

PUBLIC QUESTIONS
COUNCIL JULY 18 2024

Question from Shauneay Connor

Given the current financial situation of Shropshire Council, can I ask whether any plans exist to further develop the Swimming and Leisure facilities in Market Drayton?

Response from Councillor Robert Macey, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital

There are no specific plans for the further development of these facilities at this stage. However, this is currently under review.

The Swimming and Fitness Centre at Market Drayton is one of the facilities managed by Shropshire Community Leisure Trust as part of the Council's main leisure services operating contract. That contract ends in July 2027.

In preparation for retendering the contract, a study is underway to assess the investment needs and development opportunities at all Shropshire Council owned leisure centres.

The study will include an assessment of latent demand to analyse current and future needs at each facility, as well as a review of the existing provision. This should allow us to identify and prioritise areas for potential capital investment. The research will be completed by the end of October 2024.

Should the study find potential for further improvements at facilities a business case will be developed. For any scheme to progress the proposals would need to be financially sustainable, generating sufficient income to justify the expenditure. But it is worth noting that demand for our services at Market Drayton Swimming and Fitness Centre is strong. In the financial year 2023/24 visitor numbers rose by 22.7% on the previous 12 months, showing a continuing strong recovery from the pandemic.

In addition to plans for the Market Drayton Swimming and Fitness Centre, a separate feasibility study is currently being undertaken to examine the priorities for investment at Greenfields Sports Ground in Market Drayton. The outcome of this study will be a range of fully costed options for facility improvements as well as a draft overall master plan, for development and delivery with a range of local partners who provide sporting opportunities to the community.

Question from Jamie Russell

The Shrewsbury North West Relief Road is projected to cost around £200m. At present the DfT has only committed to a grant of £80m for the road's costs (as per the department's response to [Highways Magazine](#)).

Does the council have written confirmation that the DfT will contribute more than £80m to the project? If yes, what is the maximum the DfT has agreed to spend?

How much does the council currently expect the NWRR to cost?

If the DfT contribution is capped at £80m and the NWRR is due to cost more than this, will the council be able to proceed with the road without bankrupting itself?

Please explain how.

Response from Councillor Dan Morris, Portfolio Holder for Highways

- *Does the council have written confirmation that the DfT will contribute more than £80m to the project? If yes, what is the maximum the DfT has agreed to spend?*

The council has written confirmation of the DfT's funding allocation of £54.4m based on its earlier Outline Business Case submission. The council also has confirmation from the former Marches LEP of its allocation of £4.2m to the Oxon Link Road section. No further confirmation of additional funding from DfT is now expected before the submission of the Full Business case in Autumn 2024

- *How much does the council currently expect the NWRR to cost?*

The total cost of the scheme will be dependant on the outcome of the current open market tender for a Main Contractor. On completion of the tender process, full scheme costs will be collated from the construction costs and other required activities (design, planning application submission etc), and a comprehensive scheme cost published as part of the Full Business Case in Autumn 2024.

- *If the DfT contribution is capped at £80m and the NWRR is due to cost more than this, will the council be able to proceed with the road without bankrupting itself? Please explain how.*

The council will lay out its approach to match funding the scheme as part of the Full Business case in Autumn 2024. The council remains confident that it has the required capital funds to meet the cost requirements of the scheme, and the preferred approach to the allocation of these will also be captured in the Final Business Case.

Question from Graham Betts

Parking and speeding are issues of Community concern on the Darwin's Walk and connected Bowbrook Meadows developments in Shrewsbury. West Mercia Police have commented they are unable to 'police' the situation because of the road design.

Unlawful parking in contravention of the 1988 Road Traffic Act section 21 (parking on cycle paths) is a repetitive problem. When some residents highlighted unlawful parking on the cycle paths, the offenders stated they did not know it was a cycle path because it is not correctly signed and marked.

Can the Council explain:

- 1) Why there are no traffic, pedestrian, cycling, or school signs posted on Darwin's Walk and Bowbrook Meadows, other than a single and nearly obliterated pavement cycle sign.
- 2) Why the cycle path on the developments is not signed in accordance with Department of Transport guidance LTN 1/20 or its predecessor?
- 3) Why none of the designated £777,250 raised from s.106 and CIL payments has been used to sign the developments roads? This compares poorly with the adjacent Bank Farm Road which is the same route to school, and has 149 signs and markings.
- 4) Why the design of the roads prevents West Mercia Police from applying the law?

Response from Councillor Chris Schofield, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services

Shropshire Council as Highway Authority are aware of the concerns raised by local stakeholders with regard to parking and speeding on the Bowbrook development Shrewsbury. The current status of the majority of the roads, footways and street lighting within development is that they are privately owned and maintained, ie. not adopted by the Council. On this basis, the cycle paths, whilst intended for cycle use, do not have the status as a formal cycle path.

In response to the specific questions;

Can the Council explain:

- 1) *Why there are no traffic, pedestrian, cycling, or school signs posted on Darwin's Walk and Bowbrook Meadows, other than a single and nearly obliterated pavement cycle sign.*

The road marking and signing were designed in accordance with The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002. These regulations were subsequently superseded by Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016. Section 11.11.3 of Chapter 3 Traffic Signs Manual 2019 states;

Repeater signs may be placed along the route in order to remind both pedestrians and cyclists that pedal cycles can be legally ridden on the footway or footpath.

Due to the current status of the route and the guidance, it is not a requirement to provide repeater signs, however we are aware of the concerns raised by residents with regard to the lack of repeaters along the route and the conflict that has occurred on occasion between road users. We are therefore looking into the matter and will liaise with the developers prior to adoption.

- 2) *Why the cycle path on the developments is not signed in accordance with Department of Transport guidance LTN 1/20 or its predecessor?*

As stated above in responses to Question 1 – The road marking and signing were designed in accordance with The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 which was the relevant document at the time.

- 3) *Why none of the designated £777,250 raised from s.106 and CIL payments has been used to sign the developments roads? This compares poorly with the adjacent Bank Farm Road which is the same route to school, and has 149 signs and markings.*

The majority of roads within the development are not currently under the control of Shropshire Council it is therefore not appropriate to use CIL payments towards signing the development. Section 106 contributions are intended to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding highway network, it would therefore not be appropriate to use Section 106 contributions for this purpose. With regard to Bank Farm Road it should be noted that the Cycle/Footway is segregated and therefore is supported by relevant road marking and signing.

- 4) *Why the design of the roads prevents West Mercia Police from applying the law?*

This is a matter for West Mercia Police, not Shropshire Council.

Question from Frank Oldaker

Regarding the "open market tendering exercise" for the North West Relief Road, being carried out to feed into the cost estimate to be included in the Final Business Case, can the following please be clarified.

1. If the project goes ahead will these tenders be open for acceptance or will there be a chance for contractors to revise their offers?
2. Does the form of contract allow for extra costs - eg for repeated flooding of the works - to be met by the Council?

3. How are costs for undecided requirements, such as those still to be agreed with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent to protect the water sources at Shelton, being allowed for in the estimate.

Response from Councillor Dan Morris, Portfolio Holder for Highways

1. *If the project goes ahead will these tenders be open for acceptance or will there be a chance for contractors to revise their offers?*

All tenderers have been advised of the current forward programme for the North West Relief Road project, and are required to confirm their ability to mobilise in order to meet the programme requirements as part of their submission. All submitted tenders will be expected to be priced on this basis.

2. *Does the form of contract allow for extra costs - eg for repeated flooding of the works - to be met by the Council?*

The contractual terms will apportion such risks and their costs either to both parties, or to the council or the contractor, as is most appropriate. This will be a key element of the evaluation process to be undertaken in due course, and will give greater cost certainty to the council on award of any future contract.

3. *How are costs for undecided requirements, such as those still to be agreed with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent to protect the water sources at Shelton, being allowed for in the estimate.*

The tender process has made full reference to the draft planning conditions agreed at Northern Planning Committee in February 2024. As these effectively define the scope of works required in order to meet the requirements of the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water in some detail, tenderers will be able to anticipate their involvement, and therefore costs, in discharging such conditions when required by them as part of their submission.