

COUNCIL 22 SEPTEMBER 2022

MEMBER QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor Rosemary Dartnall

Please provide updated information about the proposed North West (Relief) Road in respect of the following areas;

- Has Balfour Beatty now completed the audit of Shropshire Council's project costing and confirmed, or otherwise, the most recently quoted total project price of £81 m (down from £87 m), provided to council some months ago?
- £20 m has been spent on preliminary investigations, we are told. How much of this spend is directly related to investigations for the elevated section of the proposed road? How suitable is the underlying geology for construction of the sub- and super-structure supporting the road at the west end? Is it possible to mediate for the nature of the subsurface sedimentary rocks?
- Does the administration remain convinced that this is a viable and worthy project, despite sound arguments that show it to be outdated, unlikely to relieve congestion, counter to net zero targets and poor value for taxpayers' money?

Response from Councillor Dean Carroll, Portfolio Holder for Physical Infrastructure (highways and assets)

Please provide updated information about the proposed North West (Relief) Road in respect of the following areas;

- Has Balfour Beatty now completed the audit of Shropshire Council's project costing and confirmed, or otherwise, the most recently quoted total project price of £81 m (down from £87 m), provided to council some months ago?

The engagement with Balfour Beatty on the North West Relief Road has not concluded and there are a number of areas requiring further clarification. The work to update the project cost estimate is ongoing.

- £20 m has been spent on preliminary investigations, we are told. How much of this spend is directly related to investigations for the elevated section of the proposed road? How suitable is the underlying geology for construction of the sub- and super-structure supporting the road at the west end? Is it possible to mediate for the nature of the subsurface sedimentary rocks?

Approximately £4m has been spent on ground investigations and analysis along the length of the North West Relief Road with final investigations ongoing. Many of the costs associated with the ground investigation are not location specific and therefore an accurate cost for investigations associated specifically with the viaduct is not available. The data from ground investigations to date support the original project assumptions and construction approach. The design and construction of the sub-structure and super-structure is challenging but achievable. This forms the basis of the environmental assessment included within the live planning application. Supplementary ground investigation data will be made available in due course.

- Does the administration remain convinced that this is a viable and worthy project, despite sound arguments that show it to be outdated, unlikely to relieve congestion, counter to net zero targets and poor value for taxpayers' money?

I do not agree with the statements made in the question following the phrase 'sound arguments', the administration's position on the NWRR has not changed.