

Minute Extract O&S Board 27 November 2017

Transport Planning Report

The Chairman referred Members to the previous Council meeting and the ongoing discussions in respect of the Transport Planning Report, which had originally been planned for submission to Council. A paper had been tabled at this meeting (attached at appendix 1) which highlighted the areas which would be covered by that report and which would now be considered, in the first instance by this Board. The Chairman was concerned that the report, which was scheduled to come to the Board's 11th December meeting, would not address all the issues which had been raised over a number of months, with a view to the Board making recommendations to the Cabinet meeting due to be held on 10th January. The aim of discussion this item this evening, was to ensure that all areas that Members wanted to be included would be covered and to suggest that, as this was such an important matter which impacted on all Members that they be invited to attend that meeting.

The Chairman invited the Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager the opportunity to discuss this with the Board and highlight the areas which the report would cover. Reference was made to the work which had been carried out by Mott McDonald and the analysis of traffic counts and the Barham model together with a response to Worcestershire County Council on the points which had been tabled at the previous Council meeting. During the following discussion Members gave their views and discussed a number of points in detail:

- The data that had been gathered over the previous months' counts and the option for data in the wider spectrum rather than as a snapshot.
- Relevant officers being present at the 11th December, including those from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) as they would be in a better position to respond to questions.
- Not simply looking at what the data is currently but also what it would look like in 2030 due to the impact of the future developments and projections.
- The need to have confidence in the figures and the implications of the growth in the full report.
- Full data sets being requested from WCC under a Freedom of Information applications and this being refused – it would be helpful to understand why this was the case and whether they were now willing to release that information.
- Provide a report which both Members and residents can understand and have confidence in the information being correct within it.
- An explanation as to why the previous WCC/model assumptions were possibly inaccurate, including the information contained in the TA for the Hanover Street development.
- Consideration should be given to the future needs of Bromsgrove, including the potential for a western distributor road and details of the A38 major scheme proposals.
- The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager explained that it was broader than just the traffic counts or the data from WCC and those future developers are required to draw up plans to mitigate any outcomes from their developments by drawing up transport plans.

- This predicated the information based on TEMPro from the Department of Transport using their models and data.
- All the information gathered together would impact on the future site selection and therefore the Council must be confident that it has used the right information and understands the impact.
- Officers at WCC had already commented that Bromsgrove was “full up” and was close to breaking point.
- Members understood from Planners the focus of the May/June data.
- The concern was how the Council got houses built which were already planned and whether the delay would cause problems for the Planning Department and the potential for this to lead to the Council to be placed in designation status once more.
- Site of the letter which was sent to WCC in respect of LTP4 as detailed in the Council minutes dated 26th April and whether a response had been received to this.
- Audit trails on previous transport mitigation measures for example once scheme have been implemented whether they have done what WCC/Developers hoped they would do. It appeared that there was no monitoring of what happened next.
- Members raised concerns about air quality levels in the district, which were already high and requested that the future protection and any mitigation strategy for air quality as a result of future developments be provided. Input from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) was essential to get a full picture of the impact of developments on the District.
- Reference was made to Redditch Road air quality in particular which WRS were aware of and which appeared to be getting worse.
- Members were keen to ensure that this report was treated separately from the planning application process and that this report does not prevent work being done on the planning applications or Planning Committee decision making process.
- The impact on the Council’s review of the Local Plan.
- The need for all the relevant information and officers to be available to Members in order that they can make the right decision and the developments are in the right places.

Following lengthy discussion the Chairman summed up and confirmed that what he understood was currently in the report, was not sufficient and did not respond to all the questions raised by Members. It was therefore suggested that this should be included within the Board’s Work Programme for a meeting in January 2018 (to be determined at a later date, as it was accepted that it may be that an additional meeting needed to be held to consider this matter on its own) with all relevant stake holders present to respond to further questions where necessary.

RESOLVED that the items as detailed in the pre-amble above be included within the Board’s Work Programme.

Appendix 1

Transport Report

The Purpose of this report is to:

- Update members on the general position in relation to the work of the consultants providing transport planning advice in Bromsgrove District.
- To report back on the resolutions made at the Council meetings of the 26th April and the 21st June 2017
- To report back on member concerns expressed at the Council meeting of the 20th September 2017.
- To highlight the way forward to ensure current planning applications can be considered by the planning committee, and
- To highlight the ongoing strategic work which requires further resourcing.

Council Minute Extracts

26th April

RESOLVED:

- (a) that in respect of LTP4 a letter be sent to WCC on behalf of all the Group Leaders expressing the Council's great concern and requesting that the LTP4 process should not proceed until all outstanding issues have been adequately resolved;
- (b) that the Head of Planning and Regeneration clarifies to Members the current framework for processing planning applications in relation to their transport implications and for this framework to be circulated to Members;
- (c) that developers be required to provide full information on their traffic proposals in their planning applications;
- (d) that Mott MacDonald be requested to advise individually on major planning applications and to include consideration of the wider transport implications relating to any other developments whose applications are before the Council;
- (e) that Mott MacDonald or other similar organisation, undertake appropriate traffic counts as necessary in respect of these developments ;
- (f) that the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services be instructed to make all efforts to recover the Council's costs associated with (d) and (e) above, including instituting legal proceedings against WCC if necessary.

21st June

RESOLVED that

- (a) In light of these ongoing concerns this Council considers that any data produced by the current survey work being carried out, may be flawed due to the extent of the road works taking place in the town;
- (b) Because of these concerns Council recognises in the context of its Statutory Duty to determine planning applications that in order for it to be in a position to make robust and evidence based determinations it will be necessary to ensure that all

traffic data is subject to scrutiny by Mott MacDonald or a similar organisation on behalf of the Council;

- (c) That Mott MacDonald or similar organisation undertake independent traffic data monitoring in September to ensure that the data gathered can be robustly verified;
- (d) that subject to amendment as detailed in the pre-amble above the minutes of 26th April 2017 be approved; and
- (e) the minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2017 be approved as a correct record.

20th September

Members considered the following notice of motion submitted by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett:

“Council notes that even Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) potentially flawed highways survey data from 2017 shows large uplifts in traffic volume over the past few years over historic levels.

Council further notes that on some roads especially on the west of town the actual observed growth is much higher than the previous projections from Worcestershire highways' now discredited models.

Council resolves to commission an urgent independent review of all WCC input into current development strategy and any local highways strategy, including the analysis and report around the need for a Western distributor road for Bromsgrove.”

Minute Extract O&S Board 15 January 2018

TRANSPORT PLANNING REPORT - VERBAL UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed the visitors to the meeting and explained that the item would be broken down into two areas, Highways and Air Quality; although it was acknowledged that there may be some overlaps in places between the two. Members were reminded that we were looking at the strategic overview and that it was important to avoid discussing specific planning applications, as these were a separate process and not areas which were within the Board's remit.

The Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Officers (Mr. Nigel Hudson, Ms. Karen Hanchett, Mr. Steve Hawley and Mr. Martin Rowe) introduced themselves and provided background as to their individual roles. Mr. Hudson thanked Members for the opportunity to attend the meeting and said his team had been provided with the minutes of the previous meeting so they were now here to listen to what Members had to say in order to feed into the report that would be prepared by the Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager. Information had already been provided and dependent on what came out of this meeting, further information and discussions would be taking place to assist with that final report.

Following discussion it was agreed that in order to give the WCC Officers an opportunity to respond to points raised, was for the bullet points within the minutes to be discussed.

- *Full data sets being requested from WCC under a Freedom of Information application and this being refused – it would be helpful to understand why this was the case and whether they were now willing to release that information.*

WCC responded that there were still a number of applications in progress and therefore they had not, on legal advice, been able to release that data. However, following further discussions they had been informed that this was now possible and were happy to share it outside of the meeting. It was currently being used for the modelling work on the A38 and would form part of a business case for that work. Analysis of that data was at the early stages and would continue.

Members asked whether if it was being used for the A38 business case, it was originally classed as commercially sensitive, but appeared now not to be and had been released to other parties. The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager confirmed that he had received the traffic count data and Mr. Hudson confirmed that there had been one piece outstanding, which had been provided today. It was understood that there had been a variety of data requested, some of which had been provided, including full counts and historic data.

WCC reiterated that that this data was now available and they were happy to provide it. Mr. Hudson clarified that there were a number of different groups of data, the surveys from May and subsequent work based on the counts used for planning applications, which had been withheld, but this was now being made available.

As there appeared to be confusion as to the circumstances of the data being released a written response to this was requested from WCC.

- *The data that had been gathered over the previous months' counts and the option for data in the wider spectrum rather than as a snapshot.*

Members were concerned around the traffic count data, which was different to that expected, in fact some had been expected to show a reduction and had in fact shown an increase. With this much variance and in the sets of data how would this impact on what might be seen by 2030 as it was important for them to be able to understand the whole picture and ensure that any revised assumptions fed into the planning process appropriately.

Mr. Rowe confirmed that data collection was a standard process and was a snapshot and not used to forecast future needs. There was national data and recognised modelling which was used in respect of traffic growth and used to inform growth. There was a significant amount of detailed analysis which was carried out throughout the process. There was a high cost to the modelling and currently there were a limited number of areas which were undergoing such work, with only three live models ongoing at the moment, one of which was in Bromsgrove. It took approximately 12 months to cleanse the data and build it into a format that produced an accurate reflection, which could be used for a number of purposes.

The data to which Members had referred to for May had been provided purely to support two particular planning applications that from June had been collected to support the modelling for the business case. The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager explained that the written report that Members were alluding to would include the traffic counts, from May, June and October, other elements would be picked up and included from the minutes of the previous meeting and these were the fundamental issues which Members had raised on numerous occasions.

As there appeared to still be some confusion amongst Members around the collection and production of data concerns were raised as to what confidence could be given to data which had been previously provided for a number of developments, specific reference was made to Hagley and the belief that the modelling/data was both incomplete and flawed and was not a true representation of the problems in that area.

Mr. Hudson explained the modelling data sets which were used to forecast growth and the highly skilled technical process behind this. He explained that developer would come up with a scheme devised to mitigate any problems which came from that modelling. The counts produced in May and June were used to give a view at that time. In respect of the national data set used, a new version was expected shortly and these were used to assess the level of growth.

The Chairman highlighted that the discussions so far had covered a number of the areas raised in the bullet points but questioned the 2 sets of models which had not been effective or given a true reflection of the position, highlighting that in one area the modelling, compared to the actual data was out by as much as 8% and the concern was the impact that this would have on future modelling going forward, as it

could potentially by 2030 be completely out of line with actual figures. A request was also made for a breakdown of the total cost of the work done by Barham.

Ms. Hanchett responded that WCC were aware of the lack of confidence from the Bromsgrove Members and she hoped that this could be addressed through these meetings, but reiterated that some of the data sets were those used nationally and had to be used in any calculations that they carried out. The errors in those had been highlighted and it was hoped that with the introduction of a revised set this would be addressed. These took into account the greater level of growth and were accurate as they could be and were being used by all the other authorities in the county.

It was reiterated that the modelling was just one of the tools to forecast for the future, which was very difficult and whilst not giving a complete answer was one of the measures used. The Barham model had been built for one particular case, but had begun to be used for areas outside of its original purpose and was withdrawn and the consultants who had built it have accepted that the cost to WCC was zero.

Mr. Hudson explained that as a result of this WCC officers had met with the Head of Planning and Regeneration in order to plan how best to move forward. This plan included:

- Assisting her and the Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager in bringing forward a number of large development schemes.
- Support in getting a common set of data everyone could use.
- Build a case for A38 model to underpin the bid – some funding had already been secured.
- What was the model needed going forward to support the Council's next plan (it was important that this gave consideration to plans coming forward from both Wyre Forest and the West Midlands).

Specific reference was made to issues which had arisen in Hagley following recent developments and it was questioned whether the data had been accurate and the impact on the local area and whether the appropriate infrastructure had been put in place to mitigate growth. It appeared that funds had been spent elsewhere within the County but that Bromsgrove had not benefited from these. It was reiterated that the issues should have been identified earlier and due to inaccurate data being provided, there was the potential that the wrong solution to problems had been put in place. It was questioned whether due to particular problems at the west side of the town, whether the impending A38 business case would identify the issues and address the problems and that in fact this was an ideal opportunity to look at a western distributor road and it would be useful to have this included within the report.

Mr. Hudson explained that a report had been done some 18 months ago, but confirmed that this point would be addressed again. It was important that everyone looked very hard at future growth and forthcoming big issues around existing growth to ensure that the right plans were put in place to address and ensure that the Council could get as much as possible from the highways and other infrastructure strategy.

Members asked for clarification around the budget that WCC held and the practicalities around the distribution of this. It was assumed that there was a set budget together with central funds which could be bid for. It was questioned as to how the existing budget was allocated across the County, as it appeared that Worcester City received a disproportionate amount. Mr. Hudson clarified that there were a number of major projects which were part of the economic plan and had been agreed across the county as a whole. It was anticipated that funding would be available for new technology and lights at a particular junction in Bromsgrove and every effort was being made to address the problems. In respect of the wider infrastructure a number of areas of investment would be discussed with the Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager. In respect of work being undertaken on the M5, it was explained to Members that this was carried out through Highways England funding, direct from Central Government and separate to the areas being discussed at this meeting.

Members discussed the number of people who, whilst living in Bromsgrove, did not work here and that any further developments needed to include some sort of alternative route to take people outside of the town centre. It was important that within any further consultations that local experience was listened to and involved. Again, reference was made to the option of a Western Distributor Road and the likelihood of major infrastructure investment being needed and included in any future plan.

Whilst all the issues raised by Members were noted it was questioned whether Members energies could be better spent looking forward and ensuring that the evidence and assumptions made were accurate in the new plan moving forward. Modes of transport were also considered and how improvements could be made to encourage the use of public transport and cycling. Mr. Hudson explained that this was something which was being considered within the Transport Plan, which included a number of ideas including the licensing of car use in town centres, which had been brought forward by other local authorities.

Members discussed a number of other areas, which included:

- How in France for example the roads and infrastructure were put in place prior to any development being carried out.
- The impact of developments in our district, for example Wyre Forest, on this Council.
- Being tougher on developers and whether the work that they carried out in respect of infrastructure was monitored to establish whether it had been successful.
- Larger amount of Section 106 monies being requested to mitigate work that was needed.

Whilst Mr. Hudson understood the frustrations of Members he highlighted that in a number of the scenarios suggested it would not be practicable for these to be carried out, although as he had previously stated they were looking at new and innovative ways of addressing the problems faced and significant Section 106 monies had been sought on a number of occasions.

Following discussions the Head of Planning and Regeneration made a number of comments in respect of the following:

- Neither she nor the Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager were qualified highways Engineers and were grateful for confirmation that the Barham model was not fit for purpose.
- Moving forward the use of Mott McDonald's data for a number of planning applications had been of comfort, in that appropriate data had been collected and was able to be fed into the appropriate plans.
- She was happy with the current situation and the work that had been done in collecting data.
- The lack of confidence in County Highways – the importance of the developers being aware of the new dimension to working together to ensure this is repaired.
- The need for WCC to work collaboratively with the Council to ensure that transport issues were identified and considered fully so that appropriate sites were identified.
- Going forward the Local Development Scheme had been considered at Cabinet the previous week.
- The importance in a two tier authority of the Planning functions working closely together and the need to review the Local Plan going forward.
- The need for Member involvement in the process to ensure that all their concerns were addressed.

Members made it clear that clear answers needed to be provided moving forward as they were constantly faced with having to respond to residents' complaints about the traffic not just within the town centre but across Bromsgrove. It was important that clear answers and information was communicated to those residents to reassure them that every action possible was being taken to address the problems faced every day.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration assured Members that lots of work had been carried out in order for the data needed to process planning applications was available and that moving forward the review of the Local Plan, although complex would go towards understanding the impact of future developments and provide general background, but again it was reiterated that within a two tier authority it was the responsibility of all involved to ensure that problems were addressed.

Members went on to further discuss a number of areas including:

- The need to communicate with residents, particularly in respect of "every day" traffic measures such as parking around schools and temporary traffic works.
- The relationship between WCC and the Council and how they are now working together and meeting on a regular basis to address many of the concerns.
- The retention of Mott McDonald for highways issues and the cost of this to date.
- Confirmation that the Council had requested reimbursement of the Mott McDonald costs from WCC and whether this had been agreed.

- To date £80k of the £150k set aside for these costs had been spent and it was confirmed that those costs had not been recovered to date.
- Clarity in respect of the Barham model was requested for the next meeting of the Board.