

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 28 March 2024

Question 1:

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

1. Cllr Mark Woodall – member for Leominster South

Many residents are hoping that a bypass will relieve the daily traffic congestion in the city. They have not been crying out for a bypass in order to have more housing or economic growth. It's always been about relieving the slow and painful passage of traffic and they want improvements as soon as possible, not in 2033 when the bypass may or may not be ready. Will the council be able to provide the necessary city centre improvements mentioned in the LTP, such as lowering congestion and carbon emissions and improving road users' safety and health, over the short to medium term without diverting all our funding and resources to a hugely expensive out-of-town project which will not by itself resolve the problem of congestion?

Answer:

It is clear that many residents are keen on a bypass in order to support a reduction in city centre congestion, pollution and severance.

The ability to provide city centre improvements, including lowering congestion and carbon emission, improving road users' safety and health, place-making and active travel are premised on the diverting of substantial quantities of traffic away from the city centre. These measures can only be implemented if traffic numbers are considerably reduced in the city. Currently there is nowhere else for traffic to go.

The Hereford Growth Corridor is a substantial package of measures which would either not be achievable, or have very limited impact, if the measures were delivered in a piecemeal manner. The ability to lower congestion comes as part of long-term strategy, focused on delivering strong outcomes, such as improved air quality

Question 2:

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

2. Cllr Stef Simmons – member for Ledbury South

Paragraph 22 states that the "LTP will include a strategic environmental assessment [SEA] as part of its development. Analysis of the current carbon baseline and the assessment of work programmes and measures that will deliver carbon reductions will identify the carbon impact of future transport proposals". SEA is an iterative process and as per DfT guidance and Statutory Regulations should run alongside development of the LTP including at broadest level of objective setting. Given decisions are being made in cabinet regarding route options for a bypass for inclusion in the LTP - has the SEA commenced to enable meaningful consideration of environmental performance and if so where is the evidence to support Cabinet's decision making process?

Answer:

An SEA ensures that environmental and sustainability impacts are considered appropriately in any policy, plans or projects. As such, a draft SEA Scoping Report has been prepared and we recognise the requirement to forward this for formal consultation with statutory consultees on its completion. During the early stages of forming the objectives and the subsequent stages of the LTP development both the environmental assessment and the quantified carbon reduction work

(included in Appendix C) are an integral part of the process. This includes during the appraisal process of identifying a long list and short list of transport proposals for Herefordshire. The final LTP will include a comprehensive SEA to support its delivery.

The proposal for the Hereford Western Bypass is consistent with objectives in both the current Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the emerging new LTP. The scheme will reduce traffic levels in the city, improve journey times, increase the resilience of the transport network and allow the detrunking of the A49. In doing so, it will support the Local Plan to deliver economic growth, enable delivery of new housing and employment land, assist city centre improvements, promote active travel and reduce severance across the city.