

Questions from members of the public: Cabinet 27 July 2018

Question 1

Mrs V Wegg-Prosser - Breinton

Please can the Nutrient Management Board Technical Advisory Group meeting minutes be published as well as minutes of the NMB itself? Without these TAG minutes the public cannot be informed of the conditions the TAG are imposing so that vital progress towards improved phosphate levels is evidenced on the proposed dashboard. When I asked for the TAG minutes to be published my request put to Cabinet on 10 May was ignored.

Response

The Nutrient Management Plan Board Technical Advisory Group is a multi-agency group chaired jointly by the Environment Agency and Natural England. Herefordshire Council does not provide the secretarial support but does attend meetings and will ensure your request is considered by the group at its next meeting.

Question 2

Ms G Parker – Lower Breinton

Every time I have attended one of the meetings at shire hall held by Hereford council it is quite clear that they are not listening to a word said by people against this bypass and they have no interest in what the wyeruinit campaign say. Can you explain why that is?

Response

I can give you my assurance that the views put forward are considered. The public consultation report being considered today provides a detailed summary of the feedback we have had from over 4000 people about this project. As with many consultations there will be differing, and often opposing views, put forward. It is our responsibility having considered all the evidence including the views of residents, businesses and organisations, to come to an evidence-based and reasoned decision. At every public meeting of the council where the project is discussed members of the public are able to ask questions in advance and at the meetings which are considered during the debate.

I accept that not everyone will agree with the decisions that we take, but don't accept that means we are not listening. It is clear from the feedback we have received, as reported today, that there is support for the Hereford Transport Package and for a bypass as part of the package. Subject to a decision today there will be further consultation later this year which will provide a further opportunity for feedback to the developing project to be made and I would encourage people to take part in this to ensure our future decisions continue to be informed.

Question 3

Mr R Parker - Lower Breinton

How many councillors have been to Breinton and stopped to think what an impact this will have on such a wonderful unspoilt part of Hereford we should be protecting this environment?

Response

I cannot answer for all 53 Herefordshire councillors, but I know the Breinton area well and have visited many times. With my Cabinet colleagues I have very recently visited the area to consider in detail the issues prior to today's debate, and I am aware that fellow councillors who are members of the General Scrutiny Committee carried out a similar visit to inform their own consideration of the matter.

Understanding the impacts, and how they may be mitigated, is an essential element of our decision-making. Herefordshire is indeed a beautiful county and we must do all that we can to ensure that we provide the conditions that enable it to thrive. Providing this necessary infrastructure will impact on the environment but, subject to any decision today, in moving the project on we will work to identify actions to mitigate those impacts wherever possible.

Question 4

Mr P Hands - Breinton

Can Councillors please confirm publicly, that the proposed Western Bypass/Relief Road/Link Road, will not improve pollution to the city of Hereford given the prevailing westerly winds or do they disagree with recent statements made by Council Officers to the contrary?

Each new household will have at least 1.5- 2 motor vehicles, creating added pollution to those already using the city roads.

Will Councillor Price now admit that the additional pollution will cause harm to the indigenous population and those with respiratory ailments or will he maintain his stance of "Road at all costs"?

Response

This is not my stance; it is that I will pursue the best option to secure the future of Herefordshire, a county I care passionately about and have lived in and farmed all my life.

Air quality modelling has concluded that the proposed scheme will redistribute traffic that currently goes through Hereford onto the bypass, leading to improvements in air quality in the centre of Hereford. This will mean improved air quality associated with traffic on homes, schools and communities adjacent to the existing A49. The implementation of Active Travel Measures within the city centre will contribute further to improving the environment for those living and working within the area.

The delivery of the bypass will have a minimal impact on air quality in the area surrounding the new road as the route will be mostly free flowing rather than stop/start traffic as is currently the case at peak times on the existing A49.

Supplementary Question

Those who attended the scrutiny meeting heard many misleading pieces of information put forward by Balfour Beatty. These were not challenged in the meeting. Balfour Beatty are

contracted by Herefordshire Council for many roles, of which many are done well, one of those roles was to advise on the Hereford bypass link road. How can they be permitted to arrange the public consultation document and then mark their own homework? Glibly it was said that 59% of the public response was in favour of a bypass when there was no option on the consultation paper to object to a bypass at all or to give a reason why it should not be built. And how can this council take major decisions on a bypass without waiting for the responses from Natural England, Highways England and the Woodland Trust? Surely any democratic body unbiased should wait for all of the information to be assembled before taking a decision. Finally, may I ask what qualifications does the cabinet member have other than being a local farmer and resident of the golden valley to oversee this project that will devastate the countryside of Hereford?

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: Decision making at any council is done by the officers and the administration, made up of elected councillors. I am the elected councillor for Golden Valley North and I have been elected to be the cabinet member for infrastructure and as such it is not whether I have a qualification, it is whether I am able to ensure that the recommendations and work done by officers are done in a sensible, evidence based fashion. I do not have to be an engineer or consultant in road building but I have the ability to talk to people to find out the answers necessary to make the decisions.

Balfour Beatty are the public realm contractor for Herefordshire Council and the work on the public consultation forms part of that contract. They are not able to be part of the procurement exercise for building the road but this consultation stage is part of their work on the public realm contract and there is no conflict of interest in this context.

Project director, WSP: Question 2 on the questionnaire used for the consultation asked whether a bypass should form part of the Hereford Transport Package. I struggle to think of a more straightforward question to ask.

Question 5

Ms K Burrows - Hereford

What plans do the Council have to ensure the long term future of the Community Farm in Warham, given the Council's preferred route will have major implications for the Farm?

The Community Farm currently provides the equivalent of 6,885 days per year of social care placements for children, young people and adults living with disability, long term health conditions and mental health issues. Crucially, the Community Farm fills the gap left by closure of other services due to funding cuts, and is provided at no operational cost to the local authority.

The facility provides a lifeline to disadvantaged people in and around Hereford. As a Community Farm volunteer, I see at first hand what a valuable service is provided.

Response

The council has had detailed discussions with both the landlord and current operator of the community farm. The landlord has confirmed that he sees no reason why the farm should not continue to operate if the by-pass is built. We will continue to work with both to establish any mitigation measures or accommodation changes necessary to enable this valued service to continue.

Question 6

Mr J Milln – Hereford

Para 11 of the report for Cabinet, states 'A total of 4,351 questionnaires were either fully or partially completed', and in para 15, '1789 of these respondents (59%) said they agreed that a bypass should form part of the package'. The claim, at para 24, that this represents a majority is untruthful, since of course 1789 respondents ticking 'yes' from a total of 4351 questionnaires is 41% not 59%. What is the number or proportion of this 41% who, in the consultation form comments boxes, indicated a preference for an Eastern route?

Response

I must correct the statement included in the question; the Phase 2 Consultation Report is not untruthful. Paragraph 15 of the Cabinet Report is quite clear that 3,033 people responded to the question 'Do you agree that a bypass should form part of the package?' Of these respondents, 1,789 (or 59%) said that they agreed a bypass should form part of the package. This indicates clear support for the bypass.

Only 74 respondents (4% of the 1,789) who supported a bypass included a comment indicating a preference for an Eastern route.

Supplementary Question

Obviously if you are prepared to count only a subset of respondents, you will skew the percentage. The fact remains 1789 ticking 'yes' to a bypass out of 4351 is 41%, and the report adds that 1747 indicating a preferred route is just 40%. We now learn quite a few volunteered preference for an Eastern route, so the actual percentage supporting a Western will be only thirty something percent, and of those only 121 or about 3% voted positively for the Red Route.

Yet I am reminded that at Full Council on 9th March, the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure said "it would be wrong to set a percentage" to the question and he is recorded as adding he would press on with his bypass no matter what. In that case would he kindly beg our indulgence for misleading us to thinking we had a say and for spending public money collecting data he uses as he chooses?

Response

I will review the specifics of your question and provide a written response. This bypass is not something that has come about in a short period of time. Consultation on the core strategy showed 79% supported a blended package of active travel measures with a bypass.

A written response was provided as follows:

3,033 people responded to the question 'Do you agree that a bypass should form part of the package?' Of these respondents, 1,789 (or 59%) said that they agreed a bypass should form part of the package. The calculation of 41% set out in the paragraph above is based on an assumption that those who did not answer this question do not support a bypass – this assumption cannot be made. We cannot presume to assume how people who do not answer a question would do so – this would not be a sound basis for presenting information – we can simply present the known information. We also set out clearly the number of people who did not respond to this question to provide complete transparency.

Only 74 respondents (4% of the 1,789 who supported a bypass forming part of the package) included a comment indicating a preference for an Eastern route.

There is no question that there is overwhelming support for active travel measures, and where these can be delivered in advance of a bypass they will be progressed. However those alone will not meet the wider objectives of the Hereford Transport package to enable the growth Herefordshire needs, to reduce congestion and improve air quality in the city centre.

The residents of the county have, consistently over a period of many years, given voice to their view that the county's infrastructure needs to be improved and in particular that the city needs a bypass. From the consultation in June 2008 when 79% of respondents stated they wanted Herefordshire Council to deliver a blended package of transport and public transport improvements including an "outer distributor road" as the bypass was then referred to, to the outcome of the most recent consultation when 59% of respondents confirmed their wish for a bypass as part of the Hereford Transport Package the message has been clear. Of course there are those who either do not support a bypass, or who support a bypass but want it to follow a different route; the fact that they are in a minority does not indicate that we are not listening or that data is being used selectively.

I would further point out that the proposed bypass is not my bypass, nor do I choose the data that gets used. The reports and appendices are collated from the consultations and technical work done to date for decisions to be taken by Cabinet on behalf of this administration. The bypass project is owned collectively by this Council working on behalf of the residents of Herefordshire

Question 7

Mrs C Palgrave – How Caple

At para 90 of the Cabinet report, the estimated cost of the Red Route is given as £153m on 2018 prices, an increase of £24m on the estimate of £129m previously used in the consultation. Applying the same increase of 18.6% to the original cost estimate for the Southern Link Road of £27m, gives a figure of just over £32m. The SLR, the second phase of the bypass, is expected to be financed from the Local Growth Fund to a limit of £27m. If the SLR construction costs were to exceed the Local Growth Fund grant, where would the additional funds come from?

Response

There is an approved budget for the Southern Link Road within the council's capital programme of £35m. Funding of £27m has already been secured from DfT with the balance being provided through a local contribution of £8m. Estimated scheme costs are monitored during the delivery of a scheme and currently remain within budget. Costs of schemes of this size do change as schemes progress; should it become apparent that costs are likely to exceed current budgetary provision this will be reported to Cabinet and approval sought for any additional funding requirement, including identification of that funding source.

Question 8

Mr R Palgrave – How Caple

In Appendix 2 to the Cabinet Report, at 6.9 Traffic Modelling and Forecasting, we read that the current forecast traffic flows from the Highways Assignment Model for the Hereford Bypass for the Opening Year (2026) project that the northern most section of the Bypass (A4103 to A49) is expected to carry a 2-way Average Annual Daily Traffic of just 7000, and the section from the A438 to the A4103 just 11300. For comparison, the July 2016 AADT figure for Greyfriars Bridge given in Table 2 of Appendix 2, was 44300. Why is the Bypass forecast to carry so little traffic?

Response

The figures selected by the questioner are not comparing like with like. The section of the proposed bypass most comparable to the Greyfriars Bridge section of the existing road would be the A465 to A438 section; the modelling shows that to have an expected 17,600 two way AADT in the opening year.

Greyfriars Bridge, as the main city river crossing, currently presents a pinch point for all traffic, whether through journeys or local journeys. Building a second river crossing as part of the bypass is not intended to remove all traffic from the current route, but will provide a suitable alternative enabling drivers to select the most appropriate route for their journey. In particular it will allow through journeys to be undertaken without the need to enter the city centre. The traffic modelling methodology used follows nationally accepted WEBTAG standards and these initial estimates will be tested and developed further using this methodology as the scheme progresses.

Question 9

Ms J Richards – Hereford

The report to Cabinet says that “The need for significant investment in transport infrastructure is recognised by the council, the LEP, and Highways England”. It also states in para 105 that there is ongoing consultation with Highways England, Natural England, Environment Agency etc. Why is there no record or evidence of this “ongoing consultation” published in the reports to either Scrutiny or the Cabinet?

Response

The consultation report published with the Cabinet agenda specifically relates to the Phase 2 consultation; the organisations referenced in the question made no response to that consultation. The issue that you raise was explored by the General Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18 July; the recommendation of the committee and the proposed response to that recommendation are referenced at paragraph 58.

Supplementary question

I was referring to the cabinet report not the phase 2 consultation report. The cabinet report at paragraph 98 says that “the need for significant investment in transport infrastructure is recognised by the council, the LEP and Highways England”. At paragraph 105 it says “there is ongoing engagement with statutory consultees. This includes: consultation with Highways England on transport modelling, developing the business case and establishing the required design standards; consultation with Historic England discussing options to avoid adverse impacts on heritage assets, including the setting of listed buildings; consultation with Natural

England to agree the approach to the Habitats Regulation Screening Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment; and the Environment Agency to discuss matters in relation to watercourses and flood risk, particularly design requirements for the River Wye.”

If Highways England have said it supports significant investment in transport infrastructure and has been consulted about developing a business case etc. and Natural England is responding in an ongoing manner about the approach to screening and environmental impacts where is the evidence to support these statements made by the authors of this report and why is this not publically available?

Response to supplementary

It is clear that over the last number of years the many, many, many conversations and meetings with officers and officers of the mentioned partners have been ongoing and have got to a position where this scheme is a priority with our partners.

It is not necessary for our partners to put forward every consultation that has taken place as this covers many different layers of the organisations. When the business case is developed alongside the planning process we will have responses from these partners. The process is what it is. We are here today to further that process in the choice of the preferred route. It will all become public in the business case as it comes and is developed and the funding alongside it.

Question 10

Mrs E Morawiecka - Breinton

Alternative options rejected in the recommendations to Cabinet include “Deferring a decision on the preferred corridor for further assessment would add significant delay to the programme for taking forward the scheme, prolong the uncertainty for residents and landowners affected by the short list of routes and incur significant additional costs” What are the additional costs incurred by not spending up to £2.45million of borrowed money on consultants reports in 2018/19?

Response

As the report sets out, a delay to the decision to select a preferred route would have a number of impacts. Increased cost is one and this would be a result of delivering the scheme in later financial years than currently programmed which would result in higher consultants and contractors costs as a result of inflation. It is also important to remember that a delay in selecting a preferred route will mean uncertainty and stress for residents and landowners affected by all possible route corridors. It is also important to note that money is not borrowed until it is required.

Supplementary question

I notice that in previous meetings Councillor Price has expressed expectations of central government funding and also has expectations that the new road will be adopted by Highways England. There is no written evidence of this. There is also no assessment that this road delivers best value for money over alternative transport measures such as active travel measures.

At the current time there is no funding in place for this project. You are going to have to borrow the £2.54m for the next stage of consultation, which I understand will be going to Balfour Beatty who will be doing the next round. Even if the council is successful with the current bid the council would then have to borrow a minimum of £65m to deliver just the

road, even if the council is successful with the housing infrastructure fund. There is no decision yet.

In view of the situation in Northamptonshire, which has had its second warning, is this cabinet confident to ignore the viability assessment of the planning inspector on the core strategy local plan which said if the council were to pursue this project it could risk the financial viability? Is cabinet here today to risk the financial viability and the future of Herefordshire Council itself?

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: We are not here to risk the viability of Herefordshire Council. We are here to be responsible in what we do. The business case for this route is being built up and the funding comes as part of that business case, it is worked up with national funding partners. The process of getting to a point of being able to get the funding into the delivery of a road must be followed and we are following that process correctly. Balfour Beatty are the council's public realm contractors and are given funding to deliver what we expect according to that process. National funding partners will look to the council and its contractors for evidence that the business case is sound for this scheme.

I believe our financial officer is comfortable with the situation and that we are robust in our financial decision making.

Project director, WSP: the strategic outline business case includes value for money for different sections of route from the A465 to the A4103 Worcester Road. A benefit cost ratio for different combinations of route is expressed, including for the section of route we are looking at today. The benefit cost ratio is only part of the value for money discussion and we will be looking at this in more detail in the next stage. It is not correct to say that the strategic outline business case is not relevant to the decision being taken today.

Question 11

Mr A Morawiecki - Breinton

The report option 3 says "Not progressing this work (the bypass) will mean the HTP objectives and core strategy growth targets cannot be achieved." With the opening of the City Link Rd in Hereford bringing forward a minimum of 800 new homes in the Core Strategy "Urban village", where is the evidence that a lack of road building has prevented delivery of any new housing or new jobs in Hereford, below levels predicted by the council in their Core Strategy?

Response

Some growth will be possible and indeed is taking place. However delivery of the projected requirement of 6,500 new homes for the city will be constrained by the lack of a bypass and associated travel measures. A number of studies have been prepared over a number of years to demonstrate the need for new road infrastructure in Hereford to enable the city to grow and achieve its housing and employment land targets. These studies are available to view on the [Local Plan](#) evidence base pages of the council's website. For example, the Hereford Transport Strategy Phasing Study Strategic prioritisation (2014) concluded that, on the basis of the level of development proposed in the Core Strategy, new road infrastructure from the A49 to the north of Hereford and the A49 in the south was required in order to enable the achievement of Core Strategy growth with a need to provide a River Wye crossing by 2022 followed by the completion of the bypass no later than 2027. This recommendation is reflected in the adopted Core Strategy policies itself, in particular policy

SS3 regarding housing delivery and Appendix 5 which sets out the relationship between the delivery of housing and timing of infrastructure.

Supplementary Question

The most recent authority monitoring report 2017 shows that the Hereford area has delivered net housing completions of 1,087 units in 2011-2017, an average of 181 net completions per annum. In this report Herefordshire Council has forecast that a total of just 345 new houses will be completed in the five years to 2022 on the strategic urban sites in Hereford, including the urban village. This would indicate that the claims that option 3, not progressing the road, would prevent delivery of the core strategy growth targets is not supported by the latest evidence provided by the council as the objectives are not being achieved even with the millions invested in the city link road. How does a 60mph dual carriageway through new housing estates at three elms bring forward the over inflated housing growth particularly the 35% affordable homes which developers have said cannot be delivered if they have to fund the road.

Response to supplementary:

I understand that housing numbers to be delivered this year and next year are rising rapidly. The 2017 figures will be published soon.

With regard to housing at three elms, the reason why we are building the business case with our national partners to be able to fund the road is so that we can deliver the housing set out in the core strategy with the ability for developers to deliver the affordable housing and infrastructure within the site. I agree that developers have an expectation of making a profit from what they do and may say that they cannot deliver according to the core strategy plans. We are trying to enable this by the policies we are pursuing. The housing in the core strategy was always going to be back loaded as we were starting from a low point.

Question 12

Ms J Harris - Hereford

The junction of the bypass with the A465 is shown as a 5-armed roundabout. How does this relate to the current plan to construct a 4-armed roundabout at that location as part of the consented Southern Link Road?

Response

The four arm roundabout currently planned for the Southern Link Road will be enlarged to include an additional arm for the bypass so making this a five arm roundabout.

Supplementary Question

You expect the southern link road to be open in 2020 and have stated that the bypass might be opened in phases from 2022 onwards. The four armed roundabout for the southern link road might therefore only be in use for 2 or 3 years before it is rebuilt. The double construction will add considerably to the impact on road users and local residents. Is this a wise use of public money and wouldn't it be better to delay the building of the southern link road until the bypass is a viable project when the roundabout would only need to be built once.

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: I have raised this point for at least the last year. I believe that delivery of the southern link road and the bypass could be closer together than originally anticipated. The four arm roundabout is part of the scheme for the southern link road. The bypass is a completely different scheme but it adds to the bypass in its total. I have raised this question many times with officers to ensure that the five arms of the bypass at that roundabout is thought about in terms of how we deliver it. I share your point not just from a construction point of view but from the point that we construct a roundabout that then has to be changed for the bypass as it comes forward. I am raising this as an issue going forward.

Question 13

Mr P Chapman – Breinton

At public meetings during the public consultation WSP confirmed that the proposed Bypass increases congestion in the City. If the addition of new houses impacting on the new route has yet to be modelled it seems strange the Council claims that the new road improves journey times in the city. Since Council has also told me no modelling has yet been undertaken, is there actually any evidence there will be an improvement on current journey times in Hereford or is this Council mis-information, and that journey times will be worse as WSP has confirmed?

Response

Preliminary traffic modelling has been undertaken, as reported in the Scheme Assessment Report (Section 6.9, this is Appendix 2 to the Cabinet Report). This modelling included the impact of new housing in the city. Once the preferred route is selected and more detailed design of the scheme is completed, further traffic modelling will be undertaken which will further examine the impact on Hereford's road network.

The results of the preliminary traffic modelling were included in the Phase 2 Consultation (see Consultation Brochure – Appendix C.4 of the Phase 2 Consultation Report, which is Appendix 1 of the Cabinet Report) show improvements to journey times on the A49 through the city, not a worsening as the questioner asserts.

Supplementary Question

In your response you have implicitly stated that detailed modelling has not been undertaken. It is claimed that there will be improvements to the A49 through the city but the A49 will no longer route through the city so this does not make sense. My question was about journey times relevant to the citizen of Hereford and journey times in Hereford and not for people who have no interest in visiting and thus bypassing our city. In public meetings and consultation events WSP on questioning has been clear that congestion will worsen as the questioner correctly asserted. This does amount to council misinformation. In order that the council is not economical with the truth to its citizens shouldn't this modelling be accurately undertaken after carefully reading appendix 1 and appendix 2 before concluding any decision on routing.

Response to supplementary:

Project director, WSP: It is not correct to think that the only traffic that will use the bypass is that looking to pass through Hereford. There will be a lot of other people who choose to use the bypass who are starting or finishing their journey in Hereford. It is possible to think of lots of different origins and destinations for journeys where people will be using the bypass for part of that journey. It is important that we recognise that the bypass is not simply there for

through traffic, it will also redistribute some of the traffic which either starts or finishes in Hereford. In so doing it will be taking traffic away from some of the existing roads within Hereford and thereby creating relief to those roads. We also have to recognise that there is new growth for the city in terms of new homes and new jobs which will mean new traffic. We then have to look at the net effects of all that taking place alongside the fact that the Hereford transport package is more than just a bypass, it is also the active travel measures which will be encouraging as many people as possible for shorter journeys to be walking and cycling. The further traffic modelling referred to will be able to take account of the interaction of the bypass and the active travel measures. It is not correct to say that we haven't done any traffic modelling, but the further modelling will be more detailed and will take into account the interaction between the bypass and the active travel measures and when that is in place it will be clear the extent of relief that is forecast to occur over the whole of the Hereford city road network.

The journey times for individual journeys will depend on the routes that they follow. Some of those journeys will use the A49 for part of their journey. What number each road will have in the future is unknown. Travelling conditions on the existing A49 will improve when the bypass is in place. The bypass from north to south will make it quicker for through traffic to use the bypass than use the existing route.

Question 14

Ms J Tonge – Hereford

The presentation to Scrutiny says that the red route was the best performing route 'after traffic, engineering and environmental assessments'. How could WSP arrive at this conclusion when environmental surveys were being undertaken the day before the Scrutiny meeting, and so the environmental surveys would be incomplete in arriving at such conclusions?

Response

Appendix 3 to the cabinet report on today's agenda sets out the work completed to date on which WSP have based their conclusions. The environmental surveys undertaken to date are appropriate for the Stage 2 Assessment. National guidance, e.g. DMRB Volume 11, Section 3, Part 4, covering ecology surveys, only requires completion of a desk study and preliminary walkover survey at this Stage. Data has been gathered in a staged way with initial survey work informing the requirement for more detailed surveys. This approach was agreed with Natural England and the County Ecologist. The data gathered to date has been used together with desk study information, habitat information, and ecological knowledge regarding species behaviour and habitat preferences and is sufficient to inform route selection.

The next stage will incorporate further detailed ecology surveys to identify mitigation measures required for delivery. It is these surveys that are currently being undertaken, in the appropriate time of year.

Supplementary Question

It is interesting to note that the desktop studies and preliminary studies failed to identify a nationally important orchard of rare cider fruit varieties built up over many years even though the cider apple is the symbol of the council's brand. In view of the lack of detailed information available from the desk top studies on the southern link road and the poor quality surveys undertaken for this second phase of this proposed bypass how confident are the council that

other nationally important environments, habitats and species will not lie in the route corridor being brought forward for selection today?

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: With reference to the collection of cider apples we have met with the Pippin Trust, understood what their issues are and we are working with them to see what we can do. On the wider question of are there other ecological or environmental issues, there are bound to be environmental issues on a road that passes for 8.5km through open countryside. The point of this exercise is to choose the best performing route of all of the options.

Question 15

Mrs J Morris – Hereford

The assumed configuration (Highway Standard) of the 'bypass' at this stage is Wide Single plus 1 (WS2+1), although the Scheme Assessment Report raises the question of a dual carriageway as design work progresses and refers to the possibility of additional land being required (para 5.11.9).

Can the Cabinet member confirm that such additional land has been allowed for in the red route corridor and the impacts on property and natural features are for a dual carriageway road?

Response

Yes, and this is a consistent assumption across all seven route options. The impacts of the scheme would be assessed in full in the Environmental Impact Assessment at the next stage. The impacts on properties would be the same for either a dual or a wide single 2 + 1 carriageway.

Supplementary Question

In view of the impact of air pollution, noise and other dangers is it appropriate for a 60mph carriages to go through the middle of new proposed housing estates planned for west and north of Hereford city?

Response to supplementary

Cabinet member, infrastructure: In the context of this question yes I would say that it is. There are many examples around the country of housing built up to the edge of a dual carriageway so we are not doing anything different here. The evidence that supports whether it is producing pollution or is difficult for residents etc. will come out of the business case as we move forward. In the context of Hereford and dealing with its traffic infrastructure and its growth for housing, we will be building houses somewhere and the infrastructure will go somewhere and this is what this process is taking us through.

Question 16

Mr E Morfett – Hereford

The Cabinet Report at para 101 says that "CPRE Herefordshire, Hereford Green Party, Historic England and the National Trust set out concerns that the proposed bypass could have environmental and heritage impacts and would not deliver the benefits claimed." and

that "These comments will be considered further as the project is progressed. "What will be the process for further consideration?

Response

The next stage of the process, if the red route is confirmed as the preferred route, will be to prepare an application for planning consent for the Hereford Transport Package (HTP) which includes the development of more detailed design. Comments received during Phase 2 consultation will inform the design process and discussions will be held with consultees throughout the design and assessment process where appropriate. Phase 3 of consultation will then be undertaken on the detailed design of the HTP, including any measures required to mitigate adverse effects identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment. The outcome of that consultation will inform the next decision.

Supplementary Question

The phase 2 consultation did not provide the public any detailed information on the impact on biodiversity. I speak as a fisherman, a geologist and a lover of nature. In fact the very considerable impact on protected species and heritage landscapes was downplayed in summary and ignored in detail. How can this public consultation process and strategic decision be considered in any way valid without these very important facts which are a major threat to the biodiversity of the fourth longest river in this country?

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: We will be crossing the river in a 50m corridor. We will protect everything that we need to protect. We will look at every aspect of the environment its ecology and all of the points raised to mitigate to the best advantage available. The people that are advising us will make sure they follow best practice in the delivery of this scheme.

Question 17

Ms A Simpson – Hereford

Would the Council members please tell us whether they have devised, or are working on, a plan to redress the imbalance in footfall & consequently trade between the 'Old Market' shopping centre & the traditional heart of the City, thereby (if successful) uniting what has in effect become a divided City in terms of the shopping areas, to the particular detriment of the Independent Quarter.

Response

I don't accept that Hereford has become a divided city. The Old Market development has indeed been successful and I welcome this. I am also pleased to note that footfall trend data provided by the Hereford BID team demonstrates that the city centre is performing well in comparison to national high street trends.

That doesn't mean that we can't collectively do more both through transport and public realm improvements, as well as supporting the work of the Hereford BID team who have implemented a programme of events and promotions and are developing wayfinding signage, aimed at increasing footfall throughout the bid area using a one centre approach.

The Hereford City Centre Transport Package includes a range of public realm projects which will regenerate the areas of Commercial Road, Blueschool and Newmarket Street as well as the provision of a new transport hub at the train station. These public realm improvements will build on the improvements delivered on Newmarket Street to ensure improvements to

the public realm consistent with Widemarsh Street and High Street and the works currently ongoing in Commercial Street. We will be consulting on these proposals later this year.

Question 18

Dr P Ronan – Breinton

The capital programme report to full Council on 13th July highlighted that the Council will have to undertake £2.96 Million prudential borrowing to fund more consultants' reports to progress the development of the bypass project. How can the Cabinet determine that this road project is best use of borrowed money and will generate a better return than any other investment such as active travel measures, sustainable modes of school transport or investment in social services, libraries, museums or tourism?

Response

The investment of £2.96m (which is not borrowed until it is needed) supports the further development of the detail of the scheme and this provision has been included in the capital programme approved by Council. It does not prevent investment in other valued services. Indeed the council is investing capital funding in precisely the areas that you suggest and more; our current capital programme includes investment in a wide range of active travel measures, libraries improvements, schools improvements, and creating much needed residential nursing care capacity as well as investing in improving our roads and supporting the growth of our economy.

The strategic outline business case for the Hereford Transport package sets out the benefits that will be delivered by the bypass project and a package of active travel measures and demonstrates a robust case for investment. This can be seen on the council's website. The outline business case will further develop the case for the package and value for money based on a bypass on the red route and a package of measures.

Supplementary Question

The strategic outline business case is for delivery of a road from the A465 south Hereford to the A4103 Worcester Road. This is not the Hereford transport package that the cabinet are considering today. The strategic outline business case appears to have underestimated the cost of this road and overestimated the benefits. Would the cabinet member please confirm that the road project being considered by cabinet today will really deliver a further 5,134 jobs on top of the 5,000 jobs the southern link road business case claims it will deliver as a separate standalone road project?

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: I cannot guarantee or suggest exact numbers. It is the principle of growth that we are talking about and what has been agreed over a number of years with the core strategy. We are aiming to produce more jobs, more investment into those jobs, we have an enterprise zone that is designed to do just that and we are investing in it to produce more jobs. We have strategic and other housing sites will deliver housing. This infrastructure is necessary to make it happen. If we do not do it we will not produce any jobs extra that we are looking for. This council has three planks of being, one is for children's safeguarding, adults' wellbeing and economic growth. Economic growth comes from investment in infrastructure. We have been looking at this for over 10 years and we believe that we need to move forward to produce growth and this is why we are choosing a preferred route for the bypass today.

Question 19

Ms K Sharp – Hereford

The Red route has a significant adverse impact on the Community Farm at Warham, which supports over 60 people with disability and learning difficulties at a very low cost to the Council. What costs relating to the loss of this facility have been included in the costs to the Council for this road project?

Response

I refer to the response given to public question 5 above.

No costs relating to a loss of this facility are included. The basis for the costs estimates for the project at this stage (which are for the process of route comparison) are set out the Scheme Assessment Report contained within Appendix 2 of the cabinet report. As the project is developed detailed cost estimates will be developed for the bypass and the active travel measures to inform future decision. These detailed cost estimates will include an estimate of land acquisition and compensation/relocation costs as appropriate.

Question 20

Mr T Geeson – Hereford

Can the Cabinet member confirm that no roads or public rights of way will be closed i.e. reduced to dead ends by the choice of the red route as it passes through Breinton?

Response

Where public roads and public rights of way are affected by the Preferred Route the project team will consult fully with affected statutory bodies, interested groups and individuals to agree suitable alternative arrangements. Where appropriate local diversions will be provided, this will improve safety and connectivity on the network. The integrity of public rights of way will be maintained.

Supplementary Question

My original question asked the cabinet member to confirm that no roads or public rights of way in Breinton would be closed by the red route. The answer cannot confirm this so I assume that there will be some.

The additional information on embankments, cuttings, junctions etc contained in the new reports is causing considerable concern amongst local residents. The Scrutiny Committee were told that these were indicative designs. Can the Cabinet member confirm that these indicative designs are what the consultants prefer, what they will continue to work on and what will be built unless some new constraint emerges or the consultants are given different instructions? If these designs are not being worked on then what was the point of including them at this stage?

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: The consultants are instructed to ensure that every right of way and road is considered in the end design and ensure if there are any roads, routes or rights of way that are potentially to be closed there will be mitigation in place to make alternative arrangements. We expect the integrity of the network to be maintained. Information will be available at the next consultation. Until we have the full design potential

including all the cuttings and infill and embankments required we will see emerging issues and problems which we will be addressing.

Project director, WSP: the approach followed through development of the Hereford transport package is a proportionate approach, we have moved from 24 options to seven and once a preferred route is selected we will have one. What we had to do for the seven options was to do a consistent and comparable exercise so that we could compare them all on a like for like basis. In the next stage we will look at the designs in more detail which will include heights of embankment, depth of cutting and so on.

Cabinet member infrastructure: the process for major road building schemes which we must follow is set by the Government. Movement of earth is comparable to the site itself. We do not wish to move thousands of tonnes of earth offsite, we must deal with cuttings and fill according to the amount that has to be moved on the site. Along the Breinton area all the way from the River Wye to Kings Acre there is some quite big cuttings and where there are cuttings that earth has to be put in context of the road and there will be some embankments.

A further written response was provided as follows:

Indicative designs were provided to suggest how embankments, cuttings, junctions etc may be addressed for the purposes of comparing possible bypass routes.

Until the next phase of the work is undertaken analysing further the detail of the route and potential mitigations it isn't possible to say whether these indicative designs will be further developed or if alternative designs will be required. Consultants have been required to follow appropriate national design guidance, and will continue to do so.

Question 21

Ms J Milsom – Hereford

The selection of the preferred Red Route for the Hereford bypass will cross directly through Hereford Community Farm making this vital service unworkable. Cllr Price and his team met with representatives and families on 1st Feb & 6 March and should now be fully aware of the devastating impact this will have. In the Equality impact assessment p28/29 section 5.2.9 & 6.1.1 recognises the potential loss of this facility - what does Cllr Price and his cabinet propose to do to enable the continuation of this essential service and what assurances is he prepared to give now to the people affected and the proprietors who lease this site to allay fears over its closure and to ensure the continued viability of the business?

Response

I refer to the answer given to public question 5 above.

Supplementary Question

I would like it noted that there are only two sole operators of Hereford Community Farm, myself and Mr John Trimble. The landlord is purely the landlord. He has nothing to do with the operation of Hereford Community Farm and for him to confirm that he sees no reason why the farm should not continue if the bypass is built is therefore irrelevant.

In the route selection report appendix 4, reference is made to policy SC1 of the Herefordshire local plan core strategy which requires that existing community and social facilities will be retained unless it can be demonstrated that they can be replaced in terms of size, quality and accessibility. It also states that Hereford Community Farm is a community asset and how it is effected by the bypass would likely be considered as an important and

relevant matter material to the decision. Councillor Price references detailed discussions. I would like to know when these have taken place for him to arrive at his decisions and I would like to know going forward that those decisions will be with the proprietors and not the landlord in our absence so that there is clarity and transparency.

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: We have met twice at the community farm and you were present at both of those meetings. The first meeting was around getting to know what you did, how you did it and the impact on your business and the people that you serve. The second meeting was more around how we can work with you to allow you to continue going forward. That meeting came away with a definite move that the community farm wouldn't continue with any route that was there. However I do believe that the community farm serves a purpose and officers will be having many meetings with you as to how you can best go forward, whether it is on that site, a change within that site or another site. We will be working with you as we move to the next stage consultation as to how the preferred route will impact on your business. I have had the same number of conversations with the landlord as with the proprietors. He has a view, you have a view and I have to take into consideration what that view is. I understand that he is willing to allow considerable changes within the site and is investing in the property the farm occupies and planning permission has been sought.

Question 22

Dr N Geeson - Hereford

If plans for the Red Route proceed, there will be a need to mitigate various impacts. Can the Cabinet member confirm that mitigation measures will be located adjacent or close to the route, within the Parishes affected rather than elsewhere in the County?

Response

I can confirm that the project will follow best practice to mitigate on site as close to the source of impact as possible.

Supplementary Question

The proposed red route with high level viaduct will have significant adverse effects on the ancient woodland adjacent to the River Wye SAC SSSI. The new national planning framework, published this week, seeks to increase protection from disturbance for ancient woodland and other trees unless "there are wholly exceptional reasons" not to. If Herefordshire Council believes that there are wholly exceptional reasons to approve the red route please can these be listed now?

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: In the selection of the red route as the best performing route there were only ever two possibilities for the crossing of the River Wye. One of the reasons the red route was chosen in that sector was that it missed historic woodland on the north side of the river. The other river crossing would go through two sections of that wood and although there is a gap it was considered that that gap was a run between the two woods and it was considered better to go closer to the city.

In the context of the regulations I believe that for the betterment of Herefordshire the reasons in a planning context is that this route is a benefit and we could argue the case against the ecology but I don't believe we are damaging specifically the special area of conservation of the River Wye.

Marc Thomas, WSP – with regards to the SAC and SSSI early consultation with Natural England already concluded about a viaduct solution across that feature which avoids any direct impact into that watercourse. The SSSI and SAC is specific to the River Wye itself. That mitigation has already been incorporated into all the shortlisted designs including the red route. We are avoiding direct impact on ancient woodland though we have acknowledged with our reports that we are still within the protected 50m buffer. That will be looked at in the next stage of the scheme in terms of looking at the design both in terms of tweaking the alignment or minimising the footprint to take ourselves outside of that buffer. The same for ancient and veteran trees. The red route had one of the least impact on those features hence that went into the route selection report and was one of the factors considered. We are still affecting some of those features and again we go through the same design exercise to try to minimise and review that impact.

The information on the potential options for mitigating those impacts is described in the stage 2 environmental assessment report, appendix 3 to the report. Discussions with Natural England have been ongoing and quite extensive and they have made the very same point but equally understand the complexity of designing a highway through this impact. If impacts are remaining then we are entering the realm of mitigation and compensation for that which again is outlined in the stage 2 environmental assessment report and those discussions will be ongoing with Natural England.

Question 23

Mr R Hunter – Hereford

The proposed Red Route would pass through the Pippin Trust's orchards which contain a nationally important collection of 150 different varieties of cider fruit and it would destroy the integrity of a collection which has taken many years to plan, propagate and establish. The orchards could be saved by diverting a short section the Red Route some tens of metres to the east to join the Orange then Cyan Routes before re-joining Red Route south of the new King's Acre Road roundabout. The assessments of these routes, completed as part of the phase 2 consultation, indicate that little environmental detriment would result. Is such a minor route diversion not feasible, justifiable and worthwhile in this case? Will Cabinet please resolve that the Phase 3 Consultation should seek the answers to these questions?

Response

Thank you for providing detailed information on the Pippin Trust's orchards. As part of the next stage of design the project team will consider in more detail the impacts of the Preferred Route and any potential mitigation, compensation and, where possible, enhancement. The project team and I recently met with you and your group and it was a useful opportunity to discuss the impacts of the proposed preferred route on the orchard and potential mitigation.

Question 24

Mr S Kerry – Hereford

Given the overwhelming public support for the active travel measures outlined in the proposals for a bypass, the reality that some of these cannot be commenced with the existing traffic flows on the A49(T) what assurance can the Cabinet Member give that all measures achievable before detrunking will be implemented and that those depending on detrunking are viable in spite of forecasted traffic flows from local traffic on the existing roads once the bypass is built?

Response

It is very encouraging to see such a high level of support for the Active Travel Measures as they are an integral part of the Hereford Transport Package. Once the Preferred Route is agreed, work will be undertaken to work up the outline proposals contained in Appendix 6 to the Cabinet Report (the Active Travel Measures report) in more detail.

It is true that part of the proposed Active Travel Measures could not be implemented without a bypass in place, and that it may be possible to bring forward some of the other measures in advance of a bypass. An assessment of what measures can be delivered in advance of a bypass will form part of the next stage of the work. Please be assured that the Council is committed to ensuring that the Active Travel Measures play an important role in the transport strategy for the city.

Supplementary Question

The active travel measures are overwhelmingly popular and very important as part of the package and I am grateful for the answer to the first part of the question that some of those will be progressed before the bypass is completed where they can be. If the bypass actually does reduce through traffic but the new housing measures increase local traffic and the present route of the A49 whatever it might be called remains as busy as ever, are all the active travel measures listed in report actually deliverable or are some aspirational?

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: Within what we are considering is how we change the culture of people using bicycles, walking, public realm and deal with the development of the university all together. The culture will be forced to change in the city centre because of those active travel measures. There will always be an element of people that will not participate in active travel measures because they live 20 miles outside the city and wish to come in and shop at the supermarkets etc. but we as part of the active travel measures initiative in the Hereford transport plan have to consider making a culture change rather than asking for a culture change. That is what the design going forward is going to look at, what do we do with the freed up capability of the city centre to enable active travel measures to be 'forced upon' people to participate rather than continue to use the motor car in the city centre. The active travel measures are being worked up - taking account of the complexity of growth, housing and introduction of the university – there is a considerable amount of work going ahead to make sure the city centre becomes a place where people feel happy to choose to walk or cycle rather than battle against cars and HGVs. All the active travel measures is the intention. Once a preferred route is selected we can work up the corridors of active travel, whatever they look like in the final design. The bypass route will also be an active travel measure route as well as for through traffic.

Question 25

Ms D Toynbee – Hereford

At para 5.1.4 of Appendix 2 of the Cabinet report, the A49 North and South of Hereford have the same projected figure of 19900 AADT. Can the Cabinet member clarify and comment on the fact that these two measurements are identical, and on the dramatic increase in traffic this figure represents over the current volume of approximately 13500 AADT?

Response

The 19,900 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) figures referred to are initial traffic forecasts for 2026 with the bypass in place; the nationally recognised WEBTAG modelling has produced the identical figures. For clarity, the July 2016 traffic flows are 13,200 AADT on the A49 to the north of the city and 15,600 on the A49 to the south. The projected increases are due to:

- a) the background growth in traffic flows over this ten year period (based on national projections) - this is the predominant effect;
- b) diversion of existing traffic from other routes (such as the Canon Pyon Road in the north and Grafton Lane and Haywood Lane in the south) as traffic is attracted to using the higher quality bypass and away from the smaller and less suitable roads. This is a key benefit of the bypass and the Southern Link Road – to encourage traffic away from using unsuitable 'rat runs' through rural communities.

The detailed modelling at the next stage will confirm these figures.

Question 26

Mr L Lagoutte – Hereford

The council states that its transport plan will provide 'attractive alternatives to the private car for journeys within the city'. We are told it will 'continue to support a core bus network', but this core bus network is inadequate and shrinking. Which bus routes is the council planning to improve and expand, in line with its stated aims and values?

Response

The active travel measures report contained in Appendix 6 of today's cabinet report provides an update of the development of the walking, cycling, public realm and public transport projects which would form part of the Hereford Transport Package with the bypass. Further development work will progress subject to today's decision and the detail of the proposed package will be presented in a future cabinet report and this would set out any proposed public transport improvements to be delivered.

Question 27

Ms H Powers – Breinton

The capital programme report to full Council on 13th July highlighted that the Council will have to undertake £2.96 Million prudential borrowing to fund more consultants' reports to progress the development of the road project. How can the Cabinet determine that this road project is best use of borrowed money and will generate a better return than any other

investment such as Active Travel measures, sustainable modes of school transport or investment in social services, libraries, museums or tourism?

Response

I refer to the answer given to public question 18 above.

Supplementary Question

Traffic congestion is noticeably reduced in the school holidays. £6.1m has been spent on consultation already. How many school buses would that fund, reducing congestion during term time by up to 50%? Would the council consider that?

Response to supplementary:

Cabinet member, infrastructure: we constantly are told that there is less traffic in the holidays but the reality of the traffic in Hereford is that many people who travel in and around Hereford choose to do it before or after the school traffic. This was a conversation we had with our consultants in the last week. If the council paid for more buses that is a consideration as part of a project just for school traffic. I don't believe that the lack of traffic is necessarily just because of the school holidays, people are choosing to travel at different times going to work earlier and coming back later. We therefore find traffic congestion at different times of the day in Hereford.

Cabinet member, shaw: Funding for a capital project is quite different to adding to revenue expenditure for the council. There are all kinds of problems in the choice of school that parents send their children to whether they are within the catchment area or not. A lot of children travel with their parents as they are heading into work. The way of changing the mode of children travelling to school I think comes down to enabling far more children to walk or cycle through the city centre on roads which are subject to 20mph limits and subject to improved cycle and pedestrian walkways.