

CABINET 6 SEPTEMBER 2023

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Jamie Russell

Shropshire Council's financial strategy indicates that it currently plans to sell £19.8M of assets to fund the proposed NWRR. Could you please explain what these assets are, and what additional assets are being investigated to cover the much anticipated substantial increase in price for the project?

Emma Bullard

In a meeting between Shropshire Council, the Environment Agency and Daniel Kawczynski MP on 28 Aug 2022, Shropshire Council stated that they were confident that 'additional costs would be met by way of CiL moneys, capital return on land disposal, borrowing (that already has full council approval) and potential DfT additional funding'. Could you please say what total budget for the North West Relief Road this was based on and how much of the overspend was planned to be met by each of Cil money, land disposal, borrowing and DfT additional funding?

Fleur Mcindoe

In September 2022 Shropshire Council unanimously voted for a motion to support the Right to Grow on suitable plots of public land. This was an exciting moment for many community gardening projects such as the one my husband and I run in Shrewsbury: The Street Allotment Project. However, almost a year on, we have no news on our community-supported expression of interest to establish such a site on Rocke Street/Old Potts Way. We submitted the design with detailed information of the plan, as required, through Shrewsbury Town Council. Our local councillor has explained that our application, along with another in Oswestry, was intended to trial the system but there appears to be no progress. Disappointingly, we have completely missed this summer's growing season. We hope not to miss the opportunity of planting fruit trees this autumn. Please can you provide an update on both the Rocke Street, Shrewsbury application and the Oswestry application? How does the council propose to ensure this system is easy for members of the public to use?

Charles Green

At the last Cabinet meeting on 19 July, Shropshire Council adopted a new Supplementary Planning Document for the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, which is now to form a material consideration in the planning application process. This means that there are now six SPDs. One of those, which was adopted over twelve years ago at the Cabinet meeting on 13 July 2011, is the Supplementary Planning Document on Sustainable Design (with its integral Sustainability Checklist), which was approved on that date, also for application as part of the development management process. The use of this SPD is enshrined within Core Strategy Policy CS6 : Sustainable Design and Development Principles, which says at paragraph 4.78 that "To mitigate climate change through sustainable construction, all proposals, including

changes to the existing building stock, will be required to complete a sustainability checklist to accompany planning applications". This follows on from this Sustainable Design SPD, which states at paragraph 5.1 that "As outlined in Policy CS6, all development proposals must complete the Sustainability Checklist as a validation requirement and be in accordance with at least the minimum standards set out within it". Having declared a climate emergency in May 2019, the matter of sustainability should be to the fore in Shropshire Council's approach to development. Why then, does Shropshire Council not require all planning applications to comply with this paragraph 4.78 of policy CS6 and complete the Sustainability Checklist as a validation requirement? Submitted by Charles Green on behalf of CPRE Shropshire

Nicola Squire

The public could not rely on officers to robustly defend the Planning Committee's refusal of the Footbridge Farm intensive poultry application on appeal (22/03021/REF). The key harms found by the Planning Inspector relating to odour and ammonia were entirely due to the expert evidence introduced by the public and pursued at the appeal hearing with legal counsel emphasising these points and noting the untested assumptions in the applicant's evidence, particularly those in AS Modelling & Data's (ASM&D) assessments. ASM&D's assessments were incorrectly given 'significant weight in the planning balance' because, according to Cabinet, officers' chosen experts (ADAS and the Council's Environmental Protection team) advised the assessments were 'fit for purpose' when, according to the Inspector, they never were. Cabinet further stated 'specialist consultees' carefully assess technical assessments within poultry applications as part of the planning process, and will continue to look at the suitability of methodologies used in the assessments, and will take into account the Footbridge Farm appeal decision — all of which is actually no more than what officers and consultees involved should routinely be doing anyway. Therefore, what reasons have the officers involved identified as to why they repeatedly failed over 6 years to correctly assess the Footbridge Farm application; and, what improvements have they identified and/or implemented to reduce the risk of incorrectly assessing such applications again; and, what action plan do they have for retrospectively reviewing other applications where ASM&D's assessments had been given 'significant weight in the planning balance'?