

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

AGENDA ITEM 5

QUESTION

MR STEPHEN MULLOY will ask the following question:

5 YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

During the consultation on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) a question was asked: "How does Shropshire Council propose to encourage landowners to make building land available." (CIL Statement of Consultation Para 3.22).

The response from the Council was: "Land supply is certainly key to the whole approach." (CIL Statement of Consultation Para 3.23).

The question of land supply was identified as a 'critical factor' (CIL Statement of Consultation Para 3.16).

In order to demonstrate a 5 Year Housing Land Supply, developments need to show that they will come forward within that time frame. It is not enough to just have planning consent.

Therefore if there are over 7,000 planning consents that have not been acted upon, and 60% of development in the County comes from 'small developers' (Less than 5 units), is it fair to pin the blame upon developers building up their 'land banks'?

Whilst this may be true for 'large developers', it is possible that the impact of the developer contributions is also having an impact on small developers.

What needs to be remembered is that large developers have always allowed for 'developer contributions' in their business plan, whereas this is a new burden to the small developer.

So, if the land supply is a critical factor and "To ensure that they do not make a loss, the developer has to pay less for the land, thereby passing the cost of the Levy on to the landowner" (CIL Statement of Consultation Para 3.16).

Is this not more than some developers taking advantage of Paragraph 49 (NPPF), and possibly something to do with the way that the developer contributions were introduced in the first place, and that better consultation may have helped?

MR M PRICE Portfolio Holder for Planning will reply as follows:

The Community Infrastructure Levy intends to provide clarity and certainty for developers of the contribution their schemes should make to infrastructure provision

in a locality and many have found this to be a positive initiative for those reasons. Whenever a new regulation or policy is introduced it will affect the shape of financial appraisals and there may be a process of adjustment over time as the new policy or regulation takes effect. Ultimately the land value is where negotiation will take place having regard to all development costs and liabilities including land supply. It is not a case that more consultation would have changed this process. In fact the upsurge in development management activity (planning applications received, permissions granted etc) in the second half of 2011 suggests that CIL consultation was proportionate and effective.

Of the stock of outstanding planning permissions (ie those where development has not been completed), 72% of permissions accounting for 75% of dwellings not built, date from before CIL was introduced on 1st January 2012. So the reason for the vast majority of these permissions not being fully developed is not connected to CIL, nor is it correct to say that the 5yr housing land supply situation has been significantly influenced by the introduction of CIL.

It remains the case that as all housing development has an impact on communities and infrastructure through additional traffic, impact on schools, medical facilities, service provision and utilities it is fair to expect a contribution to infrastructure provision from all housing development.

STATEMENT

MR DAVID KILBY will make the following Statement on behalf of Shrewsbury West Resident's Association:

Shrewsbury West Sustainable Urban Extension Masterplan

The Shrewsbury West residents association believe the Masterplan should not be put forward for adoption because:

- In our opinion the plan is not a sustainable plan given the considerable state of flux and change that is occurring in the local and national environment at the moment.
- The plan is a Shropshire Council led plan not a community led plan which in our opinion means Shropshire Council have been unable to demonstrate a clear separation between its role as planning and highways authority and their interests as landowner.
- The plan is not sufficiently viable or deliverable in its current format to benefit any of those concerned, including the local community with regard to social infrastructure, developers, landowners and the local councils.

1.Sustainability

We believe the main role for the Council today is to consider whether the master plan is sustainable:

We believe that it is clearly not, in the light of recent newspaper headlines that are being made both across the County and in Shrewsbury it-self, we list just a few of these:

- North West relief road to be axed
- £27m Ludlow hospital plan is scrapped

- Shirehall for sale
- **Staff will be moved out of Shropshire Council's Shirehall headquarters from next April.**
- Shropshire hospitals on 'high risk' list over care concerns
- 999 ambulance service lacks resources to reach some emergencies quickly enough
- Theatre numbers see drop of 7,000
- Shrewsbury prison closing down
- Death blow for the Wakeman Secondary School
- Report shows high levels of deprivation in Shrewsbury
- Royal Mail to close sorting office
- Shropshire mental health charity in danger of folding over funding
- More Shropshire families forced to turn to food banks
- Shropshire A&E admissions up by more than 7%
- Appeal to public as fire fighters strike
- Protest as Shrewsbury adult day centres axe gets go-ahead
- Public criticise county street lights switch-off
- Shropshire police stations axed in major shake-up
- Shropshire magistrates court could close as case numbers fall

For the purpose of demonstrating our point we will take just one of these headlines, '**death blow to the Wakeman**', (Shrewsbury Chronicle 2011 Sept) but would ask the reader, to appreciate each jointly will have a major impact on the sustainability of the existing and proposed new community being proposed for Bicton and Bicton Heath through the masterplan.

'Death blow for the Wakeman'

EDUCATION

- WEST OF SHREWSBURY DOES NOT HAVE A SECONDARY SCHOOL.
- SHREWSBURY IS A DESIGNATED GROWTH POINT.
- SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL HAS NO PLANS TO BUILD A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL IN SHREWSBURY.
- 3,000 HOUSES IN AND AROUND SHREWSBURY ENTERED THE PLANNING SYSTEM IN 2013.
- IF BUILT BY 2018 THIS WOULD REQUIRE 450 ADDITIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES IN SHREWSBURY.
- IN SUMMER 2013 SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL CLOSED THE WAKEMAN SCHOOL AND WITH IT 625 SCHOOL PLACES.
- 1,500 NEW HOMES ARE PLANNED FOR THE WEST SIDE OF SHREWSBURY.

Last summer's (2013) year 7 in-takes indicated that there were just three places available between the four Secondary schools covering the West, South and East sides of Shrewsbury;

School	Number of year 7 pupils accepted September 2013	Number of surplus places available
Corbet	135	-3

Belvidere	168	0
Priory	162	0
Meole Brace	243	6

We conclude the masterplan is unsustainable because it does not make any provision for a new secondary school to be built to the west side of Shrewsbury in its plans up to 2026.

The impact of this lack of school place provision could be immense causing:

- School overcrowding
- Pupil displacement
- Transport problems – safety, congestion, cost
- Lowering of attainment levels
- Lowering of discipline standards
- Lowering of health and wellbeing standards for young people.

Shrewsbury schools currently pride themselves on their good to outstanding secondary schools and is a major reason why many families choose to live in Shrewsbury, if these standards are to be put at risk, due to lack of places, choice and overcrowding then it would seem reasonable to conclude less families will choose Shrewsbury as the place they wish to bring up their families which would impact considerably on the local economy especially the sale of new houses.

2.Viability and deliverability

The masterplan document sets out a development vision, development objectives, and design principles providing a framework intended to ensure that the strategic objectives are achieved, delivering both the quantity and quality of development outlined in the Council’s adopted core strategy,

Since its conception we do not believe the master plan has evolved sufficiently in line with the considerable forces at work in the environment, most significantly perhaps being the considerable changes currently occurring to the paradigm of Shropshire Council causing we believe a considerable level of strategic drift to have occurred from the original concept, this `drift’ we believe needs to be addressed in order to ensure the plan is viable and deliverable as well as sustainable.

To demonstrate this point regard what we believe to be strategic drift we have taken the example of the Oxon Link Road in the masterplan.

Proposed Oxon Link Road

Due to changes to other elements of the plan being axed the proposed Oxon Link Road is now likely to serve little purpose or be of benefit to anyone other than the landowner, which is for the most part in this instance Shropshire Council.

Strategic drift to the Oxon link road has essentially been caused by:

- i) The Department for transport and Shropshire Councils decision **not to go ahead** with the north west relief road in 2010 leaving the proposed Oxon Link Road potentially to become a `road to no-where’, a `ghost road’ a `white elephant’, serving little purpose or benefit to anyone other than to

Shropshire Council themselves as the main land owner in this part of the SWSUE Development.

- ii) Shropshire Council's decision **not to locate** the Park and Ride at Churncote Roundabout furthers the case against the road being built, as all visitors to the town wishing to utilise the present Park and Ride will continue to access it by travelling along the existing Welshpool Road.
- iii) Additionally the Highways Agency reluctance to advocate Churncote Roundabout becoming a five arm roundabout would mean an additional roundabout being required part way along the Welshpool Road at the entrance of Gains Park in order to allow those choosing to access the proposed Oxon link road to do so.

As a consequence of this the question then has to be asked;

Why would anyone choose to take this route in preference to remaining on the well-established Welshpool Road, particularly as both roads re-join at the Shelton traffic lights anyway and the distance would we believe be shorter if they were to continue along the Welshpool Road.

- iv) Additionally the Masterplan also states that all public bus routes will continue to access the Welshpool Road in preference to the proposed Oxon Link Road simply because the pedestrian footpaths and bus stops are all located along this route, whilst residents in Bicton would continue to use the Holyhead Road to access their public bus transport.

That said the conclusion we as residents have come to **is that if this council decides to adopt the masterplan it should do so only when it has amended it in line with Transport Policy E7 to say..... `any significant new development along the identified line of a possible future North West Relief Road will be required to protect the line as appropriate**, in order that the future provision of the full road would not be compromised'.

Additionally it **should withdraw** the need for developers to provide a costly `Oxon Link Road' instead demanding they should in line with Policy E7 provide improved off road walking and cycling opportunities along the protected line whilst **retaining the ability** to construct the road in future if necessary and affordable'.

We believe this recommendation fits well with the national planning policy framework which requires due regard to the need for plans to fulfil satisfactorily a social, economic and environmental role, as well as taking a vital step towards protecting the tranquillity of the open countryside that currently attracts many tourists to the Oxon Touring Camp which is likely to be put under threat if ever the Oxon Link Road were to be built.

3.Role of Shropshire Council as Planning and Highways authority

We believe the Masterplan fails to demonstrate a clear separation between Shropshire Council's interests as a landowner and Shropshire Council's role and objectives as the Local Planning and Highways Authority.

With reference to the Council's land interests, its ownership is extensive (approximately half of the master plan area), being land largely east of Shepherd's Lane and off Clayton Way.

It is clear that this master plan portrays Shropshire Council's vision, not the local communities it represents, we believe in light of the changes that were introduced through the national planning policy framework this approach to be inappropriate.

The national planning policy framework clearly advocates the need for neighbourhood plans to sign post what communities value, what communities need and what communities want, neighbourhood plans are fully inclusive and holistic in their approach and we believe should be at the heart of the planning process.

We believe as a result of the localism act and the National Planning Policy Framework the responsibility to lead should be with local communities through the instigation of neighbourhood plans, informing and providing clear signposts for developers as to what those communities have identified should be supplied.

Members of the now formed Shrewsbury West residents association as is their right requested in August 2013 to be allowed to implement a neighbourhood plan in their area, now in December we are no nearer to being allowed to start one, as we still wait for a response of support from Shrewsbury Town Council, a prerequisite to one being allowed to go ahead, indeed just a response from STC would be welcomed to our latest letter and request of the 17th October 2013 on this matter.

Instead we find those responsible for delivering the master plan chose to work with an 'informal liaison group' that comprised of Shropshire and Shrewsbury Town Councillors for the area and representatives of Bicton Parish Council, who met with Shropshire Officers and developers to receive briefings on the process and to provide local input into the preparation and review of the SWSUE draft master plan. Whilst a request by local residents to extend a public consultation from 9 weeks to 16 weeks was refused by Shropshire Council despite over 1,000 local residents signing a petition asking them to do so.

We believe this approach in the light of the localism act and NPPF to be wrong, we believe that planning today is meant to be a three way partnership led by communities, working alongside the planning and highways authority and developers, each having a vital part to play in what should be a bottom up community led approach.

Our understanding is that it should not be for Shropshire Council to lead on planning matters, we believe it is their role to advise, support and facilitate developers and local communities not to lead and that the key consideration of this master plan by members today should be whether the plan is sustainable, viable and deliverable.

We would like your members on behalf of our residents to question the apparent resistance being shown towards the instigation of a neighbourhood plan in the Bicton, Bicton Heath, Oxon and Bowbrook areas recognising the vulnerability that not having one in place leaves the community on future planning matters.

We believe this needs to be addressed immediately as it is key to the effective functioning of this Coalition governments planning policy, without one in place residents will find themselves at the mercy of developers which should not be the case.

MR M PRICE Portfolio Holder for Planning will respond to the Statement as follows:

It is not proposed to set out a detailed response to this statement, although the Council would disagree with many of its comments.

By way of general response, the Council's position remains that the Shrewsbury West Sustainable Urban Extension is identified in the adopted Core Strategy as a strategic location for development, and the Masterplan is considered to be important as planning guidance to prospective developers and other interested parties, and to help to ensure that the strategic objectives for the area are achieved and the overall co-ordination of development and the delivery of infrastructure.

With respect to the separation of the interests of the Council as landowner and the Council's role and objectives as Local Planning and Highways Authority, the Masterplan is clearly driven by the objectives of the Core Strategy, incorporating the requirements to provide the Link Road, employment land and other benefits rather than maximising returns for the landowners.

Contrary to Mr Kilby's assertion that 'it should not be for Shropshire Council to lead on planning matters', it is appropriate for the Council, as the local planning authority, to prepare and adopt planning policy documents and other planning guidance relating to the development of its area. The written reply to Mr Kilby's question to Cabinet at its meeting on 16th October set out the scope of the Masterplan, which was not intended to be a community-led plan. The statement also stressed that the Council is supportive of the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and Community-led plans, as evidenced by the adoption of a number of these by the Council on 26th September.

As regards the comments on educational provision, Mr Kilby received a reply from the Chief Executive on 15th November 2013, explaining the position. The development will provide funding for additional school places generated by any increase in pupil numbers.

The Transport Policy E7 being referred to is the Draft Local Transport Plan published in 2011. As this is a Draft Plan there remains scope for the final wording to be considered further. However, the safeguarding of the route of a proposed new road like the NWRR is a function of the Development Plan. The Council referred to the NWRR in a number of places in the Core Strategy, including the Spatial Vision, Policy CS2 (development to have regard to it), and Policy CS7 (promotion of it), and indicated the line of the preferred route on Figure 6: Shrewsbury Key Diagram under Policy CS2 (page 43). This may be sufficient, in practice, to protect the route. However, the Council is considering whether or not to include further reference in the Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan, due to be published for final representations early in 2014, prior to submission for independent examination.

As regards not requiring the provision of the Link Road as part of the Shrewsbury West Sustainable Urban Extension, this is a key element of Core Strategy Policy CS2 and it would be a failure to achieve the Council's strategic objectives if this approach was not pursued. The coordination of the provision of infrastructure alongside housing and employment growth is fundamental to the Shrewsbury development strategy. The Oxon Link Road is considered to be beneficial and affordable.