

## CABINET

14 DECEMBER 2020

### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

#### 1. Question from Chris Tyler On behalf of Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh Group

The Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Refresh Group (MWNPRG) has already submitted objections to the Local Plan Review consultation in respect for the proposals for Much Wenlock (M W). An important part of our objection to the proposals for M W is that neither Shropshire Council (S C) nor the M W Town Council (M W T C) has undertaken any meaningful consultation with the community.

We understand that one of the reasons advanced for S C allocating a large commercial development site is because this has the support of M W T C. This is both a weak argument and also untrue. M W T C has simply offered no objection to the allocation of 120 dwellings on the new and larger site of MUW012VAR. In reaching their decision “not to object” the M W T C did not actively seek the views of its community and undertook no analysis of suitable alternative approaches for the town.

As you will be aware, national planning guidance states that reviews of local plans must not undermine existing statutory Neighbourhood Plans. The draft local plan being proposed by S C and the M W T C’s lack of any objection has deliberately set aside the key policies of the town agreed by the community in 2014 in the M W N P. The lack of consultation by either authority as to why the new proposals should not in accordance with the M W N P, which has statutory weight over Much Wenlock planning issues until 2026, has not been explained. This is both perplexing and arrogant.

In stark contrast, the MWNPRG has conducted widely and well-supported surveys throughout the M W community in both April/May 2019 and again August/September 2020. These revealed that there is overwhelming opposition from the residents to MUW012VAR. The community does, however, support the delivery of small scale sites for the limited development required to meet local needs, as per the policy approach for the town. This is detailed in our recent Deposition (see pages 79- 83 Section 3 Conclusion) to S C’s consultation.

With the notable exception of Cllr David Turner throughout the past two years both S C and M W T C have refused to meet with or respond to concerns raised by the community and MWNPRG. This is a failure of local democracy and a plainly unsound approach to local planning.

How can S C embark on the Reg 19 consultation including a preferred scheme in M W that has attracted so little local support and which deliberately and unthinkingly

overrides the statutory N P which sets out the aims of the community for the future of its town?

Does this not mean that there will be a significant risk to S C.?

**Response:**

Since 2017 Shropshire Council has undertaken five separate stages of consultation into the emerging Local plan Review, including two periods of consultation on draft site proposals in Much Wenlock. It is recognised there is outstanding objection to proposed strategy for the town, and these objections have been fully considered alongside other material considerations in arriving at the Regulation 19 version of the Plan, which is to be subject to a further period of consultation between December and February 2021.

The proposed strategy for Much Wenlock in the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan has regard for the current Neighbourhood Plan for the area. However the Local Plan must also plan positively for the town for the period 2016-2038; a period well beyond the end of the current Neighbourhood Plan timeframe. As things stand it is understood there is no intention from the Town Council to undertake a full review of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is considered therefore the risk to the soundness of the Local Plan would be if the Local Plan did not plan positively for Much Wenlock up to 2038.

All residents, alongside other stakeholders, will have a chance to comment on the soundness of the Local Plan as part of the upcoming consultation on the Regulation 19 Plan, and all these comments will be seen by an independently appointed Planning Inspector when the Plan is submitted to the Government for Examination, currently scheduled for April 2021.

## **2. Question from Mike Bastow**

As the Council's report advises the Councils emissions and so plan address 1% of the counties emissions. Can the council advise, since declaring an emergency in Spring 2019 the actions and plan for County emissions. I would be interested to hear about action on "housing plans", "transport plans" "circular economy waste policies" and influencing business investment in reducing emissions and biodiversity destruction.

**Response:**

As indicated in section 8 of the Cabinet report and section 9 of the corporate strategy, Shropshire Council is one of the key founders and supporters of the community-led 'Shropshire Climate Action Partnership' (SCAP) which has set the objective of achieving net-zero carbon performance across the county of Shropshire by 2030. SCAP is currently preparing a county-wide Climate Strategy and Action Plan which should be published by the end of December.

Further information about all the topics identified will be made available on the SCAP website: <https://zerocarbonshropshire.org/> Mr Bastow may like to consider signing a carbon reduction pledge or joining SCAP and contributing directly.

### **3 Questions from Joanna De Rycke**

The council is potentially facing a huge deficit over the next 5 years. How can this project be financially justified when the cheaper option would be to improve existing efficiencies?

**The Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre was built in 1969 and building condition surveys consider the facility to be at the end of its economic lifespan and the development of a new facility will provide a modern fit for purpose centre.**

**Currently none of the existing pools are of a standard size. 33 metre length pools are not recognised by the International Swimming Federation (FINA) or Swim England, 25 or 50 metre pools are the recommended lengths. The fitness suite is very small and there are no fitness studio facilities. The latter impacts on ability to generate income. The changing rooms are not of a modern design, the building lacks Disability Discrimination Act access, and is increasingly expensive to operate, given the planned maintenance issues.**

**The existing facility at the Quarry will become increasingly expensive to operate as building elements continue to be retained beyond their effective lifespan; replacement parts and materials are more difficult to source, and fixes that are ‘workarounds’ rather than genuinely satisfactory solutions will have to be adopted.**

**Increasing energy costs and pressure to reduce the carbon footprint to meet the Council’s climate change commitments will become unsustainable within the current building fabric.**

**Continuity of service will become increasingly difficult to maintain as crucial elements fail and are not cost effective to replace.**

**Deterioration of core elements of the facility at the Quarry affecting health and safety, risks resulting in difficulty sustaining public swimming provision in Shrewsbury in the long term.**

**The recent Covid 19 pandemic has demonstrated that due to the design of the building and the capacity of heating and ventilation plant it has not been possible to fully re-open the facility to meet Covid secure requirements.**

**Without significantly rethinking provision there is now a risk of a reduction of provision, loss of users to alternative facilities and decreasing footfall to the Quarry and wider town centre, which reduces income.**

How can building additional health club / spa facilities at the Quarry site be financially justified?

**Improving the leisure offer at Quarry through the provision of modern up to date facilities provides the potential for customers to extend their visit to the facility thus increasing the likelihood of revenue generation and improved operational financial efficiency.**

**The inclusion of other commercial opportunities such as a health spa, adventure play, café and bistro at the Quarry site have the potential to contribute to the overall viability and therefore affordability of the project.**

**The above points are subject to additional due diligence being carried out which is what the report to Cabinet recommends takes place between now and the summer of 2021.**

Why replace a 33m pool with a 25m pool?

**33 metre length pools are not recognised by the International Swimming Federation (FINA) or Swim England. 25 or 50 metre pools are the recommended lengths. The planned pool provision is therefore in line with national standards of swimming pool design.**

Why take the competition pool out of a prime location and put it in Sundorne, a location with limited public transport, no places to stay for competitors and traffic issues in that area?

**The placement of competition facilities at Sundorne Sports Village provides for this use at a location which is accessible from across Shropshire, Shrewsbury and the wider region at a venue which is better equipped to deal with the parking implications of competition swimming.**

The existing 33m competition pool is used from 6.30am until 9pm at night and is always busy. How will this demand be met at this location?

**The proposal includes for a 25m x 4 lane pool with moveable floor at the Quarry site which provides opportunities for club training, lane swimming and provision of swimming lessons in the town centre.**

**The dual site option, with a mix of swimming and other facilities at both sites, provides an opportunity to increase and improve access to leisure facilities for communities across Shrewsbury and Shropshire.**

**We want to offer a better-quality swimming offer, which is more accessible to more people, facilitates increased participation from existing users and enables new users to take part for health benefits, capitalises on town centre and other infrastructure, and is operationally sustainable long term. This means being flexible in our approach and re-thinking what aquatic opportunities best fit need.**

#### **4. Question from John Brownlie**

1) Why are you considering moving the main pool centre out the town centre, It is difficult for the main users and the elderly to gain access and will increase car usage and our carbon footprint,

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**Provision of new facilities designed to be low carbon in their performance is intended help to address the carbon footprint of swimming provision in Shrewsbury for the long term.**

2) why are you potentially taking business and tourism from our town centre again.

**We recognise that there is a need to invest in a high-quality leisure destination offer in the town centre that retains the opportunity to swim, whilst recognising that the county does not currently have a modern competition swimming pool which the Sports Village location has the potential to accommodate, providing a Shropshire-wide swimming facility.**

**We are exploring whether the proposed redevelopment at the Quarry site can facilitate the development of complementary uses, partnerships and/or commercial opportunities in line with the 'Big Town Plan', so that whilst the project is not dependant on this, we maximise the potential of the site and reflect its unique setting in the town. This will explore opportunities for additional income generation from any associated facilities within the destination leisure offer e.g. bistro, café, etc., and how the facility can link with the wider Quarry open space and assets such as the river which can provide for complementary activities that take place.**

**Proposals include for the provision of a leisure/fun water in any re-development at Quarry, in addition to the 25metre x 4 lane pool, the aim is to create a destination leisure venue for residents and visitors which is aimed at providing a new attraction in the town centre and encourages foot fall in and around the site. The addition of a leisure water area will also engage people in leisure activities and physical activity who may not traditionally participate in a more formal swimming offer**

**The development at the Quarry site will link into and support the wider Quarry park and enhance the visitor offer within the town centre.**

## **5. Questions from Bernard Wills**

### **Future Swimming provisions in Shrewsbury.**

Why is it being proposed that the Competition pool be sited at the Sports Village, Sundorne and not at the quarry site?

Sundorne is out of town and difficult to access by public transport, this will increase car usage for Shrewsbury residents, competitors and tourists staying in the town centre. . Competitors tend to bring their families, make the competition a weekend break and prefer staying in the town Tourists coming to Shrewsbury however, are unlikely to travel to Sundorne or stay in the Sundorne area due to its lack of amenities and attractions thus losing a commercial opportunity for town centre enterprises

A replacement competition pool is welcomed for Shrewsbury, but it needs regular swimmers to make it financially viable and the majority of swimmers come from within the town central area and the west of Shrewsbury.

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**We want to offer a better-quality swimming offer, which is more accessible to more people, facilitates increased participation from existing users and enables new users to take part for health benefits, capitalises on town centre and other infrastructure, and is operationally sustainable long term. This means being flexible in our approach and re-thinking what aquatic opportunities best fit need.**

**The placement of competition facilities at Sundorne Sports Village provides for this use at a location which is accessible from across Shropshire, Shrewsbury and the wider region at a venue which is better equipped to deal with the parking implications of competition swimming.**

**The dual site option, with a mix of swimming and other facilities, provides an opportunity to increase and improve access to the facilities for communities across Shrewsbury and Shropshire.**

Why is the proposed swimming pool at the Quarry centre only the size of the present Priory pool 25 metres X 4 lanes?

This is grossly inadequate for the two main swimming clubs other water sport activities and of course the general public swimmers.

This has been made more apparent now that **only** the Priory pool is open, the main Quarry pool and Claremont being closed due to COVID-19 and repairs still taking place. This has seriously affected available water space even taking into account the lower attendance levels due to many still feeling uneasy due to COVID-19 and with clubs finding alternative venues at school pools.

A 25 metre X 6 lanes pool with moving floor is more flexible in meeting town centre needs.

Clubs function early and later in the day, which makes an out of town pool unworkable for most families and other users.

**The original Sport England funded SOPG report dual site option suggested providing a 20m community pool at the Quarry site. We have considered comments made by stakeholders and the proposal is now to include a 25m x 4 lane pool with moveable floor at the Quarry site which provides opportunities for club training, lane swimming and provision of swimming lessons in the town centre. The addition of a leisure water area will create a destination leisure venue and, importantly engage people in leisure activities and physical activity who may not traditionally participate in a more formal swimming offer.**

**The proposed competition facility at Sundorne, including a learner pool, can also provide for club use, competitions, casual swimming and swimming lessons. This provides for a versatile water offering providing for competition, training and leisure swimming opportunities which are accessible for communities across Shrewsbury and Shropshire.**

**Subject to approval by Cabinet of the recommendations being considered on 14 December, the next stage of design for the two sites will be undertaken in**

**the coming six months, following which a full public consultation will be undertaken to examine how the proposals can deliver the best outcomes possible.**

## **6 Question from Rob Wilson**

As members of the public are not permitted to ask supplementary questions, in response to the answer I received to the question I asked at Cabinet on Monday 7th December 2020, please may I ask:

- Will the council facilitate more School Streets following the successful pilot at Coleham Primary School? If so, how will these be selected? Is there a process by which local communities can request them?

Responses:

**In its report to Council in September regarding 20mph zones outside schools, the paper outlined that all 150 schools in the county would be reviewed for appropriate measures ranging from Do nothing, to 20mph zone only signs, to 20mph zone with additional traffic calming to form a school street. Traffic and accident data is currently being collected to identify which measures may be most appropriate for each site and prioritise a programme of engagement and school leaders have already been briefed on this. A consultation exercise will thereafter be undertaken for all sites at which point local communities will be able to help shape final proposals. Funding is limited for such measures and therefore in the first instance School Streets will be targeted where greatest needs are identified. It should be noted that where there have been social distancing concerns raised due to Covid 19, we have responded to the concerns from Education colleagues or local Members and school streets was the appropriate intervention, thus a distinction from the planned and programmed approach which is in development and a responsive approach to support with immediate concerns.**

- I welcome that the council is now looking at trial Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Shrewsbury. Where are these planned for? How and when will the local community be engaged and consulted to ensure success?

**The trial of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Shrewsbury is proposed for Town Walls. Initial engagement with residents associations has already begun. It is not possible at this stage to identify when further consultations will take place as timing will be dependent on Covid measures in the town centre.**

- I welcome that the council is finally committed to developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Is there a senior officer taking charge of Active Travel? If so, who?

**All senior officers in Highways are committed to developing Active Travel, however Steven Brown will be leading the development of the Councils Active Travel Strategy.**