South Warwickshire Local Plan: Issues and Options Consultation

Representations on behalf of the University of Warwick in respect of main campus

March 2023



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 These representations are submitted on behalf of the University of Warwick in response to the *South Warwickshire Local Plan: Issues and Options* consultation published in January 2023.
- 1.2 They are structured as follows:
 - Section 2 considers Issue E7 which identifies the University main campus as a Major Investment Site in the "Core Opportunity Area"
 - **Section 3** provides more detailed responses to key questions raised through the Issue and Options consultation.
- 1.3 These representations have been prepared by Turley and Steer and relate to the main campus only, as the University is making a separate submission on its Wellesbourne campus which is situated in Stratford District.
- 1.4 It is important to note that Table 21 in the Issues and Consultation document setting out proposed action for policies in the Warwick District Local Plan 2017 states that adopted policy MS1 (University of Warwick) which supports development permitted in line with a masterplan is a policy to be saved and addressed in the Local Plan Part 2 (non-strategic policies).
- 1.5 These representations therefore deal only with strategic issues.



2. Issue E7: Core Opportunity Area and Major Investment Sites

2.1 Under the heading "Delivering South Warwickshire's Economic Needs", the Issues and Options Consultation identifies a 'Core Opportunity Area' (shown on Figure 21 replicated below) which comprises the five main towns, the A46 Trans-Midlands Trade Corridor and the central section of the M40. This includes the University of Warwick's two campuses (one on the edge of Coventry identified as Major investment site no.7 and one at Wellesbourne identified as number 5).



2.2 The Core Opportunity Area aims to attract inward investment in accessible locations to drive the South Warwickshire economy.



University of Warwick Main Campus Area

- 2.3 The University is recognised as a leading employer, playing an important role within the local economy as well as being of national and international importance.
- 2.4 The Issues and Options Consultation acknowledges the University's ambition to continue improving and developing its campus, and states that the Plan will "need to ensure that the aspirations of the University can be met, whilst ensuring any impacts of growth are mitigated". This will be achieved in detail through saved Policy MS1 in the short term, and a review of that policy in the longer term, but equally there are a range of more strategic policies which will impact on the University.
- 2.5 We are pleased that the Councils are working with the University to update the Masterplan, looking ahead to 2031, and recognise that, beyond 2031, the Plan will continue to support the University as a major employer and support its continued growth and the benefits arising to the local economy and local communities.

South of Coventry Area

- 2.6 The University is also recognised as part of an area to the south of Coventry that is seeing considerable change through strategic housing allocations, the sub-regional employment site south of JLR and the approved gigafactory.
- 2.7 The authorities are considering further transport investment, including Very Light Rail, a new railway station and the potential for a transport corridor connecting the new A46 Stoneleigh Junction to the University with strategic connections onto the proposed HS2 Interchange at UK Central in Solihull, where the University is partnering on a major healthcare investment.
- 2.8 Warwick District Council agreed at its Cabinet meeting on 20 April 2022 to progress masterplanning work alongside Coventry City Council, Warwickshire County Council and the University of Warwick which would:
 - map and understand the planned and emerging developments in the area
 - explore how to maximise community benefits including through improvements to green and blue infrastructure and connectivity
 - assist partner organisations in preparing their own masterplans for specific sites and to reflect their aspirations in the wider planning of the area
 - understand how the climate emergencies declared by Warwick District Council, Warwickshire County Council, the West Midlands Combined Authority and the University of Warwick, should inform the future planning of this area
 - provide a focus for considering how best to engage with HS2 in terms of how it can bring improvements to the area



- provide a context for considering travel and transport improvements in the area, which should prioritise active and sustainable travel but also consider the purpose, justification and business case for a strategic transport corridor
- provide a framework and rationale for future business cases and bids to deliver transport infrastructure projects
- enable, subject to wider work on growth options across South Warwickshire and any agreement within the SWLP as to the development strategy, consideration of whether, where and how this area may be suitable for further growth as part of the Local Plan.
- 2.9 The University wishes to remain closely involved in these discussions and will assist in exploring all options to ensure that the campus can continue to thrive and that the University's ongoing contribution to the South Warwickshire economy, the retention of graduates in the area, and its sustainable development is not thwarted.

The University's Growth Ambitions

- 2.10 The University of Warwick is now a world class higher education institution, ranked best in the West Midlands, 8th in the UK and 62nd in the world. It delivers over £1billion of economic impact to the region, with over 7,300 directly employed staff and 9,000 additional jobs supported across the West Midlands.
- 2.11 The main campus has developed over the past decade in line with a 2009 Masterplan and the 2019 Capital Plan Hybrid Permission, both of which were developed in line with existing and emerging policy.
- 2.12 The University is committed by 2030 to develop one of the world's most distinctive university campuses, with redevelopment and refurbishment of buildings in its central area, creating a more people-friendly environment, continuing the modal shift towards greater use of public transport and active travel, and transitioning towards net zero through adoption of renewable technologies and other carbon reduction measures as part of its declaration of a state of Climate Emergency in 2019.
- 2.13 A new Masterplan will look ahead to at least 2030 and will evolve alongside the South Warwickshire Local Plan. Its highest priorities will be to transform the University's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) teaching and research facilities, provide a new Social Sciences Quarter as the home for Warwick Business School, redevelop some of the original student accommodation on campus providing a net increase in bedspaces, and develop in phases a major new greenspace the Ecopark which was announced at the time of the 2021 Scoping Consultation.
- 2.14 In the University's representations to the Scoping Consultation in 2021, we set out a number of key points which remain relevant as the Councils explore Issues and Options:
 - The University fully supports the South Warwickshire Local Plan in taking a longterm view of growth, particularly as decisions around major infrastructure



provision need to create certainty and confidence to underpin further investment in the area.

- The University's Mobility Strategy is already driving long term behavioural change towards more sustainable and active travel modes which is recognised through work we are doing with the highway authorities.
- The University supports in principle the creation of a new transport corridor, including provision of a new rail station and Very Light Rail route from Coventry City Centre, which would significantly improve connectivity to the HS2 Interchange Station and other key innovation hubs across the region.
- These major infrastructure projects, along with the construction of HS2 close to campus, will serve to redefine how people get to campus and, in turn, how the University plans the growth of its campus, whilst improving conditions on the local highway network for residents in south Coventry and Kenilworth.
- The University will seek approval for its new Masterplan before the South Warwickshire Local Plan is adopted, in line with existing policies whilst making strong commitments to ever more sustainable development. This will contain growth within its original boundaries whilst incorporating the proposals for the ecopark to the south of campus, providing land for enhancing biodiversity and renewable energy generation as well as a recreational facility for staff, students and the local community. This will be delivered in phases as land is returned from HS2 and once any new transport corridor has been identified.
- The University therefore seeks a supportive policy framework within which these proposals can come forward and be approved. It is not proposing any change to the current Green Belt boundary in relation to its growth ambitions for the campus although the University will continue to work collaboratively with the local authorities and other partners to plan more strategically for the area.
- 2.15 In doing so, the University wishes to play its part in developing wider plans for the area, recognising the catalytic role it can fulfil in meeting the plan's five objectives.



3. Representations to Issues and Options

3.1 We respond to the relevant questions in respect of land at Westwood Heath Road, below.

Chapter 3: Vision and Strategic Objectives – South Warwickshire in 2050

Question V3.1: Do you agree that the Vision and Strategic Objectives are appropriate?

3.2 The University supports, as consistent with its own vision, the strategic objectives set out in the plan of climate resilient and Net Zero Carbon; well-designed and beautiful; healthy, safe and inclusive; well-connected; and biodiverse and environmentally resilient.

Chapter 4: Meeting South Warwickshire's Sustainable Development Needs

Option I2b: Focus on the strategic infrastructure relating specifically to the Growth Strategy

3.3 It is important that the focus in this plan is on the strategic infrastructure needed to support the growth anticipated across south Warwickshire by 2050 and specifically to the south of Coventry, as set out above.

Question S7.2: For each growth option, please indicate whether you feel it is an appropriate strategy for South Warwickshire:

- Option 1: Rail Corridors
- Option 2: Sustainable Travel
- Option 3: Economy
- Option 4: Sustainable Travel and Economy
- Option 5: Dispersed
- 3.4 As one of the 'enterprise hub' locations identified, the University supports an approach which seeks to maximise the benefit of strategic infrastructure investment whilst ensuring that the needs of the economic assets themselves are considered.

Chapter 5: Delivering South Warwickshire's Economic Needs

Q-E6: Protecting Economic Assets

3.5 The University supports Option E6(a) to include a policy which protects South Warwickshire's economic assets. Those identified including the University are critical to the success of the local economy and therefore it would have strategic significance if their continued success was undermined.

Q-E7.1: Directing employment to the Core Opportunity Area

3.6 The University supports Option E7.1a to include a policy directing employment to the Core Opportunity Area. As well as its own direct employment, the University supports many additional jobs in the regional and local economy and the benefits of co-location and accessibility to other economic assets is key both to protecting existing and generating new jobs.



Q-E7.2 Additional economic growth at major investment sites

3.7 The University supports Option E7.2a to include a policy relating to additional economic growth at the major investment sites, including the University of Warwick (both main campus and Wellesbourne). These are of strategic significance and whilst detailed Development Management policies can follow in Part 2, the University attaches considerable weight to the support it receives from the local plan.

Chapter 7: A climate resilient and net zero Carbon South Warwickshire

QC1.1: Renewable energy generation

3.8 The University supports Option C1.1b to have a policy supporting renewable energy generation schemes in principle subject to criteria on the suitability of the location. The University already has plans for renewable energy generation on campus including long term ambitions in relation to the ecopark and would welcome a supportive policy and criteria to be met.

Chapter 10: A well-connected South Warwickshire

Q-T1: 20-minute neighbourhoods

3.9 The University supports Option T1b to include reference to the principles of a 20minute neighbourhood or other similar design approach within a broader overarching policy. This recognises the need to approach this concept on a case by case basis and in the context of existing and proposed sustainable accessibility. Emphasis within the overarching policy should be placed on larger proposed developments which have a greater ability to internalise trips through the provision of complementary land uses such as schools, neighbourhood centres and community hubs. The University supports the need to address full journey profiles, to ensure that strategic connectivity to local and regional urban centres / destinations and first mile and last mile travel are considered in a holistically through sustainable and active travel connectivity improvements.

Q-T2: Sustainable transport accessibility across South Warwickshire

3.10 The University supports in principle, Option T2a to have a policy supporting a hierarchical approach in terms of prioritising transport infrastructure. This is subject to understanding the opportunities available to be set out as part of the emerging Warwickshire Local Transport Plan. Further consideration as part of this hierarchical approach should focus on enhancing sustainable connectivity for rural communities to ensure there are meaningful alternatives to private car use through the prioritisation of appropriate transport infrastructure. The University would welcome supporting alternative options for sustainable travel and new mobility, e.g. e scooters, cycle hire, car club/pooling schemes, mobility hubs etc. The University already has plans to support similar initiatives on campus helping our long-term sustainable transport ambitions and would welcome a supportive policy.

Q-T3: Road travel, employment, and freight

3.11 The University supports Option T3a to have a policy encouraging more sustainable road-based transport for businesses and views this as an import step on the net zero pathway for decarbonising surface access transport. The University supports an approach which seeks to maximise the benefit of strategic infrastructure investment to



help support any opportunities for 'last mile' freight journeys or driverless delivery pods and the increased use of electric vehicles, including by public transport operators and car club providers. The use of delivery and servicing consolidation hubs should form part of this policy, to serve existing communities as well 'future-proofing' new development. This would allow for last mile deliveries to be made by smaller electric vehicles, reducing congestion and air pollution. This innovative approach is being proposed at the University with an edge-of-campus delivery consolidation centre and last mile delivery and servicing being achieved on campus by a fleet of smaller electric and potentially autonomous, vehicles. The University already has a network of EV charging infrastructure on campus alongside a commitment to increase EV charging availability aligned to proposed campus improvements, and would support a commitment to increase EV infrastructure more broadly as part of the local plan policy.

Q-T4: Smart Cities

3.12 The University actively supports the development of 'smart city' technologies in support of sustainable growth and is working with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and partners in 'Choose Your Way Warwick' - a collaborative two-year project where the campus is acting as a living lab to test out new mobility ideas, approaches and technologies that could help to address the climate emergency. Initiatives include a sustainable travel app 'Choose your way Warwick', car clubs, car-pooling, e-scooter trials and demand responsive transport. Smart technology is also being used to support informed decision making, including the use of ANPR at car parks to monitor access and use with plans to extend the use of ANPR through the car-pooling technology to prioritise multi-occupant car trips. Vivacity sensors are also strategically installed around campus in partnership with local authorities to capture traffic movements. Smart technology is also central to the concept of mobility hubs to provide users with access to on-demand services. The university would be supportive of proposals to incorporate streetlight and traffic signal sensors to provide dynamic and cost-effective insights in support of transport network planning and optimisation; the roll-out of smart, connected mobility hubs across the county and provision of real time public transport information through physical displays and digital apps such as Choose your way Warwick.

Q-T5: General comments on a well-connected South Warwickshire

- 3.13 The University's Strategy 2030 includes an explicit commitment to develop sustainable transport, energy and a green campus. In September 2019, the University declared a state of Climate Emergency and set out plans to reach net zero carbon from direct emissions and the energy it buys by 2030. It is also working with the community to put in place initiatives to significantly reduce indirect emissions with the aim of achieving net zero carbon for both direct and indirect emissions by 2050. In December 2020, Warwick were ranked 4th in the UK and 29th in the world in the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings 2020.
- 3.14 The strategies to tackle climate change and provide for and promote sustainable travel within Chapter 10, align with the University's commitment to becoming a SMART carbon neural campus by 2030, through measures such as improving resource efficiency and reducing campus energy demand, generating and storing green energy to support the campus and local communities and embodying the use of SMART technology across campus.



3.15 The University anticipates further growth in student numbers and research capability by 2030 with new and replacement development primarily focused within its existing boundaries through densification of central campus, the creation of new public realm and pedestrian/cycle friendly routes, the completion of a ring of peripheral mobility hubs where visitors can leave cars and transfer to other forms of demand responsive transport and micro-transit, an integrated approach to ecology and biodiversity, and a shift towards more onsite renewable energy generation as part of the University's response to climate change. The University is underpinned by a transport strategy which has been designed to reduce emissions through the delivery of a range of sustainable transport interventions.



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