

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Osborne-Brookes, Hereford	<p>"Herefordshire Council claim for Phase 1 of the Bypass "Over the next 60 years, the total financial benefits are estimated at £54–£77 million, with around £47 million coming from people and goods saving time on their journeys."</p> <p>No information has been provided on the costs, apart from an outline budget, recently increased to £45million.</p> <p>Will the committee review the BCR calculation and whether it has included the following costs: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. mitigation of the loss of ancient woodland and venerable trees, including licenses to relocate hazel dormice living on the route; 2. the cost of the 5th arm of the roundabout on the A465 to make this part of the Western "bypass". 3. the cost of embodied carbon in the construction, increased emissions from additional vehicle movements and the loss of Carbon sequestration from destruction of soils and woodland." 	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response: Thank you for your useful observations. The Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee will meet on 15 April to scrutinise the proposed assessment criteria and requirements that Cabinet will use to evaluate the Full Business Case and to determine if Hereford Bypass Phase 1 should go ahead. It will then scrutinise the business case itself at a meeting in July. We will consider your points when determining our lines of enquiry.</p>			

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 2	Ms Martin, Hereford	<p>“AECOM's Scheme Information Report, published in advance of the Herefordshire Strategic Transport Model (HSTM), indicates that modelling for Phase 1 Southern Link Road (SLR) includes Phase 2 of the western bypass as a "committed scheme" in its core scenario, assuming its forecast time savings. However, these were arrived at using a highway assignment model that did not factor in traffic induction for either regional or local network. WSP and Mott MacDonald have flagged the risk that this would overstate congestion benefits.</p> <p>Importing these inaccuracies into the SLR modelling risks unreliable journey time forecasts and inaccurate monetised benefits for the SLR's Full Business Case, inflating the SLR's economic case. Will the Committee recommend peer review of the HSTM and, if found to be flawed, recommend an updated assessment that accounts for Phase 2 traffic induction before the FBC is finalised. "</p>	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response: Thank you for your question and the points made regarding the Herefordshire Strategic Transport Model. The Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee will meet on 15 April to scrutinise the proposed assessment criteria and requirements that Cabinet will use to evaluate the Full Business Case and to determine if Hereford Bypass Phase 1 should go ahead. It will then scrutinise the business case itself at a meeting in July which will include a model validation report setting out the modelling details used to undertake the assessment. The committee would not make any recommendation regarding the HSTM without full scrutiny of the model, which it currently has no plans to do.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>“AECOM's Scheme Information Report, published in advance of the Herefordshire Strategic Transport Model (HSTM), indicates that modelling for Phase 1 Southern Link Road (SLR) includes Phase 2 of the western bypass as a "committed scheme" in its core scenario, assuming its forecast time savings. However, these were arrived at using a highway assignment model that did not factor in traffic induction for either regional or local network. WSP and Mott MacDonald have flagged the risk that this would overstate congestion benefits.</p> <p>Importing these inaccuracies into the SLR modelling risks unreliable journey time forecasts and inaccurate monetised benefits for the SLR's Full Business Case, inflating the SLR's economic case. Will the Committee recommend peer review of the HSTM and, if found to be flawed, recommend an updated assessment that accounts for Phase 2 traffic induction before the FBC is finalised? If not, why not?"</p>			
<p>Supplementary response:</p>			

Thank you for the question. The purpose of today's meeting is to focus on the assessment criteria that will be used to assess the full business case. Our role is only to consider whether the assessment criteria is robust, transparent, and capable of supporting a sound decision by Cabinet. That question, in my opinion, would be better asked of either Cabinet or this committee when we come to look at the full business case. Today's discussion is purely around the assessment criteria.

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 3	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	<p>The "Back the Bypass" campaign shows the Hereford City Link Road as heavily congested and requiring an intervention in the form of the Western Bypass.</p> <p>The Hereford City Link Road (A49 to A465) promised significant journey time savings, reducing congestion up to 52% at peak times on Newmarket & Blueschool Streets, which, it was claimed, would enable them to become single carriageway, improving the public realm for pedestrians and cyclists and reducing severance between the new shopping quarter and the historic City Centre. Post scheme appraisal and real world observation reveal that the benefits claimed have not been achieved.</p> <p>As the City Link Road underperformed against the benefits claimed in the Business Case, would the Committee review the methodology ensuring that the benefits from the Herefordshire Strategic Transport Model for the Hereford Bypass Phase 1, will not be similarly overstated?</p>	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
<p>Response: Thank you for your observations regarding the Hereford City Link Road. I am happy to confirm that the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee will be scrutinising the proposed assessment criteria and requirements that Cabinet will use to evaluate the Full Business Case and determine if Hereford Bypass Phase 1 should go ahead at its meeting on 15 April 2026.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>Auditors issued a damning report on the City Link Road, which was one element of the Hereford City Centre Transport Project. Other non-road elements, including the Transport Hub, were not delivered due to a lack of funds. If lessons are to be learnt will this Scrutiny Committee recommend that the assessment criteria include: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the project delivers better Value for Money per pound, compared to alternative transport measures that could achieve the same outcomes; 2. there is sufficient budget and staff experience to manage and control this capital project; 			

3. "optimism bias" is excluded from journey times and the impact of induced demand is included;
4. all costs to deliver the claimed benefits of the scheme, eg a fully funded programme of mitigation and long term maintenance of any planting and rare wildlife relocation, are included.

Supplementary response:

Thank you for the question. I can confirm that a couple of things mentioned have been discussed as part of our lines of enquiry. I cannot pre-empt at this stage what the committee will decide to make as its recommendations that go through the democratic process. I hope over the course of this meeting the areas that you touch on may come out through the natural discussion and conversation we will have as a committee as we interrogate this assessment criteria and come up with a set of agreed recommendations.