

Place Overview Committee

05 November 2020

Public Questions and Responses

From: Mr Peter Clare, Member of Selattyn and Gobowen Parish Council

Remarkably no mention was made, in the course of the Sept. 3rd meeting, of the plight of those Shropshire residents, some in our parish, who have the misfortune to live adjacent to one of the county's tractor riddled narrow lanes. Not only do these householders often suffer the constant vibration of increasingly large agricultural vehicles, but, in some cases, the fabric of their dwellings is being undermined and, seemingly, they have no redress. Does not Shropshire Council have a duty of care to such council tax payers in these circumstances?

Response:

It should be recognised that many agricultural vehicles have a legal right to utilise the highway however Shropshire Council is aware that this can at times have a negative impact on those who live in the vicinity, indeed it was discussed as a specific agenda item as Septembers Scrutiny meeting. The meeting resolved that a working group of Shropshire Council, the National Farmers Union, West Mercia Police and a representative from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office would see what further work, guidance, communication or representation could be made both locally and nationally to improve this issue. Invites for a meeting have been issued and the group will begin its work, further a reference group of other interested parties such as Parish Councils or other interest groups will also support and contribute to this work.

From: Ms Emma Bullard

I would like to submit two questions in relation to the report on Item 7: North West Relief Road.

1. Para 3.1 states that: "there are no practical alternatives [to driving] for most trips" between the northern and western parts of Shrewsbury; ie. within the town.
 - What alternatives to driving have been considered for these relatively short journeys within the urban area?
 - Has the evidence as to why no alternatives are practical been published? If not, please could it be made public, with the date it was prepared?
 - Assuming that walking and cycling would be among the possible alternatives, why are these not considered practical for many short journeys? Government advice (especially LTN 1/20 which Shropshire Council has approved) and funding supports increased walking and cycling for precisely such journeys, have walking and cycling been considered in light of this?

Response:

As regards to alternatives to the construction of the NWRR for achieving the wider project outputs around traffic reduction in the town, including the related link to an increased uptake in walking and cycling for shorter trips, also public transport usage, this information is contained within the Outline Business Case. This was published in 2017 and sits on the Council's website at the following link:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/8939/shrewsbury-nwrr-obc-34-web-version.pdf>
(para 2.13.21)

At the point of the submission of the Full Business Case (FBC) to DfT in due course, the OBC modelling and assumptions will be further updated and this will note and incorporate the scheme's obligations around LTN 1/20. The FBC will also be put in the public domain at the time of submission.

2. Para 8.3 refers to Public and stakeholder engagement on the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme. There are two phases
 1. Oct - Dec 2020
 2. Jan - March 2021

What opportunities are there currently or will there be in 2021 for the public to engage with this scheme?

Response:

Public and Stakeholder engagement around the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme will be undertaken through a dedicated web-based resource, plus a range of online events / meetings as required and appropriate to a number of specific audiences. The website is expected to be live by the end of November 2020, and contact, feedback and FAQ details around the scheme will then be circulated through press communications and general media.

From: Mr Mike Streetly

I have several questions relating to the report on the NWRR that will be discussed on Thursday. Can you please put these to the council.

- 1) Traffic levels: The report on the NWRR says that the case for the road is based, in part, on rising traffic levels (e.g. para 3.2).
 - a) Could the council confirm what the most recent (e.g. post COVID) local traffic monitoring and national traffic forecasts have shown regarding current and forecast traffic levels and how this fits (or not) with the traffic growth anticipated in the outline business case? If the traffic trends have changed, at what point will the council re-visit the business case?

Response:

Local traffic monitoring and wider national guidance on future traffic scenarios (post CoVid) are currently being undertaken and prepared. This data and any amendments to the required traffic modelling as prescribed by DfT will be fully acknowledged at the time of the Full Business Case submission. This will be put into the public domain at the time of submission.

- b) The report says that 'an element of induced traffic' is included in the traffic modelling. I cannot locate reference to the factor that has been used in the traffic modelling reports in the OBR - can the council please explain what factors it has used to allow for induced traffic?

Response:

Details of the traffic modelling rationale are contained within the Outline Business Case. This can be accessed through the following links;
<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/roads-and-highways/shrewsbury-north-west-relief-road/outline-business-case-obc/>

In particular Appendix F;
https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/8944/appendix-f-nwrr-local-model-validation-report_final_draft.pdf

- 2) Timescales: On the council's website the planned date for the NWRR planning application is May 2020 with construction due to start in spring 2022. The report indicates that the planning application has now been delayed until Feb 2021, but the planned construction start date has not changed. How is the council able to accommodate these delays into the programme?

Response:

The Scheme anticipates up to a 26 week Planning determination period, and has also allowed for call in / Public enquiry in its timeline. These factors can be accommodated in the current stated delivery programme.

- 3) Budget: In the consultation documents for the NWRR, the budget is stated to be £84.3M but in the report the approved budget is £87.2M (an increase of £2.9M) and the forecast is that this could reach £95.7M. I have several questions regarding the budget:

- a) Could the council confirm when the £2.9M increase was approved and what it is for?

Response:

The overall combined budget for both the Oxon Link Road (OLR) and the North West Relief Road, based on their Outline Business cases and approved by Council is £87.2m This figure is consistent with approvals, but

was misstated within the FAQ summary sheet where the NWRR local contribution was undervalued.

- b) The construction costs are scheduled to come down again despite the specification increasing - can the council provide more detail as to how these reductions are being achieved?

Response:

Through engagement with the SCAPE Framework and Balfour Beatty as primary contractor, detailed design and construction methodologies are now being assessed for opportunities and efficiencies. There also remain wider “worst case reasonable estimates” as part of the current costings on delivery risk and earthworks. This is to be expected at this stage of such a project and is a prudent and responsible position to take. These costs therefore are also expected to be reduced in due course through further Ground Investigation studies and detailed design around the structures.

- c) Could the council confirm whether any other budgets will be affected by the NWRR in addition to the spending outlined in this report (e.g. landscaping, other road works etc) and, if so, by how much?

Response:

All works relating to the delivery of the NWRR project (construction, environmental mitigation, side road improvements and landscaping etc.) are contained within the stated project budgets. As such, there will be no impact on any wider Council budgets.

- d) The spend to date is £5.8M. Could the council confirm how much more money will be spent before construction starts? In the event that the council does not proceed with the road, is any of this spend reimbursable from the £55.4 Large Majors fund?

Response:

The current budget commitments and annual spend forecast is contained within the NWRR OBC (<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/roads-and-highways/shrewsbury-north-west-relief-road/outline-business-case-obc/>). The Council is committed to the completion of the road (in parallel with the former OLR on which joint costs are also being incurred) in line with the current Large Local Majors programme contract with DfT (pending Full Business Case approval), and all spend to date (DfT and local match) and to completion is covered in the project budgets.

- 4) Water supply - the Council was alerted in 2007 to the fact that the selected route would cross the SPZ1 for Severn Trent Water's Shelton Water Supply but was re-assured by their consultants at the time that it would be possible to make arrangements that would satisfy the water company and Environment Agency. Can the council confirm whether such arrangements have been agreed with these key stakeholders after 13 years of discussion?

Response:

Discussions are ongoing with both STW and the Environment Agency around the SPZ and wider Environmental impacts and benefits, and it is expected that through pre planning engagement with these organisations that the scheme proposals will be acceptable and compliant with all requirements at the time of the Full Planning Application submission.

From: Mr Frank Oldaker, Shrewsbury Friends of the Earth

Two benefits claimed for the NWRR are that it would reduce traffic in the centre of Shrewsbury and it would improve air quality. To clarify these statements can we please have answers to the following questions:-

1. What are the latest percentage reduction forecasts in traffic on each of the following roads?
Town Walls
Wyle Cop
High Street
Shoplatch
Barker Street
Castle Hill
Dogpole

Response:

The current forecasts in local traffic levels are contained within the Outline Business Case (OBC) and the February 2020 Public consultation exercise. These are currently in the public domain through the Councils website. These details will be updated and put in the public domain at the time of the submission of the Full Planning Application, and then Full Business Case (FBC). Links to the current assessments are below;

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/8939/shrewsbury-nwrr-obc-34-web-version.pdf>

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/shrewsbury-north-west-relief-road-public-consultation-2020/>

2. The annual mean NOx level outside the Station Hotel (opposite the railway station) has consistently been approximately 40% above the legal limit - ie 56 v a legal limit of 40. What is the predicted figure if the road is built?

Response:

Initial assessments on improvements in air quality are contained within the OBC. These will be updated in advance of the Full Planning Application and FBC submission, and will then at the time of submission be put in the public domain.

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/8939/shrewsbury-nwrr-obc-34-web-version.pdf>