

Question from Ms C Protherough, Herefordshire

Question 1

Population Increase and Demographic Change by 2030

A recent report in Hereford Times (14 Jan) recorded that Hereford County hospital had to postpone some operations to cope with the continuing high demands of emergency care through the Accident and Emergency department, which was seeing a higher numbers of patients than expected, the majority with serious illnesses or injury

An increasing population, particularly of older people, is likely to result in more essential services for both emergencies and elective surgery, which have to be provided by a hospital based service

Councillor Jarvis asserted on 20 July 2012 that the existing hospital services will be able to cope with a population increase caused by the provision of 16,500 new homes, as proposed in the Local Development Framework, solely by reliance on the health and social care model of treatment of more people in the community.

What statistical evidence has been provided of likely projected need for emergency hospital beds, elective surgery and hospital births, taking into account overall population increase and demographic change by 2030, in further dialogue, if it has taken place since July 2012, between Herefordshire Council and the Health services on the implications of large scale population expansion on current hospital provision?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 1

During a career spanning 30 years as a professional in health care including a deep knowledge and understanding of primary, emergency and elective care, I rarely experienced a time when resources were not under pressure because of increasing demand and expectation. No matter what we do I do not envisage a time when services will not be under pressure for one reason or another.

The hypothesis put forward by the question is based on an article in the Hereford Times and a rather simplistic assumption i.e. based on “an increasing population, particularly of older people” and that as a community we will continue to do more of the same, which is not the case.

It does not recognise some of the key aims described in the draft Core Strategy which are supported by the evidence base, such as the proposals to increase the number of young people who remain in, or return to the county, to increase the number of people of working age who are economically active, or the Health & Wellbeing Strategy shared by both health and local government to increase people’s health & wellbeing, support independence into older age, and increase the number of care based services provided in the home and community.

All the evidence base for the Local Plan, including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment the production of which is overseen by the Health & Wellbeing Board, is now available for inspection on a dedicated website accessible through the planning policy pages of the Council's website (link <https://beta.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan-evidence-base/>).

In addition to this I would make the point that whilst I cannot speak for the NHS I anticipate that it will respond to the ongoing consultation should it feel the need and that any such feedback, as with all, will be welcomed.

Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton, Hereford

Question 2

The draft Local Plan Core Strategy

The draft document currently available refers on a number of occasions to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. (i.e Page 60 draft Core Strategy to Cabinet 27.2.13 – particular transport proposals necessary to bring forward the Core strategy proposals are detailed in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan).

So that I, and members of the public, can understand the financial implications of the proposed Core Strategy, due to go to consultation on 4th March 2013, would the Cabinet Member responsible please advise me as to where I can find this Infrastructure Delivery Plan referred to in the draft Core Strategy and the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 2

As Mrs Morawiecka is aware, the public consultation commenced in accordance with our timetable on 4 March and will run until 22 April 2013.

I refer to my answer to public question number 1; the evidence base for the Local Plan, including the document referred to by Mrs Morawiecka is now available for inspection.

Supplementary Question

I note that the Core Strategy Infrastructure Delivery Plan refers in 1-10 to 1-18 about prioritisation of projects from “fundamental “ down to “desirable”. However, the ranking given to projects in the IDP differs from that in Appendix 1. i.e.the upgrading sewage treatment is described as fundamental in para.1-11 but is ranked a grade lower in Appendix1. Which ranking order should members of the public be considering during the current consultation and who agreed this prioritisation of the key infrastructure projects?

Cabinet Member Written Response

Thank you for drawing my attention to the discrepancy between the main text of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the associated appendix. I confirm that the main document was correct in identifying improvements to sewage treatment works as fundamental. The appendix has been amended to reflect the content of the main document.

The categorisation of priorities of infrastructure projects was undertaken by Cabinet members.

Question from Mr D Morawiecki, Breinton, Hereford

Question 3

s106 Agreements – Affordable Housing

The Department of Communities and Local Government in Dec 2012 gave new guidance on the financing of growth plans. Paragraph 22 states:

“the charging authority should also prepare and provide information about the amounts raised in recent years through s106 agreements. This should include the extent to which affordable housing and other targets have been met”.

Would the Cabinet member please advise me where I can find this report on s106 funding in recent years and delivery of affordable housing?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 3

Although the advice from the Department of Communities and Local Government is relatively recent, Herefordshire Council already has in place a detailed set of monitoring arrangements in relation to Section 106 Agreements, and makes this information available through Annual Monitoring Reports which are published on planning policy pages of the council's website (Link: <https://beta.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/monitoring/>).

Supplementary Question

S.106 Monies cannot be spent except as prescribed, for example, Three Dragons anticipates community infrastructure levy will be spent on schools when before it would have been S.106 monies funding education. How has this change in funding streams been factored into the delivery of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan?

Cabinet Member Written Response

I would refer you back to the Core Plan pages on the Council's website and if this does not answer your question please come back to me.

Question from Ms J Debbage, Hereford

Question 4

Northern Relief Road

With 500 new homes planned at Holmer West and most of the employment land being south of Roman Road, in the City or in the 'prime employment location' of Rotherwas, who is the Northern relief road being built to benefit considering that sustainable transport links across the City are planned as part of the Local Transport Plan and the problem of 'severance' across three parishes will be created?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 4

There is not a Northern relief road. Any new road infrastructure provided to the north of Hereford will form an element of a relief road to the west of the city.

The road is described as a relief road in recognition of its important role for the county as a whole in relieving the centre of Hereford of traffic. This is in the context of housing and employment land growth proposals for Hereford. The additional capacity provided by the relief road, supported by other improvements such as the city Link Road for which we already have planning approval, will enable the council to allocate further road space to more sustainable forms of transport in the centre of Hereford as part of its transport plan.

However the benefits of this development for the county's roads network go far beyond improved traffic management and are fundamental to realising the ambition for the county to develop and maintain a successful economy as a whole. To achieve this we need more and better paid local jobs with good quality housing that meets everyone's needs. An improved roads and transport system, which includes greater use of sustainable transport options such as cycling, walking and public transport, is an essential piece in the overall jigsaw.

The aim of the relief road is to provide better links and increased connectivity rather than create severance; detailed design work will be undertaken as the project is advanced in order to identify and mitigate against any risks at a local level.

Question from Dr DA Penny, Hereford

Question 5

Relief Road

What are the costings for a proposed "relief" road for Hereford? What is any such road designed to relieve from, and who will benefit from the relief?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 5

Preliminary cost estimates for a Relief Road were included in the 'Hereford Relief Road Study of Options', September 2010, available as part of the evidence base referred to in the answer provided to Public Question number 1.

For an outline of the reasons why the road is proposed within the draft Core Strategy, I refer to my answer to public question number 4 above, and emphasise again that the whole county will benefit from this improvement.

Question from Mr N O'Neil, Hereford

Question 6

Why strategically is the Northern Relief Road planned for construction before a river crossing that would serve the employment area of Rotherwas?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 6

It is not; the draft Core Strategy promotes a western relief road in support of housing and employment land proposals for Hereford. This will include a river crossing and, with the Rotherwas Access Road already constructed, will provide access to Rotherwas. No decisions have been taken on the phasing of the links of the western relief road.

In addition to this it would be remiss of me not to mention the Connect 2 cycleway bridge that is currently under construction.

Question from Mr T Geeson, Chair of Breinton Parish Council

Question 7

Draft Core Strategy questionnaire

The last consultation Herefordshire Council undertook on the Local Development Framework resisted using a questionnaire. Therefore I welcome that the Council have

decided to once again provide questionnaires for members of the public to respond to the new consultation on the Draft Core Strategy starting on 4th March. Bearing in mind the way Herefordshire Council segregated questionnaire responses from written responses during the previous consultation, how will the Council be treating questionnaire responses versus written responses on this occasion?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 7

I am pleased that Mr Geeson welcomes the decision to provide a questionnaire for the current Local Plan consultation exercise. This is in harmony with my determination to use this approach having listened to feedback, both positive and not so positive, on a range of consultations on differing subjects. I also sought the views of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in this regard for which I thank it. I would encourage him and others to use the questionnaire, which has been developed with support from both the Plain English Campaign and the Consultation Society. In the event that some respondents submit supplementary comments by way of written responses - these will be read, analysed and reported by assimilating the feedback under the most appropriate heading in the questionnaire.

As indicated during debate at Cabinet on 27 February 2013, a detailed analysis of the questionnaire responses, together with any other representations received will be presented to Cabinet to enable these views to be considered in formulating the Cabinet's recommendation to Council.

Supplementary Question

I thank Cllr. Hamilton for his response. Bearing in mind the length and complexity of the questionnaires , if Ward Members and Parish Councillors decide to provide their own questionnaires will these be treated the same as the Council questionnaires, or differently?

Cabinet Member Written Response

I would strongly encourage everyone to use the standard questionnaire, where there is space for free text for additional comments. Whilst I would not encourage comments to be sent in by written text as it is harder to analyse respondents may choose to do this if they feel that the questionnaire does not capture their views. That said all the results will go back to the Council's General Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with my offer to them, to report the outcome of the consultation and demonstrate how the feedback has informed things. If people want to use a questionnaire of their own I would encourage them to use to the official questions as the basis for this.

Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 8

Local Plan Core Strategy – Economic Viability Assessment

Reference background papers for the Agenda Item on the Local Plan Core Strategy, The Three Dragons report (February 2013) is a detailed assessment of various development sites' potential to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy which will help to fund necessary infrastructure to deliver the Council's Local Plan Core strategy.

However, the report does not update the Three Dragons and Roger Tyms Report (June 2011) which provided an Economic Viability Assessment of the deliverability of the whole Local Plan Core Strategy.

I should be grateful if the Cabinet member responsible for the Local Plan Core Strategy could advise me where I can find the full Economic Viability Assessment (EVA) of the Local Plan Core Strategy intended for dissemination as part of the consultation process due to commence on March 4th 2013.

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 8

Both reports are available on the website referred to in my answer to Public Question 1 above. The two reports need to be read in conjunction; the second report tests the delivery of a range of development types and sizes which are comparative to the sites identified in the draft Core Strategy.

Question from Professor A Fisher, Hereford

Question 9

Strategic Housing Locations, Provision of Infrastructure and Conservation of Nature

The draft local plan warns that:

'The achievement of the housing target for the plan period will be challenging'

and that:

'there may be a need to phase the release of new development in specific instances in order to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is provided either prior to, or co-ordinated with, the development. This will be particularly the case in respect of major elements of infrastructure such as the Hereford Relief Road.' (p 36 of the draft Plan discussed by Cabinet on 27th February)

Conservation of critically important natural habitat in Herefordshire (specifically, the River Wye Special Area of Conservation) will also potentially affect the ultimate numbers of houses that can be delivered up to 2031:

'the requirements of the NMP [Nutrient Management Plan] may include the need to phase or delay the release of housing during the plan period.' (p36)

Which of the proposed Strategic Housing Locations are dependent on 'major elements of infrastructure' and/or the successful operation of the Nutrient Management Plan (please indicate what sort of infrastructure they are dependent on) and what is the maximum number of houses that could be brought forward at each of these strategic housing locations if either the necessary major infrastructure is not forthcoming or the NMP requires delayed release of housing during the plan period or if both conditions apply?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 9

Each strategic housing site will require differing degrees of infrastructure development, and individual policies for the strategic sites set out criteria identifying key development requirements in each case. All those that feed into the areas of the Rivers Wye and Lugg covered by the Special Area of Conservation designation will ultimately be affected by the provisions of the Nutrient Management Plan. These matters will be ultimately decided and assessed through the determination of individual planning applications.

Question from Mrs P Churchward, Hereford

Question 10

Community Infrastructure Levy

DCLG Guidance for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Dec 2012, and Herefordshire Council's own draft charging schedule (March 2013 appendix C) states at paragraph 1.6:

"development should be supported by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, including the likely cost of providing that infrastructure. This plan should demonstrate the inability to provide the infrastructure through existing funding sources, hence the requirement to charge CIL".

Given that a Community Infrastructure Levy can only be charged when there is a shortfall between the total infrastructure costs of the plan (see above), would the Cabinet Member please provide the calculations regarding the shortfall that arises in Herefordshire resulting in the need for a CIL to be charged?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 10.

The relevant information is contained within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) that is part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy and can be found on the website referred to in my answer to Public Question number 1. It should be noted that the IDP is a 'live' document and projects can be added/deleted at any point.

Supplementary Question

Will the total draft C I L levies cover the shortfall in funding the plan?

Cabinet Member Written Response

We have never said that it would. This was not its purpose and this was set out in the consultation document and the background documents to it. The IDP is in preliminary draft , in the early stages of its development.

Question from Ms P Mitchell, Hereford

Question 11

Soundness of the Core Strategy: Influence of Public Consultations

The Planning Advisory Service is part of the Local Government Association and is directly funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government. It has produced a Soundness Checklist to help local authorities ensure that their Local Plans will comply with the Soundness Test required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Checklist makes it clear that to demonstrate that a plan is justified, the local planning authority must provide evidence of participation and the testing of alternatives. The Checklist advises that the evidence for both of these tests should include showing how consultation has influenced the plan.

The consultation report for the 2010 Hereford Preferred Option showed that 86% of consultees rejected the Hereford Movement Policy with the most frequent comment being 'disagree with need for relief road'

In spite of this, for the Revised Preferred Option consultation the Council simply restated that 'we will continue to propose a western relief road'. Despite not being provided with a revised option with respect to the road, the August 2012 report on the Revised Preferred Option consultation shows that the proposal remained very contentious:

'3.19 The biggest response to a single issue was the 650 written responses which commented upon the Hereford Relief Road. Around 53% of responses were either supportive of a relief road or had some limited concerns while 47% were undecided or disagree with the principle of a road. A wide range of issues were raised including concerns about the need for a road and the supporting evidence to finance and environmental issues. A significant number of responses expressed a preference for an eastern route while others did not consider that alternatives to a road through sustainable transport measures have not [sic] been fully explored.'

How will the Council demonstrate at the Examination in Public that its many consultations have influenced the current plan with respect to its most controversial element, the Hereford relief road?

Answer from Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Answer to question 11

I recognise that the issue of a Hereford Relief Road remains a matter of public interest. This should be expected on a plan of this scale and magnitude. The eventual examination of the Plan will consider many factors including the evidence base, detailed studies assessing the environment and economic impacts of different route options and the results of the final round of comments received by the Inspector following approval of the Plan by Council later this year. In this respect it would be usual for an Inspector to be considering a proposal supported by a raft of evidence and which itself is the subject of objection. Indeed it would be unusual for a proposal of this scale to reach examination/inquiry without a degree of objection.