

CABINET 7 DECEMBER 2020

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

1. Question from Councillor Edward Bird

The CPRE have received a response from Eddie West, Shropshire Council's planner in charge of the Review, confirming that the Pre-Submission Plan will be going to Cabinet on the 7th December and if agreed, will "lead to a consultation starting in mid December for at least 6 weeks in line with the requirements of Reg 19"

This means that if Shropshire Council stick to the proposed 6 week consultation period, most of the time will be during the Christmas break when Councils are closed and the public have other things on their mind. As Councils also have to publish meetings a week in advance, it will in effect give us little more than 2 weeks to read and digest all the documentation, prepare and agree a response and then send it out. Although with the last consultation we were able to just send out one response, as comments this time go to the Inspector, it is likely we will need to send out separate responses for each individual objection, which will considerably increase the administrative task in responding and yet again eat into the 6 week period.

It is interesting to compare the proposed 6 week consultation for what is likely to be a large amount of documentation to read with other consultations being carried out by Shropshire. They are for instance consulting on the Statement of Community Involvement for 12 weeks for a 27 page document, a Community and Rural Strategy for 8 weeks for a 22 page document and a Cultural Strategy for 12 weeks for a 33 page document.

In view of the current circumstances and given the length of other consultations, could the consultation be extended to 12 weeks?

The Council is proposing a seven week consultation, in excess of the minimum requirements, and in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This specifically allows for an additional week to reflect the period of closure at Christmas and is considered sufficient to allow all interested parties to respond.

2. Question from Councillors Elliott Lynch/Les Winwood – Members for Bridgnorth west and Tasley

Concerns regarding livestock market and traffic issues.

Under the SAMDEV proposals the livestock market was to relocate over the A458 to enable 500 homes to be built on the current livestock market site. This was considered necessary to separate the new homes and people from the livestock market which is a much valued business for our town along with all of the industrial units attached.

Why are we then, having moved the livestock market are now under the Taylor Wimpy proposals going to build 1050 houses next to the relocated market? Please tell us how you are going to alleviate and prevent the odours and noise from the livestock market with a green barrier when this solution will take years to develop and so shall be no barrier at all? How will you prevent these anti-social issues? We cannot afford for the livestock market and associated businesses to fail and must ensure at all costs that these are retained.

If the Taylor Wimpy site is allowed and upwards of 2000 cars leaving the site, the vast majority of which will be heading for the West Midlands (Kidderminster, Stourbridge, Wolverhampton and Telford) clogging up the route through Bridgnorth both along the bypass and through the town itself. This in itself will create a tremendous backlog with the present road set up and will be considered to be the wrong side of the river because of this. Please tell us how you are going to get the vast improvements to the network to prevent long queues and pollution generated through our towns streets from the Tasley site. How can any decision be made without an updated highways report which is due in January?

Finally, we appreciate that land ownership is not a planning requirement when an application comes in but could we please have an update regarding the developers acquisition of land for the Tasley Garden Village application?

Appendix 2 to the Cabinet report identifies the issues officers have considered, and the planning balance exercise, including the issue of public protection. This states: “The land at the proposed ‘Garden Village’ at Tasley is also close to sources of current road and commercial noise and potential future noise and odour from the relocated livestock market (the adjacent employment allocation includes land specifically for the livestock market and associated landscaping)... These issues require careful and sensitive consideration; however, it is considered that this can be appropriately managed through appropriate design and layout and use of green infrastructure buffering”. It should also be recognised that the guidelines proposed in draft policy S3.1(i) state that green infrastructure will be used to mitigate any noise, dust or odour arising from the existing employment allocations ELR011/a and ELR011/b, part of which will be used for the relocation of the livestock market. The guidelines also identify the need for any future development on the site to be guided by a further Supplementary Planning Document, providing more specific information on how this development will be delivered, including where mitigation will be required, and that this SPD will be a significant material planning consideration as part of any planning application for development of the site.

It is considered there is sufficient information regarding the highway situation in order for the Council to proceed to the Regulation 19 stage of consultation. However, it is recognised this is a significant issue and therefore as a further safeguard the Council is currently undertaking further assessment into the impact on the highway at Bridgnorth as a result of the Local Plan proposals, with conclusions expected early in 2021. The Council has the opportunity to review the outcome of this additional work before a decision is made to submit the Plan for Examination in March 2021.

On the issue of land acquisition, it is understood that Taylor Wimpy are currently in discussions with the landowner regarding an options agreement. As stated, the presences of an options agreement and/or land other land ownership, is not a specific planning consideration, and officers consider sufficient information has been provided to consider the site deliverable against the proposed developer guidelines.

3. Question from Councillor David Turner

Background

- When the Local Plan Review preferred site consultation opened at the end of 2018 it was known that the Ironbridge Power Station site would be a strategic allocation. Since then, planning applications have been submitted here for a mixed-use development, including 1,000 houses, and for minerals extraction. It has become apparent that the volume of traffic that will be drawn to the junction of the A4169 and the A458 at the Gaskell Arms junction in Much Wenlock will double vehicle wait times – this by the applicant’s own admission. This will encourage vehicles rat-running through the narrow streets of the town, a deterioration in air quality, and significant challenges for pedestrians trying to negotiate crossing these two A roads. The measures to address this and other highways concerns do not satisfy the Council’s highways officers and planners. This before any account is taken of extra traffic from schemes in Cressage, Bridgnorth, and indeed the Much Wenlock proposal, the latter being sufficiently far from the retail core to require shoppers to drive in.
- The Much Wenlock Place Plan area includes more than a dozen villages as well, many within my Much Wenlock division, and also some in Claire Wild’s Severn Valley division – including Buildwas. All these communities currently look to Much Wenlock for local services. The Place Plan area accommodates around 5,000 residents. Core Strategy Policy CS3, notes that the town is subject to inward development pressure, and to avoid becoming a commuting settlement, the priority is for local employment opportunities balanced with housing and infrastructure to meet local needs. The proposals contained in the Local Plan Review agenda item today will at least double the population in the Place Plan area.

Questions

1. Given that the developers of the Buildwas site haven't in twelve months provided a workable solution for the highways challenges to the south of the site, and that officers don't seem to have a solution to the difficulties, what will happen to the road network in and around Much Wenlock?
2. How is it possible to reconcile CS3, which asserts that "Much Wenlock will have limited development that reflects its important service and employment centre role whilst retaining its historic character" with a doubling of the population it serves?
3. Would the portfolio holder agree that it would be better to stall the Much Wenlock proposals until far more is understood about the cumulative impact of other development? If not, why not?

In association with the current proposals being considered as part of the Planning application at the former Ironbridge Power station site, highway mitigation works to the Gaskell Arms junction are proposed, which are not currently acceptable to Shropshire Council. It is therefore the Council's intention to secure a Section 106 Highway contribution, that will help fund a feasibility study that will assess any cumulative impact on the Gaskell Arms Junction and wider Much Wenlock area as a result of the proposed development at the former Ironbridge Power Station site, and other relevant developments proposed as part of the Local Plan Review.

As part of the ongoing consideration of the live planning application, the current Local Plan policies will be considered, including policy CS3. It is not considered necessary to stall the progress of the Local Plan Review.

4. Question from Councillor Michael Wood

Member Question to Cabinet 7th December 2020

It is noted in the draft Shropshire Local Plan report that two options for housing were available in Bridgnorth for consideration. Both Stanmore and Tasley options are styled as Garden Village developments but differ in that the former sits within the green belt while the latter does not.

The former is rejected, essentially on the grounds that the "exceptional circumstances bar" for development within the green belt cannot be achieved. However, we then see that green belt land is to be released in order to expand Stanmore Business Park.

Will the Portfolio Holder explain why one proposition qualifies for release and the other does not?

In addition, the recommended site at Tasley Garden Village includes a substantial amount of land for Commercial use. Does this not represent an over supply for this purpose so rendering the Stanmore Business Park site surplus to requirements?

The need to release land from the Green Belt has been a significant policy consideration in the officer recommendation to Cabinet, but it is important to recognise the site assessment process also identifies a number of other material issues which have been given consideration in the overall planning balance.

The recommendation to release land from the Green Belt for employment development at Stanmore is related to the need to provide sufficient opportunity for this area of expand sustainably over the course of the plan period. The exceptional circumstances identified for this land release were published as background evidence to the recent Regulation 18 and provide a comprehensive rationale and will again form part of the background evidence for Regulation 19 consultation. It is considered there is a significant distinction between this and the proposal to release land from the Green belt for housing purposes, especially given the Council is required by national policy to examine fully all other development options before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist.

The Tasley Garden Village includes the potential for 16 hectares of employment land as part of its mixed use proposal, in addition to the 11 hectares proposed for allocation at Stanmore. It is considered these land releases respond to significant opportunity to enhance employment opportunities locally, and to allow choice and competition in the market.

5. Question from Kevin Turley

I would just formally as Councillor for Shifnal North like to request that the consultation period for Shropshire Local Plan be extended to 12 weeks. This to give town and parish councils adequate time to formulate a proper response to the consulation. With the current pandemic and holiday period councils are already under a lot of pressure. Please can the cabinet review this and extend when they vote today.

The Council is proposing a seven week consultation, in excess of the minimum requirements, and in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This specifically allows for an additional week to reflect the period of closure at Christmas and is considered sufficient to allow all interested parties to respond.

6. Question from Councillor Robert Tindall

Member's Question for Cabinet to be held on the 7th December 2020

From Robert Tindall- Brown Clee Electoral Division

Introduction

Although only a comparatively small area of land of the proposed Tasley Garden Village ("TGV") Scheme affects my Electoral Division of Brown Clee compared with the other neighbouring Divisions, I have received a large electronic post bag of complaints and concerns and not one email that comes anywhere close to being supportive.

Questions

1. Does the Portfolio Holder recognise that the considerable mineral deposits between Bridgnorth and Morville will be rendered incapable of exploitation if built over? These deposits are much needed sands and gravels laid down in glacial conditions i.e. in Lake Morville and are vital for the building and civil engineering industries. After extraction and following restoration these sites become very important for wildlife as can be evidenced by the existing old quarry sites near Underton.

Officers have considered the implications of the mineral deposit in and surrounding the proposed sites of the Tasley Garden Village and Stanmore Garden Village proposals. This has not led to significant concerns in relation to the sterilisation of this resources based on the currently defined site areas of the Garden Village proposals.

2 Does the Portfolio Holder accept that however well designed and planned, the TGV Scheme will be a development wholly out of proportion to the scale and size of the existing market town of Bridgnorth and will give the impression of an almost seamless length of "suburbia" along the A458 virtually connecting Morville with Bridgnorth?

It is the officer view that the proposed Tasley Garden Village proposal is a deliverable and sustainable option, and one that has the potential to offer realistic options for providing sustainable connectivity to the existing urban area. It is considered to be of a scale which will provide the opportunity to provide the long term housing requirements Bridgnorth over the plan period.

3 Does he think this consequence is something that Shropshire Council could ever be proud of?

4 Does he recognise that considerable concern that has been expressed about the capacity of main and local highways to take the additional traffic which will inevitably generated by the TGV Scheme?

The potential impacts of both potential Garden Village proposals on the local highway network have been considered as part of the site assessment process and have been taken into account in the recommendation to Cabinet and summarised in Appendix 2 to the report. Given the information provided within the various supporting transport assessments and the scale of the developments proposed, it is considered the Tasley Garden Village proposal can provide appropriate vehicular accesses and is capable of making necessary improvements to the highway network. However, by way of additional safeguards the developer guidelines for the proposed allocation – included within Draft Policy S3.1(i) of the Draft Local Plan – states “any necessary improvements to the A458 Ludlow Road roundabout, the wider highway network and associated infrastructure will be undertaken, informed by Strategic and Local Highway Transport Assessments.” It should also be recognised that these guidelines require the preparation of a further Supplementary Planning Document to provide more specific information on how this development will be delivered, including where mitigation will be required, and that this SPD will be a significant material planning consideration as part of any planning application for development of the site.

5 Would he not agree that much further impartial research and evaluation needs to be undertaken into this aspect before any further consideration of the TGV Scheme is undertaken?

It is considered there is sufficient information regarding the highway situation in order for the Council to proceed to the Regulation 19 stage of consultation. However, it is recognised this is a significant issue and therefore as a further safeguard the Council is currently undertaking further assessment into the impact on the highway at Bridgnorth as a result of the Local Plan proposals, with conclusions expected early in 2021. The Council has the opportunity to review the outcome of this additional work before a decision is made to submit the Plan for Examination in March 2021.

7. Question from Councillor Tina Woodward

Fellow local Shropshire Councillors continue to raise concerns regarding the A442, which already has high levels of traffic as it is the main route to Telford, which has seen significant business and housing growth over recent years, hence the increasing numbers of HGVs using the route, a number of which are the very large high - topped style of vehicles. It is apparent that many HGVs and other forms of business vehicles are using the A442 as a means of connecting not just Telford, but also the M54 and other routes into Mid Wales, North Wales, Cheshire and Staffordshire to the South Midlands area, Worcester and the M5 to the South, and vice versa. Recent roadworks on the motorways network resulted in traffic heading northwards up the M5 being diverted via Kidderminster, Bridgnorth and Telford on to the M54, rather than continuing through the roadworks up the M5, onto the M6, then onto the M54. This route is arguably quicker than the motorway journey under many conditions and it appears that a large number of vehicles continue to use this route as their preferred option.

There are a number of issues with traffic in the run through Danesford to the bypass island. The A442 is restricted at this point and HGVs when they meet in this section frequently have difficulties passing one another, which can cause traffic problems. Under normal conditions at peak times it is common to experience tail backs in this area. To add an additional 1050 homes and a business allocation will clearly add considerably to congestion, as a significant proportion of vehicles will be heading backwards and forwards towards Telford, the West Midlands, Kidderminster, Worcester and further afield on a daily basis. Potentially a smaller proportion will be heading in the Shrewsbury direction.

There is also the section of the A442 north of Bridgnorth towards Telford which is narrow and winding, a section of which is subject to flooding.

How is it proposed to improve the infrastructure on the A442, A458, A454, B4176 and the rural lane network to ensure that both existing traffic levels and future increases due to the proposed development are properly assessed, design proposals provided, costed and delivered prior to completion of any significant development? Councillor Christian Lea has raised concerns that Councillors have not been provided with any firm evidence from Highways to prove that the local road network can accommodate a substantial increase in traffic volumes and that it can be "made to work" has been put to us. Is this sufficient justification to warrant Tasley being put forward as the preferred site?

I noted that vehicle activated data counters were located on the A442 through the Danesford section, however the data generated will be from this second period of restricted travel due to Covid-19 restrictions. It is essential that further data be collected under more normal travel conditions to ascertain a more accurate level of normal traffic. When will representative data be collected and circulated?

Alveley Green Belt Allocation

In light of the recent determination of a Certificate of Lawful Development for a residential caravan/ park homes site in Alveley. In my opinion Officers should review the housing numbers as, if housing numbers were to be reduced to take account of the new residential units, this would result in less Green Belt being utilised, which in my opinion should be welcomed by Officers and Cabinet. Alveley has been accepting development throughout this plan period and it should be noted that a potential for up to 100 or more residential units (subject to adherence to separate site licensing legislation) equates to a significant development in a village of 716 dwellings, based on the 2011 Census. Will this increase in residential units be taken into account in formulating housing requirement for the settlement and adjustments made accordingly?

Cllr Tina Woodward, Shropshire Council, Alveley & Claverley Division

Highways teams have begun a series of Area Assessments, funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy, to understand the future infrastructure needs resulting from the compound impact of existing and future housing development in those areas. The initial reviews are focussed on Bridgnorth,

Market Drayton, Oswestry and Shrewsbury. The reviews will consider a broad range of issues such as current infrastructure capacity, public transport, parking, air quality and active travel needs and will enable a programme of mitigation measures to be developed. It is hoped to complete the review in Bridgnorth by the end of the financial year.

This Certificate of Lawful Development relates to development outside of the geographic scope to be considered against the development requirements of Alveley in its role as a proposed Community Hub in the Local Plan Review. Whilst it is recognised there is likely to be an element of shared infrastructure and service use, it would not be considered an appropriate or sustainable solution to cater for the development needs of Community Hubs in this manner. Instead the additional housing provision provided through this development will be considered against the rural windfall allowance factored into the Local Plan's spatial distribution of growth. The Council's Place Plans offer the opportunity to capture ongoing infrastructure needs of settlements, and this includes capturing the needs of rural development on local provision.

8. Question from Tom Biggins

Shropshire Council does not appear to have an adopted minimum parking spaces policy for new developments, whether housing estates, business parks or doctors' surgeries, to name just three examples.

Insufficient provision of parking spaces on any development results in parking overflows onto adjoining areas, and spreads the problem more widely, thus inconveniencing more people.

When will the Council adopt a minimum parking spaces policy for new planning applications in the Local Plan?

As a local member, I had planned to hold a scrutiny type meeting in Whitchurch in early September 2020, to look in detail at the Infrastructure deficiencies in the town. The purpose of this was to call witnesses and in particular to invite senior representatives from utility providers and other agencies and organisations to attend so that an accurate up to date and complete snapshot of present and future infrastructure shortcomings could be taken.

Regrettably the pandemic intervened and it did not happen.

I am aware of a number of issues that have been brought to my attention by my constituents, which do not appear in the Whitchurch Settlement policy or the Place Plan

I would therefore be most grateful if I can receive in answer to this question a complete and comprehensive list/report of the infrastructure deficiencies and indeed facility deficiencies that officers have a record of for Whitchurch.

The application is minimum parking standards is no longer recognised as an appropriate or sustainable approach to promoting movements towards more sustainable transport. Indeed the NPPF state that Maximum parking standards for residential and non-residential development should only be set where there is a clear and compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network, or for optimising the density of development in city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport. As such there is no intention for the Local Plan to adopt either minimum or maximum car parking standards, and instead proposals will be considered against their own merits using the other policies of the Local Plan and any other material considerations.

9. Question from Councillor Simon Jones

I wish to ask a question at Cabinet on 7th December 2020 on item 7 Shropshire Local Plan. I wish to query the decision to designate Clive Parish as a Community Hub. The village shop has now closed and the Bowling Green is no longer a leisure amenity as the club has closed and the bowling green is in private ownership and is now a private lawn to the property Clive Hall. These 2 things should reduce the scoring to below Community Hub status.

The Council's approach to the identification of Community Hubs is guided by the application of a methodology contained in the 'Hierarchy of Settlements' document, which assessed the level of available services and facilities in an area. This has been applied on a consistent basis, and where appropriate has responded to changing levels of provision locally.

The current scoring for Clive includes the bowling green as an outdoor sports facility and the convenience store.

With regard to the bowling green, whilst it is recognised there is no active club currently using this space, this facility remains included within the Council's published Open Space Needs Assessment, and the removal of this facility will therefore need to be tested against either current or emerging Local Plan policy which, amongst other things, needs to show this facility is surplus to requirements. This is in line with general advice from Sport England. To this end, officers feel it continues to be appropriate to include this facility in the assessment.

With regard to the convenience store, whilst officers have received recent correspondence from the owner that he is not seeking to re-let following the recent departure of his tenant in October 2021, this has only very recently become the case, and indeed he has also confirmed that until October he was actively seeking to let the facility. Without further evidence of marketing more

widely or suitable assurances about the potential future uses for the facility, on the balance of judgement it is felt it would therefore be premature to delete this facility from the assessment.

Whilst this is the current position of officers, it is recognised that the Council's methodology does require continued review, especially in light of any potential change to service provision resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic. The proposed consultation on the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan will allow parish councils to indicate if they consider the Council's approach to the identification of Community Hubs is 'sound'. If there are concerns expressed, the Council has the ability to propose minor modifications to the Plan before submitting for Examination in March 2021. More substantial changes to the Plan (known as Main Modifications) can then be considered by the appointed Inspector, who as part of this process will be considering all representations made to the Plan at Regulation 19. It is therefore considered there continues to be suitable opportunities for the Plan to be reviewed in light of any updated evidence before it is adopted – likely to mid-2022. In the case of Clive, until the point of adoption, the settlement continues to be classified as 'Countryside' for the purposes of decision taking.