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Our ref: TJ/DB/cjb
Date: 27 November 2020



Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Sent by Email to: jenrickr@parliament.uk

Dear Robert

South Warwickshire – Tier 3 Decision

The purpose of this letter is to express our collective dismay with the decision announced this morning that the communities of South Warwickshire should be placed under Tier 3 from 2 December 2020, and to implore you to reverse this perverse decision so as to save some of our local economy and the credibility of your government and the measures needed to combat Covid-19.

South Warwickshire has a recognised sense of place and we have a number of partnerships that recognise this close relationship in combating this pandemic, including:

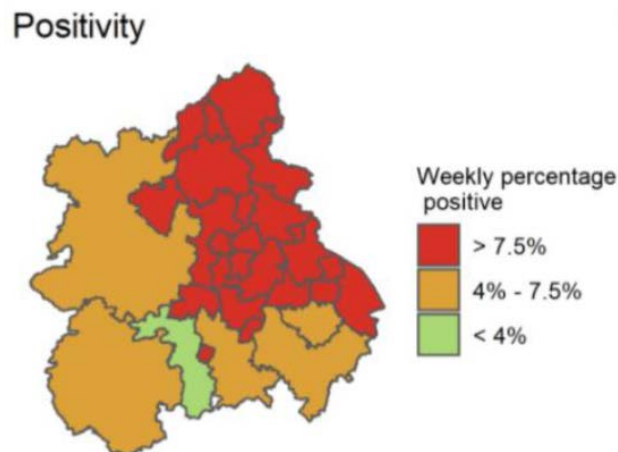
- South Warwickshire Clinical Commission Group
- South Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Partnership; and
- South Warwickshire COVID-19 Incident Management Team.

Within the briefing that you provided you identified yourself that Stratford-on-Avon DC was the lowest area for infections across the West Midlands, however, you have allocated both Stratford and Warwick District Council in Tier 3. The table below provides the most up to date information available:

	Stratford-on-Avon DC	Warwick DC	Combined South Warwickshire	Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire
Population	130,098	143,753	273,851	1,165,828
7 day rate / 100,000 (*)	102	150	127	205
Over 60's 7 day rate	36	104	72	182
Positivity	5.0%	7.4%	6.3%	9%

(*) – 7 day period 17-23 November 2020

Stratford and Warwick have both seen the number of cases in the over 60s reducing, and the total number of cases for Warwick have gone down by over 25% in the last 7 days. The map below provides the latest position in relation to the positivity levels across the whole of the West Midlands. Other than Stratford and Warwick, all other local authority areas which have a positivity level of lower than 7.5% have been placed in Tier 2.



It should be noted that the combined rate of 127 for South Warwickshire is well below that of Tier 2 areas including Worcestershire who are now at 153.

Stratford and Warwick Districts have our own general hospital serving the area and with very strong travel to work links could easily be considered a geographically contained area. Assurances have been received from both the South Warwickshire Foundation Trust and the University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, that there is more than sufficient capacity in their hospitals

As you will be aware the tourism and hospitality industry is particularly impacted by the further restrictions in Tier 3, and you will be equally aware of the massive contribution that these sectors play in the local economy across South Warwickshire. The Christmas period would have been the last chance for many of our beleaguered hotel, restaurant's and public houses to have generated much needed revenue so as to survive the winter period, to deny them this opportunity because of rates in the north of our county belies any logic. We can assure you that without the benefit of this crucial trading period they will be forced to permanently close.

South Warwickshire is internationally significant in relation to tourism and has made significant contributions to the GDP both regionally and nationally, through assets including the Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust and Warwick Castle. Stratford alone attracted in excess of 6 million visitors a year. It seems that the government is willing to sacrifice all of this due to the current infection rates for communities with no link to our locality.

Comments we have had from local residents and businessmen today have been scathing. Residents know the numbers, they know where we stand in terms of key data. Tier 3 has no credibility, and we cannot stress that enough. There is a real danger that people will simply not comply. Placing us in Tier 3 has we fear undermined the whole approach to tackling Covid-19 with our residents.

A far more nuanced approach is required, and indeed you alluded to the fact that you would be open to considering revised boundaries during our briefing earlier today. Our communities have been heroic in driving down infection rates locally and this needs to be rewarded. They do not understand or accept how after all of this effort and with low rates locally why we have been placed under the most severe restrictions. The lack of acceptance is the critical dimension.

We strongly share this view and so as to save any credibility that the government and the Covid-19 strategy has left locally. We therefore request that a review cannot wait 2 weeks and that immediate consideration is given to reclassifying Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council to Tier 2 to protect local businesses, properly reflect the local risk and maintain a common sense approach which will preserve the goodwill of our residents.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Tony Jefferson
Leader, Stratford-on-Avon District Council



Councillor Andrew Day
Leader, Warwick District Council

Copy to: Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health
Nadhim Zahawi MP, Stratford-on-Avon
Jeremy Wright MP, Kenilworth & South
Matt Western MP Warwick & Leamington
Councillor Isobel Seccombe, Leader, Warwickshire County Council