

**CABINET**  
**MEMBER QUESTIONS**  
**11 MARCH 2021**

**1. From Cllr Andy Boddington**

The Big Town Plan (BTP) presents a bold vision for Shrewsbury town centre. This vision is not only important to the county town. The impact of the BTP will extend across the county town's hinterland, including into mid-Wales. This impact is no more apparent than in the proposal to demolish the county bus station and replace it with housing.

On 1 March, members of Shrewsbury Town Council agreed to oppose removal of the bus station. Having spoken to bus companies and rural bus companies, we agree with this position. Rural bus services into Shrewsbury are at risk of failure if passengers are forced to change at satellite bus stations on the outskirts of Shrewsbury. Journey times will increase and bus services will no longer be as convenient. This could lead to an adverse modal shift from buses to cars. It could also lead to reduced footfall in Shrewsbury town centre in favour of locations such as Telford with has direct services to the bus station in the heart of its shopping centre. The plan may also lead to increased rural isolation and reliance on deliveries booked online.

The plans for consultation before cabinet today are not accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) or a movement plan that considers bus movements between Shrewsbury and rural areas.

There are few sites within the loop that can accommodate a bus station and layover facilities. There has been talk of not having bus station at all in an endeavour to maximise real estate value from town centre land owned by Shropshire Council.

The BTP must champion rural Shropshire as well as promoting the county town.

In the light of the reaction to the BTP, particularly from the rural bus companies, would the council delay consultation on the BTG until an EqIA and a movement plan that encompasses rural areas has been produced and published?

**Response:**

The Shrewsbury Big Town Plan recognises the importance of an integrated public transport network, that not only serves the town centre but also supports the specific needs of the wider county. It aspires to reduce unnecessary traffic entering and passing through the town, in preference for more sustainable, cleaner forms of transport, promote walking and cycling, and provide more space for pedestrians in the town's streets and squares. Parking provision in the town will also encourages the use of car parks outside the loop of the River Severn and beyond, supported by the new Park and Ride facility; parking will be provided within the loop of the town centre for those that have a specific need. It is recognised that there is a requirement for dedicated bus facilities that ensures the town is well served and promote all modes of public transport, accessible to Shrewsbury's rural hinterland.

Whilst the Masterplan Vision and the Riverside SDF suggests potential development could be accommodated on the current bus station, these illustrations are primarily to demonstrate the application of the core framework principles that underpin delivery moving forward. In this context, assurance can be given that it is not being recommended that the town's bus station is removed without replacing it with an facility appropriate to the Shrewsbury context and at a location that effectively supports modal shift, in particular, to and from the town's rail station. It is acknowledged that the Masterplan Vision and the recently launched Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework should reference these wider movement objectives more explicitly and clarify that the town will be served by buses, as well as wider public transport, walking and cycling, whilst finding a balance with those wishing to access the town by private car. The outcomes of the consultation processes, for both the Masterplan Vision and Riverside SDF will be analysed and appropriate amendments made and reported back to Cabinet in the summer 2021. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken of the final documents and will ensure the concerns raised will be assessed. The Masterplan Vision consultation will formally conclude on March 10 and it is proposed that the Riverside SDF consultation will commence towards the end of May 2021 for a period of at least six weeks.

## **2. From Cllr Nat Green**

Will the Low Traffic Zone or neighbourhood for Shrewsbury be implemented by October?

### **Response:**

We are reviewing proposals for a low traffic zone in Shrewsbury in consultation with Shrewsbury BID and representatives of the Town Council. As of the 12 April we will be reinstating the social distancing measures in Shrewsbury and other market towns as existed prior to lockdown. The potential for a low traffic zone will need to be considered in conjunction with the development of the Big Town Plan, Local Transport Plan 4 and the Movement Strategy for Shrewsbury which will also include the towns park and ride services. All of these will need to be assessed, considered and consulted on before any determination can be made.

## **3. From Cllr Roy Aldcroft**

Would it be possible for the Cabinet Member for Highways to explain the mitigations this Council will put in place with HS2 to minimise the effects of 300 trucks a day passing through the parish over 7 years?

### **Response:**

Further to the question raised Cllr Aldcroft will be aware of, and has been intrinsic to, the work that has been undertaken by a specific lead officer from Shropshire Council Transport team and other key officers of the Council, with the support of the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport and the local Member of Parliament on this issue. There has been

engagement and consultation with representatives of Woore Parish Council for a significant period of time to address the concerns that construction traffic will have upon the village. Ongoing discussions with HS2 as regards the impact on the village and possible mitigations to be fully funded from HS2 and a long period of negotiation has ensued. The list of possible interventions has been refined and a final proposal has been submitted from HS2 for approval.

30 transport interventions have been agreed in full or in principle, there are still some interventions to be agreed or still in negotiation and these final ones are being actively resolved. A further meeting to finalise the interventions is organised will all concerned to achieve agreement so we confirm to HS2 and allow sufficient time for the work to be delivered prior to the construction work at Crewe beginning.

The list of interventions is extensive and for example includes :-

- Upgrades to pedestrian crossing
- Numerous Vehicle activated signs
- Improving gateways into the village
- Numerous junction safety improvements
- Improved footway provision
- Improvements to visibility and speed limits
- Resurfacing of roads
- Improved road markings
- Safety mirrors
- Safety measures outside of the village
- New passing places

It is hoped that the final list will be confirmed shortly and then the final details of the agreed mitigations can be widely shared, suffice to say that the Parish Council and Shropshire Council are working closely on this issue with the Portfolio Holder and MP to ensure the mitigations support the village with the significant impact that the HS2 construction traffic will have on the local infrastructure.

#### **4. From Cllr Richard Huffer**

Burford has seen significant growth. A housing development for 33 homes at the Aspire Centre is underway. A further 40 homes are proposed adjoining Lineage Farm and 100 homes adjoining Boraston Drive.

What conversations has Shropshire Council had with Malvern Hills to ensure that there are adequate local services, including GP and schools, given that these are in Worcestershire not Shropshire.

1) Has Shropshire Council had conversations with Malvern Hills District Council and Worcestershire County Council to ensure that there are adequate local services, including parking, road improvements, along with GP and school services, in Tenbury, which is also seeing significant housing growth?

2) Given that the infrastructure impact of expansion of Burford is mostly in Tenbury, what discussions have taken place on supporting infrastructure provision in Tenbury through CIL payments made by Burford housing developers with Shropshire?

***Response:***

Shropshire Council has undertaken appropriate Duty to Cooperate discussions with Malvern Hills District Council and Worcestershire County Council during the Local Plan Review process, focussing on strategic cross boundary considerations, including strategic infrastructure. Statements of Common Ground are now being prepared in collaboration with adjoining Local Authorities, based on proposals within the draft Shropshire Local Plan.

As part of the Duty to Cooperate process with Malvern Hills and Worcestershire County Council there has been no direct discussions regarding the use of CIL payments resulting from development in Burford for use within Tenbury.

**5. From Cllr Ed Bird**

Regarding a recent article in the Shropshire Star, in which Dudley council leader, Peter Harley the leader of Dudley council has written to Shropshire Council objecting to its decision to withdraw backing for the developments at Junction 3 of the M54. Can the cabinet please provide assurances that its stance will not change and that the land at junction 3 will remain in the green belt?

***Response:***

Following extensive consultation and consideration of issues during the Regulation 18 stage of Plan preparation, in December 2020 Cabinet agreed to consult on the Pre-submission Draft of the Local Plan at the Regulation 19 stage, which did not include proposals for development on land north of Junction 3 on the M54 and thus proposed to retain this land in the Green Belt. Consideration will now be given to all duly made representations made to the Regulation 19 consultation. Whilst it is acknowledged the recent letter from the leader of Dudley Borough Council has raised concerns about the omission of land at Junction 3, it should also be noted that the duly made representations made by the Association of Black Country Authorities (ABCA), of which Dudley Borough Council are included, have raised no objections regarding the omission of land north of Junction 3 for development relating to issues of soundness or Duty to Cooperate legal compliance. The Council will be continuing Duty to Cooperate discussions through ABCA.

**6. From David Vasmer**

In a meeting of the Place Overview Committee on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, a cabinet member stated the council would be spending an extra £40M on highways during the next four years - increasing funding by £10m each year. This commitment was made verbally at the meeting and then repeated using social media.

I am unsure if this is capital or revenue spending. Whether this includes the already announced Mile End project at Oswestry or is to be spent maintaining our roads after the years of cuts made in the budget by this cabinet.

I have looked at the recent Financial Strategy, which was agreed by Cabinet and which the Council also endorsed, but can find no reference to this commitment to spend an extra £40M. Can you please direct me to the page or pages where this appears and confirm that the cabinet agrees with this statement? Have any conversations and agreement been sort from the Executive Director of Resources, James Walton after the following statements were included on P41 of his Financial Strategy Report agreed by Council just a few days ago:

"With growth in services such as social care anticipated to continue to grow ..... this results in a Funding gap of £43.3m in 2022/23 growing to £58.0m in 2025/26.....The current funding mechanism ..... is inappropriate and unsustainable. Without the fundamental change promised by Fair Funding, Shropshire Council simply does not have the tools in the box to resolve this issue."

**Response:**

The Administration has indeed pledged to spend an additional £40m on Highways over the next four years. Cllr Vasmer will not find this allocation within the budget, as otherwise we would not be referring to it as *additional* funding. There are many ways in which this funding can be provided including grants, lobbying for additional government funding, borrowing, use of reserves, efficiencies, capitalisation or reallocation of existing funds or compensatory cuts. We would discuss our proposals with James Walton and bring our fully costed proposal back to full Council for approval at an appropriate point in the future.

Our Section 151 Officer has indeed made reference to the unsustainable nature of the Council's budget. Hence a motion was brought to Council last week to write an open letter to the Prime Minister to bring our funding position to his attention. I can confirm this letter was sent on 9 March 2021.