Planning Policy & Major Sites Delivery Manager
SWLP Team Leader	Joint appointment - sits with SDC	See SDC
Theme leads	Names appointments for each SWLP Theme - Environment / Transport & connectivity / Growth / Economy & town centres / Housing, Wellbeing & Design, consultation	See SDC

Confidential	Risk Ratings	Effectiveness	Negative / Opportunity	Risk Source	Risk Response	Risk Status
Yes	1	Fully Effective	Negative	Financial	Accept	Open
No	2	Partially Effective	Opportunity	Capacity	Avoid	Closed
	3	Not That Effective		Skills	Contingent Plan	Now an Issue
	4			Legislative	Reduce	
	5			Technology	Share	
				Environmental	Transfer	
				Contractor	Enhance	
				Stakeholder	Exploit	
				Political		
				Technology		
				Scope Creep		
				Other		