

Questions from Mr M Hubbard, Hereford

in a personal capacity:

As a riparian owner on the Wye and keen to maintain the charter rights of the citizens of Hereford, enabling free use of the river for leisure & fishing purposes, can I be assured that those rights, that have been protected by the city for several hundred years and are now held in stewardship by the Herefordshire Council, are still being protected and how?

The following question is being asked in my role as Chairperson of the Friends of Castle Green:

Please would Herefordshire Council provide me with a breakdown of the total costs of maintaining & repairing the city parks known as Castle Green, Redcliffe Gardens and Cantilupe Gardens, including Castle Pool, over the past year. Please would Herefordshire Council also provide a breakdown of projected long-term spending on capital projects for the same areas.

Question from Mr R Hattersley, Hereford

City Assets

There has been rumour and counter rumour locally about the selling off of key council property in the City of Hereford. For the benefit of the City residents and taxpayers who own these properties collectively, can the Council please confirm : -

Which properties, if any, have already been sold?

Which properties are already "on the market"?

Which properties are still being discussed?

Which properties can the Council guarantee will not be considered for sale?

What plans do the Council have for consulting the residents of the City of Hereford before any such sales of their property proceed?

Can the Council please confirm precisely what any monies raised through such sales will be spent on?

Can the Council please confirm whether it is their intention to begin proceeding with such sales before or after the next local elections in May 2007?

Rotherwas Access Road

Given that the Rotherwas Access Road has been turned down repeatedly as "poor value for money", can the Council confirm that it is still their intention to pursue its construction?

If so, can the Council give some indication as to what sources of funding they will be accessing for the road, given that government sources appear inaccessible?

Recent research by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and the Countryside Agency* found that new roads in Newbury, Eastbourne and Blackburn generated unexpectedly high levels of traffic growth both on the new roads themselves **and in town centres**. Does the Council believe that a Rotherwas Access Road and indeed a bypass would have solved any of Hereford's traffic problems **within 10 years of their construction**, and, if so, will they bring forward the evidence on which they are making such claims.

Question from Mr R Gill, Cradley

The Planning Inspector in paragraph 9.56/1 of his report on the draft UDP chooses to back the views of a developer against the wishes of many objectors, many villagers and the Parish Council, in denying HBA9 (Open Space) status to the field opposite St Katherine's in Cradley. Whilst his expert knowledge of the requirements of HBA9 status is not being questioned, his understanding of the application to this particular field is limited compared to the knowledge of the locals. He does however admit that the road alongside is "at this point still like country lane" recognising a weakness in his case. His view that the field is "contributing little to the appreciation of the settlement or the neighbourhood" is strongly disputed by the villagers, who have a much better acquaintance with the locality and who could demonstrate his error in court.

It might be reasonably inferred that the recommendation of Council officials to accept his view and reverse the previous decision of the Council is influenced by fear of the legal costs of any future dispute with the developer. Would the Council please give some indication of the legal costs which they would incur in defending a decision to deny HBA9 status were this decision to be challenged in the courts by a group of concerned villagers in Cradley and would the Council please opine whether they consider that it is an appropriate use of council tax payers' money to attempt to defeat the wishes of the community?

A recitation of an answer prepared by council officials will be informative, but the views of councillors are also solicited.

Question from Mr David Creed-Newton, Chairman of Cradley Parish Council,

Would the Council care to comment on an apparent denial of the democratic process?

"Community involvement in planning accords with people's right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. It is an important part of the trend towards democratisation of all aspects of society." – *Community Planning Website, funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government*

The villagers of Cradley have expressed their view that the plot opposite St Katherine's be protected as an open space. They voted five to one in favour of this in a systematic consultation process (Planning for Real ®). The village has, in partnership with Herefordshire Forward Planning, developed a Village Design Statement and a Parish Plan promoting this. Cradley Parish Council, representing the villages of Cradley and Storridge, has laboured hard to keep this as an open space. Herefordshire Council had commendably recognised the importance of this matter in its last redraft of the Unitary Development Plan. Yet all this is to be ignored in the face of the opinion of one unelected official (however distinguished), visiting from outside the area if the Council reverses its position and accepts the Inspector's recommendation 9.56/1.

Is there any point in seeking the opinions of the electorate, of producing Parish Plans and Design Statements, of voting for councillors, of turning up to meetings of the Council, or would the Council advise voters and parishioners not to bother?