

1. Shacks Barn Planning Application – Refused

The Strategic Planning Committee met on 21 October 2025 to consider the outline application (S/2020/2337/MAO) for a mixed-use employment site at Shacks Barn Farm, Silverstone.

The application was refused unanimously (10-0), with one abstention, despite officer recommendations to approve.

We raised a key policy issue: the proposed Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUD) system was located outside the allocated employment land under Policy AL4, rendering the application non-compliant with the Local Plan.

Other grounds for refusal included:

- Inadequate pedestrian and cycle access.
- Visual and traffic impact concerns.
- Lack of sustainable transport links.
- Strong community opposition, with over 570 public objections.

As of late October 2025, no appeal has yet been lodged, though it remains a possibility.

2. Budget Setting and Financial Pressures

West Northamptonshire Council is working to close a £50 million funding gap in its 2026–27 revenue budget, representing around 10% of its overall budget.

The publication of the draft budget report has been delayed until 22 December 2025, significantly shortening the time available for scrutiny and public engagement. This delay is not ideal, given the scale of the financial challenge and the potential implications for service delivery.

The shortfall is driven by rising demand for statutory services, including:

- Children’s and adults’ social care.
- Temporary housing for homelessness.
- SEND school transport.

The administration, has begun shaping proposals to address the gap, including:

- Reviewing fees and charges for discretionary services.
- Identifying further savings and efficiencies.
- Awaiting the outcome of the Government’s Fair Funding consultation.

We must remain sensitive to any proposals that may adversely affect our rural residents, particularly in terms of service access, transport, and community infrastructure.

3. HS2 Construction and Ongoing Disruption

HS2 works continue to cause significant disruption across rural West Northamptonshire, particularly in areas such as Chipping Warden, Greatworth, and Lower Boddington. Upper Boddington and Radstone

The A361 near Chipping Warden was closed for 11 days to allow tunnel construction, and although reopened, further works are ongoing to link tunnel sections. Residents have faced:

- Road closures and diversions on key rural routes.
- Noise, dust, and visual intrusion from heavy machinery and earthworks.
- Reduced access to footpaths and bridleways.

The Chipping Warden green tunnel is now over 2km complete, with improved construction rates, but the project remains a source of daily inconvenience for many. HS2 Ltd has committed to community engagement, with drop-in events and compensation schemes available for affected residents. However, concerns persist about the long-term impact on the rural landscape and quality of life.

We will continue to hold HS2 to account—ensuring that its commitments to mitigation, communication, and community support are upheld, and that the voices of our rural residents are heard throughout the remainder of the project.