

Briefing Report for Full Council – 3rd March 2026

Local Government Reorganisation in Warwickshire

Summary

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has launched a statutory consultation on proposals to reorganise local government in Warwickshire.

Two competing proposals have been submitted:

- **Single Unitary Proposal:** One unitary council covering the whole of Warwickshire (submitted by Warwickshire County Council and Rugby Borough Council)
- **Two Unitary Proposal:** Two unitary councils - a North authority (North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Rugby) and a South authority (Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick) (submitted by four district councils including Stratford-on-Avon District Council)

Under either proposal, Alcester would be part of a new unitary authority that would take responsibility for all local government services currently split between the District and County Councils. The two-tier system would end.

Background

Current Structure

Warwickshire currently operates a two-tier local government system:

- **County Council:** Responsible for adults' social care, childrens services, schools, roads maintenance and libraries.
- **District/Borough Councils:** Responsible for refuse collection, housing, planning, and environmental health

Government Policy

The government's stated ambition is to simplify local government by ending the two-tier system and establishing single-tier unitary councils. The policy objectives are to:

- Enable quicker decision-making to support economic growth
- Speed up house building and infrastructure projects
- Improve efficiency and value for money
- Support wider devolution arrangements through Strategic Authorities

Timeline

- **5 February 2025:** Government issued statutory invitations to councils
- **28 November 2025:** Proposals submitted by councils
- **5 February 2026:** Public consultation launched

- **26 March 2026:** Consultation closes
- **April 2028:** New unitary councils expected to take on full responsibilities (if implemented)

The Two Proposals

Proposal 1: Single Unitary Council

Submitted by: Warwickshire County Council and Rugby Borough Council

This proposal would create one unitary council covering the entire county of Warwickshire, comprising all current areas of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon, and Warwick.

Key features:

- Single authority for all 573,000+ residents
- Unified approach to planning, housing, and economic development
- Streamlined service delivery across all districts
- Claims of greater efficiency through economies of scale

Full details are available here:

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/lgrproposal>

Proposal 2: Two Unitary Councils

Submitted by: North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, and Warwick District Council

This proposal would create two separate unitary councils:

North Unitary Authority:

- Covers: North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth, and Rugby

South Unitary Authority (including Alcester):

- Covers: Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick districts
- Claims to reflect distinct economic areas and local identities
- Argues for more localised decision-making and community engagement

Full details are available here:

<https://shapingourcouncils.co.uk/our-submission-document/>

Assessment Criteria

The government will assess proposals against six criteria set out in the statutory guidance. The consultation asks respondents to rate their agreement with how well each proposal meets these criteria:

1. Sensible Geographies and Economic Areas

Whether councils are based on appropriate tax bases and geographies that will help increase housing supply and meet local needs.

2. Delivery of Outcomes

Whether the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe.

3. Right Size for Efficiency

Whether councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity, and withstand financial shocks. As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more (though exceptions may apply).

4. High Quality, Sustainable Services

Whether the proposed councils will deliver high-quality, sustainable public services, including crucial services like social care, children's services, SEND, and homelessness.

5. Local Views and Needs

Whether the proposal has been informed by local views, considers local identity and cultural importance, and will meet local needs.

6. Support for Devolution

Whether the new structures will support wider devolution arrangements and Strategic Authorities.

7. Community Engagement

Whether the proposal enables stronger community engagement and delivers genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Action for Alcester Town Council

- 1. Councillors are very welcome and are encouraged to submit their own response to the consultation by completing the online survey by 26th March:**

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/warwickshire/>

- 2. Alcester Town Council also needs to decide whether to submit a formal response to the consultation.**

The Town Clerk has drafted a proposed response based on support for the Two Unitary option which was the majority view when this issue was previously discussed at Full Council.

The draft follows on the next pages:

Draft response to consultation on LGR in Warwickshire

[Date]

LGR Consultation
Fry Building 2NE
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Re: Consultation Response – Local Government Reorganisation in Warwickshire

Dear Sir/Madam,

Alcester Town Council writes to formally respond to the government consultation on proposals for local government reorganisation in Warwickshire. Having carefully considered both proposals submitted, the Council wishes to express its support for the **Two Unitary Proposal** submitted by North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, and Warwick District Council.

About Alcester Town Council

Alcester is a historic market town located in the southern part of Warwickshire, currently served by Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council. As the elected representatives of our community, we have a duty to ensure that any reorganisation of local government serves the best interests of Alcester residents and maintains effective, accessible local services.

Consultation Response Details

Organisation:	Alcester Town Council
Organisation Type:	Local government organisation – parish/town council
Council Area:	Stratford-on-Avon District Council / Warwickshire County Council
Proposal Addressed:	Two Unitary Proposal (South Unitary Authority)

Assessment Against Statutory Criteria

Alcester Town Council has assessed the Two Unitary Proposal against the seven criteria outlined in the consultation:

1. Sensible Geographies and Economic Areas

Assessment: Strongly Agree

The proposed South Unitary Authority, combining Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick districts, represents a coherent geographic and economic area. Alcester has long-standing connections with both Stratford-upon-Avon and the southern parts of Warwickshire. The proposal recognises the distinct character of south Warwickshire, which differs significantly from the more urbanised north of the county. This geography better reflects local travel patterns, employment connections, and the shared rural and market town character of the area.

2. Delivery of Outcomes

Assessment: Agree

We believe the Two Unitary model provides a more appropriate scale for delivering outcomes relevant to communities like Alcester. A South Unitary Authority would be better positioned to understand and respond to the specific needs of market towns and rural areas, while still having sufficient capacity to deliver major projects. The proposal demonstrates clear thinking about how services would be coordinated and improved under the new structure.

3. Right Size for Efficiency

Assessment: Agree

While the South Unitary Authority would be smaller than the government's guideline of 500,000 population, we believe this is appropriate for the area's characteristics. The proposal maintains sufficient scale for efficiency and resilience while avoiding the risks of creating an authority so large that it becomes distant from local communities. The combination of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick districts creates a council of adequate size to deliver services effectively and withstand financial pressures.

4. High Quality, Sustainable Services

Assessment: Strongly Agree

The Two Unitary model offers the best prospect for maintaining and improving service quality for Alcester residents. A South Unitary Authority would be of a manageable size to ensure accountability and responsiveness, while bringing together district and county functions to eliminate duplication and improve coordination. Critical services such as social care, children's services, and housing would benefit from integrated delivery at a scale that maintains local knowledge and accessibility.

5. Local Views and Needs

Assessment: Strongly Agree

The Two Unitary Proposal has been developed by Stratford-on-Avon District Council, which has consulted with parish and town councils including Alcester. The proposal reflects an understanding of local identity and the distinctive character of south Warwickshire. Alcester has stronger historic, cultural, and economic ties to Stratford and south Warwickshire than to the northern parts of the county. The proposal respects

these connections and ensures that decision-makers will understand the specific needs of market towns like ours.

6. Support for Devolution

Assessment: Agree

The Two Unitary Proposal can effectively support wider devolution arrangements through the West Midlands Combined Authority and any future Strategic Authority. Having two unitary councils creates appropriate building blocks for regional cooperation while maintaining local accountability. This structure allows for effective engagement with devolution at the strategic level without sacrificing local democratic control.

7. Community Engagement and Neighbourhood Empowerment

Assessment: Strongly Agree

This is perhaps the most important criterion for Alcester Town Council. The Two Unitary model offers significantly better prospects for community engagement than a single county-wide authority. A South Unitary Authority would be closer to local communities, more accessible to residents, and better able to engage with town and parish councils. Decision-makers would have direct knowledge of our area rather than viewing Alcester as one small part of a very large county. This proximity is essential for genuine neighbourhood empowerment and ensuring that local voices are heard in council decisions.

Key Reasons for Supporting the Two Unitary Proposal

Local Identity and Connection: Alcester's historic and cultural identity is closely tied to south Warwickshire and Stratford-upon-Avon. The Two Unitary Proposal respects and preserves these connections, ensuring that our community remains part of a recognisable area with shared characteristics and interests.

Appropriate Scale: While unitary local government is the right direction, we believe that the scale proposed in the Two Unitary model strikes the right balance. A South Unitary Authority would be large enough to deliver services efficiently and sustainably, yet small enough to remain genuinely accountable and responsive to local communities.

Accessibility and Engagement: Residents and councillors from Alcester will find it easier to engage with a South Unitary Authority than with a single county-wide body. Councillors and officers will have better local knowledge, and democratic accountability will be stronger when decision-makers represent a more cohesive area.

Service Delivery: The integration of district and county services at a south Warwickshire level will enable better coordination while maintaining services that are tailored to local needs. Market towns like Alcester have different requirements from large urban areas, and a South Unitary Authority will be better able to recognise and meet these needs.

Economic Coherence: The south Warwickshire economy, including tourism, rural enterprise, and market town commerce, functions as a connected system. A South Unitary Authority can develop economic strategies that reflect this coherence rather

than attempting to balance the very different economic profiles of north and south Warwickshire within a single authority.

Concerns Regarding the Single Unitary Proposal

While we recognise that the Single Unitary Proposal has merits in terms of economies of scale, we have significant concerns about its implications for Alcester:

Distance from Decision-Making: A county-wide unitary authority would inevitably prioritise the needs of larger urban areas. Alcester and other market towns risk becoming marginalised in decision-making processes dominated by the concerns of major population centres.

Loss of Local Identity: The distinct character and needs of south Warwickshire would be diluted within a large county-wide authority. The significant differences between north and south Warwickshire make it difficult for one authority to serve both areas effectively.

Reduced Accountability: The larger the authority, the more difficult it becomes for residents and parish councils to hold decision-makers to account. Democratic engagement suffers when authorities become too large and distant from the communities they serve.

Conclusion

Alcester Town Council firmly supports the Two Unitary Proposal as the best option for our community and for Warwickshire as a whole. This model provides the right balance between efficiency and local accountability, respects local identity and connections, and offers the best prospect for sustainable, high-quality public services that meet the needs of market towns and rural areas.

We urge the Secretary of State to give serious consideration to the Two Unitary Proposal when making decisions about the future of local government in Warwickshire. This approach will deliver better outcomes for Alcester residents and communities across south Warwickshire.

We would be happy to provide any further information or clarification that may be helpful in your consideration of these proposals.

Yours faithfully,

Vanessa Lowe
Town Clerk
Alcester Town Council